

Militant

THE MARXIST PAPER FOR LABOUR & YOUTH

ISSUE 691
16 March 1984

25p

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WILL WE BE ABLE TO
BUY IT BACK AGAIN
WHEN I WANT A JOB DAD?

THE FIGHT to save the coal fields is underway. There is now no turning back.

MacGregor and the Tories are hell bent on breaking the power of the National Union of Mineworkers.

Ian Isaac, secretary of St John's Colliery, South Wales told *Militant* that miners had to draw on their traditions of solidarity and comradeship and unite as never before in action.

Any retreat by the NUM in front of McGregor and the Tories would invite the worst butchery on the coal fields since the decimation of the Robens era.

Under MacGregor's latest plan the coal fields are to be reduced to a hundred pits producing around 100 million tonnes of coal, 35 pits would vanish each year for the next two years. But if this strike is defeated, the even more brutal long term plans of MacGregor and the Tories will be dusted off and brought forward for immediate implementation.

Tories attack jobs

Many of the so called safe "super pits" will find themselves on MacGregor's hit list.

The NCB would aim in South Wales, Kent and areas of North East England to reduce coal mining to a mere memory.

And the living standards of the miners lucky enough

By Brian Ingham



Pickets at Bilston Glen colliery in Scotland.

still to have work would come under sustained attack. But this attack is not just aimed at miners. There is hardly one group of workers that has not benefited from the solidarity and support of miners, often in direct help on picket lines.

Because of the conditions which they work and their past struggles no group of workers is held in higher esteem by the wider labour and trade union movement.

The Tories want to break the miners and thereby deal a savage blow to the growing morale of the organised working class.

MacGregor and Leon Brittan, Tory Home Secret-

ary claim hypocritically that they are defending the right of miners to work. But this strike developed precisely because MacGregor and the Tories want to deny thousands of miners and their children the right ever again to work in British coalfields!

Union rights at risk

With the latest provocation of the NCB injunction the funds of the NUM built up painfully by the sacrifice of miners are now at risk. The prospect is even raised of NUM pickets being thrown in jail. But this resort to

the courts is an act of impotent desperation. MacGregor provoked the strike, no doubt after careful detailed discussions with Thatcher and his other Tory paymasters.

No doubt, they thought they had carefully picked their moment for attack. They probably imagined that if they moved quickly, with the help of the millionaire press, they would win a quick victory. They banked on the carrot of redundancy pay and hoped for divisions amongst the miners.

But they had not calculated on the iron determination of the workers—
Continued on page 15

Save the pits

● No closures, no redundancies.

● Defend union rights.

● Mobilise Triple Alliance.

● Full support for miners' strike.

Full reports
from the coalfields
—Page 15

Building Fund— We need your money!

THERE IS now a real chance of *Militant* buying new premises. So Lawson is not the only person to have a Budget this month.

But ours is far more important. It's not for the fat cats on the Stock Exchange. It's for building up YOUR paper.

The urgency of us

reaching our Building Fund target of £150,000 cannot be over-stated. We still need over £44,000 in the next few weeks (details p4).

Don't let Lawson get your money. Give it to a socialist alternative. Rush your donations now to the 'Marxist Daily Building Fund' at I Mentmore Terrace, London E8 3PN.

Book for BLOC now!

There is now just one week to go to the Broad Left Organising Committee (BLOC) conference in Sheffield on 24 March. The organisers inform *Militant* they have already been overwhelmed by the response.

The main hall has been filled already and all future applications will be accommodated in a smaller overflow hall seating 400. This meeting

will be addressed by the same leading labour movement speakers as the main meeting.

The Tories have been allowed to get away with murder in their attacks on jobs, living standards and union rights. Join other trade unionists in building a fighting trade union leadership to stop the Tories in their tracks. More details page 14.

Militant

Labour's budget reply... needs socialist policies

No-one seriously expected the Tory budget to address the problems facing working people and, predictably, it didn't.

There is no relief in sight for the mass of unemployed, or an end of the cuts and the hardships introduced by this government.

is explained in our feature article in the centre pages, the Tories are happily presiding over the greatest-ever decline in British manufacturing, pointing to even deeper economic crises in the future.

There is no better time, therefore, for the leadership of the Labour Party to explain the utter bankruptcy of capitalism and the need for thorough-going socialist policies. The Tories and their backers in the capitalist class have palpably forfeited any right or claim they ever had to the stewardship of the British economy.

Gravity of crisis

But unfortunately, the recent statements of the Labour leadership show that they have learned nothing from the past experiences of the labour movement, nor understood the gravity of the crisis of British capitalism.

On the one side the right wing are abandoning even the modest reforms promised during the last general election campaign. Thus Roy Hattersley countered Lawson's preparations for the Budget with his own "moderate" budget. In place of the massive boost in public expenditure promised in the last General Election, Hattersley has come forward with a "moderate" stimulus to the economy.

The right-wing have, in effect, accepted the arguments of capitalist economists about the utopian character of Keynesian methods in the present parlous economic situation. Marxists have pointed out many times that a programme of increased public expenditure should be an essential part of Labour's programme but on a capitalist basis this can only come from one of two sources.

If it comes from taxes on the working class it will cut the market and therefore aggravate the problems of the economy. If it comes from the wealth tax which Hattersley has resurrected this will mean that the capitalists will launch a 'strike of capital', leading to the closure of factories and cancelling out any beneficial measures of increased employment.

Even Neil Kinnock has noticeably abandoned the proposals of Michael Foot and Peter Shore in the last election campaign for reducing unemployment to below one million in five years. He has now said it will be very difficult to reduce this to below two million!

On the other hand, a section of the Left of the Labour Party has partially accepted the argument of Marxism about the impossibility of solving the problems of the economy within the framework of the national state. Thus, Stuart Holland has proposed a

cumulative staged reflation of all West European economies over a ten year period.

This is designed to lift growth progressively to around 6% a year by the end of the decade and create about 9 million jobs. Such a plan would be the very minimum that would be possible on the basis of a socialist planned economy on a continental European scale.

But what Stuart Holland and his supporters ignore is the entrenched national interests of each of the separate capitalist states, making such a proposal completely utopian. When the capitalist powers in the past have attempted such a combined 'locomotive reflation', as it was christened, it completely failed. The attitude of the weaker powers to the stronger powers was... "after you!"

Amongst the stronger powers such as America, West Germany and Japan the same attitude was adopted towards each other. Internationally, the capitalists have been horrified at the consequences of Keynesianism, ie. deficit financing. Therefore internationally the ruling classes have adopted a policy of deflation, ie. monetarism.

None of the right-wing Tory governments in power—in Britain, West Germany, Japan or America—would put at risk their own national economies for the benefit of some "supra-national" interest.

Stuart Holland counters this by saying that it should be the socialist governments of Spain, France, Greece and at a later stage Britain which would go first. But those three countries would have been chosen to pioneer such an expansion are, as the *Times* correctly said "puny in world economic terms and in deep financial trouble to boot, with rapid inflation and yawning external deficits".

World recession

When France attempted under the Mitterrand government a unilateral reflation in 1980, against the background of a world economic recession, this only compounded the problems. Even if these powers were to stage a combined deflation, what guarantee is there that the other major capitalist powers would follow suit?

Under Holland's proposal made last year, Italy and Britain would join the three countries dominated by socialist governments in 1985. That perspective is now ruled out for Britain with the return to power of the Thatcher government in June of last year.

West Germany, which has just elected a conservative government, did not come in to Holland's scheme until 1987 while the US and Japan appear only in 1989. These plans are completely utopian because during this period, apart from any other factor, the West will experience another recession which will probably be more prolonged

and deeper than the recession of 1979-81.

All these proposals seek an answer to the problems of British economy within the framework of capitalism. But the experience both of the Labour governments of the past and also the Tory government have shown there is no hope for the British economy and therefore no future for working people on the basis of capitalism.

Marxist wing

The only option viable is the socialist programme that has been mapped out by the Marxist wing of the Labour Party gathered around *Militant*.

Only a socialist plan of production, involving a 35 hour week without loss of pay, a £100 minimum wage and a massive boost to public expenditure can begin to solve the problems of the British economy. This can only be implemented by a socialist plan involving the nationalisation of the commanding heights of the economy—the 200 monopolies that control 80-85% of the economy—with minimum compensation on the basis of proven need.

It is true that nationalisation does not hold the same automatic attraction for the present generation of workers as in the immediate post war period. When the first Labour government set up the nationalised industries this was greeted enthusiastically because it represented a real alternative to the chaos which resulted from private ownership of the mines, steel, and so on.

But since then there has been 30 years of "state capitalism", ie. nationalised industries with bureaucratic, pro-capitalist boards of management like MacGregor's in the Coal industry.

Moreover, once an industry is nationalised a massive programme of "rationalisation" usually takes place, meaning thousands of redundancies, further discrediting the principle of nationalisation.

Therefore part of a socialist plan should include real workers' control and management, as sketched out many times in the pages of *Militant*. The budget provides the Labour movement with an opportunity to explain the incapacity of capitalism to solve the problems of the economy of working people and to outline the socialist alternative.

To the extent that workers are "fed-up" or sceptical about politics, it is the "old" politics they reject. Labour itself has lost support in recent years, not because it has moved left, but through the leadership's association with "old", discredited policies.

Change is what workers are looking for. Genuine socialist ideas, properly explained and campaigned on, would get a wide echo among workers. It is the responsibility of the Labour Party, rank and file and leaders, to conduct such a campaign.

Youth march against Thatcher



Over 15,000 students and youth joined the demonstration on March 10 called by the student's union to build support for their 'new deal'. There was a good turnout from LPYS branches and FE colleges. Photo: Sandra Fentiman

Army harass Irish socialists

MYSELF AND four other comrades were taken into custody for nearly two hours by British soldiers on Friday 9 March.

We had been driving to the Irish Labour Youth Conference in Dublin at the weekend when we stopped at the border checkpoint at Aghnacloy, County Tyrone. The driver was asked to open bags in the boot of the car. On finding copies of *Militant* a military policeman was called in.

The military policeman referred to the fact that five were from *Militant* and told other soldiers to take us away. Two passengers were put into the back of an ar-

my jeep. Another soldier got into a front passenger seat of the car. Two army jeeps with about ten armed soldiers then escorted the car to a nearby army barracks.

Full body search

When we arrived we were told to dump our possessions on the ground. Individually, each person was then subject to a full body search, including in and around the genitals and the anus.

Each person was individually interviewed by a soldier for the second time, and the contents of the car were searched. We were held for nearly two hours without

any explanation given. The only indication was the fact that a copy *Militant* was "discovered".

Working class people, socialists and labour movement activists constantly face this type of harassment. This single incident was nothing out of the ordinary, but it was just more blatant and more humiliating.

All the repressive apparatus of the state is used to harass and hinder known labour movement activists. The time is long overdue for the labour and trade union movement to come out in opposition to all repressive laws in Northern Ireland. Failure to act now will raise the danger of these same laws being used against the movement in Britain in the next few years.

By Manus Maguire

Labour clubs reinstated



ANGRY LABOUR students voice their protests at undemocratic practices in the National Organisation of Labour Students at a lobby of the 11 March meeting of the NOLS National Committee. The lobby complemented letters of protest, resolutions, etc, demanding the re-instatement of four disaffiliated Labour Clubs and the implementation of the NOLS Conference decision to allow NOLS NC members to see the conference correspondence and Labour Club cards. It proved the final straw for John Dennis, Labour Party Student Organiser, who stormed out of the meeting complaining of "pressure" and "intimidation". However, while the four clubs were re-instated, the "pressure" of protests from clubs and labour movement bodies must continue. Only by implementing the 1983 conference decision to "open the NOLS files" to all NC members can a democratic and representative NOLS conference be guaranteed.

Support Liverpool fightback

High rates are no answer

TORY MINISTER Patrick Jenkin has "praised the courage" of seven renegade Liverpool councillors who say they will not support Labour's council budget on March 29.

He has been joined in praising these 'rebels' by none other than the Labour Party leadership—environment spokesman Dr John Cunningham has also called the seven "brave and sensible".

But it isn't only on this that the Labour leadership and Patrick Jenkin agree. Dr Cunningham has suggested—as one of the options Liverpool could take—that the council could raise rates by 60%. Yet this is no different from the original proposal put by Patrick Jenkin!

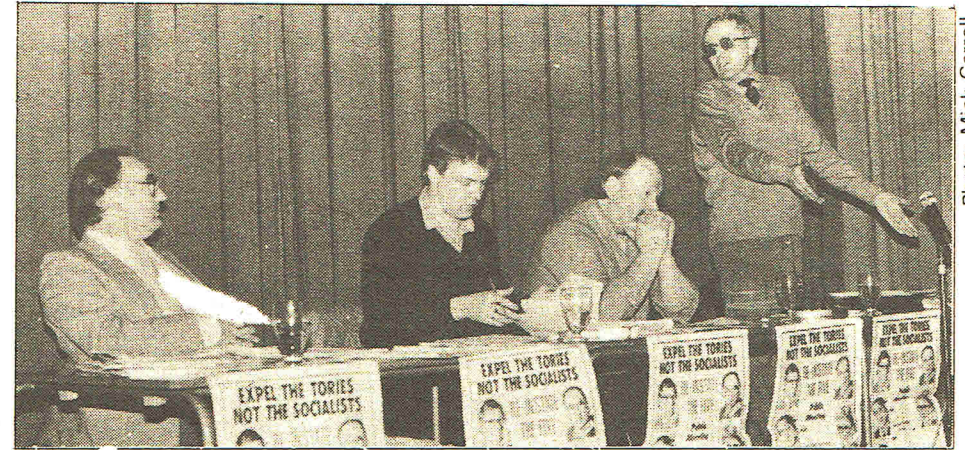
A rate rise of 60% is no real alternative. After this figure is moderated by the county council structure it would mean a 50% rate rise for householders and

tenants, and a 45% rate increase for local business.

For workers and their families it would mean a direct cut in their living standards in an area already impoverished by Tory policies. Liverpool already has the highest council rents of any city outside London.

Redundancies

And for local businesses it would mean redundancies. The *Liverpool Echo* (March 6) quoted the manager of the giant Lewis's store as saying: "Inevitably we would be forced to do the very thing the council is trying to avoid and shed labour." Similarly, a spokesman for the bulk storage firm United Molasses said: "A 45% rise



Platform of a *Militant* meeting in Southwark, South London in support of Liverpool City Council. Left to right: Peter Taaffe (Editor, *Militant*), Paul Astbury (Liverpool councillor), Brian Kelly (Southwark councillor) and Terry Fields MP.

Photo: Mick Carroll

would just about wipe out all our profits in Liverpool. It will cost jobs, it is as simple as that."

It is ironic that one of the 'rebel' seven, Bill Snell, is a full time official for the shop workers union, USDAW. Besides the jobs that would be lost in the council abattoire as part of the 2-3,000 redundancies that would follow the 60% option, many other USDAW members would lose their jobs as Liverpool's stores faced massive rate rises.

These are the facts of life

for Liverpool. Yet Dr Cunningham has lectured the Liverpool Councillors that their 'no cuts' stand is "the worst course of action as far as jobs are concerned (!) and so far as the future of Labour control of the city is concerned." The facts tell otherwise. What's more, if the 60% option was taken it would mean electoral suicide for Labour in Liverpool. How can Labour build support while pushing through mass redundancies and cutting living standards? Indeed, Labour lost its minority con-

trol of the council back in 1979 following its decision to push through a 50% rate increase!

Clear support

While these points unfortunately seem lost on Dr Cunningham they are clear to the ranks of the Liverpool movement and the rest of the country, who are giving their support for the council's stand against the Tory assault on local services.

By Richard Venton

Out of order

THE TORY press has recently been stirring it up again. They have hinted that Merseyside's five Labour MPs are wavering in their support for Liverpool Council. This is untrue. On Tuesday night the five of us—myself, Eric Heffer, Eddie Loyden, Bob Wareing and Bob Parry—met the Labour Party leadership for discussions. All of us were absolutely firm in our support for the council.

At the meeting Mr Kinnock also denied press reports that he had urged Liverpool to adopt the "60% option", but that this was just one of the options looked at.

The Liverpool councillors were criticised by the leadership for their comments over the 'rebel seven', but it was pointed out that these rebels were the ones who had defected from the democratic decisions of the local labour movement, and the way was still open to them to see the error of their ways. If they maintained their position, I pointed out that they would be looked upon in a dim light by the local movement.

There was also the question of the councillors 'breaking the law', but Eric Heffer pointed out that the councillors in Poplar in the 1920s broke the law and in doing so won the support necessary to change the law. Mr Kinnock was also reminded that on GCHO, for example, the Labour leadership agreed with breaking the law on that issue.

By Terry Fields MP

THIS WAS the first budget I had witnessed in Parliament and it just showed where Tory priorities lie. Every time a bonus for the bosses was announced, such as the scrapping of the National Insurance Surcharge, looks of sheer delight spread across the faces on the Tory benches.

This was a budget for the City of London and does nothing for working people and the four million on the dole. The so-called £2 increase means nothing—a couple only have to go to the fish and chip shop on Saturday night and bang goes the increase.

By Dave Nellist MP

Anger over 'rebel seven'

FOLLOWING THE announcement in the Tory press that seven Labour councillors would not support the Labour group's budget on March 29—losing Labour its majority in the council chamber, the District Labour Party Chairman Tony Mulhearn spoke to *Militant*:

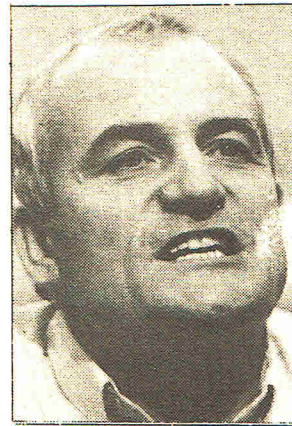
Outraged

"The rank and file of the party have been angered and outraged at the gang of seven's decision to make their statement through the media before coming to their colleagues. When the council issue has been put to the test at Labour Party meetings, support has been unanimous. The action taken by the seven is totally against the democratic processes."

Tony Mulhearn said that the seven have had ample opportunity to discuss their opposition to the plan with the party since the May elections, but have never taken it. He added: "If the seven carry out their threat they will be supporting attacks on working peoples' living standards and will not be forgiven by the labour and trade union movement."

Retraction demand

Gillmoor Labour Party, which embraces the wards of 'rebel' Councillors Roderick, Murphy and Snell, have already disassociated the Party from the actions of these councillors, and is calling for them to make an immediate retraction. Tony Mulhearn said that attempts would be made to persuade



Tony Mulhearn.

the rebels to agree to the Party proposals, explaining that if they did not all facilities to them would be withdrawn.

Mass stoppage

"We are confident of the support of the people of Liverpool for our stand and we believe that the intentions of the seven makes the massive stoppage and demonstration called for March 29 all the more essential."

Council campaign for support gains momentum

THE unprecedented campaign amongst the Liverpool labour movement to build support for the council and the 'Budget Day' strike on March 29 is gaining momentum.

At the Liverpool District Labour Party meeting on Monday night, convened at three days notice, 400 party members attended. The rebel seven who were invited to defend their actions did not turn up.

Union support

It was reported that trade union support for the strike was growing. Nearly 5,000 GMBATU local authority members have now voted in favour, with only 10 against. NALGO were 8 to one in favour of strike action, and on Sunday night 100 TGWU lorry drivers voted to come

out on March 29, with only a handful against.

In a move effectively reversing their previous decision the NUPE district committee in Liverpool has voted to strike on 29th.

The Tories and Liberals have attacked the Labour group for 'not consulting' the public over the budget (a demand incredibly repeated by the so-called 'Communist' Party!) but as deputy leader Derek Hatton pointed out to the DLP meeting, there has been a widespread campaign to explain the council's policies: 18 public meetings had been held attracting 3,000 local people, 900 local authority shop stewards had discussed the plans and there had been wide discussion in the local press.

On Tuesday night there was a meeting of Council

Action, a delegate body with representatives from local community and tenants groups and workplaces—there were 53 delegations present from local factories alone.

Knowsley strike

Knowsley council NALGO in Liverpool will be going on strike with support of the Knowsley Labour leader.

This Friday there will be another meeting of all local authority shop stewards for an update on the campaign and on 19 March, representatives from the DLP and the council's Joint Shop Stewards Committee will meet Neil Kinnock and the Labour leadership for discussions.

Labour's ranks take up fight

LIVERPOOL'S determination is receiving widespread sympathy and support amongst the ranks of the labour movement.

The Campaign Group of Labour MPs are to send a delegation to Liverpool to express their support for the council and its fight against Tory attacks on public expenditure.

Liverpool has been a central issue at many regional Labour Party conferences. At the Scottish conference, there was dismay that a resolution supporting the 'Liverpool option' (now supported by Glasgow District Labour Party) was not called, even though the debate on local government strategy ended 15 minutes early. However, during the debate many delegates echoed the words of Labour Party chairman Eric Heffer that Liverpool was taking a "realistic stand."

The discussion was continued at a *Militant* Readers Meeting where 150 attended. In summing up the meeting, the chairman said: "Neil Kinnock said at last year's national conference that Labour has to say what it means and means what it says. That is what we are doing in Liverpool."

North West

At the North West conference, two notable speakers opposed Liverpool's stand; Jack Straw, MP for Blackburn who has supported a local witch-hunt against *Militant* supporters, and Bill Snell one of the 'rebel' councillors. This did not go down well. Speaker after speaker from Merseyside answered them, giving graphic illustrations of the impossibility of cutting one penny more in Liverpool, and that the only alternative was to fight, not next year or any other time in the future, but now. Many local Labour Parties are backing Liverpool.

Manchester District Labour Party, Leicester West CLP and Blackpool North CLP are among the many Labour Parties that support the Liverpool council.



Derek Hatton.

Trade Union branches too are taking up Liverpool's fight. On March 9, the Brighton NUR joint branch agreed to send a delegation of eight railmen to meet the council. Train guard Dick Robson summed up the attitude of many trade unionists when he said: "We felt it was bloody marvellous that at long last we had a Labour council that is actually doing the job it was elected to do—create jobs, keep rates and rents down and get involved with the trade unions and people of Liverpool."

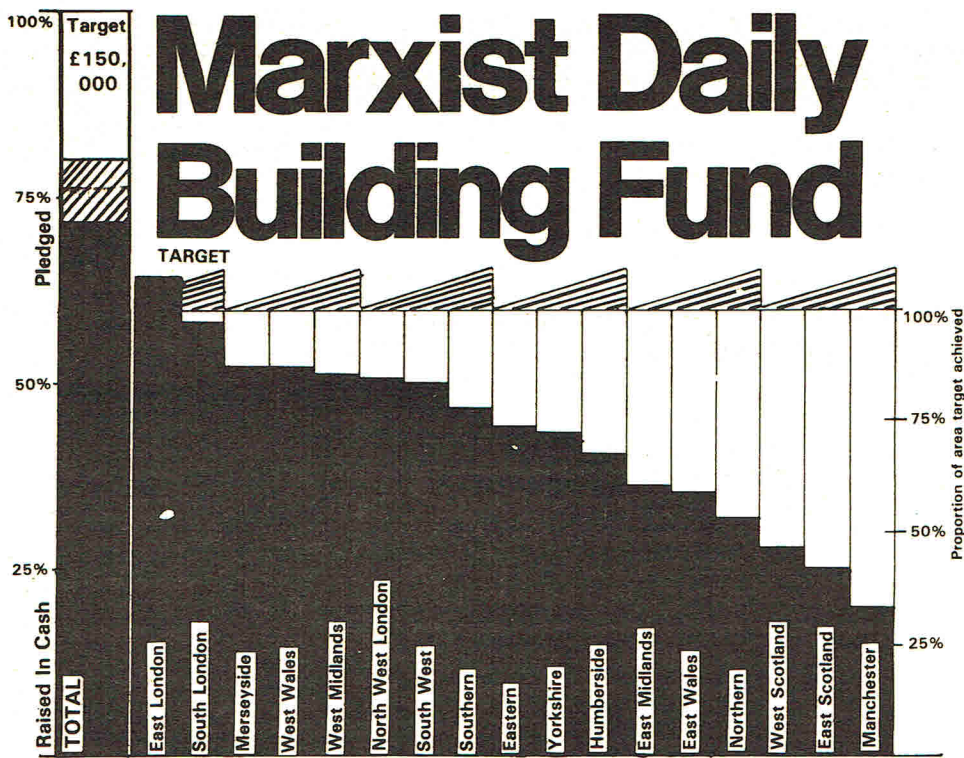
Support is also growing nationally in the local authority union NALGO. It is holding a special local government conference in London on March 20. Delegates plan to put a resolution in support of Liverpool.

To prepare for this discussion, the NALGO Broad Left are holding a pre-conference meeting on the Liverpool issue with top labour speakers (see below).

NALGO Broad Left Meeting on Liverpool's fight Speakers:

Dennis Skinner MP and Derek Hatton (Deputy Leader, Liverpool City Council)

Monday 19 March, 8.30 pm at the Camden Town Hall, Euston Road (opp. Euston Station)



Little time left for last big sacrifices.

THERE IS now a great prospect of us buying new premises within a very short space of time. If the money keeps coming in we should be able to borrow the necessary extra from the bank.

However, it is essential for the borrowing requirements that we raise the full £150,000 within the next few weeks. There is only a limited time to raise the money. No reader who sees the importance of a daily Marxist paper should allow us to miss the opportunity of getting these premises. If we have to forego these, then it could be a long time before we are presented with a similar bargain.

We raised £3,667 in the last week to bring our total to £105,831. This means there is still £44,167 to raise. Those areas at the bottom of the table have some catching up to do. But the quality of

the sacrifice by ordinary workers to our campaign is outstanding. Nobody could doubt for one minute the enthusiasm that exists for a daily paper putting forward the ideas of Marxism.

It was the turn of Comrades in North East London to show their determination when at a meeting over the weekend they raised a further £459, including £20 from an unemployed disabled supporter, Colin Foreman.

In Newcastle a fantastic £700 was collected from forty people. West Scotland have sent down £350. J Carey from East Wales donated £250 and Jack Armstrong, a pensioner in Poole CLP, gave £20. Poole LPYS showed their support for Marxist ideas by giving £50. Has your YS branch contributed to the fund yet? Workers at Scotts Bakery

on Merseyside have donated £20 showing the support of the rank and file activists involved in struggle at the moment. Merseyside in general is still sending the money with £659 in since last week.

Manchester have been slow off the mark but have sent in £243 of which £100 was from A Boardman. They still have a long way to go, however, if we are to get these premises.

If you haven't yet sent in your donation and support our campaign for a daily Marxist paper then don't wait any longer. Delay could mean us missing these premises altogether. We are confident though that the money will come in time because all our supporters see the necessity of the campaign being a success.

By Nick Wrack

ADS

CLASSIFIED: 10p per word, minimum 10 words.
SEMI-DISPLAY: £2 per 2 column centimetres.
All advertisement copy should reach this office by SATURDAY.

MEETINGS

For events in your area contact your local Militant seller.

"Militant Turn left for workers unity and socialism"

T-shirts—£3.50—white, yellow, navy black.
Sweatshirts—£6.75—grey, pale-blue, navy, dark green.

Small 32"-34" chest
medium 34"-36"
large 36"-38"
extra large 40-42"
All proceeds to Militant Fighting Fund. All cheques and postal orders with size and colour preference to R. Harris, 2 Dukes Brow, Blackburn, Lancs.

TOWER HAMLETS: "Defend Liverpool Council! Fight Against Council Cuts!" Speakers: Terry Fields MP (Liverpool Broadgreen) & Chris Rackley (Tower Hamlets Councillor) at Bethnal Green Town Hall, Patriot Square (off Cambridge Heath Road), London E2 on Tuesday 20 March, 7.30 pm.

THANET: Militant Readers' Meetings are held on alternate Monday evenings. For further details phone (0843) 291293.

TYNESIDE: Speakers: Peter Taaffe (Editor of Militant), and Malcolm Graham (AUEW Conventor, personal capacity). Sunday 18 March, 7.30pm at Friends' Meeting House, Archibald Terrace (nr Jesmond Metro), Newcastle.

HOUGHTON-LE-SPRING: Marxist discussion group-held every Monday, 7.30pm. Programme for March and April includes: What is Marxism; Is Russia Socialist?; Parliamentary road to socialism—is it possible?; Role of the state; The Marxist view towards terrorism and violence. For further details ring (0783) 653994.

COMPLETE SET of Agatha Christie novels in paperback (71 books) + two novels written as M Westmachott and her autobiography for sale. All proceeds to Building Fund. Offers to Box 27, 1 Mentmore Terrace, London E8 3PN.

ZX81 and 16K RAM for sale: £40 (money for Building Fund). Contact: Tony Nicholls, 3 Craven Street, Melton Mowbray, Leicestershire.

UNFAIR WELFARE IS NO FUNFAIR: CPAG fringe meeting at East Midlands Regional Labour Party conference. Speakers: Austin Mitchell MP, Cllr V Bell, Mel Read (ASTMS), Chaired by Peter Golding (Leicester CPAG). 17 March, at Manhattan Room, Parade Hotel, Skegness (opposite Embassy Centre) at 1pm.

MAIDSTONE YOUTH Training Scheme meeting. Speakers: Andy Bevan (Labour Party National Youth Officer) and Paul R Ursell (Maidstone YTURC). Tuesday 20 March, 7.30pm at Shepway Sausage Hut, Maidstone.

BRACKNELL: "The way forward for women—positive discrimination or class action?" Speaker: Val Pearce. Monday 26 March, 8pm at Easthampstead Community Centre, Rectory Lane, Bracknell.

SHEFFIELD: Speakers: Dave Nellist MP; Lynn Walsh (Militant Editorial Board, expelled from Labour Party) on 2nd April at 7.30 pm. Venue to be announced.

HARTLEPOOL: Marxist discussion groups. Held weekly. Ring Malcolm Fallow, Peterlee 867789.

ISLE OF WIGHT: "No to council cuts. Save jobs, save services". Speaker: Nick Brooks (Southampton Labour Party, personal capacity). Monday 19 March at 7.30pm at Cowes Labour Club, 26 Newport Road, West Coast, IOW.

BIRMINGHAM: "Support Liverpool Council". Speakers: Paul Astbury (Liverpool City Councillor) and Les Millard (Dudley Councillor). Tuesday 27 March, 7.30pm at Dr Johnson House, Bull Street, Birmingham.

MAY DAY GREETINGS: get your labour movement organisation to place a greeting in the May Day issue of Militant:

3 column cms (up to 15 words) £5, 6 column cm (up to 25 words) £8, one-sixteenth page £13, one-eighth page £25, one-quarter page £50. Deadline for copy, April 18.

MILITANT STICKERS. Still available. 200 for £2.30; 500 for £5.60; 1,000 for £11.00. Contact: Militant Circulation, 1 Mentmore Terrace, London E8 3PN.

ALMOST COMPLETE file of Militant 1975-1983 must be disposed of. Offers? All proceeds to the Fighting Fund. Contact Julie, Coventry 418141.

SRI LANKA: The tasks today. New pamphlet from the Nava Samaja Party (UK Branch). Obtainable from World Socialist Books (see address below). Price 75p plus 10p postage.

Cassette tapes with two issues of Militant (one each side). Available fortnightly. £3.50 per quarter, £13 for year. Write to: Militant Tapes, 26 Aston Terrace, Harehills, Leeds 8, or phone (0532) 493440.

This week:

£2,356

Area	Received	% of target achieved	Target 7 April
Eastern	846		2500
East Midlands	771		2900
Humberside	454		1500
London East	1307		3250
London West	476		2050
London South	878		2650
Manchester & Lancs	661		3520
Merseyside	1078		4000
Northern	841		3350
Scotland East	421		2150
Scotland West	635		3000
Southern	1487		4300
South West	416		2000
Wales East	661		1880
Wales West	617		1650
West Midlands	765		3500
Yorkshire	1302		4100
Others	1145		2000
Total received	14760		50,000

Keep the cash flowing in!

THIS WEEK'S contributions include: London Labour Party Conference Militant Readers Meeting collected a total of £125, P Campbell Leeds £50, Watford Disco £40, Washington social £30, Jackie Eaves (housewife), Macclesfield £15, Ernie Watt CPSA Edinburgh £10, Steve Draper unemployed Grimsby £6.

Miss A Wilson Halifax £5, John Fotheringham and Sean Klisser, both from Stirling, £5 each, Nina Westlake Bristol has promised

£5 a month, Dave Corde, Little Hutton SOGAT, £3.80.

Chris Poole, unemployed, Milton Keynes £3, Dave Cooper Vauxhall £2.50, Jim Hayes, Hayes CLP £2, B. Shepperson NALGO Nottingham £1, J Halford ASTMS Nottingham £1, Mick Parkes Twells CLP Kent £1, Gary Peck Grimsby GMBATU £1, and Mrs Benn, Chesterfield (!) 50p.

Many Labour Party Young Socialist have donated to the paper that is

at the forefront of many LPYS campaigns. London LPYS Conference Public Meeting total collected £156, and Yorkshire Regional LPYS Conference Public Meeting £88 after expenses.

Springburn LPYS, Glasgow £8, Broadgreen LPYS, Merseyside £6.40, Newcastle LPYS £3, Worley LPYS, Bolton, £2.60, Tynemouth and Benton LPYS's £1.28, and Hull West LPYS 72p.

By Kath White



Part of the audience at Southwark Readers' meeting.

Photo: Mick Carroll.

Southwark support for Liverpool

OVER TWO hundred people gathered in Peckham, South London on 6 March for a Militant Readers' Meeting called to support Liverpool City Council.

The excellent turn-out, including over 30 Southwark Council shop stewards, heard Terry Fields, Labour MP for Liverpool Broadgreen, Paul Astbury, Liverpool City Labour councillor and Peter Taaffe, Editor of Militant.

All three speakers got a warm reception. Paul

Astbury, in a moving contribution, outlined Liverpool's case and the tremendous support the council's policies and campaign are receiving. He said if it meant being labelled as a criminal on budget day, and facing fines and bankruptcy, "I and other councillors will hold our heads high, and refuse to carry out Maggie's dirty work".

Three Southwark councillors pledged their support from the floor. Hazel Flynn, a NALGO shop steward,

pointed out that the fight against cuts has to come from "both sides of the counter"—council workers and tenants must work together.

After the meeting a worker pledged to Paul: "If they take your home, you can come and live in mine. If they take your car, you can have mine." This mood of sympathy and support was shown in the fighting fund collection which raised an excellent £450.

By Theresa Wrack

Exploitation

Low pay in the sweatshop

‘We work from nine in the morning till six at night, solid, all day long. The machine fills one sack every 30 seconds—there’s two of us to a machine and we hump the sacks into a warehouse. We don’t get breaks, not even dinner.

For lunch, the foreman goes to the chip shop and brings us back pie and chips, which we eat on the job. If a lorry comes in that has to be unloaded, the chips go in the oven, until the unloading’s done. By the time we get to eat them they’re hard and dry.

I get £60 a week but that’s with a ‘bonus’. Last week I couldn’t stand any more so I clocked out an hour early—the boss stopped my bonus, £10 in all. Apparently we can get an extra bonus if we bag over 50 tons of the stuff in a week, but I’ve never known anyone do that.

The worst thing is the health and safety aspect; that is to say there isn’t any. The roof has exposed asbestos. But what gets us is the dust from the mix. It gets everywhere. The machine sucks out the dust from the seed mix as it goes into the sack, but blows it out into your face as you stand over it. That’s typical of the boss’s attitude—musn’t get any dust in the sack but if it goes all over you that doesn’t matter.

Recently we had a container of mix arrive in loose form. The boss sent a lad into the container to shovel it out to us. All

he gave him was a pathetic surgical mask. Within a few minutes it was black with dust, so it shows how much we are breathing in.

There are two workshops—six of us in one, and one kid on his own in the other. If he had an accident he could be in there six hours before anyone found him.

Fire regulations are a joke. The fire extinguishers haven’t been touched for ages, they’re covered in dust—on one of them the seeds have actually germinated!

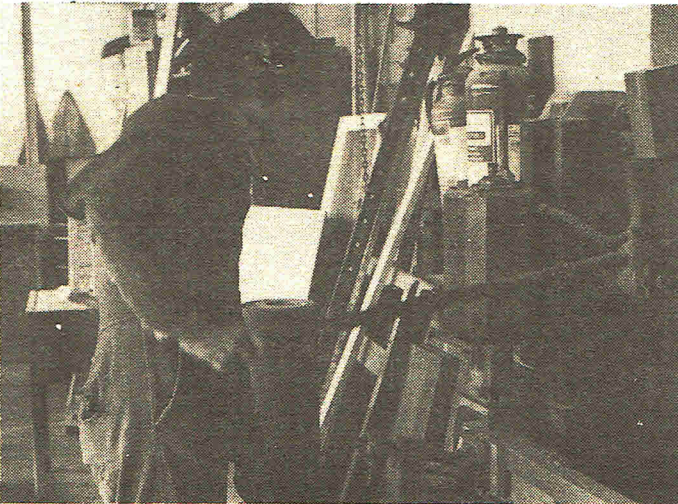
Of course, if you complain, you’re out. ‘If you don’t like it you can go’, is all we hear. We don’t have a union of course and we don’t know our rights. The boss takes 16-year old kids straight from school—how are they meant to know about rights at work? Even if you point out the law, the boss is the one with the money—he

SIGNIFICANTLY, the Tories have chosen April Fools Day to introduce the new Young Workers Scheme. Like YTS, this new scheme will be yet another device to drive down young workers’ wages.

The bosses are having a field day. Because of mass youth unemployment, more and more young workers are being forced to accept low pay and dangerous conditions in a growing number of sweatshops. Below, a member of Newham North East LPYS describes the conditions he faces at work. He works filling sacks with birdseed mix in one of the many ‘factories’ housed under ageing Victorian railway arches, common to East London.

can bring in lawyers and such like, who turn round with nice little words and phrases; that’s typical of the Tories. But if you have a union they can bring in people to answer them.

I’ve learnt a lot about rights at work since I joined the LPYS. But that makes it worse. You read up on ‘hours at work’ etc but you know you can’t do anything about it without a union. I’m hoping to join the TGWU and two or three others are interested. But to be honest I think I can only take another two months of this. Then the boss can go, stick it.



Life in the sweatshop—low pay, bad conditions and a blatant disregard of the Health and Safety at Work act.

Labour Party Young Socialists Conference '84

22nd annual national conference
at Spa Royal Hall, Bridlington Easter weekend, April 20-23.

Debates include YTS, drug abuse, unemployment, racism and nuclear disarmament. Speakers include: Tom Sawyer (NUPE Asst. Gen. Sec.), Dave Nellist MP, and top labour movement figures. Entertainment includes discos, live band, plays and the feature film *Reds*.
Visitors tickets: £6

Details from LPYS, 150 Walworth Road, London SE17 1JT

WHY I'M GOING TO CONFERENCE

NUPE MEMBER Mark Seales, of Bermondsey LPYS in South London, explains why he joined the Young Socialist and why he will be going to the national conference:

I've always been Labour, but it's only recently that I've got active. I just came to realise that there's no future under the Tories. When I met the Young Socialists I could understand what they were getting at—they were working class, not stuck up or trendies, which is what a lot of people think political people are like.

I used to be a road sweeper, now I'm in the Housing Office. We were all out on strike to support the GCHQ day of action—we were out all day. Last week I stuck up *Militant* and *Socialist Youth* on our notice board at work. All my mates were asking about them and

I sold 5 *Militants* and 7 *Socialist Youth* in half an hour.

We were out selling papers at the Elephant and Castle, and the National Front turned up. We were united, shouting and standing in front of them. They didn't sell one paper and bottled out. I go to Millwall football and people think a lot of fans are NF. But they've got very little support—we've got to get rid of them.

I'm going to write down the truth about Millwall and how right-wing organisations have tried to get in there—don't believe all you read in the *Sun* and other papers.

Something that's been building up inside me is coming out bit by bit—I'm learning something new every day. You get a real feeling of working as a team, not just a bunch of individuals.

Five years training gets £40 a week

YOUNG WOMEN are one of the lowest paid sections of the working class. Margaret, a young mother of 24, left hairdressing last year to start a family. When she left she was taking home £40 as a manageress:

I started as a junior working on Saturdays for £3 a day. I started working full-time on £15 per week which rose to £19 at the end of three years.

£5 to spend

I can always remember that after paying £5 in dig money then £5 for bus fares, I was left with £5. From this I had to buy all my equipment and overalls. If there was any left I saved up to buy clothes or go out at the weekend.

During the three years I had day-release at college to sit my City and Guilds exams, but after that I still had another two



LPYS campaign for 35hr week.

years' training in the shop to do as an 'improver', and my wages went up to £25.

After five years I was a qualified hairdresser and I was paid £40 a week.

There was no union. If anyone had any queries about their wages we had to phone the

Wages' Board because there are minimum rates of pay. Insurance men came to the shop regularly to sell us insurance against accidents at work—burning our hands with chemicals etc.

I think that hairdressers should be encouraged to join a union to fight for better conditions and wages. We should be supplied with overalls and equipment. Every two years hairdressers are supposed to have chest X-rays because of the fumes from the chemicals that we come into contact with, but few take the time to do this.

Minimum wage

I think that X-ray units should visit workplaces in the same way that blood transfusion units visit factories.

I agree with the LPYS campaign for a 35-hour week and I think that a £100 minimum wage is a more realistic figure than the wage minimums currently used by the Wages Board.

By Pauline Dick
(Midlothian)

YWS drives down wages

THE YOUNG Workers Scheme, to be introduced on April 1, hammers the Tory lie that government schemes have anything to do with providing jobs and opportunities for youth.

The YWS will give bosses subsidies of £15 a week for every wage of a young worker they keep below £50 week. At the same time they will change the law so that only 16 year olds can go on YTS.

The Tories envisage school leavers going onto YTS, then 'graduating' to YWS and then—they hope—to full time work, in a job where wage levels have been driven down, the 'pay norms' being set by YTS and YWS.

Yet the pilot YWS scheme proved that it will not create any jobs. Last year a study by the University of Sussex estimated that 90% of YWS

recruits would have been taken on by firms in any case, and that over 6,000 'real' jobs were lost, jetisoned by the bosses to take advantage of YWS handouts.

In the pilot scheme the bosses received £15 for wages kept under £42 a week, and £7.50 for paying between £42-47 a week. From April 1, it will be the standard £15 a week handout for wages at £50 or below—so the bosses are hardly likely to raise them above the current £42 a week.

Already YTS has taken its toll on youth wages. The average weekly wage for under 18s is currently £61.70. The Tories hope that YWS will drive this miserly figure down even further.

By Nick Toms
(LPYS National Committee)

us?

about

what

Surviving the Tories

Getting through the benefits maze

TO PUT pen to paper in anger may not produce a coherent story but I hope you will be able to get the thread of this encounter I had with the DHSS.

Our gas cooker, 25 years old, finally packed up on us—leaving only two of the four burners working and the oven working at 50% of its normal capacity. With two young children both under three the cooker as everybody knows is one of the vital pieces of equipment in any household.

Claimants' Union

A dilemma faced us; how to get it repaired or how could we get another. It goes without saying we did not have any cash. So I went to see the Claimants' Union, who told me that I was entitled to have it repaired or

By Roy Davies
(EETPU,
personal capacity)

a sum of money would be provided for us to purchase a second-hand one.

We were delighted; it was as if we had come up on the coupon. Such a problem as this would not have caused a discussion three or four years ago, when I was a well-paid electrician and my wife was also working.

I sent my letter off to the DHSS. We received a prompt reply telling us that we should get an estimate of repairs from the Gas Board. Immediately I got onto the

Gas Board only to find they would come, but would have to charge. Knowing the cost of gas maintenance my heart sank.

Bury pride

Never mind I thought. The DHSS would understand if I did not have the money for the cooker; then I would not have £7 to get the Gas Board called out. This may seem petty, going to the DHSS to see if they would pay for the estimate, but these days when you are in debt all over the place—you have to bury your pride and ask. The reply was, in effect, "tough, we don't pay for estimates".

With that I rang back the Gas Board and spoke to a

friendly clerk who sympathised and thought it was ridiculous because she knew of cases where they paid the estimates. Then she told me to try the Social Services. This I did. I explained my predicament and told the clerk if nothing could be done I would like a 'covering letter off the social services', stating that they knew of my situation and in the event of an accident with the gas cooker, I could fall back on the letter.

Pursue needs

He said he would do this and he would also ring the DHSS. Anyway to cut a long story short, that same afternoon the DHSS agreed to make a payment to me in



Photomontage by Peter Kennard.

two days of £70 for a second-hand gas cooker.

Is it any wonder that there are so many millions of pounds unclaimed each year. What would have been the case if I did not have the help of the local claimants' union, a sympathetic gas clerk and the social services?

I would advise everybody to pursue their needs to the end, using such excellent

organisations as the Claimants' Union and the Social Services. Workers should join the Claimants' Union and the Labour party and exploit ways of getting their just deserves from the Tory-governed DHSS just as Thatcher exploits the working class to prop up this rotten system.

So I took Tebbit's advice

Recently I decided to take Norman Tebbit's advice and 'get on my bike' to look for work. So I applied for a job at a small engineering firm in Somerset.

After a month or so of waiting, I'd almost given up hope—like so many other jobs I'd applied for. Then they rang me to come down for an interview. I finally got there after being sent to the wrong station.

At the interview I was told that overtime rates weren't paid, as this would put prices up and make the firm uncompetitive, and any overtime worked would be paid at the normal rate. I found out later he was also anti-union.

The first couple of days or so weren't too bad. But it was soon becoming clear to me that the lack of equipment was worse than I first thought. It took me time to find the right size milling cutters for the job I was doing.

Times given to do the various jobs were ridiculous. One job to spray, fit and pack stoves, should have taken half a day, it was quoted as taking just 45 minutes. A YTS trainee was lucky to escape with just cuts on her fingers when a drill twisted and broke.

After a couple of weeks I couldn't take any more. I gave a weeks notice; this was turned down and I was sacked with two days notice. Having seen the foreman and a secretary go down the road, I was hardly surprised.

With employers like this it's all the more important that everyone joins the fight for socialism, not only to eliminate rogue employers, but also so people like myself don't have to uproot ourselves away from our family and friends just to get work.

By Kevin Taylor
(Blackpool AUEW)

Dampness caused by heavy breathing?

Dampness in the house for many council tenants is just another one of the inconveniences of life. The solutions offered range from the absurd to the ridiculous!

"Open your window and turn your heating up...the problem is the washing machine...too much heavy breathing."

As someone once put it, one person's dampness is a housing officer's condensation situation.

Tenants' desert

The seriousness of the problem in Scotland has even forced the Tories into carrying out a door to door survey of 7,500 homes. The Tory environment minister reckons that approximately 160,000 homes in Scotland are affected by "condensation".

In Glasgow some of the most serious of the dampness cases are in the old area of the Gorbals now called Hutchesontown. The "Hutchie 'E' scheme consists of 12 blocks of seven storey,

By David Churchley
(Glasgow District LP,
personal capacity)

low rise, deck access type, and two 24-storey high rise blocks. A planners' dream and a tenants' nightmare.

Ten years of dampness has cost more in suffering than can be calculated in this article. Suffice to say that with relentless campaigning and struggle many have escaped the misery, with only the high rise blocks left occupied. The rest of the scheme lies empty, as a monument to the boom years of the British economy.

Budget attacks

Glasgow council faced with further attacks on its budget now has a difficult

choice before it—do nothing, demolition or sell the property and land.

To do nothing would cost the council £250,000 a year in security and a loss in an already overstretched budget.

To sell it and buy back refurbished houses for council use and allow the majority to be sold privately would cost about £7 million. This option is the one that the Tory ministers fancy the most. It fits in with their privatisation plans.

Casino economy

To demolish would cost £2 million. The same as eight years security costs. But to demolish would also mean to overspend, to run the risk of seeing other housing problems jeopardised and to upset the Tory plans for profits. To demolish would mean £235,000 a year for the next 60 years out of budget.

The people of Glasgow have paid for the intolerable

standard of housing for more than this already. The reality of today's casino economy cannot evaluate the cost to personal health.

For every £9 paid in rent to the council £11 is paid out in debt and interest charges to the banks and insurance company's. The crushing necessity to highlight the Tory control over the council's budgets and the parasitical role played by the tops in our society are no longer the demands of only a group of marxists in the district Labour Party. They are the experiences of those who have lived in the "Hutchie 'E' schemes" up and down Britain.

The media may have given the appearance that the Gorbals of yesteryear were gone forever but the reality is that things will never get any better than they are now, the dampness monster and others are with us now until the system that has created them is disposed with.

LEFT and RIGHT

Democracy in the Building Societies

Next Friday the Board of the Nationwide Building Society are supporting a resolution to raise the salaries of the eleven part-time directors from a total of £84,000 to £130,000. However they are opposing any moves towards democracy.

The resolutions from ordinary members they are opposing include demands for: informing new members of the existence and address of the Building Societies Members' Association; disapproval of heavy expenditure for an entirely social trip to Australia by wives of directors; a fair election of directors; discussion with the Electoral Reform Society about improving present practices and procedures.

Cinema censorship

New information has just surfaced about the extent of political censorship of films during the 1930's. Fifty years ago the cinema had become the most popular entertainment and the authorities were desperate to ensure that no dangerous ideas were allowed. British films were not allowed to show strikes, labour movement demonstrations, street riots; anything that showed any figure in authority, policeman, politician, businessman in any disrespectful manner was cut.

The political bias was clear. Films were not allowed to criticise Fascist Germany or make any reference to anti-Semitism. One Gaumont film got round this censorship by making a historical film on eighteenth-century Germany and getting a character to say that Jews had: "always faced anti-Semitism; it was true in 1730, it had been true in 1630; it would probably be true in 1830 and it would be the same in 1930."

Even the classic film, *Love on the Dole* about the great depression was not allowed to be shown until 1940. Then, in a period of war-time full employment, it was portrayed as representing some dark, bygone age of British history.

A Police enquiry

Seven and a half years ago an elderly black couple, Mr. and Mrs. White, were brutally beaten up by Hackney police when seventeen policemen invaded their house without a warrant. The police tried to cover up their action by accusing 62 year old Mr. White of assault. The charge was thrown out of court.

And two years ago, after a lengthy delay, the High Court awarded Mr and Mrs White a record £51,000 damages against the police. The judge declared the police's actions were "monstrous and wicked" and accused the police of trying to cover up their "inhuman" assault.

Afterwards local police chiefs promised there would be a full enquiry. Last week they announced the results of that enquiry. Thirteen officers were cleared without a hearing. Four were brought before a disciplinary panel. Three were cleared. And one was fined for "using unnecessary violence"; he remained in the police force.

And Scotland Yard have now sent a letter to the White family offering a "sincere apology" for the whole incident.

(Thanks to Christina Huxtable)

Most top companies don't pay tax

The Budget '84



While tax rates for the majority of working people have risen sharply, the tax that big business pays has actually fallen. January's issue of Labour Research reported that only about 40% of companies pay corporation tax.

In 1979 the Inland Revenue assessed 535,000 companies, but only 230,000 paid tax. In 1981-82 only 6 of the biggest 20 paid any tax at all, and the total tax paid amounted to little more than 1/4% of profits.

It is not because these companies are unprofitable as Table 1 shows. It is because companies are allowed massive reliefs on any investment they make. They are also allowed reliefs on the effect of inflation on the value of their stocks (stock appreciation).

By Alan Turner
(East Leeds CLP)

or pay very little. Government figures estimate that total tax losses due to this system up to 1982 are an incredible £30,000 million and this is increasing by roughly £5,000 million per year.

But even this is not the whole story. Since most gains are made from allowances for capital spending, industrial firms add to existing reliefs if they buy new equipment. Banks for instance spend little on capital investment and so miss out on these allowances.

But the banks have managed to get round this by buying up and then leasing out capital equipment. In this way they get allowances they would not normally qualify for and lease them out to industrial companies, who don't need to add to their tax losses by further direct investment. The end result is the banks end up paying less tax on their huge profits.

For example in 1977 the big four clearing banks paid 38.2% of taxable profits; in 1982 it had fallen to 21.8%.

So this Budget Day don't be taken in by the cry of poverty coming from the CBI spokesman. Our slogan should be—nationalise don't subsidise.

Tax relief for companies, 1982/83.

	£ (m)
Capital allowances	5,330
Stock relief	1,690
Double taxation relief	2,400
Other	240
Total	9,660

Source: Government Expenditure Plans, Vol II, Cmns 8789, Table 4.7. Excludes relief to nationalised industries and North Sea.
Table Two

Payments of Mainstream Corporation Tax 1976-1982 (£m)

company	1976-7		1981-2	
	profits	tax paid	profits	tax paid
Allied-Lyons	63	nil	95	nil
Bass	69	17	126	25
B.A.T.	374	2	684	nil
Bowater	78	nil	107	nil
British Leyland	71	nil	(333)	nil
B.P.	1784	nil	5932	145
Courtaulds	46	nil	5	nil
Distillers	91	7	172	36
Dunlop	74	nil	(3)	nil
Esso	69	nil	805	nil
Ford	122	nil	220	nil
G.E.C.	207	41	476	144
Grand Metropolitan	57	nil	187	nil
G.K.N.	70	nil	46	nil
I.C.I.	540	12	524	nil
Imperial Group	130	9	102	nil
Marks & Spencer	84	29	178	62
P. & O.	31	nil	41	nil
Reed International	37	nil	72	nil
RTZ	279	nil	348	4
Total	4276	117	9784	416

From: The British Tax System, by J Kay and M King (3rd edition), 1983. Authors' estimates.
Table One

Tables: Labour Research.

Tax relief

In 1982/3 the Inland Revenue estimated that the total cost of these reliefs and other allowances came to £9,660 million for private businesses (see Table 2). This figure excludes another £3,000 million relief given to North Sea firms.

Even more startling is the fact that these reliefs are so generous that companies have not been able to take full advantage of them. This happens when companies do not make enough money in any given year, so they are allowed to carry forward from year to year any unused tax allowances.

This allows them to offset these accumulated allowances against a year when they make big profits and so either avoid paying tax at all

How it all began

It didn't take the Tories long to cotton on that they could rob us at home and play, as well as at work. Taxes on vital foods and commodities which hit the poorest hardest, have always played a central role in paying for the capitalist state.

A hundred-and-sixty years ago, after the financially disastrous Napoleonic War they abolished income tax completely. The wealthy didn't like paying a tax, where the amount you pay depends on how much you earned.

To pay for their inflated interest charges on war debts, the ruling class whacked huge tax increase on vital commodities which hit the poorest in society disproportionately hardest.

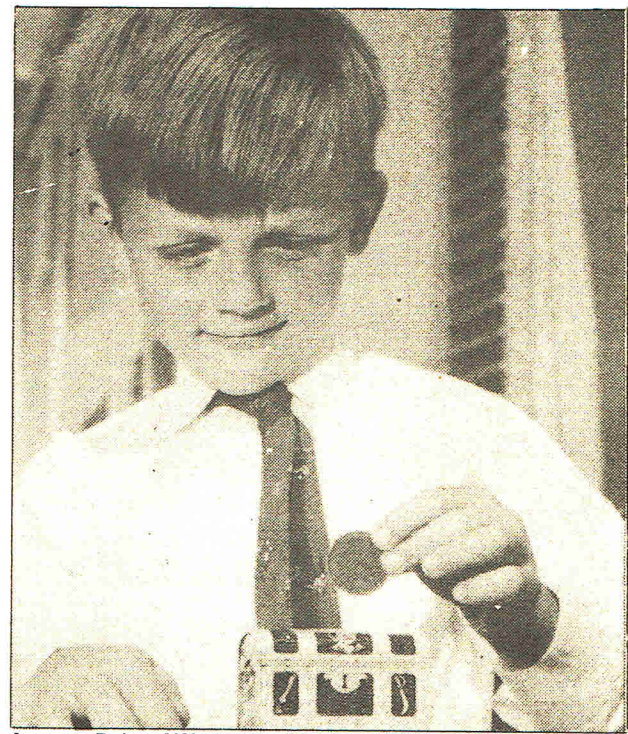
Bread was kept at intolerable prices through the

Corn Law of 1815, which kept out cheap foreign wheat. Taxes on tea raised between £3m and £4m, on sugar about the same, on tobacco about £3m, and on beer a further £3m.

Huge sums when you consider the annual government expenditure was only £55m. Very heavy taxes were also levied on basics like soap, candles and paper.

This was a time of acute depression with mass unemployment worsened by the return of 300,000 demobbed servicemen. The Tory response to the appalling suffering was to take financial measures which boosted the wealth of the 'natural rulers' in society. Sounds familiar?

By Paul Traynor



A young Duke of Westminster counts his money—he's been filling his piggy bank ever since.

Guide for shop stewards

MANY SHOP stewards already have experience in helping workers with tax problems. There is little point in getting a member the right bonus if they lose all of it and more through incorrect tax deductions.

A high proportion of workers accept their tax code, because they don't understand the system, or though faith in the revenue's accuracy. Increasingly this is a mistake. Changes introduced by the Tories have put more responsibility on each worker to make sure they do not pay too much.

By an IRSF member

year. If you had paid too much it was refunded.

This check has been scrapped to save staff, so you must check it yourself or ask the tax office to do so. Even if the tax office finds that you have overpaid tax, but it is less than £5, they will not refund it or tell you—you must find out and claim it.

The Tories have made unemployment pay taxable, with a system so complex that many civil servants cannot fully understand it. So

Staff cuts mean more errors in codes, so the code shown on the form or your wage slip must be checked, and the tax office approached with any enquiries.

Staff cuts also mean longer delays in getting problems sorted out. This is not the fault of the worker at the tax office, but that doesn't mean you should accept it. You will get the service you fight for from the revenue.

Be polite but firm, and if there is unreasonable delay complain to the District Inspector, saying you will go to your MP. If you get no joy, go to your MP.

Shop stewards should get informed about the outlines of the tax system. Arm yourself and your union room at work with revenue pamphlets such as those on allowances, the unemployed, strikes, layoffs and short-time working (ask for a selection from your local Inspector of Taxes).

Shop stewards' committees or union branches could ask the revenue for a talk on tax—ask the IRSF representative to take it up if the local boss knocks you back. With tax, as with all government departments, knowledge is power. Help on tax should be one of the services that the trade union movement offers its members.

for workers going on the dole, or signing off to start a job, it is vital to check your tax position. Husbands who are out of work can transfer any excess allowances to their working wife and pay less tax—but you have to claim this.

Workers no longer get a form showing the tax code every year—another 'saving'. A form is only issued if your code has changed.

Claim refunds

Previously everyone's tax was checked at the end of the

Lies, damn lies, and past budgets



Thatcher and the Tories have ensured that her businessmen friends have done very well out of successive budgets.

IN HIS budget Chancellor Howe gave a firm promise of what Tory policy would be. "People need to keep more of what they earn, so that hard work, talent and ability are properly rewarded", he proclaimed in 1979.

But below is the Tories' record over the last five years. It has meant that ordinary people are now paying far more in taxation than in 1979. The only people paying less are businesses and the rich.

June 1979
-cut the top rate of income tax, giving the lowest maximum figure for fifty years.

An executive on £30,000 a year gained an immediate £4,329

-brought down the basic rate of income tax from 33p to 30p in the £.

-doubled VAT to 15%, thereby cancelling out the benefit of lowering the basic rate and hitting those on lowest income hardest.

1980
-abolished earnings related benefit.

-cut Corporation tax for business

-announced plans to tax sick pay

-announced the creation of enterprise zones offering cheap factory space.

1981
-refused to raise tax

thresholds in line with inflation then running at 15%. Millions of low paid were caught in the tax net for the first time.

1982
-raised tax thresholds, but not back to 1980 levels (it was calculated that to restore tax to pre-Tory levels, it needed a 9p drop in income tax)

-increased national insurance contributions

1983
-cut pensions and social security benefits by 2% by altering the date on which they were fixed.

-gave £800m to oil companies in immediate tax concessions and promised more was in the pipe-line.

Photo: Militant

Economy: Tory strategy in ruins

TORY SPOKESMEN have developed the theme in speeches and articles that under their direction the British economy has staged a miraculous rebirth. Chancellor Nigel Lawson never ceases to extol the virtues of alleged Tory 'achievements' since 1979.

The supporters of the government in the board rooms of big business have latched onto Lawson's theme. Thus Walter Goldsmith, retiring head of the Institute of Directors, has hailed a new "golden age" of British capitalism. He compares the prospects for the British economy to that which faced German capitalism on the eve of the so-called post war economic "miracle".

Even the soothsayers of capitalism—the myriad of economic forecasters—seem to be more enthusiastic about the prospects of the British economy than at any time since 1979. While there may be not much evidence for a massive increase in the economy nevertheless there is a clear surplus of "optimists" over "pessimists" amongst this worthy body.

It is true that the economy in 1983 grew by 2½% and is expected to increase by 3% this year, yet the picture that is revealed behind these crude figures of growth is one of unrelieved gloom for British capitalism. A large part of the growth of the economy is accounted for by the growth in North Sea Oil and Gas.

In the last quarter of last year the 1½% recovery in output by all the production industries was mainly due to an 8% rise in the extraction of oil and gas from the North Sea.

Indeed, without the crutch of North Sea Oil, British capitalism and thereby British society would have faced an absolute catastrophe in the past five years. North Sea Oil has masked the calamitous drop in comparison to its rivals of British

capitalism.

In one important sense it has even aggravated the long term problems of British capitalism: by creating a surplus on the balance of payments it has been mainly responsible for maintaining the pound exchange rate at "artificially high levels".

This high exchange rate has undermined the competitiveness of British capitalism, and particularly of manufacturing industry.

In 1983 British manufacturing industry passed a landmark. For the first time in the 200 years since the industrial revolution, more manufacturing products were imported into Britain than were exported.

This fact has been commented on very widely in the capitalist class. But the most striking feature of the discussion has been the almost breathtaking complacency with which the Tory Government and even some of the strategists of capital have greeted this astonishing fact. Chancellor Lawson has even commended this industrial collapse as "a good thing" in discussions at the National Economic Development Corporation!

Forlorn hope

Thatcher, Lawson and the rest of the Tory crew take comfort in the collapse of manufacturing industry by the forlorn hope that it will be replaced by service industries, like banking, insurance, the so-called expertise of the City of London, tourism, distributive trades etc.

The majority of the Tory cabinet, including Thatcher, represent more the interest of finance capital than of industrial capital, but it is absolute lunacy from a capitalist point of view to imagine that service industries can replace manufacturing. The production of real wealth is based on the produc-

tion of manufacturing wealth.

In fact the service sector is entirely dependent on manufacturing, for their products. The bankers depend on computers, the hairdressers on scissors, the hotels on furnishings, the journalists on typewriters. They also look to manufacturing to provide "demand" for the services they provide.

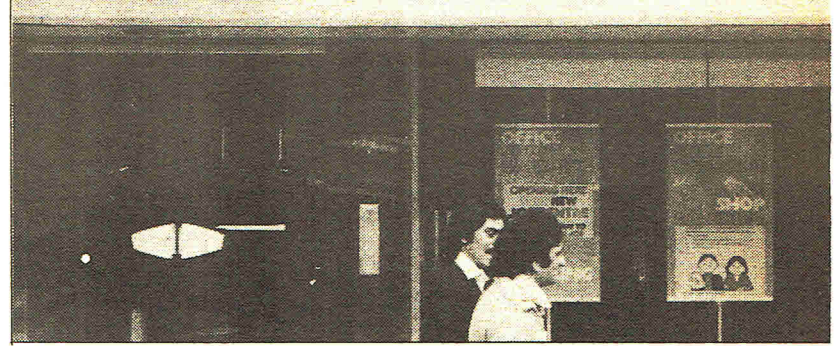
In the long run this policy spells absolute disaster for British capitalism. The more serious spokesmen for capitalism have begun to point out the catastrophe which faces the British economy once the oil runs out, from 1985/6. From an estimated £11.5bn oil income will decline to less than half of this by the end of the decade.

In terror, therefore, the *Financial Times* asked recently where will the income come to pay for the imports from abroad, once the oil runs out? "It will not come from manufacturing industry which now is in irreversible decline. Thus, the same newspaper pointed out on 23 February: "A couple of years ago the decline in manufacturing industry received a disturbing new impetus. Until then the traditional products of Britain's engineering industry—commercial vehicles, engines, tractors and construction equipment—regularly piled up the trade surpluses. Now many of them appear to be suffering from major structural decline."

Leyland for instance, once exported about 10,000 trucks a year and the commercial vehicle sector as a whole used to earn big trade surpluses. But by 1982 Leyland truck exports were down to 5,000. This was bad enough but last year they plunged to only 2,700. The country's total trade in commercial vehicles fell into deficit last year for only the second time in history.

In manufacturing industry as a whole a surplus of £2.6 billion pounds in 1981 tumbled to a surplus of only £233 million in 1982

JOB CENTRE



and then to a deficit of over £5 billion in 1983. The non-oil trade deficit for January 1984 alone was over £1 billion.

Under the Tories more than 20% of industry has been destroyed. Britain is now the fourth poorest nation in the EEC and lags well behind Japan in prosperity according to even the official figures of the Treasury.

Thus National Output per capita in 1982 was higher by 7% in Japan, 19% in France, 28% in West Germany, and 32% in Denmark. The collapse of manufacturing industry was the greatest of any of the advanced capitalist countries. It was the main reason why unemployment continued to increase by 160,000 in a year even though the economy grew by about 2½%.

American economy

Yet in the past 12 months the American economy created 3 million extra jobs, more than Europe as a whole managed in a decade. US growth last year and on a year on year basis was little more than 3.25%—a pretty modest recovery by the standards of the past. The unemployed rate dropped from 11% to nearly 8%.

The reasons for the better performance of the American economy compared to that of Britain and her European neighbours is to be found in the performance of manufacturing industry. While "service industries" increased substantially in the course of the last 10 years, at the same time the American economy managed also to maintain its manufacturing base.

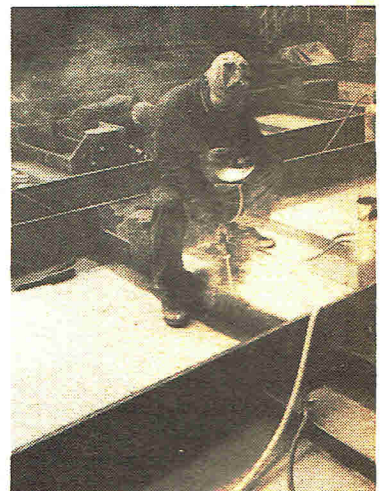
In the words of the *Financial Times*, "the jobs gulf between the USA and Britain lies less in the development of services than the maintenance of employment in manufacturing." In Britain between 1973 and '83 the increase in service jobs was swamped by a

huge decline in manufacturing employment. As a result the total number of jobs in the economy fell by 1.5 million.

In a masterly understatement the *Financial Times* comments, "with the best will in the world it is not easy to see how employment in services can increase sufficiently over the next few years to compensate more and more for job losses in manufacturing."

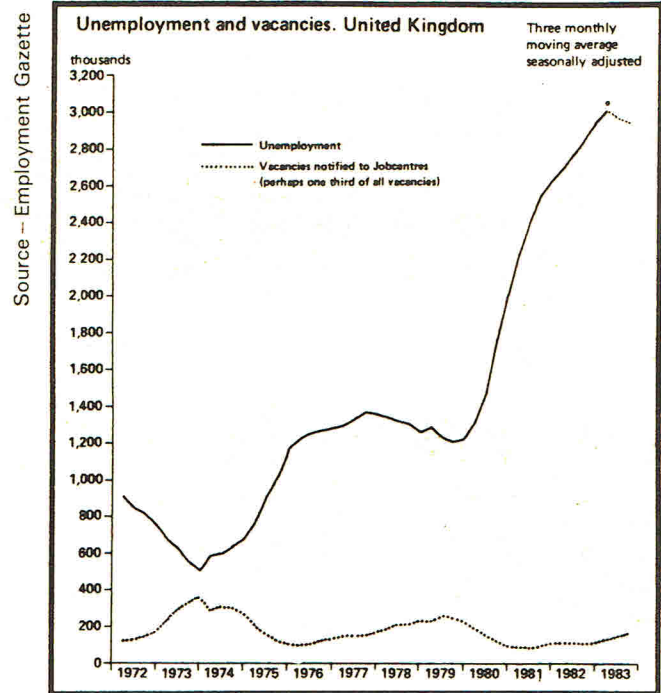
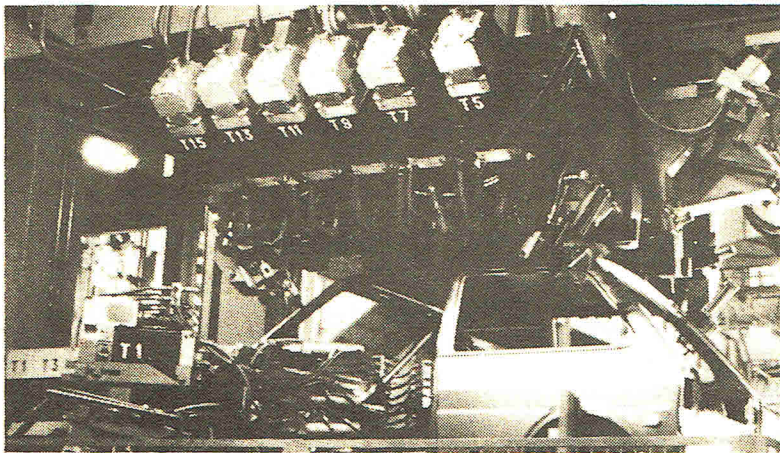
The most important barometer of the economy is investment in industry. Investment, the engine of capitalism, will increase by 2½% this year, but this has to be set against a decline of more than 41% between the end of 1979 and the middle of 1983.

The Tory government and their supporters in the press seem to hold to the lunatic notion that the millions of workers evicted from



the steel industry, machine tools industry, car manufacturing, will be somehow absorbed by the service sector. The workers of Merseyside, Clydeside, Tyneside will thus earn a living by dressing up as beekeepers to guide millions of tourists around the museums of industrial decay in their own areas!

Even the Liberal leader Steel has



Source - Employment Gazette
* Figures affected by Budget provisions for men aged 60 and over.

£17,000 million between 1978/79 and 1983/4 of which almost half, £8,200 million, was accounted for by taxes on North Sea Oil.

Small business people who were promised a golden future under Thatcher have been driven to the wall. Last year was a record year for company failures, 11% higher than 1982. 34 businesses a day are collapsing.

The consequences of this collapse are already evident in the smoking ruins in the major areas of Britain, but it has been precisely in those areas sheltered from the economic crisis of the inter-war period where the recession has borne down most. Thus the West Midlands, which 10 years ago was one of the most economically developed areas of the country, is now near the bottom of the league. This can be shown by the extent to which just ten companies' redundancies have decimated the area.

In 1978 a total of 686,964 workers throughout the world were employed by these ten companies of which 517,400, or 75%, were employed in Britain. By 1982 the global workforce of these ten had fallen by a quarter to 530,275, accounted for exclusively by cut-backs in Britain where their total workforce fell by 31% from 573,000 in 1978 to 353,000 in 1982. At the same time the West Midland workers have dropped from the top of the league in wages to second from the bottom!

Moreover, Thatcher's promise to "set industry free" by slashing public expenditure has come to nothing. When she first came to power all public expenditure accounted for about 44% of Gross

National Product. It now accounts for 48%.

This Tory government forgot one little detail in their attempt to return workers to the Victorian era. In the 19th century the hardnosed British capitalists could allow the unemployed, the sick and the poor to starve if they didn't have a job. Now, because of the pressure of the labour movement, there is a modest "safety net" that has been built in the form of social security payments, unemployment benefits and so on.

The net result of Thatcher's cuts in living standards and general deflationary policies has helped to boost unemployment and thereby increasing public expenditure in benefits. But contrary to the myth perpetuated by this Tory government, Britain's expenditure on the social services is "smaller than in any of the major European countries, and only the 12th highest proportion of the twenty OECD countries", (*Financial Times* 15/2/84).

Nothing that this Tory government has done in the present budget will in any way fundamentally alter the long term decline of the British economy. The above facts are a devastating indictment of the stewardship of the Tory government and of the capitalist class of the economy and society.

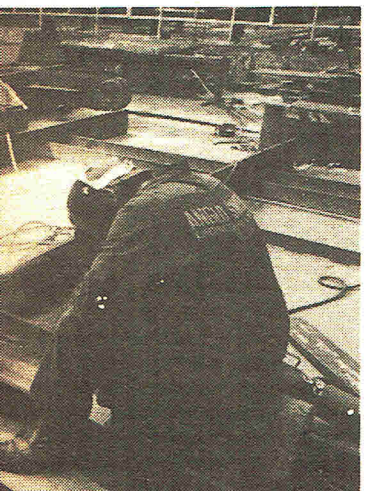
These facts should be used to prepare a mass campaign of education, to mobilise workers to bring down the Tory government and bring to power a Labour government committed to a socialist programme.

By
Peter Taaffe

correctly said that Thatcher seems to have convinced herself that Britain can get by as a nation of "waiters, bookmakers, tourist guides and video salesmen".

The incapacity of British capitalism to further develop industry and society or to compete with its capitalist rivals was underlined in an exchange in the House of Commons between Labour MP for Coventry South East, Dave Nellist, a Marxist and *Militant* supporter, and a Tory Minister. The Tory was forced to admit that it would take a massive re-investment of £200,000 million to even put British capitalism on a comparable basis with its rivals such as West Germany, Japan and America.

Dave Nellist asked the Minister how this investment was to be achieved given the fact that at the



present rate of investment it would take not just to the end of this century but to the end of the next century before Britain caught up with its competitors. The Tory Minister could only mumble in embarrassment that he had enough problems for this century without worrying about the next!

The consequence of the failure to

invest today is seen in practically every industry. 15% of Civil Engineering firms have no work even during this "boom". Upwards of 20% to 30% of industry is lying idle.

The British capitalists, rather than retooling their industries, have convinced themselves that the only road to economic salvation lies in a further massive decrease in the living standards of the British working class. They now rely purely on cheap wages to increase profits.

In the long run this will lead to disaster. No economy in history which has been based on cheap labour has been able to compete with others based on more productive machinery. Yet the Tory government is hell-bent on driving down the living standards of even the lowest section of the working class. This is the meaning of the abolition of the wage councils announced by Tory Ministers recently.

At the same time, there has been a massive increase, to the tune of more than £40,000 million, of investment abroad. Thus the British capitalists, in their death agony, have become more and more reliant on *rentier* capital, income from investments abroad, bank capital etc, rather than investment in industry.

Zero benefit

Recent estimates have shown that the benefits of overseas investments is now almost cancelled out by the inward investment of foreign capital in Britain. At the same time as abandoning its industrial base British capitalism has thus become more reliant on foreign multi-nationals.

In the past the multi-nationals at least based a part of their most productive potential in Britain. Now Fords is winding up its Dagenham

Foundry, converting its operations in Britain into merely an assembly plant for products manufactured elsewhere. The Nissan company has also been promised lavish bribes by the Tory government to base a plant in Britain which just assembles products manufactured in Japan.

This will mean Britain will be in a similar dependent situation as some of the lesser capitalist powers like Ireland, where Fords, and Nissan have just wound up assembly plants.

Weakest state

Thus, from every point of view the economic perspectives of the Tory government lie in ruins. The weak recovery, together with the measures of the Tories of the last five years have undoubtedly led to an increase in the profits of big business. But the British economy is in its weakest state ever to compete with its rivals internationally.

This will be shown as the small "boom" develops and imports flood into Britain, because of the absence of British made competition. Imported colour TVs already corner more than 50% of the market.

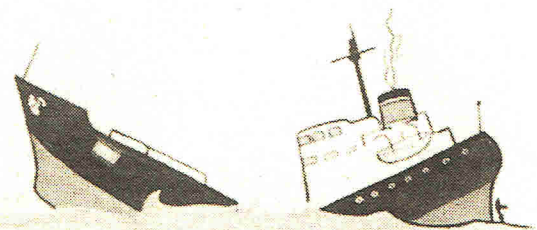
But the next economic downturn expected in 1985/6 will see British capitalism in an even more exposed position, squeezed even more in foreign and domestic markets by its fitter, more productive rivals.

All the economic promises of the Tories lie in ashes. They promised to reduce taxes massively when they came to power. Yet the overall tax burden has risen from just under 34% of national income to nearly 40% in 1982/3. There would have been even greater increases in taxes but for the unexpected bonus of North Sea Oil.

Treasury estimates recently disclosed that, after adjustments for price rises, taxes increased by



SCUTTLED



BY THE TORIES

India, Bangladesh

Bombay's two year strike

A LARGE group of Indian workers have written their names into the Guinness Book of Records through a two year long strike for decent living standards. Prasad Kerkar from Bombay explains the reasons for the strike.

Bombay's textile workers are organised in large numbers, about 25,000 and they are politically experienced.

The mill owners have in the past tried to sponsor a 'union', the RMMS, affiliated to the Indian National TUC and recognised under the Bombay Industrial Relations Act. (BIR Act).

After independence in 1947, the mill owners, aided by RMMS cruelly exploited the workers. There have been many attempts to end recognition of RMMS but the government have never yielded. Textile employees realise the BIR Act is a major hindrance to them.

In search of leadership

Workers waged many struggles; for the eight hour day, a cost of living allowance, adequate bonuses but workers in other engineering and chemical industries have surpassed them in wages and other benefits. In 1981, like other workers they started to demand a 20% bonus and wage rise to cope with prices which were spiralling upwards.

When some owners announced they would pay only the minimum bonus, seven of the 62 mills struck from October 1981. The strike started spontaneously, without leadership. There are six unions apart from RMMS in the industry but workers had little faith in them and went in active search of a militant leadership.

At that time, Datta Samant, a professional doctor was the only militant leader in the engineering/chemicals field. He had become a union leader to end exploitation and left the Congress Party after his fighting attitude earned him many stays in jail.

By Prasad Kerkar in Bombay

Dr Samant's idea of prolonged struggles and indefinite stoppage of production had gained pay rises in a number of companies so workers at Standard Mills approached him to form a union. Eventually he agreed and the Maharashtra Gizih Kamgar Union (MGKU) was formed. It demanded abolition of the BIR Act and the formation of a union through the ballot box, a 200 rupees (£13) a month rise, increased bonus and the removal of the increased work load due to automation.

This charter was turned down by central and state government, who backed the textile magnates and wanted to finish off Samant-type militancy.

After enormous pressure from the workers, Samant called an all out strike at a huge rally from 18 January 1982. Most workers came from rural areas, and realising this was going to be a long drawn out strike, many started collecting grain and money for their counterparts and fighting the false propaganda of state-owned TV and radio and most of the press.

"Long marches"

The government tried to break the strike and the committee appointed by the state government to look into textile workers' grievances was dissolved. Workers responded with many demonstrations during the first year and large amounts of profits were lost but the government didn't move.

As the strike entered its second year, the state's new chief minister, a sugar com-



Textile workers demonstrate in Bombay.

pany baron tried to resurrect the tame RMMS and sabotaged talks between Samant and central government ministers.

After that, protests in the form of "long marches" were organised all over Maharashtra.

Votes for workers candidate

The new chief minister was in office but he had not yet been elected, so when other political parties failed to contest his election, a workers party leader backed by Samant's unions stood and gained 15,000 votes, particularly from the working class, against 39,000 for the chief minister.

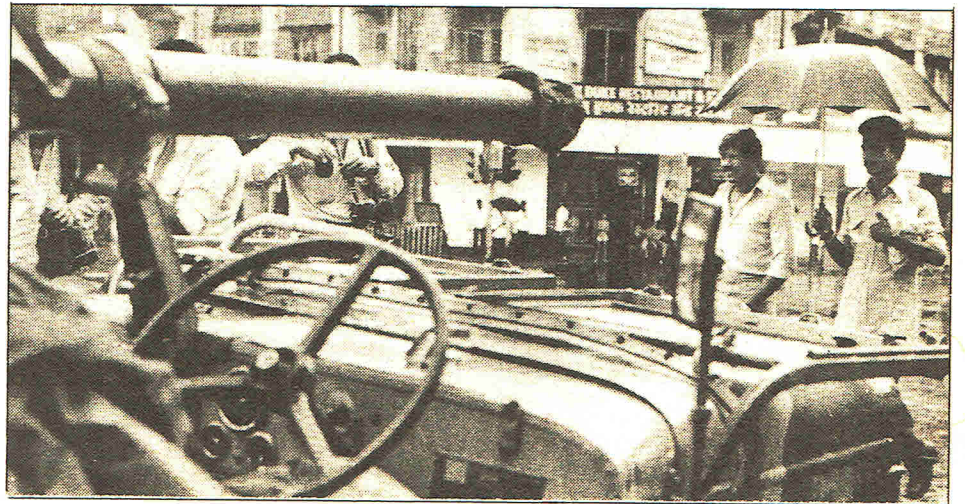
On 1 August 1983 another long march was organised against the government. In between the textile magnates had liquidated the mills and demanded further loans from the government to run the mills afresh. But the workers of Bombay were by then demanding the mills should be taken over by the government without any compensation.

General strike in Bangladesh

A general strike paralysed Bangladesh on 1 March shutting factories, offices, courts, schools and colleges. Protestors were demanding the return of democratic rights, the end of martial law and the release of political prisoners.

The military have ruled this desperately poor country since 1975. The present President General Ershad seized control of the military junta in 1982. Opposition parties criticised his plans for rural elections this month as an attempt to perpetuate martial rule, hidden in a new decentralised structure.

Two people were killed in the demonstrations and many opposition leaders were arrested. Groups of government supporters toured the cities beating up demonstrators.



Troops used against the strikers

One day before the new all-India Congress session the Gandhi government made a dramatic announcement that 12 Bombay mills had been nationalised. Six months later not one of these 12 has yet started production. The owners have filed a law suit in the courts against nationalisation. The wheels of the law grind slowly, and the government, of course, are not hurrying them along.

The strike is now more

than two years old and half of the original 25,000 strikers have been forced back to work by sheer starvation. But the fight is still going on.

Elections postponed

Workers now see they will not get justice under this government, and Dr Samant has established a workers party to contest the ensuing elections.

Under this pressure the

government postponed Bombay's municipal elections fearing they could lose their hold or get completely defeated.

The workers have shown enormous determination. Whatever the fate of the textile strike, workers have learned that real change can only come when they form their own government. They will be just as determined in that struggle.

Repression in Kashmir

LAST MONTH Mohammed Maqbool Butt was hanged in Tihar jail in Delhi and sent a shudder of revulsion through Kashmiri communities all over the world.

After the kidnapping and killing of the Indian diplomat Ravindra Mhatre in Britain, the judicial powers in India refused Maqbool Butt's appeals for mercy. He has been awaiting execution for many years. In the Kashmir clashes of 1966 a policeman was killed. He was sentenced in 1968, escaped in 1969 and was re-arrested in 1976.

Nationalist pressures

This reprisal hanging shows the senile desperate nature of Indian capitalism. With a bloodbath in Punjab over the Sikh minority, caste and communal riots all over India, the Gandhi government's blundering act will further fuel nationalism in Kashmir.

An open decision has been made to step up repression of the Kashmiris. A senior

Foreign Ministry official has said, "We want to make it clear to all terrorists that the Indian government cannot be intimidated by violence".

Scandalously Thatcher's government used the killing of the ambassador to harass Kashmiris in Britain with police raids, detention for up to sixty hours mainly for members of the Kashmiri Liberation Front who, despite denying any involvement in the pointless kidnapping, have been detained under the Prevention of Terrorism Act.

Terrorism—a gift to the bosses

For nine million inhabitants of Kashmir, the Indian Army's beatings, victimisation and repression has added to the horrors of existence near to starvation

level. A family were tortured and killed just for their wish to migrate to the Azad Kashmir area of Pakistan.

An illiteracy rate of 80% is the highest in the whole sub-continent, and reaches 90% among women. Typhoid, cholera and diarrhoea are common but medical facilities hardly exist. Bonded slavery is still rife even though it is illegal in the state. The Indian state is disintegrating and these dreadful conditions, the communal riots and caste wars have exacerbated the situation.

Marxists have always emphasised the essential role of the working class and mass struggle to defeat capitalist exploitation. For this reason we oppose individuals who try to by-pass or substitute themselves for the masses. Acts of individual terrorism serve to undermine mass action and relegate mass struggle to, at best, a secondary role.



Demonstration in Birmingham last month against hanging of Maqbool Butt. Photo: John Harris (IFL)

Hijacking a plane or kidnapping a diplomat does not further the struggle for liberation in any way. It gives Mrs Gandhi and her son Rajiv, representing the capitalists, the chance to further repress the Kashmiris and gives credence to the state's "necessity" to hang opposition figures like Maqbool Butt.

Mass demonstrations, strike action and revolutionary movement by the masses along socialist lines are the only way to stop this oppression. Capitalism cannot maintain a stable nation-state in this region. A socialist plan of production brought about by the workers and peasants of the sub-continent could solve all the basic economic problems

of the ex-colonial world and alleviate the barbaric injustices of backwardness and class oppression.

This alone could unite the peoples of India, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka and allow equal rights to all national groupings.

By Amil Kumar

Sri Lanka, International Women's Day

"The Unions are fighting back"

TWO TRADE union leaders from Sri Lanka recently visited Britain to appeal for workers' support in their struggle against the regime.

JD Silva and S Sathyapala are President and General Secretary respectively of the Government United Federation of Labour—the federation most heavily involved in the 1980 general strike and which after its defeat suffered severe repression.

They have been active in the labour movement of Sri Lanka since they were teenagers and between them boast nearly half a century of involvement.

Recovering from defeats

They were attracted to the old Lanka Samasamaja Party because of its revolutionary Marxist traditions and its vision of a socialist society. They subsequently became leading members of the left opposition within that party which in 1977 formed the Nava Samasamaja Party which embodied the finest fighting traditions of the LSSP.

The two comrades spoke to *Militant* about their struggles.

JD Silva: "The 1980 general strike was a defeat for the working class which threw the movement back. The eighteen trade union offices seized by the government in 1980 have still not been returned and some are being demolished and replaced by tourist hotels. 8-9,000 workers remain sacked. However, the workers' movement was not completely smashed up by that defeat."

S Sathyapala: "The first point is that in the 1980 strike only certain sectors of the working class joined in, predominantly the government clerical workers, teachers, railworkers, local government and workers in the administrative services. Therefore this was not a total defeat for the whole working class."

"For instance just ten months after the defeat several groups in the private mercantile sector, bank workers and hospital workers moved into struggle and even took strike action. In addition in sectors where workers were sacked over the 1980 strike, their colleagues who were not sacked have carried out an agitation for their re-instatement."

"The task today is to organise these two strands into one fighting whole to overcome the organisational weaknesses and re-establish the working class at the forefront of the anti-government movement."

Militant: How did the working class respond to the anti-Tamil racial attacks of last July?

JD Silva: "The working class in no way took part in any of the racial violence on the Tamils. Wherever possible the organised working class took action in their workplaces to defend their Tamil comrades and even Tamil managers."

Workers defend Tamils

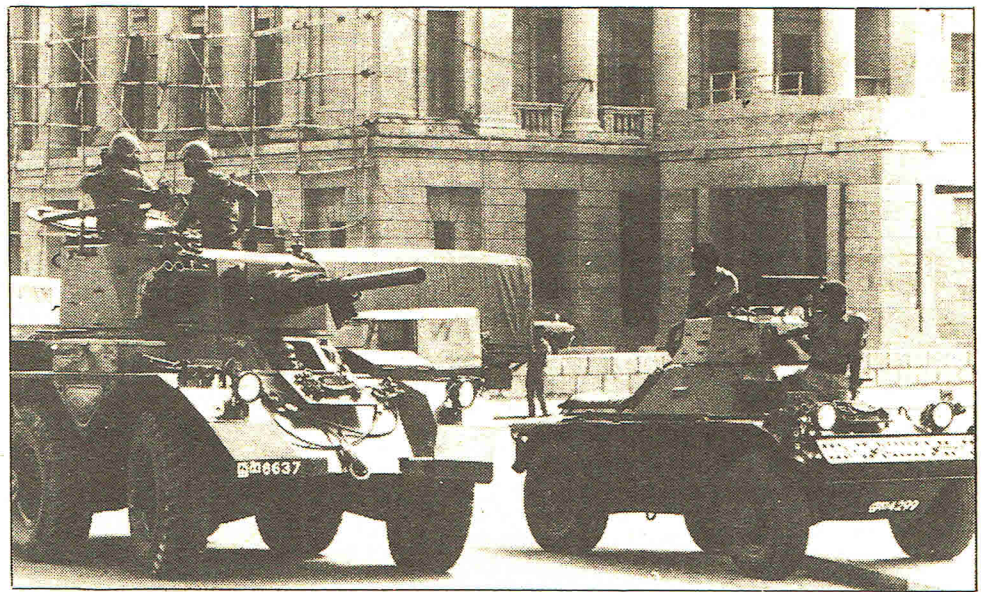
"I can give several examples where organised workers actively repelled the mobs that came to attack Tamils in the factories. In Lever Brothers, where several Tamil officials were employed, workers organised and prepared to meet the mobs and drove them away from the factory."

"In Ratamala mobs had gone on the rampage in workplaces where only women comrades were employed. When they came to certain factories the workers once again repelled them. The Indian Hume Pipe Co and Samuel and Sons are examples of this."

Militant: Comrade Sathyapala, why were you

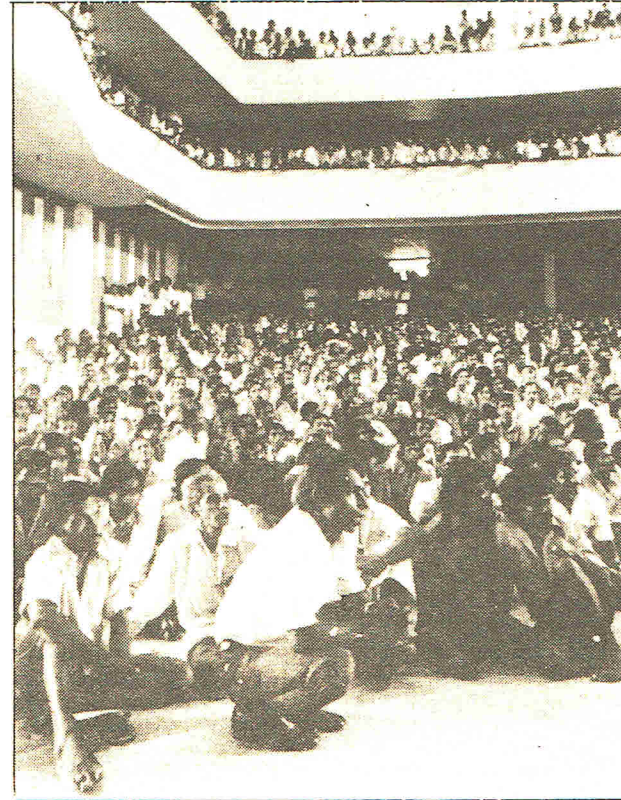
In the first of two articles, *Militant* speaks to two Sri Lankan union leaders

Three faces of Sri Lanka.

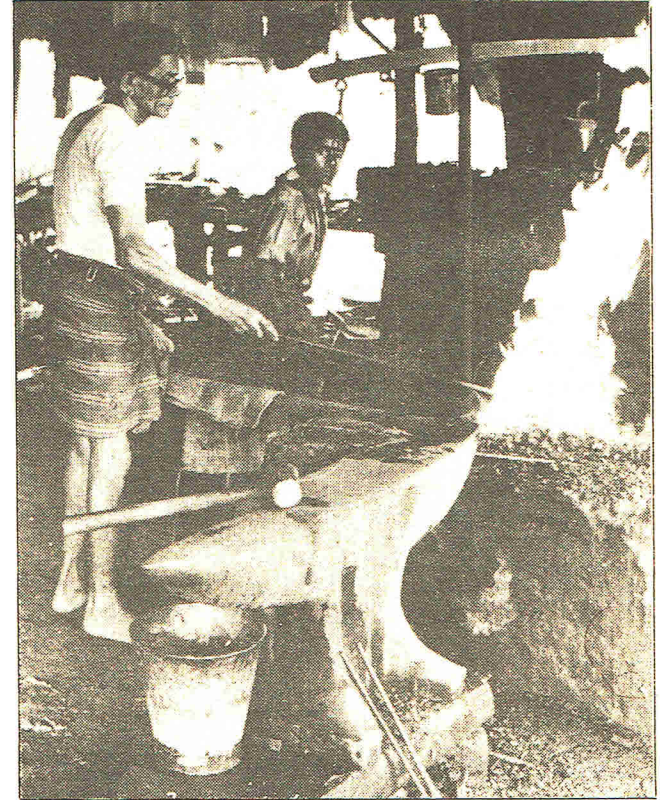


Repression. Troops in use in the general strike.

Photos: Julian McKittrick (Militant)



Workers' Unity. General strike meeting in 1980.



Poverty. A forge on the outskirts of Colombo.

imprisoned last year?

S Sathyapala: "I was in prison for 140 days but was never charged or brought to court. I was arrested as I tried to leave Sri Lanka to go to Britain for discussions with British trade unionists."

Support for government falls

"I was not subjected to physical torture in prison, but I had to go through an intense mental agony because even the minimal concessions normally allowed even to criminals were not

allowed by the prison authorities."

"I was not allowed to meet relatives, have food parcels brought in from outside, and in all these aspects they pressurised me mentally with sessions of questioning for days on end."

Militant: What is the workers' attitude today to the United National Party government?

S Sathyapala: "Their disillusionment cannot be exaggerated. For instance, quite a few less advanced workers who joined the so-called trade union of the

government—the JSS in 1977—have recently resigned in large numbers in the plantations, the Plywoods corporation and the Colombo docks."

JD Silva: "In the decisive plantation sector many thousands of Tamil workers are deserting the government unions. A vast section of workers are totally disillusioned and a considerable number of workers' organisations are coming together in a joint council of democratically elected workplace leaders."

"A very large congress of

workplace leaders has been organised. We are working to link the union opposition to the government with the broader oppositional movement amongst the people as a whole and we hope that our ideas will be increasingly accepted and that this broad oppositional movement will grow."

The second part of this interview will be published next week.

International Women's Day—A day of anticipation

INTERNATIONAL Women's day (8 March) is often either completely forgotten or marked only by some bland pronouncement from such bodies as the United Nations expressing pious hopes for women's equality.

Its origin, however, lies in militant class action of the labour movement. Like May Day, it began in America. At the turn of the century, socialists throughout the United States were agitating for the 8-hour day and for women's right to vote.

Working class women

Women workers were at the forefront of these strug-

gles. In 1908 women in the needle trade on Manhattan's Lower East Side struck; the following year on 8 March a major strike of women workers in Chicago took place.

Fight for the vote

In the meantime, in December 1908 the American Socialist Party had stated "that we recommend, to all locals of the Socialist Party, to set aside the last Sunday in February 1909, for the purpose of a demonstration in favour of women's suffrage." On that day, 28 February, meetings were organised across America by the Socialists and by 1910 the last Sunday in February had become recognised as 'Women's Day'.

In 1910 with the threat of war growing, the Women's Secretariat of the Second In-

ternational organised a women's conference on the twin themes of opposition to the war and the fight for women's suffrage.

That year in a special edition of the *New York Call* (a Socialist Party paper), Lena Morrow Lewis wrote: "Women's day... is not a day in which we celebrate anything... The battle for economic and political freedom is yet to be fought out. Women's Day in the Socialist movement is, therefore... in every essential AN ANTICIPATION DAY..."

The Second International conference of Socialist Women was held in Copenhagen immediately before the 1910 International Socialist Congress. It was attended by women from seventeen countries and the proposal for an International Women's Day, moved by Clara Zetkin of the German section, was

unanimously approved and subsequently endorsed by the full congress.

The first celebration of the day in Europe took place the following day with major demonstrations in Germany, Switzerland, Scandinavia and Austria (including 30,000 in Vienna). By 1913 the day was being celebrated in Russia.

Four years later International Women's Day marked the beginning of the Russian revolution. In February 1917 women textile workers in Petrograd marked the day with a strike and a march to the city centre, calling out other factories on the way. This gathered enormous momentum with the women demanding bread.

Russian revolution begins

A general strike rapidly developed with bakeries being smashed and women

even invading officers' barracks to seize weapons. It resulted in the toppling of the Tsar. The revolution had begun.

Women's Day had never been solely about the struggle for the vote, as Alexandra Kollantai, a Bolshevik leader, explained: "Although Women's Day was established for the special purpose of demonstrating the Socialists' support of the political enfranchisement of women, other demands were also put forth and other political and social questions. It was the struggle against the increased cost of living, the demand for motherhood assistance, for women's and children's labour legislation, as well as to cry 'down with militarism', that constituted the Women's day programme in different years."

Today, the vote has been long won and yet women remain oppressed by the

demands of capital. With the relatively new phenomenon of millions of women workers organised in the trade union movement, new opportunities have been presented to Marxists to show in practice that the struggle for the emancipation of women and the struggle for socialism is one and the same.

Change society

On Women's Day in 1984 we should remember the words of Eleanor Marx in 1886 that "... those who attack the present treatment of women without seeking the cause of this in the economics of our latter-day society are like doctors who treat a local infection without inquiring into the general bodily health!"

By Sue Davies

Letters

Write to *Militant*, 1 Mentmore Terrace, London E8 3PN

What recession?

Dear Comrades,

The working class of this country is constantly being told that there is no money. No money to give much-needed wage rises, no money to improve the NHS or education. However, in an article published by the *Daily Express* on 1 February 1984 the picture is somewhat different. The article says: "are you one of the favoured few with an income of more than £100,000 a year? The

number has risen from a mere 400 in 1973-'74 to more than 2,000 in 1979-'80 the last time there was a count." This is just one small example of the system which we live in. A system where the rich get richer and the poor get poorer. Only under a socialist system can the money which belongs to the working class be returned.

Yours
Anne McCluskey
Pollock LPYS

Children's right to food

Dear *Militant*,

As comrades will have seen or hear in the news Princess Anne has toured the impoverished continent of Africa, spreading, we are told, good will and hope. What about money and supplies?

Also in the news was the

pregnancy of Princess Di, will she or her children ever want for a basic human right, that of food. Not while she's scrounging £40,000 a year for her child.

Let's look forward to a socialist world in which every child will be able to grow up in the comfort the Royals are accustomed to.

Yours fraternally
A Fisher
NUM, Mansfield

Cut throat cleaning

Dear Comrades,

I am a self-employed window cleaner. Last week, while cleaning a council estate, I found that I had competition and the person involved was prepared to undercut me by 25%.

In the present economic situation people are prepared to undercut each other at whatever cost. This is not the fault of the individual but of the system where working people have to cut each others throats to survive.

Yours fraternally
Derek Berken
Hounslow

Swedish message

Dear *Militant* comrades,

On the initiative of Anton Nilson, the veteran Swedish and early Bolshevik class fighter, we would like you to put forward the following greetings to Tony Benn and the labour movement of Britain:

"Your magnificent victory at Chesterfield inspires socialists all over the world and reinforces hopes for the

bold socialist leadership for the Labour movement that is absolutely necessary to defeat Toryism and decaying world capitalism. Forward to the socialist transformation of Britain and the entire world."

Greetings from Anton Nilson and the Editorial board of the Swedish Marxist journal *Offensiv*.

Anton Nilson
Arne Johanson
Stockholm

Help for picket fine

Dear Comrades,

At this week's meeting of the Leeds University Labour Club, one of our club members moved that a donation be made to help pay the fine incurred by a friend of his who had been arrested while picketing at Warrington last year.

He told us how his friend had gone down to show solidarity with the workers in dispute and had been caught in a police charge before even reaching the picket line. Falling to the ground, he was then picked up by some of the boys in blue, and just as he was beginning to feel grateful for having been saved from the stampede, was informed that he'd been nicked.

His case came up last

week, and he was fined £80, including costs. This despite his innocence of any crime, and his plea for leniency. He explained how although living in Hartlepool he was having to study 30 miles away at Sunderland Poly, for which he received no grant or travelling expenses because he was living on Social Security.

But maybe it wasn't so surprising that the magistrate rejected the plea, considering that one of his other occupations was Chairman of the ... local branch of the Tory Party!

What's that about one law for the rich and another law for the poor?

Yours fraternally
John Goodby
NE Leeds LPYS
PS The Labour Club agreed to pay £40.00 towards the fine.

Obituary—Les Cummins

Dear Comrades,

Les Cummins, a socialist and trade unionist was buried on the 10 February this year. Les took out the first order for the *Militant* in Stevenage in 1971. Although Les did not agree with every policy, he was a fighter, holding contempt for those on the outskirts of the movement, saying you have to be in the ring to fight.

Les was a fighter all his life, becoming political in the 1926 General Strike. He voted against the Tories Housing Act while on the Council, risking surcharge. Les will not be forgotten, as his wife Joan and their children Sue, Maggie, Jackie and Jes are still active! I saw Les just before he died, knowing he was going to, he said to me, "we are both fighters, there's not enough of us, keep fighting!"

Yours fraternally
Steve Glennon



Nurse addresses a rally in Queens Park, Glasgow on the TUC day of action, 1982.

Photo: Rick Matthews (IFL)

Wave of health cuts in Glasgow

Dear Comrades,

On the 17 and 18 of February, the city of Glasgow welcomed the Labour Party Campaign Ambulance. Among the crowds in attendance were Neil Kinnoch and Glasgow Lord Provost Michael Kelly.

Glasgow has had to endure the latest private hospital, Ross Hall and also many cuts in the NHS Hospitals. The closure of the Ear, Nose and Throat Hospital and Schaw Home are examples. Also Glasgow has had wards in Woodilee,

Stobhill and Ruchill closed.

The Tory Government claims that the NHS is safe in their hands. Yet the cut-backs imposed have led to waiting lists in Scotland rising from 67,000 in 1979 to 89,000 today.

We must also see that

under a system which puts a profit before needs the NHS will never be safe except under a Labour government which is committed to socialism.

Ann McCluskey
Pollock LPYS

No policy electioneering

Dear Comrades,

The Liberals' shallow and shameful approach to politics was yet again exposed on BBC's Newsnight programme on the evening of the Chesterfield by-election. Commentator Vincent Hanna pointed out that in the 39 film-clips taken during the Liberal campaign, policies had not been mentioned once. In each case voters had been asked for support on tactical grounds.

This strategy is of course not new to the Alliance and

has for some time been part and parcel of their dustbin approach to electioneering which is riddled with deliberate lies and deceit.

For example, in the 1983 Cardiff City elections the Liberal candidate in the Gabalfa Ward visited houses displaying Labour posters spinning the yarn that only the Liberals could keep the Tories out since Labour was not in the race. In the event Labour thoroughly hammered both Tories and Liberals.

Since it is so widespread this despicable form of cheating is obviously sanc-

tioned by David Steele and the rest of his Mr Nice Guy, clean-cut crew. Fortunately the Liberals and their SDP partners in the Alliance will find that electioneering based on crude attempts to secure a protest vote will result in very unstable support.

When class issues are pushed to the fore that support will evaporate in a puff of smoke. A party with no policies will prove to be no party at all.

Yours Fraternally
Chris Peace
Cardiff North Labour Party

Chile and reformism

Dear Comrade,

I am writing regarding the Chile article in *Militant*, Issue 688, page 10. Admittedly, you only faithfully quote what was said by an elected leader representing 160 workers at the A2A Foundry in Santiago, but nevertheless, I feel that, in a footnote, *Militant* should have pointed out very strongly that the 1973 coup came about NOT because of the "lack of awareness of the workers" who were very well aware of the imminent danger, but because of the reformist ideas of President Allende, who believed that the ruling class would play the rules of the game.

Of course, having read this statement it would seem that they are still unaware of what is required to be done and therefore maybe in danger of repeating the mistakes of the past.

Sincerely,
Mrs N Michael
Neath

Increasing police intelligence

Dear Comrades,

I was extremely concerned when I read the latest information on the £1,400,000 Humberside police computer which will be working by February 1985.

The police will be transferring information from their 'collator cards' (intelligence files) onto the computer. It was stated that there are 160,000 of these cards and if there is information on one person per card, this would mean that the police have files on every one in five of the population of Humberside.

Members of the labour movement must take up issues such as these and campaign for more democratic control of the police. It is frightening to think of how the increasing power of the police could be used in the future.

From
H Ridley
Hull

Liberals and Tories—same views on Liverpool closure

Dear *Militant*,

The Liverpool Echo recently printed extracts of a letter from Margaret Thatcher to Liberal MP David Alton (Mossley Hill, Liverpool). She explained why the government refused to intervene in the planned closure of BAT in Liverpool. She made excuses for BAT saying that they took the decision after very careful consideration, and defended her own inaction saying: "The government would not wish to intervene in matters concerning a company's commercial judgement".

She was quick enough off the mark to intervene in the Stockport Messenger dispute, supplying Eddie Shah with advice on how to smash the NGA. And she was eager to defend the brutal tactics of the riot police on the Warrington picket line.

In the same article the 'boy wonder' David Alton exposes the Liberals' support for private ownership of property by actually agreeing with her that the Tory government should not interfere with a company's decision to put people out of work.

Yours fraternally
R Murray
Liverpool

Benn and the media

Dear Comrades,

After reading the *Daily Telegraph*, March 1 1984, I was disgusted by yet another swipe made at Tony Benn by the media:

"The *Daily Telegraph* devoutly hopes that when the votes in Chesterfield are counted up tonight the name of Mr Wedgewood Benn will not be found to head the bill. We regard the policies he advocates as dangerous or vacuous, and for the most part both."

Perhaps these policies are dangerous as they will affect

the comfort and wealth of the ruling class and give working class people a better quality of life.

After looking up 'vacuous' in the dictionary I find that it means someone who is bereft of ideas or intelligence—can this be referring to Tony Benn or has the *Telegraph* made yet another printing error?

After this attack on Tony Benn the *Telegraph* goes on to say that Tony Benn has "weird complexes about persecution by the media". I wonder why?

Yours fraternally
Caroline Bone
Andover

Child abuse and charities

Dear Comrades,

Having read the letter from Lynne Tice (Issue 686) in which she raises the NSPCC, I feel that she may have overlooked some important areas. Bad housing, massive unemployment, homelessness and poverty are escalating, and with it an increase in child abuse.

I have worked for seven years as a teacher and have noted the NSPCC as an organisation that with its limited ability has offered assistance and reached families before abuse occurs.

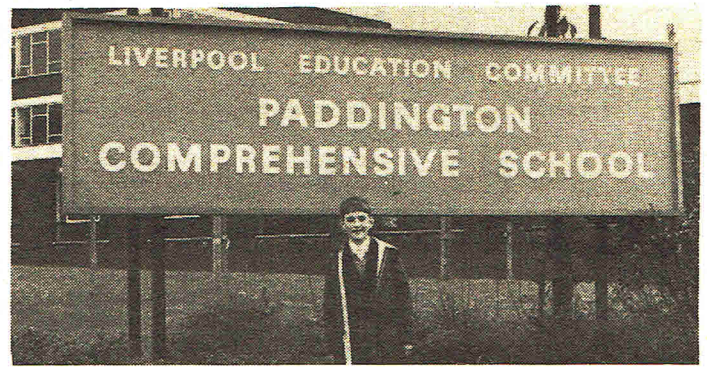
However its resources are totally inadequate to match the needs of a society that is

pushed into further crisis. Its policies, while to be commended, are not long-term solutions.

Prevention of cruelty to children should not be the concern of a charity, but should be of paramount importance in State expenditure and controlled by the working class. Like Lynne, I am appalled at the lengths the NSPCC have to stretch in order to reach people's pockets for pennies, by advertising pictures of battered children, but under this system what else can they do to attract attention?

Fraternally,
Shirley Whitaker
Coventry NUT

Liverpool's education



FELICITY DOWLING, Secretary of Liverpool District Labour Party, and former President of Liverpool National Union of Teachers, explains the issues behind Liverpool Council's reorganisation of education in the city.

EDUCATION HAS proved itself to be a very important issue with working people.

There's been a major involvement of the Labour Party in Liverpool on education issues, particularly battles to save threatened schools such as Croxteth. I believe that helped to win the city to Labour.

Labour's proposed reorganisation of secondary schools, which has provoked a lot of controversy and publicity, has been worked out over a number of years. It hasn't been knocked together within a few months of coming to power.

It's an answer to the cuts that have been introduced by previous administrations and the major problem Liverpool's education service faces—falling rolls.

There has been a collapse in the number of pupils in the schools. It's now about 33% of the number ten years ago. Live births in Liverpool in the 1960s were about 17,000 per year; now they're about 6,000 per year.

That drop has never been planned for. Schools have simply been left, some of them rattling, half-empty, some more than half-empty. Closures proposed by the old Liberal council have been class-based. They were attacks on working class areas, depriving them of the few resources they have.

The closure of Croxteth comprehensive would have deprived one of the poorest areas of the city of one of its few public buildings, its only public amenity.

Re-organisation

This re-organisation will cover the County sector. It is important to remember that about 40% of secondary school places in the city are in voluntary-aided church schools.

We are talking about the largest sector but not all the secondary schools in the city. We plan to completely re-organise the County secondary sector into seventeen district schools. They will be community comprehensives.

The important thing is that they will establish a full cur-

riculum in each school. That is the full range of subjects at each level of ability and each standard. The present pattern is that some schools offer a full curriculum while others offer a severely restricted one.

This way we hope to bring about a major improvement in education achievement.

STAFFING LEVELS must be kept to the maximum possible, and improved upon, if we are going to see our re-organisation bear fruit.

Staff are facing tremendous strain from children who reflect all the problems of poverty and stress in Liverpool. Because of falling rolls they are also dealing with problems like being asked to teach subjects they are not qualified in, subjects that they don't wish to teach and do not feel confident to handle and deal with the children at the same time. That's got to be tackled.

Lack of resources

Primary school teachers face similar problems of re-deployment, the collapse in numbers in some of the primary schools, and a sheer lack of resources.

Liverpool is now one of the best staffed authorities in the North-West as far as primary schools go. But we're still nowhere near that in the secondary schools. Labour believes, and most teachers in Liverpool agree, that Liverpool schools should be staffed way and above most areas, simply because of the level of stress and strain on pupils and staff. We are all fighting against terrible odds.

The unions have demanded re-organisation for four or five years now. Fundamentally the Labour Party plan fits in with each of the demands of the NUT. There are some minor differences, but the union has given its full support to the plan as it now stands.

BEFORE LABOUR took control there had never been a plan for education as a whole. The service had suffered badly from



Felicity Dowling, NUT, addresses a shop stewards' meeting at the Royal Philharmonic Hall, Liverpool in September last year.

the cuts.

The director of education had issued statements saying he could no longer offer a viable service, that the physical state of the buildings was approaching danger levels.

We had seen a drop in the total number of teachers and yet still had 13,000 pupils taught in classes of over thirty. That's despite falling rolls. Reports from HMIs (education inspectors) had pointed out problems in Toxteth primary schools, and a very damning HMI report on the one selective boys school left in the city was produced.

It's important to realise that Liverpool never went comprehensive like most major cities. The comps have been arrived at in a piecemeal fashion and have had to compete with, for instance, Church of England schools which operate as selective grammar schools.

Selective schools

The Church of England schools do not take their pupils solely from Church of England primary schools for example. They take them, or have in the past taken them from the better-off state primary schools.

It was only two years ago that the last secondary modern was closed. The Catholic sector is also large. That went comprehensive last year. But their comprehensive plan means that within a couple of years two or three of their schools could close.

We are offering a detailed, planned future for the state schools for at least six years. It's difficult to get definite

statistics so far ahead but we think it offers the best possible plan for the next ten years.

Each of the schools will have a secure future with a planned number of pupils and an ability therefore to plan staffing and protect the curriculum.

Long-term planning

That kind of long-term planning is vital to provide stability for pupils and staff, for a good atmosphere and efficient overall running of a school. Those are the pre-conditions for raising the standard of education in Liverpool.

WORKING CLASS parents are deeply concerned about the education of their children. That is the biggest lesson of this whole debate.

The fact that across the city over a period of weeks, there were meetings of 500 and 600 parents in many of the schools; the degree of interest and questioning has shown in live detail the extent of interest in this issue.

The first and probably most important force behind the opposition is parents being scared of change. But as we make it clear that we are taking care of their children; that we are working to improve the standard of education available to their children; then that level of objection will fall.

For instance, there was a large petition against the plan. If people are approached and asked to sign a petition against school closures they will sign that petition—I'd sign it myself. But if people are

presented with the alternative to not closing schools—which is to leave children in working class districts of the city with what amounts to a third and fourth class education—then they will agree with us that it is necessary to make the change.

OPPOSITION TO the plan has been led and used, for purely selfish political reasons, by the Liberal Party and people representing the most reactionary politics of the city.

During the time of the Liberal administration there were attempts to close schools and deal with the falling roll situation. Each of the schools then threatened with closure was in a working class area. It would have made the problems of that area even more acute.

There was no attempt to deal with the city as the whole, and there was no attempt to raise the standards of achievement of working class children. Labour's plan seriously addresses both of these problems.

Euphoric period

When Labour was first elected there was a period of euphoria in the schools. It was felt that most of the problems could be solved. I think it's now become clear to all that though important changes are being made, the underlying problems of poverty and lack of resources remain. They cannot be tackled without a major government intervention in terms of money. And only fundamental socialist change will make education genuinely accessible to all.

The campaign to save Croxteth school from closure was an important factor in Labour's council victories last year.



INDUSTRIAL REPORTS

GEC Measurements: - strengthen the strike!

"If we go back we won't get a decent rise for ten years", commented one of the 800 workers locked out by management at GEC Measurements, Stafford.

Last week a mass meeting heard the AUEW Senior Steward explain the two options of return to a smaller offer or none at all, or continue the action.

One section wanted to "get round the table and negotiate" then another section called to "wait for an increased offer" which was applauded. Workers asked, "what's the point of going back and moaning about a pay rise for the rest of your life?"

Less than a third voted to accept the offer followed by a clear decisive majority of the workers to stay out, greeted with a loud cheer. One woman who has worked 25 years for GEC described the workforce as "more solid than I've ever known".

Pickets view the rumoured threat of mass sackings by Personnel Manager Nigel Craff, brought in last year from BL, with contempt. The cost in time and materials to send five letters to each of 800 workers'

houses has hardened attitudes towards management. A large proportion of workers are women who are more determined to win, women shop stewards being highly active on the picket line.

Pickets are angry over the Prior and Tebbit laws which make it illegal to stop other GEC Group lorries loading and unloading at the rear of the factory.

The first step the shop stewards should take is to strengthen the strike by organising strike funds for hardship cases, advice on mortgages and eviction threats, and the despatch of groups of workers to raise financial support from GEC factories and other workplaces.

All donations to Bro. Ray Ford, GEC Measurements JSSC, 40 Dryden Crescent, Stafford, ST17 9YH.

By an ex-GEC worker

POSTSCRIPT 13 MARCH. At a mass meeting this morning workers responded to the company's combined ballot paper and dismissal threat.

The senior shop stewards gave no recommendation which is dangerous. The management have turned this into a serious struggle and a lead both locally and nationally is vital.

But in a tremendous display of determination workers voted by 290 votes to 253 to stay out.



Pickets at GEC.



Part of mass meeting at GEC.

Photos: Militant

Cooper and Turner

WORKERS AT Cooper and Turner have won a great victory. On 6 February our management put forward plans for "stringent action" to make the company profitable.

They proposed to chop the factory in half, scrap machines, stop producing unprofitable products and introduce new working practices.

44 out of 192 workers were to be made redundant, firstly voluntary than compulsory with efficiency, experience and disciplinary record to be taken into account for deciding who should go.

The Joint Shop Stewards Committee said they would not accept redundancies and held a mass meeting which decided to implement an overtime ban.

We also agreed to press ahead with our pay claim due on 1 January and for settlement of a dispute involving regrading of a member.

Management replied to the wage claim by asking for a 3 month pay freeze! This was rejected by 125 votes to 6. After some volunteers came forward, we were still threatened with a surplus 18 people to be made redundant. We put forward an alternative of work sharing and short time working.

Management said they could not guarantee no compulsory redundancies. And they put a price on any 'no sacking' policy, restrictions on work sharing, full cooperation to reach management objectives on new working methods, flexibility amongst

workers, heavier work loads and no pay rise for the whole of the year. They gave us two week time limit to consider.

Management also refused to hold the nationally agreed procedure of "external conferences" between stewards, officials and bosses on the pay claim and regrading dispute. Members rejected all these threats and gave shop stewards a mandate for industrial action if needed. We told management we would take action from 5 March.

After a meeting when stewards refused to budge, management conceded the external conferences with no strings whatsoever and after another five hour meeting they withdrew practically all conditions they had put on the proposed document for no compulsory redundancies.

They now put emphasis on mutual agreement on any new methods with no time limits. A mass meeting accepted this seeing it as a big victory through our being united.

On 9 March the external conferences were held. The regrading claim was accepted in full and after trying a compromise of a wage rise from 1 March, capitulated and agreed to 1 January payment. The JSSC held a mass meeting, recommending non-acceptance because the offer didn't meet the claim in full.

But the members accepted by a two thirds majority, realising that after the initial threats, a 5% rise was a great victory for the membership.

By Andy Holland

(Chairman, JSSC, and AUEW convenor Cooper & Turner (Glynwed Ltd) Sheffield)

Scott Lithgow — Hope for the best — prepare for the worst

FOR THE past few months the major off-shore rig companies in Western Europe have been vying with each other to take over the "hopeless case" of Scott Lithgow off-shore construction yard, at present part of British Shipbuilders.

Now two of these have joined together to get their slice of the cake the government is intent on giving away to its capitalist friends. The site, described as having, "the potential to be the most advanced off-shore fabrication yard in Europe" is obviously seen as a gold mine by some.

Rumours of further massive job cuts (the 4,000 workers in January 1984 has already drifted down to 2,900 due to voluntary redundancies); a site agreement with frightening conditions for the workforce,

and unspecified threats to get rid of militant trouble-makers and bad workers demands a strong response from the workforce.

The women of the area have organised another demonstration this Saturday. The men of the yard must follow their example. A commitment to occupy the yard if all conditions and all workers' jobs are not saved by the forced privatisation of the yard is being demanded by many of the workers of the yard.

The stewards must take up this demand, hope for the best but prepare for the worst, and set up an occupation committee now to mobilise the fight before many more jobs are lost by workers drifting away.

By Ronnie Stevenson

Weir Pumps — No more low pay

ONE THOUSAND shop floor workers at Weir Pumps, Cathcart, Glasgow have struck for a £15 a week pay claim.

"The members have given a lead to the shop stewards' committee this time. Last week they gave us a mandate to call a strike if management did not improve their 5% offer," said Willie Maley, the AUEW chairman of the JSSC.

"We implemented an overtime ban and no co-operation with the bonus scheme, pending a works conference with management involving full-time officials. Before the meeting management tried to remove products from the factory on the night shift. But members stopped it and were removed from the payroll.

"The strike is solid. Office staff, with a separate agreement have implemented an overtime ban in support and so

have Weir Pump service centres throughout the country. We are also in touch with other factories within Weir group for support.

"The factory has been running down for years. Only last month a number of voluntary redundancies were agreed and over the last few years workers have taken low pay rises because of the company's economic position.

"An existing productivity agreement has given no money over the past two years except for payments for lay offs during short-time working. The company now admit they're doing better and our members need a share."

The AUEW District Committee have officially backed the strike. Messages of support and donations should be rushed to: Robert Tweedie, 57 Chalmers Drive, East Kilbride, G75 0NY.

British Hovercraft

AT THE British Hovercraft Company, part of the Westland company, new shift patterns were agreed recently between management and AUEW TASS officials who described it as a good offer.

Workers at BHC did not agree; there were to be no premiums for shift or unsocial hours, simply a cut in hours worked. The Joint Union Committee were told their con-

tracts would be changed to incorporate changes in hours. Workers at Yeovil, Weston-Super-Mare and Cowes agreed to support any worker refused a contract.

Notice of dismissal was given to a worker at Yeovil on 5 March, so pickets were set up and unions demanded the withdrawal of the threat. They offered to talk nationally, but not locally. The dispute now

affects 1,600 to 2,000 workers.

The 250 TASS members striking at Cowes have given 100% support; many are striking for the first time. They have been incensed at press and radio bias and feelings ran even higher when dismissal notices were issued to 38 to 40 draughtsmen, many with years of loyal service to BHC.

The TGWU have been asked not to send lorries across picket lines but management have told drivers there are no TASS members in the stores

so its OK to deliver. The blacking of all supplies is essential to this small group of white collar workers.

On 28 February, all 700 workers at BHC came out in support of civil servants at GCHQ. A TASS member on the picket said, "our management have taken a leaf out of the Tories' book. But BHC is not GCHQ."

By Cathy Wilson

BLOC Conference — Build strong trade unions

JUST ONE week to go to the Broad Left Organising Committee (BLOC) conference. Some of the delegations received this week include:—

T&GWU (House of Commons) branch; TGWU 99; GMBATU (Grimsby); GMBATU (Newbridge) West Lothian; T&GWU Peterborough; T&GWU 2/28 (Southampton); AUEW (London Transport); AUEW James Neill Shop Stewards' Committee (Sheffield); AUEW Engineering, Birmingham 28 400BE branch (Austin Rover); AUEW (Swansea).

Kensington and Chelsea Trades Council; Brighton and Hove Trades Council; T&GWU 10/105 branch (Hull Docks); T&GWU 1/319 (Battersea Bus); T&GWU 5/325 (Redditch); AUEW Shop Stewards' Committee (Self-Changing Gears, Coventry); T&GWU 1/1231 branch (Slough); COHSE Walsall branch; COHSE Burton Road branch (Dudley); NUSMWH&DE (Nottingham); NUR Tinsley branch (Sheffield); ISTC (Grimsby branch); NUM Askern Main Colliery (Doncaster); NUR Willesden No 1 branch (West London); BFAWU (Manchester Bakeries).

AUEW Halifax 2 branch; NUPE St Bernards Hospital Ealing (West London); ASTMS Steel Branch (Sheffield); AUEW-TASS Manchester East branch; POEU Post Office Railway Branch Committee; AUEW-Foundry (Wednesbury branch); Seddon Atkinson Works Committee (Rochdale); UCATT Manchester 1st UD 166 Branch; Hackney Direct Labour Organisation, building division; NUR (Nottingham and District Rail); NUPE Notts APT&C branch; ASTMS Ford Industrial branch; AUEW Cricklewood 61CE branch; T&GWU 1/1881 branch (Kodak); GMBATU Coventry No 3 Gas branch; GMBATU Cambridge (2) branch; National Union of Seamen; Harwich; NUPE Chorley Hospitals branch; Wittington Hospital Joint Shop Stewards' Committee; NUPE Firvale branch (Northern General Hospitals); NUPE United Sheffield Hospitals; AUEW Cannock Chase 2 branch; URTU Blackpool (Derbyshire Bakery).

SOGAT Chapel Eric Bemrose Ltd (Liverpool); Newcastle-upon-Tyne Trades Council; Preston and District Trades Council; COHSE Pinderfields Hospital (Wakefield); NUM Wearmouth Colliery Mechanics branch (Sunderland); NUM Betws New Mine (West Glamorgan); AUEW INCO Europe (Clydach, West Glamorgan); Edinburgh and District Trades Council; AUEW-TASS No 16 District Committee (Coventry); USDAW B153 (Belfast); ASTMS Birmingham District Committee; GMBATU Burley Branch; T&GWU 3/464 branch (Bristol); McEvoy Shop Stewards' Committee (Gloucestershire) GMBATU; AUEW Swansea No 6.

NUM St John's Lodge (Mid-Glamorgan); Dagenham Trades Council; AUEW-Engineering Enfield Lock Branch-GEE; AUEW Park Royal 68 PE branch (West London); POEU London South Central Extn. branch; NUR Clapham Junction and Waterloo branch; NUR Brighton Joint branch; NUPE Lambeth general branch; UCATT Poole branch; NSMM (Stevenage); AUEW Lincoln 15 branch (Ruston Gas Turbines); Kellogg's (Craft Unions JSSC); T&GWU (Shell Carrington branch).

One week to BLOC conference



National
Delegate
Conference

Saturday 24 March
11 am—5.30 pm at Octagon
Centre, Western Bank,
Sheffield 10

Sessions to be opened by David Blunkett, Leader of Sheffield Council and LP NEC, and Joan Maynard MP. Main speaker: Tony Benn.

Any bona-fide trade union body is welcome to send up to five delegates. For credentials and further information contact: George Williamson, Organising Secretary, 11 Sutton Place, London E9 6EH.

TRAVEL FROM LONDON

Reserve seats on 07:45 St Pancras to Sheffield for only £12.50 return (normally £15.00). Train leaves Sheffield 19:25. Bookings must be made in advance. W. Boyle, 59 Offenbach House, Roman Road, London E2 Cheques to BLOC London Co-ordinating Committee

Miners' strike . . . around the country

Save the pits

Continued from page 1

Yorkshire militancy



600 MINERS on the lobby of NUM headquarters were in a militant mood and were generally pleased about the executive's decision.

Placards emphasised the determination of the miners to see this struggle through. "MacGregor wants a job at 71, I want a job at 31, stop pit closures". "Polmaise will never surrender", and, "wot, no pit? Save Cortonwood".

Bob Ellis, from Barnborough pit (Barnsley area) said, "the main thing I have noticed is the number of young miners. This fight is about their future. MacGregor is trying to buy us off, but it's not just our jobs we're fighting for, it's our kids' jobs as well".

The police at Yorkshire Main have harassed pickets

Going into action

THE MOOD on the picket line is excellent. How else could you describe it? Even at five in the morning, we were far more cheerful than when we're going into work.

First off, at the Prince of Wales, we set out our stall, pitched the tent and started a full burning brazier. The only NUM members who arrived were pickets reporting for duty.

The NUM members were going to allow office staff into get wages ready for next week. But

and one thirty-three year old police officer told them his superiors have said he was too old to be "in on the action".

Also, two young miners have been evicted by private landlords because they're on strike and others have been threatened with having their electricity cut off—the first question they were asked was "are you a miner?"

At Treeton the manager has been threatening to allow the pit to flood, unless the pickets allow more members of BACM (the managers) to

cross. Sixteen have been allowed in. "If we allow more in, they'd ask for NACODS members to be allowed in as well, and still use the same threat", was the response. "Let him pull the plug, he's not going to stop us".

South Yorkshire miners realise it could be a long and bitter battle and they have to get the support from other

COSA members also turned up to picket and turned away their own members.

At Kellingley, the biggest pit in Britain employing 2,200 men, over 200 pickets turned up and no miners reported for work. The only conflict at Kellingley was a football match between the pickets.

By Richard Clarkson
(Prince of Wales NUM,
North Yorks)

unions to stop any movement of coal. They also realise the difficulties of stopping the power stations—where one man can control the movement of coal because of the highly mechanised nature of the job.

But above all, they are determined to spread the dispute and fight for their future.

Nottingham

TERRY DUNN from Yorkshire Main Colliery was one of 200 pickets at Bevercotes, Notts.

"IF WE'D listened to the media yesterday, we'd have been terrified at the resistance they portrayed. We've come here and found it's totally different.

"The response has been marvellous. We just told everyone it was an NUM picket and asked them not to cross. 90% haven't crossed, I'd say the media picture is a fabrication. I've seen no violence at Harworth or Bevercotes, and we've a good relationship with the police.

"Every area faces the same threat of closures and redundancies. If Notts think they're safe from MacGregor's hatchet, they've got another thing coming.

"Otherwise Yorkshire would come out smelling of roses. Yorkshire is the least threatened area but we're willing to unite to protect weaker, smaller areas. If we're united we'll win. And we are here to unite them."

By Chris Ridge

Scotland

EVERY PIT in Scotland came to a standstill as miners fought for survival of their industry. At Monktonhall colliery even the overmen and deputies joined the strike.

Only at Bilston Glen was there any effective resistance to the strike call when about 200 walked through picket lines on Monday morning, but there were not enough to man up any of the sections however. In the afternoon the picket was reinforced by miners from the threatened Polmaise pit who succeeded in keeping the figures down to 70.

NUM member Steve Devlin was pleased at the numbers on strike having anticipated nearly all Bilston men going in. Doubts were more over the way the strike was called than its justice.

By Pat Craven



PHOTO: Rick Matthews (JFL)

Pickets at Bilston Glen colliery.

South Wales . . . Now really fighting

"NO, I don't want a paper, I will be selling papers next week," said one miner, bring the news of a unanimous vote for strike action from a mass meeting of Tower Lodge NUM last Saturday.

Later we spoke to Lodge chairman Hugh Edwards who commented, "the feeling of the lads is tremendous. We've known for some time the big one was coming. There was no hesitation at the meeting, they backed it unanimously".

We asked, "Was there criticism about Yorkshire not supporting you two years ago?"

"Certainly that was paramount in a lot of the boys' minds", said Hugh Ed-

wards, "but we dispelled a lot of that last week. The media talk was its Yorkshire that's out, you are only going out to support them. The answer to that was quite simple.

"Lodge representatives at the respective pits should tell the boys that whatever transpires in other areas, ignore this until we have had the full and comprehensive report from the local conference in Pontypridd on Friday.

"Our boys were very concerned after the let-down they had had, but they responded well. If every pit in South Wales could vote like these boys there would be no problem at all."

Durham miners speak

DURHAM MINER, Norman Strike: "I went to Boldon Colliery by myself this morning at six where the stockpiles are kept. I turned away seven lorries. No hassle. We need support particularly from transport unions but we've got to get ourselves properly organised, and quickly too."

TOMMY WILSON, on the NUM committee at Westoe spoke to Dave Bruce.

"Most miners here are quite young, they don't want to sell their jobs for redundancy pay, they want a future in the industry. The Tories have got away with destroying the

country's industry too long, someone's got to stand up to them. If its got to be the miners, then so be it.

At our meeting we overwhelmingly passed a resolution supporting the strike but with the proviso that a ballot be organised as soon as possible, but we have faith in the executive and fully support the strike meantime. If the leadership campaigns on the issues, the mood for strike is there.

"Either we let MacGregor walk all over us, killing our pits or we stand and fight. So far (Monday) half Britain's miners are out. We miners may be slow starters but we're pretty good finishers! We must win."

especially the younger miners—to save jobs. This strike has strengthened by the hour.

Initially some miners were reluctant to join in, influenced by memories of recent aborted strikes and lost ballots. Some older miners doubted whether victory was possible. The massive redundancy bribes did have some initial effect.

But within days, sometimes within hours, the mood dramatically changed. In Blaengarw pit, a 2-1 vote against the strike on Saturday was transformed on Tuesday morning into a resounding 300-80 vote for strike action. This is in South Wales.

In Scotland also there has been a swift consolidation of the strike. Chris Herriot from Monktonhall colliery told *Militant* that his area had been against the strike but now everything was set up for the fight.

The media have tried to highlight the opposition to strike action at Bilston Glen. But a central strike committee already exists covering the Mid and East Lothian areas which includes Monktonhall colliery and Bilston Glen, together with New Battle Workshops and the local Transport Depot.

Solid support

Local area strike committees are also being formed following the pattern established during Monktonhall's recent strike. Regular meetings of the local strike committee chairmen have been arranged.

This battle has been driven forward from below. Monday morning's picketing was clearly decisive in building momentum. Tyrone O'Sullivan, secretary of Tower Colliery, South Wales, told *Militant* that a lot of barriers had been crossed already, no pits were producing coal in South Wales and 80% of South Wales miners were solidly in support of the strike.

Picket volunteers

They were finding that as miners turned backed from picket lines, many of them were volunteering for immediate duty elsewhere.

A clear national central lead alongside the initiative of the rank and file is now vital. Special issues of the NUM paper, *The Miner* should be rushed out. Every miner should be armed with a detailed breakdown of MacGregor's plans.

The pits and workshops where investment is needed should be named. The specific amounts which the

government must guarantee should be spelt out. The NUM should also explain its alternative to the butchery of the coal industry.

Publicity material should be made available in sufficient bulk supplies so miners can take their case to the wider working class. Once the strike is solid among miners then attention will turn to stopping all movement of coal stocks and supplies.

Lessons of 1972

The TGWU General Executive has already called upon members to support the miners, by not delivering coal to any coal stockists or any NCB customers. The Triple Alliance should be invoked. Joint Committees should be organised between power workers and miners to ensure maximum immediate support for the miners. Such solidarity would rapidly bring MacGregor and the Tories to their knees.

The decision to go to the Courts is a desperate bid to stop such solidarity. But the signs are that this latest provocation is already recoiling in the face of MacGregor. In 1972 the Heath government imagined it could use the law courts against the dockers when dockers and transport workers seemed to be involved in a fratricidal battle over jobs.

The TGWU was fined and five dockers were thrown in jail. But any differences between dockers and drivers rapidly receded under the impact of this attack. They joined together against the common enemy, as did workers everywhere.

"We can win"

A spontaneous general strike erupted through the length and breadth of the British labour movement. Should any move be made today to seize any NUM funds, or to jail any miner, then the entire labour movement must be mobilised immediately in solidarity action. The preparations for support action must be made now in every union and every locality.

The battle lines are drawn. Once on strike, miners will be determined to go back only with a victory under their belt. If necessary they will dig in for a long bitter struggle.

They will not be stampeded back to work by threats of legal action. Such intimidation will only harden their determination. Tyrone O'Sullivan summed up the situation. "It is not going to be easy," he said, "but we can win".

Kent pits all out

AT BETTESHANGER colliery there was an overwhelming vote for strike on an estimated 94% turn-out at the meeting.

All three pits are out solidly. Areas of Kent are already unemployment blackspots difficult to beat anywhere in Britain and closure would be the end.

A young miner interviewed on TV was asked whether he wouldn't lose money in a strike. "I've got a £200 a month mortgage, but I've got to pay that

PHIL SUTCLIFFE: "We've got nothing to lose. All other areas should back Yorkshire. It's no good going back and crying on their shoulders".

PAUL DEVEREAUX: We shouldn't be fighting ourselves but fighting MacGregor".

over 19 years, not just a few weeks. I'm coming out".

BUDGET

Big slice for rich Crumbs for rest

HAVING DINED in the plush surroundings of No 11 Downing Street on smoked salmon and smoked trout, the Chancellor of the Exchequer Nigel Lawson held up the battered budget bag, smiled sweetly and said his proposals would help the poor and create jobs. Reality proved otherwise.

Despite a meagre crumb handed down to some of those caught in the poverty trap, the budget proved to be just more of the same from the Tories. The major part of the budget cake went as ever to big business, to squeals of delight from the Tory benches in Parliament. The 'gains' for working people are pathetic. A young worker on £35 a week can expect an 'extra' 20p a week. A married man or an average wage will get £2—but even this miserly sum will be eaten away by the price rises made by the Tories. Yet the rich on over £40,000 a year can expect about £550 bonus each year. The budget does little to help ordinary working people:

★ **The poor.** The Tories claimed raising the tax threshold would lift people out of the poverty trap, where meagre wage rises only leave workers cut off from benefits. But Chris Pond of the Low Pay Unit said: "The budget will only help very few people, about 10,000 families out of the estimated 160,000 families in the poverty trap."

"There's absolutely nothing in the budget to create jobs. There's plenty for the rich, there's concessions for them. The CBI say the budget will help create some jobs, some time in the future but we've heard all that before."
 — **Wally Jaynes, secretary of Binley and Willenhall Labour Party, Coventry.**

★ **Workers.** The £2 a week 'rise' will soon be swallowed up by increases in 'luxury' goods such as cigarettes (10p rise), beer (2p a pint), petrol (4½p gallon) and road tax (up £5). Also National In-

urance contributions are set to rise from 5 April.
 ★ **Families.** Besides being hit by those mentioned above, they will also lose out with no increases announced in Child Benefit and increases in NHS charges earmarked for 1 April (prescriptions up to £1.60). Many have been angered by the new 15% VAT on take aways. For many the fish and chip shop makes up part of their staple diet—and the 'luxury' of the Chinese take-away at the weekend has been hit.

★ **Pensioners.** Their small increases will soon be eaten away. One sickening aspect of Lawson's speech was his 'benevolent' decision to abolish tax on paraffin, saying many pensioners relied on this for fuel. Yet this is the most dangerous form of heating. With electricity charges (because of a new service 'tax') going up from 1 April—the seventh time they have risen under this government—more people will be forced to revert to risky paraffin heaters.

★ **Jobs** are hit too. Another 37,000 jobs are to go in the Civil Service while cuts of £3 billion were announced in the public sector.

Even people on modest earnings are hit by the budget. The removal of life insurance from tax relief will deter small savers, while VAT of 15% on building improvements will hit many young house owners.

But one section not to be hit of course is big business. The Tories attitude was well summed up by Dave Nellist MP who described one incident to *Militant*: "Previous to the budget Labour had been calling on the Tories to put the long term unemployed in the same bracket as those who are disabled by industrial accidents etc, so they would get an increase in benefit. The Tories said this would cost them £220 million and they

When putting tax on cigarettes and drink Lawson said it was to help people's health. Danny Cunningham of Gorton LPYS in Manchester replied: "We appreciate the Chancellor's concern for our hearts, lungs and liver but we feel that his touching concern would have been better directed at our stomachs and towards fatter giros."

couldn't find that sort of money. Yet in the budget the cuts in the Corporation Tax will give big business extra profits of £280 million!"

The budget marked another boon for the bosses, with the National Insurance Surcharge abolished and business tax cut by 35%. Sir James Cleminson, the new leader of the CBI, appearing on television, talked vaguely that reduced costs for the private sector would mean more jobs. But they always say this. Already this year, profits for big business have risen by 25% (*Financial Times*, March 12), yet there has been no similar increase in jobs.

Indeed, the budget cut back the investment allowance for the manufacturing industry, at the same time as giving a boost to share buyers. The Tories are not interested in helping create real jobs in industry but look towards the 'paper money' for their friends in the finance houses. This budget offers nothing new for ordinary people—just more of the same, while its still boom time for the rich.

(See editorial page 2 features pages 7, 8, 9)

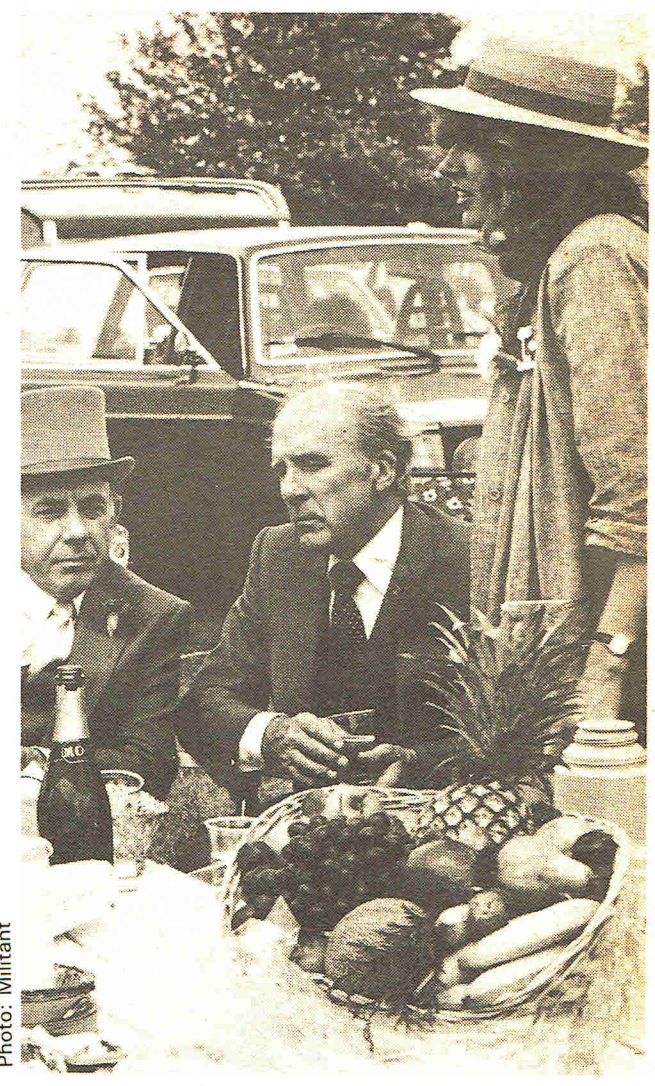


Photo: Militant

Crisis? What crisis? The rich at Ascot last year. As you can see, they are tightening their belts like the rest of us.

Workers in Glasgow gave their verdict on the budget. John Macloud, a kitchen porter said: "Putting VAT on fish and chips is typical of them. I don't expect Lawson has ever eaten a fish and chip supper."

Anne Galbraith, single parent: "There's nothing in it for me or the likes of me. But then I didn't expect anything, did you?"

Tony Quinn, unemployed: "Typical—nothing in it for us but I saw from the television that if you're on over 35 grand you do alright."

Brian Williamson, shop steward at Rolls Royce: "It does nothing to help the working class at all. The price of a pint for the workers is up while the wine for the middle classes is down."

Support fight for decent pay

THE TORIES claimed that their budget bonanza for the bosses would help working people. Danny Cunningham of Manchester Gorton LPYS showed how such measures in the past have done nothing to help workers, using the example of the Phillips rubber factory in Manchester where the workers are fighting for decent pay:

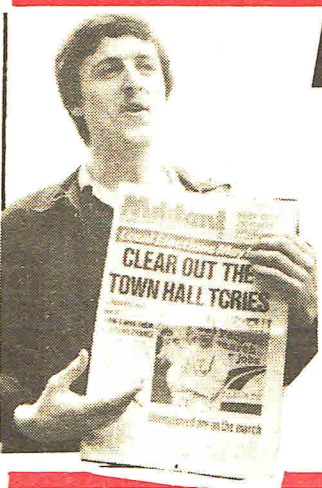
"The Tories have reduced tax for the bosses, yet at the same time cut down the allowance for manufacturing investment and put VAT on building improvements. The bosses now have even less incentive to invest, but if you look at the Phillips rubber factory, you can see how these 'incentives' didn't do much good anyway.

"The boss at Phillips forced the workers to use old worn out machinery and work with dangerous chemicals, and as for the

building itself—when I went down to the picket line with the LPYS I thought it was one of those derelict warehouses, not a factory. All the Phillip bosses are worried about is not how much they can claim on this or that machinery but how much profit they can make every day by squeezing the workers' wage—it was £48 basic which is why they're on strike.

"Workers in the Manchester area can best show their anger at the Tories by joining the march in support of the Phillips workers this Saturday.

March and Rally in support of Phillips workers, Saturday 17 March. Assemble 10.30 am at junction of Mancunian Way/Oxford Road (near the Polytechnic)



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