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**NATIONAL
CONFERENCE**

Billionaire budget

Health service pays the price

LAWSON'S BUDGET was a kick in the teeth for the poorest nine tenths of the country, the health workers in particular.

By Pat Craven

Not a penny more is going to the NHS. The millions which could have been used to pay nurses, reopen wards and clear the waiting lists have been diverted into the pockets of the super-rich.

While the poorest face new social security rules which will push thousands into destitution, those on £100,000 and more have had gold poured down their throats. Burton's boss Sir Ralph Halpern will take home £5,000 more a week!

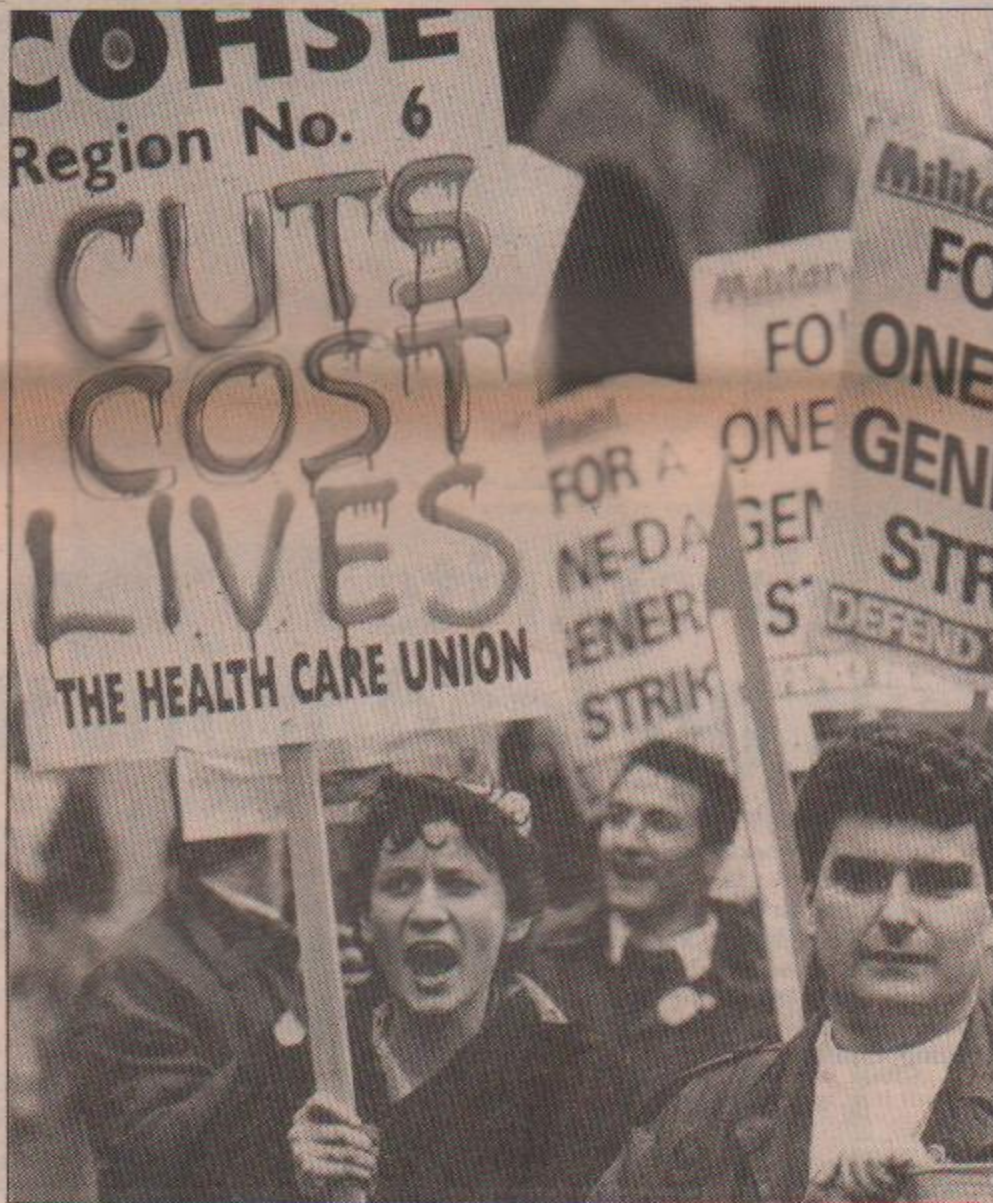
"I think it's absolutely ridiculous," said Ruth Herdman, a Cohse nurse in Sheffield: "A staff nurse on £6,000 is going to get an extra £2.20 a week. Two billion has been given away to the rich, just what Cohse has been demanding for the health service."

At Netheredge Hospital in Sheffield, workers decided on an immediate walk-out on Wednesday on the budget issue.

Labour MPs exploded with rage, echoing the fury of millions of workers at an act of piracy with the wealth which their labour has created.

The budget is a turning point in the health workers' struggle. Lawson has treated with contempt the pleas of union leaders who urged restraint and the 'power of love' to persuade the Tories to spend more on health.

Silent vigils and processions to bring moral pressure on the Tories have got nowhere. Those who have



Health workers on 14 March day of action in London.

Photo: Dave Sinclair.

demanding strike action as the only way to move the Tories have been vindicated.

Health workers are angry but not surprised. "It's absolutely appalling" said Ailsa Burns, Cohse shop steward at Gartnavel Hospital, Glasgow, "but I didn't expect anything. I know what they are like."

"We knew they wouldn't

give us the money, but we didn't know they would be so blatant," said Ruth Herdman: "It's ammunition for our side. We're not going to let it drop now."

The rank and file are already years ahead of their leaders. The TUC's refusal to allow health workers to speak at the 5 March rally and Nupe and Cohse

leaders calling for action on two different days last week typified the leadership's unwillingness to wage a real fight.

The campaign has proved that the impetus for action comes from below. The workers in the wards, starting with the nurses in North Manchester, have powered this campaign.

But it is more vital than



Nigel Lawson—robbing poor to pay rich.

ever that pressure be intensified for a change of course by the union leaders. Rank-and-file pressure alone will not be sufficient to draw into action all those thousands still waiting in the wings, both in the NHS and the wider movement.

Sympathy is overwhelming, but the mass of workers will move when they see a bold lead from the unions. There must be a flood of resolutions to commit the health unions and TUC to call a one-day general strike to defend the NHS and oppose this billionaires' budget.

The combination of pressure from the activists below forcing the leadership to give a lead from the top will mobilise into action the biggest ever demonstration of working-class power.

Lawson has demonstrated how little he cares for union leaders' words. Now is the time for mass action in a one-day general strike to force him to respond.

Inside Sacked!

King's Cross train drivers and Dover P&O ferry workers. —see page 15



Land Rover

—page 14



US elections

—page 10

Defend the NHS with a one day general strike

Strike day for the NHS

MINERS, DOCKERS, bus crews, shipyard and aircraft workers joined thousands of health workers in Monday's eve-of-budget strike action to demand more resources for the NHS.

This was despite relentless pressure against action from the press, and threats of legal action and intimidation by management.

Most of the solidarity action was taken after appeals from health union activists and local broad lefts. But the actual numbers on strike belied the widespread support from other workers who would have taken strike action given backing from union leaders.

Legal threats

Many union branches, such as Kings Cross Aslef, voted to take action but were threatened with legal action. In other cases union leaders wouldn't give their backing to strike action.

In London health workers struck at 17 hospitals and took part in a 3,000 strong demonstration. The best support came from London buses, with 18 garages stopping for most of the day and another 18 stopping for 2 hours.

In Sheffield striking hospital workers were sup-

By Ben Eastop

ported by bus workers, firefighters and council workers.

Lone picket Maggie Black brought 150 miners out at Littleton pit in Stafford and there was a joint demonstration of health workers and miners in the town.

In Coventry Nupe members voted 2 to 1 for a 24 hour strike which affected all the hospitals. Birmingham's All Saints psychiatric hospital struck for the day and there were strikes at Manchester's Withington hospital and North Manchester.

There were protests at all hospitals in Northern Ireland and shipyard workers at Harland and Wolff came out in support.

Dockers at Tilbury, Southampton and Bristol struck in support of the health workers.



Part of the noisy and enthusiastic demonstration in London.

Photo: Dave Sinclair.

Nurses swing towards Labour

MORE NURSES are now supporting Labour. In a poll conducted for the *Nursing Standard* 48 per cent said they would vote Labour compared with 36 per cent in the election, a 7.5 per cent

swing to Labour.

Undoubtedly anger over health cuts and industrial action by nurses and other health workers has produced this radicalisation of political opinion.

Dave Ward, a Liverpool council worker: "I believe that it is our duty to defend the NHS. It has been fought for by the working class. The nurses have shown their determination by coming out. They are telling us it is in crisis.

"A one-day general strike would get tremendous support throughout the country. Workers need a positive lead. These vigils are OK, but people will get fed up standing out in the rain seeing their efforts being dissipated".

National Health Shop Stewards Combine Inaugural Conference

Saturday 26 March, 11am to 5pm
Memorial Hall, Barker's Pool,
Sheffield S1

Admission: £3 per delegate

Supported by London, Leicester, Manchester strike committees and Sheffield Cohse stewards committee

Moscow Trials Campaign Public meeting

Clear the names of Stalin's victims

Sunday 20 March, Kingsway Princeton College Sidmouth Street, London WC1

High spirits in the rain but no lead from the top

THE RELENTLESS drizzle could not dampen the exuberance of 3,000 London health workers, school students, British Aerospace stewards, firefighters, dockers, nursery nurses and bus drivers as they marched from the South Bank to the rally in the Friends' Meeting House.

By Pat Craven

Before the meeting began, the hall resounded to the chants of the marchers and their song 'We're going to strike for the NHS'. This rally was everything the TUC's in Hyde Park on 5 March was not—the chance for the voice of the rank and file to be heard.

The mood was reflected by the official speaker from Cohse, who demanded that trade union leaders do what their members tell them, not what High Court judges want.

Sick and fed up

Camilla Crevillo, a student nurse representing the Youth Trades Union Rights Campaign, warned of the threat to bring YTS trainees into nursing jobs and to make it compulsory: "This march has shown that the youth are sick and fed up".

For the Schools Students' Union, Dan Lowenstein said that youth have been in the front line of the Tory onslaught. He condemned their 'free-market education scheme which will leave the working class the scraps."



Picket at Charing Cross Hospital.

Dave Hogkinson of Thorn-EMI, Manchester, reported how management had now withdrawn all their threats to take shop stewards to court after a 24-hour strike on 19 February in support of NHS workers: "Thorn-EMI have given leadership; the TUC must take it up".

Chris Herriot, a sacked Scottish miner, said he had not experienced such a mood since the great strike of 1984-85. The main lesson of this struggle was the need for solidarity: "No one group of workers must be left to fight alone.

"The union leadership have failed to live up to their responsibilities, but the members must still exploit the trade union structures to get resolutions flooding in to Nupe and Cohse in support of the call for a one-day general strike.

Nurses assaulted by police

PROTEST ACTION also took place on budget day, but on a reduced scale.

London hospital in Whitechapel took strike action supported by Hackney council direct labour workers. A large and successful picket addressed by a P&O worker and local post office workers was only marred by a vicious attack by police on a small group of nurses outside a local police station.

Hundreds marched to Mile End hospital and back. During the march three building workers were arrested and taken to Leman Street police station. A group of nurses and activists went to the police station to protest about the arrests.

While they stood outside on the steps chanting slogans a police van drew up and 14 policemen jumped out and attacked the six nurses without warning.

Nurses were pulled and manhandled and one was arrested. Two nurses held up against the entrance were then pushed down the steps, injuring their hands.

The arrested nurse was later released without being charged, but the building workers were charged with disorderly behaviour.

Sheffield success

IN SHEFFIELD at least 5,000 took part in a lively and enthusiastic demonstration to defend the health service.

Nurses in uniform and other health workers were joined by council workers, town hall staff, firefighters, engineers, bus workers, college teachers, school students and many others, all led by the Grimethorpe colliery band.

From early in the morning hospitals were ringed by pickets, despite the bitter weather. Many nurses also leafleted railway depots and other workplaces for support.

Bus workers had a two hour stoppage after a ballot last Thursday, despite a last minute attempt by the management to threaten strikers with the sack. 93 per cent of the bus workers took strike action, the first time that they have taken sympathy action for another group of workers.

At Shardloes engineering factory 700 workers staged a 24 hour stoppage. College teachers went on a half day strike and the housing department at the town hall had a day's strike action. At one health centre GPs and nurses turned away all but the most urgent cases.

At the City Hall the atmosphere was electric. A special ovation was given to the bus workers and for the Markham NUM banner. A Bloc petition calling for an NHS broad left and the establishment of a NHS shop stewards' combine was received enthusiastically.

But for many activists there was also a sober, hardened mood underlining the obstruction from Nupe officials. Many Nupe members were livid that they hadn't had the chance to ballot for strike action.

Cohse member Ruth Herdman has been the victim of a smear campaign by some Nupe officials who alleged that she was not a health worker, but a full time worker for *Militant*. They then used this to undermine solidarity action.

The increasing confidence of health workers in their own strength and the possibilities of solidarity action will not allow witch hunts, or inter-union rivalry to prevent the campaign for further action developing.

Sheffield labour movement gave a brilliant example of what can be done. For most other workers this was the opportunity to get back at Thatcher around the issue of the health service.



Picket line at Charing Cross hospital (see right).

Photo: Mick Carroll.

A member of the National Union of Seamen in Liverpool told Terry Harrison: "The NHS belongs to the people. In no shape or form does Mrs Thatcher have a mandate to destroy it!"

"She claims she has put more money into the NHS than ever before. What she hasn't told the people is that the private companies that provide the drugs for the NHS are making more and more money. All the 'extra' money is going into the pockets of her friends."

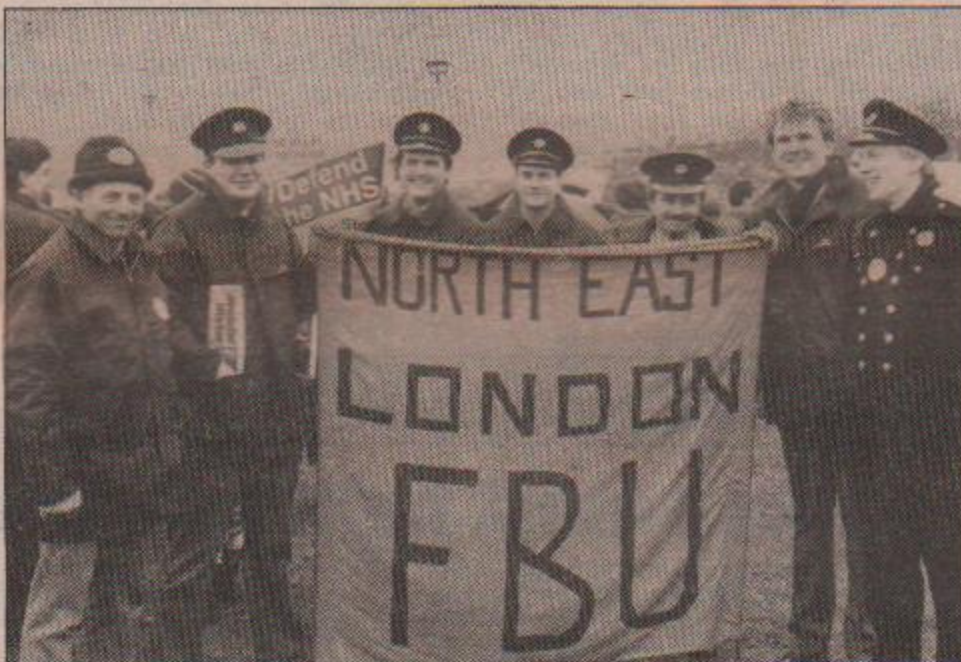
"I am totally in support of a 24-hour general strike."

An Electricity Board worker said: "This is the same as 10 February. The NHS must get extra funds. If other trade unionists don't support the nurses,

then they won't win the fight. It will just peter away like last time.

I think the call for a 24-hour general strike should be supported. Eventually, if we keep up the support, we can go for a 24-hour general strike. It will have to be supported by the full-time officials of the trade unions, because they are doing nothing about it.

"In our industry they would tend to support the NHS before disputes of their own. They see the NHS as running parallel with their own problems, especially with the privatisation of electricity. We see our own jobs under threat. We need an NHS because most of the workers in the electricity supply industry couldn't afford private health care."



Members of the Fire Brigades Union join the pickets in Newham (see right).

Photo: John Woulfe.

Newham plans drastic cuts

NEWHAM HEALTH Authority in east London is planning to make drastic cuts, including the closure of wards, because of what it says will be a "significant financial shortfall" for the coming year.

In a circular to acute unit staff it says that at times "we will not be able to keep open all our currently

used beds" because of a lack of trained staff and learner nurses. "We are therefore faced with having to plan the closure of wards..."

The circular claims that the authority will try to maintain the quantity and quality of the service by alternative means, but doesn't say what these are.

Keep quiet on that demo!

'QUIET ON the procession!' was the slogan of the stewards when the Northern TUC organised a torchlight procession on 14 March.

By Bill Hopwood

In spite of little publicity, 2,000 walked three miles from Gateshead to Newcastle at 7 pm on a rainy cold Monday evening. The timing could have hardly been worse for making a big impression, and as if to further decrease the impact, it was supposed to be a quiet procession (not a demonstration) with no chants, slogans or songs.

However neither the car drivers

honking their horns nor the demonstrators took any notice of this. The first chant was 'Sh-sh, Sh-sh-sh', as the stewards went up and down with their walkie-talkies urging quiet. Later the slogan was 'TUC, TUC, Call a One-day General Strike'.

The speeches at the end only lasted a few minutes. Yet again workers saw the contrast between what could be and what was organised.

The Northern TUC over the last few weeks have worked hard to minimise any action. On the train to the 5 March demo, the regional TUC secretary was going up the carriages complaining: "There's too many people on this train!" His other main concern was trying to stifle discussion about the 24-hour general strike.

The regional TUC persuaded Cohse to cancel its day of action on 14 March. This had gained widespread support. In a number of hospitals ballots for action were being held.

Many groups, including workers in mining, shipbuilding, local government, the civil service and railways had planned stoppages. Thousands more had said that if the NHS workers asked they would be alongside them.

Instead of a powerful day of action, the Northern TUC organised a one-hour march of 2,000 workers and vigils outside hospitals. In a number of cases, union officials have stated that health workers don't want other workers taking action to defend the NHS.

In brief

ONE OF the biggest pickets was organised by nurses and ancillary staff at Charing Cross hospital in west London, despite threats of disciplinary action by hospital management.

It was joined by a big contingent of Nalco members from Hammer-smith Town Hall, bus workers from Shepherds Bush and Putney garages, GMBATU council workers, West London Old Age Pensioners and Age Concern. Representatives from these groups addressed a thousand-strong rally.

Tina Kelleher, a staff nurse, said: "Charing Cross is well on strike. The corridors, normally full of people, are empty. Ambulances are not crossing picket lines and management are cooking patients' meals".

CLARE FISHER, a nurse from Kings College hospital and Chris Hart, a Cohse shop steward from Maudsley hospital in south London spoke to a meeting of 250 bus workers at Peckham bus garage at the start of a two hour 'pull-in'.

"Thatcher won't listen to talk about the NHS", said Clare, "that's why we are calling on all workers to come out and support us".

LEWISHAM HOSPITAL voted to strike on the 14th and had pickets out early though fewer than on 3 February. Cohse members also took action at Hither Green and a steward spoke at a solidarity meeting at South East London Tech.

New Cross bus garage workers struck for 24 hours. Striking Lewisham Nalco members organised a rally and march from the Town Hall to Lewisham Hospital, involving striking seafarers from Dover, teachers, civil servants and students. Members of the Fire Brigades Union and local pensioners joined the pickets.

200 HEALTH SERVICE workers and other trade unionists took part in a two-hour vigil outside the Royal Liverpool Hospital. There were Merseyside old-age pensioners, National Union of Seamen, electricity board and Nalco workers.

Harry Keidan, old-age pensioner activist: "As you can see, there are pensioners in the wet and the cold, demonstrating to make sure the health service is properly funded."

"The reason why we are here is that we have got long memories. We recall what it was like to get a national health service that would be free at the point of need and be free for all. We are disgusted and angry that a Tory government should cut our health service, talk about privatisation, make pensioners wait for hip or eye operations."

"Many pensioners have died because they could not have an operation. We are also disgusted at the appalling pay and conditions of nurses. These are some of the reasons that we are here in the cold and

wet, to show our hatred of this Tory government and our support for the National Health Service."

12,000 MARCHED in Belfast in a brilliant display of workers' unity and solidarity with the health workers. There were 2,500 from West Belfast and 2,000 shipyard workers, with a big contingent from Harland and Wolff.

There was the biggest labour movement rally for several years in the city centre. One trade union official said: "We've stopped Northern Ireland, what we need now is for the trade unions to stop the whole of Britain and stop the Tories".

Around 3,000 also marched in Derry and there were smaller demonstrations in Armagh and Newtownards.

200 copies of *Militant* Irish Monthly were sold and £120 raised for the fighting fund.

THORN EMI management have been forced to back down completely in their threats to take legal action against shop stewards who had organised solidarity action in support of Manchester health workers.

Plans by management to investigate the convenor, who has a full-time position, were also dropped. This victory was won through concerted action by the workers, against the advice of union officials, including a demonstration of 300 to coincide with the disciplinary hearing.

One of the victimised stewards, Keith Davenport, spoke to 40 people at a *Militant* readers' meeting and thanked *Militant* for the assistance given to Thorn EMI workers.

IN NEWHAM, hospital workers from St Andrew's and Newham General hospitals were joined in a protest meeting by about 200 Newham Council Nalco members, dockers from Tilbury and firefighters from Silvertown. "I am concerned about the threatened closure of three wards at Newham General and two here at St Andrew's", said Cohse member Rod Wallace. "It can only lead to suffering. The wards are nearly always full up anyway. They can't get the trained staff and they have a financial shortfall."

"I am angry at the trade union leaders and their inability to co-ordinate action between health service unions. But I am encouraged by the rank-and-file workers who are taking unofficial action where they can."

MINERS JOINED health workers and Nalco members on a demo and very successful rally in Wakefield, despite attempts by some union officials at sabotage. Cohse branch chair Adrian O'Malley got a great response to his call for a one day general strike.

At a rally in Leeds Pat Wall MP got a standing ovation when he made the same demand.

Boom only for rich

LAWSON'S FIFTH budget, even more than his others, is exclusively for the rich, by the rich. A 20p in the pound cut in the top tax rate for the wealthy and nothing for the beleaguered health service. Meanwhile the very poorest, under the new social security legislation coming in on 1 April, will be hit mercilessly.

But to cover the tax give-away to her friends, Thatcher had to give some temporary tax concessions to better paid workers and the middle class.

The Tories continue to propagate the idea of Britain's lasting economic prosperity. How else could they afford tax cuts while keeping the budget in surplus to the tune of £3 billion, if the economy was not thriving, they argue. All the sacrifices of the early Thatcher days have now paid off.

The truth is without the great privatisation swindle, selling off cheap state assets to the big capitalist monopolies, the budget could not be balanced.

Beneath the official propaganda, moreover, the conflict between Thatcher and Lawson reveals the real tensions surrounding the 'economic revival', and the profound disquiet, particularly of industrial capitalists, about the future.

The Tories have sustained an economic boomlet, particularly since the months running up to last year's election, by quietly burying the monetarist strictures of 1979-81. Lawson as Chancellor has completely abandoned the close scrutiny of the money supply figures of Lawson, the Chief Secretary to the Treasury.

Particularly in the pre-election Autumn Statement of 1986, he presided over a significant increase in public spending. Despite Thatcher's war on public expenditure, it now stands 11 per cent higher in real terms than when she was first elected.

Cuts in interest rates around the same time fed what has now become a mountain of personal credit. Consumer debt has reached £24,000 million—£1,000 per household, not including mortgages.

Wage rises have been averaging 6 per cent and earnings (with overtime and productivity bonuses included) 8 per cent.

All this allowed for a temporary boost to the economy.

But despite the higher growth rates (at 4.5 per cent last year, higher than at any time since 1973 and higher than the rest of Europe) none of the fundamental weaknesses of the British economy have disappeared.

International funds have flooded into sterling, artificially boosting the value of the pound, making imports cheaper and exports more expensive. British industry, already crippled by decades of under-investment and by the deliberate destruction of capacity during the early Thatcher years, has been unable to take advantage of the artificially expanded home demand.

Last year there was an 11 per cent increase in imports, taking the current account deficit to £2.75 billion, the worst level since 1974. It has recently been running at an annual rate of £5 billion.

The government increased interest rates last month to try to curb the credit explosion which was sucking in imports. Now the pound has breached its unofficial target of 3 Deutsch Marks, making British goods still more uncompetitive.

Even Lawson, reflecting the pressure of the CBI and industry, is now looking to interest rate cuts to bring the pound down. Thatcher, who actually seems to believe that the economy can prosper without a strong industrial base, is standing out against any intervention in the currency rate.

With manufacturing investment still 8 per cent below its 1979 level, despite rising profits, economic growth could not possibly be sustained.

An inevitable US recession (of which Black Monday, October 1987, was the harbinger) and a tightening of world trade, will only exacerbate Britain's payments problems. According to *The Guardian* "the coming slowdown in the US will deprive us of outlets for exports."

Thatcher got back to Number 10 on the basis of a temporary, optimistic appreciation of the economy. Although she was helped by the complete failure of the Labour leaders to present a convincing alternative, socialist economic policy, and their inability to explain that the Lawson 'boom' would be as temporary and fragile as the Barber credit boom of 1973.

The new economic storms that loom will finally destroy any illusions about the Tories' economic 'success'. They will be forced to preside over a savage onslaught on workers' wages and conditions, taking back the recent tax cuts and more.



★ With the top rate for income tax down to 40 per cent and a 2p cut in the basic rate anyone earning £100,000 will receive an extra £249.92 a week.

★ Yet a family on £100 a week, receiving housing benefit and family credit, will only get 2p a week or £1 a year from the cut in the basic rate.

★ Under the new social security legislation, coming into force the same day as the budget measures, 215,000 people on housing benefit will lose 65p

from each pound they gain in tax cuts; 350,000 families on family credit will lose 70p and 100,000 families on both will lose up to 96p.

Scottish LP conference

Leaders must fight poll tax

THE OPENING day of Labour's Scottish conference an opinion poll in the *Scotsman* revealed that 42 per cent in Scotland favour an illegal non-payment campaign against poll tax. Among Labour voters this is 57 per cent.

This is despite the sustained onslaught against the idea by Neil Kinnock and his shadow Scottish secretary, Donald Dewar.

However, the overwhelming support for a confrontation with the Tories over the poll tax failed to make any impression on the national and regional trade union officials at the conference.

In a card vote a resolution opposing illegality was railroaded through by a margin of two to one. This decision was at total variance with the mood of the vast majority of delegates, particularly from the constituencies.

Delegates responded rapturously to a parade of speakers, including *Militant* supporters, who passionately argued the case for defiance of the Tory poll tax. In a ferocious broadside Dick Douglas MP declared:

"There is an army waiting to be led down the road of non-payment." He compared Neil Kinnock to "a general leading his troops into battle carrying a

white flag".

Euro-MP Alex Falconer referred to "a legendary Scottish socialist, John Maclean, who was imprisoned on four separate occasions for his stance on behalf of the working class."

By contrast Neil Kinnock's speech was as the *Glasgow Herald* put it "universally rated as a disaster". It attacked his "empty rhetoric" and "disturbing intolerance to criticism that is ill-suited to the leading critic of Mrs Thatcher's authoritarianism".

Shift left

There is a definite shift back to the left within the Labour Party in Scotland. Calls for Labour councils to mount real resistance to the Tories, met with an icy silence in the past, were warmly applauded by many of the rank and file delegates.

A number of criticisms directed against the party leadership would have been almost unthinkable a year ago. Significantly the soft left Labour Co-ordinating Committee which for some years has dominated Scottish Labour's executive, is now wracked by division. The pressure of radicalised local communities is making itself felt on party activists

and with reselection looming, even on some of the party's 50 Scottish MPs.

Dick Douglas said after the conference: "I know that my stance has upset many of my fellow MPs who have built their reputations on the left. I now feel that they are the ones with the problem because they will have to answer to their constituency parties. We all have to face reselection and they will have to defend their position on the poll tax."

Although conference came out against a non-payment campaign at this stage, it decided to reconvene in the autumn to reconsider the non-payment option. With the mass of Labour voters much further to the left than the Labour and trade union leaders on this issue, enormous pressure will continue to build up particularly on the trade union leaders to reverse their decision.

If Labour fails to intervene and spearhead the battle against poll tax, not only will the working class of Scotland face the prospect of a devastating defeat, the ugly forces of Scottish nationalism could be given their most powerful boost since the discovery of North Sea oil in the early 1970s.

By Alan McCombes

Stop Botha's state murders

THE SOUTH African regime has decided there will be no reprieve for Theresa Ramashamola, Reginald Sefatsa, Reid Mokoena, Duma Khumalo, Francis Mokhesi and Moses Diniso, to be hanged on Friday.

By George Collins

This is the most blatant case of judicial murder in the history of apartheid.

The six were condemned because they were part of a mass protest against rent rises in Sharpeville township in September 1984, in which a puppet deputy mayor was killed.

Under South African law the six were innocent. The rules had to be changed to hang them.

This is clearly an attack on the mass movement of black workers and youth which has terrified South Africa's rulers. By cold-blooded state terror they hope to intimidate activists and deter opposition to the elections of their puppet township councils.

Instead, they will steel the determination of workers and youth to end apartheid rule and force tens of thousands more into activity in the next period.

Frustration

Totally out of keeping with the anger and frustration among South Africa's black masses is the attitude of the church leaders who, in the absence of a clear lead from the African National Congress, are placing themselves at the head of protest demonstrations.

They claim that only fellow reactionaries like Thatcher, Reagan or West German Chancellor Kohl can persuade Botha to change his mind.

Neil Kinnock has joined the appeal to Thatcher, while 100 Labour MPs addressed their own appeal to Botha.

In reality, Thatcher, Reagan and Kohl are Botha's chief accomplices in upholding white rule to defend capitalist interests. Only the power of the working-class movement internationally can strike blows against Botha.

The South African masses will avenge the Sharpeville Six with renewed struggle to overthrow Botha's regime. Workers internationally should give them active support.

Trade unionists must demand action from the TUC and act themselves—

* to build direct links with SA workers and youth;

* to cut off South African trade links through organised union action;

* for the release of all political prisoners, including union leader Moses Mayekiso;

* to support the building of a mass ANC on a programme to end apartheid and capitalist rule.

30,000 youth STRIKE

THIRTY THOUSAND young people joined the strike called by the Youth Trade Union Rights Campaign (YTURC) on 14 March. They aimed to stop the Tory plans for YTS conscription.

But their action was met with a conspiracy of silence by the national press. The media didn't repeat the hysterical attacks with which they greeted previous strikes by school students - because these only convinced more to join the walk-outs.

And this time school headteachers did their best to intimidate their pupils, with the help of the police. Cop cars were on the gates at most schools. Several headteachers sent letters to parents and victimised 'ringleaders'.

Despite all the intimidation, lively marches and rallies were held all over the country. The London health workers combined their march with YTURC's and about 800 school and FE students joined it. In many other cities youth marched with the health workers and in areas like Scotland, where there were no NHS strikes, young people still marched in their hundreds.

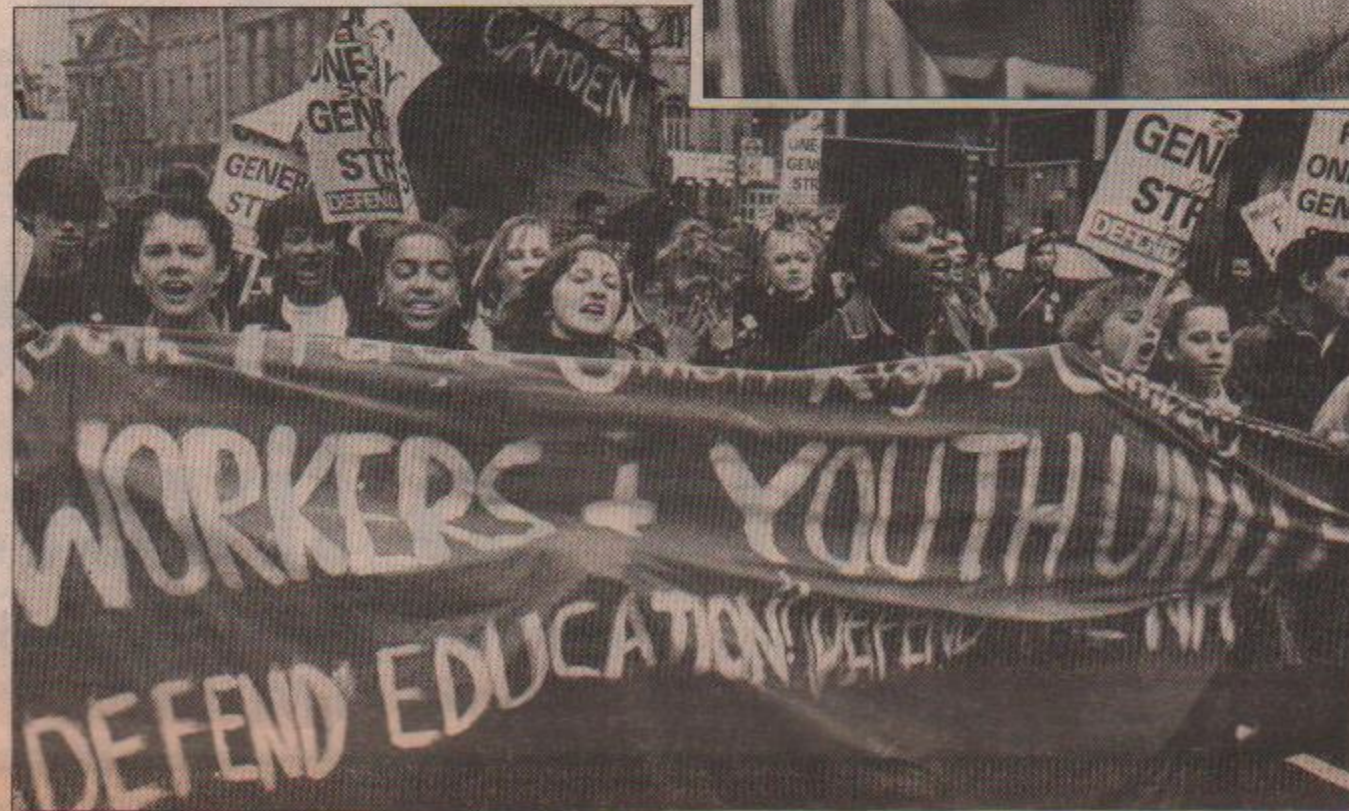
By Mark Meredith

School gate intimidation

LEAFLETTERS AT Armthorpe comprehensive school near Doncaster experienced the sort of intimidation that has been going on all over the country.

"The response from school students was great," writes Gary Gabbittas. "Then the deputy head arrived. He told one of us to move and stop leafletting because 'that's not the sort of thing to give to our children'. Obviously he agrees with the Tories that all the youth in Armthorpe are good for is YTS or a low paid job."

"Then he called the police. When they arrived, they told our comrade, Paul, to stop dishing out leaflets or they would arrest him. When Paul asked what for, the policeman replied he didn't know, but he would think of



"Workers and students unite" on the London march.

Photos: Dave Sinclair.

Liverpool solidarity

HEALTH WORKERS joined 250 school students on a noisy demonstration through Liverpool. Some Post Office workers on the street applauded the march and then joined it, leading the singing.

At Savio school in Bootle a strike committee organised a

picket of 300 at the school gates to appeal to the teachers to support them.

At the rally there was a brilliant mood of solidarity, with spontaneous chanting and singing before and after every speaker. A Nigerian girl student appealed to the school students to help her

fight deportation and was given a brilliant reception.

But the loudest and longest applause was for a lad who'd come out on his own. Solidarity forever!

By Tony MacNulty
Merseyside YTURC organiser

Swansea - "when's the next?"

IN SWANSEA 150 students from one school walked out and marched to another to get that one out too. Then they marched to the local nest of Toryism, the Conservative club, where they held an impromptu demonstration.

When they banged on the doors to try and get in, one of the freedom loving

occupants came out and assaulted a school student.

Four hundred attended the rally in the city. The most common response to the day was: "When are we coming out on strike again and how are we going to get the rest of the 2,500 school students in Swansea out?"

By Paul Orders

Bradford's voice

"WHAT DO we want? Thatcher's head. When do we want it? Now!" That was the most popular chant on the demo in Bradford.

Neither intimidation nor pouring rain could prevent over 200 young people converging on the town centre for the demonstration.

In one school it was announced over the PA that all pupils were forbidden to attend the march and would be expelled if they did go. But 20 students managed to escape and come to the demo.

Deafening Edinburgh

INTIMIDATION COULD not stop over 400 YTS trainees, school students and college students marching through Edinburgh. School students from Livingston even travelled by train, such was their enthusiasm for the rally.

A number of apprentices from Stevensons College also joined in. The chants of 'Maggie Out!' were deafening.

All working class people, young and old, must stand together, Nupe member Sharon Yeoman told the rally. She got a tremendous response when she outlined the attacks on the NHS.

On Friday and Saturday before the march £200 was collected for YTURC in Livingston. Just four people collected £160 of it.

By John Kay Edinburgh school student

The rally at the end of the demonstration heard the real voice of youth in Bradford. Representatives were elected from

each school and they spoke alongside YTS trainees, LPYS members and YTURC members.

By Razina Boston

Benn backs school strikers

A COVENTRY headmistress wrote to parents, telling them that it was illegal for their kids to go on strike.

At a rally of 350 after the successful demonstration in the city, school students stood and cheered Paul Smith, speaking for YTURC, when he challenged the organisation's critics to debate with its representatives.

Brandishing the headmistress's infamous letter, Tony Benn told the meeting he supported the school students' action.

Brum luck

"A FEW years ago my brother left school and got a job," a third year student told the Birmingham rally. "He was one of the lucky ones. When we leave school, there won't be any lucky ones and we'll all have to go on a YTS. That's why we've got to fight now."

The day had started with 20 school students going to the health workers' picket lines to give their support. The nurses clapped and cheered when they saw what was happening.

Three hundred marched through the city centre chanting "YTS - knock it on the head!"

The youth will have to lead the fight for a future for the whole working class, a Vauxhall striker told the rally that followed.

By Chris McCann

Success in the South

SOUTHAMPTON SAW its biggest demonstration for years on 14 March. Not since the march for jobs in 1979 was there such a show of solidarity amongst the working class of the city.

The demonstration of health workers and school students in the city centre was a great success for both YTURC and Cohse. Over 200 school and college students joined the youth strike.

Every one of them could face suspension or expulsion for doing so. At Oakland school two students have been suspended for leafletting. When one of them went to see the headmaster with his father, a school governor was also there. He was a supposedly left-wing union official, but he still went along with the head saying that the student would be expelled if he took further action like this.

By Mark Ovenden



Gay infant bombers shock

TORY MP Dame Jill Knight can't wait for the Local Government Bill to be passed. She wants witch-hunts against Labour local authorities—starting as from now.

She has bravely sounded the alarm about the impending eruption of anarchism and homosexuality amongst the under-sevens in Haringey. In a Commons question she asked the Prime Minister about claims that infant teachers there are somehow using Home Office funds to produce videos promoting homosexuality and terrorism in South Africa. A further threat to young minds came from "a bookshop which is selling anarchist literature to five-year olds". Can the borough's parents sleep easy in their beds?

Brave 'communist' professor

WHAT MORE can a 'communist' want than to be quoted by Neil Kinnock and praised ad nauseam in the capitalist press? Professor Eric Hobsbawm's courage in challenging 'old-fashioned' socialist ideas is much admired by the media. Indeed the professor has bravely spoken out against the pact between Hitler and Stalin...50 years after the event! In a *Guardian* interview, he goes on to say: "For many years...I wasn't anxious to write about Russia—because you'd get into trouble. You couldn't write without actually deciding that the official line on most things was horse shit...so it was easier to keep off it." It seems some people are only brave when they have Stalinist or capitalist 'public opinion' behind them.

Just an ordinary Liverpool girl

EDWINA CURRIE thinks we need the health service and "we will go on needing it, because the bulk of the people we look after are uninsurable", she says in the *House of Commons* magazine. Perhaps she means all those people in the north who don't eat properly? "I'm an ordinary Liverpool girl", she says, and doesn't regret what she said about the diet of people in the north. She finds it distressing that the "patterns of illness and disease are so sharply different across the country." Could this have anything to do with the policies of Margaret Thatcher, whom Edwina so admires? The junior health minister claims, however, that she is no longer ambitious and hasn't thought about being prime minister. "I must say I hope its highly unlikely for the sake of the party..." And we hope so for the sake of the country.



Council uses strong arm tactics against squatters

ABOUT 250 squatters erected barricades with skips and burnt out cars to try and stop mass evictions by Hackney's Labour council using riot police.

The siege lasted two days and squatters organised crime prevention patrols and some sympathetic tenants provided hot refreshments. The director of housing then apparently offered tenancies to some of the squatters who then left peacefully.

This angered council staff who refused to process the allocations because it appeared that squatting and setting up barricades was a way of getting housed in the borough ahead of others.

Too young to retire too old to live....

Derek Bainbridge committed suicide outside Downing Street. His brother Joe spoke to *Militant*,

ON 16 February, in the early hours of the morning Derek Bainbridge, an unemployed Worksop man, sat in his parked car at the bottom of Downing street, locked the driver's door, doused himself in paraffin and blew the car up.

His brother Joe, a former Transport and General Workers Union branch secretary, spoke to *Militant* about the events which led his brother to take this desperate step.

"I've looked forward to this interview more than any. Joe Bainbridge is nobody but I'm proud to be the brother of Derek Bainbridge. He couldn't speak when he was alive, but I'll make sure he says a lot now he's dead.

Derek worked as a carpenter at Oates from leaving school. He was good at his job but hadn't got the qualifications. Oates was taken over by a plastics firm based in Hull. He was kept on as a van driver. He lapped it up—he loved anything to do with cars.

He tried to get accommodation in Hull but no matter how hard he tried he couldn't find any, so he had to give the job up. He had an old Hillman Minx and when he went for unemployment benefit they said to him: "You've got a car, so sell it". He was naive about the system then, so he sold it and got £50.

Ambition

His only ambition was to be a car mechanic. But after a year or two he was so desperate for work he took a job as a road sweeper. Everyone looks down on a road-sweeper. He had to put up with all sorts of jibes. One autumn, some people at Sparken Hill (the prosperous part of Worksop) complained he hadn't swept up the leaves.

He put up with this for five years until someone complained to the council about him smoking while he was working. He was hauled into the office. When he heard what it was about he said: "If you can't have a smoke in the street..." and walked out. That was November 1986.

Once again he was told at the unemployment office that he had to sell his car. This time he realised he needed it to look for a job. He went round Retford, Mansfield and Hull. He really wanted work. He was bored stiff. While he was looking for these jobs he often went down to the Job Centre.

Date	Cheque No	Transaction Details	Amount	Balance
15 10 87				
15 10	76	SELF	50-00	150-00
30 10	77	SELF	50-00	100-00
3 11	78	SELF	50-00	50-00
26 11	79	SELF	50-00	NILL

Derek Bainbridge's Giro account—nothing left to live on.

He'd look at the cards on the shelf but when he went down the jobs had already gone—no end of them. That's one of the cons.

The final straw came five weeks before he died. He was really elated. He thought he got a job in Sutton-in-Ashfield. But it didn't come to fruition.

His savings had run out. His last withdrawal from his Giro account was 81 days before he died. He had nothing to live on except his unemployment benefit. He had no debts, everything he had was paid for. His furniture was out of the Dark Ages. He had a dilapidated portable colour TV.

He'd just received a letter saying he had to re-apply for housing benefit. His car tax was due to run out at the end of February. He had no more hope.

The Tory press made out afterwards that although he was unemployed he could still afford a car. He couldn't afford a car. You need a vehicle to look for a job, but you can't run one on unemployment benefit.

We think he planned everything carefully. You don't do something like that on impulse. The week before, he disappeared overnight at exactly the same time. We surmise that he went to check the situation in London and make sure the streets were empty at that time of night. He wouldn't harm a fly. He was non-violent. He locked the driver's door and shut the window, which was always open. He meant nobody to risk themselves trying to rescue him. He planned it in fine detail.

People came to the funeral from different unemployed groups. One man hitched

five-and-a-half hours from Bristol. I want to get through to those who came to the funeral. If you can get through to them I would be really grateful.

We've had messages of sympathy from all over. A card from a jobless single mother in Milton Keynes said: 'With endless hope, for a government who will listen to the cries of the people, and heed the needs of the people'.

Political act

He wasn't political. To him all parties were cast in the same die. His only interests were his car and his CB radio. But obviously he has done a political act on behalf of the unemployed. He left a note: 'Too young to retire—too old to live'. For me that's not a suicide note. That's a political statement. It won't have made any impression on that creature Thatcher. But it will make some impression on some of the more sensible people in the Tory Party.

A couple of years ago I joined the Labour Party, but I was disillusioned by the local group. They were mainly interested in running raffles. One of the things wrong with the Labour Party is that they are getting too casual. I don't want to see my MP lounging around in a sweater, running bingo. That's why I've always been proud of you lot in the Labour Party. I'm a moderate, but I've always admired someone who can get up and fight—like *Militant* and any union activist.

I want to make sure that Derek hasn't died in vain in any way I can. ??

Belfast erupts

Expelled after death

RIOTING ERUPTED on the streets of Belfast on Wednesday after the murder of three mourners at the funeral of the Provisionals killed by the SAS in Gibraltar.

The assassin ran from a van on the motorway next to the Milltown cemetery, hurled grenades into the 15-20,000 strong crowd and then opened fire with a gun.

He was caught before he could

get back to the van and badly beaten before being rescued by the police. Dozens of injured were taken to hospital.

The Ulster Defence Association and its military wing, the Ulster Freedom Fighters have pledged to intensify their military campaign, claiming to be better armed and equipped than at any time since the 1970s.

The scene is now set for the worst crisis in Northern Ireland for years.

A 25-YEAR old South Belfast catholic, Charlie McGrillen, was shot dead on Tuesday morning by the UFF. He had just started work at Dunne's supermarket when his attackers opened fire and then escaped on a motor bike.

He was a long-standing shop steward in the ATGWU and was the key figure in building the union in his workplace. The *Militant* editorial board extends its sympathy to his family.

THE EETPU Political Bulletin, edited by John Spellar, has sunk to the depths of exploiting a death to try and score a cheap political point. Under the headline *Militant Hypocrisy*, the February edition carries an article about Bob Herley who died last December.

It recalls that when Gillingham Labour Party tried to expel Bob in 1983, *Militant* defended him as a loyal member of the Labour Party, but that after his death he was praised as "one of *Militant's* most loyal and dedicated supporters". This is claimed to demonstrate *Militant's* 'hypocrisy'.

All it demonstrates is that *Militant* supporters like Bob Herley are also the most loyal members of the Labour Party. To suggest otherwise is a cowardly libel by an anonymous author. EETPU members who are appalled at this scurrilous attack should flood Spellar with letters of protest.

LABOUR'S WAR on Liverpool on continues with the expulsion by the National Constitutional Committee, at its 16 March meeting, of Josie Aitman, formerly chair of Liverpool Broadgreen Labour Party.

MILITANT has public meetings and discussion groups in most towns throughout the country. Below is a listing of meetings or contacts for further information. If you want to know the nearest one to you telephone the 'MEETING LINE' (01) 533 3311 ext 227.

STRATHCLYDE

For details of meetings in the following areas contact: 041 221 1443.
Clydebank
Cumbernauld
East Kilbride
Cathcart Central
Garscadden
Govan
Hillhead
Maryhill
Pollok
Rutherglen
Shettleston
Springburn
Hamilton
Monklands
Motherwell
Paisley

EAST SCOTLAND

For information of meetings in the following areas contact: Andrea Charles-031 659 6187.
Edinburgh
Aberdeen
Dundee
Stirling
Livingston
Bathgate
Falkirk
Inverness
Perth
Glenrothes
Forfar
Dunfermline

NORTHERN

For details of any further meetings contact: Bill Hopwood 091 276 1736.
Newcastle
Copeland
Carlisle

Washington
Hartlepool
Ashington

YORKSHIRE

For further details in the following towns phone: Henry Gregory 0709 371250

Sheffield

Stop the Alton Bill 18 March 7.30pm Sheffield Campaign Centre Against Unemployment

Barnsley: King George Pub Peel Street Barnsley, COHSE speaker. March 17th 7.30pm.

Leeds: Trades Club. Tuesday 22 March. Health speaker.

Rotherham Bradford

MERSEYSIDE

For details of meetings in the following areas contact: Richard Venton 051 260 3111 2 Lower Breck Road Tuebrook:
Wrexham
Ellesmere Port
Northwich
Winsford
Chester
Bootle
Birkenhead
Wallasey
Kirkby
Huyton
St Helens
Halewood
Skelmersdale

Liverpool:

Broadgreen
West Derby
Mossley Hill
Riverside
Garston
Walton

MANCHESTER/LANCS

For details of discussion groups held in the following areas contact: Mike Johnson on 061 273 8648

Barrow
Preston
Blackpool
Blackburn
Burnley
Pendle
Rochdale
Bury
Oldham
Salford
Wigan
Stockport
Tameside
Macclesfield
Manchester

SOUTH WEST

Torquay: Regional Labour Party Conference, Conference Room, Queen's Hotel, Harbourside. 19 March, 7pm.

WEST MIDLANDS

For details of meetings in Birmingham contact: Bill Mullins 021 552 7624 For details of meetings in Stafford

and Stoke area contact: Dugald Mckinnon 0782 633568.

Birmingham: Car workers fight back; Carrs Lane Church Centre. April 7th. 7.30pm.

EAST MIDLANDS

For details of further meetings contact: Andy Jackson 0602 623112.

Lincoln
Boston
Mansfield
Bolsover
Chesterfield
Derby
Nottingham
Burton-upon-Trent
Kettering Northampton

EASTERN

Ipswich: For details of meetings contact Teresa MacKay 0473 713179.

Basildon: launch of Liverpool-A City that Dared to Fight, Tuesday 29 March, 8.00pm, Pitsea Leisure Centre.

WALES

For details of further meetings contact: 0222 736682.

SOUTHERN

For further details phone: 0272 601481

LONDON

For further details of meetings contact: George Roberts 01 739 9123.

Stop Alton! Defend the NHS!

Haringey: Winkfield Community Centre, Winkfield Road, Wood Green, N22. March 23rd. 7.30pm.

Hammersmith: Bishop Creighton House, Lillie Road, W6. March 23rd. 7.30pm.

Lambeth: Wednesday 23 March 7.45pm. St. Matthews Meeting Place, Brixton SW2 (opposite Town Hall).

Southwark:

Tuesday 22 March 7.45pm. Rockingham Community Centre, Rockingham St, SE1 (near Elephant & Castle).

Hackney: Thursday 17 March 7.45pm. Wally Foster Centre, Kingsmead Estate, Homerton Road, E9.

Militant Health Workers' Forum:

Falkland Arms, 31 Bloomsbury Way, Holborn. March 17th. 7.30pm.

Where to find us

What we stand for

* The immediate introduction of a 35 hour week without loss of pay as a step towards the elimination of unemployment.

* A minimum wage of £135 a week, tied to the cost of living, for everyone including sick and disabled people.

* Reversal of all Tory cuts and a massive programme of public works on housing, education, and the health service etc.

* Opposition to the Tories' anti-trade union laws and reversal of attacks on trade unions.

* Massive cuts in arms spending. Support for unilateral nuclear disarmament, but with the recognition that only a socialist change of society in Britain and internationally can eliminate the danger of a nuclear holocaust.

* Workers' management of nationalised industries. These should be run on the basis of one-third of the places on the management board coming from the unions in the industry, one third from the TUC representing the working class as a whole, and one third from the government.

* Nationalisation of the top 200 monopolies, including the banks and insurance companies which control 80 per cent to 85 per cent of the economy. This should be through an Enabling Bill in Parliament with minimum compensation on the basis of proven need.

* A socialist plan of production democratically drawn up and implemented by committees involving trade unions, shop stewards, the unwaged and small business people.

* Opposition to the capitalist Common Market, the EEC. For a socialist United States of Europe as a step towards a World Socialist Federation.

Sell Militant



"I'VE BEEN selling *Militant* for over five years but I have never found it as easy to sell as it is at the moment", writes a seller from the Tower Hamlets area of east London.

"Regular workplace and estate sales have seen sales double in our area over the last few months, but it is at the hospitals where we have had our greatest successes. When I first started selling at the London Hospital, Whitechapel, a few years ago we thought we had done well if we sold four or five. But the early mornings in the cold and the rain certainly seemed worthwhile this week.

"We also sold 21 at St. Andrews and nine at St. Clements and thought we were doing well. But the sales at the mass picket of the London Hospital on budget day were just unbelievable.

"We took about 100 papers down with us but after an hour we had to send a seller off on his bike to try and get some more. By the end of the day we had sold over 350. The star sellers were Ian and Shirley Trail. They sold over 100 between them. At one time Shirley had a queue of five people waiting to buy papers. "In our area we will certainly make sure we keep the hospital sales going as a regular part of our work and we will also make sure that we take advantage of the lighter evenings to step up door to door sales on the estates round the hospitals."

Become a Militant supporter

YOUR NEXT STEP... OUR FIGHT IS YOUR FIGHT...JOIN IT!

I wish to become a Militant supporter:

Name.....

Address.....

Tel:

or telephone 01-533 3311 NOW!

WHAT THEY SAID ABOUT OUR 1985 & 1986 RALLIES:

'SOME SIDE SHOW' Daily Mail 4/11/85.

'LENIN AND LASERS' Militant is a perplexing beast. Despite everything it seems to be thriving. 7 Days 21/11/86.

This spectacular five thousand-strong Militant Tendency rally in London's Albert Hall on Sunday was an

RALLY'88

ALEXANDRA PALACE
19TH JUNE 1988

12-6pm £6.

Impressive show of strength'. Frank Chapple in the 'Daily Mail' 20/11/86.

WHAT THEY ARE SAYING NOW:

"The size of this rally clearly shows that Militant is thriving despite Neil Kinnock's claims to have moderated the Labour Party". From a Tory Councillor in the 'Hampstead and Highgate Express' 19/2/88.

TICKET APPLICATION FORM

Please send me.....Tickets. I enclose £.....

Please send me details of transport:.....

Please send me a creche booking form:.....

Name.....

Address.....

Return to MILITANT RALLY: 3/13 HEPSCOTT ROAD LONDON E9 5HB.

No return to da

THOUSANDS WILL be marching through London on 19 March to oppose David Alton's Bill to limit the time after which abortions will be legal. It is vital for the future of working women that this attack on their hard-won rights is defeated. Margaret Crear and Jane Hartley look at the background to the Bill, those supporting it and how to fight it.

THE FACT that so many women seek abortion is a comment on the difficulties and disadvantages experienced by women and children in a capitalist society in crisis.

The House of Lords select committee, which opposed Alton's Bill and called for the liberalisation of the 1967 Act, commented that women seeking abortions after 20 weeks (which is what 24 weeks would mean in effect) are the most distressed:

"Many are the victims of some personal tragedy. There is clearly a need for improved education, counselling and awareness in regard to family planning and abortion services, particularly amongst very young women".

But this would mean opposing not just Alton's Bill, but all the policies and reactionary ideas of the Tories.

Amongst the worst hit if Alton's Bill succeeds, even with a compromise time limit of 24 weeks, will be young women. Over half of all abortions in England and Wales are to women under 25. It is estimated that one in ten teenagers turning 15 this year will have an abortion before she is 20.

There is an urgent need for good sex education in schools. The 1986 Education Act made sex education, unlike any other subject, the responsibility of schools governors, who even have the right to stop it altogether. Yet the vast majority of parents support sex education.

Clause 29 of the Local Government Bill will undoubtedly have an effect on any open discussion on the subject. Labour local authorities have a particular responsibility to refuse to cave in to the 'moral majority' pressure groups and to set up good sex education courses which deal with all the issues relevant to young people.

The recent Aids campaign has revealed the real interests of the ruling class. As long as the only consequence of inadequate contraception was a high rate of teenage pregnancy and abortion, with enormous consequences for the young women concerned, no real effort was made to promote contraception.

With the spread of Aids, however, advertising condoms was suddenly allowed, not specifically to prevent pregnancies, but to prevent the spread of the disease.

Obviously many in the ruling class feared the spread of Aids to themselves; some may have feared the effects on society generally. But its main value to the ruling class was the opportunity to campaign against 'promiscuity', homosexuals, drug abuse and the 'disintegration of family life'. It was an attempt to reimpose the 'traditional' family, in other words to increase repression.

Advertising condoms to reduce teenage pregnancies and abortions on the other hand, would have had the implication of offering young people the possibility of choice in personal relations without unwanted consequences.

Of course the advertising has not been for free contraception and family planning centres, which have actually been victims

of Tory cuts, but for the commercially produced profit-making condoms of the Tories' 'Mates'.

A recent international survey summed up the real situation: "Those developed countries with the most liberal attitudes towards sex, the most easily accessible contraceptive services for teenagers and the most effective formal and informal programmes for sex education have the lowest teenage pregnancy, abortion and child bearing."

The number of under-25s coming forward for abortion reflects not just these inadequate resources, but that this generation has reached adulthood under Thatcher governments, with youth unemployment, YTS, low pay, bad housing and cuts in services.

Many young people now in their early 20s have never had a permanent job or earned enough money to establish a comfortable home. Many who did find work and took on a mortgage found their homes repossessed when they were made redundant.

Every serious study draws attention to the link between abortion and poverty. The national rate for abortion is 12-13 per 1,000 women aged 15-40 per year. In Paddington, one of the most deprived areas of London, the rate is 43.

One doctor described the situation of one of his patients: "She is living in bed-and-breakfast accommodation... The partner who gave rise to her first pregnancy has abandoned her... She then formed a new relationship and the current pregnancy is a consequence of this. He has now left her and she is coping with a young child in bed-and-breakfast accommodation at the age of 18, a long way from her parents... who don't want anything to do with her."

Her case is not unique. In London in 1986, 30,000 families were registered as homeless, many of them single parents.

Not only does the crisis in council housing affect a woman's attitude to having children, so does the cutback in local authority childcare.

Only 2.5 per cent of London's under-fives are in state-funded childcare. This is under threat from cuts and in many local authorities, childcare has been abandoned altogether.

All the Tory attacks on maternity rights, social security and education affect a woman's decision when faced with pregnancy. They also affect the lives of the children they have, stunting their physical and intellectual growth.

Contraception and abortion are not an alternative to fighting for better social conditions and a socialist society.

In the 20s and 30s, continuous pregnancy, miscarriages and childbirth (and many children dying in infancy) meant constant ill-health and drudgery for women.

The availability of contraception and abortion, in spite of its inadequacies, has contributed enormously to the ability of working-class women now to be involved in the struggle of their class for socialism and for their own liberation as women.



Trotsky described anti-abortionists as having "the philosophy of a priest endowed also with the powers of a gendarme".

Lobby these MPs

MEMBERS OF the Labour Party Young Socialists and Women's Sections should lobby the surgeries of the following Labour MPs who voted for the Alton Bill, to explain why the limit on abortion should not be changed:

John Battle (Leeds W), Stuart Bell (Middlesbrough), Jeremy Bray (Motherwell S), Ronnie Campbell (Blyth), Dale Campbell-Savours (Workington), Dennis Canavan (Falkirk W), Tom Clarke (Monklands W), Frank Cook (Stockton N), Stan Crowther (Rotherham), John Cummings (Easington), Laurence Cunliffe (Leigh), Don Dixon (Jarrow).

Frank Field (Birkenhead), Bruce Grocott (Wrekin), Peter Hardy (Wentworth), Sean Hughes (Knowsley S), David Lambie (Cunninghame S), James Lamond (Oldham Central and Royton), Geoffrey Lofthouse (Pontefract and Castleford), Calum MacDonald (Western Isles), Michael Martin (Glasgow Springburn), Tommy McAvooy (Glasgow Rutherglen), John McFall (Dumbarton), Kevin

McNamara (Hull N), Bruce Millan (Glasgow Govan), Alf Morris (Manchester Wythenshawe), Gordon Oakes (Halton), William O'Brien (Normanton), Robert Parry (Liverpool Riverside), Tom Pendry (Stalybridge and Hyde), John Reid (Motherwell N), George Robertson (Hamilton), Ted Rowlands (Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney), John Smith (Monklands E), Jack Thompson (Wansbeck) and Tony Worthington (Clydebank and Milngavie).

The following abstained or were absent:

Betty Boothroyd (W Bromwich W), Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow), Donald Dewar (Glasgow Garscadden), Dick Douglas (Dunfermline W), Patrick Dudley (Sheffield Attercliffe), George Galloway (Glasgow Hillhead), Thomas Graham (Renfrew W and Inverclyde), Roy Hattersley (Birmingham Sparkbrook), Doug Henderson (Newcastle N), Norman Hogg (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth).

John Home-Robertson (E Lothian), Denis Howell (Birmingham Small Heath), Barry Jones (Alyn and Deeside), Gerald Kaufman (Manchester Gorton), David Marshall (Glasgow Shettleston), Alan McKay (Barnsley W and Penistone), Paul Murphy (Torfaen), Harold Walker (Doncaster C) and James Wray (Glasgow Provan).

"These gentlemen have, it seems, completely forgotten that socialism was to remove the cause which impels women to abortion, and not force her into the 'joys of motherhood' with the help of a foul police interference"
Trotsky in The Revolution Betrayed

Dark ages

Insidious propaganda from Spuc and 'Life'

ALTON'S BILL to restrict even further women's rights to choose abortion is now entering its committee stage. Undoubtedly the Society for the Protection of Unborn Children (Spuc) and 'Life' are waiting in the wings with ready-made sensational horse stories to feed to the gutter press to detract from the real issues.

There are many ordinary women disturbed by the idea of late abortions, including women who would have had them. But there should be no illusions about the character of Spuc and Life. As the Bill came to its second reading, their supporters released confidential information about a woman in Carlisle who had an abortion at 21 weeks because she believed the foetus might have an inherited disease.

Distress

They alleged that the foetus died after the abortion and that an attempt was made to resuscitate it. This took place last July. Spuc and Life released it to the press in February.

In spite of a barrister's advice that no law had been broken, Life reported the incident to the police, and the woman was interrogated for three hours. The outcome was a lot of distress for the woman, no action by the police as there was no case to answer and a lot of hysterical press publicity in support of Alton's Bill, giving the impression that women who have abortions do so for trivial reasons and are no better than murderers.

When Life gave evidence to the House of Lords select committee,

it was pointed out that the Director of Public Prosecution's report is full of similar referrals from Life, none of which has ever been successful.

Life asserted that they had failed "because of the onus of proof"! The committee asked Life's leader, Mrs Scarisbrick, if she considered society would be better-off without medical screening of pregnant women. "You've said it! We do" she replied: "In most hospitals now, screening is not done unless the woman has already indicated that she will have an abortion".

Enormous damage can be done by Spuc and Life's reactionary propaganda even when they fail to change the law. This was demonstrated when the Court of Appeal initially supported Victoria Gillick in 1984 to prevent doctors providing contraception to under-16s without their parents' consent.

Although the decision was reversed by the House of Lords in 1985, attendance by under-16s at family planning clinics fell by 34 per cent in England, from 17,900 in 1984 to 11,800 in 1985. Even in Scotland, where the ruling did not apply, but where publicity was given to it, there was a 13 per cent drop.

39 of the 47 Tory MPs and four from other parties who signed the Spuc 'pro-life' advert have voted for hanging!

Their main concern is not the foetus itself. They show little regard for the conditions in which it will live if it develops and is born. Their concern is with re-establishing 'Victorian' values, the traditional family of husband

and dependent wife and children, where a male bread-winner is expected to provide economically for those members of the family not working, without recourse to what Tories regard as unfortunate overheads of social security.

They want all the responsibility and drudgery of raising children and caring for the elderly and sick to fall on the shoulders of individual women, without the assistance of the community, health and social services.

Imprisonment

For people who do not conform to their moral outlook, the answer is simple—send for the police and take the dissenters to court.

In Spain in the 1970s, when the law on abortion was similar to that favoured by Spuc, 80 per cent of the female prison population was made up of women who had had abortions or had helped others to have one.

In 1934 the Co-op Women's Guild passed a resolution calling for the legalisation of abortion and asking "that women now suffering imprisonment for breaking antiquated laws be amnestied".

The history of abortion makes it clear that women driven by desperate conditions to abortion will not be deterred by laws based on moral and religious opinions they disagree with and which have no relevance to their lives.

It will be young women and the poorest sections of the working class who will end up inducing abortions themselves, in the hands of back-street abortionists, and quite possibly in the courts and prison.

Europe's more liberal laws

ACCORDING TO Alton, Britain is the 'back-street abortionist' of Europe, because it has the most restrictive laws. On the contrary, British laws are amongst the most liberal. Unlike most European countries, the woman has to get the permission of two doctors and is not allowed to make the decision herself.

Women are treated like children as if they are incapable of making their own lives. Stalling doctors causes many late abortions, forces many women into the private sector and leads to many refused abortions and abandoning their children at birth. There are eight European countries with more liberal laws. In Sweden, Norway, Austria, Greece and Denmark there is abortion on demand and at least until 12 weeks. In France, Italy and Holland, the final decision rests with the woman.

The largest number of women travelling to Britain are from countries where abortion is illegal. In 1986, 3,800 from Southern Ireland, 1,700 from Northern Ireland and 12,000 from Spain.

An article in *New Society* jointly written by Wendy Savage points out: "The idea of having an unwanted child is so traumatic that women will go great distances, take enormous risks and use up all their savings to get an abortion".

The article shows that the abortion rate is about the same in Ireland, where it is illegal, as in Holland, which has the most liberal laws. Changes in the law will clearly not stop abortions.

Prejudices

The figures for women travelling to Britain reflect the international battles for abortion rights. In 1973, 38,500 came from France. Then in 1975 abortion on request in the first 12 weeks was legalised. Within two years only 5,000 came and now it is down to 3-4,000.

In 1983, 22,000 women came to Britain from Spain, but since 1985 new laws have been working their way through and in 1986 only 12,000 women came and the number is still falling very rapidly, to perhaps only 7,000 in

1987.

Alton is trying to rest on all the backward ideas and prejudices in society, even to the extent of whipping up feeling against 'foreign women'.

He showed his backward ideas when he said that rape and incest victims should be forced to carry on with pregnancy. More recently he has suggested that an exception to the 18 weeks limit could be made to rape victims if they reported to a police station within a strict time limit.

The implication is that women might otherwise pretend they have been raped to get an abortion!

Alton views women solely as walking incubators who are likely to be totally immoral and irresponsible unless kept in line through the repression of the state.

However, as more and more women are working and gaining confidence, like the nurses, they are turning to the labour movement to defend their hard-won rights. Every trade unionist and labour organisation must take up this issue.

Defeat the Alton Bill



Lobby of Parliament against Alton's Bill last October.

Cuts hit abortion rights

IN A report of the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists in 1984, six of the eight reasons they listed for late abortions related to the condition of the NHS.

Since then, as the current action by NHS workers has shown, the NHS has deteriorated and now represents a further threat to women's right to abortions.

City and Hackney District Health Authority have now proposed imposing a time limit of 12 weeks on all abortions, except those on purely medical grounds. This would exclude the two thirds of women who go for NHS abortions after 12 weeks on 'social grounds', such as poverty or being deserted by their partner.

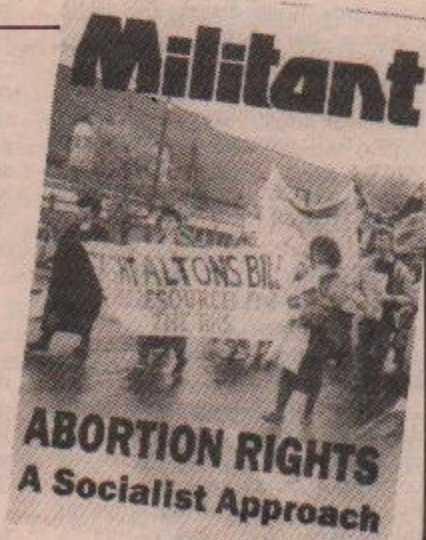
They, often the poorest women in society, are to be advised to go private, at around £250!

This unilateral decision to withdraw a vital service, in addition to the restrictive requirement to get permission of two doctors before an abortion, only underlines the need for:

- * abortion on demand;
- * a reversal of NHS cuts and massive expansion of the NHS;
- * democratisation of the health authorities to be accountable to the workers in the NHS and the people the NHS is supposed to serve.

Militant Pamphlet Price 50p

cheques to World Socialist Books
3/13 Hepscoff
Road, London E9.



THE "CAUCUS" is a procedure where the registered members of each party come together and vote for which candidate they eventually want to stand for the Presidency on the party ticket. There are no regular meetings of locals (branches) of the two capitalist parties

where issues can be discussed; often there are no functioning locals. So caucuses give the appearance of a democratic structure.

In primaries, voters register their choice for presidential candidate at a central point, as in an election.

Labour's untapped power

WHOEVER IS elected to replace Ronald Reagan in November will preside over the most powerful economy in the world, and the second most powerful military force. The election is an event of great importance to workers, youth and peasants on every continent.

It would be easy to forget this, considering the coverage of the election process by the US media.

Great importance is attached to the size of a candidate's ears, the colour of his eyebrows, the tone of his voice and similar matters. In no other country where elections take place do trivial personal factors get so much attention.

The reason for the very low political level of US elections is the fact that the US working class has no political voice of its own.

Elections are reduced to contests between the parties of big business, the Democrats and the Republicans. With no fundamental differences between them, personal and trivial details tend to be emphasised.

But, indirectly, the election process does indicate the developments taking place in society.

Throughout the USA, the buying power of the working class has fallen by 11 per cent between 1978 and 1987. In 1980 the poorest 20 per cent of the population had to live on 4.1 per cent of total family income; by 1987 this was down to 3.8 per cent.

Over the same period the rich have been getting richer. The share of the top 20 per cent increased from 44.2 per cent of total family income in 1980 to 46.1 per cent in 1987.

Polarisation

This change in income distribution has been brought about by wage cuts, firings, union busting, cuts in social services, and family farmers driven from their land.

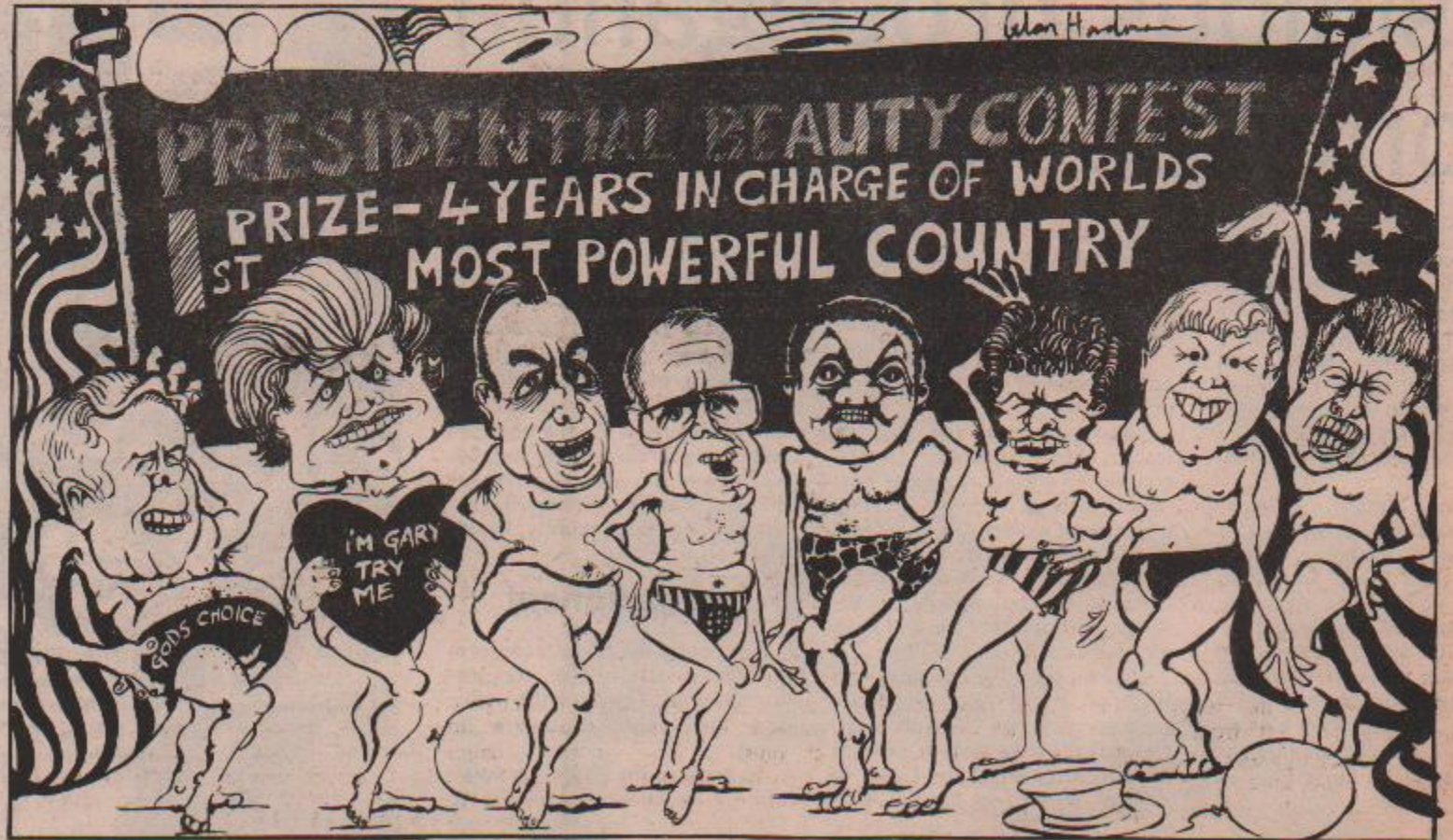
The result has been an increasing political polarisation. "Class politics", according to the *New York Times*, "is standard fare in the Democratic Party ... (But) class lines are also being drawn this year across the Republican Party". (10 February)

The two Republican frontrunners, Bush and Dole, accused each other of being rich. It is a sign of the shift in consciousness taking place when Republican candidates feel that to win support they must attack the rich!

Since his defeat in Iowa, however, Bush has pulled ahead by basing himself on the upper layers of Republicans who have done well out of the Reagan years.

The support for the evangelical preacher Robertson, on the other hand, indicates the rising anxiety and discontent in society. It is strongest among the middle class and less advanced workers, who are given no alternative by the labour leaders.

Faced with falling living standards, increasing crime, the Aids epidemic and a tidal wave of corruption, they seek a way out by enforcing biblical teachings on themselves and society as a whole.



"Dictatorship or revolution"

MORE AND more workers in construction are getting fed up with the way things are heading.

In my local of the Carpenters' Union guys are seeing the need to come back to union meetings. Last month we topped over 100 at our meeting, out of 600 members. Each month there's heated debate on union or political issues.

Our union has headed a campaign to register workers to vote in the Presidential elections. But most guys are very frustrated at the choice of candidates.

At our last meeting the following motion was put forward by Labor Militant supporters:

"This Local notes that over the last 8 years Big Business, in cooperation with the Reagan Administration, has been on an offensive to drive down the living standards of American workers. We also

note that during the last Democrat Administration not one piece of the AFL-CIO's priority labor legislation was passed.

"We therefore resolve that in order to secure legislation favoring organized labor and all working people, the trade union movement must have its own independent political party, a Labor Party, based around the union locals, citywide, statewide and nationwide bodies of the AFL-CIO. Only on this basis can Labor effectively begin to turn the tide of big business domination over the American political system."

The voice vote was even and the motion was lost on a standing vote. After the meeting many who backed the motion shook my hand and voiced their approval enthusiastically.

It is mainly the union officials who

defend the 'tradition' of supporting the Democrats. If the union leaders proposed a Labor Party it would get overwhelming support. Even brothers in my Local who abstained like the idea of a union party but weren't sure it's possible.

The strongest mood of the night was shown by the comments of two guys who buy *Labor Militant*:

"Unless we do something now this country will become a dictatorship, with the super rich at one end and everyone else poor."

His buddy turned and said: "No. There'll be a revolution before then!"

By Rick Rollins
Carpenters' Local 1144 Delegate,
Seattle Labor Council

The struggle among the Democratic candidates has been even more illustrative of the deepening gulf between the classes.

Only a few weeks before the first primary, the Iowa winner Gephardt was at the bottom of the opinion polls. Then he changed his message, stressing a kind of moderate populism, the virtues of the American common people, the need for change, the fight against big business, against Wall Street manipulators and 'unfair' barriers to US exports.

More recently Albert Gore made a similar U-turn from a right-wing militarist stand, which got him nowhere, to an appeal aimed at the "working man and woman", promising them a "White House back in the control of US working people!"

Jesse Jackson

The black Democratic candidate, Jesse Jackson, has been getting not only the black vote but support among sections of whites as well. The *New York Times* described his appeal:

"Mr Jackson has presented himself as the champion of farmers and workers ... willing to

assail the big corporations, to call for higher taxes on the rich, to walk the picket lines at strike-bound factories and foreclosed farms." (4 February)

The front-runner Dukakis, on the other hand, tried to remain aloof from the general appeal to working-class anger. But, even with most of the establishment and its money behind him, he too has been forced to denounce poverty, 'unfairness' and the threat of war.

This general theme of the need for new measures to deal with the developing crisis reflects the mood that is building up among workers and youth—antagonism to the rich, and a demand for change.

A *Time* magazine poll showed that 65 per cent of voters want different policies after the election; only 25 per cent are satisfied with existing policies.

When Carter was elected in 1976 it was in the belief that he represented a way out of the crisis of the Nixon and Ford presidencies. When Reagan was elected in 1980, it was in the belief that he would show a way out of the crisis of the Carter presidency.

Reagan won re-election in 1984 because he conjured up economic

growth of 6.8 per cent that year by putting the economy in unprecedented debt. The candidates of both parties now feel that to win in 1988 they must promise yet another change, and portray their candidature as yet another way out of the crisis.

These developments reflect the organic and insoluble crisis of US capitalism. As one president is replaced by another, he is exposed as being incapable of solving the problems, and an alternative is sought.

Labour movement

It is here that the role of the labour leaders is central. Their refusal to mobilise the working class for independent political action, to end their support for the Democrats and build a Labor Party, allowed Carter to replace Ford and Reagan to replace Carter.

If they continue with this policy, the most likely result of the 1988 election will be a Democratic President—yet another administration representing big business, and further attacks on workers.

This can be cut across if the labour leaders take action. There

are 18 million trade union members in the US, organised in 65,000 locals (branches) and close to 1,000 city-based Labor Councils.

The leaders of the American Federation of Labor-Confederation of Industrial Organisations (AFL-CIO, the American TUC) need to explain the insoluble crisis facing US and world capitalism, which has been underlined by the international stock market crash.

They must take up a campaign for a \$10 an hour minimum wage, a 32-hour working week, free education and a free national health service, a programme of useful public works and a crash house-building programme.

This must be linked to the need to nationalise under workers' control and management the 500 corporations which constitute a dictatorship over US society.

Fighting on such a programme, the labour leaders could unleash a movement which would transform the unions, draw in the youth and the unemployed, and establish a mass Labor Party pledged to implement socialist policies.

By Sean Herron

General strike in India

CONTRARY TO press reports, the all-India *bharath bandh* (general strike) on 15 March was one of the biggest mobilisations of working-class power ever seen.

By Mukesh Moorthy

The strike was called by the four-party 'left front'—the Communist Party of India (Marxist) (CPI(M)), Communist Party of India (CPI), Revolutionary Socialist Party (RSP) and Forward Bloc—to protest the pro-capitalist policies of the Congress(I) government and demand immediate general elections.

Tens of thousands of activists were arrested to try and break the strike. Shopkeepers led by reactionary organisations opposed the strike, while bus workers were mistakenly exempted.

Despite this, several states were totally paralysed, and much of industry and banking was shut down.

Left front

The decisive impetus to this movement was the formation of the left front in mid-1987. After decades of class collaboration the Communist parties found themselves without any allies among the capitalist parties.

The independent red banner of the left front attracted one and a quarter million workers and peasants to a "Rajiv must

resign" rally in Delhi on 9 December. Our Bangalore correspondent reports:

"Nearly half the participants came by foot from six different corners, spreading the message of anti-Rajiv campaign and raising the issues of unemployment and price rises. This limited initiative has electrified the mood of the rank and file of the workers' parties and cut across the caste, communal and separatist moods that had begun to grip sections of the masses."

Last week, for instance, lawyers shut down the judicial system by going on strike throughout the country against police brutality.

In Meerut (a northern city notorious for communal strife) a non-communal rebellion of hundreds of thousands of poor peasants sprouted up as a consequence of the devastating drought. They demanded relief and the cancellation of electricity bills and taxes.

Dalits (low-caste Hindus) have also been roused to rebuff the rising Hindu chauvinism, as seen by the 200,000-strong Dalit march against the communalist Shiv Sena movement in



Over 200,000 took part in the Dalit protest in Bombay on 12 February.

Bombay on 12 February.

The eyes of the Indian masses are now focused upon the left front. 15 March must be seen as the opening shot in the struggle to oust the government and

unify all sections of the people behind the workers' movement. Providing they maintain their independence from all capitalist parties and campaign on a socialist programme the

workers parties can become the national opposition to the Congress(I), build a movement to sweep away capitalism and landlordism and usher in a socialist society.

What it's like under Israeli occupation

NEWS COVERAGE of the struggles in Gaza and the West Bank has opened the eyes of many in Britain to the appalling conditions of Palestinian workers, peasants and refugees.

Students in Leeds were shocked by the experience of a Palestinian fellow student who, watching the TV news one night, saw his brother shot in the mouth by Israeli security forces.

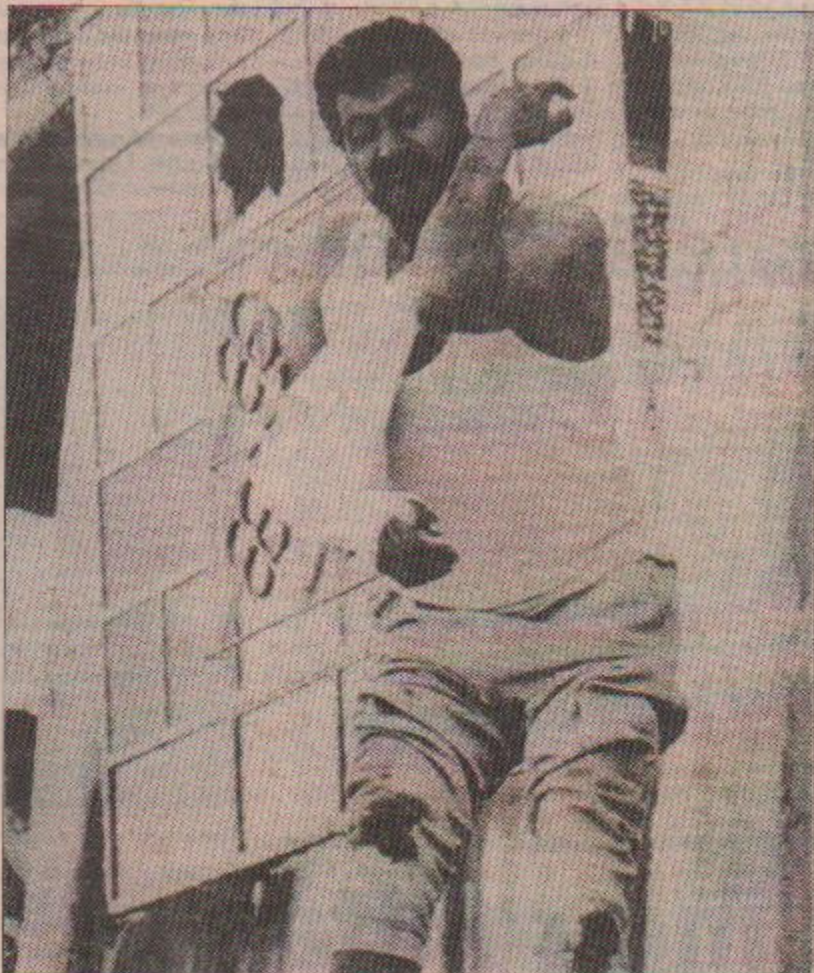
When he tried to phone home, the lines to Gaza were closed. Later he got through to the hospital where his brother had been taken, but nurses were too scared to say much over the phone. It is not known if the man will live.

But although the suppression of the *intifada* (uprising) has been brutal, the situation is not new. The Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza have suffered under Israeli occupation for 20 years, and before that under Jordanian and British rule.

The youth in particular face daily harassment. In 1986 I spent Christmas Eve in Bethlehem on the West Bank. Not knowing my way around, I asked directions from a couple of local youths. They turned out to be students from Bethlehem University, which had been closed by the military following a demonstration in which a student was killed.

"They want to keep us in ignorance, to keep us down", one said. They offered to take me around the town "to show you what it is like to live under the occupation".

The whole town had been swamped by the Army because of fears of an attack on Christmas celebrations. It was impossible to move in or out of the centre of town without being searched at an



An injured Palestinian shows the brutal way Israeli soldiers try to deal with stone-throwing.

Army checkpoint.

To my surprise the students introduced me to a soldier at one checkpoint. He was a Druze (a non-Moslem Arab minority who, unlike the majority of Palestinians, are subject to conscription) whom they knew from school. They chatted for a few minutes, teasing him for being in the army.

Later I was to meet other conscripts. Waiting on my own for friends at the bus station. I was twice told to move on. The first time, a young soldier waved his rifle at me, gesturing me to move. When he found out I was British he said: "Oh, that's all right, I thought you were just some Arab". I was wearing a Palestinian

SHOWING THE blatant double standards applied on the occupied West Bank, an Israeli District Court two weeks ago handed down a six month sentence to a Jewish settler who had killed a 13-year-old Palestinian.

During disturbances in October 1982 the settler had left his lorry near the Balata refugee camp to shoot at a group of youth throwing stones. He killed one of them.

Not only has it taken five and a half years for the case to be tried, but the court ruled that the sentence could be served as some form of community service.

scarf.

A few minutes later a second soldier tried to move me on. This time I was able to start a conversation. It turned out that he was from a kibbutz (collective farm) in northern Israel, and just wanted to go back.

He was very unhappy with the job he was being forced to do but saw no way of avoiding it.

Now, as a result of the brutality of the security forces (egged on by 'Labour' Minister Yitzhak Rabin) a significant number of Israeli youth are refusing to do military service. This is only the second time there has been such a development in Israel's history. The first time was during the invasion of Lebanon in 1982.

In the coming period—as the Israeli working class moves into struggle over economic demands, as West Bankers continue to build their unions and debate opens up in the "Committees of Struggle" (see *Militant* 880) in the wake of the *intifada* the situation will be more favourable than ever before for drawing together the struggles of Jewish and Arab workers and youth.

Internationally, it is only the Marxists who can provide the analysis and programme that is necessary for this task.

By Peter Cross

'Hungarian model' comes apart

SUPPORTERS OF Gorbachev's reforms in Russia have regularly held up Hungary as an example for the Soviet Union to follow.

Economic decentralisation, foreign loans and a measured dose of market economics have been used over the last 30 years to boost the production of consumer goods and raise living standards.

But, as explained in *Militant* 867, the 'Hungarian model' is coming apart. This is confirmed by the figures of Hungary's economic performance in 1987.

Gross Domestic Product rose by only 2-2.5 per cent, while agricultural production fell by 0.5-1.5 per cent. The number of active workers dropped by 36,000. Half of these may have opted for work in the 'private sector'.

There was a shift in employment away from industrial production towards the services sector. Industrial employment declined by 55,000 people, while service industries employed 37,000 more.

The infrastructure is in an appalling state. The housing crisis, reputedly to blame for Hungary's high suicide and divorce rates, has worsened. Only 57,200 flats were built last year—18 per cent fewer than in 1986.

Overcrowding

Even more significantly, only 13.7 per cent of these flats were built by the state. The rest were provided by a private building programme, which is fast becoming the only way most Hungarians can hope to get a place of their own.

Overcrowding and the resultant tensions poison the life of the youth. The official 'Young Communist League' admitted at its last congress that there is now a whole generation of youth who have no hope of ever living in their own accommodation.

With several rounds of price rises a year, and state subsidies fast disappearing, an urban family of four needs 10,000 forints per month to live decently. In fact, the average monthly wage is 7,040 forints (£1 = 80 forints) in industry and 6,220 in agriculture, while 41 per cent of pensioners live on less than 3,000 forints per month.

Official inflation was 8.6 per cent in 1987, while wages have stagnated even according to state figures. This year has seen the introduction of income tax and VAT. There is an ongoing drop in living standards for most.

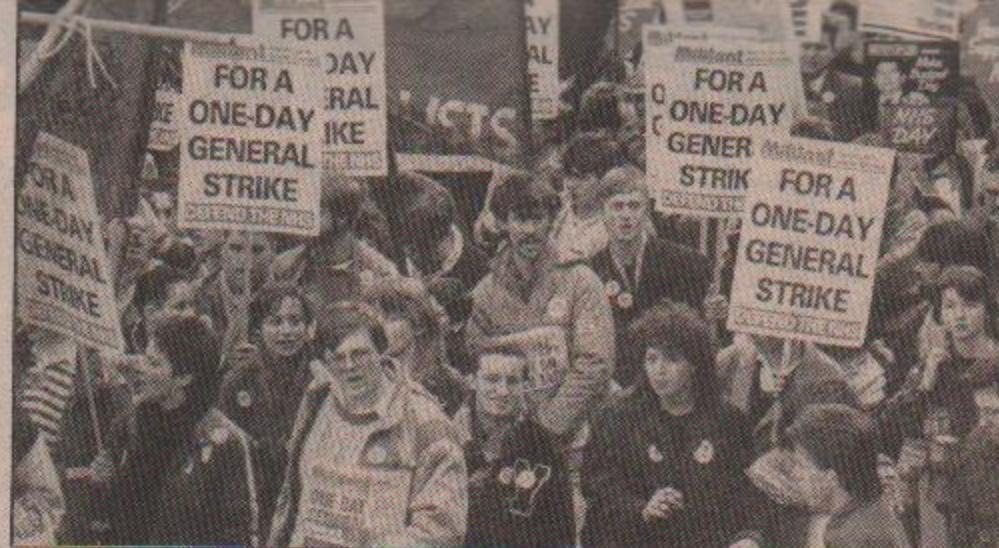
Discontent will grow. More and more workers and youth will conclude that democratic workers' control over the economy and the state is the only way to solve the crisis—a prospect that is making the Hungarian bureaucrats quake in their boots, and will certainly make Gorbachev think.

No help for childless

Dear Comrades,
After two years of operations and tests, I was told by my doctor that I was unable to have children. My only hope is *in vitro* fertilisation (a test-tube baby). I am 26.
I was able to ask Edwina Currie, on a recent visit to Leicester, why IVF treatment was effectively no longer available on the NHS. (The few lists there are rapidly being closed due to lack of funding).
Her answer demonstrated again the true nature of

'caring capitalism'. Firstly she automatically assumed that I had 'had my tubes cut'-wrong.
Secondly she stated that I "wasn't ill"-wrong, I have had major surgery and I'm still unfit for work. Wrong also in the sense that I have had to cope emotionally with two years of disappointment and pain.
Thirdly she stated that she "would rather save babies alive now". Not only was that a totally insensitive remark, but the Tories don't even manage to do

that!
There are thousands of people in Britain who experience fertility problems. Many can't afford private IVF treatment at about £2,000 a time. In a society that truly cared, facilities would exist for these people as well as adequate health care for the young.
I have written to Mrs Currie asking her to explain her remarks-I wonder if she'll bother to reply?
A Leicester comrade.



Part of 5 March demo to defend the NHS.

Credit swindle

Dear Comrades,
Frank, a comrade in North Shields, was recently approached by a young lad selling kitchens. He gets £10 every time someone agrees to have a salesman come round to their house to convince them to buy. Feeling sorry for the lad and hoping to earn him £10, Frank agreed to this.
It turned out that the lowest price for a kitchen was £4,200! But you could 'save' money by buying on credit over ten years at 26 per cent interest. So in fact

you end up paying £9,000, saving yourself a small fortune!
Firms like this prey on working-class families offering 'easy credit': "It's only £18 a week".
Why should someone have to tramp the streets for these cowboy firms on the off-chance of earning £10? He would have to arrange 12 interviews a week to earn what the TUC regards as a realistic minimum wage.
Terry McPartian,
Whitley Bay Labour Party

Defending our rights

Dear Comrades,
As a lesbian, I was pleased to notice the recent reports on Clause 28, the latest government legislation to discriminate against lesbians and gay men (as if we are not oppressed enough already).
However more could have been said to stress the importance of defending lesbian and gay rights. All too often lesbian and gay oppression is ignored or dismissed as a 'trendy, loony-left' issue. It is not-it is about our lives and defending the right to choose whom and how we

love.
We do this in the face of immense prejudice. Clause 29 is just another divide-and-rule tactic whereby the government uses intolerance of homosexuality to whip up hatred and win support.
Lesbians and gay men refuse to be used in this way. When Clause 29 comes into force, we're not going quietly back into the closet. We'll be out shouting and I hope to hear the labour movement shouting too.
Michelle Ruddle,
Leicester East LPYS.

Classified ads

20p per word, minimum 10 words. Semi-display £3 per column centimetre. Three weeks for the price of two. Militant meeting ads free. All advertisement copy should reach this office by first post on Friday, the week before publication.



□ New sticker available in rolls of 250. 'One day general strike-Defend the health service'. Other stickers: 'Kick out the Tories', 'No to slave labour on YTS', 'For a socialist South Africa', £2.50 per roll. 'Militant for labour and youth' enamel stud badges £1 each. A3 size posters of Marx, Engels, Lenin, Trotsky, Luxemburg 50p each collecting tins £1 each, 10 or more 75p each. Available from Fighting Fund Dept, 3-13 Hepscoth Rd, London E9 5HB. For all orders add 25 per cent P&P. Cheques payable to Militant.

WINTER 1988 issue.
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Letters

Send us your views, comments or criticism.

Militant,
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Golden trough

Dear Comrades,
In September 1986, along with 1,200, I was made redundant from Britoil. We received redundancy terms on average of four weeks per year of service-not excessive but at least better than the statutory requirements.
But these terms were a far cry from those given to Britoil's chairman, Sir Philip Shelbourne, now that the multi-national giant BP have gained control of Britoil. He is to receive a lump sum of £530,000 and be re-employed as a consultant working a maximum of 36 days a year for £127,000.
As he doesn't have an office, he gets

£40,000 a year in lieu of office services and a lunch allowance of £24,000 per annum.
Just in case he can't survive on this, he is allowed a chauffeur-driven limousine, four centre-court tickets for Wimbledon and four tickets for every Royal Opera performance at Covent Garden.
Sir Phil's £666.67 per day lunch allowance is all the more ironic since Britoil have a free canteen for its workforce. We couldn't have him eating with the workers, could we?
Unemployed Apex member, Britoil, Glasgow

Right's arguments routed

Dear Comrades,
The right-wing 'moderates' claim their policies win the middle class and that Militant policies put people off. Yet I have just read in *Liverpool-a City that Dared to Fight* that Beryl Molyneux, Liberal candidate for the 1984 council elections, resigned as candidate and joined the Labour Party.

She says: "I began to ask myself had I made the right choice... I attended the Labour Party 'Liverpool in Crisis' public meeting and got answers that I could relate to."
This was at a time when Labour had abolished the Lord Mayor, re-organised education and proposed a budget £190 million outside the government target-and

gained a massive 17-seat majority on the council in the subsequent council elections.
It's a fantastic book, routing all the arguments of the so-called 'moderates', who were the ones actually proposing cuts in jobs and services to compensate for Tory cuts.
Pete Mason, Leicester South Labour Party.

Royal riches

Dear Comrades,
Money magazine have just listed the top 200 richest people in Britain. Guess who's top of the list-your friend and mine-the Queen. She's worth three and a quarter billion!
Now where did all this money come from? Was it by working hard for a living? Was it by working overtime? Was it by increased productivity?
No-she sat on her throne in Buck palace and the working-class people of Britain gave it to her, courtesy of Tory and Labour governments.
Sounds like a fairy tale, except the disgusting fact that it's true! This so-called head of democracy, this right hand of God, sits back while 'her people' are being exploited into the ground.
The excuse we are always given by the state is that she brings millions into the country in tourism. But this is a tiny fraction of the amount that would be brought into the country if we had investment put into our manufacturing industry and people were given jobs.
Vanessa Loraine, Stockton.

Beware the gerbil

Dear Comrades,
Thatcher's Great Education Reform Bill (Gerbil for short) has been heralded as the answer to the problems of education.
But the likely consequence of one aspect of the gerbil, the common core curriculum, is that pupils' choice of subjects will be severely restricted. Subjects like computer studies and typing will face the chop because they will be dependent on a reduced option base.
However the aspect which will surprise most parents is that English and maths will also be cut-despite the Tories' complaint that too many school-leavers are illiterate and innumerate (as well as being unable to use computers and type!).
The people laughing all the way to the bank will be the private schools, such as the cabinet send their offspring to. The gerbil will not be set on them and the chaos it creates in the state schools will make them more attractive to those who can afford to buy a better education for their children.
Derek McMillan, East Grinstead.



Classroom scene at Croxteth Community School, Liverpool.

Rising militancy

Dear Comrades,
With the recent rise in militancy amongst workers, Kinnock's attempt to move the Labour Party to the right has been totally discredited.
In a recent article in *The Guardian*, Alfred Brown, transport union shop steward at Solihull, said of the Land Rover strike: "I've never seen one so solid, and I've been here for 37 years".

Yet in the same paper, a poll showed that only 44 per cent of Labour voters thought the party was doing a good job in opposition. Is it any wonder, when Kinnock is increasingly isolating himself from workers in struggle at the very time they need a fighting lead?
Andrew Woods, Poole Labour Party.

Dear Comrades,
'This recent wave of militancy really shows up the accusation of workers being jaded and complacent to be a lie. Therefore the position is very favourable for the left to stand a candidate for the leadership of the Labour Party.
When the workers presently in struggle see a Labour leader not afraid or embarrassed to stand with them, there would be a large influx into the party who would side with the left against the rightward drift of the leadership.
Jon Melia, Bellshill.

As Ridley fills in the loopholes...

Councils must mobilise against Tories

THE TORIES' one-sided 'war of the cities' against Labour local councils has been stepped up by Environment Secretary Nicholas Ridley.

As from 9 March, it is illegal for authorities to raise much-needed cash by selling leases on property ranging from council house fixtures to town halls.

Government policies have squeezed the finance out of local authorities, leading to these desperate measures. Southwark has raised £30 million in this way, repaying, with interest of course, over the next 20 years. Brent council's recent deal worth over £30 million led the Tories to make it illegal.

As soon as a council sees the chance of a loophole to stop massive cuts, the Tories close it. So Labour councils go down the road of cuts mapped out by Ridley and co.

The only way to reverse this tide is to fight the government, by the mobilisation of a mass campaign involving all those affected—council workers, tenants, teachers, students, the unions in the private sector and local residents.

The experience of Liverpool city council, which defeated Thatcher in 1984, shows that this is the only alternative left.

By Tim Harris.

Who pays for "moderation?"

Knowsley

THE ROMAN Catholic archbishop of Liverpool recently praised Knowsley's 'moderate' Labour council for bending over backwards to remain within the law.

Mentally and physically handicapped people and the elderly, users of the borough's day centres, see things differently. They were threatened with a £10 a week levy to attend these centres, just one of the cuts proposed by the council.

Together with local authority trade unionists, they lobbied the social ser-

vices committee and turned up with home-made banners and placards.

As the council chamber opened, demonstrators flooded in, those in wheelchairs leading the lobby.

Not only were councillors staggered by the strength of feeling, many of them had difficulty finding a seat!

As a result, council leader Jim Keight was forced to move that the charges be deferred to another committee.

By Roger Bannister.

Barking

A TORY COUNCILLOR commented on Labour controlled Barking and Dagenham council's decision to raise rates by only a small amount: "There were no dissenting voices when this was agreed in committee. We are always willing to compliment the majority party when they get it right."

Of course, there is nothing wrong with keeping the rates down—after all it is working class people who have to pay them—but

at what cost?

According to Labour leader, George Brooker, this was "at the expense of the poor blighter in the tower block. Families are now condemned to spend their lives in high rise blocks.

"The reason we've got money in the bank is that we've sold so many of our council houses due to government policy. The people who never get out of the high rise blocks are paying the price."



Liverpool workers support their Labour council in 1985.

Liverpool's tribute to the fighting 47

600 PEOPLE braved a stormy night to pay tribute to the 47 Liverpool councillors on the first anniversary of their disqualification from office, for daring to fight Thatcher.

Dennis Skinner said the general election results in Liverpool were "a miracle", given the surcharge and expulsion of many leading figures.

Eric Heffer was greeted enthusiastically by everyone when he called for a Labour leadership contest. His call for a one day national strike in support of the health service workers was equally well received.

A collection of £3500 showed the backing for

the 47. Ucatt donated £400 on the night. Without the house building programme of the 47 many of its members would be without work.

Tony Mulhearn speaking for the 47 reminded the new Labour Group that any moves to ditch the policies of the previous council would be met with the wrath of the labour movement in Liverpool.

The enormous support for the 47 still has to be fully translated into regular donations to pay off the surcharge. Cheques payable to: Liverpool 47 Defence Fund, c/o MTCURC, Hardman Street, Liverpool.

LIVERPOOL-A City that Dared to Fight, Peter Taaffe and Tony Mulhearn's book about Liverpool city council's fight with the Tory government between 1983 and 1987, has been well appreciated in Liverpool itself. 21 copies were sold on the train to the NHS demo on 5 March.

"It's of historic importance to have an evaluation of these important years of struggle by a Labour council and its

workforce. It will not only be of value to Liverpool people, it will have international implications."

Fred Taylor, shop steward, GMB Branch 5.

"Excellent! It shows particularly the role of the local press who spread poison about the council. It will help us to map out future struggles, showing us what to expect from our enemies."

Steve Sullivan, branch chairman, GMB Branch 200.

The myth of the dented shield

LEAFING THROUGH January's *Community Care*, I came upon comments by Toby Harris, Labour leader of Haringey council, about 'socialist' cuts.

He said the re-election of the Tories was the "final nail in the coffin" for Labour councils. "The gamble on a change of administration in Westminster had been lost."

His alternatives for Labour are to... "stay in office and protect what could be protected or to run out of money and let services collapse and risk surcharge, removal and the district auditor". There is no mention of Labour authorities organising a concerted fightback against the Tories.

He admits that "given the scale of cuts... serious damage is being done to essential services". But "Neil Kinnock said a dented shield is better than no shield."

The 'socialist' cuts disease is spreading. In Sandwell there is the real possibility of a £7 a week rent increase by the local Labour council.

In Walsall, where a coalition of Tories, Liberals and independents control the council by one vote, the Labour group is desperate to gain control before the May elections so that it too can introduce cuts and rent and rate increases.

Walsall borough Labour Party is still suspended so despite almost total opposition from party organisations, the Labour group are a law unto themselves.

If you wonder why Labour does so poorly in such working class areas, look at the right-wing leadership which means that potential supporters stay at home rather than vote Labour.

By Nigel Wheatley

Oldham

THE CUTS which ex-left Manchester council is pushing through have given the green light to neighbouring authorities like Oldham to do the same. Labour councillors are hiding behind the argument, "There is no alternative" to embark on a cuts package.

Proposed are the closure of two children's homes, Hawthorne Crescent and Lower Lime Road with the immediate loss of nine posts and six

residential places.

This announcement came after the principal officer had already said that every other children's home was overcrowded.

So what will happen to the children at the homes which are closing? Some could be sent into foster care. The elderly will suffer as well with the 'Sandhurst' residential home being sold off.

By Bob Marshall

Camden

CAMDEN NALGO members recently won a temporary victory in court against the council's threat to sack 3500 workers.

But the council still want huge cuts and sackings. This former left wing borough wants to cut its 1988/89 budget by a massive 20 per cent—£43 million.

Here are just a few of the cuts. The internationally known Camden Festival will never again be organised and the local arts centre will close. The Shaw Theatre may be sold.

Two housing aid centres have closed, one of them only recently built. Council rents are to go up on average £3.50 per week. Tenants are to be charged for some repairs; at present only life and limb emergency repairs are being carried out.

Caretakers are on a maximum 35 hour week

so night patrols have ended, making estates more dangerous, especially for women. The asbestos removal programme is down to its legal minimum.

The decorating service for elderly or handicapped tenants in private accommodation has stopped as have decoration allowances for council tenants.

Council nursery places have been slashed from 625 to 450 and parents will now be charged £5 per week. A quarter of the 250 hospital social workers will go.

The chairman of social services committee admits that the £8 million cut in his budget will affect the borough's disabled, recently estimated as being 17 per cent of the population. Lunch clubs for the elderly may close.

By Ian Collins

Liverpool
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LAND ROVER:

AFTER FOUR weeks the Land Rover strike has become the most significant dispute in Birmingham for many years.

By Les Kuriata

Despite many management attempts to break the dispute, the strikers are firm. The beginning of the fourth week saw only about 10 to 20 scabs sneak into the plant (management claim 50). Even on the company's dishonest figures, this is less than one per cent of the workforce.

But the significant thing is that so few have tried to go into work despite the company's high powered two week campaign. Their attempt to instigate a back-to-work meeting backfired when just over 100 turned up, many of them just wanting to know what was going on. The company had boasted that 3000 would be present.

However many pickets

feel their case has not been helped by a written statement by Sam Robinson, the union's chief negotiator, who said no-one returning to work would be obstructed. As one shop steward put it: "The company could use this statement as a green light to any potential scab. Anyone would think we were prepared to hold scabs' hands and walk them over the line."

The company's request for a limit of six pickets was met at the beginning of the fourth week with 200-300 pickets, the biggest for some time. A sign of the company's desperation is their insistence that both main picket lines are physically moved off "their land".

The truth is, the longer the strike goes on, the more management will dredge the depths of the dirty tricks barrel to break it.

The Land Rover stewards have just reaffirmed their full support for the strike. This needs to

Strike worries bosses — step up the action

be translated into action. Lay-offs at Thompson Industries in Wolverhampton, Carbodies in Coventry and Freight Rover in Birmingham show what effect the strike is having in the local economy and what can be achieved. This advantage has to be rammed home.

Regular mass meetings of the strikers are essential in any strike. The strike committee should call an immediate meeting to give a clear lead, a strategy to win, to all strikers.

Land Rover stewards must approach all other Rover group factories via works committees at Longbridge, Cowley etc. to campaign for a 24 hour solidarity stoppage. Strikers need a factory bulletin explaining the present situation instead of relying on the bosses' press and management for information.

Privatisation will also be on Rover workers' minds. The Land Rover strike



On the picket line.

Photo: John Harris (IFL) II.

committee should put out the call for a stewards' conference of all the Rover group to discuss the future of jobs, plant etc.

This body can also use its authority to pressure Day and the Land Rover management to increase

their offer, particularly after Rover group announced their first profits for a number of years.

The strike is a turning point in the minds of the area's car workers and manufacturing workers generally. In November,

Longbridge and Cowley go into negotiations on pay. A victory for Land Rover workers will be a great boost to the unions in these talks, and also show to workers in general that the bosses can be beaten.

Trust House

THE INFAMOUS Trust House Forte management have tried to end a strike by 150 low paid TGWU members at THF Inflight catering at Manchester Airport by sacking the strikers.

By Ron Wilson, Manchester Airport Trade Unions Committee

Only hours before they were due to go back to work after a 48 hour strike against an insulting six per cent pay offer, management used scab transport firm TNT to deliver dismissal notices to strikers' homes.

Starting at the shop stewards' houses at seven in the evening, they were still knocking on doors at two in the morning!

If they thought this would make strikers buckle under, they were mistaken. Next morning over 100 picketed their workplace and only three scabs worked, one getting police protection.

The pressure of the strikers on the airport executive and the airlines forced Forte to send senior managers from London to try to resolve the dispute.

As many as 50 strikers



THF workers' picket at Manchester Airport.

Photo: Viv Seal.

More than Forte catered for

picket through the night and many more during the day. They want an end to their low pay. The company offered them 11p an hour increase on their £1.96 wages. The semi retired head of the group, Charles Forte recently gave himself a rise of £70 an hour!

Pickets are calling on TGWU shop stewards to build support for an all out

strike on the airport and are also demanding that low pay firms like THF and scab transport firms have their contracts on the airport revoked. If Labour councillors who sit on the Airport Committee took this up workers would support them.

Messages of support to the THF Strike Committee, c/o P McDermott, TGWU

convenor, Trade union office, Manchester International Airport, Manchester M22 5PB.

STOP PRESS:

Management have been forced to remove sacking notices and have offered other concessions. Details next week.

Civil servants prepare for victory

THE LONDON civil servants' strike against compulsory transfers, staffing cuts and sacking of casuals is now entering a decisive stage.

By Charlie Parker (MSC West London)

Management at last recognise the strength of our action. Last week saw the beginnings of negotiations at national level. Although the talks showed there was room for agree-

ment on the issue of transfers, no progress was made on staffing levels.

However management have set up further discussions which are currently taking place. While these talks are a big step forward, CPSA members know it would be a mistake to base all our hopes on them having a satisfactory outcome.

The last strikers' meeting overwhelmingly backed a motion from Militant supporters Charlie Parker and

Simon Dennison which called for preparations to continue for a London wide all out strike.

CPSA deputy general secretary John Macreadie told the meeting that positive steps forward had been taken in delivering solidarity action at the Reading and Livingston computer centres. This would stop giroes being sent out from strike-bound offices.

Members are confident we are on the verge of an

historic victory. Ealing B UBOs have joined the action and preparations are in hand for the massive escalation we will need if management are unable to meet our demands.

We are determined to defend jobs and services; we will not let management prepare the ground for the privatisation of the employment service at the expense of CPSA members and the public we serve.

The General Secretary and President of the union suspended the Brigade Committee officials who supported the boycott, then, citing the possibility of injunctions, fines and sequestration, sent instructions round the fire stations that all previously agreed action was unofficial.

But Merseyside were determined. Not one union member on the stations cooperated with the Home Office and three of the five divisions refused to do anything other than deal with emergency calls during the inspector's visit.

The HMI have left Merseyside. No legal action has been taken but the officials remain suspended by their own

FBU suspends activists

SIX MERSEYSIDE Fire Brigade Union officials have been suspended from office by their union's national executive because they followed its conference decisions.

For three years, conference has adopted a policy of non-cooperation with Her Majesty's Inspectors' (HMI) yearly inspection of brigades. But after a dispute in the West Midlands last August, when the local authority took the local brigade to court, the NEC overturned conference policy.

The inspectorate's role has been changed from examining the running of stations, to looking for places where cuts could be made.

Firefighter Steve Ellison, speaking in a personal

capacity, said: "When we cooperated with the inspectorate we lost 88 jobs. Most metropolitan brigades, and some shire brigades, lost jobs. We are fighting a rearguard action to get these jobs back and increase the workforce. We will still be following conference policy until it is changed by conference."

Strathclyde brigade has supported Liverpool's stand, and others are beginning to follow. These suspensions are unprecedented.

Steve commented: "Before last August, some 33 brigades cooperated with the inspectorate against conference policy. Not one of them, as far as I know, had their officials suspended."

leaders and the day-to-day running is in the hands of regional officials.

The latest edition of the union journal writes on the NHS that "workers taking action deserve our support" but it seems our own union members taking action 'deserve' suspension.

FBU members should demand that the national executive reinstate the Merseyside officials.

Messages of support to Dave Buckney, suspended Merseyside Brigade secretary, 44 Morden Avenue, Ashton-in-Makerfield WN 9PT.

By Mick Eaves, Cheshire FBU

SACKED for solidarity

Rail unions must strike back

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

AS WE go to press, the threat of the sack hangs over Steve Forey, assistant branch secretary of Kings Cross Aslef.

This is not just an attack on one worker. If it is carried through, every single activist on the railways and in every trade union is threatened.

Steve Forey's supposed crime was acting upon a branch decision to strike in support of the health workers on 14 March. It is the kind of action which was needed all over the country to defend the health service.

Steve distributed newsletters containing this decision. The full force of the law was then hurled at the leaders of this branch. Management served writs and Steve Forey was summoned to face a discipli-

inary hearing.

All branch members understand that the charges are totally trumped up. The guiding hand of the national British Rail Board and the government can be clearly seen pushing the local management.

Stand firm!

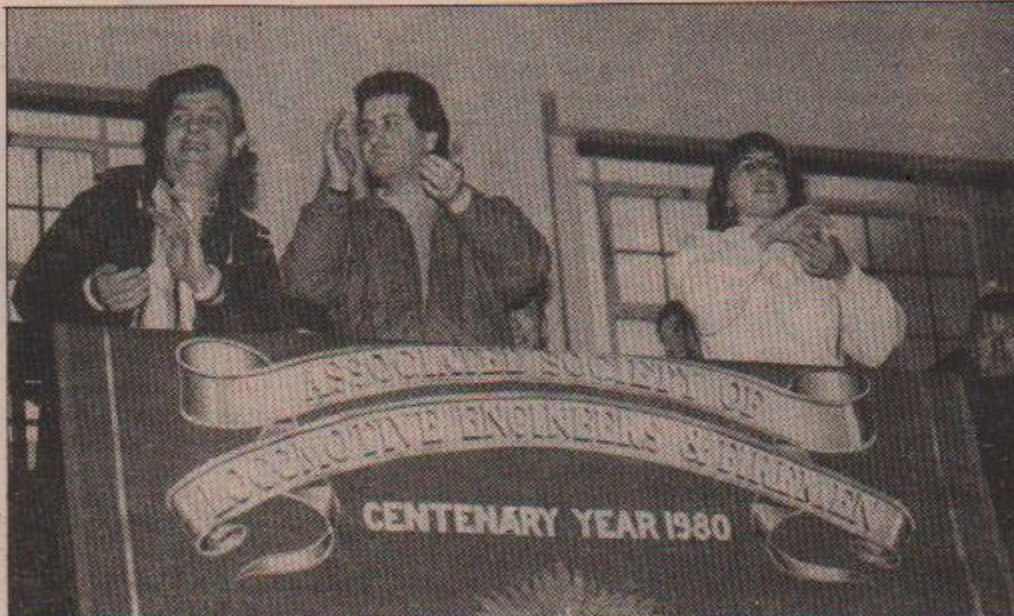
The Tories have been encouraged by the attitude of the Aslef leaders telling the branch not to strike. The worst thing to do in the face of such intimidation is to back down. This only demoralises and confuses the workforce, while giving heart to the Tories.

The Aslef leaders must now stand firm. The NUR and Aslef leaderships must lead an immediate fightback. If Steve Forey is sacked,

there is only one possible response. The call must go out straight away for an all out strike, with every station, depot and workshop setting up strike committees.

Rail workers must then turn to other workers calling for solidarity. Health workers will respond, so will other workers everywhere. The rail union leaders must demand immediately that the TUC calls a one day general strike. Should they again refuse, Aslef and the NUR themselves must name a day for mass solidarity action.

If railworkers give a clear determined lead, Steve Forey's job will be saved and we will see the beginning of the end for the Tories' anti-union laws.



Steve Forey (centre) at the NHS meeting in Euston on 14 March. Photo: Militant.

ASLEF MEMBERS are convinced that there have long been plans to victimise Steve Forey, who has a national reputation as a leading class fighter, and the Kings Cross branch, one of the

most militant in Aslef.

Their suspicions have grown further after a professional looking break-in at the local union office last week. There were hundreds of pounds worth of equip-

ment which could have been stolen, but these had been left untouched. But the drawer in Steve Forey's desk had been clearly rifled through and his papers tampered with.

SACKED Call national ferry strike

THE MASS meeting of 2000 members of the National Union of Seamen (NUS) at Dover on 16 March was unanimous. Their strike goes on, despite the threat by P&O European Ferries to sack 2,300 workers.

More than that, the meeting called for a national stoppage. The national ports ferry committee on 17 March must make the call clearly for an immediate nationwide strike by all ferry workers and a ballot for action by deep sea shipping crews.

The seafarers have been on strike for five weeks. As the interview below shows, the main concern of the strikers has been safety.

P&O, who took over Townsend Thoresen, the owners of the Herald of Free Enterprise, have ignored public fears of lowered safety standards only a year after the Zeebrugge disaster. They want to cut staffing and increase the

pressure on their employees.

That would be cause enough in itself for other workers to back the Dover strikers. Now the attack on the union members and the threat to try to employ non-union crews make an escalation the only course open to workers.

The NUS leadership must give a lead to its members. When the Isle of Man ferry workers were sacked, the union leaders made defiant noises about national action then retreated as soon as P&O and Sealink bosses started using Tory laws. This time, they have so far opposed a national strike.

The weakness at the top of the union can only confuse workers, but Dover NUS members are convinced of the need to step up the action.

Many Dover strikers have been travelling the country to publicise their case; it is their action which produced the 17 March meeting. There must now be mass meetings

at all ferry ports to explain the need for all-out strike.

Workers are being sent to Belgium and France to build support. The French union confederation CGT have called out SNCF boats on 18 March.

The officers' union Numast's negotiating committee have agreed to accept the company's conditions but the NUS are to ask Numast members at Rotterdam not to cross picket lines. The TUC are calling for Numast to ballot its members to refuse to work alongside non-union members.

The company are trying to impose a scab's charter on seafarers which would threaten jobs, wages, conditions and union rights. This is not just an 'ordinary' industrial dispute; it is part of Thatcher's civil war on the working class. It must be fought by national action and solidarity.

By Eric Segal



Photo: Mark Salmon.

NUT-a question of leadership

TEACHERS AND other trade unionists want to fight Tory cuts in education spending. The demonstration in Leicester (above) shows the growing feeling at local level.

They want to fight the abolition of the Inner London Education Authority and Tory threats of privatisation. Unfortunately, the leaders of the National Union of Teachers have been trying to discipline the leaders of the London teachers, ILTA-for organising pay strikes!

But the union's national disciplinary committee told union of-

ficials that they would not recommend expulsion or suspension of the activists. This so angered national officials that they appealed to the courts—at an estimated cost of £100,000.

They lost! The courts judged that the national officials had no power to appeal against its disciplinary committee decision. One of the leading activists will be able to take back his seat on the national executive and NUT members hope the union can now concentrate its time, energy and resources on seeing off the Tory attacks.

"Safety is our main worry"

BEFORE THE sacking threat, Paul Shearwell from Deal seamen's support group spoke to Jimmy and Ruby Haddow.

"The plans which P&O are trying to impose would increase the hours we work. On the Zeebrugge and Boulogne services, the current three crews working agreement would be reduced to two crews.

"Crew members would have to spend a minimum of 72 hours aboard ship—three 24 hour duties, up to a maximum of 168 hours on ship seven 24 hour duties, each 24 hour period, eight hours pay would be deducted. Our members would have to work a considerable number of hours more for less pay.

"We would become captive on board ship. Crew members will only be allowed six hours rest break during each 24 hour period.

And while they're off duty on board ship, they will also be subject to be recalled for work should it be deemed necessary.

"We could also be detained on board after the end of our shift if any of the relief crew do not report. In some cases, instead of being on a seven day working week, this could mean a 14 day or even a three week shift before being relieved.

"Members on the Zeebrugge and Boulogne services will also lose about £33 per week. On the Calais service, our members will still be expected to work a 13 hour 30 minutes day—three return trips. They will lose £45 per week. When on leave our members will be liable to be recalled on duty should any ships be short handed.

"We are not after more money or more time off or even any more crew. We want the present

agreements and present safety levels kept. Safety is the priority. The P&O proposals affect not just the seamen but the stewardesses and even the officers.

"The ship will become like a prison. There will be more divorces as a result of changing the hours. I am divorced myself and the reason my ex-wife gave was that she couldn't take the present hours. My solicitor told me that 95 per cent of his business was from ferry crews.

"Our health and safety, and that of the passengers, is being put in jeopardy. P&O are trying to maximise their profits before the Channel Tunnel is built.

"We need money to keep the fight going. We are not prepared to break the dispute."

Donations should be sent to Magnus House, Mill Hill, Deal, Kent.

Leicester

SINCE THE dismissal of the director of housing and his deputy in Leicester for alleged incompetence, Nalگو members have boycotted correspondence with the councillors. Workers were worried that the sackings were the start of 'rationalisation', in other words Tory cuts.

A member was victimised for carrying out this policy and suspend-

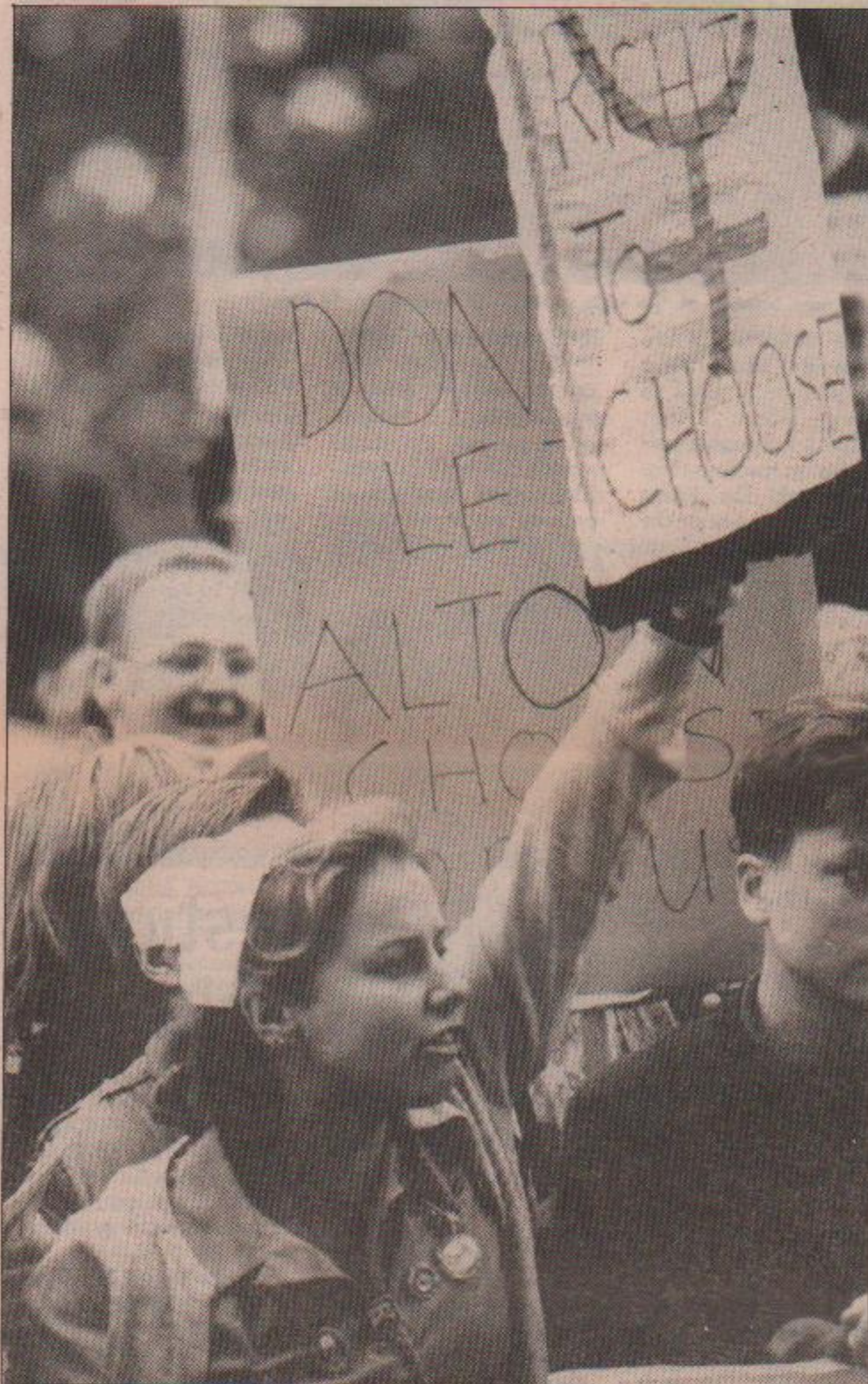
ed without pay from 9 March at 5pm. Nalگو members walked out on all out strike, which produced a climbdown by management on 14 March. This means reinstatement for the victimised worker. None of the strikers will now lose any pay for the three days out and the council agreed to further negotiations on their proposals.

Militant

Fight the Alton Bill
 FAB/TUC Demonstration
11.30am Saturday 19 March
Embankment, London
 Copies of Militant, stickers, etc from 10.30 at
 Cleopatra's needle

Defeat Alton's

Bill



On the lobby of Parliament against the Alton Bill last October.

Photo: Dave Sinclair

THOUSANDS OF angry women on 19 March will demonstrate against the Alton Bill to limit the right to have an abortion to 18 weeks.

Women know that this reactionary Bill, which attacks the right of women to control their own lives, would be a backward step. It could push many back to the dangers of back-street abortions, to the lonely horrors of self-inducement and even into the courts and prison.

All MPs, particularly those Labour members who voted for the Bill or abstained last time, should be reminded that lowering the legal limit for abortions will not stop desperate women from seeking them.

It simply means they will have to resort to illegal measures which will endanger their lives and well-being.

No concessions should be made to the idea of a compromise of 24 weeks. This would only encourage Alton and his supporters to go for legislation to reduce the time limit further until the 1967 Act is meaningless.

Alton and his supporters are entitled to live their own lives according to their own beliefs, but they are not entitled to force those beliefs on to other people.

Many women do not even have the right to avoid pregnancy through safe and reliable contraception because of the closure of family planning clinics and the stranglehold of the big companies on the drugs industry where safety and reliability take second place to profit-making.

The decision to opt for an abortion is often agonising and never taken lightly. Having taken their decision, women have to clear many hurdles. The main one is having to get



the agreement of two doctors, which often delays the abortion while women seek sympathetic doctors.

However it is the present shortage of beds, staff and theatre sessions which causes the greatest delays. The outcome of the fight to preserve and extend the NHS is crucial to the availability of free, safe and early abortions.

Alton and his supporters set great store on the preciousness of human life. But they are not prominent in the fight to stop the destruction of maternity rights, which will force many women workers to choose between having children and keeping a job.

Parents of babies who get into difficulty at birth have to compete for places in intensive care cots. Should they be born with problems such as heart defects, babies cannot be

guaranteed health care. Given the general decline in living standards of working-class people, it is little wonder that the infant mortality rate has begun to rise again.

Working-class women do not just want the right to choose a safe abortion and good contraception. We also want the right to choose to keep children and to bring them up in decent conditions so that they can develop all their talents and abilities.

We also want the right as women to be able to continue with our own lives and interests after childbirth. That means a massive expansion of maternity and paternity rights and child-care. And we demand benefits which cover the real cost of bringing up children, instead of the pittance paid put now.

19 March must be the start of a new phase in the battle against Alton.

The arguments against it must be taken into every workplace, union branch and on to the estates, particularly to the young, to counter his reactionary ideas and ensure that his Bill is so resoundingly defeated that his supporters are deterred from making further attacks.

By Maureen Hearn

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Give us a day's pay

WE HAVE had a brilliant start to our campaign to raise £50,000 by 1 May.

Betty Coates from Australia, after reading the Liverpool book, says: "The depth of the establishment and media venom took my breath away... I enclose £100 to your Militant Fighting Fund to balance up the venom".

A Swansea pensioner bought a copy of the book for £100 and a Dagenham Ford worker donated £100!

We are asking every reader for at least a day's pay and to ask their workmates, fellow Labour Party and union members for the same. Roy Wembourne, NCU Newham, sent us £50. Cath Thomas, Apex shop steward, Caerphilly, gave £20. £316 was collected at the

Yorkshire Labour Party conference and £32.70 at Nols conference.

Our demand for a one-day general strike to defend the NHS has had a great response on the picket lines and demos. Six supporters from Bermondsey on the NHS and Ilea demos raised £100 selling the Militant 'One-day General Strike' stickers.

Southampton supporters raised £56 on the 5 March TUC demo selling stickers. In Stevenage on the Cohse day of action, one supporter raised £20.19 from extras on the sale of Militant and stickers. A new Llanelli supporter on her first-ever activity sold eight Militants and raised £9.03. What can YOU achieve?

Thanks to all our contributors, including Brian Smith from Stret-

Target May 1 £50,000 Raised this week £2,209

Fighting Fund

Area	Received	% of target achieved	Target
1 Northern	409		3770
2 London	294		7060
3 Yorkshire	400		5960
4 East Midlands	140		2530
5 Southern	116		2020
6 Merseyside	156		5000
7 South East	60		1570
8 Manchester/Lancs	69		2890
9 Wales	79		3510
10 West Midlands	51		3360
11 Scotland East	15		2150
12 South West	4		1270
13 Eastern	0		2280
14 Scotland West	0		2520
15 National	103		4000
Total	2,209		50,000

ford, £12.77; Brenda Hilditch, Manchester, £5; J Frew, St. Michael's LP branch, Coventry, £5; and P Storer, Coventry LPYS, £4.

Special thanks to Ben, Jago and John, aged seven from Hackney, who raised £3 selling stickers on 5 March.