

Militant

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Special celebration issue
See pages 7, 8, 9, 10
Details of regional rallies
See page 10

WARNING Your benefits at risk



THE GOVERNMENT are making the unemployed, the low paid, the sick and the old pay for their economic crisis.

By a CPSA member

Tory social services secretary, John Moore, is attacking the ten million people who live on or below supplementary benefit level. The latest figures suggest that, after the stock market crash, around six million people own shares; far more people are forced to depend on some form of benefit.

Moore has already frozen child benefit payments; now he wants to re-introduce means testing to restrict payment to about a million families. Many more benefits will be hit hard in the next year.

Staff at the Department of Health and Social Security (DHSS), are now being trained for the new system (Income Support), which replaces supplementary benefit next April. They have been told that the changes will make the system simpler.

The only 'simple' aspect is that there are fewer things people can claim. At present, you can get extra money for things like extra heating for young children, for medically prescribed diets and sometimes for clothing, bed linen etc.

There were over five million such claims last year. These will disappear next April and be replaced by loans at the discretion of DHSS managers, so will have a 'social fund' with cash

limits. Staff will be expected to choose which claimant is most in need. Late in the financial year this cash may have dried up.

Young and jobless

The Tories claim that some of their provisions will help low paid workers. But any marginal improvements when the Family Income Supplement is replaced by Family Credit will be more than offset by a new extremely stingy Housing Benefit system and by the freezing of child benefit.

Far more people will lose than gain from the changes.

The young unemployed and groups like pensioners will suffer most. Most young people under 18 will lose all benefit unless they take either a job or a slave labour training place. If they are 'lucky' enough to get benefit it will be a low flat rate regardless of whether they live at home or in a rented house.

The Tories talk about 'incentives' to work. If benefits are low enough, people will be desperate for any low wage job, such as solving some rich parasite's 'servant problem'.

But people need real jobs. How can these barbaric "incentives" conjure up jobs which don't exist? And what incentive can a freeze on child benefit give to parents?

Businessmen who underwrote privatised BP shares got a multi-billion pound safety net to stop them hurling themselves off corporation skyscrapers. But safety nets for the poor are too expensive!

The Tories want to cut social security costs to cut taxes for the rich. Social Security staff will suffer as well. A 'simplified' system can be run by computer, so fewer workers will be needed, particularly if Moore's plans to privatise DHSS computer records go ahead.

The labour movement must expose the Tories' aims and lead a fightback.

Cash to fight with

ONLY A few days left to reach our £70,000 fighting fund target. We are appealing to all our readers to match, or better, the donations we've received this week.

A magnificent sacrifice of £1000 was made by local authority worker Peter Krumbein of east London. From west London John Golding donated £200. Steve White from Chelmsford

gave £100. Tudor Parsons of Blaenau NUM sent us £40.

These donations show we can do it. Can you make a similar sacrifice to help build Militant?

Send off your donation today. £1000 or £10, large or small, send us what you can. Pull out all the stops in the last few days to help us reach the target.

Inside Peckham tenants' nightmare

See page 5

Fight Tories' new anti-union laws

See page 13

Tell Sid not to bother - the share of shares

See page 6

Struggle sweeps Latin America

See page 11



Militant

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Gorbachev's speech

THE CONQUESTS of the historic Russian Revolution have been brought into sharp relief by the anniversary speech of Gorbachev, chief representative of the bureaucratic caste that falsely claims for itself the mantle of October.

Inside and outside Russia, there are many illusions in Gorbachev, and the 'reforms' he has instituted. Khrushchev's 1956 denunciation of Stalin was made in secret session. Gorbachev's speech is beamed around the world by TV satellite, and even shown live on a giant screen in Red Square.

He attempted a reassessment of the heritage of the revolution, in line with the policy of glasnost, openness, he is applying to Russia today. But his speech was as full of distortion and untruth as many by other heads of the ruling elite. And like Banquo's ghost, the real ideas and record of one man haunted the bureaucracy as Gorbachev spoke, but were never explained—those of Leon Trotsky.

Nearly fifty years after his murder by Stalin's agent, his heroic fight for workers' democracy and against bureaucratism, still makes him their sworn enemy. Gorbachev even managed to salute the bravery of the soldiers of the Red Army, against the armies of imperialist intervention in the civil war, without mentioning Trotsky who organised them.

He repeats the Stalinist crime of distorting the unity of Lenin and Trotsky in the struggle for socialism in Russia and internationally. He repeats the lie that 'Trotskyism' was some separate trend from Lenin and Bolshevism, and salutes Stalin in safeguarding the party from it.

But then he is compelled to recognise the "wanton repressive measures of the 1930s", in which "the guilt of Stalin... is enormous and unforgivable".

But who other than Trotsky and his persecuted followers fought back against those "unforgivable" crimes, against the torture, labour camps and executions? And not from the safe distance of 1987, but then.

Not the leadership of any of the 'Communist' Parties internationally, including the CPGB, nor the old *Daily Worker*. Now its successor, the *Morning Star*, without a blush, reports Gorbachev's "balanced assessment" of the period. In the thirties it resorted to such 'balanced' abuse as 'Trotsky-fascists' and 'reptiles'.

"We now know," proclaims Gorbachev, "that political accusations and repressive measures... were a result of deliberate fabrication". Trotsky exposed them as such half a century ago.

Gorbachev, while criticising the savage manner in which it was enforced, explains the essential need for the collectivisation and industrialisation begun in the late twenties. However, he deliberately ignores that it was Trotsky who campaigned, over a period of years, for collectivisation by example and industrialisation through five year plans.

This new Stalinist falsification of the true post-revolution history, exposes the bureaucracy's lack of commitment to open discussion and any real democratic reform.

But while he might deny Trotsky's role, Trotsky understood the motivation of a Gorbachev. "Stalin," he wrote "is compelled from time to time to take the side of the 'people' against the bureaucracy... at least partly to purge the state apparatus of the corruptions which are devouring it".

Since then of course the Russian economy, with the incalculable benefit of state ownership and planning, has progressed enormously, to the second world power. But in a modern, developed economy, the existence of a bureaucratic caste and the gross mismanagement and corruption that inevitably accompany it, is literally choking up society.

Perestroika, reorganisation, aims to shake up the bureaucracy's inertia and self satisfaction. To use the 'whip' of election of managers and even party officials to bring them to heel.

Gorbachev is not reforming away bureaucracy; he is taking desperate steps to save the ruling elite, before economic stagnation and too ostentatious perks, impel the workers to sweep them away.

It is as the apostle of the political revolution that Trotsky must continue to be slandered and vilified. But the Russian working class, the strongest and most educated in the world, will still turn to the programme of Trotsky to overthrow their bureaucratic oppressors. In carrying through the political revolution, they will rediscover the genuine history of revolutionary Russia.

Militant will carry a full article on Gorbachev's speech and his reform programme in a coming issue.

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Listen to Labour

"WE MUST be prepared to listen to the people and to learn from them".

By *Militant* reporter

No socialist could dispute this sentiment, which was contained in the Labour national executive statement—*Moving Ahead*—presented to September's Party conference. But it was invoked to give the appearance of reasonableness to the leadership's total review of Party policy.

But as *Militant* and others warned the 'review' was code for a total revision of Labour's socialist aims. And what an irony this is turning out to be. Just when the shares crash demonstrates the fundamental crisis-ridden nature of capitalism, the Labour leaders choose to try to discard any idea of ending it and of transforming society.

And now the fears of the left are being confirmed, as it becomes clear exactly whom the 'listening party' will listen to. If the meeting held on poll tax on 27 October is anything to go by it certainly will not be ordinary voters.

Invited to it, where Jack Cunningham and Jeff Rooker were 'listening', were the Building Societies' Association, the British Chambers of Commerce, the National Federation of the Self-Employed, the Institute of Chartered Surveyors and several others. What possible advice could such organisations of assorted business people and Tories give Labour about financing the economy?



Kinnock and Hattersley want to listen, but not to the workers.

Did they suggest nationalising the financial institutions or interest free loans to help local councils?

At Labour's national executive meeting, the very same day, it became clearer still what the leadership had in mind. A number of 'Labour Listens' events are being planned at different levels, but they will be for "invited" audiences. In fact at the big regional events, those attending will have to send in their questions in advance!

Ex-left Tom Sawyer claimed that nobody should feel excluded from the policy review, but already it is felt doubtful whether people the leadership disagree with will be listened

to.

£50,000 has been set aside from this year's budget for the project, and next year still more will be spent, including trips abroad for the members of the seven policy review groups. At the NEC, Dennis Skinner moved the money not be spent, especially at a time when the right wing were pushing through redundancies for Party staff and closing Labour Weekly. But his motion only attracted three votes.

Right control

The NEC also appointed the chairs of these groups, and each one was kept

firmly in the hands of the right. Brian Gould is to chair the economy group. Perhaps he will 'review' his Party conference speech encouraging share ownership, now the value of shares has collapsed?

Rather than stage managed listening exercises, why does the Party leadership not arrange a series of major public rallies, explaining the socialist answer to the coming economic crisis or how Labour will organise resistance to poll tax. Perhaps then "the people" would listen to Labour, if the Party was saying things worth listening to.

Ian Isaac expelled



IAN ISAAC, former Lodge secretary of St John's NUM in South Wales and member of the South Wales NUM executive, was expelled by the National Constitutional Committee (NCC) on 15 October after 17 years' Labour party membership.

This expulsion shows most graphically the persecution any Labour Party member can expect once referred to the 'Star Chamber' of the NCC.

Ian has a long history of loyalty to the labour movement, in particular

to the miners in his home community of Maesteg. During the miners' strike he and his pit became known nationally for their militancy and the model campaign they built up. It is a disgrace that such a class fighter should be expelled from the party.

EDINBURGH PENTLANDS Labour Party has deferred accepting the membership transfer of long-standing left winger Jim Greer, until it hears from the NEC. Jim has been in the Labour Party

for 10 years, yet Sighthill-Longstone branch don't want him.

Councillor Tom Fraser declared that Jim had been given no appeal to the Constituency Labour Party and that the branch had not passed the matter on to the CLP, as should have happened under the Party rules. Tom also pointed to the CLP's policy against expulsion of members for their views.

By **Tam Burke**,
Sighthill-Longstone LP

Liverpool party reformed

AFTER A two year suspension Liverpool District Labour Party has been given permission to resume its meetings. Unfortunately the speed with which things are being done does not bode well for party democracy.

Party 'policeman', Peter Kilfoyle, has called a meeting for 2 December just a month away and nominations close on 18 November. Under the old District Labour Party—which was suspended for allegedly breaking the rules—a couple of months' notice was normally given for the annual general meetings, particularly for the trade unions which use different procedures

for the election of delegates.

Calling the election so quickly and with so little time for nominations will undoubtedly lead to either a curtailment of democratic procedures within the trade unions or to them being disenfranchised.

Ignoring rules

Activists will be asking is it that the party officials wish to try and directly influence the outcome of the elections by calling such swift elections. One thing is for sure they are quite prepared to ignore the rule book if it suits

their interests.

At this stage only a small number of trade unions have contributed to the appeal for the Liverpool councillors debarred from office and facing bankruptcy. The national Labour Party leadership has largely harmed the fundraising job by their attacks. Local officials in Liverpool have been too busy suspending parties and supplying files on people for expulsion to bother about fundraising. The rally commemorating the Russian Revolution aims to raise a minimum of 500 standing orders which should net a regular £1000 a month to the appeal fund.

Lawson in wonderland

LIKE A Rip Van Winkle who was fast asleep as the world's stock exchanges were crashing, Nigel Lawson has awoken to proclaim complacently that everything is for the best in the best of all possible capitalist worlds.

The Chancellor's autumn statement on the British economy ignored all the warning signs of an impending recession. As the share prices went on falling even as he spoke, he smugly bragged that the 'boom' was set to continue.

He did not mention the £135 thousand million wiped off the value of shares in a few days. He ignored the political somersault he has just performed in resorting

to government intervention to save the BP privatisation.

He did not refer to the millions of the unemployed and low-paid for whom his 'boom' has meant only poverty and hopelessness. Nothing was allowed to cast a shadow on his picture of free-market prosperity.

But all his juggling with figures could not disguise the underlying problems facing British capitalism.

He admits that the four per cent growth in production he now forecasts for this year is set to fall to two and a half per cent next year. Inflation, already the highest among the major industrialised countries, is going up again,

and Lawson concedes there is likely to be a further half per cent rise in 1988.

He acknowledges that unemployment is going to fall more slowly, that next year he will not be able to match this year's record 400,000 per cent drop (only achieved by increasing the numbers on phoney 'training' schemes).

Miserly increases in public spending have been conceded. The £400 million for housing and £65 million for the Urban Development Corporations is less than the amount the Tories have taken in grants from just one city, Liverpool!

The rises in Social Security

payments are supposed to cover an expected higher take-up rate of benefits under the new regulations. But the new system involves more means-testing, which normally leads to a lower take-up rate. So a lot of this 'expenditure' is likely to stay in the Treasury!

Lawson's central aim is to clear the ground for yet more tax reductions for the rich in next year's budget. The price will still be paid by the unemployed, whose job prospects are no brighter, the low-paid whose benefits are to be cut and the claimants who will be forced to undergo humiliating means tests to claim any benefit.

Investment in industry is still seven per cent below its level in 1979. Output has just got back to that year's level. Yet Lawson concludes that Britain is uniquely well-placed to weather any storms which follow the fall on the stock markets.

A recession in the USA is now inevitable, and Britain, one of the weakest capitalist powers, will be in no position to avoid being swept down in its wake. This will blast away Lawson's smug complacency and confirm the Marxists' diagnosis of the terminal sickness of capitalism internationally.

By Pat Craven



As Labour opposed BP privatisation in the Commons, Chancellor Lawson threw back at them Brian Gould's statement supporting share ownership: "Instead of opposing wider share ownership, for example, we should set about making it a reality...The idea of owning shares is catching on and as socialists we should support it"

Defend women's right to abortion

Liverpool Labour Women's Council organised a very successful demonstration on 27 October (the 20th anniversary of the 1967 Abortion Act) against David Alton's bill to reduce the time limit for abortion and also calling for extra resources for the NHS to ensure proper health care for women and children.

Liverpool Women's Council felt that David Alton's concern for women and children would have been better served by introducing a bill to de-

mand back the £5.32 million that is being cut from Liverpool Health Authority's spending. This will mean the closure of five major hospitals, including the Women's, two maternity and one children's.

About 200 people gathered for the demonstration outside the Women's hospital and marched past two other hospitals facing possible closure, Oxford St maternity and Myrtle St children's. T&GWU pickets were outside Myrtle St

as the porters are on strike against management's attempts to remove security screens from the porters' reception area. This is just one of many small disputes breaking out in the hospitals.

The march finished outside Senate House where the Liverpool Area Health Authority later met to discuss the current crisis of an overspend situation where the money will soon run out with no reserves to fall back on, and the necessary unspecified cuts.

Militant

Defend abortion rights!

Our bodies our lives our right to decide

Militant Abortion rights leaflet available from 3-13 Hepscoot Rd, London E9 5HB. Raise money through collections for further material!

Protests at Monerville arrest

ON SUNDAY 1 November, Trevor Monerville, a black youth, with his brother Peter Thomas, was charged with robbery, grievous bodily harm and assaulting a police officer at Hackney police station.

For the second time, in Trevor's case, he and his brother were taken to Homerton hospital with injuries to the head, face and body. Another man, Trevor's friend was also charged with attempted robbery.

According to friends and

relatives the three left a relative's home shortly after 1 am on Sunday. At approximately 1.45 Trevor's father received a call to say his son was in police custody. At Old Street Magistrates Court the police alleged the three were involved in an accident at 1 am on Sunday.

The family were particularly disturbed at this incident as Trevor is still recovering from severe injuries sustained in January when he was detained by the police.

On 5 January after five days' search, during which the police continually denied any knowledge of Trevor's whereabouts, John Monerville discovered his son in Brixton prison covered from head to toe in bruises.

Serious injuries

He later went on to a life support machine and underwent surgery to remove a blood clot from his brain which left him temporarily paralysed down one side of

his body.

The local community was shocked at reports that Trevor had been detained and beaten again. LPYS members and the Family and Friends of Trevor Monerville Campaign responded with a picket of the police station throughout Sunday afternoon and evening. During this time the police continually delayed Trevor's interview, at which he was to be charged, and an examination by his doctor.

John Monerville said, "They've been using these

delaying tactics since January..." "they think we'll go away but we won't."

Campaign

The campaign organised another picket outside the magistrates court on Monday where the Magistrate refused to grant bail to Trevor and his brother despite the fact that Trevor is still receiving treatment for the injuries he received in January.

It is clear in Thatcher's third term how confident

the police and the courts are in their lack of genuine accountability. The campaign intends to show, however, that the police are not completely unaccountable by stepping up their activity beginning with another picket of Hackney police station at Lower Clapton Road, London E5 at 12 noon, Saturday 7 November.

By Derek Richards
Hackney North Labour Party

Don't stand on the sidelines



Richard Venton

Militant's campaign to win thousands of new supporters in November continues. Here we print what inspired another supporter—Richard Venton—to get involved with Marxism.

My parents were forced to wander Ireland in search of work, married into poverty and reared a family through extreme sacrifice. I grew up to observe the extremes of wealth and poverty.

The late 1960s' struggles of youth in France and Ireland and blacks in America inspired me to join the fight for socialism.

Militant best represents the aims of workers who hate inequality born of capitalism and who want to build a classless society. History is riddled with lost opportunities for building socialism. Militant provides the missing factor—a determined, tested socialist leadership.

Scotland fights slave labour

Nothing's going to stop us!

THE YOUTH Trades Union Rights Campaign (YTURC) in Scotland has organised its one day education strike against all the odds. The police tried to ban our march, but they were not alone.

We were disgusted to hear ourselves called "vermin" by a member of the Scottish Labour Party Executive on TV. We are young people fighting for our future, but instead, of using the opportunity to back us up, this 'comrade' said poison should be laid to deal with us!

Most of the so-called leaders of the Scottish labour movement have been the same.

Labour councils have decided to have nothing to do with us.

The Labour Party has circulated organisations instructing them not to give us donations or support.

Even the Scottish TUC decided to isolate us and to instruct all unions to ignore us. What an indication of how far removed they are from the working class!

But several union branches have sponsored us. They include Paisley bus drivers, Rolls Royce Hillingdon and the CPSA at the Department of National Savings, with nearly 3,000 workers. At Langside College, 128 out of 130 students voted in favour of the strike and sending a train to the national lobby. At Cardonald College,

385 out of 400 voted for the strike, with calls for a national one.

And, vitally, West of Scotland National Union of Students (NUS) debated our strike. A surprise speaker from the STUC laid into YTURC and NUS executive members joined in.

But to no avail. By 17 to 15 the Area, representing 90,000 students, voted to support. All eight executive members voted against, but the rank and file college reps voted in favour.

We are going to organise thousands to oppose Thatcher's YTS conscription plans.

By Pauline Donald, West Scotland YTURC committee

THE FEELING around the schools and colleges in Edinburgh has been electric.

Meetings have taken place in all the major FE colleges in the East of Scotland. At Stevenson College, 15 day release students signed up immediately to help.

On 2 November, we organised an occupation of Edinburgh Chamber of Commerce, the bosses' organisation. It brought eager support from passers-by, with folk waving support from their cars. The news has spread like wildfire. A special

meeting organised by shop stewards of YTS trainees on a community programme agreed to support the strike. Four groups from the community programme in Edinburgh are coming out.

5 November looks like being a success. The campaign will continue with a rally on 11 November in Edinburgh and a day school in December for young trade unionists.

By Ed Petrie, AEU Young Workers Committee (personal capacity)



Youth at a YTURC rally in Glasgow call for action on 5 November.

Arrested for internationalism

MARC GREEN, Labour Party Young Socialists National Committee member for the South East region, was arrested last Saturday for collecting money for South African workers at a street meeting in Chatham, Kent.

The meeting was the end of a

highly successful tour by Nimrod Sejake, exiled South African union leader and co-ordinator of the South Africa Labour Education Project (Salep). Almost £20 had been collected for Salep before the police arrived and Marc was arrested.

He was charged with wilful obstruction. We will launch a vigorous campaign to defend him.

After all, as Nimrod Sejake commented: "Even in South Africa, workers are allowed to meet publicly."

By Martin Cock.

Students' creche victory

TORY ATTACKS on council budgets threaten cuts in childcare provision. In Hackney alone 100 nurseries are threatened. But women and students are fighting back. In Southwark and Newham, they have lobbied in protest against cuts and in Chesterfield College they persuaded the council to provide a creche. But the greatest success has been in Liverpool. ELLEN PEOPLES, Chair of Millbrook College Labour Club, explains how their victory was won.

THE PREVIOUS Liverpool City Council, whose Labour members were surcharged and disqualified from office, provided a creche at all further education colleges. Many working-class women, usually at home with young children all day, took advantage of this opportunity to study.

At Millbrook College this year 2,000 extra students enrolled. But many were turned away because the creche was full. Also, for the first time since it opened, the creche was closed between 12.30 and 1.30.

This was causing mothers to miss half an hour of classes and have a hectic dinner-time running

around the canteen after their two-year-olds. Some were missing an hour and a half a week out of A-level classes.

With the support of the creche workers, the mothers took a petition to the vice principal demanding that the creche stay open. She told them she was trying to get something sorted out, but that they would have to wait, maybe till Christmas. This was not good enough.

Occupation

The college Labour Club asked the mothers to explain what was going on. Three of them turned up, frustrated that none of the authorities seemed willing to do anything. The Labour Club had given the first positive response.

The Labour Club called a mass meeting to explain to all the students that if they cut back on the creche today, it would be on something else tomorrow. Terry Fields MP, councillor Lesley Holt and Collette Williams of the National Union of Students executive were invited to speak.

Posters went up, press releases went out and leaflets were circulated round the canteen. The response from all the students was of support. Over 150

came to the meeting. There it was announced that the mothers had gone to occupy the vice principal's office. All the meeting were invited to show their support by doing the same.

200 students, mainly women, ran down the corridor to join the occupation, followed by the Liverpool Echo reporter and photographer!

The vice principal looked a little shocked when the Echo photographer started to take photos. "I don't think you can do that in here," she said. "Let's take a vote on that!" shouted one of the students. The unanimous vote was to let him stay.

The vice principal took a statement from a student demanding creche facilities and then hurried off to a meeting with council officers.

Terry Fields, who had taken part in the occupation, answered phone calls for the vice principal, saying: "Vice principal's office. No, sorry, she's not in; we're occupying the office."

Collette Williams phoned round the press and radio. One of the mothers, Gillian McDonald, went out live on radio whilst in the occupation, and the Echo photographed Terry Fields sticking posters up



Terry Fields MP and NUS executive member, Collette Williams, in the occupation.

on the office window.

The women then decided to demand that Keva Coombes, new leader of Liverpool City Council, come to the college. He told them he would be there in an hour. They told him to "get down here now!"

When he had been presented with the case, he said he would not sign the statement, but that if it was a matter of money, he could authorise it immediately. "Put it in writing!" shouted

the students.

"I give you my word and you can quote me publicly on it" he replied: "The money is there if we can get the nursery nurses".

The creche liaison officer was called in. She said she could get three nursery nurses by the next day. An officer from the creche workers' union, Nalگو, gave his support and agreed to the emergency steps being taken.

Keva Coombes then announced that nursery provi-

sion would be provided on a proper basis from the next day onwards.

The occupation was a marvellous victory for women, not just in Millbrook College, but everywhere. It was *Militant* women who led and won this struggle. When students and workers unite and organise, you can fight back.

Straight away there were over 100 applications to join the Labour Club.

North Peckham

Heavy handed police

"THIS POLICEMAN stopped me and asked if I had a criminal record. When I said 'No', he just didn't believe me. He wouldn't believe a young black could have a clean record."

This is Keith Watson's experience of the police. They regard all young people in the area, especially young blacks, as troublemakers.

One in three people in the area are black, suffering some of the worst conditions of overcrowding, unemployment and racism. This misery has driven many to heroin. Muggings and burglaries have increased, often to finance the habit.

"The youth on the estate don't care. They can't see any real future, so they steal and live for drugs," says Lynda Peters, who has lived here for 19 years.

Tension

During the last Brixton riots, police poured onto North Peckham, expecting trouble. Their tactics are heavy handed but they still don't end the high crime rate.

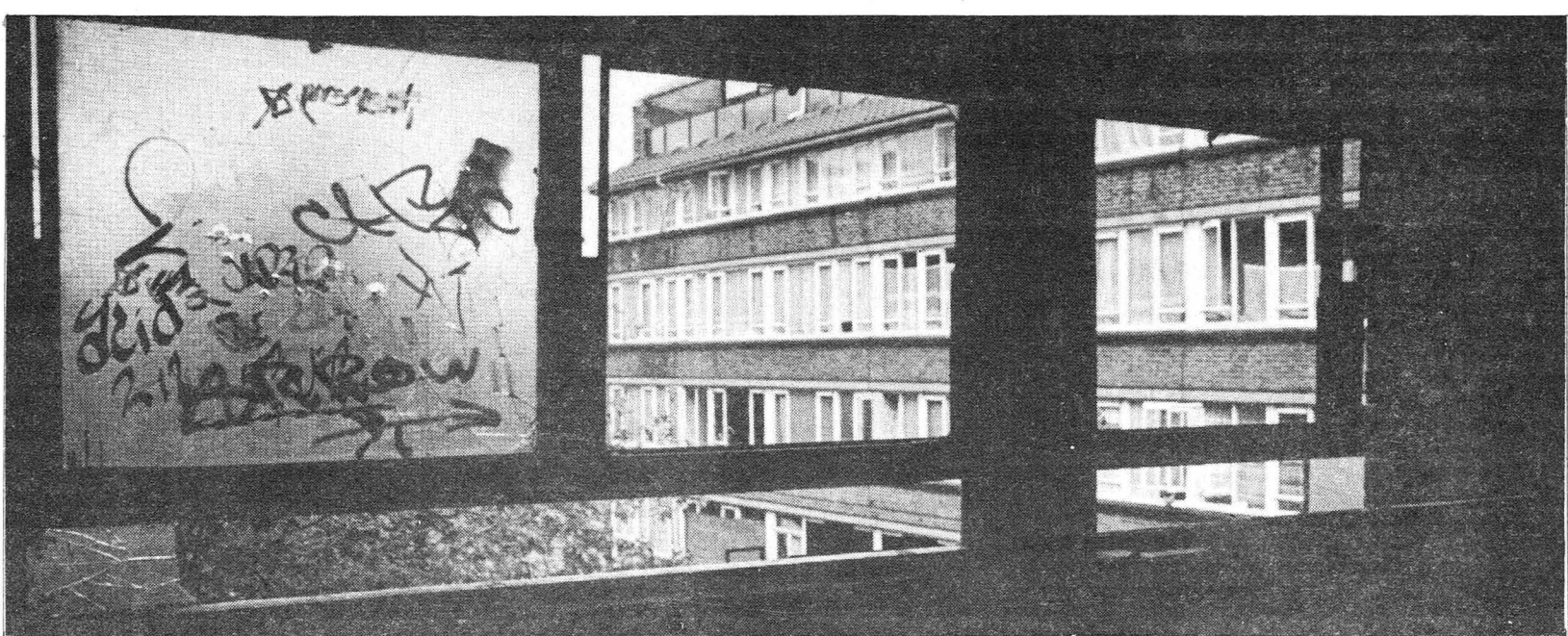
So, when the police organised a surgery, only six people bothered to turn up. "There's tension between the community and the police," says Lynda. "There are constant raids. In the summer, the police raided a house in full riot gear. We've got two token black policemen now. But we don't want them, because they're doing Thatcher's dirty work."

"The North Peckham is a dump. Living here makes you feel down. There's dog mess on the corridors and a large number of squatters. You're lucky if you get off."

We asked if a riot like on Broadwater Farm could happen.

Lynda replied yes if things did not change for the better.

Many young blacks are cynical about politicians, too. Their bitterness and anger must be channelled into a campaign for better conditions and an end to racism.



The tenants' nightmare

"SINCE NORTH Peckham's been a task force area, there's been no change. Still cockroaches in the flats and skag heads and muggings on the corridors. Mums are afraid to let their children play outside and women themselves don't go out once it gets dark."

So says Janet Dugan, a single parent living in a council flat in the area. The Tories' plans to revitalise the inner cities are a joke in Peckham. A government and media showpiece, the North Peckham Task Force, has spent nearly £1 million in the last year. It has only managed to create 144 jobs!

It would take 25 years for everyone in the area to have a job at this rate!

This inner city area has the highest unemployment rate in the country. With 3,400 unemployed people per square mile, it is as high as anything in Liverpool and Glasgow, showing that the so called North/South divide is really a class divide everywhere in the country.

The situation is worst for youth and ethnic minorities. Peckham has a large Vietnamese community. After all the press propaganda about their 'escape' to capitalist

democracy, all Tory Britain has to offer them is the dole. 80 per cent of them are unemployed.

Burglaries

The Tories promise homes that people can be proud of. But ratecapping has devastated the area, 95 per cent of whose housing is public. Services and maintenance have sharply deteriorated.

The estate won design awards in the 1970s. Now it is a tenants' nightmare. It has the largest number of burglaries in London. The large, dimly-lit maze of walk-

ways are a muggers' paradise. In the past, postmen and milkmen have refused to go onto the Gloucester Grove estate.

Nobody wants to stay. But there's no choice when a two-bedroom house costs over £50,000 to buy.

All the Tory talk of revitalising the inner cities is meaningless. As one resident says: "North Peckham is a tinderbox, waiting for a spark."

By Chetan Patel and Peter Smith
Peckham Labour Party (personal capacity)

The cost of Thatcher

THIS IS what Tory policies mean to North Peckham:

★ **Cuts** mean a £30 million improvement plan is unlikely to be implemented

★ **Ratecapping** means that the Labour council is putting up rents by £2 per week, rather than fight the Tories

★ **Poverty** means that the mortality rate is 25% higher than nearby but better off Dulwich

★ **Poll tax** is likely to be £568 per person, compared to household rates of £487 per year.

London YTURC public meeting

2.00pm Sat 7 November
Sumner Tenants Assn. Hall
Marne House,
Sumner Estate SE15
(corner of Commercial Way
and Sumner Rd)
Speakers from Southwark
Campaign against Nursery
Closures and Southwark
Broad Left



Janet Dugan, Peckham single parent.

JANET DUGAN used to work for Southwark Council and was a Nalgo shop steward. Now she is a single parent and lives with her two children in a one bedroom flat. She spoke to *Militant*:

"Peckham is a forgotten slum. The housing conditions are diabolical.

"I've been on the transfer and repairs lists for five years. My floorboards are unsafe, they're collapsing through damp. For six months there was a hole in the kitchen floor, with a ten foot drop to the cellar.

"Toadstools were growing from the floor where water was overflowing from the toilet. The window frames are rotting and, if the skirting board is kicked, it goes through to the garden.

"The bedroom is ten foot by nine, only just enough

room to fit my bed and my kids' beds.

"This isn't untypical of housing in Peckham. Once you're on any of the North Peckham estates, you can't get off. Any decent council homes are being bought and the council aren't building any new homes.

Nurseries

"The estates should be pulled down and replaced with decent homes. Everyone has got the right to decent housing, not to be caged in big claustrophobic blocks, which breed frustration and demoralisation.

"Nursery care is inadequate, even though there are many single parents on the estate. Me and my friends go to Camberwell Baths on the women's days. But even there, there are

no instructors and no decent creche facilities. Now rumour says that even this small provision for women is to be closed through cuts.

"There are no decent jobs in Peckham. School students are taught about social security! I don't see any future for my kids unless a Labour government gets in.

"I blame the government for the housing conditions, lack of child care and women's facilities, and for the repairs not being done. It's not the council workers. There are too many chiefs on the council who aren't willing to fight.

"I've been a fighter all my life. I want the Tories out and I'll join up with Southwark Broad Left to fight for a socialist council and a socialist Labour Government."

Fighting Fund

Area	Received	% of target achieved	Target
1 London	5982		9400
2 South East	1218		2250
3 East Midlands	1539		3250
4 Eastern	1306		3050
5 Wales	1926		4850
6 Scotland East	1019		2800
7 Southern	1080		3100
8 Scotland West	1108		3500
9 South West	485		1900
10 West Midlands	1140		4850
11 Manchester/Lancs	842		4050
12 Yorkshire	1806		8450
13 Northern	935		4600
14 Merseyside	1370		7500
15 National	6318		6950
Total	28,074		70,000

THERE ARE only a few days before our 11 November deadline. Our appeal for cash to reach this quarter's target has met with some marvellous responses.

John Golding of West London sent us the following letter;

Dear Comrades,
Please find enclosed a cheque for £22—1 year's subscription to *Militant*. If I could collect it from one of the local comrades, then the postage might be put to better use in the fighting fund. As a donation to the latter I enclose another cheque." That cheque was for £200!

Steve White of Chelmsford also made a large personal donation of £100. Ian Stiff, a member

of Bifu from Ipswich, sent us £50 and Tudor Parsons of Blaenant NUM gave £40.

In the last few days of the quarter remaining, can any of our readers match, or better, that level of sacrifice to build the *Militant*?

Militant meetings in Oxford and at the London BLOC Conference netted us £224 and £207 respectively. A meeting in the west of Scotland raised £147, while a jumble sale in Glasgow realised £105.

Sellers from Bristol raised over £30 selling stickers on the recent Anti-Apartheid demo where a seller from Peckham raised £13 in extras on sales. £23 was raised at

the Socialist Conference.

Finally, many areas will hold social events to celebrate the 70th anniversary of the Russian Revolution. Don't miss the opportunity to raise fighting fund at the same time and celebrate reaching our quarter's target.

This weeks contributors include:

Ian Skemp, Manchester, £25. D.Gartrell, South London, £20. R.Rankin, Fulham CLP, £15. Dave Backwith, Bristol, £10. Mick Gibbs, Wakefield, £10. Jim Smith, a student from Glasgow, £10. A.Healey, Vauxhall CLP, £9.80. John Legg, Strathclyde NALGO, £7. Martin Allan, Sutton GMB, £2.50.

Tell Sid not to bother

THE COLLAPSE of share prices has smashed the Tory myth of the "share owning democracy".

By Mick Brooks

"People who own shares...directly on their own account, watching the stock market, receiving company reports, learning to understand and appreciate the problems and possibilities of business", that was Thatcher's dream.

But this idea of 'popular capitalism' was never more than that—a dream.

A Treasury/Stock Exchange survey claimed that share ownership had trebled under Thatcher, to involve 8.5 million people—one in five of the adult population. But polls conducted by MORI and Financial Services show only 8.5 per cent of adults directly owning shares. All of these surveys are based on quite small samples.

The idea of 'popular capitalism' was never more than a Tory dream.

But they all indicate that three quarters of shareholders only own shares in companies privatised by the Tories. They have not been converted to playing the stock market, they do not see themselves as mini-capitalists.

A recent survey of these privatised companies shows holdings have been sold off as quickly as their owners could manage, it was the quick cash not a stake in capitalism they wanted. Only 6,077 private shareholders remain out of the original 65,000 after the Amersham International flotation.

Nearly one million have got rid of their Telecom shares. Only a quarter of the issued shares remain in private hands, the rest are held by the big institutions. This winter, Telecom employee-shareholders will have their first big chance to take the money. And with the crisis of share values, most will, pushing the

proportion of private holdings down still further.

Many workers chose to invest what money they had set aside, when the privatised share deal looked such a certain winner. It no more bound workers to capitalism than a flutter on the horses.

The Tories were deliberately underpricing the privatisation share issues, trying to buy popularity. British Airways' shares paid a profit of £108 for 200 part paid shares at 65p in one day. That is an 80 per cent profit for doing nothing.

PR firm Dewe Rogerson reports the main reason for buying shares was "to make money". The main reason for not buying was "lack of money". To them that hath shall be given, is the Tory motto. The average application for British Gas shares was £1,300-£1,400. Not many unemployed or low paid workers could lay down that sort of stake.

With some firms it was an even bigger con as only working class taxpayers' money had kept them alive before the privatisation rip-off. Rolls Royce had floated share capital of £1.36 billion. But it had gone bust in 1971 when its shares were worth nothing, and been nationalised by a despairing Tory government. It received £645 million in government hand-outs. So almost half the value of the shares consists of ordinary taxpayers' money.

The real trend is not conversion of the masses to share ownership, but the decline in the proportion of privately owned shares. In 1963 individuals owned 59 per cent of shares, but by 1984 only 22 per cent. Despite being tempted with privatised shares, individual investors were still net sellers of shares—£937 million worth in 1985, £1,075 million in 1986.

The small shareholders have sold out to the big institutions. Financial institutions hold shares rather than individuals because tax breaks are available to individuals who put their money into life assurance or pension funds, which then buy shares. They are not so generous towards individuals who buy shares directly.

Obviously the rich have much more money to stash away via the institutional shareholders, so the basic



On the Stock Exchange after the Big Bang but before the big crash.



Shareholders reduced to tears!

inequalities in our society remain unchanged.

Anyway a high proportion of privately held shares belong to the 200,000 ultra wealthy shareholders.

Workers who have a job want to save, to boost inadequate state pensions for instance. These working class and middle class sav-

ings flow into the big financial institutions, which in turn lend the money to capitalist corporations or buy shares.

The institution and share managers take no day to day control of the companies they invest in. If they are unhappy with a company's performance they

won't even send anyone to the annual shareholders' meeting, they just sell.

How can anyone believe that the small proportion of shares held by individual shareholders gives workers any leverage? Three billion BT shares are held by institutions other than the government. The employees hold 53 million through a trust—less than two per cent of the issued shares.

If the Board ever considered making concessions to the workforce at the expense of dividends, the finance houses would use their giant 'block vote' and start a wave of panic selling.

Profits

Last winter BT engineers, 95 per cent of whom are shareholders in Telecom, went on strike—against themselves if we believe the Tories. Owning a handful of shares can not fool workers into believing they have common interests with the employers.

Capitalist firms operate within laws dictated by the market. The very pressure of institutional investors demands that they maxi-

mise profits. And these profits come from nowhere but the working class. The class struggle cannot be glossed over by a thin film of share ownership.

In the USA in the 1920s shoe shine boys and garage hands would offer useful tips about making money in the great bull market of the time.

All that was knocked on the head by the crash of October 1929. By 1932 the index had fallen from 380 to 42. 'Black Monday' 1987 could have a similar effect. Who now is going to see buying shares as the surest winner?

Bryan Gould's ideas of popular shareholding were a fiction. Real socialism was supposed to be out of date and Gouldism the theory for the nineties. His programme lasted exactly four weeks, from his pathetic aping of Tory arguments at Labour's conference to the inevitable stock market collapse.

The fundamental problems of capitalism have reappeared, with shades of 1929. What else but socialist ownership and planning of the economy could offer an alternative to millions of workers?

Left and Right

Pirates scorn safety

BUS DRIVERS unfortunate enough to have to retire early due to heart problems or blackouts are getting their jobs back again on privatised routes, claims a London Transport pressure group, Capital Transport Campaign. All they need is a public service vehicle licence and to pass a far less stringent medical test than London Regional Transport allow.

You can understand why workers who retire early want to get a job, but bus driving in a city like London is very stressful. The pirates who take over these routes presumably think the increased

likelihood of accidents is a small price to pay for guaranteed profits.

Brokers broke?

"NEARLY FIVE years of steady economic expansion across the US has managed to leave 20 million people without enough to eat," says an article in the *Independent*. The jobs created in that time are mainly service jobs and mainly low paid. They will be at risk. Others suffering from the crisis are less easy to feel sorry for. A managing director from investment brokers Merrill Lynch complains that times look bad. "The wife expects a new Jaguar every year and the three houses aren't paid for yet."

"Doing the business"



Seller at Labour's conferences.

WHILE LABOUR'S bureaucracy in Wales are expelling socialists from the party, Welsh workers are showing their appreciation for socialist ideas.

Over 60 Militants were sold in Maesteg at a meeting called by Women Against Pit Closures to hear miners' leader Arthur Scargill. One miner told Militant sellers: "You're the only ones doing the business round here."

Well done, Cramlington in the north east where two sellers have proved the success we can have with estate sales. In just two streets they sold 32 Militants, an average of one to every three houses. Can you send

us a similar example?

Sheffield sellers were out in strength last week with the back page feature on their area. As we go to press we've heard of two successful sales so far—a street sale of 25 and an estate sale of 20. Fuller reports next week.

To take advantage of the pre-Xmas shopping spree, unemployed supporters have started a Friday dinner time sale in the shopping centre at Birkenhead. They sold 13 in half an hour last week, and will make this a weekly sale.

By Gerry Lerner

70th anniversary of the Russian revolution

Ten days that shook the world

THIS WEEK marks the 70th anniversary of the greatest event in human history. On 7 November (new-style calendar, 25 October old-style) for the first time ever, a state came into existence which represented the majority of society, the labouring masses, as against a narrow class of exploiters. Through their elected soviets (councils) the workers, peasants and soldiers of Russia took power into their own hands.

Except for the few far-sighted among them, the world's bankers, capitalists and war-profiteers paused only momentarily in their scramble for war booty. But the workers in the factories and the soldiers knee-deep in mud did not fail to register the tremors beneath their feet. For them, the events in Russia were a signal of hope, ushering in a new period of struggle of class against class instead of worker against worker. The soviet state became an inspiration and a call to arms for workers everywhere.

In previous issues of *Militant*, we have examined the beginning of the revolution in February 1917 and the period of reaction in July and August. This week, JOHN PICKARD describes the events that led up to the October insurrection.

The Bolshevik Party was subjected to fierce repression in July: its papers banned, its leaders jailed or in hiding, all subjected to the slanderous accusation that they were 'German agents'. But by the end of October, the Party was in power, at the head of a mighty movement of the working class.

These titanic events, of just four short months, are a textbook demonstration of the sharp changes in the mood and political consciousness of the masses in a revolutionary situation. Although the Bolsheviks provided the necessary leadership—the subjective factor without which the October revolution would not have been victorious—it was the elemental movement of the many millions of Russian people that gave an unstoppable impetus to the revolution.

After the suppression of the Bolsheviks, reactionaries of all stripes and shadings began to raise their heads with new confidence and hope. Officers began to demand salutes, ignoring the soldiers' committees; factory owners in increasing numbers began to threaten to close their factories to break the power of the workers' committees. Thus, the ground was prepared for the attempted coup by General Kornilov.

But the reaction was not deep nor long-lasting, and, before the Kornilov coup dissolved in ignominy, the workers' movement had already begun to recover. Even in late July, the Bolsheviks had begun to regain ground in the soldiers' meetings, in the navy, and in the workers' districts.

In reply to the capitalists' lock-out, a wave of strikes spread all over Russia, bringing into action for the first time completely fresh and untried layers of the working class. While the more experienced and battle-hardened sections of the workers bided their time—beginning to realise that a different, more serious struggle was necessary—others were

catching up in their understanding of the class forces and the issues at stake.

The workers began to ponder over the slanders against the Bolsheviks: is it a coincidence, they asked, that the same people who exploited them and denounced their committees are also the loudest shouting about 'German agents'? The soldiers mulled over the same problems: why was it always the worst and most repressive officers who foamed at the mouth and went into apoplexy at the mention of Bolshevism?

The workers and soldiers knew that they themselves were not German spies and yet their every action, every democratic demand, was denounced as 'Bolshevism'. There was hardly a factory or a military unit that didn't have its 'Bolshevik' who in reality had never been near the Party.

An enormous polarisation was taking place within Russian society. Soldiers' committees demanded an end to the interminable and bloody war; peasants demanded—and in hundreds of cases occupied—the landowners' estates; workers took over factories to break lock-outs and management sabotage. The Provisional Government, meanwhile, went on with the war, urged 'patience' and 'restraint' and denounced the Bolsheviks.

Floodtide

The Kornilov revolt in August petered out into farce, as Bolshevik soldiers and workers agitated among his troops, spreading the seed of revolution. But the revolt gave a powerful impetus to the leftward shift of the masses.

The warnings of the Bolsheviks, about the Provisional Government preparing the ground for reaction, were remembered by the workers and soldiers. The worst slanderers of all had even supported the attempted coup. The leaders of the other 'left' parties, the Social Revolutionaries (SRs) and Mensheviks, had



Russian troops greeting the revolution.

scoffed at the Bolsheviks' dire predictions before August and were now discredited in the eyes of their own members.

There now began a floodtide of support towards the Bolshevik Party, a tide that would carry the Party through to October and beyond. Bolshevism, already synonymous with any forward movement or struggle was thus made the property of the masses. The Party ranks swelled out of all proportion to their former size.

The SRs lost hundreds of thousands of supporters among the soldiers. These became millions. In the cities, the Mensheviks were virtually wiped out, as workers surged towards the Party of Lenin and Trotsky.

Soviets all over the country followed the lead of Petrograd and returned a majority of

Bolshevik delegates. Factory and shop committees, trade union committees, military units and land committees began to be transformed. The soviets of February and March had been weakened by their SR and Menshevik leadership, vacillating and compromising with the capitalist class, tail-ending the Provisional Government, itself slavishly following the policies of the imperialist powers. The July reaction had dealt yet more blows to the soviets.

But now the revival began. The delegations to the established soviets underwent a rapid transformation. At the same time millions of workers and peasants in the far-flung corners of Russia began to establish them for the first time.

As the soviets revived, they

were Bolshevised. In the bigger soviets the Bolsheviks were stronger than in the average; among the soldier-worker masses the Party was stronger than in the soviets. Similarly, the closer the committees were to the workers on the shop-floor, the sooner there was a majority for the programme of Lenin.

After Kornilov had shown the threat of reaction, new leaders crowded to the front in these bodies, forming special committees for the defence of the revolution: military committees, often charged by the soviet with arming the workers, arresting reactionaries and deploying troops. These new leaders, hardened and steeled by events, were overwhelmingly Bolsheviks.

continued on page 8

70th anniversary of the Russian revolution

Ten days that shook the world



Lenin speaking in 1918.



Trotsky at work in the Smolny Institute.



Peasants reading proclamation of Agrarian reform.

continued from page 7

The October revolution was to be no 'putsch' by a small minority. In their millions the workers, soldiers and peasants looked at the programme they needed: 'Bread, Peace and Land', realised which Party supported it, and acted accordingly. 'If that's Bolshevism,' they reasoned, 'then I'm a Bolshevik!'

In Finland, the Bolsheviks formed a majority coalition in the soviets with the Left SRs who had split from the old party. Immediately, the Finnish soviets commanded the loyalty of the working class and the soldiers stationed there. When the Provisional Government demanded that certain units withdraw from Finland, they refused, citing the authority of the Finland Soviets. Finland had already had its 'October', weeks before the rest of the Russian empire.

After having dropped the slogan in the weeks after the July events, the Bolshevik Party once again raised the demand of a Soviet Government. In the first week of September the key Petrograd soviet voted for this policy. Others soon followed: Finland, Moscow, Kiev, in days the trickle turning to a flood.

The whole of Russian society was polarising into two irreconcilable camps. As the attempted coup had shown, the capitalist class now saw no way out other than outright counter-revolution. But the workers had also drawn conclusions: they were now more sober, more serious. The heady days of February were gone, along with any illusions in an 'easy' end to the war.

The capitalist Kadet Party, along with the Compromisers, the SRs and Mensheviks, now cooperated in the convening of a 'Democratic Conference' to give legitimacy to the Provisional Government and bolster their sagging morale. This artificial body, whose size and distribution of seats were decided from above, bore no relationship to the true balance of class forces in the swirling waters of revolution outside its doors.

The in-built right-wing majority voted, against the Bolshevik and Left SRs, for a new coalition, but could come to no conclusion about its composition. This indecision, what Trotsky described as a "public confession of its bankruptcy", corresponded exactly to the paralysis of the ruling class in the streets and barracks.

But like a dying body that clings to life, the representatives of capitalism and their hangers-on continued to go through the motions. They elected a 'Council of the Republic' or 'Pre-Parliament' to continue its deliberations. The Bolsheviks withdrew from this body, leaving it to its own impotency.

Thus, while society moved inexorably to a decisive conflict over who was to hold power, Prime Minister Kerensky fuffed and fiddled and shuffled the seats around in his Cabinet Room. His new government, the fourth coalition since February, was met among the masses by a mixture of indifference and scarcely concealed contempt.

The orders of the Provisional Government and its representatives were increasingly ignored in the factories, the soviets and, crucially, in the military units. Kerensky's authority was rapidly shrinking to an area conforming

approximately to the walls of the Winter Palace.

A serious economic and military crisis now threatened. The capitalists were openly sabotaging industry, closing factories and disrupting transport. Food was becoming scarce in the cities. In frustration, more and more sections of workers took to strike action. The front was in danger of collapsing and the ruling class looked with glee at the prospect of the German army capturing 'Red Petrograd'.

In the countryside, land seizures and insurrections were increasing. The radicalisation of the peasantry interacted with and fed the leftward shifts within the army, overwhelmingly from a peasant background.

This whole period was characterised by an enormous ferment within the masses. Trotsky describes in his *History of the Russian Revolution* how meetings were going on everywhere. Debates, arguments, discussions, mass meetings, and in the centre of every one of them—a Bolshevik. In the barracks and factories, there were thousands of 'Lenins'.

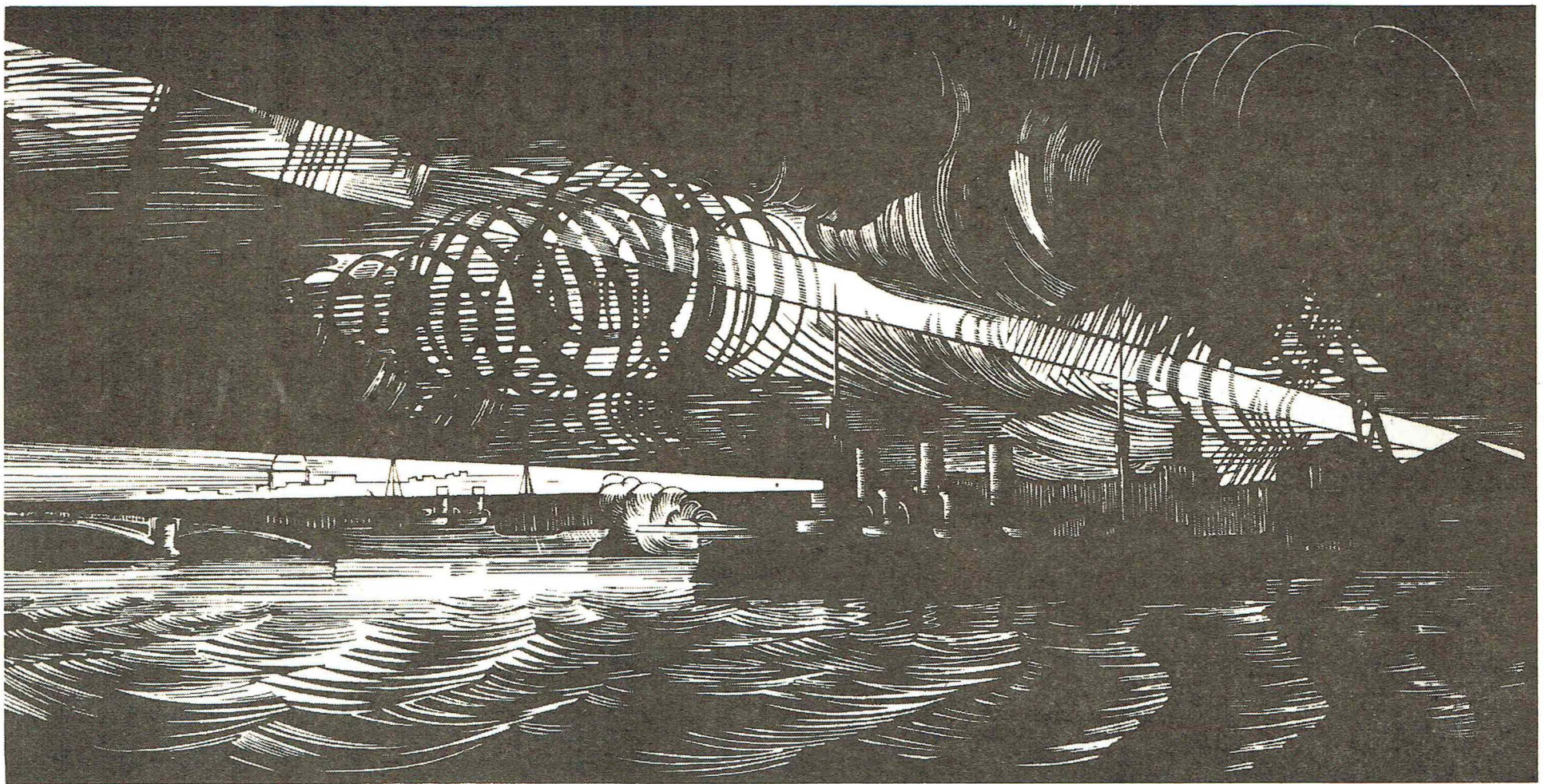
The question of power was being raised. Who was going to run the economy and therefore the government? The soviets or Kerensky? It would be confirmed by decisive action

Karl Marx long before had explained that an 'idea' can become a great material force, if it corresponds to a social movement, and such were the ideas and programme of Bolshevism in October. As workers visited the front, soldier-delegates visited the factories and both visited the villages, 'Bolshevism took possession of the country'.

Because of the dislocation of the economy and transport, the soviets were increasingly obliged to intervene and organise the supply of food, light, fuel and transport for the cities and the front. The question of power was being raised in all its aspects. Who was going to run the economy and therefore the government? The soviets or Kerensky? As Trotsky explained, the soviet government grew up from below. But it would only be confirmed by decisive action against the remaining centres of capitalist authority in the army, the ministries and the Winter Palace.

That decisive action came to revolve around the Second Congress of Soviets, organised for October. The leadership elected by the First Congress, the Central Executive Committee, was dominated by the compromisers. They called the new Congress only under the pressure of the soviets. Fearing the worst, they promptly began an agitation against it.

But with the Bolshevik Party conducting a campaign in favour, there began an unstoppable wave of telegrams and resolutions demanding the CEC convene the Congress, and, moreover, demanding that it take power. The CEC did not succeed in postponing the Congress for more than a few days, to 25 October.



The Cruiser Aurora; etching by Mikolai Kupreyanov.

The question of the Congress was the dominant political question throughout October. Every vital question: the economy, the war, food supplies, the land question, etc. raised the question of power. The masses now understood this and anxiously demanded the question be resolved by the Soviet Congress.

The decisive initiative was taken by the Petrograd Soviet. On the same day that the fourth coalition had been announced, the soviet had elected a new executive with Trotsky, released from prison 'on bail', as its president. A few days later, it also elected the Military Revolutionary Committee, once again under Trotsky's leadership.

This committee immediately began to establish permanent lines of communication and command with all the different workplaces and military units in the city. It was consolidating a state—what Engels described as essentially 'armed bodies of men'—which corresponded to the power that the soviets already possessed. One after another, the remaining military units transferred their allegiance from the army command, still under the nominal control of the Provisional Government, to the soviets through the MRC.

The Committee also began the systematic arming of the workers—Red Guards—with the active support of the soldiers. Mixed detachments of armed workers, soldiers and sailors were now seen to be stationed at key points in the city. The capitalists could only look on, wide-eyed with horror, but unable to stem the tide of history.

From his place of hiding, meanwhile, Lenin was directing insistent demands to the Bolshevik leadership that they should prepare the Party to take power. Conditions were over-ripe for a soviet government, but Lenin feared that some of the old Bolshevik leaders would hesitate at the critical moment. Throughout October, he denounced with increasing anger those he called the 'waverers' in the Party.

Lenin understood that in this situation timing was of critical importance. If the Bolsheviks were to fail to give a lead and the soviets let slip the opportunity to take power, then the psychology of the workers might have suffered a decisive reverse, leading to disillusionment and inevitable defeat by a new Kornilov.

As it turned out, Lenin's fears were not without foundation: at

Church leaders ignored

IN MANY parts of the world, because of the absence of an alternative leadership, social movements have often taken on the mantle of a religious movement of one kind or another. In this light it is interesting how the American journalist, Albert R. Williams, who was in Russia with John Reed in 1917, described how reaction tried to use the Orthodox Church against the Bolsheviks:

"The Bolsheviks made no direct assault upon religion, but separated Church from State. The flow of government funds into the ecclesiastical coffers was stopped. Marriage was declared a civil institution. The monastic lands were confiscated. Parts of monasteries were turned into hospitals.

"The Patriarch (Archbishop) thundered his protests against these sacrileges but with little effect. The devotion of the masses to the Holy Church proved to be almost as mythical as their devotion to the Czar. They looked at the Church decree giving them hell if they sided with the Bolsheviks. Then they looked at the Bolshevik decree giving them land and factories." "If we must choose", some said, "we choose the Bolsheviks." Others chose the Church. Many merely muttered 'Neechevo' (It doesn't matter much), and walked in the church procession one day and in the Bolshevik parade on the next."

Wine cellars opened

"In their efforts to befuddle the brains of the masses the bourgeoisie saw an ally in alcohol", writes Albert Williams, "The city (Petrograd) was mined with wine cellars more dangerous than powder magazines. This alcohol in the veins of the populace meant chaos in the life of the city. With this aim the cellars were opened and the mob invited in to help themselves. Bottles in hand the drunks would emerge from the cellars to fall sprawling on the snow, or rove through the streets, shooting and looting.

"To these pogroms the Bolsheviks replied with machine-guns, pouring lead into the bottles—there was no time to break them all by hand. They

destroyed three million roubles' worth of vintage in the vaults of the Winter Palace, some of it there for a century."

Courteous warders

Fyodor Raskolnikov, one of the Bolshevik leaders among the Kronstadt sailors, describes in his memoirs how he found himself in the Kresty Prison, along with Trotsky and other Bolsheviks, after the July days. Noting the way the 'politicals' were treated with more caution, or even courtesy compared to other prisoners, he asked why, only to be told by one of his warders: "Here you are today, in prison, but tomorrow perhaps, you may be Ministers."

Guardian's report

On 9 November the *Manchester Guardian* carried the first reports of the revolution that had taken place in Russia, although mistranslating the word 'Bolshevik' which is derived from the Russian for majority (from Lenin's majority position at the Second Congress of the Russian Social Democratic Labour Party in 1903). Surrounded by a mass of other war news, chiefly from the middle east, the paper reported, under the headline "Maximalist coup" that there had been a "forcible seizure of power in Petrograd:"

"Delegates of three cossack regiments quartered here yesterday declared they would not obey the Provisional Government, and would not march against the Council of Workmen's and Soldiers' Delegates."

The report went on that the President of the Council "M. Trozky (sic) declared that the Provisional Government no longer existed, and that some of the Ministers had been arrested... M. Lenin, who was received with prolonged cheers, made a speech in which he outlined the three problems now before the Russian democracy—first, the immediate conclusion of the war, for which purpose the new government must propose an armistice to the belligerents; second, to hand over the land to the peasants; third, the settlement of the economic crisis."

the Central Committee meeting that voted in favour of organising an insurrection, two long-standing Bolshevik leaders, Zinoviev and Kamenev, voted against. That was bad enough, but Zinoviev and Kamenev then circulated to party members and later published openly their personal opposition to the line being pursued by the Party.

Trotsky, seven years later, in his *Lessons of October*, demolished the reasoning of Zinoviev, that "the forces of the opponents are greater than they appear"—a statement merely covering up a complete lack of confidence in the working class. Lenin fumed at this treacherous conduct, and although it was not acted upon, he even demanded their expulsion from the Party.

But Zinoviev and Kamenev—supported from the sidelines by

Stalin, then a little-known figure—were swimming against what was a strong tide in the Party and even more so outside it. The overwhelming majority of the Party, pushed by the now impatient masses, were on the road to power.

As Trotsky later explained, in *Lessons of October*, this episode demonstrated the social law that every serious turning point creates a crisis, even in the leadership of a Marxist party. As with the political re-arming of the party in April, so also in October, Lenin had to base himself on the class-conscious traditions of the worker-Bolsheviks to ensure a correct line of march.

The episode also demonstrates the vital importance of the subjective factor in revolution. The October revolution could not take place spontaneously. It

needed a leadership with a conscious understanding of the laws of history, a realistic appreciation of the living forces of the revolution, and from these, a perspective and a goal.

Like a human tidal wave, the Russian masses were hurled in the direction of power. But without a guiding party tied by a million threads to every factory, barracks and village, no order could have been created out of the maelstrom. Likewise, without the conscious role of Lenin and Trotsky guiding the Bolshevik Party itself, the October revolution would not have taken place, or would have ended in disaster.

The final *denouement* began on 24 October. The Provisional Government at last began to stir itself out of its torpor. It ordered the Military Revolutionary Commit-

tee be closed down, and the Bolshevik press be banned. The battleship *Aurora*, whose crew, like those of all the big ships and the navy in general was overwhelmingly Bolshevik, was ordered to sail and, for good measure, Kerensky ordered 'reliable' units to move to the capital.

In reply, the Military Revolutionary Committee, under Trotsky's guidance, organised the defence of the Bolshevik press by detachments of soldiers, ordered the *Aurora* to stay put and defend itself from reaction if necessary, and called on all railway workers and troops to hold up any forces advancing towards Petrograd. Kerensky could do nothing.

The MRC was now functioning day and night. There were 200,000 soldiers, up to 40,000 Red Guards and tens of thousands of sailors under its command. All bridges, rail depots, stations, intersections and key buildings were occupied. The Smolny Institute, home to the Petrograd soviet and the Bolshevik Party, was fortified.

On the morning of 25 October, the Smolny announced to the world: "The Provisional Government is overthrown. The state power has passed to the hands of the Military Revolutionary Committee". The last remaining stronghold of the Provisional Government, the Winter Palace, was taken virtually bloodlessly in the next 24 hours.

Power had been taken in Petrograd with barely a shot being fired because of the audacity and determination of the Bolshevik Party and its leadership. In reality, soviet power was consolidated over a period of two or three weeks, but the insurrection, begun on 12 October with the election of the MRC, was only consummated on 25 October.

With an overwhelming majority of Bolsheviks and Left SRs, the Second All-Russian Congress of Soviets accepted the power presented to it and proceeded to elect the first-ever workers' government.

In his classic book *Ten Days That Shook The World*, John Reed described how Lenin, coming out of hiding for the first time since July, addressed the Congress and was given a tumultuous welcome. "The trench delegates gaze with all their eyes at this mysterious being whom they had been taught to hate and whom they have learned, without seeing him, to love." Lenin began his speech simply, saying, "We shall

continued on page 10

70th anniversary of the Russian revolution

continued from page 9
now proceed to construct the socialist order."

The soviet government kindled the flame of revolution in the minds of workers throughout the world. The October revolution was infused with the finest traditions of the working class: workers' democracy and workers' internationalism.

The very first resolution of the Congress was an appeal directed "to all the warring peoples and their governments" for a "just, democratic peace." The Bolsheviks and their supporters understood this as no purely Russian affair, but the beginning of a new world.

Impelled by the horrors of the World War, and with the example of the Russian workers' government to guide them, the workers of Europe launched themselves in the direction of revolutionary struggle.

The German and Austro-Hungarian emperors followed their Russian cousin into oblivion; soviet republics were established in Germany and Hungary; strikes and social upheavals threatened every ruling class. Only the absence of Marxist parties with the same traditions and leadership as the Russian Bolshevik Party prevented the victorious spread of the October revolution in the way Lenin and Trotsky had anticipated.

In their instinct for class self-preservation, the capitalists of Europe, Japan and America forgot the bitter rivalries that had led them to war among themselves a few years earlier. They now turned their attentions to their common enemy. Capitalist states, large and small, sent their armies (21 in all) against the young workers' republic at one time or another between 1917 and 1921, in an attempt to crush it.

Mutinies

That these attempts failed was due to a combination of factors: the newly-formed revolutionary Red Army, under Trotsky's leadership, the support and boycotts by workers overseas, and the frequent mutinies of the soldiers and sailors sent against Russia. By 1921, the revolutionary regime prevailed, although by then isolated and greatly weakened.

The October Revolution is rich in lessons for the labour movement today. The exact social conditions of Russia in 1917 are unlikely ever to be repeated, but the methods of Lenin, unbreakable in his determination and his principles, yet flexible in tactics, have a greater relevancy than ever before.

The objective conditions faced by workers today in South Africa, the Philippines and Latin America—and tomorrow in Europe, North America and Japan—are a hundred times better than those faced by the Bolsheviks. The social weight of the working class and its potential power have grown immeasurably in the last 70 years.

But the key issue that still needs to be addressed, and the one that stands out in any study of October, is the subjective factor: the question of leadership. No matter how great the courage, self-sacrifice and combativity of the working class, the socialist transformation of society also needs conscious leadership.

Since the Stalinist reaction, the ideas of Lenin have been distorted beyond recognition or suppressed in Russia, while that same Stalinism is used to discredit what socialism is. But in both East and West, in the storms and convulsions of the years ahead, the genuine traditions of October will be rediscovered by millions of workers.... and put to good use.

A Bolshevik tells his story

70 years ago Anton Nilson fought alongside Lenin, Trotsky, and countless others to preserve the gains of the October Revolution against the armies of imperialism and the White guards in the civil war.

His political commitment to the working class had begun 12 years earlier when, inspired by the 1905 revolution in Russia, he joined the Swedish Young Socialists. In 1908 he was sentenced to death in Sweden for blowing up a ship in which scabs, brought from England to break strikes in the textile industry and on the docks, were being housed.

Fury at the sentence among workers in Sweden and abroad forced this to be commuted to life imprisonment.

Red Army

By 1917 the turmoil in Russia was reverberating amongst workers in Sweden and on May Day 10,000 workers demonstrated outside the prison demanding Anton's release. They threatened to storm the prison, and the government issued an order that if this happened he was to be shot. The workers were persuaded to remain outside the prison, and Anton kept his life. However, the demonstration precipitated the resignation of the right-wing government, and within a few months he was free again.

In September 1918 he arrived in a Russia gripped by the fervour of the revolution and arming itself against the counter-revolution. He became a pilot in the newly formed Red Army and organised the air defence of Moscow, later taking command of the air-force on the Baltic Front. For his services his comrades elected him to receive an award from Trotsky.

The scarcity of fuel during the



Anton Nilson—100 years old on 11 November—speaking at a Militant Rally in 1984.

civil war made flying hazardous: "We had to use wood alcohol... this created a lot of black smoke, with flames belching out behind. Luckily the fuel was so bad, it could not burn clothes. Nevertheless it was somewhat disconcerting to be 3-4,000 feet up with flames all around you."

After victory in the civil war Anton stayed in the Soviet Union until 1928—witnessing the rise of the bureaucracy around Stalin: "Stalin took the state police, which had been formed against

the counter-revolution, and turned it against socialists," he says. In contrast Trotsky "tried to follow the line of the October revolution."

When he returned to Sweden Anton opposed discussions held by the Communist Party with the Nazis: "If they came to power, I said, they will not discuss with the CP; they will hang us."

The Stalinists responded by expelling him from the party.

But despite the terrors of Stalinism, and the setbacks in the world

revolution which followed, Anton maintained a commitment to Marxism and his belief in the inevitable victory of the working class:

"My political life has been based on one belief: 'October is correct'".

On 11 November Anton Nilson celebrates his 100th birthday. Militant salutes him and his enduring role in the struggle of the working-class of the world to complete the process begun by the October Revolution of 1917.



Birmingham
Saturday 7 November 11-4.30
MASU Centre, Gaywood Croft, Cregoe Street, Lea Bank.
Speaker - Ted Grant

Cardiff
Friday 6th November 7.30,
National Sports Centre, Sophia Gardens. Speaker - Ted Grant.

Edinburgh
Wednesday 18th November, 7.30,
Calton Studios, Calton Road.
Speakers include Alan Woods, plus film.

Glasgow
Saturday 7 November, 7.30-1.00
Winter Gardens, Peoples Palace, Glasgow Green. Speakers- Tony Saunois, Nimrod Sejake. Plus Ian Saville (the Marxist Magician), bands. Admission by ticket only-

Obtainable from local Militant sellers.

Liverpool
Sunday 8th November, 11-5.30,
Liverpool Empire. Speakers-Ted Grant, Peter Taaffe, Tony Mulhearn, Sue Haney, Tony Byrne. Chair-Felicity Dowling.

London
Wednesday 11 November, 6.00
Calthorpe Arms, Grays Inn Road, WC1. Speaker- Helen Redwood. Organised by NCU Militant Supporters.

Newcastle
Tuesday 10 November 7.00,
Newcastle Guild Hall. Speaker- Peter Taaffe. Plus Ian Saville, Mike Elliot (comedian) and disco.

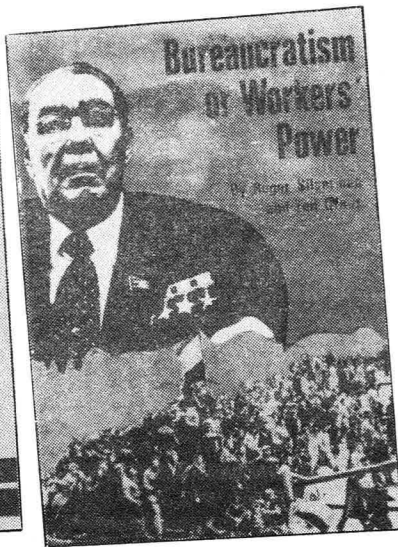
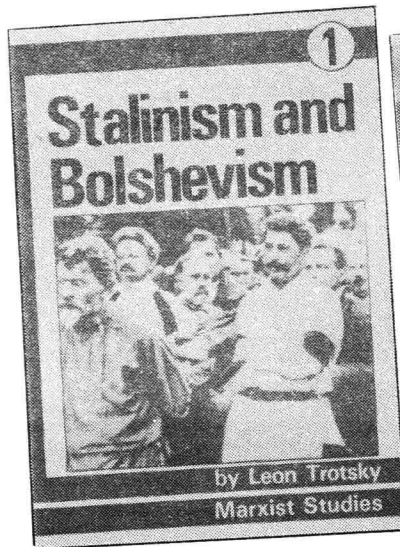
Nottingham
Sunday 8 November, 2.00-6.00,
Peoples College, Maid Marian Way. Speakers-John Pickard, Ray Apps.

Sheffield
Friday 13 November, 7.30
Sheffield City Memorial Hall.

Southampton
Saturday 14 November, 11-5,
Polygon Sports and Social Club, Polygon Road. Speakers- Jeremy Birch, and from SALEP and CSDC.

Stevenage
Saturday 14 November,
11.00-5.00, Stevenage College, Monkwood Way.

Swindon
Saturday 7 November, 11-5.00,
County Ground Hotel, County Road. Speaker- Jeremy Birch.



Reading on the Russian Revolution

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—Stalinism	50p
Ideals of October (originally produced by LPYS)	50p
Trotsky—In Defence of October	50p
Trotsky—Stalinism and Bolshevism.....	50p
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Grant—Russia: Reform or Political revolution?	30p
Woods and Grant—Lenin and Trotsky, what they really stood for	£1.50
Inqaba 24/25 with supplement on the Russian Revolution	£1
Trotsky—Revolution Betrayed	£4.50
Trotsky—My Life	£6.95
Trotsky—History of the Russian Revolution	£8

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Class conflict builds up around the world

With the world's financial markets in turmoil, major struggles of workers and youth are exploding in a series of countries. The move-

ments reported on this page give a flavour of the period now opening up as the capitalist world slides into new crisis.

Struggle sweeps Latin America

Peru

ON 12 October President Alan Garcia of Peru announced the nationalisation of 10 private commercial banks, 17 insurance companies and six finance houses. This would, in Garcia's phrase, "democratise credit" and "crush the four financial power groups that are holding back the country's development".

By Mike Waddington

This enjoyed very widespread support. Since then, however, Garcia has managed to bungle the affair, precipitating a crisis that has given rise to speculation of a new military coup.

Garcia became President in a sweeping electoral victory in July 1985. His American Popular Revolutionary Alliance party enthused millions.

To the masses, Garcia declared: "I am a marxist and Peru is going to follow a hard anti-imperialist line." But the *Wall Street Journal* had his measure: "Mr. Garcia is Peru's last chance...the nation is close to economic and social collapse..."

Garcia limited external debt repayments to 10 per cent of export earnings. Wages were boosted, helping to reflate the economy which grew by 8.5 per cent in 1986. But investment slumped, with inflation at 100 per cent and national reserves evaporating at the rate of \$100 million a month.

In June 1987 the prime minister and the finance minister resigned. The new prime minister announced that his government would be one of "economic austerity and law and order".

Workers responded by striking to protect their meagre living standards. A widely observed general strike was called by the CGTP (trade union federation) in May. This coincided with a remarkable national police strike (see *Militant* 22 May).

In September 600,000 civil servants took 48 hour action.

Argentina

WEDNESDAY'S 12-hour general strike in Argentina, called by the Peronist-led CGT trade union federation against the Radical government's proposed social contract, has been the ninth protest of its kind since President Alfonsín took office in 1983.

Behind the strike call lies sharp divisions in the leadership of the mass-based Peronist movement. The corrupt right-wing



Photo: Ana C. Gonzales/Reflex

Clashes on the streets of Lima during a civil servants' dispute. The slogan was "for a national strike".

Currently civil servants, doctors and teachers are striking over pay. A thousand teachers have gone on hunger strike!

It is not surprising, therefore that Garcia has been forced to take action beyond his original intentions.

In 1986 he dismissed nationalisation as the "childish sickness of the left". He even claimed to have learned the lessons of Chile: "I remember Salvador Allende, President of Chile, used to say 'Advance without compromise'. I am not going to make the same mistake... I will not allow Peru to arrive at a dramatic tremendous dictatorship that kills many Peruvians..."

Yet Garcia has demonstrated that he has failed to learn the very first lesson of Chile—not to leave the levers of power in the hands of the capitalist class. Garcia, almost Allende-like, had earlier said: "Private industry is an irreplaceable force for the development of society".

Obviously some capitalists are impressed. A French bank, faced with nationalisation, is negotiating for compensation while also offering to manage the newly nationalised sector!

'Unconstitutional'

The local banks, however, resisted. The courts ruled the nationalisation "unconstitutional". The government dismissed the judge, appointed another, and had the ruling reversed. The banks responded by giving their workers 15 days' paid holiday and selling them shares! The government declared this illegal.

Then, in a stunning blunder, 200 riot police smashed into the banks with armoured personnel carriers. The workers promptly went on strike.

On top of this Garcia has used troops to attack the youth, supposedly in an attempt to cut off aid to the guerrillas in the rural areas. In

one swoop on the university 800 youth were arrested.

The *Financial Times* commented that this has probably resulted in more support for the guerrillas.

Reports coming from Peru say there is deep resentment among senior navy and air force officers as well as middle-ranking army officers. Retired General Luis Cisneros said: "I doubt we'll get to 1990 without a coup unless there are big rectifications".

The warnings are clear. Garcia has now said that he will not move against other banks in the same way. However, the confusion caused by the government's contradictory moves, the disappointment of the workers and the anger of the capitalists make for an explosive recipe which, in the absence of a socialist lead from the workers' movement, could prepare the ground for renewed military intervention in the future.

emergency, seizing control of the radio and press—a sign of the explosive situation in the country.

Uruguay

ACROSS THE River Plate from Argentina, the Uruguayan trade unions called a general strike for last Tuesday against President Julio Sanguinetti's economic policies.

Demonstrations have been staged around the capital, Montevideo, to press for an 18 per cent real wage increase. The government has announced an increase of 14 per cent.

Canada moves left

THE *Wall Street Journal* remarked a few months ago that only *Militant* and the Canadian working class still seem to believe in the class struggle.

From a correspondent in Canada

While underestimating the mood of the working class internationally, the comment does reflect the wave of struggle across Canada which has swept the labour-based New Democratic Party to the top of the opinion polls (see *Militant* 859).

The Canadian economy is generally in a weak position with low commodity prices, fear of a trade war, and a looming slump in the USA. The nightmare of the 1930s could be around the corner.

Already 10,000 farmers in western Canada have been forced off their farms, and one in five kids grow up in poverty.

Alberta, once the province of the oil boom, has felt the cold winds of recession. During the boom, the Conservatives ran Alberta virtually as a one-party state. This has begun to change, with the NDP going from two to 16 MPs.

In Edmonton the Conservatives used to have 15 out of 16 seats. Now the NDP has a majority with 11, and the city is called 'Redmonton'.

Underlying the political swing has been a wave of strikes. Current disputes include the carpenters' and postal workers' strikes as well as elementary teachers in Toronto.

Recently a national rail strike was ended by government legislation, and the postal letter carriers won a victory over Canada Post.

The NDP has a great opportunity to unite these struggles. It is gaining support across Canada, even in French-speaking Quebec where from nothing they are top of the polls.

The NDP must grasp the opportunity and campaign on socialist policies. Even according to opinion polls, 28 per cent of Canadians are already in favour of socialism. With a clear lead from the NDP, this could become a crushing majority.

Siege of Dhaka called

THREE PEOPLE were killed and 100 wounded when police opened fire on demonstrators in Bangladesh last week. Over 600 activists of the opposition parties have been arrested.

By Steve Edwards

This is General Ershad's response to the growing opposition to his military government.

This movement, including a two-day general strike last week, results from the country's desperate economic crisis. Demands from the World Bank have meant 40 currency devaluations in the last five years.

Officially, 80 per cent of the people now live below the poverty line.

The opposition parties, grouped around the Awami League and the Bangladesh National Party, have called on their supporters to put up roadblocks, surround government offices and bring transport to a standstill in the run-up to a "siege of Dhaka" (the capital) on 10 November. They hope to bring hundreds of thousands onto the streets to paralyse the regime.

But the opposition leadership are in disarray, and looking only for a return to parliamentary government. The demands of the masses, faced with nightmare conditions under the rule of capitalism and landlordism, go much further. The struggle might not be confined to the limits that the politicians have in mind.

bureaucrats, who favour a deal with the government, are coming under increased pressure from workers angered by the crisis in society, and from more radical officials adapting to this mood.

The leadership's policy has been to dissipate the workers' militancy in a series of token actions. But, with the Peronists preparing for victory in the 1989 presidential election, there is every sign that the workers will break through the artificial limits that their leaders are trying to set.

Ecuador

ECUADOR'S CAPITAL, Quito, turned into a battleground as riot police fought workers and students across burning barricades during last Wednesday's general strike. A bank was set ablaze.

The strike was called by the biggest trade union federation in protest against the government's rejection of Congress's vote of censure against Interior minister Robles.

The government reacted by declaring an indefinite state of

Job Club con

Dear Comrades,
Recently I joined a Job Club. During the two weeks I was there I managed to get one interview, but not as a result of the club. There were no suitable jobs for the majority of Club members.

I found out that Job Club was being used by private employment agencies. One local agency had a 15 hour working day (including travel) for this they paid about £2 while they got up to £8 per hour for supplying labour.

One woman who for medical reasons needed a job that involved sitting down was given a job that involved standing up all

day.
In order to protect their profits these people will not tell anyone where they are going to work, just in case the worker goes there and gets the proper rate for the job. This led to one man being brought back to Maidstone at 4am and then he had to make his own way home.

Which Job centre has the worst job? £15 a day for a window cleaner, 5am start in Maidstone, or £40 a week for a housekeeper/childminder in Tavistock. We need a minimum wage of £120 to stop abuses like these.

Bob Excell, Maidstone Labour Party.

Sorry—no room

Dear Comrades,
After several months of ill health I finally received a letter from my hospital advising admission. However it advised me to telephone the ward sister to arrange a 'suitable date and time for admission'. The sister put it a little more bluntly—"No spare beds at the moment, ring back Monday".

Have the Tories introduced a hotel booking system in place of the NHS without telling anyone? Or are they hoping no-one will

notice until it's too late—when we have a two-tier health service—for those who can afford to pay for hospital beds and other 'luxury' services and those like me, who's diabetic and relies on the NHS for survival, and who, if the NHS was privatised would face crippling insurance premiums because I was unlucky enough to have an illness.

Michelle O'Neill, Washington.

Classified ads

20p per word, minimum 10 words. Semi-display £3 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.

Issue 24/25 of

Inqaba

Journal of the Marxist Workers' Tendency of the African National Congress.

★ Reports on the recent miners' strike and interviews with black mineworkers.

★ How to fight Buthe-lesi's scab 'union' UWUSA.

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□ Wanted co-op and green shield stamps. Loose, part or full books. All proceeds to the fighting fund. Send c/o Militant circulation, 3/13 Hepscoth Rd, London E9 5HB.

□ "Militant for Labour and Youth" enamel stud badges now available £1 each. Red plastic fighting fund collecting tins £1 each. A3 size posters of Marx, Engels, Lenin, Trotsky and Luxemburg, 50p each. Stickers available in rolls of 250; 'Kick out the Tories', 'No slave labour on YTS', £2.50 per roll. All available from fighting fund dept, 3/13 Hepscoth Rd, London E9 5HB. For all orders add 25% p&p.

Militant meetings

○ Southampton Marxist discussion group. Wednesdays 12.30pm. 7 Goodwin Close, Millbrook, Southampton. Creche provided. Thursdays 7.30pm. Tel 786879 for details.

○ Woolwich Town Hall. Wednesday 11 November 7.30pm. "Crisis in local authorities". Speakers: Cllr Eddie McParland and a surcharged Liverpool councillor.

Letters

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

Send us your views, comments or criticism.

Cut down or cut out

Dear Comrades,
The article in *Militant* 870 entitled "Speed Kills" by a reporter from Liverpool shows a rather reactionary and prejudiced attitude on the question of drug-taking.
The council is quite correct in having as its main aim to prevent young people from taking drugs. But what about those youth for whom drug-taking is al-

ready a way of life? Should they be confined to the dustbin of history until the dawn of socialism?
Cigarettes and alcohol kill far more people than all the illegal drugs put together. However, it suits the ruling class to keep certain drugs illegal because they compete with 'respectable' Tory-financing companies which produce cigarettes and

alcohol.
There is no evidence to suggest that advising drug takers how to avoid unnecessary death would encourage young people to take drugs. Or does West Derby Labour Party believe that drug takers should be allowed to die to act as a warning to others not to experiment with drugs?
Dan Taylor, West Reading Labour Party.



Photo: Dave Sinclair

Who was really responsible for the failure to predict the hurricane two weeks ago?

Finding scapegoats

Dear Comrades,
The media and some MPs are very keen to see heads rolling at the Meteorological Office because of the failure to predict the 'hurricane' on 16 October. But according to the *New Scientist*, government cuts were a crucial factor.

It points out that there used to be a weather ship in the Bay of Biscay, where the storm developed, but this has been retired due to cutbacks last year.

There used to be eight weather ships in the North

Atlantic, now there are only two, Britain used to own three of them, now we only have one.

Although intense, the storm was small, and the path it took meant that it missed nearly all the remaining weather ships and land stations. Not even the Met office's 'super-computer' can give accurate predictions if it doesn't have adequate data.

The press and TV ought to be castigating the British and European governments

for their shortsightedness, but instead they're baying for the blood of a few individual meteorologists.

This is typical of the pro-capitalist media of course. As with the Zeebrugge ferry disaster, they'd rather crucify a few individuals than have people asking awkward questions about big business methods and government spending priorities.

David J Ellis, Hailsham, Sussex.

All in a day's work

Dear Comrades,

I was asked to speak at a Transport and General Workers' Union workplace branch last Wednesday. I spoke about the reasons for Labour's election defeat, the need for socialist ideas and why trade unionists must become active in our party.

As a result of the meeting, their first with a political speaker, one of the branch members has expressed great interest in hearing more views of *Militant* supporters; a shop steward took a couple of membership forms for the Labour Party and I've

been asked to arrange other political speakers for future branches.

When a shop steward, a new *Militant* supporter, raised the YTURC lobby of parliament on 19 November against compulsory slave labour on YTS, the branch responded magnificently with a cheque for £50.

If this is the kind of response we can achieve from workers without a strong tradition of struggle, think of the untapped resources nationally.

Vanessa Loraine, Stockton South Labour Party.

AIDS—avoiding division

Dear Comrades,

In response to the letter from Dale Miller (*Militant* 871) as to why there was little reference to gays and lesbians in the feature on AIDS, the main point of the article on AIDS was to answer the press propaganda that AIDS is some kind of punishment or even 'divine visitation' for certain types of sexual behaviour.

Sufferers of the disease are still not popularly seen as the victims but as the

cause of the disease. The article attempted to set aside the moral approach and treat it like any other, that is a class question. Similarly the article attempted to explain how the virus could be wiped out if the resources were provided.

Perhaps more could have been made in the article about homosexuals and the oppression they are subject to, especially discrimination in employment and the activities of the police.

Militant has carried articles about these issues previously.

However, it should not be forgotten that worldwide the main category of AIDS sufferers are not homosexuals. To draw the conclusion that *Militant* is somehow 'anti-gay' is a serious misrepresentation of the position we are proud to stand by—that is one of fighting against discrimination and prejudice wherever they occur.

Mike Waddington

King with no clothes

Dear Comrades,

The *Guardian* was poking fun at Neil Kinnock and Labour's right wing this week. They pointed out that Kinnock was in a hurry to put on Thatcher's clothes about 'popular capitalism' and the 'share-owning democracy'. Just as Neil gets the idea, the idea collapses. Now Neil is the laughing stock.

60 years ago there was another right wing Labour leader who tried to ape the boss class called Jimmy Thomas. The press called him 'The Right Honourable Dress Suit', expressing their contempt for his fawning efforts to ingratiate the well-to-do by ill-fitting attempts to dress like them.

Thomas ended up being expelled from the Labour Party for his part in creating the coalition government with the Tories and Liberals which brought down the second Labour government in 1931.

The right wing never learn. Their policies will only earn them the simultaneous contempt of workers and employers.

Phil Frampton, Manchester.

Bridge suicides

Dear Comrades,

The Clifton suspension bridge, 250ft above Avon Gorge is a very popular place for committing suicide. Because of this, I read in the local paper that there is a proposal to stop people crossing the bridge on their own!

Single people will be held up by the toll collectors until someone else going in the same direction arrives.

Apart from being an infringement of civil liberty, I do not think this solves the problem but would drive it elsewhere. It misses the point—why people take their lives in the first place. A lot of people are driven to despair under the poverty and insecurity created by capitalism.

Many unemployed youth see no future in this society.

As Trotsky said: "Life is beautiful, it is the task of future generations to rid it of all its evils".

Colin Toogood, Bristol West Labour Party.

Militant Marxist Weekend School

London 27-29 November, University of London Union, Malet Street, London WC1

Featuring
The Crash of '87—A new world recession?
Friday 27th 7.30pm
Speaker: Tony Saunois

Whole weekend costs: £9 waged; £7 unwaged. Cheques to MWES 3-13 Hepscoth Rd, London E9.

As Tories unveil new anti-union plans, TUC must...

Meet fire with fire



Photo: Martin Shakeshaft.

The miners understood the need to mobilise against the bosses and the Tories.

HOW ARE the trade unions going to mobilise mass action to defeat the new so-called 'Employment Bill', the latest piece of cynical Tory anti-trade union legislation?

That question is now posed sharply following the publication of this Bill on 23 October. The government intend to rush these measures onto the statute books. They will drastically curtail democratic and trade union rights.

This legislation is as vicious as anything enacted during the nine years of Tory rule. It will reinforce massively the legal minefield in front of the unions already laid down by Tebbit and Prior.

Once law, any disaffected union member will be able to take his or her union to court to stop industrial action where no majority for action has been recorded in a secret ballot.

Scabs' charter

But, even where there are clear majorities for action, scabs will be able to defy the ballot decision, cross the picket lines and work with full legal protection against any disciplinary action by the union.

So much for all the hypocritical Tory verbiage of 'extending democracy'! This bill is a scabs' charter. A new 'commissioner for the rights of trade union members' is to be appointed. This means, in effect, a permanent secretary for trade union legal harassment.

New restrictive codes of practice on balloting are to be issued, containing more legal hurdles and effectively dictating that from now on the government will frame all questions on the ballot paper.

More than this, actually gaining a majority for strike action is to be redefined totally. In future, in order to bring out every workplace in a national strike ballot, majorities nationally will no longer suffice.

Each and every workplace involved in the ballot will have to record a majority before it can be involved legally in strike action. A legal united strike of miners nationally would require ballot majorities in

Brian Ingham
Industrial correspondent

each separate pit.

Thousands of different civil service establishments would have to record majorities before a legal united civil service strike could be held. Every serious trade union struggle potentially would involve a bitter legal war of attrition.

By this legislation the Tories hope to strike a crippling blow at solidarity and mutual support, the very source of trade union strength. The idea is to break the internal cohesion of each union and to produce new obstacles to the support one union can offer another during action.

It will be illegal to use union funds to contravene a court order. The help given by the Transport and General Workers Union and others to the miners, repeated again under these laws would place the entire funds of those unions in jeopardy.

This Bill also lays down that in future, all union officials attending executive meetings other than in an advisory capacity will be subject to election, and all union elections will be by secret postal balloting with supposedly independent scrutineers.

Militant has long fought for the regular elections of all trade union officials. In recent years, significant strides forward in union democracy have been achieved by rank and file members with *Militant* supporters playing a central part.

No trade unionist needs lectures on democracy from Tory ministers. The main architect of these proposals was Lord 'unelected' Young, Thatcher's favourite for the unelected post of party chairman!

The Tories want to undermine the democratic gains secured by rank and file union members in unions such as the CPSA, where balloting takes place at the place of work after full discussion and debate on all the issues

involved.

Less members will take part in postal ballots than in ballots at the place of work. This is not an exercise in democracy, but an attempt to take control away from union activists who are aware of the personalities in elections and the issues at stake and to place far greater power in the hands of the anti-union press barons.

As for the scrutineers, who is to define who is independent? This Bill outlaws action to establish or maintain a closed shop and makes dismissal of a non-member illegal. It has clauses to allow union members to inspect union accounts, which is again ironic given this government's paranoia when it comes to the freedom of information.

Of course there is no such provision for any worker to have access to the accounts of companies. That would be unwarranted interference!

"I am sure that many Conservative MPs will recognise...that this provision damages democracy"

—Norman Willis.

Lumped together with the attacks on union rights is a further section dealing with training which emasculates the role of the unions at national level in the manpower services commission and—with the new Social Security Bill—puts the finishing touches on the plan to create among the youth of Britain, a YTS cheap labour conscript army.

Norman Willis said that "At the heart of this Bill is a contempt for unions." More accurately, the lengths government are now prepared to go in their assault on union rights demonstrates vividly their utter contempt for the union leaders.

Thatcher has remarked that "Weakness invites aggression". That has been her maxim in dealing with union rights.

The Tories know the real, inherent power of the

unions, which potentially are the most mighty force in British society. But each retreat by the union leaders, each refusal by them to meet the threat with a counter offensive, has only emboldened the Tories to go further.

Prior and Tebbit were able to introduce laws stripping union rights, simply because the leaders of the unions were incapable of mounting any meaningful resistance.

Preparation

Left to the right wing leaders, pious phrases will again be the main thrust of the 'campaign' against this present Bill.

For them, going through the motions of a campaign is sufficient.

John Macreadie spelt out that the only way this Bill will be beaten is by mobilising the unions. The strategy of the right wing would assist the Tories by paralysing the will to fight back of rank and file union members.

Arthur Scargill has called for non-cooperation. That call must be supported. But serious non-cooperation means preparation for mass industrial action in defence of the first union singled out for attack by this legislation. Other than that, unions will feel isolated and one by one will begin to comply.

The TUC must convince every union member that a serious campaign to defeat this Bill is underway by implementing in full the proposals for a mass campaign tabled by John Macreadie.

Whatever measures they devise, sooner rather than later, first through widespread unofficial action, then through all out official action, all the restrictive Tory anti-union legislation will be trampled underfoot.

The unions are like caged tigers at the moment, imprisoned behind the collaborationist attitude of the leaders.

The Tories should also be warned. Any victories they have chalked up against the unions will prove both superficial and temporary. The real power of the unions is undiminished.

What the Bill means:

- ★ Requires separate secret ballots in every workplace.
- ★ Enables the prevention of disciplinary measures against scabs.
- ★ Restricts the entitlement of young people to unemployment benefit.
- ★ Restricts the use of trade union funds.

Macreadie resolution

THE TORIES new anti-trade union Bill can be defeated. But strength is the only argument that will have any effect on Thatcher. That was the message of John Macreadie in last week's TUC General Council discussion on the government's new 'Employment Bill.'

John answered the naive pessimism of certain right wing union leaders that the way to defeat the Bill was by talks with the CBI, alliances with employers' organisations and pressure on the House of Lords. He explained that the only way to stop the Tories was through the mass mobilisation of the trade union movement, including demonstrations and, if necessary, the use of industrial action.

Following the further erosion of the TUC's role by the Bill, and given the attitude of many young people to YTS, Arthur Scargill called for total non-cooperation with this legislation. Ron Todd said that the TUC may have to reconsider its involvement in the Manpower Services Commission.

John Macreadie pointed out that he had submitted a resolution to the General Council, but was prepared for it to be discussed by the Employment and Organisation Committee first, and then come back to the November GC meeting. It explained that "this squalid document represents a fundamental attack on union democracy, the rights to

bargain and struggle collectively, to uphold democratic decisions and the right to organise independently, free from state interference."

John's resolution called for the following initial steps to be taken by the TUC in a campaign to defeat this Bill:

- ★ To write to all affiliated organisations outlining the dangers and the need for the maximum mobilisation of the trade union movement as the only way to prevent the Government proceeding with this Bill.
- ★ To write to all trades councils calling for local conferences of shop stewards, branch officials and workplace representatives on the proposals in this Bill and to prepare local campaigns. Unemployed, youth and claimants' organisations to be invited.
- ★ To issue written material exposing the dangerous and undemocratic clauses in this Bill to the wider public.
- ★ To work with the Labour Party on that part of the campaign in Parliament.
- ★ To consider at our next meeting, a programme of action against this Bill, drawn up by the Employment and Organisation Committee, which will culminate in a mass demonstration to express opposition to this Bill and to demand the safeguarding of the rights of young people, the unemployed, claimants and to demand an end to all attacks on the democratic rights of trade unions.

Industrial reports

Vauxhall workers win round one

3,500 WORKERS at Vauxhall in Luton have recently taken strike action because of non-payment of bonuses by management (see issue 870). A victory has been won by the car workers who have now voted to return to work. On Tuesday 27 October, management, increasingly worried about the affect of the strike and the threat of lay-offs at Ellesmere Port, met with union negotiators.

Mick Longley, AEU convenor at the plant, spoke to Ian Parker, from the *Militant*. This is his report.

"On Tuesday we met with management in Coventry and started off by demanding why the company hadn't looked to make a settlement in view of the fact that they now admitted that our figure of £10-12 per week unpaid bonus was accurate.

Settlement

"After a series of recesses in a meeting lasting seven hours, they eventually made a proposal which was exactly the same as the one we had made on 16 October. They

proposed to make a settlement on the basis of a nine week average of what was owed to us viz the so-called 'ghost hours'.

"The company had changed their management team on the negotiating committee, including two plant managers, one from Ellesmere and one from Luton. They obviously wanted to get back in and start producing cars.

"In monetary terms the final settlement is worth roughly £50 net. The mass meeting on Thursday was well attended and by a large majority voted to return to

work immediately.

"The bonus question has been successfully resolved, the principle is clear and it has proved that we were basing our argument on fact. I now see the pay talks going better than they did before. Previously we were facing a complete stumbling block as far as the management were concerned.

Victory

"Obviously from this victory, and it is a victory, the members on

the shop floor all feel a lot more confident in their negotiators, because management had said from day one there would be no monies paid out over the bonus issue.

"We will now go back and negotiate our claim from a stronger position. On offer currently is four per cent per year over a two year or three year agreement, with consolidation of bonus of £3 per week over a two year period. We'll go in there with a greater degree of confidence than we had before."

Haringey council strike

THE ONE-DAY strike called by Haringey local government officers (Nalgo) and teachers (NUT) on 24 October in response to the council's budget cut of £15 million was almost universally respected by the membership. Most departments, schools and libraries were closed or badly affected.

The 3000 strong march and rally was a reflection of the understanding of the workforce and community of the scale of the cuts and the future for local government under the Tories.

This amazed no-one except the soft left Nalgo branch leaders, who from the rally platform expressed their surprise at the success of the strike.

Unfortunately, the manual unions had not supported the action. The blame for this must be laid at the feet of the Nupe branch leadership, who have told their members that the cuts will only hit white collar workers.

Cuts of £50 million next year and privatisation legislation will mean large redundancies, wage cuts and worse conditions for both white collar and manual workers.

These leaders have failed to explain this. Unity of all local authority unions with the tenants associations, Labour Parties, and the private sector unions on a borough, London and national level is the only strategy for confronting and defeating the Tories anti-local authority crusade.

DHSS plans attack on jobs

TWO MAJOR studies have been announced by the Department of Health and Social Security (DHSS), both aimed at cutting costs by destroying jobs, particularly in the London area.

By Simon Dennison
DHSS section executive
personal capacity

One study, entitled Regional Organisation Efficiency Scrutiny, has the remit to look into the 'current arrangements for and location of social security work done in local offices, and to re-appraise the roles of the three tiers of the regional organisation'.

This is jargon for 'how can we cut as many jobs as possible?' The remit identifies a number of themes which are linked to computerisation and the soon to be implemented Social Security Act 1986, and how these will affect the role of regional and head quarters offices. The study will also look into the 'considerable difficulty in recruiting and retaining staff, particularly in London and the South East'.

Retreat

Last year, management outstationed, on a temporary basis, work from some offices in South London and it was discovered that plans for a major move towards taking work from London offices and permanent bases were being discussed. Successful strike action involving CPSA members in North and South London, forced management to retreat.

These plans involved



Low paid Civil Servants marching for a better deal. Now jobs are threatened again.

closing social security offices and opening so-called super offices covering larger areas than present. These offices would deal with 'urgent' cases and public calls only. The vast bulk of work would be outstationed to other areas.

This would have a devastating effect on jobs. Staff left in those offices would have the worst jobs, ghettoised, with little scope for gaining experience on different jobs. Promotion would be severely limited and job cuts large, with staff who refuse to transfer to offices miles from home presumably dispensed with.

The service to the public would become more bureaucratic.

The government's justification for the move will be in the form of the usual rigged 'study'. Virtually all government studies produce the results the ministers wish to see, however illogical or unpopular.

Militancy

At the 1987 CPSA DHSS section conference a motion calling for strike action to be organised, preceded by consultation and discussion with members affected, if outstationing was

attempted, was moved and carried overwhelmingly. Whilst London is the prime area for outstationing, the Tories will look at the country as a whole. Every union member must be made aware of this threat.

A second study into the functions of the DHSS HQ is also aimed at relocating work currently done in London to other areas, reducing the role of the London HQ buildings to a minimum. This would affect jobs in the HQ buildings in the Elephant and Castle, Vauxhall, Euston and Holborn.

This study has a similar aim to the first. Higher wage costs in London, problems of recruitment, and the militancy of local offices in London who are subjected to some of the worst accommodation imaginable, are all good reasons for the Tories to move in and disperse our jobs.

Last year's limited strike action showed that DHSS staff understood the potential threat to their jobs and are prepared to fight back. The policy agreed at the union conference must be activated, for local offices and HQ staff.

Pendletons strike

ONE HUNDRED and thirty workers at Pendletons ice cream factory, Kirkby, have been on strike for three weeks to win the re-instatement of a sacked shop steward.

This is a crucial battle at one of the best organised factories on the Kirkby industrial estate.

Now owned by Associated British Foods (ABF), it had a tradition of low pay and poor organisation until 1976 when 100 per cent union membership was achieved. Since then, tremendous advances in pay and conditions have been achieved.

ABF is notoriously anti-

union. When workers at the Devon plant were visited by Kirkby colleagues they were threatened with the sack if they even talked to the pickets!

There is a strong feeling that the company are attempting to pick off the best organised factory and that the dispute was being engineered by management. Any trade unionists in ABF should make contact with the Pendletons workers for more information. Make out donations to TGWU 6/556 and send c/o Kirkby unemployed centre, Westhead Avenue, Kirkby, Merseyside.

'We want robots'

"WHAT WE want is robots, blokes we can rely on who'll be here week in, week out!" This was the amazing comment of a manager to me after I'd been accused of having too many days off sick.

By an East Midlands electricity worker

As an Electricity Board employee I was aware that the industry was being prepared for privatisation. When he told me that my

60 days off, according to his records, in six years of work was 'totally unacceptable and atrocious' I realised that my worst fears were being confirmed.

I was told of the board's new policy of interviewing any worker who is off on three or more occasions in six months and then "I must warn you this is going on your record and if you are off work for any reason in the next two months, you'll have to see a higher member of management and possibly a doctor, to see if you are physically

capable of doing the job".

Management are also looking at a new scheme to get the blokes to do more visits and read more meters in a day. They say it's based on levels in other parts of the country but I don't believe it. It would mean we'd have no time to speak to the customers.

The other day, a woman collapsed. I went to phone for an ambulance at a neighbour's. In all it took about 15-20 minutes. With this new system I wouldn't have had time.



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Industrial reports

Crewe campaign continues

ACCOMPANIED BY a symbolic coffin and black-garbed mourners, 400 Crewe workers from the health service, British Rail Engineering (Brel), and many others, including pensioners, marched through the town protesting against cuts in the health service, and the Brel redundancies.

At a rally following the march, they heard Terry Fields MP explain the rising anger of workers everywhere at the attacks of the Tory government. Other speakers included Dave Highland, from the NHS, Bob Jones, from Rolls Royce, Bob Curzons, NUR, and Margaret Parrish, NHS. The rally pledged to continue the campaign of mobilising Crewe workers for the fight-back.

In the five weeks of the campaign, many lessons were learnt by the participants. Under very difficult circumstances, and with their eyes open, the supporters of this newspaper convinced the meeting that elected a Town Action Committee (TAC) to link up the NHS cuts with the massive redundancies at Brel.

This was met with a barrage of smears and denunciations by the right wing in the town's Labour movement. Both Gwyneth Dunwoody, the local Labour MP, and Peter Kent, Labour group leader on the Council, went on the radio condemning the Town Action

By Bill Mullins

Committee as a 'Militant front'.

Members of the Brel Works Committee led a campaign of intimidation against any Brel worker actively working for the TAC. The convenor, George Cheetham, admitted to Bob Jones, chair of the TAC, that the campaign had "given us a kick up the backside" and moved them into action in defence of Brel.

A typical response from Brel workers was "About time somebody was doing something". The Works Committee issued notices instructing the workers to stay away from the march. In response the TAC issued an open letter challenging the Works Committee to explain their strategy to defend jobs.

We were told that workers had written on notice boards "TAC might be a 'Militant front', but at least it's doing something". It became clear to workers that the issue wasn't *Militant* but the fact



Part of the Crewe demonstration.

that the TAC was posing a programme of action.

This is the last thing the right wing want. If *Militant* didn't exist they would have to invent it. In a wholly negative fashion the union leadership have demonstrated their authority.

Leadership

Workers will not lightly abandon the official leadership of their unions. The TAC must now continue the campaign to defend its influence and authority. Factories and trade union branches will be approached to gain support and

new delegations.

Resolutions outlining a fighting strategy will be argued for in the Labour movement bodies.

This demonstration is the start of a longer campaign, though time is crucial. Brel workers are already being made redundant. The Area Health Authority, despite the lobby, has voted to close wards in Leighton hospital. The TAC has a network of 150-200 activists prepared to carry on the campaign. It is on this layer that it can succeed. Just like the miners, it'll be the younger rank and file Brel workers who'll increasingly come to the fore.

BOB JONES, chairman of the TAC, and member of the Rolls Royce Works Committee, explained why he got involved.

"My mother was waiting three and a half years for a hip operation. On the day I was due to take her to Oswestry hospital for the operation she died. This was mainly due to the side effects of the pain-killing drugs she was forced to take as a result of waiting so long. That is why I am active in the campaign against NHS cuts".

Cowley: action looms

WORKERS AT Cowley assembly plant will this week decide at a mass meeting whether to carry out a decision made two weeks ago for a one day strike over the freezing of the Austin Rover pension fund.

By a Cowley worker

The company have used the new Tory government law to freeze the fund over a certain limit and cream off the rest to use to pay off Rover Group debts and for use in new technology and increased wages and pay offs for top management.

The money the company are taking out could be as much as £200 million,

which would be equivalent to our last wage deal.

Workers were incensed at the decision because we still have to pay the same amount in each week while there will be less money in the funds for our pension benefits.

The National Joint Negotiating Committee (JNC) for Austin Rover at their September meeting decided on a resolution proposed by Cowley, and seconded by D.Osborne (Longbridge), to call for a ballot on a token one day stoppage to protest at management's decision.

The ballot took place during October. The result was an overwhelming 'yes' for the action in the Transport and General Workers

Union and other smaller unions, including a 1300 majority in the Cowley assembly plant. But the engineers' union (AEU) and the electricians' union (EET-PU) voted against. The overall joint union result was an 800 majority.

Ridiculed

At the last JNC, the expected decision was to respect the ballot and call a strike, but in their infinite wisdom the shop stewards controlled by the Communist Party, led by D.Osborne, vetoed any strike action with the latter issuing a statement saying that irrespective of the ballot decision, or the JNC meeting,

he and his stewards would not be calling for a one day strike because the AEU did not vote for it, and he did not want to damage industrial relations at Longbridge.

With the AEU votes, the JNC voted not to call for action by eight votes to seven with the minority coming from Cowley. The Longbridge stewards even ridiculed national officer Mike Murphy, not known to be a militant.

The assembly plant stewards, enraged by the Longbridge stance, overturned the JNC decision and are recommending that the assembly plant workforce do the same at the mass meeting and go for a

one day strike, as already backed in a secret ballot.

This chapter hits a new low for the union leadership who have turned their backs on the secret ballot decision. If they ignore workers' democracy, it does nothing to instil confidence in the membership who are facing unprecedented attacks by the most vicious management.

It leaves the union open to ridicule by the Tories and the green light has been shown to attack us even more. The JNC must unite together against these attacks and carry out the wishes of the rank and file who elected them.

Birmingham housing clerks

THE BIRMINGHAM housing clerks dispute came to an end on 27 October after a long and bitter battle lasting nine weeks. The strikers have returned to work with little to show for a magnificent struggle in support of their grading claim and in some cases with only the experience of a dispute which will stand them in good stead for the future.

Disgracefully, it was the cold-blooded tactics employed by a so-called 'Labour' council and their lackeys at local management level that eventually starved the young strikers back to work.

Strike

But even in the face of lies and distortions there were sympathy strikes, culminating in a city-wide 24 hour strike which was enthusiastically supported, and which brought the council back to the negotiating table.

As yet, the full gains of the dispute have not been published, but judging by the attitude and role of this Labour council throughout the dispute, any support from them for future battles against privatisation looks extremely doubtful.

By a Birmingham Nalگو shop steward

"100 per cent support for our claim"

WITH POSTAL workers, members of the Union of Communications Workers (UCW), voting on industrial action for a shorter working week, full page adverts have appeared in the press from Post Office management, warning the workforce off strike action and claiming among other things that Alan Tuffin, union General Secretary, is himself opposed to strike action.

There is no doubt that management are worried by the strength of feeling which exists amongst postal workers, facing as they are a number of different attacks on

their conditions and future. A victory on the question of hours would be an enormous blow to plans to privatise the service, as well as being a long overdue step forward for the workers.

Below, a young member of South East London Letters Distribution Office No1 branch speaks to *Militant*.

"I was born in 1965. That was the year when Post Office workers last got a reduction in the week.

"We're told that management is trying to provide a better service for the customers. In reality it's

about cutting our conditions to make profits and prepare the Post Office for privatisation. Anyone who thinks privatisation equals a better service should look at British Telecom.

"There's 100 per cent support for a three hour cut in the week, certainly as far as the 70 members at our AGM went. Everyone understands that strike action could become necessary to support the claim.

"We'll win the ballot because there's confidence in the branch, but we shouldn't take it for granted. The branch shouldn't try

and cover for the NEC—there's no point. We should campaign for the ballot with our own leaflets, organise meetings, explain what's going on and be honest about what we can expect from the NEC.

"Above all, we can best back the campaign by preparing the branch for strike action and link up with the other London branches. That way we will strengthen the union's negotiating hand as well. If management see we're serious they may even back down without it coming to a strike".

Militant

Scottish YTS protest

Youth strike back



"WE'VE GOT no future, so we've got to fight. That's why me and my mates will be going on strike on 5 November."

By Ian Henderson
YTS trainee on YTURC West Scotland Committee

So says a fourth year pupil at Glasgow's Crookston Castle school. "I'm leaving school this Christmas, but there's no way I'm going onto YTS. It's crap. It's slave labour and I don't believe the lies about being kept on," he explains.

School students, students and YTSers in Scotland will be supporting the strike call made by the Youth Trade Union Rights Campaign

(YTURC) to oppose the Tories' YTS conscription plans.

"If they get away with this, you can forget about General Studies, and many other Further Education courses," a 21 year old part-time student at Langside College told us. "And then how long before they make JTS compulsory for people like me and other 18-25 year olds on the dole but attending college?"

Already pupils at St. Margaret Mary's School in Castlemilk have taken spontaneous action. They visited a 'YTS Fair' organised to sell the scheme, which was leafleted by YTURC. Later 200 fourth, fifth and sixth years held a playground meeting and decided to strike.

Young people see through the glossy presentation to the reality of YTS.

I wonder if Thatcher would let her son go on a YTS for 75p an hour and next to no health and safety. No, YTS is not good enough for him and his ilk. But it's alright for working class kids!

"No way!"

Well, we say: "No way!" YTS conscription will mean the compulsory labour for the first time since slavery. It's an attack on older workers as well as on youth.

We have a job on our hands. We have to organise school students and give them some way to channel

their anger. We have to unionise YTS trainees so they can fight for higher wages, better training and a guaranteed job. And we have to involve FE students, pointing out the JTS threat.

We are forging a mass opposition to the Tory plans. From the youth strike, we go on to the national Lobby of Parliament on 19 November.

And that's just the beginning! We can either give in or fight, let them walk all over us or say "enough is enough!" To parents, teachers and the rest of the working class, the youth of Scotland are saying: "Fight. We are prepared to show a lead. Support us!"

LPYS Labour Party Young Socialists
YTURC Youth Trade Union Rights Campaign

Say no to YTS conscription

Lobby of Parliament
Thursday 19 November
Assemble: Kennington Park, London SE11 (Nearest tube Oval)
Time 12 noon.

Right to march threatened

YTURC'S MARCH in Glasgow has faced continuous harassment from the police and the Labour Strathclyde Regional Council.

The week before the strike, a YTURC representative was summoned by the police and told that the march was banned. The police said they could muster up to 8,000 officers and anyone turning up would be arrested.

There was space for 2,000 in the cells and "we have dealt with the miners, so we can certainly deal with schoolkids."

But YTURC stood up to this pressure and forced the police to back down.

However, in a disgraceful last minute manoeuvre, Strathclyde Council threatened the organisers with fines of £500 or three months in jail and told under 16 year olds they too

would be fined.

The Council placed an advertisement in local papers announcing that a condition of the march going ahead was that no under 16s be on it. In a blatant attempt to intimidate parents and get them to pressurise their children not to demonstrate, it said that under 16s participating would be liable to fines of up to £200.

A letter to the organisers told them that they could be liable to fines or jail if the conditions, imposed under the Civic Government of Scotland Act, were broken.

What a disgrace that a Labour council should use Tory legislation to threaten young people with fines and imprisonment for fighting for a future! And in doing so, they have jeopardised the rights of the whole labour movement to demonstrate in the future!

The Student Union executive at Strathclyde University were faced with legal pressure from a different source after agreeing to support YTURC.

A Tory student took legal action to overturn this democratic decision. But a Students' Council voted 34-6 to back the executive, despite the Labour president voting against.



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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 tied to the cost of living for all, including sick and disabled people.
- A socialist plan of production democratically drawn up and implemented by committees involving the trade unions, shop stewards, the unwaged 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 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.