

Socialist Summer Camp
Militant public meeting

Hear Ted Grant
at Bracelands Campsite,
Gloucestershire.
Tuesday 1 August, 6pm

ISSUE 955 28 July 1989

Bosses double their money

But it's 7 per cent for the rest of us

TWO HUNDRED per cent! That's what three of Britain's highest-paid directors got for pay rises this year. The top 30 executives' salaries rose by three times the inflation rate. And they're telling workers to exercise restraint. A railworker answers back:

OUR BOSS. Bob Reid happily stuffed his pockets with a £213 a week rise. And he's attacking the NUR for sticking out for more than nine per cent. Am I overpaid? I haven't had a holiday in three years.

It highlights the hypocrisy of this system. It's rises for those who can already afford to live comfortably, but there's nothing doing for railworkers who have to work overtime to get a living wage.

The big bosses are emptying out the bank accounts of the industries they're supposed to run. Some of them have been even more outrageous than Reid. British Airways (BA) chairman Lord King isn't even embarrassed about his 116 per cent pay rise.

He got annoyed when worker-shareholders asked him why he was worth £386,000 a year, why other directors' pay had gone up 70 per cent and why another director was given a £900,000 golden handshake.

The airline workers were angry as well. Their pay rises had been kept down to 5-6 per cent. And, like other workers, they're being asked to work harder

for it. Engineering staff at Gatwick are 200 short while BA's profits went up 18 per cent.

There were rumours that the Tories were talking about putting King in charge of British Rail.

He told his audience that the justification for his salary "is in the results before you". That's a load of rubbish. It's not them that get the results, it's the workers. We make the industries run. They're in the game of making profits, which doesn't mean they're doing any good for us.

"If you don't want us to be paid at all, we will do some other job," snapped Lord King, when he was under pressure.

Well, let him come down and do a trackman's job on the railway, working Saturday nights to make a living. My life's in somebody else's hands every day, I have to rely on the look-out man to warn me if a train's coming. And I take home about £85 if I don't work Sunday.

Thatcher says she's appalled at the top people's pay rises. How can she say that when she's given out millions of pounds in tax concessions to the rich?

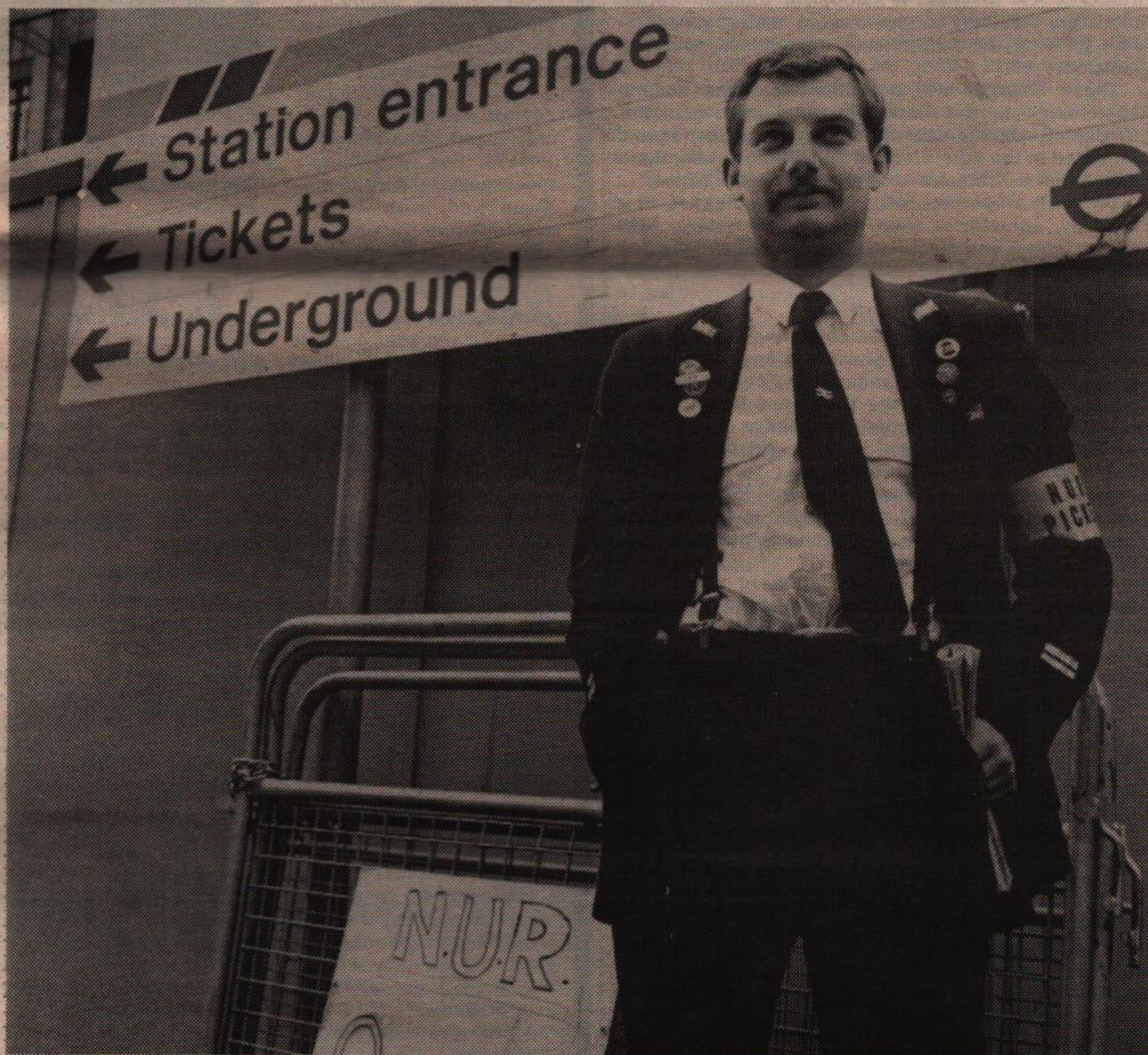


Photo: Steve Gardiner.

Pay up! A Liverpool Street railworker pickets on the sixth NUR strike-day – a huge success despite the press's predictions.

- ★ The TUC and Labour leaders must support all workers fighting for decent pay;
- ★ For a national minimum wage of £150 per week;
- ★ Link wages to the cost of living.

Inside

Soviet miners' strike – page 10

Food poisoning – a recipe for profit – pages 8 and 9

MILITANT will be appearing less often during August, due to the summer holidays. Our next issue will appear on Friday 11 August.

Militant

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Big reshuffle — little change

THATCHER'S CABINET reshuffle, the biggest since 1962, represents a desperate attempt to refurbish the government's image. At least seven per cent behind in the polls, they are panicking at the prospect of defeat in the next general election after a decisive turn in the public mood against the Tories.

Those ministers associated with the the most unpopular policies have been either shifted sideways or removed altogether. Out has gone 'Crash' Channon, and John 'Poverty' Moore. Lord Young and George Younger have retired to more lucrative pastures in business, in Younger's case with a worried glance at his 182 majority in Ayr.

Most predictably, Nicholas Ridley, the least popular minister apart from Thatcher because of poll tax, water privatisation and the environment, has been moved. The most publicity has been attracted by the appointment of John Major to the Foreign Office to replace Geoffrey Howe, which has drawn attention from the problems of all the other ministries.

Kenneth Baker, now Tory party chairman and given the sinecure of Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster to justify Cabinet membership, has the job of regenerating the party for the next election.

But the personalities of ministers will not be decisive, it will be policies and these will be unchanged. Thatcher has elevated a number of younger 'wetter' ministers precisely to give a more 'caring' presentation to what will continue to be ruthless, uncaring policies.

These changes will not alter what has been a sea-change in the popularity of the government. Beginning with the Vale of Glamorgan by-election and repeated in the Euro-election and opinion polls, there has been a dramatic swing against the Tories.

On every important issue the government is in a minority, sometimes even among Tory voters. NHS reform, water and electricity privatisation and the poll tax have created a massive surge of opposition against Thatcher. Even Tory MPs are now beginning to see 'her' as a liability.

In addition there has been an upsurge in industrial struggles. Many sections of workers have moved into action to defend living standards and conditions. The general unpopularity of the Tories and the industrial struggles have interacted to change the whole political psychology: there is now a growing realisation that Thatcher can be beaten.

The enormous groundswell of hatred that has been building up against her for years is now finding an outlet. This will not be diminished by the new-look Cabinet.

The government is on the brink of a crushing economic crisis, with an unsustainably high balance of payments deficit, inflation higher than that of any other major capitalist economy and Lawson's interest rate policy threatening to bring the economy to a dead stop.

Given the possibility of recession in the US in the next year, a major recession is likely here also. That would destroy all the lingering illusions in so-called popular capitalism and provoke an even more furious reaction against the Tories.

Thatcher has felt unable to move Lawson out of the Chancellorship, despite their open disagreements, precisely because of the economic crisis. To move him at a time of high inflation and high interest rates would be an acknowledgement of the real situation facing the economy and could trigger a run on the pound.

In July 1962 the then Tory government was as unpopular as the present one. The Prime Minister, Harold MacMillan, carried out an even bigger Cabinet purge, dubbed afterwards 'the night of the long knives', trying to rebuild the government's image. Yet within a year there were threats from Tory MPs of 'civil war' in the party if he was leader in the coming general election.

In October 1963 MacMillan, forced out on the pretext of an illness, was replaced by Lord Home. It still didn't save the Tories, who lost the 1964 general election.

When it dawns on the strategists of capitalism that Thatcher's reshuffle has not improved the Tories' election prospects and when dozens of Tory MPs see their majorities in jeopardy, there could still be a similar bandwagon to ditch the iron lady herself. Far from signalling a Tory revival, the reshuffle could be the beginning of the end of the Thatcher era.

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Tories' poll tax lies

THE CABINET reshuffle is the first stage in a new propaganda war to convince us that Tories are good for us. Last week's poll tax figures are a good example of what's coming. CLIVE HEEMSKERK checks up on Ridley's arithmetic.

ONE OF Nicholas Ridley's last acts as environment secretary was his list of figures which supposedly showed what we would pay in poll tax in 1990-91. In reality this was the last thing his statement dealt with.

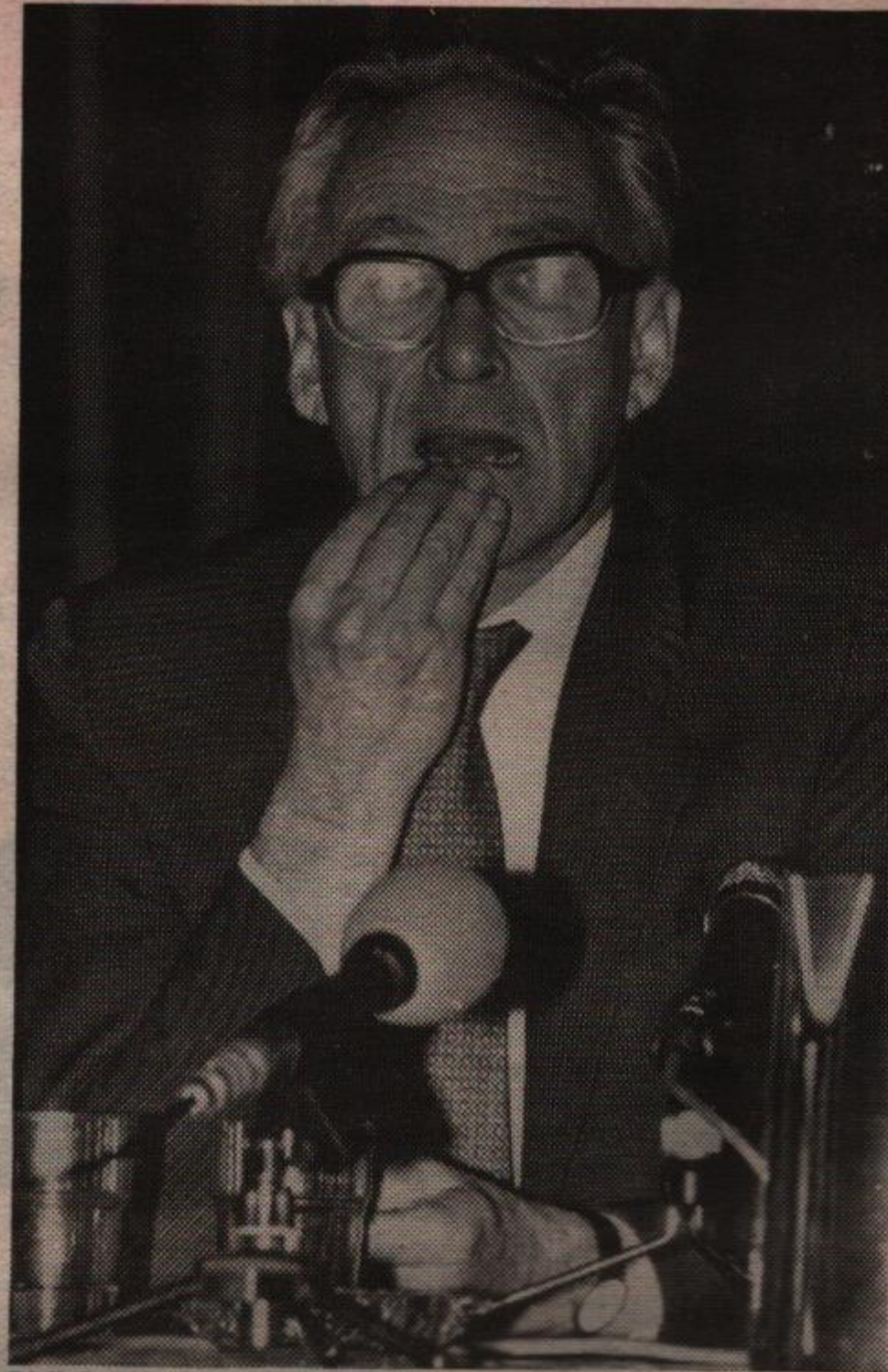
The calculations have been greeted with scepticism. At a very successful meeting to set up a city-wide Nottingham anti-poll tax federation, Notts county councillor Paddy Tipling mocked Ridley's estimate of £242 poll tax in Nottingham in the first year.

He said this would mean £36 million worth of cuts and the sack for 2,000 workers. The real level would be about £320 to begin with, rising sharply after this.

The only fact Ridley gave was that the total amount central government will give to English local authorities in 1990-91 — through revenue support grant, specific grants and rebates from the new national 'uniform business rate' — will be £23.1bn.

The government estimates councils should only spend £32.8 billion in 1990-91. But, as Labour's spokesperson Jack Cunningham said, with 8.5 per cent inflation, just to keep current levels of spending, councils will need to spend £34.1bn — £1.3bn more than Ridley's estimate.

In fact this year councils will spend around £2 billion



Ridley — worried at the thought of a million non-payers in Scotland — and more to come in England and Wales.

more than the government's needs estimate so the shortfall is likely to be even greater.

This sleight of hand allowed Ridley to claim that the total amount of money to be raised in England from the poll tax would be £9.7bn — an "average" £275 per person.

In fact, just for councils to stand still, £11bn would need to be raised — 13.5 per cent more than Ridley's "estimate".

With these fraudulent figures Ridley then produced a list of "illustrative charges" of what the poll tax would have been this year "had the new system

Photo: Militant

been in force".

The press reprinted these figures. True, they do include changes to the so-called 'safety net' arrangements which will affect poll tax levels next April. (See below).

But they massively underestimate what needs to be raised from the poll tax. They are a fraud — designed to sow confusion and to shift responsibility for the inevitable higher charges on so-called 'high-spending' Labour councils.

You can't find the real figure just by adding 13.5 per cent to Ridley's. 13.5 per cent is a national figure, it underestimates the actual increases that will be needed. And it doesn't allow for wage increases arising, say, from the Nalco dispute.

The anti-poll tax unions (APTUs) must expose Ridley's figures for what they are, but at this stage everything is speculative.

Autumn

The government will not announce until autumn how it will distribute the £23.1bn between the different councils. This announcement will decisively affect our poll tax bills.

Without this information, as Ridley conceded under questioning, no authority can calculate what its community charge may be next year. In other words, these figures were just a propaganda exercise.

Moving the safety net

WHAT IMPACT will the 'safety net' arrangements have on poll tax bills next April?

Originally the 'safety net' was introduced to hide the poll tax's initial effects in, mainly, deprived inner city areas, transferring £625m to 79 councils by charging higher poll tax in other areas.

But Tory backbenchers complained that their constituencies, with few services and low-spending Tory councils, would 'subsidise' 'high-spending' Labour councils.

So Ridley added £100m to the £625m 'pool' of safety-net money and cut 172 councils' contribution to the 'pool'. But Tory backbencher Rhodes Boyson still argued that the new scheme will "damage our support in a lot of areas."

Moreover, these reductions were offset by 130

councils having to increase their contributions. To reduce poll tax by £17 per person in affluent Woking, Haringey will have to pay £15 per person into the 'pool'.

Whoever draws the Tory maps that show Haringey as anything but a deprived inner-city borough? They must come from another planet. Now Manchester, Salford, Knowsley and Newcastle will also contribute to the pool!

The safety net will reduce poll tax bills in the

first year in some inner-city areas but the decisive factor will be the level of government grants councils receive.

Thatcher is alarmed at the mass movement developing against the poll tax and is considering the possibility of a retreat. She told her backbench committee that her "hands were not tied for future years" over safety-net payments.

Neil Kinnock has pointed to possible "pork-barrel promises" over the poll tax. But if he put himself and the labour movement at the head of a mass movement of non-payment, they could force the Tories to scrap the poll tax completely!

THE PRESS claimed that the inner London borough of Tower Hamlets would pay £153 per person, the second lowest poll tax in the country.

Under Ridley's accounting, £62.4 million would have to be raised from the 'domestic sector' — poll tax and special needs money — to pay for the borough's services.

But if the borough's spending rises in line with inflation, they'll need £80.4 million. With Ridley's special needs figure providing £44 million, that would leave a poll tax bill of over £300 per person, nearly twice what the Tories claim.

Solidarity with soviet miners

WORKERS' COMMITTEES and unofficial socialist opposition groups in the USSR have called on socialists in the West for support for the Soviet miners' strikes and the right to form independent trade unions.

Labour MP Terry Fields has tabled an Early Day Motion (below) in Parliament together with other Labour MPs.

They are calling on trade unionists and Labour Party members to pass resolutions of support for miners and others involved in industrial struggle and in support of the right to form independent trade unions.

The motion calls for support for "miners and other workers presently

on strike in the Soviet Union who are demanding proper living conditions and a socialist society free from bureaucracy and corruption, who are waging their struggle through the establishment of independent trade unions, which open the way for the establishment of genuine workers' democracy based on a planned economy."

Democracy

Terry's motion supports Lenin's four points for a democratic socialist workers' state. "Not only election but the right of recall at any time; wages to be no higher than the wages of the

workers." The motion supports the call for no permanent bureaucracy and no standing army but the armed people.

It continues: "This movement, in the true tradition of international socialist and labour solidarity will provide a tremendous inspiration to workers all over the world, who are struggling against capitalist and Stalinist societies."

Resolutions and messages should be sent to Socialist Solidarity with Soviet Workers, c/o Terry Fields MP, House of Commons, London SW1A 0AA.

See page 10.

Railworkers answer back



Photo: Militant

When the leaders of railworkers' union NUR rejected British Rail's third offer, Labour leader Neil Kinnock told them they should accept it. A London railworker addresses an open letter to Kinnock giving his and his workmates' reaction.

Dear Mr Kinnock,
I was absolutely appalled at your speech last weekend. You said that railworkers like myself should accept the 8.8 per cent which our employers had offered as there was nothing more to gain.

At a critical time for our dispute when management were pulling out all the stops to try and get people back to work and disregard the union, I find it disgusting that you as leader of the Labour Party should be siding with the bosses.

This is indirectly encouraging people to ignore strike calls by saying: "There's no point in going on with the dispute."

If you are leader of Her Majesty's loyal opposition on over £40,000 a year, 8.8 per cent might give you a big rise. But for low-paid railworkers like myself on just over £112 a week, it's peanuts.

Most of the blokes I've talked to about this are incensed by your remarks. They were saying if you're like this when

you're in opposition what are you going to be like in power?

It's about time you went and visited a picket line to get the real facts of living in Tory Britain and not just to read about them through the newspapers.

You're the leader of the Labour Party. The working class and the unions built up the party which gave you your position. But you stood back when the miners fought for their jobs and now you seem to be embarrassed by our strike. We want you representing us, not accepting the arguments of the bosses.

If you're with us, then a few well-chosen speeches of support would be in order, rather than phrases flung to the well-heeled journalists of the Tory press. Remarks like yours do nothing but cut across the attempts at union solidarity we are trying to build.

**Yours,
A rail striker.**

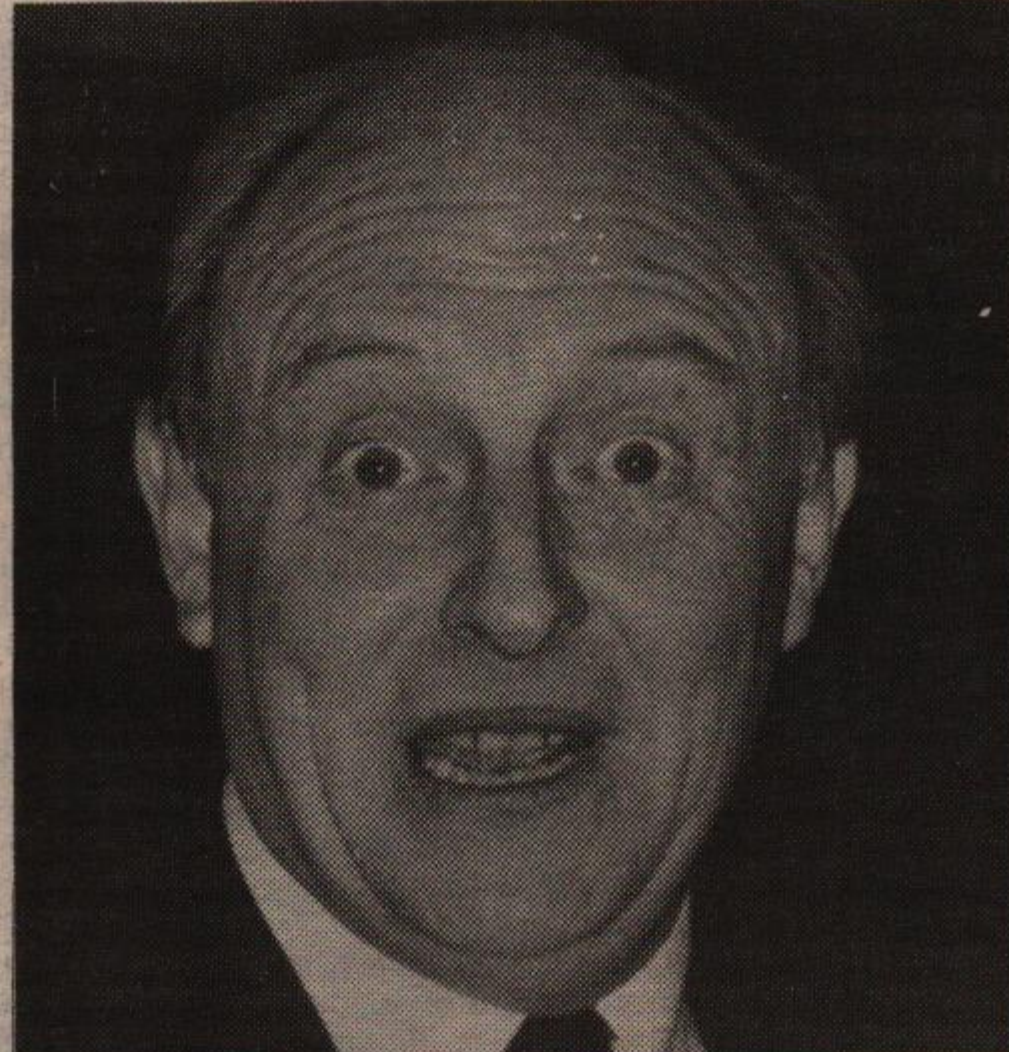


Photo: Steve Gardiner

What Neil should have said

IT'S A pity Neil Kinnock didn't make a speech like the one a striking railworker made at the Middlesbrough Nalgo rally last week:

"British Rail don't allow us to speak about the dispute so I'll probably get the sack tomorrow.

"I believe that the CBI and Thatcher have organised these strikes - we were all offered seven per cent.

"Workers in the NUR are so low-paid many claim family credit and many have to work loads of overtime. The 8.8 per cent offer is rubbish. We need a living wage. And we need massive investment on the railways.

"Maggie says there is no more money but she's spent a fortune in redundancy money, getting rid of 40,000 employees from the railway.

"The NUR banner says: 'Workers of the world, unite'. I'm here today to show that solidarity with you."

Oh, Lady Porter, what did you do?

HOW CAN you stop a Tory council going Labour? Elbow out the Labour voters and move in Tories!

By Paul Kershaw

How do you solve the problems of poverty and bad housing? Get rid of the poor and move in the rich!

This, according to last week's *Panorama*, seems to be the policy of the City of Westminster's 'model' Tory council. The council leader is Lady Shirley Porter, heiress to Tesco stores and much praised by Thatcher.

She is already notorious for pushing through the sale of cemeteries at 5p a time, a better bargain than any you'll find at Tesco, except for the ratepayers.

Scared by Labour advances in the last council elections, local Tory bigwigs laid plans to stop Labour ever getting a majority. Initially the idea was to designate empty council flats for sale in marginal wards which the Tories needed to hold to keep control.

Officers warned this could be illegal so the council designated some flats in other wards as well. But in practice 81 per cent will be put up for sale as they become empty in marginal wards, compared to 36 per cent elsewhere.

This policy will cost Westminster an estimated £7.4 million by March 1990 in losses on vacant property and costs of alternative provision for the homeless.

Even dissident Tory councillor Patricia Kirwan thinks the policy

of selling flats to anyone who lives or works in the borough "attracting the upwardly-mobile Conservative type voter" while moving homeless families out into bed-and-breakfasts outside the borough is "gerrymandering".

Homeless

Westminster includes 10 Downing Street and Buckingham Palace but many more live on run-down council estates and grotty private bedsits. Many are homeless, some living in cardboard boxes in West End side streets.

The council gladly helps the upwardly-mobile but rehuses no-one off its waiting list.

Panorama highlighted the case

of a single parent, eventually rehoused in Hermes Point, a run-down tower block with exposed asbestos. There was also the man with cancer who applied for a ground-floor flat. When the suitable flats became available, they were booked up at £50 a week.

Maybe the cost of this strategy is why council rents went up 25 per cent last year.

Housing was only one prong of the plan which included dossiers on the private affairs of Labour councillors and their associates.

Local MP and then national Tory Party chairman Peter Brooke (now Northern Ireland secretary) was reputedly 'worried' about the dirty tricks proposal.

But was he worried about the homeless? Will he and Mrs Thate-

her keep supporting Lady Porter?

The leader of the house has defended Westminster, accusing the BBC of conducting trial by television. That's rich. When Liverpool and Clay Cross councillors were surcharged for holding down rents and housing working-class people, the media tried to crucify the councillors. No complaints then about trial by television.

Wealth

Westminster's leaders may have embarrassed the Tories nationally by getting found out. But their policy of transferring wealth from poor to rich is, after all, the very cornerstone of Thatcher's strategy.

Beware water thieves!

ONE OF London's main reservoirs at Hampton went out of operation last week because of insect larvae in the water supplies, right in the middle of a heatwave and drought.

In Catford, south London, two men had taken advantage of the crisis, siphoned off water from a static tank and charged pensioners £2 a bucket.

A police spokesman told

the press: "Water belongs to us all and cannot be sold in this way. We are asking everyone to inform us immediately if anyone attempts to sell them water."

The police should look into Nicholas Ridley and his friends who are siphoning off and selling the entire water industry. The popularity of water privatisation, never high, has completely evaporated during the

drought.

Pensioner Don Jones said his road in Catford had its water cut off. "There's a standpipe where you queued. Someone said it gave Catford an olde world look - bloody nonsense, though Thatcher wants to put the clock back to before I was born with privatisation."

Water experts have been gagged from speaking about the dangers of nitrate

pollution in water and the cost of dealing with it. Scientists have been told they could face criminal proceedings if they come clean.

Nitrates can cause stomach cancer and can reduce the oxygen intake in small babies. But the Tories consider that irrelevant compared to the danger of stopping investors buying water shares!

THE TORIES believe you should pay for water; our area is a testing ground for water meters. 70 people turned up at Clifton and Hotwell Labour Party's public meeting to protest at water bills 50 to 100 per cent higher than in non-metered areas of Bristol.

Water metering is inevitable with privatisation where profit rules. Lowest-income families will be hardest hit and disconnections will soar. Some families will face a permanent drought.

People angrily challenged represen-

tatives of the private Bristol water company at the meeting. Why had they introduced the meters without consultation? "We did consult," claimed the water company. "All we got was PR," the crowd shouted.

The government has invested heavily in these experiments, money which could have gone to clean up the system.

The company claimed that if a meter was suspect you could have it checked free of charge but it would

cost you £70 if the meter was proved to be alright!

It's an experiment here for three years but the Tories want it nationwide. Labour's policy review had no mention of any policy on water! This is crazy. The unions should put forward a policy of renationalisation under the control of workers in the industry and other workers/consumers. We should run water for the good of all.

By Helen and Steve



Free

Mahmoud

Masarwa

THE ISRAELI state is trying to prove that Palestinian socialist Mahmoud Masarwa, currently standing trial in Tel Aviv, is guilty of espionage.

Their only evidence is a 'confession' given under torture. Trying to show it was given willingly, they argue that Mahmoud initially didn't complain to the authorities about the beatings and threats he received. Mahmoud explained

that all the officials he was allowed to see were involved in covering up the torture. When the judge asked who had beaten him, Mahmoud replied: "Your masters, the Shabak (secret police)."

It is the first time in living memory that a trial of this type is being held publicly in Israel. The pressure of international protest is undoubtedly having an effect. The next trial date is 17 August.

Rush protests to Prime Minister's Office, 3 Kaplan Street, Jerusalem, Israel 91919. Messages of support to Mahmoud Masarwa, Prison No 0018.342, Nizan, Prison Service Ramle, Israel.

Copies and donations to Labour Movement Campaign for the Release of Mahmoud Masarwa, PO Box 524, London E2.

FIGHTING THE POLL TAX

London preparing to fight back

I SPENT over three days in London recently, speaking at seven anti-poll tax unions (APTUs) as well as to members of local government union Nalگو on their picket lines.

Everyone I spoke to was amazed to hear of the million who are still not paying the poll tax in Scotland. There has been a deliberate and deafening silence in the press and TV. The news filled them with confidence to get involved with local APTUs and build for mass non-payment next year.

A new APTU was set up on Tabard estate in Bermondsey and even in the Tory suburb of Kingston where the local Labour Party Young Socialists branch had great success in getting 50 to the meeting.

One man was greeted with great applause when he said: "I'm 82 and my income is £42 a week. If Kingston can get the poll tax out of me they'll be doing very well because I'm not paying." He donated £1 to the APTU before the meeting started.

But the best response was from Nalگو workers. I told a meeting of about 200 Westminster Nalگو members of the success of the non-payment movement in Scotland and how the poll tax would be used to try to

destroy local government jobs and services.

I spoke to about a dozen pickets on Hammersmith Nalگو's picket lines who all signed up to join their local APTUs and were really keen to set up workplace APTUs as well.

Later in the morning I spoke to about 150 people at Hammersmith Nalگو's rally. Everyone started cheering when I said that a million people hadn't paid.

My three or four days in London were tiring but they've given me new enthusiasm and confidence because I've now got a message for non-payers in Scotland. Nalگو members and people on the estates are inspired by our success. APTUs are springing up all over London and they are building for mass non-payment next year.

I've also got a message for the Tories. They wanted to divide the working class by bringing poll tax in this year in Scotland. Well, you're failing. We're building a united mass non-payment campaign the length and breadth of Britain and it won't be defeated.

By Anne Craig, treasurer, Scottish APT federation

Carnival for the rich

"HAVE YOU got any bricks mate?" was the most common comment at the Medway carnival, as anti-poll tax campaigners sold wet sponges to throw at Maggle locked in 'ye olde poll tax stocks'.

Parading through the streets of Rochester and Chatham, the universal anger at the poll tax was plain. We fell further and

further behind the other floats as people fought for a chance to throw a sponge.

Even the bloke in the new BMW didn't seem to mind when a stray sponge landed through his sun roof!

Over £50 was raised for our anti-poll tax union and 1,500 leaflets headlined "Poll tax - carnival for the rich" were given out. Many

people said we should have been at the front of the parade.

The leader of the Tories on the council recently told the local paper that he had never heard of the anti-poll tax union. They certainly have now!

By Martin Cock, Medway anti-poll tax union.

Fiery Dundee

DUNDEE CITY Square echoed to chants of "We're not paying the poll tax" when 300 gathered to burn their poll tax payment books. The protest was organised by the Tayside anti-poll tax union federation.

There were workers, pensioners and students - all united behind the call for non-payment. Dundee has never seen a demonstration like it, as the crowds queued up to throw their payment books on the fire.

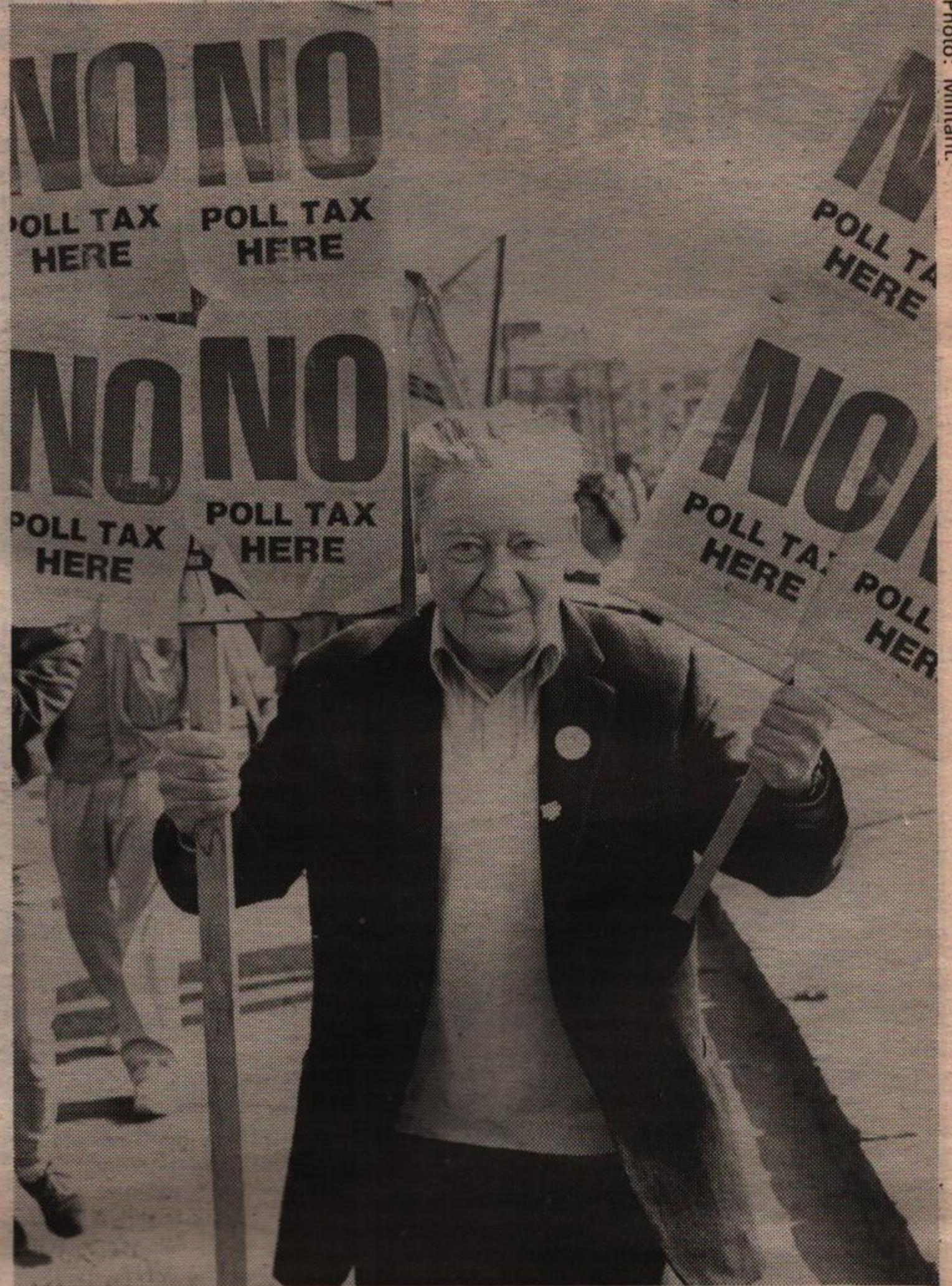
Anger in the city has been building up because virtually everyone has received demands for the full tax with no rebate. Over 4,500 people queued up for rebate forms at one office in just two weeks.

Speakers at the protest said that the non-payment campaign would press the regional council not to prosecute non-payers and to refuse to collect the tax. 150 signed up for the anti-poll tax unions and 25 copies of *Militant* were sold.

The campaign is planning a 'Poll tax mobile' which will tour the estates in the city blasting the anti-poll tax message over loud speakers.

There are also plans for a trade unions for non-payment conference and another mass demonstration.

By Jim Bennett, Tayside APT federation



He's definitely not paying.

Down Lambeth way

RUMOUR HAS it that Lambeth's depleted number of returned registration forms are hidden in black plastic bags somewhere in the town hall.

The council has yet to buy a £2 million computer to start poll tax registration and is still refusing to fine those who refuse to register. This is quite handy because only 25 per cent

have sent their forms back so far and a third of those have been spoiled or had abuse written on them.

40 people from the local anti-poll tax unions lobbied the town hall against the implementation of the tax. Dozens stopped to sign the petitions or take leaflets. Eventually the council failed to make a decision about the com-

puter because the computer company withdrew from the contract.

It is all adding to further delay in chasing up the 83,000 who haven't registered and has really boosted the local campaign against the tax.

By Steve Nally, Ashmole anti-poll tax union, Vauxhall

SELL MILITANT

IF YOU'RE reading *Militant* for the first time, you might not know that a million Scottish people are refusing to pay their poll tax.

You'd also be forgiven for not knowing that hundreds of thousands have mobilised in anti-poll tax unions, or that demonstrations of 20,000 marched in Glasgow both in March and June.

There's a conspiracy of silence in the media. Tory editors understand that if workers in England and Wales knew the fightback was getting such a response, they would follow Scotland's lead.

Every week, *Militant* keeps workers around the country informed of the poll tax fight. And there have been impressive sales around anti-

poll tax activity. The consistently high sale at the Monument in Newcastle results from innovative selling methods.

Using anti-poll tax petitions, stalls and signing up names for the anti-poll tax unions (APTUs), sellers use *Militant's* unique material on the poll tax. 112 were sold this week and £45 raised for the fighting fund.

Swansea sellers sold 40 papers knocking on just 100 doors in Penlan estate before an APTU meeting. Sellers made an appeal for people to buy and sell *Militant* at an APTU meeting and every new person there bought one.

28 *Militants* were sold during anti-poll tax work in Grimsby. Two

sellers sold 12 during their first sale at Safeway at Stamford Hill using petitions.

"We're finding the coverage in *Militant* gets more and more people involved in our anti-poll tax work," says a seller in Hackney where 17 were sold on Mare Street and 12 to DLO workers. Another dozen were sold at an APTU meeting in Stirchley, Birmingham and 15 at a Nalگو meeting in Tyneside.

The Tories say their cabinet reshuffle is designed to present their unpopular policies more acceptably. That means more misleading propaganda. *Militant* must reach every member of the APTUs to combat these lies. It's the best weapon we've got, use it!

WHERE TO FIND US

For details of *Militant* meetings in the following areas please contact:

LONDON
George Roberts
01 739 9123

EAST MIDLANDS
Andy Jackson
0602 423001

WEST MIDLANDS
Bill Mullins
021 552 7624

MERSEYSIDE
Richard Venton
051 260 3111

EASTERN
Theresa MacKay
0473 713179

NORTHERN
Bill Hopwood
091 276 1736

SOUTHERN
0703 211995

MANCHESTER/LANCS
Mike Johnson
061 273 8648

YORKS/HUMBERSIDE
Dave Milson
0742 480878

STRATHCLYDE
041 221 1443

SOUTH WEST
0272 631471

WALES
0222 736682

EAST OF SCOTLAND
031 661 4078

Poll tax strikers

LABOUR CONTROLLED Lothian regional council asked local government union Nalگو for an exemption from last week's strike - to deal with the Tories' poll tax.

They claimed they wanted finance department staff to process poll tax rebate forms. Nalگو might look with some sympathy to requests to exempt, say, people who work with the elderly. But not workers who are being told to implement a poll tax which hits at those the council is supposed to be helping.

Needless to say the Nalگو branch refused the exemption. The finance department have had solid turnouts on the picket lines and almost 100 per cent on strike.

PUBLIC MEETING
SAY NO POLL TAX IN BOW
Wednesday 2 August 7.30pm
Bow North Youth Club, Parnell Road

Anti-poll tax posters
Militant: No Poll Tax Here, Don't Collect, Don't Pay - A2 size red & black.
Anti-poll tax union blanks:
No Poll Tax Here,
space for local details A2 size red and black.
£5 per 100 + 50p p&p.
Also available from *Militant*:
Poster/broadsheet from issue 949
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Racism in Liverpool: who is to blame?

FOR BLACK people in Liverpool 8, life is a grim struggle against racial discrimination and harassment. That is clear from the interim report of an inquiry by Lord Gifford, commissioned by the leader of Liverpool city council.

By Colin de Freitas

But while Gifford diagnoses the problems, he has no solutions and much of his report is devoted to attacks on the 47 surcharged and disqualified councillors of the previous Labour council administration who took concrete measures to solve the problems faced by Liverpool's blacks.

Facts and figures alone cannot bring out the oppression of this section of the community. Unemployment, racism and discrimination have shaped the psychology of the black scouser. Gifford accurately describes them as one of the most oppressed communities in the country.

Unemployment runs at 70 to 80 per cent. This is not just a phenomenon of the '80s. So bad is the level of discrimination that even in the city's boom years, unemployment was part of life for Liverpool's blacks.

Historically confined to the south-end of the city, blacks are constantly under the threat of racial harassment, particularly if they venture beyond the boundaries of Liverpool 8.

From an early age black youth are criminalised by the police and courts. Their expressions of anger, bitterness and frustration are bridled by the systematic harassment of the state. Toxteth was the scene of the worst riots seen in Britain this century.

The report highlights the racism of the police. One former policeman who blew the whistle and gave evidence to Gifford was arrested on the morning he was due to appear at the press conference to launch the report.

But few of Gifford's findings are new. Since 1981 there have been at least five major inquiries, dozens of reports, meetings and conferences on the conditions of blacks in Liverpool, all of which have more or less drawn the same conclusions.

The inquiry only covers the 47's period of office. It would seem the blame for centuries of racism and discrimination in Liverpool is to be laid at their door.

Most of the 'evidence' to this inquiry has come from those involved in 'community projects',

mainly supporters of the Liverpool Black Caucus, a self-appointed clique of 'community leaders'. The young blacks in Liverpool 8 have had little input into it.

Will this inquiry be linked to a campaign to effect fundamental changes for Liverpool's blacks or will it be yet another means for attacking the record of the former city council?

The inquiry was initiated by Keva Coombes, the present leader of Liverpool city council, without any reference to the Labour group, at the prompting of people in and around the Black Caucus.

These 'leaders' see it as a means of launching a political attack on the previous Labour administration and of strengthening their negotiating powers with Coombes and co for further funding of their own institutions and future projects.

This can be gleaned from some of the evidence given to the inquiry. Sean Deckon of the Federation of Black Liverpool Organisations, said that, by funding the inquiry, the city council showed it wanted to "...change the situation for Liverpool-born black people".

But what changes does Deckon recommend? "Every area of the council needs a race relations adviser, from plumbing right up to the chief executive position." Again: "We are hoping that because the city council have initiated it (the inquiry) they will show the political will to do something about it."

But what does he want? After some reference to contract compliance, his most important point is: "With regard to local and voluntary agencies, there has to be some kind of long-term establishment towards financing staffing projects."

Proliferation

Militant has never been opposed to funding viable projects to improve people's lives. But there is a proliferation of 'community group projects' throughout Liverpool 8 which have had little if any effect on the problems of blacks. These people's 'solutions' are measures to promote their own material interests.

For his part, Keva Coombes, has sponsored the inquiry as a moral battering-ram to be used within the Labour Group to advocate the funding of these projects, to escape the pressure of the Black Caucus and to give the appearance that something is be-



Photo: Militant

Policing in Liverpool 8 - Gifford condemns police racism.

ing done for blacks.

As Deckon said to Gifford: "I see one of the main functions of this inquiry is to particularly strengthen his hand in having a comprehensive policy and programme to tackle these problems."

This approach is far cheaper and less risky for Coombes than continuing the pace of house-building in Liverpool 8 begun by the 47.

The transcript of the inquiry is riddled with distortion and downright lies on the record of the 47 and numerous political attacks on *Militant*. These responses are encouraged by the inquiry team.

For example Sam Semoff, secretary of the Granby ward Labour Party, which covers most of Liverpool 8, and a supporter of the Black Caucus, told the inquiry: "If anything, the black community and the community of Liverpool 8 saw the previous Labour group as their main enemy, more so than the current government!"

Yet under the 47's administra-

tion his ward moved from being a marginal to a safe seat for Labour, a process accelerated when a black candidate, who in reality was supported by his ward Labour Party, stood against the official candidate.

House-building

Not one mention is made in the transcript of the massive house-building programme in Liverpool 8, not a word on other successful initiatives taken by the 47 to deal with the problems of Liverpool 8 (See the chapter on Rebuilding Liverpool 8 in Peter Taaffe's and Tony Mulhearn's *Liverpool, A City that Dared to Fight*).

These success were attained at a time when the 47 were being hauled through the Tory courts, vilified in the press, attacked by the leader of their own party and eventually surcharged and disbarred from office.

Their race initiatives were continually blocked by the coalition of the Liverpool Nalگو leadership

and the local race relations industry - the very same people who are giving evidence to the Gifford inquiry today.

We can only conclude that this inquiry is a cynical attempt by interested parties to use Liverpool blacks' problems for their own ends.

Liz Drysdale, one of the most vociferous supporters of the Black Caucus and now a councillor for the area, epitomises the outlook and aspirations of these community leaders. When asked by Gifford if she was "obviously a local resident?", she replied: "No, not obviously at all, the ghetto does expand now and then to let one or two of us out."

These people's policies may help a few more 'leaders' to escape from the ghetto, but the policies of the 47 offered a way out of poverty and oppression for the whole of Liverpool's black population.

And it is to the ideas of the 47 that the Liverpool working class, black and white, will return.

Liverpool - A City That Dared To Fight

by Peter Taaffe and Tony Mulhearn

Hardback £9.95 Softback £6.95

Available from World Socialist Books, 3/13 Hepscoth Road, London E9 5HB.

Give us your summer cash

YOU COULD be paying the same poll tax as John Ashcroft, or more. He's the chairman of Coloroll and he got 319 per cent pay increase last year, taking his salary to £517,000 per year.

This is a clear example of how divided and unfair capitalism is. In the *Financial Times* one boss warns his friends that if they carry on taking rises like this regardless of performance, they are "asking for trouble". How right he is! We can't afford to wait to overthrow capitalism.

To build a mass movement to change society we need a workers' paper.

We still desperately need your cash over the summer period. The struggle to defend workers' rights against

the bosses' can never afford to rest.

Adam Gosnav, a young worker from Peckham, has shown his support by donating £120 to our fighting fund. An anonymous reader from the West Midlands has sent £500.

R Talbot from London sent £40. Alan Batchelor, Coventry Nucps, sent £15. Ann Bates and Mr and Mrs Silcock from Leicester each sent £10.

We appeal to all our readers to send a donation and help us reach our target by Tuesday 5 September.

Three sellers with anti-poll tax petitions collected £51 last Saturday in Preston. One of them has raised £69 in the past week on just four activities.

In Stockton sellers raised £15.42 selling *Militant* anti-poll tax stickers and a Homerton seller raised £18 in just one day selling stickers and collecting extras. In every area this success can be repeated. So why not organise a stall this Saturday and use petitions, stickers and tins?

Take advantage of the hot weather and organise a barbecue like our readers in Acton who raised £94. In Camden our readers opted for a jumble sale and raised £48.77.

Thanks to Lindsey Common, Nottingham, £8; Conrad Lashley, Leicester Natfhe, £5; James Clark of Maidenhead, £5; Peter Readdy, Wigan, £3; D Brazier, Leicester, £3; D Tremlett, Exeter, £3.

FIGHTING FUND

TARGET £45,000 BY 5 SEPT

WEEK 3

Area	Received	% of target achieved	Target
1 South East	603		1,350
2 West Midlands	832		3,000
3 East Midlands	345		2,300
4 London	966		6,500
5 Manchester/Lancs	327		2,750
6 South West	129		1,150
7 Eastern	189		1,750
8 Merseyside	344		5,200
9 Scotland West	119		3,200
10 Yorkshire	133		4,000
11 Wales	82		2,800
12 Northern	69		2,400
13 Scotland East	53		1,900
14 Southern	39		1,700
15 National	172		5,000
Total	4,402		45,000

THIS WEEK £1,570



Protecting a racket

THE ONLY national leader to take as many security guards (80) as President Bush to the celebrations of the French revolution was President Mobutu of Zaire.

He is probably worried for his own safety because he has systematically looted the coffers of his poverty-stricken country for over two decades.

His personal wealth is reckoned at £3.2 billion, though Mobutu modestly estimates it "to total less than £33 million. What is that after 22 years as head of state of such a big country?" Whichever figure you believe, it obviously takes a lot of security to protect it.

Pump up the prices

THE GOVERNMENT recently planned to restrict Britain's big six brewers by putting an upper limit of 2,000 on pubs which are tied to their products. The brewers grouped together in a massive campaign of opposition and the Tories watered down their beer proposals.

Now the worst that will happen is that big brewers will be expected to get rid of half their pubs over the first 2,000. The top six will still own 23,000 pubs.

One of the brewers' arguments was that prices would rise if the government got its way. A few weeks later brewing giant Whitbread and Bass put up the price of a pint of beer by as much as 10p. Others followed suit. The Tories' fight against inflation has gone down the drain.

Over a barrel

THATCHER DIDN'T accuse the brewers of spreading inflation like she does when workers put in a pay claim. The Tories could lose massive sums of money if the brewers got bitter. In 1987 Whitbread gave £76,500 directly to the Tories. Other brewers are as generous if not more so.

On yer bike

WHEN THE radio programme *Any Questions* was picketed in Newcastle by striking BBC workers, one of the panellists, Labour spokesman Gordon Brown, rightly refused to cross the picket lines.

The BBC rang round for replacements. Jonathan Porritt, director of Friends of the Earth, unfortunately showed himself to be a friend of the Tories by taking Brown's place. But to prove he's got some principles he cycled to Kings Cross — and missed the train to Newcastle.

Mismatch

THE BRYANT and May match factory in east London, made famous by the 1889 matchgirls' strike, was being transformed into very expensive dwellings by Kentish Property Group. On 19 July, Kentish suspended share dealings. Romantics were hoping it was the ghosts of the pioneer trade unionists troubling the developers, but it was just the collapse of the Dockland housing boom.

At work and play

LAST WEEK'S Open golf championship at Troon was open wallet time for some people.

The top players earned a lot. Ian Woosnam set out in golf with the intention of becoming a millionaire and succeeded, partly by playing in South Africa.

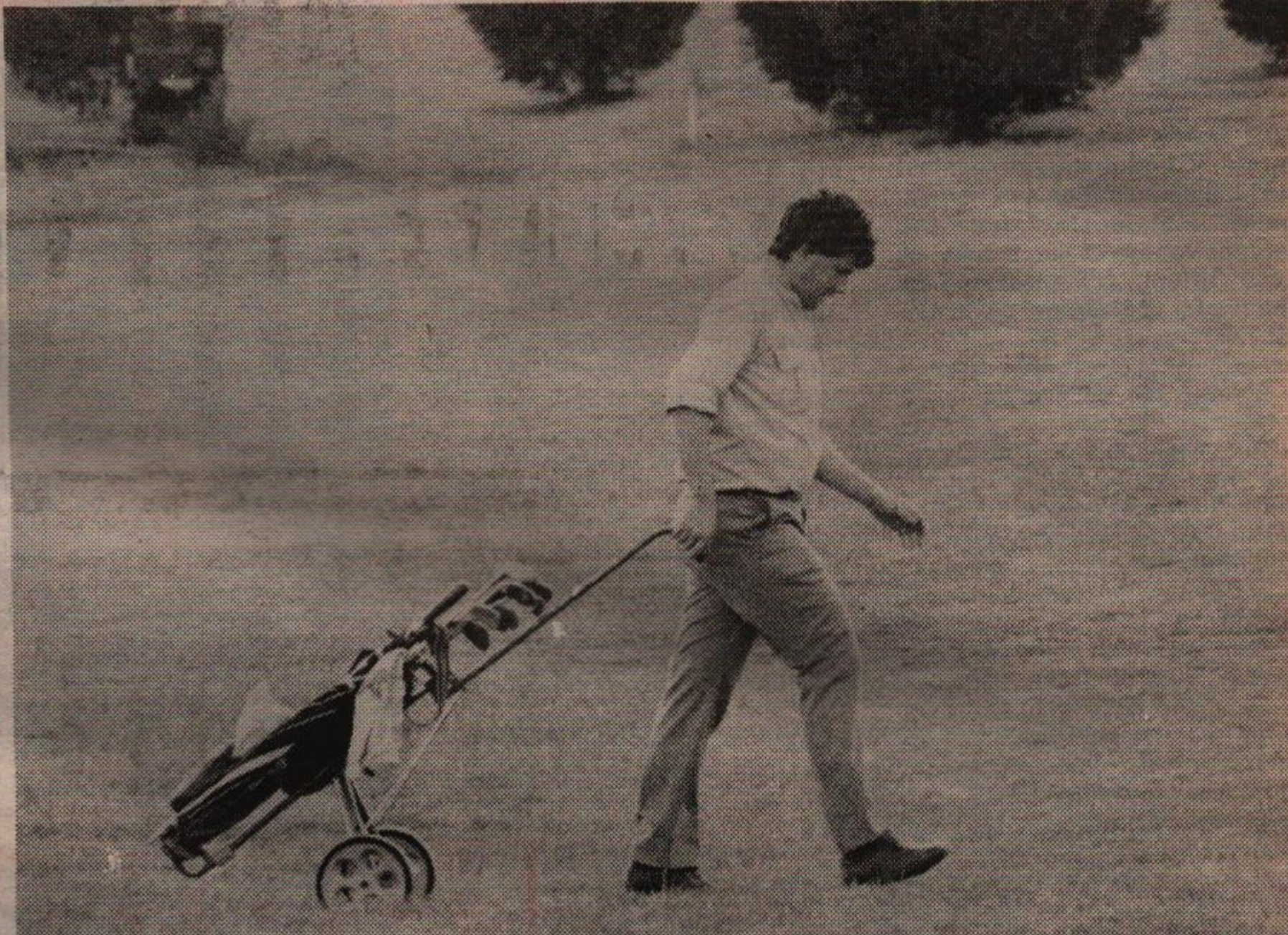
The hospitality tents were overflowing and so were most of the people inside them! But it was all in the cause of business, they claim. Big deals hit the fairway or fell in the bunkers accompanied by the sound of champagne corks popping.

Golf is no longer just a game for many people, it's a mark of status and privilege. And the two articles below show how this is reflected in the pay and conditions golf clubs impose on some employees.

GOLF CADDIES face the same casual system which the dockers faced before the national dock labour scheme. You line up at work every morning, hoping to be picked out and given a job.

A few years ago, I worked as a caddy at a well-known Scottish golf course. If any golfer wants a caddy he asks the starter who looks over the wall and selects someone.

Of course if you buy the starter a drink in the pub the night before you may stand a better chance. If no-one wants a caddy or no-one chooses you, you sit round all day or even all week with no income.



Golf: an expensive hobby, but poor pay for the caddies.

The conditions are appalling. The caddies' toilet is no more than an open sewer. Trade union rights are non-existent and you live in fear of getting on the wrong side of the starter or golf professional.

They have the power to send you down the road, suspend you, for a week, a month or even for life. This punishment can be invoked for any reason, usually for refusing to work for a particularly disagreeable golfer or for asking too much for a fee. There is no right of appeal.

While I worked there, one young lad was hit on the head by a golf ball. He was taken to

hospital, luckily he was let out after treatment. Compensation wasn't a word in their vocabulary. Because he was unconscious he couldn't finish the round so he didn't even get paid.

Callousness

This callousness breeds callousness back. When a golfer died on the 17th hole one day, the caddy's only comment was: "If only the bastard had lasted another half-hour I'd have got my wages!"

A small percentage do well out of caddying if they work on the tournament circuit and get

paid by a professional golfer. But this is usually very low paid and bonuses depend on the golfer winning tournament money. It also means travelling around the country, even the world, with little if any home life.

Thatcher wants to attack what she calls the dockers' job for life. But any move that threatens more people with the humiliation of standing in a crowd, hoping to be chosen for a job for the morning must be resisted.

The back-stabbing, nepotism, crawling and degradation this brings about have to be seen to be believed.

Keeping the greens green

I WORK as a gardener on a private golf course. I get £70 for a 40-hour week, which leaves me with about £10 more than I'd get on the dole after I've paid tax and rent.

By John Morton

What's more there is no sick pay and no pay for times when work can't be done because of bad weather. I also had to buy my own set of waterproofs which cost £35 as we sometimes have to work in the rain and they had no waterproofs to fit me.

Despite the efforts of the gardeners,

standards on the course are lower than they should be. The owner is unwilling to pay for such things as regular servicing of machines, enough staff to maintain the course properly and lighting for the shed where the machines and tools are kept.

There's often not enough attention paid to health and safety. When the pair of safety goggles for the trimmer was lost, it wasn't replaced right away.

Later, something struck the greenkeeper's eye and he had to spend a weekend in hospital. Only then did the owner buy a new pair of safety goggles.

Many other horticultural workers can expect similar things in future as the upkeep of publicly-owned courses is cut back and put out to private tender. Gardeners working nearby at the University of East Anglia lost their jobs last year through cutbacks.

The way things are going, open spaces available to all could become more and more of a rarity. You'll be expected to pay for it, if you can afford it, like the well-heeled golfers who use this course.

Any government that can privatise water has got the cheek to privatise grass and trees as well — the ultimate in Thatcherism.

SUMMER READING

The Unbroken Thread

THE DEVELOPMENT OF TROTSKYISM OVER 40 YEARS

Tuesday 22 August

London launch of

'The Unbroken Thread'

rant will sign copies from 6.30pm at Friends' Meeting House Euston Rd London NW1 Public meeting 7.30pm

THE MASSES ARISE

THE GREAT FRENCH REVOLUTION 1789-1815

The Masses Arise:

The Great French Revolution 1789-1815

Peter Taaffe £2.95

The Unbroken Thread

Selections from the writings of Ted Grant

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No Poll Tax Here!

Scottish Anti-Poll Tax Federation

The facts, figures and arguments. Essential reading for anti-poll tax activists north and south of the border. 50p (25 for £10, post free)

Divide and Rule: Labour and the partition of Ireland

Peter Hadden

August will be the 20th year of British troops in Northern Ireland. Why was Ireland divided? What was the role of James Connolly and the labour movement? £1.40

In the Name of the Working Class

S Kopaszi

Hungary 1956 — as featured in *Militant* on 14 July. £4.95

Ten Days that Shook the World

John Reed

Eyewitness account of the Russian revolution. £4.95

Militant Youth



**BUILD A MASS SOCIALIST YOUTH MOVEMENT:
JOIN THE LABOUR PARTY
YOUNG SOCIALISTS!
SUPPORT THE YOUTH TRADE UNION RIGHTS CAMPAIGN!**

SCHOOL STUDENTS FIGHT TORY PLAN

"THEY DIDN'T take any notice of what we said, so we took action instead." Girls from Haberdashers' Aske's school in New Cross told *Militant* why they occupied their school's playground on Tuesday 18 August. They were protesting against Tory plans to turn their school into a City Technical College (CTC), part-run by industry and geared to its needs.

"What we did was brilliant," fourth-years Dee and Liz said. "Everyone was united. We hung a huge banner saying 'No to CTCs' in the hall. Then we stayed in the playground all day."

The Tories allowed a vote about whether to change the school into a CTC. The trouble is, it was only for parents and votes at the girls' school were counted with those at the boys' school up the road. The majority of the girls' parents were against a CTC but the combined majority went against.

"We were told if the school voted against it, it wouldn't happen. But the parents voted against it and it's still going to happen," Dee and Liz said. "The teachers said it's nothing to do with us. But we should have a vote, it's us who're affected."

"We don't want a CTC, it will be elitist. Those who are good at science will get on. Those who aren't are stuffed."

The school has a good reputation for music. "That will all go," the girls say. "They say: 'Don't worry, there'll be a synthesiser to play on.' But we don't even get to use the drumkit, because there's no drum teacher. What chance will we have of using synthesisers?"

Some boys from the other school came down to show their support and a friend from Bacon school, also earmarked for a CTC, said: "What we need to do is to link up."

"The Tories have taken money out of education," they say. "This school is voluntary-aided — parents contribute to the funds, but they shouldn't have to. All schools should be the same and education should be free."

These school students aren't just worried about their education. "Thatcher's just out for the rich. She doesn't care about us. It's the same with the poll tax, that's just for the rich."

School students and education workers' unions should unite to fight CTCs. They should campaign among parents and other workers' and students' unions for support. CTCs will be educational conveyor belts for the bosses' needs. Labour and the unions should fight them.

By a South London Young Socialist

FIGHT FOR A FUTURE



Labour students split on defence

OUR LABOUR Party Young Socialist (LPYS) branch have been having a few early mornings lately. We've been getting up at six in the morning to support the railworkers in the NUR in their strike. We've gone down to the picket line with our banner every week and we've had a good reception every time we've been.

We invited the NUR branch secretary to speak at our meeting and we're having a joint meeting with the union especially for young railworkers. Rather than collecting money for the strike fund, the union asked us to make a banner for the picket line. It reads: "Would you get up at three in the morning for £79 a week?"

The first time we went to

the Nalgo picket line the reception wasn't so good. But we've built up a good relationship with them now and made them a banner too.

Every LPYS branch should go down to the picket lines with their banner, to show solidarity with workers on strike.

By Helen Watson, Bedford LPYS.

Support the strikers

THE NEW national committee (NC) of the National Organisation of Labour Students (Nols) had its first meeting on 19 July.

Almost its first decision was to ignore its own condemning a unilateral disarmament motion to Labour Party conference.

Labour Party conference. This year's Nols conference passed a resolution demanding that Labour's policy on unilateral nuclear disarmament be retained and that Nols send the resolution to the party conference.

The majority of the Kinnockite 'Democratic Left' (DL) showed their contempt for Nols conference's decisions in their anxiety not to embarrass the party leader. But, significantly, they split on the issue. Only the chair's casting vote stopped a unilateralist motion being submitted.

This demonstrates the decline of the DL and that potential exists to begin to transform Nols into a campaigning body.

By Labour Student

YOUNG HOMELESS HOUNDED

DAVE NELLIST MP is the honorary president of the Youth Trade Union Rights Campaign. Last week he got a special debate in Parliament on the plight of the young homeless.

COVENTRY TEENAGER Terry Flowers had no money for two months before his 18th birthday at Christmas 1988. He was a victim of the Tories' decision to cut all benefit to 16- and 17-year olds not on a YTS scheme.

Terry couldn't get a YTS place in competition with 16-year olds who had two full years to give. When he told the DSS, they advised him to go to the Salvation Army.

This is how the Tories are driving young people onto the streets, Dave Nellist said.

HUNDREDS OF young people are being prosecuted for vagrancy, even though homeless legislation says they're eligible for housing, according to Dave Nellist.

Barristers and solicitors had told him of "an explosion" of such cases at the nearest magistrates court to the House of Commons. The Horseferry Road court dealt with one a week in 1987. Now four or five in a single morning is not uncommon.

The Tories have driven these young people onto the streets through their cuts in young people's benefits and the housing shortage, Dave said. Many of them move to London looking for work and "after a few weeks...have little option other than begging, prostitution or both."

"Yet one in five housing authorities said that a girl under 18 open to sexual and financial exploitation was not vulnerable and half the authorities would not deem as vulnerable a young homeless care leaver, a young

homeless person with no parents and no support, or a young homeless person under a probation order."

Homeless youth now find themselves prosecuted under the sections three and four of the Vagrancy Act 1824. Dave Nellist described it as "one of the most archaic pieces of legislation still on the statute book".

"It speaks of the 'idle and disorderly', of 'rogues and vagabonds' and of 'incorrigible rogues'." It is aimed at "the suspect characters the law could not pin specific crimes on but were apparently up to no good," one author said. It presumes guilt from its victims' conduct and they effectively have to prove their innocence.

One 17-year old girl told a TV programme how she had been driven to begging by her benefit being stopped.

"She had been nicked for it loads of times and had got a £10 fine. She had to beg the money to pay off the fine and then got nicked begging the

money to pay off the fine."

Dave called for the abolition of the begging and sleeping-out provisions of the Vagrancy Act and the restrictions on young people registering on local authority housing lists.

"There should be provision for the control of the bed-and-breakfast hotels that are used by DSS claimants in order to prevent the profiteering of multiple occupation; for the immediate payment of board and lodging allowances, instead of payment of arrears as at present; for decent benefits for young people, without the disparity between the under-25s and the over-25s; for those benefits to be paid at two-thirds of average earnings...and for a crash building programme which I believe should include the municipalisation of corporately owned property."

This requires public ownership and planning of the economy, Dave explained, for the sake of young people whose "crime is not begging; it is poverty".

Photo: Andrew Wlard from Shelter's One Day I'll have my own place to stay...



FOOD - A RECIPE

SALMONELLA POISONING in eggs, **listeria** in cook-chill products, **botulism** in yogurt, water polluted with worms and irradiation of food to make products last longer. The Tories and their friends in the food industry have told us not to worry and have hushed up the rising tide of food poisoning and contamination. In this feature workers from the food industry and hospital laboratories, and ordinary consumers expose the truth behind the Tory food cover-up.

STOP FOOD RESEARCH SELL-OFF

EVERY DAY brings a new example of food contamination. Salmonella, listeria and botulism have all been detected by medical laboratories and food research centres around the country.

Far from praising these centres for their work and increasing funding into food research, the Tories are out to privatise them.

The Centre for Applied Microbiology and Research, a health department laboratory, with a good reputation in the investigation of viral diseases, is under consideration for privatisation. It is responsible for the research into combating diseases such as AIDS, legionnaire's disease and food poisoning. The centre will obviously be a bargain for companies hoping to make profits out of food research.

Also under threat of privatisation is

the Institute of Food Research in Bristol. It deals with all aspects of meat production, from the microbiological effects of rearing and slaughtering, to cook-chill and salmonella.

Last year the government cut the laboratory's budget by £1.7m. At present small firms receive advice on food safety free of charge. If the institute were to be privatised, and research carried out by big corporations, their smaller competitors would be cut out and food safety would be affected.

In one section of the institute research into salmonella was carried out until the government cut funding at the start of this year. The laboratory was working on a cheap and fast method of stopping salmonella in chickens, without the use of antibiotics. But the government and demanded that private industry take

over. Industry didn't, and as a result the research remains unfinished.

If these institutes are privatised, private food companies, whose only consideration is the amount of money they can make, will be in charge of monitoring contamination of our food. Would you trust a company that produced meat, to tell you if their product was contaminated or contained steroids or harmful additives?

The only way we will ever be able to control research into food contamination is if funds are pumped into research and if laboratories stay in public ownership, with workers' control of research. This, hand-in-hand with the nationalisation of the large multinationals in the food industry, will secure wholesome, contamination-free food.

By Helen Watson

LET THEM EAT STEAK!

WHEN THE Chernobyl accident occurred and was followed in Scotland by a very heavy rainfall, Irene and I talked about giving milk to the kids and letting them out to play when the puddles were still out. She had no hesitation! No milk and no playing in the rain!

She was right - as time went on we saw more alarming figures coming out about contamination of milk products and eventually some information and contradictory advice.

But what's worse and most worrying to me about all these dangers is the lack of honest advice. We don't want to be alarmed unduly but the lack of information frankly just

makes you wonder what's true and what's not. The latest and most frightening story is about BSE (Bovine spongiform encephalitis).

I can hear it now, the oldest one will reply when I ask what she wants for tea - "sausages and beans". This time instead of thinking "Great, that'll be quick", I'll be stopping and thinking. BSE is a close relation to so-called scrapies in sheep and a human brain disease, which is now being found in cattle. It affects the brains of cattle causing them to become aggressive and deranged.

Vets and farmers have become increasingly concerned about the incidence of the disease in

cattle. 3,000 have died and 130 to 140 new cases are reported weekly. The practise of feeding sheep remains to cattle has fallen under suspicion as responsible for transferring the disease to the cows.

The government's response is too little, too late. They describe the chances of human disease as remote, but have banned tripe, brawn and spleen from cattle from being in baby foods. Their report wanted to recommend compensation of 75 per cent per cow to farmers who found BSE amongst their cattle. The Ministry of Agriculture agreed 50 per cent, which means the pressure on farmers not to

disclose BSE and to send cows to the slaughterhouse regardless, is immense. Cuts in agricultural and medical research funding will also make the disease harder to detect.

Why not eliminate brains and spinal cords from food processing? We probably won't hear it from the food industry, but their profits from sausages and hamburgers are dearly at stake if such precautions were taken. I suppose as far as the government are concerned, next time my oldest one asks for sausages for her tea, I could always feed her T bone or sirloin steak instead!

By Clare Murray

SUFFER LITTLE CHILDREN

RECENTLY MY children were given a large pack of sweets, Swizzels children's mix. I was horrified at what they contained - additives E100, E110, and yellow dye. This causes skin rashes, swelling of blood vessels, gastric upset and vomiting. E132 indigo dye, to be avoided by anyone with allergic reaction, causes nausea, vomiting, high blood pressure, skin rash, itching and breathing problems.

All these additives cause hyperactivity in children and have been recommended not to be used in children's foods.

We hear working-class people being patronised and knocked on their eating habits - that we don't eat healthily enough, that it's all stodge and grease. But what you never hear about is how the food industry is

poisoning us to keep up their big fat profits.

They tell you sugar is a good, cheap form of energy. But what they don't tell you is that sugar given to children at an early age can lead to retarded brain growth as the brain is still developing in the first two years of life.

Breast milk is best for your child. But what's not said is that if the mother has sugar it will pass straight through into her milk and damage the immature immune system of her baby.

A red dye E123 which is used to make chocolate darker, in trifles, Vitamin C drinks and health drinks has been banned in many countries including USA, Russia and Malaysia. It has been shown to be a cancer-causing agent and it also causes

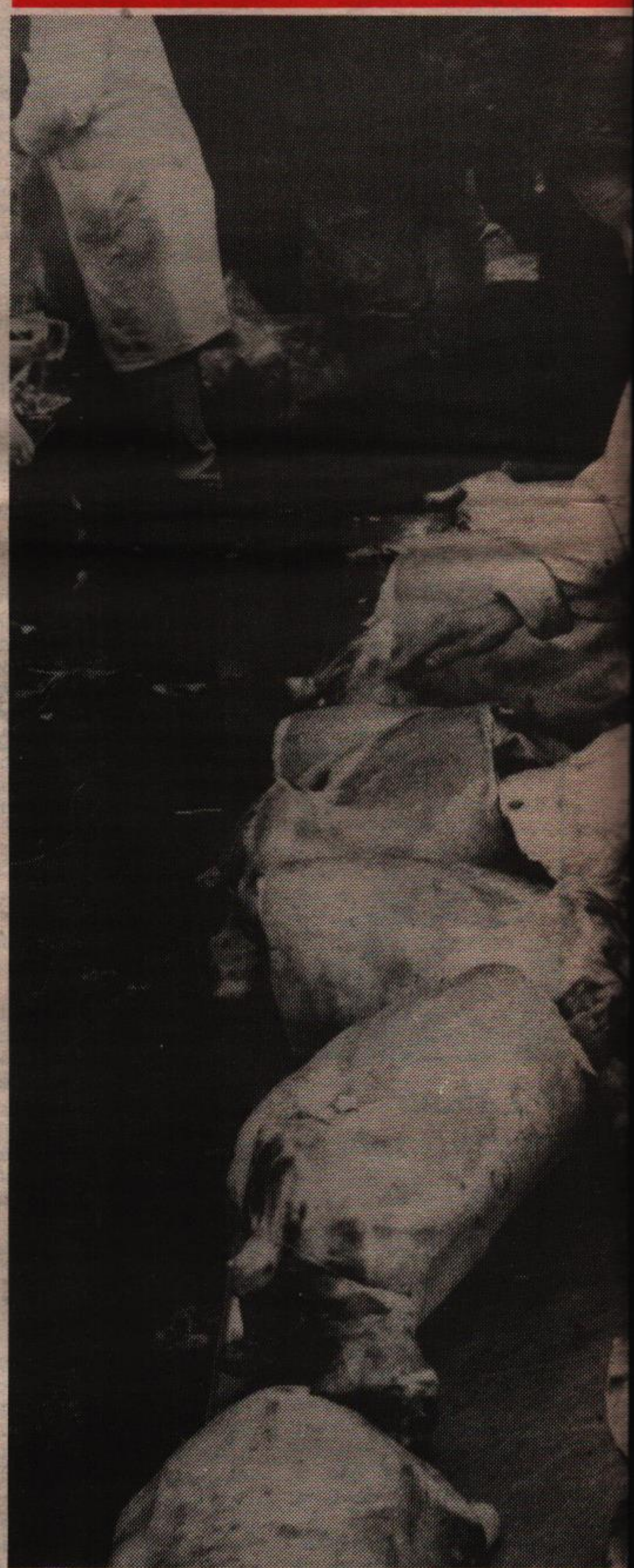
damage to the liver and sexual organs.

Even though the British government know the danger of the dye, it has not been banned here and the food manufacturing industry are free to add dyes that are dangerous to products which are made for children.

A lot of working parents don't have the time to hunt about for healthier foods and the unemployed may have the time, but certainly don't have the money. We could all afford to live and eat more healthily if we had decent jobs, decent pay and no unemployment. A lot is covered up about what goes into our foods to protect the food industry. How about protection for the us, the people who make the industry function.

By Lynn Worthington

PRO



- ★ Fight the privatisation of food research centres and get them back into public ownership when in government.
- ★ For massive investment into publicly controlled research.
- ★ For committees of consumers, shopworkers and workers to check on food hygiene and safety with the power to prosecute.
- ★ Full support to trade unionists who refuse to work for the food industry.
- ★ For nationalisation of the food industry and workers' control and management.

E FOR D FIT

FOOD WORKERS SPEAK OUT

FIVE YEARS ago, the retail company I work for didn't sell sandwiches. Today in my own store, the lunch-time trade accounts for one-third of daily takings.

On my way to work for a 6am start the City is full of sandwich bars, small cafes and takeaways that have already started work. Lights blaze as rows of workers make up rolls and sandwiches for the secretaries and stock-brokers.

My own store sells approximately 6,500 sandwiches per week, at an average price of 90p each. On top of all this there are the yoghurts, quiches and soft drinks. The average take home pay for a Central London sales assistant in my company is around £100 a week. The staff in the little sandwich bars fare even worse.

It is vital that the handling of food, particularly fresh food, is carried out by properly paid, trained staff, in safe clean and healthy conditions.

You should not handle food if you are ill with a stomach or bowel complaint or even if you have a cold. Yet for many low-paid workers in this industry, paid sick leave is just non-

existent.

Even the larger retail companies who do offer sick pay, put incredible pressure on workers to come in when they're not well. Aside from moral pressure about how you're letting your workmates down, many employers give out written warnings for taking too much time off sick!

Another problem is the hot weather. In the recent heatwave, staff in my store have been sweltering in unbearably hot conditions. The air conditioning doesn't work and management have been generous enough to buy one fan!

By the time we're serving the lunch-time queues, the temperatures are almost tropical. The food in our chilled cabinets is supposed to be kept at no higher than six degrees, but when it's 25 degrees in the shop then it's a constant battle to keep it cold. The staff are vigilant, but when we're on the tills with queues stretching to the door it's not always possible to keep checking the temperature.

The sheer pressure of work on overstretched staff means potential health hazards. When the refrigerated

van pulls up, we have just 15 minutes to transfer more than 1,000 sandwiches, several hundred yoghurts and fruit juices, not to mention a few dozen pints of milk, and all the other odds and ends, into the few store fridges.

Well, when the display cabinets at the back of the shop and the back-up fridge is downstairs and there's no lift, you have to shift it all by running up and down two flights of stairs. It's not at all easy!

Workers employed in selling food don't want to cut corners. We're as concerned as everyone else about the safety of food. After all, we have to buy it as well, usually from our own employers!

There are calls for more legislation to force companies to adopt stricter controls on the sale of foods. I support that, but I know from my own experience that in the desperate rush to get food into the cabinets and sold to the public within that two hour lunch period, the bosses' first consideration is profit, not health.

**By Helen Gaskin,
Usdaw West End One.**

THE TORIES have very generous friends in the food industry. While Thatcher, and the health ministry busily try to cover up cases of food contamination, the food industry pays them in kind with donations to the Tory party.

Here are some examples from the 1987 election campaign:

United Biscuits	£100,000	McCain Foods.....	£11,100
Allied Lyons	£97,100	Ranks Hovis McDougall	£40,000
Associated Fisheries.....	£2,000	Tate and Lyle	£40,250
Kellog Company of Great Britain	£15,000	Unigate.....	£50,000

That's what you call food for thought!

EATING CAN DAMAGE YOUR HEALTH

DESPITE THE massive publicity surrounding the salmonella and eggs scare over six months ago, figures for food poisoning infection continue to rise. The fault cannot rest with the consumers, many of them are taking greater precautions.

In the public health laboratories and hospital microbiology departments we know increased incidence cannot be due to extra vigilance, as the procedures for testing food poisoning have not changed.

The most accurate indicator of trends is the weekly Communicable Diseases Report (CDR). All food poisoning organisms have to be notified.

This report is not for general publication and disclosure by health workers of its contents

LISTERIA HAS been known as a cause for disease amongst animals since the 1930s. It's importance in humans has only been recognised recently. The bacterium rarely affects healthy individuals but can have serious consequences for those who are ill or weak.

These include pregnant women and the newborn, diabetics and AIDS sufferers. It is now implicated in miscarriage in early pregnancy and stillbirth. New food preparations such as cook-chill and microwaves are considered definite sources, as are soft

THE RECENT outbreak of botulism food poisoning in the North-West is another indication of the serious consequences of the lowering of standards in the food industry.

It has always been associated with poor hygiene and production methods. In Britain food preparation methods have in the past been quite good and as a

could lead to them being prosecuted. The reports show a continuing increase in cases of salmonella infection especially the now famous enteritidis type, associated with eggs. Another species, salmonella virchow, is now giving cause for concern.

More common and often more serious infections are caused by campylobacter. CDR shows that the total of these infections to 9 June was 12,256, compared with 10,531 in the same period in 1988.

Incidence of infections associated with contaminated water are also seen to be increasing. Cryptosporidium infections have increased from 1008 in 1988 to 2834 in 1989. Giardia infections have also increased from 1653 to 1919. Both these also cause very severe symptoms.

Meanwhile CDR reports

cheeses. Now pate has been shown to be a danger. Yet no government warning was issued, until it was too late.

The parliamentary Social Services Select Committee in a recent report concluded that the Department of Health was made aware of a link between listeria and food in 1987. As a result, at least 26 unborn and newborn babies died of listeria last year.

The earliest warnings about cook-chill foods or soft cheese were in February of this year.

result botulism was very rare. The disease has also been prevented by spotting the bacterium in imported produce.

Professor Richard Lacey warned that botulism "could return unless the catering industry addresses the problem". Labour's David Clark reported in a recent parliamentary debate that the biggest outbreak of

on a spate of new outbreaks. These include:

October '88: The fifth incidence of a Staphylococcus aureus food poisoning in six months, involving tinned ox-tongue in a residential home.

April '89: 145 out of 390 inmates of a prison fell ill for 10 days with diarrhoea caused by salmonella enteritidis.

Five people fell ill after eating cheeseburgers or chilli con carne at a takeaway. It was found that batches of mincemeat were thawed, made into chilli, kept refrigerated for one to four days and reheated when required. The cheeseburgers were thawed and left for up to 10 hours and cooked when ordered.

May '89: More outbreaks were reported linked to scotch eggs and egg sandwiches.

Customers at a London restaurant ate canned tuna and within 20 minutes developed headaches and rashes.

June '89: Two outbreaks reported in one hotel, within two days. 23 were taken ill after a retirement luncheon and 54 guests were struck down after a wedding reception. Subsequent investigation showed that kitchen staff had shown symptoms and that some weeks previously management had declined to allow staff to attend a food hygiene refresher course.

Recent estimates show that food poisoning may cost industry twice as much as strikes. Instead of discussing legislation to outlaw strikes the Tories should be legislating for greater food safety.

By an NHS microbiologist.

Leeds hospital, which routinely conducts post mortems on all stillbirths, predict the annual death toll as a result of listeria, is between 100 and 150. Professor Richard Lacey of Leeds University exposed the reason for the Tories inaction: "The government deliberately tried to deceive everyone because a public warning would have got in the way of the boom in cook-chill foods and privatisation of catering in the health service."

By a laboratory worker.

aration methods, declining standards in the food industry and the increasing number of food poisoning cases are all a great worry to the consumer. Most people wouldn't buy this kind of meat if it carried a warning: "This cow has been fed on dead chickens!"

By Gwyn Morris

es. Labour must give a commitment to bring nment.

ed research into food safety.

and and workers in the food industry to er to enforce standards.

sell or manufacture unsafe food.

he retail monopolies under democratic

Photo: Steve Gardiner.



Vision of workers' democracy

THEY WERE striking in Vorkuta. The Soviet miners' strike, having swept through Siberia and the Ukraine, reached up to the most northerly coalfields in the Arctic Circle. 53 years ago it was here in the Vorkuta mines that Trotskyist political prisoners staged their heroic hunger strike. It was here that many of them were murdered. They defiantly sang the Internationale as they were marched to their deaths.

They were murdered as the Stalinist bureaucracy sought to stamp out for ever any threat to its privileged position from the working class.

Yet today the miners of Vorkuta and the rest of the Soviet Union have sent that same cold chill down the bureaucrats' spines. At its height 500,000 participated in the biggest strike movement since the bureaucracy consolidated its position over 60 years ago.

The bureaucracy has survived over that time because of the economic progress brought to the Soviet Union by the abolition of capitalism, in spite of their mismanagement and corruption. But also the working class, without any genuine independent organisations of their own or real democratic rights, felt powerless. The power of the officials, managers and behind them the secret police seemed all pervading.

However, the spreading revolt of the national minorities has already served notice that the masses are losing their fear of the bureaucratic state apparatus.

Now, in the Russian Federation itself, the Siberian miners have demonstrated the same growing self-confidence. The miners are a key section of the working class. This is a decisive new step on the road to political revolution.

Thousands striking, mass rallies, solidarity action and the spread of the strike to other coalfields all gave miners a sense of that collective strength which terrifies the bureaucrats.

**"Like Marx said, you've nothing to lose but your chains. I just want my children to live better."
— A Donetsk strike leader.**

The strikers have established their own committees, by-passing the official, state-run trade unions with contempt. They are correctly seen as part and parcel of the bureaucratic regime. To the top bureaucrats they are nothing but a transmission belt for instructions on work-rates and extra effort down to the shopfloor, as well as a means of picking up workers' grievances and spying on activists.

In fact Gorbachev, like Brezhnev before, has reprimanded his fellow bureaucrats heading the unions for not being attentive enough to these grievances and providing a safety valve.

Instead the independent strike committees negotiated on the miners' behalf. They even organised patrols of the mining towns to maintain order and discipline, ensuring that no pretext was given to the state forces to wade in.

For the first time in living memory the drying-out cells for those arrested for being 'drunk and disorderly' were empty in Siberia. The workers' patrols banned alcohol. This demonstration of workers' self-organisation must have conjured up for the bureaucrats the spectre of Gdansk in 1980. Polish Solidarity, eventually embracing 10 million workers, grew out of the strike committees first established in that shipyard town.

Moscow News now warns: "Let

By Jeremy Birch

us remember that events in Poland...began with purely economic demands." The Chernonograd strike committee in the Ukraine has already called for "the establishment of an independent trade union under the name Solidarity", a demand echoed by workers elsewhere.

But Solidarity in Poland also demonstrated that when the workers move into action en masse in the Stalinist countries they inevitably raise all the demands against the unwarranted perks of the bureaucrats.

The very existence of the bureaucratic elite was under threat. A conscious leadership at the head of Solidarity, basing itself on the striving of the workers towards the programme of political revolution, would have led to workers' democracy.

Instead the movement was allowed to ebb and the bureaucrats reprieved.

Now the Soviet miners, once on strike, have also challenged the privileges of officialdom. They demanded higher wages, better safety conditions and stable prices.

They are searching for a way of ridding themselves of the worst aspects of bureaucratic government by command, while not yet seeking the removal of the bureaucracy as a whole.

They called for new elections for local councils. The last were held two years ago before Gorbachev introduced the idea of

more than one candidate. At the moment the miners see it as the best means to push aside the worst of the local bureaucrats.

Because Russia's pits are profitable, workers are attracted by the idea of economic autonomy of individual enterprises. This is supposedly an essential part of perestroika, although it has been bitterly resisted by the conservative wing of the bureaucracy who jealously defend central direction of the economy. Of course to Gorbachev it only means giving more authority to local managers and technocrats.

The miners look to the idea of being able to retain the surplus they create locally, even dealing directly with foreign customers without going through the state trading institutions, as a means to improve their lowly standard of life.

They are groping towards the conclusion that they, not the bureaucrats, should control the pits; towards the idea of workers' management — and that is definitely not what Gorbachev has in mind.

If the bureaucracy had not offered substantial concessions the miners' programme would have become sharper and for the Kremlin more menacing. The bureaucrats feared the prospect of the workers' committees linking up and a permanent mass organisation emerging.

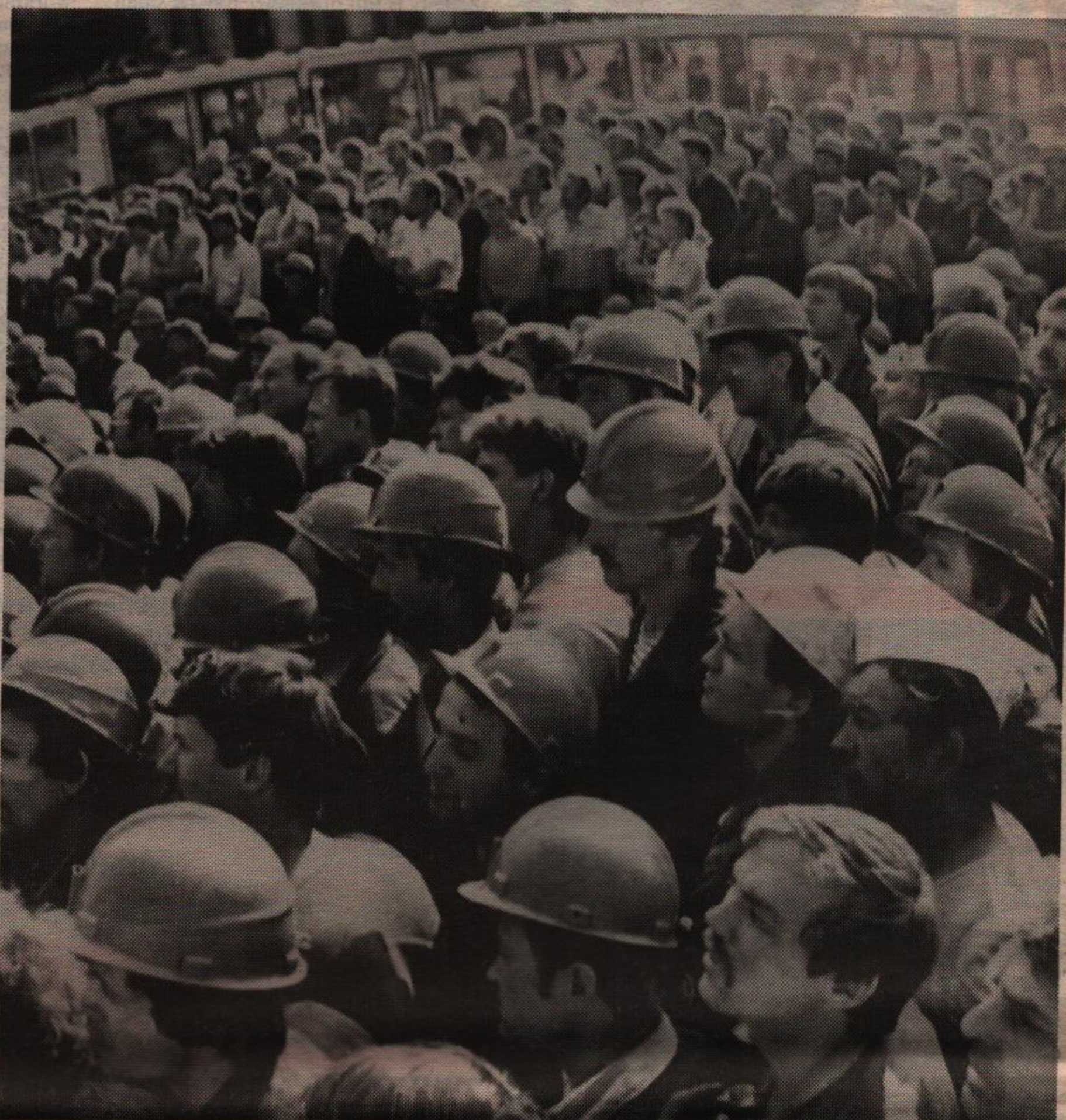


Photo: AP

Siberian miners listen to Gorbachev's concessions on TV. But some of their demands threaten the overthrow of the bureaucracy. In Vorkuta miners are calling for an end to the 'leading role' of the Communist Party.

As it is the Siberian committees are remaining in existence to watch over the implementation of the promises from the bureaucracy they do not trust. They have "temporarily become a kind of alternative government, with people phoning in complaints about poor housing and factory pollution" (*The Guardian*, 24 July).

The workers' committees may only function temporarily at this stage — but did not the soviets also start as strike committees in 1905?

WHAT WILL the strike and the concessions it forced from the Soviet regime mean for perestroika? The tons of food, soap and other basic necessities and the wage increases will be costly. They had to be offered too to the miners in the regions that did not strike. Why should engineers or steel workers not demand the same?

The miners have set a precedent — striking wins concessions. There are rumours of a rail strike from 1 August.

But the budget deficit, already running at ten per cent of gross national product, is being met by printing more roubles. Inflation is rising by ten per cent at least.

It was not that miners were that badly paid compared to other workers. There was nothing to spend their money on, not even soap. Part of perestroika is to encourage greater effort and interest by workers with bonus payments for results. But why work harder if there is nothing in the shops?

The growing struggles by national minorities and the miners' strike have been fuelled by the intense shortages of food in particular. Workers are reaching the end of their patience with perestroika which has not stocked the shelves or cut the queues.

Gorbachev was given warning of this in Siberia twelve months ago. He went on a walk-about and was harangued by ordinary people. On his return he forced through the Central Committee the demotion of his chief conservative rival Ligachev and tried to kick-start his stalled 'reforms'.

Gorbachev did not go back to Siberia to speak to the miners,

AT HALF the coal faces in the USSR coal is still hewn by hand. Working conditions are primitive, productivity low and the safety record criminal.

10,000 miners have been killed at work since 1980 — as many as in the war in Afghanistan during the same period. The bureaucrats are less under the check of the workers than Western capitalists who have to face independent trade unions, not tame union stooges.

What worse condemnation of Stalinism can there be than this slaughter in the mines, the dire housing conditions of the miners or the unbearable pollution they have to contend with?

The delegate to the supreme soviet from the Kuzbass mining area in Siberia likened it to a "moonscape", so devastated that nothing could grow. "The city of Novokuznetsk has the dirtiest air of any city in the Soviet Union and probably in the world," he reported. "There are virtually no healthy children in the Kuzbass."

fearing humiliation. He may be cheered in West Germany but among the Soviet workers there is growing disenchantment.

In this climate how can he risk pressing ahead with his price reform? He wants to remove subsidies so that prices bear a more direct relation to the cost of production. He knows he would risk a dangerous inflationary spiral,

but without it how can his perestroika work? How else can the efficiency of enterprises be measured?

How can Gorbachev's 'reformers' press ahead with the closure of the least productive workplaces and the consequent redundancies? The miners have shown that Soviet workers are ready to defend their fundamental conditions.

Now Gorbachev is preparing a new assault on the conservative bureaucrats. He wants to smash their obstruction to his reforms and their indifference to the feelings of the masses. But changing the faces around the politbureau table will not resolve the crisis that has engulfed perestroika, for it is the crisis of the bureaucratic system which Gorbachev is trying to uphold.

As one Siberian miners' leader explained, he joined the Kemerovo strike committee "to fight that bureaucratic apparatus that sits on our necks — the people who don't work and live better than anyone else."

As the pressure of the masses grows, the crisis will deepen. If concessions do not work or are no longer available the bureaucracy will eventually have no alternative but to try to return to repression.

Gorbachev's liberal mask slipped during the miners' strike. He told the new supreme soviet that special measures would have to be taken if the situation got "out of control" and the miners did not return.

But the Soviet working class must be a terrifying enemy — the largest and best educated working class in the world. It has begun to flex its muscles in the coalfields. Once it has a clear conception of how to wield its full strength the days of the bureaucracy will be numbered.

Bosses' party in disarray

THE RESIGNATION of Japanese prime minister Uno has set the seal on the defeat of the ruling Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) in last Sunday's elections. With half of the 252 Upper House seats contested, the Socialist Party doubled its representation and won more seats than the LDP, which has lost control of the Upper House for the first time since coming to power in 1955. A further 11 seats were won by the trade union federation Ren-go. The question of elections to the Lower House is now on the agenda which, provided they offer a clear alternative, could lead to the Japanese workers' parties forming a government for the first time. **CARL SIMMONS** looks at the background.

THE SETBACK for the LDP, following significant gains for the Socialist and Communist parties in by-elections and the Tokyo city elections, marks a sea change in Japanese society.

A major factor was the scandals which rocked the LDP leadership over the past year. Leaders of all the party's factions were implicated in receiving 'gifts' of pre-listed shares in the Recruit corporation's property subsidiary, netting them fortunes.

This forced prime minister Takeshita's resignation. Then came the sex scandal involving the new premier Uno.

In the past, however, the LDP emerged relatively unscathed from similar scandals. The present events reflect deeper changes taking place in Japanese society.

At first sight Japan has enjoyed prosperity in the last few years. Since 1983 it has accumulated \$400 billion in current account surpluses and gross national product per head is now higher than the USA's. The dollar value of Japanese assets quadrupled between 1980 and 1987.

However, these figures hide the shaky and speculative nature of the boom, which is fundamentally different from the 1950s and 1960s.

Some sectors, particularly electronics, have seen massive invest-

ment. There are now fears of over-capacity and a cut in investment which could trigger a recession. But other industries are in decay. In shipbuilding, for example, capacity and employment have been reduced. In some cases production transferred 'off-shore' to exploit the cheaper labour of the newly-industrialised countries.

The boom has not been fuelled by manufacturing investment primarily but by land and stock market speculation. A torrent of cash has forced prices up to astronomical levels, making enormous paper profits for investors.

In Greater Tokyo, for example, residential land prices leapt nearly 70 per cent in the year to January 1988. In 1987 the increase in the value of financial assets was greater than the gross national product, with Toyota actually making more money on the stock exchange than from making cars!

Parties

The *nyuu richi*, as Japan's yuppies are known, are indulging in a bout of conspicuous consumption. Diamond imports soared by 44 per cent in the first half of 1988 while in Yuzawa, a resort close to Tokyo, 20,000 apartments have been built as weekend homes for Tokyo's rich.

Inevitably workers have begun to ask: now that the country is wealthy, where is our share?

But most wage workers have missed out on the boom. As a Liberal MP aptly put it: "People have got nothing from labour and everything from capital." Consumption by the self-employed has risen five times as fast as wage-earners'. Spiralling house prices have put a home of their own beyond most families' reach.

In Tokyo it takes about £1,360 a month - 57 per cent of typical family income - to buy a three-room apartment. Repossessions have increased tenfold since 1979 and two-generation mortgages are increasingly common.

And while directors of Japanese Telecommunications (NTT) and other bigwigs made



(Left) Anti-Recruit demonstration in Tokyo (Right) Victorious Socialist Party leader Takako Doi.



fortunes from Recruit, many small investors who sank their savings in the privatised NTT lost substantial amounts.

This has coincided with a number of unpopular government measures. The three per cent consumption tax, a kind of VAT, was forced through parliament despite the LDP's election promises to the contrary. This has proved particularly unpopular among women, traditionally responsible for housekeeping, who have borne the brunt of the price rises.

In the Tokyo city elections 62 per cent of women turned out, compared with 54 per cent of men, and voted two-to-one against the LDP. The revelations of prime minister Uno's seedy personal life cannot have helped.

In his defence, his wife claimed that he was 99.8 per cent perfect; his only failing was that he used to shout at her to change TV channels before they got remote control. This from a man who last year chaired a government committee on discrimination against women!

The lifting of restrictions on some agricultural imports further undermined the LDP's support among farmers, traditionally a

bastion of LDP strength.

This situation has provided enormous opportunities for the Socialist and Communist parties to drive the LDP from power for the first time in 35 years.

The Socialist Party's vote increased from 12 to 29 per cent in the Tokyo elections. But instead of linking up with the other major workers' party, the Communist Party (JCP), it has patched up a shaky alliance with two minor capitalist opposition parties.

The leaders of both these parties, the Democratic Socialist Party and the Komeito ("clean government") party, have been implicated in the Recruit scandal. Both would be facing annihilation but for the prop provided by the Socialist leaders. Neither can be relied on not to form a coalition with the LDP instead.

Unholy alliance

The Socialist Party (JSP) itself depends on big business financial support. It sells tickets for its fundraising activities to LDP ministers and Recruit representatives and buys LDP tickets in return.

In a suburb of Osaka a long-standing Communist mayor was narrowly defeated by an ex-LDP

"independent", backed by an unholy alliance of the Socialist Party and its capitalist partners, as well as the LDP itself.

The JCP, the only party not tainted by the Recruit scandal, has made gains in some areas. But it is not seen as an alternative by most workers. Its policies differ little from those of the JSP. The party chair explained:

"We are aiming to change a politics dominated by big business to a politics dominated by people, within the framework of capitalism."

How this utopia could be achieved was not explained. In reality their main disagreement with the opposition alliance is that it excludes them.

Nevertheless the reverses of the LDP show a polarisation in Japanese society, with workers moving on the electoral plane towards their traditional class organisations. Developments are still at an early stage and the LDP has enormous resources available, giving scope for concessions. They have already tried to bribe the farmers. However, the often brutal class struggle smouldering never too far beneath the surface of Japanese society will increasingly burst forth over the next few years

Hong Kong

Trade unions want their own party

TRADE union organiser in Hong Kong spoke to a Militant reporter.

"IN HONG Kong we are organising the workers in independent trade unions. We organise seminars and courses on how to build trade unions and the role of trade unions.

The independent unions represent about half of the organised working class, about 180,000. The other two unions are under the influence of China and Taiwan respectively.

We are seeking to organise a working-class party in Hong Kong, which will fight capitalist exploitation here and the bureaucratic dictatorship in China.

The clique around Deng have launched a massive purge against the people. The central focus has been the arrest of the leaders of the newly-formed autonomous workers' union.

The Party launched the massacre in order

to preserve the privileged position of the bureaucracy. The Party's turn towards market reforms in the past ten years has resulted in even greater privileges for the ruling clique, creating enormous discontent among the population.

The students, I believe, should have retreated from Tiananmen Square and concentrated on organising the workers and clarifying their political objectives.

It was wrong to believe that they could reform the Communist Party. It must be overthrown. The people must have the right to elect their own government and form their own parties.

The people would eradicate this corrupt bureaucracy and democratically take part in the productive process.

We must put pressure on the Beijing authorities to stop the purges. We must defend the workers and students."

India

Mutilation and Murder Inc

SOME OF the world's most enterprising businessmen can be found in that land of Gandhian pacifism, India.

Like the gangsters who abduct children, cut off a limb or two and send them out to beg. Or the employees at a mental home in Ranchi who gouged out the eyes of 800 inmates and sold them through middlemen to eye surgeons.

Racketeers in Bihar buy up some of the 7,000 children who go missing every year for 100 rupees (£4) each. They are sent to specialists who cut off their heads and chemically process them at Rs 35 'per capita'. The heads are then exported to medical schools in 23 countries.

India supplies 80 per cent of the world's requirements in human heads - 1,500 per month - for scientific research, with Bihar accounting for 60 per cent.

In addition to these services to science, Indian businessmen are also helping to solve the food crisis. It was recently disclosed in the Uttar Pradesh state assembly that a local gang is selling kidnapped children to a restaurant in Kanpur to be slaughtered, cooked and served to unsuspecting customers.

RELEASE



FEMI CAMPAIGN

NIGERIAN SOCIALIST and trade unionist Femi Aborisade has been in detention since February. Hundreds more activists have been imprisoned following mass protests against the military

regime's austerity policies.

Now it has become known that Femi has been elected as their spokesman by his fellow prisoners at the secret police headquarters in Lagos.

Conditions in prison are appalling. A detainee has written to *Militant*:

"We have been subjected to the most dehumanising conditions of living. Our meals are miserable, filthy and nauseating to say the least. We are constantly harassed by mosquitoes and rats. We are made to sleep in our tens in six-square feet cubicles. We have been put in a state of incommunicado, since we are banned from contact with our families, friends and counsels."

Send protests to Nigerian High Commissioner, 9 Northumberland Ave, London WC2N 5BX. And to President Babangida, Lagos, Nigeria. Copies and donations to Nigerian Labour Defence Campaign, c/o 42 Hemberton Rd, London SW9.

Against the poll tax Drinkers &...

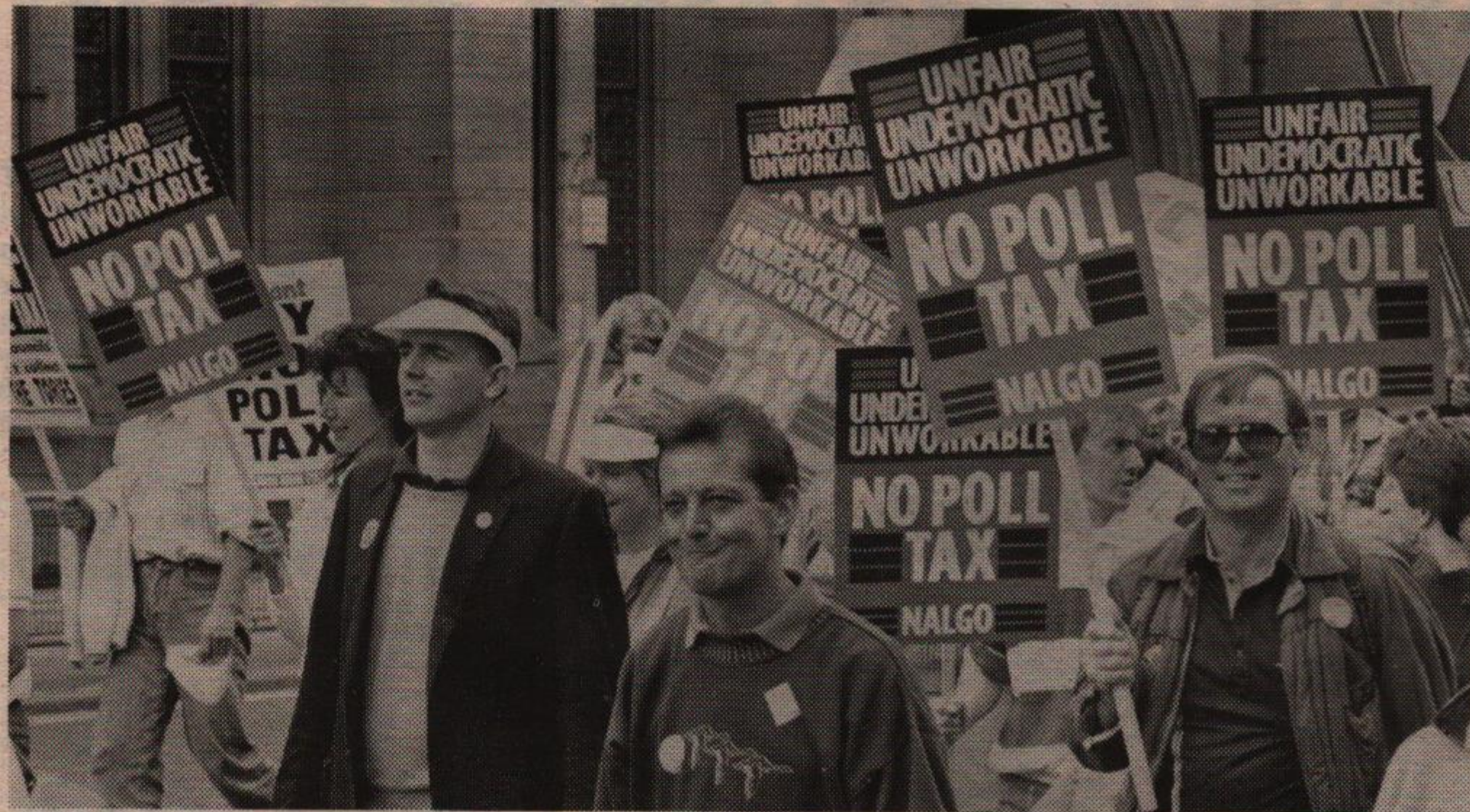


Photo: Steve Gardiner.

Dear Comrades,

In the queue to pay the rent at my local housing office, the little old lady in front of me was having a go at the girl behind the desk about going on strike and blaming that for her rent going up.

The girl very politely explained what the dispute was about and added that if she thought the rent increases were high she was going to be horrified at what the poll tax would be.

The old lady immediately retorted: "Well you'll be coming to collect my rent from prison cos I'm not paying any Tory poll tax." This was obviously the consensus of opinion of the rest of the tenants in the queue.

But the girl replied that that wouldn't be necessary because they'd be in the nick together cos none of the staff at the rent office were paying either.

That short conversation illustrates the depth of feeling against the poll tax. Ordinary working-class people can't afford to pay and they're not going to.

It also shows the potential for building a mass campaign of non-payment on the estate in anti-poll tax unions, linked up to local trade unions, Nalگو branches in particular.

The majority of Nalگو members are low-paid. They are expected to implement a poll tax which most of them won't be able to afford. And the poll

tax is a threat to their jobs as its main aim is to smash local authorities.

We've seen Nalگو workers fight for decent pay and conditions. They will be prepared to fight the poll tax, even more so if it is backed up by tenants like the old lady.

This conversation has inspired me to work even harder to build my anti-poll tax union so we can defeat the poll tax, defeat Thatcher and most importantly, out of the fight build a strong labour movement that will demand and get a fighting socialist leadership capable of getting rid the Tories' rotten system once and for all.

Bermondsey tenant and Labour Party member.

Dear Comrades,

After the TUC demo, when we got back to Leeds, my mate Steve and I went for a drink.

The overworked barmaid saw our anti-poll tax stickers and said she supported us. She was a member of the CPSA workplace anti-poll tax group and bought some stickers.

In the next pub we got chatting to two couples, one of whom said he was a steward in the bakers' union. They bought stickers and said they were interested in the campaign.

But the best response was in the local pub. A shop steward from a nearby

engineering works came up and said he was in favour of non-payment and had taken a petition to work. Another guy bought a copy of *Militant* and someone else wanted to know about the non-payment campaign in Scotland.

A girl came up and not only expressed support but said she would sign others up into the anti-poll tax union. She bought a copy of *Militant* and then took my rattling tin around the pub, selling stickers and signing people up to the anti-poll tax union on the back of beer mats!

Malcolm Richardson, Leeds.

...landlords

Dear Comrades,

The poll tax has not only alienated many working-class voters completely and utterly from the Tories but is also threatening to topple one of their most loyal bedrocks of support — the landlords!

At a public meeting organised by Chris Chope, Tory MP for Southampton Itchen, a landlord who sarcastically commented that he had only found out about the meeting through the local anti-poll tax union, launched a scathing attack on the poll tax.

He reminded the extremely embarrassed Tories in front of him that it was people like him that had

elected Mrs Thatcher three times on the trot and now they planned to make landlords do their dirty work by making them responsible for chasing up their tenants' poll tax.

He was quite obviously disgusted that his reputation as a landlord would plummet in the community as he would be seen as the local poll tax collector and this was something he was not prepared to stomach.

Unfortunately he stormed out too quickly after his outburst for us to sign him up to the APTU.

Mark Caprioli, aged 19, secretary Newtown APTU, Southampton

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- ★ **Results of Strathclyde prize draw:** 1st, 14" colour TV — 05992, Charles Baird. 2nd, Radio Cassette — 10789, Kelly MacDonald. 3rd, £25 of books — 24281, K Veevers. 4th, £25 of books — 17469, G Eadie. To claim prize phone (041) 221 1443

Just like fresh air

Dear Comrades,

I found the feature by Kevin Parslow on the French revolution very interesting. At school, when it came to the French revolution, all that was taught to me by the nuns was that it was a violent mob against peaceful rulers. Also that there was no need for a revolution. Reading the article was like a breath of fresh air.

On a programme the other night on Channel Four, four people were discussing the French revolution. One of them was introduced as a South African exile who used to be a reformist but is now a revolutionary. She said she wanted to get rid of apartheid (all very well) but then went on to say the structure of the state should not be changed. I turned the TV off after a few minutes.

One of the best comments was to come from a BBC news reporter who said sources in Paris told him that the people enjoying themselves today were the ones who can afford it; the real revolution is yet to come.

Chris Fernandez, Derby

PLEASE SEND US YOUR VIEWS, COMMENTS OR CRITICISM.

LETTERS

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

I trust Militant to fight for me

Dear Comrades,

I decided to send you my last £10 for three reasons. Firstly I am a sixth-form student who, despite the prospect of 'excellent' A-level grades, is unlikely ever to get to university. The reason is simple: Thatcher's destruction of grants and the new loans system.

Instead I work nights and holidays to try and save money to go to university, whilst the privileged sit on their arses. I trust Militant to fight on my behalf and on behalf of all, for free education.

Secondly I would like to feel I am doing something against racism, especially as the anti-BNP march in Dews-

bury reminded me of what I should be doing. I would like to declare my solidarity with my brothers who fight against racism and for black rights, especially the Kirklees Black Workers.

As a final point I have sent a small donation in the knowledge that Militant will continue to fight for the rights of all those less fortunate than myself (I have food and a bed to sleep on!) both in Britain and abroad.

I will continue my personal attempts at converting my brothers and sisters to socialism. I have had at least some success.

Jason Sinden, Huntingdon

Alliance antics

Dear Comrades,

Remember the good old days of the two Davids and their 'Alliance' which was to sweep to power? In the Kent County Council elections I was leafleting for Labour in a ward where we were fighting a sitting Liberal councillor who was a renegade from Labour.

After leaving one house a woman emerged and came running after me down the street. She wore an SDP rosette, so boldly upstaging what I expected to be a torrent of abuse I shouted out: "I assume you're voting Labour madam."

When she reached me and had regained her breath she said: "As a matter of fact I will be voting Labour because we don't have an SDP candidate in this ward and I used to be in the Labour Party. But I can't very well shout it out in the street because I'm the SDP candidate in the next ward."

Labour easily regained the seat from the Liberals of course and as the SDP are the living dead, one wonders how long it will be before both these treacherous back-stabbers come knocking on the door asking to be allowed back into the Labour Party.

Allan Ursell, Faversham Labour Party

Off with Thatcher's head!

Dear Comrades,

Copies of Militant and Peter Taaffe's *The Masses Arise!* were sold at a celebration of the French Revolution in London's Covent Garden.

A street theatre group re-enacted great scenes from the revolution. With

the help of a large crowd they stormed the Bastille, captured and tried the King.

A group of French youth sang *La Marseillaise* as the King was led to the guillotine. As Louis' head was very realistically severed and placed on a

bayonet the crowd fell silent, then a broad Yorkshire accent piped up from the back: "Fetch Thatcher next!"

There was great applause and the executioner agreed — "Yes, revolution in France — Britain and Ireland next!"

John Hird, East London.

MILITANT INTERNATIONAL REVIEW



Journal of Marxist analysis £1
Order from World Socialist Books, 3-13 Hepscoth Rd, London E9 5HB

Stop these fire cuts!

FOR THE first time in the memory of serving firefighters stations in London are under threat of closure. Whole swathes of the capital could be left without adequate cover.

A report drawn up by the chief officer of the London brigade recommends the closure of six fire stations, the removal of a fire engine from 22 stations and the reinstatement of an engine at eight others.

On one stretch of the A13,

stretching across four East London boroughs, an area of high population and many industrial estates, the present five pumps will be reduced to just three.

Already, a crew last week reported that it took them 15 minutes to reach a shout when they had to cross into another station's area. Such incidents will become more frequent with fewer pumps. 15 minutes can be the difference between life and death with a fire.

The new proposals will jeopardise about 600 operational

firefighting jobs. The chief officer claims that the jobs will not be lost, merely replaced by fire prevention work. But the Fire Brigades' Union (FBU) has correctly argued that if more fire prevention work needs to be done then extra jobs should be created.

The London Fire Brigade has already seen the loss of 700 jobs since the abolition of the GLC. But now the Tory/Liberal alliance who control the London Fire and Civil Defence Authority want more. The local council elections next May mean that the council-

lors are open to pressure if a major campaign alerts the public of the dangers.

The Tory Home Office will be closely following events in London. If such major cuts can be imposed in Britain's biggest fire brigade then other brigades will also face the axe. A failure to fight these cuts would also strengthen the hand of the government at present seeking to attack our pay and conditions.

The FBU has declared that if all else fails then strike action may have to be taken to defend our

service. But if the membership are to be convinced then the campaign must be stepped up.

Union officials must get out of their offices and into the fire stations. Every watch on every station must be visited. Mass meetings can help to break down any feelings of isolation. There has not been such a good time to fight for years. We will take up the gauntlet thrown down by the chief officer.

By a London firefighter.

Rig workers strike for safety

"THE EMPLOYERS are going for a strike wipe out" said rig workers' spokesman Ronnie McDonald. "They are rig-hopping in helicopters with orders to get all action stopped. They would rather damage their own interests than concede our demands. This is the American approach to industrial relations, minus the baseball bats. But give it time."

After ten days of 'peace' construction companies on the North Sea rigs contemptuously rejected demands on safety and union recognition and began a drive to "sack the lot and fly them all back to the beach".

Of 30,000 workers in the North Sea, 75 per cent are construction workers. Rigs have to be constantly rebuilt because of corrosion from the

oil and gas.

All the workers are employed on a casual basis, two weeks at a time, by the subcontractors. The union presence which was virtually eliminated over the last decade, is now being built through the struggles around safety and pay.

By Roderick McDuff, Glasgow branch, AEU construction section.

A PIPE-FITTER on Mobil's Beryl Alpha platform, a member of the TGWU who cannot be named for fear of intimidation, spoke to Militant about the latest developments and the background to the strikes.

IN THE Beryl field we have been having weekly 24-hour strikes for three months and have banned overtime. But all the men have now been taken off and suspended.

In June BP evicted all their workers who were occupying their four Forties platforms. BP then brought in Danish scabs. On two platforms the workers have been taken back but the scabs are still on the other two, being paid £13 an

hour.

There are now occupations on Shell's Cormorant Alpha and Brent Charlie platforms. Shell threatened to lift the gangway between Brent Charlie and the Safe Gothia accommodation rig. So 20 men went onto the platform to stop them and three men in shifts are staying on the gangway 24 hours a day.

Shell applied to the High Court to get the people off Brent Charlie but they were

refused. The judge ruled that the men had done nothing illegal. But now Shell have approached Grampian police. They could try to remove them by force.

The strike is being co-ordinated by the unofficial Oil Industry Liaison Committee which meets every Tuesday in the Adelphi trades club in Aberdeen. Every off-shore worker is invited to attend and vote. All shop stewards are then

informed of these decisions and they are put to mass meetings on every rig.

On-shore workers at the St Fergus terminal on 20 July held their second 24-hour stoppage in support of the off-shore men. The AEU is backing the men and we are appealing to workers at all other on-shore terminals for support.

We will continue until we win. How long? I've heard talk of Christmas!

WE WORK 15 hours a day for 14 consecutive days in each trip, then 14 days off. We get £6.50 an hour, £7.50 an hour for overtime. But the normal working day is 7am to 7pm, so only three hours are overtime.

You don't have to work overtime. But if you don't, you don't get back again. So you have to. We want a pay rise to £7.60 an hour so that we don't have to work overtime.

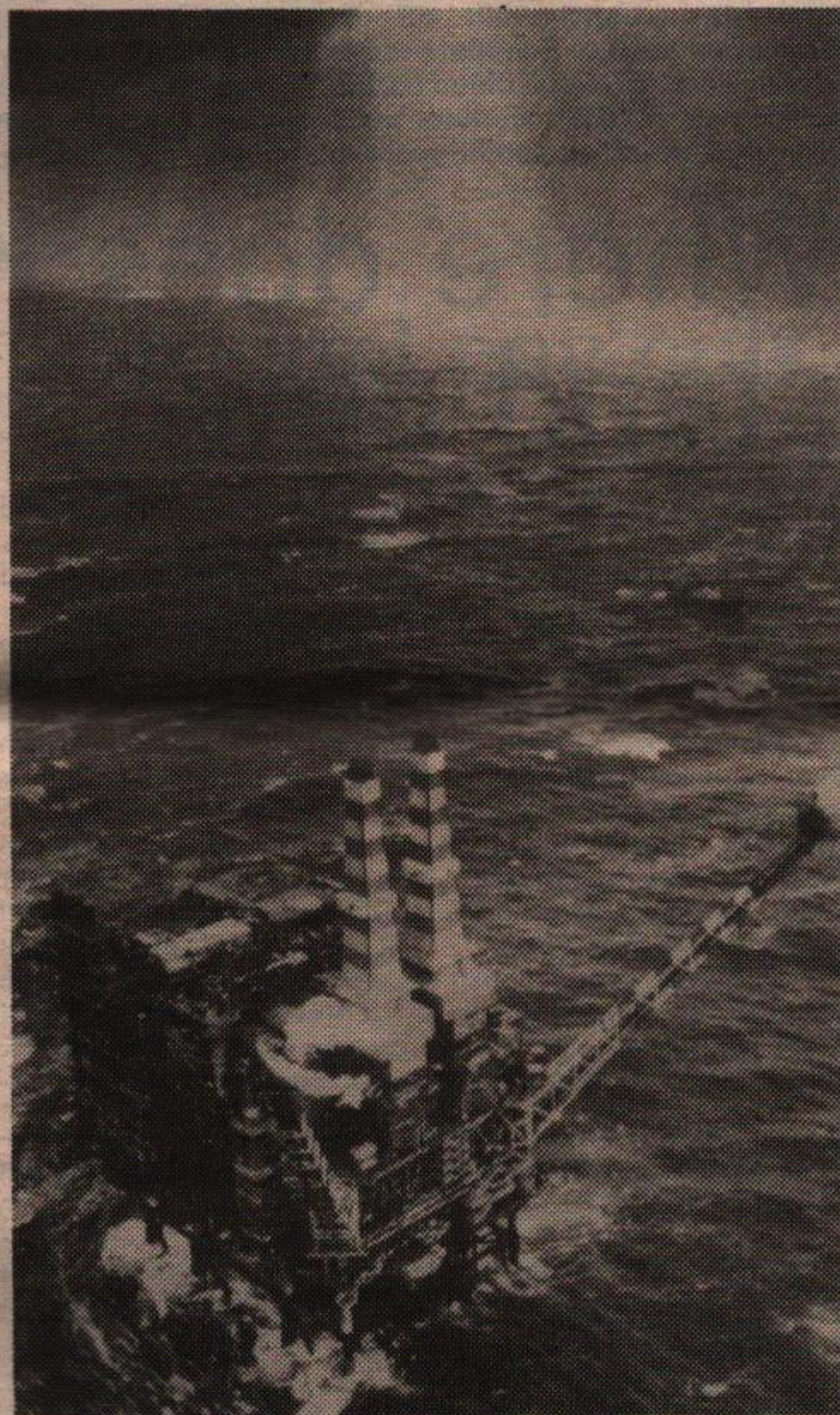
But the main thing we are fighting for is safety. Each company hires its own safety men from an agency. If

there is any damage to the steel grids or you're working with dodgy tools all you can do is report it. It takes them a long time to do anything about it.

We are all supposed to carry permits and no-one should start work without one. The permits indicate which part of the rig you should be working on so that you can be found in an emergency. They detail safety rules and guarantee insurance cover. But the companies have been taking on people without permits. The only meeting so far with

management lasted five minutes. They were prepared to discuss pay but were not willing to give anything on safety. It would cost them too much. Yet all we want is the same as everyone else gets in industry.

We want a safety committee on every rig, with safety reps elected in each company. Some companies are starting to organise committees but they are only inviting the men to attend, without any real say or power.



At ACAS talks, both sides agreed to ballot on TU recognition. All action by the unions and suspension by the companies has been suspended.

Manifold lock-out

SEVENTY ENGINEERING workers have been sacked for refusing to co-operate with a firm of management consultants who were not there!

For nearly a year management at Manifold Industries have been trying to force through wholesale changes in working practices that would lead to an intolerable situation for us.

Following last year's wage talks management had engineered a situation where they gave our union, the engineering union AEU, six months' notice of ending recognition. They then handed out a statement showing the new terms and conditions they wanted us to accept.

We were then informed that our contracts of emp-

loyment would be ended and we would be offered new ones. If we refused this contract we would be given our notice.

The new contracts included compulsory overtime, compulsory working of bank holidays, compulsory weekend working, new shift patterns with shifts over nine hours and an evening shift that ended at twenty past twelve.

When management consultants were introduced by management they were told by a shop steward and another worker that they would not co-operate. The consultants disappeared and later management said they could not force anyone to co-operate. It was up to the individual whether they wanted to or not. This was immediately relayed to the

shop floor and every individual decided not to co-operate!

Management then changed their minds. They told the stewards that anyone refusing to co-operate would be breaking their contract of employment (the old one, not the new one!) and subject to immediate dismissal. That was the last we ever saw of the management consultants...but we were still sacked.

Most AEU members are now on strike. One of the few scabs said that he had rung his mother in Scotland telling her what he was doing. She shouted "scab" at him and slammed the phone down!

We are now locked outside the gate. But we are picketing every day and in-



The Manifold Industries picket in Leyton.

(Photo: Militant)

tend to stay here until we get our jobs back. George Anthony, full-time AEU district secretary, is backing

us. Support and donations to: Lock-out committee, c/o Coopersale Road, Lon-

don E9 6BA. By John Edwards, AEU shop steward, Manifold Industries.

Editorial: the dock strike

A MASSIVE campaign of intimidation has been unleashed by the port employers in an attempt to break the dock strike. Thousands of dockworkers, with decades of service in the industry behind them, were given a contemptible 24 hours to sign draconian new contracts or face the sack and lose all redundancy entitlement.

The 16 shop stewards at Tilbury had already received their redundancy notices and cheques. Effectively they have been sacked.

All the warnings of the dockers that the ending of the National Dock Labour Scheme would lead to the most cynical management methods are being brutally borne out.

The port employers want to smash all elements of control by the dockers over their working conditions. They want to drive down wages, scrap job security and force out the older dockers to bring in younger, cheap labour. They want to destroy effective trade unionism on the docks.

In their lust for increased profits they are prepared to wantonly trample on the lives of the dockworkers.

The dock strike is thus at a critical point. Ron Todd has stated that this is not a "normal, run-of-the-mill dispute". The employers want to humiliate the Transport and General Workers' Union (TGWU). Other employers of TGWU workers will feel emboldened to attack conditions if the union

leaders fall the dockers.

Ron Todd and the other TGWU leaders must now boldly put themselves at the head of this dispute. Dockers have been advised by their union to stand firm and not sign the new contracts. This must now be backed up with action.

TGWU leaders must make it clear that they are mobilising the whole union in defence of the dockers around a clear strategy for victory.

Dockers have a long history of giving support to other workers in struggle. Now the debt must be repaid.

Should the employers win this battle, the same methods now being used against registered dockers will rapidly be aimed at dockers who have never been registered. A mighty campaign should be launched to unite all dockworkers, ex-registered and never registered, in industrial action for a new dock labour scheme to cover each and every dockworker in Britain. Blacking of diverted cargo by every TGWU member must be made a reality.

At the same time TGWU shop stewards' conferences should be convened in every area to organise fund-raising and the blacking of all dock work. They should prepare the broadest action necessary should any attempt be made by the courts to touch any TGWU funds or imprison any TGWU members for action in defence of this strike.



Ron Todd with Bristol strikers. He now has to back words with action.

Photo: John Harris (IFL)

Dockers' leader appeals for backing

JIMMY NOLAN, chair of the port stewards' committee, appeals for solidarity through the pages of *Militant*:

ON FRIDAY we are having a mass lobby outside Transport House in London. We intend to make it clear to the docks delegates, particularly those who have continued to work during the dispute, that they must go back to their areas and bring their labour forces out.

We are demanding that the TGWU general secretary makes it very clear to the recalled docks delegate conference that it's not just a question of parallel agreements.

It's now a question of the survival of the TGWU throughout the ports industry. Shop stewards in London plus lads who

have always supported the union have been made redundant by the Port of London Authority. We can't tolerate that.

We would now hope that the trade union and labour movement will realise what we've been saying for months has become a reality.

We appeal to the movement not to allow any imports or exports to go through any port in this country.

Requests for speakers and donations: Bro. R. Lewis, treasurer, Mersey Port Shop Stewards' Committee, c/o TGWU, Transport House, Islington, Liverpool, L3 8EQ. Phone: 051-207 3388.

Where does Kinnock stand now?

IN MAKING his case for the outdatedness of socialism at 1987 Labour Party conference, the highlight for Neil Kinnock was his joke about the £400-a-week docker.

Of this docker, who owns a car, microwave, video and has a second home in Marbella, Neil quipped: "You do not say to him: 'Let me take you out of your misery, bruvver.'"

Of course, the British docker whooping it up on the Costa Packet was never more than a myth cir-

culated by the tabloid press, but events have confirmed the shallowness of this viewpoint.

What indeed does the Labour leadership say to the docker at the beginning of a bitter dispute in which all that has been won is under threat?

To the docker who has children on the dole or YTS, whose parents still live in their council flat, a docker who has all the debts and pressures of working-class family life, not least the increased mor-

talage repayments.

Is this what is meant by Labour's slogan, "Meet the challenge, make the change?"

Let's hope that in urging this year's conference to recognise 'reality' Mr Kinnock again cites the predicament of the dockers.

You may have won the plaudits of the press for your second-rate Cockney accent, Neil, but workers will not be entertained by a cheap impression of the Tories.

By Kath Lee, Liverpool.

"IF WE lose, by 1993 the ports of Europe will be manned by migrant labour - British dockworkers." *Tilbury shop steward.*

"SOME FIRMS on the Tees are recruiting casual labour to unload ships. Kids are turning up wearing sandshoes. What about health and safety?" *Teesport docker.*

NATIONAL SOLIDARITY RALLY

Jimmy Nolan, Liverpool docks shop stewards committee.

An NUR speaker.

Terry Fields MP Liverpool Broadgreen

Saturday 29 July 10.30 am.

Central Hall, Renshaw St, Liverpool.

Tickets £1. If your organisation wishes to sponsor the conference, please send a donation of £10 to National Solidarity Rally, c/o Terry Fields MP, 662a Prescot Road, Liverpool L13 5XE.

Rail leaders must take initiative

WE ARE CARRYING ON the fight for decent wages and a decent machinery of negotiation. If the NUR had accepted British Rail's (BR) latest proposals we would still have low pay and BR would still be ploughing ahead with plans to end existing national negotiations.

Unfortunately the other unions, Aslef and TSSA, have accepted the 8.8 per cent offer. But BR have only offered us 1.8 per cent more than their original offer and have only deferred the ending of

the machinery of negotiations from November to the end of January. They are still holding a gun at our heads. Our determined action has forced important concessions from BR but we should continue to fight for our full demands.

While they have conceded that pay, pensions and so on could be discussed at a national level, there is enough ambiguity in their document to suggest that they will still try to set up regional deals where they can. We must ensure that any

negotiated settlement is absolutely watertight.

BR's deviousness has already been shown by their attempts at court action over our ballot and their further attempts to get union members to complain to the government's 'union rights' officer. Even the judges threw out their case.

Having taken six one-day strikes we have shown that we have the power. Our action has been solid and we have won massive support from the public. Even

the most rabid of the right-wing press had to recognise we had a just case.

Unfortunately our leaders have allowed outside forces to set the agenda. We have had the press, the Tories and even Neil Kinnock telling us to take the 8.8 per cent. And this has not been effectively countered by the NUR leaders. They have not set out a clear series of demands we can mobilise around. The "substantial pay rise" must be put into figures.

We want 15 per cent and no

strings. We want BR to completely withdraw their threat to end the machinery of negotiation and we want union participation at every level in the new machinery.

But BR, with the government behind them, are now digging their heels in. To win these demands in full will take a massive propaganda campaign from the executive to gear up the entire membership for escalation of the action, if necessary to indefinite strike.

By a London NUR member.

"I'M ON nights at the moment. I get nine hours for that. Once the machinery of negotiation goes they could turn round and say to me: 'Oh, we don't want you today, come in tonight. Work five nights and Sunday.' So you could be working six days for 39 hours."

"I spoke to a group of my members who are middle-of-the-road. They said, 'If he accepts this and we go back we'll be eating sh-t!' One lad, who I would describe as a Tory, really surprised me. I expected him to vote against an overtime ban and against a strike. He voted yes on both!"

"He came to me today. He's well-known in the district as one who would cut your throat for overtime. He's adamant that if Jimmy Knapp goes back on his word there will be a hell of a lot of trouble."

"The men are petrified at what might happen if they don't win."

"These proposals will be terrible, especially if your face doesn't fit. You'll be working six days a week and they'll pick the hardest jobs for you to do."

By a Merseyside NUR member.

"WE'RE ON a basic £107 a week which is not enough to live on. Many of the lads are too proud to claim family credit so they work all the hours God sends. How can staff who constantly face job cuts and excessive overtime do justice to their work?"

"British Rail and London Underground put profit margins before the safety of their staff and the public. This is why we saw the Clapham and King's Cross tragedies. They could have been avoided. They will happen again."

"Since 1982 our pay and conditions have been imposed. Before 1982 we used to be one of the better-paid sections

of workers. Now we are with the worst.

"Our members and the public know that only investment, decent wages and national bargaining will ease the problem."

By ex-NUR executive member in Teesside.

WHAT TOUCHED the pickets at Thornaby maintenance depot most was an old-age pensioner who came to see them. Her late husband, a UCW member, had been on the picket line in past disputes. She said she knew what it was like and congratulated them for taking action. She had brought with her £20 worth of groceries for them to share out.

The strikers clubbed together to send her a bouquet of flowers and Jimmy Knapp wrote her a personal letter.

By Vanessa Lorraine.

Industrial reports

Step up Nalgo action

AFTER SIX days of strikes no-one can doubt that the overwhelming majority of Nalgo's local government members are prepared to fight for a decent wage and the maintenance of national negotiating machinery.

The action has been absolutely solid — especially in the three-day strike. Our strength of resolve has begun to move the employers. New talks have been offered. It is understood that over 100 authorities now want to improve the offer.

The national local government committee are calling for indefinite strikes of five per cent of the membership working in key areas like computers, finance, poll tax and housing.

These members will strike from 28 July on full pay while the rest of the membership is balloted on guerrilla strikes for a maximum of four days a month, starting in September.

Nalgo Broad Left (BL) conference agreed unanimously to campaign to make the limited action bite as hard as possible and to call on Nalgo's leaders to organise an effective national levy to increase the number of workers brought out.

But the Broad Left also warned that a strike which actively involves only five per cent of our members was unlikely to succeed in winning the full claim.

If the employers do not concede as a result of the limited action we should demand a recalled national conference to sanction an all-out strike ballot.

The limited action should be used to build support for this with rallies in every

area. A national demonstration should be called to coincide with one of the days of strike action to show our strength of feeling and build further the confidence of our members.

A COACH load of school students turned up at Richard Dunne sports centre in Bradford for an end-of-term swim on one of Nalgo's strike days. The teacher let one of the pickets speak to the students, who then took a vote and decided not to cross the picket line. The manager came out and tried to persuade them the baths were open, but they refused to go in.

Those taking selective strike action should be used to campaign throughout the rest of the membership.

If possible an all-out strike should be timed to coincide with any action the manual workers may take in pursuit of their claim.

Nalgo has come of age during this year's pay campaign. We can hold our heads proudly in the trade union movement. We have shown ourselves to be a disciplined force. Having come this far no-one is in a mood to retreat.

12 per cent or £1,200 and no strings!

By Chris Hill, national Broad Left secretary.



Strikers marching in London.

"MOST PEOPLE are worried about conditions. At the moment we're on scales and get an increment every April. Career grading means it will be up to the section or department head. I could be on the same scale next year — my boss doesn't like women!

"But if you've worked your way into the bosses' good books you might get a higher scale.

"Then there's pay. Seven per cent is no good — it's just a few quid a week. I come out with £350 a month. Two thirds of that goes into expenses so I'm skint after two weeks.

"Yesterday was the

best picket we've had. In the evening people coming out were abusive, shouting things like "Piss off" and giving us hand signals. When we shouted "Scab!" we were advised not to by the police as it was 'intimidating'!

"The funniest thing last night was we left three pickets outside. The rest of us hid till they came out. Then we clapped and shouted: "Come out tomorrow, two days are better than none!"

"The feeling is we're going to win, as long as it takes."

By a Nottingham striker.

THE HEAD of finance in Hendon town hall, a Mr Ross, told Nalgo pickets: "It's in the public interest to keep the rates down. You should have a pay increase no more than five per cent this year."

He received a £7,000 increase last year, more than many Nalgo members get in a whole year!

By Phil Hutchinson.

3,000 PEOPLE marched through Middlesbrough on 19 July, singing "12 per cent no strings" and "Maggie out!" It was Nalgo's northern region demonstration. When we arrived at the meeting place a cheer went up for the Ucat members working on a building behind us — they had hung up Nalgo's placards from their scaffolding.

From Vanessa Loraine.

New witch-hunt in Nupe

MOVES TO oust left winger Ian Driver from Nupe's national executive have been unveiled by the union's right wing.

Despite the host of pressing issues that face public sector workers, and Nupe members in particular, July's meeting of the executive council (EC) devoted precious time to approving a special hearing to remove Ian from office.

Ian Driver spoke to a rally of Southwark Nalgo three weeks ago, arguing for trade union solidarity to ensure the successful conclusion of the pay dispute. His remarks were enthusiastically received by the Nalgo strikers.

The right wing are now alleging that Ian, far from relaying messages of solidarity, made personal attacks on the role of general secretary Rodney Bickerstaffe and other members of the

executive.

Many Nupe members believe that the right wing's fury stems from the success of several left-wing socialists in recent EC elections and Nick Bradley's 40 per cent of the vote in his challenge for deputy general secretary.

The decision to organise the hearing came just minutes after Ian's request for a special EC meeting to discuss the Labour Party's policy review had been turned down!

It was Ian who had moved that Nupe should ballot alongside Nalgo in the council officers' pay dispute. In the event it was the lack of any campaigning material by Nupe's officers which contributed to the narrow failure to return a 'yes' vote in that ballot.

Nalgo members will be extremely concerned at the reports of action

against Ian. Already a number of branches are considering motions regretting this action. Many Nalgo activists are questioning the viability of a merger with Nupe if they can treat a member of their own EC this way for supporting their strike action!

It is ironic that at the time of the biggest strike wave in ten years Nupe's executive has commissioned a report on industrial action short of strike action. With such a report they hope to reverse the membership decline that has seen 25,000 leave the union in the last two quarters.

At the same meeting it was noted that Nalgo are gaining members as a result of their action. But still Nupe's leadership seems unable to make the connection that militant action wins support!

By a reporter.

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

YTS victory

CPSA MEMBERS in six regional DSS offices in England and Wales and one central office in Scotland have rejected the introduction of the Youth Training Scheme (YTS) by 344 votes to 118.

This is a defeat for the BL'84/right-wing section executive (SEC). Despite conference policy and a vote against YTS by the membership nationally, they have campaigned vigorously in favour of accepting YTS.

The SEC argued that the scheme was a success where it had been int-

roduced and that the union couldn't stop it anyway.

Members rejected this position. CPSA's policy of total opposition to YTS must be upheld. A ballot for indefinite strike on 50 per cent strike pay will be conducted from 31 July.

CPSA members should demand the SEC back union policy and campaign for strike action. Broad Left supporters should step up the campaign against YTS and build for a yes vote for strike action.

By Simon Dennison, CPSA.

Chunnel pay cuts

WORK ON the Shakespeare Cliff site of the £6 billion Channel Tunnel was hit by an unofficial 24-hour strike last week. Over 500 building workers refused to cross a picket line after loco drivers, fitters and spoil machine operators struck over an attempt to cut wages by £20 a shift.

Pay on the tunnel has been cut twice in the last six months since new management took over.

Transmanche Link (TML), the consortium building the tunnel, recently won a one-month exten-

sion on the contract along with an additional £100 million bonus if the job is completed on time and within budget.

Although TML chief executive Jack Lemley denied that there was an attempt to cut wages, their paymaster Eurotunnel has told TML it wants "sweeping cost savings of up to a third". If TML take this as the green light for attacks on wages, conditions and safety then strikes like this will be our answer.

By Andy Benard, Folkestone branch, Ucat.

Brent DLO axed

LABOUR-CONTROLLED Brent council has decided to close down its direct labour organisation (DLO). This disgraceful move will mean the loss of over 100 construction jobs. Brent's offer of only statutory minimum redundancy pay has further angered workers.

A Brent council spokesman made the pathetic comment: "The decision to close was a case of us doing it before the minister came in and did it for

us."

Ghanyam Vekaria, a Ucat member working on the Church End site, said: "There is still plenty of work and they are bringing in sub-contractors to do the job. They say we are making a loss, but we haven't been told how.

"The refurbishing work we are doing has to be finished. So private contractors will do it and it'll cost more."

By Tim Burr, Brent branch, Ucat.

Moodie ballot

RELUCTANTLY, CPSA staff in the Department of Social Security (DSS) have rejected strike action to stop the relocation of work from 21 London DSS offices — the Moodie proposals.

Management plans to cut jobs drastically, resulting in compulsory transfer for staff and a worsening service for the public, will go ahead with the assistance of CPSA's BL'84/right-wing section (SEC) leadership.

The vote against strike action came as little surprise to most activists. The union launched no cam-

paign. Any initiatives were left to individual branches and offices.

Yet at the 11th hour the SEC posed for members throughout London, not just in the 21 offices, the choice: accept management's proposals or take all-out strike action. The SEC of course recommended rejecting strike action.

Despite this vote, the right wing will be hard pressed to find one member who voted against the strike who backed the SEC's cynical position.

By Rob Williams, CPSA.

Solidarity price £1

Militant

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40p

Poll tax gift for the rich

A LOCAL Tory councillor, R Love, had a letter printed in our local paper attacking me and my family after we were featured as being against the poll tax.

I wrote a reply to Love's letter but it wasn't accepted. When I telephoned to find out why I was denied the right of reply I was told my letter was "too political and incited the public to engage in civil disobedience". Love's letter was entitled "New charge is fair". This was my reply:

THE POLL tax is grossly unfair. It is a system of local taxation which halves the tax burden of the richest and increases that of the poorest, costs twice as much to collect as the present system, needs an army of investigators to trace those liable to pay it, disenfranchises the poorest sections of society, introduces a system of rebates so complicated that few will be able to understand them or be able to claim and destroys local democracy, services and jobs.

It is a system so 'fair' that it caused the peasants' revolt in 1381 and so 'fair' that our neighbours in Europe will have no part in it.

Councillor Love claims that I am mistaken in saying that poorer people will be subsidising the rich.

Councillor Love says: "Those earning the lowest wage will only pay 20 per cent of the full charge. The worse-off, on income support, will have their benefit increased by 20 per cent of the national average community charge."

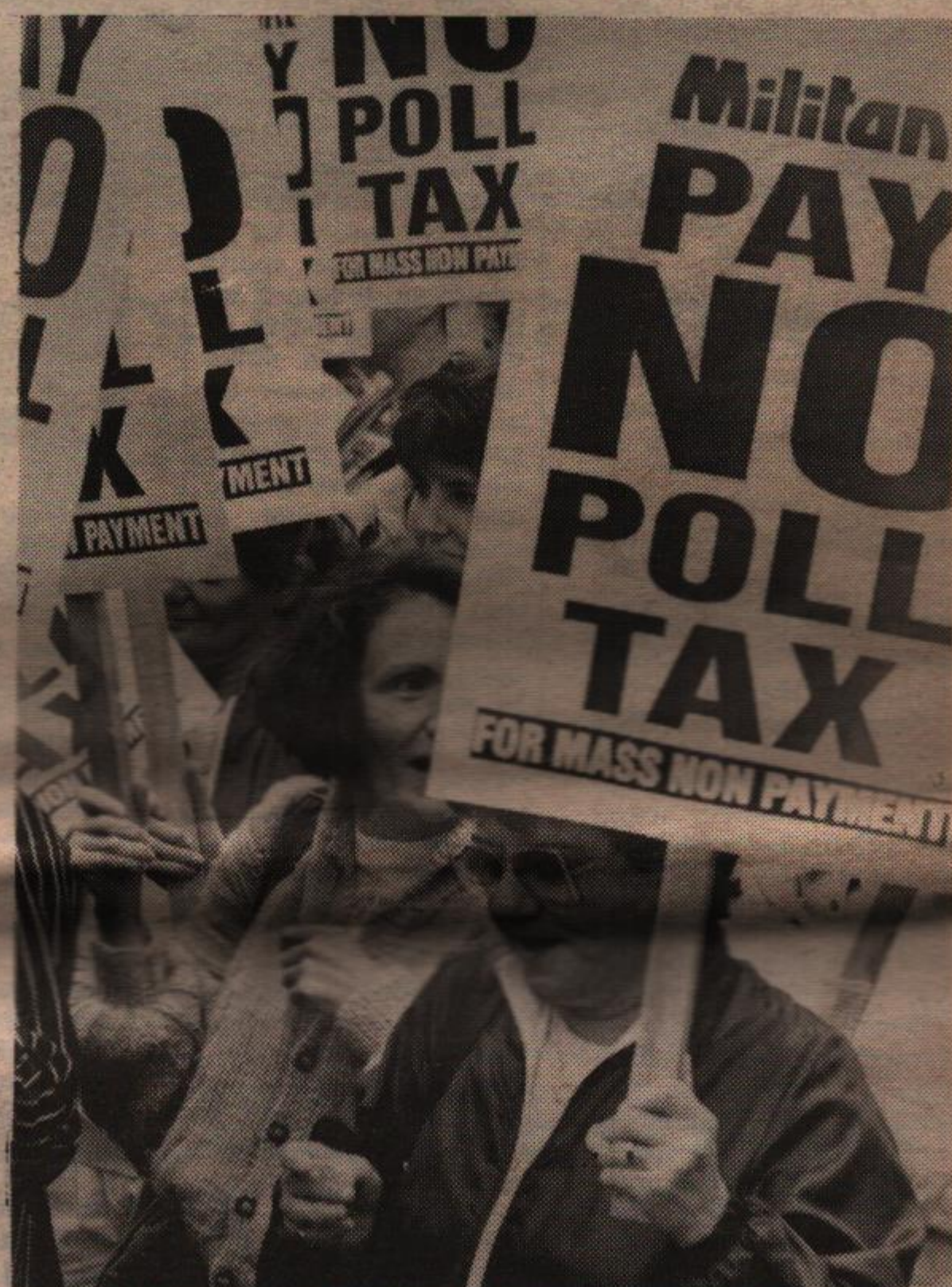
Shepway district's poll tax is estimated to be £260 a

year each. But with the cost of collection the figure could be as much as £500 or even £700 a year.

If it was £500, 20 per cent is £100. The national average poll tax is £224 and 20 per cent of that is £45. Those on income support will still have to find about £55 per year (out of their own pocket) or £1 a week. This might be small to someone in a well-paid job, but a small fortune to the less well-off — a couple of pints of milk and a loaf of bread.

Only a massive campaign against the poll tax will change the government's plans. A million people in Scotland have refused to pay. After only three weeks of campaigning in Shepway, 300 have said they will not pay. Anti-poll tax unions are forming in other towns in Kent. I say to the people of Shepway — join our fight against the Tories and their attacks on our local authority. Refuse to pay the poll tax.

By John Stephens,



WHAT IT MEANS TO LORD VESTEY AND ME:



Lord Vestey

	Lord Vestey (millionaire)	Myself (caretaker, £119 p.w)
Rates	£5,017	£4.80
Poll tax	180	2,000
Gain	4,837	nil
Loss	nil	1,520

TWO-THIRDS of households will be worse off under the poll tax. The latest report from the Child Poverty Action Group also shows that 55 per cent of families with children will lose out.

And these are underestimates. They are based on an average poll tax of £234, but the Tories are now saying it will be £275 for England next year. And you can bet it will be more than that.

Despite rebates and safety nets, some of the very poorest will be hit hard. Taking poll tax and last year's social security cuts together 62 per cent of households lose out — a fifth of them will lose £5 per week or more.

Of course three-quarters of the top 10 per cent of earners will gain under poll tax — it really is the perfect Tory tax.

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WHAT WE STAND FOR

- The immediate introduction of a 35-hour week without loss of pay as a step towards the elimination of unemployment.
- A minimum wage of £150 a week, tied to the cost of living, for everyone including sick and disabled people.
- Reversal of Tory cuts and a massive programme of public works on housing, education, and the health service etc.
- Fight racism. Oppose all forms of racial discrimination. Labour movement action against racist and fascist attacks. End police harassment. Oppose all immigration controls. Unite black and white workers.
- 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.

● Workers' management of 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.

● 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.

● A socialist plan of production democratically drawn up and implemented by committees involving 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.