

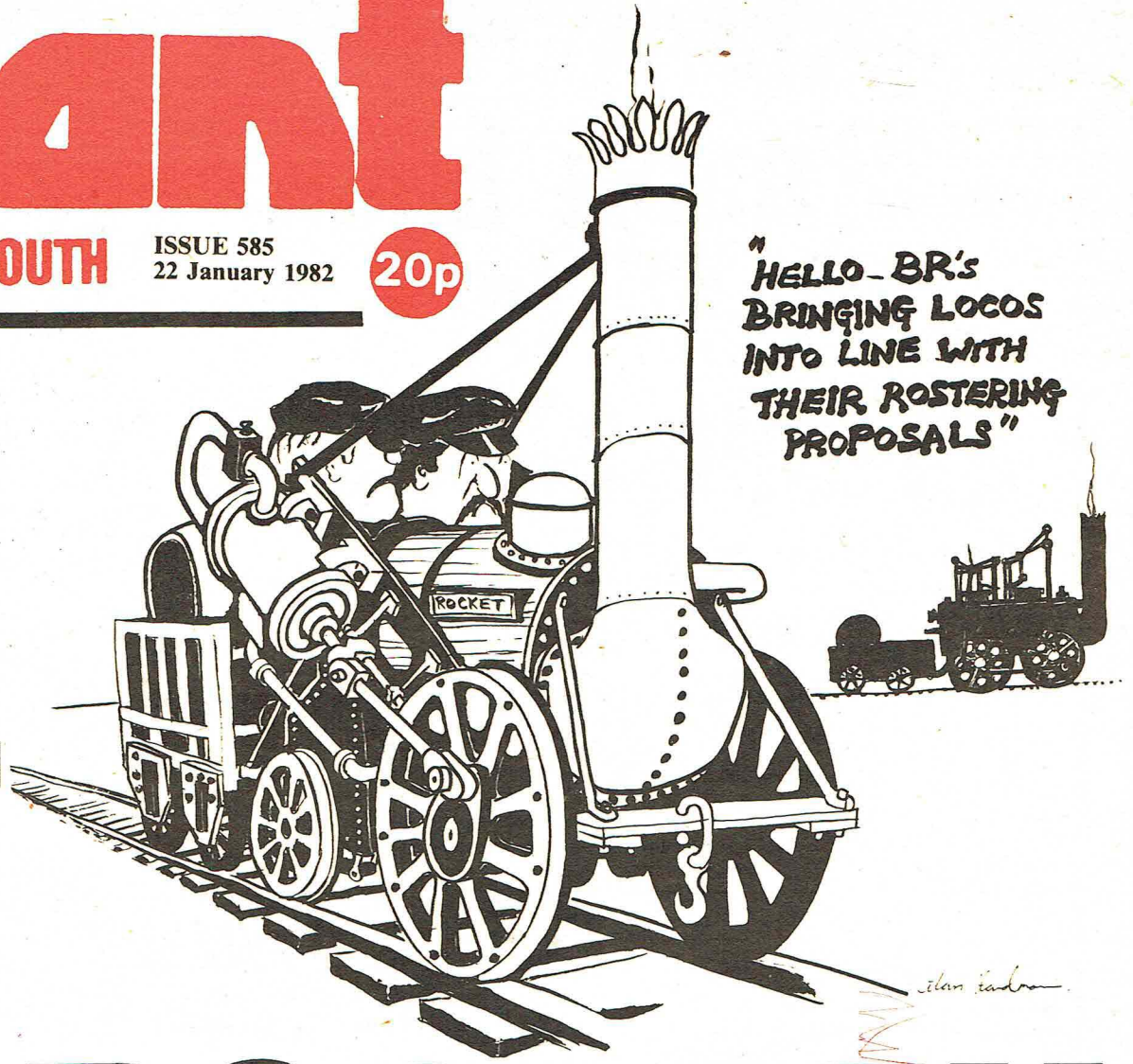
Militant

THE MARXIST PAPER FOR LABOUR & YOUTH

ISSUE 585
22 January 1982

20p

THE GREAT TRAIN ROBBERY



Back drivers defence of jobs and conditions

I've never known quite such a strong feeling about any issue as this one, even in disputes about base rates of pay.

I've never seen the amount of militancy and determination. You get some disagreements amongst the men as to what is 'reasonable'. But this one is different.

I don't think Ray Buckton would dare sign anything even vaguely along the lines of the management proposals.

The issue, as most of us see it, is a clear-cut one. We are frequently called to work through the night, to start at 2 or 3 o'clock in the morning. And the men are just not prepared to get out of bed at these times and actually go to work for less than 8 hour's pay.

The idea that they are putting about that you can accrue leisure time—three or four days together—well that's fine.

But what they haven't pointed out is that to get this accumulated leisure you would have to work 15 consecutive days, so that you can have 3 days off. And these

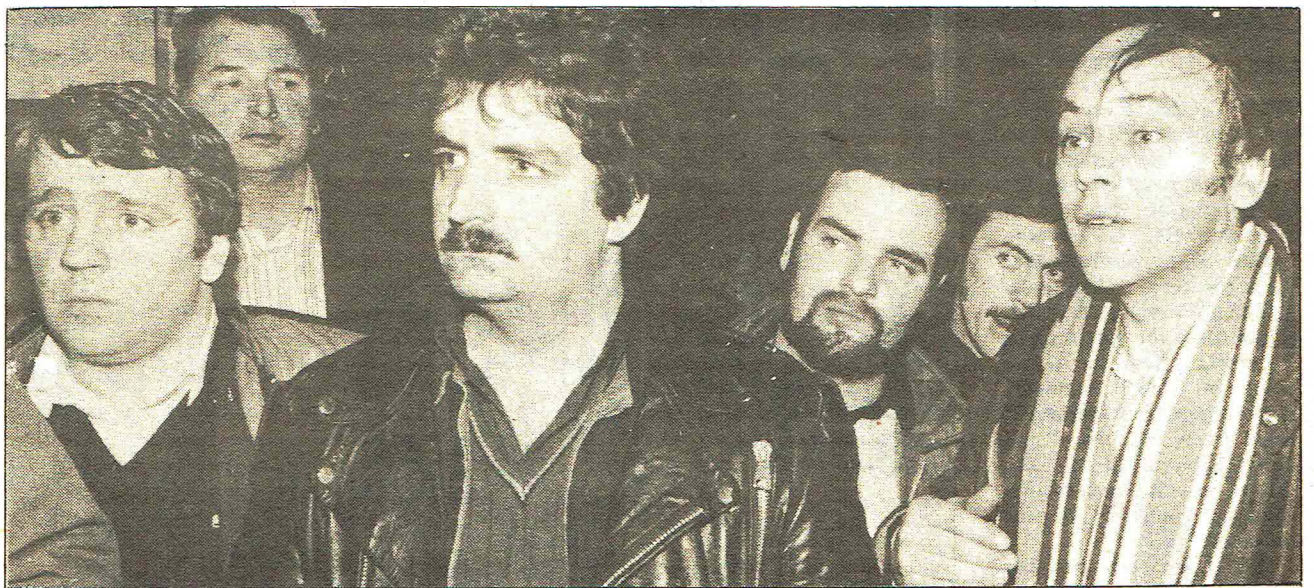
An ASLEF driver at Gateshead who has worked on the railways since 1948 spoke to 'Militant'

15 consecutive days can be at the most unsocial hours—3 o'clock in the morning, for instance.

The demand of British Rail is for more flexible rostering. This week my normal starting time is 8 am. I can be called upon two hours either side on a day-to-day basis. So it can be 6am. on the Monday, 10am. on the Tuesday and back to 6am. on the Wednesday.

I'll not know from one day to the next what my

continued on back page



Angry locomen from Scotland lobby ASLEF leaders during negotiations at BR's Rail House, Monday 11 January

Photo: Denis Doran

THE HAZARDS OF YOPS

The Tories are boosting the 'Youth Opportunities schemes' to try to conceal the real youth unemployment figures. One alarming aspect is that they will expose thousands more young people to serious accidents and death.

Last year, there were at least five deaths, and well over 3,000 accidents, 23 of them resulting in amputations. The injury rate on YOPs is 3.25%, compared to 1.29% for all full-time workers (bad enough in itself).

The stories from YOPs schemes are horrifying. The case of one YOPster was publicised in the media. He had both his feet severed while cleaning out a machine. Only one of them was successfully sewn back on.

girl slipped on a dangerous floor into a hot toffee machine. One of her hands was seriously injured, and she will be disfigured for life.

With a five-fold expansion in YOPs places this year, the accident rate could rise to over 16,000 injuries. This can only be prevented by YOPsters being organised in a union and fighting for safe working conditions, as well as decent pay, hours, and holidays.

The YOPs Trade Union Rights Campaign has made great strides forward. On Saturday 23rd January YOPsters Activists' Conference will be meeting in Manchester Town Hall, and on 25 February, there will be a national rally and lobby of parliament (details on page 4).

RETURN OF THE JOBLESS WONDER

Dear Militant,

I am sure readers were at their wits end last Tuesday evening when they heard

about the disappearance of Mark Thatcher.

I wonder how many of them realised that on the News at Ten we saw a long probe into the train drivers' dispute—concentrating on the fact that now and again they have an hour or even more not actually working.

Then we were treated to a look at Thatcher's unsuccessful racing escapades all over the world, only to hear him pronounce that 'It's only a hobby.'

Perhaps the Prime Ministers' son is able to spend so much time on his hobby because he works a flexible shift system? By the way, it's escaped me for the moment but what does he do for a living. Will someone please tell me?

Yours fraternally
T Hopper, Brighton

More letters,
page 12

Militant

NUR must back ASLEF in all-out strike

The ASLEF Loco men must get the full backing of the whole labour movement.

ASLEF's fight is not over a narrow, 'craft' issue, as the BR Board, the Tories, and the bosses' press are trying to make out. The 8-hour day, won in 1919, is a vital gain. Let it go and the way would be open for the BR Board to cut railwaymen's living standards and chop further jobs.

If BR's current 'productivity' schemes are implemented, 1 in 5 or about 4,000 loco men would lose their jobs.

If ASLEF were to be defeated, all railwaymen would then face similar attacks.

The BR Board—undoubtedly with complete backing from Thatcher behind the scenes—is out to smash ASLEF. BR's deci-

sion to pay a 3% increase to NUR members, but not to the loco men, is a blatant attempt to isolate ASLEF.

Last Summer, BRB managed to head off a rail strike by agreeing to an 11% pay increase, with 3% of that being held over to January 1982. There were separate 'Understandings' signed with the three rail unions on Pay and on Productivity, and they were not dependent on each other.

BR's bosses, however, evidently calculated that the NUR leadership would accept flexible rostering and other productivity measures, thus allowing BRB to go ahead with its job-cutting plans. The stumbling block for Parker and the Tories is the ASLEF leadership who refused to accept the productivity proposals, which they had only agreed they would discuss, not accept.

But BR's attempt to batter the ASLEF leadership into acceptance has come unstuck.

Ray Buckton's refusal to accept the undermining of the 8-hour day accurately reflects the determined mood of the ASLEF Executive—which in turn reflects the angry, determined mood of ASLEF members.

Selective action has had total support of ASLEF members

The selective strike action so far has demonstrated total, solid support amongst ASLEF loco men. In some stations, like Southern Region's London Bridge, moreover, there have been walk-outs by NUR

members in support of the ASLEF action. Thousands of guard's jobs would also be slashed through flexible rostering.

ASLEF's selective action has already had a big effect. Although according to official figures only 15% of freight now goes by rail, this includes strategically vital materials like steel, fuel, and important bulky industrial supplies which can't be easily diverted. The stopping of commuter services also hits thousands of employers very hard.

But now the action should be stepped up: ASLEF should call an all-out national strike.

This should be done on the basis of the maximum involvement of the membership. The mass meetings which have already been held should be continued. Picketing should also be organised to increase the effectiveness of the action.

Although this may not be necessary to stop trains running, it would provide a focal point both for the loco men, other railway workers, and for trade unionists generally.

It would also provide the basis for flying pickets to prevent the diversion of freight to other means of transport.

The ASLEF leadership should now ask the TUC and other key unions, such as the NUM, the ISTC, the UCW (post office workers) and the T&GWU (who

organise most lorry drivers) for official backing. This should also be backed up by ASLEF members locally approaching these trade unions, especially the shop-stewards' committees.

Of crucial importance to the success of the strike will be the attitude of the NUR leadership.

The majority of NUR members do not feel that they should stand aside and let ASLEF fight alone. They understand that a defeat for ASLEF would expose NUR members to further savage cuts and job losses.

They cannot accept the argument of the BR Board, that jobs can be saved through 'productivity' deals which rest on cutting more and more jobs. This is the way to destroy the industry.

BR's divide and rule tactics threaten all railway workers

Only massive new investment can bring genuine improvements in productivity, with better services for the public and improved pay and conditions for railway workers.

The argument that investment can take place only on the basis of further 'sacrifices' by the

workers—an argument that some right-wing trade union leaders seem to accept—must be totally rejected.

The BR bosses and the Tories are making another big mistake if they think that they will always be able to negotiate with a NUR leadership which accepts the logic of their arguments and is willing to bargain away railwaymen's jobs and conditions.

There is a process of change taking place within the NUR. Members are increasingly questioning the past role of Sidney Weighell and the old right-wing leadership. The spontaneous walk-outs in several areas in support of ASLEF's action shows that more and more NUR members feel that they should be fighting shoulder to shoulder with their fellow railwaymen against attacks which will devastate the whole industry.

The NUR leadership should therefore call all-out strike action in support of ASLEF. Joint policies on pay, hours, conditions, and the overall planning of the railways should be worked out, as the basis for a common fight.

Action by the NUR would immediately put an end to the BRB's divide-and-rule tactics, which are aimed not just at ASLEF but ultimately at the strength of the trade unions in the railway industry.

POISON PRESS

The Tories' Fleet Street propaganda machine has now turned all its venom on the striking rail drivers.

Ignoring the fact that it was the BR bosses, who broke an agreement, they have the nerve to blame the railmen for going on strike, "just when the country was recovering from the severe winter weather." Suddenly developing a concern about road safety, the "Sun" [12 January] proclaimed "the price of Mr Buckton's stoppage could well be paid in blood".

Yet it has been the Tory press who have supported Thatcher's cuts in transport, health and public services, which have turned the problems caused by the severe weather into a disaster. It is the Tory cuts which have been "paid for in blood".

If Fleet Street was so concerned about workers' safety why didn't they urge them to stay at home? But the "Sun", having warned that the "roads are a sea of ice, accidents are likely to take a frightening toll", next day urged drivers to offer lifts to work.

Singled out for vilification has been Ray Buckton, ASLEF's General Secretary.

But what else can be expected from the media when they are the property of millionaires and big multinational firms?

Last year the Trafalgar House group, which owns the Express papers, donated £50,000 to the Tory Party. As long as the press is in the hands of big business, workers in struggle can expect no sympathy from Fleet Street, let alone fair, accurate and balanced reporting.

Photo: Denis Doran



An ASLEF driver locks up and nothing moves. Kings Cross Station, London (17 January)

Distortion of the facts and hostile attacks from the bosses' press are nothing new for railwaymen.

A Gateshead driver who has worked on the railways since 1948 (whose article appears on our front page) recalls:

"There was a strike in 1955 when ASLEF was in-

involved in a 17-day dispute. The secretary then was Jim Batie and the press really went for that man. They didn't even confine it to him: they also went for his wife and daughter.

"I can vividly remember a national daily had an article which not only abused Jim Batie, but his wife who apparently supported him. You cannot get a greater crime than that.

"Jim Batie died within a very short time of the 1955 strike. Many of us know that the attitude of the press contributed to his illness.

"We are now well aware of the attitude of the press, we don't even expect an even break. Disputes outside of our industry are probably getting the same sort of distortion and abuse as they give us.

"Possibly, the working class is becoming aware that you can't just read the press and complain about the unfair deal that you've been given by them. You've also got to think that when other disputes are being reported that the same lies are being told."

HYPOTHERMIA

REAL EXTENT CONCEALED

The Norwich coroner recorded verdicts of hypothermia on four old people last week. One had a body temperature of only 18 degrees centigrade, a full 19° below normal.

These tragedies are only the tip of the iceberg. According to Dr Geoffrey Taylor, an expert on hypothermia, up to 850,000 old people are now at risk from death through cold. In normal winter, 48,000 more people over the age of 65 die than during summer. There is also a rise of 40% in the deaths of babies under the age of twelve months.

The Tory government refuses to recognise that the rise in deaths comes through hypothermia. In 1980 only 596 deaths were put down as being from extreme cold. Experts estimate the real figure as being a hundred times more.

Nothing could bring home more savagely the way working people are thrown onto the scrapheap when their working lives they pass the retirement age. Instead of being able to enjoy their lives, they are forced to live in misery.

Pensioners needs do no suddenly disappear. They need as much to live on as other people, and should get the equivalent of a workers' living wage, a minimum of £90 at the present time.

Heart attacks increased

within days of the temperature falling below 10°C and within a week the number of deaths through pneumonia rises. Surveys have shown that 55% of old people have living rooms below 60.8°F, the minimum recommended for workplaces. Yet they cannot afford to heat it more.

It is the poorer sections of society who suffer most. A review by the fuel industries found that 90% of those who had their heating cut off because they could not afford the payments were living in real hardship and 60% were receiving state benefits. The £1.65 a week heating allowance gives less than a day's heating.

In the first nine months of last year 112,071 homes were cut off for non-payment of fuel bills.

All this government did last week was to delay further cut-offs by seven days and promise to subsidise some fuel bills. This will be of little use to the majority of those under threat from the cold.

One week's respite is not enough, and to qualify for extra fuel subsidy you have to produce your 1980 quarterly account to prove that you have no savings.

The price of Tory social service cutbacks, the absence of a decent pension and proper welfare benefits is being paid for now in the lives of the very young and old.

By Jim Christie

ACT NOW TO SAVE LONDON TRANSPORT

Last week's decision by the Greater London Council to raise the fares marks a serious set-back to a campaign to save the 'Fares Fair' scheme.

By Bob Labi

(Greater London Labour Party Executive)

Instead of defying the House of Lords ruling they have instituted a 100% fare increase, a 4% reduction in manning and up to 25% cuts in London Transport services.

A defiant GLC against the fare increase, while not itself preventing the London Transport Executive from trying to implement the increase, would have provided a clear challenge to the Tory government and a firm lead to the labour movement. However, a minority of Labour councillors voted against their Election Manifesto, against the 26 to 7 vote of the Party Regional Executive, and against the decision of the Labour Group—in favour of fare increases and service cuts.

This minority of 21 outvoted the other 24 Labour councillors present with the aid of the Social Democratic, Liberal and three Tory councillors. Most Tories abstained in a desperate attempt to keep their hands clean, but enough voted to ensure that the fares went up.

The "Financial Times" reported that Harvey Hinds, the Labour Chief Whip and one of those voting for the increase, told one Tory that he did not need to vote as there were "enough Tories in the lobby to ensure victory".

Now the key issue is how the wider labour movement responds to this attack on public transport. The deci-



Long queues will get even longer if London Transport is allowed to increase fares and cut services and jobs

sion of ASLEF to call for a protest strike against this attack marks a clear step forward. The other unions representing LT workers must now join with ASLEF in calling a strike as the beginning of the next stage in the fight-back.

Such a stoppage should not merely be seen as a symbolic gesture of opposition. It has to be linked with a campaign of mass leafletting and public meetings to

explain why and how public transport can be safeguarded and developed. Such a campaign, extending into both workplaces and residential areas, would find an enormous response.

Coupled to a threat of further and wider industrial action it could force the Tory government to back down and amend the 1969 Transport Act to allow cheap fares policies and to increase the transport

grants to councils so that rates do not bear the burden of supporting transport.

Unfortunately, the section of a resolution moved by "Militant" supporters at the last meeting of the Greater London Labour Party Executive—supporting such a policy of confrontation and the idea of a one-day LT strike as the beginning of the campaign—was rejected by 19 to 12 votes after AUEW-

TASS and TGWU objections.

The mounting anger against this attack on London Transport, however, could still force the London labour movement leadership to embark on a serious struggle.

Unless a vigorous campaign against these proposals is mounted quickly it will become too late to defeat them. The implementation of the fare in-

crease and service cuts will make a deep cut in Londoners' living standards, and further undermine confidence in Labour's ability to carry out its policies. This will be only seven weeks before the local elections.

Only a determined fight by the labour movement can hope to prevent these cuts and pin the responsibility for them clearly on the Tories and their Judges.

AUSTIN MITCHELL WRITES OFF WORKING CLASS

Labour's renegades—if they are still reading Labour Weekly — must be delighted at Austin Mitchell's regular articles, which should really be headed "Fifth Column!"

His propaganda would warm the cockles of any SDP heart.

This week he denounces the Bishop's Stortford agreement, because "truce is impossible". He refers to "our common aim", but is clearly opposed to any kind of unity based on policies adopted by Party Conference and on the recent reforms in Party democracy.

"It would be nice," he says, "to keep re-selection as it is provided we don't mind more recruits to the SDP." In his view, the selection process should be much more controlled "from the centre" (by a right-wing dominated PLP and, he hopes, a Right dominated National Ex-

ecutive).

"It would be even nicer," he goes on, "to allow constituency parties the untrammelled right to select. Yet if a small minority insist on choosing people as acts of ideological defiance rather than to actually win seats we finish up with a clutch of kamikaze candidates alongside whom some of us are not prepared to fight." So, presumably, unless re-selection is reversed... Austin will be leaving the Party?

Warming the cockles of SDP hearts

Mitchell then outlines his own view of Labour's history. Agitation, campaigning, democracy was all right in the past—but should now be subordinated to the priorities and predilections of established MPs. An exaggerated caricature of his views?

Well, he says treating the Party "as a perfect democracy and a school for

socialism" has "made it less useful in its main job." Its main job? "Our objective is power in Parliament and the Councils and agitation doesn't help."

Agitation "took the people into Parliament long ago," says Mitchell: "Now they are there they can only achieve useful reforms by using that power. Extra-parliamentary campaigning might win on small issues, a pedestrian crossing here, a nursery closure there. On



Austin Mitchell, Labour MP for Grimsby, writes regularly for "Labour Weekly" putting the views of the extreme Right of the Parliamentary Labour Party.

big ones it frightens, alarms, and alienates."

The problem is—for Mitchell—that the Party is dominated by activists. By frightening the right-wing into the SDP they have relegated the Labour Party to "sect status". There is "a deeper gap than ever" between the activists and the electorate.

Mitchell has apparently forgotten that it was the right-wing policies of previous Labour governments which led the party to defeat, not left-wing policies or party activists. The Social Democrats he is so keen to appease are cashing in on disillusionment...with their own former policies!

Activists were the key to building the labour movement, as even Mitchell concedes. They will also be the key to returning a future Labour government with socialist policies. It is the more politically aware and active workers that can bring out millions of other workers to ensure a Labour victory—without the activists Labour doesn't stand a chance of winning an overwhelming majority.

The truth is, Mitchell has no confidence in the working class at all. The electorate, for him, are like a mass of passive consumers whose support has to be wooed by clever publicity, political advertising, and election gimmickry.

By
Lynn
Walsh

Nor, despite his talk about "winning power for socialism", does he give the impression that he really believes in socialism. His rejection of agitation, his distrust in "perfect democracy", and his desire to woo the SDP leaves little doubt that he inclines to the view that Labour should merely attempt to manage the "mixed economy"—to make the best of capitalism on behalf of the (working class) electorate.

The harsh experience of unemployment and lower living standards, however, has already taught millions

of workers that capitalism can no longer deliver the goods. On this point, Mitchell remains a parliamentary dunce.

Nevertheless, he manages,—in spite of himself, to pay a compliment to the Marxists. "Those who hope to win by radicalising the working class don't realise how much times have changed. Mass socialist feeling is as dead as Trotsky."

Yes, times have changed. The divine right of Labour MPs to hold onto their seats for ever is being challenged. Socialist feeling is reviving within the trade unions and the Labour Party. Economic crisis is radicalising the more active, politically conscious workers, and tomorrow will radicalise millions more.

That's why—in spite of Trotsky's assassination—Marxism is far from dead. After all, it's the rapid growth of support for Marxist ideas that Mitchell—and his SDP friends—are complaining about so bitterly. Otherwise, why should they worry about the ghost of Trotsky and "mass socialist feeling"?

YOPPS FIGHT CHEAP LABOUR

A 33% pay cut! That's the Tories' 'offer' to school leavers.

The miserable YOP allowance of £25 a week is to be reduced to £15 in the government's new training package for 1982/83.

And the Tories have made it an 'offer you can't refuse', as school leavers who don't take places on the training schemes will be barred from claiming social security.

This turning back of the clock to the 1930s has already provoked a massive tide of anger among YOPs and trade unionists. The reply of YOPs to the Tories' proposals must be to 'Get Organised', join a trade union and link up in the fight against the Tories alongside the trade union movement.

Already a magnificent beginning has been made. Since the launching of the YOP Trainees Union Rights Campaign last September,

By Kevin Ramage

(LPYS National Chairman)

thousands of YOPs have joined unions in every main town and city.

Shop stewards committees have been established in Glasgow and Liverpool. This marks the beginning in the building of a national movement of YOP workers.

The next step in the campaign is the mass rally and lobby of Parliament on 25 February. Speakers already arranged include Tony Benn, Dennis Skinner MP, and Rodney Bickerstaffe (General Secretary elect, NUPE).

Backing for the lobby has already come in from Liverpool District TGWU who are urging the TGWU nationally to give the lobby its backing. Olwyn Davies (Vice President NUPE) is also sponsoring the cam-

paign.

Paul Benierthon, Organiser of Region No 1 (London and South East) TGWU has given his backing, and will be arranging for 5,000 leaflets to be produced for the lobby. The regional TGWU banner will also be there.

On 25 February the streets of Westminster and the Royal Festival Hall (it holds 2,700) will be ringing with the demands of the YTURC:

- ★ No pay cuts! No to cheap labour!
- ★ Proper training at trade union rates of pay!
- ★ Five weeks' holiday!
- ★ Proper safety conditions and clothing!

100,000 leaflets and 5,000 posters have been produced advertising the lobby, along with trade union letters.

These must be distributed to every YOP worker. All trade unionists involved in organising YOPs, and those who want to see YOPs get a better deal, should come along too.

The Labour Party Young Socialists National Committee (who initiated the YTURC) are calling on every LPYS member who



Training? What training? YOPs worker in Wallsend

Photo: MILITANT

can to attend the lobby, and the Youth Sub Committee of the Labour Party NEC has given its full backing to the lobby, a decision which will now go to the full NEC.

Want to come on the lob-

by? Start arranging transport now!

Get your mates to come along to. Commit your union branch to supporting the lobby and sponsoring YOPs to attend.

If you want further information/literature write to YTURC, c/o LPYS, 150 Walworth Road, London SE17.

Leaflets are £5 per 1,000, posters £1 for 20.

The poverty allowance ...

During 1981, no fewer than 6,000 jobs disappeared in the Paisley area. 5,000 vanished with the closure of Talbot Linwood.

A further 1,000 workers at Cortes thread mills were flung on the dole. Despite heroic resistance by workers at India Tyres, other smaller factories facing closure meant that the total figure for job losses in the area was probably over 7,000.

The prospect of young people finding work in Paisley is practically nil. Looking through the local newspaper recently there were exactly seven vacancies advertised by all the job centres in the area, which included three for Paisley, a town with a population of 90,000, one for Barrhead (population 18,000) and two for Renfrew (population 20,000). Needless to say none of these vacancies was suitable for young people.

The dole queues and the Youth Opportunities Programme schemes are "booming" of course. There are now four MSC training workshops in the area "employing" 450 young people and rapidly expanding which is excellent from the bosses' point of view.

At Maxhelton Training Workshop 200 young peo-

By Joanne Coyle
(Paisley and District TGWU youth section)

ple make a wide range of articles, such as teddy bears dolls, puppets, anoraks, clothes, wardrobes, fire places, cabinets, chairs, couches, cushions, dog kennels, greenhouses and even park benches for the council.

The bosses must be rubbing their hands with glee. Sell the goods at the usual retail price, but only pay out one third of the normal cost of production, i.e. YOPS "wage" of £23.50 and they're made.

At another YOP workshop young people provide everything for the regional council. From making iron gates and railings, uniforms and clothes etc. to decorating OAP flats, again all at a third of the price.

But who pays the poverty allowance?—the government, or more precisely, the tax payers. The bosses in fact get the "services" of young people for free, and fat profits.

In all these schemes YOP workers have been told that if they are good boys and girls, and don't join a trade union or cause any "trouble" the bosses in the area might employ one or two of them.

The YOPers have said "stuff it!" (or words to that

effect). "We have absolutely nothing to lose but a hell of a lot to gain if we join a union."

The real anger came out in the one day strike when the Jobs Express arrived in Glasgow. Then all 450 YOP workers in the Paisley area walked out. And on the picket of the MSC offices, 600 YOP workers took a banner from some Labour Party Young Socialists members and marched down to the STUC centre shouting "You can stick your £23.50 up your!"

(Many YOPers joined the LPYS that day).

Young people now are thoroughly fed up with being used as a constant source of free labour just to keep unemployment figures down. YOP workers themselves told us in no uncertain terms what they would like to see for YOP schemes.

First of all, a substantial increase in the allowance—not £28 or £30, but trade union rates of pay. Secondly, trade union rights for YOP workers (rights all

"normal" workers are entitled to) and also, real and proper training linked to a guaranteed permanent job.

On this basis YOP schemes could be expanded into a scheme of useful public works to build hospitals, nurseries, youth centres, and other much needed facilities for working people and their families.

We won't put up with slavery. We are the future generation of this country and we demand a future—one for all workers.

In short we demand socialism.

And it's only through the organised might of the labour and trade union movement that we can achieve this solution.

When we have taken into our hands the means of production under democratic workers' control and management, then our generation will have a future.

And that is what 'Militant' and the LPYS are fighting for.

.... and the low wage trap

By Ann Bennet

Reading 'Militant's' reports on YOP trainees joining a union, and the "workhouse mentality" of some managers instituting Victorian working conditions, brought back bitter memories of my first experience of "work".

I started work in a little sweat shop in the Rhondda in 1958 when I was just 15. Within a month of my starting, the manager asked me to work overtime at weekends. I knew this to be against the law for a person my age, and refused. I was sacked for "insubordination".

I wasn't in a union and the wages were £1.85 for an 8-hour day. Conditions there were Victorian: no canteen, no health or safety requirements and a bad "reference" was damning.

Seven years later, in North Wales, older and wiser, but desperate for a job, I went to work in another little sweat shop for a wage of £20 per week, working with the manager alongside restricting both speech and movements. There were poor facilities for dinner breaks and it was very cold in winter.

The most significant factor on both occasions was the fact that most of the other workers were women and young kids, but perhaps also significant was the fact that for all of that time Wages Councils were in existence.

Wages councils were set up to intervene where sweated labour prevailed and to combat excessive hours, unhealthy conditions, and competitive undercutting of wages by managers. It was the duty under the Wages Council Act of 1959 to ensure that a reasonable wage is maintained, and under the Employment Protection Act of 1975, wages set by Wage

Councils are an entity unto themselves—free from state intervention.

Most of the people that fall into the net of Wage Councils are women and young workers, and for those people the Wage Councils have consistently failed to aid these low paid workers. The Wage Council minimum rate for January 1980 was £52 per week.

Underpayment of this minimum rate is all too frequent and the main victims are young women.

It is imperative that young workers including YOPS people join a union and are made aware of their rights. But of greater importance too, is the demand for a minimum living wage and for the effective reinforcement of that minimum wage by the unions.

We must use every opportunity to bring up the question of low pay, the poverty trap for those on low pay, and the bad working conditions that still prevail.



Support grows for Militant

Waving the photograph of Peter Shore and Shirley Williams marching together in London in the 'Militant' he had bought before the meeting, a local councillor attacked the threats of expulsions and proscriptions.

Another called 'Militant' supporters 'the conscience of the party' as West Bromwich West CLP Executive Committee debated a resolution attacking any idea of a witch-hunt.

The mood of the meeting was totally against what one delegate called 'Stalinist Tactics'. "We've over 3 million on the dole, one of them my 16 year-old son, we need socialist policies not expulsions" said another.

Delegates were reminded of moves against Bevan and Foot in the past and, determined not to have a repeat, the following resolution was passed unanimously.

"This executive is opposed to the expulsion of supporters of the 'Militant' newspaper and to any witch-hunt in the party."

In response to the attacks in the national press against the 'Militant', a 'What we stand for' meeting was organised by 'Militant' supporters in Kirkcaldy, Fife, the first organised in this area.

The Saturday before the meeting leaflets were distributed and 100 'Militants' sold at an NUM rally. The response for the

native posed by the "Militant".

Bob was given great applause and after his speech £140 was raised for the fighting fund. Many contributed from the floor and outlined how they as Militant supporters had built the Labour Party.

Kirkcaldy YS was an example, recently set up it had won young workers to the Labour Party and was publicising the ideas of socialism in the town.

One older man who gave £5 to the fighting fund spoke to Bob and some other comrades after the meeting and told how in the 1950s he had been expelled from the Labour Party in the purge carried out by the right wing. He fully supported the ideas of 'Militant' expressed at the meeting and was heartened to hear that young people and older workers were continuing the fight for socialist ideas in the labour movement despite renewed attack by the right wing.

meeting was excellent, over 60 people attended and hear Bob Wylie from the "Militant" editorial board and Ewan Duncan a shop steward from the Robb Caledon occupation in Dundee.

Ewan Duncan outlined the struggle in the shipyard. Bob Wylie went onto deal with the recent attacks on the "Militant" and how far from "ruining" the Labour Party the Militant and the LPYS were actually helping to build it. Bob took up the press allegations and put forward the socialist alter-



GET THE FACTS!!!

Price 20p from local sellers or from 'Militant', 1 Mentmore Terrace, London E8 3PN (add 10p P&P, 10 more post free)

Fighting for Socialism

STUDENTS

"To propagate the ideas of Marxism and increase the influence of the Militant newspaper." So runs the aims and objects of the Manchester University Militant Supporters' Society.

In the last term it has sought to develop support for Marxism within the Labour Club and Student Union (the biggest in the country) and amongst campus trade unionists.

Eight political discussions with an average attendance of 17, were held ranging from an open forum on "the way forward for Labour" to the inadequacy of import controls as a solution to Britain's economic problems.

At the latter, six members of an unemployed TGWU branch were amongst those present to hear a former senior BL shop steward, Bill Mullins, speak.

International questions

have also featured prominently with discussions on Poland, a socialist solution to the Irish question, and the "Brandt Report or World Socialism?" in relation to the horror without end which is the lot of the masses of the third world.

These meetings have served as a springboard for the taking of socialist ideas into

the Labour Club, student wing of the Labour Party, where Militant supporters have taken the initiative in proposing campaigns to expose the SDP and to ensure a positive result on the ballot for NALGO affiliation to the Labour Party.

By L Kaplan
(Publicity Officer)

LPYS

Wanted—man or women, no experience required, £250 per week."

This was the only vacancy Kevin Ramage, speaking at a Southampton LPYS public meeting could find at his local Job Centre.

The catch is that it was for a knife throwers' assistant in a travelling circus!

Not everybody's suffering though. For £2,000 each year, a private box can be hired for 24 days racing at Ascot. In addition a bottle of champagne can be bought for £16.

This at a time when the Tories say they will pay only £15 per week for a youth on

training.

With these examples Kevin showed that capitalism is a system of pleasure for the rich, but a system of unemployment and poverty for the rest.

We must rid ourselves of the bosses' system and replace it with socialism so that a secure and decent future can be achieved.

For many, this was their first LPYS meeting. Impressed with our ideas they completed YS application forms straight after the meeting.

By John Planken
(Vice chair, Southampton LPYS)



The Glasgow demonstration last year. Sheffield workers don't want to mourn: they want to organise

STRIKE BACK AGAINST TORIES

We've got to use our industrial muscle against Tory policies. That is the feeling of active trade unionists in the Sheffield area.

At a recent meeting of union representatives in Sheffield, initiated by the Confederation of Shipbuilding and Engineering Unions, but also including representatives of local authority unions, a successful call was made for a one day general strike on 25 January.

In the first place this is to be campaigned for in the Sheffield area, but shop stewards hope that the call will be taken up by the labour movement national-

ly as a general action against the Tory government.

Workers in this city, a key centre of the engineering and steel industries, have seen plants and factories steadily dismantled over the past few years.

By Rob Jones

Before this, our area seemed relatively privileged, with an unemployment rate only about half the national average, but now we find for the first time that official job losses in the area are above the average for the country as a whole.

The result can be seen in the grim trail of derelict factory buildings with 'For Sale' notices all over the east side of the City.

Isolated pockets of

resistance to closure, notably Snods and Planters have unfortunately failed. The majority of workers at the Aurora plant were reluctant to take action which seemed unlikely to succeed.

This has made active trade unionists in the city see the need for a far more united fight, for which the proposed action on January 25th is seen as just the spring board.

It is hoped that all sections of workers in the area will participate and that the issues are fully explained to the unions' membership.

Above all, it is crucial that this is seen not as an action affecting only one locality, but that the call for industrial action against government policies, and for retention of jobs, is taken up the length and breadth of the country.

WORKERS SOLIDARITY

Working class solidarity is a thing the Tories cannot defeat. On our way down from Bishop Auckland to London to pick up the Chamberlain Phipps dispute marchers (see previous issues) we stopped at a motorway cafe at 4.30am.

The only other customer had a "Vote Scargill" badge on and was hitch-

hiking to lobby the coal board in London on the miners' pay claim.

During the journey we discussed the "wallpaper warriors" dispute and the miners' fights, the Labour Party and the way ahead.

Within 2 days that pitman from Springhill colliery Notts had filled all the petition sheets and raised the dispute in many bodies

of the movement and sent them back to Bishop Auckland. Thanks very much comrade, workers of the world unite!

By Matt Smith
and Les Sans
(NUFLAT)



Apartheid screams

When Steve Kitson was recently imprisoned by the South African regime, a BBC reporter asked if he was being questioned. 'No', said a police spokesman, "he's quite all right." This unintended irony by one of apartheid's jailers is tragically all too accurate for black prisoners.

Kitson reported when he was released of seeing: 'a man being admitted after having been beaten up and I heard him being beaten up very, very savagely until finally his screams were like those of a three year-old child. It is one of the most horrifying things I have ever heard.'

Tories reject facts...

Over a century ago, Karl Marx wrote of the honesty of many of the official reports on life in Victorian capitalist Britain. Even if the reports embarrassed the bosses they were confident enough to collect the information. Government reports these days are not perhaps the most reliable source of information, but many useful facts and figures are still provided by the Government Statistical Service.

There have been a number of criticisms of the material they produce. Often information is inadequate or wrongly interpreted, with the government trying to play down the significance of figures showing class differences in health, educational opportunities and so on.

But even this material seems to be too explosive for the Tories. Sir Derek Rayner's review of the Government Statistical Service recommended a cut of 25% overall. The present-day Tories would obviously prefer the working class to live in blissful ignorance and be fed the lies of the bosses' own kept press.

..and turn to superstition?

Maybe even the Sun is too informative on the real situation facing the working class. Thatcher, Howe & Co. probably use tea leaves—or possibly Old Moore's Almanac for their information. Throw away your crystal ball, Mr Howe, Old Moore tells us this is the Year of Human Redemption 1982.

The publishers W Walker and Sons of Fleet Street and West Yorkshire turn aside from their usual activity producing "Dialogues for school entertainments to give entertainments too juvenile even for an infant school class.

"Old Moore greets his readers with high hopes that 1982 will see the unions waking up to reality and facing the fact that they are choking the life out of Britain creating unemployment by excessive pay demands and destroying Britain's ability to compete in the world" Old Moore drones on about the evils of trade unions, communism, capital gains tax. Obviously the perfect source for Howe's next economic forecast.

50 years ago

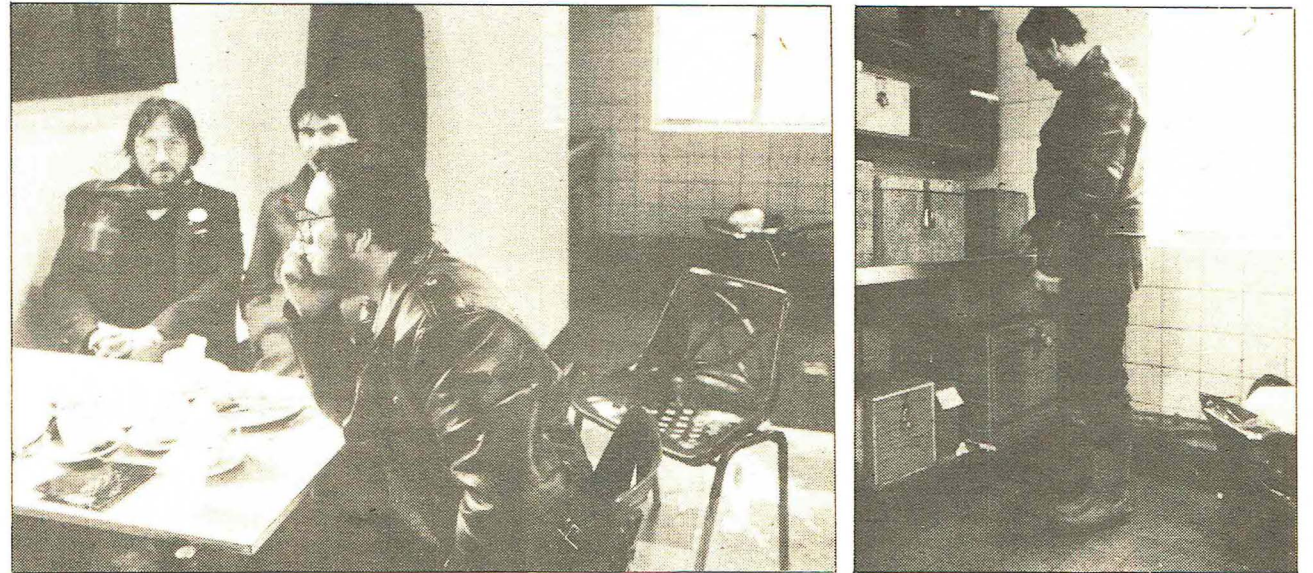
As the world-wide recession deepened there were growing threats to the capitalist system. On 6 January more troops were rushed to India to counteract the growing demand for independence. In Central America workers took on the mighty United Fruit Company, which had a stranglehold upon Honduras.

But then as now the question of which policies the working class should adopt was to prove decisive. For the storm clouds were already gathering. In the first week of January the Japanese military completed their conquest on Manchuria.

In Germany unemployment totalled over 5 million. But the leaders of the German labour movement refused to come together, as Trotsky had argued, on a class basis to fight Fascism. Their failure to adopt a thoroughgoing Marxist approach was to be paid for in millions of lives, including their own.

Health threat in LT canteen

By Ed Bober



Works canteen at Edgware. (Right) wading through water on the floor where lockers kept. Photo: D Doran

Transport union members are fighting for the best service they can get for London passengers. At Edgware garage in north London, Ernie Hadcock, local trade union spokesman, told me of his members' opposition to the proposed fare increase.

He wanted a low flat-rate fare, leading eventually to a free service. If there had been a decent bus service, he pointed out, the rape of the girl hitch-hiker would never have happened.

But whilst the workers want to provide a good ser-

vice, it seems that the local management are indifferent to the conditions of their workforce. The conditions of the works canteen, according to the men, breaks health and safety regulations.

There are pools of water on the floor where the men keep their lockers. A broken window has not been repaired for five to six weeks and during bad weather rain pours in. One of the doors is kept locked, apparently in contravention of fire safety regulations.

The canteen is supposed to be cleaned daily by a contracting firm, but they are not reliable. LT should organise its own workforce as a cleaning department, instead of leaving a job like

this to a private firm, which costs them thousands of pounds.

When the canteen is unbearably dirty the men have no alternative but to organise a ferry service to other staff canteens. Naturally this wastes time and disrupts services, but management are to blame.

If people have to eat in appalling conditions it increases all health risks and more would go down sick. So by ferrying to another canteen, the union is reducing sickness amongst staff.

Yet the local Tory rag, the 'Edgware and Hendon Times', is trying to claim that the workers are to blame for disruption to services. This is despite the union's battle for decent

services.

As Ernie Hadcock pointed out, "The more buses we can put on the road the better it is for us. If you leave buses out it puts our drivers in a position where they may get abuse from passengers."

"On a half hour service, if one bus is cancelled, some passengers will have had to wait an hour. We even have drivers who are prepared to do overtime to cover for men who go sick. The regularity of all services must be maintained."

Workers at Edgware garage are demanding a decent transport system and decent conditions at work. The wider labour movement must help them to achieve both.

TV Reviews

'Fame is the Spur'

By Derek McMillan

"Fame is the Spur" on BBC 1 gives viewers a useful insight into the conditions of the working class and the rise of the labour movement in the first half of this century.

It tells the story of Hamer Shawcross who rises from the ranks of the working class movement to the exalted heights of the House of Commons, only to betray the workers along with Ramsay Macdonald in 1931.

The sword of Peterloo is used as a symbol of the brutality of the ruling class in defending their class interests. Hamer inherited it from his uncle, whose girlfriend had been killed with it at Peterloo in Manchester when troops were used to disperse a peaceful demonstration demanding the vote for workers.

Although there is an inevitable note of pessimism in this story of betrayal, it shows the lessons of 1931, in particular the need for workers control of the Parliamentary Labour Party, which is especially relevant today. Rather than using the sword of repres-

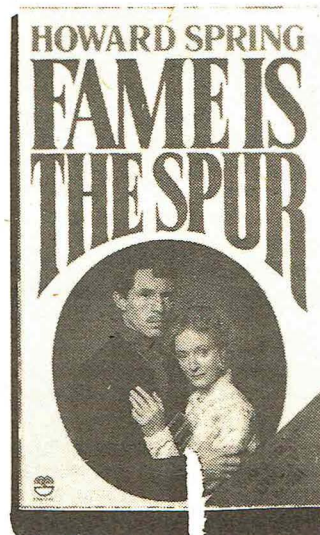
sion, the ruling class chose to seduce the Labour leaders away from the movement.

Macdonald remarked, when he betrayed the Labour Party and formed the National Government, "tomorrow every duchess in London will be wanting to kiss me." The social climber Macdonald is mirrored in Hamer, who politically defeats his Tory opponent and then proceeds to marry into his family!

To get the right atmosphere of Victorian Manchester, for 'Fame is the Spur' the BBC had to pay Oldham Council £2,000 to 'dress up' a local slum. Crumbling terrace houses were given new window frames and fresh paint etc. Oldham plans to pull the slum down as soon as possible and replace it with new housing.

Writing in 1940, Howard Spring appeared to believe that the tactic of the ruling class had finished the Labour Party for good. He was disproved by the Labour landslide in 1945. No doubt the social climbers of the SDP harbour the same illusions today.

It is entirely possible that they can be disproved in an equally dramatic fashion if the Labour leaders are brought under the stern control of the rank and file in order to drive those who would sell us to the highest bidder into the political wilderness for good.



'Fame is the Spur'. Novel available £2.40 (inc. p&p) from World Books, 1 Mentmore Terrace, London E8 3PN.

Trouble at Crossroads

TV screens seem to be full of strikes. Comedy series have their usual jibes about 'workers', 'union' and Labour Party. But what's this? Union trouble at the Crossroads motel? Of course this did try to imply that the building contractor was running the union for the members' good as, in the world of Crossroads, the management attended union meetings.

Recently having been ill I've watched a number of TV series: 'Strumpet City' (about Irish workers in the early part of the century), 'Fame is the Spur' (about reformism and the Labour Party). In recent years we've had 'Power Without Glory' (about corruption in the Australian Labour Party) and 'The Ragged Trousered Philanthropists' (about turn of the century working-class life). The books are mostly far better than the TV, but all these series are, or have been, worth watching. How about a repeat of 'Days of Hope'?

By William West



Labour movement demonstration last year to save Chatham Dockyards
Photo: MILITANT

Changing face of Kent

Until recently Kent was amongst the most prosperous areas of the UK and a Tory stronghold. The recession is changing that.

The Medway towns of Kent are being hit by unemployment, factory closures, short time working on a scale never experienced here before. The impending closure of Chatham Dockyards means the loss of approximately 11,000 jobs, the Isle of Grain Refinery, 1,700 jobs.

The Medway towns, the industrial heart of Kent, could be facing 29% unemployment within the next two years. Elsewhere in Kent the Ashford Rail Works is being closed down with the loss of 900 jobs. There are serious threats of redundancies at Snowdon Colliery and massive job losses on the Cross-Channel ferries and Hoverport.

Kent County Council, possibly the most vicious anti-working class county council in the country, are threatening unprecedented cuts and job losses in their social services, schools, hospitals, home helps, education etc.

Many of the workers now unemployed and about to be thrown on the scrap heap previously voted Tory. In the Medway towns the two local Tory MPs campaigned

for years that a vote for Labour was a vote to shut the dockyard, but now they are about to do just that.

The anger and bitterness at this betrayal has to be seen and heard to be believed, not only among the industrial workers, but also members of management.

Up to now this anger has not manifested itself in any real action by the workers to save their jobs. This is mainly due to the inexperience of the union leadership and the bureaucracy of the Whitley System in allowing the local Tories to control the 'Save the Dockyard' campaign and stifle any industrial action.

One thing is certain—the Tories can no longer count on their safe seats in this area. But the workers must not allow themselves to be duped again, this time by the SDP, the Tory second eleven.

The only answer is a demand for alternative work for socially useful purposes for the dockyard; a united campaign by the labour and trade union movement in Kent to save jobs and the return of a Labour government committed to socialist policies to secure the future of all workers.

By Eddie Pymm
(Deputy Convenor
UCATT Chatham
Dockyard)

WHEN WORK TEARS THE SKIN FROM YOUR HANDS

Winter on a building site can be one of the most dispiriting experiences imaginable.

By Jack Harvey,
TGWU

(Newarthill
& Carfin LPYS)

On a few occasions I have lifted metal bars which were so cold that they actually stuck to the palm of my hand tearing off pieces of skin. Obviously this could be avoided by wearing proper protection, but very few firms provide the necessary gloves.

Or if they do it is on the basis of one pair per employee and if you lose them or wear them out, you have very little chance of replacing them.

In the current recession tiny concessions won in the past are being eroded by the bosses. The statistics show a rise in unemployment in the building industry from 150,000 in August 1979 to over 400,000 at present.

But these statistics cannot convey the misery endured by unemployed building workers and those with jobs. I have worked in the industry since leaving school at fifteen and have seen how safety regulations are continually and increasingly ignored by management.

Yet the hazards we have to cope with include faulty machinery, pneumatic tools, dump trucks etc. Scaffolding is often badly constructed by unskilled labourers as management balk at paying an extra 15p an hour to employ properly trained scaffolders. Often trenches are excavated and not properly shored, resulting in cave-ins with the sides collapsing and trapping the men working there.

On arriving at my last site the two bricklayers and myself (their labourer) discovered that there were no toilet facilities except for one small WC in the foreman's office.



Office construction New Oxford Street, London

Photo: A Wiard (Report)

When we complained, we were duly informed that "there are plenty trees around here boys and if you don't like it..." Only after much heated discussion and a few threats from us that a site and factories inspector would be called did we get an assurance of proper facilities; the houses we were building were being sold at upward of £65,000.

I totally agree with John McLean, the great socialist teacher, when he said, 'capitalist builders exist not to build houses but to build profit.' The time has come to take the building industry

from the bosses, to nationalise it under workers' control, so that need and not greed becomes the order of the day.

Some may argue that workers are not capable of running their own business. Let me give you one small example of our efficient progressive management.

Working with a special type of brick it was necessary that the mortar should be dyed. After three days I was approached by a foreman and asked how much dye I used in each mix.

When I told him a bag to

every bag of cement he replied 'that's wrong, we have computers working all this out, and you should only be using 0.765 of a bag.' He didn't appear too pleased when I asked if it would be possible for a computer to come and weigh out the 0.765 for me.

In all seriousness is there anyone who honestly believes that if workers had control of their own industries that they would make such an awful job as those captains of industry now at the helm?

DENMARK — women workers demand six-hour day for all

A recent late-night BBC TV programme highlighted the struggle of women workers in Denmark for the six hours day and the abolition of part time working.

Part time work for women is so prevalent in

Denmark that the Union of Women Workers (the fourth largest trade union in the country) fears that there will be increasing difficulty for women obtaining full time work. Women workers who were interviewed argued strongly against part time working.

It means that they were financially dependent on their husbands or on the

state. The double load of housework and a job was institutionalised—'we are back where we started before equal pay and opportunities came in'. It was harder to organise the union.

Several women who worked part time explained that they preferred it as it gave them a chance to organise their lives, to

spend more time with their children, or to do housework. But whether they liked it or not, inevitably they were the ones who did most of the shopping, cooking and cleaning.

Yet the six-hour day for all workers would help everyone. It would assist mothers who want shorter working hours so they can conserve time and energy for their families and it would also stop the segregation of women into part time work.

For the first time it would be possible for both working parents to equally share in bringing up their children. As a young woman cleaner explained, it would mean that all kinds of leisure interests could be taken up by women and

men which at present they don't have the time or the energy for.

Another worker in the same brewery said workers would be able to play a part in working to change society. Surely they argued new technology puts the six hour day well within the bounds of possibility.

In Britain thousands of women work twilight shifts in factories, do evening work in shops, pubs and clubs, take casual, non-union jobs and homework, in fact anything which will give them a bit of extra money to keep their families, while still putting in a full days work at home.

The answer is not to decry the husbands for not doing their share, but the employers who are profiting

from the casualisation of women's work. Women will be doubly exploited as long as we have a system based on private profit.

If British trade unions were to demand a six hour day for all and campaign on it, it would be seen as a solution not only to the problems discussed by the Danish workers but also to the burning problem of unemployment. And in such a campaign the need to change society to achieve such a reform would immediately come to the forefront.

By Charlotte
McDonald

OUR SECRE

Fifteen Labour MPs were investigated by MI5, Britain's internal security service, between August 1961 and January 1962. This investigation was at the special request of George Brown, at that time one of the principal shadow-cabinet lieutenants of Hugh Gaitskell, the Labour Party leader.

What makes this particularly scandalous is that—in the words of a recent Labour Party Consultative Paper—"the Security and Intelligence services spend a considerable amount of time and resources in surveillance of the labour movement.

"This is especially true of the internal Security Services (MI5) and the Special Branch of each police force. Such information may be used generally to report on—and, if need be, to disrupt and otherwise control the activities of Labour and leftist trade union activities....In addition both the Special Branch and MI5 recruit informers and on occasion plant infiltrators."

The definition of 'subversives' adopted by the anonymous bureaucrats who run the intelligence services is broad. It encompasses "activities which threaten the safety or the well-being of the state and are intended to undermine or overthrow parliamentary democracy by political, industrial or violent means." In their view, in other words, many of the normal activities of the labour movement are 'subversive.'

"The aftermath of the 'Watergate affair,' warned another Labour Party discussion document, "showed the world how easy and dangerous it can be for government security and intelligence services which are charged with defence of the state from external attack to become involved in the defence of the state from internal threat defined by the security services themselves." The British intelligence services have preserved their cloak of secrecy more effectively than the CIA but there is unmistakable evidence that they carry out exactly the same kind of activities as their American counterparts.

The security services have vast resources but neither their huge expenditure nor their activities are subject to any effective kind of democratic accountability. MI5, the internal security service employs between 4,000 and 5,000 people; MI6, the external security service, employs at least 600 people at its London headquarters; and the Special Branch, formally a part of the police force, though working in close cooperation with MI5, has at least

By
Lynn
Walsh

1,250 officers. In 1979 the official figure for the "secret vote" was £40m, but the real cost of MI5 and MI6 alone was estimated at over £100m (most of this concealed in defence expenditure).

Between them they have files on several million people.

Not even senior cabinet ministers, let alone MPs, are fully informed of the security services' activities. There is ample evidence, moreover, that Labour ministers are especially kept in the dark by the bosses of the security services, though this has not stopped Labour ministers turning to them for help when it suited their purpose.

It was undoubtedly on the basis of "intelligence" from MI5 and the Special Branch that Harold Wilson attempted to undermine the 1966 seamen's strike by claiming that the seamen's executive was being manipulated by a "tightly-knit group of politically motivated men". MI5 regularly spies on trade union activists. In her memoirs former Labour Employment Minister, Barbara Castle, recalls how the security service supplied her with frequent briefings, including one with allegations about relations between Hugh Scanlon, then leader of the engineering union, and the Communist Party.

Labour's right used MI5 against the left but the intelligence services work against them too

There is no doubt either, that the labour movement is subject to massive surveillance at every level, especially thorough phone-tapping. An ex-military intelligence man turned 'security adviser', Mr Ralph Matthews, claimed in 1974 that telephones in Labour Party headquarters in Transport House were tapped for long periods under the Heath government in 1972 ('The Times' 4 October 1974).

Numerous instances have come to light—notably the case of British Steel's Greenwich subsidiary in 1974—of the Special Branch (possibly relaying MI5 material) providing the bosses with information about trade union activists. There are other cases, like that of Robert MacNeil, a first year student at Paisley College of Technology, who in 1977 was asked by the Special Branch to supply "secret and confidential information" on his friends and associates. To his credit he immediately rejected this approach ('Guardian', 9 Feb 1978); but how many others have been recruited to spy on fellow-students or trade unionists? The experience of the CIA shows how easily, in the event of intensified social and political conflict, the security and intelligence services can slip from 'mere' spying to more active intervention. Northern Ireland is a warning for the future in this sphere too.

There is the notorious case of Kenneth Lennon, who claimed he was recruited by the SB to act as an *agent provocateur* within the IRA in Luton, conspiring with them to set up robberies. Shortly after he made his allegations public he was found shot dead in a Surrey lane. In the case of the Littlejohn brothers, who were jailed in Ireland for bank robberies and causing explosion in 1977, Tory Home Secretary Robert Carr admitted that Kenneth Littlejohn had been working with MI6 and was in touch with a SB Chief Inspector.

The idea that the British intelligence services would never use the same kind of 'dirty tricks' as the CIA has been dismissed as naive by investigative journalists like Bernard Nossitter, former London correspondent of the 'Washington Post'. British intelligence, he says, "stage-manages coups, burgles safes, blackmails the vulnerable and practices most of the curious arts familiar to well-endowed agencies with overseas interests." MI6 undoubtedly employed 'dirty tricks' against Nasser in Egypt, and was involved with CIA moves against the governments of Mosadeq in Iran

(1953) and Jagan in Guyana in 1964.

One of the most dramatic allegations was that Harold Wilson had actually been bugged by MI5 both at Downing Street and in his private room at the House of Commons—when, as Prime Minister, he was officially in charge of the security services! Shortly after his resignation in 1976, Wilson made an extraordinary allegation to two BBC journalists: "I am not certain that for the last 18 months when I was PM I knew what was happening, fully, in Security," he said with obvious annoyance. He really could not rule out the possibility that individuals working inside MI5 and even MI6 had contributed to the 'smears', which, he complained, had frequently appeared in the press while he had been at No 10. He told the reporters that some people in the Security Services were 'very right wing'. 'They would naturally be brought up to believe' he said, 'that socialist leaders were another form of communist. They are blinkered...'

British intelligence, like the CIA, has secretly backed "grey propaganda" operations aimed against the labour movement

Wilson told them that a group within MI5 "were saying I was tied up with the Communists...the arch link was my political secretary Marcia (Lady Falkender). She was supposed to be a dedicated Communist!" Wilson said he had first heard about these things in mid-1975. (Penrose and Coutour 'The Pencourt File' 1978).

Soon, however, Wilson thought better of his allegations and withdrew his support from the journalists' investigation. He reverted to the role played by senior Labour ministers in the past, that of helping to maintain the cloak of secrecy around the intelligence services.

In fact, recent evidence which has come to light

A major part of the secret security and intelligence services' operations are aimed against the labour movement

shows that Labour ministers not only decline to reveal the activities of the security services or to call for democratic accountability but were themselves involved in initiating new areas of activity—including activities partially directed against the labour movement. This is particularly the case in the field of covert propaganda.

This was recently revealed by Richard Fletcher ('The Guardian' 18 December 1981, with additional information in 'The Observer' 20 Dec 1981).

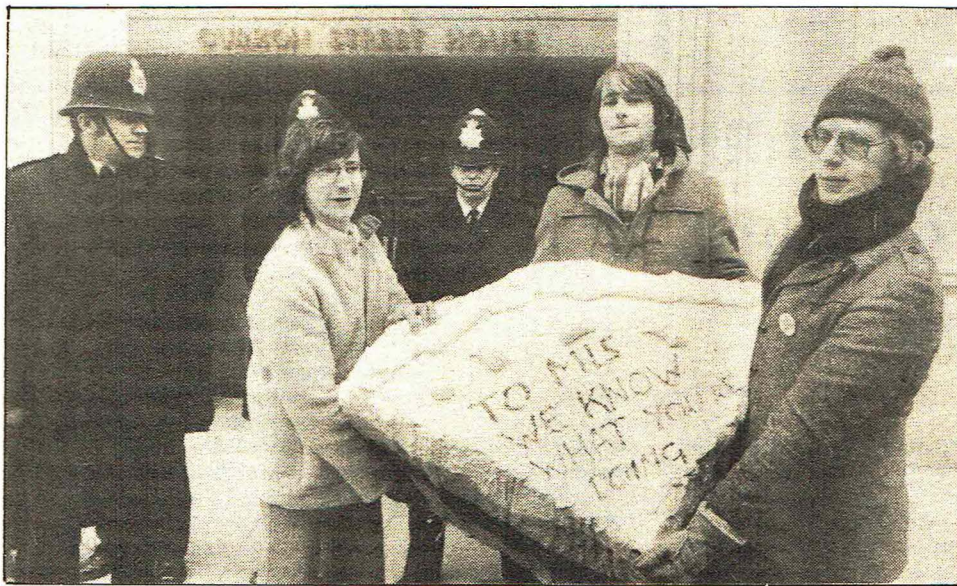
It is now clear that the British intelligence services backed a network of supposedly 'independent' news agencies, centring on the Middle East and India, on an even bigger scale than

the CIA. These specialised in 'grey propaganda', that is not outright lies (or 'black propaganda') but carefully selected factual material heavily slanted in the interests of British capitalism.

This was an outgrowth of the activities of the so-called Information Research Department, a secret agency of the Foreign Office (which also controls MI6). This was set up under the post-war Labour government under the general direction of Ernest Bevin, Labour's Foreign Minister, and under the direct supervision of Christopher Mayhew, then a junior Foreign Office minister (who later deserted Labour for the Liberal Party). At least three of the people on the boards of the companies controlling these stooge agencies were Labour MPs (now no longer active in politics).

The Information Research Department was intended to counter "Soviet influence". From the beginning part of its activities were directed against the left of the labour movement in Britain. The IRD paid a secret subsidy to a right-wing journal called 'Freedom First'. This was run by Herbert Tracey who worked as a full-time official in the Labour Party International Department. It was distributed, mainly free, throughout the trade unions and Labour Parties.

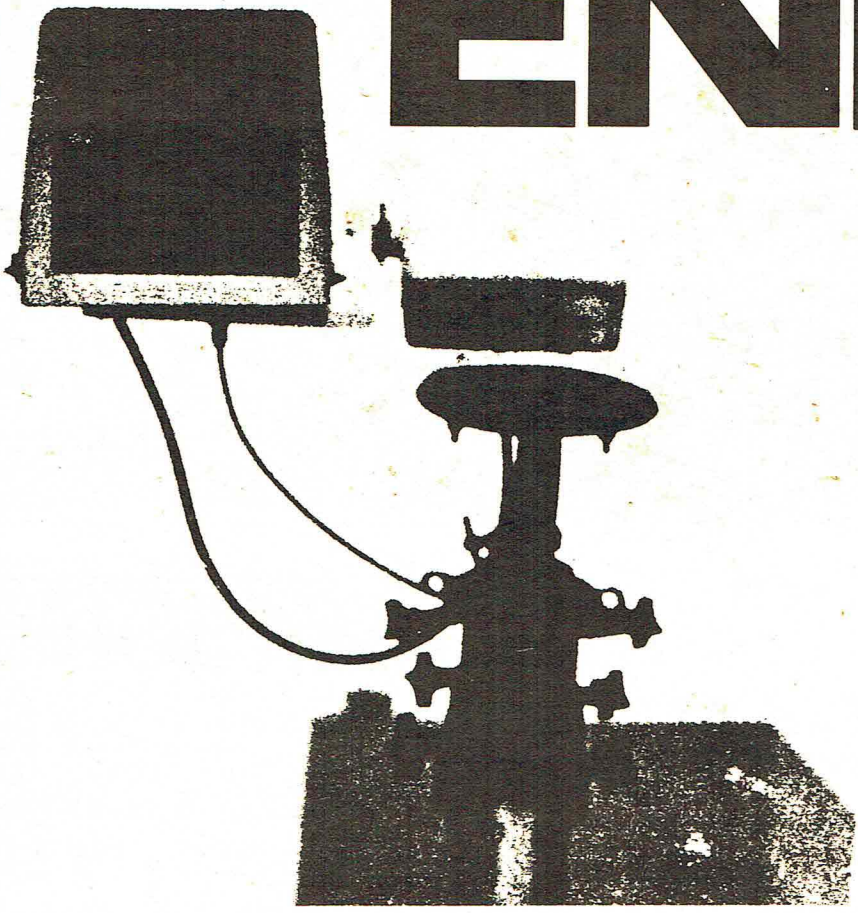
The IRD also secretly financed a publishing company called Ampersand. This was used to channel secret state finance to a number of established publishers, including the Bodley Head, Allen and Unwin and others—without



The Curzon Street Headquarters of MI5: The defendants in the notorious "ABC trial", Aubrey, Berry and Campbell, who under a Labour government were charged and tried at the Old Bailey under the Official Secrets Act for collecting and publishing material about electronic surveillance (mainly from published sources) present a "We know you are watching us" cake to the secret intelligence services. The trial, its background, and much information about Britain's security services are dealt with in "Who's Watching You?" (Penguin Books 1981) by Crispin Aubrey.

Photo: Andrew Ward (Report)

T ENEMIES



Big Brother (top left) watches a mass picket at the Nottingham Evening Post, pictured below. The television camera is mounted on a telescope boom above a police control van, which is also equipment to beam pictures and information to and from the police station where there is access to computerised files. Top right. Their photographer photographs our photographer photographing their photographer: The Special Branch photographer can be seen standing by the police in the picture above photographing the Nottingham Evening Post pickets on 1 September 1979

them necessarily being aware of the source of the funds—to publish pro-capitalist, anti-communist and anti-Marxist books.

Far from being curbed by subsequent Labour governments the activities of the IRD were expanded by the Wilson government after 1966, especially with attempts to establish covertly further news agencies in Latin America. However, the IRD was closed down, at least officially, by a later Labour government in 1977. This was possibly because the Foreign Office was aware that their cover was about to be 'blown.' It is also possible that even right wing Labour ministers were becoming alarmed at the activities of some right wing characters involved in a bodies associated in some way with IRD or the British and American intelligence services.

One of the CIA's major covert propaganda fronts, it should be remembered, was based in London. This was Forum World Features, set up in 1965 and run by the ultra right wing Brian Crozier. This also specialised in 'grey propaganda' favourable to the interests

of western imperialism. Their material was frequently used by the capitalist press and television. An internal memorandum written by Richard Helms, then the director of the CIA, confirmed that Forum World Features was "run with knowledge and co-operation of British Intelligence". In all probability it was what the security services call a 'joint operation'. It was certainly no different from the covert propaganda operations of British Intelligence.

The National Executive must urgently investigate the secret security services' penetration of the labour movement

But Forum World Features was hurriedly wound up in 1975 pending its imminent exposure in various radical and left-wing journals—which also drew attention to the connections between Brian Crozier and characters like Robert Moss and Norris

McWhirter, who were involved in bodies like the Institute for the Study of Conflict and the National Association for Freedom—bodies whose bitter opposition to the labour movement has never been in any doubt.

Perhaps even right wing Labour ministers had a sudden glimmering of the danger to the labour movement to these official and semi-official, covert and semi-covert activities.

Perhaps they had reflected, moreover, on the fate of the Labour government in Australia, which, under Gough Whitlam, was ousted in November 1975 by the intervention of the Governor-General, Sir John Kerr. Behind the scenes the CIA played an active role in attempting to engineer Whitlam's downfall. This was suspected at the time but it was confirmed in 1977 at the trial in California of Christopher Boyce, a former under-cover electronics expert who, before being silenced by the Judge, gave details of CIA involvement. This led to calls by leaders of the Australian labour movement for an inquiry. "One union leader,"

reported the 'The Guardian' (29 April 1977), "claimed that he had proof that the CIA had been paying money to union leaders to affect strike activity. Another claimed that a Labour Party official was on the CIA payroll..."

In its under-cover political manoeuvres the CIA enjoyed the co-operation, if not the active assistance, of the Australian Special Branch. Australia may seem a long way away,

We must be warned by Australia, where the secret service worked with the CIA to bring down Whitlam's Labour government

but its security system was set up in 1949 by a former head of MI5.

South Australia's Police Commissioner, moreover, was previously a Chief Constable in Yorkshire. And as far as his discredited Special Branch was concerned, was

only continuing British practices. But action by the labour movement had positive results. Salisbury was dismissed from office and South Australia's Special Branch was completely disbanded in 1978 after an investigation had revealed that the Branch's dossiers were "scandalously inaccurate, irrelevant to security purposes and outrageously unfair to hundreds of loyal and worthy citizens."

When the SB was wound up, thousands of these files were officially destroyed. It was found that the Special Branch's records included all the South Australian Labour Party politicians (both local and national representatives) and all the most prominent trade union officials. At the end of the enquiry the presiding judge commented that the files were based "On the unreasoned assumption that any persons who thought or acted less conservatively than suited the security forces were likely to be potential dangers to the security of the state."

Could it happen in Britain? All the indications are that the secret intelligence

services certainly think that it could. Last year a former MI6 electronic expert, Lee Tracey, alleged that possible "violent action to stop Tony Benn becoming a Labour Prime Minister was secretly discussed between former MI6 employees and the late Airey Neave just before the last election." He claimed that Neave, one of Thatcher's closest lieutenants (later assassinated by Irish Republicans), feared that Labour might win the May 1979 election, and that a Labour victory could be followed by Tony Benn taking over as Prime Minister. Tracey claimed that he was asked to join a team of intelligence experts who would make sure "Benn was stopped." These allegations were included in a BBC Panorama programme—but cut out after the direct intervention of the BBC's Director General Ian Trethowan. The allegations were subsequently published in a 'New Statesman' article (20 February 1981). This incident shows the role that the intelligence services, along with the tops of the civil service, the armed forces and sections of big business would play if their system should ever be endangered by the labour movement.

Rather than collaborate in concealing the horrendous activities of the secret security services—which are followed closely by all major foreign intelligence services and kept secret only from the British public—the leaders of the labour movement should be campaigning to expose their activities to workers and warning of the danger they pose to the labour movement.

Labour should follow the example of the Australian Labour Party in relation to the South Australian Special Branch and demand the disbandment of MI6, MI5, the Special Branch, Military Intelligence and any other secret intelligence sections that exist.

Labour should demand an end to the all-pervasive surveillance of labour movement and other activists, and the destruction of the grotesque files kept on millions of people.

While campaigning on these policies, however, the labour movement should take immediate steps with regard to its own bodies: Labour's National Executive has already set up a Study Group on the secret intelligence services, but this should be extended into an urgent investigation of the interference of the intelligence services within the labour movement, particularly examining possible secret links or covert manipulation of right wing organisations, groupings and journals within the labour movement.



We reproduce below an interview with some Italian car components workers, conducted by a member of the Italian Socialist Party.

ITALIAN WORKERS FACE CLOSURES

When did large scale lay-offs first hit this factory?
We first had them in 1974, but only for one or two weeks a year, not like now. The situation has got worse since April or May of this year.

What exactly is the situation now?

In the whole group, there are 3,500 workers laid off. This is about 30% of the total workforce. Some are laid off for 30 working days a year, and others for 70 working days. In this factory it affects almost half the workers, that is 1,500 out of 3,300. In Naples we have 200, including some office workers, affected.

What was the reaction of most workers at the beginning?

At the beginning most workers generally underestimated the situation. They saw the lay-offs almost as an extra week's holiday, also because this summer we had a week's lay off tagged onto our summer holiday, making it up to 5 weeks.

And what's their attitude now?

Now they are worried and frightened about the future. The workers are beginning to ask themselves 'Where are we going to finish up?' All the more so because when we look around us we can see what the situation is like in other factories, especially at FIAT. Between 70% and 80% of our work is done for FIAT, which apart from being our main customer is also our biggest shareholder having about 90% of shares.

In what way is the worry affecting the workers? Do they want to take action of some kind, or are they afraid of doing anything?

They want to take action. This is always the first reaction in a situation of this kind. You can see this from all the short spontaneous stoppages over little things. For example 400 or 500 workers downed tools spontaneously over Prime Minister Spadolini's decree on prescription charges.

In one department the workers went on strike in order to get the lay-offs moved from Thursday and Friday to Monday and Tuesday. But it's really the whole situation that causes

these strikes, that is the mass lay-offs, worry about the future, and, precisely, the desire to do something about it.

What are the Trade Unions and factory council doing about it?

The FLM (the federation of all metalworkers' unions) is doing precisely nothing. Its marking time! At the beginning it said that the lay-offs at Magneti's were just a trick to scare the workers. They didn't want to face-up to the seriousness of the situation; and whenever the FLM says something, there are always some people on the factory council who repeat it like parrots.

Then a couple of months ago the FLM did a complete about-face on the situation in Magneti's, and began to say the exact opposite, but they have never made a serious analysis of our situation. The attitude of the FLM has helped to create confusion in the factory.

There are different opinions within the factory council and we haven't managed to give the workers a clear platform of

things to fight for. Our most serious problem is a lack of clear demands on which to base a concrete struggle.

In your opinion, what are the perspectives for the new year?

Without a doubt the lay-offs are going to continue. Apart from anything else they have already announced them for up to June. Probably they will offer greater incentives to those who are prepared to accept voluntary redundancy.

In one way or another they will further reduce the workforce. The management says there are 1,000 too many of us.

At the moment the management are still using soft tactics, maybe because they realise they wouldn't get away with using the same methods here that they might apply elsewhere. It doesn't look as if there is going to be a head-on clash for now, but if the management group changes...

In your opinion what is the basic problem of this factory, is it the crisis of the market, that the factory isn't working properly, or is

it lack of investments?

All three. They're interlinked. When there's a crisis of overproduction, the market doesn't work, competition intensifies, and the factories to be first hit are the least competitive ones.

We are among the least competitive because our productive machinery is 10 or 15 years old. The last important investments in this factory were made 7 or 8 years ago.

From the figures you gave me earlier, I see that this factory has been more affected by the lay-offs than the other factories in the group. Is there any reason for this?

There are two reasons, one objective and one political. The political reason is that the factory council of this factory has always played a leading role in the whole Magneti group, and in the past we have managed to block a number of the management's plans. The objective reason is the obsolescence of the machinery in this factory.

In your opinion are these two reasons independent of each other or are they con-



Fiat workers demonstrating outside their factory.

nected with each other?

They're connected. The tradition of struggle of this factory goes back to 1945. We have always played a leading role inside the Magneti Marelli group.

The management defines this factory as 'ungovernable' and in this way justifies the lack of investment in the productive techniques and machinery of this works.

We have spoken to some Trade Union comrades in other factories in Seato San Giovanni (industrial areas of Milan), and they all say that although the Magneti is not one of the largest factories in the area, it has always played an important part in the Trade Union struggles in Seato San Giovanni, so it would be a blow, not only for you, but also for the whole of the local Trade Union movement if the management managed to drastically reduce the workforce or even maybe close this factory altogether.

What have you done in order to make contact with and get support from other factories in the area, many of whom have the same problems as you?

We have made various attempts to link up with other factories in the same situation, above all with the Breda Steelworks, but we have always come up against political problems of a more general nature, like the government etc.

I must say that the FLM instead of helping us in our attempts, hinders us. If a group of workers go to the FLM and say that they want to go on strike, the FLM bureaucracy replies 'Yes, yes, OK., if you can manage to get it organised'; they

play no active role, but then they turn up at a mass-meeting once the strike has been organised.

When Spadolini does something stupid, the workers want to go on strike...then the FLM rings up three days later to declare a one hour or two hour strike.

What are the different points of view and the different proposals made within the Factory council?

There are some who want to put their heads in the sand and pretend that nothing is happening, then there are some who say 'We will be OK if we sabotage everything that management tries to impose on the workers.'

They want to reduce production in those departments affected by lay-offs, in order to force management to withdraw the lay-offs. In my opinion it wouldn't help us much to reduce production at the present time because that is precisely the result that management want to obtain.

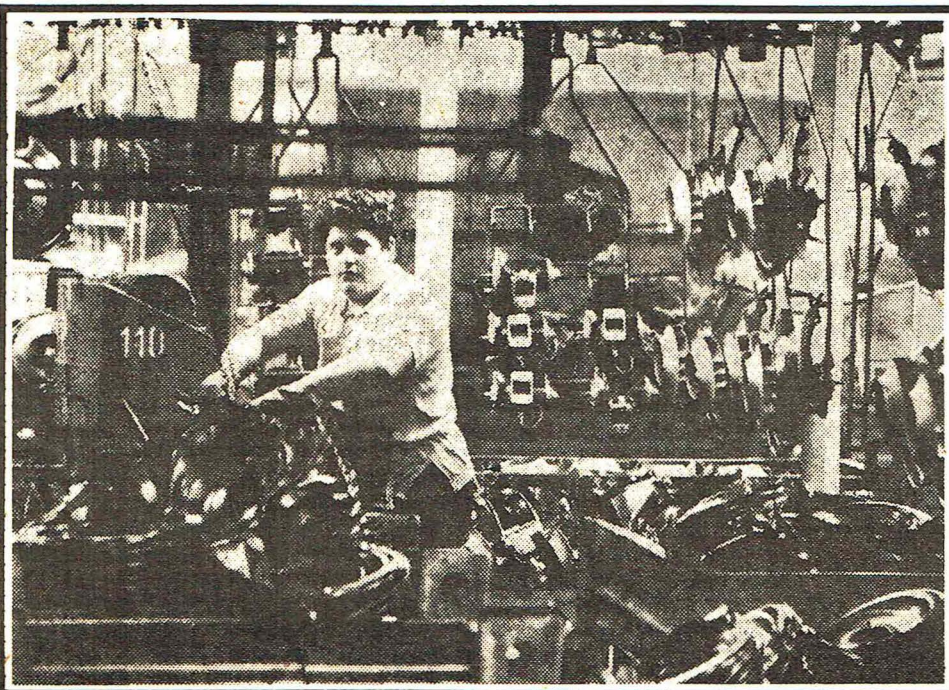
In your opinion, what kind of struggle is possible in these circumstances?

A united struggle of the whole sector that produces car components, but such a struggle would have to involve at least the whole Lombardy region.

If we remain isolated, we will only manage to prolong the agony. Then it very soon becomes a political question.

For years we have been proposing a plan of production and development for the whole car industry. You will see that if they won't have one, there will be 40,000 or 50,000 redundancies at FIAT.

Over the last few years many thousands of workers have been laid off from the car industry and related manufacturing industry.





President Brezhnev and Marchais, leader of the French 'Communist' Party

FRENCH LABOUR OPPOSES POLISH REGIME

The immediate reaction of the workers' movement in France to the military takeover in Poland was a rash of demonstrations, rallies, meetings and protests.

Showing an instinctive internationalism, the workers—especially labour movement activists—understood the common interests of the workers of Poland and France. In Paris, on the first evening after the news broke, 50,000 people marched through the streets.

Scandalously, and to the disquiet of the majority of Communist workers, the leadership of the French Communist Party (PCF) wholeheartedly backed the move of the military to crush the Polish working class.

The daily 'L'humanite' blamed Solidarity for bringing Poland to 'poverty and despair'. It claimed that none of the rights won by Solidarity would be taken away. Yet the 'counter-revolutionary Solidarity movement had to be stopped.'

The PCF leadership justifies this stand by pointing to Reagan as a friend of Solidarity. The sanctions urged by Reagan against Poland are said to be proof that Solidarity was a reactionary movement.

In fact the real attitude of American big business to the defeat of the Polish working class was shown by the statement of a Wall St. speculator which appeared in the newspaper 'L'Aurore' 'This is the best thing. At least now we'll get some of our money back!'

It is only the failure of the Socialist and Communist Party leaderships to explain the real issues which enables the capitalists to exploit the murderous reaction in Poland to discredit the idea of socialism.

Whilst the Socialist Party (PS) has opposed the coup, the leadership has explained nothing. Mitterrand has only defended 'Western democracy' and what he

calls 'The Rights of Man.'

The most right-wing capitalist papers have been hysterically goading the PS leadership to expel the Communists from the government, although big business as a whole does not see this as being in their interests at the present time because of the 'moderation' urged by the PCF in regard to the wages struggle.

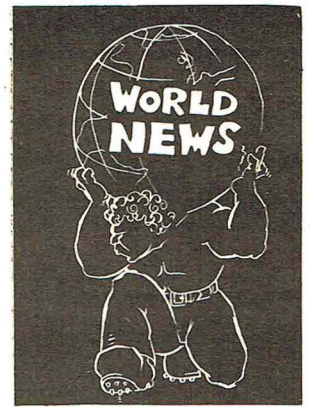
The call for a one hour general strike on Monday 21st of December met with a very weak and patchy response. The call to strike, amazingly supported by some of the bosses' press, came from the extreme Right of the Trade Union movement—the 'Force Ouvriere' union and the Catholic CFTC. The second biggest union, the CFTD, then supported the call. The PCF—controlled CGT, the biggest union by far, refused to support.

Whilst the overwhelming majority of workers were opposed to the coup, they would not respond to a call from trade union leaders whose 'no strikes' standpoint on wages and conditions is well known. Many did not see how a strike would help matters anyway.

At a mass meeting in Paris called by the CFTC-CFTD-FO, the speakers from the platform ruthlessly attacked the Communist Party for supporting the coup, but they were shouted down by angry Communist workers—"Don't say 'the Communist Party', it's only the leaders!"

These workers and many like them understand that neither the 'democracy' of poverty and mass unemployment, nor the bureaucratic totalitarianism of the eastern bloc offer any way forward. They are looking for genuine workers internationalism, linking the struggle for a planned, nationalised, and democratically controlled economy, in the east and in the west.

By Marcel
Coupeau in Paris



Australia

Miners in New South Wales, Australia, began a programme of industrial sanctions recently in support of their pay demands, but were met with the closure of all the NSW mines by their bosses.

In retaliation, a meeting of the miners' union last week decided to go on an all-out strike in NSW and in Queensland, the two most important mining areas in Australia. 30,000 miners are on strike in these two states, closing a total of over 140 mines, and it is expected that within a week, New South Wales could be without power supplies.

United States

Ronald Reagan is following closely in the footsteps of Thatcher. Since he took office, over 1.68 million Americans have lost their jobs, nearly 1.5 million of them in the last three months. The total now stands at nine and a half million or 8.9% of the work force.

The continual collapse in the construction industry, the widespread industrial recession and high interest rates will almost certainly push unemployment next month up to record post-war figures.

Sudan

Recent increases in food prices in Sudan, especially a 60% hike in the price of sugar has led to widespread opposition in several towns. Demonstrations of students and young workers have taken place in a number of centres and the police has responded with bullets. A total of ten people have been reported killed and 20 wounded by the police.

Tories back Chilean junta

The co-ordinated military coup led by Pinochet in September 1973 which overthrew Allende and the Popular Unity Government was a crushing defeat for the Chilean people.

Today, eight years later, the labour movement in Chile and internationally continues to struggle against the repressive regime of Pinochet and the military junta which, with the aid of capitalist finance, continues its torture and oppression.

With unemployment at around 25%, and an average wage of £51 per month, many workers face starvation conditions. Education in Chile is only

for the rich, and new legislation means that no state financial assistance will be provided for primary and secondary schools.

The bosses don't pay their staff any pensions, and instead the workers themselves have to pay 17% of their measly salaries into a pension Agency. These agencies are privately owned and run for profit, and there is no guarantee that pensions will be paid.

A new constitution, introduced on 11th March last year, gives Pinochet the power to forbid entry or expel anyone associated with working class organisations or anyone who questions the rule of the junta; also, links between the trade unions and political parties are forbidden, and any organisations opposing the junta or 'based on the class

struggle' cannot stand candidates for parliament. In universities, there is a complete prohibition of political activities.

In 1979 the Chilean government, faced with economic collapse and in an attempt to stifle the organisations of the working class, introduced Labour legislation which imposes severe limitations on strikes. But the Chilean Labour Movement has enormous strength, with more than 70% of the population living in urban areas and a rich history of political struggle by the workers.

The mood of the Chilean workers has been shown last year by a series of strikes involving over 30,000 workers. Two miners' strikes—one in April and one in October—ended

after 59 days (the Labour laws restrict strikes to 60 days).

A strike involving 15,000 workers ended in November and was followed by the sacking of 20,000 dockers. Striking workers receive no payment from the state and are often forced back to work, being faced with starvation for themselves and their families.

So what is the Tory Government doing to oppose the repressive methods of the Chilean government? Despite their fancy speeches about 'deep concern about human rights' they are in fact doing everything they can to aid their capitalist friends in Chile.

Last year a Tory minister, on a visit to Chile, publicly declared support for the junta's economic policies, saying they were the same as

those of the Tories! Thatcher has lifted the embargo on arms sales to Chile, and made the Tory position quite clear when she said in Parliament this year 'Our policy is to have normal relations with Chile consistent with our interests.'

Of course, their interests are those of the ruling class in Britain and Chile, and have nothing in common with the workers of any country. It is vital that the Labour Party Young Socialists and trade unions learn the lessons of Chile, and take these up in discussions and campaigns throughout the Labour movement.

By Liz Floyd
(Paddington LPYS)





Letters

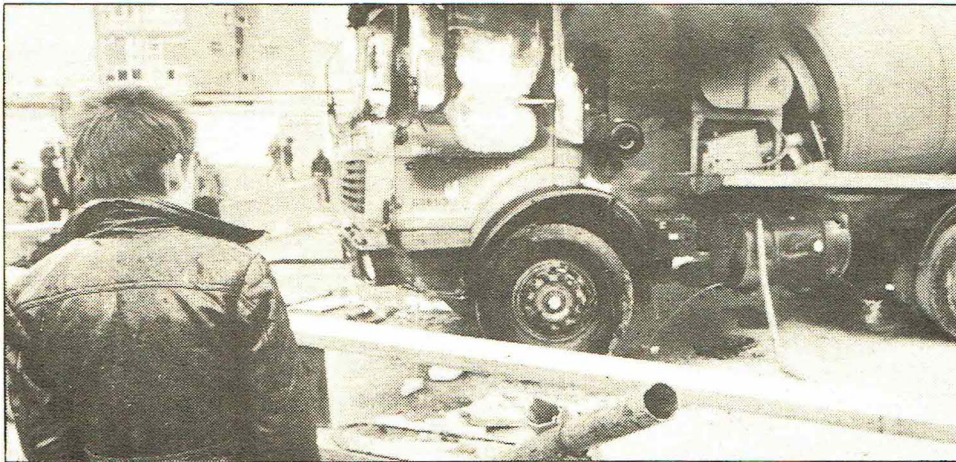
**VIEWS? COMMENTS? EXPERIENCES?
CRITICISM? WRITE ABOUT THEM TO:**

MILITANT, 1 Mentmore Terrace, London E8 3PN

A united class struggle will solve the problems of partition

Dear comrades,

The labour movement in England must give a lead to the workers in Ireland today, and not sit back and hope that it will come about on its own. One of the key questions surely must be partition, which the labour movement and working class organisations must try to solve. They must approach this question in a way that will strengthen the unity of the workers, North and South.



The aftermath of a riot in the Bogside, Derry, last year

Photo: MILITANT

As I see it, the answer lies in getting the workers to join together in unity so to make a voice strong and loud enough to shake the very roots of the troubles into a state of collapse, like in 1919. It was then that

they went on strike in unity and left no place for the gun or their owners, and the Irish people went in unity to better their standard of living and for once fought for a common cause. The cause which is the real goal of all

Irish workers and workers all over the world. Only a united class struggle for socialist policies can end partition in Ireland.
Yours fraternally
John Harte
Hayes and Harlington CLP.

More power to 'Militant's' elbow

'Militant' receives many new subscriptions every week. When Len Carrington sent in his order, he added this note:

Dear Sir

Thank you for the sample copy (of 'Militant')—I find myself very impressed. I had heard about 'Militant' entirely from adverse media coverage, but the ideas expressed seem very much in line with the '1945' idea of what electing a Labour government should be about. More power to your

elbow. I enclose a subscription for three months as I appreciate factual illustration of points raised. I have been more and more antagonistic towards Denis Healey's and Roy Hattersley's expressed views. Your exposé of the former's attitude to the nuclear deterrent in your December issue makes it inconceivable that Michael Foot tolerates him as a Labour spokesman.

Yours sincerely
Len Carrington
London

PS. I am 62 years of age so it could be said that I'm partly to blame for the present mess. Although I always voted Labour, perhaps we were not 'militant' enough!

How a healthy Labour Party can keep fit!

Dear comrades,

In November last year, the Sunday Times (29/11/81) reported that some Labour leaders were convinced that 'infiltration by revolutionary sects (was) crippling Labour's election chances.' It talked of plans to change party rules so that members could be subject to a 'loyalty test'.

Why stop there? Why not a blood test to flush out any member with traitorist SDP blood in them, or an X-ray to see who are the gutless, the heartless and the spineless! The rank and file of our leftward moving party have already squeezed the spot of hypocrisy and careerism and out oozed the

SDP, which along with the gangerine Liberal Party, formed the Alliance. Medicated by the media and big business the LSD Alliance are trying to stunt the growth of a healthy Labour Party coming to power.

The SDP by deceiving the working class into believing that they have the cure-all to a diseased profit system will soon have to swallow their own medicine, when the X-rays of their policies reveal a cancerous deception. Meanwhile, time is the great healer and we must continue to apply pressure to ensure a healthy Labour government committed to real socialism that can cure the illness of capitalism and all the diseases it produces.

Yours fraternally
Dave McGarr
Wallsend EETPU

Working class stronger than '20s and '30s

Dear Comrades

While some people cry into their beer at present over the so-called 'weakness' of the workers in the face of the bosses, it is interesting to note that the mouthpiece of big business, *The Times*, does not share this analysis. In their editorial (11.1.82) they plead with the miners not to

vote for a strike in tones such as "one does not underestimate the grievances of the past that can be exploited in the memory of the coalfields." It went on to implore Labour leaders to make pronouncements about the 'national interest' etc. and to defy the leadership of the NUM.

Yet it was *The Times* and their ilk in the past who provoked and goaded the miners into action in 1926 knowing their leaders of that time would sell them out, giving big business the chance to break the miners'

unions. Now they whistle a different tune! This is not because they have changed their attitude to the miners, but because the NUM itself now realises the power it has after the events of '72 and '74, coupled with a leadership which is now to the left. The power of the organised working class is now immeasurably stronger than it was in the '20s and '30s, as *The Times* and its friends will find out in the months and years ahead.

Yours fraternally
Benny Lynch
Linwood No 4, AUEW

An MP's pay

Dear Comrades

Did any readers see an article in the 'Daily Telegraph' (24.12.81) on payments to Members of Parliament? Basic salary—£13,950 per year. Plus £4,903 subsistence allowance, plus £8,840 for office and secretarial allowance. Travel allowance 19.1p per mile by car. Also 15 journeys a year to Westminster by their wives.

Yours fraternally
William West
Blyth

Don't help the Tories' witch-hunt of the unemployed

Dear Sir,

The Tory government has launched another witch-hunt on the unemployed. In a pilot scheme first introduced in the West Midlands and now in Scotland, teams of special investigators under the pseudonym 'Specialist Claims Control Teams' are entering local DHSS Offices to "deal with cases where benefit is being paid unjustifiably." So how do these teams operate? What is the criteria for their investigation? This is the "objectionable" part of this scheme as a spokesman for the NCCL stated.

If a claimant is unlucky enough to be in the random 5% check of supplementary benefit cases, and has a skill like typing, or has worked in the building trade or has "local knowledge indicating opportunities to work on the side", then they will be possible fraud suspects. The 'suspect' will be interviewed by these teams of qualified special investigators.

But the question arises if these interviewers are experienced, why do their guidelines give a seven point paragraph on "unacceptable interviewing techniques". There is an underly-

ing unspoken hint for all to see. The DHSS CPSA has come out vigorously against this harassment of the less fortunate in our society, and has urged total non co-operation with these teams. However the teams have recruited trade union members (SCPS) but they have been told that if money to a claimant is wrongly suspended and the claimant prosecutes no union backing will be given to the person prosecuted. It is sad that trade unionists are willing to snoop on their fellow workers and aid this government in its attack on the working class.

The trade unionists within DHSS will continue to fight against this form of undercover spy ring as well as mobilising against the Employers Statutory Sick Pay Scheme which will lead to sickness benefit being supposedly paid by employers and will lead to certain abuses of the system. It will strengthen private industry giving it a powerful weapon to threaten, and under-pay the needy. This cynical government is attempting to rape the welfare state, and tear the hearts from people. All trade unionists must unite behind the flag of solidarity and support groups of workers who stand up and fight.

Yours fraternally
Dave McNab
CPSA-DHSS
(personal capacity)

Stop violence, abuse and the denigration of women

Dear Comrades

I was sickened to hear recently that a wealthy businessman escaped with a £2,000 fine (hardly a strain on his fat capitalist wallet) for the rape of a 17-year-old girl. Under capitalism the "rich" will always be protected by their associates in our so-called "hallowed halls of justice", however iniquitous their crimes against working people. For as shown in the past the machinery of the state will always protect its own. One senile judge even had the audacity to insinuate that the girl was 'asking for it'. The labour movement must make it clear that it ut-

terly condemns violence against women and all forms of abuse and denigration of them. Such violence against women is a symptom of a sick society. We in the labour movement must fight to change this system which produces violent individuals, and which maintains a ruling class who can 'afford' the crime of rape and get away with it!

In true Marxist tradition, Trotsky said that "in order to change the conditions of life we must learn to see them through the eyes of women". Thus, only by winning over the confidence of millions of working class women and fully involving them in the struggle for a better deal in life, can we go forward towards the socialist transformation of society.

Yours fraternally
Lesley Maiden
Edge Hill LPYS

Mitterrand to attempt wage restraint?

Dear Comrades

I heard recently on Radio 4 that Mitterrand is going to attempt to bring down France's high rate of inflation. Thatcher and Reagan are fighting the same battle, so how will a socialist cope? First of all, he is going to hold down prices on one-third of the goods on the market for three months, then another one-third of prices will be frozen for the next three months and so on. So far, so good (well not too bad, but the prices are only being held by agreement, not law).

But he also intends that workers whose wages are at present index-linked and go up automatically with infla-

tion will lose this benefit and it will be replaced by yearly or twice-yearly bargaining. This can only be an attempt to keep wage rises below the rate of inflation and will lower living standards, putting those workers in a worse position under Mitterrand than they were under a right-wing government.

This is yet another example of so-called socialists attempting to run capitalism better than the capitalists and demonstrates quite clearly that there can be no benefit under the present profit system, whatever the colour of the government. Workers will only see an improvement when capitalism is dismantled and replaced by a planned economy run by the workers for the workers.

Yours fraternally
Helen Mullineux
Havant & Waterloo CLP



Police fail to hold back mass picketing during the famous 'Battle of Sattley Gates' during the 1972 miners' strike. After appeals from the NUM engineers in Birmingham struck for a day and joined the picket, closing down the scab coke depot in Sattley

WORKERS BACK A WORKERS' PAPER

The rail strike has seen the usual distortions and downright lies coming from the bosses' press.

Even the extremely bad weather seems to have been blamed on the drivers and footplatemen by the Fleet Street hacks. The fact that railway workers have to keep services going at great danger to themselves in all weathers seems to have been ignored.

Our paper is used to vicious attacks from the press and we will, as usual, report the truth as seen by the working class in the pages of 'Militant'.

And it's appreciated by workers who have been in struggle recently. A very welcome donation to kick off the New Year is £100 from the Staffa Products Shop Stewards Committee in Leyton—regular readers will remember our recent reports and interviews about their factory occupation.

And from the London Transport Building Joint Convenors' Committee, Bro. C J Murphy writes "...This Committee supports you in the face of the right-wing witch-hunt. We believe that all socialists have a right to belong to the Labour Party. We thank you for the support given to

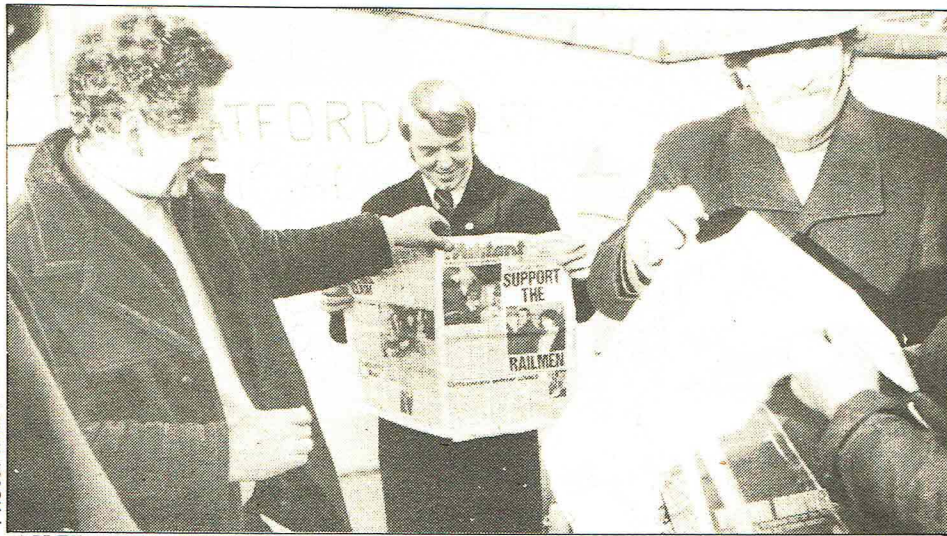


Photo: MILITANT

ASLEF members at Stratford, East London, read 'Militant'

us in our recent dispute by your paper and comrades. We enclose a £5 cheque for your funds. Yours fraternally, C J Murphy, Senior Convenor Steward".

Thanks to Manchester supporters who have got off the mark quickly, with a fiver from Wythenshawe LPYS, and collections at Macclesfield Labour Party, including J Plymen and R Frankling. Other fivers include J Stewart (Warrington) and J Planken (Southampton), with tenners from P&M Dinsdale (Camberley) and D Moscrop (Bristol), and £15 from A Fraser, also Bristol.

About half of the money promised to be 'on the way' from the end of last year has already arrived, in-

cluding £45 from four Boo-ble supporters and a tenner from M Dodds, (Boiler-makers' Steward, Sunderland), but where's the rest? Don't delay, post to-day!

Amounts of £18.60 came from lunch-time refreshments in Ealing, and £5.89 from sale of badges in Norwich. Liverpool Edgell supporters sent in £32.35, while from Teeside we've had contributions from members of Thornaby CLP, and from K Mellis (ISTC).

We know there have been problems with the post in the last 2 weeks—both because of the weather and the rail strike, so we're confident that the coming weeks will see the trebling

of this week's total, of £644 which, on average, will be needed to reach £35,000 by April 11th.

In fact we need £2,800 per week now. In view of last week's £9,100 this should be EASY—if all our readers help us! Send in what you can afford now, and ask any other readers to do the same!

And if you think of (legal) ways in which we can raise money, but don't see them mentioned in this column, why not drop us a line? If we can tap your brains as well as your pockets the Militant Fighting Fund will grow and enable a big step forward for the ideas of Marxism in the labour movement.



Photo: MILITANT

Staffa workers in their sit-in last autumn. The shop stewards committee have donated £100 to 'Militant'

Marble and Iron

Polish filmmakers have been singled out by the Polish military dictatorship as being 'counter-revolutionaries'.

Apparently TV and radio reporters were far more understanding of 'the needs of Poland'. So understanding of his own needs was the ex-director of Polish Television that he had a private villa in Kenya, private yacht and a secret slush fund.

Two films of Andrzej Wajda, *Man of Marble* and *Man of Iron* were recently shown on BBC TV and you could see why the bureaucrats were worried about the impact of film. *Man of Marble* followed the attempt of a trainee TV producer to make a film in the mid-1970s about what happened to a 1950s shock-

worker.

These workers were used by the Stalinist bureaucracy to demonstrate team brick-laying and inspire other workers to greater efforts. The story of the shock-worker himself is both inspiring and tragic.

He leads a team of bricklayers to establish a new record and lay 30,000 bricks in a shift. At one of their demonstrations, a red hot brick is passed to him, badly burning his hands. Not realising how his skills have been exploited, he bitterly comments: "How could a worker do this to another worker?"

He challenges the disappearance of another worker, and is arrested himself. The poster of him, showing his achievements in exceeding production targets is taken down. Having been cynically used by

the bureaucracy, he is discarded and discredited in a 'show trial'.

At every stage the trainee producer meets opposition from higher-level bureaucrats who oppose her film. At the end she is denied the right to make it.

She discovers that the shock-worker is dead, but the film does not tell how he died. It just shows her talking to his son at the Lenin shipyard at Gdansk.

Implying that the shock-worker was killed at the officially-denied Gdansk demonstrations of 1970, it was still impossible for Wajda to state so openly in 1976.

He had to wait four years to make the sequel. By that time the cracks in the Polish bureaucracy which had opened up after the workers' movement of 1976, had been thrown wide

open by the rise of Solidarity.

Man of Iron is the story of the shock-worker's son, forged by the titanic struggles of the Polish working class. It is told through the experiences of a cynical TV reporter sent to spy on the Lenin shipyard. This film finally tells what happened to the 1950s shock-worker and why the bureaucracy wanted it suppressed.

It ends in optimism, tinged with concern that the regime may break its agreement with Solidarity. Including live newsreel and Walesa acting as himself, it is a remarkable film on the formation of Solidarity. If you missed either film, and you have a chance to see them, don't miss it.

By Peter Davies

CLASSIFIED: 5p per word, minimum ten words.
SEMI-DISPLAY: £2 per 2 column centimetres.
All advertisement copy should reach this office by SATURDAY.

ads

"What We Stand For" Meetings

STEVENAGE: Thursday 28 January, 8.00 pm, Committee Room 1, Stevenage Leisure Centre. Speaker: Clare Doyle.

WARE: Wednesday 3 February, 8.00 pm, Garden Room, Priory, off Ware High Street.

SWANSEA Militant Public Meeting: 'Fight the Witch-hunt!' Hear: Peter Taaffe (Editor, 'Militant'). Monday 25 January, 7.30 pm, Main Hall, Dynevor School, Swansea

EAST EDINBURGH: Monday 1 February, 7.30 pm, Brunton Hall, Musselburgh. Speaker: Peter Taaffe (Editor, 'Militant'); Chairman: Keith Simpson, (Musselburgh Labour Party).

SHEFFIELD: Friday 29 January, 7.00 pm, AUEW House, Furnival Gate, Sheffield. Speaker: Ted Grant (Political Editor, 'Militant')

BRADFORD Militant Readers' Meeting. 'What we stand for'. Hear Ted Grant (Political Editor of Militant) at Room 1, Floor 2, Central Library, Bradford, on Monday 25 January, 7.30 pm.

WARRINGTON: Tuesday 26 January, 7.30 pm, Midland Hotel, Winwick Street, Warrington. Speaker: Terry Fields (Fire Brigades Union EC, personal capacity)

WALLASEY: Monday 8 February, 7.30 pm, Wallasey Labour Club, Church Road, near ferry. Speaker: Derek Hutton (Liverpool Labour Councillor)

MANCHESTER Militant Rally 'What we stand for'. Speaker: Peter Taaffe (Editor, Militant). Chairman: Eddie Furey (FOC SOGAT). Wednesday 27 January, 7.30 pm, Hulme Labour Club, Bonsall Street, Hulme, Moss Side, + exhibition showing growth of 'Militant'.

GRANTHAM: 26 January, 7.30 pm, Oxford Hall, Grantham. Speaker: Brian Ingham (Militant Editorial Board) + other speakers.

DERBY: Thursday 21 January, 7.30 pm. Speakers: Dave Nellist and Malcolm Bryan (NUR) at Trent Social Club, Charnwood Street.

SUTTON IN ASHFIELD: Thursday 28 January, 7.30 pm. Speaker: Brian Ingham. At Sutton Centre.

NOTTINGHAM: Wednesday 27 January, 7.30 pm. Speaker: Brian Ingham. Albert Hall Institute, Derby Road.

LONDON Irish Social. Sat. February 20th, 7.30pm. "Crusheen" as at LPYS Summer Camp, and other guests and stars at Fairholt house, Whitechapel Road (opposite Aldgate East Tube). Tickets available from Anne Beales: 474 6584, £1.50 and 50p unwaged (£2 at the door).

'Introduction to Marxist Economics'—South Yorks reprint of original. 35p each or 10 for £1.80 inc. p&gp. P Greatrex, 14 Harcourt Rise, Chapelton, Sheffield.

MANCHESTER UNIVERSITY Militant Supporters Society.

Monday 25 January: 'What is Trotskyism?' Speaker: Tony Aitman (Liverpool Kirkdale Labour Party)

LEWISHAM Readers Meeting. 'What Militant stands for'. Speaker: Wayne Jones. 7.30 pm, Monday 25 January. Deptford Town Hall, New Cross Road, London SE14

LAMBETH: Monday 25 January 8.00pm. Lambeth Town Hall, Brixton, SW2

HACKNEY: Thursday 4 February, 7.30 pm, Hackney Labour & Trades Hall, 96 Dalston Lane, E.8. Speaker: Bob Faulkes (Hackney Central Labour Party)

EALING: Tuesday 26 January 8.00pm. Acton Town Hall (Council Chamber), Acton High St, London W3. Speaker: Willie Griffin (LPYS NC)

ENFIELD: Wednesday 27 January, 8.00 pm, Enfield Co-op Hall, 446 Hertford Road, Enfield Highway, Middlesex. Speaker: Peter Jarvis.

BRACKNELL Militant Readers Meeting. 'What we stand for'. Thursday 21 January, 7.45 pm, Griffin House (opp. Red Lion pub), High Street, Bracknell. Speaker: Peter Jarvis

SOUTHAMPTON: Monday 25 January, 7.45 pm, St Matthews Church Hall, St Mary's Road (off Six Dials roundabout), Southampton. Speakers: Tony Sanois (Labour Party NEC 1978-81); John Kelly (T&GWU Fords, Southampton).

EASTLEIGH: Monday 8 February, 8.00 pm, Labour Rooms, 69 Leigh Road, Eastleigh. Speaker: Alison Hill (Gosport Labour Party)

PORTSMOUTH: Thursday 11 February, 8.00 pm, Labour Party Rooms, 84 Kingston Cres., North End, Portsmouth. Speaker: Nick Brooks (Southampton Labour Party)

GOSPORT: Thursday 11 February, 8.00 pm, Labour Club, 145 Brockhurst Road, Gosport. Speaker: Cathy Wilson (Labour's Prospective Parliamentary Candidate, Isle of Wight)

YEOVIL: Thursday 4 February, 8.00 pm, Labour Club, Vicarage Street, Yeovil. Speaker: Nick Brooks (Southampton Labour Party).

POOLE: Wednesday 27 January, 8.00 pm, 'Retreat Hotel', Ashley Road, Parkstone, Poole. Speaker: Alison Hill (Gosport Labour Party).

1981 MILITANT Index. Precise guide to issues 534-582. 20p each (+ stamp). Orders: Rich Lee, 28 Harrington Road, Bridlington, Humberside.

Militant Marxist discussion groups, every fortnight in Waltham Forest. For details contact: Janice Dale or Mike Cleverley (01) 519 0961.

BLACKBURN Womens Council present—North West Spanner Theatre Company in "Symptoms", a women's cabaret about present day women's health care. Friday 29 January, 7.30 pm, £1 entrance (50p unemployed). Union House, St Peters Street, Blackburn, Lancs.

Industrial Reports

NSMM Youth Conference

The crisis in engineering is the basis of the chaos in society. All aspects of this will be discussed at the National Society of Metal Mechanics' Youth Conference this weekend.

What is posed at this conference is how young workers can fight back.

Youth in most unions are not given a voice, so it is important that we give clear answers. Resolutions from the delegates will cover all topics, but then this must be linked to a fighting programme against this government and its system. Only by seeing the need to fight for a real socialist change is the answer, not only for the major problems facing us but also the day to day problems in the factory. Socialism is not an idealist approach, but a necessity if we are to use this conference for the benefit of workers, young and old alike.

If we want a future this youth conference should mark the start of a campaign in the union, and then by the union in the broader movement, for real change within society.

By Steve Glennon
(Delegate to NSMM
National Youth Conference)

Cleaners occupy bank

More than 50 women cleaners, members of the Civil Service Union began a sit-in at the National Savings Bank, Cowglen, Glasgow on January 8. The defiant women began the occupation when they learned that 'Contract Clean, Scotland' who had won the new 3 yearly contract would only offer work to 37 of the 107 cleaners employed at the bank by the previous company.

Mrs Margaret Morrison Vice President of the CSU speaking on behalf of the protestors blamed government cash limits for pressuring management into accepting the lowest submitted tender and consequently being responsible for throwing the women, some of whom have worked at the bank for 12 years, on to the unemployment scrap heap. Messages of support and donations to: Mrs M Morrison, c/o Trade Union room, National Savings Bank, Glasgow G58 1SB.

Jewel Razors

Workers at Jewel Razors, Sheffield have been on strike since last year. In a blatant attack on the newly-organised AUEW branch, management enforced two redundancies—one was John Cunningham, the factory convenor!

19th century conditions exist in the factory which contravene the AUEW safety handbook. The handbook states that minimum working temperature should be 60°F. The workers at Jewels have been forced to work in temperatures as low as 53°F and have to warm their hands on the hot dryers in the toilets!

These conditions demonstrate the need for a union, and in a show of solidarity with their convenor, the workers walked out. They were immediately sacked. In a recent article in the local paper management warned of further redundancies and said that "loyalty to the firm would be taken into consideration." As one of the strikers put it "if we go back in their without a union they will walk all over us."

Vosper Thornycroft

This week the management of Vosper Thornycroft Ship repairers in Southampton, put forward to its already depleted workforce proposals for new work practices. They include getting rid of the Shop Stewards committee and replacing it with a new works committee with management representation; flexibility (get-

ting rid of trade rights) and disposing of the two tier system for mates ie semi-skilled and unskilled, all of whom will be paid the lower rate of pay.

They will also be put into a pool of mates and will not be working with the trades as before ie fitters mate, plumbers mate, painters mate, carpenters mate. The tradesmen will have to take pot luck as to whom they will get! Management say that this will make the yard more productive. Workers will also have to clock on from the ship instead of at present from the yard gate.

There will be a ballot this week where the workers will be asked to agree. Those who do not agree will be considered to have sacked themselves!

It is believed the future for Southampton as a major ship-building, repairing and container port is in the balance. What the Tories would like is for Southampton to be changed into a Marina. But workers must fight redundancies to protect their future and their children's future. Once a job is sold for redundancy payments it can never be bought back.

Local Authority workers' pay

Despite the recommendation from the General and Municipal Workers Union's executive, the Liverpool, North Wales and Irish region local authority manual workers overwhelmingly rejected an employers' offer. A resolution condemning the decision by the executive to recommend the offer, was carried unanimously. Other regions have still to vote on the offer, amounting to just over seven per cent. The trade union side's decision will be conveyed to the employers later on in January.

Brighton busmen fight new rosters

The snow and ice wasn't the only reason the streets of Brighton were relatively free on Sunday January 10. On that day 300 bus drivers from South down's Conway Street, Hove and Whitehawk, Brighton depots started an indefinite all-out strike.

The dispute is over new rostering arrangements. At present the drivers work Monday to Friday with weekend working as voluntary overtime. Management want to introduce a flexible 7 day roster, which will drastically cut overtime and cut the average driver's weekly wage by £30.

Management hypocritically claim that they want to introduce the new rosters to create 30 new jobs, besides cutting the wage bill. Yet only last year the busmen threatened to go on strike when management re-organised the bus services and threatened 200 redundancies!

The response, not surprisingly, has been total. Both the TGWU (who have made the strike official) and management are expecting a long dispute.

Donations and messages of support to TGWU District Office, 20 Church Road, Hove, E. Sussex.

A 'lovable' occupation

Over 300 women workers at the Lovable Bra factory in Cumbernauld, Strathclyde, occupied their factory on January 8 in protest at not receiving sufficient guarantees of their jobs' future. 123 workers were made redundant after the bosses called in the receivers late last year, but the stewards stressed that the factories future is far from secure.

Senior shop steward Sadie Lang said defiantly "We will not budge until we are given a guarantee of no more lay offs". The local Trades Council has offered help and there is widespread support in the town, which suffers the same plight as all other Glasgow overspillers, of high unemployment.

Steelmen prepared to fight

Most firms in Scunthorpe do not charge their employees for travelling to work on the works bus. Not so with British Steel!

By a British Steel worker

I work at the Scunthorpe BSC works, but living in Grimsby I have a round trip of 60 miles a day. Two years ago we paid £3 a week and now the fare is £8.50.

What's more, we don't get paid for travelling time. When I'm working on the early shift (6am—2pm), the bus picks me up at 4.10am which means getting up at 3.30am. I don't get home after work until 3.30pm—12 hours on the go but only paid for 8 hours!

The works itself is a very hot and dusty place. The steel in the ladles is heated up to a maximum of 1700°F. It gets so hot that the special heat visors worn often melt and the special protective clothing has been known to smoke and burn. All this in one of the most modern steel plants in the country!

Safety is almost non-existent. A few weeks ago, I complained of oil leaking on the platforms we work on. I saw the foreman, the union rep, the works safety officer, and finally the works manager. Four weeks later and still nothing has been done to stop the oil leaking.

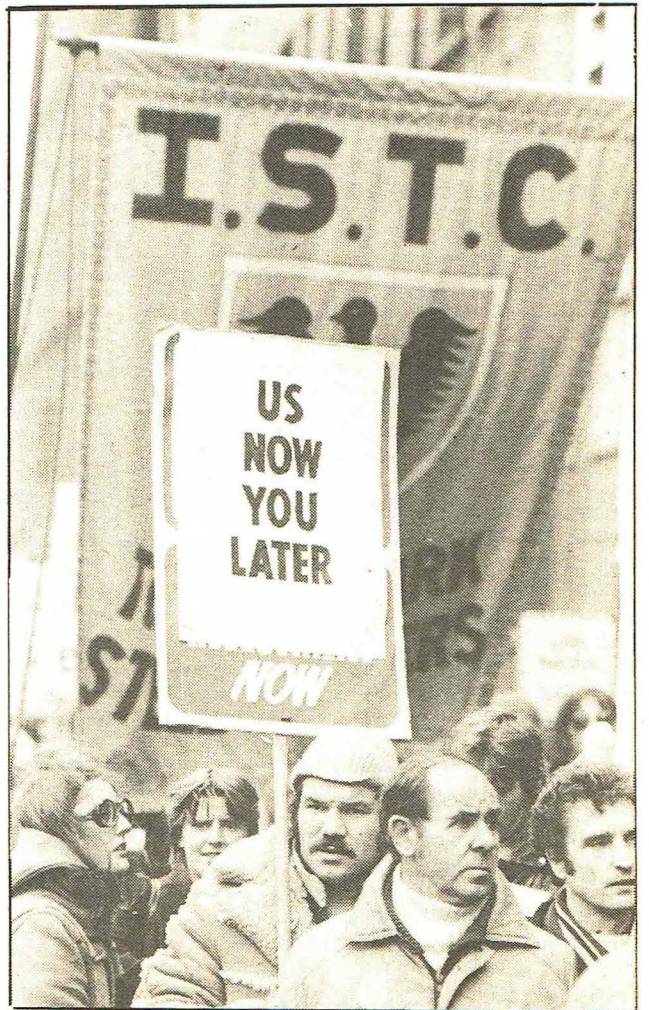
The only way to get anything done is for the workers to stop the job. For example, we had been standing on handrails to reach

fittings for the lances because the platform wasn't high enough. Eventually we said enough was enough. All four shifts refused to work under these conditions any longer and within 24 hours a new platform was erected.

Unfortunately this does not happen often enough. After the national strike, and with it 13 weeks of scrimping and saving, we went back for 11%. Sadly, apathy set in for quite a while and thousands of jobs went down the road. But the mood is now changing.

Although we have seen one plant in Scunthorpe close down, when management asked for a further 50 redundancies, the men's response was "so far, no further". An immediate overtime ban has been imposed and everyone is prepared to go further if necessary. The same thing is happening in other plants up and down the country from Ravenscraig to South Wales.

It's not only the redundancies that have provoked such a response. Two years ago, we were producing an average of 45,000 tonnes of steel per week. The job was then manned for a two 'vessel' (steel producing furnace) operation. Then McGregor said we were overmanned and there was no market for so much



Steelmen demonstrate in the major battle of 1980. Now the mood to fight is returning Photo: MILITANT

steel. Men were made redundant. Not long afterwards, the job was then remanned as a 1½ vessel operation. Gradually the tonnage increased until October 1981, we averaged over 60,000 tonnes a week!

More steel, for which there wasn't supposed to be a market, produced by less men. That is the true meaning of productivity deals—unemployment through the back door.

The job should have been

stopped there and then. However, the fight is starting again on the shop floor. We have the fighting traditions from the last strike, but as for the leadership, we look with envy at the NUM and their new leader, Arthur Scargill. However, through the Triple Alliance and the struggles that lie ahead, the union will ultimately throw up a fighting leadership that can stop the Tories plans.

MINERS £100 – modest claim

“Joe Gormley has recommended the membership accept an offer of 7%—for a workforce that produces the cheapest deep mined coal in the world”.

So Arthur Scargill, at a meeting of miners in Barnsley, expressed his dismay at the stand taken by Joe Gormley, the retiring president.

Senior officials of the National Union of Miners were speaking to secure a 'yes' vote for possible industrial action in the present pit head ballot.

Mr Scargill then moved on to the anomaly of private contractors working within the coal industry. Men employed by these companies earn £2—300 per week carrying out duties similar to miners employed by the National Coal Board, who receive around half of that sum.

The NCB offer is equal to an increase in take home pay of £4-20p per week for the lowest paid surface

workers. This sum is put into perspective when research carried out by economists at Sheffield University reveals that Geoffery Howe's mini-budget will cost every family in the country £10 per week.

Mr Scargill carried on, the Price and Taxation Index introduced by this government "to give a clearer indication of the relative spending power of workers", shows that an increase of 15.6% is required

merely to stand still.

A contrast was drawn between the £100m offered to 230,000 miners and the £70m offered to colliery management who are far less in number.

A demand for the implementation of the shorter working week promised to miners in 1919 was coupled with a call for retirement on full pay for all employees at 55. Both these measures would create much needed jobs.

In reply to those who

label the unions demand as excessive the president levelled the fact that to restore the purchasing power of miners wages to the level of 1974 would require a surface minimum wage of £110 weekly; "From that point our claim of £100 can be seen as moderate!"

By Kevyn Williams
(NUM)

personal capacity

CPSA Broad Left to pick candidate

Local Broad Left groups of the Civil and Public Services Association will be meeting over the next month prior to a special Broad Left conference in London on January 30th, to discuss the left candidate for the post of Deputy General Secretary, the election of which will be held soon.

The left has an excellent chance of winning this election. The recent General Secretary election result pulled 28,000 votes for the left candidate, John Macreadie and showed what

can be done with a hard campaign.

This result was reached despite a scurrilous press campaign which alleged ballot rigging by the left, although not one single shred of evidence to support this was produced. What makes John's achievements even greater was the fact that he was standing against the union's Deputy General Secretary, Alistair Graham, who as the heir apparent enjoyed an enormous advantage.

This conference must set

the tone for a hard united campaign within the union with the Broad Left uniting around the candidate selected at the conference and building on the base set up during the General Secretary campaign. The left can win this election. If John Macreadie is chosen as candidate, as 'Militant' supporters believe he should, we have a strong candidate.

By Bill Boyle
(Secretary,
Broad Left)

'BR don't want workers... they want slaves'

'There is no way we will accept the new rostering proposals. We will not give up our 8 hour day—otherwise in a few years we will be back to a 12 hour day.'

There is a 100% support for the rail strike in Bristol. Fred Jones of Bristol ASLEF told Bryan Beckingham why there was solid support;

At the 1981 conference we passed a resolution that said under no circumstances will conditions be eroded through productivity deals. The new proposals could mean 6 hours one day and 10 hours another to make up the average. Specimens of the new roster show some weeks with 28 hours and another at 48 hours per week! In November we should have brought in the basic 39 hour week. This was delayed with union agreement because of the British Railway's pleas of poverty.

They can already roster our work up to no more than 9 hours with a guaranteed 8 hour day now. If we go over 8 hours we get overtime; with this new

scheme we will not be paid overtime. We will lose money.

By longer rostering they can make us go further, especially with the '125' trains, and hence more miles, so this definitely means a loss of jobs. If we give in on this they will want to turn Sunday into a normal working day. They also want to bring in split shifts which will mean 4 hours at the peak in the morning, a break, and then four hours in the peak in the afternoon. In other words they want a split.

The media have said that we have never given anything on productivity. Unfortunately, this has not been so. In 1955 we had 85,000 footplatemen; today there is only 28,000. All those men and jobs have gone.

Every depot in the country is united in fighting this one. British Rail management have chosen and issue which affects every ASLEF member. We will never give up the 8 hour day—the 3% 3% is irrelevant to this.



Guards, members of the NUR, vote for action at the London Bridge meeting

The lies of BR management and the Fleet Street press that it is only the locomen fighting flexi-rostering, were quashed this week.

On Monday NUR guards on the Southern Region showed their anger at the new proposals. At London Bridge (Central Division) meetings were held for each shift. The afternoon shift did not go into work that day, and the earlier shift took action on the Tuesday morning.

At both meetings an ASLEF member was present to spell out what they were fighting for, and why

the NUR should take action.

The decision taken by the London Bridge guards follows the vote by the Streatham Hill guards to stage a 24 hour strike on Friday January 22, combined with a lobby of Unity House, the NUR's headquarters. As one member said, "Members were enthusiastic after the meetings. This could snowball now—all that was needed was a bit of a lead."

A Streatham Hill member said, "We felt strongly about the proposals, called a meeting, and voted for strike action. We have formed a Guards Committee to organise opposition to flexi-rostering.

"We didn't want it at all. The NUR's annual general meeting last year voted to instruct the executive to negotiate for the elimination of the nine hour rostering system, to that of eight hours.

"We will be contacting and are hoping to get other depot's support for the lobby on the 22nd."

Like the drivers, guards suffer the unsociable hours. "I see my boy once a week sometimes. Now they want us to do over eight hours. They tell us we'll get more rest days, but we can't afford to take time off anyway. If we did, they wouldn't have enough staff to cover trains to run a service."

Bro Nelson, a London Bridge guard backed this up when he said, "If we are 'spare' we can be moved in starting time by up to two hours each way—on 7am 'spare' you could be starting 5am one day and 9am the next. If that isn't flexible, what is?"

As they pointed out, unlike ASLEF, which stood by its members, NUR members were told to accept the proposals by the leadership, not asked.

However, the attacks are bringing railwaymen together as never before.

Martin Elvin spoke to NUR guards

UNSOCIABLE HOURS

Even at present the hours worked by train drivers are unsociable, and would only be made worse if the BR bosses plans went through.

Tim Mitchell, an executive member of the Birmingham ASLEF branch, and his wife Bonney talked to Bill Mullins of the problems they face.

Tim: Even at present the hours we work allow no possibility of any social life.

Bonney: I have to leave notes around the house for Tim. I don't know when he will be home.

Tim: One example. Last week we worked from 7.40pm to 3.40am. This week 8.40pm to 4.40am. I don't know what worktimes I'm doing next week. On top of which every third or fourth week I have on 'spare'—which means the two hour leaway each side of the starting time.

BM: What would it be like under flexi-rostering?

Tim: It will be intolerable. The thing is, with proper planning all journeys could be completed in 8 hours.

Bonney: I never see him now. When the kids were very young they used to cry when Tim came home—they didn't know who he was.

BM: How do you think things will go?

Tim: The men are not going to give in. I've never seen them so angry, nearly every branch has supported the action. Many have called for an all out strike. As for linking up with other rail unions, local NUR officials are not very sympathetic but the rank and file are raging at Weighell. But we have no tradition of linking up at local level. We are looking forward to hearing how to do this at Wednesday's meeting (a meeting of readers of 'Militant' in Birmingham on January 20, with speakers from ASLEF and the NUR).

For the two days of the strike, Holbeck depot in south Leeds has seen a complete standstill on activity, with the deisel

locos standing in silent rows. The strike has been 100% solid in Leeds as a whole with some pickets being withdrawn when no-one turned in for work.

The BR plans will mean more jobs to go. Already due to the cuts (local freight traffic cut by over 50%, depots and sidings axed or under threat such as Hunslet sidings where management want a reduction to one shift per day) drivers are having to travel from as far away as Hull to come to work at Leeds. This means travelling over the previous night for those on early shifts. The BR proposals in practice would mean possible effects on safety due to tiredness.

Even the local management have admitted that the BR Board's proposals would be difficult if not impossible to run; and the drivers agree that with better scheduling of trains there would be no basis for the flexibility plans at all. And if the management try on the tactic of suspensions, said the drivers at Holbeck, then the strike should become all out indefinitely.

Bill Wynn spoke to Howard Smith

Scotland fights

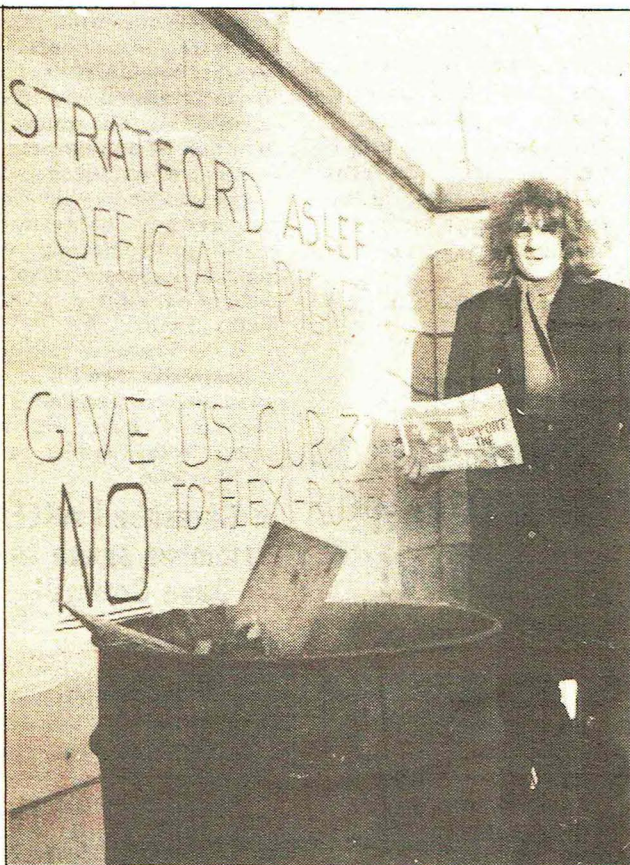
There is a real fighting mood in Scotland. Even depots never known before for their militancy are calling for all out strike.

Depots like Inverness and Fort William, want all out strike; these usually moderate depots also want to withdraw snow ploughs right away and so shut the lines! There were many questions to John about the dispute, and criticism levelled at the union executive about calling a two day strike and overtime ban instead of all out action. A motion supporting the fight against flexi-rostering was carried without a single person against.

Another motion calling for more action to be called by the executive and calling for a work to rule at the Eastfield depot up to the 48 hour strike this was also passed.

This dispute is crucial for the workers in the railways. As John Walker said "it's not workers that the BRB want; it's bloody slaves".

By David Chapman (Glasgow ASLEF)



An ASLEF picket, 'Militant' in hand, outside the Stratford depot in East London

NUR votes for action

Like London Bridge, NUR members at Ripple Lane Depot, Barking, voted to reject the introduction of flexi-rostering recently accepted by the union negotiators, and have sent a telegram to NUR leader Sid Weighell informing him of their decision.

"We are just not going to operate it," said Davy Jones, a local NUR secretary. Even if one of our members are sent home for non-co-operation, we will be out!"

"Mr Weighell should have organised meetings to get the feeling of the

members. The deal is for the management, not us. It sounds a good idea to get an extra day off every 8 weeks, but if the hours they knock off each week is at night it mean in the end that we will lose money.

"We need more accountability in this union. I have been a union rep since 1964, and I have to stand every 2 years for re-election. If Mr Weighell is confident that he is carrying out his members' wishes, he should do the same."

By Maggie McGinley and Alan Watson



THE GREAT TRAIN ROBBERY

continued from front page

starting time will be. And that's under the present arrangements. British Rail want to make it even more flexible.

It's even worse when you get a starting time of 4am.—it's 2am to 6am. in the morning.

Obviously, it affects your family life—it can't do any other. I find as you get older you learn to live with it.

The biggest effect of un-social hours is on the young people in the industry—and we have always had a large turnover. Girlfriends are not prepared to wear you going to work 4 in the morning—possibly including Saturday and Sunday.

ASLEF, together with other trade unions, were involved in bitter protracted disputes about the 8-hour day. As a result of those battles we won the 8-hour day in 1919 from the old railway companies—who were not particularly benevolent. Now they intend to take it off us.

There's been a great change in what's required of a driver. It's easier, it's more comfortable, it's cleaner. But the driver now has to have a massive amount of technical knowledge. The pressure is there, especially if something goes wrong.

During the current weather conditions the nice warm comfortable modern cab is great. The trouble is that half of your time is spent out of the cab in telephones finding out what is wrong, sometimes assisting in clearing the points. Recently I've spent half of the shift up to my knees in snow.

If the Executive calls for a total strike then I'll be on total strike. Certainly the feelings I have will be shared by the footplate men in Newcastle.

A Gateshead ASLEF member spoke to Dave Cotterill

HOT RECEPTION FOR THATCHER

MINERS HOLD THEIR FIRE

Pickets outside Kellogg's factory, Trafford Park, Manchester, protesting against Thatcher, 15 January. Workers walked out while management showed the Prime Minister around a deserted factory. At nearby Salford University, the media interviewed Thatcher about the return of her prodigal son from his Saharan escapade—while students and campus workers protested at Tory cuts which will hit Salford (with a high proportion of science and technology courses) harder than any other university.
 Photo by John Smith (IFL)

Send a donation to Militant NOW!

Subscribe Now!

BRITAIN & IRELAND 26 issues... £8.00	13 issues... £4.00 52 issues... £16.00
EUROPE (by air) 26 issues... £9.00 52 issues... £18.00	REST OF WORLD (by air) 26 issues... £14.00 52 issues... £28.00

Name

Address

Make cheques payable to MILITANT and return to the Circulation Department, MILITANT, 1 Mentmore Terrace, London E8 3PN. Bulk orders available, sale or return.

The Tories and big business are breathing a deep sigh of relief now the prospect of confrontation with the miners over pay is receding.

Their dread of a miners' strike was voiced recently by 'The Times'.

If the NUM went into battle against the Tories, they commented, miners would receive the support and sympathy, not only of other organised workers, but also of the unemployed, who are bearing the real brunt of Thatcher's policies.

A miners' strike—the bosses fear—could mean a repeat of 1972 and 1973/4, with the pits at the forefront of a general movement to defeat a vicious, anti-working class government.

In December, a special NUM conference almost unanimously backed the NEC, rejected the NCB's offer (which meant a cut in living standards) and authorised the Executive to call an all-out strike "if necessary."

As we go to press, however, reports from the coalfields indicate that there has probably been a vote against strike action, with the traditionally militant areas voting for action, but other areas accepting the of-

By Brian Ingham

fer. If this is true, the capitalist media will gloat that, despite Scargill's victory in the NUM's presidential election, there is no support for militant policies to protect miners' jobs and living standards. But they will be made to eat their words.

Gormley helped Tory campaign against action

Today many militant miners are expressing disappointment at the lack of clear-cut support for action. But they remain convinced that if the NCB dares to come forward with a similar offer next year, or if the Coal Board tries to implement widespread closures, there will be enormous support for national strike action.

Last year, remember, the Tories only avoided a head-on collision by capitulation on the issue of pit closures.

The feeling among miners that the NUM leaders were



Joe Gormley, outgoing NUM president opposed miners' action in the Tory 'Daily Express'—pinned up on pithead noticeboards by NCB management.

only trying to wrest from the NCB a couple of percent extra on top of the existing offer has also influenced the ballot. They have concluded that a major battle is not worth the sacrifice at this stage.

Big business was trembling at prospect of confrontation

At the special NUM conference in December, delegate after delegate stressed the need for a bold campaign throughout the coalfields to answer the media and weld the miners together around the original claim.

But such a campaign has not taken place. The union's right-wing officials have either ignored the decision or gone against it. In other areas like South Wales, the recent snow and flooding have made such a campaign impossible.

It is also possible that some on the left took a positive vote for granted and therefore saw no need to continue the campaign put in for the presidency. Ezra, the NCB chairman, however, stalked the country threatening miners' jobs—and went largely unanswered.

And then, at the eleventh hour, came the disgraceful intervention of Joe Gormley. Unity and firm leadership are vital in any struggle against this ruthless government. Yet Gormley allowed himself to be used by the Tory 'Daily Express' to undermine the fighting resolve of the miners.

Should the majority still come out in favour of action, even if it only just tops the required 55%, then all miners will loyally support any action called by the Executive.

Such a majority may seem unlikely now. But the Tories should be wary. The miners are far from being a spent force. Any illusion which the Tories may have to the contrary will be mercilessly destroyed in the not too distant future.