

Militant

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50p

ISSUE 1308 31 January 1997

Coming next week

The Socialist

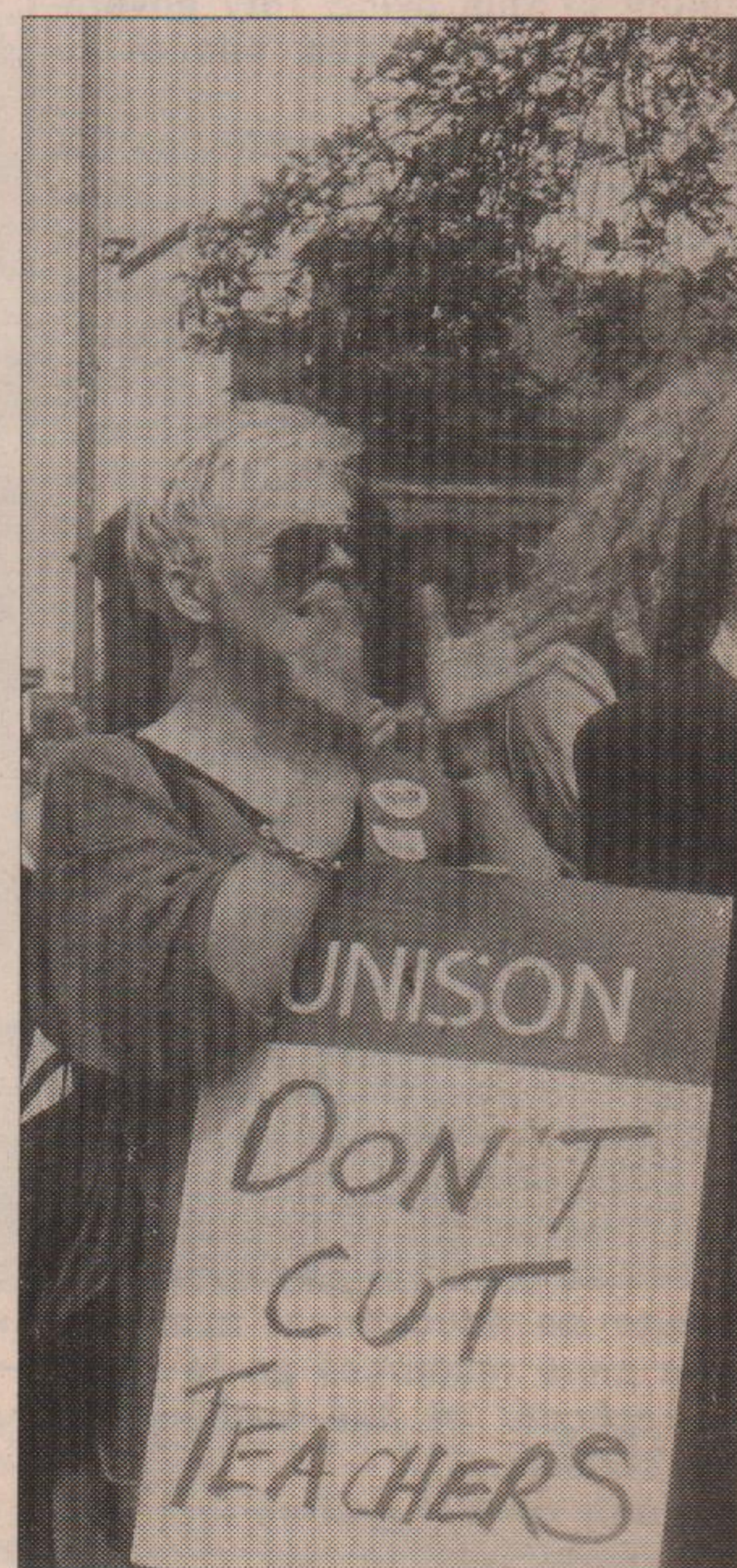
THIS IS *Militant's* final issue. But before our enemies start jumping for joy, we should warn them that we are not going away.

Instead we are coming back next week as *The Socialist*, the newspaper of the Socialist Party, which is also launching next week.

This week we take a look back at all that *Militant* achieved.

See pages 7,8,9,10,11 &12.

TORIES SINK SCHOOLS DEFEND EDUCATION



THE TORIES are establishing a two-tier education system, creating a few super-schools and a lot more 'sink' schools with less and less funding.

Apart from a small minority, most school students are seeing their education cut under the Tories. The government are writing off children and writing off their teachers, who get the blame if standards fall.

The Tories now want to move towards abolishing local education authorities (LEAs), with direct (and restricted) state funding of primary and secondary schools, forcing what's left of the LEAs to compete with the private sector.

The Education Bill provisions scuppered in Parliament this week would have allowed grant-maintained schools that 'succeed' in attracting pupils to expand. They now want to let 'popular' schools expand by direct access to money through the Private Finance Initiative.

What they don't say is that more and more schools would fail through desperate under-funding. Then they plan to bring in US management teams to run 'failing' schools in inner-city areas.

Teachers' morale is plummeting. Even Tory education minister Gillian Shephard admits that four out of five teachers retire early.

Trying to cope with a cash-starved schools budget, more administration, and taking the rap for the government's failed education policies, is pushing out experienced teachers before retirement age. But as they are making no attempt to resolve the basic problem of under-funding, the Tories intend to effectively end early retirement.

The teachers' unions must shift to organising industrial action to defeat this latest Tory attack. Look at France.

The French lorry drivers won the right to retire at 55 through their great strike movement last year. On 24 January Metro, bus and tram workers struck for the

same right and are getting a lot of support.

But we also want to stop teachers getting desperate to escape, to attract young people into teaching and to give the next generation a decent education. That needs resources. The money being wasted on the royal yacht could build six new secondary schools, cut class sizes in schools or allow teachers to take early retirement.

Education needs £5 billion just to deal with urgent problems of under-funding and immediate repairs.

Join the Socialist Party, which fights for an education policy providing for the needs of all our children not of a privileged few.

Hunger Strikers - Urgent action needed

AS MILITANT went to press the lives of hunger strikers at Rochester Prison were in great danger. One inmate, Nigerian pastor Ejike Emenike, was said to be "close to death".

Three other men were said to be in particular peril and could die within 72 hours.

They and 13 others have been on hunger strike since 6 January, claiming they are being treated like criminals, by being held in jails.

◆ Send urgent protests to Home Secretary Michael Howard. Fax: 0171 273 3965.

(Fuller report page 6)

Militant

EDITORIAL COMMENT

Launching a real alternative

MAJOR RECKONS his government can go on until 1 May. The fiasco over the education vote shows the inability of this dying Tory government to survive from minute to minute.

But behind all the jumble lies the more serious questions as to what all the fuss is about and whether you have a Tory or New Labour government, will it make any difference?

The education farce revealed how little difference there is between the establishment political parties. The vote, on whether or not to extend the number of Grant-maintained (GM) schools, was being used by the Tories to expose Labour hypocrisy.

Labour leader Tony Blair sends his son to a GM school and will be sending his younger son to one soon.

New Labour does not oppose extending the number of GM schools, or reintroducing streaming and elitism in schools, they just want to do it a different way.

Grant-maintained schools are being used by the Tories, and will be used unfortunately by Labour, to institute an educational apartheid where more resources go to these elite schools at the expense of other schools.

The only correct gesture that Tony Blair made was to say that the Tories should call a general election now. But when the election comes what choice is on offer?

Gordon Brown's recent promise of a continued pay freeze when Labour comes to power will also increase the danger that many working-class people see no point in voting at the general election.

Despite the intense desire to get rid of the Tories, who have made our lives miserable for 18 years, what will be the point if you get a government that promises to keep your pay frozen for years ahead, or won't restore your rights at work, or won't promise a decent wage to lift you out of the poverty trap?

Many working-class people are now looking for an alternative to New Labour. That feeling will multiply when a New Labour government is in power.

Already we can see their councils threatening thousands of redundancies because they have been told to keep in line with Gordon Brown's pledge not to increase public spending.

There is an alternative being built. *Militant* has argued for the creation of a new mass party to fight for working-class people. That's why *Militant* Labour is launching the Socialist Party next week and is also relaunching *Militant* as *The Socialist*.

We believe this is an essential step in beginning to build a mass socialist alternative that will create a better, socialist society for workers in Britain and throughout the world.



National yachtery?

WHEN TORY politicians talk about the NHS, benefits or education for the mass of the population, they talk cuts. We can't afford it unless you pay for it, they say.

People who have been fighting cutbacks in these services are raging that this very same government could find £60 million of public money for a new yacht for the royal family.

How many other families on state benefit will get a new pair of shoes this month, let alone a new yacht?

The old yacht *Britannia*, with a crew of 240 including a Marine band, cost £10 million to run last year. It was only used for three days, though the royals might have used it more if they

could have got it on the ski slopes.

The money being spent on the new yacht (unnamed yet but left-wing Labour MP Dennis Skinner suggested *Camilla*) could finance at least one small hospital.

All the other money that Liz and Co are paid, or have rotting in their accounts, could probably provide the £6 billion that the British Medical Association say is needed in the NHS immediately.

Disapproval

Michael Portillo says he's doing it all for "the nation's pride". Instead of saying "Thanks, Mike, we didn't know you cared", the 'nation' has given it a huge thumbs down.

A *Guardian* poll showed 72%

disapproval, even higher amongst working-class, women voters and young people. The royals are probably lucky the TV poll on their future came before this latest storm.

The depth of the opposition even made Labour's right-wing leadership say that a future Labour government would not pay for the new yacht.

The first problem with Labour's position is that Blair and Brown are also promising no new spending on essential services.

The other is that instead of calling for the scrapping of the royals and their expensive toy, they have stolen the Tories' clothes and want to get private funding - the royal yacht sponsored by Littlewood's?

Lad's Army

Who do you think you're kidding Mr Portillo?

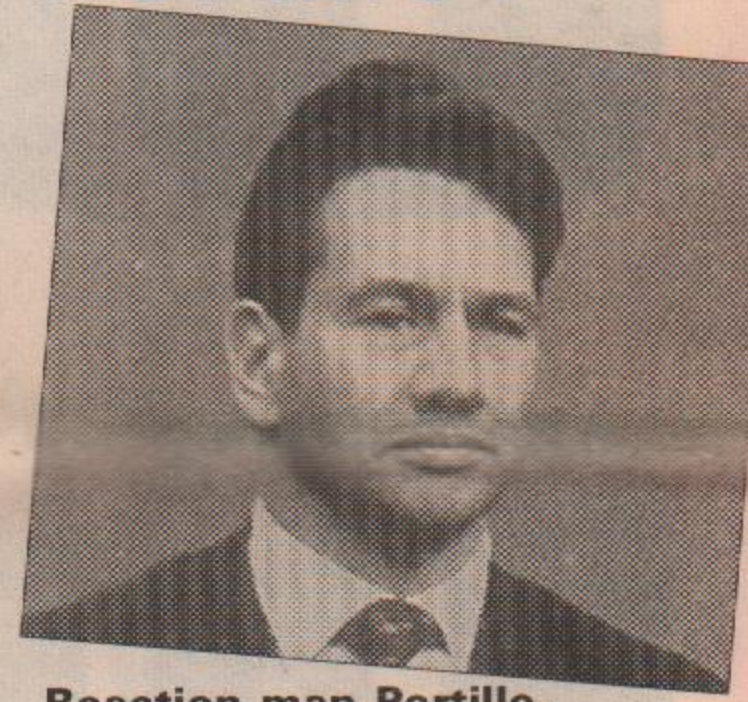


Photo: Dave Sinclair.

Reaction man Portillo.

MICHAEL PORTILLO'S "Lad's Army", his plan to expand the Combined Cadet Force into most British schools, has disgusted many people.

After last year's Dunblane massacre, does the government really want to put more weapons in people's hands? In reality his crazy idea is designed to firm up soft Tory support and also get Portillo a name amongst his party's gung-ho wing.

He says he wants to instil 'self-discipline' into teenagers with drill and arms training. The Tories are building up a moral panic about young people being out of control and violent. Portillo's instant solution comes after Blair's "more homework" brainwave and the previous Tory 10pm curfews and boot camps.

At present, 198 of the cadet groups are in private schools, only 45 are in state schools. The armed forces recruit their ranks mainly from the working class, particularly the unemployed.

Our rulers like us on a diet of "polish your boots, salute it if it moves, paint it if it doesn't," and they'd like to add "shoot if it goes on strike or gets ideas above its station".

But the Cadets concentrate on the public schools to produce the next generation of officers. Portillo has no objection to some working-class youth getting a taste for military life but he certainly doesn't want to build up the embryo of a workers' guerrilla army! It's an election stunt.

All Portillo and his backers are proving is that they can't offer young people the prospect of jobs, a decent education or youth facilities - only army spit and polish.

Abolish the monarchy

SOCIALISTS ARE opposed to the royal family. It's not just because they're all barking mad and very rich and 'own' most of the land in Britain - land which they robbed from others. It's also because of their undemocratic powers.

The Queen has to approve and sign every law passed by Parliament. She has the power to appoint Privy Counsellors - leading MPs who are 'her special advisers' - and can decide which political leader will form 'her government'.

These are not just ceremonial powers. In 1975 in Australia the Governor General, appointed by the Queen and acting on her behalf, removed Gough Whitlam's Labour government from office.

In Britain there has been more than idle speculation about how the monarchy can use their powers, especially to decide who will form a government in the case of a hung Parliament.

Apologists for the monarchy claim she no longer uses these

powers. But with the break-up of established political parties and the possible introduction of proportional representation the monarch may well step in to sort out a 'constitutional crisis' for the ruling class.

You can't imagine one of the Windsors inviting Arthur Scargill or Dave Nellist to form a government even if they won 90% of the vote at an election.

The royals' defenders say their heroes bring a lot of money into the country (in reality they cost us more than they bring in) and you need a figurehead to be head of state.

Socialists believe that in a proper democracy every public representative would be elected and accountable to the people who elected them. People have never voted for the Queen or any of their family. And while the Queen cannot vote herself, she can exercise more power than any of us.

We would get rid of the royals. We wouldn't give them new yachts or huge allowances but we'd probably be more generous



to them than their rotten system is to most of us.

We'd give them a job with decent hours, 35 or less, a decent home with a front and back garden, we'd give them a few weeks less holiday than they get now but still at least six weeks a year. We'd even give them the right to vote!

The Marxist paper of Militant Labour: Issue 1308.
Militant, 3/13 Hepscott Road, London E9 5HB.
 Tel: 0181 533 3311
 Fax: 0181 986 9445
 E-mail 101464.3527@compuserve.com.
 Registered as a newspaper at the Post Office. Published by *Militant*. Printed by Eastway Offset, 3/13 Hepscott Road, London E9 5HB.
 ISSN 0144-9275.

Scotland says no to cuts

THOUSANDS OF council workers across Britain are currently fighting to save their jobs as the round of local authority budget meetings comes closer. 30,000 marched in Glasgow against £80 million of cuts. Hundreds of firefighters lobbied Kent county council this week against £23.6 million cuts across the board.

IT WAS Glasgow's biggest demonstration since the huge anti-poll tax protest in 1990.

Richie Venton

On 25 January over 30,000 people joined the protest called by Scotland's largest teachers' union, the EIS. Marchers were angry at the threat to jobs and educational provision posed by the council cuts that have been issued.

In Glasgow alone £80 million of cuts threatens 2,000 jobs (550 of them teachers), many of them through compulsory redundancy, in itself a huge breach with past job security for teachers.

In the last two years Tory cuts have stolen the equivalent of £500 out of every household in Glasgow. Huge contingents turned up from all over Scotland, including bus-loads from primary schools where parents and children joined the staff. Workers from UNISON and other local government unions joined the demo.

The multitude of banners, many

home-made, reflected the number of schools and other centres which attended what was a huge outpouring of opposition to all council cuts.

Unfortunately, the EIS leadership booked an indoor rally at the end of the demo and told people the hall was full, so they should disperse immediately as there was a lot of road congestion!

Most people never had a chance to ask the EIS leaders what they were going to do next. They're balloting for strike action, seemingly for 5 March.

UNISON is balloting across Scotland for action on 6 March, the day councils officially declare their cuts budgets. The EIS decision could lessen the impact of industrial action - a common day of action would be far better.

Nonetheless, this demo and the defiant mood shows the potential for a whirlwind of protest by council workers.

Members of Scottish Militant Labour (SML), Scottish Socialist Alliance (SSA) and others on the left have fought successfully to commit the big Glasgow UNISON



The battle to save Scotland's schools has been running for several years

Photo: Craig Maclean

branch to ballot two departments for a one-day strike on 20 February.

We are campaigning for other unions to join the strike and to besiege the council which meets that day and makes the real decisions on the budget.

The SSA had an open-air meeting at the demo which put forward the idea of a needs-based defiance budget, with no cuts in jobs or services and open defiance of the Tories.

We demanded that the cash needed to meet the balance should come from an incoming Labour government.



Photo: Craig Maclean

Single parents

Labour's poverty trap

TONY BLAIR said last week that he aims to get single jobless mothers off benefits and into work.

Blair correctly says that 70% of unemployed single mothers want to work and that they should get the chance to do so.

But what do his plans mean? He says that JobCentres should invite single mothers for an interview and tell them about childcare facilities and after-school and homework clubs for their children.

Blair also says Labour would make more training available and relax the "16-hour rule" for lone

parents under 25 so they could study without losing benefits.

Given that Blair has set his face against new spending, single parents may be sceptical. They often can't find any child care or lose benefits if they get it.

But they also find that most jobs available are for unsocial hours on low wages. Working for low pay can make parents worse off than on Income Support.

Workers need a minimum wage of around £6 an hour to avoid this poverty trap. Otherwise it will only help to cut the £10 billion a year benefits bill for lone parents. Any

new scheme must be voluntary. Claimants must not be denied benefits if they don't get a job.

At present childcare provision is woeful in most areas, few employers offer childcare and free public provision is under continual attack from cuts - which Blair pledges not to undo!

And what quality child care will there be? Parents need to be confident that their children will be safe.

If these plans are just a bouquet to hide the smell of more attacks on benefits, single mothers will soon be disillusioned with a New Labour government.

Health Service cuts hit abortion rights

MEANS-TESTED abortions. That's what Haringey and Enfield Health Authority has in store for north London women.

The health authority wrote to local GPs asking them "not to discourage women from using private abortion clinics if that is what their patients wish".

Their criteria for access to NHS abortions denies women the legal right to choose an abortion enshrined in the 1967 Abortion Act. It smacks of Tory "moral" values.

The health authority claims it needs these restrictions because of increasing demand from local women when it

cannot increase the £600,000 year's budget set aside for abortions. But many local people will see this as a political move given that two of the local constituency MPs are currently the ultra-right Portillo and Eggar.

The health authority is choosing a soft target to off-load the financial problems caused by the Tories' stranglehold on NHS resources.

Many local women who fall outside their criteria will face the choice of paying up, giving birth to a child they do not want or cannot cope with, or what? - a return to the horror of back-street abortions? Not much of a health authority.

Helen Redwood, Haringey.

Obituary - Iris Bentley

THE SAD news of Iris Bentley's death came through on 22 January. Just after we printed last week's Militant which contained an interview with her.

Iris died, aged 65, after a long illness. For 44 years she had fought to get her brother Derek a posthumous free pardon after his execution in 1953 (see Militant 24 January).

Joan Francis, Socialist Party prospective parliamentary candidate for Peckham, first met Iris in 1995.

"It's very sad that this very brave woman has died when there is a strong possibility of a free pardon if Labour wins the election. Howard is a vicious ignorant Tory who refused to give a pardon because he couldn't admit that the state had got it wrong.

"Derek Bentley had a mental age of eleven. Before he was hanged, he kept asking Iris and his father 'is it going to hurt?' He saw it like a child, he would be punished then he would be able to go home.

"Iris was suffering from cancer and had her operation at Tooting hospital cancelled several times. She told me and others involved in fighting to save Guy's hospital to keep fighting for the NHS

"Iris said she'd take the fight to pardon Derek to the grave if necessary. Sadly it was. The best memorial would be for Militant readers to write to Tony Blair, as she asked, to call for a full pardon."

Militant sends its condolences to Iris's daughter and the rest of her family.

Fighting Manchester hospital privatisation

NOT ONLY do the health authorities want to close Withington hospital, in Manchester, they also want the small extension at Wythenshawe (including a private wing) to be built under the Private Finance Initiative (PFI).

Margaret Manning

They want the Atcare Consortium, main partners the builders WS Atkins and Pall Mall (infamous for sacking the Hillingdon hospital

cleaners) to build and run Wythenshawe and the glorified clinic left at Withington.

The trade unions and the community health council were originally told that the Royal Bank of Scotland had a stake in the South Manchester PFI project. The Hands Off Withington campaign called on local people to write to the bank threatening to withdraw accounts if they were involved in the privatisation of the local hospital.

This had an effect. The Bank's HQ in Edinburgh telephoned the

campaign to ask us to make it clear they are not involved!

We are determined to stop the PFI. Building projects under PFI will cost more of our taxes in the long run as the 'rent' paid by the NHS would cover the huge profits of the private firms and banks.

The NHS will have no public control over subcontractors used by private firms.

After 20-30 years of the NHS paying for the contract, the hospital might belong to the private firms, not the NHS. For example,

one hospital in Scotland will be turned into offices at the end of the contract.

The private firms' contract to run the hospital is unlikely to include a commitment to upgrade the facilities or keep up with new medical techniques. This will hold up progress.

The government is finding it hard to get PFI projects though. We are confident we can stop the South Manchester Health Authority plan to close Withington, when it meets in February.

Stop New Labour cuts

UNION MEMBERS in the Cardiff county UNISON branch are balloting for strike action in protest at the threat of Labour-controlled Cardiff county council to make 250 workers compulsory redundant as part of a £17.5 million cuts package.

Dave Reid

300 angry UNISON members voted overwhelmingly at an emergency general meeting to ballot for strike action on hearing that council leaders had already given notice of 250 compulsory redundancies before even meeting the union. GMB union members also want to ballot for strike action and National Union of Teachers members are meeting this week.

The council are proposing amongst other things to cut £4 million from its education budget and £1.6 million from social services.

100 teachers would be sacked leading to most Cardiff school class sizes rising above 40.

Social services, already subject to two investigations due to malpractice, would cut a number of services already



Council workers demonstrate against cuts. Photo: S O'Neill

weakened by previous cuts.

Workers understand that the Tory government stand behind these cuts but they are angry that the Labour councillors simply pass the cuts onto its workforce.

The large £11 million budget for councillors' allowances and the Lord Mayor's expenses are untouched by these cuts.

Mike Shepherd, Socialist Party's prospective parliamentary candidate for Cardiff

South and Penarth condemned the Labour council's stance. "Labour are openly pursuing Tory policies in Cardiff. For years New Labour in Cardiff have been claiming that they are only carrying out cuts that the Tories are inflicting on them."

"Gordon Brown's statement last week that the cuts will continue under Labour show that there will be more of the same next year unless council workers take a stand."

School closures campaign

GATESHEAD LABOUR controlled council are preparing to make £2 million cuts in education. A delegation of parents went to lobby the education committee. Prior to the meeting it was denied that school closures would be discussed.

However it was eventually admitted that the committee would be "identifying areas" for the cuts. But that part of the meeting would not be open to the public.

The chair of the education committee refused to talk about leaked Labour documents that had discussed schools closures. He also refused to give guarantees that the schools mentioned in the report - Lyndhurst and Blydon comprehensive - would be kept open.

Parents feel that their views are being ignored and that the council are not being honest about what is happening.

Linda and Don Rowling, whose eldest child attends Lyndhurst, said: "It's a brilliant school, the bairn's doing really well there."

However, they went on to express concern about whether or not to send their youngest daughter there. Not only could her education be disrupted but they explained that they are both unemployed. "If we kit her out in Lyndhurst uniform only to have her move on we have the expense of another uniform. Parents can't afford it."

Parents from the school are not prepared to sit back and let their kids' education be threatened. We demand that Labour councillors fight these Tory cuts.

◆ For parents wanting to get involved in this campaign call Elaine on (0191) 487 8026.

Shopworkers

Right win tainted election

NATIONAL ELECTIONS in the shopworkers' union USDAW have resulted in a continuation of the rule of the right-wing establishment but only on the basis of a very low participation by the union's membership.

Kevin Miles, vice-chair USDAW Broad Left

Only 6.5% of the union's 275,000 members voted for the new general secretary Bill Connor.

Broad left-backed candidate Terry Savage polled 39% of the votes, maintaining the level of support he won in the last election three years ago.

Left-wing President Audrey Wise lost her position to the establishment's preferred candidate, divisional officer Marge Carey.

Broad Left chair Pat Buttle lost her Executive Council seat but Broad Left secretary Maureen Madden topped the poll in the same division.

The low poll helped to increase the influence of right-wing union officials on the vote.

The union's personnel and publications were fully

utilised to ensure support for Bill Connor, while he refused invitations to debate the issues, thereby preventing hustings taking place.

The election timetable over Christmas and New Year was designed to minimise participation. Finally, there was the blatant attempt by Tesco management to interfere in the election.

"As a union prop for Tony Blair, Connor will become associated with failings of a future Labour government especially if the level of the minimum wage is low.

The need for a fighting union leadership, independent of company management and New Labour's policies, will become increasingly clear.

General Secretary election

Bill Connor (right-wing)	18,055	61.4%
Terry Savage (Broad Left)	11,359	38.9%
Turnout:		10.7%

President's election

John Buckingham	6,767	22.9%
Marge Carey	12,165	41.3%
Audrey Wise MP	10,545	35.8%



SHEETMETAL WORKERS belonging to the MSF union picketing their employer Project Aerospace Ltd, in Coventry. 41 workers have been locked out over a pay and health and safety dispute since last December. Send donations to: Project Aerospace Dispute Fund, c/o Colin Lindsey, Coventry trades council, Unit 15, The Arches industrial estate, Spon End, Coventry CV1 3JQ. Photo: Terry Finch



AS PROMISED, more Tory job losses! That would be a more accurate slogan on a poster located beside the Parsons plant in Newcastle that is being sold by Rolls-Royce with the loss of up to 800 jobs. Photo: Tommy Gardner



Jobs threat

PARCELFORCE HAVE announced a new super depot at Coventry saying it will create 700 new jobs and will sort 40,000 parcels an hour. They say this will secure the future but there are winners and losers.

In fact there will be many more jobs lost than new ones created. (An estimated 2,000 jobs out of a workforce of 12,000 over the next three years.)

Many places like the international centre in London will close. Parcelforce are also introducing a new computerised financial system that will replace many clerical jobs around the country.

Parcelforce workers have jumped through every hoop the managers have asked for. This shows that Teamworking and new management techniques do not protect jobs or ensure workers their future.

Management have not published the full plan under which Parcelforce will become a considerably smaller express parcels carrier with no standard traffic.

Reorganisation should only be agreed if Parcelforce agree to safeguards on jobs and wages. If the Post Office board refuse to accept this, Parcelforce workers need to organise for industrial action either official or unofficial.

by a Parcelforce worker

Magnet Kitchens

MAGNET WORKERS sacked last September after taking industrial action against low pay, are organising a mass picket of the Darlington factory on Friday 14 February, at 6.30am. The workers, many of whom had received no pay rise since 1992, have been mounting a boycott campaign of Magnet kitchens at retail outlets in the North East.

Transport to the picket from Tyneside has been organised by Tyne and Wear TUC. For details Tel: 0191 232 4606.

Send donations to the Magnet Families Hardship Fund, c/o Ian Crammond, 109 Jedburgh Drive, Darlington DL3 9UP.

Victimisation

NATFHE, THE university and college lecturers' union, is fighting the sacking of lecturer and union activist Pat Walsh by Accrington and Rossendale College.

Pat, who was fighting the college's decision to sack 300 part-time lecturers and replace them with agency staff, was himself sacked just before Christmas. As the only full-time lecturer being made redundant it smacks of victimisation.

The NATFHE branch will ballot between 24 January - 7 February. A 'yes' vote will lead to all-out strike action.

Stagecoach offer

THE PAY offer from Stagecoach to busworkers in Stroud includes cuts of up to £40 a week, reduction in sick pay and other losses in conditions. No wonder that the 42 bus workers voted unanimously for strike action.

However, in Gloucester it's a case of too little, too late, as TGWU leaders prepare to wind down a dispute marked by nine months of time-wasting and refusals to call ballots for action. Eventually an overtime ban was called but ludicrously, less than a week before Christmas. But at least Gloucester crews got a tiddling pay rise.

Gloucestershire Bus worker

Preparing a public-sector fightback

AS A local authority worker for the last ten years and a UNISON branch secretary in a right-wing Tory borough, I have been looking forward to the day of seeing the smug smiles wiped off the faces of the councillors and their management friends when the Tories are finally kicked out of government.

Glenn Kelly, CFDU national secretary

But with each day that the election draws nearer, those moments of pleasure are drowned out by feelings of anger at the betrayal of the Labour Party.

It seems Labour are not satisfied with telling us that we can expect no halt to the privatisation of services, no repeal of the anti-trade union laws.

Now we are told by Labour's shadow chancellor Gordon Brown that Tory public spending levels and a pay freeze, are going to continue under a Labour government.

Since 1982, five million public-sector workers have seen their wages fall by an average of 16% behind pay in the private sector.

The majority of health workers have yet to receive a pay rise due last spring. We now have a situation in which over 40% of UNISON members earn less than £4.50 an hour.

Gordon Brown's announcement clearly shows that the Labour Party have no intention of introducing a £4.50 minimum wage for public-sector workers.

It is clear that behind the scenes the Labour Party are preparing to take on the public-sector trade unions.

One senior Labour source said that public-sector pay restraint would provide an opportunity for

an "early sorting out of the relationship" with the unions.

Public-sector workers along with others will have no choice but to confront a Labour government to demand back all that has been taken from us in 18 years of Tory rule.

That means using the strength of our union through national strike action.

However, despite Brown's announcement, the union leaders' response has been deafening in its silence.

These leaders will not be prepared to lead a fight against a Labour government. Many of them will do all they can to hold back any moves to organise against Labour.

Behind the scenes the union leaderships are drawing up plans not to take on Labour but to ensure that union activists are kept in check.

In a number of unions officials are bringing in measures to stop socialists organising. UNISON has issued advice to branches saying it's "potentially illegal" to affiliate to the left-wing Campaign for a Fighting and Democratic UNISON (CFDU).

They have sent national auditors into branches who support the CFDU - including my own - hoping to conjure up financial scare stories as a pretext for a witch-hunt. This type of measure is not unique to UNISON. In fact, other unions have been far more vicious.

Faced with these prospects, it is vital that activists in the trade unions organise themselves.

The Socialist Party welcomes the conference of union Broad Left organisations on 1 February as an opportunity to put to draw up plans to take on the unions' right-wing leaders and a Labour government to ensure we win decent wages and conditions for all workers.

Union ranks support strikers

VITAL LESSONS need to be drawn following UNISON's withdrawal of support for the 17-month-long Hillingdon hospital workers strike.

Bill Mullins, Socialist Party industrial organiser

The industrial action committee - made up of lay members of the union from the national executive action committee - which made the decision, was split four votes to three to withdraw support.

The three, including Socialist Party member Roger Bannister, are all supporters of the Campaign for a Fighting and Democratic UNISON (CFDU).

All the union officials present supported the decision, and indeed had wanted that to happen for some time. The fact that they don't have a vote on these matters is to their eternal frustration.

What this episode demonstrates is the vital need to fight to increase the support and influence of CFDU within UNISON.

The union branch officers from Hillingdon hospital have continued to work throughout this dispute.

The strikers have done their best to get the other workers at the hospital to join them, including at one stage winning a secret ballot for strike action amongst the majority of those still at work. The fact that when it came to the strike day only one or two joined the picket line is not the responsibility of the strikers.

Their decision to keep the strike going, even without official backing is to be applauded. The Left in the union should do all they can to keep raising cash for the strikers and demand that the union reverses its decision. Trade union branches and supporters have already raised £13,000 in only seven days.



Fighting low pay.

Photo: Militant

Hillingdon and the Liverpool dockers need more than sympathy or even money. What they have needed all along is strike action from other workers.

In the case of Hillingdon this means other workers employed by Pall Mall around the country. The CFDU pushed the union to organise a conference recently of these

the need to normalise relations with UNISON.

If the union had been prepared to call these other groups out on strike then we could have seen Hillingdon workers on a winner. The UNISON officials did not even have the excuse of the anti-union laws.

'Secondary' or sympathy strikes can be called as long as the workers are employed by the same employer. In Pall Mall there are many outstanding issues that can be used to organise a ballot for strike action right across the company.

★ Hillingdon strikers' support conference, Sunday 9 February, 2pm at the Civic Hall, Civic Centre, Uxbridge.

★ Donations are urgently needed and should be made payable to: Hillingdon Strikers Support Campaign (HSSC), c/o Councillor Kennedy, Civic Centre, Uxbridge, Middlesex, UB8 1UW.

★ South-west London CWU postal workers union branch has passed a resolution of support for the Hillingdon strikers and is supporting the 9 February conference. It has also agreed to organise a levy of branch members.

Hillingdon and the Liverpool dockers need more than sympathy or even money. What they have needed all along is strike action from other workers.

workers and about 40 delegates turned up.

Pall Mall have been affected by the bad publicity that the strike has given them and they were very conscious of this every time they put in bids for work with NHS Trusts. They refer to this in the settlement letter when they talk about

Pay freeze ★ Potteries strike

Questions to Gordon Brown

GORDON BROWN'S statement that a Labour government will freeze public spending and public-sector pay for the first two years has angered Civil and Public Service Association (CPSA) union members in the Employment Service Agency (ESA).

Martin Smith CPSA (employment service) section officer (personal capacity)

For eleven weeks in late 1995 and early 1996 our JobCentre members took part in industrial action against performance-related pay (PRP) and the agency's low pay plans.

The action was successful in changing much of the ESA's pay system but PRP remains.

Brown's statement leaves many questions unanswered. Namely, will PRP remain? Will the Agency's decision to shed 50% of its HQ staff and privatise certain functions remain unaltered?

It is clear that CPSA members cannot rely on a Labour government to rescue them from privatisation and job losses.

The CPSA employment service committee meting on the day after Browns statement agreed a motion proposed by Socialist Party members that called on CPSA general secretary, Barry Reamsbottom, to seek an urgent meeting with Gordon Brown to tell him his pay and

spending freeze is unacceptable. It should also be spelt out to him that any more attacks on wages, conditions and jobs of members will be met with opposition, including industrial action.



The Iron Chancellor?

Pottery workers escalate action

MANAGEMENT AT Wades pottery in Stoke on Trent have been stunned into virtual silence by the unity and confidence of their workers.

Andy Bentley

After three successful one-day strikes, this week sees the first two-day strike, (29 and 30 January). The bosses' threat of a lock-out on Friday 31 January will not deter this action. Their profits will be hit even harder and the determination of the strikers will increase.

The stand taken by Wades workers against the attacks on pay and conditions has inspired all pottery workers in the city. As with many other workers potters have suffered years of job losses and attacks on pay and conditions. No wonder massive support exists for action.

In only three hours Socialist Party members raised £70 on the streets to pay for leaflets, posters and petitions. Workers at other pot-banks have already said they will take solidarity action. If this support, allied to Wades workers' action is tapped, then an important victory for all pottery workers could be won.

The Ceramic and Allied Trades Union (CATU) is supporting the strike and must take advantage of this unique opportunity.

A weekly levy of all pottery workers could be introduced, supplemented by factory gate collections. Wades strikers could be sent to all pot-banks to explain what is at stake.

Rallies could be organised in all the potteries towns to build support in the wider community. A mass picket of Wades could pave the way for a 24-hour city-wide strike of all pottery workers. If CATU, the pottery workers' union, fails in conducting a campaign of this type, then Wades workers themselves will clearly take the lead.

Dockers' action makes impact

THE IMPACT of the Liverpool dockers' international day of action is still reverberating around the world.

Since last week's report in Militant, more information on the world-wide boycott of ship owners and port users of Liverpool docks has become available.

According to the Los Angeles Times: "Pacific rim trade spluttered to a halt and dozens of mammoth cargo ships sat idle in their ports Monday (20 January) as union dockworkers from Los Angeles to Seattle stayed off the job in a one-day show of support for striking longshoremen (dockers) in Liverpool, England".

The president of the US port bosses organisation said: "This is going to cost us millions of dollars in delays"... "Half a billion dollars is shot down the drain."

In Australia, an Israeli-owned Zim-Lines ship was diverted from Sydney harbour with more disruption to Zim-Line likely this week.

Seafarers in New Zealand picketed the three major container terminals, and longshoremen honoured the picket lines.

In Mexico city unemployed transport workers marched to the British embassy in support of the sacked Liverpool dockers. "We are here because they supported us. This is happening because of neo-liberalism", said one demonstrator.

★ Donations and messages of support to: Jimmy Davies, secretary port shop stewards committee, 19 Scorton Street, Liverpool L6 4AS. Tel: 0151 207 3388.

Fascists on self-destruct

WEDNESDAY 22 January Jeroen Mol, a prominent fascist in Bruges, Belgium, claimed to be the victim of a booby-trap bomb. He was hurt in the leg and the damage, both to his apartment and the neighbours' house, was huge.

He said to the press that he suspected Blokbuster, the Belgian branch of Youth against Racism in Europe of planting the bomb in his home.

Two hours later he had to admit he did it himself. The reason? He wanted to denigrate Blokbuster.

This incident is just one in a conscious offensive against Blokbuster, Militant Left (the Socialist Party's sister organisation in Belgium) and other left activists in Bruges, that has been going on for months now.

Bruges is the traditional centre of hard-line fascists in Flanders.

In the last few months a violent gang has been terrorising the streets of Bruges.

Youth clubs and progressive pubs have been attacked and vandalised. Anti-racist activists have been harassed on the streets and the houses of Blokbuster members have been painted with threatening slogans.

Participants in an anti-Shell

action in support of Nigerian trade union activists were beaten up and a bomb scare was organised against houses where asylum seekers live.

At the same time, the fascists have been trying to depict "the left" and especially Blokbuster and Militant Left as the violent ones!

Jeroen Mol, a long-standing and prominent member of the Vlaams Blok and its youth organisation NJSV, who 'disappeared' in 1995 to fight in Croatia, claimed a 'mur-

It took the police only a few hours to find out the truth and Mol had to admit he blew up his own apartment.

der attack' against him in August last year.

Since then the fascists have invented more of these kind of stories, which have not only been published in their own press but taken up by more 'respectable' papers.

The booby-trap last Wednesday

was an attempt to isolate the anti-fascist movement in Bruges as a "violent and terrorist" group.

If only Mol had not used Yugoslavian grenades and had not kept the rope he made the booby-trap with in his pocket, this would probably have been another 'successful' fascist stunt.

It took the police only a few hours to find out the truth and Mol had to admit he blew up his own apartment.

He was arrested and risks a two-year prison penalty. But this incident shows the sort of people anti-fascists in Bruges have to deal with.

Left activists in the whole country have at last realised what is going on in Bruges and are prepared to join the united anti-fascist action that Blokbuster and Militant Left have consistently proposed.

Last Friday more than ten national organisations were represented at a meeting where it was decided to organise a campaign around the following demands: An end to all fascist violence; banning of the NJSV; closure of the headquarters of Vlaams Blok and NJSV in Bruges.

On 29 March a mass demonstration will be organised in Bruges, to expose the fascists for what they really are: hate-filled thugs who will stop at nothing.



Blokbuster on the march against the fascists.

Photo: Militant

Criminals again

"BIZARRE", SAID John Wadham, director of the civil rights organisation, Liberty, talking about last week's High Court ruling on the 1994 Criminal Justice Act (CJA).

Margaret Jones

The judge upheld the right of the police to ban a peaceful assembly of 20 or more people within an exclusion zone, even if it takes place on a public highway. Such a gathering is still "trespassory" and people taking part in it can be convicted of a criminal offence.

The case concerns Richard Lloyd, a former member of Solidarity, Bristol's anti Criminal Justice Bill campaign and myself.

We were arrested 18 months ago for the very serious offence of loitering around the perimeter fence of Stonehenge.

Our conviction for trespassory assembly which was overturned on appeal at Salisbury Crown Court has been restored by this new ruling. For the time being we are criminals again.

Right-wing politicians (Tory and Labour), some judges and the police want to keep alive the CJA's power to ban assemblies.

They want the power to use the legislation against trade unionists, road protesters, young people or anyone who fights collectively.

The power to ban assemblies, "where disruption is feared to the life of the community", is only one brick in the wall of repression built up by the Tories.

They are also responsible for the anti-trade union laws, the removal of the right to silence when arrested and the new Police Bill with its extended powers to bug offices and homes.

The national media have focused on this temporary defeat but we prefer to look to the future.

Our lawyers have already begun an application for an appeal to the House of Lords.

If we lose there we shall appeal to the European Court where under section 11 of the European Convention on Human Rights the right of peaceful assembly is upheld.

The "law and order" brigade needn't gloat too soon. Dedicated lawyers and civil rights activists will continue to fight within the system. And as recent examples have shown from Seoul to Newbury, passing a few laws doesn't put an end to protest. When enough people want something badly enough, they go for it.



Going underground!

At the time of going to press three protesters are still underground at the proposed site of the A30 in Devon. They are demanding amongst other things that the Highways Agency reveal the financial details of the planned road and that building is halted until there is a full public inquiry

NMP update

LAST WEEK a fire destroyed files and copying equipment at the offices of the Newham Monitoring Project (NMP).

This set-back for the NMP follows Newham council's decision to withdraw funding from the anti-racist project.

While arson has not been confirmed (the Fire Brigade investigation said an electrical fault was the cause) several threatening phone calls and letters were received by the project in the days following the incident.

Clearly the Labour council and the local newspaper, *The Recorder*, have whipped up a climate which has encouraged the NMP's enemies to kick them while they are down.

These threats to the NMP have coincided with an increase in fascist activity in the area. There has been an increase in racist attacks and the Nazi British National Party has stood in a by-election in the area.

Despite having to fight a rear-guard action against the Labour council's attempt to discredit them, the project has been active in campaigning against the BNP's election efforts which has prevented them canvassing openly, standing at the polling stations or sending anyone to the vote count.

Hunger strikers - condition critical

DETAINEES AT Rochester Prison are continuing their hunger strike to draw attention to their conditions as asylum seekers.

From midnight Sunday 26 January eleven of the hunger strikers stopped taking fluids.

Due to their weakened state after three weeks without food the detainees could be dead within days.

Three other hunger strikers who hadn't eaten for three weeks have now been released on temporary admission.

Brian Debus from Hackney UNISON stated: "Michael Howard, the Home Secretary, should release these detainees before they die. They are not guilty of any crime yet they are held indefinitely in conditions which are worse than those for convicted criminals."

The prison authorities have resorted to switching off the TV news and barring newspapers that have carried reports of the hunger strike.

◆ A fourth prison protest will take place this Saturday, 1 February 2pm - 3.30pm at Rochester Prison. Contact Brian Debus for details on 0181 986 3606.



Picket outside Rochester prison.

Photo: Brian Debus

A paper that left its mark

Youth - the secret of our success

FROM ISSUE one, Militant has taken socialist ideas and campaigns to young people. For much of the 60s, 70s and 80s, we were campaigning to build the Labour Party Young Socialists (LPYS), Labour's youth section.

Paul Ursell, former LPYS national committee, ex-national secretary YTURC and YRC

In the 60s, with a lot fewer sellers, *Militant's* priority was to "patiently explain" our ideas. But our hallmark was also to show in practice we were the best campaigners, so *Militant* transformed the LPYS, a small organisation that hardly campaigned, into one that could influence a whole generation.

Militant first got a supporter on the LPYS national committee in 1968 and majority support at the 1970 LPYS conference. As our first priority we launched our Charter for Young Workers. *Militant* supporters got the LPYS campaigning on issues like unemployment with rallies of 1,500 and 2,000 in 1971.

We ran international campaigns like the Spanish Young Socialists Defence Campaign, which had a 2,000-strong-Smash Franco for a Socialist Spain rally.

In the 1974 general election, we mobilised 400 LPYS members to campaign in Tony Benn's marginal seat in Bristol.

The LPYS was the first to organise a national rally against racism - 3,000 rallied in Bradford against racist attacks in 1974. In 1975 a similar number joined our demonstration: "No to the Bosses' EEC, Yes to a Socialist Europe".

As unemployment spiralled upwards, we set up the Youth Campaign against Unemployment (YCAU) in 1977 with 1,450 at its conference and 1,500 on its lobby of parliament.

After Thatcher's election in 1979, we increasingly campaigned to a mass audience. When we got a TV broadcast about 2,000 people appeared to join the LPYS.

In the 1981 inner-city riots we showed how to channel young people's anger into a fight for a better society. 600 attended our Brix-

ton meeting.

Labour's leader, James Callaghan, wrote to the *Daily Mirror* calling for the LPYS's disaffiliation. Our campaigns were increasingly suppressed.

Militant was determined that our ideas would get through. The LPYS organised a number of campaigns (on Chile, South Africa, further education). In 1981 we set up the Youth Trade Union Rights Campaign (YTURC) which campaigned against Tory slave labour schemes.

When Norman Tebbit said Youth Training Schemes (YTS) would be made compulsory with a wage of just £15 a week, YTURC's campaign included a 4,000 lobby of parliament which ended with the Tories backing down.

By 1983 our week-long summer camp attracted 500 young people; our Black Youth conference 350 and our Young Workers' Assembly 2,300.

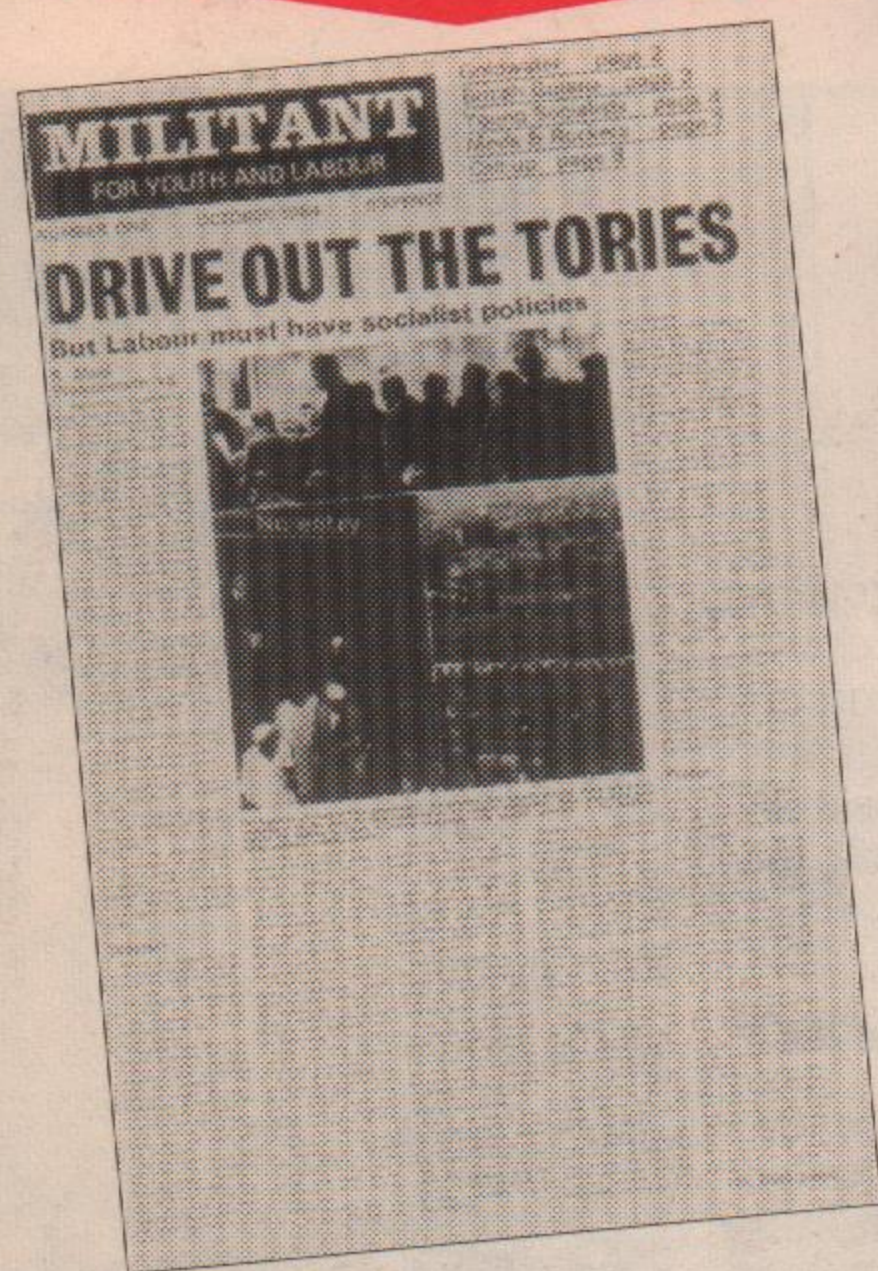
The Labour Party halved the LPYS budget and banned *Militant* from holding a rally at LPYS conference. But 55 of their own MPs (and most of the political pop stars of the day) backed YTURC.

In the 1984-85 miners' strike, while Kinnock sat on the fence, the LPYS raised £1 million for the miners. While the right wing closed LPYS branches, we recruited hundreds of young miners, setting up 20 new branches in pit villages.

In 1985 Thatcher tried again to make YTS compulsory. In Glasgow a school students' rally turned into a 10,000 strike. At LPYS conference 200 school students set up an action committee to call for a national school strike. Before the strike Kinnock said students were being manipulated by 'dafties'. Some dafties - a quarter of a million struck and 100,000 heard our speeches all over Britain.

One month later YTURC got a letter announcing the Tories had dropped compulsory YTS. We carried on by organising a school students union and a 25,000 'Real Jobs for Youth' demo.

Our reputation led 85% of Labour's organisation to oppose attacks on the LPYS but our paper *Socialist Youth* was closed and LPYS conference cancelled at the end of 1987.



The first issue.

JUST OVER 32 years ago Militant made its first appearance. Sub-titled for youth and Labour it was a paper and political movement destined to make its mark.

Now it's moving on, as from next week *Militant*, after a successful and proud 32 years of uninterrupted publication, becomes *The Socialist*.

The name and the look of the paper may be changing but the policies and campaigns it pursued will be kept centre-stage. From issue one of *Militant*, issues affecting young people and industrial workers were the key areas that the then new paper pledged to take up. That pledge was kept as other issues also came into focus.

Militant took up new campaigns: violence against women; international solidarity; defending the courageous stand of the Militant Liverpool councillors from 1983-87; defending and supporting the heroic miners' struggle of 1984-85 and leading 18 million people to victory over Thatcher's hated poll tax.

Militant was a byword for working-class resistance at that time.

The Socialist and the Socialist Party plans to achieve as much and more for working-class people in the decades ahead. But this week we look back at some of the main issues and highlights of *Militant's* 32-year existence.

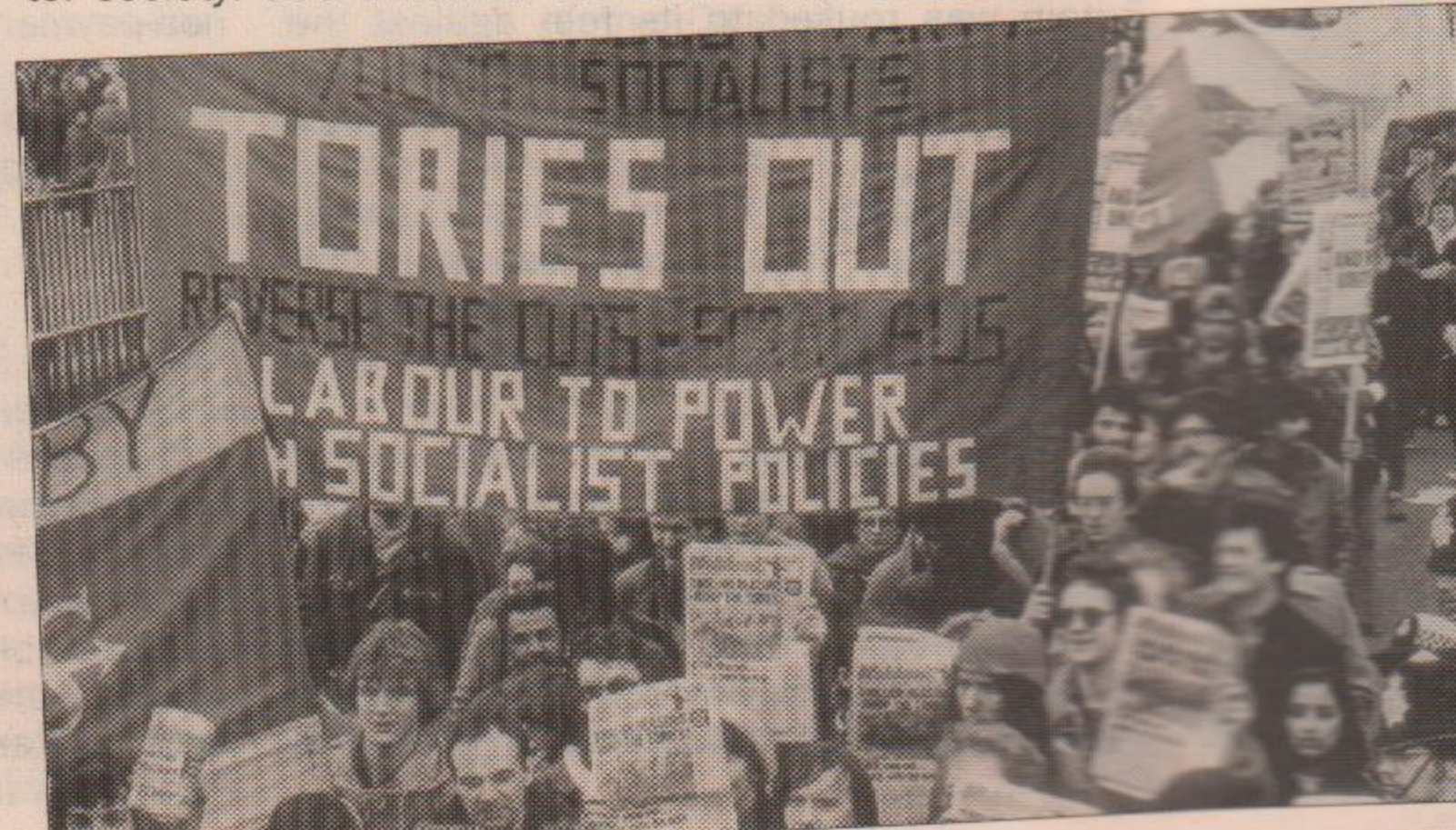
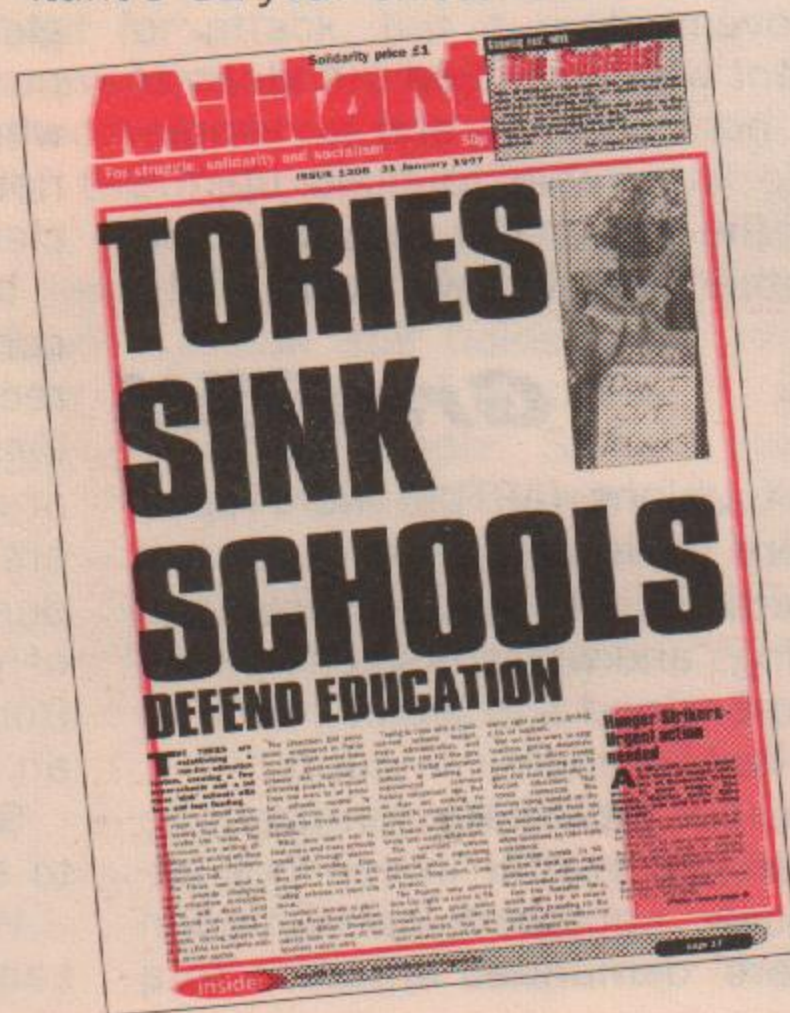


Photo: Dave Sinclair.

Photo: Martin Milne.

Youth campaigns have been central to our progress.

Red Train

BY 1989 we were organising young people against the poll tax. London YTURC paid for and filled the "red train" to the 1989 Glasgow poll tax demo.

In 1990 a 500-strong conference voted to broaden YTURC into the Youth Rights Campaign (YRC) with a charter of 12 rights. It was soon campaigning as Youth Against the War for No Blood for Oil in the Gulf War.

In 1991 YRC lobbied for Jobs and Homes for Youth, and sponsored a bill of rights for young people. Importantly it helped to launch, with anti-racists from ten other countries, Youth against Racism in Europe (YRE), whose 40,000-strong demonstration in Brussels in October 1992 set new traditions for international campaigning, stewarding etc.

In Britain the YRE, with the support of Militant Labour members, played a big role in driving the fascists out of Brick Lane, east London and their headquarters in Welling as well as educating many young people about the causes of racism. The YRE will be combating the fascists in the coming general election.

More recently, Militant Labour's young members played a big role in campaigning against Job Seekers' Allowance (JSA) and Workfare cheap labour schemes.

For over 32 years *Militant* has campaigned amongst young people for socialism. The new Socialist Party and the Young Socialist Resistance will keep up and build on these traditions, experience and reputation. The last issue of *Militant* confidently predicts that Socialist Party will succeed, gain the youth and win the future.

The Militant years

1964 Labour win general election after 13 years with majority of four MPs. Wilson promises "100 days of dynamic action". Khrushchev deposed in USSR. Johnson becomes US president.

1965 US steps up attacks on North Vietnam. Malcolm X killed, Watts riots. Ted Heath new Tory leader. Rhodesian regime declares UDI. Indonesian military coup kills two million lefts.

1966 Labour gets 100-seat majority in general election. Seamen's strike. Cultural revolution in China.

1967 Colonels' coup in Greece. Six-day war of Israel and Arab states. Abortion Bill passed. Vietnam protests step up. Che Guevara killed.

1968 May. France's month of revolution by workers and students. Tet offensive in Vietnam. Russian tanks invade Czechoslovakia. Enoch Powell starts racist offensive. Assassination of Martin Luther King/riots. Police attack Derry civil rights protest.

1969 August. Free Derry barricades set up. Labour government sends troops to Northern Ireland.

MILITANT FOR YOUTH AND LABOUR

1970 Tories win election under Heath, planning new attacks on workers. Dockers' strike. US bombs Cambodia. Middle East. Black September movement.

1971 First-ever national postal strike. UCS shipyard work-in. Tories bring in Internment in Northern Ireland. First fortnightly *Militant*.

1972 Miners' and dockers' strikes smash Heath's anti-union laws. Bloody Sunday massacre in Derry. Direct rule in N Ireland. First weekly *Militant*, January, up to

Militant

eight pages September.

1973 "Peace" in Vietnam. Military coup overthrows Allende government in Chile. Yom Kippur war starts oil crisis. Three-day week starts as rail, coal and power workers strike.

1974 Miners' strike. Heath loses 'who rules Britain?' election to Labour under Wilson. Portugal overthrows dictatorship, revolutionary movement starts. Northern Ireland loyalist lockouts. Greek regime overthrown. Nixon resigns over Watergate.

continued on page 8

Putting the wo case

MILITANT'S INDUSTRIAL coverage has been second to none. We don't say that boastfully. Unlike the capitalist press, we have had access to thousands of correspondents in the workplace.

Bill Mullins
Socialist Party industrial organiser

They allow us to put the workers' case every time strikes and industrial struggles break out, providing *Militant* with unrivalled coverage.

We are not neutral commentators but neither are the serious papers like the *Financial Times*. For nine-tenths of the time the bosses' press can appear to be objective until they feel that the class interests they represent are at stake.

Militant has produced marvellous articles mainly written by the workers at the sharp end of the class struggle. In the 1970s, a decade of massive struggle, a lorry driver commented: "Well I've just read your report in *Militant* and there's nothing more to say. That's the best report we've ever seen. It's a good paper."

But we don't just publish without

comment, we attempt to draw the lessons of any struggle and suggest, in an fraternal way, the best way forward.

General Strike

AGAIN IN the 1970s, a political debate in the labour movement developed on the question of the need for a general strike to fight the Tories' anti-union Industrial Relations Act.

The TUC had been forced to call a massive 300,000-strong demonstration against the government.

Militant carried a series of articles on this demand where we pointed out that an all-out general strike poses the question of power. For this to happen would require a period of preparation of the working class, therefore we put the demand for a 24-hour general strike as part of that preparation.

This demand gained an echo not just then, but many times since in other periods of heightened class struggle, such as the great miners' strike of 1984-85.

During the political witch-hunt of

Militant and its supporters in the 1980s when the capitalist press assisted the Tories and Labour's right-wing in attacking us, they had to admire our paper's "gritty coverage of industrial disputes".

The paper covered all the big industrial stories of the 1970s. From the miners' strikes of 1972 and 1974 through the car workers' struggles in British Leyland to the building workers' strikes and the imprisonment of the Shrewsbury Two. Our coverage and intervention in the million-strong strikes by public sector workers at the end of the Labour government in 1978-79 was a turning point. Alan Fisher, then general secretary of NUPE, a forerunner of the public-sector union UNISON, wrote an article for the front page of *Militant* at this time.

We always tried to draw the lessons of those struggles in our paper and to warn the working class of the dangers from the capitalist state. We were the first to warn of how the ruling class was preparing to confront the trade unions, with measures such as the militarisation of the police after the miners' defeat of the Tory government of Ted Heath.

Both Labour and Tory governments have since used repressive laws and the police against workers in struggle, including Jim Callaghan's Labour government unsuccessfully trying to use the Army to break the firefighters' strike in 1977.

Leyland

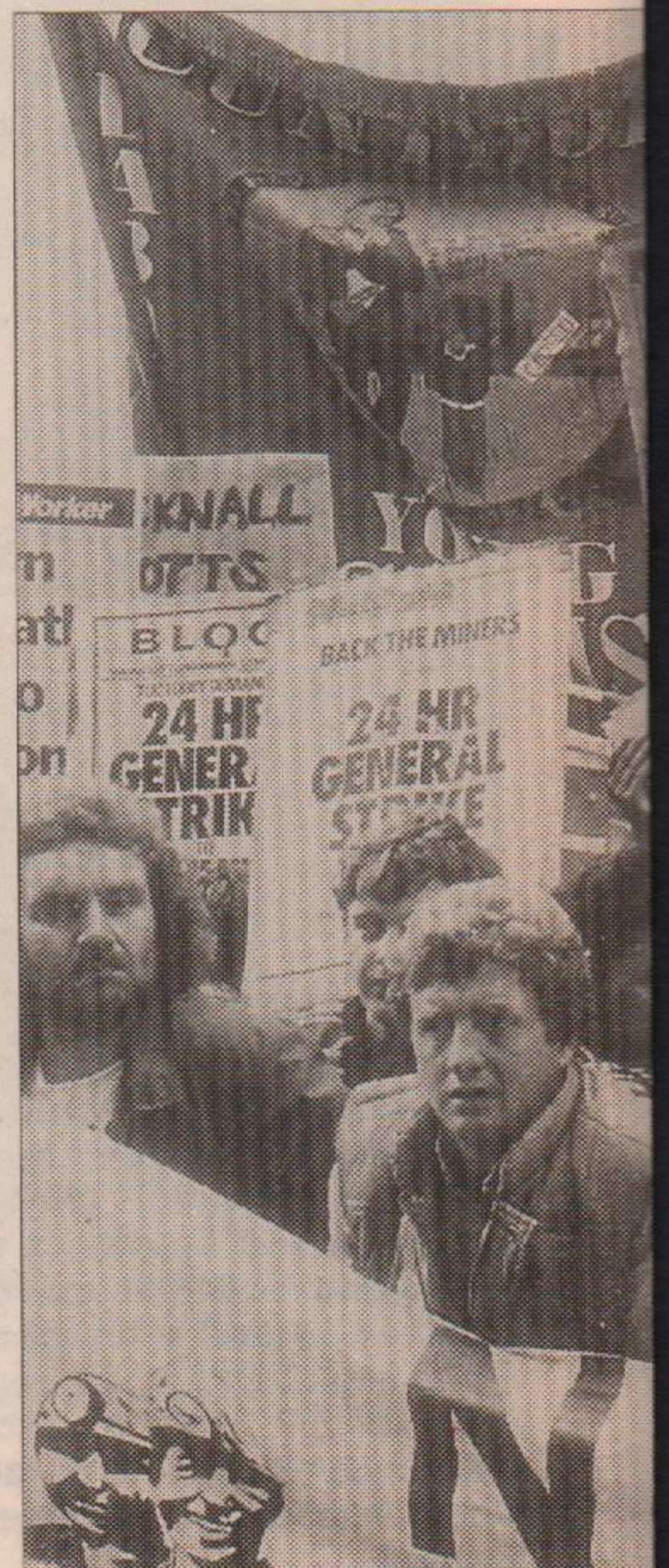
A FEATURE of *Militant's* coverage was not just reporting but detailed explanation of the issues behind the front-page news. Workers in industry were given space to develop alternative plans to the bosses.

British Leyland workers faced tens of thousands of redundancies. *Militant* carried articles which showed how the management had undermined Leyland's viability with underinvestment, built-in obsolescence and mismanagement.

Instead of asking the Labour government for a handout we called for it to be nationalised under workers' control and management.

Militant has also highlighted the lack of leadership by most of the trade union leaders when it came to fighting back against Thatcher's plans to smash the unions.

We said the new anti-union laws



Militant Lobbies the TUC for a 24-hour general strike which were introduced in the 1980s could have been defeated from the beginning if the TUC had used the mighty power of the organised workers in militant action. Instead, the union leaders, who in truth secretly

Photo: Dave Sinclair.



Hundred of thousands gather at the start of the anti-poll tax demo on 31 March 1990.

Toppling T

THE BATTLE against the poll tax is the story of the greatest civil disobedience movement Britain has ever seen. Millions of people, upwards of 18 million, did not pay.

Mike Waddington, Socialist Party National Secretary

Thousands besieged courts and ran rings around magistrates and council officials. The biggest demo in London for 100 years - followed by a police-inspired riot - literally shook the establishment. The whole of Britain was roused to its feet against the Tories and Thatcher, the political representative of arrogant capitalism was brought down.

The real story of this movement has yet to be written. You will not find it in the papers or the academic histories as commentators are generally bewildered by what took place.

Literally thousands of what became known as anti-poll tax unions were organised throughout Britain; first in Scotland, then rapidly covering the rest of the country. These eventually came together to form the All Britain Anti-Poll Tax Federation - affectionately known to all combatants as The Fed.

Militant took the initiative in organising many of these bodies which rapidly took on hundreds, even thousands, of members. Many of our comrades were jailed for taking a principled stand; Tommy Sheridan in Glasgow, Terry Fields the Liverpool MP and many others.

Militant supporters Steve Nally became the National Secretary of the Fed and Maureen Reynolds from Manchester its Treasurer. Behind the scenes thousands more were absolutely vital to the running of this successful movement.

It was *Militant* who advanced the ideas of non-payment, non-collection and non-implementation. We were able to build up the confidence of the movement that we could all stand together and that we could win!

Graffiti

ANTI-POLL TAX unions (APTUs) were open meetings where all issues were discussed and tactics worked out. how to resist the bailiffs (poundings and warrant sales in Scotland, bailiffs in England and Wales), what to do when you had to appear in court.

APTUs also put on many propaganda stunts. Anti-poll tax graffiti in ten-foot letters mysteriously appeared at Hampden Park; 'gas fitters' demanded entrance to a

sheriffs' the door member One of before g the aud stunt wa TV.

TORY HO gled out puncture who knee rience claims.

In cou comrade record o ings aga areas to ers, even dures a of jail. V Bureaux an eme Scotla to supp We fo Labour

Militant
The
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years
MILITANT
FOR YOUTH AND LABOUR

1975 Thatcher wins Tory leadership contest. US and capitalist regime forced out of Vietnam. Spanish dictator Franco dies. Queen's representative sacks Australian Labour government.

1976 Wilson resigns - Callaghan new prime minister. Healey introduces new cuts, revolt grows in Labour's ranks. Soweto protests in South Africa. Junta seizes power in Argentina.

1977 Lib-Lab pact props up Callaghan. Angry protests force back fascists in Lewisham South London. Grunwick strike - mass pickets.

1978 Middle East - Camp David agreement. Revolutionary mood grows in Iran,

Nicaragua, Rhodesia/ Zimbabwe. Ford strike. Labour conference rejects pay restraint. First 16-page *Militant*.

1979 Winter of discontent strikes by lowest-paid workers, disillusioned by wage attacks. Thatcher wins election. Sandinistas win in Nicaragua. Afghanistan invaded by the USSR.

1980 Steel strike. First of series of anti-union laws. Unemployment rises rapidly as industry wrecked. Callaghan resigns as Labour leader. Michael Foot takes over. Solidarnosc union formed in Poland.

1980 Labour special conference give

constituencies reselection rights. Right wing SDP defect. Thatcher u-turn after miners threaten strike.

Riots in Brixton and Liverpool Irish hunger striker Bobby Sands elected MP then dies, riots. Martial law in Poland.

1982 Falklands/ Malvinas war. Defeat forces out Galtieri in Argentina. Israeli troops

Militant
Workers' MP Lashes Tories
Jobs axe hits family four times
Back the party that backs you

Workers' The march of Militant



hour general strike during the 1984-85 miners' strike.

agreed with much of the legislation as a means of curbing their own rank and file, bowed the knee to Thatcher.

A new period is now opening up. Our new paper will reflect the grow-

ing struggles and above all speak in the language of workers. Their anger and determination not to allow themselves to be driven down by the bosses will always find space in the pages of our new paper.

Thatcher

office in Edinburgh only to leave open for a passing invasion of Fed

our comrades was arrested just into BBC TV centre to sit in place of Wogan, fearful that some about to be pulled on prime time

Baker's lies

ME Secretary Kenneth Baker, sin- Militant for attack, but it didn't the movement. Millions of people and worked with us had an expe-riently the opposite of Baker's

we developed great skills - one in South London still holds the forcing the rejection of proceed-ist around 7,000 people! Some ay still advise welfare rights work- probation officers, on the proce- methods for keeping people out e are still on the Citizens Advice central list of who to contact in

led the way with mobilisations non-payment.

and ourselves mainly up against councils, partly because they ran

most councils but also because the poll tax became a defining moment in the evolution of the Labour Party to the right.

Labour advocated not only total co-operation with this Tory law but that Labour councils had to be the firmest imple-menters.

Many APTUs found that Labour councils were the most ruthless when it came to persecuting the poor. Labour Party members who sat on the magistrates' bench were generally more likely to send non-payers to prison.

Sickeningly, Kinnock started singing "We shall overcome" - the anthem of the Civil Rights Movement in the US - at Labour conferences whilst those who were actually doing the overcoming were persecuted and jailed by those doing the singing!

Many hundreds were eventually impris-oned, but defences were mounted, many so successful that imprisonments came to a halt until the Tories changed the law. But the movement was never broken.

There were many courageous women and men who were the organisers and inspirers of this movement. Our job was to help work out what to do next, to develop the cam-paign, to maintain mass involvement. It was a supreme test but we were not found wanting.

"I T WOULD be absolutely implausible for us in a libertarian party to embark upon some great purging process on the basis of simple allegations against people, or the fact that they've sold newspapers, or the fact that they have a particular form of expressing themselves or set of beliefs - that would be ridiculous."

So said Neil Kinnock shortly after his election as Labour leader in 1983, the same conference that also expelled the five members of Militant's Editorial board, after a two-year battle.

Of course that is exactly what the Labour Party embarked on, but it took the best part of a decade before Militant was fully expelled.

This was the David and Goliath story of politics in the 1980s. The whole apparatus of the Labour Party was mobilised to try and stamp out Militant. Our organisation ferociously fought back, repeatedly slowing the right wing down and frequently throwing them back.

Many of our supporters had to defend themselves courageously against organised and hysterical attempts to intimidate them into abandoning their beliefs.

Stymied at every turn, Labour's right adopted new methods, and were only successful ultimately by suspending parties, preventing hundreds of people joining, dismantling the entire national youth and national women's organisations and stifling political debate in the party itself. But that was the point after all. Blair's party is the final fruit of this process.

When moves against us were first proposed in 1981, Peter Taaffe, then our editor, replied; "Militant has come under ferocious attack from the capitalist press and their shadows within the labour movement, right-wing leaders like Denis Healey and James Callaghan. They are calling for the expulsion of Militant supporters from the Labour Party. This is seen as the first step towards a purge of the left and reversal of all the recent gains on party democracy and radical policies."

The end of the Callaghan govern-ment, the first government to carry through Thatcherite economic policies, moved the Labour Party over to the left. Changes were made that gave more power to the membership.

As a result of this, Militant supporters were chosen as council candidates and prospective parliamen-tary candidates.

This filled the capitalist establish-ment with horror. Efforts were then made to use the Militant issue to attack the socialist left in general.

Labour Party officials went through copies of the Militant every week, keeping files on individuals who were mentioned. What were referred to as staff consultations of Labour party employees would discuss handling Militant - one infamously reported in 1988 that there had been "a wide ranging discus-sion ... focusing on reducing the effect of Militant".



Tony Mulhearn, leader of Liverpool Labour in 1980s. Photo: Militant.

Militant fought back by mobilising opposition and quite skilfully throwing confusion into the right wing's ranks by the use of legal action which stopped the Labour Party National Executive Committee on a number of occasions.

When the Five Editorial Board members were expelled in 1983 more than 3,000 attended our meetings over the next 14 days. When the Liverpool councillors were threatened with expulsion in 1985, our public meetings attracted over 50,000 people.

After a successful rally at Wembley in 1982, Labour Weekly wrote: "The size of Saturday's conference "Fight the Tories Not the Socialists" organised by supporters of Militant, is a warning to those people hoping for easy expulsions of a few prominent Militants from the Labour Party".

And so it proved. Only 41 supporters were expelled up to 1985.

New Militants were replacing the expelled at a faster rate! This coincided with the battles around Liverpool city council, which propelled Militant again into headlines but this time for building houses and creating jobs!

Labour spent over £100,000 inquiring into Militant and devising a new system. The requirements of 'natural justice', won as a result of our legal action, slowed the procedure down even more; in the first three years of the new streamlined Party court, the National Constitutional Committee, only 13 supporters were expelled!

This brought another change of tack. More than 180 applications to join the party in Pollok in Glasgow were stopped. Parties with Militant candidates in Liverpool, Bermondsey and Bradford were suspended.

More and more powers were concentrated in the hands of the NEC and its officers. Some were expelled on the basis of wearing a sticker, selling a paper, advocating non-payment of the poll tax and even in one case attending a jumble sale!

By 1992 the socialist MPs Dave Nellist and Terry Fields were expelled, with their commitment to be workers'

MPs on worker's wages, particularly highlighted as a party crime!

By then most of our campaigning work was outside the Labour Party; we were blocked off from official activity. Our choice then was to either stop campaigning for our ideas and accept the dominance of the right wing or to re-group and keep fighting.

We chose to fight.



Militant's MPs, Pat Wall, Dave Nellist and Terry Fields.

<p>massacre refugees in Lebanon. Strikes in NHS, railways.</p> <p>1983 Thatcher wins second term. Two Militant supporters elected as Labour MPs. Labour, with large Militant contingent wins back Liverpool council. Militant editorial board expelled from Labour Party. Kinnock new Labour leader. US invades Grenada. Warrington print workers' battle.</p> <p>1984 Miners strike. Battle of Orgreave. NUM assets sequestrated. Liverpool council force concessions from Tories. New protests in South Africa.</p>	<p>Bhopal explosion in India.</p> <p>1985 Liverpool battle at its height. Miners' strike ends. Riots in Tottenham and Brixton against police murders.</p> <p>1986 Wapping printers' strike starts. Marcos flees in Philippines. US bombs Libya. Chernobyl nuclear disaster.</p> <p>1987 Liverpool councillors disqualified. Thatcher re-elected. Stock Market crash. Korean protests against dictatorship.</p>	<p>Palestinian Intifada protests start.</p> <p>1988 Nurses and NHS strikes and protests get massive support. P&O workers strike starts. SAS shoot to kill in Gibraltar. Iran-Iraq war ends.</p> <p>1989 Mass movement, "people power" in Eastern Europe topples Berlin wall and Stalinist regimes. Tiananmen</p>	<p>Square protests in Beijing, China. Poll Tax starts in Scotland. Hillsborough disaster. Guildford Four freed. US invades Panama.</p> <p>1990 Poll tax protests and huge demos in London and Glasgow. Thatcher forced out, mainly by poll tax. Iraq invades Kuwait. Mandela released in South Africa.</p> <p>1991 US wins Gulf War, killing 100,000 Iraqis in fighting. Poll tax ditched. Break-up of USSR accelerates, after defeated coup attempts. Civil war stepped up in Yugoslavia. Birmingham Six freed.</p>
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RE-READING *Militant's* coverage of women's struggle since the 1970s shows the emergence of a new fighting force through issues which have at root the need for a new society.

Margret Crear and
Christine Thomas

Militant urged on the Equal Pay strikers at Ford when a couple of hundred women threatened to close the whole firm.

We backed the Leeds clothing workers when tens of thousands took to the streets calling out sweatshops as they went along.

Women have stood up to bullying bosses and demanded the right to organise from Grunwicks to Timex and smaller sweatshop disputes, often ignored by the capitalist press, such as Kay Wool where they closed down the factory rather than accept poverty pay and dangerous working conditions.

The Equal Pay fight has not gone away. It is likely to merge with the battle to end low pay in the next few years, especially in the public sector.

Meeting other women and earning your own pay gives you the confidence to fight against the discrimination through which capitalism expresses its contempt for women. The issue of sexual harassment exploded in a dispute at the Lady at Lord John shop in Liverpool during the general election campaign of 1983.

Audrey White, a *Militant* supporter who was the manageress, protested at abuse by the area manager and was sacked. We found ourselves picketing the shop and winning a famous victory as she was reinstated.

The whole event was made into a film by Lezli-An Barrett called *Business as Usual*.

Another *Militant* supporter took up the case of a women harassed and degraded by her boss, took him to a tribunal and won a record settlement. The reports in the paper encouraged others to take up the fight.

Nurseries

WE CAMPAIGNED for better childcare facilities from Brights Nursery in Rochdale in 1978 - a successful battle to save a nursery when the textile mill it served closed - to Bootle in 1995, where after the tragic death of James Bulger, we argued successfully for a creche in the shopping centre where he was abducted.

Many of these campaigns were led by *Militant* women who persuaded the Women's Sections (LWO) of the Labour Party to support them. From the early 1970s until the early 1990s we contributed to building an active, fighting, democratic women's organisation.

The work we did led to *Militant* women being elected onto regional committees in many areas and onto the national committee. In the North-West the first post-war demo of the LWO took place in support of the miners and the women from the mining community. We organised a demonstration against low pay.

In 1989, in a debate at Wom-



Women were in the forefront of the year-long Timex dispute.

Photo: Jeff Smith.

Women in the front-line

en's conference, we moved a resolution calling for a national minimum wage of £2.80p an hour (the decency threshold then). *Militant* reported how Diana Jeuda, then an USDAW official, spoke for the leadership and called on our sisterly solidarity saying such a high level would cause "problems for women employers". One delegate retorted, "So what? They've been causing problems for me all my life". A sentiment the next government might well become familiar with!

The LWO stood by Liverpool city council in its battle with the government and the Labour leaders.

In the end the right wing and some trade union officials strangled the LWO, closing down many of the most active Women's Sections and Councils. It was just one of the steps taken to make the Labour Party safe for big business.

Militant has constantly fought to defend the 1967 Abortion Act especially against the Alton Bill - part of the struggle of women to control their own lives we have to take up again today.

CADV

THE HUNGER strike by Sara Thornton concentrated the outrage many women felt about domestic violence

and the discrimination against women by the legal system. We contributed to setting up the Campaign Against Domestic Violence (CADV) now one of the biggest broad-based campaigns in Britain. Only *Militant* promoted its activities and programme regularly over the last six and a half years.

In 1992 we reported the lobby of Parliament for the release of Kiranjit Ahluwalia who had been jailed for life after killing her violent husband. We celebrated her release in October 1992 with an exclusive interview - read by many of the 2,000 women who demonstrated that weekend against violence.

In November last year, 600 demonstrated outside eight women's prisons demanding justice. *Militant* conveyed the determination and enthusiasm and also revealed the terrible conditions many women face in prison, with some handcuffed in labour and six committing suicide in Cornton Vale prison over just 15 months.

We campaigned for Mumta Chopra, Prakesh and Prem and other women facing deportation under immigration legislation for leaving violent partners; just as in the 1970s we successfully fought for Anwar Dittar to be reunited with

her three children after a Labour Home Secretary, Merlyn Rees, excluded them from the country. In 1993 we opposed the Child Support Act giving practical advice to single parents on how to cope with the effects of the Act. We fought to unite Child Support Agency workers and single parents in the fight for a flexible child maintenance policy.

Militant has given women a voice and a presence. But it has also actively helped organise women and proposed strategies for changing our lives.

In the last few years we have fought the ideological attack of the Tories, often echoed by New Labour, who blame women, especially single parents, for all the ills of society. Capitalist society is at root a society of exploitation, coercion and violence, which distorts relationships and deprives people of the possibility of

leading a happy and productive life.

As we launch the new paper, these ideas will be even more important as working-class women take their place at the forefront of the battle for a new socialist society.



One of the many demonstrations against domestic violence supported by us.

Photo: Dave Sinclair.

The Militant years

1992 Major wins election. Tommy Sheridan comes second to Labour in Pollok; Dave Nellist and Terry Fields, expelled by Labour, lose seats. Dave Nellist voted MP of the year! John Smith replaces Kinnock as Labour leader. Black Wednesday financial crisis in London. Pit closures bring huge protests. YRE anti-fascist demo in Brussels.

1993 Mitterrand defeated in election. Fascist fire-bombs in Germany bring counter-demos. Oslo agreement on Palestine. Nigeria - elections declared null and void. Oil workers strike

Timex workers fight against wage-slashing, union-busting, multinational. Police wade in at Welling anti-fascist demo. Northern Ireland - strikes and protests against sectarian killings.

1994 Zapatista rebellion in Chiapas, Mexico. Northern Ireland ceasefire. Railways signal workers' strike. Blair new Labour leader. Mandela wins first multiracial South African elections. Tommy Sheridan gets 12,000 votes in Glasgow Euro-election.

1995 France - massive movement against public sector cuts.

MILITANT FOR YOUTH AND LABOUR

Liverpool dockers and Hillingdon hospital workers start strikes. Labour ditches socialist constitution. Growing protests against education cuts. Tory splits grow, Major survives leadership challenge. Mahmoud Masarwa released after seven years in Israeli jail. Shaky Dayton 'peace' deal between nationalist leaders in Bosnia. Ken Saro-Wiwa executed. Protests against Shells role in Nigeria.

1996 Dockers step up international battle.

Militant

Postal workers' strikes over Employee Agenda. Europe protests against Maastricht, France, Spain, Germany. Strike movements in Canada, South Korea and Latin America.

Job Seekers' Allowance and Project Work introduced. No Turning Back protests in Northern Ireland after Canary Wharf bomb.

1997 Protests grow in South Korea. Glacier workers win reinstatement after sit-in. Socialist Party and Socialist paper to be launched in February!



Campaigns

the future is red

“Militant struck a chord in me”

“ I N 1982 I joined the Labour Party. I was intensely dissatisfied with society and wanted to get involved in changing things. I recognised that this is best achieved by like-minded individuals working together and the traditional party of the working-class seemed to be the obvious group to join.

I was an active Labour Party member for five years and became steadily disillusioned. We did little that was going to change anything. Meanwhile the Militant Tendency were getting very negative media coverage. This was never discussed at our branch.

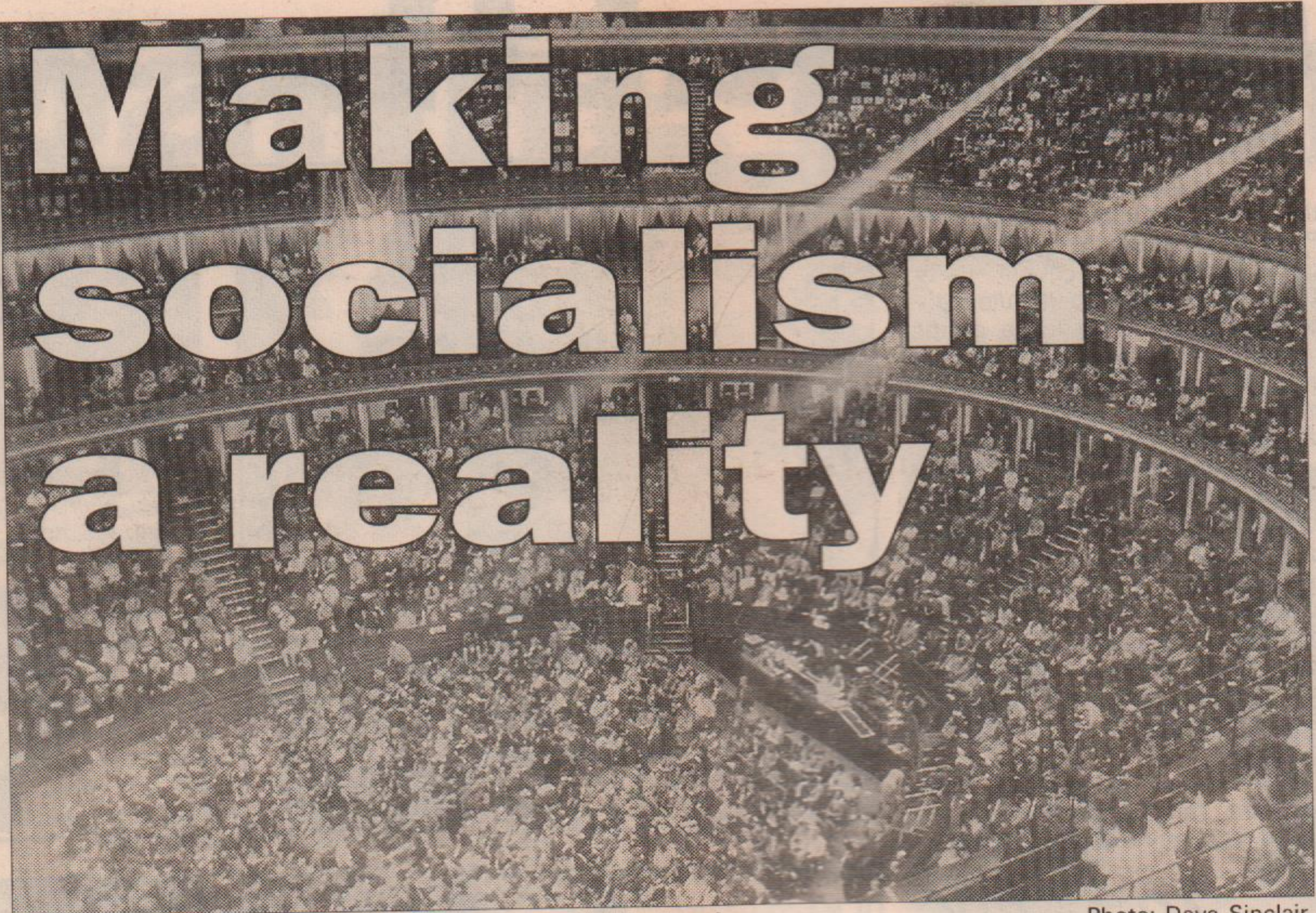
By 1995, largely due to work-related stress, I became unwell and lost my job. I read a letter in a local paper from Militant Labour councillor Wally Kennedy about housing which struck a chord. I was also struck by how reasonable his argument was and found it difficult to believe that this was the same organisation which I had first heard of a decade earlier.

I felt compelled to find out more. I did, and soon became a member of what I now consider to be THE party of the working-class - the Socialist Party.

One regret - that it took me so long to become conscious.”

Barbara Gordon, Hillingdon.

SOCIALIST IDEAS need resources if they are to be put into practice. **JOHN REID** charts the history of *Militant's* resources.



Militant's 1985 rally packed the Royal Albert Hall in London.

Photo: Dave Sinclair.

“ I N 1964 a small number of socialists in Britain set out to establish an independent Marxist newspaper. They had few resources but had confidence that Marxist ideas would attract working-class people. Enormous sacrifices of time, energy and money were made to get *Militant* up and running.

Militant started as a monthly newspaper in October 1964. The first print-run of 2,000 copies sold out and £150 fighting fund was raised.

By 1970 we purchased premises in Cambridge Heath Road, east London - our first headquarters. A year later we bought our own press for £1,050 and the first fortnightly *Militant* rolled off. But under pressure from events, the miners' strike and Bloody Sunday in Northern Ireland, the *Militant* went weekly in 1972.

Disaster struck in 1975 when a fire destroyed our print shop. £27,378 was raised for new premises at Mentmore Terrace, Hackney. Within two years production expanded to a 16-page paper.

Militant's support began to grow to such an extent that in 1983

Labour's right wing mounted a witch-hunt to stifle our success. We vowed that for every expulsion, we would win 10 more supporters. Between 1983 and 1984 £175,000 was raised towards a £340,000 bigger and better HQ. (This was on top of £280,000 for the fighting fund). In November 1984 we moved in.

1984 was also the year of the heroic year-long miners' struggle

Alexandra Palace where £51,725 poured in during the 45-minute finance appeal.

During the late 1980s to early 1990s *Militant* led another historic battle - the anti-poll tax struggle (see pages 8 and 9). Thousands of pounds were raised to finance this campaign and to further build *Militant's* resources.

Meanwhile, the Labour Party were moving ever rightward. In 1993 we made the break and launched the independent organisation, *Militant* Labour, raising thousands more pounds to enable us to stand in both local and general election campaigns.

During 1994-96, £40,000 was invested in new technology to improve *Militant*, paving the way for the next milestone - the launch of the Socialist Party and *The Socialist* next week.

The Socialist Party will be standing in 17 seats in the general election in England and Wales for which £43,000 has been raised so far. In Scotland, 8 Scottish Militant Labour members will be standing as part of the Scottish Socialist Alliance.

Help us make socialism a reality - join the Socialist Party and help build our resources.

Enormous sacrifices of time, energy and money were made to get *Militant* up and running

during which *Militant* supporters in the leadership of the Labour Party Young Socialists ensured the collection of over £1 million for the miners.

Militant celebrated its 21st anniversary in 1985 with a spectacular 5,000-strong rally at the Albert Hall. The appeal raised a fantastic £26,587.

Support for *Militant* had grown to such a level by 1988 following the historic struggle we led against council cuts in Liverpool, that 7,500 turned out for a rally at

Help launch The Socialist!

Whether you're reading the *Militant* for the first time or the last - check! Have you put in your order for *The Socialist* - out next week?



Will you be helping to achieve record sales for the historic first edition? If you want to help, phone Alison on 0181 533 3311 now!

Please send me copies of *The Socialist*.
I enclose payment (50p each).
Name Tel
Address

Early reminder Celebrate May Day 1997 with greetings to *The Socialist*.

Greetings from trade unions, Socialist Party branches, individuals, other labour movement and community organisations all welcome.
Rates: 30p per word, or £4.50 per column centimetre display.
Copy deadline: Thursday 24 April.

To join the Socialist Party, donate money or subscribe to *The Socialist* write to *The Socialist* Party, 3-13 Hepscoth Road, London E9 5HB.

Socialist Party THE LAUNCH

AT A special conference in December 1996, *Militant* Labour members voted to change the party name to Socialist Party.

The national press conference will take place on Thursday 6 February in London - details from Mike Waddington 0181 533 3311.

Bradford: Thursday 20 February, 7.30pm, Bradford Central Library, Jacobs Well.

Brighton: Thursday 13 February, contact Mark on 01273 298905.

Bristol: Tuesday 18 February, 7.30pm, The Mailcoach, Bond Street/Broadmead, (next to Littlewoods). Contact Robin Clapp at PO Box 1031, Bristol, BS99 1SR.

Cardiff: Tuesday 11 February, 8pm, Sandringham Hotel, St Mary Street. Contact Alec Thraves on 01792 476156.

Chatham: Monday 10 February, 8pm, Churchill's Pub, The Brook.

Eastern Region: contact Jane James on 01438 741 618.

Folkestone: Thursday 13 February, 8pm, Oddfellows Social Club, Broomfield Road, Cheriton.

London: contact Julie/Lisa on 0181 533 3311.

Manchester: contact John Killen on 0161 283 1872.

Merseyside: contact Mike Morris on 0151 260 3111.

Northampton: Wednesday 19 February, 7.30pm, King's Heath Community Centre, North Oval, King's Heath. Speakers include Northants County Council UNISON.

Northern Region: contact Kevin Miles 0191 262 6694.

Nottingham: Tuesday 11 February, 7.30pm, Queens Walk Community Centre, Houseman Gardens, Meadows.

Oxford: Thursday 27 February, 7.30pm, Oxford Town Hall.

Ramsgate: Wednesday 12 February, 8pm, Red Lion pub, Kings Street.

Sheffield: Thursday 13 February, 7.30pm, Sheffield Unemployed Centre (SCCAU), West Street.

Southampton: Saturday 8 February, between 11am - 1pm, Regional Conference of SP. Rally 2pm - 4pm, St Matthew's Hall, St Marys Road. (Creche available).

West Midlands: contact Dave Griffiths, PO Box 121, Coventry CV1 5DA or 01203 555620.

Scotland: In Scotland our party is called Scottish Militant Labour (SML) - if you want to know more about activities in Scotland then contact SML on 0141 552 6773 or at the Socialist Party headquarters on 0181 533 3311 or 0181 986 7578.

Fighting fund ★ paper sales

Ballots and bed pushes

THE SOCIALIST Party's campaign against health service cuts continues with new initiatives in Manchester and Coventry.

In both areas members have taken inspiration from Cardiff Socialist Party's campaign to save the Royal Infirmary and are organising city-wide ballots to save local hospitals.

As a result of their campaigns, in Manchester £118.35 has been donated to the Socialist Party's fighting fund, while in Coventry a total of £388 was donated during street activity. Two weeks of action, from

5-22 February, are planned to focus the campaign to save Coventry and Warwickshire Hospital including a bed push through the city. (See *The Socialist* next week).

NEW Socialist Party protest stickers:

● No cuts, Defend our NHS, JSA no way, Tories out, £6 per hour minimum wage, End poverty wages.

● plus petitions on same issues.

Order from the fighting fund department, 0181 533 3311.

Fighting Fund Week 4 (campaign deadline 1 April) **Total £3,049**

Area	Amount	Target
1 West Midlands	579	2,550
2 Southern	224	1,300
3 Yorkshire	618	4,000
4 South West	263	2,000
5 Manchester/Lancs	160	1,550
6 Wales	175	2,350
7 London	568	8,000
8 Northern	59	1,600
9 East Midlands	64	2,650
10 Merseyside	48	2,000
11 South East	40	1,750
12 Eastern	21	1,200
13 West Scotland	0	3,640
14 East Scotland	0	1,450
15 National	225	3,960
Total	3,049	40,000

Uniting workers throughout the world



MILITANT'S FOUNDERS were always part of an internationalist movement but our approach was often very different from that of others on the left.

James Long, Committee for a Workers' International

Our internationalism based itself on solidarity with those struggling against oppression. But we were never simply uncritical cheerleaders.

We saw ourselves as part of an international movement. So, just as Marxists in London can and should have views, if necessary critical, on what is happening in Birmingham, so Marxists in Britain could comment on struggles and developments around the world.

At first *Militant's* small size meant that we mainly commented on events from afar, while simultaneously campaigning in Britain on international issues.

We produced special material, for example in solidarity with Marxists imprisoned in the jails of the 1967-74 Greek military dictatorship and in 1968 explaining both the revolutionary events in France and the Stalinist invasion of Czechoslovakia.

Our articles never hid our own views while always attempting to develop international working-class links and action. This was the case in the ad-hoc committee organising the 100,000-strong October 1968 London anti-Vietnam war demonstration.

There, in a small minority, we unsuccessfully argued for a campaign to build a trade union boycott of all goods going to the US-backed South Vietnamese dictatorship and against giving uncritical support to the then North Vietnamese leadership.

We often had to argue against those in the labour movement who attempted to limit solidarity to bland

speeches at meetings or demos.

This was especially the case with the now defunct "Communist" Party and its supporters in both the trade unions and Labour Party. They did not want a genuine discussion of the experience of the movement in other countries and sought to prevent direct links being built between rank and file activists internationally.

Politically the reason why the 'Communist' party leaders did this was because they were both fundamentally apologists for the undemocratic bureaucratic rulers in the then USSR and because their policy in capitalist countries was always to support alliances of the labour movement with so-called "progressive" capitalist politicians.

They feared that direct links between rank and file workers would undermine these policies.

The Chile Experiment



BETWEEN 1970-73 the entire international labour movement was following the experience of the Popular Unity government in Chile.

For the first time in a capitalist country a self-proclaimed Marxist, Allende, had been elected president. Chile became a test case on whether it was possible to gradually overthrow capitalism.

However Allende, while calling himself a Marxist, was not a revolutionary and was generally on the right wing of his own party.

Big reforms were made at first, but from the beginning Allende agreed not to touch the main instruments of capitalist power. Steadily the Chilean ruling class became alarmed as the working class became more radicalised.

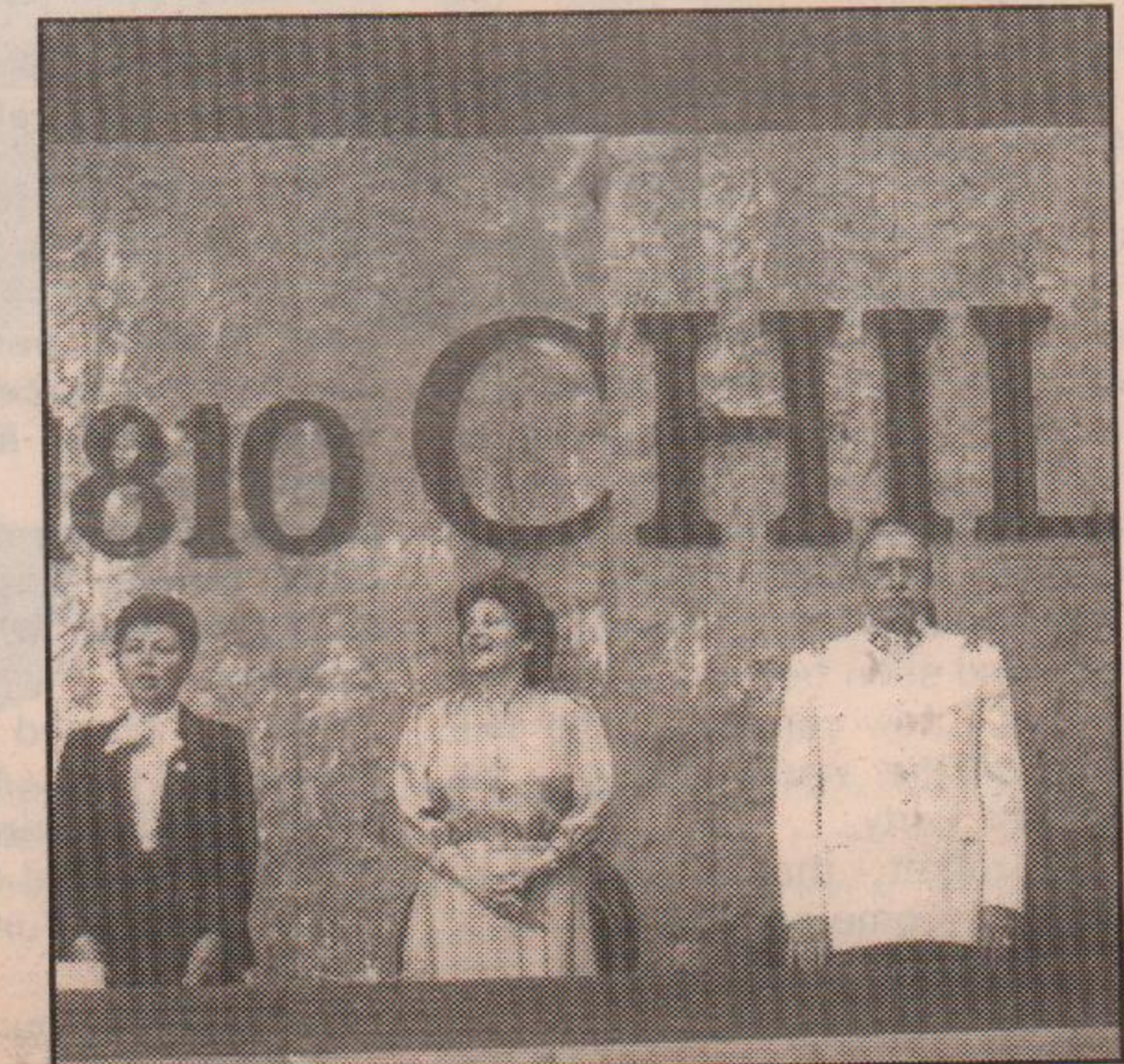
Chile became more and more polarised as the ruling class prepared to strike back.

Militant analysed the situation as it unfolded and warned of the dangers ahead if capitalism was not decisively overthrown.

Tragically our worse predictions came true when the military seized power in September 1973, killing tens of thousands.

Chile was the last time when *Militant's* international analysis was simply confined to articles or activities from Britain.

As *Militant* grew in strength in Britain we were also able to build firm links with socialists in other



Militant, along with young socialists, consistently fought for independent trade unions in South Africa and to remove the dictator Pinochet (bottom right) in Chile.

countries, laying the basis for the formation of the Committee for a Workers' International (CWI).

This growth meant that we were able to directly contact activists in other countries and start to become an international trend within the workers' movement around the globe.

Ireland



BUT *MILITANT* was not only concerned with literary activity. The articles were designed to inform, help share the international experience of the working class and, where necessary, develop solidarity action and direct links between the rank and file in different countries.

From 1969 onwards this was especially seen in relation to Ireland.

From the beginning *Militant* consistently analysed the situation and argued that only united working-class action could overcome the legacy of centuries of "divide and rule" policies and begin to solve the problems of Ireland.

Since then we have worked closely with activists who shared this approach and who last year founded a Socialist Party in Ireland.

Our stand has not always been immediately popular, often we have had to stand against the stream.

Thus, unlike many others, we opposed the 1969 deployment of British troops in Northern Ireland and, later, the illusions held by many young Catholics that the IRA's military campaign would provide a solution.

Starting with Spain in 1971, we began a series of solidarity campaigns with those involved in struggle.

Spain was followed by a drive to

assist the workers who were victimised after the defeat of the 1980 public-sector general strike in Sri Lanka. Later in the 1980s we organised direct aid to socialists in the Chilean underground's resistance to the then military rulers.

South Africa



FROM THE late 1970s, *Militant*, together with a number of South African activists, began to help in the establishment of genuine trade unions in South Africa.

This campaign not only faced the opposition of the Apartheid regime but also of the South African 'Communist' Party and the British Labour and 'Communist' party leaders who argued that no genuine trade unions could be built in South Africa.

The opposition *Militant* encountered to these international campaigns from many in the Labour Party and trade union leaderships was not accidental.

Following from their pro-capitalist policies within Britain, many of these leaders worked internationally to develop similar leaderships in other countries. This meant trying to prevent us discussing with activists in other countries.

Despite many obstacles we were able to help in the formation of an independent, fighting, socialist trade union movement in South Africa. In fact, the first President of the South African Miners Union was a co-thinker of ours.

The December 1985 formation of COSATU as a fighting mass trade union federation was a confirmation of our approach and proved to be a powerful factor in the undermining of Apartheid rule.

The South African Miners Union was also one of the organisations

which welcomed British miners during their 1984/5 strike.

We arranged for strikers to go to different countries around the world not only to raise support but also, as in South Africa and Sri Lanka, to concretely try to build international links between workers.

Building on this experience *Militant* and the entire CWI have established a reputation for real solidarity campaigns.

It has reported and urged support for striking workers (ranging from Liverpool dockers, bus workers in both Denmark and India, hospital workers in Pakistan, chemical workers in Israel) and campaigned for the release of political prisoners.

On The Spot



MILITANT'S PAGES have been more and more able to tell the real 'on the spot' stories of developments around the globe.

The 1974 Portuguese revolution, the 1979 Iranian revolution, the Chilean anti-military struggle in the mid-1980s, the 1986 overthrow of Marcos in the Philippines, the 1987 struggle in South Korea, the 1989 "Tiananmen Square" movement in China and the collapse of Stalinism in nearly all the countries of eastern Europe were events that were covered in detail in the *Militant*.

The initiative which the CWI took in launching Youth against Racism in Europe in 1992 was the most successful international movement so far, bringing over 40,000 youth from all over Europe to a march in Brussels in October 1992.

This international work will continue. The Socialist Party is part of CWI and *The Socialist* will maintain the proud international tradition of the *Militant*.



Palestinian Socialist Mahmoud Masarwa - Militant campaigned for his release from an Israeli jail for over seven years.

South Korea

LAST WEEK the South Korean government signalled that it was prepared to make some concessions to the magnificent strike movement that has paralysed the country. **ELIZABETH CLARKE** gives more eye-witness accounts on the events of the recent days.

Preparing the next wave

“WE’LL MAKE an end to the Chaebol economy and build a new one that can sustain the lives of all the people!” The strident voice of **Kwon Young Kil**, hero-leader of South Korea’s month-long strike movement, booms out across the huge square on Yoido Island, Seoul.

“If the politicians don’t replace the labour laws before March we will fight until all of us perish in the struggle!” Cheers, shouts, applause greet his every sentence from more than 100,000 members of the KCTU and the KFTU trade union federations united in one big anti-government rally last Sunday. A Korean protest is definitely a festival of joyous determination.

Row upon row of noisy but totally disciplined demonstrators stretches as far as the eye can see in these sub-zero temperatures. Each contingent’s distinctive banner billows high on its bamboo pole.

Here the green one of the Kia carworkers and below it a forest of matching green head bands, here Hyundai heavy engineering, the chemical workers’ orange and the teachers in yellow.

Today the atmosphere is, if anything, more festive than usual and a little more relaxed, even though the battle is far from over.

“If the ruling party and the Chaebols refuse us our requests we will make our next general strike earlier than the 18 February date that we announced,” Kwon Young Kil



Kwon Young Kil.

announces from the platform.

These have been hard weeks of struggle in which hundreds of workers have been arrested and injured in clashes with the hated riot police.

Today the men in grey fatigues surround the demo as always, with their helmets and tear gas not too far away, but not quite so threatening.



Strikers sit down to hear speakers at the demo. Photo: Elizabeth Clarke

Government morale shattered

IT IS a big blow to morale, particularly of the police, that Kim Young Sam was forced to order the rescinding of the arrest warrants made out for the 20 most prominent strike leaders.

The seven who were camped out in the grounds of the Myong Dong cathedral are now back in the KCTU headquarters to continue with the campaign to nullify the laws and to fight every local victimisation the bosses are now trying to pursue.

Although moved down a gear or two, it is clear that the campaign will not stop even at repeal of the “two bad laws”.

Today’s movement is led by veterans of persecution and prison over decades.

Numerous trade union and political organisations have maintained a precarious half-life under the supposedly democratic but in fact dictatorial regime of Kim Young Sam.

After the huge democracy movement of 1987, independent trade unions were forged in heroic battles over wages and conditions and many of the socialist groupings that had sprung up like mushrooms were crushed.

Today, those who have retained or even developed a Marxist, class or socialist approach, are obliged to operate under a multitude of different guises.

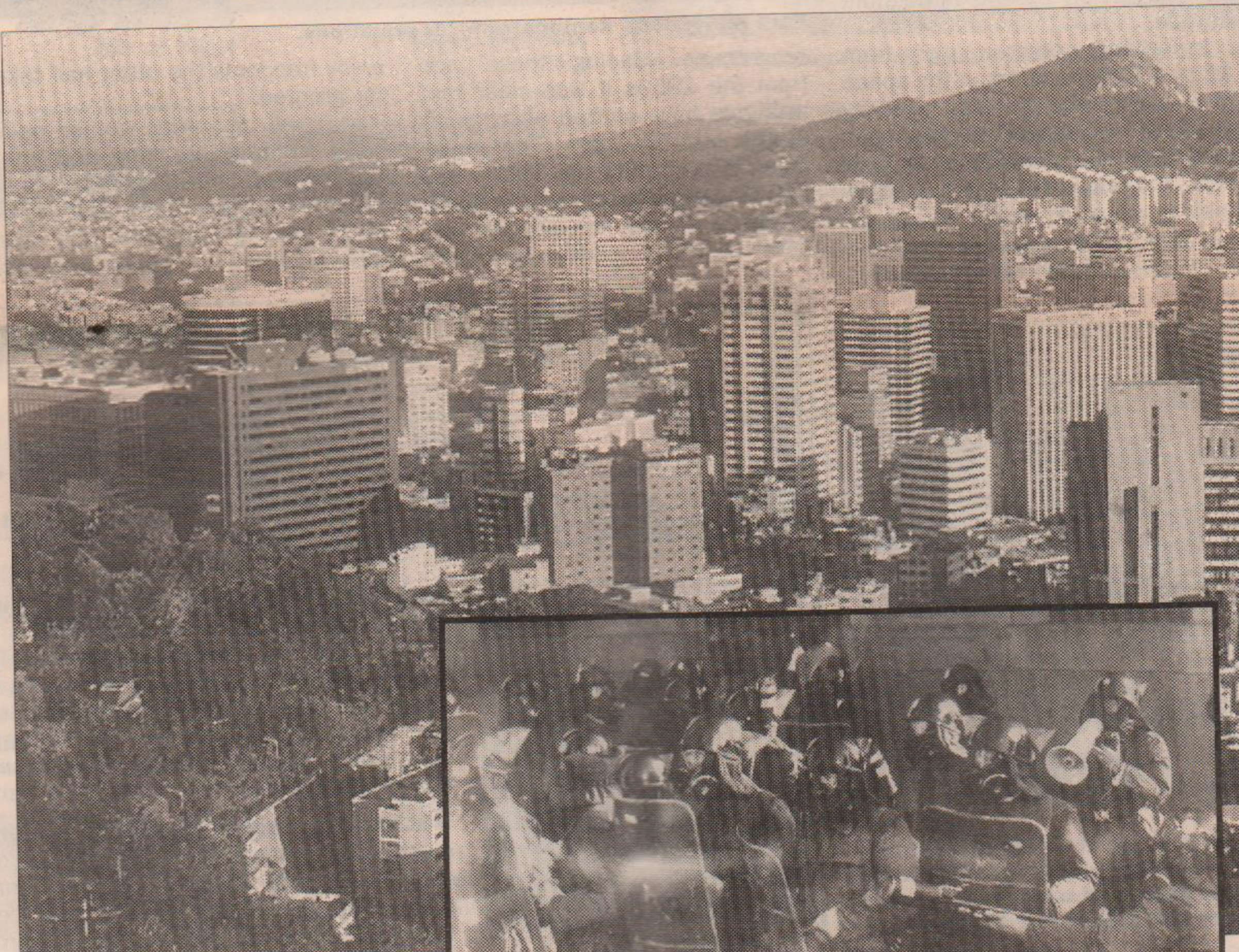
Even advocating a party of workers is identified with the ideology of the North and deemed to be a crime against the state! So is singing the *Internationale!*

There is a far greater job to be done than simply defeat the new laws. Official black head-bands, lapel ribbons and flags prepared for the demo, carried the slogan “Democracy is dead!”.

Now on the international circuit, and pledging solidarity with the semi-legal KCTU, right-wing trade union leaders like Bill Jordan, John Evans, and their ilk, have nothing to offer the Korean working class.

Jorden and Evans couldn’t bring themselves to support the British miners in their year-long struggle and who have themselves signed ‘sweet-heart’ single-union and no-strike deals.

Their new-found interest in the fate of the Korean working class is motivated more by concern for moderating rather than encourag-



Seoul - splendour and squalor.

ing the legendary militancy of the Korean working class.

The Kim Young Sam government has been forced to make a temporary retreat.

What it cannot push through now, because of the mass resistance of more than 80% of the Korean population, it will return to in the not-too-distant future.

Both sides are well aware that the road of struggle is still long but a highly combative and organised radical workers’ organisation, formed over a period of time, has come of age, steeled and sharpened in the course of this magnificent strike.

Even the president has had to recognise verbally the existence of the KCTU and sees in it a force to be reckoned with.

Whether it proves to be the force that finally puts an end to his political career, only time will tell. And time may not be on his side!

More analysis on South Korea will be in the new issue of *Socialism Today*, out this week.



The men in the grey fatigues.

“Today is a great day. We have released all our discontent into the air. We are hopeful that we can achieve all we want.

“I am really happy that my union is fighting together with the KCTU even though I am KFTU. I think we have become more energetic than we used to be through fighting alongside the KCTU.

“We would like international solidarity. Please help us!”
Kim Chung Won, Branch leader from Industrial Chemical section of the Korean Federation of Trade Unions.

A teacher, a woman with a yellow head-band that reads:

“We want the Korean Teachers’ Trade Union recognised!”, says: “We are very vigorous and have a high feeling of victory.

“I don’t think it’s going to be easy to get our union legalised because our government knows that we teachers are powerful. This government is not very democratic.

“It is not easy to act as a trade union member in the schools. Teachers of the world help us to get our trade union legalised. If we have the power of unity and international solidarity, it will be easier to get legalisation of the trade union.”

There were large contingents of teachers, well organised and well represented but it is illegal for teachers to belong to a union, let alone strike!

New scandals brewing

PRESIDENT Kim Young Sam and his compliant government are in trouble.

One of the sure signs is that they are actually implicated in involving the Korean CIA in engineering a headline-catching defection from the North as a diversion from the dramatic defiance and increasing popularity of the strike movement.

Their own poor ratings decline by the day. Now a scandal has erupted over favouritism to one of the giant Chaebols - Hanbo Steel - which is bankrupt and has been a heavily subsidised lame duck over a long period of time.

Investigations into the ruling party’s involvement in corrupt practices have already touched the president’s son and could reach to the very top.

The president has promised to review the labour laws and big business representatives have said they might even accept recognising more than one union. But they also say the flexibility, lay-off and replacement of workers clauses must stay!

It is difficult to see how the government can back down without a possibly fatal loss of face.

KATH MACKAY from Ipswich is in South Korea. She sent this report of a demo in Kwang Ju.

“LAST WEEKEND I joined a local demonstration. A Korean woman (teacher) asked me as many questions as I did her. It was great! She was inspired that a foreigner joined and supported the demonstration.

“They’re expected to work 55 hours a week and are calling for an eight-hour day, but bear in mind they work six days a week, so that’s still 48 hours.

“The Korean labour movement anthem is so moving - *The Marching Song for You* - just sung by Yung Hee Un, a woman in her 70s. So uplifting - I had chills down my spine and tears in my eyes.

“The chants are about ‘Protecting Democracy’, ‘Kill Dictators’ - they don’t mince their words here - and they are all wearing head-bands that read: ‘Fight, Unification, Victory’. “It’s excellent how more workers are joining each day. Today the suit-office workers have joined in!”

Half the people still fighting for equality

LAST WEEK'S *People's Century*, 'Half the People', charted the inspirational struggle of women for equal rights.

Christine Thomas

"My firm's always made a point of not employing women", boasted a worker in a promotional film for Ford. During the second world war women flooded into industry, challenging the traditional division between 'men's work' and 'women's work'.

Lilian Gillen became a crane driver at Ford in Dagenham. The job gave her new confidence and a changed outlook on life. But propaganda films in Britain and the US made it quite clear that women like Lilian were only 'temporary'.

A smiling woman in a boiler suit explained, "This job belongs to some soldier and when he comes back he can have it." That wasn't the attitude of Lilian and thousands of other women. But when she asked to carry on with her job after the war they laughed in her face.

The post-war propaganda machine went into overdrive. In films, ads and magazines, the message was pushed home relentlessly - a woman's role is to be there to support her man and bring up a family. In one film a mother was at home playing energetically with her two children. "Look", exclaimed her proud husband relaxing in his armchair, "and she's already done the washing

and ironing for a family of five."

In the 1950s and 1960s, the number of women working outside the home began to increase. Women benefited from an expansion of higher education and the general economic upswing. But at work women were restricted in the jobs they could do and the wages they could earn.

In 1968, Joyce Wheedan worked as a machinist at Ford. Skilled women workers were paid 20% less than male colleagues.

Anger was building up. "I put on my coat, picked up my bag and switched off my machine. I'm going out", said Joyce, "who's coming with me?" 187 women walked out and brought Ford to a standstill.

Three weeks later they won their battle to be regraded. "We were the first to stand up." Joyce explained.

The Ford women sparked off a movement throughout Britain that culminated in the Equal Pay Act of 1970.

All over the world women were demanding equal rights. The women's liberation movement grew out of the Civil Rights movement in the US and rapidly spread throughout Europe.

In Holland, one group went from 18 to 4,000 members in the space of a month. Women used publicity stunts to help raise consciousness. Inevitably, the press tried to trivialise the movement and obscure their serious demands for equal pay and opportunities.

I had mixed feeling watching this



Ford machinists demonstrate for equal pay.

programme. Seeing those ads from the 1950s it was clear that attitudes have shifted enormously in the last 50 years. The movement of women in the 1960s and 1970s has definitely left its mark. However, as the film pointed out, 50% of the population still can't

enjoy freedoms the other half take for granted.

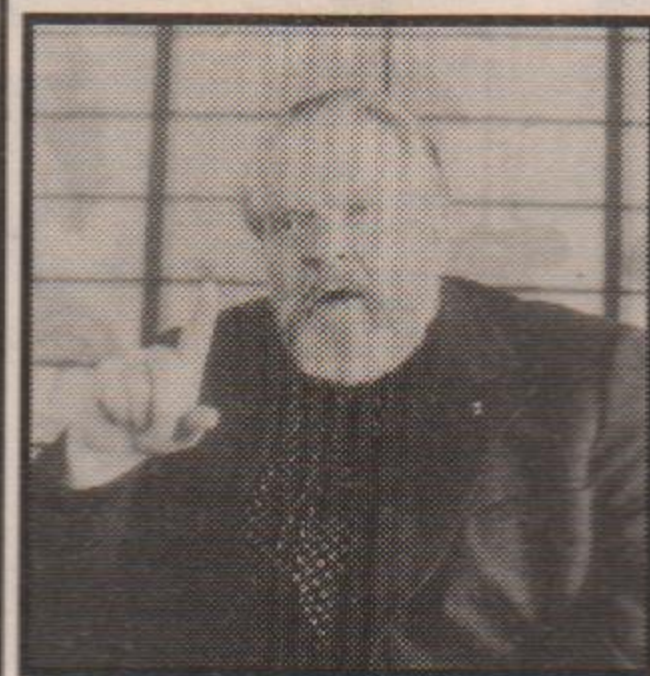
In poorer countries women daily carry out back-breaking and dangerous work, often unpaid. Every year two million young girls experience genital mutilation and over 6,000 women are burnt to death

under the dowry system.

But, in every part of the world, women have collectively struggled against discrimination and backward attitudes. These movements are an inspiration to a new generation of women who will carry on the struggle for real equality.



Kevin Parslow's Boxed Off
Fri 31 January - Thu 6 February



Tx (Saturday, 7.40pm, BBC2)

THIS WILL be the last Boxed Off, but with a new title for our paper the TV column gets refurbished!

More Socialist Party members on TV recently include Martin Powell-Davies discussing Labour's economic policy with UNISON members on *Newsnight*, and Naomi Byron on a cable TV programme debating the question of no platform for fascists. Perhaps with a general election on the way, and a probable change of government, more of our members will be asked to appear on TV to outline a genuine alternative to Labour.

Saturday Assignment (BBC2, 6.30pm). As Pakistan votes in a general election, an investigation into political corruption in the country, including an interview with ex-prime minister Benazir Bhutto and her jailed husband Asif Zadari, to find out whether they bought a country mansion in Surrey through illicit funds. Also looks at Imran Khan's campaign - he would hang those guilty of corruption.

Tx. (BBC2, 7.40pm). *The Lost Films of Orson Welles* examines the career of the great actor/film maker whose work started brilliantly, but seemed to decline, ending with a series of half-made and unfinished movies, stopped due to lack of finance or his constant travels. In the afternoon BBC2 shows the films *Journey Into Fear*, *The Magnificent Ambersons*, and for some the best film ever made, *Citizen Kane*, which was nevertheless a financial failure, and made the studios wary of Welles.

Nostromo (BBC2, 9.30pm). A four-part adaptation of Joseph Conrad's novel starring amongst others Albert Finney and Claudia Cardinale in a story of people driven by ideals and ambitions, but flawed by corruption and destroyed by fate.

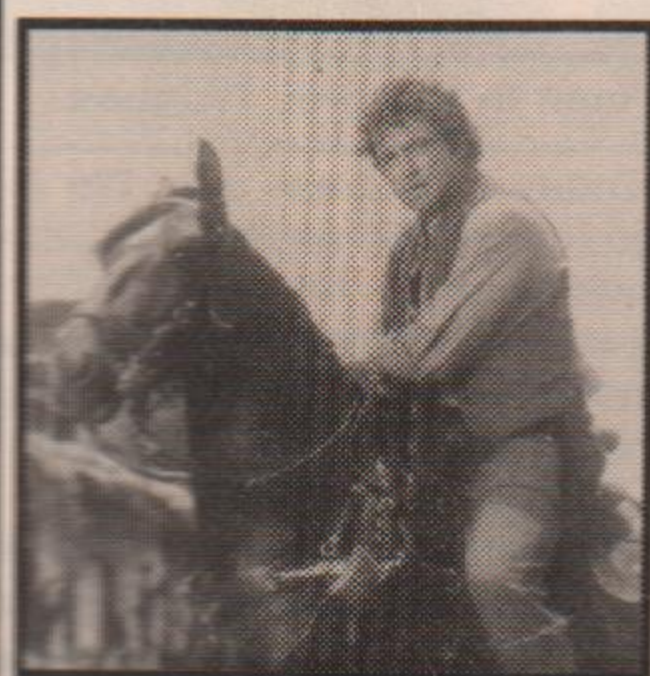
Hill Street Blues (Channel 4, 11.35pm). Another repeat run for the first series of the cop show that was ground breaking not just for police stories, but for TV drama in general.

Sunday The Great Sell-Off (BBC2, 7.50pm). The government continued to privatise into the 1990s. But public opposition grew as only big shareholders, fat-cat directors and the government seemed to benefit, at the expense of jobs and services.

People's Century (BBC1, 10.30pm, repeated Monday BBC2, 7pm). 1975: *War of the Flea* looks at guerrilla movements in the twentieth century, talking to members of Castro's army, Vietcong fighters and Afghan Mujahadin.

Wednesday The Aristocracy (BBC2, 9pm). Looks at the lifestyles of the titled classes between the wars, and finds support and sympathy for the fascists and Nazis among them.

Thursday Horizon (BBC2, 9.25pm). Continuing the story of the *Ice Mummies*, with the uncovering of the body of man high in the Alps, a man who from the scientific investigation of his body, was involved in the production of copper tools in 3,350BC, earlier than many previously thought had happened.



Nostromo (Saturday, 9.30pm, BBC2)



People's Century (Sunday, 10.30pm, BBC1)



Drafted into the factories during the second world war and then sent back to the kitchen. Adverts from the 1940s and 1960s.

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Your say

Militant, 3/13 Hepscoot Rd, London E9 5HB.

Public transport workers strike in France

Dear Comrades,

It is inspiring to see that the recent lorry drivers' strike in France (November 1996) has inspired other French workers to go on a public transport strike on 24 January.

Five of France's biggest unions are pushing for workers in the bus and metro sectors to have the same retirement rights as the lorry drivers at 55 years of age. In 1981, in the face of a

mass radicalisation of workers in a socialist direction, the retirement age was brought down to 60.

In some cities, transport workers have already struck, much to the displeasure of national full-time officials. This, however, has prompted a debate on the issue. A poll recently showed 61% of the population favour a lowering of the retirement age.

John Curtis
Margate

Cold weather payments are just window dressing

Dear Comrades,

I received my cold weather payment of £8.50, as did my mother who is over 70-years-old. But this didn't come near all the money we had to put in the key meter and gas for the month.

Two deaths from hypothermia have been reported in the local press since Christmas. One of these women was reported as fit and healthy for her age (85 years) and well cared for, but to keep the bills down she had simply been run-

ning her storage heaters at too low a level.

The 270 millionaires in government have presided over keeping benefits at merciless levels and stand responsible for these deaths.

These cold weather payments are nothing but window dressing while these rich MPs want for nothing. The payments should be increased to realistic levels immediately.

Patrick Westmore
Isle of Wight

A soundbite with teeth!

Dear Comrades,

The *Guardian* recently commented on Dave Nellist's contribution to the monarchy debate on TV. They described his "30-second attack on the royals as a soundbite with teeth".

How right they were! Two members of my UNISON branch who also saw the debate were so impressed by Dave's clear socialist ideas and conviction that they immediately both took out subscriptions to *Militant* or *The Socialist* as it will be relaunched next week.

Every Socialist Party member should feel encouraged by the *Guardian's* back-handed compliment - so let's show them, or more importantly show the unemployed, low-waged, homeless and the alienated, angry working-class youth, that not only do we have teeth but that we also know how to use them!

Solidarity, struggle and socialism.

Steve German,
Taunton



Dave Nellist campaigning against the Job Seekers' Allowance.

Out of the gutter, into... well, the gutter

Jared Wood

TORIES IN Kensington and Chelsea have chosen former Minister Alan Clark to replace Sir Nicholas Scott as their general election candidate. Sir Nicholas was of course found in a gutter at party conference allegedly after a serious session (unfortunately not of the conference).

Clark too is no stranger to the gutter of society. Once describing himself as a bounder who deserves horse-whipping he perhaps is best known for his diaries.

The diaries are quite remarkable and succeed in displaying every 'ism' and 'obia' it is possible for a bigoted, upper-class, public-school twit to embrace. Summed up by an entry dated 31 October 1987 when Clark, finding opponents to General Pinochet's dictatorship in Chile rather uninspiring dinner guests writes: "Frankly, I'd have them all put under arrest as they left the building. I might say that to Pinochet if I get to see him on Friday."

BRITAIN, MOTHER of the free, is insisting the Chinese abandon their plans to limit the right of assembly in Hong Kong. Should they succeed we may find a procession of strikers, environmentalists and Mr and Mrs J Public who want to stop their hospital from closing, making their way to Hong Kong to escape the Criminal Justice Act and exercise their democratic rights.

Funny how freedoms held so dearly by Britain's government, when applied to Hong Kong, cannot be extended to 20 people who want to look at an ancient monument in Wiltshire. (See also page 6).

SHARES IN Millwall football club have been suspended and the club put in the hands of an administrator.

I have only ever been to Millwall once, in the days of the old Den. On that occasion I ran the length of The Old Kent Road to avoid a long sock full of nails and the F-troop.

Despite this, it is nothing short of a cultural disaster that clubs like Millwall and many more outside the Premier League face a battle to survive. The Premier League split off has allowed the top clubs to monopolise TV money and investment in the game. If things keep going this way, working class supporters will soon have either lost their club or be priced out of their grounds.

In praise of Militant

Dear Comrades,

I'm enjoying so many of the articles in *Militant* lately.

I find the style of writing relaxed, the subjects more relevant, the language straight forward and this combination makes everything easier to absorb and understand.

I was surprised to realise that all the articles I'm writing to praise were written by women. Readers should perhaps reflect on the point that these people work four times as hard for half the pay and still they are finding time to write the most poignant letters and the most perceptive articles.

Sharon Chate
west London

Shattering myths

Dear Comrades,

One of the wealthiest and most true blue Tory counties in Britain, Sussex, has long been the playground of the rich. However, a recent report by a Portsmouth University research team has shattered a few myths.

The study, commissioned by Arun District councillors in a bid to obtain government regeneration cash for Littlehampton, was shocking in the scale of poverty it uncovered.

The report showed that the area between the town centre and the seafront suffers from wide-ranging social factors including poor housing, high unemployment, low wage jobs and single parents struggling to bring up their children.

The economic profile covered the whole of the Arun District, a very wealthy area, but highlighted parts of Littlehampton and Bognor Regis as in need of particular help. 18 years of Thatcherism have devastated parts of this 'true blue' area. Researchers admitted to finding pockets "worse than traditional blackspots such as Bradford and Gateshead."

Militant Labour members campaigned in this part of Sussex and during the poll tax years succeeded in getting almost a third to refuse to pay. How much longer will people allow their noses to be rubbed into the ground before they realise that a socialist society is their only answer?

Stan Natrass
Sussex

Labour cosy up with police

Dear Comrades,

Last June we got some unusually heavy police harassment on *Militant* sales in Southampton precinct, during which I was arrested and charged with willful obstruction.

The matter came to trial recently. After hearing some very dodgy evidence from the prosecution and a very rational argument put by us, the magistrates found me 'guilty'. I was given a six-month conditional discharge and ordered to pay £50 costs.

The prosecution were unwilling to say why the police and council had decided to act as they had, even though we'd had a presence in that part of Southampton for 25 years.

The magistrates were also unwilling to answer our point about the Labour

Party holding their election stall in the precinct and being more 'obstructive' than we were.

The reason for all this is that the Labour Party don't want anything to detract from their prestigious shopping centre when it opens sometime next century and are trying to get rid of us well beforehand.

Some hopes!

David Rawlinson
Southampton

Research help wanted

Dear Editor,

I am a member of Greater Manchester CADV (Campaign Against Domestic Violence) and hope some *Militant* readers might be able to help me with a research project I am doing on the links between animal abuse, wife beating and child abuse.

Studies show a strong link between the issues - a New Jersey study shows 88% of families experiencing physical abuse had also experienced animal cruelty. Much of the work in this area is being done by the American Humane Association (AHA).

Despite these links and the pioneering work by the AHA there is still not enough known about this area of domestic violence. I am aiming to partly fill this gap with my own research.

Through CADV I know of several cases but would like to find out more. Any women willing to share their experience or otherwise collaborate in the research can reach me on 0161 330 9112.

Nicole Taylor
Manchester

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Do you have any comments on or disagreements with this week's paper? Phone and tell us on 0181 533 3311 or write/fax us using not more than 200 words (fax: 0181 986 9445).

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Ford

Strike against job cuts

JOHN MAJOR is out to win the next election by having us believe Tory claims of rising employment and an expanding economy are bringing back the good times.

Roger Thomas

He should ask 1,000 shop-workers whose jobs are being axed by House of Fraser if they're having a good time.

Perhaps he could canvass the opinions of thousands of council workers facing the sack, or the 2,000 Naafi catering workers, or British Airways staff, bank workers, workers at Marshall's in Coatbridge, Scotland, or any of the thousands more workers facing the dole.

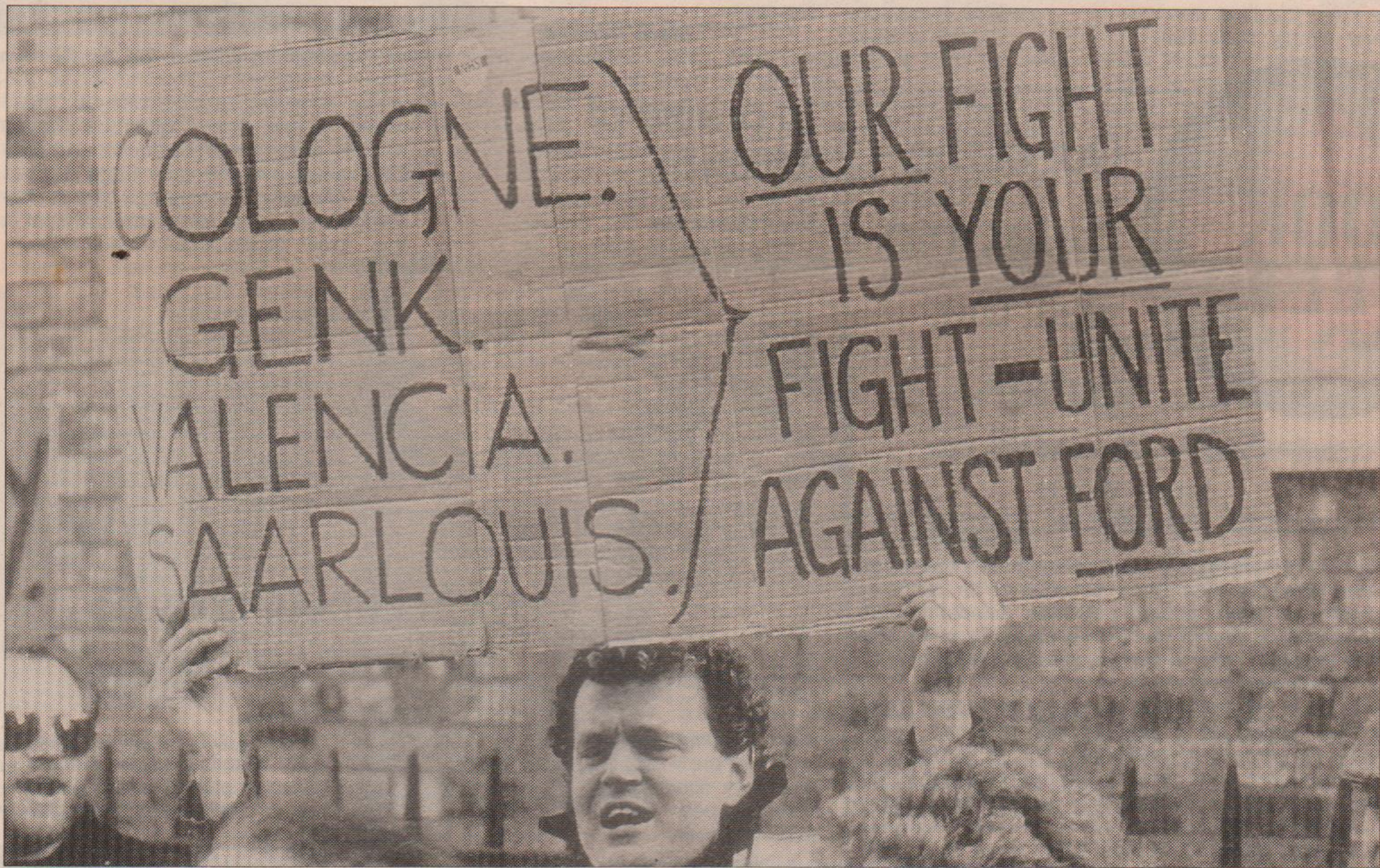
He would know, soon enough, that for working-class communities there's no 'feel-good' mood, only bitterness and anger at the Tories and the bosses.

But resistance within the ranks of the trade unions to the continual haemorrhage of jobs and the attacks on pay and conditions, is growing.

Last Thursday, workers from Ford factories across Britain joined in a noisy trade union lobby outside Ford HQ in London, to protest against 1,300 redundancies.

The crowd chanted: "Ford workers united will never be defeated." And referring to the long-running Liverpool docks dispute: "Dockers in, scabs out!" Ford in Halewood was completely shut for the day. Even foremen and security staff walked out.

Clearly, Ford workers are determined to see off the 1,300 redundancies, seeing this as the thin end of wedge to run down



Ford workers should make their fight international.

car production in Britain.

30,000 workers will be balloted after officials announced that they were now in official dispute with the company.

Tony Woodley, TGWU national secretary announced that no job was safe. "If they get away with this, they can get away with it anywhere in the Ford combine. We have to ensure as big a vote as possible for strike action."

A strike across the Ford combine

in Britain would punish the bosses.

But the unions should also link up the fight of workers in jobs devastated Merseyside with Ford workers throughout Europe to bring the Ford giant to its knees.

This action would stop management playing off worker against worker in different countries.

The lessons of the Glacier workers need to be learnt. They defeated sackings, wage cuts and harsh working conditions by

occupying their Glasgow factory for 55 days which forced the bosses into a humiliating climb-down

At Ford Halewood, the 'Glacier option' will undoubtedly be considered. As one Halewood worker said at the lobby: "I spent five years on the dole before getting this job at Ford. If I'm sacked now what chance will I have of working again?"

The Liverpool dockers, the

Hillingdon Hospital cleaners, the Magnet workers in Darlington, the Project Aerospace workers in Coventry, are all battling against hard-nosed bosses who locked them out and hired scab cheap labour.

These workers haven't given up and walked away. Their action is winning the sympathy and solidarity of the wider working class. What they need now is union action.

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