

Militant

THE MARXIST PAPER FOR LABOUR & YOUTH

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25p

Inside:

Liverpool's fight

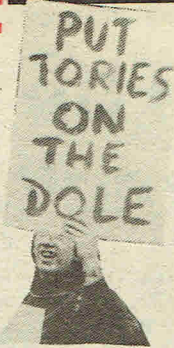
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MINERS

fight for jobs

By Ian Isaac

(Secretary, St Johns NUM and South Wales Miners' Executive)

THE MASS of the British miners are on strike. 134 pits are closed. Nothing must be allowed to deter the struggle of miners to defend the pits, our jobs and our communities.

Nothing must be allowed to halt the momentum now building up behind this strike.

A whole layer of miners are being involved in action for the first time in their lives. They have witnessed the devious methods of the National Coal Board, the police and the government to rob them of their jobs.

Fighting closures

At the same time, they have felt the comradeship that is deeply embedded in our union, a comradeship that is always particularly strong when miners stand together in struggle.

This strike is not like the miners' strikes of the 1970s. Decent living standards are at stake, but the central issue is jobs. We are fighting against pit closures. For many pits and for entire coalfields the issue is literally survival or annihilation. There is a confident mood



Agecroft Colliery. Police attack Yorkshire pickets

Photo: John Smith (IFL)

amongst miners and a feeling that the strike is going forward. The strike has begun to develop in pits where recent area ballots voted against action.

Bolsover in the Nottinghamshire NUM area and the afternoon shifts at Bersham colliery North Wales, are among those pits where

miners have recently refused to cross picket lines.

This strike is strengthening daily, through the living democracy in action upon which many of the most famous victories of the trade union movement have been based.

(Continued on page 2)



Photo: Tommy Carroll

Liverpool council's campaign has been supported throughout by the council's workforce.

Liverpool council: 'We won't budge'

THE BATTLE to defend Liverpool City Council received a major boost this week when the local government union NALGO declared they would support councils that stood up and fought the Tories.

A special NALGO conference was held on Tuesday March 20 and delegates agreed to support "any council refusing to make cuts even in the event of central government imposing any kind of legal sanctions against them."

Support for the council amongst workers on Merseyside is growing day by day, as March 29—Liverpool's 'Budget Day'—draws nearer. On that day Liverpool's Labour Council in-

tends to push through its agreed budget proposals which the Tory government has declared 'illegal'.

Of course, there have been setbacks on the way. Six councillors have defected from supporting Labour's policy and say they will not support the budget. Also this week, the Labour Party national leadership equivocated in its support for the council's stand. (These issues are taken up fully inside.)

But amongst the Liverpool labour movement there is no such backpeddling. It's a pity the national Labour leadership does not show the same kind of determination as the Liverpool Labour leaders.

Their defiance—in the face of Tory threats to surcharge them was well summed up by Council Leader

(Continued on page 3)

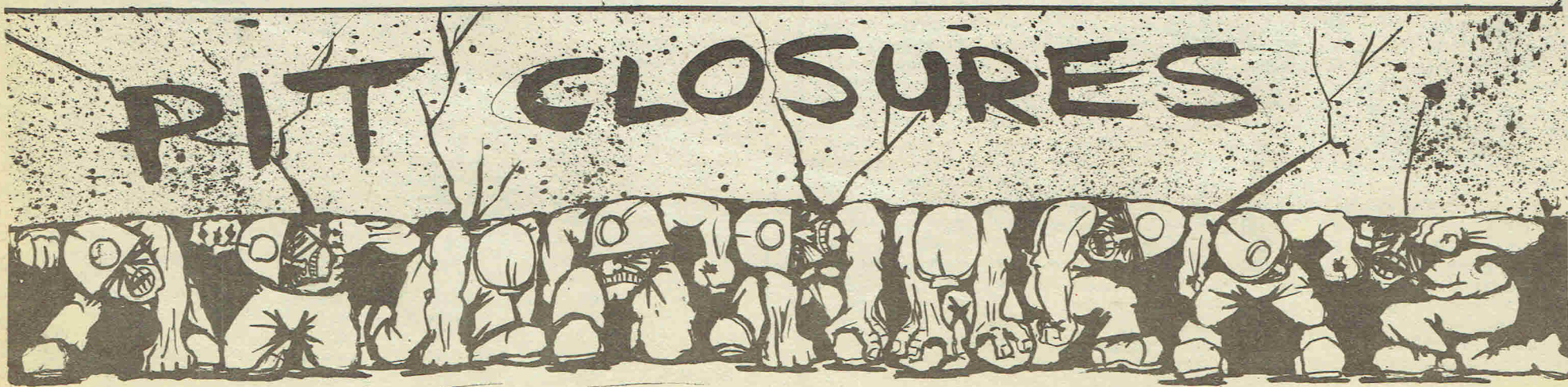
Building Fund appeal

MONEY IS FLOODING to the Marxist Daily Building Fund—another £5,000 in the post on Wednesday, and messages of TENS of thousands more on its way! This is a magnificent response to our urgent appeals!

Now EVERY promise must be turned into real hard cash so that all the deadlines can be met in our negotiations for the premises we have seen. This week we go to our bankers to see if they will lend us the extra we need. Even if they do, obviously, the more you send us before the actual date of purchase, the less we will have to borrow and the less goes to the bankers in interest!!

We wish to thank all those who have already 'invested' their hard-earned 'capital' with us and got us this far towards realising the hopes of premises for a Marxist Daily. There's still a long way to go, but with YOUR help and determination, we will do it!!

IT'S NEVER TOO LATE TO DONATE!!
Rush donations to 'Marxist Daily Building Fund', 1 Mentmore Terrace, London E8 3PN.



Militant

The Tories' picket-busting police

THE HUGE military-style police operation ordered by Home Secretary Leon Brittan against the striking miners, is the biggest such operation since the 1926 general strike.

It dispels any lingering illusions there might be that the police are a 'community' based force not directly involved in the implementation of political policy. They are plainly being used to bolster the Tories' relentless drive against trade union rights and conditions.

Including those held in reserve, up to 20,000 police officers have been deployed at a cost of over half a million pounds a day. Three army barracks have been made available to this picket-busting force, as well as all the paraphernalia of riot control, like special helmets, shields, flameproof uniforms, and police dogs, not to mention spotter aircraft and helicopters.

Militant has always argued that the police, the judiciary and the law in general are not 'neutral', but instruments of the employing class, and nothing better illustrates that than the use of the police in the last week.

It goes without saying that the Tories would not even consider a legal 'blitz' on the thousands of employers who defy the laws on Health and Safety or on statutory minimum wages, or on company law. There are vast areas of law-breaking to which the Tories and the judiciary turn a deliberate blind eye—but that is never the case when it comes to workers fighting for their own class interests against the bosses.

In this instance, the police have assumed legal powers far and above anything they have used in the past, stopping cars and buses and turning them back hundreds of miles from their destinations, intimidating bus companies into refusing contracts with miners and even threatening to arrest Kent workers if they stray outside their own home county.

Solicitors for the Kent miners have argued that by these actions police are themselves acting unlawfully. "There is no such offence as secondary picketing", one solicitor said, "except in the civil law and yet the police are using the criminal law to prevent people from picketing peacefully."

Reserve laws

But however much workers would agree with these comments, the Tory Attorney General, Sir Michael Havers, has pointed out which legal powers the police are using. The police have powers to turn back anyone, he explained, if they thought they were attending a picket where there might be a breach of the peace. Failure to comply would make workers liable to arrest for obstruction.

Havers' 'clarification' only underlines the political use of the law: there are no recorded instances to our knowledge of police turning back busloads of National Front thugs off to intimidate some local black community with their sticks and staves. There are no massive



Photo: John Smith (IFL)

police operations to turn back football hooligans on their way to a Saturday afternoon punch-up.

The Tories' explanation and the police action, therefore, merely confirm that law is applied in a class manner. Where there are not sufficient laws on the statute book to directly restrict workers' rights, then other laws held in reserve will always be suitably interpreted to do the job.

The lessons for the labour movement are two-fold. In the longer-term, the police actions can be seen as a part of a general trend towards the restriction of trade union rights, in order to facilitate the Tories' assault on the living standards and rights established by workers over many years. The crisis of British capitalism demands that the working class have to make huge sacrifices and the trade union movement stands in the way of that.

Anti-union laws

MacGregor has for the moment drawn back from seeking a writ for contempt over flying pickets but it is still not ruled out that steps could be taken to try to sequester parts of the NUM assets, as in the case of the NGA. MacGregor's resort to the law will have been the first time for any major public sector employer against a trade union, and sets a dangerous precedent.

Moreover, one of the heads of the Institute of Directors commented that MacGregor's success in obtaining the injunction "constitutes the key to the next step in trade union legislation, shortly to be the subject of a government consultative document: the removal of legal immunities for strikes in essential public services." (*The Times*, 15 March, 1984).

Sections of the ruling class, in other words, are planning to effectively ban all public sector strikes, if they could get away with it. *The Times* has added its own penniworth, bluntly declaring that all picketing is "intimidation" and should be banned.

The moves towards the restriction of democratic union rights and the parallel build-up of riot police and sophisticated police control techniques are an indication of the movement of British society towards greatly sharpened class struggle. The so-called traditions of "gradual, peaceful and har-

monious development" upon which the right wing of the labour movement base themselves, will be blown apart by developments over the next few years.

The clash of class interests carries within it the possibility of struggle on the scale of the inter-war years, including general strikes.

Meticulous planning

The political implications are clear: there is no road out for workers on the basis of the present system. Capitalism is itself creating all the conditions for class conflict and social upheaval. The response of one section of the Tory Party and the ruling class will be a clear move towards police-state conditions. This should increase the determination of labour movement activists to fight for the only alternative—the socialist transformation of society.

In the shorter term, the lesson of the police operation against the miners is that it demonstrates clearly the need for a bold and decisive lead from the top and the most meticulous planning in any industrial dispute.

The union leaderships at area and national level must show the same commitment to planning and organisation—involving, of course, the mass of the members—as have the police and the Tory government.

The miners have reserve assets that the Tory government can never have: the sympathy and support of the labour movement. No force in society can defeat the labour movement, fully mobilised and clearly led in defence of its interests.

As Peter Hennessy, correspondent of *The Times*, explained, "If, for example, the Yorkshire miners, assisted by large numbers of sympathetic trade unionists decided to besiege the big coal-burning power stations in the Trent Valley and the Doncaster area—the backbone of the national electricity grid—there is very little the chief constables of Nottinghamshire and South Yorkshire could do on the day to make sure supplies were not affected if the workforce could not enter the premises." (*The Times*, 20 March).

That must be the answer of the labour movement to the Tories' massive show of police power.

Miners

(From page one)

Miners have come together in the traditional manner, discussed the issues and voted.

In most collieries the votes have become more firmly pro-strike, as the struggle has developed and as the confidence of the miners has increased. Three quarters of miners have now voted with their feet.

The tasks of this striking majority now is to convince the non-striking minority of the need to fight. When pickets from my own colliery, St Johns, went to Nottinghamshire we received an extremely friendly response. We are confident that all non-striking pits will listen to the class appeals of their brother miners and join the fight to stop pits being closed.

The striking coalfields must convince, persuade and lead by example. Where it is at all possible, non-striking miners must be addressed in properly organised meetings so the issues can be clearly put to them and appeals for support can be made.

The left activists in areas like Nottingham must mobilise the thousands who voted for a strike to argue, discuss with and convince their fellow miners to join the struggle for jobs.

In some pits, sympathetic local miners have joined our picket lines, but for the moment they have been unable to persuade the bulk of their shift to stand with them. In these cases they should discuss special dispensation with the pickets, so that they can continue to argue the case for the strike, on the pit-head and in the mine itself. This is particularly important in cases where the police absolutely refuse the right for pickets and for local men sympathetic with the stoppage to approach men coming on shift.

Miners who still imagine that their own pits are safe need only remember the experience of the South Wales coalfield in the 1960s, when over half the coalfield was closed down for the sake of cheap oil.

Coal accessible

No pit is immune from MacGregor's plan. My own colliery is typical of those now under threat. No more than 2½ miles from our shaft there are 150 million tonnes of coal, about 100 years of production, which has been proved and qualified as accessible from the St Johns shaft by the union's engineers. The National Coal Board play the game of ostriches—pretending that this easy access to the Margam coal-seams doesn't exist.

But this fight is not just about St Johns, Gortonwood or the other pits on MacGregor's immediate hit-list. The future of every miner is at stake.

Even at this stage tremendous initiative and imagination has been shown in developing the strike and winning support. Now, alongside the boldness, organisation and ingenuity at a rank and file level, a clear central lead is necessary. A national co-ordinated strategy for victory should be outlined to all miners.

The union should identify the investment requirements of every pit, plant and workshop, in order that the rank and file can easily identify not just with the national struggle, but also with the



NEVER HAVE SO FEW
OWED SO MUCH
TO SO MANY.

local requirements necessary for job security in their own localities.

In opposition to the redundancy bribes we should fight to bring about the union's demand for retirement at 50 with dignity, where men can leave their jobs intact to be handed over to their sons and nephews or to other young people in the mining communities. Special issues of *The Miner* must be brought out to counteract

informed of the progress of the strike.

In South Wales, following a shakey start, we had within a matter of days consolidated our strike organisation. We have the experiences of 1981 and 1983 to draw from. Within hours of the votes for action hundreds of miners were on the road to lobby for support.

At St Johns we have had three mass meetings of 600 in a week. This will be followed now by a regular pattern of weekly mass meetings to keep the men fully informed of what is going.

Scottish Area organises pickets

"WE SENT two carloads of pickets to Northumberland. At Ashington we were stopped by police and escorted back to the Scottish border.

"The Tories have declared war and gone about this like a military operation. There's only one reply to that, organise our flying pickets along the same lines.

"If our leaders were to call off the strike now, we wouldn't be talking about 20,000 jobs but about 40, 50 or 80,000 jobs in the next year or so.

"Our first task must be to get non-striking areas to join the dispute, then to get solidarity action and build this into a mass movement of working people. It is a fight for the entire labour and trade union movement and for our democratic rights as free citizens.

"If we can beat this Tory government we'll be beating it out of 10 Downing Street and putting a Labour government into power to throw out reactionary policies and carry out socialist policies in the interests of the working class."

—Chris Herriot, strike committee Monktonhall colliery, Scotland.

the NCB's *Coal News*.

Each area should now commission a special series of leaflets, drawing out the implications of MacGregor's plans for their own pits and for their own communities. Material should also be produced to be handed to miners in the non-striking coal-fields.

As the strike develops national and local material must be produced regularly, to help keep all miners fully

24-hour strike committee

Locally, in South Wales, and nationally, we have established committees dealing with house-coal delivery for the old, chronically sick and hospitals, and we have established our strike headquarters which is being manned 24 hours a day.

Already, we have been overwhelmed by offers of help and assistance. Mid-Glamorgan County Council is providing free school meals to the sons and daughters of striking miners and OGWR, the local borough council, is suspending payment of rent for the duration of the strike.

Local people have been phoning up, volunteering to drive members to lobby and picket free of charge. Local petrol stations have offered discounts on petrol and the local clubs are reducing the price of beer to striking miners. There is a whole world of local sympathy beginning to develop.

We have begun to turn to our brothers and sisters in the power-stations, in the steelworks, on the railways and on the docks. One railway worker told us we should have no cause for embarrassment in asking for aid. Our fight was their fight. The issue of jobs affected everyone in South Wales. "If more pits closed," he said, "less jobs will be needed on the railways".

He pointed to the *Militant* poster, which showed the miner holding his redundancy packet and his son asking, "Will be able to buy it back day when I want a job?" That poster, the railway worker told me, sums up the whole situation. That is what the fight is all about!

Liverpool: no help from Kinnock

THE TORY press have taken great delight in reporting Labour leader Neil Kinnock's "snub" of Liverpool council. A delegation of councillors and labour movement representatives from Liverpool met Mr Kinnock on Monday 19 March. They were looking for his support, or at least a viable alternative they could pursue.

The meeting opened with a clear statement of the financial position of the council from the delegation. This had been explained at three previous meetings with Jack Straw, the Labour spokesman on local authorities. There were no fundamental disagreements about the stark realities facing Liverpool, and that the blame for the situation lay with the Tory government and ten years of previous Liberal/Tory misrule of Liverpool.

Tony Byrne, city finance chairman, spelt out the situation in detail. Derek Hatton, deputy council leader, explained the campaign that had been fought for Liverpool and the extent of local support. He also pointed out that other local authorities, in increasing numbers, would be in the same position as Liverpool next year.

Tony Mulhearn for the District Labour Party, pointed out that the press had played up this meeting as an attempt at a com-

By a Militant Reporter

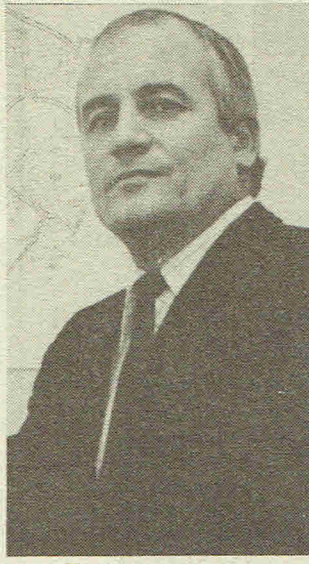
promise. It was nothing of the sort, he said. Liverpool had come to ask the national leadership for full and unequivocal support. They were prepared to listen to anyone who could show an alternative that did not include massive rate or rent increases or job losses.

Neil Kinnock agreed that it was not a meeting to call for compromises. He said there was nothing he could insist upon, there was no machinery for asserting or imposing. He asked though, could what Liverpool aim for be achieved with the powers that Liverpool has: "Whatever course of action, you will be deprived of achieving your aim."

He went on to ask rhetorical questions which painted a picture that Liverpool could not break the law, that it would be better to stay in office to "mitigate the damage" of the Tory government. He went on to



Neil Kinnock.



Tony Mulhearn.

say: "We will make representations to the government to secure additional finance if the situation makes it possible" (ie if Liverpool keeps within the law).

Bravado

He said whatever declarations of support are forthcoming they are, "bravado" in terms of the power of the government. He said all they would do was remove people from central positions and the government would enforce its policies.

In reply John Hamilton, leader of Liverpool council, pointed out the consequences of implementing cuts. He said illegal protest, the breakdown of social order were just below the surface. The government had to face up to the consequences of social unrest. After the 1981 riots they had coughed up £20 million—cannot the government be persuaded to find the money, he asked? He asked could the Parliamentary Labour Party not have a much stronger debate in Parliament on this? Why was it left to Liberal MP

David Alton to initiate a debate on Liverpool?

Peter Leonard, chairman of Liverpool G&M local authority convenors, spoke about how his members had physically helped the return of the local council, but how they would totally oppose all cuts. If Labour betrayed its policies it would not be returned in May.

Tony Mulhearn pointed to the example of the Upper Clyde in 1971. There the then Tory government, having promised no aid to 'lame ducks', eventually paid out £25 million "to avert social disorder". The mass movement in Liverpool was a parallel situation.

Parallel

Yet Kinnock said there were no parallels with the Upper Clyde or Clay Cross or Poplar. If it was a workplace fighting, then it might be possible to win the fight. But the law has changed. He said he understood Peter Leonard's attitude of "better to go down fighting" but he was not prepared to indulge in empty rhetoric. The question was, he said, will you succeed? The answer he said was no. "If there were a Labour government we could deliver," he said.

For the delegation Terry

Harrison stressed that by not giving support, the Labour leadership were in effect telling Liverpool to make cuts.

Mr Kinnock replied that he was not saying sack the workers, nor was he washing his hands of Liverpool.

He was asked finally if he would come to Liverpool. He declined saying it would be "pointless". He said he had no power to help. Yet it was pointed out to him that he could give great encouragement to the movement in Liverpool by a declaration of support and by coming to Liverpool on 29 March.

The Liverpool case was plainly put. There is no dispute as to its validity. The national leadership offered a great deal of sympathy and understanding, but Neil Kinnock did not feel able to offer any real alternative to the stark choice facing Liverpool.

The discussions will continue however as the situation demands full, positive support from Kinnock and the Labour leadership.

To the workers of Liverpool the situation facing them is clear. To the ranks of the labour movement, not only in Liverpool but nationally, the situation is clear. It is hoped this understanding will permeate up to the Labour leadership.

Why we back the council

WORKERS from different walks of life in Liverpool told *Militant* why they support the City Council in the fight against the Tories:

Industrial worker

TONY HAYES, TGWU convenor at Schwepes, Aintree—

"We have been fighting the closure of the Schwepes site at Aintree. One thing I have learnt in the past nine months is that whatever capabilities you can throw at a multi-national, you still need political back-up. That's why I applaud moves by Liverpool City Council. We've had a lot of support from them. They've made themselves available all the time, but the company have refused to sit down and discuss with them.

"There's been more support for the council from the TGWU than any other union on Merseyside. Some say we 'mustn't break the law', but as far as I am concerned, if the council backs down now they'll be in permanent opposition. So they've got to go forward and they can't go forward alone."

Council worker

FRANK SKELTON, UCATT shop steward, council estates department—

"Most of the lads know if it wasn't for the election of the Labour council a lot of us would not be in work now. In the depots we were particularly threatened by the contract for the Dovecot

estate building extensions and bathroom units going out to private contractors. With the election of Labour that contract went to the Direct Labour Organisation—over 300 jobs were kept in the depots. Most of us are young and know we will have no chance of getting another job if Labour is defeated. The Liberals would put those jobs out to private contractors."

Council Tenant

A TENANT from the Scotland Road area spoke to *Militant* as she protested against Tory minister Patrick Jenkin's visit to a new watersports centre—

"Jenkin should have looked at the housing we're living in. They're disgraceful housing conditions up here. I've got nothing against the watersports centre, I think it's a good thing. But the priority should be housing. Also over here there's not a bit of fencing. The children can walk off the road and drown in the canal—there's been 10 drowned in the past 10 years. When we asked about fencing they told us there's no money—yet there they are running buffets for him.

"We want £30 million off them and they won't give it to us, that's why we're here. He wants to come and look at the other side of the canal where we live. Rat infested—that's our home."



Students take to the streets of Liverpool on a NUS day of action on 10 March. Photo: Tina Carroll

College student

GEORGE McDERMOT, a disabled student at Millbank College—

"I got involved along with another student and helped to set up a Labour Club. If you go to a YS meeting you meet other people facing problems trying to survive on the dole, just getting by. Though I may be in a wheel-

chair, you realise you have lots of things in common with other workers.

"Some people in the Students Union don't like to bring politics in but the thing is you can't run a union without being political. I support the City Council all the way. The youth of Liverpool are sick and tired of the situation they face. The only way we are going to show this is by a combined force—Liverpool council are a voice for us."

Local anger at the 'rebels'

A LIVERPOOL Labour Party branch that has three of the 'rebel' councillors in its ward is campaigning on the doorstep for the support of the local people.

Gillmoss Labour Party has begun canvassing, handing out copies of the council's paper *Not the Liverpool Echo* and collecting signatures for a petition supporting the council's stand.

Phil Nibbs, canvass organiser, said: "The three local 'rebel' councillors—Roderick, Murphy and Snell—have gone totally against local feeling. Roderick has already been deselected but his vote still counts at the Budget Day meeting, and up until May.

"We are aiming to get two and a half thousand signatures so these three can't claim that Labour voters would prefer them to go against Labour Party policy—two and a half thousand was about the number of votes the last councillor got when elected in this ward. When we ask people

to sign the petition, we are asking them to vote Labour in May".

On a canvass on March 15, comments at the door showed great support for the council's stand. One unemployed worker said: "I think it's disgusting what the councillors did. They didn't come to the people and ask what we wanted. We put them into power and they just went against everything that we put them in for, against everything the Labour Party stood for."

Maureen Tomkins summed up the attitude of many workers in Liverpool: "These councillors took on the job so why in the middle of it turn around and say no? Lets face it, what's Roderick ever done here, or Snell, or any of them. Nothing. These lads here have. I'm not militant—I just want to live in this world, I don't want to own it. I just want a decent job and to go about my business."

Council fight

(Continued from front page)

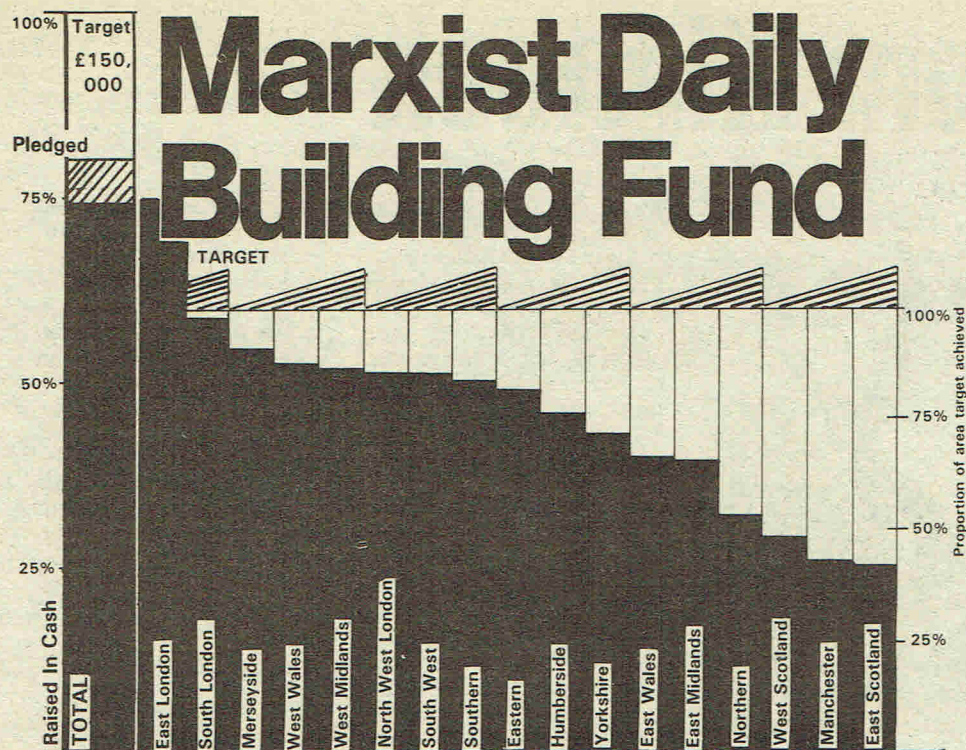
John Hamilton. He told the *Liverpool Echo*, this week: "I could be made homeless and would lose any savings that I have, any personal possessions, part of my teacher's pension and would probably finish up in Salvation Army type accommodation. But I am adamant. We will not budge. The only person who can save this city is Patrick Jenkin."

This is not empty rhetoric. Liverpool workers are backing up the council with strike action on 29 March. Already thousands have pledged support. This list was added to this week where mass

meetings were held to vote on strike action for 29 March.

A mass meeting of the council's Recreation and Open Spaces Department workers voted 980 in favour, with only 11 against. At the meeting of the Department's 300 EETPU and AUEW members—*unanimous*. At the meeting of the Department's 300 TGWU members—*unanimous*.

And it's not only council workers who are backing the council. Workers at the Birds Eye plant, the Merseyside NGA and SOGAT are backing the strike. Liverpool is all set for a massive turnout in support of the City Council on 29 March.



With very little time left to raise the rest of the £150,000 target this week we URGENTLY APPEAL to all workers, all the unemployed, all housewives and all organisations who have not yet made a donation to the Building Fund—to all those who have still not pledged—do it NOW!

The total has risen to £109,668. This means there is still £40,332 to raise. However, £84,368 has been received since January! In one week at the beginning of February we received £23,521! We are confident that workers will rally to our appeal to meet that effort or double it in the course of this week.

Possible premises

Many workers are being thrown into struggle for the first time due to the ravages of the Tory system on their jobs etc. During these struggles they begin to appreciate the necessity for a workers daily which will defend their living standards. But we must have the premises first. Help us take this giant step. With the many annual trade union conferences ap-

proaching we appeal to all trade unionists—get your shop stewards cte/trade union branch to make a donation.

Many Labour Party Young Socialists branches have already donated towards the fund and money came in this week from Bournemouth W LPYS. Whatever the organisation send us a donation. Is your future worth fighting for?

Some of the areas lagging behind have started to respond; £900 is on its way from East Scotland and £236 has come in from Manchester this week including donations of £100 from A. Walsh and Grahame Smith. And Manchester have guaranteed at least 80% of their target will be met this week.

Although East London has sailed over its target money continues to pour in

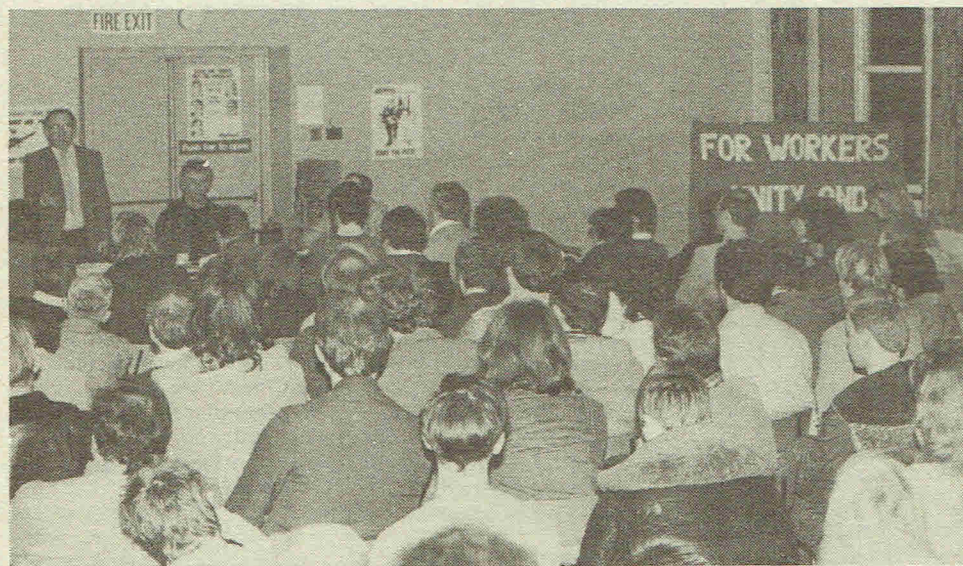
with a further £317 this week. Hull also collected a further £300 from a meeting of 30 supporters!

Other donations included; £100 J. Atkinson Hull; £200 Gerald Patton Reading; £50 Bob Wareing Merseyside MP; £50 Tommy Nelson, Scott's bakery, Merseyside; £50 Neelam Sharma West London; a further £50 from Bill Wynne Lancs following a donation of £100; £10 Ravrinda Newham; Audrey Moore Nottingham £5; and Mark Drakeford Branch Secretary Riverside Ward LP Cardiff.

The unemployed continue to support the fund; two donations received were £5 from Paul Holmes Saddleworth and C. Gwynne Poole £5. We've had many many promises this week that most areas will reach their targets-but those 'promises' MUST be turned in to CASH if we are to realise the opportunities now in front of us—you can help us do it if we respond NOW!

By Kim Waddington

Newcastle readers meeting



Section of the audience at meeting, 18 March.

Photo: D Pearson

LAST SUNDAY'S *Militant* Readers' Meeting in Newcastle was a huge success. Over 150 people, our largest audience ever, heard Peter Taaffe (*Militant's* Editor) and Stan Pearce, (NUM Monkwearmouth).

£675 for Building Fund

During the discussion there were optimistic reports from the miners' picket lines and determined speeches from councillors who have stood firm against the local

Labour council's decision to implement cuts.

During the meeting a cheque for £675 was handed over to Peter Taaffe for the Building Fund. Every penny had been collected over the last few weeks from the

pocket of workers and the cheque was presented by Daisy Rawlings a Marxist stalwart for over forty years.

By Jane Harker (Wallsend LPYS)

SPRING ISSUE—MILITANT INTERNATIONAL REVIEW—JUST OUT

Articles on: Andropov and after Lenin's last struggle 1983 Belgian General Strike

Buy it from your local Militant seller, 75p or order from World Socialist Books 90p (incl. p&p), 1 Mentmore Terrace, London E8 3PN.

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.

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.

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

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.

LEYTON public meeting: "Stop school closures!" Speakers from Labour Party, National Union of Teachers. Plenty of time for questions and discussion. Sunday, 25 March, 4 pm at The Grange, 70 Grange Park Road, Leyton. Organised by Waltham Forest Labour Party Young Socialist branches c/o 70 Grange Park Road, E10. Further details phone Chris (556 4996).

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

SHEFFIELD: Speakers: Dave Nellist MP; Lynn Walsh (*Militant* Editorial Board, expelled from the Labour Party) on 2 April at 7.30 pm at the Graves Cinema, Sheffield University Students' Union, Western Bank, Sheffield 10.

OLDHAM: 'What we Stand For', Thursday, 5 April, 7.45 pm. Speaker: John Hunt (LPYS National Committee, personal capacity) at Mare and Fowl Pub, Ashton Road, Oldham.

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.

LINCOLN: Marxist Discussion Group. Every Tuesday at the Victoria Pub, Union road, Lincoln, 7.30 pm. For further details tel: (0522) 27922.

BRYAN BECKINGHAM and MANDY LANGMEAD are 'making it legal' on Saturday, 31 March. Comrades who know us are welcome to celebrate with us at 'The White Horse', Bedminster, Bristol from 8 pm.

SEND YOUR Shell Petrol "make a million cards" to Helen Mullineux, 7 Station Road, London SW12 9AZ. All proceeds to the fighting fund.

FIGHTING FUND This week: **£1,787**

Area	Received	% of target achieved	Target 7 April
Eastern	867		2500
East Midlands	857		2900
Humberside	555		1500
London East	1430		3250
London West	673		2050
London South	1015		2650
Manchester & Lancs	838		3520
Merseyside	1093		4000
Northern	1013		3350
Scotland East	563		2150
Scotland West	682		3000
Southern	1626		4300
South West	461		2000
Wales East	671		1880
Wales West	617		1650
West Midlands	899		3500
Yorkshire	1511		4100
Others	1175		2000
Total received	16547		50,000

SOCIALS AND fund raising benefits are by no means new ideas. Eleanor Marx was often involved in organising fund raising benefits to raise funds for strikers and their families nearly 100 years ago. On one occasion a "Grand Concert" was organised to raise funds for the "Nine Elms Branch of the Gasworkers" and the "Vauxhall Working Men's Club".

From Eleanor Marx's biography: "It was indeed a grand and very prolonged affair, with speeches galore, telegrams from those unable to be present, songs of every variety, sketches and recitations to which Eleanor contributed; 'Hoods Song of the Shirt' and Aveling, 'Shelley's Address to the Men of England', moving the audience deeply... during the interval the Gasworkers' Union banner was ceremoniously unfurled on the stage by Keir Hardie..."

Socials are still a lively part of our fund raising activities as a letter this week from Julie Clifford shows,

"... the Militant Supporters Society at the University of Kent in Canterbury held a "social" in the form of a folk evening starring "Junk and Disorderly" and "The Dialectic Twins". The evening was a total success with over 50 people present. However, one most important announcement was that we raised £50 for our fighting fund".

Socials are one of the most pleasant ways of raising money. Let's all put the social back into socialism for the benefit of the fighting fund.

By Kim Waddington

THIS WEEK'S contributions include: Yorkshire Regional Labour Party conference collection £96; first ever public meeting in Houghton-le-Spring, Wearside £17; A Rosser, Poole £15; Morecambe and Heysham LPYS £11.34; Wallsend Women's Section £9.85; Barry Williams, Birmingham

£8; Alan Needham, Sheffield £6; B Collinson, Oldham £6; Miki Thornton OAP, Blackburn £5.80; E Doveton, Secretary Coventry SW Labour Party £5; Ian Kemp, Rotherham CLP £5; Birmingham LPYS, £5; Tony Healy, Vauxhall LP £3; Erith and Crayford LPYS £3; Ralph Goy worker from British Gas, Easington £2; Benton and Tynemouth LPYS's £1.51; Tina Seddon, Sittingbourne LPYS £1.40; Tony Colwell, Nottingham CPISA £1; Alistair White Ayesford £1; A Richardson, unemployed from Hammersmith 80p; Blundells factory, Hull regularly give extras from the paper, this week 60p; J Hunter, Leicester NGA 55p; Billy Higham, Sunderland AUEW regularly gives 50 for paper; Gordon Robson GMBATU, Sunderland 30; and Steve Cokerill, Sheffield 30p.

Socials this week added to the total included: video night, Hull £25, social in Rotherham £19; and one in Perth £15.

'It's our industry, our future'

UP AND down the country miners are rallying together to fight for their industry and their future. There is no doubt that now is the time to fight. Now is the time to stand up to the vicious onslaught on jobs by Thatcher and her government through MacGregor and his henchmen. We must make it clear that enough is enough.

Despite the cries for a ballot, the justice of the strikers is unquestionable. At Polkemmet, even though the majority of men voted to work, no one crossed the picket line and the pit has been effectively on strike since the outset. We know that if we lose this fight the pit would close in about 9 months time. It is clear we cannot afford to lose.

Destruction of community

MacGregor has made his paymasters' intentions very clear—to destroy the industry, the union, and subsequently the communities reliant upon it. Indeed when recently asked about the catastrophic effect on communities as a result of pit closures he stated: "It is not my concern, that is the government's concern."

Well, it does not need me to point out how concerned this government is.

The fact is that the welfare of miners and their families and future jobs for their children don't matter a damn to the Tories. On the pretext of closing pits they will attempt to smash our union. They will attempt to do so because they rightly see the NUM as the biggest threat to the continuation of their policy to abuse, smash and exploit our class to the greatest possible degree.

That is why we must fight now. That is why we must stand united, fighting together for the future. It is not our right to turn our backs on the struggles of the past. Nor is it our future to sell.

This industry belongs to the people, the jobs belong to the youth who are the future. We must safeguard that future.

I am confident we will take up the fight as in 1972 and 1974 when major steps forward were taken for our industry and our class.

By Joe Owens
(Youth delegate
Polkemmet NUM,
personal capacity)



Young miners have been in the forefront of the battle to save the coal industry—now many are joining the Young Socialists.

Photo: Rick Matthews (IFL)

Young Socialists support miners

AROUND THE country, Labour Party Young Socialist branches have been giving their support to the miners' struggle.

In South Yorkshire LPYS members have been handing out a *Militant Miner* special leaflet, drawn up by local *Militant* supporters, that explains how to claim social security and the rights of striking workers.

This was well received, especially as one miner explained to the LPYS that even though he was married with two children, he was getting only 69p a week out of the DHSS! The South Yorkshire NUM strike committee have asked the LPYS to produce 500 more of these leaflets to distribute to the miners.

Day of action

Last Saturday LPYS members in Dalkeith, Midlothian organised a day of action to publicise their public meeting in support of the miners. Speakers at the Dalkeith meeting include Chris Herriot (youth

delegate, Monktonhall NUM), Eddie Donachie (Scottish LP Executive) and a speaker from Scott Lithgow.

LPYS members in the Lothians who have begun visiting factories to gain support for the LPYS national conference are also distributing appeal sheets for the NUM. LPYS members who have a job are taking the appeal sheets into their workplaces.

In Wales, LPYS members have organised a public meeting in Blaengwynfi on Monday 26 March. (See ad).

LPYS members canvassing for the meeting were overwhelmed by the response. On the first evening they received 14 applications to join the LPYS. A number of people took leaflets advertising the meeting and stuck them on their front room window. In a nearby village, Glyn-corrwg, the response was so good that there are plans to take a coach to the Blaengwynfi meeting.

Over 70, mostly miners, attended a successful LPYS

public meeting in Lumpinas, Fife. The meeting was organised by Kelty and Lochgelly LPYS branches. The speakers included a member of the Scottish Area NUM Executive, a convenor from Rosyth Docks and Tam Dury (SCEBTA Youth Rep, Monktonhall).

Leaflet pits

To gain support for the meeting with only a few days notice, LPYS members leafleted the pits and miners' welfare, and flyposted the bus stops with posters advertising the meeting as well as contacting the local labour movement.

LPYS Public Meeting
'Save the pits,
fight Tory cuts'
Monday, 26 March,
7.30 pm at Blaengwynfi
Sports and Social Hall.
Speakers: Ian Isaac
(South Wales NUM Exec)
Tudor Parsons
(Blaenant NUM)
Richard Morgan
Chairman, Wales LPYS)



A section of the highly successful Young Workers' Assembly, Manchester, December, 1983.

Appeal to BLOC delegates

Build the Young Socialists

YOUNG MINERS have been in the forefront of the present battle to save pits. Indeed the fighting spirit, the élan, energy and determination of young workers has meant they have played a leading role in every industrial dispute in the last few years.

Decisive role

Young workers will play a *decisive* role in the process of transforming the unions into mass, campaigning organisations with a socialist leadership prepared to fight.

The Labour Party Young Socialists have been to the forefront in involving young workers in the labour movement. During the NGA dispute we organised a Young

Workers' Assembly attended by over 2,000 youth with 500 union organisations represented.

LPYS branches have campaigned energetically to win the support for the miners, the NGA, POEU, health workers and ASLEF in recent years, as well as numerous local disputes. LPYS members have also vigorously campaigned to build the BLOC.

We are now appealing to union organisations to help us build a mass socialist youth organisation. We are asking for union organisations to sponsor one or more of your young members to the LPYS National Conference this Easter. Already over 200 young trade unionists have been sponsored by their trade

union organisation.

Young workers coming to the conference benefit tremendously from the political debate at conference, and in the evenings there are plenty of lively social activities. Attending the LPYS Annual Conference is just about the best way of awakening and developing a socialist awareness in young workers.

Union sponsors

I would urge every union organisation involved in BLOC to sponsor a young member to the LPYS conference—it is an experience they will never forget.

By Willie Griffin
(Chairman LPYS)



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

us?

about

what

Will positive discrimination help women?

ALL THE gains made by working-class women, are now under threat or have already been wiped out.

More than ever before, women are searching for a way out of their misery and are beginning to look to the labour and trade union movement as the only organisations capable of doing anything to change their conditions.

With an increase in trade union membership by women, many resent the fact that women and the issues that affect us are not being properly represented by the male-dominated leadership of the Labour Party and trade unions. Hence the call for positive discrimination or 'reverse discrimination' for women.

Militant's latest pamphlet, *Positive discrimination or class action* takes up all the arguments put forward in favour of positive discrimination and explains why these sort of policies cannot solve the terrible every day conditions that working-class women have to face. It further argues that such policies can even be counter-productive and

eventually end up by creating further divisions between women and men in the common fight for a better life for all.

The pamphlet analyses the arguments of the supporters of positive discrimination. These latter point out the failure of present legislation such as the Equal Pay Act (1970) and the Sex Discrimination Act (1975).

They go on to say that as past legislation to create equality has not worked, there should be new legislation to create 'reverse discrimination'. They argue that there should be quotas of women for every lot of jobs and for every lot of positions going in the labour movement.

Linda Douglas (Vauxhall LPYS) reviews 'The Way Forward For Women. Positive discrimination or class action?' (Available £1 from World Socialist Books, 1 Mentmore Terrace, London E8 3PN.)

The first flaw in this argument lies in the fact that while realising that previous legislation has not worked, the supporters of positive discrimination are calling for priority to be given for yet another round of legislation within the framework of capitalism as opposed to class action for a socialist alternative. The pamphlet looks at how positive discrimination or 'affirmative action' has been implemented in the USA, in the most favourable circumstances of an economic upswing.

But all the activity only managed to solve a minute amount of the problems, and the women who did

benefit were predominantly middle-class, well educated, and white.

Now that the USA is going through an economic depression though, even those gains are vanishing. Every member of the working class is under threat and where a factory or company has to close it's last in, first out. That means women!

And how does 'positive discrimination' deal with redundancies? Does it mean that only a certain quota of women or blacks should be made redundant?

That would just play into the hands of the bosses. It would divide the workforce from a common fight to stop redundancies.

Positive discrimination provides no protection against unemployment; it doesn't create jobs, schools or nurseries. It will only divide men and women workers, especially in a recession, and weaken the

labour movement, at a time when it should be strong and fighting against redundancies.

A purely legislative approach to the fight against the discrimination women face looks an easier road than organising common class action, but it lacks real backbone. Reagan has started to demolish the US Civil Rights Commission and other bodies which help implement reforms. This is being done without much outcry from workers because the whole system of 'Affirmative action' was set up through individual court actions and concessions from the bosses.

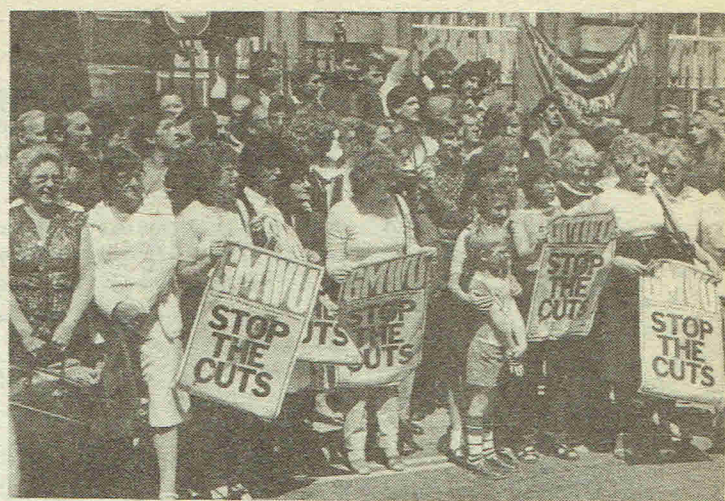
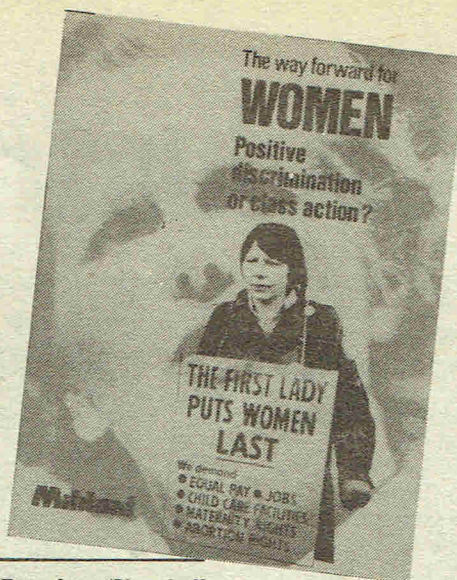
This is where the message of the pamphlet really comes. We should support reforms but if they are not made on the basis of organised struggle by the labour movement, actively involving women workers, then these gains or reforms

will simply be wiped away by the ruling class; legislation is only a minor obstacle to them.

No short cuts

There are no short cuts to eliminating discrimination. Women holding token positions in the labour movement and liberal, reformist ideas are not the ways that will eventually win the mass of working women and men to the fight for socialism.

A socialist programme for women is put forward in the pamphlet which outlines the socialist policies that *Militant* is campaigning on. These policies are the ones that will win working class women to the fight for socialism. Read the pamphlet—it is a first class contribution towards building a common fight for a society free of all discrimination and oppression.



(Above) Demonstration against privatisation, Liverpool.

'Just 'cause you walk funny doesn't mean your head is too'

WHEN THE economy goes into recession it's always the more vulnerable sections of the working class that get hit first and handicapped people are definitely one of the more vulnerable sections.

Gordon is 31 and has had problems with his feet since birth. Because they weren't seen to early enough his feet became deformed. He now wears a caliper and the winters are particularly bad; walking any distance is difficult and painful, and his feet are steadily worsening.

Problems at work

"They think just 'cause you walk like that, up here walks like that as well", he says pointing to his head. Now, as far as I'm concerned, I wouldn't have thought

By Paul True

that would be Gordon's problem. He's a pretty sharp character and because he's got the gift of the gab and everything, you don't think of him as handicapped; but, particularly in a work situation, that can lead to problems.

Retraining no help

"On a cold morning you're knackered when you get to work, you get picked on, known as idle and you start not going to work. You lose your job one way or another, go to the D.H.S.S. and say you've been bullied at work. They say you've gotta put up with it. You're not the only person in the world with a disability—this is their favourite".

Just to put this in context it's worthwhile giving a description of Gordon. He's

about 6 foot, weighs 16 stone and permanently dresses in boots, overalls, and a jacket, looks like a biker and is a pretty hard individual. So if this is the situation with him, then the feelings must be multiplied many times over for handicapped people less sure of themselves.

"If you're disabled you can't apply for a re-training course without a rehabilitation course and I waited four years for a rehabilitation course. Out of the 36 who did the course three were offered training places and they'd all had a trade previously.

"One of the 36, he had four kids, it was his last chance, and after it finished he ended up doing himself in.

"They don't give you a reason (for not employing you); they just say you're unsuitable, but when you look at the figures—three out of 36—you wonder what the

crack is. I went to see the disablement officer. 'It depresses me', he said. 'I've got 5,000 on the books with one sort of disablement or another. I can't find them a job, there's no way I can find you a job, carry on signing on.'

"They tried to get me to go to a sheltered workshop, aah...sitting there making silly little dolls...they make nice things yes, but it's not work. They should have proper factories.

Use new technology

"You got all this new technology...who's the prime people you could use for all of that? All these people, chair-bound for most of their lives, they're the people who should be using software not people with strong bodies, there's plenty enough work in this country to be done".

How can the Tories say they care?

THE RIGHTS of disabled people are many, and need to be put right now. We have a government who professes to be so caring and committed to our welfare.

So what has this government done to improve the well-being of the disabled. In one word, nothing.

We, that is the disabled, are fed up with being treated like second-rate citizens. We didn't asked to be disabled.

We don't like being treated like charity cases. We are not asking for hand-outs. We only ask for what is ours by rights.

So all we are doing, is asking this government to treat us as human beings. We ask to be treated like all members of the community.

We ask also for the government to be straight, and to tell us their future plans and hopes, because at the moment our future looks so bleak under them.

As the N.H.S. is being cut back, disabled people are

frightened to ask for help which is theirs by rights. When I say disabled I mean those who are mentally ill as well; what is this government doing for them? I defy any member of this government to go into any of these prison-like buildings, especially in London, and say they are impressed about the long-term commitment for those shut away and forgotten about.

This government says it cares; let them therefore show they care by speaking up and doing something now. Not keep on promising there is a brighter future ahead as they are so keen on doing.

By Michael Harris

LEFT and RIGHT

Smoked out by Tories

Even a fire drill can be the occasion for people to show their dislike of Tory policies. When staff at Wandsworth Town Hall walked out during the TUC day of action unfortunately it was only for a fire practice. But according to the local paper, the South London Press, "they were greeted rapturously by a bus queue in Fairfield Street with shouts of 'Up the workers, down with Maggie'. 'We didn't have a heart to tell them it was just fire practice', said a union spokesman'."

Thatcher makes another million

The number of children getting free school meals because of low family income has risen to more than one million for the first time, according to figures published by the Department of Education and Science, 14 March.

The annual school meal census, taken last October, reveals that more than half England's school children take a school meal, with almost 16 per cent—1,074,882, a rise of 110,752—getting them free.

Relax and get more popular

"One of the reasons why 'Frankie Goes to Hollywood' was so successful is the fact that they banned it; rather like the Militant tendency—you ban it and it gets more popular"—BBC Disc Jockey Radio One.

Bias at Question Time

All *Militant* readers will be aware of the completely unbiased nature of Sir Robin Day's *Question Time* programme. Normally there is one Labour, (usually right wing), one Tory, and an Alliance MP and an 'independent' expert (usually a businessman/woman or civil servant).

Next week they have Rodney Bickerstaff (General Secretary of the public sector union, NUPE). But of course when a Trade Union leader appears it is not as a 'national expert' Oh no! That would mean having two Labour reps against two representatives of the ruling class. So to keep the usual balance of one Labour to three others, there will be no Labour MP next week. After all that would make it biased...

(Thanks for this week's Left and Rights to David Churchley, Peter Redfern and Kevin Ramage)

Lessons for Town Hall battles

THROUGHOUT THE country, the labour movement is fighting the Tory assault on local authorities. The stand by Liverpool City Council has provoked a wide-ranging discussion in every area.

The reports below show how lessons are being drawn from the Liverpool struggle, and also what can happen, as in the case of Swansea, when a Labour council enforces Tory cuts.

It can't happen here—or can it?

BASILDON CLP in Essex unanimously passed a resolution supporting Liverpool. Our CLP is by no means a bastion of the left wing—until recently there were many who thought the conflict in Liverpool was due to some *Militant* conspiracy.

Basildon Labour council could soon be in the same position as Liverpool as it lies in the 'top ten' of overspending local authorities.

Basildon

Militant supporters in Basildon have not only argued that Liverpool should be backed up 100%, but that a similar campaign should be launched here to mobilise workers to defend our council. But the right-wing, and some sections of the left, have said that workers in the South East are 'different'. The leader of the Labour group said we could never mobilise 30,000 people for a march on a local government issue as they did in Liverpool.

That is true at present, but only because there has been no mass campaigning work.

A determined campaign explaining that the council would not be prepared to give in to Tory dictates or off load the burden of Tory cash limits onto the backs of workers, would get tremendous support for Labour.

Fightback

In Basildon, the prospects for workers are as grim as everywhere else—house building programmes slashed, factories closing down and unemployment at nearly 20%. A campaigning socialist party would get great support—after all, support for Labour in Liverpool did not occur overnight, it was achieved by hard work and presenting socialist policies.

By John McKay
(Basildon LPYS)



Photo: John Harris (IFL)

Education is one of the main areas for attack from the Tory assault on local authorities. Above, workers protest at the Hereford and Worcester councils threat to cease operating school meals services.

Swansea anger at bus cuts

THE DANGER Labour councils face if they implement cuts can be seen in Swansea. Here the County Council attempt to cut free school transport has aroused enormous anger amongst working class families.

Over 2,000 parents and their children marched through Swansea on 6 March to protest over the Labour-controlled West Glamorgan County Council's decision. West Glamorgan intends to go back to the statutory legal requirements and 6,000 children will be affected. With high unemployment, most parents will simply not

be able to afford the £5-£15 additional expense on public transport.

One 14 year old school student on the march said: "It's not only us but people with young kids they've got to send to school, and most of them haven't got any work. That's £20 a week if you've got three or four of them going to school".

Angry scenes

There were angry scenes outside County Hall when parents heard that the Education Committee were not prepared to reconsider their decision. Only a police

cordon across the entrance prevented the protestors from invading County Hall, aptly nicknamed the "Taj Mahal".

The bulk of the demonstrators were young mothers who are concerned with not only the extra financial burden but also the safety of their children who would be forced to walk two or three miles to school.

The initial response of the parents was to dismiss the Labour councillors as "Tory puppets" and promise never to vote Labour again. But after we explained how the councillors were selected, a number of parents agreed to

join the Labour Party and select Labour councillors who will not carry out the Tory cutbacks.

The local LPYS was also present on the demonstration and they collected 23 names of 5th and 6th formers who wanted to join the LPYS.

Battle continues

What our councillors don't understand is that while we have lost this particular battle we can't afford to give up. Our children's education and safety is at stake and we owe it to our children to carry on the fight both outside and where it really counts, inside the Labour Party.

By Kay Thraves
(Swansea Labour Party)

Solid support in North West

LABOUR'S RANKS are firmly behind Liverpool. The council's fight was rightly the subject that dominated this year's North West regional conference.

Speakers such as Tony Mulhearn, Derek Hatton and Terry Fields MP outlined the stand being taken against cuts, rent rises, rate rises and redundancy.

Won support

They described the campaigns in the unions, tenants associations and other local groups on a whole range of issues, that had won for Labour the overwhelming support of working class

people in the local elections and general election.

Two notable speeches opposed the resolutions which supported this stand: Bill Snell, one of the seven councillors who revealed to the media (but not the party) that they would be voting against the Labour budget on 29 March, and Jack Straw MP for Blackburn (and supporter of the recent witch-hunts in Blackburn). Both argued that we (and Liverpool) should be "realistic". They tried to argue that Liverpool Council's stand would lead to more redundancies than a "legal" budget.

This did not go down well.

Speaker after speaker from Liverpool gave graphic illustration of the impossibility of cutting one penny more, and the only alternative was to fight.

Important gain

Felicity Dowling (Walton CLP) described the desperate state of school equipment and Ken Stewart (chair of the council's housing committee) in a very rousing speech paraphrased James Larkin: "The rich only appear great because we are on our knees. Let's get up off our bloody knees," he said.

John Byrne (AUEW)

North Manchester District linked the fight in Liverpool with Warrington and GCHQ. John, who is also a councillor, wants to see a stand like Liverpool's being taken in Manchester.

The executive recommended support for the resolutions on the grounds that they supported Labour councils in making democratic decisions; and they would equally support any other Labour council who democratically decided to do the opposite and cut jobs and services!

Nevertheless, the North West Region of the Labour Party now officially supports Liverpool and that is an important gain.

By Viv Seal
(Gorton CLP)

Manchester puts off the struggle

MANY LABOUR councils believe they can put off confrontation with the Tories through juggling finances. The 39 right wing Labour councillors in Manchester have managed to find a way out of taking on the Tories this year.

By using up all the financial reserves in this coming year they have been able to present what looks like a "no cuts" budget, on the surface at least.

At a meeting in the Town hall of 130 activists, group 'leader' Bill Egerton blinded the members present with what was described by one left-wing councillor as "financial conjuring".

After an initial scare that Manchester would face a 43% rate increase to maintain services the group treasurer has managed to find some hidden resources to limit the rate increase to

4.9%, make no cuts but increase council house rents by 40p.

Whilst this budget proposal has moved nearer to the city party's policy of no cuts and no rent increases, the rent increase will be opposed in council by the 26 left wing Labour councillors who are currently out of the Labour group for the crime of supporting party policy.

Determination

At the meeting speakers from the floor lashed the position of the Labour group for failing to offer any fighting political lead in comparison to the determined stand of the Liverpool City Council. After the May local council elections in Manchester there is a real chance that there will be a majority of Labour councillors who are going to

prepare for confrontation over rate capping in 1985.

Nevertheless the mood of the meeting was that Manchester activists must support Liverpool. To this end city party activists are booking coaches to come to Liverpool on 29 March.

Labour right wingers in Manchester are displaying all the mannerisms of desperate people clinging to outdated and irrelevant ideas. Their witch-hunting in Whythen-shawe, their banning of LPYS meetings with *Militant* speakers are just some examples. However, their latest decision to vote for a Tory Lord Mayor exposes their complete political bankruptcy.

Manchester Labour Party and trade union activists are determined to defend working class people in the city and the mood of the meeting was that no one will be able to stop us in that fight.

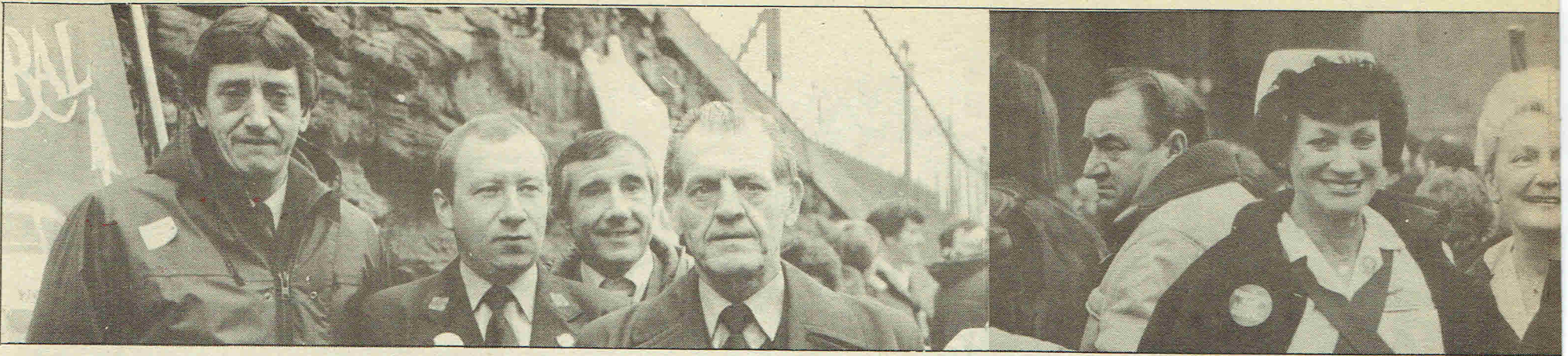
By Michael Lee
(Manchester City Labour Party Executive)

Kent services under attack



Photo: Stefano Cagnoni (IFL)

Cleaning workers protest outside a meeting of Kent County Council on February 23 in Maidstone. The Tory controlled authority wants to introduce wide-ranging privatisation of council services, slashing up to 2,500 jobs.



Groups of workers on Liverpool council demonstration in November 1983.

The election of a majority Labour council in Liverpool in 1983, well against the national trend at that time, showed the determination of Merseyside workers to fight back against the Tory government.

Despite the most vicious and unprecedented smear campaign by the local Liberals who even tried to introduce sectarianism into the election campaign (eg. "Why no Catholic can vote Labour"), the Labour Party won seats. There can be no doubt, given the Labour Party's manifesto and the "red-scare" campaign of the opposition, that the workers of Liverpool knew who and what they were voting for. Without any misunderstandings or misconceptions they were electing a council to fight for their interests, to fight to keep and restore jobs and services and to squeeze back out of the government some of the £120m taken away from the City in recent years.

The Tories and the employers sought to take their revenge on the City by the slaughter of jobs—34,000 have been lost in the last three years leaving a terrible situation of 42% youth unemployment and nearly 100,000 people in total on the dole queues. Last month 11,000 Merseyside teenagers chased after less than 100 jobs.

In addition, Merseyside faced some of the worst housing conditions with 22,000 people on housing waiting lists. With an avalanche of redundancies, with big firms pulling out of the area, the only source of hope for the working class was the election of a socialist Labour Council.

This council was elected on a programme to create 1,000 jobs, prevent privatisation and to end cuts planned by the Liberals. In the nine short months since the election a mass movement has developed in the area, involving tens of thousands of workers and their families, against the Tories and in defence of the City Council strategy.

Last autumn a mass meeting of about 800 local authority shop stewards and trade union reps filled the Philharmonic Hall. In the same period the District Labour Party in Liverpool organised mass public meetings and rallies with 2,000 in attendance on several occasions.

November demonstration

A land mark was the November 19 demonstration called by the Merseyside Labour and Trade Union movement campaign committee which embodies the Labour Parties of the area, the Labour City and County Councils, and Trade Union organisations.

In the build-up to the demonstration a whole series of factory gate meetings were held at which councillors and Labour MPs spoke. The turn out to these meetings actually exceeded those during the General Election period. For example at Plesseys, now in the throes of a struggle against job losses, a gate meeting of about 200 took place, in comparison to about 100 during the General Election campaign.

Labour Party Young Socialists played a key role in organising street meetings to appeal to the broader masses of people, getting a reception unheard of in the past. One old woman approached them and almost physically assaulted a

By Richard Venton

Young Socialist who was dressed up as a business man.

Bin men were seen to hoist red flags on the backs of their bin wagons. Local authority depots had lunchtime meetings which gave unanimous backing to the demonstration in support of the council.

The march itself was the most representative demonstration in the whole of the history of Merseyside, at least since the struggle against the Industrial Relations Act, and possibly even since the period of the 1926 General strike. A total of 25,000 workers demonstrated with delegations from the shipyards, car plants, the mines, NALGO workers, Local Services, Health Service, postal workers and a whole range of industrial and white collar workers.

Warrington dispute

No sooner had the dust settled from that march than the workers of Merseyside went into another struggle—that around the NGA dispute in Warrington. Printers, dockers, car workers, civil servants, and especially a large number of youth including ranks of the unemployed joined the struggle against the Shah of Warrington in defence of jobs and wage levels and basic Trade Union rights.

The defeat of the NGA undoubtedly had a temporary effect on the mood of workers locally, but by January the council campaign revived and reached a new phase. The three months since have seen the greatest degree of unity between Labour Party and Trade Union activists on Merseyside.

On 11th January a District Labour Party Rally was held for all Party members and about 350 attended. From that meeting there was absolutely no reason to imagine that any of the 51 Labour councillors were opposed to the strategy of the District Labour Party and Labour Group. As Labour's Chief Whip Jim Parry put it, if any councillors had any thought of opposing the strategy of demanding Liverpool's £30 million back off the Tory Government, they would go down in history as "political lepers" and would be ostracised by the working class.

The campaign then turned outwards to wider sections of the working class. During the course of early February, a total of 18 local Public Meetings were held with 2,500-3,000 in attendance. This was in a period of atrocious weather conditions, yet meetings attracted up to 250 people. Once they heard the case, the meetings were almost unanimous in support of the councillors' campaign.

On February 27 a mass rally of 1,700 Trade Union reps and activists was held in St Georges' Hall. Speakers included Ron Todd of the Transport and General Workers Union. Not only were local authority workers represented, but also private industry. For example, Trade Union banners from Ford Halewood and Vauxhall Ellesmere Port were draping the room.

Perhaps the biggest applause was for John Hamilton, Labour Group Leader, who made an impassioned speech on the question of breaking the law. John pointed out that it is apparently wrong to help the poor, the needy, the aged and the sick. "But we don't think we're wrong" he said, "it's the law that is wrong. It's this Government that is wrong". John's speech received a standing ovation.

That rally also demonstrated that the struggle over the city council is linked to the wider issue over jobs, defence of services and defence of Trade Union rights. It was held on the eve of the historic half-day general strike on Merseyside and nationally in support of the civil service unions at GCHQ.

Merseyside was perhaps the strongest area of solidarity on February 28. A total of 100,000 workers were involved in the action, including all the major sectors of manufacturing industry that still remain.

On the Wirral, all the major work-places were out that day. Shell, Cammell Lairds, Vauxhalls, British Aerospace. The same applied in the Sefton-Knowsley area where big workplaces such as Pilkington's came out in solidarity.

In Liverpool the local authority workforce was solid and the only industry that failed to strike was Ford's—and that by a narrow majority. A demonstration of 5,000 was held in Liverpool and this would have been 4 or 5 times the size but for the decision of bus crews to have a 24 hour stoppage. The local *Liverpool Echo*, noted for its reactionary views, had to resort to a front page headline that 4 bus men were actually found to go to work that day!

In the build-up to March 29—Council budget day—a whole series of mass meetings have been held in both local authority workplaces and in the wider areas of industry.

Overwhelming support

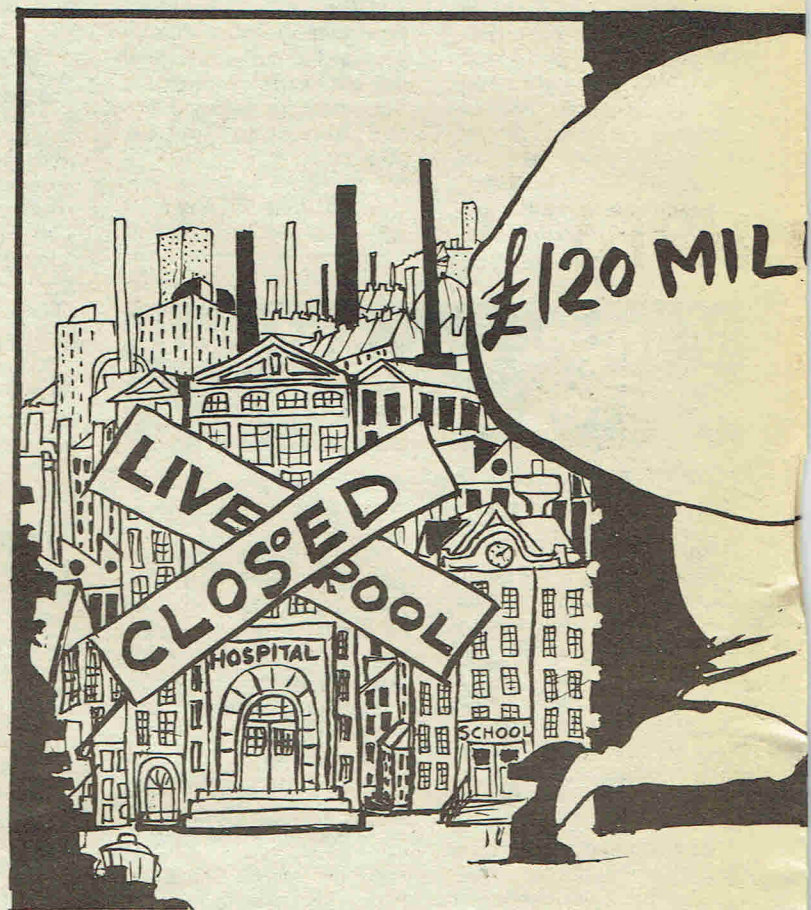
About 4,000 GMBATU members held mass meetings and voted overwhelmingly in favour of a one day Strike on 29 March. In fact less than 10 people voted against at the cleansing branch meeting where 999 voted in favour. Local authority drivers voted in favour of the same action with only 4 or 5 against.

In the white collar section, the pattern has been the same despite a concerted campaign by the local press to affect the decisions. NALGO members, at a mass meeting, voted 851 for strike action with only 144 against, and during the meeting there wasn't a single speaker against the day of action.

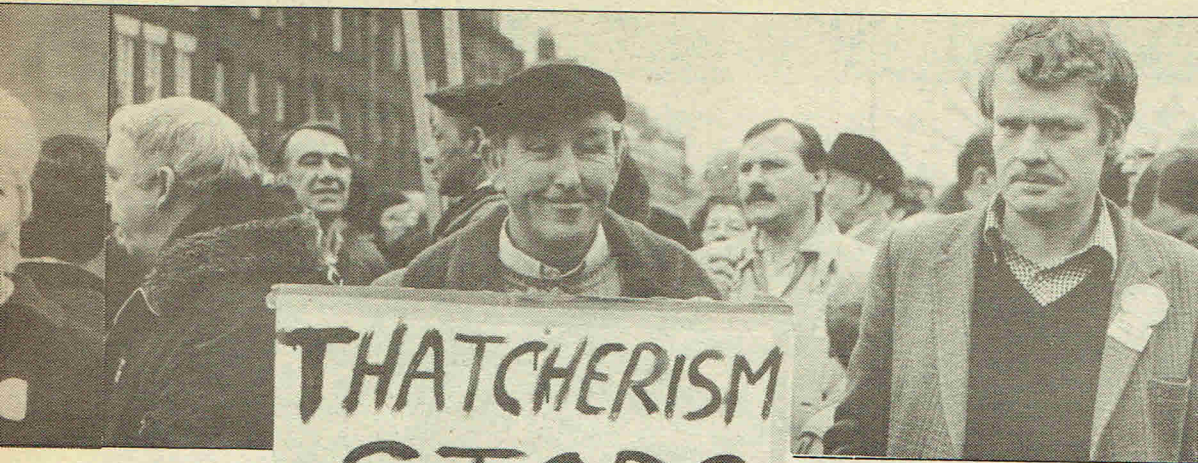
The national press has made much out of the decision of an NUT meeting which narrowly decided against strike action, but that was one of the first mass meetings held and there was no prior campaign by the branch leadership. Now, with other workers, including white collar workers having decided for the action, many teachers will see the need to reverse that decision and

TORIE LIVER

Council demands



Stop th



Photos: Tina Carroll



S ROB POOL

Is money back



nief!

stay solid with their brothers and sisters in other unions.

In NUPE when the district committee decided against strike action, two branches were outraged at this decision and voted in favour of strike action. In any case the 1,200 social service membership of NUPE would be exempt from strike action on the 29th because of the sensitive nature of their jobs.

In the private sector a total of six industrial estate meetings have been held, involving shop stewards from the various factories. Those already held have been enthusiastically in favour of putting the case to the membership at mass meetings.

For the first time in their history there will be a meeting of 350 shop stewards from the three separate bus companies, Ribble, Crosswell and MPD. To show the level of organisation in the local working class the crews are discussing whether or not to provide a skeleton service for the day of strike, in order to provide transport to the demonstration outside the City Town Hall.

If any of the infamous seven councillors who we are expecting to defect on the day of the budget imagine that they have backing among the trade union movement, then they are obviously closing their eyes to reality.

USDAW members

One of the would-be defectors is Bill Snell a local USDAW full time official. At a meeting of USDAW members at Glaxo in Speke, a resolution was passed condemning his stand and calling for him to stand by Labour's policy. At a meeting of the USDAW Littlewoods branch in Crosby a similar resolution was passed, along with a unanimous decision in favour of a one day strike.

The call for a one day strike on March 29 originally came from the campaign committee and from the local authority joint shop stewards committee (JSSC). But the one day strike will not be one of passive action but an active day of campaigns and explanation of the alternative to Tory rule and capitalist crisis.

A mass rally and demonstration outside the council will be held, with the council proceedings hopefully relayed outside.

A mass movement has now been developing with more thorough preparation and greater support than even the heroic movement of Poplar Councillors in the 1920s.

In the teeth of such a mass movement, and to their eternal shame, seven Labour councillors have declared their intentions to go against Labour on the day of the Budget. The Labour Party membership are attempting to draw them back "into the fold", bending over backwards to accommodate them and to insist that they stand by Party policy.

A mass rally of 400 Labour Party members last week was quite determined to continue the struggle to force the Tories to give back to Liverpool the £30 million necessary to balance the books, avoiding redundancies and massive rate rises.

In Birkenhead CLP the party voted in favour of the councillors' strategy by 74 to 2. The recent North West Labour Party Conference was unanimous in passing two resolutions defending the council. If the seven defy such a movement, they will be isolated from the whole of the working class.

Many activists have asked, "what will happen if on the day, despite such a mass movement, the seven refuse to vote for Labour?" There is no simple answer. For the Tories it would open up a political and legal minefield.

'What next'

It is possible they may consider the use of commissioners to try to impose their rule and their cuts on the Liverpool working class. Equally, they may try to carry out their threat of banning the May council elections to prevent an inevitable Labour victory after Budget day. It is not even clear what would happen if the Labour Group could not get its budget through and there was a "no budget" situation.

Sections of the Tories and Liberals will be looking for some form of "coalition budget" but

An important feature of the last few months is that a number of industrial struggles on Merseyside have been supported by the City Council. The Labour Group have given solidarity in concrete terms. John West, for example, came out on strike for the first time in 100 years and won their struggle against the employers. The interest of that workforce in political events has been raised to the extent that 25% of them now buy *Militant* on a weekly sale.

In Bootle, the bakery workers in Scotts unfortunately lost the struggle against redundancies but this has only added to the bitterness workers feel.

The City Council have also linked up with a whole series of work places in dispute on jobs and against victimisation e.g. British American Tobacco, Cammell Lairds, Cadbury Schweppes, and Fords. This proper use of the council as a platform for voicing the cause of the organised Labour movement has stood the council in good stead in winning solidarity from Trade Unionists.

even that is fraught with difficulties. The Tory spokesman was forced to concede that the so called Liberal "budget" was a sham and Tory minister Patrick Jenkin's suggestion of an alternative rate rise of 60-70% would mean inevitable bankruptcy and redundancies among many small firms and small businessmen, not to mention the impact on workers and their families.

The fight goes on

The most important conclusion that activists and Trade Unionists must draw is that the struggle will continue, regardless of the outcome of March 29. The one day strike will serve to warn the Tories of the consequences of their assault of local working people, and the mass demonstration will remind those Labour Councillors who are wavering that they were elected to represent the working class.

There is absolutely no alternative budget other than that presented by the ruling Labour group which demands £30 million back from the Tories to prevent redundancies and rate rises.

The Press has recently speculated that leading Labour party members are proposing a 60% rate rise. This would be disastrous. It would mean a massive cut in living standards for working people and would lead to huge redundancies.

From 1979 to 1983 under the rule of Liberals and Tories, rates rose by 109% in Liverpool and as the GMBATU convenor's committee has spelt out in a leaflet, Labour are not in the game of transferring redundancies from public to private industry.

It is not the task of any Labour Council or Labour Party to carry out so called "humane" cuts. Such a course of action would lead to inevitable victory for the Liberals and Tories in the May council elections, with all the consequent mass redundancies that would follow.

There is only one alternative and that is for the local Trade Union and Labour movement to stand firm and come out on March 29 in a one day general strike. It should be made clear to the Tory Government that if they want to carry out these planned attacks on jobs and services, they could only do it over the living body of the organised labour movement.

National lead

With a firm stand with clear leadership at a national level from the trade union and labour leaders the labour movement can win in a struggle for the extra £30 million. There are precedents for the Tories giving concessions in the face of mass opposition—ten years ago, in the Upper Clyde Shipbuilders dispute, the Tories were forced to concede £20 million. Two years ago the Tories performed the fastest U-turn in British history when they conceded money to the National Coal Board after the threat of a National Strike by the miners against the threatened pit closures.

The eyes of workers throughout the country are on Liverpool. They understand that this movement in defence of jobs could be the spark that lights the Mersey. It could be a beacon for the whole of the working class in their struggle against the Tories.

The socialist leadership provided for the Merseyside working class at present is a model to the rest of the country. *Militant's* supporters over the years have been to the fore in struggling to build a mass, working class Labour Party. Even anti-Labour papers such as *The Guardian* have had to admit recently that the Liverpool Labour Party is overwhelmingly working class in make up.

Increasingly, local authority trade unionists have played a key role in the Labour Party. Hundreds of Trade Unionists and youth at mass meetings in the workplaces and technical colleges have applied for Labour Party membership in the last year.

They gain inspiration from a leadership that is prepared to even risk their own livelihoods in the struggle against redundancies and cuts. If the same determination was shown by the national Labour Party and Trade Union leadership, workers would rapidly win the struggle against the Tories.

The working class of Liverpool can yet be victorious, opening the floodgates to a tidal movement that could bring down the Tories and replace them with a genuinely socialist government.

Northern Ireland

The horrors of capitalism...

THE CATHOLIC working class areas of the Falls and Ardoyne and the Protestant working class areas of Shankill and Sandy Row in Belfast show some of the worst examples of poverty in Western Europe.

In my recent visit to the North of Ireland, I saw these areas as a monument to the failure of British capitalism and a forewarning of the horrible future for the British working class on the basis of capitalism.

Unemployment has been endemic in Northern Ireland almost since the foundation of the state but present unemployment levels are absolutely horrific.

Dole queues

Bored and permanently unemployed youth have taken to "flat hopping" i.e. leaping from the top of one tower block to another as a means of "killing time". Also "joy riding" which ends up with some youth being shot by the army has become normal.

There are officially 122,000 workers unemployed in Northern Ireland, more than 22% of the working population. It is anticipated that it will rise to at least 24% in the next couple of years.

However in many areas the figures are absolutely staggering; 40% in Strabane, 33.2% in Cookstown, 32.5% in Dungannon, 29% in Derry, but perhaps the statistic showing most clearly the collapse of British capitalism is that the figure for unemployed is actually twice that of those working in manufacturing industry. If that was true throughout Britain it would mean about 16 million on the dole!

This is a crushing indictment of the incapacity of capitalism to solve the problems of Northern Ireland and, in particular the failure of Keynesian methods, favoured by the Labour leadership.

In a desperate attempt to provide some stability, British governments since the beginnings of the troubles in 1969 have poured in colossal amounts, mostly inducements to big business.

Since 1963 the support from Britain the so called British subvention, has risen from £48 million to £1,312 million in 1982/83, an increase in real terms of about 325%. A big proportion of this represented bribes to big business to develop industry and jobs.

Repressive measures

But international capitalism has taken the inducements, set up industry for a short while, pocketed the loot from the British Treasury, then after the minimum period, withdrawn their investments. Last year the Northern Ireland Development Agency say they wrote off investments to the tune of £24 million.

The lion's share of this was almost £18 million given

By Peter Taaffe

to De Lorean when he set up his ill fated company in Belfast. The De Lorean fiasco typified the total failure of government bribery to the capitalists. De Lorean received millions from taxpayers' pockets in Britain and Northern Ireland and then invested this in cocaine, one of the best paid drug pushers in history!

Every capitalist option has been tried and failed. Repression and military might cannot bring about a lasting solution as even the more far sighted representatives of the capitalists have recognised. At the same time the use of "supergrasses" against the IRA and other paramilitaries is also an enormous danger to the labour and trade union movement.

Provisionals no answer

Indeed all the repressive measures introduced to attack the Provisional IRA are also very useful weapons for the ruling class against the labour movement. At the same time the British capitalists in collaboration with their Southern Irish counterparts and some parties in the North have made

RECENTLY THE *Militant* featured an interview with a woman in East Belfast who comforted the dying victim of a sectarian murder.

Since the interview Mrs X's husband was lifted by the police for over twelve hours. The police asked him to name names of membership in the Provisionals.

After long interrogation he told nothing and was released. Shortly afterwards Mrs X's son was lifted by the police. When Mrs X heard this she went to demand his release from the police station.

A police officer hit her

a futile attempt through the "Irish Forum" to find a basis for the political pacification of the North.

However any proposals on a capitalist basis will come up against the opposition of either the Catholic or Protestant population. Thus James Prior merely floated the idea of joint sovereignty with the South, and immediately provoked the headline "Treachery" in the main Unionist newspaper, the *Newsletter*.

Any proposal which even hints at compelling the one million Protestants into a capitalist united Ireland would arouse implacable opposition.

At the same time, the strategy and tactics of the Provisional IRA can never bring about the unification of Ireland. The military

THE ATTEMPTED assassination of Sinn Fein MP Gerry Adams is a warning to the labour movement that some political groupings in the area still aim to deepen any sectarian divisions in Northern Ireland.

The danger of sectarian outbreaks underlines the need for a party of labour to unite the workers, Catholic and Protestant, to fight the problems capitalism has caused in an area of mass unemployment.

***Militant and Militant Irish Monthly* have consistently fought for such class unity policies. In this article Peter Taaffe editor of *Militant*, reports from his recent visit to the North of Ireland.**

struggle, guerillaism, will never compel the British ruling class to withdraw. The British capitalists in fact would love to disentangle themselves from the Northern Ireland imbroglio.

They supported partition in 1922 for a combination of reasons. Firstly they wanted to divide the working class because of the dangerous social situation developing North and South, and in Britain at that stage. On the other hand the military bases in Ireland were a vital component of the naval strategy of British imperialism.

Now with the decline economically and militarily of Britain these factors are no longer important in the

about the face. Her son, in attempting to defend her, hit the policeman. He is now in prison for assaulting a police officer. Not only has his working class family to cope with the sectarianism of the paramilitaries but it has to face brutal repression from the state forces.

Mrs X remains in firm opposition to sectarianism, repression and all the other miseries imposed on her by the capitalist system.

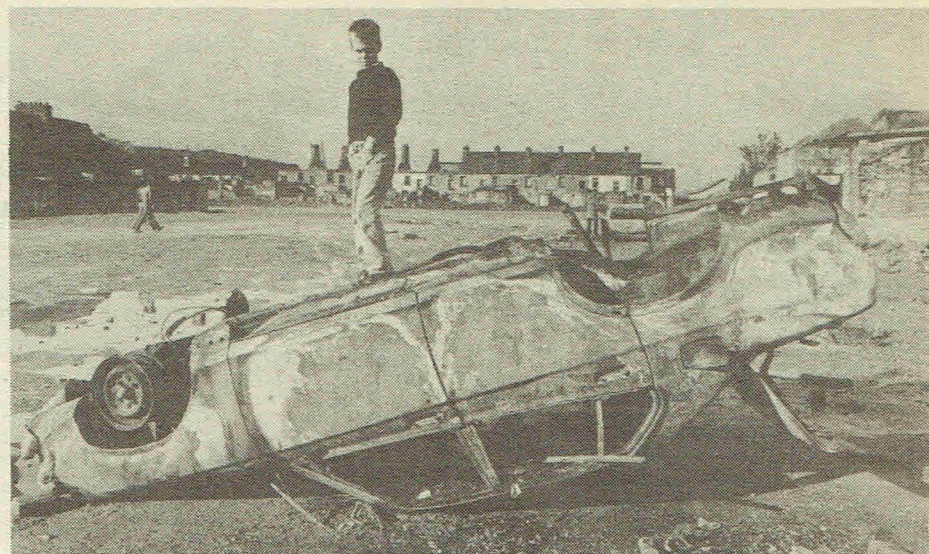
By Glenn Simpson
(Labour and Trade Union Group)

calculations of the British ruling class. However the very sectarianism which they fostered and developed in the past is now an obstacle to their withdrawing from the North.

Military withdrawal

It now appears that even the majority of British military officers are in favour, in theory, of a British military withdrawal, as recently revealed in the *Irish Times* (8 March) "Half or more of British Army officers serving in Northern Ireland privately believe the Army should be withdrawn, a former Coldstream Guards officer has told the *Irish Times*."

But withdrawal of the British Army on a capitalist



Derry 1981. Terrible social conditions are the background to the violence.

Photo: Militant

basis would provoke a civil war which could, as *Militant* has argued many times in the past, lead to the redivision of the country with a Protestant statelet in the North and a quarter of a million Catholics evicted into the South. They would form a sort of equivalent of the Palestinians within Ireland.

This would then set the scene for endless conflict, guerilla raids, bombings etc. which would spread to Britain and enormously complicate the struggle for socialism.

Lebanese scenario

Even if this horrible scenario was not to come to pass, at the very least it would result in a Lebanese situation, similar to the horrors of Beirut at present. A patchwork of Protestant and Catholic enclaves could be established, which would mean horror without end for the populations of the North of Ireland. Militant alone in the Labour left opposed the sending of the British Army to the North of Ireland in 1969. We stand for the withdrawal of British troops. But such a withdrawal can only be effected by a united movement of Protestant and Catholic workers, using its enormous power to defend workers against sectarian attack.

The Provisionals' strategy for mobilising the Catholic population in a mass movement against British imperialism has failed. In one sense Willie Whitelaw's prediction of producing an "acceptable level of violence" has now come to pass.

Workers oppose sectarianism

If the leadership of the Provisionals and the INLA had consciously set out to create the conditions for a Protestant backlash and civil war they could not have gone about it better than in the recent attacks on UDR and ex-UDR members. The shooting of the farm labourer who had left the UDR eight years ago was itself the signal for the attack on Gerry Adams.

However, while it is possible for events like this to trigger off a resurgence of sectarian conflict and violence, nevertheless the basic mood amongst the working class is against sectarianism.

Some of the most militant and best organised struggles of the working class against the Tory government have taken place in the North. Thus the health workers strike was more solid, more complete, and probably better led there than in any other part of Britain. We

saw a tremendous response in Northern Ireland over the GCGQ issue. Northern Ireland was probably second only to Merseyside in turnout.

Not one major struggle, not one strike of Northern Ireland workers since the troubles began has been broken by sectarianism. 55% of the labour force are in trade unions. This is a higher percentage than in Britain.

Yet when it comes to elections, Northern Ireland workers cannot vote for a party really representing their interests. All the conditions for the development of a mass party of labour in Northern Ireland have been

created, as can be seen in discussions with the best workers from both Protestant and Catholic backgrounds, particularly the youth.

The rank and file of the British labour movement must exert the greatest pressure on Labour Party and union leaders to assist with such an initiative. Even articles in the capitalist press in the north pointed to the greater class awareness of Catholics and Protestants.

A political party needs to be created to give expression

(Cont'd next page, column one)

..and the hope of socialism



Militant Irish Monthly supporters on a demonstration in Belfast.

Photo: Eamonn O'Dwyer (IFL)

ABOUT TWO hundred attended the *Militant* rally in Belfast on 3 March addressed by Peter Taaffe, editor of *Militant* in Britain, and an exiled trade union leader from South Africa, Nimrod Sejake.

Banners proclaimed "workers' unity and socialism" and posters of Lenin, Trotsky and Connolly hung between copies of back issues of *Militant Irish Monthly* back to 1972.

From the platform, Peter Hadden of *Militant Irish Monthly* raised the call for a conference of labour to stand candidates in the 1985 council elections. Nimrod Sejake made a rousing speech on the need for socialists to combat racism

and sectarianism while Peter Taaffe outlined the crisis in the capitalist system and showed the importance of such events as the fight in Liverpool.

The ugly face of Northern Ireland's past was seen when a large number of National Front members tried to attack the meeting but they were repelled by stewards.

The mood of confidence in socialism was shown by the collection of £650 for the fighting fund. The oldest worker present, Alex Simpson a machine operator and TGWU member, said it was the best political event he had seen since the 1930s.

All who attended are determined that Marxism will be the face of Northern Ireland's future.

Sri Lanka Mozambique/Angola

Horrors of capitalism
(cont'd from opposite page)

to this movement. However it must be rooted in the situation in the North of Ireland and not artificially transplanted from the outside.

Labour and Trade Union Group

A region of the British Labour Party would not get the support of the majority of the Catholic population. A meeting of 55 trade union organisations brought together by the Northern Ireland Labour and Trade Union Group last year urged the British Labour Party to give financial and organisational support to a conference called by the trade unions which would set up a genuine Labour Party, rooted in Northern Ireland and drawing support from Catholic and Protestant workers.

Photo: Militant



Army patrol on Belfast streets.

Such an initiative is urgently needed, given the local elections in 1985 and in preparation for the next general election. Once such a party is created, its developments can outstrip that of even the regeneration of the British Labour Party.

The Marxist wing of the Northern Ireland Labour movement gathered around the Militant Irish Monthly and the Militant, through their stubborn and heroic efforts over the last fifteen years have helped to create the basis upon which such a party can be created.

Unity through socialism

With a clear socialist programme this can attract both Protestant and Catholic workers and break the sectarian divide. In concert with the workers of Southern Ireland and Britain it will then be possible to forge a united socialist Ireland linked to a socialist Britain and a socialist united states of Europe.

Rebuilding the workers movement

Part two of the interview with two Sri Lankan union leaders, JD Silva and S Sathyapala.

JD Silva: "Up to last July, hundreds of thousands of plantation workers were organised in the trade union of Mr Thondaman, a landowner himself and a UNP minister. There were far fewer in the Left unions. Right up to July 1983, plantation workers didn't receive any of the minimal concessions that the government had doled out to workers from time to time.

"The plantation workers, mostly Tamil, were intimidated by the government to keep them tied to their bosses' union. The anti-Tamil race riots severely affected the plantation workers. Thousands ended up as refugees, their homes destroyed.

"The plantation workers have come to understand that membership of Thondaman's right wing union has provided them no defence whatsoever against racial atrocities and there is no hope that this union will be able to win them any decent reforms in the future.

"Those workers worst affected by the race riots want to go to India for safety, others remain in refugee camps and those who remain at work will have nothing more to do with the United National Party".

S Sathyapala: "Conditions in the plantations are those of semi-slavery and bondage at the best of times. Educational facilities are non-existent, and children have suffered periodically from epidemics of cholera and other diseases. On the plantations today, male workers earn on average 18 rupees (50p) a day and female workers 16 rupees a day.

"At the very best of times the 200,000 stateless planta-

tion workers face the threat of deportation under the Sirima-Shastri repatriation pact. With increasing frequency, they have experienced ever-worsening racial violence. They see that practically every year they have been subjected to racial pogroms. It is no longer a question of finding food and clothing—they have also to constantly watch out for the invading mobs.

"The government has increased food prices, introduced water taxes and a 1% rehabilitation tax to pay for damage caused by the 1983 riots. The unions are demanding an immediate wage increase and the linking of wages to increases in the cost of living.

"Workers are infuriated that they are asked to pay for riot damage caused by pro-government forces. We demand the 1% tax be abolished. We call for reinstatement of all those made unemployed by the July riots and the reinstatement of the sacked strikers of 1980. We also call for a restoration of democratic rights and most specifically the lifting of the ban on the New Socialist Party (NSSP) and the Peoples Liberation Front (JVP)."

JD Silva: "Our union federations are actively trying to build unity of workers regardless of political or union affiliation at the workplace level. It is not enough to have unity at the top, which we have partially achieved, but that unity must be established at rank and file level. We've called for United Workplace Committees.

"We are at present publishing a fortnightly newspaper and have carried



Demonstration against government-backed anti-Tamil riots last year.

Photo: Militant

out widespread poster campaigns on a number of occasions. So our members face severe repression. Nevertheless ours are the only posters with political demands put up since the July events.

"Many workers understand the government is in dire crisis and has no future. Workers are becoming more militant. The coming together of anti-government forces around a trade union front—which unites all main unions—and the building of workers' unity at workplace level is the only way to prevent further communal rioting and develop effective opposition to the government."

Please send donations and messages of support to Government United Federation of Labour, 6 Ockenden Road, London N1 3NP.

Send telegrams demanding the lifting of the ban on NSSP and JVP to President Jayawardene, Presidential Palace, Colombo, Sri Lanka, with copies sent to the above address.

"Unite or perish"

LETTER FROM a Tamil unionist, Northern Sri Lanka.

All the best for the forthcoming BLOC National Delegate Conference.

In Sri Lanka too, a left-orientated national workers centre is an acute, long-felt need. All defeats and setbacks we have suffered in the past, culminating in the grievous defeat of the 1980 general strike are attributable to this shortcoming.

In Sri Lanka the Committee for Workers Unity was formed in 1981 to unite all workers at office and factory level and establish a democratic national workers council with an elected central leadership.

This is the only way in

which self-seeking and lackadaisical leaders could be exposed, and a dedicated and bold leadership built. The disunity of our left trade union leaders in Sri Lanka has cost us dear.

The Jayawardene regime on the one hand brutally oppresses the Tamil speaking people and on the other hand, workers are pounced upon on picket lines by government thugs and generally harassed.

Nothing is more urgent today than trade union unity with a Marxist leadership in the struggle to overthrow the wretched United National Party regime, which is moving steadily towards the annihilation of the working class and the socialist movement in Sri Lanka. CWU in Sri Lanka, BLOC in Britain—Unite or perish.

Pretoria steps up pressure on neighbours

THE PROSPECT of non-aggression pacts between South Africa and both Mozambique and Angola is being heralded as a "triumph of realism" by the capitalist press.

"Marxist Mozambique was brought face to face with its own humiliation last week" said the *Sunday Times* on 26 February.

"A motorcade of South African government officials bounced along the potholed Lenin Road, Maputo and pulled up outside the conference room.

"Inside, Mozambican officials took their seats opposite the South Africans and began to bargain for their survival", they continued

tinued. The report shows once more the immense influence of South African capitalism in the entire region.

Botha's deal

On 16 March, Botha, the South African Prime Minister and Mozambique's President Samora Machel agreed on a deal with great implications for the guerilla strategy of the African National Congress.

In return for SA agreeing

to halt military aid to the pro-capitalist Mozambique Resistance Movement in its struggle against the Frelimo government, Mozambique will close down ANC bases in its country. 95% of ANC attacks in South Africa pass through or emanate from Mozambique.

Similarly with Angola, a deal seems likely to be signed with South Africa as a prelude to Namibian independence. Angola will control the activities of the Namibian liberation movement SWAPO in its country while SA pulls out troops from Angola and ceases aiding anti-government rebels.

It is the might of SA capitalism that has brought its erstwhile enemies to the negotiating table. Mozambique earns \$30 million from remittances of migrant workers in SA mines. 40% of Zimbabwe's exports go to South Africa. Transport in this region is dominated by the SA railway system.

Balance of power

The Southern Africa Development Coordinating Committee was formed by SA's black neighbours to lessen this dependence. Its attempts at economic independence have been futile but they have gone against

the interests of SA capitalism. The apartheid government in Pretoria wants the region to be a host of political and economic satellites around itself.

This is the impetus behind South Africa's destabilisation policy, not only to eradicate ANC bases but to further move the balance of regional economic power in its favour. Now more than ever, there is no way forward unless SA capitalism itself is overthrown.

Mozambique's Foreign Minister Chissano advised the ANC to commit "no violence" and to struggle against apartheid "on a diplomatic basis". But

Marxists don't see the only alternatives being either diplomatic discussions with Pretoria or guerilla struggle against the mighty military forces of apartheid.

Black workers

The class that involuntarily built SA's power, its 10 million black workers, is the only force that can end its malign dominance. Organised and conscious of its own power it will be unstoppable.

By Stephen Jolly
(Hackney North CLP)

Letters

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

Kicked out of hospital bed

Dear Comrades,

Following the recent letter from Adam Turff on the NHS cuts, I would like to tell you of a recent experience that happened to me.

The morning after an operation at Charing Cross Hospital (supposedly one of the most modern in Britain) I was asked to vacate my bed

even though I was still feeling ill.

This was because there were at least 4 other people waiting in the sitting room to be admitted. I later collapsed.

On the day I was admitted they had to turn away 9 other people as there were only 3 beds available.

Yours angrily and fraternally
Lynne James
Fulham LPYS

Soviet Union—truth not lies

Dear Comrades,

The comrade in 'Letters' (9.3.84, "Russia Defended"), who criticises Militant's position on the Soviet Union, misses the point of Peter Taaffe's article: namely, that the modern day Soviet state isn't 'socialist' but a gross caricature of socialism.

The only remaining vestige of socialism in the Soviet Union today—the political power of the working class having been usurped by a caste of bureaucrats after 1924—is the planned economy. But the planning of the economy remains in the hands of a parasitic bureaucracy—democratic planning through the Soviets having ceased long ago.

I would sincerely recommend to the comrade who feels that Militant is giving ammunition to the capitalist class, to read Trotsky's *Revolution Betrayed*. As Trotsky puts it: "The final argument of the 'friends' is that reactionaries will seize upon any criticism of the Soviet regime. In reality a Marxist criticism, which calls things by their real names, can only increase the conservative credit of the Soviet diplomacy in the eyes of the capitalists."

It is otherwise with the working class...here our work will acutely cause doubts and evoke distrust—not of revolution, but of its usurpers. But that is the very goal we have set ourselves. The motor force of progress is truth and not lies".

Fraternally
Dave Carr
Oxford

Liberal Duke

Dear Militant,

One of the Liberal/SDP Alliance's richest members must be feeling a bit sick these days. Spare a thought for an elderly man, perhaps not in the best of health, whose rather splendid home is reputed to have an electricity bill for £1 million a year.

If that wasn't bad enough, he now must feel as if his landed estates are swarming with extremists. The Duke of Devonshire (supposed to be richer than the Royal Family) not only has the Tory extremist of West Derbyshire, Michael Parris MP, and the Beast of Bolsover, Dennis Skinner MP to contend with, but now Tony Benn in Chesterfield. Poor bloke.

Yours fraternally
Olwen Davies
Leicester West LPYS

Selective sympathy

Dear Comrades,

I bet there wasn't a dry eye in the house last Sunday after reading a recent *Sunday Mirror* front page story. Poor Erica Roe 'busty rugby stalker' is penniless and pregnant.

The poor girl is reduced to shopping at Oxfam since breaking up with her millionaire boyfriend. It's a regular thing for myself and my friends to do the rounds of local jumble sales to clothe ourselves and our kids.

She obviously hasn't encountered the DHSS because

she insists she won't disclose the name of the father of her child.

It never ceases to amaze me that the media can pour out sympathy in certain instances and yet embark on bitter campaigns against class struggles. There are thousands of working class women in Britain far worse off than Miss Roe. The *Sunday Mirror* hasn't seen the need to highlight their plight.

In conclusion I must point out that the average working class women has neither the time nor the inclination to run topless around Twickenham.

Yours
Kath Burns
Birmingham

Commons style of dress

Dear Comrades,

I was disgusted to read a report that Tory MP Terry Dicks had personally abused three Labour MPs (Dave Nellist, Harriet Harman and Jeremy Corbyn) over their style of dress in the House of Commons.

He suggested that the speaker should refuse to 'call' those members who didn't conform to a 'minimum' standard of dress.

This arrogant attitude speaks volumes about the Tories' view of the House of Commons—the best club in London.

My attitude is, let the Tories pose and posture in



Dave Nellist MP

their expensive clothes. Dave Nellist, for one, on his average worker's wage can't hope to compete with them.

I judge Labour MPs on their record of fighting for their class, not on what they wear. Give me socialist MP (scruffy or otherwise) rather than a well-heeled Tory snob any day.

Fraternally
Dave Warren
Swansea LP

Sectarian rats?

Dear Comrades,

"I've seen one of those Irish Militants and in it was an article about the rats in Divis Flats (issue no 114)! It proves that the Catholic workers are worse off...The Protestant workers are more privileged and have much better housing conditions."

This statement was actually put to me the other day by someone who calls himself a socialist. And in his kind of 'True Socialist' spirit proceeded to storm off without giving me the chance to reply, simply saying, "what do you know, you're just a 'Brit', an imperialist who has stood against the Nationalist people etc."

I wonder if this character has ever been to Northern Ireland? I would like to take him through the streets of the Short Strand, the

Shankill onto the Springfield and then down towards the Falls and challenge him to point out these 'privileged areas and better housing conditions'!

On the point of me being a 'Brit Imperialist' I will admit that I was indeed a soldier serving in West Belfast. However, I challenge him to a debate, anywhere and at anytime, on the whole question of the Armed Forces and their relation to Northern Ireland. He would find out that not only I but many more soldiers and ex-soldiers wholeheartedly support the call for a socialist United Ireland, an end to sectarianism and an end to all repressive legislation and oppressive measures by the armed forces!

Fraternally
Bob Harker
Gateshead

Poverty and diet

Dear Editor,

With reference to comrade Gary Nightingale's letter "Deadly Diet" and World in Action's documentary on the British Diet, I wish to confirm that the "Deadly Diet" in question is indeed the lot of the working classes and low income groups. I am married with two children and find it very hard to provide my family with a healthy diet. My children are constantly tempted by crisps and sweets—local shops do not always sell raw peanuts

and pure fruit juice.

I used to work for Tayside Regional Council's school meals department and have seen the menus. They are very heavy on sausage, chips, pastry and white flour. What is very worrying indeed is that these same menus are offered to nursery school children. The younger the child the more protein is required per body weight and the more disastrous must be the effect of a fatty diet.

Yours sincerely
H J Murphy
Almondsbank
Perthshire

Dopey survivors

Dear Comrades,

In Hull in 1980 a conference was held on the 'post attack society'—how the bosses would manage after a nuclear holocaust. Obviously there would be enormous discontent amongst those left.

To deal with this a Reckitt and Colman executive had the idea that "marijuana would be an effective substitute for such necessities as alcohol, nicotine and caffeine".

He even suggested that:

Unfair redundancy

Dear Comrades,

I've been talking to a miner from Doncaster who feels bitter after working in the industry since 1949 and a face worker for 29 years. Now he has been relegated to 'other work' after an accident which injured his

back. He has been offered a lump sum of £1500 plus a £10 injury pension.

His mother-in-law has worked 3 years in a canteen was made redundant and got £500. These redundancy payments are all so unequal, and the more so the further you climb down the ladder.

Yours fraternally
Mike Singleton
Hove CLP



A series of industrial disputes had politically radicalised many civil servants. Above: picket against increasing workloads, London, November 1983. The government has responded by attacking union rights in the Civil Service. Photo: Stefano Cagnoni (IFL)

Civil servants radicalised

Dear Comrades,

I think everyone was surprised, including the government, by the size of support for the GCHQ day of action, both inside and outside the Civil Service. Especially considering the leaders of the Civil Service unions and the TUC were so half-hearted in the campaign.

I work in the Southampton Valuation Office and can see that people at work have been radicalised by the whole affair. Two of my workmates have applied to join the Labour Party.

At a packed meeting in Southampton during the strike one of the speakers (ex-leader of the Tory trade

unionists in our area) told how he tore up his Tory Party card and sent it back to Central Office on hearing of the banning of unions at GCHQ. He urged all other Tory Party members to do the same.

Yours comradely
Lee Dunsden
Waterside

Political Levy—No threat

Dear Comrades,

The *Financial Times* recently reported on a programme of contacts between trade union leaders and Neil Kinnock to discuss the whole question of the political levy. Mr Kinnock is reported to have said, after a meeting with the executive of the Amalgamated Union of Engineering Workers, (AUEW): "We'll certainly put up a good fight in the ballots but we have a fair set of forces ranged against us."

It then fell to Terry Duffy, President of the AUEW to AUEW to point out that the ballots could be counter-productive for the Tories.

In the last year the number of AUEW members in Northern Ireland contracting in to the political levy had increased. In Northern Ireland, Union members have to contract-in, unlike the rest of the UK where they have to contract-out.

The AUEW only has 25,000 members in NI and the total percentage contracting in has now risen from 20% to 25%.

I would be interested to know if this is happening in other TU's in Northern Ireland—imagine if those workers had a party of labour based on the unions what a campaign could be waged.

Yours Fraternally
Cathy Wilson
Vice Chair
Isle of Wight CLP

Liverpool Council supporter

Dear Comrade,

On Monday 12 March I was canvassing a block of flats in Old Swan with Terry Fields and had an interesting conversation with one of the occupants.

He told me how the old Liberal led council spent a ridiculous amount of money on a pathetic landscape scheme without even thinking of improving the condition of the flats.

I was also told that his four month old child was in an oxygen tent in one of

Liverpool's hospitals. In his opinion the condition of his child was made worse by the appalling conditions which they have.

Because of the 22,000 long waiting list for new or better accommodation the people of Liverpool find themselves in a helpless situation.

This emphasises the need to support Liverpool Labour council and its fight for the working class of Liverpool.

Yours Fraternally
David O'Farrell
Wirral

Housing benefits cut

Dear Comrades,

I had a shock recently. I was down at the dole office signing on and got handed a leaflet. I read the leaflet and had a minor heart attack.

It stated that because I was between 18 and 21 years old and was living at home they were going to cut off my housing allowance by all of £3.10. I know it doesn't sound much but if you are only getting £24.00 it's a hell of a lot of money.

This shock happened on budget day and surprise, surprise, who benefited from the budget? Of course, the rich. Now I know where the £3.10 is going. I didn't know the rich were such a needy case.

Yours fraternally
Mark Dyball
Norwich LPYS

Football fans fighting fund

Dear Comrades,

Being the FA Cup quarter-final day last Saturday, Plymouth was packed with football fans. A group of about eight of them came over to where *Militant* was being sold and bought a few papers to read at half time.

One gave what money he could and asked us to put it towards "fighting the Tories and capitalists". Working class football supporters are not all thugs, and have the same gut anger against the Tories as many other workers. Let's build on that anger and fight for socialism.

Yours fraternally
Joe Harris
Plymouth Sutton LPYS

BLOC

The need to change the unions



Workers at Warrington were not so much defeated by the massive show of force by the police (above) as by their abandonment by the TUC leadership. Photo: John Smith (IFL)

THE NATIONAL trade union conference called by the Broad Left Organising Committee (BLOC), in Sheffield on Saturday 24 March, promises to be a tremendous success.

With applications for some 2,000 delegates already received, all indications are that this will be the biggest, most important meeting of rank and file trade union representatives and activists for over a decade. Called under the demand, "Campaign for a fighting trade union movement", it has undoubtedly captured the interest and imagination of many of the best activists throughout the movement.

As the BLOC's own leaflets explain, "its aim is to help coordinate and give aid to the struggle to transform the unions into fighting organisations. Rank and file trade unionists from all unions will gather at this conference to discuss the programme necessary to begin the fightback against the Tories."

The need for a fighting programme is the vital question facing the membership of the trade union movement, and in particular, those socialist and left wing trade union members seeking to find an alternative to the disastrous policies and tactics pursued by the right wing leadership at present at the head of many unions, and currently in a majority on the TUC General Council.

It is the issue to which this BLOC conference must address itself in the wake of a number of set-backs and defeats suffered by the movement at the hands of the bosses and the Tories in the past period. How are the left to organise their forces, win the majority of trade union members to socialist policies, and replace the present leadership inside many unions with leaders prepared to fightback?

The trade union movement has suffered an onslaught in the form of high unemployment, together with a vicious crackdown on shop floor rights and organisation. Tory legislation has been designed to outlaw much legitimate and vital trade union activity, including picketing and other forms of solidarity action.

Tory Cabinet Ministers and Fleet Street have boasted about the fall in the number of days lost through strike action, and point to a "new mood of realism". This theme has also been taken up by right wing trade union leaders who have used it to excuse their own total lack of leadership over the past period.

ASLEF, NGA abandoned

But despite claims to the contrary, a number of important struggles took place during the Tories' first term of office, each one presenting the unions with an opportunity to inflict a serious defeat upon the government.

During the train drivers' strike against flexible rostering in July 1982, support from other sections

By Martin Elvin

of the trade union movement was growing when ASLEF appealed to the TUC. The TUC's response was to do a deal behind the union's back, forcing ASLEF members to return to work on the terms of the BRB and the government.

All throughout that summer, unprecedented levels of solidarity were displayed by virtually every group of organised workers, in support of the health workers' seven month struggle, but once again the TUC failed to harness that mood into effective action to defeat the Tories. Instead they allowed the dispute to peter out.

Far from drawing the lessons of this period, last year's TUC Congress took decisions with potentially serious repercussions for the working class. By agreeing to talks with the government over their vicious anti-union legislation, the right wing union leaders laid the basis for their disgraceful abandonment of the National Graphical Association, which was the first union to come into conflict with the Employment Act.

The so-called "reasonable" and "responsible" approach which the right wing have said is needed to ensure that the government consults and takes the unions into their confidence, has earned the same union leadership nothing but contempt and ridicule from the Tories.

Bold leadership needed

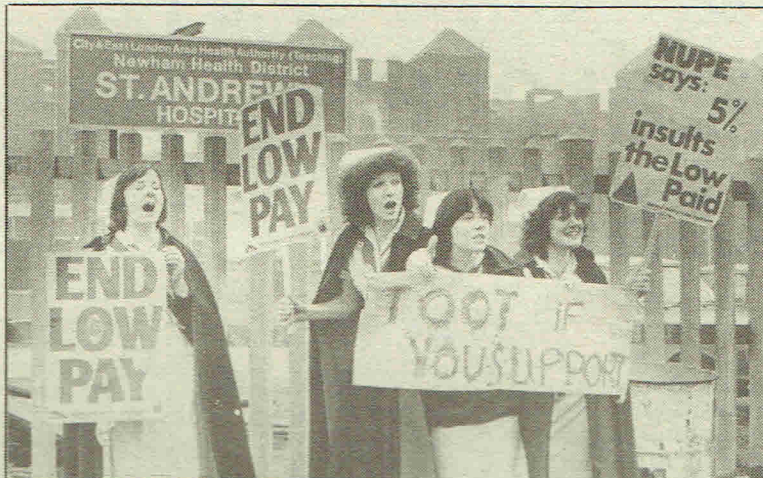
Just how far this government is prepared to go was amply demonstrated by their unilateral decision to tear up all agreements and end totally all rights to trade union membership for civil service staff at GCHQ in Cheltenham. Once again, the preparedness of trade union members to take on this government was graphically shown by the marvellous response by men and women all over the country to the last minute, half-hearted TUC call for a half day of action in support of trade unionists at GCHQ.

The experience of the past few years shows, above all, the need for a bold, clear leadership at every level of the trade union movement. Equally clearly, the right wing can offer absolutely no way forward for the working class. Their outlook and their policies have been moulded in the period of the boom years of the 1950s and 1960s.

To many of the right wing, trade unionism is solely about arbitration, negotiation and conciliation. The idea of leading a confrontation is totally alien to them. Many of them believe that their "negotiating



ASLEF members were left by the TUC to go back on the BRB's terms. Photo: Militant



In 1982 health workers generated an unprecedented degree of support from other workers. Photo: Militant

skills" are all that are needed to solve the problems of today. They refuse to see that it is the accumulated power of the working class which ensured the gains of the post-war period, and that the same power stands now in the way of the Tories' aims to drive down workers' living standards.

Campaigning Broad Lefts

Many of these leaders show a complete lack of faith in the willingness and ability of workers to fight, whilst at the same time they have a morbid fear of the power of the trade union movement, which they consequently refuse to mobilise. On a personal level too, many of today's right wing union leaders enjoy a life-style more akin to the employers and the ruling class, than the millions of low-paid workers they are supposed to represent.

A break with the bankrupt policies of these leaders is vital. Unfortunately, however, even some of the left trade union leaders have allowed themselves to be affected by the air of gloom and pessimism exuded by the right wing over the past period.

In truth, whilst the left trade union leaders are, unlike the right, genuine and well-intentioned,

many start from the same premise as the right—that the trade union movement is weak and unpopular. Such views have even permeated down to the ranks of some of the older "Broad Left" bodies, which as a result have actually retreated and declined in size, effectiveness and appeal, thus allowing the right wing to make temporary advances.

This has unfortunately been the case in the EETPU, for example, where the *Flashlight* body has really been little more than an election machine, and not a particularly effective one either. It has really failed to win around it the many thousands of young electricians and even apprentices in the electrical trades who yearn to change the EETPU.

As ASLEF President Derek Fullick explained in an interview with *Left Lines*, the journal of the Broad Left of railway workers, "As I see it, the Broad Left is a unifying group at grass roots level which gives a forum for exchange of views—it is not a counter-productive body.

"I think it's healthy having it, because if someone wins an election, makes a few good speeches, and leaves it at that, groups like the Broad Left can keep the discussion going, which is good for the membership and also the particular leadership they are pushing".

The Railway Workers Broad

Left is one a number of union Broad Lefts which have been launched in the past few years, including in ASTMS, BIFU, COHSE (Group '81), GMBATU, UCW and NUPE. Broad Lefts in unions such as the POEU, CPSA and others have been revitalised, turning them back once more towards the membership.

Unlike some of the older Broad Lefts, which even today are run on an "invitations only" basis, almost like a secret society, these newer or revitalised Broad Lefts are campaigning bodies.

Operating as a United Front such Broad Lefts should aim to draw together all those within the union who are determined and committed to encouraging the active participation of the membership in the union's affairs, in order to transform it into a fighting organisation, for the democratisation of the union's structure, and in the process to defeat the right wing leaders and officers, and establish instead a socialist leadership, responsive to the needs and wishes of the members.

The organisation of regular open meetings at national level to democratically thrash out policies and elect a leadership, is vital to these Broad Lefts, as is the holding of regular meetings in each area to build the support and influence of the body at local level. Regular journals produced to communicate to supporters can act as a campaigner on the main issues.

The Broad Left Organising Committee has now begun to bring together the various Broad Left Bodies throughout the trade union movement. It can now undoubtedly begin to undertake the vital task of uniting left-wing and socialist trade unionists in all unions.

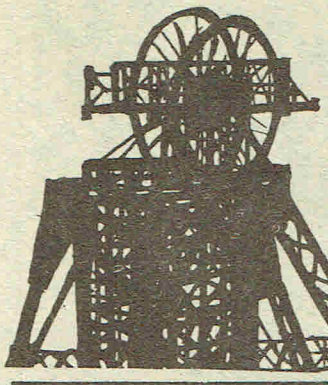
Above all, the Broad Lefts need to clearly raise political demands. As a first step, every attempt by the right wing to sever union links with the Labour Party must be implacably opposed and campaigns must be waged inside those unions not yet affiliated, to rectify that situation.

The Broad Lefts must raise clearly the need for socialist policies. The attacks upon the working class flow directly from the crisis of the capitalist system. All the gains made through industrial struggles, and the reforms of the post-war period are now threatened.

In the long run the gains and achievements of yesterday and today can only be guaranteed tomorrow, through a successful struggle for the transformation of society. Massive battles in Britain are now on the order of the day, the possibility of a general strike looms in the background.

In Britain, more so than many other countries, the role of the unions will be decisive. The economic levers of power lie there. The unions can and must be transformed into levers for socialist change to put the power once and forever firmly in the hands of the working class.

INDUSTRIAL REPORTS



Success for flying pickets

OVER THIRTY miners turned up at Prince of Wales pit at short notice to go to Lancashire. We were split into cars, given £1 apiece and told we were going to Bold Colliery.

The Branch Secretary wasn't exactly pleased to see us at first, telling us in language familiar in the mines to go away but once we told them we wanted a word with the men, the Branch paid for a cup of tea for all the pickets.

We organised to picket the night shift as they came on. Most of us were young with only a few veterans of 1972 and 1974, so we weren't exactly sure what to do, but we soon worked out where to picket.

A feeling of apprehension had built up by the time the first miner turned up but he listened to our arguments and turned back to massive cheering. The first bus arrived, a picket got on, put our case and got off with arms full of snap (food).

By 11 pm the night shift had all turned back, the young pickets were jubilant and we began the long cold vigil till day shift.

When the morning shift arrived we again asked for support; most men gave it but said they wanted to attend their meeting. We had to wait ten minutes before the canteen doors opened and men began streaming towards the car park to loud cheers and applause.

By Richard Clarkson
(Prince of Wales NUM)

Kent miners say . . .

"THE KENT Miners have always had a good reputation of battling and always supporting others. Now the Kent miners are asking for support. Not for more money but to defend their jobs.

"I was picketing in Leicestershire last week and I was disgusted, particularly with their leadership. We've had to fight in Kent for all we've got and we all stand together, but they condemn us for sticking up for our rights.

"We were at Portsmouth at the weekend for regional Labour Party conference. There are no pits in the area but the people welcomed us with open arms, and collected £350."

Peter Jaconelli
(Snowdon NUM)

"WHEN MacGregor came over here everyone pointed out his success in mining in the USA and its profits. Now after a few years his mining company over there is nearly bankrupt. So let him go back to the States and leave NCB mining alone."

Gary, a member of
Tilmanstone NUM

Miners strike gathers pace

PICKETS SET off from Kellingley, a dozen of us packed into three cars.

With only £2 in our pockets we faced a 12 hour picketing shift which started at 7.45 when we reached Parkside colliery in Lancashire. At first I was taken aback at the hostility from the local NUM secretary who argued we were out to intimidate his men.

We explained we only intended to put our case and ask for support from other NUM members but this had no effect on the local official, we found his presence intimidating as he stood alongside the most objectionable personnel manager I have ever met.

Coal Board intimidation

When the night shift started to arrive we tried to have a free discussion. However the local official and the personnel manager kept interrupting. We were asking the lads to give up a shift's work and their pay but with the personnel manager peering in to see who was in the cars, NUM members were being treated to real intimidation, as the lads would be worried about their jobs, training and future prospects.

Even with this opposition we had a very good picket, as shown by the lack of any media coverage. We explain-



Ollerton colliery. Huge police mobilisation on 14 March, the night of David Jones' death.

ed we were from the North Yorkshire pits on official strike and wanted their support. It's your choice whether you cross the picket line, but we believe our fight is your fight".

Miners join pickets

With this approach, 50% of the nightshift turned back. The most significant part of the night was when 20 of the younger Parkside miners joined the picket line and stayed

with us.

The real test came however with the day shift, all 900 of them. The response was extremely good in the cars and coaches.

But picketing can be frightening! The shift did not go home but stayed at the end of the road. About 500-600 were congregated only a couple of yards from where we stood. At times we'd take a few paces backwards only to see a mass of Parkside miners edge a few paces forward.

A few, only a few, choice

remarks telling us exactly how to get back to Yorkshire were hurled at the pickets. Stalemate—and the tension was quite great. Then a Parkside lad came forward and threw something towards the picket line.

Local lads in charge

We looked up. A brick? No, it was someone's snap! Sandwiches came flowing over after that and the tension eased.

We were left with a big pile to eat and the vast majority of the day shift finally made their way home. We could see that we had a lot in common with the Parkside lads. Their pit was under threat like many Yorkshire pits.

In the end this showed through and we were able to leave the local lads in charge of the picket line.

By Mick McMahon
(Kellingley NUM,
N Yorkshire)

Death of a picket

ABOUT 4am on 15 March several hundred pickets stood in absolute silence for about two minutes, outside Ollerton colliery in Notts.

Egen the police took off their helmets after angry demands from miners paying their respects to Yorkshire miner David Jones, who had died earlier.

By Chris Ridge

Frank Slater, another Yorkshire miner was at Ollerton. "Tension was building up before the lad was killed. People were coming out of the Plough—a pub opposite the pit and goading the pickets. The police kept us in line but did nothing about the people

causing trouble. I heard the lad who died went to his car on his own and was hit by or with a brick."

Police broke promise

The media tried to blame this tragedy on the presence of so many pickets. We were treated to pictures of police and pickets clashing outside nearby Thoresby colliery, with one blood-stained picket being carried away. Frank Slater explained what actually happened:—"I was asked by the police to let the night shift who'd scabbed out. I agreed, provided a local official walked in front of the cars so they wouldn't drive out fast.

"I only asked for 5 minutes

after to discuss the day-shift problem with Thoresby officials. If there was no agreement I said I'd disperse the men. The problems came because the police broke their promise. While the lads had their heads down the police marched in and forced us back.

Good response

"PC 1010 picked out one picket and gave him some stick with the boot. He had to go to hospital and came out with a collar on his neck and broken ribs. Earlier on relations with the police were good. At Birch Coppice in the Midlands the chief inspector came up and thanked me for

keeping order.

"We've also had a good response from local miners. At one pit their wives put up pickets overnight."

David Jones appeal fund

AN APPEAL fund for David Jones' widow and two children has been launched and donations can be sent to the "DAVID GARETH JONES APPEAL FUND" c/o Mr K Homer, Yorkshire Area NUM H.Q. 2 Huddersfield Road Barnsley.

Anger in Yorkshire

"IF IT were Poland there would be an immediate outcry from Thatcher." This was a typical comment from South Yorkshire miners on police saturation of the Midlands coalfield.

The turning away of men at county boundaries has aroused enormous hostility. As one miner told us: "I go often seven miles down the road to drink with mates in Longhorne in Nottinghamshire. Can't I go from one county to another now because I am a miner?"

Potential for victory

The NCB's original threat to the Yorkshire NUM HQ at Barnsley also added fuel to the flames. These draconian attacks should convince miners in Notts and other non-striking areas of the need for total solidarity through national action.

The potential is shown in one incident alone. A miner from Askern Colliery, Don-

caster, reported that he and other pickets went to Lea Hall pit, Staffordshire on Friday—the day after they balloted. They tried to talk to miners there in a friendly and constructive manner. It worked.

They addressed a meeting in the canteen of 26 surface-men and explained the issues. The Staffordshire miners told them that they had not been given the full facts before, and if they had known would have certainly voted completely differently the previous day.

Unions support

Yorkshire miners are learning all the time in the heat of the struggle. Critical issues have been raised and extensively discussed. The LPYS is organising public meetings in South Yorkshire sponsored by

the neighbouring NUM branches. Solidarity has been built in action.

The South Yorkshire miners are also fully aware of the need to get contacts in other sections of the trade union movement. The local NUM knows the importance of the BLOC conference in Sheffield on Saturday, and the South Yorkshire panel is now supporting the conference. From every NUM branch in the area in the area delegations are now expected. The case of the miners must be put to the entire labour movement.

By Rob Jones

See editorial on miners and police. Page 2.

Midlands area — why the ballot was lost

THE MIDLANDS area ballot gave just 28% support to strike action over pit closures. Could the result have been different?

The vote for strike action was up seven points from 21% last time but this increased support unfortunately was not built on.

The area council, say the rejection "surprised" them. However, many miners were not surprised. There is much criticism of the area council for their headlong rush into a ballot, before the Yorkshire strike had fully developed, before they even mentioned their support for the dispute, and before the issues had been explained to or discussed by miners.

The council's support appears to be, "through clenched teeth" Dave Cliff, Hem Heath NUM and having called a ballot there was no campaign whatsoever for a "yes" vote. It was left to the rank and file to try and win sup-

port, often against the local leadership.

At Littleton, men wanted a ballot because they wanted a say in the matter. But a few men went to the union office and asked whether before a ballot were cast they could hear a representative from the Yorkshire miners. The few became a crowd. They were told no.

They then demanded that someone from the Area Council come and put the case. But no one came, they were "busy". "A pithead ballot? You may as well have a Sun ballot" said one miner.

Young Littleton miners succeeded in getting the pit out on strike by shouting "We've come out lads, come out with us. Let's close our own pit down". But the confusion engendered by the local and area leadership remained.

By Dave Griffiths

Around the country:

Building solidarity

IN SOUTH Wales all pits are closed with almost total support. In the only pit which has not voted to support Celynen South, they have voted not to cross picket lines.

Two pits previously opposed to the strike Cynheidre and Nantgarw voted to support it this weekend. Although a small minority of pits have called for a national ballot most areas have been involved in picketing other coalfields or local power stations, rail depots etc.

Rail workers aid struggle

British Rail have threatened to send home train crews with no pay if they refuse to cross picket lines. Miners have succeeded in preventing coal getting to a large power station mainly through solidarity action by railmen, meanwhile arrangements are being made for delivery of coal to cases of urgency such as schools and hospitals.

AT TOWER Colliery, South Wales we asked miners their views on the strike.

We asked how the strike was stopping coal to the power stations. Hugh Edwards, lodge chairman, wryly commented: "we placed a large banner at the side of the railway track and the driver was not prepared to pass it."

"We got the same response from shunters and track-layers. The rank and file of the NUR and ASLEF believe this is a fight for all trade unionists." A number of miners surrounding us shouted out, one said, "The band-wagon's rolling. Anyone with a gripe against the Tories can jump on", and another, "we'll have a general strike".

Hugh asked us to print the lodge's heartfelt thanks to the

A plan for the industry

AFTER A mass meeting on 14 March, Billy Davis chairman Abernant Lodge, West Wales, spoke to Pam Woods and Brian Lewis.

"We know in Abernant that our pit is threatened, just like other pits in Kent, Yorkshire and Scotland. The miners know that nobody's job is safe with this Tory Government.

"Our main weapon is secondary or, what it should be called, effective picketing, and if the law is used to prevent us and undermine the

Durham—link to wages

BILL, WILKINSON, PAUL LUNDIE, GEOFF McDONALD, all Wearmouth Colliery NUM pickets spoke to RAY PHYSICK.

"IF EVERYONE comes out we can win. Unity will come. If we have a national ballot in Durham, we could get a 75% vote for strike.

"The fight to save pits must be linked to higher wages. A surface worker only gets £56 on a flat week. Thatcher tells us the more you produce the more you get paid. We are

At least one local Labour council is offering free school meals to miners' children in return for coal. Cardiff trades council are arranging a special mass meeting in support of the miners and will probably hold it in working time in order to disrupt work.

Miners welcomed the *Militant Miner* posters and took copies to put in their windows and also welcomed the special leaflets on DHSS rights which South Wales supporters have drawn up. One miner said "they aim to prosecute the bus drivers who have taken the flying pickets. Talk about bloody Poland!"

Another said "our mine is like a gypsy camp for miners; we've taken so many men from closed pits" One older miner said "I've worked in the pit since 1944. If Maggie closes this pit and it floods they can never re-open it if they need the coal. She offers a thousand pound a year to miners, why can't they invest that in the industry?"

lads in the NUR and ASLEF for their support. Such is the solidarity of support that now there is only token picketing on the depots and the lines.

On the Tories' anti-union legislation a miner angrily responded. "We're not bloody interested in their laws."

The strike, the hopes and anxieties of the men could be best understood by coming out of the canteen. Stand on the hill-top and all you can see in any direction for miles and miles is forests, little village hamlets and one factory estate which had been devastated by redundancies. Either the miners win, or they face destruction of their entire communities.

By Roy Davies

strike, then we have got to take them on, meet the consequences later and face the challenge.

"What we want from this strike is to set up a plan for coal, where new mines will be started, old mines re-developed, bringing them up to date with massive investment, so that we can give young people without jobs a future in the coal industry. But we know what the Tories want to do—axe the industry by closing pits and hiving off the profitable parts to private companies through denationalisation. This is a fight that we can't afford to lose".

breaking all production records but we are still only getting 5.2%—compare that with what the police got.

"The huge police presence is bound to cause friction. Yorkshire are not secondary picketing, they are picketing their own union members. If the NCB can move us to any pit they like, we can picket any pit we like!

"The strike needs support from other unions, but first we need unity ourselves."



Miner at Celynen South. NUM members in South Wales are gaining tremendous solidarity from other workers. PHOTO: Dave Sinclair

Nottingham

"THEY CAN pay us 10 years wage rises with the cost of this lot" one miner summed up the massive police operation in Notts and Derbyshire this week.

Over 8000 police on hand, half of them from 20 outside forces, costing £½ million each day and the Tories say local ratepayers must foot half the bill. If councils levied a rate to improve local services they would be penalised.

The action has been a great eye opener for many miners. When Notts area branch officials met on Sunday to discuss ballot results, the approach road was blocked off either end and NUM members had to show credentials to get through.

Kent

THE FOLLOWING letter was sent to leaders of the Nottinghamshire miners:

"WE ARE Kent miners' wives, proud of our men in their struggle against pit closures, and we are sure we speak for many miners' wives throughout the country.

Recent events have proved difficult and distressing for all miners' families involved in the dispute, but the most distressing point of all is the 'I'm alright Jack' attitude of the majority of your members.

"This dispute is about pit closures, jobs and a future for

Some compared it to the use of apartheid style pass laws. Another miner saw police apparently practising how quickly they could seal off roads. By Monday morning ready for morning shift police with hundred of reinforcements were at every pit. They easily outnumbered those pickets who broke through the cordon.

Law and order?

Police have claimed they are defending the right of Notts miners to go to work, but they have never forced the NCB to open a pit they have closed!

They also claim they are upholding law and order but events at Ollerton and Thoresby show they are responsible for much of the violence.

They are defending the right to break strikes and trying to make picketing ineffective.

all in the industries. It will affect your area as well as the rest of Britain. It should be the duty of all on-line NUM members to support the action being taken at the present time in an effort to challenge the NCB plans for the cutbacks in the industry.

"Many of your members seem proud of the fact that this dispute may cause an irreparable rift in the union. They should feel ashamed of the way you appear to endorse the NCB and government's dirty tactics.

"We understand the pressures—we are living through it too. We struggled to survive in 1972 and 1974 strikes because we believed in

How can you speak to a car driven straight past you?

Blidworth

"WE'RE 100% for this strike; we've got to take on McGregor and Thatcher, it's now or never!"

These were comments made by Notts miners at Blidworth pit. The morale and enthusiasm for an all-out strike was very high, and one miner commented that a ballot was irrelevant now that the strike was underway.

All the pickets remarked how the media both locally and nationally had chosen to ignore pits that were supporting the strike. One lad said: "It's a shame the press doesn't come to Blidworth and see the peaceful picketing here."

what we were fighting for. We are willing to struggle again. This case can be won—it must be won.

"It is the most important battle of our lives—it is a fight for our future—the survival of Britain's finest industries and a lot of mining communities. Our fight should be your fight. No miner has the right to take another man's job in the future.

"Challenge your members to think again and unite behind the leadership in an effort to secure a future for all.

Yours Sincerely
Mrs KN Sutcliffe
Aylesham Ladies' Section,
Friends of Mineworkers,
Snowdown Colliery.

Westoe colliery

AT WESTOE the strike carries on solidly and miners are determined to picket any Durham pit which doesn't come out and use the Triple Alliance of rail, steel and coal to end all coal distribution except to hospitals, etc. Already all colliers arriving in the River Tyne is prevented from docking to unload coal.

Ann Kendrick whose husband works at Westoe said, "Obviously miners' wives don't like the men being on strike but if we don't stand and fight we'll have no jobs and no wages.

Wives support strike

"As for the women shown on television escorting husbands past picket lines I just wish the NUM would organise a bus for the wives who support the strike. We'd show them a thing or two. If any 'pinny brigade' tries tricks like that here I'd be on the picket with my husband pushing the other way."

Ashington—whole town wants to win

ASHINGTON IN the heart of the Northumberland coalfield is bracing itself for a long, bitter fight.

Along the street, the men bring plastic sacks filled with coal gleaned from the waste tips. At home the women inspect the larders prepared carefully over the last few months—by getting extra items on each week's shopping.

Everyone here knew a strike was coming, the only question was when. In the bars, on the street corners and down the narrow back lanes the topic of conversation is about only one thing—the strike.

In Northumberland there have been miners for 200 years. At the time of the 1926 general strike there were dozens of pits, today there are only five. The smallest—Brenkley Colliery—is due to close in the next year or so.

Northumberland has always been considered a right wing coalfield but this time in the ballot they voted narrowly for

a strike. The young married men carried the vote. Without the pits there will be nothing left to do, no jobs, no future. Only a few maintenance men have sneaked in across the fields at the back of the pits.

Door to door collections

But mass pickets are out every morning, making sure they don't get in. Ashington has been covered with *Militant Miner* posters. Collections have been organised around the doors. One unemployed worker gave 50p and said, "the miners' victory was the only way that he was going to get a job." Old women come up to the Young Socialists in the street to tell them that they are doing a fine job.

If Thatcher thinks she's going to intimidate, humiliate, or crush the miners, she had better think again. The whole town of Ashington has a message for her—the miners will win.

In brief

Birmingham school meals

LAST MONTH 5,500 school staff were sacked by Tory controlled Birmingham City Council and offered, "new contracts with the loss of 14½ days pay for the same work". The staff have responded firmly: "our conditions are not for sale".

The dinner ladies feel they are being used as a "test case" by the Tories, mainly because, as part-time female workers, they seem a weaker section of the movement, ideal targets for a "GCHQ—style attack", to take away hard-won rights. At a meeting on 7 March in the Town Hall 4000 of the staff at a public meeting voted for all out strike on 27 March, the regional Democracy Day and the public sector alliance in the city has given its support to the meal staff in their fight to maintain nationally agreed conditions of service.

By Kath Burns
(Erdington Labour Party)

Vosper's

700 MANUAL workers were laid off without pay by Vosper shiprepairers Southampton on 16 March.

Workers earlier had implemented an overtime ban and refused to work night shifts in support in of their claim for £26 on the basic wage. Shipyard workers have slipped consently down the earnings table and British Shipbuilders offer of £7 a week does nothing to rectify this.

Management's reaction was a lock out. Some fear this action is a first step to the selling off of Vosper's, with the normal "slimming down" of the workforce and wage cuts to make it more appealing to the private consortium in the City of London which has already shown an interest.

Pickets have been set up to stop office staff and sub contractors entering. However management told white collar workers to arrive two hours earlier to avoid pickets. Mass meetings of Vosper workers are being called.

Westland

AT YEOVIL, Westland helicopters workers walked out on 6 March when the company issued notices to employees in areas of Computer Aided Design (CAD) and manufacturing engineering to work shifts, whether they were single parents, people with families or whatever, without consultation or be sacked.

This followed workers rejection of a new offer. Working hours were to be cut from the usual shift workers' hours of 37 to 32½ but there would be no premium.

The company then instructed line management to call in employees one by one with no union representatives present. They asked them if he/she agreed to work shifts. If they refused, they were told "Personnel" would be writing to them. The unions kept asking, does this mean the sack, but the company just blandly sent out the letters with their ultimatum.

Negotiations on shiftwork can begin anytime provided management withdraw their threats of sacking.

By Ted Routledge
(Strike committee member Yeovil)

Letters of support and donations: C/O Strike Committee AUEW—TASS, Unity Hall, Centre Rd Yeovil Somerset.

Militant

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Broad left conference - a huge success

See background feature page 13

The organisers of the Conference of the Broad Left Organising Committee (BLOC) expect the event this weekend to be a huge success. Two thousand delegates have already applied for credentials and the main conference is having to be supplemented by an overflow meeting in an adjacent room in the same building.

In an interview with *Militant*, George Williamson, the organising secretary, confirmed the huge response there had been, especially from the industrial trade unions. "61 per cent of the delegates", he explained, "are from blue-collar unions, 36 per cent white collar and about 3 per cent from trades councils."

"The biggest delegations are obviously from the major industrial unions. The TGWU, for example, will have over 200 delegates present, the AUEW approximately 130 and NUPE about 140. The National Union of Mineworkers will have at least 60 delegates present. These trade union members are coming from all over Britain, from as far afield as Plymouth and Perth."

Militant: Can you give an outline of the purpose and the aim of the Conference?

George Williamson: In the face of the retreat of the TUC leadership and their attitude of so-called "new-realism", in other words bowing down in

front of the Tories, the central purpose of the conference is to begin to organise a campaign within the trade union movement for a fighting response from the TUC, and for total opposition to any anti-trade union legislation.

After the conference the BLOC intends to organise an intensive campaign through the trade union conferences and up to the TUC congress to try to get that policy changed. The open fashion in which this Conference has been organised also challenges many cherished concepts about how the left should organise its forces. More importantly, it shows the enormous potential to mount a serious challenge to the right-wing's stranglehold within the trade union movement nationally.

Militant: How will the conference assist in building up the individual Broad Lefts?

GW: The most important task for this Conference and for the Broad Left Organising Committee is to build and strengthen the individual trade union Broad Lefts. So far as this is concerned I think that the BLOC Conference has already been very successful.

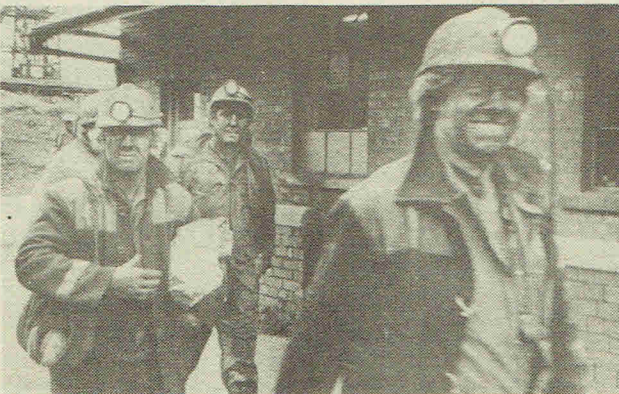
It will undoubtedly bring a whole new layer of workers into contact with their own individual

Delegates to the BLOC conference should take out a subscription to *Militant* for their own trade union branch, shop stewards committee or workplace. The *Militant* is the only paper that can counteract the lies and distortions of the millionaires' press of Fleet Street. Support *Militant*, a paper for workers, written by workers, sold by workers. See subscription form below.

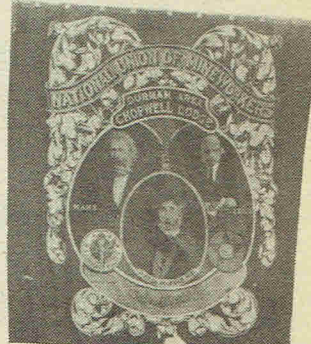
WHAT MILITANT STANDS FOR:

- ★ Election of all trade union officials, subject to recall by the membership.
- ★ All trade union officials to be on the same average wages as the members they represent, with legitimate expenses paid by the union and audited by members.
- ★ Defend the political levy. The trade unions created the Labour Party and should remain the back-bone of the Party.
- ★ A campaign in workplaces for workplace Labour Party branches.
- ★ A campaign for affiliation to the Labour Party of those unions not yet affiliated, like CPSA, NALGO, NUT.

Photo: Dave Sinclair



Over 60 NUM delegates will be attending BLOC conference.



Hardie, Marx and Lenin on this miners' lodge banner show the fighting traditions of the labour movement.

trade union Broad Left, therefore strengthening those individual Broad Lefts, and, I believe, a couple of Broad Lefts are actually being formed and launched at this Conference. For example, the GMBATU Broad Left is launching itself publicly at this conference.

Also, the purpose of it is to build up, where possible, local committees of the BLOC in all different parts of the country, where these are viable. This conference, therefore, will be the launching pad for concerted campaigns by the various lefts throughout the trade union movement to transform their own organisations into fighting, democratic bodies which will fight and defend the interests of the members.

It is very important that the Broad Lefts themselves become campaigning organisations which are prepared to go out and win the mass of the members of their trade unions to their ideas...towards the idea of changing their trade union. The BLOC can play an important role in coordinating this and giving assistance to individual trade union Broad Lefts.

Militant: Will there be separate meetings for individual union Broad Left groups?

GW: Any union which is in a position to hold a meeting—and by that I mean three or more delegates—will be able to

convene a meeting. These will be held during an especially extended lunch hour at the conference to enable them to take place. Special rooms are being allocated apart from the main hall for the trade unionists to hold their individual meetings and in these it is hoped the individual trade union Broad Left will be able to make contacts with all their delegates. But in many cases the separate BL meetings will be used simply to brief delegates on the developments in their unions in the past period of BL activity.

Militant: What function will the BLOC have at local and regional level?

GW: This Conference will give an impetus to the setting up in some areas of local committees across the broad lefts, local 'BLOCs'. There is huge scope for such initiatives, first of all in helping to organise the left in some areas on trades councils, but more than that, in helping to generate solidarity and support for workers going into action.

What is important is that these local BLOCs should, like the national body, be firmly rooted in the struggles of the separate union Broad Lefts, campaigning within union branches, district and regional committees and in the workplace, for fighting, democratic unions.

Militant: What is the policy of BLOC on the

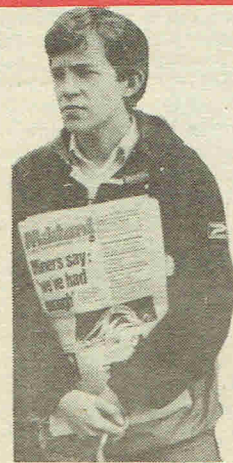
questions of union democracy and affiliation to the Labour Party?

GW: A declaration will be presented to the delegates at the conference which incorporates demands on these questions. In fact, it has been the supporters of the Broad Lefts in many unions that have been in the forefront of the struggles to democratise their unions.

In the CPSA for example, Broad Left supporters were the ones putting forward the idea for the regular election of all officials. Much the same kind of demands have been put in other trade unions by Broad Left supporters.

The BLOC is confident that this declaration will be agreed by the delegates and will form the basis of a continuing fight for the democratisation of the trade unions—to turn them into fighting organisations responsive to the interests of their rank and file.

We will be also be including in the Declaration the demand, should the King legislation become law, and trade unions are forced to hold ballots, that those unions already linked to Labour continue to be affiliated to the Party. We would also support a campaign to have those unions not already affiliated to affiliate. We would attach great importance to this campaign over the next couple of months.



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