

STRIKE with the NURSES

Inside



Scargill victory

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Labour councils in crisis

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HEALTH SERVICE workers are sick of the Tories bleeding the NHS to death through cuts and low pay. They have voted for strikes in many parts of the country.

The NHS was introduced by a Labour government 40 years ago as a result of working class pressure. Now the biggest concession we have ever wrung from the hands of the capitalist system is threatened.

We must not leave it just to health workers to defend the NHS. Every worker must be mobilised to strike in solidarity.

Ian Morton, Cohse branch secretary at Maudsley hospital in south London told *Militant* that his hospital had voted to strike on 2 February. Many other health workers have now voted for action on 3 February.

80 per cent of Maudsley nurses are in Cohse and many RCN members are leaving to join a real union. As we spoke to Ian, two doctors rang up to join Cohse.

"In 1986, our union had a victory in the anti-cuts campaign. But since then, management have introduced back door cuts, like non-filling of vacancies. Management boasted that there would be no cuts this year due to the large number of nursing vacan-

By Soraya Lawrence

cies! "There is a downward spiral of long hours, demoralisation and danger to patient care."

The Cohse branch executive had already decided to ballot for strike before Manchester's night nurses came out. But that was the turning point for Maudsley. "From feeling health workers had no power, they now feel that if anyone was to take on the Tories, it would be us."

Support

Joan Forster, a shop steward at North Manchester general hospital, showed *Militant* reporters piles of letters, mostly from nurses, supporting the strike action night nurses there had taken.

"The strike achieved what we wanted and showed other nurses that they are not on their own. If we don't act now, there won't be a health service."

"We've let governments rely on our dedication to treat us badly. If we'd acted

More on the health service on pages 2 and 3

like this years ago, we might not be in this situation now. We've got to make the government put money into the NHS, rather than making the rich richer.

"I agree with the call for a one day general strike, but it would have to be built for, you've got to be sure you've got all the backing."

"We are sick of just one hour of protest here and half a day there. This just means you've got to catch up on your work the next day. People are losing money and they don't feel that they are getting anywhere."

"The union leaders should take the call for a national strike back to the branches and get the feedback. I think the mood is there."

The Labour Party and union leaders must give a lead to the struggle. Every worker should invite NHS trade unionists to their workplace to build for local days of action. But the call must go out for a national one day general strike to save our health service.

Photo: Militant.



Pickets at Hill End Hospital, St Albans. See report page 3.



Alton Bill

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New 'training' swindle

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Defend the NHS with a one day general strike

AT THE TUC general council, John Macreadie pressed for a one day general strike in support of the nurses and the NHS. The NHS crisis and the possibility of solidarity action was referred to the Health Service Committee.

John Macreadie later said: "If the health unions were to ask the TUC general council for support, including industrial action, I am convinced they would get that backing and also get overwhelming support from working people and the general public."

Militant

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

Building solidarity

HEALTH WORKERS in hospitals across London have been voting to strike on 3 February. Some other regions also plan action on that day. In the north west a day of action for health workers has been called for 10 February and a demonstration for 19 February. The Scottish TUC is calling a one day strike of all health workers.

Thatcher thought that by conceding to the demands of the Manchester nurses and the blood transfusion workers, she could head off the embarrassment of growing protests within the health service. Instead it enormously boosted the confidence of all health workers.

Other workers want to get involved in the health workers' fight for decent wages and conditions, and to defend the NHS. Health workers must be urged immediately to turn to the major industrial workplaces, local council depots and civil service offices to turn this into

active support.

Activists in other trade unions must invite health workers to address meetings at their workplaces, who can then make the call for their members to come out in solidarity on the appropriate day in the region.

These days of action, strikes and protests must be as widely supported as possible. But the question will be raised—what next? *Militant* still believes that the potential exists for a national one day general strike to defend the health service.

It is unfortunate that the protests now being planned are partly unco-ordinated, breaking out in different areas on different days. The responsibility lies with the union leaders, including those in the NHS, who have given no real national direction to the struggle.

They have been following the nurses' action, not leading it. 3 February could have seen mass industrial action by all workers, called out by their national leaders.

Possibly the Tories may give some concessions for areas of critical nursing shortage. But this would be only an attempt to divide health workers and deflect mass opinion.

Thatcher's strategy is to encourage more private sector interference in the health service. Rather than increase the money available for the NHS, they want to promote private health insurance schemes, taking those who can afford it out of the national health safety net.

The very principle working people fought for is under threat—properly funded, top quality health care free at the

point of delivery for everyone. The organised working class as a whole must be mobilised to defeat the Tory offensive against the NHS.

Neil Kinnock has spoken of turning budget day, 15 March, into national health day. Make this a reality with a one day general strike on that date. There could be a really mass demonstration and lobby of Parliament, just as Chancellor Lawson gets up to announce tax cuts for the rich.

A one day general strike would be a massive rebuff to Tory plans for health. If 38 Manchester nurses could make them back down, 9 million striking trade unionists would force the Tories to think again.

A 24 hour general stoppage would give workers a taste of their power and increase their self confidence. The warning would clearly be there—if Thatcher does not back off from attacking the NHS, further generalised class action would be launched.

Health workers and left trade unionists must press their national leaders and the TUC to call a 24 hour general strike. But they must also prepare through their local action committees, shop stewards' and district union structures to organise such action from below.

Regional meetings of health stewards should be convened, if necessary by local stewards themselves or by NHS broad lefts, to plan action now, and to involve other trade unionists. The coming BLOC conference will establish a national NHS broad left. Every health activist must be convinced to attend.

Coping with the cuts

NHS WORKERS are coping with an increased workload in an underfunded service. Although hospitals in the Wirral have far fewer beds than before, the number of porters, cleaners, cooks and other ancillary workers has gone down even faster.

Most shifts in St Catherine's hospital consist of one or two porters, with only one on duty from six at night to 7.30 the next day.

Porters usually pick up on average £70 to £80 a week, including bonus and night shift pay. Some workers get as little as £64 for 40 hours.

Following the opening of Arrows Park hospital, St Caths was to be a 320 bed hospital. This is now to be reduced to 112 beds.

The richest man in Britain, the Duke of Westminster, is to open a new hos-

pital on the site in April, staffed by some of the worst paid workers in Britain.

We are worried that the hospital will eventually only be for the use of the rich. The last Tory conference talked about putting whole hospitals out to tender.

Cleaner's jobs in Wirral hospitals have already been sold off to private firms with wage cuts of up to 30 per cent for the workers kept on. Management plan to contract out porters, maintenance jobs, etc. over the next year.

The ancillary workforce is being cut, putting yet more work on to the nurses.
By an ancillary worker.

High tech low finance

BRITAIN'S X-RAY departments, once highly funded and modern, are falling behind other European countries.

Some hospitals are getting new body-scanners and ultra-sound machines, but many have been bought by charitable means and health authorities may have problems in staffing them.

Technological advances like magnetic resonance imaging mean body-scanners can use radio waves and a large magnet rather than X-rays which can be harmful. But lack of funds stops these being used.

For some kidney examinations, doctors can be faced with using cheaper contract agent (a sort of dye) which can cause reactions in patients, or a safer but more expensive one. The drug companies keep prices high, knowing that doctors will choose the safest course.

The number of patients attending X-ray departments increases by 10,000

every year, probably even faster in hospitals with a casualty department. For example, ultra-sound scans of pregnant mothers are now routine.

The workload has gone up but staffing has not. Our safety is at risk. A radiographer on call runs the department single-handed, often including the operating theatre. The department can be quite secluded. Some London hospitals have flashing warning lights to show if staff are being attacked.

At night there are not enough nurses to escort patients to X-ray. Casualty departments are understaffed; people wait for hours for treatment so staff have to deal with patients on stretchers and drunks on mattresses on the floor.

NHS staff can't wait until a nurse or a radiographer is killed. Workers and patients need far better levels of staffing and finance.

By a Liverpool radiologist

THE UNPRECEDENTED nurses' strike has made the health service crisis into headline news and shown the way to defend the NHS.

The crisis is not new, neither is it restricted to nursing. As the articles below show, specialist and ancillary services are also suffering from cuts and shortages.



Blood money?

I WORK IN a blood bank in Liverpool as a medical laboratory scientific officer (MLSO). We are all sick of low wages.

I am in a training grade, taking home £73 and paying £20 rent. When I was on the dole I got £31 with the rent covered. In effect I work for £22 more than the dole.

Many MLSOs have to work 'on call' to get extra money. This is a system of payments for out of hours emergency work. On call, you might work a normal day, then work all night and then be expected to do another normal working day. This may bring you up to the wage of a skilled worker.

But in many sectors such as the blood transfusion service, there is little or no 'on call' and MLSOs are voting with their feet. Virtually everyone I work with wants to leave.

An MLSO may have to cross match blood for an operation, where a simple clerical error can cost a patient's life. It's skilled, responsible work, but you are always skint by the middle of the month.

I like my job and I'm proud to be a part of the NHS but if things don't get better, I'll leave too.

"Health workers are voting with their feet. Virtually everyone I work with wants to leave"



A pregnant mother being scanned at Guys Hospital. Shortage of cash stops the full use of technology in medicine.
Photo: Carlos Guarifa (Reflex)

Real Cuts in Nursing

MOST NURSES have traditionally joined the Royal College of Nursing, (RCN), which claims to be a professional body and has a no strike clause.

But the president and a senior member of the RCN have been accused of breaching their professional code of conduct. Not because they went on

strike but because they voted for cuts in the health authorities they serve on, in Berkshire and the Brent area of London!

Many nurses are now leaving the RCN to join unions like COHSE and NUPE which can organise strike action. They have come to the conclusion, usually reluctantly, that strik-

ing is an essential weapon to defend themselves and save the NHS.

The unions and the Labour Party must show they are worthy of this new support by making sure the whole movement is mobilised to defend the NHS.

For a one day general strike

OVER TWO thousand health service workers and other trade unionists demonstrated in Wolverhampton against Tory attacks on the health service.

By Diane Simcox

The protest, called by the local NUPE branch, was led by hundreds of nurses in uniform including RCN members. There were banners from, among others, the FBU, AEU, UCATT and the LPYS.

The marchers cheered when Dave Nellist MP, addressing the rally told them: "If 40 Manchester nurses can make the Tories back down, imagine what could be achieved if the TUC called all workers out for 24 hours."

After the march, activists in the West Midlands NHS met with Dave Nellist to map out a strategy to build support. In Wolverhampton, Kit Rae, Nupe health branch secretary has balloted her members for strike action on 3 February in line with London. Similar ballots are taking

place in Staffordshire and elsewhere in the region.

In Coventry, the half day strike and march on 19 November, got the backing of delegations of factory workers. This has encouraged the NHS unions to organise a conference of labour on 20 February to mobilise support from industrial workers. Many see this conference as an opportunity to organise a city wide 1 day general strike.

Broad Left

In Birmingham, the 'defend the NHS joint trade union committee' is organising a demonstration on 15 March. With these events in mind, a West Midlands NHS Broad Left will meet on Saturday 6 February in Wolverhampton.

Militant supporters in the Broad Left will raise possibility of a one day regional general strike through the medium of city and district conferences of labour similar to the Coventry initiative, possibly for budget day 15 March.

Cook roasted

LABOUR'S HEALTH spokesman, Robin Cook, made health workers angry by saying he would have voted against strike action.

All Labour's leaders can think of is 'won't health strikes be electorally unpopular?' But Labour reached its highest point in the opinion polls between 1983 and 1987 (substantially higher than they actually scored in the 1987 election) just at the end of the miners' strike.

Labour is a class party, its fortunes are tied to the confidence and willingness to fight of the working class.

Tories lie on NHS spending

THE NATIONAL Institute for Economic and Social Research have shown up the Tory lie that they have increased health spending.

By Soraya Lawrence

After adjusting government figures for the rate of health service inflation and including demographic and technological factors the Tories' 30 per cent claimed increase is reduced to nothing.

Allowing for rising costs, the NHS needs an extra £600m just to restore services to 1980/81 standards.

There are two main reasons for the existing shortfall which the Tories deliberately conceal.

NHS resources need to increase by at least two per cent a year, in real terms, to keep up with extra demands from an ageing population, the rate of medical advance and to meet priority aims like the development of home kidney treatment and community care.

Secondly, the government refuses to fully fund agreed NHS pay rises. Government funding consistently falls short of the minimum requirements as it ignores these facts.

Thatcher chose Roy Griffiths to help solve manpower problems in the NHS. He is deputy chairman of Sainsbury's! But the NHS crisis shows it is the Tories who have far exceeded their shelf-life.



Three hundred hospital workers invaded a District Health Authority meeting demanding no cuts and no redundancies at Manchester Royal Infirmary. The pressure of demonstrators and strikers made the DHA back down—at least for the present.

Nurses reject Clay's insults

JANE FORSTER, shop steward at North Manchester General Hospital spoke to Militant about their recent strike. Militant asked what she thought of the criticisms by Clay and the leaders of the RCN.

"Nothing you could put in writing! If Nupe and Cohse call strike action to maintain pay or get a pay increase, would he advise his members not to accept the rise or tell them to accept a pay cut?"

"If Clay consults his members he'll find he's out of touch. He's already lost a lot of members."

"Clay called our action irresponsible, but is it irresponsible to give 72 hours' notice to the management? Or to allow agency nurses in to cover on the night? Was it irresponsible that all the patients in the hospital supported us and encouraged us?"

"Emergency cover was important. None of our patients were harmed and they all supported our action. But I'm a parent and if I were stood on a picket line and my son came in in an ambulance I wouldn't want anyone stopping me getting into the hospital and we don't want to harm any of the patients."

Private firms

"The RCN now want auxiliaries and other staff to join them. But that's what this government wants. They want to sell off all services to private firms, who want no union. He's offering the government a union with a no-strike clause for all hospital staff."

"We weren't hot-

headed; we planned in advance. Nurses have to come out together. Some of them are isolated in their wards and hospitals, and management could put an end to a nurse's career if they're on their own."

"Forty of us came out and they can't sack 40 nurses. Our strike had been discussed since October and the ballot was in November."

"A lot of nurses get angry at being called angels. We're human beings. We've got to get rid of the Florence Nightingale image, from when nurses were from well-to-do families. A lot of us now are low paid and we've got to fight for decent pay and decent conditions."

"Nurses have dedicated themselves to this career and they don't want to see it poured down the drain by some uncaring automaton in Whitehall."

Scargill victory a blow to the Tories

ARTHUR SCARGILL'S re-election as president of the National Union of Mineworkers is a great victory for miners and a blow to the Tories and British Coal.

By Ben Eastop

Scargill won with 54 per cent of the votes cast, a clear 8 points ahead of the right wing candidate John Walsh. Yet according to the Tory press, who at times waged hysterical warfare against this one trade union leader, Scargill only 'scraped home' and 'hung on by the skin of his teeth'.

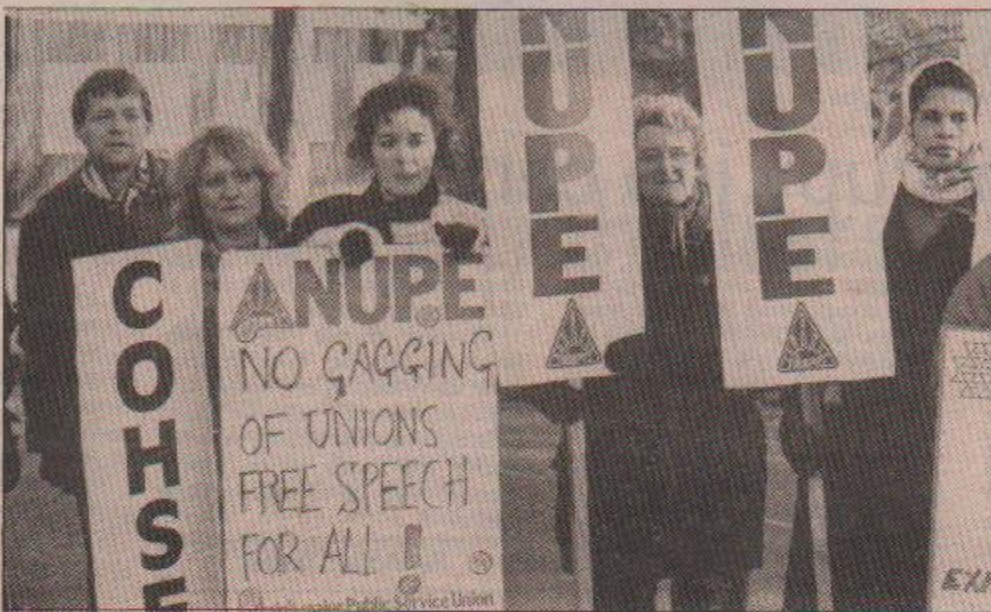
In any other election this would have been a clear victory—as Scargill himself pointed out his result was 12.5 per cent better than Thatcher's in the general election, acclaimed by these same papers as a glorious victory, and Walsh's result was worse than when he stood against Peter Heathfield in 1984.

Fighting

Despite being defeated Walsh claimed that "members are looking for a change of direction".

But miners know that they need a fighting union leadership to fend off attacks by British Coal's management—an answer also to the right-wing new realists who claim that uncompromising, socialist policies lose votes.

A victory for the right wing would have meant an immediate deterioration of miners' rights and working conditions and given the go-ahead for British Coal's aims of reducing the industry to a handful of super-pits.



Hill End Pickets.

Hill End strikers defiant

EIGHT HOSPITALS in Hertfordshire had a 24-hour strike on 21 January, called by a Cohse/Nupe joint action committee. Strikers demanded reinstatement of two shop stewards suspended from Hill End hospital.

Jane Barclay Taylor, Cohse branch secretary, was suspended after speaking on BBC Radio Bedford about NHS cuts.

Doug Landman was suspended a couple of days later. Management tried to enter the union office and Hill End hospital workers

responded with a strike. After management refused to negotiate with the unions, a one-day strike was called.

85 nurses, porters, stores workers and domestics came out at Hill End. 20 of them are still striking. Postal workers refused to cross picket lines and offered facilities for the strikers.

The defiant mood on the picket forced the district health authority to offer a settlement. They agreed to both stewards having their jobs back—but not at Hill End. Both would be given

promotion and one could spend six months in the union's regional office, paid for by the district health authority.

The branch meeting rejected this; they want them to stay at Hill End. The ACAS talks have ended with management still refusing to back down.

Letters of support/cheques payable to COHSE/NUPE joint action committee, c/o 14 Telford Road, London Colney, Herts.

By Ian Flood

Further Education Conference to back youth strike

THIS WEEKEND FE student activists will gather in Chesterfield to attend the fourth conference organised by Further Education Labour Students (Fels).

From the Conference Fels will be launching a campaign to support the call made by the Youth Trade Union Rights Campaign for strike action on 16 March in opposition to the government's proposals to make YTS compulsory for working class youth. *Militant* asked Cheryl Varley, the Fels member on the Further Education national committee of the National Union of Students, why Fels were supporting the strike call.

"This conference will be the most important Fels Conference yet because of the seriousness of the Tories' attacks. We will be discussing taking strike action because the implementation of compulsory YTS means that 30,000 Fe students who study part time whilst signing on could be forced out of education and onto YTS. There are at present at least

25,000 Fe students who do not receive a grant. Six out of ten school leavers do not get a job.

If the Tories get their way, working class youth will be denied a right to further education and to a decent job or training.

Through their Education Reform Bill they are attempting to reorganise the Fe sector into nothing more than YTS centres. We believe it is time to say enough is enough.

We must make it clear that it is not enough to give out leaflets in a college and expect an instant response. If we are talking about taking on the Tory government then we are committing ourselves to an ongoing campaign of mass action with the aim of involving the maximum number of students in the running of the campaign.

In Spain, only the mobilisation of over three million youth forced the government to back down. They held four separate national

demonstrations (none less than 100,000 strong), a week long strike, and posed the decisive threat of joint action with workers.

In Britain students have the advantage that they are united in the NUS (in Spain the union was built up during the course of the struggle). With a membership of 1.5 million and total national resources of around £24 million imagine what could be achieved through a campaign modelled on the strategy of the Spanish students.

The NUS has organised a programme of action in protest against government attacks on students.

On 11 February NUS has called for a national 24 hour shutdown of the Fe and He colleges. Fels members should organise for this event as soon as they return to

college by campaigning for their student unions to organise general meetings. Resolutions should be put forward calling for a shutdown.

However this action should not be seen as a lecture boycott, students should be encouraged to participate in action on the day, starting with picket lines on the college gates, joint trade union/student union rallies or a picket of the local Tory headquarters etc. The aim of the shutdown should be to mobilise students and build links with college workers who are also facing attacks.

Action can be escalated from the shutdown by taking students to the NUS national demonstration on 27 February in London. Coaches should be booked NOW!

On 1 March delegates should

be sent from the trade unions and the student union in the college to attend the TUC Lobby of Parliament against the Education Reform Bill.

If this programme of action is campaigned around then the students who become involved in the campaign can begin to build links outside the college with local young workers, YTS trainees, the unemployed etc to escalate action for the Youth strike on 16 March. 16 March should be seen as the start of an ongoing campaign to unite youth in the colleges, in the factories, on the dole etc. against the Tories. I am confident that this campaign with the support of the labour and trade union movement could be capable of forcing the Tories to back down.



Labour students occupy Chesterfield job centre.

Students occupy job centre

A CHESTERFIELD Tech Labour club meeting called for an immediate occupation of the local Job Centre (now locally known as the Joke Shop) after discussing government proposals for education and plans for compulsory YTS.

Twenty five students, many of them members of Chesterfield LPYS, occupied the Job Centre. They discussed the issues with members of staff and people

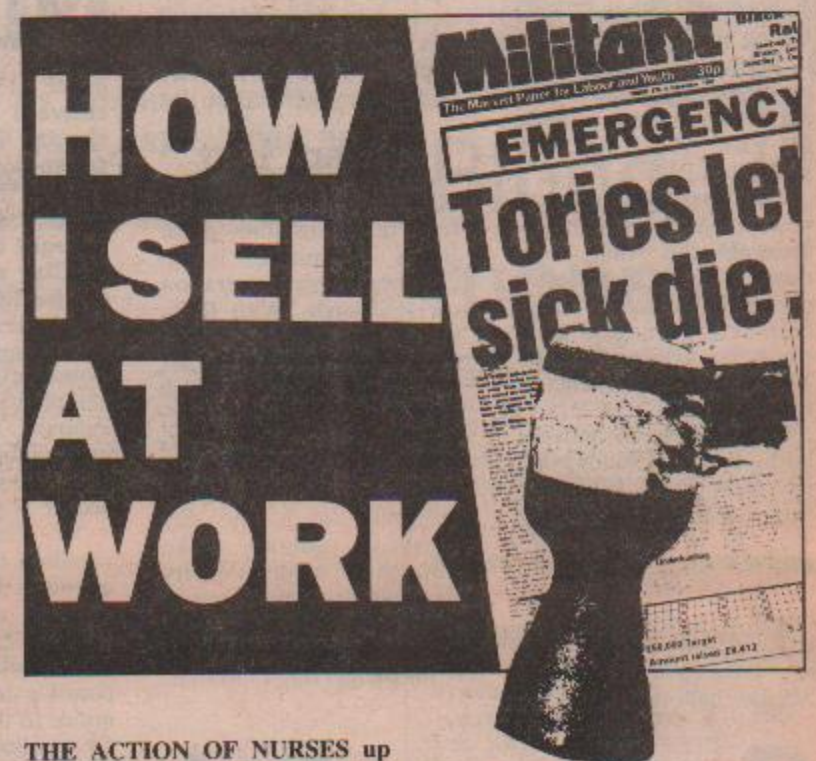
there looking for jobs. The manager then called the police after complaining the noise level was too high! The police asked us to leave and after a vote we decided that because we had drawn sufficient public attention that would be the best move.

Paul Crowson, sabbatical president of Chesterfield College students' union said 'We hope that the attention we have drawn to our campaign against the

Tories will help us build a fighting, campaigning Labour club at the college.

"Young people have little future under the Tory government and students in Chesterfield have recognised that we must fight back now by linking with the labour and trade union movement to stop the Tories in their tracks.

By Adrian Dudley



THE ACTION OF NURSES up and down the country has inspired support from all sections of the working class.

Militant spoke to Cohse shop steward, Howard Oakes, who works in a Bradford mental hospital: "They are all ready to go; everyone agrees with our call for a 24 hour general strike as a first step. This is taken for granted. The biggest problem is the trade union leadership. Through selling *Militant* it has been possible to build up support for the idea of struggle."

When we asked Howard if we could print his name, he said we may as well as the right wing union officials had already given his name to the *Bradford Telegraph* and *Argus*. "We are living in turbulent times and everyone is questioning the role of their leaders especially in the Royal College of Nurses."

Mines

Sales in mines have rocketted corresponding to the mood and activity around the presidential elections. Tudor Parsons of Blaenau colliery in the Welsh coalfield summed it up: "The feature on our colliery I wrote for *Militant* gave a national forum to local grievances. Miners were able to relate it to their own experiences. Paper sales have boomed since then. One miner told me: "Everyone agrees with what's in that paper only some say that they fear it will be used against them."

The growing interest in *Militant's* ideas amongst workers can be developed by the bold approach of our sellers in their workplaces. The following letter gives examples. It must remain anonymous for obvious reasons.

"Selling *Militant* in hostile

work places can be a daunting and often frightening task, but one that can be overcome with thought and persistence.

"I work for a company producing military products for the government, hence I am subject to the Official Secret's Act. However, I have built up a steady readership. This has been achieved by being active within my union and having a close relationship with rank and file members, therefore I am able to assess potential paper readers. Papers sold discreetly in the workplace, followed up with frequent discussions, can result in good politically informed readers who may become sellers of *Militant* themselves. During disputes these regular readers will automatically take a leading role and continue to be active after the dispute is over."

Dave Wevill, a car worker at Vauxhall's in Ellesmere Port, says: "Once you've started selling it becomes easier and easier as people get to know you and what you stand for."

The simple fact that two sellers were able to sell 40 copies of last week's issue at the Alder Hey Children's Hospital in Liverpool is proof enough of what can be achieved through a bold approach. We are only in the first month of 1988 and we can see a transformation in the outlook of working people. The nurses are showing the way to fight back and we must and will ensure that the sales of *Militant* reflect and lead this change to bring down the Tories and work for a better society.

Gerry Lerner

MILITANT WORKPLACE SALES CAMPAIGN

The next issue of *Militant* (882) is the special workplace issue, every *Militant* seller should use it in their place of work and local *Militant* sellers must ensure it is sold outside the main work places in their area.

If you would like to assist in the *Militant* Workplace sales campaign. Please send me.....copies per week on a sale or return basis. (Minimum 5)

NAME:.....
ADDRESS:.....
TRADE UNION:.....

Return to: Circulation Department, *Militant*, 3-13 Hepscoot Road, London. E9 5HB

New training swindle planned

IN A further escalation of the attacks on unemployed youth, the Tories are planning to introduce a new Unified Training Scheme (UTS) for over 18s.

Youth on UTS will have to work a 40 hour week for their benefit plus a miserly £10. Clause 26 of their new Employment Bill disqualifies from benefit those who leave a training scheme early, decline to take up a vacancy or "neglect to avail" themselves of a training place.

Following their plans to abolish supplementary benefit for 16 and 17 year olds and force them onto YTS, it is clear the Tories want to abolish benefits for all unemployed youth. Their system has condemned a whole generation to the dole—now they want to starve them onto their cheap labour schemes.

But, disgracefully, many union leaders look set to go along with this plan. Union representatives voted for it on the Manpower Services Commission (MSC). Ron Todd told the Guardian that the scheme would provide genuine training of high quality!

Doesn't he know the history of Tory training schemes? It is one of us-

**By Davie Archibald
Secretary, Youth Trades
Union Rights Campaign**

ing youth to provide cheap labour for the bosses. He has supposedly agreed with the scheme on the basis that it is voluntary. But this will clearly not be the case.

The unions have a responsibility to lead a fight back on behalf of the unemployed and superexploited youth. Rather than agreeing to go along with these slave labour schemes, they should be organising a massive campaign to unionise young people. The Youth Trades Union Rights Campaign (YTURC) will be doing this up and down the country.

In 1985 the Tories backed down on compulsory YTS because of the strike of 250,000 school students. YTURC is calling a strike on 16 March of youth in schools, colleges and YTS schemes to unite different sections of youth against the Tories' plans.



Labour Party Young Socialists

Youth robbed of £8 a week

THE NEW Social Security Act being introduced in April will mean increased poverty and misery for people on benefits. The under-25s will be most harshly attacked.

Not only will 16 and 17 year olds be conscripted onto YTS, 18-25 year old householders will be unable to survive on the new extra low level of benefits.

Personally, I will be at least £7.90 a week worse off due to the changes. Included in this are cuts in benefit of £4.35 a week and having to pay 20 per cent of rates and water rates.

I estimate my weekly expenditure will be:

Rates	—£1.88
Water rates	—£1.67
Food	—£12.00
Electricity	—£5.00
Bus fares	—£1.50
Newspaper	—£1.50
Miscellaneous	—£1.00

Total—£24.55

This will leave me £1.50 a week to spend on other goods. My table doesn't include money for a phone bill, a TV licence, cigarettes, stamps, writing paper and envelopes to write to prospective employers on, or even clothes. It certainly doesn't allow me a social life—one and a half pints of lager would see the end of £1.50.

It will be no wonder if young people in my position turn to crime or drugs, even taking their own lives in desperation at the squalid lives they will be leading.

Workers and unemployed together have got to defeat this bill.

**By a Liverpool
Young Socialist**

The Tories' Social Security Act will mean attacks on all young people. Militant will carry more articles on its implications in future issues.

Youth Trade Union Rights Campaign

STOP THATCHER'S ATTACKS

- * No To Compulsory YTS
- WE WANT A 3-WAY CHOICE**
- * Real Jobs With Real Pay
- * £35 Per Week Education Grant at 16
- * Proper Training with Trade Union

Rates of Pay

National Youth STRIKE

Wednesday 16th March 1988

For Our Future

Local details

Youth Trade Union Rights Campaign

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YTS Abuse

MY BROTHER recently left school and was put on a YTS in a large warehouse. At his interview the manager told him he was to start the following Monday at 7.30 am.

My brother turned up on time. There was no-one else there. he waited over one and a half hours in the freezing cold before deciding to go home.

He went back at 11.30 am. The manager abused him and then set him to work. To his astonishment, the manager then left the warehouse, leaving on his own to work with heavy loads.

He came back a while later and started being abusive again, saying my brother had taken one of his sandwiches. He told him to clean out the toilets and the floors.

My brother stormed out. But he will get no dole for 13 weeks, just because he wouldn't take these terrible conditions. Now he realises what YTS really is—a slave training scheme in which young people get ripped off. Now he is joining the Youth Trade Union Rights Campaign and the Labour Party Young Socialists to fight back.

**By Karen Buchanan
Musselburgh LPYS**

POSTERS AND leaflets

are now available for the YTURC strike. Leaflets cost £10.00 per 1,000 and posters £4.00 per 100. Order them from YTURC, c/o 29, Marlborough Avenue, London E8 4JP.

Young workers fight liars

A FEW WEEKS before Christmas, a Birmingham shop called Mark One took on 30 youth. "We're not like other shops. This is definitely a permanent job," the manager told them.

"Even though the wages are low, it's better than the dole," one of the young workers remarked.

But when the Christmas boom was over, they were told: "Thanks, but your contract will terminate at the end of the week"! Even though they were not in the union, 24 of the 30 walked straight out. They organised a boycott between 12 and 2 o'clock on the following Saturday and printed leaflets.

On the Saturday, 12 Militant supporters turned up to support them. We played a leading role in organising and canvassing shoppers to boycott the shop. Leaflets ran out. We sold

papers and the boycott was a success.

This is not an isolated case. Many shops hire and fire with ease over the Christmas period, using youth as slave labour. Now youth are saying: "No more!" Even these non-union young workers are organising

to defend themselves. They find that that the Labour Party Young Socialists and Militant supporters represent their views.

**By a young
industrial worker**

Attack defeated

JOYCE GOULD, the Labour Party's national 'organiser', tried to get the party to denounce the Youth Trades Union Rights Campaign (YTURC) at the January youth committee.

She had received complaints from Labour's Scottish organiser and wanted to put a circular out saying that YTURC's activities are not acceptable to the party.

But LPYS rep, Linda Douglas, defended YTURC and left MP, Dennis Skinner, said it had helped win working class youth to the Labour Party.

So the party's previous (very sympathetic) decision on YTURC stands. Sometimes reason does triumph!

MSC workers strike against YTS see page 15

Out of the mouths of babes

CHILDREN'S BBC are inviting their viewers, mainly of primary school age, to suggest who should be dropped in a tub of "gunge" to raise money for Comic Aid. The presenters usually suggest children's TV personalities, but this week saw a startling new entry at number eight. Margaret Thatcher.

These perceptive youngsters are presumably the sisters and brothers of the 12 to 18 year olds in a survey recently published by *New Society*. One in four believed it very likely or quite likely that the British government would be overthrown by revolution. Gunge today, baricades tomorrow?

Chalker washes whitest

ACCORDING TO Linda Chalker—the Tory who told the ANC to renounce violence and then supported the bombing of civilians in Tripoli—the inhabitants of the Falkland Islands are a 'people' but the former inhabitants of Diego Garcia are not.

That was her explanation why the government fought a war and an election over the Falkland islanders' rights but allowed the Ilois of Diego Garcia to be evicted from their home at gunpoint.

It had nothing to do, of course, with the fact that the Falkland islanders are white and the Ilois are black.

Unpopular capitalism

A RECENT opinion poll found that 57 per cent of those interviewed wanted to abandon or put off the sale of state assets. Only one in four wanted them to carry on.

Forty per cent of interviewees thought nationalisation gave ordinary people a bigger stake in the country, while only 35 per cent thought privatisation had that effect.

This is despite the bureaucratic control of nationalised industries, despite a continuous campaign to boost denationalisation, and despite the Labour leaders bowing to so called "public opinion" and jettisoning any commitment to nationalisation.

Soft option

THE SO-CALLED "soft left" paper *Tribune* is appealing for help in a financial crisis. Neil Kinnock has given £100; he says Labour without *Tribune* would be like Clause Four without part four (the nationalisation section). We didn't realise how fond he was of public ownership.

Labour's general secretary Larry Whitty said it would be a tragedy if the paper closed. Nigel Williamson, editor of *Labour Party News* thought they needed a paper where you could read all the news his own journal wouldn't print!

Labour Party News, the bland but glossy leadership worshipping journal 'replaced' *Labour Weekly* and *Socialist Youth*, killed off by among others, Kinnock, Whitty and Williamson. Ostensibly it was to save money, but these papers criticised the party's shift to the right and opposed witch hunts. *Tribune* has backed the leadership on most issues, so they get by with a little help from their friends.

A woman's right to choose

MILITANT WELCOMES letters on controversial issues. The letter below takes issue with our opposition to the Alton Bill. We are also showing some of our readers' ex-

periences debating with the so-called Society for the Protection of the Unborn Child (Spuc) and other supporters of Alton.

Dear *Militant*,

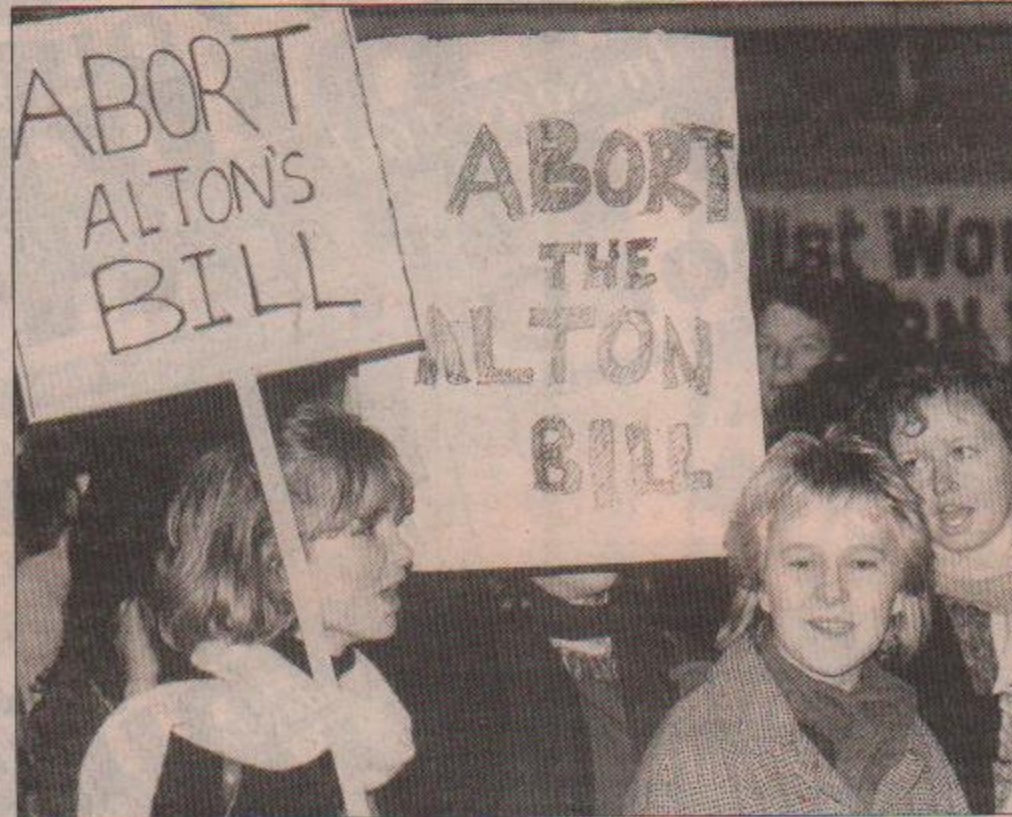
Life offer an alternative to abortion by caring for women that find themselves pregnant. Spuc are geared up to fight on the political front but are still a caring organisation so much so that they have set

up a group for survivors of abortion.

I agree the labour movement should defend a woman's right but we are not talking about women's rights we are talking about the basic right to life itself. A baby at 18 weeks is fully

developed in every way and I urge trade unionists to consider it very carefully and seek a debate with SPUC trade union division.

Vince Crosby, Co. Durham



"I always thought I was too young to get political", said one young woman who joined the Bermondsey march against Alton's Bill. "I thought I should enjoy myself first but since I heard about the Bill I realised I have to get involved now". She, and four of her friends, have since joined the LPYS. Banners on the march showed the support from trade unions, colleges, Labour parties and there were many placards carried by school students.

Society for the Prevention of Unwanted Criticism

MANNY THAIN from Stroud reports on the debate between Spuc and supporters of women's right to abortion. This was at the biggest LPYS meeting ever in the town, where a number of new LPYS members were signed up. Spuc and *Life* supporters were very disruptive and undemocratic. Anyone who spoke against the Bill was rudely interrupted. When a young lad asked about the viability of the foetus, a pro-Lifer stood up, held a picture of a foetus in the womb and said, "Look at this picture whilst you are talking."

A 14 year old pointed out to Spuc supporters that if she were made pregnant by an incestuous relationship it would take her 18 weeks worrying about what to do let alone have the abortion. A Spuc speaker claimed there was 'adequate help' from

social services for women looking after handicapped children.

Life and SPUC supporters might as well have been living on another planet. One of them boasted she lived 'near' a deprived housing estate. Diane Simcox, a speaker from the Labour Party women's section said she lived on one!

The pro-Alton lobbyists deny the fundamental right for a woman to choose. David Alton was referred to as single, celibate and Catholic. We do not oppose people practising any religion but they must not impose their attitudes on to others. The SPUC speaker lost all support when she made personal attacks on a young lad by saying, "If your mother knew you were going to look like that she would have sent you back."

Sir Gerard says...

HELEN TAYLOR from Berkshire went to lobby her MP, former Tory health minister Gerard Vaughan, on the Alton Bill and had a face to face confrontation. She told *Militant* what happened.

Outside Sir Gerard's surgery, we stood chanting for half an hour before the great man himself appeared. When we tried to present our petition, he said he would only accept it if a representative came inside to speak to him.

I had only gone along to lend support, but no-one else seemed prepared to take this man up, so I volunteered. I was apprehensive, but I was also very angry.

Once inside he said as it was his home he could decide what was discussed. I knew this was just to unnerve me, so I pointed out that it was also his surgery and I was a constituent come to discuss an issue of concern to me.

Then we got on to Alton's Bill. He tried the usual moral arguments: that it was murder, putting the mother before the life of an innocent child. He said a 28 week foetus now had a good chance of survival.

I reminded him that Royal Berks Hospital, in his constituency, only has two intensive care places for premature babies. Sick premature babies have had to be moved to hospitals miles away. The general manager has resigned, saying he cannot be party to the destruction of services.

I asked Sir Gerard what he was doing about it. He said he had spoken to the local health authority chairman, and to health minister, John Moore. "What's he going to do about it?" I asked. "My God the man's been ill, I haven't had an answer yet" he replied.

Unreasonable

Vaughan felt I was being unreasonable. That's probably true if you are a member of a government hell bent on cuts. But if you believe everyone is entitled to decent, free health care, it is not 'unreasonable' at all.

He said he would vote for the Bill to go to committee stage, where it should be discussed with full representation from "all concerned." I wondered how they would contact me as a concerned individual!

We discussed what proportion of 28 week abortions are because of severe mental or physical deformity of the foetus. "Oh" he admitted, "that will be a high percentage". I explained that this was because most conclusive tests could not be carried out until very late in a pregnancy.

"But I am all in favour of developing tests to detect these things sooner," he announced. I did not reply, it was not worth getting back into a 'where's the money coming from' argument.

It was a very long half hour. I feel I could have made my points better, but arguments about this being a fundamental attack on working class women would have been wasted anyway.

Halfway through, he said I was "very difficult to deal with." In spite of my nervousness, I was determined not to be browbeaten or patronised by claims that as a doctor he knew the facts better than me.

I was proud to make him speak to someone who did not abide by parliamentary niceties. Before long the Tories will find the whole working class "difficult to deal with." In the meantime, I will do all I can to defeat this Bill.



Out now

New Militant Pamphlet

Price 50p

cheques to Militant publications,
3-13 Hepscoot Road London E9

Thousands lobby against Alton

TEN THOUSAND mainly young women lobbied and demonstrated against Alton's bill to restrict abortion rights outside Parliament last Thursday.

Around 4,000 to 5,000 listened to speakers in Central Hall, while thousands queued to lobby MPs, attempting to bring the problems of ordinary women into the gentlemen's club of Westminster.

15,000 women took part in a torchlight procession that evening. It was joined by 500 men and women in a lively feeder march organised by Bermondsey Labour Party Women's Section.

The Labour Party and Trade Union banners underlined the commitment of the labour movement to women's issues.

Unfortunately the male comrades were forced to leave as the marchers came together, on the insistence of the organisers of the procession and with the police threatening to enforce the rule.

Heavy handed policing was evident all day—the TV news showed young women in tears after being roughly handled by the police. Typically this was played up by the press.

After the march 100 people packed in to hear expelled Labour Party member Teresa Mackay speak at a *Militant* readers' meeting on the need for a real choice for women. £470 was raised for the *Militant* fighting fund.

against Alton



On the Liverpool anti-Alton demonstration on 16 January.

Photo: Militant.

Alton Bill passed

DAVID ALTON'S attempt to restrict abortion rights won its second reading in Parliament when 35 Labour MPs voted with Liberals and Tories for his reactionary bill.

296 MPs voted to impose their consciences on others, giving Alton a majority of 45. He showed his callousness before the debate by asserting that victims of rape and incest should be forced to carry on with pregnancy.

Jo Richardson recalled that in 1966, 95 women died from back street abortions. The bill would "criminalise doctors helping worried women".

In a distorted way, it was Tory MP

Andrew MacKay who came closest to showing the bill's class bias. He said his affluent constituents would have no difficulty arranging their abortions before the 18 week limit. Those affected would be 15 or 16 year old girls "of low IQ" who were confused and unaware of their pregnancy for some time.

Since '67 four million women have had safe and legal abortions. 70 to 80 per cent repeatedly say in polls they support a woman's right to choose. The labour movement must mobilise this silent majority.

By Jane Hartley

Labour's guilty MPs

THE FOLLOWING Labour MPs voted for Alton's bill:

John Battle (Leeds W), Stuart Bell (Middlesborough), Jeremy Bray (Motherwell), Ronnie Campbell (Blyth Valley), Dale Campbell-Savours (Worlington), Dennis Canavan (Falkirk W), Tom Clarke (Monklands W), Frank Cook (Stockton N), Stan Crowther (Rotherham), John Cummings (Easington), Lawrence Cunliffe (Leigh), Don Dixon (Jarrow), Frank Field (Birkenhead), Bruce Grocott (Wrekin), Peter Hardy (Wentworth), Sean Hughes (Knowsley S), David

Lambie (Cunningham S), James Lamond (Oldham C and Royton), Thomas McCavoy (Glasgow Rutherglen), Calum Macdonald (western Isles), John McFall (Dumbarton), Kevin McNamara (Hull N), Michael Martin (Glasgow Springburn), Bruce Millan (Glasgow Govan), Alf Morris (Manchester Wythenshawe), William O'Brien (Normanton), Bob Parry (Liverpool Riverside), Tom Pendry (Stalybridge and Hyde), George Robertson (Hamilton), John Smith (Monklands E), Jack Thompson (Wansbeck), Tony Worthington (Clydebank and Milngavie).

Do not adjust your set...

MICHELLE IS 18 and pregnant again. Two years ago she had her first child and started to raise the baby on her own. Now she faces the choice of staying with a husband she wants to leave in two grotty rooms, or returning to her family's overcrowded home with four generations under one roof.

Many people will have watched recent episodes of *East Enders*, which dealt sympathetically with Michelle's unwanted pregnancy and coincided with the Alton bill debate.

Michelle realises that if she continues with her pregnancy she will lose any opportunity of going back to work and escaping from her prison. She feels she has a life to lead too and a baby will be her total responsibility.

Earlier episodes found her getting permission from her doctor, only to be told that she would have to wait three weeks before she

could see a consultant on the NHS. This highlights the dilemma many women face, even when they decide early in their pregnancy that they wish to terminate it.

Michelle's need for reassurance that she was doing the right thing indicated that women do not take abortion lightly. The need for a youth advisory service was shown in her and Lofty's attitude to contraception (using the safe time of the month!), her inability to discuss the situation and his attitude to her after the abortion.

The weekly soap has at least highlighted one particular reality facing working class women. That of finding, through no fault of your own, but because of poverty and deprivation, pregnancy is not a choice, but a luxury you cannot afford.

By Teresa Mackay

Prescott gives up leadership challenge

The left must stand

AFTER MONTHS of press speculation, Hull MP, John Prescott, has declared that he will not stand for Labour's deputy leadership. But the left-wing Campaign Group of MPs may stand candidates for the leadership and deputy leadership.

Prescott has given in to intense pressure from Neil Kinnock and other Labour and union leaders who have signed up as agents of Kinnock's increasing authoritarianism.

Prescott, a seafarers' union sponsored MP, raised no political differences with the right-wing leadership. But he did reflect the disquiet among some union officials at the party's lack of working class members and the leadership's belief that the unions are a liability and should be kept at arm's length.

The strategy of the parliamentary right is to have a party where campaigns are run entirely through the capitalist media and the membership is effectively dissolved.

Party democracy

This was the reasoning behind Kinnock's public campaign against Prescott standing. While proclaiming that a leadership contest would display divisions in the party publicly, he did not hesitate to feed snide attacks on Prescott to an eagerly waiting press, even after he had agreed to stand down.

Kinnock will not be happy until the party is as silent as the grave. But, as Eric Heffer MP has said, Labour is a democratic socialist party, not a Stalinist one.

There is no question of democratic elections harming such a party. What does seriously weaken the party are witch-hunts and the leadership's constant attacks on sections of its own membership.

Prescott's withdrawal opens up the way for the genuine left to stand for both the leadership and deputy leadership. It is essential that the Campaign Group does so.

It will be an opportunity to show that the left defends the party's democratic structures and opposes witch-hunts and to explain a socialist alternative to the right's rewriting of the party's basic principles. A campaigning, socialist party will rebuild Labour's working class membership.

By Tony Cross

Fighting Fund

£2,000 donation to start

OUR NINE week campaign has got off to a tremendous start with a magnificent donation of £2,000 from an anonymous reader. Supporters of the *Militant* newspaper never cease to amaze us with their sacrifice for building a daily paper.

With only six weeks left to the end of the campaign we need to receive a rush of cash for our funds. Why don't you follow this example by making a donation yourself and organise a fund raising event in your area?

Workers are now in a militant mood. Fed up with attacks on their living and working conditions, many are preparing to face the Tories head on. Nurses in

particular will be portrayed by the Tories and capitalist press as being uncaring towards their patients. It is vital that we raise the cash for a daily newspaper to counteract the Tory lies about our ailing health service.

Militant has been warmly received at workplace sales. Paper sellers have been out with their rattling tines and stickers—in West London £23.00 was collected and in the Potteries £10.00 was collected.

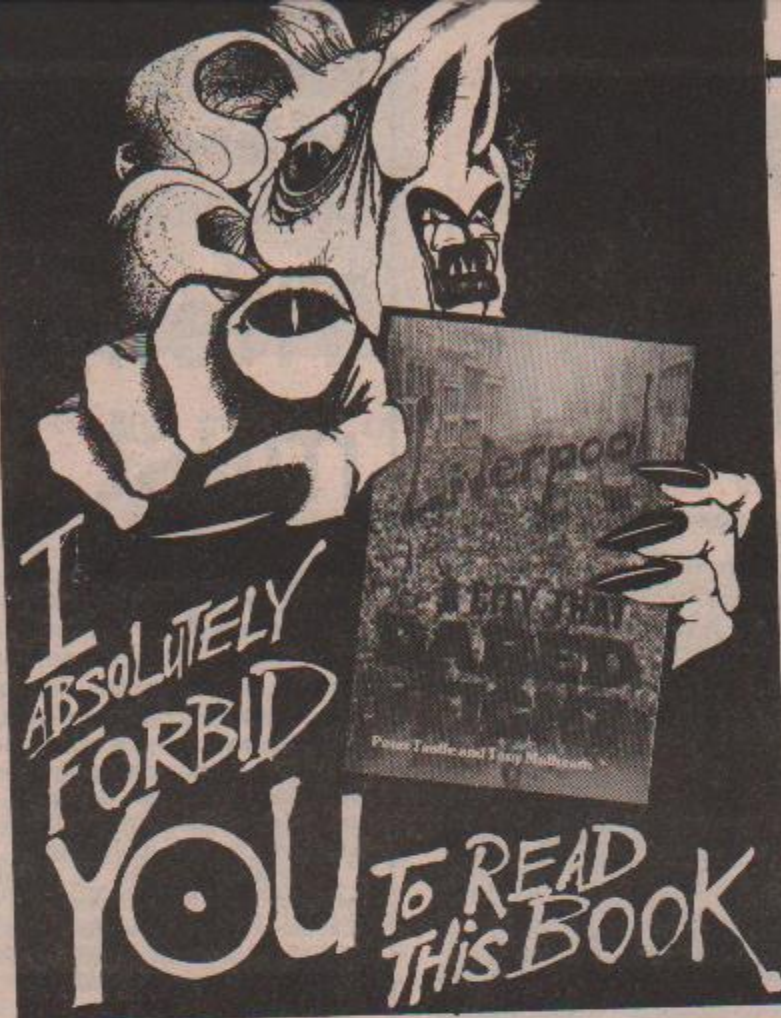
Bermondsey *Militant* readers held a public meeting last Thursday after the demonstration against the Alton Bill—£462.00 was raised at that meeting with a number of donations being

made by young women who may see their abortion rights being curtailed if the Bill goes through.

Regular readers have also made donations to the fighting fund. In East Midlands £26.36 was collected and a donation of £50.00 was received from R. John of Tooting.

Our thanks to other contributors this week: Bill Hawkes of Blackwood, £5.00, Terry O'Brien of Port Talbot £10.00, Marcus Edwards, Neath £5.00, John Cooze £20.00, Yvonne from Lincolnshire £25.00, P. Cunningham TGWU £7.50 and £8.456 from an Edinburgh supporter after a sponsored walk.

Area	Received	% of target achieved	Target
1 Scotland West	181		2520
2 West Midlands	198		3510
3 London	302		6770
4 Manchester/Lancs	120		2890
5 Southern	89		2020
6 Yorkshire	218		5950
7 East Midlands	83		2500
8 Merseyside	90		5360
9 South West	21		1270
10 Wales	85		3510
11 Northern	37		3270
12 Scotland East	31		2150
13 South East	14		1570
14 Eastern	0		2260
15 National	2368		3790
Total	3837		50,000



"BY ANY standards, the political story of Liverpool from 1983 to 1987 was extraordinary. For nearly four years, one of Britain's leading cities was controlled by Marxists who, despite the unqualified hostility of the press and Labour establishment, despite press reports that they used intimidation, despite expulsions and the threat of municipal bankruptcy, retained the support of a large section of the people of Merseyside."

That is how Andrew Marr begins *The Independent's* review of *Liverpool—A City That Dared to Fight* by Peter Taaffe and Tony Mulhearn, which is described as "a manual for municipal Marxists throughout the country."

"The tale is told with imagery redolent of Petrograd, rather than the modern council chamber"... "It is all rather a long way from sub-committees on drainage and mayoral banquets."

An example of the book's relevance to the crisis in local government today can be seen in its description of the contrast between Liverpool's approach and that of the other councils...

"The 'trendy left' typified by Ken Livingstone, David

Blunkett and Margaret Hodge, counterposed (to Liverpool's deficit budget strategy) a so-called 'no-rate' policy... As subsequent events demonstrated, this was an attempt to avoid (or at least postpone) giving battle to the Tory government in a clear and unambiguous fashion..."

"Ken Livingstone led the retreat of other councils. Despite his heroic words and gestures, he led the majority of London Labour councils into a position of remaining 'within the law' and setting a rate and budget which would mean cuts. This represented a turning point in the struggle of Labour authorities against the government..."

"All those who had abandoned Liverpool in the ratecapping battle in 1985 were now busily carrying out cuts..."

"Some erstwhile 'lefts' eventually embraced Kinnock's 'dented shield', but at the cost of some damage to their 'left' credentials. No such suspicion is attached, however, to the battling Liverpool councillors and particularly the lefts and Militant supporters within that group, by the advanced workers."

Get your copy of the poster for the book, 18 X 14, on gloss paper, 75p plus 25p postage, from Fortress Books, Po Box 141, London E2 ORL

Launch tour by Peter Taaffe and Tony Mulhearn. Provisional dates, all February: London press launch, 9th; Liverpool, 10th; Newcastle, 11th; Sheffield (BLOC conference), 13th; Clay Cross, 14th; Leeds, 14th; Edinburgh, 15th; Bristol, 15th; Glasgow, 16th; Swansea, 16th; Manchester, 17th; Birmingham, 18th—7.30 New Imperial Hotel, Temple Street, off New St; Eastern Region, 22nd; Southampton, 23rd and Brighton, 24th.

Liverpool—A City That Dared to Fight

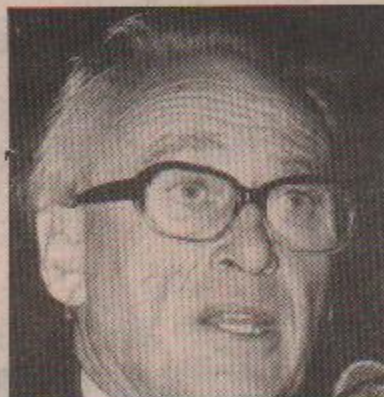
"I HAVE read this book and recommend it to you as a fair and true account of what really happened in Liverpool between 1983 and 1987"—Tony Byrne, leader of Liverpool City Council 1986-87 and one of the 47 surcharged councillors.

Special Offer. The book is due for delivery from the printers on 27 January. Get your order in now! Softback £5 + 90p post, hardback £8 + £1.20 post. Special offer closes 13 February. From Fortress Books, PO Box 141, London E2 ORL.

Name

Address

Council



Nicholas Ridley.

Ridley will acquire sweeping new powers, which will undermine any remnants of local democratic control.

For councils already at breaking point, it will be the earthquake which follows the flood.

THE IMMINENT publication of *Liverpool—A City That Dared to Fight*—could not be better timed. Every delegate to the Labour Party local government conference this weekend should absorb the lessons of Liverpool City Council's campaign against the Tories.

By Keith Baldassara

Labour council leaders are meeting to discuss the most serious threat yet to local government. The experience of Liverpool, whose council mobilised workers, tenants and community to defend jobs, homes and services, has never been more relevant.

When Thatcher took office in 1979 she made it clear that cuts in public spending would be her main priority. In her first year £2 billion was taken away from local

government.

Between 1981-82 and 1986-87 expenditure fell from £32,044m to £32,001m. If the rate of inflation over those years is taken into consideration, this cut is seen to be much greater.

Council house building has ground to a halt; in London it is almost non-existent. Yet homelessness stands at 8,000 and another 240,000 are on council waiting lists.

Earthquake

Spending on housing has fallen from £7,308m in 1979 to £4,900m in 1987. More houses were built in 1926, the year of the general strike, than in the 'boom' year of 1987.

If Environment Secretary Nicholas Ridley's new local government legislation is allowed to go through unchecked, it will create havoc. For councils already at breaking point, it will be the earthquake which follows the flood.

Disaster will fall upon every service—school meals, refuse collection, housing repairs—none will be exempt.

Ridley will acquire sweeping new powers, which will undermine any remnants of local democratic control. He will have the right for instance, if contracts are awarded to the direct labour organisation, to veto council decisions.

The alternative of 'in-house tendering' by direct labour will lead to job losses, cuts in services and worse conditions for the workforce.

The Association of Metropolitan Authorities recently estimated that 700,000 jobs would be lost as a result of the government's privatisation measures, nearly 3,000 jobs every week for the next five years. Thousands of trade unionists are faced with the need to fight back and force the Tories to retreat.

Ridley, the architect of the attack on the miners, has prepared for battle. But unfor-

Education in danger

Inner London

WORKERS IN the Inner London Education Authority (Ilea) face an unprecedented attack from the Tories, who are determined to smash the authority and cut thousands of jobs.

Irrespective of the government's proposal to break it up, Ilea faces a catastrophic budget crisis, since Environment Secretary Ridley set next year's spending limit at £955m, a cut of 15 per cent. After protests he has agreed to increase this amount by £15 million, but only if it is used for redundancy payments!

In the spirit of 'new realism' the Ilea has agreed to implement cuts and is now only quibbling about the scale. But the government will insist that the full 15 per cent cuts are implemented, which will entail:

★ A minimum of 9,000 jobs to go, 2,500 teaching and 6,500 non-teaching. The number could be much higher.

★ A freeze on filling vacancies. For teachers this will result in supply teachers being removed and the cover burden on establishment teachers being increased.

All Ilea unions must meet to discuss this most urgent issue and relay the real situation to

the workforce. There can be no illusions this year that the authority can simply muddle through.

The scale of the cuts is so great that only a united and combative workforce prepared to take strike action, up to and including all-out action, can spearhead the sort of movement of workers, parents and students that will force the cuts to be dropped. Teachers are already balloting on a one-day strike on 9 February.

The Ilea Labour members must be constantly reminded that they were elected to defend jobs and services. They have a clear responsibility to fight together with the unions for more money. Any cuts made to the service will only be viewed as a signal to ask for more. Tories understand only one thing—force.

No cuts! Defend jobs and services! No privatisation! No to break-up of Ilea!

By Bob Sulatycki, W London NUT, and Hugo Pierre, assistant branch secretary, Ilea Nal-go. (in personal capacities)

Ilea Broad Left meeting. Organise to defend jobs and services Sat 30 January 12 noon Oxford House, Derbyshire Street, Bethnal Green Open to all activists within Ilea unions.

Newham

IN A BLATANT attempt to offset its lack of funds, Newham education department have put forward reorganisation proposals, which will cut down pupils' choice, threaten many girls' chances of sixth form education and could lead to school closures and job losses in this Labour controlled borough.

Only one of the four options put forward by the council mentions 11-18 year old comprehensives which could serve the whole community. The other three, which are being strongly pushed by the education department, are based on school ending at 16, with some form of sixth form college for post-16 education.

Many pupils see college as a separate institution and will not go there, as happened to many secondary modern pupils when these schools had no sixth forms.

For many Asian girls who rely on provision of single sex schools, education after 16 would cease, as co-educational institutions are not acceptable to their families. This directly counters the council's claim to provide "equal opportunity for all, regardless of race, gender, class or disability" within its

Councils in crisis



Lobby of Southwark council to oppose nursery closures.

Fight or get out Editorial statement

Unfortunately many Labour councils have adopted the same attitude of 'new realism' as the TUC, arguing that workers are not prepared to struggle. They have abandoned the fight and are implementing cuts.

Manchester is now implementing £100,000m worth, with 4,000 redundancies in the pipeline. Camden, Lambeth, Haringey and Liberal-controlled Tower Hamlets between them will implement 5,500 redundancies before April.

Contempt

Linda Bellos, leader of Lambeth council calls them 'socialist cuts', but phrases like this cannot excuse these people for the role they are playing.

In Hackney there are no immediate redundancies, but refuse collection has been cut in half and libraries and other leisure facilities will close.

A report from the council leadership said that "The punters

know that many of the services provided are not worth keeping". Such is his contempt for workers that he even fails to tell the 'punters' which services are 'not worth keeping'.

Local government in 1988 will be a battlefield, as workers move into action to defend their jobs and services. A magnificent opportunity now exists to take on the Tories.

If the leadership of the labour movement were prepared to wage a national campaign, linked to health and other public services, they could force the Tories to retreat. If they do not, then undoubtedly a movement will develop from below like that of the nurses.

In London in the past 12 months, workers in 30 out of 32 boroughs have been out on strike. The London Bridge joint shop stewards committee has called for an all-London local authority strike for 9 March.

In Scotland, where the Poll Tax will be implemented first, tenants

have begun to stir. In the Drumchapel housing estate in Glasgow, a meeting of tenants heard their Labour MP Donald Dewar speak of the horrors if the tax were implemented, but with no indication of how it would be fought.

Angry mood

When Anne Lynch, a single-parent *Militant* supporter, spoke on the need for a campaign of non-payment and to mobilise council workers and tenants, half way through her contribution she was given a standing ovation. Such is the angry mood of the working class on the estates in Britain today.

It is now the duty of the leadership to harness this anger and take it to its logical conclusion. Failure to do so will lead to massive job losses and the destruction of services. The stage is set for the most explosive period for local government in the post-war era.

LABOUR COUNCILS face a catastrophic situation. Government grant reductions, rate-capping, and other restraints imposed by the Tories mean an even more drastic round of cuts-if Thatcher's limits are accepted.

The problems will not be limited to 1988-89. The poll tax, the Local Government Bill, particularly in relation to privatisation, and new housing and education legislation add up to an all-out assault on local government.

Among the councils facing the worst problems for 1988-89 are those led by formerly left Labour councillors, many of whom now face a worse crisis than right-wing councils who have been continuously making cuts.

While carrying out some cuts, the left Labour councils postponed the worst, temporarily preserving their left credentials, by 'creative accounting' and loans based on 'lease-back' schemes worth an estimated £5,000 million. But scope for these methods has now been exhausted or blocked off by the government.

Their present crisis results from the failure to fight in 1984 and 1985. After proclaiming they would adopt a 'no rate' policy and refuse to implement cuts, when it came to the crunch they left Liverpool and Lambeth to fight alone.

Now they propose to carry through the postponed cuts plus those dictated by the government grant allocation for the next year, with catastrophic results for those who depend on council housing and other services and for the council workforce.

The argument, such as it is, usually boils down to 'there is no alternative', an ironic echo of Thatcher's own catch-phrase.

But there is an alternative. District Labour Parties should call special conferences of affiliated parties and trade unions to draw up plans for fighting the cuts, with a bold socialist programme for defending services and jobs, based on the following main points:

- ★ No cuts in services.
- ★ No rent rises; no massive rate rises (even if rate-capping is escaped) to pay for cuts in government grant.
- ★ No job losses nor reduction in conditions for council workers.
- ★ Continued recruitment to fill all vacancies to provide effective services.

★ Opposition to privatisation of services.

★ A campaign to force the Tory government to provide the extra funds required for new houses and repairs, better education and nursery provision and the improvement of all services.

★ A campaign for the lifting of the surcharge and disqualification from Liverpool and Lambeth councillors, removed from office and fined for carrying out their election mandates.

★ A fight to abolish the dictatorial powers of the District Auditors, who enforce Tory policies on elected Labour councillors.

The mass campaign waged by Liverpool between 1983 and 1987 showed what could be achieved. The stand of the councillors was repeatedly endorsed in general and local elections.

The present movement in the health service shows the effect that bold action can have in galvanising wider sections of workers.

There is bitter anger among local authority workers. Given a bold lead by council and trade union leaders, based on total opposition to further cuts, there would be the mood for a fight.

Even if no lead is forthcoming, when the crunch comes there will be struggle from below -and workers will not easily forgive leaders who failed them.

Full support must be given to all council workers attempting to oppose cuts through token stoppages, one-day strikes and mass lobbies of council meetings.

The Labour leadership in Southwark argues that the only alternative to working within the Tory-imposed restraints is 'opting out'. This, they say, would be 'abdication' and reduce socialists to the side-lines. But what is the difference between such 'abdication' and capitulation in office?

Carrying out swingeing cuts now in order to hold on to office, will cause massive defeats for Labour in future council elections. If the present council leaders really see no alternative to cuts or have no stomach for a fight, they should stand aside and make way for workers' representatives who are prepared to engage in battle.

Labour councillors, on the other hand, who use their elected position to advocate socialist policies and take a stand against the Tory cuts have a crucial role to play.



Newham council workers protesting against cuts last year.

Photo: John Woulfe.

schools. The proposals worry staff too. The council give no assurance that all jobs will be saved.

The possibility of closures, if schools amalgamate, will lead to job losses in the ancillary workforce. It is a disgrace for Labour councils to implement job losses and cuts, then try to put them forward as a change for the better.

If there are fewer pupils in schools in the next few years, this should be seen as an opportunity to have smaller classes and more money being spent on pupils, rather than saving money by losing staff and keeping class numbers high.

All people involved in education in the borough must fight these proposals and defend education and jobs.

By a Newham NUT member

Strathclyde

JUST A few yards from the massive health lobby in Glasgow (see *Militant* 22 January), 5,000 parents, teachers and school pupils were lobbying Strathclyde council over proposals to close 57 schools because of falling rolls.

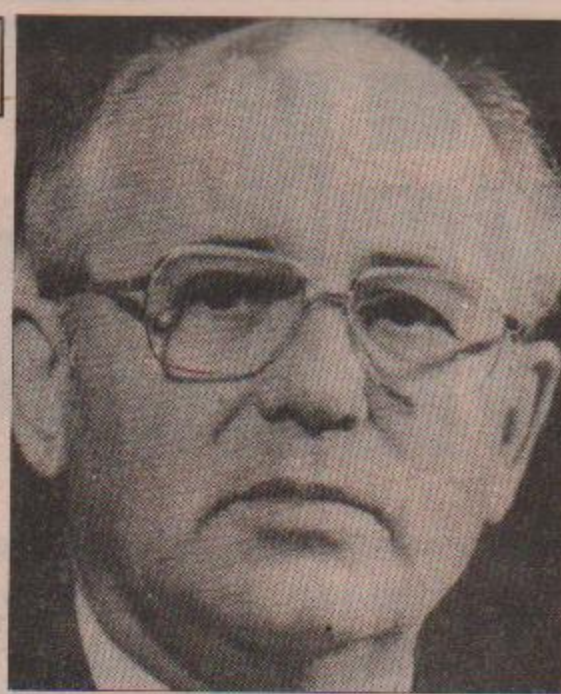
The Labour group, shaken at the protests, went into its longest ever meeting. As a result, ten schools have been

saved and a further 19 will have a further review.

Teachers and parents concede that 'excess capacity' has to be addressed, but are furious at the inadequate consultation process. The council are attacking rather than improving pupil/teacher ratios, teacher training, pre-five education and other services. Many placards accused the council of doing Thatcher's dirty work.

The standing of the Labour council has never been lower. Parents and teachers should not turn their backs on Labour but join the party and ensure that Labour elects councillors who will fight for the rights of working class people.

Gorbachev's tried and failed solutions



At £12.95 your local library may still just be able to afford this book, even if you can't!

'PERESTROIKA' MEANS restructuring. What makes this book interesting is that it shows to what drastic lengths the ruling Russian bureaucracy are prepared to go to try and save their system.

By Phil Hutchinson

A creature of the very bureaucracy he is trying to reform, Gorbachev fails to understand the Marxist teachers of the past. His political analysis is nothing like that of Lenin and Trotsky.

He cannot give any explanation of how the problems in the economy or the corruption of the bureaucracy developed in the first place.

However, in contrast to Reagan's primitive scratching around in the past, with the backward idea of private enterprise dragging the world into the twenty-first century, Gorbachev seems almost sophisticated. He speaks of establishing a 'world laboratory' of "joint exploration and use of outer space and of planets and the solar system, and research in the field of superconductivity and biotechnology".

Unfortunately such phrases are only superficial. Gorbachev fails to show how the Russian bureaucracy will break out of its own straitjacket on progress: mismanagement of the economy, parasitism by the officialdom, and the attempt to develop 'socialism within a single country'.

Lenin

He rejects the idea of international socialist revolution, which ran so vibrantly through all Lenin's speeches and articles.

When the reforms started, and bureaucrats began to use the word 'initiative', many people had to look it up in a dictionary! What a condemnation this is of a society that claims to be socialist.

The fact that the bureaucracy have been forced to acknowledge the existence of economic and social problems is itself a response to the pressure of the workers. Gorbachev admits:

"Pressure from the working people and their outspokenness are mounting and even outpacing the actual rate of restructuring."

Glasnost ("openness") and perestroika have started a discussion over the length and breadth of Russian society which will be impossible to stamp out.

Gorbachev gives us a glimpse of the workers' attitude towards perestroika in some letters which he quotes:

"I'll be frank with you. At first many people reacted to the general course of perestroika with suspicion. Not that it ran counter to our wishes—not at all. People simply knew from bitter experience that too often good slogans did not square with reality."

Another worker says: "I approve of your meetings with work-



(Top) Workers queue outside a Moscow shop. (Above) A 'vote' is taken in the supreme Soviet of the bureaucracy. It is their interests that Gorbachev is trying to defend against the anger of the workers.

ing people and of the honest and open discussion of our problems and troubles. But my only wish is for these discussions to produce results."

These quotes show that many workers, whilst wanting to see democracy and an end to corruption, are cynical—a feeling that will have been reinforced by the sacking last autumn of Moscow's outspoken reformist bureaucrat, Yeltsin.

Despite the sub-title of the book, "New thinking for our country and the world", there is nothing fundamentally new in the solutions Gorbachev puts forward for Russia's economic problems.

Readers may like to guess which of the following statements are Gorbachev's 'new thinking', and which date from prime minister Kosygin some two decades earlier:

● "Perfection of economic management is impossible without a further development of its democratic principles, without a considerable extension of the participation of the masses in industrial management...A feeling must be instilled in all workers that they are masters of their factory".

● "(We aim to) assist in every way the unfolding of the creative activity of the masses".

● "We should rely on the initiative and creativity of the masses; on the active participation of the widest sections of the population in the implementation of the reforms planned that is on democratisation and again democratisation".

● "Of prime importance is for the people to be the true master of production, rather than a master only in name. For without it individual workers or collectives are not interested, nor can they be interested, in the final results of their work".

New stage

The first two are Kosygin's, the second two are Gorbachev's. The similarity serves to illustrate that, despite the new stage in the desperation of the bureaucracy to find a way out, the solutions they are coming up with have been tried and failed before.

The lack of depth in his argument shows that Gorbachev is only interested in doing away with the worst excesses of the bureaucracy. Although he uses the word 'revolution' to describe what he is initiating, it is clear that he does not stand for genuine socialist democracy or any kind of fundamental change.

Gorbachev has introduced bonuses and other 'profit incentives' to individual plants and

factories, and increased the differentiation of wages among workers. With these palliatives for economic failure, borrowed from the dying system of the West, he is trying to create new divisions within the working class.

However, it is on international issues that Gorbachev shows his real position most clearly. He is anxious above all else to appear 'respectable' in the eyes of Western leaders.

He does not intend to spread revolution. This book should be a reminder to every thinking worker that those Communist parties in the west and the colonial world which still follow Moscow will be quite prepared to support the capitalists' efforts to maintain the status quo in their own countries.

The same holds true, with slightly different phraseology, for those which follow Peking or any of the other splinters within the Communist bloc.

For these bureaucrats the world is divided into immutable 'spheres of influence': "Let the Americans live in their country as they like and we will live in the Soviet Union as we desire".

There is no attempt to appeal to the American workers, to explain a socialist alternative to the eight million unemployed in the US or the 40 million living in poverty. Yet this is supposed to

be a book written for the American public!

For the Middle East, Africa and Central America it is a similar story:

"Really if the United States left Nicaragua in peace this would be better for the US itself ... we do not at all want the process of working towards a settlement or the very goals of this process, in some way to infringe upon the interests of the United States and the West".

Deals

Not infringing on the interests of imperialism! This policy can hardly appeal to the mass of exploited workers and peasants in the Third World. Gorbachev is quite prepared to bargain with their interests in deals with the imperialists:

"I have explained on many occasions that we do not pursue goals inimical to Western interests. We know how important the Middle East, Asia, Latin America other Third World regions and also South Africa are for American and West European economies, in particular as raw material sources. To cut these links is the last thing we want to do, and we have no desire to provoke ruptures in historically formed, mutual economic interests."

Mutual! About as mutual as the robber and the robbed! And Gorbachev has the cheek to claim he is following in the footsteps of Lenin!

He embarks on an impassioned plea for the West's leaders to see sense and raise the living standards of the masses in the third world. This, he hopes, will restore health to the world capitalist economy.

Gorbachev's remedies are just as futile as those of the right-wing labour leaders of the West, who imagine they can solve the capitalist system's problems with similar policies. Such ideas are utopian, especially with capitalism in crisis. They show his limitations.

On the question of disarmament, Gorbachev again fails to explain in a scientific way the long term dangers facing mankind. Have the Soviet bureaucracy suddenly discovered that nuclear weapons are a waste of resources? It is the economic problems of the planned economy that has forced Gorbachev to the negotiating table. His denials of this are not convincing.

In the end, Gorbachev fails to say anything that can solve the inherent problems of the bureaucratic system. The last word will be with the soviet workers.

The best that can be said of this book is that it is considerably less boring than anything that has come out of the top circles of the soviet bureaucracy since the departure of Lenin and Trotsky (which is not difficult!).

If you read it critically you may find it thought-provoking. But a better sub-title would have been "New packaging for old and failed ideas."

French Socialist Party convention

Workers move to left - leaders to the right

THIS MONTH'S convention of the French Socialist Party underlined the shift to the right in the leadership.

From our correspondent in Paris

The draft programme presented by the leading body, and adopted by the convention, is undoubtedly the most right-wing platform in the history of the Socialist movement.

It describes at great length the crisis of French and international capitalism—not to argue the case for socialism, but to provide a pretext for the almost total absence of reforms.

The basic argument of the leadership is that the "margin of manoeuvre" of a future Socialist government will be "even narrower" than that of 1981-86.

The one fig-leaf in the programme is the promise of a "guaranteed social minimum" for the unemployed. At present, almost half of France's 2.7 million unemployed receive no benefits.

But can even this measure, vaguely put forward without specifying an amount, be taken seriously?

Ruled out

On TV recently the party general secretary, Lionel Jospin, ruled out a significant increase in the minimum wage as being 'incompatible' with the economic situation. Workers will naturally wonder if the economic crisis will permit a social minimum worthy of the name, or if this will be dropped like so many other promises in the past.

The real meaning of the policy adopted by the convention is that the next Socialist government will begin where the last one left off, by applying austerity measures in a vain attempt to 'manage capitalism'.

But such is the hatred of the



French workers demonstrate. The Socialist Party leadership oppose elections, fearing that a Socialist victory would spark off a new mass movement. Instead, they hope to cobble together a coalition with the Right!

right-wing government of Jacques Chirac that the absence of socialist measures will in all likelihood not prevent a victory for the Left in the forthcoming presidential election.

Nonetheless, as events in Spain and Greece have shown, a future Socialist government applying austerity measures will inevitably come into collision with the powerful organisations of the workers.

Already, even before the next recession begins to bite, the situation of workers is intolerable. One in three young people are unemployed. Hundreds of thousands go round the treadmill of YTS-type cheap labour schemes.

This is the background to the

split opening up in the party over the question of dissolving the National Assembly in the event of a Socialist victory in the presidential election.

Most of the party leadership are opposed to dissolution, which would lead to new legislative elections, and would prefer to continue the present 'cohabitation' between the Socialist president and a right-wing government. They are looking to a government of coalition with the Right.

Crisis

If Mitterand wins, as seems certain, the capitalists will apply pressure to keep the National Assembly as it is, allowing the entry of a few Socialist ministers

into the government in exchange.

Such a development would open up an enormous crisis within the Socialist Party at rank and file level. Many members recall the disastrous coalition politics of the old SFIO [predecessor of the present Socialist Party], which led to its virtual destruction.

France is heading for social upheaval. Capitalism is in a blind alley. Workers hate the Right, but are increasingly mistrustful of the Left leaders.

The only solution lies in the development of a powerful Marxist current in the unions and in the Socialist and Communist movement, which could pose a serious alternative to the bankrupt policies of the present leaders.

Swedish 'new realism' could provoke storms

SWEDEN'S INDUSTRIAL calm of the last period has been shattered by a national strike of 50,000 private sector white-collar workers. The giants of Sweden's export industry are paralysed.

With bosses laying off another 50,000 manual workers, the stoppage is the biggest since 1980.

At Volvo and Saab (motor vehicles), Ericsson (telecommunications) and Electrolux (white goods) production has halted as members of the union SIF protest at an insulting 0.9 per cent pay offer.

The union is also demanding what amounts to a right of veto in local agreements.

Employers' representatives and their press are howling that the stock market crash has destroyed any prospect of a real wage increase. Unfortunately, this refrain has also been taken up by the Social-Democratic government.

In the wake of the stock exchange crisis they have imposed a 4 per cent pay limit, and announced that promised reforms in pensions, child benefits and education are now 'conditional' on low wage settlements.

A draft budget document from the government calls for wage restraint 40 times in 40 pages! Right-wing Finance Minister Feldt's response to the 0.9 per cent offer to SIF: "no comment".

But the signs are ominous for the bosses in this election year. The SIF strikers are only the first group in the annual pay round, with powerful groups like the metal workers to follow. The pro-big business policies of the Social-Democratic leaders may well provoke an industrial storm.

By Len Anderson

Argentina-why the coup collapsed

ARGENTINA'S LATEST military rebellion has ended with the surrender of its leader, Colonel Aldo Rico, and over 400 followers. However, the events have highlighted not the strength but the underlying instability of President Alfonsín's administration.

By George Collins

The military have dominated Argentine politics for most of the last 57 years. This has been a result of the weakness of the capitalist system, and the inability of the ruling class to take society forward.

Under the last junta, from 1976 to 1983, the military waged a 'dirty war' of killings and torture against working-class activists and the youth of the mass Peronist movement. Many youth were organised behind the Montoneros and the ERP, whose methods of individual terrorism were used by the military as a pretext for the clampdown.

In the process up to 30,000 people were tortured, murdered



A scene from the 'dirty war' or 'disappeared'

Alfonsín, elected after the collapse of the junta, was forced by mass anger to take action against the military butchers. This has been the key issue in the simmering discontent among the officers and the repeated uprisings.

The officers' defence has been that they were only doing their

job: putting down a revolution to save the capitalist system, which is no task for the squeamish. Alfonsín, faced with worsening crisis, has made concessions to them all along the line.

Last Easter Rico led an uprising, demanding exemption from prosecution for junior officers and lower ranks, plus the dismissal of Army chief Erenú.

Mass demonstrations forced the rebels to surrender—but Alfonsín, in turn, surrendered to them. Officers involved in the uprising were pardoned. Caridi, the present Army chief, was appointed in Erenú's place, and most officers accused of human rights crimes received an amnesty.

Since then the most notorious military killer, naval Lieutenant Astiz, has been promoted and returned to active service. At Christmas, officers serving "rigorous" terms of imprisonment were given home leave.

Rico, detained since Easter, burst into Caridi's office full of arrogance and contempt:

"Either you lot decide, or I will. I'm going to spend New

Year's Eve at home. I'll give you until the 30th to make up your minds."

He was duly released into 'house arrest'. Then, on 15 January armed forces were sent to arrest him at his mansion. He 'escaped', and the rebellion was under way. Rico's demands: more exemptions and forced retirement of certain top officers for their role in the Falklands war.

Challenge

This challenge was more than even Alfonsín could tolerate without surrendering all authority. He made no appeal to the masses, and there were no huge demonstrations as at Easter.

Nevertheless, Rico's rebellion collapsed because the vast majority of the military understood that a serious coup attempt would spark off enormous resistance—and, with Alfonsín retreating all along the line, what for?

As a woman shouted at Rico's camouflage-dressed soldiers:

"Why don't you wash your faces? We want to live under

democracy, not animals."

Alfonsín's weakness before the military, the country's deepening economic crisis and attacks on living standards are steadily eroding his support.

Inflation doubled to 175 per cent during 1987. At present it is officially 'down' to 5 per cent per month. In poorer provinces such as Tucuman, children are dying of hunger.

The more the masses become demoralised, the more the military will be able to dictate 'solutions'—in the end, seizing power to restore capitalist 'order'.

Only the working class has the power to inflict a lasting defeat on the generals, and end the chaos of capitalism by implementing their own democratic rule. This was foreshadowed last Easter, and before that in the revolutionary events of 1982 and 1969-1973.

Not appeasement of the generals, but bold socialist policies in the Peronist movement—in particular the trade unions and the youth—are essential to avert the danger of a future return to brutal military rule.

National wealth service

Dear Comrades,
What is Maggie Thatcher trying to do to this country? Maybe she doesn't know, but she is totally ruining it with her pathetic party policies.

To start with, the health service, which she would love to see privatised by starving the NHS of vital life-saving money. But why should we have to pay for private health care when our parents and their parents worked for a socialist society with a health service that is free.

Take the night shift nurses in Manchester. They have decided enough is enough. The nurses should have more 24 hour strikes as long as they have the union backing and maybe Thatcher will stop the murder of the health service. For all Thatcher cares we could be dying on the street and she wouldn't lift a finger to help.

We have to open people's eyes to what is going on. We have to stand up and fight for our rights. Stand up and be counted as a fighter, not a listener.

Carol Montefiore,
Bow London LPYS

service

Dear Comrades,
There has been an outbreak of meningitis in the north Kent area recently, with at least two children dying from it during December. Obviously parents are worried about their kids and are looking for information and advice.

However, Medway health authority is already deeply in debt. They cannot afford the cost of a leaflet or letter to go out generally informing parents of symptoms to watch for etc, so they've asked for business sponsorship of it!

The ad men must be in ecstasy—a whole new advertising area could be opening up. The possibilities are endless—Boots could do the pregnancy advice, Sainsbury's the nutrition leaflets and just think what the Aids contract would be worth!

Maybe the Tories' slogan should be changed to 'the health service is safe in our friends' hands'.

Martin Cook, Medway

Thoughts from abroad

Dear Comrades,
Birkenhead *Militant* sellers have come across several examples of how low the standard of living is in Tory Britain today despite Thatcher marvelling at the strength of the economy.

Sellers were approached by a Czechoslovakian who expressed interest in the paper but said she was going back to Czechoslovakia: "at least there you get the basics, a

proper house, a proper job and all the basic amenities."

On another occasion sellers convinced a Norwegian girl and her boyfriend to join the Labour Party and get active. She couldn't understand why more people didn't fight for better conditions since housing in Birkenhead was so appalling:

"I went to see my MP (Frank Fields) to appeal

against the DHSS refusal to give us any heating allowances. He said that he sympathised with us and loaned us a fan heater but we can't afford to use it since it uses too much electricity...In this country you have to grab as much as you can when the going is good. In Norway you have the right to a job, here you have to fight just for the right for benefits."

Phil Cooper, Birkenhead

Martian snoopers

Dear Comrades,
According to the *Guardian* (9 Jan) a 'senior' Labour Party 'source' has said, referring to Bermondsey CLP, that: "It is clear to a congenial idiot who had arrived from Mars that the constituency is Militant-operated." Isn't it about time the right wing came clean and told us exactly how long they've been getting visitations from idiotic Martians? And why are they employing them as snoopers? Surely that's the job of the national constitutional committee?

John Timberlake
Burnley LPYS

Letters

Send us your views, comments or criticism.

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

A woman's place



-in her union

Dear Comrades,

It was good to see the article by Sue (Usdaw steward *Militant* 879) concerning the need for unionisation of shop workers and especially women. Where I work in Presto's at least 65 per cent of the staff are women and often part time with little or no rights.

Management is constantly breathing down everyone's necks and setting staff against each other by asking them to 'inform' on anyone taking an extra few minutes' tea break. So the atmosphere can be extremely bitchy. There was even a

fight before Christmas.

There are only two other union members apart from me and although I have persuaded a couple of other workers to join there doesn't seem to be much enthusiasm. Mainly because the union doesn't have much credibility because you never see anyone.

What is needed is a genuine campaign to inspire in members and non-members a feeling of their latent strength and capabilities to fight for decent wages and conditions.

Dave, South East London.

Unconquered space

Dear Comrades,

Many comrades may have seen the film *The Right Stuff* on television recently, which told the story of the first US space programme in the 60s.

Following the Challenger disaster in January 1986, in which seven crew members were killed, all shuttle launches were grounded pending an investigation. Flights were due to resume with a launch of the shuttle Discovery in June this year but now that has been postponed indefinitely.

The US government needs the space programme to divert people's attention from the state of the economy and to whip up patriotic fervour. With the success of the Soviet Union's space programme continuing, recent events are a cause of embarrassment to the Reagan administration.

A glimpse of the benefits which could be achieved from space research is seen when we examine experiments which have taken place in space into diseases

and illnesses as yet unconquered by man. In the controlled conditions of space Soviet scientists have made massive strides forward in research into diseases such as cancer.

If the technology that is available to send people and rockets into space were diverted from military use the world could go a long way to eliminating disease and creating a better life for millions.

Andy Walker
Middlesbrough Labour Party

Guilty of poverty

Dear Comrades,
At a time when inside dealers on the stock exchange are given a slap on the wrist for defrauding millions, I was disgusted to read that a young couple were sent to prison for 90 days for stealing £5 cash.

The couple stole from Royal British Legion collecting boxes to pay for the funeral expenses of their three day old baby. They had been struggling to pay for the funeral at £2 a week since 1986 and when the funeral company decided to take them to court they were ordered to pay £50 a month and costs.

It was impossible for them to pay this and they had visions of the bailiff moving in to take all their possessions, so stealing from the boxes seemed the only way out.

It is the capitalist system which makes people's lives such hell that should be put on trial.

Ged Grebby, Blyth

Hit back with facts

Dear Comrades,
I recently joined the Labour Party and my wife has begun subscribing to *Militant*.

I find your last two headlines 'Tories let sick die' and 'Eight years of misery' exaggerated and easily countered by our formidable Mrs Thatcher.

It is my contention that she needs to be hit with irrefutable arguments and harrying questions like having to reveal how the government calculates the annual rate of inflation, when everyone knows the figure should be much higher or why Seafield colliery in Fife was given impossible targets so that closure was inevitable.

The facts need to be hammered home without respite to bring her to her knees: she is a barrister after all and used to self-defence if the prosecution doesn't mount irrefutable arguments.

A R McGavin
West Lothian Scotland

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.

12 February SALEP benefit. Bands: The Neurotics, The Hillstormers, disco and stalls. 8 'til late. Thames Polytechnic, Cellar Bar, Woolwich. £2.50 waged, £2 unwaged.

Inqaba T-shirts for sale £5.25 each inc postage. Logo black clenched fist "smash apartheid and capitalism". Available in white or lemon large or XL. All surplus to Campaign for a Socialist South Africa. Cheques/cash with orders to W. Blackstock, Flat 23, 425 Sauchiehall St, Glasgow.

Read *Militant Irish Monthly* the Marxist paper for workers' unity and socialism. January 1988 issue now out, with articles on: Enniskillen bombing; Joe Higgins to stand for Labour; Strike against Youth Training Programme; World recession; Women and the cuts. To subscribe to 6 (12) issues, send £3 (£5) to *Militant*, 75 Middle Abbey Street, Dublin 1 or 4 Waring Street, Belfast.

Back file of *Militant* nos 1-877 plus 50 old *Militant Irish Monthly* 75 old *Left/Socialist Youth* Any offers? to box no 69, World Socialist Books, 3-13 Hepscoth Rd, London E9 5HB.



Militant International Review

Out now. 90p plus 20p postage and packing from World Socialist Books, 3/13 Hepscoth Road, London E9 5HB, or 90p from your local *Militant* seller.

Militant readers' meeting against Alton Bill, in defence of NHS. Thursday 4 February 7.30. Premier Social Club, Ashington. Speaker: Jen Pickard. Creche available. Contact Sue Curry 850 985.

Militant meeting—NHS in crisis: the socialist solution. Dunraven Arms Hotel, Bridgend 9 February 7.30.

Islington Militant supporters public meeting on the council's budget crisis: Defend jobs and services! No rent increases! Tuesday 9 February 7.30, Red Rose Club, 129 Seven Sisters Road. Speakers: Cllr Dave Barnes, Lawrence Hemming (Hackney Nalgo, personal capacity) and Pat Booton (Channel Islands Tenants Association, personal capacity).

RALLY '88

Alexandra Palace
Sunday 19 June

Tickets £6

Order your ticket now! From *Militant* Rally, 3/13 Hepscoth Rd, London E9.

Industrial reports



Massive backing for strike

FORD WORKERS have overwhelmingly voted for strike action in support of their claim. At workplace ballots in every plant last week, the message came across loud and clear: "We're not satisfied with management's offer. We're fighting for the full claim."

By Tim Harris

One shop steward at the Southampton plant told *Militant*, "The lads have thrown down the gauntlet to the company. The thing that is worrying most people is the threatened use of temporary labour—one of the strings in the offer."
At Southampton a remarkable 85 per cent of members of the Transport and General Workers Union (TGWU) voting rejected the offer and 92 per cent rejected in the Amalgamated Engineering Union (AEU) ballot. These figures were repeated, and in some cases



Photo: Dave Sinclair.

Even foremen have struck in protest at management's proposals.

exceeded up and down the country, from Halewood to Bridgend, from Dagenham to Swansea. One TGWU member at Halewood told us: "At this plant 89 per cent of members of my union voted to reject. This puts our negotiating team in a very strong position. No-one in Halewood is desperate to go on strike but if management don't come up with the full claim, then

we'll have to strike. Ford has been rocked by the size of the vote."

Profitable

With the company making record profits and a 40 per cent increase in productivity over the last two years, the workforce is angry that they are only being offered 6.5 per cent this year, followed by an

inflation-linked increase next year and the year after. On top of this, the management want part-time workers, job 'flexibility', and quality circles.

Whilst Ford UK has been more profitable than Ford in Europe, wages are virtually half those paid in Germany. British workers have a longer working day, and holidays are fewer than those of the continental



workforce. According to *The Guardian*, "The fear this week among those close to the negotiations at Ford... is that many of the underlying attitudes of Britain's car workers have not really changed". In other words, the workforce, which the employers hoped had become cowed by a period of victimisation, speed-up and new work practices, is prepared to fight for its fair share.

Powerful

The massive vote to reject the offer should be clearly understood by the union negotiators. It does not mean that a few concessions by management will be acceptable. Management must drop the three

year deal, and the other strings attached. The claim for a shorter working week and a substantial pay rise must be met in full. The ballot is a powerful indication of the mood which exists. Preparations must now get underway for a national all-out strike. Approaches should be made to dock and transport workers and to workers at Ford plants throughout the world. The labour and trade union movement in Britain must be alerted. If the talks fail on Thursday there must be an immediate national strike call.
★No three year deal!
★No strings!
★For the full claim!
★For an immediate national all-out strike if the talks fail to achieve these demands!

"Tea—but no sandwiches"

Austin Rover

"SUCH IS the regime of fear and oppression from top management, that even the foremen walk in fear. One worker overheard a senior foreman say to one of his juniors, "When the production manager asks you what the production figure is, tell him 2.4". Later, the junior foreman was heard muttering with fervour, "Two point four, two point four, two point four." When the manager finally spoke to him, all he could reply was "Two point four" to every question he was asked!"

going to tell me when to have a cup of tea." The convenor told the shop steward involved that it was a 'piddling dispute', but he stuck to his guns anyway and management backed off."

The bosses attempted to prove that other sections didn't have cups and mugs 'on view' by sending a temporary foreman down to one of the more militant sections and issuing instructions to remove the offending drinking receptacles. This resulted in the spreading of the dispute, with a demonstration by workers, all waving cups in the air!

The final management position was, "You can drink tea but you can't eat sandwiches."

Austin Rover bosses are attempting to implement Japanese-style methods of working, including 'quality circles'. One example of the new restrictions introduced relates to slip relief operators. According to one worker, "I had an appointment with the nurse and asked the foreman for slip relief so I could get off the job. I waited two and a half hours but still didn't get relieved. When I asked the foreman, he told me that I was not seriously ill and that I could hang on. The other blo-

kes threatened to stop work, so he had to let me go. We call him Doctor Bob now.

"If foremen lend out slip reliefs to other sections, and don't have to ask for them back, then it's a feather in their caps."

New starters are treated diabolically. "Two new lads who had injured themselves playing football outside the factory were hauled up to industrial relations and told that they were guilty of 'frustration of contract' and could be dismissed under Tory legislation, the same way that the printers were sacked by Murdoch".

Confidence

"When we were laid off we operated the one out, all out policy even though they wanted some in to work on car rectification. This was carried out in the area that had a steward sacked just before Christmas. It was his policy that we were operating".

"The works committee is a joke. The blokes have no faith in it whatsoever. The convenor calls our disputes "piddling", but in reality it's building up the blokes' confidence, especially when we win them."

"I DON'T know much about building cars but I do know about keeping you bastards in line!" Senior member of Austin Rover management to track worker recently.

Exposing the myths

THATCHER'S TALK about "sheer good workmanship in the Midlands" in reality means lengthening hours and increasing stress for workers.

At Austin Rover's Canley plant in Coventry there is now the threat of the first strike for six years over plans to further increase the exploitation of the workforce. Management want a seven day shift pattern and 24 hour cover, Monday to Friday. Men of over 60 would be expected to work 61 hours in one seven day period and 6pm to 6am Saturday and Sunday on one shift pattern.

Before Christmas, Peugeot Talbot had to withdraw plans to introduce the continental shift in their Ryton plant—the ten hour, four day week.

Jaguar only recruit men in their 20's or under. Massey's the tractor manufacturer, have been taken to an industrial tribunal for discriminating against older employees in job cuts. But in lowering the age of workers in industry to bring about increased exploitation of labour, the bosses are stoking up future explosions.

As an indication of the changing mood, Jaguar nightshift voted in favour of striking in support of the local health service.

For me, the stories of conditions in car factories are only an echo of my father's experience of the 1950's. "We would arrive home with our shirts ringing wet from a days slog." Of his friends, my father was the only one to retire from the factory, and that was with Parkinson's disease. All the others died in their 50's. Even with his illness quite developed, and with a doctor's letter, the bosses would not give my father lighter work.

Now we hear all the time of modern automated factories with workers only doing maintenance. This is a myth. The only difference between now and the 1950's was that 34 years ago men at what is now Talbot earned £26 a week. The average wage at that time was £9 a week. Now workers at that plant are the worst paid of their type in Britain and are £30 below the national average wage.

By a Canley worker

"MANAGEMENT ARE talking about changing people's attitudes. They've given a bloke two days' suspension for dropping paper on the line."

Correction: In last week's paper we wrongly attributed an article on Grange Hospital to Matt Davies. It was in fact written by Mark Davies.

After Scargill's victory— NUM must take up the challenge

Come to BLOC conference!

THE RE-ELECTION of Arthur Scargill as president of the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM) represents a setback to the schemes of British Coal (BC) and their Tory backers and a massive boost to those wishing to fight them. The result is a victory for the fighting traditions of the union and a defeat for those who have given up hope, including the 'new realists'.

By Chris Herriot,
a sacked Monktonhall miner.

With BC, the Tory government, the press and media, as well as many inside the trade union movement weighed against him, Scargill still won a majority. In Yorkshire he won 64 per cent of the vote and even in Scotland and South Wales, where the area leaderships have opposed him, Arthur Scargill still won over 60 per cent of miners' votes. All the press carping about a reduced majority changes nothing. Thatcher was elected with only 42 per cent of the vote....and what sort of majority did Sir Robert Haslam get?

Scargill has received a renewed mandate and he will now have to set his mind to meeting the challenges that lie before the union.

In 1982, he predicted 75 pits would be closed in line with British Coal's hit list. Since then, 76 pits and at least 90,000 jobs have gone. BC, Thatcher, the press and the 'new realists' have all blamed 'Scargillism' for this outcome. Yet, even Nottinghamshire, heartland of the sweetheart 'union', the UDM, have had their share of closures. No amount of compromises or 'accommodation' with management can stem the tide.

Privatisation

Despite embracing 'new realism' and bending over backwards to suit the whims of BC at area level, Scotland has been reduced to under 4,000 and South Wales to less than 10,000—a loss of over 21,000 jobs.

In fact, George Bolton, the Scottish president, has at least twice publicly declared his acceptance of a pit closure before the miners at the pit have had a chance to vote on it.

It is clear from last year's annual report that BC have been given financial objectives by Thatcher and they intend to pursue them relentlessly—to the extent of closing profit-making pits.

Massive increases in productivity, more accent on production and less on safety, a harder regime in the workplace and vast changes to working practices have put BC well on the road of achieving its target of 'full financial viability without government



support' by the end of 1988/89.

However, few multi-national corporations will relish acquiring a business where the workforce has Arthur Scargill as their union leader. Worse still, as far as big business is concerned, is the record of the miners themselves.

"The number of strikes per person employed in the coal industry is thirty times the average number of strikes in the economy as a whole...the average mineworker loses eight times as many hours through strikes as the UK average." (BC annual report 1986/87).

The 'culture of militancy' has not even been broken by the imposition of the vicious disciplinary code which in fact sparked the magnificent Frickley dispute of last summer. More recently, the Bentley dispute, over the redeployment of three miners, led to the whole of South Yorkshire and parts of North Yorkshire withdrawing their labour at a cost of over £4.5 million in lost output.

The massive state repression of 1984/85, the victimisation of union activists, divisive bonus schemes, skilful propaganda and the continued threat to job security have all failed to cow the miners. Now, the Board are beginning to get desperate.

The world price of steam coal is now expected to rise dramatically. For years, companies such as Exxon have been deliberately underpricing their coal in order to capture the world market. Perhaps it is time to capitalise on their investments?

In any case, the strain of coal subsidies in Australia and elsewhere coupled with the costs of multi-national oil companies in

America are taking their toll. There are also reports of mine closures in South Africa and Colombia. Yet the CEEGB still talk of sustaining massive increases in the amount of coal imports on a prolonged basis at a cheaper cost than home produced coal.

A concerted effort is being made by BC, the government and the CEEGB to force drastic changes in working practices to create the conditions for massive profitability on the basis of privatisation.

Hence it is likely that BC will move to impose 'flexible working' and six-day production at one or more pits within the next few months. It is possible that management may pick March, with all its significance for mineworkers, to make such a move— even on a national basis.

BC are attempting to use the same encroachment tactics they employed to introduce new technology and the divisive bonus scheme, without union agreement and on a piecemeal basis. But the 'new realist' area leaderships cannot be relied on to resist these attacks. The Board have been very skilful.

Blackmail

Margam in South Wales, Frances in Scotland, Thorne in Yorkshire, Asfordby in Leicester, and Hawkhurst Moor in Warwickshire are all to be used as levers in a national campaign of blackmail to achieve six-day working. So far, the union has done nothing to counter these moves.

No preparations have been made for a struggle. No real campaign has been launched to convince the members of the

THERE ARE only two weeks left to the 1988 conference of the Broad Left Organising Committee. With health workers taking action, miners re-electing Arthur Scargill as president and Ford workers voting by 90 per cent for strike action in pursuit of their claim, the time is right for the left in the trade union movement to come together and organise the fightback against the Tories and the employers.

At the conference there will be a special discussion on the crisis in the NHS—among proposals will be a call for a one-day general strike of the whole movement and the establishment of a national Broad Left for health workers.

This week, delegations which have come in include AEU Heywood 3; TGWU 10/115A; Actss housing workers 1/1111; TGWU 5/440; Nupe Norwich Health; Astms 245; Ealing association NUT; Nupe Hull Hospitals Central.

BLOC
BROAD LEFT ORGANISING COMMITTEE

Conference '88

Sheffield
City Hall
Sat 13
February

ALL TRADE union bodies (branches, workplaces, district committees, divisional councils etc) can send up to five delegates. The fee per delegate is £3. For application form and details of local transport to the conference, write to Broad Left Organising Committee, PO box 464, London E5 8PT.

Speakers include **Tony Benn**

New life in Nalگو Broad Left

FIFTY NALGO members attended the Metropolitan District Broad Left conference recently. The meeting was in stark contrast to those held over the last few years, which have often had the atmosphere of a funeral about them.

This was because of the attacks that London Nalگو members are facing at the moment, but also, as one speaker put it, "The example of the nurses has given us a tremendous boost". The conference called on the TUC to organise a one-day general strike in defence of the NHS, voted to back

the London Bridge steward's combine one-day strike on 9 March and demanded that Labour councils fought "as Liverpool fought".

The election of a Marxist leadership of the Broad Left marks a milestone in the fight against job losses, cuts and privatisation and means that the demand for a fighting leadership of Nalگو in London can now become a reality in the near future.

By Ian Page
Secretary, Met. District
Nalگو Broad Left

need to fight 'flexible working'. Nor of how to fight it. Nor of how to win such a fight.

Scargill should take full advantage of the mandate provided last summer at annual conference to campaign amongst the rank and file for the rejection of six-day working. Time is running out. It is not good enough to blame the majority of the NEC for their lack of backbone. The membership have repeatedly shown their willingness to struggle against 'flexible working'—at Bilston Glen, Lady Windsor, Taff Merthyr and others.

Arthur's electoral victory will be a tremendous boost to the rank and file, but having kept faith, we will expect Arthur Scargill to live up to his promise. If the NEC and area leaderships are not up to scratch, we can demand their replacement—and undoubtedly we will—but if the Board are prepared to move as quickly and resolutely as we suspect, whilst still campaigning for the democratic replacement of these leaderships, it may be necessary for Scargill to go direct to the rank and file for support. Such a move could only

be undertaken with the fullest support and involvement of rank and file activists.

In the past, as described in Vic Allen's book *The Militancy of the British Miners*, the left organised through a body known as the Miners' Forum. Left branch and area officials met in closed meetings to discuss strategy and tactics to take the union forward. Today, in the aftermath of the historic strike, where the rank and file cast off all inhibitions, such a method of organisation is out-dated. Grass roots activists demand a say in their union and in the discussions amongst the left.

An open and democratic forum is the only possible vehicle. The National Miners' Broad Left is such a grouping. If Scargill was to openly identify with this body, it would quickly become the focal point within the union and indeed, its backbone. The future of the NUM depends on our ability to build the confidence of the membership in struggle and to develop a clear understanding of strategy and tactics throughout the union.

Stop these Labour cuts

Lambeth

THE LOGIC of not fighting the Tories is to carry out their cuts. That is exactly what the right wing majority on Lambeth council are doing. Cuts of £60 million have been passed, including the closure of nurseries and day centres and the loss of 1000 jobs.

Council staff now face redeployment and then redundancy if they refuse two job offers. As one right-wing councillor said, "You have to have something to make people do as they are told". The very same characters who condoned attacks on Liverpool city council are supporting policies that include no new house building and increasing rents by £2.50 per week. Worse still, the council

have locked out 80 mechanics, who have refused to do flexible working unless an earlier pay deal is honoured.

However, the trade unions and left councillors are prepared to fight back. There has been a successful one-day strike by Nalco members and two council meetings have been disrupted by demonstrators.

The mechanics' picket lines around the depots and town hall have been respected, apart from by right-wing councillors. The joint trade unions have also agreed to take united strike action if the mechanics are not back on the payroll by next Friday.

Linda Bellos and her cohorts have

swallowed 'new realism' hook, line and sinker.

But Wednesday's council meeting brought her down to earth with a bump when she survived a vote of no-confidence by one vote—a sure sign that her days are numbered.

The degeneration of this so-called 'left' council is made even worse by the fact that the majority of the Labour group crawled to power on the backs of the surcharged councillors and a manifesto of no cuts. They have now broken that mandate and unless they do a complete U-turn, they face a confrontation with the unions—a confrontation which could have been avoided if a fight had been mounted against the Tories.

Greg Vincent,
Lambeth JTUC,
personal capacity.

Manchester

MANCHESTER, A CITY with no Tory MP's, is now faced with the prospect of a Tory council takeover next year as a result of widespread dismay at the Labour council's cuts programme.

Not a day goes by without workers, tenants, students and youth clubs lobbying council committees. Car park attendants are the latest group of workers to strike.

Last year, there were 2,500 incidents from assault and rape to petty theft in city parks. Some would not be alive today were it not for the park police. Yet now the council propose to get rid of all the park police in their cuts programme.

Half the cleansing workers on the bins are to go. Yet trade union leaders of Nalco and Gmbatu have done their utmost to limit opposition. However, the real mood amongst workers can be seen by the overwhelming vote of 2,000 Nalco members for a 24 hour strike in support of the nurses.

At the same branch meeting, only disgusting red-baiting by the Communist party, combined with promises of further negotiations and concessions, forced the defeat of calls for immediate action against the cuts.

This will only delay for a time a movement of council workers in the city. Labour in the city must choose—either harness the power of the workers to fight the Tories or the Labour leaders should resign and make way for those who will.

By a Manchester reporter.



THE SENIOR Coleman strikers celebrated a year in dispute with a rally in Manchester attended by about 400 workers. Graham Wyatt, convener of Senior Coleman (pictured above) said: "Solidarity has kept workers battling on. There have been victories; the managing director and financial director were sacked and one of the original four workers sacked was reinstated." But they had been "betrayed by the union leadership."

Dennis Skinner demanded the TUC give full financial support to the strikers—the AEU only give strike pay for one year and the area leadership refuses to levy for the strikers.

In memory of Ken Peeney

LIVERPOOL MILITANT supporters are mourning the death of TGWU full-time official Ken Peeney. Hundreds of bus drivers and labour movement activists packed into a Kirkby church to pay their last respects. Ten buses brought men from every bus garage and the presence of over 60 taxis was a tribute to his work in organising taxi-drivers.

Ken was totally committed to the labour movement and the socialist cause. The Walton TGWU bus garage banner was present on almost every demonstration, with Ken at its side.

As a boy he went to sea on the Cunard boats. He jumped ship in South Africa and found work in the diamond mines. The exploitation of the black workers left a permanent impression on him. Ken later worked in Dingle bus garage and participated in the eleven week Liverpool bus strike of 1968.

As branch secretary at Walton he fought both right-wing cuts and Tory de-regulation.

He was an active Labour party

member for many years and a delegate to Knowsley North CLP where he fought to remove Kilroy Silk as MP. Always a friend to the Young Socialists and Militant supporters, the buses on nearly every demonstration were booked through Ken. Every Saturday he organised an open-top bus during the 1987 Broadgreen campaign.

Always one to speak his mind, the turnout at his funeral indicated the esteem with which he was held.

As a full-time official Ken didn't change. In fact he was always amazed at the lack of fight by many national officials over bus de-regulation. He was once accused by a right-wing official of not only looking, but talking like a bus driver!

Ken will be sadly missed. His death at the early age of 48 has deprived the labour movement of a great class fighter and activist. Militant sends its condolences to Ken's family.

By Militant reporters

Plymouth Citybus on strike

WHEN BUS workers turned up recently to a union meeting they were handed redundancy notices by management. The workers, employed by recently privatised Plymouth Citybus, were supposed to be discussing their response to proposals to cut their wages and conditions.

In response, all the drivers have come out on indefinite strike. Management are desperately trying to recruit a scab workforce, not it appears, with much success. There is 24 hour picketing and tanker drivers have refused to cross the line.

The drivers, members of the TGWU, have been told they can have their jobs back only if they accept cuts in wages and holidays and a longer week.

By Chris Parry

What's happening in your workplace?
Phone in your reports to
the Industrial Editor
on 01-533 3311
before 5pm on Monday.

News in Brief

London UBO strike

STRIKING CIVIL servants in five north-west London unemployment benefit offices (UBO's) received a boost last week when CPSA members in Swiss Cottage, Edgware Road, Kilburn and West End job centres voted to join the dispute.

The strike started when members walked out against compulsory transfers and staff cuts. However, senior management have now made it clear they see this dispute in terms of establishing their 'right' to treat clerical staff as mobile grades.

What this would mean for CPSA members has emerged in management proposals for integrating UBO's and job centres. These open the way for

Department of Employment (DE) staff to be moved backwards and forwards with no guarantees on opening hours, monitoring of performance standards or promotion prospects.

Management are refusing union requests for negotiations at national level. The task now is to force them to open up talks. Plans are in hand to escalate the action into other DE workplaces and into DHSS offices. The 200 strikers are confident they can win. Every CPSA member, however, can help them achieve a successful outcome.

Cheques should be made out to CPSA Fighting Fund (North-west London DE), c/o 7 Fowler House, South Grove, London N15 5QJ.

By Charlie Parker, chair CPSA DE London region, and Steve Bell, branch secretary, NW London MSC, personal capacity.

Brighton

OVER ONE hundred Brighton council workers, members of the National Union of Public Employees (Nupe), took strike action last week in protest at the cuts proposed by the Labour authority which could mean one in every five jobs going.

"Stand and fight" was the message from Tom Barwell, Nupe branch secretary at the rally. Scores of letters supporting our action were read

out, and Gordon Wingate, one of four councillors attending, spoke in support. Senior shop steward, Paul Cadman, and LPYS member, Colin Shepherd, were also on the platform. We're now aiming to link up with Nupe health workers who are balloting for industrial action in defence of jobs and services and will be seeking support for a town-wide campaign against Tory cuts.

By Samantha West, Nupe shop steward, personal capacity.

Sheffield MSC

PICKETS HAVE continued outside the Manpower Services Commission (MSC) in Sheffield, where staff are striking over the imposition of a YTS trainee. Joining them were other civil servants and the Sheffield Co-ordinating Committee Against Unemployment (SCCAU).

One member of management at the Sheffield MSC headquarters has said: "Striking against YTS in MSC is

like Vauxhall workers publicly knocking the Cavalier". But as a striker retorted, car workers would strike if they thought the cars they were producing had no brakes!

A march supporting the strikers takes place on Friday 29 January, from the SCCAU offices to the MSC. The strike is still solid and at the moment management are refusing to discuss the workers' demands.

Letters of support should be sent to Andy Duncan, c/o Sheffield Co-ordinating Committee Against Unemployment, 73 West Street, Sheffield.

Relyon

A STRIKE is looming at the Relyon furniture factory in Wellington, Somerset, after management have broken off negotiations with the Furniture, Timber and Allied Trade Union (FTAT).

The company offered a paltry £5.25 extra, complete with strings, rejecting the union's claim on the grounds that, "We can't afford it".

One worker commented: "They announce record profits in one

breath and plead poverty in the next".

A meeting of 200 endorsed the proposal that there should be a ballot for industrial action. This was despite management refusing to allow the meeting to take place on the company's premises.

It is now up to the local FTAT leadership to give a clear lead—that means first of all campaigning to win a majority in the strike vote. It seems that strike action is the only language that the company understand.

Bermondsey Labour fights on

DEFYING AN angry lobby of 100 party members at their Walworth Road headquarters, the Labour Party's national executive committee (NEC) have voted by 20-4 to suspend the Southwark/Bermondsey constituency party (CLP) and hold an inquiry which could lead up to 40 expulsions.

This is the biggest attack yet on a CLP and a major threat to the democratic rights of all members. From Bermondsey and nationally, there will be a storm of protest hitting the NEC at this assault on party democracy.

Most alarming is that no officers or members of the Bermondsey party have had any notice or explanation of this action, only a report leaked to the South London Press. Yet Neil Kinnock was quoted as saying that he was "already satisfied that there is Militant infiltration".

Such has been the outrage of all party members at the way the report was compiled that ward branches and the CLP general committee have passed unanimous resolutions of opposition.

Former Labour Party

By a Bermondsey Labour Party member

general secretary Jim Mortimer has described the affair as "disgraceful, dishonest and undemocratic... improper and contrary to natural justice". He has defended the conduct of party meetings and challenged allegations of 'intimidation'.

Clause IV

Another allegation is that the 1987 election was not fought on Labour Party policy but on the programme of *Militant*. In fact the candidate, John Bryan, stood firmly on Clause IV, Part 4 of the party constitution, for a socialist society. Can the national leadership say as much?

WEDNESDAY'S NEC meeting also voted 17-5 to report nine members of the Bradford North Labour Party to the National Constitutional Committee for expulsion.

A constituency party spokesman told *Militant*: "Bradford North was a victory for Labour. With socialist policies we increased the party's vote by 50 per cent. The NEC should learn from our socialist campaign, not purge us from the party."

The NEC also rejected a left-wing motion to campaign in support of health workers but passed one which merely said "we understand the nurses' action". NUPE and COHSE leaders Tom Sawyer and Colm O'Kane were more concerned about the 'bad' effect of strikes on Labour's image than in backing the health workers with action.

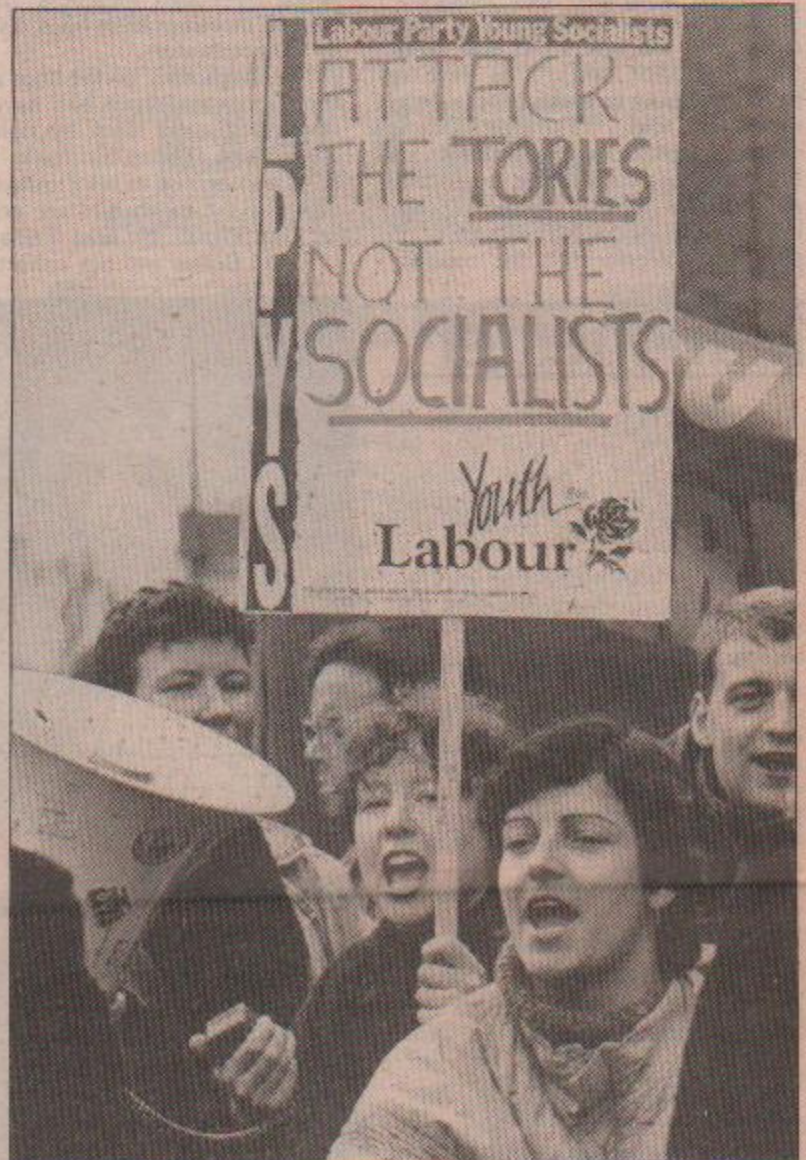
If the Labour leaders had followed John Bryan's example they would have achieved as good a result as Bermondsey's 23 per cent rise in the Labour vote, rather than the 0.5 per cent swing to the Tories in London as a whole.

Indeed the party's Greater London regional secretary wrote to thank John Bryan for his "tremendous efforts in the general election campaign".

The real reason for this attack is the growing support for the Bermondsey party's socialist policies.

Their uncompromising position against cuts in council jobs and services and rent rises has been a beacon for tenants and council workers.

The party has a proud record of defending the working-class people in the borough. A major crisis was averted on the Arnold estate last winter by the party's prompt campaign to force the council to act when pipes froze.



Bermondsey supporters lobby Labour's NEC.

The party's childcare campaign prevented the closure of two nurseries. The women's section organised a march of 500 against the Alton Bill, which Simon Hughes the local Liberal MP voted for.

The leadership have closed the party down when so much campaigning work needs to be done in this area of social deprivation. They cannot have the interests of the people of Bermondsey at heart.

Council workers, parents, nurses, teachers and tenants all need a strong Labour Party to lead their struggles against the Tories.

But no matter what measures the Labour leaders take, they will not stop workers moving into action, not only to defend their jobs and services, but also to reclaim their own party in the name of working-class unity and socialism.

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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.