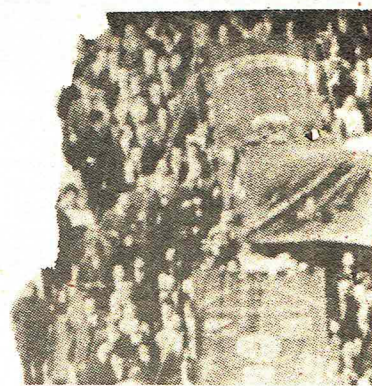


Militant

THE MARXIST PAPER FOR LABOUR & YOUTH

ISSUE 587
5 February 1982

20p



KILL TEBBIT'S BILL

ASLEF DISPUTE

ALL OUT ACTION NOW

John Blues has worked for British Rail for 25 years, holding, in his time, every office in the Perth branch of ASLEF.

Currently branch chairman, he is also a member of Section Council B, the body which negotiates with the footplate section of BR's Scottish Region management. John was interviewed for 'Militant' by Graham Blues, a member of Perth NUR:

"The British Rail Board have reneged on the 1981 pay award. The 39-hour week should have been introduced, according to the agreement, in November 1981. This has still to be brought into effect.

The 1981 pay award went through all the machinery of negotiation, including the independent tribunal of

ACAS. It was agreed it would be implemented in January 1982, backdated to August. But it is still to be introduced for footplate staff.

We work all around the clock, over 24 hours, in links of 20 or 30 different turns of duty. All of these are at different times of the day or night.

The 3% pay rise is not the main issue. The fundamental issue is the 8-hour guaranteed day.

The loss of the 8-hour day would eventually lead to the elimination of drivers' assistants as we know them. It has been estimated that at least 4,000 assistants would be made redundant at a stroke.

Eventually, through the 'trainman concept', both drivers' assistants and guards grades would disappear.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

The Tories issued a declaration of war on the trade unions last Thursday when Tebbit presented to Parliament his so-called Employment Bill—a package of reactionary plans to fetter the unions.

By Roger Shrives

The Thatcher government's new anti-union laws are intended to clear the way for a further driving down of workers' living standards. Trade union rights built up over decades of struggle would, if the Bill was to be implemented, be drastically undermined.

Determined resistance is the only possible answer from the trade unions.

The trade union leaders, the TUC and the Labour Party must mobilise the whole labour movement to defy the Bill, frustrating its implementation with united action.

Britain is already well on the way to becoming a "cheap labour" economy. In a league table of European, US and Japanese labour costs, British workers come 9th down the list.

Three million unemployed workers are now being paid, flat-rate benefits which have been pushed down, compared

to average wages, to the meagre level of 1951.

The Tories hope that by undermining the power of the trade unions to defend workers they can impose even worse conditions on the British people—in an effort to boost the profitability of big business and find a way out of the crisis they have created.

Under Tebbit's proposed law, judges would be given the ultimate right to 'decide' whether strikes were 'lawful'. A "trades dispute" is defined in the narrowest possible way. Solidarity action with workers in other firms, or in

TURN TO BACK PAGE

Witch-hunt Backfires: Our Support Grows

The media's campaign against 'Militant' has rebounded, as in the past—but this time on an even bigger scale!

The growing support for the Marxist ideas championed by 'Militant' is shown by the enormously successful meetings held around the country in recent weeks.

In Swansea, 300 attended our Readers' Meeting (page 5), while in Manchester 250 packed Hulme Labour Club (page 13). 'Militant' meetings have been held for

the first time in some of the smaller towns, with new people attracted by media attacks as well as our own publicity.

Workers attending these meetings have demonstrated their firm support by donating generously to our Fighting Fund, with collections of £351 in Manchester, £300 in Swansea, and over £1 a head coming from many smaller but no less enthusiastic meetings.

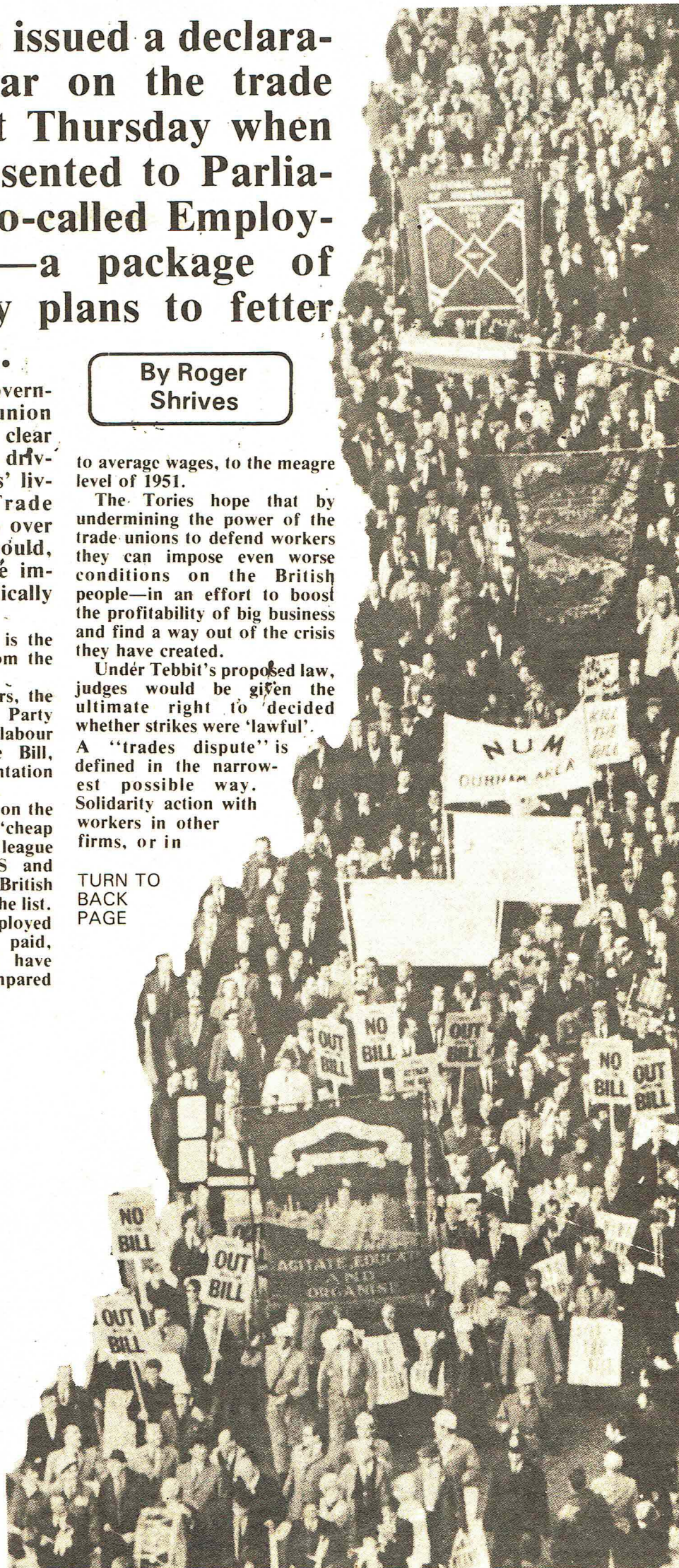
To take our ideas to wider sections of the labour movement and youth, as well as to counter the right wing's continued pressure for a witch-hunt, we need

this extra cash more than ever. Keep up the donations!

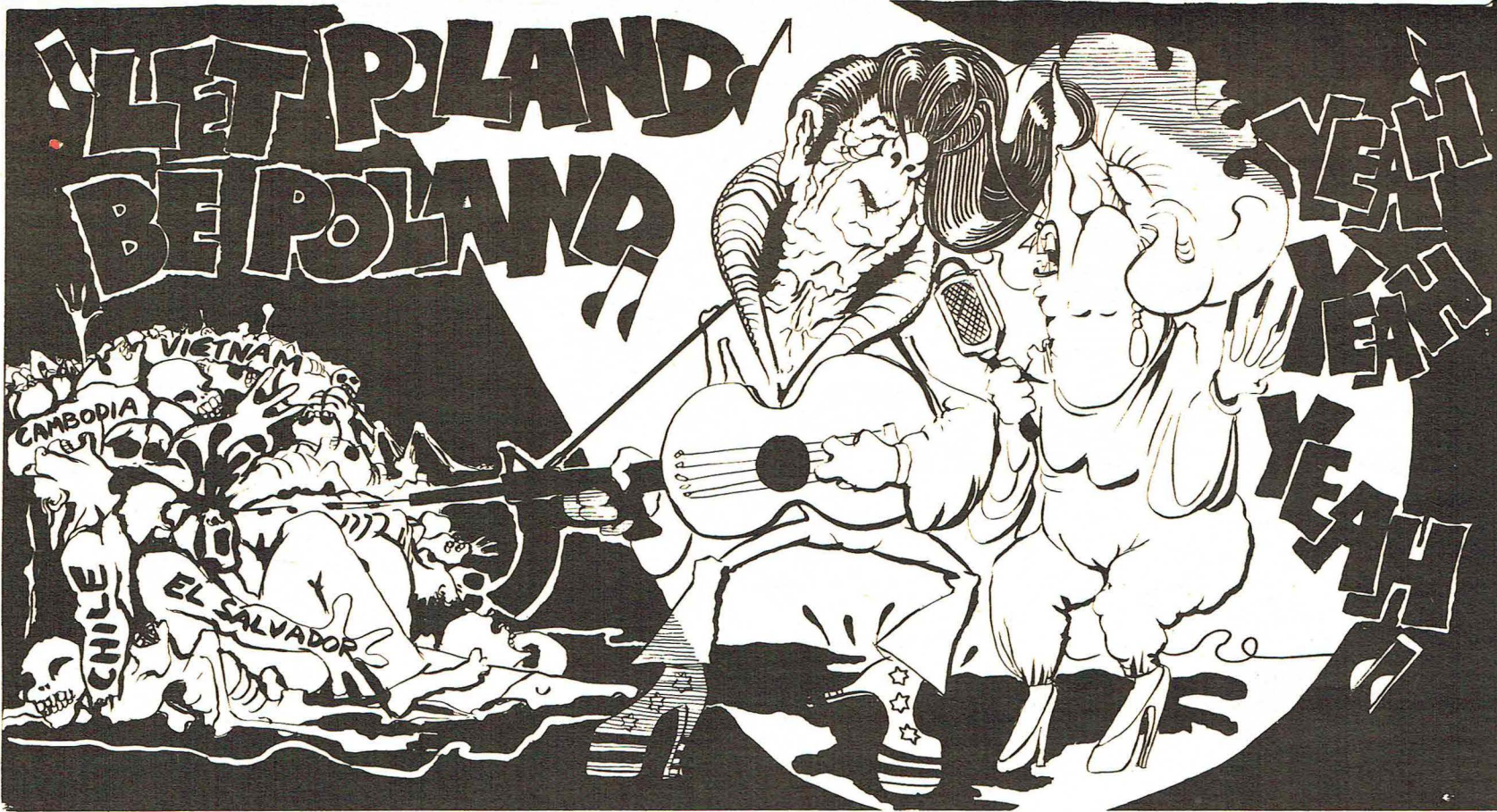
With increased interest in 'Militant' sales, too, can be pushed up. No worker should be deprived of the chance to buy our paper.

In South Wales last week, Jim Bond from Neath set a new individual sales record—162 copies in a week. What about the other areas? Surely there are contenders to take the trophy from South Wales (at least temporarily)?

Fight pay beds: NHS feature, pages 8 & 9



London, 21 February 1971: a quarter of a million trade unionists on the march against the Heath government's ill-fated Industrial Relations Act. That Tory government was brought down by the miners in 1974



ASLEF:
All out
action
now!
Continued from
page 1

pear.
ASLEF must win! The BRB are out to smash ASLEF as the voice of BR footplate staff.
The Federation of rail unions should be meeting now to set out a joint strategy to defeat this blatant attempt by BRB and the government to destroy part of the trade union movement.
In short, we will not accept any variation on the 8-hour day. Ray Buckton and the Executive Committee must take into account the anger of the grass roots railmen.
We cannot renege on this issue. It would set back the movement to Victorian times. ●

Can Reflation Cure Unemployment?

The Tories claim that their economic policies are now beginning to work, and the British economy is beginning to recover.

Even the 1% growth rate which the Treasury hopes for in the coming year will, of course, be a "recovery" by the dismal standards of British capitalism. But such a modest rise in output will not pull British capitalism out of its crisis. Nor will it provide any real consolation for the working class.
In spite of the small expected upturn in production, unemployment will continue to rise. All the capitalist economists are agreed on this.
"There seems little hope", wrote Robert Taylor in *The Observer* (31

January), "of any dramatic reduction in the numbers out of work in this country for the rest of the century whatever any political party might like to assert."
The Manpower Services Commission estimates that there will be 3½ million out of work by 1986. The TUC, in this week's TUC Economic Review, predicts that there will be a 4.9 million "job gap" in the economy by 1986.
The Tories' current "economic recovery" can in no way falsify these predictions. They claim that there has been some improvement in investment. But the Treasury's own 'Monthly Economic Assessment' (January 1982) bleakly comments that "the recovery is...liable to be more than offset by further falls in the first half of 1982 and, overall, it is estimated

that the volume of manufacturing investment, including lease assets, will be slightly lower in 1982 than in 1982."
As far as big business is concerned, profitability is still not high enough to justify major new investment in Britain. This is confirmed by recent figures which show that since Thatcher's government removed exchange controls in October 1979, over £13 billion has been invested abroad by British companies and investment institutions. In the same period, only £7 billion of foreign investment came into Britain, leaving a deficit of roughly £6 billion.
Financiers and businessmen invest for profit, not for some notional "national interest", let alone in the interests of working people.
What is the way out for the working class? This week, the TUC publishes its latest Annual Economic Review.
The main plank of the review is a £8.3 billion recovery programme. This would provide for a £2.1 billion expansion of public

sector capital investment and big increases in spending on manpower, education and training, together with a massive expansion in social spending on the health service, pensions, and other benefits.
Any attempt to reverse the Tories' savage cuts in public spending would be welcome to working people. But will it solve the crisis of the British economy?

MILITANT EDITORIAL

In the first place, there is clearly no chance of persuading the Tories to adopt such a reflationary programme, and it is futile to assume that argument, propaganda, or even action will change their policies. Only action to bring down the Tories and return a Labour government can open the way to an alternative programme.
More fundamentally, however, the programme put forward in the Economic Review is based

on the fallacy that there can be a solution within the diseased framework of capitalism. On the basis of the present economic system, a £8.3 billion reflation would inevitably enormously accelerate inflation. Gains given to the workers, on the one hand, through increased public expenditure would be taken back, on the other hand, by spiralling price increases.
The limitations of the TUC plans, moreover, are clear even from their own figures. They say that 4 million extra jobs must be created by 1986—though this would still leave 700,000 registered unemployed! This huge figure is because of the new workers coming on to the labour market, as well as the loss of jobs in manufacturing industry and other sectors.
To achieve this an average annual growth rate of 3% would be needed. This is the sort of growth rate achieved by British capitalism in the boom period of the 1960s! What chance is there of achieving it on the basis of big business investment and capitalist profit-making in the present crisis situation?
The answer should be clear to all those who have learned the lessons of post-war Labour governments. It

was not possible to manage capitalism in the interests of the workers even in a period of boom—and it will certainly not be possible in a period of world economic crisis.
Labour's alternative must therefore be based on a fundamental transformation of the system. Only when the major means of production, now in the hands of a handful of big monopolies, together with the financial institutions, are in the hands of the workers so that a socialist plan of production becomes possible will there be a cure to the crisis.
All sections of the labour movement want immediate improvements in their conditions: an end to unemployment and redundancies, a 35-hour week, a £90 minimum wage. We all want to reverse the Tories' cuts in social spending, and enormously expand and improve education, the health service, housing and so on. In the coming months, if the slight upturn in the economy materialises, sections of the industrial workers will undoubtedly move into action on these issues.
But the labour movement must have a programme that would allow them to be implemented—this requires thorough-going, socialist policies

WORKERS LOBBY COUNCIL

Angry council workers expressing their anger last Wednesday (27 January) at Tory-imposed cuts in home helps for the sick and aged—and their disgust at the lack of a fight-back from Sunderland Labour council. In the council chamber, some of the 300-strong lobby, many NUPE members, showed their hostility to the Tories—and showered councillors with anti-cuts leaflets. "This lobby is only the start," NUPE members made clear: "The fight must be taken to the workplaces..."

Photo: Denis Doran



Explosion Under Ground

The deadly blast at Cardowan Colliery last Wednesday (27 January) once again brings home the striking disparity between the hazards daily faced by miners and their relatively modest pay rewards.

Forty-two miners were burned, seven seriously. Only days before, after a massive campaign against the NUM's call for action, the miners accepted the Coal Board's 9% offer which will mean a fall of at least 3% to 4% in miners' living standards.

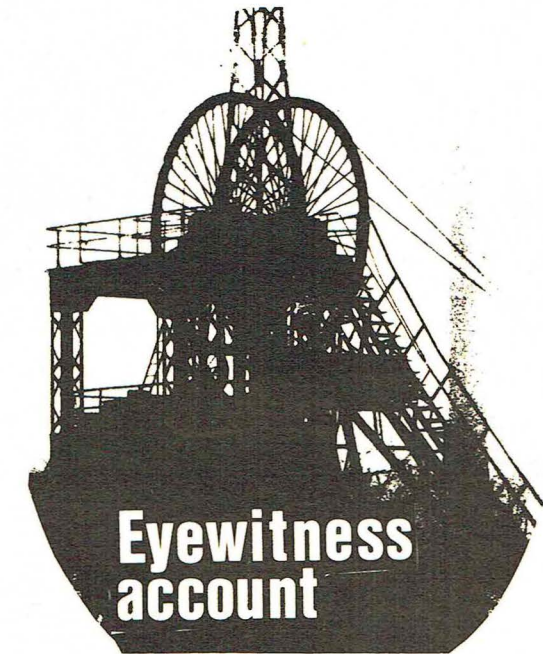
Tam McPhee is a young miner at the Cardowan pit, which is at Stepps, near Glasgow. He was amongst the first to reach the injured at the coalface after the explosion. A member of the NUM Scottish Area Youth Committee and Chairman of Garthamlock Labour Party Young Socialists, Tam has been a union activist for a number of years.

After the accident, Tam spoke to Eddie Phillips:

"At about 9 am on Thursday 27 I was underground at Number 2 pit, Cardowan colliery, walking towards the V52 section in my job as underground transport (tender) driver. Although I was at least half a mile from the coalface, I guessed there had been an explosion because of the change in the air and the atmosphere in the roadway.

Within minutes fumes, possibly poisonous, had reached my young workmate and me. We quickly retreated to the safety and welcome fresh air of the intake airway.

On meeting three other young miners, we immediately got hold of two stretchers, blankets and a first aid box, and made our way to the section.



Tam McPhee, a miner at Cardowan colliery, spoke to Eddie Phillips

Reaching V52 it was a disturbing and harrowing sight. Face workers were staggering out to the road and collapsing at our feet. Some just sat there disbelieving what had happened.

They were dazed and bloody with a sickly smell of burning flesh. So bad were the burns that we could not touch them.

We then began the slow process of stretchering the injured men up the pit in terrible conditions, wet and slippery, walking over 1 1/4 miles of uneven terrain.

The response of the miners, young miners in

particular, was magnificent. They worked together instinctively to get the injured men to safety as quickly and comfortably as possible.

The sight of my comrades with scorched skin literally hanging off their arms, and the obvious ordeal they had been through, is something I don't ever want to forget.

The hostility shown by the miners to the clamouring press on the surface was quite natural. Only two weeks before they were demanding that we, along with the rest of the workers, must take a cut in our standard of living. They told us we were "greedy",

"selfish" and "blackmailers", yet this week we were once again heroes and a different grade of men.

Typical bloody hypocrisy of the British press!

Just after visiting my injured comrades in Glasgow Royal Infirmary, I heard Sir Derek Ezra giving gentle hints that he may have to close Cardowan—not because of what happened yesterday, not because there's no coal, simply because it does not make a profit.

What a kick in the teeth to the men lying in those beds!

Cardowan's record as far as safety is concerned leaves room for improvement, but it is no worse than any other pit in Scotland. The introduction of the productivity bonus scheme has undoubtedly led to an increase in accidents underground.

The schemes set area against area and miner against miner. The majority of miners voted by ballot against the scheme, but the NCB ignored the result.

Can you imagine the reaction of the press had the union ignored the recent ballot and gone ahead with strike plans?

There are 40 years of coal reserves at Cardowan. If Ezra thinks he can use the tragic accident to close our pit he'll be met with the same response he met in February 1981.

Scargill said about pit closures, 'There is no Scottish area or Yorkshire area. There is a British area, and every single job will be defended.'

Let those words ring in the ears of Gormley, Ezra and Thatcher.

COVENTRY - LABOUR FIGHTS THE GLOOM

Coventry has changed from "Motor city" to a gloom city in less than 15 years.

Even the official jobless statistics showing one in six on the dole mask the real level of unemployment. Thousands of workers are not included, such as YOPs trainees.

For the 28,974 officially unemployed in the city there are 565 vacancies. The odds against getting a job are over 50 to 1.

One LPYS member gained national prominence last week, when after 17 months on the dole, he was featured on the front page of the *Daily Mirror*.

He had written to 130 engineering firms in Coventry, each time enclosing a stamped addressed envelope. Though he only received £20 supplementary benefit, the applications cost him £30 in stamps. Only 50 firms bothered to reply!

Within the next 3 months, 2,500 workers at BL's Coventry Engines Plant, Rolls Royce, and Bryco will lose their jobs. To these will be added the Easter school leavers. If the Tories remain in office, Coventry's unemployment rate will soon be over 20%.

Despair and hardship are increasing. Forty per cent of council tenants are now in rent arrears—three times the number eighteen months ago.

The local Evening Telegraph regularly carries reports of chronic damp houses, of increasing indebtedness and other strains

By Dave Nellist
(Prospective Parliamentary Candidate, Coventry SE)

suffered through low incomes or unemployment.

An 83 year old pensioner was found dead in her home on 22 January, after a fire. Firemen thought it had been started by candles she may have been using to save on power bills. The Electricity Board said that in the last 6 months she'd only used 52 units—that's less than £2.50 worth of electricity.

We urgently need to force the Tories to an early general election—and make sure that the next Labour Government implements policies that sweep away the suffering of the working class.

More and more workers are realising this, as can be seen from the dramatic increase in Party membership in Coventry South East.

The January Management Committee approved 77 new members—the highest monthly figure in living memory.

If the energy of Labour's rank and file could be matched by determined leadership from the TUC and Labour MPs, 1982 could see the downfall of the Tory government, and massive working class support for the carrying out of socialist policies.

Labour Party membership drive. Sunday 7 February. Meet at TGWU, Short Street (junction of London Road and ring road). 10.00 am. Crêche available.

YOPS and the 'Right to work' campaign

The YOPS Trade Union Rights Campaign, in which the Labour Party Young Socialists have played a leading role, is organising a Lobby of Parliament on Thursday, 25 February (details page 4).

The "Right to Work" campaign is also organising activity at that time, and has requested speakers on the YTURC platform. The following letter, sent to the "Right to Work" organisers on 30 January, makes clear the LPYS's position.



Photo: John Smith (JFL)

The YTURC activists' conference in Manchester on 23 January. Spearheading the fight to organise YOP workers.

Dear Brothers Deason and Roberts,

We received your undated letter on 19 January informing us of the activities which you are planning around the YOPs lobby of Parliament we are organising for the 25 February.

We were already aware of your plans from the January issue of the Socialist Workers Party's paper, *Socialist Worker*, and the collection sheet and leaflets you are cir-

culating around the London labour movement.

After examining your material we have come to the following conclusions:

We note that your leaflets make no mention whatsoever of the demands around which the lobby is being organised. The only demand on the first leaflet you produced was for "free travel facilities in London" for the unemployed. Your collection sheet states

that the lobby is simply "against Youth Opportunity Schemes".

Indeed, the most recent leaflet you have produced (entitled 'March on Parliament') says that "we can get YOP trainees to join a trade union and fight to turn the YOP schemes into a permanent properly paid job"; but it does not put forward any specific demands, and noticeably fails to state that the lobby is being

organised by the Labour Party Young Socialists. We cannot understand why there is no mention of the lobby's four demands in your propaganda, unless of course the 'Right to Work Campaign' disagrees with them.

In addition, we find it a somewhat surprising method of building the lobby to appeal to the London labour movement for funds for your march, which will only detract from our efforts to finance YOP workers from all over the country to the lobby.

As you make no mention of the lobby's main demands and give no details whatsoever of the mass meeting we have organised on the day of the lobby, we wonder exactly what is the purpose of the march you are organising in London during the five days leading up to the lobby?

Of course, we fully agree with the need to visit YOP schemes, dole queues, work-places, trade unions and Labour Party meetings to gather support for the lobby. Our own supporters have been doing this since the lobby was planned at the YOPS Trade Union Rights Campaign founding conference on 21 November 1981.

But when your march is apparently not being organised around any definite demands, it is hard not to draw the conclusion that it is intended to gain publicity for the "Right to Work Campaign" at the expense of dropping demands of the YOPs Trade Union Rights Campaign.

This belief can only be reinforced by the fact that we received your letter asking for co-operation nearly two months after the lobby was first announced, and after you had already set in motion your own plans.

Given these facts (especially the failure of your literature to make any mention of the lobby details, apart from an infantile cartoon showing YOPs "storming" Parliament) and the number of labour movement speakers already committed to address the lobby, we do not feel that we can agree to a speaker from the "Right to Work Campaign" to address the lobby from the platform. Of course, your campaign may well be able to address the meeting from the floor during the discussion and debate.

Yours Fraternally
Kevin Ramage
National Chairman.

PREPARE FOR YOPS LOBBY

Support is increasing for the YOP lobby of Parliament on 25 February organised by the YOP Trainees Union Rights Campaign.

This week backing for the lobby has come from the Labour Party National Executive.

The National Union of Public Employees nationally have given their backing and already a number of NUPE divisions have organised coaches. LPYS branches should approach local NUPE officials to ensure transport is being organised to the lobby from your town.

Already we've been informed of transport organised to bring over 1200 YOP trainees to the lobby. In Manchester the General and Municipal Workers Union are bringing two coaches.

On Merseyside YOP

By Willie Griffin
(Secretary, YOP Trade Union Rights Campaign)

trainees are planning to strike on 25 February and the Transport and General Workers Union have booked 100 seats on a train to the lobby.

In Barking YOP supervisors have decided to strike on February 25th and will organise transport to the lobby for trainees.

The lobby of Parliament is the beginning of a campaign to prevent Tebbit's 'Youth Training' proposals being introduced. LPYS members should contact as many YOPsters as possible over the next week to gain their support for the lobby.

One avenue that has been very fruitful is for LPYS members to approach local Further Education colleges to speak to YOP trainees on 'life and Social Skills courses'. This should be attempted in every town.

The effect of 3000+ YOP trainees and unemployed youth descending on Parliament will be electric—we aim to be more noise at Parliament than anyone else since Guy Fawkes!



YOP workers in the North East. Stop the Slave Labour Minister Tebbit before things get worse

Photo: Militant

Three weeks to go!

Every LPYS member and 'Militant' supporter should make arrangements to get to this lobby. It will be an event nobody will want to miss.

The lobby of Parliament is not the end of our campaign. It is only the beginning. Our demands are

- ★ No to Tebbit's proposals
- ★ Trade union rates of pay for YOP trainees
- ★ 35-hour week and five weeks holiday
- ★ A guaranteed job for all trainees

Cowboy bosses-toytown wages

Are you bored, unemployed and looking for a job? Why not get a job with a milkman!

Hours Mon-Fri, 5.15 am-10.00 am, Sat 5.30 -11.00 am. Wage £13 per week plus one cup of tea and a Kit-Kat each day.

Until recently this job, belonged to Billy, a 16 year old from Cowgate in Newcastle. He spoke to 'Militant' about his experiences.

'I'd worked on the milk for three years, part time when I was at school, and full time since I left school in June last year. I got paid £13 a week from the milkman.

"I got the sack the other week. I couldn't get home one night because the buses had been cancelled after it had snowed, and I missed work the next morning. When I saw the boss to explain what had happened he said "You only do that once to me" and said I was sacked.

"It wasn't fair, I'd worked hard for that milkman over three years in all weathers, sometimes I'd done double milk (for no extra money). At various times he asked me to help him out with various jobs and given me no extra money.

"The real reason he'd sacked me was that I'd asked him for a rise. He said

By Dave Archibald
(Newcastle West LPYS)

that he'd increase the money to the YOP rate of £23.50 a week, but he never did. Every time I asked him about it he said he was trying to get it sorted out through the books.

"My mam was furious when I told her and went round to his house to complain. She couldn't manage to see him as he'd gone on a Business/Holiday trip to Florida! Ever since then I think he wanted to get rid of me and was just looking for an excuse.

Sacked—for demanding YOP wages!

"All the lads on the milk are exploited. My mate Jimmy who is 15 and is still at school is getting £10 a week. I even know some lads who are getting £6 a week.

"It really affects you working on the milk. You're always tired. I'm sure I'd have got better exam results if I hadn't been on the milk. My mate Jimmy is always falling asleep at school, at dinner-time he goes home to get some kip.

He's even beginning to lose his friends. Every time they call round for him he's

asleep. Now they've stopped coming because it's a waste of time!

"Some of these small milkmen are cowboys, always fighting for more customers. My boss even pinched milk bottles from rivals, kept the bottles under the cab seat till they were sour, so he could swap them for bottles on somebody's doorstep to try and get them change milkman!

One of my mates worked for another milkman, and he had our bottles under his seat to pinch our customers! Competition is cut-throat. One bloke is even offering new customers 26 weeks free milk! The whole set up is crazy.

"Crazy" is the only word to describe a system which offers young people the choice of the dole or a lousy job at £13 per week.

GREETINGS

TOWER HAMLETS LPYS GREET LONDON LPYS CONFERENCE: "Victory to the railmen, defend the 'Militant', Labour to power on a socialist programme!"

MAN OF (TORY) IDEAS

By Geoff Darvell (POEU delegate, Leyton Labour Party, personal capacity)



Bryan Magee obvious and extremely embarrassing."

I have been a member of Leyton Labour Party for 17 years. I voted for Magee when he was chosen to replace Gordon-Walker as our candidate (when he won by one vote). I canvassed and delivered leaflets for him in all three elections since. If he had remained in the party and won the re-selection I would still have worked for his return to Parliament because I am loyal to the Party and respect majority decisions.

We feel absolute disgust for Magee's behaviour. The value to the capitalists of Magee and his like is their identity with the Labour Party. It is their antics which make Labour appear a divided party.

Leyton Labour Party is

a united party and is in an ideal position to expand its membership. Our future campaigns must be fought on policies, not on what might pass for personalities.

We must challenge Magee to a bye-election so that he can prove that he is the man of the people he claims to be! It was the local party who kept open Leyton baths, and who stopped Leyton's expectant mothers from being turned away from Whipp's Cross maternity facilities.

Magee's performance in the Staffa dispute which cost Leyton one third of its engineering jobs can only add to his weakness and not to his strength. No wonder he poses as a 'man of ideas': no-one will take him for a man of action!

When Leyton MP, Bryan Magee, resigned from the Labour Party at the local GMC he listed four main policy differences: his commitment to private medicine and private education and his opposition to unilateral disarmament and withdrawal from the EEC.

He refused to resign his seat in Parliament because "it would cost the local party a lot of money to fight and lose a bye-election." This 'concern' for the well-being of the party he has consistently attacked in both local and national press, and against which he will almost certainly fight in the next election was greeted with utter incredulity.

As a parting shot Magee had circulated amongst GMC members a copy of his recent 'Guardian' article, where he 'predicted' that the left (Marxists in particular) must inevitably degenerate into Stalinists in power. He went into lengthy philosophical points, even psychoanalysed the entire Labour left, then launched into personal attacks against his own party members—"They will perform whatever lies in their power to prevent any other view from being put, they will withhold the use of halls, break up meetings, shout down members..."

"I have only to look around me at the left-wing members of my own GMC and ask myself 'If society were run by these people and their friends, would it be a more or less civilised place—more or less open, free, tolerant—than the Britain we have now under this Thatcherite Tory government?' for the answer to be

THE VOICE OF SOCIALISM

Huge reception for Militant

An older worker, Bill Williams, aged 68, captured the feeling of the Militant Readers Meeting in Swansea.

It was, he said, the most magnificent meeting he had attended since the war.

On 25 January, almost 300 trade unionists and Labour Party members heard Peter Taaffe attack the right wing's witch-hunt of the Militant. The meeting hall was overflowing with miners, engineers, car workers, bus workers all sections of the local labour movement turned up to support 'Militant'.

Swansea has been picked out for special investigations by Labour's NEC, so local 'Militant' supporters organised a meeting for the editor of 'Militant' to answer directly the allegations made about the paper.

Due to the local re-selection battle and the publicity for 'Militant' there has been an enormous interest shown for the ideas of Marxism.

Tyrone O'Sullivan, secretary of the joint lodges of Cwman Valley, National Union of Mineworkers pledged the support of himself and his lodge against the attacks on the Militant. The audience were extremely enthused by the comments of comrade Taaffe as he lambasted the attacks of the right wing on the left of the movement.

**Reports by
Brian Lewis
and Nick Brooks**

The whole meeting was elated to take on the struggle to defend Marxism in the Labour Party. As we left the meeting, worker after worker pledged to transform the Labour Party and to fight to bring down the Tories.

The overwhelming support for Militant was shown when over £300 was raised for 'Militant's fighting fund and to cover expenses, a direct rebuff to those who say "where do you get your money from"? It's not KGB gold but money from the pockets of working people.

Under the pressure of the crisis, the bold ideas of socialism expressed by 'Militant' will gain a real echo. This is a new take off point in the growth of influence of Marxism. South Wales will once again be in the forefront of the struggle to transform society.

Southampton too had its biggest ever 'Militant' public meeting of 80 people, overwhelmingly trade union activists. The atmosphere of the



Demonstrating against Thatcher's government in Wales last year. The Tories have reduced areas like South Wales to an industrial desert. The pressure of the crisis is now pushing Welsh workers to the forefront in the struggle for socialism.

Photo: Militant

meeting was raised by the presence of the lights and cameras of BBC South, who filmed the whole meeting for a programme.

The speakers were John Kelly, a candidate for the council elections in May (that day he had been elected

on to the T&GWU delegation to this year's TUC Congress) and Tony Staton, the branch secretary of Eastleigh ASLEF. Tony explained why rail workers were striking, and how angry and determined his members were. He also praised the work of 'Militant'

supporters in his own Labour Party.

The third speaker was Tony Saunio, who outlined Militant's programme and the reasons behind the witch-hunt. Over £80 was raised for the Fighting Fund.

MILITANT SUPPORTER FIGHTS FOR LABOUR

"Who shall rule the country — the bankers or the workers?" With this headline in their local newspaper, Kirkdale Labour Party fought the 1931 General Election.

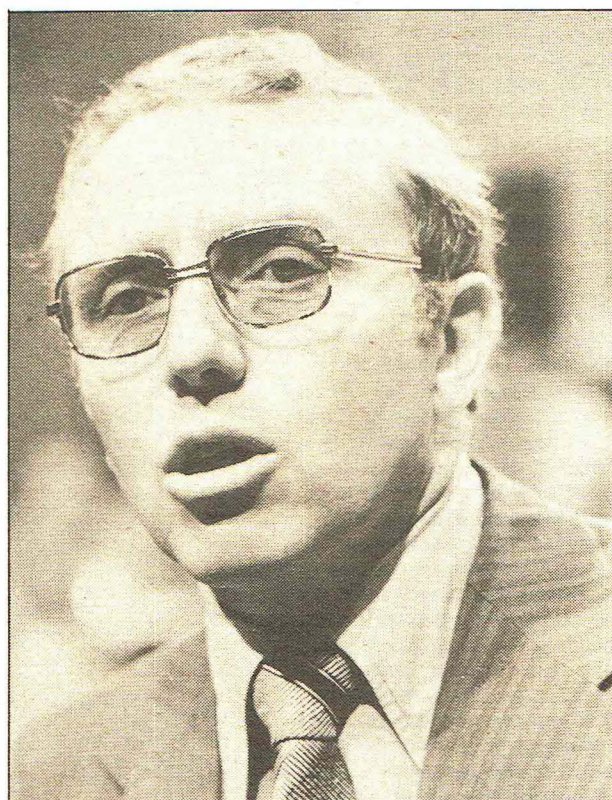
These words were quoted once again when Terry Fields was selected as the Prospective Parliamentary Candidate for Liverpool Kirkdale last Monday.

The sitting MP James Dunn defected to the Social Democratic Party, closely followed by the Chairman and ex-secretary of the Constituency Labour Party. The defectors claimed that Kirk-

**By Jackie Smith
(Kirkdale LP)**

dale had fallen into the hands of Marxist "infiltrators masquerading as Labour Party members."

Terry Fields has been a Labour Party member for 14 years, was a leader of the firemen's strike in 1977 and is a member of the Fire Brigades Union National Executive. He was democratically selected by the overwhelming vote of the delegates. The rank and file membership of the local Labour Party, many of them party members for years, selected Terry for his pledge to support the working class in their struggles to see a socialist society.



Terry Fields, new candidate for Kirkdale. A member of the FBU for 24 years and the Labour Party for 14 years, he was selected as a socialist and a proven class fighter.

Photo: Militant

But the real battle is only just beginning. The day after the selection, David

Croft, the Liberal's prospective candidate called on Michael Foot to refuse to

endorse Terry Fields because he would frighten off businessmen coming to Merseyside.

In an area fast becoming an industrial wasteland, where unemployment is now 19% of the population and where the Liberals on the City Council are responsible for the loss of 4,000 jobs, this is a hollow joke.

Kirkdale Labour Party will soon doubtless be organising a massive campaign of recruitment into the Labour Party. The Young Socialists already have 60 members, and will be actively campaigning for Terry. Leafleting, canvassing and public meetings will be planned in the immediate future.

Terry Fields, like the other Marxist candidates selected in Liverpool, Tony Mulhearn in Toxteth and Terry Harrison in Edge Hill, believes that the only way to bring down the Tory government and to defeat the Liberal and SDP block is for Labour to launch an energetic campaign.

We must and will fight for the election of a Labour government at the next election committed to carrying out a programme in the interests of the working class; a socialist programme.

Stop the Witch-hunt

The trade union's ranks, the class fighters at local level, want a struggle against the Tories and the crisis ridden capitalism system.

They do not want a witch-hunt against socialists who are an integral part of that struggle.

That is the message of the Suffolk area conference of the National Union of Agricultural and Allied Workers. Taking place just two days before the union's announcement of the overwhelming vote for merger with the TGWU, the resolutions covered a wide range of trade union and political subjects.

They passed a vote of support for the rail drivers' union ASLEF, and resolutions ranged from wages, safety on the farms (one of the most hazardous workplaces in terms of accidents) and the use of toxic sprays, to the EEC, nuclear power and nuclear disarmament, council housing and the cuts.

The role of the Labour Party Young Socialists was realised when they agreed to affiliate to the LPYS-backed YOPS Trade Union Rights Campaign.

They also adamantly opposed the NEC's decision to refuse the endorsement of Peter Tatchell and to institute an enquiry into Militant. It was felt that constituency parties had the right to choose their own candidates, in accordance with the rules of the Labour Party.

Brother Salmon, County Secretary, when seconding the motion, pointed out that the SDP started out as the laughably named "Campaign for Labour Victory" so who were they to talk of a party within a party?

Twenty of the thirty-five delegates bought a copy of 'Militant' showing that the recent media poison had not deterred the farm workers of Suffolk. They know who the real enemy is.

Also in the East Anglia region a very short but to-the-point resolution was passed at the GMC of the Sudbury and Woodbridge Constituency Labour Party on 23 January.

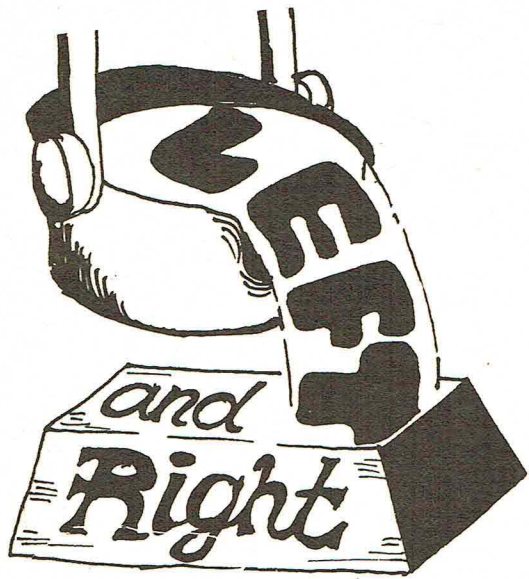
It said, "This party stands firmly opposed to: (1) The inquiry into 'Militant', (2) any attempt to reintroduce any form of bans or proscriptions."

It was carried by 37-4. One delegate summed up the feeling of the meeting with these words: "This party needs an inquiry like a hole in the head."

The London Socialist Education Association passed the following resolution, "The SEA oppose the Labour Party NEC decision to hold an enquiry into Militant."

"We believe this will be used as part of a general attack on the left in the Party. We believe all Labour Party members have a right to put forward their views, within the provisions of the Labour Party's constitution."

**Reports by Teresa Mackay
(Branch Secretary and delegate Tuddenham Branch NUAAWA, personal capacity)
and Trevor Harris
(Sudbury LPYS)**



Not on the News

Former BBC newsreader Kenneth Kendall is reported to be getting £10,000 for 3 days work making a food advert. He says that this 3 days' pay is 5/8th of his previous newsreaders annual salary. So he has ended a £16,000 p.a. job to sell us something we all have to have anyway—food! If he works an eight hour day he would be paid over £400 pounds per hour. This is about 700 times more than a YOP employee. Will such inequality be pointed out on the news?

Secret chemical warfare

Last year the Reagan administration in a welter of publicity accused the Vietnamese regime of using chemical warfare in Indo-China. But now it emerges that much of the damage done may result from the US clandestine and illegal spraying of defoliants during the Vietnam war.

Victims of the herbicide used, 'Agent Orange', include former US servicemen from Vietnam and a new book they are trying to publish shows that the USA secretly stored defoliants in the early 1960s, in breach of Geneva agreements. The Reagan government has tried to suppress the book's further revelations that defoliants were illegally used over Laos during the Vietnam war. In the first seven months of the war there were 200 flights, spraying 200,000 gallons. There was a sustained campaign to conceal this, with the US government considering telling pilots to wear civilian clothes and to fly planes with false markings.

Having broken agreements on biological and chemical warfare in the past, why should anyone believe that arms control treaties will be any better implemented in the future?

Czech price rise

It is not just in Poland that Stalinist regimes are in crisis. Last week the Czech regime introduced the steepest price rises for three decades. Meat went up, at a stroke, by 41%, poultry 15%, sea fish 26%, rice 100%. The price of meals in restaurants has risen by between 16% and 25%.

The impasse that the Czech dictatorship has reached in the absence of workers' democracy is shown by its failure to take the economy forward. This year investment will be cut by 3.3% and it is now officially admitted that none of last year's industrial, agricultural or construction targets were reached. Over the next four years 70,000 administrative workers will lose their jobs. And just to keep a check on the rapacious life-styles of some bureaucrats, and try to prevent criticism from below, it has been promised that official cars and expense accounts will be cut by between 10% and 30%.

Worse is on the way for Czech workers as long as they stay within a Stalinist system. The Russian nationalist bureaucracy have announced they are cutting oil shipments to Czechoslovakia by 2.5m tons this year, so more price rises can be expected.

50 YEARS AGO—

February 1932 began with seamen's strikes in Britain, Belfast, Derry, Dublin and Cork against cuts in pay and abolition of overtime. But then as now the bosses wanted to reduce workers' living standards to pay for the crisis within capitalism. They wanted to use the threat of unemployment to force workers down and they thought that trade union leaders should help them do it by acting as the policemen of the workers (just like the new Tebbit Bill).

In a half-page advert in the 'Spectator', fifty years ago this week, Belfast manufacturer, W A Ross and Sons Ltd stated: "It is the employers' duty to reduce wages when times are bad. It is the trade union leaders' duty to advise their members to accept lower wages rather than lose their jobs, and it is wisdom on the part of the men to realise that it is better to be sweated than to be starved, to take low wages than get no wages."

Now who does that remind you of?

RAGTRADE SWEATSHOP

Instead of fighting bosses for decent jobs and working conditions, textile union leaders have gone in for a joint campaign with the bosses to demand import controls. Below, car park at Leicester demo in 1980. On left union car, on right boss.



Photo: Militant

The textile industry bosses try to claim that they and their workforce have identical interests and must unite to 'save the industry'. Reality tells a different story.

A while ago my brother in law was 'lucky' enough to find a job in one of the city's hosiery firms. He had been unemployed since coming from Pakistan in December 1980 and was unable to sign on the dole for six months as the Home Office continued to hold onto his passport.

As his wife, my sister, was in her final year of college he was financially dependent on my parents. This would not have been bad a few years ago but now my father, after 23 years working in the Yorkshire textile mills and later for Midland Red Bus Company (with barely a day off) is 'home

By Nasim Aslam
(Leicester South LPYS)

ridden' with very bad diabetes.

He receives the princely sum of £63 per week invalidity benefit. So you can imagine the euphoria in the family when my brother-in-law, after months of trudging around the city looking for work, finally succeeded in getting a job.

The euphoria was short lived. The workplace was a privately run family business which owned three other factories in the city whose profits gave them three Mercedes and two 'W' registration cars!

My brother-in-law was expected to work a week without pay, so that he could learn the 'tools of the trade' (ie. fetching and carrying boxes!). He readily

agreed to this, being so desperate for any kind of work.

When he started he learnt that three workers had been sacked the previous week because they had asked for higher wages. He also discovered that the highest paid worker had been there for two years and only received £70.

At the end of his second week, his bosses in their wisdom decided to pay him nothing for the whole fortnight. After he had caused an almighty fuss they finally relented and gave him £20.

Tories' dream

He still carried on because the demoralising effect of unemployment was still fresh in his mind. After the third week he took home £39. The following week he worked an extra 15 hours overtime on top of the

normal forty hours, just so that he and his wife could get through the week.

But at the end of the week the bosses refused to pay his overtime money and told him that they no longer needed his services. When he tried to question the justice of this he was told to leave the premises or the police would be called. When he refused he was literally thrown out!

These are the kind of sweat shops that the Tories would like everywhere. It is a piece of cake for the bosses to degrade and insult workers in this way if there is no trade union breathing down their necks and especially if the worker happens to be an illiterate immigrant!

When you experience cases like this you are shown once again that the only way out is a fight for a socialist society where there will only be one kind of justice. Not one law for the workers and another for the bosses!

The rich tastes of the Queen

A recent 'exclusive' in the Daily Star of 19 January gave an interesting insight into the sort of inequality that exists in Britain today.

In the article entitled "secrets of the Royal kitchen", a former chef at Buckingham Palace told bemused "Star" readers of the eating habit of our monarch. He told how during the garter luncheon at Windsor in Ascot Week a staggering £2½ million worth of gold table decorations are used, including:

Antique plates—£600 each, crystal glasses—£250 each, solid gold sets—£1500 each.

This treacherous chef then went on to explain that when the royal family stay at Windsor, a different dinner service is used every day! It's silver on Mondays and Fridays, china on Tuesdays and Thursdays, and gold on Wednesdays.

Having captured the imagination of "Star"

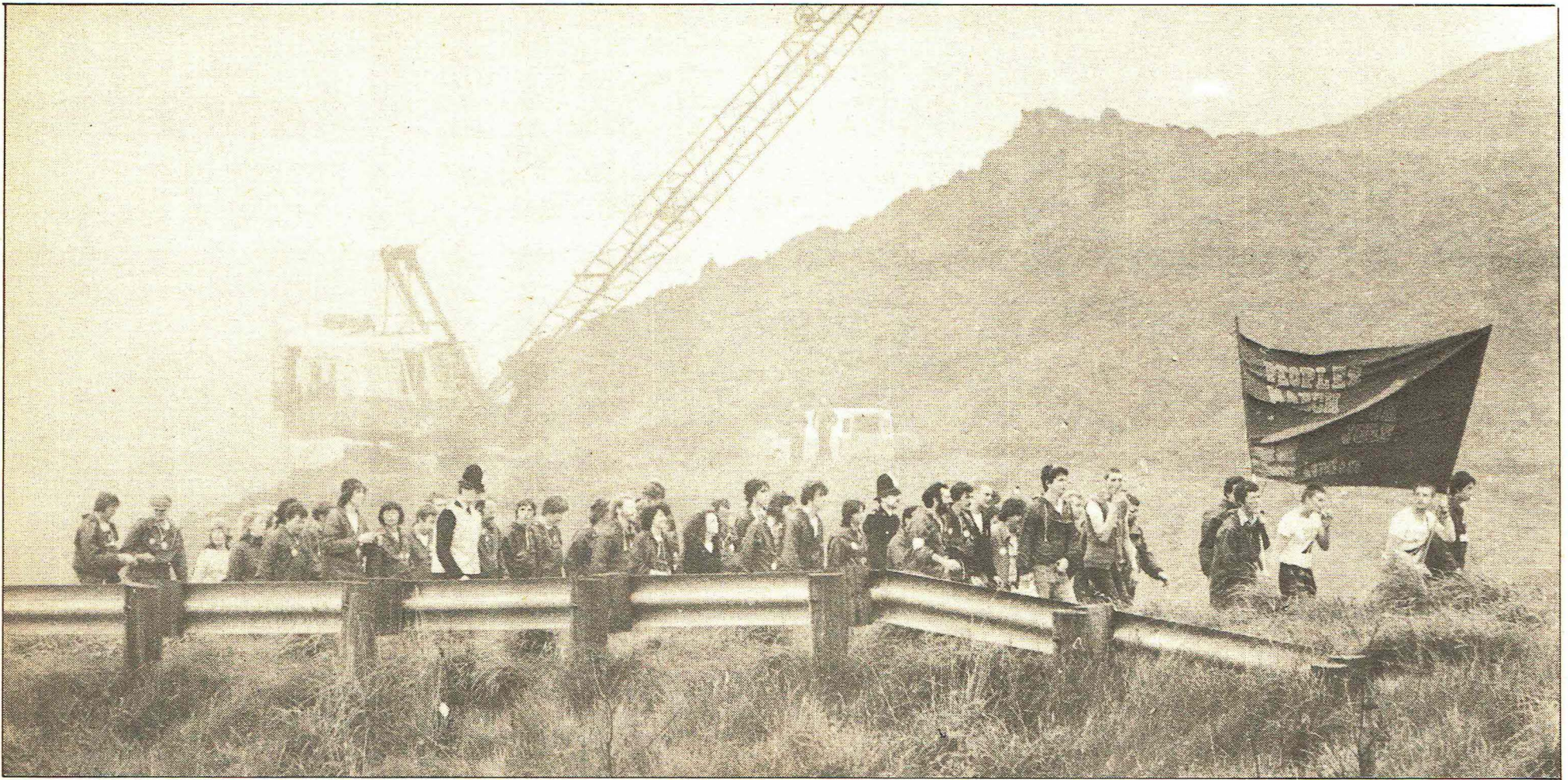
readers, the bold chef goes on to reveal one of Britain's best left secrets, namely that Prince Phillip only has a yoghurt for breakfast, while Lizzy always has eggs—scrambled, fried or poached—in a jewelled gold dish.

However, when it comes to favourite dishes, the Queen apparently likes nothing better than to get her gums round Lancashire Hot Pot; Irish Stew; Curry; Fudge and chocolate shortbread.

Our subversive chef did add, however, that the Queen always goes on a grapefruit diet after Christmas because she puts on weight from drinking and eating creme de menthe and Turkish delight. We certainly don't want a flabby head of state, do we? Anyone for another bag of chips?

By Stephen Wright
(Rutherglen LPYS)





Marching for jobs again. Last year's People's March near Nottingham. Photo: Sean Whelan (IFL)

The '30s are back!

"It begins to look as if the years of virtually full employment in the 1950s and the 1960s were an aberration rather than a new dawn."

This was how 'The Times' correspondent, Melvyn Westlake, described last week's record unemployment figures.

The 1930s have returned with a vengeance. In Britain one in eight are now out of work. In the USA the Salvation Army has started up soup kitchens again (see page 11).

In the western capitalist world there are now nearly 30 million people unemployed.

In the country of the post-war 'economic miracle', West Germany, there are now more jobless than at any time since the early 1950s. In fact in the last three months, unemployment has risen in West Germany and the USA nearly three times faster than in Britain.

In the post-war boom years Marxists were mocked when they argued that Keynesian economic policies had not fundamentally changed capitalism, and that crisis and recession would return.

Labour's leaders were convinced that the mass unemployment of the twenties and thirties would never re-appear. They believed that, with Keynesian measures, they could manage capitalism and eliminate the endemic boom-slump cycle of the past.

In 1944, together with their Tory and Liberal wartime coalition partners, they produced a White Paper which stated: "The government accept as one of their primary aims and responsibilities the maintenance of a high and stable level of

employment after the war."

In the following years, British capitalism benefited, like the other western economies, from the great expansion of world production and trade. All the major economies grew, in spite of the different policies pursued by national governments.

The world boom disguised the backwardness and relative decline of Britain. But as the long boom exhausted itself, this has become all too clear. The world-wide slump of 1974/75 revealed itself in a particularly acute way in Britain.

Unemployment in Britain rose above one million in 1975, during the time of the Wilson right-wing Labour government. Since the Tories came into office in 1979 unemployment has doubled. It rose above two million in 1980, and most economic forecasts now predict it will stay over three million until at least the mid 1980s or even the 1990s.

When the 3 million total was announced last week the Tories tried to claim that the economy was beginning to improve. But such has been the devastation wreaked by Thatcherite policies that no one claims that capitalism will be able to bring back full employment.

In the last three years, nearly a fifth of Britain's manufacturing capacity has been wiped out. The biggest decline has been in mechanical engineering, metal manufacturing and textiles.

Outside of manufacturing, the construction industry has been hardest hit, with 400,000 building workers on the dole. As in the 1930s it has been the older industrial areas which have been most affected by the recession. In Chester-le-Street in the North-East,

male unemployment now stands at 36.1%. Many women do not bother to register as they are denied benefit.

Seasonally adjusted figures show unemployment has now reached: 18.1% in Northern Ireland, 14.9% in Wales and the North, 14.3% in the West Midlands and even 9.7% in formerly prosperous East Anglia.

A marked difference between unemployment now and the 1930s is that this time Tory policies are hit-

ting the whole country.

The West Midlands survived the inter-war years with very little unemployment and prospered during the post-war boom. Now its manufacturing base has been devastated. Over the last year seasonally adjusted male unemployment has risen in the West Midlands by 46%, faster than anywhere else in the country.

But at least in some respects present-day Tories are the same as their 1930s

counterparts. They think that the unemployed have it "too easy."

In December, the Tory Chancellor, Howe, announced that his next Budget would see a cut of 2% in unemployed and social security benefit. Some thirty Tory MPs are so worried about the electoral effect of this that they have threatened to vote against the proposal.

The return of recession has begun to open up such cracks within the party of

the ruling class. But neither the Tory 'wets' nor Thatcherite 'drys' have any solution to the continuing decline of British capitalism.

As long as their system is allowed to continue, mass unemployment will blight the lives of millions.

By Jim Christie

Right Wing attack Militant — through Tribune

On 1 January 'Tribune' gave over a third of a page to an article entitled 'Why Huyton CLP believes that Militant Tendency and Labour are incompatible' by George Howarth, chairman of Huyton CLP.

It called for the expulsion of Militant from the Labour Party and whilst talking of defending the self-defined 'legitimate left', described re-selection as 'degenerating into hit-lists' and stated how the party had tried to ban leaflets from the local Youth Campaign Against Unemployment, even though Howarth called these leaflets 'harmless'.

So far 'Tribune' has failed to print the following reply which was sent to them on 4 January:

George Howarth's article on the attitude of Huyton CLP to 'Militant' is as appalling as it is misleading. There can be no doubt at

all that Huyton is a right-wing Party. It was one of the few CLPs that backed Denis Healey in the election of Deputy Leader of the Labour Party, and the Huyton Prospective Parliamentary Candidate even expressed support for the monarchy in a recent television interview.

George Howarth's mention of a 'Militant front organisation' is in fact a reference to the Youth Campaign Against Unemployment, which is sponsored by many MPs, many of whom are members of the Tribune Group.

Huyton CLP is in fact the last bastion for Labour's right wing on Merseyside, mainly as a result of the local government situation in the area. George Howarth is a Councillor on Knowsley Metropolitan Borough Council (my own employers), a right-wing Labour Councillor. Knowsley MBC extends into three Parliamentary Constituencies—Huyton, Ormskirk and Widnes, but Huyton CLP is the only party which falls entirely within the boundaries of Knowsley MBC.

The activities of right-

wing Councillors on the Management Committee of Huyton CLP do much to ensure its right-wing dominance. As a Labour Councillor, George Howarth and his fellows on the Labour Group voted in November 1979 to impose a 5% cut in expenditure. This move had the full backing of Knowsley's Tories.

The result of this move was to freeze posts in a Borough with an unemployment rate of around 30%, reduce Home Help services, increase charges for the Mentally Handicapped attenders of Day Centres and other attacks on the needy.

Knowsley Labour Councillors have persistently under-funded the Borough's Direct Works Department, supported the disciplining of their employees for abiding by officially backed industrial action, and George Howarth himself—in October 1980, as Chairman of the Housing Committee—authorised the disciplining of one of his staff for taking industrial action, a move which resulted in the first total strike of the local NALGO Branch.

At the same time as

doing all this, George Howarth and his fellows have found time to approve the expenditure of over £30,000 on the suite of Knowsley's Chief Executive, which included the hard pressed ratepayers of the Borough paying out £56 per roll for wallpaper!

Obviously, a record such as this is widely known amongst the labour movement on Merseyside, and George Howarth's record as a Councillor was in fact raised when he attended a selection meeting at Edge Hill CLP, resulting in his obtaining only one vote. No wonder his article expresses an ambiguous attitude to re-selection.

George Howarth and others like him in Huyton have chosen to do the Tories' dirty work, and are now trying desperately to silence the inevitable opposition to their antics in the Party by stifling democratic debate. Rank-and-file members should take note of the facts of the matter, and campaign even harder in the Party against cuts and witch-hunts from people purporting to be socialists.

Yours fraternally
Roger Bannister
Bootle,
Merseyside

PRIVATE MEDICINE LEECHING OFF THE NHS

HARLEY STREET W1
CITY OF WESTMIN

The National Health Service, inaugurated by the 1945 Labour government, is one of the most important post-war gains of the labour movement. Today, however, the health service is being devastated by savage cut-backs—when the need of the working people for health care is greater than ever.

"It is not our intention," claimed the Tories' 1979 Election Manifesto, "to reduce spending on the health services."

But in 1979/80, the Tories effectively cut £160 million from the NHS budget—through their refusal to adjust the cash limits to cover increased VAT, higher fuel prices, and pay awards.

Back-door cuts have continued through the Tories' insistence on totally unrealistic cash limits. In 1980/81 real NHS expenditure went up by 3%—but the imposition of a 14% cash limit contrasted to an estimated 18% rise in NHS costs. For 1981/82 the Tories have imposed cash limits of 6% for pay and 11% for prices.

In addition to the cash limits have been the moves to "redistribute" resources from allegedly "over-financed" health authorities to other health authorities—resulting in disastrous cut-backs in the inner-city areas where health care problems are most severe.

On top of all this have come the Tories' drastic increases in health charges.

"We have no intention to

raise [prescriptions] charges," said Margaret Thatcher at a Tory press conference in April 1979. But next April, prescription charges will go up another 30p to £1.30 for each item (it was 20p at the end of the last Labour government). This will amount to a 550% increase under the Tories.

They also intend to increase the charges annually in line with the cost of pharmaceuticals (the NHS's drugs bill, incidentally, is now running at well over £700 million a year).

These charges will inevitably deter many workers from visiting their doctor. The assault on the NHS comes at a time, moreover, when there is growing evidence that unemployment drastically affects the health of the jobless and their families.

Studies in the United States, such as Professor Brenner's, showed that in a society which experiences an increase of unemployment of over 1 million over 5 years there are likely to be 50,000 more deaths through general illnesses, 167,000 more deaths through heart disease, and 63,900 more admissions in psychiatric hospitals.

Needless to say, these findings have been challenged by reactionary politicians who want to minimise the effects of unemployment.

However, a pilot study sponsored by the DHSS in 1978 confirmed Brenner's conclusions as far as Britain was concerned.

"The main findings [summarises an article in the SMA's 'Socialism and Health', Nov/Dec 1981] from this pilot study were that health deteriorated in a number of members of the family following the event of unemployment, and that these subjective changes in health were not restricted to the breadwinner but were also experienced by the wives and children.

Tories are imposing back-door cuts through cash limits

"Some husbands and wives showed clinical features of moderate to severe depression, taking depressants, tranquilizers or sleeping pills supplied by their doctors. People who had experienced previous psychosomatic disorders such as asthma, psoriasis (a scaly skin disease), gastrointestinal complaints, insomnia and headaches, and had not been bothered by them for some time, had severe recurrences of these illnesses.

"Disabled people who had managed to keep their disabilities at bay through their working lives, suffered serious and rapid decline in their physical handicap."

The children of families hit by unemployment also suffered from a variety of illnesses, many of them, according to the report, "stemming from feeling neglected by their parents, who were totally taken over by the experience of being out of work and worrying about how they would provide.

"A number of children from our sample deteriorated in their performance at school, experienced more incidents of truancy and wandering, and sometimes showed uncharacteristic behaviour such as stealing from their mother's handbag or becoming more infantile and demanding. Some children were taken to their doctor because of refusal to eat, tummy upsets, diarrhoea, or general unmanageability."

Clearly, the cure required is socialist economic planning which will restore full employment and provide a basis for a much higher living standards. However, it is obvious that that worsening economic conditions, particularly high unemployment, will increase the need for health care.

This makes defence of the NHS even more urgent.

Apart from Tory cuts, the deadliest threat to the NHS comes from the growth of private health care, as the big health insurance companies (backed by banks and finance companies), the private hospitals and medical associations, and money-grabbing consultants move in to develop what they see as a growing field for private profit.

When millions of workers are thrown onto the dole, deaths and illnesses increase dramatically

With a national waiting list of over 600,000, it's hardly surprising that they can rapidly recruit queue-jumping clients.

During 1980 the number of people covered by private health insurance rose by over 800,000, the highest annual increase ever recorded. This means that there are now 1.6 million subscribers covering more than 3.5 million people (compared to 1.5 million in 1966).

This growth of private medicine cannot but be to the detriment of the NHS. Even the 'Financial Times', the mouthpiece of the City, admitted this recently.

The leading article in a special supplement on Private Health Care (4 January 1982) admitted "there are still major difficulties in the field of private medicine."

"One is the extent to which the private sector is involved in the profitable

business of short-stay acute surgery, leaving the NHS to tackle almost alone the enormously expensive problems of maternity, geriatric, psychiatric, long-stay and very complicated surgical sectors."

"Another major problem," it said in something of an understatement, "is the blurred relationship between the NHS and private sides. The private sector cannot avoid the charge that it robs the NHS of trained medical and nursing personnel while making no contribution to the cost of training them in the first place."

And this is only one aspect of the private sector's parasitic nature, as Alistair Tice's article shows.

The labour movement, and especially the health service trade unions, must campaign against private medicine—on the lines already being followed in Humberside and other areas.

Private medicine is a greedy, parasitic growth feeding on the body of the NHS

The labour movement must campaign for a reversal of all the cuts, the ending of charges, and a massive increase in the resources devoted to the NHS at every level. Hand in hand with this must go the fight for the democratisation of the NHS, with workers' control and management to ensure that the health service is run in the interests of working people.

DEFEND THE NHS!

NURSES FEEL THE STRAIN

Recently a patient himself, Steve Sanderson, chairman of Newcastle Central LPYS, tells of his own experience of the stresses caused by cut-backs.

After writing for nine months, I was finally admitted into hospital for a minor operation. There, at first hand, I saw the run-down of the National Health Ser-

vice, which seems to be proceeding at a faster rate than ever.

Though the nurses were obviously dedicated to caring for their patients, they were clearly hard pushed to do this. Short staffed, many nurses seemed to be on 12-hour or longer shifts with very few breaks, and they were pushed to the limit.

Though they attempt to conceal it, their physical and mental tiredness became apparent near the end of their shifts. Their lack of numbers meant that

they were denied the opportunity to give all their patients the individual attention they wished to give, and that patients needed. This led to great tension on the ward at times, both on the part of nurses and patients.

The cutbacks in the NHS were more clearly evident in other ways. Nurses often

Patients frequently have to help out with running the wards

had to enlist the help of patients to make their own beds, to collect their midday drinks and meals and even help clear away afterwards—at a time when they are supposed to be resting and receiving the 'best' care available!

The greatest irony was that although I had to wait 9 months for a bed—and other patients I talked to had waited anything from 6 months to a year—there were beds on the ward permanently empty. Later, another nurse told me that doctors often employ this

practice, so as to be able to admit fee-paying patients at very short notice! Words fail me when I hear of such abuse, given the long waiting lists that exist.

Because of the dedication of the nurses to their job, they are taken advantage of by the government in wage negotiations. I think these people should be amongst the highest paid in society—not the lowest as at the moment.

And it is incredible that nurses are being trained today to 'graduate' onto the dole queue, as hospitals are actually being closed. But a proper health service and adequate rewards for those who man it will not be

realised while society is organised on the basis of profit and not need, where the ability to pay is more influential in getting a hospital bed than medical priority.

Three days in hospital solved my problem, but made me more consciously aware of the wider problems working people face getting health care. Such a consciousness needs to be embedded in the entire labour movement if we are to achieve a real health service and proper rewards for those who work in it. No government under the present system will give us it out of choice—as the last twenty or so years have shown.



Fighting to save NHS facilities: Staff protest against the closure of the Royal Northern's casualty department, Holloway Road, North London (16 March 1980)

Photo: Mark Rusher/IFL

Fight pay beds!

Queue-jumping—for those who can afford it

The Conservative government's 1980 Health Service Act encourages Area Health Authorities to increase the number of pay beds and other facilities for private patients inside National Health Service hospitals. It invites Area Medical Committees (AMCs), composed of consultants, to make proposals towards this end.

Without a co-ordinated national campaign by the health service trade unions, these proposals have gone through unopposed in many Areas.

However, when our branch heard of draft proposals last August, for a 50% increase in pay beds on North Humberside, we immediately launched a campaign to stop these, which now seems likely to be successful.

There are now only five pay beds, but the consultants want to increase these to 32! The AMC admits that the local private nursing home in Hull, the Nuffield hospital, cannot take emergency cases, and does not have highly sophisticated equipment nor the support facilities required for many specialities. These can only be provided for in NHS hospitals.

In other words, they want to leech off the NHS which has been fought for and paid for by the working class. The AHC then talk of the "frustrated demands

By Alistair Tice
(NUPE Branch Chairman
Hull Royal Infirmary)

for private treatment"—but they are not prepared to invest to expand their private nursing homes to meet this.

The cutbacks in the NHS have led to an increased demand for private treatment, and now many consultants want cynically to exploit the NHS's remaining facilities and resources for their own private profit.

Their promises that the Common Waiting List of private and NHS patients will prevent queue jumping does not stand up to scrutiny. It is the consultants who decide how urgent an admission or operation is, and through private out-patient consultation long waiting lists can easily be overcome.

What about the "frustrated demands" of NHS patients?

If there was no advantage to going private, there would be no demand for private medical insurance schemes at all. Yet you only have to watch the advertising of BUPA to realise that by paying for treatment you can get your operation at a time convenient to you.

Supporters of private practice also argue that the NHS benefits financially through having more pay beds because of the charges made for the bed and services. They have never been able to produce figures to

prove this.

In fact, in 1974, revenue from pay beds was £14.3 million, whilst an estimate of running costs based on DHSS hospital costing returns was £21.5 m. In other words, the NHS was subsidising the private sector to the tune of £7m.

Similar figures more recently (for 1979) show a £4 million shortfall.

One of the problems has been to get the private patients to pay up! The Government has now stopped compiling figures of pay defaulters, and many have been written off as bad debts. In any case, the fees are not realistic as they do not cover full capital costs, and in many instances charges are never made, so the NHS foots the bill.

Our main concern in this campaign, however, has been to defend the principle of the National Health Service as a fully comprehensive service free at the point of need, without discrimination between patients. And it is the working class who are the main NHS consumers.

We see the proposed increases as the thin end of a wedge which is likely to get much bigger. The Tories have made clear their plans for health care—a two or three tier service with the private sector grabbing the profitable parts and the NHS holding the cinderella services, such as geriatrics, mental handicap and psychiatry.

There's not much money to be made out of old age pensioners! Whilst the Tories reward their rich friends amongst the consultants and BUPA, it'll be back to the charity hospitals for the rest of us!

It is precisely in the hardest pressed departments at our hospital, surgery, orthopaedics, operating theatres and out-patients, that the AMC want to introduce more

Fees from pay beds don't cover the real cost to the NHS

private beds and consultations. Despite their claims to the contrary, this would inevitably make NHS waiting lists longer.

There are over 12,000 waiting in North Humberside, and over 600,000 na-

tionally. So what about the "frustrated demands" of NHS patients?

Our campaign began with petitions inside the hospitals which gained overwhelming support from ancillary and nursing staff and amongst many junior doctors. The local labour movement was then approached for support which was forthcoming from the local Labour MPs, city Labour Party and Trades Council, as well as Labour and trade union representatives on the AHA and Community Health Councils.

Then our petition was taken onto the streets with leafletting and a loud speaker in the city centre. Nearly 10,000 signatures

have been collected, with older workers, in particular, who remember the bad old days before the war, eager to sign.

NHS trade unions organise a bold campaign to defend a comprehensive, free health service

The pressure of this campaign, which has had sympathetic media coverage, has even forced the District Management Team (DMT) to reject the AMC's proposals, even though we know that leading members of the DMT are personally in favour of private medical practice within the NHS.

This is significant, as in April, the DMT will constitute the reorganised health authority, so their decision should make the AHA reject the AMC's proposals. We will send a delegation to present our petition and urge rejection at the next AHA meeting in February.

If the proposals are not rejected, or a decision deferred to the new Health Authority, then we will have to step up our campaign, possibly with industrial action, to defend our National Health Service.



Photo: Militant

A word of sympathy from a nurse (at Bethnal Green Hospital just before the ward was closed down). Profit-motivated private medicine is not interested in elderly, long-stay patients

CIS Report:
NHS Condition Critical
Available from
World Books,
1 Mentmore Terrace,
London E8 3PN
Price £1.20 inc. post

Southern Ireland

THE CHOICE BEFORE LABOUR

ELECTION
FEB 18



The huge strikes and demonstrations against the burden of PAYE in 1979 showed the strength of the working class. If Labour mobilise this, they could win votes from the two Tory parties.

After only six months in office, the Fine Gael/Labour coalition government in the 26 counties fell on 27 January.

It was brought down by a vote in the Dail (Parliament) on the budget, with 82 votes against the government and 81 votes for, including the 15 Labour Party TDs (MPs).

This budget, one of the most vicious in the history of the state, proposed an 18% rate of VAT on children's clothing and footwear. Food subsidies were to be removed.

No more jobs were to be created in the public sector. Government spending in many departments was to be cut in real terms, and new levies were to be placed on wages and salaries.

The government's pledge to reduce the tax burden on PAYE workers was not carried out. In fact, an extra £30 million was to be collected from this sector in 1982. Overall, these budget measures would have raised the cost of living by about 6% and unemployment would also have been pushed up.

The budget measures reflected the determination of the big-business-backed Fine Gael Party to try to solve the country's economic problems at the expense of working people. The package was introduced not because of the vindictiveness of Fitzgerald, the Taoiseach (Prime Minister) or Bruton, his Finance Minister, but rather

By Finn Geaney

because of the needs of the capitalist system itself.

Already, Fianna Fail, the other big-business party which now hopes to be returned to government, have already stated that the budget they would introduce would be substantially the same.

The country's economic problems are acute. Inflation is over 20%, and 141,000 are officially unemployed, the highest figure in the history of the state. The balance-of-payments deficit is the worst of any advanced country at 14% of GNP.

The Exchequer's foreign debt this year will be £5,000 million. Seven years ago it was £92 million. The level of debt is so high that one third of all government revenue last year was needed to pay the interest charges. In fact, the rate of borrowing per head of population is higher in Southern Ireland than in Poland!

In the first half of 1981, the country's foreign debt rose by one third. All of these factors, combined with the high interest rate and a weak currency are now throwing the economy into disarray.

Both the Fine Gael (FG) coalition government and its Fianna Fail (FF) predecessor were desperate to find a way out of the

crisis. About £400 million was to be lopped off government spending in this budget, on top of the £326 million cut last July.

Yet the outlook still looks bleak indeed. It has been estimated that in 1982 Ireland will have the lowest growth rate of any of the OECD countries.

The general election on 18 February will be fought on the basis of facts and figures. The failure of the capitalist system will express itself in the price of children's shoes. The public sector borrowing requirement will be explained in the higher charges for milk and bread.

A serious mistake was made by the 15 Labour Party TDs when they each marched into the lobby behind Fine Gael.

Independent class policies

But this was the logical outcome of the Labour leaders' decision to join Fine Gael in a coalition which—as 'Militant' supporters clearly warned—could only base its economic policies on the cutting back of workers' living standards.

Labour's parliamentary leaders were, yet again, able to join Fine Gael in a government after they had managed to get the approval of the special Labour Party Conference last June. That Conference, however, voted by a small majority—and against the opposition of the trade unions and many of the most active sections in the Party—in favour of a coalition policy.

But the Party's Administrative Council has now correctly decided that the February general election should be fought on the basis of Labour's independent socialist policies.

A start can now be made in pulling the Party back to its rightful place on the side of working people and their families. Yet there are still some Labour Party leaders who believe that the Party's best chances in the election rest with the defence of the budget measures and the continuation of the coalition.

Not only is such an attitude fundamentally at variance with democratically expressed views of the Party, but it can only lead—if accepted—to a further decline in Labour's vote.

The coalition strategy has been disastrous for Labour. Fine Gael have always held the whip hand in coalitions, and right-wing FG policies have always prevailed. After every past coalition, Labour's vote has fallen.

Since it took the decision in 1970 to open the door to collaboration with the South's "second" capitalist party, Labour's percentage of the vote has consistently gone down. From 17% in 1969 to 13.7% in 1973 to 11.6% in 1977 to 9.93% in 1981. Labour's vote could possibly fall further—unless the party leaders face up honestly to their fundamentally wrong approach in the past.

Even at this eleventh hour, Labour could raise its prestige among working people if the Party was unequivocally to turn its back on a coalition and fight on its own policies—such as

nationalisation of the banks, the 35-hour week, the £90 minimum wage, and its programme for public works.

Labour has a base in the organised trade union movement, with 16 affiliated unions. Campaigning on a clearly explained socialist programme, Labour could win a considerable amount of support away from both the capitalist parties, Fianna Fail and Fine Gael.

Make the bosses pay for their crisis!

Of course, the economic problems of the country have to be faced. But there is an alternative to the approach of this and previous governments.

Firstly, it must not be working people and their families who are made to suffer because of the failings of the capitalist system.

In our present society the vital decisions regarding levels of investment, living standards and jobs are not made by the mass organisations of working people or for that matter by governments. They are made by a handful of banks, financial institutions and privately owned major industries, which dominate the economic and commercial life of the country.

It is the capitalists' system, they should pay.

However, increased taxation of the ruling class in society, while it would be a more equitable approach, would not solve the basic problems. Only the public

ownership and control of the big industrial and financial institutions could lay the basis for a rational plan of production to meet the needs of the country.

The Labour Party already stands for the nationalisation of the banks and sections of industry. But such policies must no longer be hidden away behind woolly talk about "national crisis" or "financial rectitude". There is no "national" crisis, but a crisis of the capitalist system.

Labour must support workers' struggles

In the period leading up to the coalition's downfall an Independent TD, Jim Kemmy, an ex-member of the Labour Party, achieved much prominence for his defence of food subsidies, his attacks on indirect taxation, his call for measures against the banks and opposition to back charges on essential commodities.

These are all Labour policies. Why was it he and not the Labour Party who refused to back Fine Gael in this unprecedented attack on the living standards of ordinary people?

Whether, as now seems likely, a Fianna Fail administration crawls back to office with a slim majority or else some amalgam of parties assembles a government, Irish workers are about to face continued and sustained attacks on living standards.

Even the very rights which the trade union movement won for itself over the years been threatened. Unemployment will soar upwards towards the 200,000 mark. It is fundamental to the strategy of both capitalist parties that government spending be drastically reduced, regardless of the effects on working people.

It has been estimated that about 600,000 in this country of 3 million people already live below the official poverty line. Standards of living have been sliding downwards over recent years. In 1973 the level of income per head was only 65% of the EEC average. By 1979 this figure had fallen to 61%.

As the major classes in Irish society, the workers and the owners of industry, line up for battle it is essential that the Labour Party takes its stand unequivocally on the side of the oppressed, turns its back on coalition and puts forward its own socialist policies as a solution to the crisis.

For regular coverage of Ireland, North and South, read MILITANT IRISH MONTHLY. Subscribe now. 6 issues £2, 12 issues £4. From Militant Irish Monthly, 75 Middle Abbey St, Dublin 1

USA:

The return of the soup kitchens

The soup kitchens and the bread lines of the 1930's are reappearing, quickly this time because Reagan has washed his hands of the people and turned the whole thing over to charity.

The Salvation Army is moving to establish soup kitchens across the country. Its national headquarters in Philadelphia is directing its divisions to set up "practical response to the poor... food, clothing distribution, soup kitchens, etc", as it was reported recently.

Until the recent recession, it was only the "poorest of the poor" who came to the Salvation Army, the churches, and shelters and missions. They were treated as a layer separate from the working class as a whole, as cast-offs on the "scrap heap" no longer on the labour market, ill, alcoholics, narcotics, relegated to the life of the street.

But now Major Alice Stekley of the Salvation Army says in Philadelphia: "With the cuts in welfare, people are really hurting. Food is where they're going to be hit the hardest".

It takes only 26 weeks for job loss cheques to run out—and for men who had jobs, union cards, and homes to end up on "Skid Row".

Thousands do not qualify for unemployment cheques. The call back to work is more remote today than it has ever been since the Great Depression. So the number of applicants to charity organisations is rising as the generosity of corporations, donors, and government allotments falls sharply.

The cost of 'Reaganomics'

The "Los Angeles Times" recently had a round-up survey of shelters and services for the "poorest of the poor". An official of the "Community Service Desk" in Culver City said Reaganomics had forced a budget slash from \$62,490 to \$6,613. About 200 appeals for help to the "haves" were rejected. The "Times" said: "Hundreds of appeals to corporations failed to net a single donation".

"Times" reporters found "all of the agencies reported a dramatic in-

crease in the number of people requesting aid for the holiday season". More calls than ever before came in from the West Side of Los Angeles, an area relatively less affected by destitution. Even families

By Betty Traun
in New York

who were still working, who hadn't been laid off or cut back, were asking for help. After paying the rent and utilities there wasn't much left for food.

The Inglewood Salvation Army, the Leakland Wesley House of Venice, Cal., and Ocean Park Community had to turn people away because collection funds had dropped drastically. The Ocean Park Community is working up a food bank with the hope that it will be substantial enough by March for distribution.

In Nashville, Tennessee, the Salvation Army gave 67,000 shelter in 1980 and 100,000 in 1981.

In Detroit the Salvation Army shelter is full every night. The soup line usually had 300 in line and now has 400, and the newcomers are mostly auto workers.

The Salvation Army in Kansas City anticipated its Christmas aid would go to 40,000, but that number increased by 20% because many on direct relief suffered a cut in welfare.

Jean McDonald, administrator of the Salvation Army's Harbour Lights Centre in Detroit, states that for the past four or five months even children "and I mean three or four-year old kids in families have been coming in here every night and I would safely bet this is the only food they are getting."

She says "people who have a lot of pride about coming for help are now coming more than they would have when the economy was better".

In Vermont the Salvation Army increased service 300% since last year, and this "is only the tip of the iceberg," said David McLean, the co-ordinator. "They'll be back next year when the full impact of Reaganomics will be felt".

Christmas appeals have revealed the extent of the rise in destitution. The most serious side of the picture is the growing number that have become homeless. Last August it was estimated that 30,000 men and 6,000 women are supposed to receive shelter in New York City.

Now, as the Reagan hatchet slashes, a fresh layer of desitute are joining them.



Without work and without a home in New York 1932. The current crisis threatens a return to those days.

GENERAL STRIKE IN INDIA

Workers brave ruling class fury

The growing strength of the Indian working class has become a nightmare to the ruling class.

This was evident on 19 January, 1982 when workers held a highly successful general strike. The call was given by the National Campaign Committee, comprising of major trade union Federations and Central Trade Unions i.e. CITU, AITUC, HMS and BMS and a faction of INTUC.

The general strike is significant for the fact that it included demands concerning the entire toiling masses. The demands included: 1) Repealing of anti-worker legislation; 2) fixing price support for the produce of the peasants; 3) halting price rises.

The giant power of the Indian working class has sent shivers down the spine of the capitalist class. Mrs Gandhi and her sycophants know that the working class pose the main threat to their power.

Mass defiance of draconian laws

They have not spared one moment in promulgating anti-working class legislation, i.e. the National Security Act and the Essential Services Maintenance Act (ESMA). These two Acts give wide powers to the government and the bureaucracy to rape the rights of the working class, rights

By our Indian correspondent

won through bitter struggles and enormous sacrifice in the past.

Though the central government have time and again said that the National Security Act would not be used to curb legitimate trade union rights, many militant trade union leaders—Shankar Guha Niyogi of Chattisgarh Mine Workers union, Datta Samant of Bombay (to cite just two cases) have been arrested and imprisoned under the National Security Act.

The Essential Services Maintenance Act is another piece of draconian legislation, under which the government and the bureaucracy can declare any services as 'essential', and ban strikes. Workers participating in an 'illegal' strike can be imprisoned for six months and persons sympathising with the strike can be put behind bars for one year. These may be the milder provisions of the Act!

The Indian working class know the price they have to pay when they go on strike. They face harassment, intimidation, assault, victimisation, bullets, retrenchment and court cases. Yet the workers have shown an indefatigable spirit and are putting up a brave fight against the capitalist rulers.

The massive success of last month's general strike, especially when viewed against the background of the new repressive legislation, heralds a new phase in the

struggle of the Indian trade union movement.

The prime minister, Mrs Gandhi, and the home minister, Mr Zail Singh, called the general strike "anti-national" and continued a tirade against the trade union and opposition leaders. The mass media, radio, TV and the press were unabashedly used to dissuade workers from joining the general strike.

Incentives were announced. Workers in Posts and Telegraphs were told that if they stayed in the office on the night of 18th and attended the office on 19th, they would be given a cash incentive. Those not listening to the 'advice' of the rulers would face disciplinary action, break-in-service and wage cuts equal to five days' pay. The panic of the capitalists was visible.

The workers chose the hardest path. They were not cowed. They defied the legislation and participated whole-heartedly in the strike. Canvassing for support was not even conducted in the vicinity of factories or in the workers' areas.

The public sector industries did not work. Private industries came to a grinding halt; the banking industry was paralysed, the Life Insurance Corporation closed transactions. In some cities, hotel and cinema workers struck.

The strike was most successful in West Bengal, Kerala, Bihar, Tamilnadu, Karnataka, Maharashtra and Tripura states. The shops remained closed in many cities. The textile workers in Bombay went on strike from 18 January.

The Indian Airline workers gave the lead by starting their struggle on the night of 18th. Bombay docks had a deserted look. Though the Posts and Telegraphs, Railway and

Dock unions did not endorse the strike call, they gave their support by wearing black badges and holding demonstrations.

The cities looked like armed garrisons. Thousands of police and army jawans were pressed into service. The bid to quell the strike through a massive deployment of state forces did not seem to have any effect on workers' morale.

Thousands of trade union activists were arrested all over India in a massive swoop on the evening of 18th. The state government of Bihar issued 'shoot at sight' orders for the day.

No doubt, the ruling class is unnerved by this magnificent show of strength by the working class. Mrs Gandhi particularly, must be most worried among the worried. She must be feeling the tremors created by the working class. She is no doubt trying to think of ways to discipline the workers.

Just the beginning of the struggle

A lot depends on it—she has to get the IMF loan, she has to change the constitution to a presidential form of government, she has to perpetuate the rule of capitalism in India. She is pretty sure that she cannot do all this unless the workers are emasculated, and to do this she needs more power.

That means a greater challenge to the Indian working class, peasants and Dalits. So the 19 January general strike is the beginning of an unfolding struggle.

Letters

VIEWERS? COMMENTS? EXPERIENCES?
CRITICISM? WRITE ABOUT THEM TO:

MILITANT, 1 Mentmore Terrace, London E8 3PN

The brutal side of the rail industry

Dear Comrades

In the past weeks we have seen a vicious campaign aimed at ASLEF members who are in dispute. One side of the coin that is not publicised is the fact that in the past few weeks three rail workers have lost their lives whilst on duty. Another was seriously injured after a recent well-publicised train crash.

The rail staff also have dirty jobs to do—not just cleaning up the mess after the trains go to the depots, but cleaning off axes after the numerous suicides. They also have to help collect the bodies for identification. As you can imagine, in some cases, it is difficult to find the minimum 9 pounds of flesh needed for burial. You may think this is extreme, but in Southern Region alone the suicides and accident cases cause real problems for the staff. Near a southern Mental Hospital a driver had to stop due to a suicide. The rule is that the train must wait for a relief driver. Staff, including railway police went down the track to retrieve the body, but found to their horror that a few hundred yards previously another person

had jumped on the line!

An inspector told me that in cases of this nature it took the driver, guards and staff a long time to get over the shock caused by this sort of event.

Accidents are commonplace in any rail yard. One case a few years ago still haunts me. A new inspector was checking the undercarriage of a train in the Eastleigh depot. To check it properly he had to lie on the track. Whilst under the train, the engine moved off, resulting in his right foot being severed. After almost a year in hospital and numerous operations the doctors managed to transplant the tibia from the leg which had lost the foot to the other injured leg so that at least he would have one reasonable leg. Four years later, living in poverty on state benefits, this man is justifiably sorry that he ever started work in an industry which is so hazardous.

All this may seem brutal and sickening, but they are the hard facts. I hope that this letter in some way redresses the balance as far as the rail industry is concerned. I for one hope that the rail workers win the present battle on hours wages, and jobs.

Yours fraternally
Pat Blatch
Southampton CLP.

What the Chartists really thought of parliament

Dear Comrades

There are many myths perpetuated about the history of the working class in this country, by the ruling class and unfortunately the Labour leadership. I think that Michael Foot's misrepresentation of the Chartist movement, in order to justify arguments against 'extra-parliamentary activity', needs a reply. Perhaps that reply would be best coming from the Chartists themselves.

In 1839 the Chartists elected a Convention, to organise support for the Charter, and when, as they anticipated, it was rejected by Parliament, it would implement "ulterior measures" and become a 'Peoples Parliament'. The ruling class claimed that the Convention could not co-exist; that either the Convention would destroy the House of Commons or be destroyed by it.

A speaker at a Chartist rally in Newcastle replied that 'he would not say that the Convention would

destroy the House of Commons, but that they would reform the House of Commons, and if they reformed the House of Commons, then they destroyed it for where would the owls and bats, which at present roosted within it, where would they find a roosting place, when the voice of the People re-echoed within its walls!

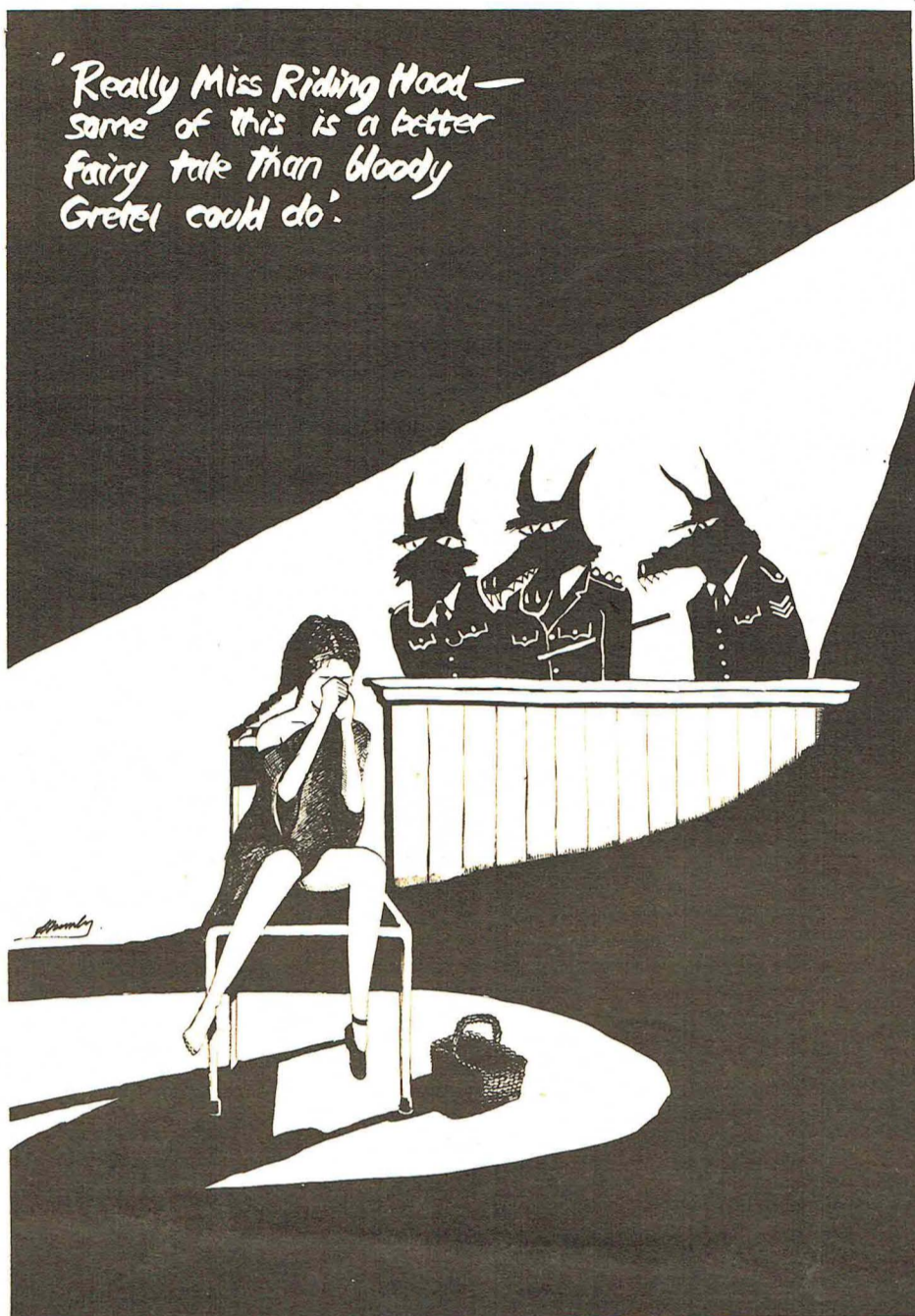
In the same year, Bron- teine O'Brien, Chartist leader claimed "that there was no law in England except for those 200,000 living off rents, profits and interest who attempted to govern England by physical force."

For the Chartists the campaign for universal suffrage was not primarily a campaign for Parliamentary rights, but they aspired to achieve economic and political power for the working class. It is also forgotten that the 6th point of the Charter—annual elections, considered to be an essential part of the Charter has never been implemented. When you consider what this would mean, for MPs of all political parties, you can understand why!

Yours fraternally
Barbera Humphries

doubt thought up by some enterprising boss just to cheer us up; "Boss: 'I've granted your request for a pay rise. I want your last week to be a happy one!'" No doubt a sentiment that management and Tories which will carry on into 1982.

Yours fraternally
Bob Faulkes
Hackney Central CLP



— a cartoon comment from Steve Humby of Newbury CLP, on the treatment of women who report rapes. In the BBC programme 'Police' (18 January), a woman who reported rape was shown being interrogated by three male police officers. After she'd told them what happened one of them told her it was a 'better fairy tale than bloody Gretel could do'.

The cost of education

Dear Comrades,

If I believed everything I read in the daily papers I could not be blamed for thinking that we have a free education service in this country. Unfortunately this is a myth.

Having missed out on 'A' Levels at school I decided to try and improve my chances of a better job by taking two 'A' Levels (English Literature and Sociology). I realised that this would be hard work, studying for two nights a week for two years as well as going to work all day and coping with extra homework. That was one and a half years ago. I have just applied to take these exams and realised just how much of my hard-earned money this has cost!

Tuition Fees 1980—1981	£43.45
Tuition Fees 1981—1982	£50.25
Examination Fees	£19.45
Cost of text books excluding pens, paper etc.	£30.95
Total	£144.10

No, this is not a private school or a correspondence course but the cost of evening classes at the local college of Further Education, under the control of Staffordshire County Council.

And, after all the hard studying and cost, what then, any chance of a better job? Hardly likely! Any chance of further education? Not much of that as grants are being cut drastically.

What a waste of time and money. In future I shall devote my time and money to the cause of socialism and leave my education to the four great teachers: Marx, Engels, Lenin and Trotsky and the experience passed down to us through the struggles of our forefathers in their fight for the emancipation of the international working class.

Yours fraternally,
Ruth Gordon
Stoke South LPYS

When the 'hounds' were sent packing

Dear Comrades,

Recently I took part in an anti-bloodsports demonstration outside the Queens Hotel in Bournemouth, with some Young Socialists, and members of anti-bloodsports organisations.

When we arrived we distributed leaflets to guests and passers by. Shortly afterwards two coaches arrived to carry hotel guests into the New Forest to see the local hunt.

One of the hunt supporters, an aged old hag wearing a fur coat decorated with a diamond brooch, took exception to my "Militant" badge, and snapped, "...if I had my way, scum like you would be deported...!"

I reciprocated the compliment and the worthy lady climbed up into the coach to take her seat. As the coaches left for their destination, they were followed by four car loads of protestors, the rest of us went down to Bournemouth Square to demonstrate against hunting.

Barbaric attitudes

President Reagan, with Mrs. Thatcher echoing him, wants the "Third World" to come to the "market place" to solve their problems. This is a most un-Christian attitude. "Become fit and survive" they say to starving destitute people. How can we be civilized, and see our fellow citizens in this world, go under?

Incidentally this is the crux of the Tory philosophy; "we must have a spur to compete and win..." We as socialists go for a higher plane than this present jungle. We must raise all men and women to higher levels. As Lenin said, "I want to see every person capable of being Prime Minister."

Yours fraternally
Clr. Fred P. Bailey,
Devon.

Why one MP opposed a witch-hunt

Dear Comrade,

Recently I wrote to Joan Lester about the National Executive's decision to hold an enquiry into Militant, and I think her reply will interest readers:

"Thank you for your letter regarding any move towards bans, proscriptions and expulsions within the Labour Movement.

"Whilst I do not, for one moment, believe that Michael Foot wants this to happen, there are those who do. That is why I opposed an enquiry into 'Militant'.

"There is, of course, a case for information about all groups operating within the Party, to make their details available to all. But my fear is that this information could be misused by those who might seek to do so."

Yours fraternally
June Marsden
Leeds.

We later re-assembled outside The Queens Hotel when the two coaches were due to bring back the guests for their lunch. There were more of us this time, and we displayed our banners.

One coach returned empty. We soon discovered the reason why. It was because the hunt supporters did not wish to be identified, and the hotel manager had to go and collect them in his car from where they had been dropped off, a quarter of a mile away from the hotel!

At this point we entered the hotel foyer and began to protest loudly against bloodsports. Fifteen minutes later, the manager arrived back and attempted to assault one of the women protestors. We refused to leave and he telephoned for the police, and we left the building as three car loads of police arrived.

There is no doubt that the hunting brigade in my area at least is now seriously worried in view of the fact that we are turning our protests towards not only the hunts themselves but also to those establishments which support them.

Yours fraternally
Dennis Neal
Bournemouth.

That's a cracker!

Dear Comrades,

Although Christmas is well over, I have just come across one of those Christmas cracker joke slips—found lying around. These jokes are usually terrible, but this one was no

BUILD MILITANT...

"Please find enclosed cheque for £25 in answer to your appeal, from the members of this Branch.

"We fully support your fight against this Tory government, and also endorse all your policies.

Amalgamated Society of Boilermakers, Shipwrights, Blacksmiths and Structural Workers, Southampton No. 1 Branch."

"Please find enclosed cheque. Wish we could make it more. Yours in Struggle. H Baines Sec. UCATT BC 136 Branch."

"Dear Comrades, Having spent the last six months bed-ridden due to a spinal injury I have been unable to actively take part in the activities of our local YS. I am therefore extremely thankful for my weekly issue of 'Militant' which keeps me in touch with the important items of news..." L Barrett (Macclesfield LPYS) sent £1 with her letter which described how the government's health service cuts sentenced her to bed until the cash was available to assist her.

These letters show that our readers are realising the urgency of building Marxist ideas within the labour movement, at a time when our class is being trampled on by the ruling class in a vain attempt to restore their profits to the levels of the 'good old days' when workers starved.

Some of the cash collected at meetings is still on its way to us, but we've had over £90 from Merseyside, £32 from Blackburn, (plus an appeal sheet), £32 from Lambeth, nearly £40 from Derby, £17.50 from Reading, over £60 from West London, £50 from a meeting in Deptford and over £40 from meetings in Havant, Rugeley, Brighton and Torbay.

'Top Marx' for LPYS branches must go to Dorchester this week for a £50 donation, followed by Chester LPYS with a collection of £17.38. Thanks also to Stockton, Wavertree and Clydebank LPYS branches amongst others. Students who collected for 'Militant' include supporters at Brunel



Photo: MILITANT

Getting the message across in Glasgow last year

The paper that gives the truth

University, and in Leeds.

Individual donations this week include those from P Elmer (BRD) £15, C Thorpe (Birmingham) £11, tenners from E Hill (Royston), P Campbell (Bootle) and P Traynor (London), £6s from G Bright (Chairman Tinsley NUR Branch) and the McCartneys (Clydeside). E McGeachan (Glasgow CPSA) and five other supporters in the same union sent us £10, whilst fivers this week included those from M Cox (Mansfield), B Pirie (Wolverhampton) and P McGhee (Stockton).

Thanks for £2s to M Coulson (Tyneside), S Corben (Chester LPYS), and

others. D Love (Paisley) collected £2.20 in 'extras' in change from copies of 'Militant' donated back. Are all our sellers in a position to copy this example? £1s from M Sewell (Largs), T Murgatroyd (Huddersfield) and B Lahore (Corby UCW) were three of many.

Discussion Groups in Coalville and Sunderland were profitable for us: £24.60 came from Lenin badge sales—again Sunderland. Extras on the sale of the 'Militant' *What We Stand For* pamphlets came to several pounds, too. There's cash to be raised by people who agree with 'Militant's' ideas, but just

need an excuse to give it to us!

We need roughly twice as much money to come in each week to reach our £35,000 target by April 11th. Doubtless there will be bumper collections at 'What We Stand For' meetings, to judge by the performance to date.

But we also need to appeal to those of our regular readers who, by reason of work etc, will not be able to attend these meetings, not to lose the opportunity to assist building 'Militant'. You raised over £20,000 in December last year: let's see some more of the same spirit!

'Militant' in Manchester

The millionaire bosses and the Tory press not noted for getting things right, are absolutely correct to fear the growing support for Marxism in the labour movement.

That was the clear message from the 250 strong audience of trade unionists, Labour Party members and unemployed workers packed into Hulme Labour Club to hear Peter Taaffe outline the policies of 'Militant'.

Peter explained that in the deepest capitalist crisis since the 1930s no amount of lies, distortion and manoeuvres from Labour's right wing would prevent the working class movement returning to its socialist traditions.

The audience warmed to the demands of a 35 hour week, a £90 minimum wage

and a massive scheme of public works, but were warned that only by nationalisation of the banks and the major monopolies under democratic workers' control and management could gains to working people be permanently secured.

To the delight of the audience he answered the lie that 'Militant' favoured a totalitarian regime. He pointed out that come socialism, whilst 'Militant' would have a daily circulation of millions, Rupert Murdoch would still be allowed to stand outside railway stations trying to sell the 'Sun' and advocating the return to capitalism, with mass unemployment, poverty and slum housing.

The optimism of the meeting, and the commitment to the ideas of 'Militant' is shown by the magnificent fight fund collection of £351.

By Roy Lewis
(Blackley LPYS)

BIGGEST EVER

The record for selling most 'Militants' set by Brian Lewis of Swansea last year, has finally been broken. Jim Bond, a tobacco worker from Neath, sold 162 papers in one ordinary week. Jim stated that the witch-hunt had created an enormous interest, resulting in his regular

sales on Saturday doubling from fifty to a hundred. Obviously not every supporter is able to sell this many!

But if efforts are redoubled in this period, big increases in paper sales can be achieved, and the witch-hunt can be turned to 'Militant's' advantage.

Trent Polytechnic Labour Club CONFERENCE ON N IRELAND

Saturday 13 February, Lecture Theatre, Byron Building Trent Poly Student Union, Shakespeare St, Nottingham
Registration at 11 am. Two sessions:
— 'Divide and Rule: Background to the Present Crisis'
— 'What Future for NI?, debate between Clive Heemskerck ('Militant' supporter, NOLS NC) and a NOLS Officer
Social in the evening. Accommodation available if requested.
Labour Club delegate credentials (£1.50)
and Visitors' credentials (75p)
at Poly Labour Club, c/o address above

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

BROMSGROVE: Hear Jeremy Birch (Selly Oak LP). United Reformed Church Hall, Windsor Street, Bromsgrove. Thursday 4 February, 7.30pm

WEST BROMWICH: Hear Kevin Ramage (LPYS National Chairman). Wednesbury Labour Club, Hilltop, West Bromwich. 8.00 pm, Wednesday 10 February.

YARDLEY: Wednesday 10 February. Hear: Jeremy Birch. The Malt House, St Giles Road, Tile Cross, Yardley.

KIDDERMINSTER Readers' Meeting: 'Socialism or Nuclear Annihilation'. Friday 5 February. Hear: Jeremy Birch. The Railway Bell, Comberton Hall, Kidderminster.

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

KIRKBY: Hear Terry Fields (Labour prospective candidate, Liverpool Kirkdale) at Kirkby Labour Club, Monday 8 February, 8.00 pm.

CAMDEN: 'Support the train drivers. No to witch-hunt!' Speaker: John Pickard. Collegiate Theatre, Gordon St, London WC1. 7.30 pm, Wednesday 10 February.

WEST LONDON 'Defend the Militant! For a mass socialist Labour Party'. Speaker: Ted Grant. Thursday 18 February, 7.30 pm, Anson Hall, Anson Road, Cricklewood NW2

LEEDS Raffle winner: June Marsden

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

WASHINGTON: Speaker: Brian Ingham (Militant Editorial Board) 7.30pm, Sunday 14 February. Oval Community Centre, Concord. For further details phone Sunderland: 653994.

GREENOCK: Thursday 18 February, Summerhill Primary School, Greenock. Local press for details. Further details: Bob Wylie, 03552-29082

BRISTOL: Hear Bryan Beckingham. Tuesday 9 February, 7.30 pm, Patchway Community Centre, Rodway Road.

SHEPTON MALLETT Hear: Bryan Beckingham. Town Council Chambers, Great Osty, Shepton Mallet. 7.30pm, Thursday 11 February.

BRISTOL WEST: Speaker to be announced. Monday 22 February, 7.30 pm, The Swan, Gloucester Road.

GLOUCESTER: Hear Mick Whale. Labour Party Rooms, 115 Barton Street, Gloucester. Tuesday 9 February, 7.30 pm.

HARLOW: Eastern Region LPYS Conference Militant Meeting: 'Tories out. Labour to power on a socialist programme.' Saturday 13 February, 6.30 pm. Speaker: Peter Taaffe (Editor, Militant) Stavanger Room, Harlow Town Hall.

Irish LONDON Social

Saturday, 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: (01) 474 6584, £1.50 and 50p unwaged (£2 at the door).

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GET THE FACTS



Obtainable 20p from local 'Militant' seller, or from 'Militant', 1 Mentmore Terrace, London E8 3PN. (Add 10p p&p, orders more than 10 post free).

Industrial Reports



NALGO

The Campaign for Nalgo Affiliation to the Labour Party held its first meeting in Leicester recently. For the Labour Party executive, Doug Hoyle put the case for affiliation pointing out that today 57 trade unions were affiliated including white collar unions such as ASTMS. Ray Harper, of the union's executive, a supporter of FLAG, re-inforced Doug's points about the need for NALGO to be political. He added that the main aim of NALGO when it was first founded was to secure higher pensions from the government for its members. And NALGO's founder chairman, Sir Hubert Blain, went on to become Tory Party National Agent—NALGO has been 'political' since its inception!

TBA Victory

The TBA's Industrial Products factory in Rochdale had its first full stoppage for over 100 years last week.

The dispute was in support of a woman member who was sacked for industrial misconduct. The woman had been stopped by security staff as she was leaving the factory and was found to be in possession of a small number of cleaning rags. The stewards felt that the action taken by the company was far too severe. When the news of the sacking spread, department after department stopped work in support.

A mass meeting in the canteen voted unanimously to stop everything until the woman was reinstated. The canteen staff also agreed to stop work. The boiler men remained at work purely for safety reasons. Talks began and finally agreed to reinstate the woman. Senior shop stewards addressed the workforce who had remained in the works canteen: "I haven't won this, you have, by sticking together it is you who have won." To this one woman shouted back "Aye, and we'll do it again!"

Already the dispute is showing an effect on the workforce who normally meet and vote on issues on a departmental basis. They now realise their strength are now calling for further mass meetings to decide the issues that face them.

Benefits

Under the headline "Harassing the Unemployed", TOWCAS (the out of work centre and advice service in Leeds) is explaining to claimants the implications of new Tory measures being tested out in the area. The new scheme asks claimants an extra question, i.e. whether they will take "any full time job which you can do". Depending on your answer you can then be asked to fill in a detailed questionnaire supposedly designed to test whether you are really available for work. But with questions such as "what wages are you willing to take?" and "what arrangements have you made for children during working hours?", it is clearly a concerted attempt to terrorise people into accepting loss of benefits, and forcing people into low paid and hazardous work.

Already strong resistance has built up. CPSA members in DHSS have issued a leaflet advising claimants not to answer the extra question, as they are not legally obliged to do so and may lose benefit. After a meeting with CPSA official-TOWCAS aims to draw all sections of opposition into the campaign for abolition of the scheme. Claimants should watch out as this scheme is already being tested in several offices around the country.

For further details contact: TOWCAS, Leeds 456985.

Manchester

Due to the withdrawal of the rate support grant by the Tories, the Greater Manchester Council (GMC) has now planned to close Weaste depot, Salford. The closure of Weaste depot is expected to save £1½ million over the next 2 years. Also in the pipeline to go in this area are Hinley and Leigh, with three other depots yet to be announced.

At a mass meeting held at Weaste depot of the 250 T&G members on 30 January, branch secretary Len Newman put the blame squarely on Tory policies. He said, "Workers are unanimous in their resolve to fight this proposed closure and have stated that they will refuse to be re-deployed in any other depot. Also the depots in the Manchester area will refuse to accept any buses based in Weaste. The determination of workers at Weaste and other depots, combined with the support of the labour movement in Greater Manchester, should ensure that the savage cuts in public services will not lightly be accepted by the community. And the Labour-led GMC must make it clear that they will not go along with the savage cut backs ordered by the Tories."

Hymac

Redundancies have been announced at Hymac, a subsidiary of IBM, in Rhymney, Mid-Glamorgan. 75 jobs are to go, mainly amongst white collar staff, mostly members of APEX. Over 400 jobs have been lost over the past few years. Management say the work will be transferred to IBM's site near Motherwell, although shop stewards there have no knowledge of this.

USDAW

A meeting of the Broad Left in USDAW will be held on February 7 at 2pm, at the Star Club, 25 Essex Street, Birmingham. All USDAW members are welcome.

Handbook

A pamphlet on State Benefits, titled a 'guide for trade unionists' has been published by the Labour Research Department. This clearly outlines the qualifications and workings of all state benefits, describing national insurance, non-contributory and means-tested benefits. This is a worth while handbook for all stewards and union activists. Price 60p from Labour Research Department, 78 Blackfriars Road, London SE1 8HF.

Plessey

Since 26 January, 24 drivers have been on strike at Plessey, Beeston, where hourly paid workers were also in dispute over pay and threatened redundancies before Christmas. John Peters and Ken Owen, T&G stewards, explained that for several years they had enjoyed staff status but now the benefits had been eroded. "We are contributing to the company's profits but not reaping the benefits. Men doing less skilled jobs are taking home more pay. Hourly paid workers enjoy better sickness benefits and pensions. We have been willing to discuss our grievances but management have refused to negotiate since they offered us just under 8% on 1 October last year." The men have had a good response from outside drivers with the overwhelming majority refusing to cross their picket line. (See report on Plesseys, Bathgate on back page)

BLACK AEROQUIP GOODS

The workers in Aeroquip in Cardiff have gone on strike in response to the bosses' refusal to give us a pay rise this year.

Since 1979, our wages have gone up just 5%, in 1981. Even then the bosses didn't pay the increase for four months! There have been 200 redundancies, productivity has gone up 25% but still the company complains that it can't afford to give us a rise in wages.

Last year Aeroquip UK

made £2¼m profit, and up to April 1982, will make over £1 million profit. The bosses can afford £50,000 on company cars in Cardiff, but they are not prepared to give us a decent pay rise.

We are taking home less money now than when we got our last wage increase in 1981 because our bonus payments have been reduced. We gave management the options of sitting down and negotiating a pay rise immediately or going to an independent arbitration. Mass meetings of members on 27 January voted overwhelmingly that if they fail-

ed to agree to one of these two options then a strike would begin immediately.

They responded by saying they were prepared to meet us in February when there would be a review in the order situation which, so far as we were concerned, meant that there would be no rise. A strike began immediately.

The strike has been made official, and 100% of G&MWU members are on strike. A picket line has been set up 24 hours a day, preventing seals and hoses leaving.

The workers at Fords

Dagenham have agreed to black Aeroquip seals and gaskets. We are asking all trade unionists to black all Aeroquip products: gaskets, seals, hoses and so on. Aeroquip products are used particularly in the motor industry and by the National Coal Board.

Donations and messages of support to A Thompson, 72 Monthermer Road, Cathays, Cardiff.

**By Alvin Compton
(Works Convenor,
Aeroquip)**

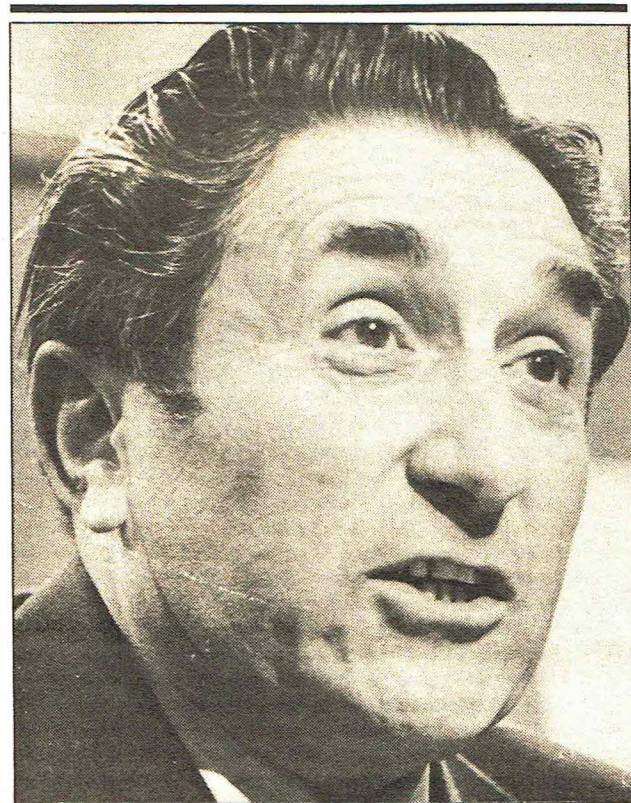
Anger in EETPU

Angry scenes took place on 19 January at the meeting of the new London 'super' branch of the electricians' union, the EETPU.

At the union's Highbury office 120 members turned up but were told apparently on the EC's ruling that only certain members would be allowed in. Visitors were barred, an unparalleled step as visiting union members have always had the right to attend other branches. Others who had forgotten their cards were stopped from going in, even after being vouched for by their own shop stewards.

This new 'super' branch, consisting of over 11,000 members, arose out of the closure of three London branches, London Central, NE London and West London. These have followed a whole spate of branch and lodge closures. Some members will now be forced, if they wish to attend their branch, to travel up to 50 miles.

Eventually, practically everyone managed to get in. Then a full time official read out a list of names who were asked to leave. The meeting erupted. Members protested. Points of order were raised but ignored with an executive member saying the union's executive had



Frank Chapple, leader of the EETPU and enthusiastic campaigner for trade union rights and democracy in Poland

determined who would attend.

The meeting refused to comply and the officials walked out. The members, undeterred, proceeded to elect their own Branch Secretary and Chairman to run the meeting. Many members gave their opinions on the branch closures and the role of the full time officials in the trade unions.

Eventually three van loads of police arrived, including the SPG. They met our newly elected branch committee who assured them that the meeting was being run in an orderly fashion. They eventually left leaving a couple patrolling outside. Inside the members carried on the

meeting, pledging to continue the fight to reopen the closed branches.

These events again underline the urgent fight for real democracy within EETPU:

★ Election of all full-time officials.

★ The right of immediate recall over all officials not carrying out members' wishes.

★ No officials to be paid more than the members they represent and expenses vetted by the rank and file.

With these demands implemented a real fighting and democratic EETPU would emerge.

**By an EETPU
shop steward**

BR Engineers dispute

"I give uncritical support to the drivers, there is no reason why they should go to arbitration over something already awarded."

"In effect British Rail got off the hook last time with not having to pay the full 11% at once. British Rail itself should pay less on the advertisements in the newspapers and less on internal bulletins. These bulletins urge workers to pass resolutions against ASLEF.

"John Boyd, General

Secretary of the AUEW, in particular has spoken totally on his own. (He has called for BR and ASLEF to go to arbitration, calling for an end to this "expensive, destructive strike".) He has not taken the issue to the branches and has never asked the AUEW members working on British Rail. For instance, we ourselves are in dispute, and members of the AUEW, EETPU, G&MWU and NUR are operating a work to rule.

"Our dispute is over the

ending of rostered overtime. In the past, everyone had a chance at the dirty and clean jobs but now the best go to the blue-eyed boys. Management have even stopped overtime on Sunday at our maintenance depot in Leeds. Madness! The ideal time for maintenance must be when the trains aren't running!"

**Jimmy Monksfield
(Leeds AUEW, Holbeck
BR Maintenance Depot)
spoke to Jon Ingham**

**Support
floods in
for ASLEF**

Yorkshire

Engineering workers outside British Rail are pledged to support the ASLEF drivers. The Leeds AUEW District Committee passed a resolution giving total support to ASLEF.

On the same night the following resolution was passed unanimously by the No. 32 area of the Confederation of Engineering Unions covering the West and North Yorkshire areas and representing the AUEW, EETPU and many of the other engineering unions:

"We record our support for the ASLEF drivers, and consider it outrageous that anyone can consider that railwaymen should sell thousands of jobs for an already agreed 3%. We call on the trade union movement and the TUC to give unqualified support to the ASLEF drivers."

Labour Party

The National Executive Committee of the Labour Party has passed the following resolution in support of the train drivers:

"This NEC, like the General Council of the TUC, endorses the statements of Len Murray that British Rail should forthwith honour its signed agreement which is specific and unconditional; to pay the footplatemen the 3% balance of the pay increase which it was agreed last August should be paid to all BR employees; believes that the BR Board is at fault in failing to pay the balance of the pay award and in failing to use established machinery to find acceptable methods of improving productivity—machinery which provides full scope for negotiations on all issues and if those do not produce an agreement, for independent arbitration."



Industrial Reports

ASLEF - A STRATEGY TO WIN

The continued demands on the train drivers to go to arbitration and for an 'independent inquiry' are the height of hypocrisy when they come from the British Rail Board.

It is the BRB who have reneged twice on the original agreement; they refused to accept the findings of last summer's Railway Staff National Tribunal and they have now reneged on the ACAS decision over the train drivers' 3%.

The BRB have made clear their attitudes towards 'independent inquiries'. We must presume that those union leaders who echo the BRB's current talk of arbitration do not understand this.

ASLEF does. Their resolute action, along with growing numbers of NUR men, clearly show that rail workers will not accept flexible rostering. The hours they work presently are already unsociable enough. And flexible rostering will mean the loss of another 4,000 jobs, in an industry already decimated by redundancy.

The ASLEF leadership have realised the need to step up the action, with their decision to now hold stoppages on Tuesdays and Thursdays. But the full muscle of the train drivers should now be used. An all-out strike should be called. While the two and one day

stoppages have been unwaveringly supported by the train drivers, ASLEF members realise the dangers inherent in the present limited action. Pulling members in and out of work can have a demoralising effect through action dragging on. In the civil service dispute last year, where various sections were pulled out at certain times, the dispute dragged on for 21 weeks.

And although obviously being hit by the dispute, industry is managing to struggle on. All-out action would hit the bosses hard, and bring an avalanche of pressure on to the BRB to settle the dispute.

The ASLEF executive have made a good general call for support to the trade union movement. Goodwill from the labour movement has flooded into the ASLEF's headquarters—this must be tapped to ensure maximum support not only in goodwill but in action. As a matter of urgency the original call must be followed up with specific requests for solidarity blacking. At present, road, sea and air transport are being used to break the strike. Specific appeals must be sent out to trade unionists in these industries.

In local areas, ASLEF members have taken initiatives in strengthening their action, but guidelines are needed for all branches on picketing, money raising

Photo: MILITANT



Railworkers have to take industrial action to get decent wages and conditions

and blacking action.

Similarly, appeals should go out to build a strike fund to ensure the train drivers are thoroughly prepared for an all-out struggle.

The train drivers have shown they are solid in their action to beat back the British Rail bosses—with a well prepared all-out strike they can win.

NUR - join action

Throughout the dispute, ASLEF has acted as a constant source of inspiration to NUR members, particularly guards.

Despite the constant barrage of propaganda from BR management, and the attempts of the NUR leadership to sell the deal, NUR members too are totally opposed to flexi-rostering.

Last week saw more strikes by guards and further action is planned.

Unfortunately, however, whilst NUR members are demanding that their union also takes a stand, the leadership have played the opposite role. In particular the general secretary, Sid Weighell, has attacked as "irresponsible" the action of his own members, who are attempting in the most difficult circumstances to defend their jobs and working conditions.

Now the general secretary of the NUR has added his voice to the chorus of criticism of ASLEF. Sid Weighell has even objected

to the welcome resolution of support from the Labour Party to ASLEF, which, like the NUR, is affiliated to the Party. (see opposite)

Whilst the strikes by guards are condemned by the NUR leadership the general secretary was reported in the *Guardian* (27 January) as saying the BRB's decision to lock out thousands of rail staff on Sundays was "sensible and reasonable".

In Brighton the understandable anger of NUR members spilled over into further strike action on Monday at BR's punitive treatment of them. As a result management now intend to lock out Brighton guards during the forthcoming two days' stoppage by ASLEF.

This represents the most serious attack upon railmen in this dispute. The NUR leadership will ignore this at their peril. Management's action is unacceptable; it breaches the agreement giving all staff a guaranteed week's pay.

In his latest outburst Sid Weighell has attempted

to exploit the dispute to further his attacks on *Militant* (*Sunday Express* 31 Jan, *Daily Mail* 1 Feb).

In his incredible outburst to the right-wing *Sunday Express*, Weighell accused *Militant* supporters of "Trying to stir up trouble" in NUR branches, and of "totally misrepresenting the issues." Weighell has complained to the bosses' papers that we circulated a letter to NUR branches answering his repeated attacks on *Militant*.

The general secretary seems to have little confidence in the ability of NUR members to understand the issues and decide for themselves. His real complaint appears to be that NUR members, along with ASLEF members, welcomed *Militant's* bold advocacy of their case throughout the labour movement. Worst of all, in Weighell's view, is the fact that more and more railwaymen are supporting the socialist policies put forward in our pages.

Once again the NUR general secretary has

FURY AT 'SUN'

The day the 'Sun' carried its notorious article attacking rail drivers, a stream of angry rail men stormed into the union offices at Kings Cross.

From the start, both the ASLEF and NUR Local Departmental Committees acted as one. Over 300 attended a mass meeting, unanimously passing a resolution calling for the 'Sun' to be blacked with a stoppage if any others were disciplined. Some members even put forward that the blacking should last forever!

Immediate support was received from Doncaster ASLEF. Platform leaders refused to unload the lorries carrying the 'Sun' and they were turned away.

The two ASLEF officials, Steve Forey and Dennis Caddywould, were served with an injunction by the

flouted the feelings of his own membership and made a number of statements which his own executive do not support.

The NUR leadership has misjudged the feelings of its members. It is now essential that they reverse their decision and renegotiate with the BRB. Furthermore, they must be prepared to put their full support behind ASLEF, organising sympathetic strike action. The full weight of the Triple Alliance must be used to bring this dispute to a swift and victorious end for all railworkers.

'Sun's' solicitors.

At the court, 40 rail workers demonstrated outside with the union banner. Brothers Forey and Caddywould accepted an undertaking to ask members to ignore previous resolutions. On Monday morning, again over 300 attended the mass meeting. The two officials did as instructed, but as Steve Forey told the meeting "I don't need words to tell you my opinion of the 'Sun' and then then ripped up a copy of that rag.

Support continued to come into the Kings Cross workers. Over 40 messages came in, including ones from Tony Benn and 40 GLC members.

Eventually the 'Sun' backed down and agreed to give the Kings Cross men the right of reply. However, alongside the article, appeared another scurrilous attack full of smears and innuendo.

But as Steve Forey pointed out, the workers didn't want the incident to continue to divert them from their main struggle with the BRB on flexi-rostering, and the blacking was called off.

As Steve Forey said, "This is the most united action we have ever had at Kings Cross. If we could mobilise the same support for an all out strike on the rostering issue we would have won by now."

By Kevin Miles (LPYS) & Ian Nunnery (Train driver, Kings Cross)

What the bosses really want

The action of the ASLEF members is becoming a struggle over whether the union will have the right to exist to protect their members' conditions, as the Tories and their friends in the media are baying for blood.

With all the venom they can muster, the capitalist press are using every lie and distortion to smash ASLEF. But if we look at the pages of the more sober side of the bosses' press we can begin to understand what really are the Tories' and BR management's intentions.

'The Economist', the weekly voice of big business, in an article in the 23/29 January issue, clearly calls for the smashing of ASLEF. After weighing up the pros and cons of a possible all-out stoppage, they go on to give a green light to Thatcher and Parker not to compromise and to hammer the train drivers into the ground.

"The case for taking them on is overwhelming. ASLEF, the drivers' union, represents much that is worst in Britain's labour movement. It is small (20,000 members), bolshie (a weak leader in the pocket of a rag-bag of communists and other left-wingers) and it has a long, dishonourable tradition of the most absurd restrictive practices (such as insisting on having firemen on the footplate when the railways switched from steam to diesel)."

These comments leave no doubt as to the thinking of our rulers over a union daring to fight to protect fundamental conditions that were won in the 1920s. And having been a train driver who suffered the already unsocial shifts, I know what response there will be in the mess rooms to this incitement! However, to dispell any further doubts as to what the bosses want, we quote further from the 'Economist': "The ideal outcome of the current dispute would be the destruction of ASLEF, in much the same manner as President Reagan, with less justification but a legal contract to help him, destroyed the Air Traffic controllers last year."

By John Mclelland (Strathclyde)

GLASGOW ASLEF Public meeting. Sunday 7 February, 2.00 pm, Moia Hall, Granville Street (at back of Library), Glasgow. Speakers from ASLEF and labour movement.

PLESSEY OCCUPATION, BATHGATE

SITTING IN FOR A FUTURE

"If I got hold of Mr Jackson, I'd wring his throat!" That was Mary McLean's attitude towards her employers, Plessey's.

By Pat Craven

The firm have announced the closure of their Bathgate factory in West Lothian on 31 March.

Mary is one of the 330 workers who are occupying the factory to save their jobs. "I have to cadge my bus fare to get down here. I've no money left, the rent's overdue and I couldn't pay the coalman.

"But it's worth suffering all this. I've got nieces and nephews on the dole thanks

to Maggie Thatcher." Anger and determination were written all over her face.

Mary is typical of the spirit of this struggle. At a meeting of trade unionists from all over Central Scotland last Wednesday, to rally support for the workers of both Plessey's and Leyland Vehicles, the workers' case was put by their convenor, Ina Scott.

"The management said



Photo: Denis Doran/MILITANT

Determined to fight it out: workers occupying the Plessey factory, Bathgate, Scotland (29 January)

that the machinery and products were obsolete, yet they had just spent £185,000 on new machinery which was now being sent to Italy."

"Plessey are a very big company," added George Wilson, "They made £84 million profit last year." And as another speaker pointed out, they are one of the biggest contributors to the Conservative Party.

Workers in other British Plessey factories have already agreed not to handle any work taken from Bathgate.

Shop steward Agnes Boyle told me, "We're well organised, manning the gates and getting people fed." (They are also providing food for the British Leyland strikers across the town.)

"People with some money are helping others with no money. All those sitting in are doing their part in going round other workers getting support."

And the management? "Management are hiding," said Agnes. "They are not only holding on to back

wages but even workers' savings!" All attempts to contact them have come to nothing.

This is a desperate fight. Unemployment in West Lothian has now reached 20.7%. Money is

urgently needed to support the Plessey workers' fight. All donations and messages of support should be sent to: Mary Murphy, 20 Main Street, Fauldhouse, West Lothian.

BUILD FOR YOPS LOBBY

Lobby of Parliament, Thursday 25 February. Rally at Royal Festival Hall, 2-5pm. Speakers include Tony Benn MP, Dennis Skinner MP, Rodney Bickerstaffe (General Secretary-elect National Union of Public Employees) and Peter Taaffe.

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Fight Tebbit's Bill

CONTINUED FROM PAGE ONE

other countries, would be unlawful. So would strike action against government pay policies, or redundancies imposed by government cuts, or even strikes against local authority wage settlements determined by central government.

Such "unlawful" action would expose the trade unions to court action. Defiance of judges' rulings could put trade unionists in "contempt of court", leading to the jailing of union officials, shop stewards, pickets, and trade union members.

Tebbit's bill removes the vital legal immunities gained by the unions decades ago—exposing the trade union funds to action in the courts. Big unions could face maximum damages of £¼ million. Just a few strikes ruled "unlawful" by the courts could bankrupt almost any union.

While not abolishing the closed shop, Tebbit's Bill attempts to undermine it.

Closed shops could only be maintained if "tested" by ballots every five years, with 85% of the workers

covered voting in favour of the closed shop agreement. Every time, the capitalist press and television would have a field day campaigning against union strength.

Tebbit's proposals also include compensation of between £2,000 and £17,000 for any workers who lose their jobs as a result of refusing to join the union—which the union could be liable to pay.

In other words, there will be special "bonuses" at the union's expense for "free-riders"—workers who refuse to pay union dues but never mind taking home pay increases—and for strike breakers.

Unveiling his proposals in parliament last Thursday (28 January), Tebbit also announced a £2 million fund to compensate—retrospectively—a handful of workers who, in defiance of closed shop agreements, refused to join trade unions in the last few years.

While being given a license to use scabs, the bosses would also, under the Bill's proposals, be given a free hand to victimise shop stewards and militants. After strikes, they would be allowed to re-employ workers selectively, with excluded workers losing their right to appeal against 'unfair dismissal'.

Tebbit's Bill, if put into effect would turn the clock



back to the 19th Century. Trade unions would be taking on the bosses—who still control the factories, the finance institutions, investment, jobs, etc.—with their arms and feet tied.

However, it takes more than legislation to break the power of the organised labour movement—as Tory Premier Edward Heath learned to his cost in 1972-74. Millions of trade unionists will fight to the finish to defend vital trade union rights, which are the only guarantee of living standards and all the other democratic rights won by workers in the past.

But there must be a bold lead from the top. The TUC, in conjunction with the Labour Party, must mobilise all the collective,

financial, organisational, and industrial strength of the trade union and labour movement.

Meetings, rallies, and demonstrations should be called now to spell out the implications of the Bill to workers and to warn the Tories that the labour movement will not sit back and allow anti-trade union laws to be used to crush workers' rights.

The TUC should call on all affiliated trade unions to give full backing, with co-ordinated industrial action, to any union, shop stewards, or trade union members who come into collision with the bosses, the government or the courts as a result of the new anti-union law.