

Militant

THE MARXIST PAPER FOR LABOUR & YOUTH

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20p



**Colin
Roach
death:**
full report
page 3

WATER WORKERS

MUST WIN!

“We’ll stay out as long as it takes,” said Bob Ackland, water worker at Beckton sewerage works in East London.

His words could be echoed across the country.

The first national water-workers’ strike has shown tremendous unity in pursuit of the 15% claim. Another Beckton worker, Fred Webb, pointed out “over the last week a feeling of comradeship has grown up between skilled and unskilled workers.”

As expected there has been a deluge of press and government propaganda against the strike. Leading the field was that expert in union democracy Norman Tebbit, with his barefaced lie that unions were ignoring their rule books in calling the strike.

As John Feely, Beckton shiftworker said, “Tebbit can talk. Our union is a lot more democratic than Thatcher. What about her ‘support’ for free collective bargaining?”

But even if trade unionists needed lessons in democracy they wouldn’t get any from the water industry. It isn’t the waterworkers who control and get most benefit from the industry; it’s the Tories and the bosses.

For a start, there are still 28 private companies making guaranteed profits from their monopoly of local

By Steve Feely

(AUEW Beckton
sewage works,
personal capacity)

and Gavin Dudley
(NALGO, Newcastle and
Gateshead Water
Company)

water supplies (see *Militant* 15 October). The public water authorities are run by part-time boards of some local authority representatives, plus industrialists, landowners, etc. appointed by the Environment Secretary or the Agriculture Minister. The chairmen are hand-picked by the Tory government.

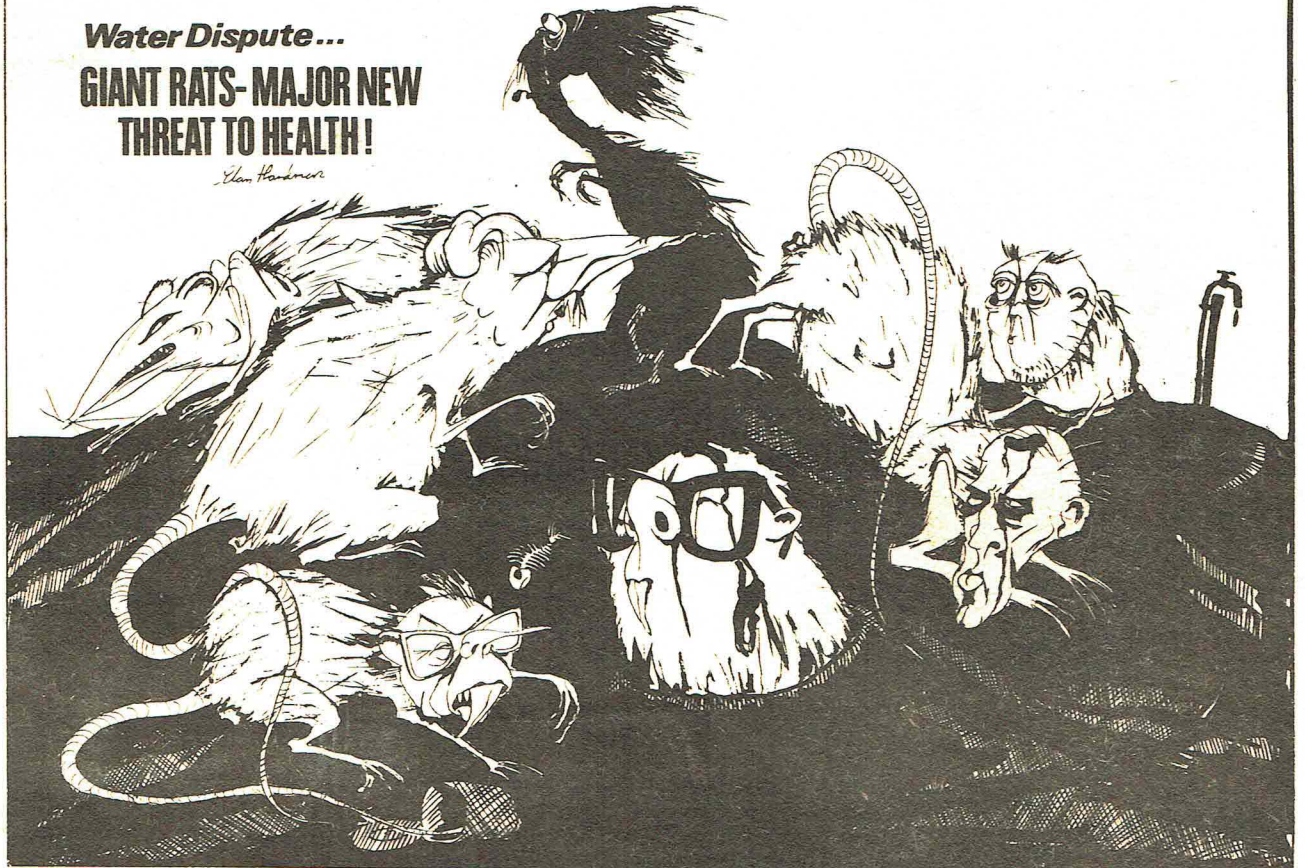
For instance, the chairman of the Northumbrian Water Authority (NWA) was previously chairman of the still operating Newcastle and Gateshead Water Company (NGWC) and a former leading Tory. This is an overwhelmingly Labour area.

The new chairman of Anglia Water was chief executive of his family window and door manufacturing firm, before he went to retire in Scotland. He’s had no experience of local government since 1974 and has never served with a Water

Continued on back page

Water Dispute...
GIANT RATS- MAJOR NEW
THREAT TO HEALTH!

Alan Handman



Public to pay for Tory nuke campaign?

‘Nukes are good for you—government health warning.’ This won’t be the style of a proposed government campaign to convince you to support Tory defence policy.

But, according to a leak which has embarrassed Thatcher & Co over the last week, they have been planning to pay advertising agency J Walter Thompson, one million pounds of public money to launch such a campaign!

Worried about the impact of CND and support for unilateralism in producing votes for Labour, plans for an advertising campaign to explain to young people and women the need to retain nuclear weapons have been discussed by the Ministry

of Defence, the Central Office of Information and the American-owned firm.

As a result of the publicity and parliamentary outcry, it seems that new defence minister Heseltine may drop or modify the idea. But the secrecy surrounding the scheme, in an industry famous for nothing if not publicity, shows the Tories were scared of word getting out. It makes a mockery of the so-called ‘neutrality’ of government machinery if it is used as a vehicle for

Tory party propaganda, especially in election year.

The Tories must be worried about the impact of unilateral feeling on the coming election to risk exposing their own myth of ‘keeping government out of party policies.’ When they are planning on spending over £7.5bn on Trident without asking us, it’s really shovelling it on to propose spending £1m of taxpayers’ money to defend such policies against popular criticism.

Labour must ram home the message to workers everywhere—that issues like peace, unemployment, the disaster of this Tory government and its system—all are linked to the need for socialist policies and a socialist Labour government.

The immediate losers
Continued on back page

**BACK THE
PAPER
THAT
BACKS
YOU**

Militant needs your support more than ever before.

Our enemies are intent on pursuing a witch-hunt against us, and the Tories are literally allowed to get away with murder!

Help us fight off the witch-hunt and step up the campaign for socialist policies to defeat the Tories.

Militant must have £50,000 by April 9, and well into the fund-raising quarter we have only just over £3,000 (see page 4).

Don’t leave it too late to catch up on your target! Give a special donation and collect from every worker you know who wants to see a socialist change.

All donations to: *Militant*, 1 Mentmore Terrace, London E8 3PN.

Militant

A REPLY TO JIM MORTIMER

Among the rank and file of the Labour Party there is an overwhelming urge for party unity and for a bold and vigorous election campaign.

The party membership are determined to have a go at the Tories and they have not given up the election as lost, as have many on the right wing of the Parliamentary Party.

"Few Labour MPs", the political editor of the *Sunday Times* wrote last week, "talk about winning the election. Privately, victory is no longer on their agenda... What they talk about is a hung Parliament. This appears to be the height of their ambition. Their eyes light up at the prospect."

The right wing may be resigned to defeat—indeed some may even look forward to it, in order to seek a coalition with their pals in the SDP, but the supporters of *Militant*, in common with the grass roots of the party, have not given up the ghost. The election can be won. If the Labour Party fought a unified campaign on the basis of socialist policies, including all the reforms spelt out in the conference resolutions and documents, including, especially, a clear and unequivocal call for unilateral disarmament, then a victory could be assured.

The opinion polls should not blind party members to the massive unpopularity of the Tories. Thatcher's policies over the last three and a half years have built up an enormous reservoir of anger and bitterness, which, were it not for the policies of Labour's right wing, could have swept her out of office even before now.

It must be extremely disheartening for Labour supporters that at such a time when the whole of the party, including the staff at Walworth Road, should be winding itself up for the election battle, the right wing on the NEC have launched a campaign to expel socialists from the party. Understandably, this will be seen by the party rank and file as sabotage.

What will have added to the disquiet would have been the statements made by the General Secretary, Jim Mortimer, on the BBC *Newsnight* programme, on the evening of the NEC meeting last Wednesday. Jim Mortimer, supposed to be politically 'neutral', a party 'civil servant', made a number of statements about *Militant* which were profoundly misleading and which cannot be allowed to pass without comment.

—Asked about the threat of legal action, Jim Mortimer replied: "I deplore it. The proper way for the labour movement to resolve its internal problems is through discussion in the labour movement. If people disagree with decisions they should debate them within the forum of the labour movement..."

The editorial board also "deplore" the use of legal action. But the responsibility for it lies squarely with the National Executive Committee.

It will no doubt escape most party members how it is possible to discuss an issue



Jim Mortimer, the supposedly 'neutral' General Secretary of the Labour Party. Photo: *Militant*

within the labour movement, after having been expelled from its forums, but the NEC have even curtailed the debate before the expulsions.

At no time have the NEC or the General Secretary presented any conditions to the editorial board such as would be necessary to avoid expulsions. At no time have any suggestions been made as to the changes required in the alleged structure of *Militant*.

At the NEC meeting which was attended by the five editorial board members, discussion was deliberately ruled out. No NEC members were permitted to ask questions to the five and the editors themselves were not allowed to ask any. When one of them asked the NEC to state their conditions or suggest changes, there was a stony silence. Under these conditions, the five made it absolutely clear that they made statements to the NEC only under protest.

The NEC, in considering expulsions were acting against the spirit and the letter of the Labour Party constitution, and the editorial board believed that it had no option but to take recourse, reluctantly, to legal action. Legal action, it should be noted, has never been ruled out by socialists. Without having any illusions in the class nature of the courts, and without neglecting the main struggle—the need to campaign within the rank and file of the party—the use of the courts can be justified in some circumstances.

It is unlikely, for example, that Jim Mortimer would condemn his friends and erstwhile colleagues in AUEW (TASS) who recently took the AUEW (engineering) to court over the composition of the latter's national committee—

and winning the case.

Similarly, in a letter to Maxim Gorky in 1913, Lenin also made his position clear in relation to legal action. Referring to Pyatnitsky, he wrote, "I am for prosecution. There is no need to stand on ceremony. Sentimentalism would be unforgivable. Socialists are not at all against the use of the state court. We are for making use of legality. Marx and Bebel made use of the state court even against their socialist opponents. One must know how to do it, but it must be done."

Asked on *Newsnight* if the NEC's case was "pretty well impregnable", Jim Mortimer replied: "I would hesitate to say that about any legal case. We shall observe natural justice. We shall be careful. We have tried to be careful throughout this. We've given them the opportunity to be heard..."

Before the threat of legal action, there was no talk of "natural justice". Indeed, the original motion that would have gone to the NEC meeting last year would have expelled the editors of *Militant* "forthwith", without a hearing, without consideration of evidence, without any natural justice, in other words. It is perfectly obvious that the "care" that Jim Mortimer refers to would not have been taken had it not been for the threat of legal action.

As for being given an "opportunity to be heard", as we have indicated above, the meeting between the five editors and the NEC was a farce. One NEC member walked out while that part of the meeting was in progress and another called it a "kangaroo court".

Jim Mortimer continued, in the interview: "I wrote to them for the first time in the summer of last year. They didn't even acknowledge the letter. They didn't reply for more than three months... They are a Trotskyist sect in breach of the constitution. That was the decision of our annual conference."

In fact, the General Secretary invited *Militant* to apply to the register of non-affiliated groups long before the conference agreed to set the register up. He even stipulated a closing date for application—also before the conference.

The editorial board did not apply to go on the register as long as the conference had not approved it. However, immediately the conference agreed to set up the register, the editorial board sent a long letter to the General Secretary (published in full, in *Militant* October 22, 1982) applying to the register, while making it clear they would campaign for its future abolition.

At a subsequent meeting, however, the NEC decided not to turn down the application, or to reply to it, but not even to consider it!

It should also be noted that the register was only approved by conference against the overwhelming majority of Constituency Labour Parties and by a number of big union delegations going against the express wishes of their lay members' meetings and conferences which had opposed witch-hunts. If the trade union delegations had realised the full implications of the vote and where it would lead, if they had seen behind the sweet promises that "it was not a witch-hunt", it is doubtful that the register would have passed conference.

Asked by the interviewer if there was now going to be a series of "what amounts to show trials", with party members informing on party members", Jim Mortimer was extremely evasive. "I think the responsibility for the present situation lies with the leaders of the *Militant* Tendency... They were arrogant..."

Thus, there was no denial that "show trials" will take place or that party members will be informing on party members.

As for the accusation of "arrogance": in his own submissions to the November NEC, the General Secretary made it clear that "a large majority of Constituency Labour Parties are not sympathetic to the exclusion of *Militant*... Labour cannot afford to alienate large numbers of its activists", he went on, "or to come into collision with a significant number of Constituency Labour Parties in the approach to the general election."

We would leave it to party members themselves to

judge which is the greater arrogance—to make a principled stand against political expulsions, or to go ahead with them against the wishes of the majority of party activists.

In reply to a later question Jim Mortimer stated that, "There is no inclination to stage a wide witch-hunt in the party..." Later, however, he was again asked "if an individual Labour Party member in some constituency wants to provide the NEC with evidence that so-and-so is a supporter of *Militant* or works for it or raises money for it and gives you that evidence—aren't you then in a position, under the decision you have taken today, of having to bring that before the NEC?"

"Yes", Jim Mortimer replied, "if we are satisfied there is evidence..."

In other words, despite the denials to the contrary, the party will be opened to snooping, spying, false charges and show trials,—and this is the run up to an election! The kind of "evidence" that the NEC will consider could no doubt be guessed at from the so-called 'black-box' of evidence against *Militant*.

The reason why the NEC has not seen fit to publish this "evidence" or even allow the editorial board to see it, is that the bulk of it is made up of tittle-tattle, gossip and scurrilous letters. Is this the kind of material the "leadership" of the Labour Party should be considering before an election—or for that matter any time?

Finally, Jim Mortimer, trying to emphasise the "constitutional" issue, said that "It is not a question of holding views..."

On the contrary it is a question of political views. Where has been the investigation into 'Labour Solidarity' or other right wing groups? Where is the investigation into Labour MPs support for NATO-funded and CIA-backed organisations?

Why does Jim Mortimer spit out the words "Trotskyist sect" when he refers to *Militant*, if not because he objects to the ideas of the paper? He even tried at Labour Party conference to justify the attack on *Militant* by giving over half his speech to an attack on its political views—distorting and twisting them in the process. What was that if not a political attack?

Whilst being vigorously opposed to any members being expelled for their views, the editorial board of *Militant* have always made it clear that they would be prepared to meet with the NEC to discuss any changes or proposals they would like to make. The whole onus for the dis-unity in the party lies with the right wing NEC.

The Labour Party rank and file do not want a witch-hunt: it is an election-loser. The party membership want to fight the Tories not each other. There is a general election looming and it can be won. There is a by-election in Bermondsey that must be won. The NEC should stop their sabotage act and drop the witch-hunt, "forthwith", to coin a phrase.

Labour right 'prepare' for election

Despite massive opposition from constituency parties and union branches to any witch-hunting, and facing the most important general election for decades, the right wing on Labour's NEC have refused to abandon their attack on *Militant* supporters.

As for preparing for the election—it seems that at the last meeting of the executive on Wednesday 26 January, the only discussion was on whether to squander £43,000 on opinion polling! This proposal, naturally favoured by the right, was carried by 17 votes to 8. At a time when the party is cutting back on staff, and when the Young Socialists, for example, have suffered a big cut in resources, party members will be amazed at this decision.

At the same meeting, a proposal to raise more money was heavily defeated. LPYS representative Laurence Coates and Dennis Skinner MP, moved that the names of those Labour MPs who haven't paid their £85 voluntary levy to the party should be published in *Labour Weekly*. Last summer it was revealed that 78 members of the PLP had not coughed up!

Confirming the worst fears of the rank and file, that the attack on *Militant* is just a prelude to a right-wing offensive against all the democratic gains of the last few years, the NEC agreed in 'principle' to look at changes in its own structure. This is a move clearly designed to give the right an in-built majority on the executive. Although initiated by John Golding, the issue has been delayed, with the meeting agreeing to leave the election of the enquiry team 'on the table'.

Undoubtedly the right's willingness to let the matter rest, reflects their awareness of what a reaction this move will get in the party. Having won on the issue of 'principle', they will probably not raise the matter again until after the election, or just prior to annual conference.

A new parliamentary section of five seats chosen by the PLP, and 11 members elected at the regional conferences to replace the present CLP section, are some of the proposals that Golding's enquiry will eventually look at. These proposals originate from the NUR's resolution to Annual Conference which was remitted to the NEC along with an amendment from APEX. The amendment would increase the number of seats for the PLP section to 12, plus the leader, deputy leader and PLP chairman.

The right could well have opened up a hornet's nest with this blatant attempt to rig the NEC's structure. A torrent of opposition from the party's membership can be expected in the next few months.

Colin Roach: independent inquiry vital

The wave of protests, demonstrations and clashes with the police which have followed Colin Roach's death are an indication of the tremendous anger felt by local people over the way the police have handled the whole affair.

Colin Roach was found dead in the doorway of Stoke Newington police station, East London, on 12 January. According to the police, he entered the station at about 11.30 pm and then killed himself with a shotgun.

A press statement issued by the police shortly after the incident failed to establish a precise motive for the alleged suicide, but indicated that Colin had a history of mental disorder, a claim that has since been vigorously denied by Colin's family.

If Colin did decide to take his own life, then why did he choose to do so in a police station?

How did he come to be in possession of a shotgun?

Was he known by any police officers at Stoke Newington police station?

None of these or many other questions will be resolved by the narrow investigation of a coroner's inquest. It is essential that the local Labour movement and black organisations establish an independent inquiry into all the circumstances of Colin's death and the police behaviour afterwards.

Mr Roach arrived at the police station at 12.15am,

and says he was not told of his son's death for at least two and a half hours. His wife constantly rang the station to make enquiries, but she too was told nothing.

There are also complaints that the family were treated badly when the police searched Colin's room at 5 am, and when they interviewed Mrs Roach at the station the next day at the station.

Concerned about Colin's behaviour on the night he died, a friend, Keith Scully had taken Colin's father to the police station. The attitude of the police can be gauged by how they broke the news to Keith Scully, five and a half hours after Colin's death. "The policeman came in and said he had good news and bad news. He said the bad news was that Colin was dead... Then they said the good news was that I wasn't being charged with anything."

The intense feeling of the local population after Colin's death reflects the pent up anger that has been steadily accumulating against years of harassment and victimisation by the police.

Last year, a local black family was awarded £50,000 in damages after officers from Stoke Newington Police station illegally raided their home in 1976 and brutally attacked them.

The trial judge, Mr. Justice Mars-Jones, said the police had been guilty of "wicked and shameful conduct". He accused the police of a "five year cover-up" of their "brutal, savage and sustained variety of assaults"

The police are now facing similar allegations from another local black family. Their home was also raided by the police who later charged them with assault, but all the charges were

subsequently dismissed in court.

The call for an independent inquiry into both the Roach case, and the whole nature of policing activities in the inner-cities, especially on their treatment of blacks, has won widespread support. Hackney's Labour Council, the Commission for Racial Equality and Labour's Shadow Home Secretary, Roy Hattersley, have called for an independent inquiry into Colin Roach's death.

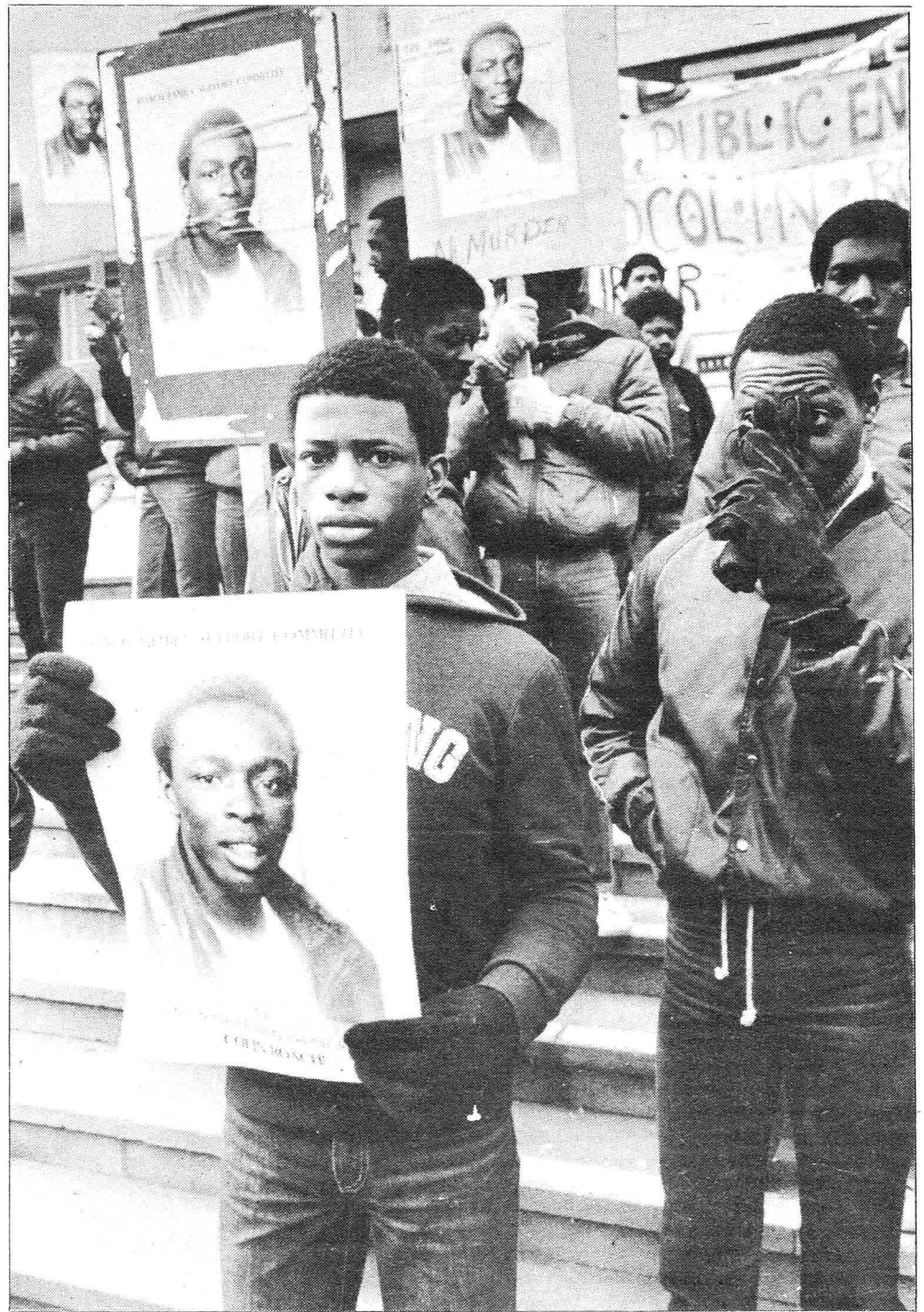
This latest case comes on the second anniversary of the New Cross Massacre, in which 13 young blacks were killed, but that case still remains unresolved. No one has ever been charged, and the Coroner's court totally failed to discover what happened.

But today the tensions between local people and the police in much of our inner cities have reached boiling point. In Notting Hill, London, the police have been warned that the black population will not hesitate to take action to defend themselves from the constant harassment and intimidation meted out to them by the police.

If nothing is done, sooner or later the anger and bitterness that exploded in 1981 will return, with renewed force.

The next Labour government must repeal the present laws that allow the arbitrary powers of the police to go unchecked. All aspects of policing should be made subject to public scrutiny, through local authority Police Committees that have full powers to control and check the day to day activities of the police forces.

By Bob Lee



Youth protest against the death of Colin Roach outside the Town Hall in Hackney, East London, On January 22.

Photo: Militant

Keep Bermondsey Labour

The events surrounding the retirement of Bob Mellish from the Labour Party, and the adoption of Peter Tatchell as Labour candidate, have brought a barrage of attacks against Bermondsey Labour Party.

The press have sent snoopers round and claim that the party is in 'crisis'. Far from being in a crisis, the party is healthier than it has been for years. Since the Annual General Meeting in 1980, the membership has doubled, from about 400 to over 800. Hardly a sign of decline!

The hostile press has spread the myth that the party has been taken over by "middle class infiltrators". Nothing could be further from the truth!

Industrial and white collar workers play a prominent part in the party, and are represented at every level. There are numerous officers

and leading members of the party who are also active members of industrial trade unions.

Mellish claims he was ousted by what he refers to as a "Mafia" in the party. Untrue! Back in July 1981, he announced that he would not be standing again for parliament. The Bermondsey LP then set in motion the democratic procedure for selecting a new candidate, and picked Peter Tatchell.

But Bob Mellish decided that he was more important than the Labour Party and tried to dictate who should be his replacement. He threatened to resign and support an anti-Labour candidate if Tatchell continued to be the candidate.

For years and years Labour Party members in Bermondsey, despite policy differences with him, have worked to return Bob Mellish to Parliament. Now he's stabbed them in the back.

In last May's local council elections, Bob Mellish supported three anti-Labour "Independent Labour and

Tenants" candidates. Now he is backing right wing former Southwark Council leader John O'Grady who is standing under the laughable title of "Real Bermondsey Labour".

Working people will do well to remember his role as leader of Southwark Council over the last few years—the rent rises, and the slashing of services in complete obedience of the Tories in Westminster. If Mr O'Grady is 'Real Labour,' why doesn't he have any trade unions supporting him? Because they remember his role in the past as Southwark Council leader.

There is nothing 'new' or 'independent' or 'Labour' about O'Grady, Mellish and their supporters.

Mellish himself is sitting pretty in his retirement. He is picking up £16,000 a year as Vice-Chairman of the Tories' London Docklands Development Corporation. How many other 69 year olds in Bermondsey can look forward to £300 a week?

John O'Grady is also on the Docklands Board, with

an allowance of £3,060.

It is hardly surprising that the enemies of the working class should try to damage the Labour Party. Regrettably they have now been assisted by disgruntled right wingers who have caused splits in the party.

We appeal to the whole of the labour movement—help us in the election campaign—keep Bermondsey Labour, defeat the Tories, and their shadows such as O'Grady. This should be the first step in building the Labour Party among local workers and fighting to kick out the Tories and return a Labour government committed to socialist policies.

By Bernie O'Connor

(Vice Chairman, Bermondsey CLP)

BERMONDSEY Labour Party canvassing. Help required. For further details contact: Dave Fryar, 743 8275, Ann Colthart, 231 9572, Peter Tatchell, 403 1790.

Bristol Poly occupied

A legal injunction has been served on students who have been involved in occupation at Bristol Polytechnic since last Thursday, in protest against proposals for cuts in course numbers and accommodation, including the closure of sites. Accommodation is already overcrowded, with some courses occupying corridors.

If implemented the new proposals could cut intake to Social Sciences by 40% and humanities by 50%. Consultation with staff and Student Unions has been totally inadequate, and support for the occupation has come from both teaching and ancillary workers at the Polytechnic; lectures and

seminars are being held in occupation. A negotiating committee met governors on Friday, but the latter are refusing to enter into further discussions as long as we are in occupation.

Labour Club members have approached the controlling Labour Group on Avon County Council to put pressure on the Governors to come back to the negotiating table. The campaign is now being taken to the town with leaflets and approaches have been made to the labour and trade union movement.

By Ian Campbell
(Bristol Polytechnic Labour Club)

BERMONDSEY
MILITANT READERS MEETING
"Which way forward for Labour after the by-election?"

Speakers: Peter Taaffe (Editor *Militant*), John Bryan (Southwark councillor).

Chairman: Bernie O'Connor (Vice-chair Bermondsey LP)

Monday 28 February, 7.30 pm. Rotherhithe Civic Centre, Albion Street, Rotherhithe, SE16.

ALL WELCOME

£50,000 needed by April 9

Area	Received	% of target achieved	Target 9th April
Eastern	263		2700
East Midlands	363		2850
Humberside	64		1500
London East	177		3300
London West	143		1650
London South	241		2500
Manchester & Lancs	326		3000
Merseyside	222		3100
Northern	81		3750
Scotland East	119		1850
Scotland West	31		2800
Southern	205		4000
South West	91		2000
Wales East	40		1500
Wales West	76		2000
West Midlands	334		2800
Yorkshire	96		3700
Others	319		5000
Total received	3191		50000

£4,000 needed every week

You can tell there is a general election likely this year; the Tories are "giving away" money! Sir Geoffrey Howe is said to be planning income tax cuts worth £1.50 a week for a single person and £2.30 a week for a married couple for his March budget.

Although, how on earth will working people stretch £2.30 to cover the 40% rate rises proposed in some areas? And despite inflation falling to 6%, housing rents have actually increased by 19%!

By Clare Doyle

There's no doubt that for millions of us the Tories measly offering will amount to nothing. Far better to put it in the *Militant* Fighting Fund! Despite the hardships, hundreds of contributions do pour in each week from workers, housewives, the unemployed, trade unionists, students, Labour Parties and even old age pensioners.

Any donation is now a sacrifice, considering the appallingly low levels of pay and the poverty levels of social security payments. The money comes in to *Militant* each week precisely because working people want to see an end of the Tory system that puts profits before people.

We have received some excellent donations this week:— £70 from CPSA DHSS Section Executive Committee members, £30 from three Civil Aviation Authority workers, and over £150 raised from a *Militant* public meeting held at the London Labour Party Young Socialists' conference.

Two old age pensioners who live in Newcastle, Staff donated £10, and health

worker S Watson from Sunderland parted with £2. M Talbot in the EETPU from Newham gives us £1 every week! An example for all readers to follow!

Trade union donations

this week included; £15 (UCATT supporters, Doncaster) £5 (Selly Oak TGWU 5/826 branch) £2 (AUEW Hull No 12 branch) £2 UCW Leyton supporters) and £1.50 from Guinness Export

workers in Walton.

Thanks to all those who managed to send us "tenners" including:— D Etherage (Ipswich) D Byrne (Louth) J Nelson (Walton) J Mullarkey (AUEW Selly Oak) and £10 from LPYS supporters in Sunderland. Thanks also to all those who gave "fivers" this week including:— M Parker (Lincolnshire) M Townsend (Sunderland) M Gray (Gosport Labour Party) D Kaplan (Rotherham Labour Party Young Socialists) and P McFarlane a student from Shettleston.

We are grateful for all the individual contributions we receive but unfortunately we cannot mention them all. Among this week's were M Peat (Knowesley NALGO), T Johnstone (Faversham LP) and S Stones (Birmingham) who each donated £2. Among those who gave £1 donations were:— K Mitchell (Birmingham ASLEF) G Littlejohns (NUT Leicester), P Greenfield (Hull), T Robinson (Grimbsby GMBATU), J Ryan (Dagenham LPYS) V Hanford (Blackpool) I Williams (Denbigh LP) S Biro (Rutherglen CPSA) T Beddis (Coventry).

Don't forget the appeal sheets. A supporter in Birmingham raised £6 this week by passing one round. Take your appeal sheet with you when you go to your local trade union or ward meeting.

There's lots of enjoyable ways of raising money if you use your initiative. Why not try a pancake night? But the most important way is to collect regular donations from supporters and 'extras' on top of the price of a *Militant*.

So far in three weeks this year we have got just £3,000. But we need £4,000 every week to get to our £50,000 target. Don't leave it too long before you get your area's line moving across the chart. Like you we have bills to pay. And only your money will enable us to pay them. Get *Militant* on target in the fight against the Tories.

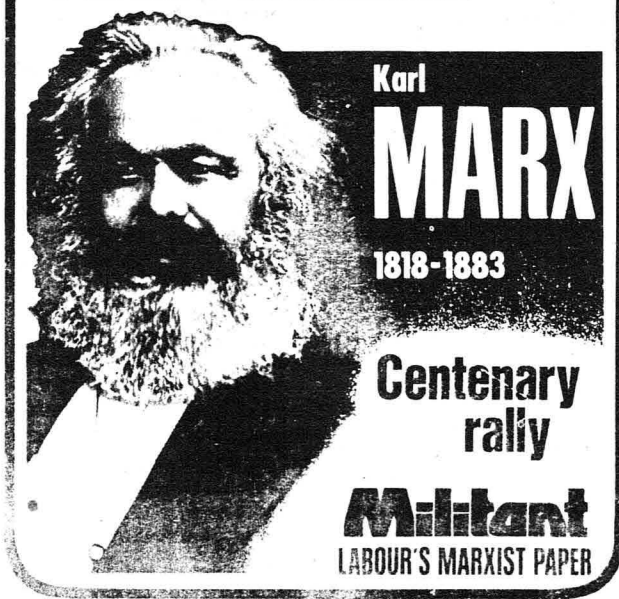
**THIS WEEK:
£1,808**

MARX CENTENARY RALLIES

This year is the centenary of the death of Karl Marx, who died on March 14 1883. Throughout his life, Marx provided the labour movement with an analysis of capitalist society as a preparation for the emancipation of the working class.

Militant—Labour's Marxist paper—has organised a series of regional rallies to commemorate the event, and explain the relevance of Marxism today.

- ★ LEEDS—Saturday 12 March
- ★ NOTTINGHAM—Sunday 13 March
- ★ CARDIFF—Monday 14 March
- ★ BRISTOL—Monday 14 March
- ★ SWANSEA—Tuesday 15 March
- ★ MANCHESTER—Wednesday 16 March
- ★ EDINBURGH—Saturday 19 March
- ★ HUMBERSIDE—Saturday 19 March
- ★ BIRMINGHAM—Saturday 19 March
- ★ LONDON—Sunday 20 March
- ★ LIVERPOOL—Sunday 20 March
- ★ NORTHERN REGION—Saturday 26 March
- ★ GLASGOW—(to be announced)



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

ads

MILITANT READERS MEETINGS 'WHAT WE STAND FOR'

Militant Discussion Group. Tuesday 8 February at 8.00 pm on "Nationalisation and workers control" at Commercial Inn Smallbrook, Shaw, Oldham.

LEEDS 'How to win a socialist government' on Tuesday 15 February at 7.30 pm at Trades Club, Saville Mount, Leeds. All Labour supporters welcome.

Militant Trade Union School Sunday 13 February, 10.00 am—4 pm at AUEW Buildings, Margaret Street South, Aston-Under-Lyme. Speakers: Jon Ingham (AUEW) on 'Which way forward for the trade unions'. Gerry Lerner (TASS) on 'Workers control and management'.

Militant Discussion Group "Which way forward for Labour". Friday 11 February, 8.00 pm at Middleton Labour Club, Long Street Middleton.

CLEVELAND: "Socialism and the Bomb", Thursday 17 February, 7.30 pm. Labour Club, Linthorpe Road, Middlesbrough.

GLASGOW: 'Which way forward now for the labour movement?' Speaker: Peter Taaffe (Editor, *Militant*) at McLellan Galleries, Glasgow, Thursday 3 February, 7.30 pm.

CLASSIFIED

HACKNEY Youth Rally: '£20 weekly grant for all students over 16'. Thursday 24 February, 7.30 pm, Assembly Room, Hackney Town Hall. Speakers to be announced.

CHESTERFIELD: 'Youth on the scrap heap?' Speaker: Chris Revill (Mansfield LPYS). Monday 7 February, 7.30 pm, Rooms 3/4, Market Hall, Chesterfield.

SHEFFIELD, Hillsborough LPYS Public Meeting: 'Jobs not bo.nbs'. Speaker, John Goodby YS National Committee on 9 February, 7.30 pm at Winn Gardens, Hillsborough (below 1st Tower Block).

NORTH EAST Marxist Discussion Groups:
FOREST HALL: Details Dave Metcalfe, 0632 665277
NEWCASTLE WEST: Every Sunday. Contact Rob Lowther, 0632 775636.
NEWCASTLE NORTH: Every Sunday. Contact Karen Walker, 0632 732959.
SANDFORD: Every Sunday. Contact Gavin Dudley, 0632 652906.
GATESHEAD: Every Sunday. Contact Tom McGuinness, 18 Lumley Gardens, Gateshead (Gateshead 783262).
WASHINGTON: Details, Washington 478424.

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A MILITANT PAMPHLET

SOCIALIST YOUTH OUT NOW!

These were two of the contributions made in the excellent debate on *Socialist Youth* at the London LPYS Regional Conference.

"During the nurses' strike the *Daily Express* had the headline 'Striking nurses should be sacked.' What else can we expect from the Tory press?"

"In Hayes, two LPYS members sell 6 or 7 *Socialist Youth* every Tuesday morning at the Employment Exchange. Every LPYS member should sell *Socialist Youth* at work, at school or at their Labour Party or union branch."

—Mandy Kent (Hayes LPYS)

"I work at County Hall. There are something like 10,000 people working there. Some other LPYS members and myself are setting up a workplace branch of the LPYS."

"At the first meeting we've invited Ken Livingstone to speak and we've fixed up an interview with

him for *Socialist Youth*.

"It's important every LPYS member is a member of a union. LPYS members should get their union branch to take an order for *Socialist Youth*. It's our duty to get the name *Socialist Youth* well known."

—Janet Toms (Bermondsey LPYS)

Every Regional Conference should follow the example of the London LPYS by fully discussing both the content and sales of *Socialist Youth*.

Already in the past month over 1,500 new orders have been placed for *Socialist Youth*.

The February edition includes a pull out poster highlighting the campaign for a £25 a week grant for all further education and school students over 16. There are interviews with Labour Party General Secretary, Jim Mortimer, and Alex Kitson on Ireland and lots more.

Socialist Youth is out NOW!

Order from:
Socialist Youth
150 Walworth Road
London SE 17

Inquiry into YS students

A Labour Party inquiry has been called into the role of the LPYS at the recent Further Education sector conference of the National Union of Students.

The Party's National Executive meeting on 26 January approved a recommendation from the Youth Committee to hold the inquiry. The inquiry, to be undertaken by Youth Committee Chairman Denis Howell and National Agent David Hughes, is to investigate claims by the leaders of the National Organisation of Labour Students (NOLS) that the LPYS stood candidates for the FE National Committee in opposition to candidates nominated by NOLS.

In fact, the decision to stand candidates for the FENC was not taken by the LPYS National Committee but by individual LPYS members present as delegates at the conference, including members of four FE Labour Clubs affiliated to NOLS.

They feared that, despite the attacks on FE Students by the Tories, the NOLS leaders would not attempt to

win a Labour majority on the FENC.

This fear was based on the past record of the NOLS leaders in NUS elections. At the March 1981 NUS conference, for example, the NOLS leaders backed a Liberal Party member, Leighton Andrews, against a Labour Party member for the position of Vice-President Welfare.

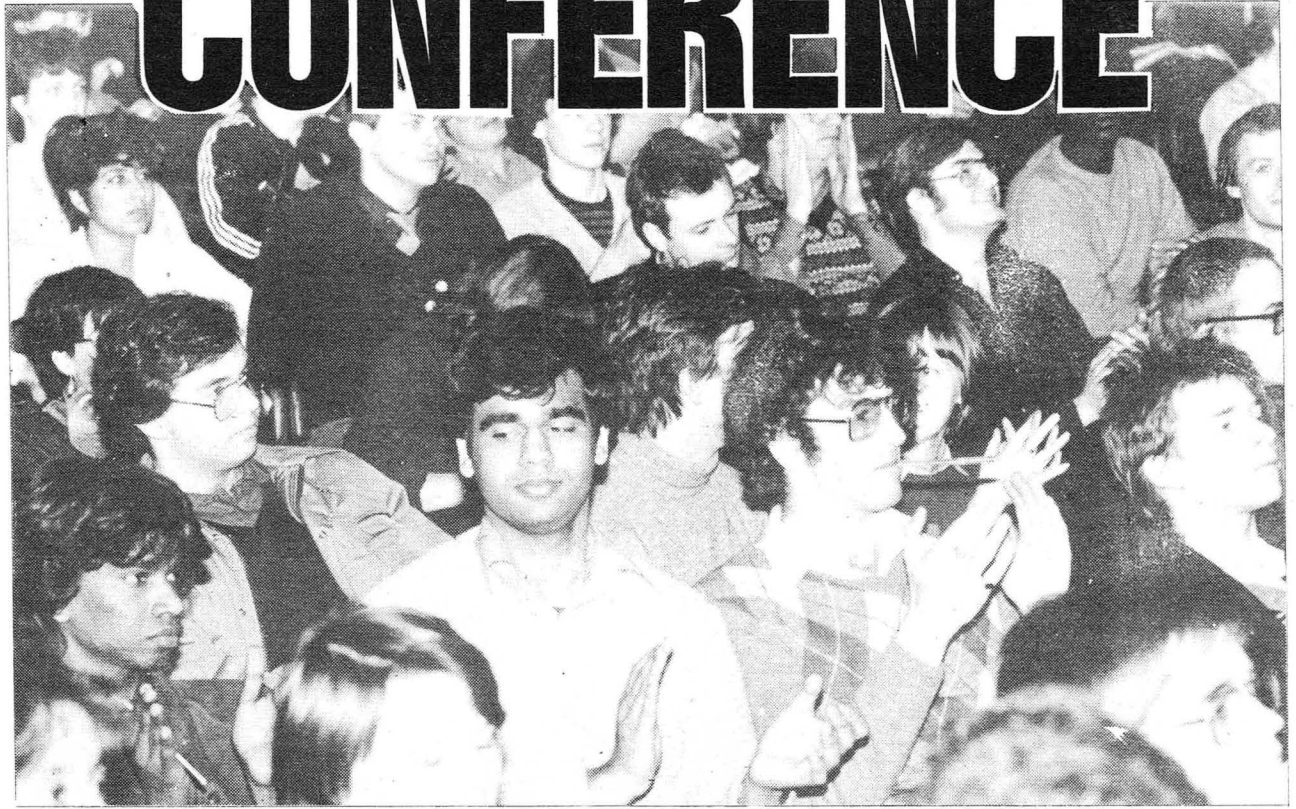
At the 1982 FE Sector Conference the NOLS leaders refused to organise a NOLS meeting and backed candidates who stood on a non-political 'United Left' platform. The NOLS leaders stated, following this conference, that whether NOLS stood Labour candidates depended on "the tactical approach necessary at an individual conference" (NOLS NC minutes, January 1982).

No wonder that many Labour student activists at the FE conference felt that NOLS might not stand candidates.

Indeed, it was subsequently revealed at the NOLS national committee meeting on 23 January that the NOLS NUS Committee had decided not to stand official NOLS candidates for FENC!

Consequently, when

LPYS NATIONAL CONFERENCE



Delegates at the London regional LPYS conference on 22/23 January. Photo: Militant

Why we are going

Young Socialists attending the London LPYS conference, held last weekend, told *Militant* why they're coming to the National Conference in Bridlington:

"This is the first LPYS conference I've been to and I'm quite impressed—it's very good! I went to the Black Youth Conference last year. That was the first step—I joined the LPYS from there. I'll definitely be at the Annual Conference."

—Sharon Mayne, Hackney Central LPYS



Sharon Mayne

"I'm going to try to get to the conference. I went on the big CND march last summer and bought a copy of *Militant*—that's how I got involved with the YS. I get some stick at school

for being in the LPYS. It's a grammar school and they're all Tories!"

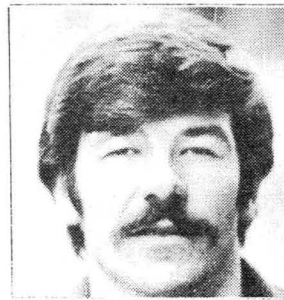
—Christina Purcell, Ilford South LPYS



Christina Purcell

"I went to the conference for the first time last year. I'm a delegate this year. The *Militant* Readers' Meeting was brilliant—I've never seen so many people packed into one hall. Our accommodation was good too, we've booked the same place this year."

—Gus Cousins, Dagenham LPYS



Gus Cousins

"I joined the YS because of *Militant*. I agree with what *Militant* says and decided to do something

about it. I'm definitely going to LPYS conference—our LPYS branch is organising a series of socials to help pay for it. We're also levying all the members."

—Andrea Stark, Bermondsey LPYS



Andrea Stark



Ona Eribenne

"I've found the conference very interesting. I never realised that Labour backed so many groups—like people on strike. I'm particularly interested in CND. I shall be going to the national conference."

—Ona Eribenne, Vauxhall LPYS

STEP UP ESTATE SALES

Recently Benton LPYS held an estate sale on a small estate called Rocket Way, in Forrest Hall, Newcastle. Three of us took to the street for what was our first public paper sale.

At first we were a bit frightened. We didn't know

what to say or how to handle the response. Or at least this is what we thought. In little over half an hour we sold five *Socialist Youths* and nine *Militants*!

It was a really excellent response. Labour voters were pleased to see us. We did come across a few people who were a big cynic over Labour's past record and said they may vote SDP, but on the other hand they hated the Tories!

Our message to other LPYS branches who haven't held estate sales is to get out there and give it hell. You've nothing to lose.

By Benton LPYS

NOLS NUS Officer John Mann refused requests from LPYS members to convene a meeting of Labour students before the deadline for nominations (Saturday 7pm, the second night of conference) two LPYS members sought nominations for the FENC.

However, after nominations were closed, the NOLS Officers convened a meeting where it was decided that NOLS should back two of the 16 candidates nominated

although neither of them were members of NOLS (as they did not have Labour Clubs at their Colleges and there is no provision for individual membership of NOLS).

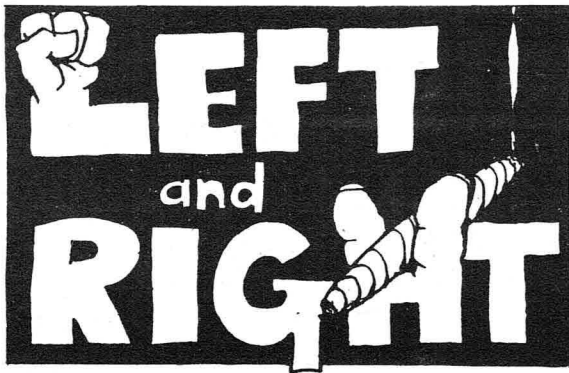
Every Labour student and LPYS member will be concerned at this lack of coordination in taking the fight for socialist ideas to FE students. But they will be equally concerned and angered at the decision of the NOLS Officers to take this

issue to the NEC Youth Committee, thus causing another 'inquiry' which could be used by Labour right wing to attack LPYS.

Instead they should have approached the LPYS directly on the proposal put forward by *Militant* supporters at the December NOLS national committee, a proposal agreed unanimously, that NOLS and the LPYS should jointly organise a conference of all Labour Party members in

FE colleges to launch a campaign in the FEs and Techs.

Labour Clubs should send resolutions to the NOLS national committee and the NEC Youth Committee defending the LPYS and calling on NOLS and the LPYS to organise a conference for FE students in the Autumn term. In this way a concerted joint campaign can be launched to win FE students to the side of the labour movement.



On the breadline

If it was not for the welfare state over five million people in Britain would have to exist on *ten pounds a year*. That is the latest revelation to come from the government's own handbook of statistics, *Economic Trends* (HMSO £9.75). It finds that in 1981, when payments from social security, child benefit, unemployment pay and all other welfare benefits are excluded, then the income coming in for the poorest 10% of the population was on average, just £10 a year.

Tom and Jenkins

When the SDP was launched two years ago, the Tory media greeted it with fanfares in the hope that it would provoke a major split within the Labour Party. Now it has dismally failed in its class task, the media spotlight has been withdrawn. When the SDP tried their third re-launch last month, the *Daily Telegraph*, 21 January, gave them about as much space as it devoted to a man being bitten by a mouse (see below).



Sounds familiar?

"We urge caution! No pay rises, until the firm knows the likely trading results for 1983. Do not pretend to have in your pocket what will still have to be earned. The question now is not 'who is getting a big rise, and who is getting a small one?'—but who is getting one at all! The small amount of money available has got to be concentrated in places where possible profits in 1983 might lay the foundations for a rise in 1984."

Who said it? Maggie Thatcher, Norman Tebbit? No! While the above words sound terribly familiar, they come from László Pongrácz, a director of the state Wage and Labour Office of Hungary.

He was being interviewed for *Heh Viláogazdaság* the main Hungarian economics weekly. Bureaucratic mis-management coupled with the world recession put enormous pressures on Hungary's economy. The solution to the bureaucrat's problems is identical with that of the capitalists': reduce the workers' living standards!

The solution to the workers' problems—east or west—is also identical: it is called workers' democracy and socialism!

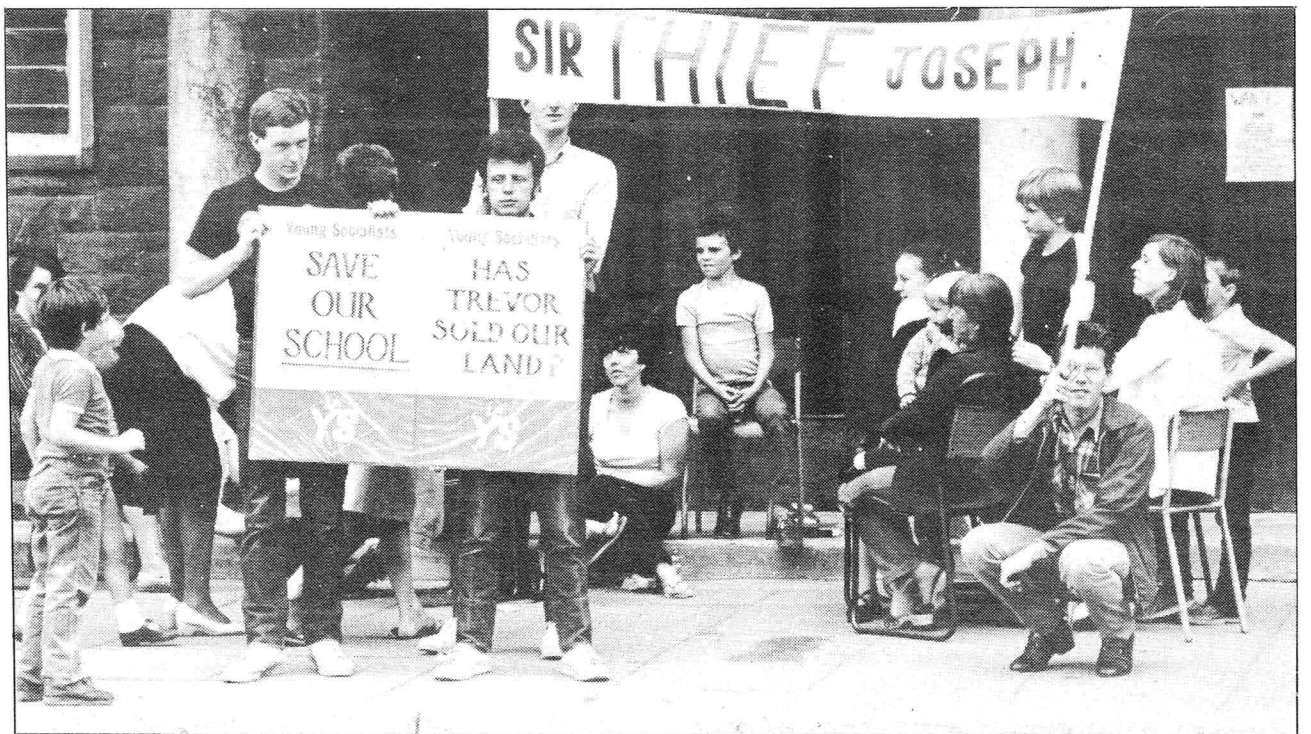
FIFTY YEARS AGO

No capitalist economist pretends, in 1983, that when the slight upturn in the economy finally materialises there will be any real decline in the number out of work. But they often cover up the meaning of their words with euphemisms, like "this is the age of mass leisure".

Fifty years ago the government used more direct language. On 14 February, 1933, Prime Minister MacDonald claimed, in a letter to Bethnal Green Council, that the depression was ended. Three months before, he explained what that would mean:

"When trade has become as brisk as anybody can expect trade now to become we shall still have a residuum. We shall still have a population which, were they not human beings, one would describe—merely for the sake of making quite clear what their position was—as scrap." (House of Commons, 23 November 1932)

The brutality of their system has not changed, only the rhetoric has altered.



Rates Threaten School's Success

By Ray Murray
(W. Derby LPYS)

Now well into its second term, Croxteth Community school has confounded its Liberal and Tory critics.

It has 159 students on its roll and this week some took their mock 'O' levels.

The school was occupied six months ago when the Tories threatened closure. There are now ten full-time teachers, two administrators and fifteen part-time teachers. "The atmosphere is better than ever," Phil Knibb chairman of the school's Action Committee told me.

The Liberals may talk about "community politics" but they are no different from the Tories when it comes to action. The two parties combined together on the local council and refused to pay the school's

heating bills (£1,000 a month) or rates.

On Monday, 31 January, the council slapped a £27,000 rates bill on the three organisers of the school's Action Committee. This is a deliberate attempt to cripple the school. Phil Knibb one of those charged, told me: "It is now really crucial that donations come in over the next few weeks."

Only the determination of the local community and the financial and political backing from the labour movement has so far kept the school open. Amongst the donations received have been over £2,000 from various TGWU branches, £950 from Lawrence Scotts Manchester, £500 from the Labour Party, and £100

from GMBATU (No 1 branch).

When the autumn term began, Kemp, the chairman of the local education committee forecast it would fail within six weeks. Within five he was sacked as chairman.

Despite threats of legal action, the threatened arrival of bailiffs, hostility from the Tory press, the local community has refused to give in. They know that the school is about the only decent community facility left in the area. Croxteth has an unemployment rate of about 40%, with 98% of 16-19 year olds without work.

Property developers have their eye upon the school's extensive playing grounds if it is closed. So far they have been stopped in their tracks.

And there is a commitment by the local Labour group, that if they take control of the council, state education will be resumed at Croxteth, with fourth form entry in September 1983.

The lessons of the occupation must be learnt by others fighting Tory cuts. Thatcher and Joseph can be stopped, if they face a determined and united community backed by the labour movement.

But more money and help is desperately required. Send donations, resolutions of support or invite speakers to your branch or factory. Contact Phil Knibb, Chairman, Croxteth Community Action Committee, 27 Recruth Rd, Liverpool 11.

SCHOOL ACTION COMMITTEE

DAMP DIVIDES FAMILY

By Brian Debus

Due to cold and damp Alyson Gower cannot live in her parent's Coventry council house. She lives with her grandparents because a severe throat infection flares up whenever she stays at home.

Her mother says "whenever she comes here she finds it hard to breathe, she can't even stay for a weekend."

"There's no way she can live here", her stepfather pointed out, "we've got black fungus on the kitchen walls. Upstairs there is no heating at all and there is damp coming out of the walls leading to Alyson's room."

Alyson's story is not unique. There are thousands of damp houses in Coventry and an estimated 6 million damp homes throughout Britain.

Last year Upper Stoke Ward Labour Party in Coventry conducted a survey of council house repairs. They found that 599 reports had been made to the council, but 434 of these had not been completed. 136 rooms

suffered from damp. Meadway, where Alyson used to live, had 38 homes surveyed and 24 rooms were found to be damp.

Yet John Sullivan of the City's Homes and Property's services department claimed that although the house was cold and damp it was not 'excessive' and Alyson's con-

Council claim damp not 'excessive'

dition was not sufficiently serious to merit special priority. One can only wonder what justifies a priority. The council clearly accepts damp and the consequences for 'family' life.

Coventry Confederation of Tenants has shown the scale of the housing crisis. There are nearly nine thou-

sand people on the waiting list, but last year the council built fewer than 50 houses. 2,000 council houses have been boarded up for two to three years.

Weekly rents are hardly low, with a three-bedroomed place being between £24.74 in Henely Green, £29.15 in Willingham. It even costs £12 per week to rent a slab of concrete for your caravan at Henely Green.

Instead of wasting money on armaments it should go to building houses. The 500,000 building workers on the dole could build and renovate 1 million homes a year. This would create jobs in the building supply, furniture and carpeting industries. Otherwise in a few years time we will return to the Victorian era and sleep under the arches.

To continue the battle the confederation is moving into new premises: Unit 15, Industrial Estates, Wood End, Coventry and is looking for support from labour movement organisations in its struggle for a socialist solution to housing.

Students at three schools in Hillingdon, West London threatened with closure, have established action committees, with representatives of the teachers' union, NUT. Uxbridge LPYS has offered its help and resources and has obtained the use of the local Labour Party rooms as a meeting place for the students.

When the closure was announced on 24 January the public gallery of the Council chambers was full and special 'overflow' rooms had to be provided.

The local LPYS branch had produced leaflets publicising a meeting the following night. Two of the schools threatened with closure were leafleted and students from both schools attended the highly successful meeting.

By Simon Kaplan
(Uxbridge LPYS)

OPEN DOOR

The Brighton Unemployed Centre have got a programme on BBC 2's Open Door series next Wednesday, 9 February at 6.15pm. Entitled 'Fight on the beaches', it reflects the views, of Brighton's unemployed about their conditions.

Northern Ireland

The article entitled "The shadow of 1984" in *Militant*, issue 634, covers the possibility of mass surveillance of the population. Yet this is already the case in the six counties of Northern Ireland.

The soldiers are told before they go out to patrol the area that one of the best sources of intelligence is through the de-briefing of the soldiers themselves after they return to base.

When I served there, we were told to keep our eyes and ears open all the time, the reason given, they said, was to help combat terrorism. Also we were told that it is important to get on to the computers at Lisburn (the army GHQ) every single detail including the names, addresses and activities of every single suspected terrorist or those who were 'politically connected' with the terrorists i. e., members of the Sinn Fein Party.

However, if this is the case then the ruling class must suspect every single Irish man, woman and child of terrorism. Many times the soldiers are sent out on deliberate patrols which consist of visiting whole rows of houses with a question sheet which reads something like this:- How long have you been married? How many children are there in your family? What school do they go to? What are the names of your family? How many of your family are working? Do you own a car?, etc, etc.

At the same time another soldier is ordered to (and I had to do this myself on a number of occasions) find out details of the home:- The colour of the living room wallpaper. How many chairs and tables? What colour carpets do you have? Do you own a colour TV? etc, etc. I can tell you that this 'important job' disgusted many of the soldiers and made them bitter towards the army. Many soldiers kept repeating the same question—WHY?

On one occasion four of us were sent to a house in the Moyard Estate of West Belfast. The occupier of the house was an old woman who was a widow and who was evidently very poor. Two of us entered the house whilst the other two soldiers took up defensive positions in the garden. I could see with my own eyes that there was scarcely any furniture and the house was suffering from damp. But still I had to produce my clipper board and question sheet as I had been ordered to.

Understandably, the old woman couldn't understand why I was asking these questions and at that time (as it was early on in my four month tour) I did not fully understand myself. But what struck me at the time was that if she refused to answer any of the questions she could be liable for arrest, and held at an RUC station

By a former soldier in Northern Ireland

for up to four hours in the hope of obtaining this kind of information. Just imagine being arrested for refusing to tell when you bought your colour TV set!

This, by the way, is just one example of a repressive role in which the soldiers are ordered to undertake. And though I know for a fact that some soldiers deliberately barge their way into people's homes and cause havoc, some others actually put down their own details on the question sheets so that the occupier would not be arrested.

All this information is stored and after a few months another detachment of soldiers could be sent out to see if things have changed i.e. the wallpaper.

On another occasion our patrol group was called into the briefing room and told we were to go out on a 'very important patrol' at 2 am. I was given a small hand tape recorder and I had to go, with the protection of the other three soldiers, and record every single number plate of the parked cars in the Ballymurphy and Moyard area. There was I crouching behind every single car and speaking into the recorder; "Alfa, Oscar India 2, 3, 4, Foxtrot".

Every single car in Northern Ireland is on the computers and it wouldn't surprise me if a great deal of those from the South were as well.

When you are in an observation post (sanga) and a car passes by, you just have to press an intercom button and say "car check, such and such". Within minutes it is sent off to Lisburn, checked, then sent back to you with a coded reply informing you who's car it is etc.

On many occasions plain clothed intelligence officers have sat in the sangas with you and photographed street activities. Even the length of a person's hair is recorded i.e. such and such has had a hair cut the other day so we must get a new photo of him/her.

This is just a few examples of the type of surveillance that goes on, however. There are other kinds, like infrared cameras mounted on helicopters which can pick up the heat of the body from hundreds of feet up and produce perfect photos as though the camera were only a few feet away.

The 'shadow of 1984' has been in Northern Ireland ever since the late sixties and the seventies.



A soldier checks the ID card of a taxi driver in Belfast, relaying the information onto the Army computer in Lisburn

Photo: Militant

LABOUR MOVEMENT MUST FIGHT REPRESSIVE LAWS

The shooting dead of seven men in recent weeks by the Royal Ulster Constabulary marks a serious new turn in security policy in Northern Ireland.

Clearly, despite denials, a decision has been taken by the RUC that District Mobile Support Units will be allowed to shoot to kill on sight. The labour movement must oppose such a development as it must oppose all repression.

Militant has always condemned the acts of terrorism carried out by the Provisional IRA and other sectarian terrorist groups. Besides the obvious fact that it is often workers who suffer from the bombings and assassinations, such futile acts leave the ruling class an open door—because of the revulsion of workers at acts of terrorism—to implement new repressive measures.

However, the labour movement must also condemn and campaign against the terror inflicted on the Northern Ireland working class by the British state—the shootings, arrests, spot checks and so on by the police and army.

Militant has consistently pointed out that so long as this issue was ignored by the leadership of the movement, it would be taken up in a sectarian manner by the Republican movement and its allies.

Repression is not a

Republican issue, it effects the whole of the working class and can only be solved by a class approach.

On every occasion that the government has introduced some new aspect of repressive legislation, for example the Emergency Provisions Act, the Prevention of Terrorism Act, Payment of Debt Act, it has publicly insisted that they would only be used against those who were breaking the law—the IRA, UVF, etc.



Troops armed with Plastic bullet guns.

Whatever the excuse offered by the state for bringing in this legislation, these laws would, in the future, be used against the labour movement as it begins to struggle for better conditions, etc.

In a whole number of areas examples exist where the government has already used this legislation against members of the labour and

trade union movement.

While the **Prevention of Terrorism Act** has received publicity recently over the exclusion of the Sinn Fein Assembly members from Britain, it has again also been widely used to harass trade unionists travelling to Britain.

This use of the powers of detention has frequently seen workers being held at British ports and airports and therefore missing union conferences, as was one delegate to the recent health workers shop stewards conference in Sheffield.

The **Payment of Debts Act**, a procedure initiated to counteract the rent and rates strike organised by the Civil Rights Association called at the outbreak of the 'troubles', was almost immediately extended to cover all those who got into debt.

In March 1976, the rent/rates strike was called off, yet in April the government extended the scope of the act to cover all tenants who were over £20 in debt. So the number getting deductions taken off their state benefits to pay their arrears rose from 2,170 to 7,000 from April to September 1976.

A further example was the recent use of the RUC to enforce payment of £49 rates arrears from a 69 year old pensioner under a related piece of law, the **Enforcement of Judgements Act**.

These, and numerous other cases of repressive legislation, show that,

despite the 'intention' of the government to limit its apparatus to attack paramilitaries, the presence of these laws on the books are preparing the ground for the future.

Over the past three to four years, numerous cases exist of the use of the army and police to harass the working class. For example, the use of the Special Patrol Group against the Euroweld occupation in East Belfast, the use of plain clothes police to evict homeless squatters in Lenadoon, West Belfast, the continual 'personal checks' ('P' checks), where people are arbitrarily stopped to give details about themselves, and so on.

These examples, like many more, highlight the point that it is essential for the labour movement to take up these issues (as with the recent unanimous vote to ban plastic bullets at the Irish Congress of Trade Unions conference), instead of keeping quiet and letting this issue fall into the laps of the Republicans, who obviously raise the whole issue in a sectarian manner.

The struggle against repressive legislation can only be successful if it is taken up by the labour and trade union movement in a determined fashion.

By Ciaran Crossey
(West Belfast Labour and Trade Union Group)

UNEMPLOYMENT:

Mass unemployment is now a permanent feature of 'life' in Tory Britain. At a recent National Economic Development Council meeting it was forecast that by 1990 the number of jobless would rise to 5 million.

The *Financial Times* pointed out that despite repeated references to this forecast during the meeting, "neither the Prime Minister nor any other member of the government team refuted the figure."

Millions of workers and their families, young people coming out of school, old age pensioners and all those already unemployed will be pondering a grim future as the Tory government remorselessly tries to grind down living standards towards starvation levels reminiscent of the 1930s.

The hopes and expectations of these millions of working people seeking to find a way out of this situation lie in the hands of the trade union and labour movement.

The scourge of unemployment must be fought and eliminated and this must involve the unity of the employed and the unemployed. It is therefore essential that the unemployed are organised alongside and together with the employed workers. The trade unions first and foremost must organise the unemployed, actively recruiting them into their ranks.

But the TUC, through the trades councils, must also ensure that the unemployed themselves join together and have representation, including full speaking and voting rights, within the local, regional and national structure of the TUC. The unemployed should be able to fight with the employed, against unemployment, by having an effective voice at every level of the labour movement.

National Unemployed Workers' Movement

It was these twin aims, the fight for a better deal for the unemployed and the constant struggle against mass unemployment, that were the driving forces behind the heroic struggles organised around the **National Unemployed Workers' Movement (NUWM)** in the 1920s and 1930s.

In those years numerous demonstrations of protest, involving altogether hundreds of thousands of

By Wayne Jones

workers, were held up and down the country, in most cases in the face of constant police harassment, baton charges, imprisonment, press lies and the callous indifference of successive governments to the terrible plight of those without work.

It was only this mass action that forced the governments then to increase benefits, give fuel concessions, remove some of the most odious means test clauses and reverse some of the most damaging governmental legislation, such as the slashing 10% cut made in unemployment benefit and wages by the 1932 National government.

Today, as then, the need to organise to ensure a basic right to live remains. The rallying cry of the NUWM of "work or full maintenance" retains its validity today. But the leaders of the NUWM, mostly victimised and blacklisted shop stewards, also recognised that solidarity, to stave off isolation and despair, was just as vital.

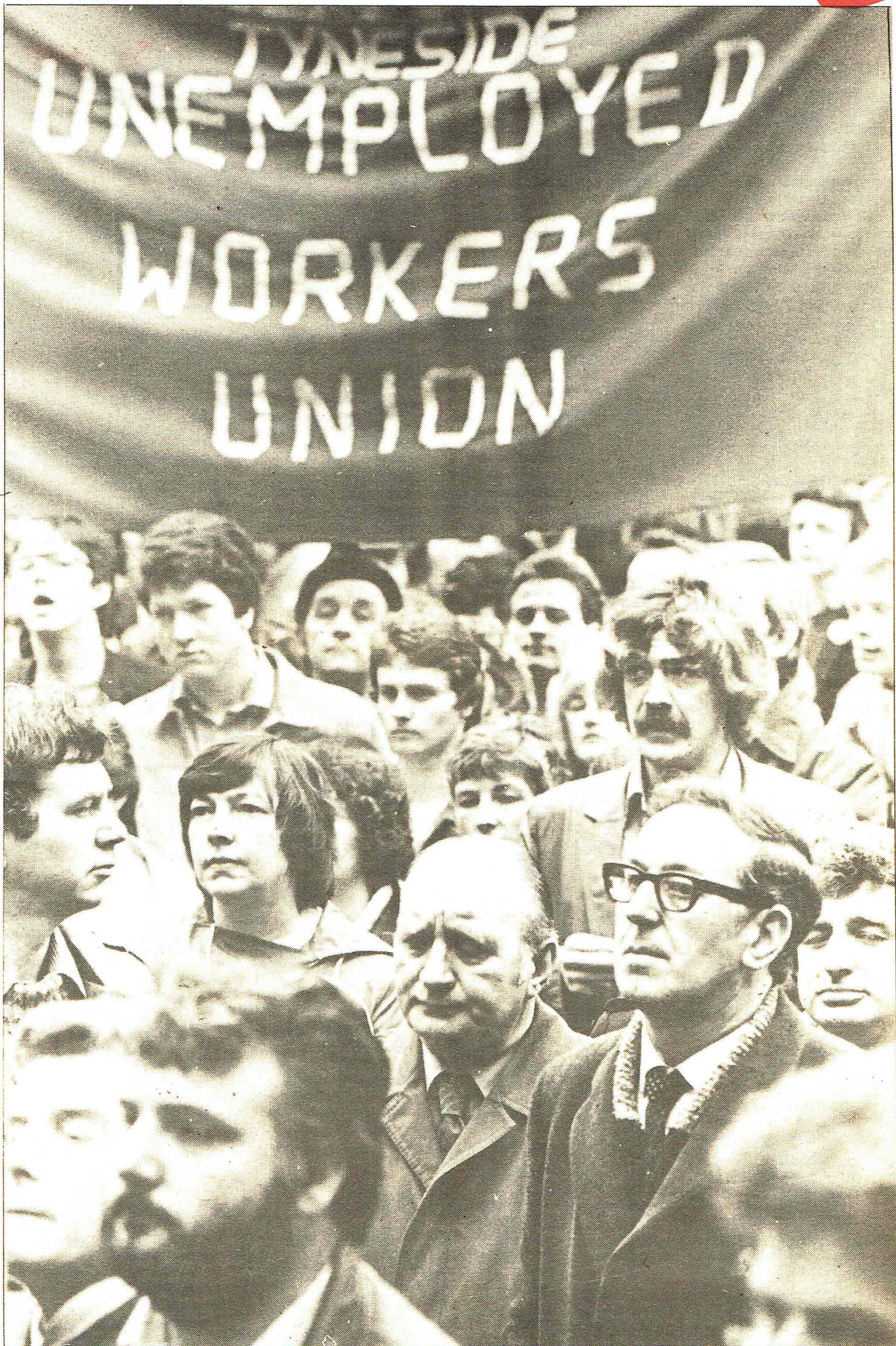
The desperation of the dole can leave the unemployed prey to hopeless and false solutions, perhaps even posing a threat to the hard won gains of the trade union and labour movement—unless the movement offers an alternative. The bosses will always try to use a pool of unemployed to sow divisions between the employed and the unemployed, and to create a breeding ground for racist and fascist propaganda.

Already YOP and similar schemes are being used to undermine trade union rights and conditions. The use of unemployed as blacklegs to break strikes is a cherished ambition as far as the Tories are concerned. As in the thirties, there is a need to counteract these problems.

Today the trade union movement is much stronger. There is hardly a sector of the working class that is not organised. The shop steward system is now widespread. Despite the capitalist recession trade union power remains largely intact and if it were united and mobilised on a national basis then it would be invincible.

This strength must now be utilised to encompass the

Photo: Militant



The banner of the Tyneside UWU. The work of the Newcastle Unemployed Centre, with the support of the city's trades council, pioneered many areas of work concerned with the unemployed.

organisation of the unemployed, in such a way that the unemployed are able to campaign themselves, but inextricably linked remaining at all times to the organised labour movement. The interests of both, to fight for full and lasting employment, is the same. The conduct of this fight must be together.

The lessons of the past must be learnt. In the 1920s and 1930s, the NUWM, despite indefatigable effort to organise the unemployed effectively, was always

hampered by being somewhat isolated from the official trade union structure.

NUWM isolated from organised workers

Today the TUC have endorsed the organisation of the unemployed through setting up Unemployed Centres. Over 160 such centres now exist, staffed by over 200 full-time TUC appointed officers and with some funds

provided by the TUC itself. The majority of these centres are administered under the wing of the local Trades Councils who themselves seek to represent the common interests of workers across all industries and workplaces.

Furthermore, in May of last year, the TUC General Council made an historic decision to change a long standing rule which previously debarred the unemployed from being delegates to the annual

Trade Union Congress.

The Unemployed Centres can become a focus to organise political campaigns against unemployment. In this way campaigns can be launched, not only for free welfare entitlements, free and better access to local transport and leisure facilities but also against redundancies, closures, excessive overtime working and for a scheme of public works at trade union rates and conditions.

Thus, both the practical

The question of organisation

and political tasks are drawn together as the most effective way of fighting unemployment and uniting the local labour movement.

Newcastle Unemployed Centre

The Newcastle Unemployed Centre was a pioneering Centre. From the outset it was looked on as a campaigning organisation which sought to unite with the local labour and trade union movement to eliminate unemployment. It was not merely a trade union based citizens advice bureau.

The Centre called a meeting of the unemployed and an Unemployed Workers Union (UWU) was set up. The UWU was not seen as a replacement for the trade unions but as a means to bring together those unemployed who had never been in a union or who at first would identify only with others in the same situation.

The overall strategy was to integrate the unemployed with the official trade unions, bearing in mind that over 50% of those on the dole today have never been in a union.

There has been some suspicion in some trade unions about the desirability of "unemployed unions". But the main aim must be to ensure that in one way or another the isolation of unemployment is broken down and organisation takes place.

In Milton Keynes the UWU had some success in organising the unemployed, particularly school leavers, into the Transport & General Workers Union. In Newcastle the UWU assisted the workers at Courtauld's in Spennymoor, who fought the closure of the plant, unfortunately without success. Afterwards the shop stewards persuaded the unemployed workers to transfer their shop stewards' committee into a branch of the UWU. Their experience in fighting redundancy could then be utilised, they felt, to help other workers in a similar situation.

Unemployed should have representation

The Newcastle Trades Council allowed two delegates from the Centre to participate in the Trades Council with full rights. Others can attend with speaking rights. But unfortunately this is the exception rather than the rule.

Some union leaders are reluctant to allow the unemployed themselves to bring first hand their feelings and wishes into the forums of the movement. But the movement must be constant-

ly reminded of their obligations: not to begin to tolerate unemployment but to wage a relentless campaign against it at all times.

The unemployed through the unemployed centres, associations and unions should be allowed to elect at least two delegates with full speaking and voting rights on to the Trades Councils.

The Newcastle Trades Council after several years of joint discussion and activity have adopted a "Charter for the Unemployed", including demands for higher benefits, an end to means testing, free use of leisure, transport and educational facilities, for the replacement of YOP schemes by a proper programme of training and education at trade union negotiated rates, and the right to work.

National campaign needed

Many other centres and unemployed unions have also formulated programmes for action for which they campaign in the localities. A campaign for concessions for travel and leisure for the unemployed, for example, by the Brighton UWU, has been waged successfully even against a Tory council.

But what is needed now is the linking up of all these various campaigns nationally.

In 1923, following a national day of demonstration organised jointly between the NUWM, the TUC General Council, the Labour Party and the Trades Councils, a Joint Advisory Committee was formed to combine the efforts of the NUWM and the TUC against unemployment. When the JAC met in January 1924 it drew up a six point Charter for joint action and agitation by the employed and the unemployed, leading to a national demonstration on June 1st.

The Charter demanded work or full maintenance, a public works scheme at trade union rates, state workshops to use the idle skills and resources for the benefit of the whole community, a reduction to a six hour working day, occupational training centres, particularly to give training to youth, and proper housing with the demand for 1 million houses to be built.

A similar campaign today would receive a tremendous response and, like in 1922 and 1923 there could be months of agitation, marches, demonstrations and protest actions playing a big part in preparing the way for the election of a Labour government.

A national conference of all the TUC-endorsed unemployed workers' centres and UWUs attached to

these centres, with representatives of unions with unemployed members' sections, could hammer out a National Charter and a campaign which could then be presented from the unemployed themselves for endorsement by the Trade Union Congress.

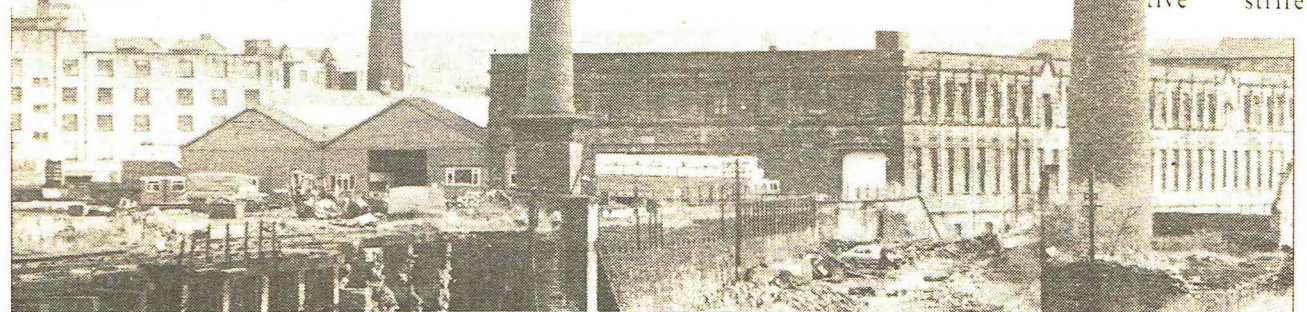
Unlike the 1920s when the TUC rejected the affiliation of the NUWM and the 1930s when the TUC cut all links with it, the TUC today has given a cautious stamp of authority to the organisation of the unemployed.

Nevertheless, the functioning of the unemployed centres has been hampered in one vital area—finance. Although the TUC has donated several hundreds of pounds to some regional TUCs, funding has generally been on a shoestring and has mainly been left to the hand-outs of various state funded and charitable institutions such as the Manpower Services Commission (MSC) and Community Enterprise Programme, and the Rowntree Trust.

Not only is the money received insufficient but the source of finance in such cases is damaging to the interests of the movement. The composition of the Centres' management committees are to a large extent determined by how they are funded.

George Pope, one of the main organisers of the Brighton Centre pointed out to the *Financial Times* (21.10.81) that "the MSC funded full-time workers would not be involved in anti-governmental political activities".

In Newcastle, now that the main source of funding is from the MSC, political action is being replaced by activities designed to fulfil, primarily, the function of a Community Advice Centre. The production of the *UWU News* which was used as a campaigning voice of the unemployed, aimed at forg-



The forecast for Tory Britain—more empty factories and unemployment at 5 million by 1990.

ing and cementing links with the trade unions, has virtually ceased.

Funding must be provided on an unconditional basis for the unemployed to use as they see fit. The unemployed and the Trades Councils must have powers to elect their own full time workers.

If such assurances are not forthcoming then every penny, if necessary, must be raised from local Labour authorities and the trade

unions levying their members a few pence a week.

At the 1982 TUC Congress in Blackpool a composite resolution was passed which contained a call for the "creation of more unemployed centres by the TUC regional councils and trades councils under the auspices of the General Council."

Yet two other important points in that very resolution were "trade unionists who are made redundant should retain full rights in their respective unions" and "unions to actively recruit unemployed workers, including school leavers and those working on government training schemes."

A recent Trade Union survey revealed that 70 trade unions have arrangements where an unemployed member can retain his/her card. In 65 of these fees are nominal or none at all. In the majority full rights are maintained.

The Liverpool branch of the NGA has formed an "unemployed chapel" and this is an example of how redundant workers can still retain an effective voice and participate fully in the affairs of the union. It meets every Friday, has its own elected committee and its own rules and constitution.

The meetings are always attended by branch officers which ensures that members are well informed on current matters within the union. Meetings are regularly addressed by speakers from the labour and trade union movement and the members have actively participated in

ly to the youth, who will not find their way into the working class organisations unless they are actively recruited.

It is to this task of paramount importance that the trade unions must turn. But to date the results have not been very encouraging despite the TUC and individual trade union conference resolutions.

One notable exception on a regional basis, again in Merseyside, is the work of TGWU branch 6/612. The 1980 issue of the TGWU newspaper *The Record* paid a well earned tribute to the initiative of the officers of the branch, Bobby Owens and Frank Banton, who when they were made redundant from Standards at Speke retained the branch and its shop stewards as an active unemployed branch. At that time it was reported how the branch had just increased its membership as redundant Massey Ferguson and Ward and Goldstone workers had joined.

The branch has been active and successful in recruiting the unemployed to the branch, especially the exploited youth of the YOPS schemes. The production of a recruiting brochure proclaiming that "organisation is strength—fightback! Join the TGWU" has greatly assisted this activity.

'Constitutional' difficulties illusory

Those in the TGWU who complain of "constitutional difficulties" concerning the participation of the unemployed in the union would do well to remember the history and origins of the union. The mighty TGWU had its birth as the Dock, Wharf, Riverside and

closure of the Dunlop plant in Liverpool in 1979. At present several members of the TGWU Executive Committee are unemployed.

The TGWU as the biggest trade union and with its numerous trade groups and diverse membership covering virtually every major industry and service, is well suited to organise the unemployed. The TGWU could set an example, but every trade union must find ways and means to organise the unemployed—no matter what their current structure.

The organisation of the unemployed in such a meaningful manner must not be delayed. The dole queues increase with every passing day with no end in sight. Alienation amongst the youth is also growing—the 1981 riots were a symptom of their enraged despair.

The organisation of the unemployed must incorporate independent activity but interlocked with the trades councils and the trades unions. The question of defeating isolation must be paramount but so must the demands and programme to fight the roots of mass enforced idleness.

The understanding for a political solution, a socialist solution, was clear to the leaders of the unemployed struggles from the outset. The spirit of the movement was expressed in an oath that those active in the struggle against unemployment took. The last paragraph stated: "Further realising that only by the abolition of this

hideous capitalist system can the horror of unemployment be removed from our midst. I here and now take upon myself a binding oath, to never cease from active strife

every major event and demonstration over the past couple of years.

Many unemployed have never been in TUs

But what of the majority of unemployed today who have not felt the benefit of organisation in the movement? That applies especial-

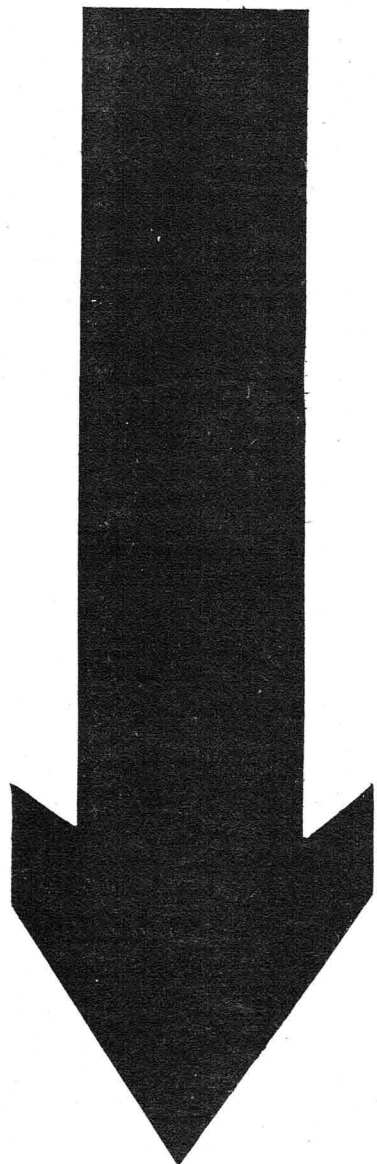
General Labourers Union, formed to organise the unskilled and often casual general labourers who could be hired or fired by the bosses from the pool of unemployed labour at any time, and thus a constant source of potential blacklegs.

Furthermore, until retirement recently the President of the union and member of the TUC General Council, Stan Pemberton, was unemployed following the

against the system until capitalism is abolished and our country and all its resources belong to the people."

The trade union and labour movement, has similar socialist 'oaths', enshrined in the constitution of the unions and the Labour Party. These historic aims must become reality if the scourge of unemployment is to be eradicated never to return.

Why World Oil Prices Fall...



The prolonged recession in the main capitalist economies—the most severe in the post-war period—has had the effect of temporarily forcing down the world price of crude oil. For the moment, it seems, the once mighty power of OPEC has been broken.

The Organisation of Oil Exporting Countries (OPEC) was set up 22 years ago by the dozen or so main exporters in an attempt to form a united front in their price negotiations with the big oil monopolies who were making massive profits at their expense. For the first twelve years the OPEC cartel made very little headway: in fact by 1973 the official oil price was only 51 per cent of its 1951 level, measured in real terms (i.e. against the World Commodity Price Index).

The 1973 Middle East war and the oil embargo gave the producers the long sought for opportunity to raise

prices. By that time, demand for cheap oil was beginning to outstrip supply and the main consumers—the advanced capitalist states—had come to depend heavily on oil for their energy, as coal and other resources were run down or neglected.

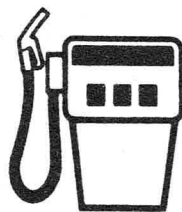
As the 1981 annual report of the World Bank pointed out, the rate of growth of oil consumption began to exceed the growth of additions to reserves—as it did throughout the 1970s—so prices would have risen “regardless of the way the world oil market was managed.” In other words, even without the 1973 war, the price of oil would probably have increased.

But since the 1970s, new factors have intervened to weaken the OPEC cartel. The demand for OPEC oil has fallen in the last three years by as much as two fifths. According to their own economists, OPEC have lost the equivalent of 12 million barrels per day (mbd) of demand.

Five million have been lost, they reckon, by the consumer countries investing in and developing other energy sources and oil fields like Mexico, Alaska and the North Sea, and by conservation. But over 3.5 mbd have been lost directly as a result of the recession in the west, with its consequent decline in industrial output and energy demand.

As their share of the world oil trade has shrunk, OPEC has tried to reduce supplies in order to keep the prices up. The OPEC meeting which collapsed last week was the third unsuccessful attempt in seven months to reduce output by agreement.

The previous agreement, to produce 18.5 mbd in total, was only made last December, but that fell apart. The new agreement was to have reduced output even further—to 17-17.5 mbd. Saudi Arabia, the biggest producer in OPEC, had agreed to produce only 4.5 mbd (well down on the 10 mbd it was pouring out only two or three years ago, but it proved impossible to arrive at an agreement.

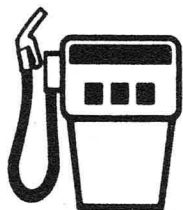


The splits in OPEC arise from the fact that some of the producer countries are not prepared to limit their production to their given “quota”. Despite last December’s agreement, Libya and Iran, for example,

were selling oil at well over their “quota” level.

Moreover, even through the whole point of the production ceiling was an attempt to keep prices up, some of the oil nations were selling their crude at a discount in order to sell more. The Arab Gulf producers were also trying to insist that oil from Libya, Algeria and Nigeria be priced higher (or given a ‘premium’) to take account of its higher grade and its proximity to the European markets.

The separate and conflicting interests of the OPEC states have thus made an agreement on production levels impossible up to now.



But if the OPEC states prove unable to cut production, they will be unable to keep up the price. Each time one ‘breaks ranks’ in order to sell more, it will only result in a vicious circle—they sell more oil...but for less money.

It has been in this situation of a glutted market, with the prospect of an OPEC “free-for-all”, that some capitalist economists have been speculating and even crowing on the possibility of a generalised slump in oil prices.

A major fall in world energy prices, they have pointed out, would cut world inflation and so increase the expected rate of growth within the main capitalist countries (the OECD) to about 2½ per cent, instead of the miserable 1-1½ per cent expected this year.

But other economists have pointed to the dangers and are just as much afraid of too sudden a fall in prices as they were ten years ago of a sudden rise.

Those oil producers with large populations and large international debts, like Mexico (\$60bn), Venezuela and Indonesia, would find themselves suddenly unable to meet even the newly-scheduled debt repayments, as their main source of foreign earnings dried up.

As one banker put it, a drop in oil prices to below \$27 a barrel (the present official price is \$34) could “blast the entire Mexican rescheduling package out of the water.”

The net result of the price fall could be, not a price collapse, but a partial lowering of the price—for example, to \$28-\$30 a barrel. The main

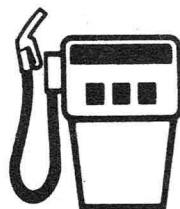
capitalist countries, with an eye to the financial effects of a dramatic price collapse, will probably co-operate with the oil producers and companies in an attempt to make any reduction gradual and therefore manageable.

Furthermore, the price reduction of \$3 or \$5 would probably be enough to persuade most if not all of the OPEC governments to reduce their output, and try to hold the line against any greater fall. All the governments concerned will in any case be desperate to ensure that the price of oil is not ‘out of control’, in order to keep the financial and political effects ‘under control’.

In the longer run, there will not necessarily be a lowering of oil prices, or even a stabilisation at present levels. There are several factors that could easily turn the oil glut into a shortage.

The reduction in demand recently has been partly due to the oil companies and consumers running down their stocks—refusing to buy, in other words, in anticipation of a general price fall. But stocks cannot be drawn upon indefinitely.

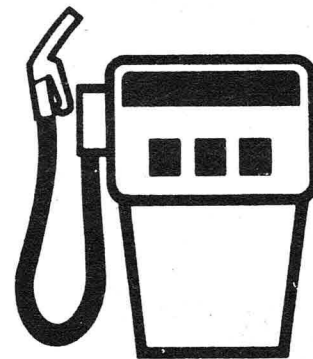
Any recovery of production in the western economies would also tend to restore demand for oil—even the modest growth already forecast by the OECD would increase demand. There is still the possibility that Eastern Europe, formerly a net oil exporter, could become a main importer in the next few years, and within three or four years some of the present oil fields like the North Sea will begin to reduce production.



In addition to all these, there is always the danger that political instability, especially in the Middle East, could trigger off production cuts and price rises. A poll was taken last summer at a meeting of international energy economists and most of them thought that the next serious oil crisis would originate in the Middle East, a region still accounting for 27 per cent of production and 53 per cent of reserves. Of these, most thought that a revolution in Saudi Arabia would be the single most likely cause of such a crisis! The long term market is, no more predictable therefore,

than it has ever been.

The oil crises in former years, especially in 1973-74, came as ‘shocks’ to the capitalist system world-wide. The new threat of a collapse in prices, or even a substantial drop, is now introducing yet another element of uncertainty and instability in an already unstable world. It is instability and uncertainty that can never be overcome through the chaos of the capitalist market.



Workers in Britain will be angry and confused at the paradoxical situation in which they find themselves—paying higher prices for petrol, while world oil prices fall.

The explanation for this contradiction lies ultimately in the run-down and decay of British capitalism over the years. With the collapse of the manufacturing base of the economy, especially in the last two years when 19 per cent of production has disappeared, the economy has come to rely far more heavily than ever before on oil.

Last week’s trade figures, for example, showed a record surplus of £822m for December. Yet this figure hides the fact that the surplus on ‘invisible’ earnings (banking, insurance, shipping, etc.) was £230m, and that for oil was £688m. In other words, in non-oil goods there was a deficit of £96m, an increase from £36m in November.

The British economy relies on oil to the tune of about £6bn a year to boost its balance of payments. Furthermore, the Chancellor of the Exchequer has also come to rely on oil revenue taxation. Without the cushion of oil, the pound would have collapsed on the world financial markets long before now.

But the situation is made more complex still by the fact that oil is priced on the international market in dollars, no matter where it is produced. The oil companies

buy oil from the British National Oil Corporation in dollars, so that irrespective of what the price happens to be in dollar terms (and up to now it has been set slightly below the OPEC level, at \$33.50 a barrel), the real cost in terms of pound sterling varies as the pound floats up or down on the financial markets.

The oil companies, to be sure, have always pleaded poverty, even when they have been raking in billions. As they control the oil industry almost from the point of production (and in parts of the world they still control that), to transportation, refining, retailing and so on, they are able by differential pricing to ‘create’ losses on some operations by just shifting profits onto others.

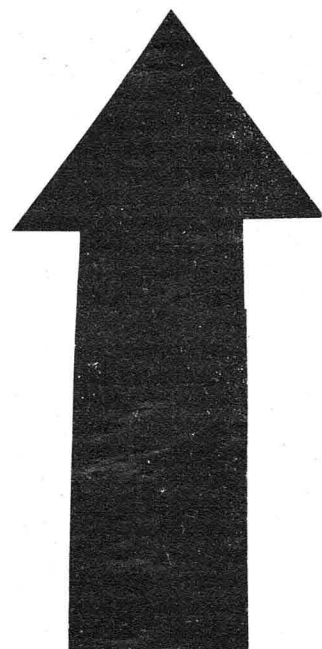
The oil companies’ complaint in the recent period has revolved around the devaluation of the pound. Since November, the pound has lost ten per cent of its value against the dollar, so that in terms of sterling, the oil companies have had to pay about ten per cent more for oil from BNOC.

The fall in international oil prices is only now affecting the North Sea prices, fixed by quarterly contracts, and the companies claim that in the meantime, they must put up prices to compensate for the devaluation. Hence the petrol price rises, while world oil prices fall.

This process, however, demonstrates how a general fall in oil prices—if it did take place—would leave the British economy little better off, or even worse off.

A fall in oil prices may tend to reduce inflation, but on the other hand the weakness of the oil market would cause a considerable devaluation of the pound, making imports expensive and pushing prices up by an even greater amount. Nothing, it seems, not even oil, can stem the inexorable decline of British capitalism.

By John Pickard



...As Petrol Prices Rise in Britain



Ireland rocked by phone-tap scandal

Dublin is not Washinton, as the *Sunday Times* pointed out, yet it has been rocked by a scandal similar to that of Watergate.

Phone taps, secret tape recordings, political dirty tricks, conspiracy and determined journalism, they were all there.

By Heather Rawling

Peter Murtagh, a young journalist with the *Irish Times* had begun to investigate 'startling allegations' against the justice minister, Sean Doherty. Mr Murtagh then received a 'deep throat' telephone message that indicated even more corrupt practices taking place, including the phone tapping of politicians and journalists.

Charles Haughey and Doherty had been concerned at leaks from the cabinet of their government last year, not least because the Fianna Fail had no majority and they were relying on the support of independents to stay in power. Doherty turned to Police Commissioner Ainsworth to discuss the leaks. They decided to tap the phone of a senior political correspondent, Bruce Arnold of the *Irish Independent*.

'National Security'

On the slender pretext that he had contacts with the foreign press, a warrant to

tap Arnold's phone was applied for. When a senior civil servant turned down the request, Doherty overruled him. Doherty and Ainsworth then applied for a warrant to tap the phone of Geraldine Kennedy of the *Sunday Tribune*, using the name of the previous telephone subscriber. 'National security' was given as the reason for the tap.

In an interview on Irish radio, Doherty was asked whether it was just coincidence that the two journalists Arnold and Kennedy were tapped who, among all the political correspondants, wrote most about the splits within Fianna Fail. Doherty replied "...a suggestion made the other day that no other journalists' phone in this country was tapped is untrue..." He claimed that others had their phones tapped including Vincent Browne, another journalist.

Doherty also complained that everybody had been directing their attack against him "as if I were the only person in this country who was responsible for every devious and wrongful act as they would see it and I think that is totally unfair."

Doherty has let the cat out of the bag. The crime that he and others made is that they were found out. The capitalist class in Ireland and elsewhere, sanction this sort of invasion of privacy all the time to defend 'national security' or rather the interests of those in privileged positions at the top of society. Water workers may well wonder whether their 'phones have ever been tapped in the interests of 'national security'.

Room bugged

During October last year, Haughey's deputy minister and also finance minister, MacSharry, became convinced that a smear campaign was being orchestrated against him by the party dissidents. It was being rumoured, although not substantiated, that Haughey was paying for MacSharry's loyalty with money or alternately that MacSharry was prepared to take money to change sides.

MacSharry, with the co-operation of Doherty, decid-

ed to confront one prominent anti-Haughey party member, Martin O'Donahue who had resigned his cabinet post. The room was bugged with the co-operation of Doherty and, the police commissioner Joe Ainsworth, using police equipment. On 2 December, Ainsworth was promoted to Third Deputy Commissioner, a job especially created for him.

Labour Youth

Labour's Youth warned at their national conference in Dublin last week that "tapping is not confined to political journalists or dangerous subversives. It undoubtedly applies to many labour and trade union activists. The present episode should spell out a warning to the labour movement for the future". Ray McLoughlin, chairman of Labour Youth, called on the Irish Congress of Trade Unions to set up a labour movement enquiry into phone tapping.

The bosses and their representatives in parliament will use every dirty trick in the book to cling on to their positions of power and privilege. Even now, Haughey is refusing to resign. The labour movement must be watchful. Such corrupt practices happen every day, only we don't always hear about them.



Charles Haughey, former Prime Minister and presently leader of Fianna Fail, who has been implicated in the phone tapping scandal.

Photo: Derek Speirs (Report)

Millions deported by Nigerian government

Millions of people are being driven out of Nigeria on the orders of the government. They are labelled "illegal immigrants", workers and their families who have lived in the country, in many cases for years, without passports or papers.

The Nigerian government have exempted a few hundred thousand professionals and highly skilled workers so the refugees are mostly unemployed or unskilled workers who drifted to Nigeria in the oil boom or were deliberately recruited as cheap labour.

The order to leave by midnight on 31 January has created panic along the roads to the borders causing a 30 hour delay for those who want to cross. The expulsions affect around a million Ghanaians, two million from the small states of Niger, Benin, Togo and Cameroon and a large number who fled from the civil war in Chad.

Any immigrants who remain after the deadline live in dread of the repercussions as the Nigerian press and rul-

ing class stir up hatred of all foreigners and encourage what they call "vengeance".

The Nigerian government faces elections in August, and these expulsions are obviously crude electoral trickery of the most repulsive kind, playing the chauvinist card to distract attention from the deepening crisis.

Nigeria is the giant of West Africa. It has the biggest market in the whole continent, with a population of 80 million. The economy grew by 6% per annum in the oil boom years 1970 to 1977 and it was seen as the most likely success story in a continent which overall benefitted little from the years of economic upswing and which has suffered enormously since the end of the boom in the mid seventies.

Nigerian capitalism's short burst of comparative prosperity has ended. Oil exports account for 94% of the gross domestic product so the country is badly hit by falling oil prices. The rest of industry and agriculture is stagnant with unreliable supplies of water, energy, telecomms preventing development of the economy.

The expulsions won't solve these problems, but the

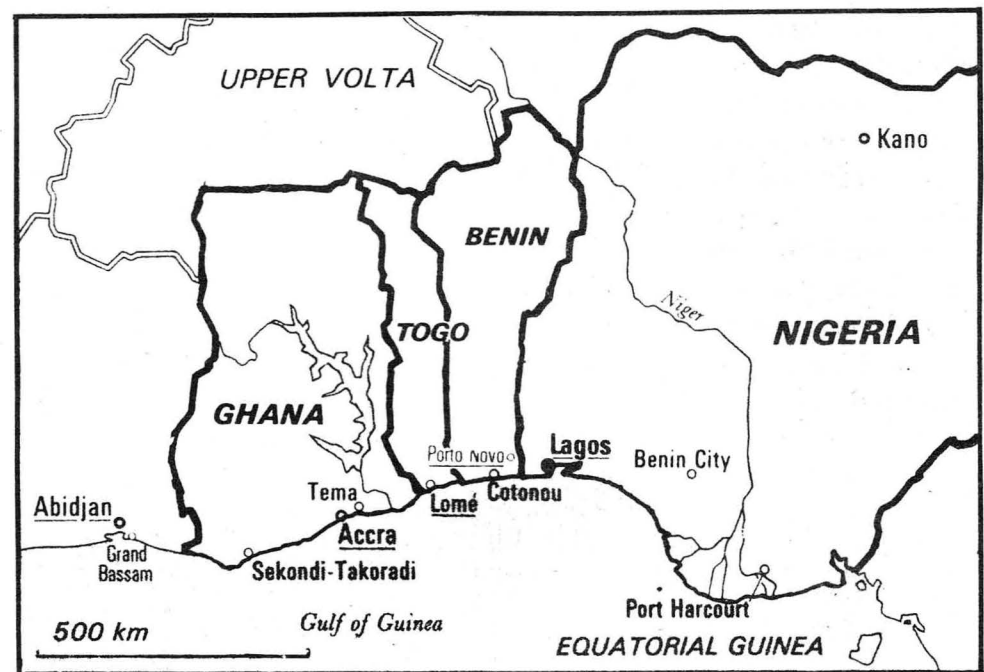
government hope they will act as a diversion.

Ghana, which has opened up its borders, is on the verge of an economic catastrophe and will be completely unable to cope with a million 'returnees'. The same applies to the other small West African states which were originally carved out of the African continent in the colonial days with no regard for tribal or linguistic boundaries but with the sole purpose of making convenient administrative divisions for imperialist powers such as Britain and France.

The latest tragedy is further proof that these states are incapable of allowing further development of the economy and society.

The failure of the capitalist rulers of the area to overcome the artificial barriers imposed by imperialism puts the responsibility now on the leaders of the working class to oppose this chauvinist victimisation and fight for the socialist federation of West Africa which alone can seriously set about the development of this potentially wealthy area.

By Roger Shives



Spain — mass protest against steel closure

Spain's first big labour protest since the election victory of the Socialist Party took place on 25 January. It brought Gijón, the industrial centre of Asturias to a standstill. Shops, factories and offices were closed by the strike called by both UGT (Socialist Party union) and CCOO (Communist Party union).

Tens of thousands marched through the city demanding an end to government plans to cut the workforce of the state owned Ensidesa steel factory. The leaderships of UGT and CCOO need to show some united and resolute approach at national level to remind the government that its 10 million supporters are more

interested in action to tackle Spain's 16% unemployment level than in sermons about the "moral renaissance of the Spanish people".

National action such as a 24-hour general strike would mobilise trade unionists behind the demand for wage increases in line with inflation (around 13%). The employers' organisation CEOE is proposing an insulting 3-7% band for increases.

The national leaders could well take a leaf out of the Gijón unions' book with their demands for an end to redundancies, increased investment in state industries and the real implementation of the 'change' promised by the Socialist Party election

manifesto.

The banks and the 100 families who dominate the Spanish economy are the bitterest enemies of such change and history show that the Spanish capitalists will fight a vicious battle to prevent it. The only change these rich parasites want to see in the lives of the Spanish workers are changes for the worse to give increased profits.

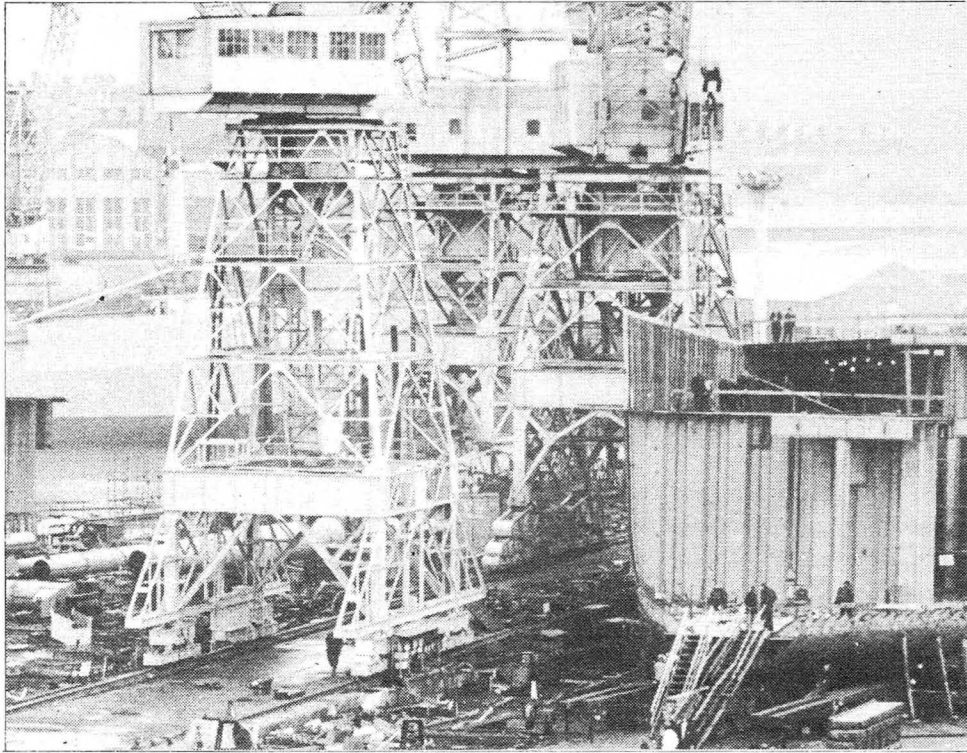
The anger of the Asturian workers shows that Spanish workers will increasingly put pressure on their leaders to fight for the nationalisation of the banks and industry to secure the kind of change they want.

By Steve Poole

Letters

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

MILITANT, Mentmore Terrace, London E8 3PN



The shipyards in the North East have been decimated by the Tories.

Photo: Militant

Wearside needs socialism, not a purge

Dear Comrades,
Unemployment in Sunderland costs a staggering £122 million a year with the unemployment rate ranging from none in the more affluent areas to 68% in the poorest.

For Wearside as a whole, unemployment has reached 27,744 but this is an underestimate if you take into account the people who

for one reason or another don't bother registering.

An article in the *Sunderland Echo* shows that for every one job in Sunderland there are 2,792 unemployed labourers, 396 storekeepers/warehousemen, 522 fitters/mechanics, 264 joiners/bricklayers. There are no jobs at all for 212 electricians, 610 sheet metal workers, platers-shipwrights and welders or for 110 plasterers. That is how Thatcherism has devastated Wearside.

Washington, the town

where I live, was looked on as Wearside's boom town, but the unemployment there has gone from 1,688 in May 1979 to 4,198 now. I have been unemployed for almost three years and under the present system I can't see any prospect of work.

The right wing of the Labour Party should stop trying to witch-hunt true socialists out of the Labour Party and get on with fighting for socialism.

Yours fraternally,
Malcolm Rumney,
Washington LPYS.

Is abortion the answer?

Dear Sir,

As a Catholic and a socialist, I find myself in agreement with Brian Foster's comments ("Marxism and religion" last week's letters). In particular, the piece by Jackie Walsh, on doorstep babies disturbed me.

Is abortion really the answer to this problem? Pregnancy, unfortunately, cannot always be planned like clockwork and for those who find themselves with an unplanned pregnancy, will disposing of future human life solve anything?

Surely the problems are mainly accommodation, money and personal relationships. It seems to me that the answer is to provide care, accommodation and a reasonable allowance to enable the mother to give her child a decent upbringing and future.

Of course some people would say that this would encourage promiscuity (in the same way that providing council houses encourages people to place themselves on the waiting lists!) If we, as socialists, cannot find room for these unwanted babies, who will. Certainly capitalism has no use for them, looking on them as merely surplus to requirements.

The idea of working class girls providing babies (acceptable as to colour and physically perfect of course) for adoption by well-to-do couples, because they cannot provide for them, simply disgusts me.

To my mind all human life is precious and deserves a chance to live and fulfill its destiny, and I don't think it should fall to any one of us to select or reject our fellow human beings to live or die—where would it end? The terminally sick? The old? The starving? Surely we must work towards a society where each life has equal value.

Yours,
Mrs A E Farmer
Chingford Labour Party

is not extreme to want peace, and to oppose the turning of Britain into an American aircraft carrier.

The NEC has got it wrong—we are the socialists, they are the infiltrators. Let's turn them out of the Party. Only by putting forward a radical socialist alternative to the Tories and their friends in the SDP will we get the power which we need.

On with the fight.

Yours fraternally,
Celia Lamberth,
Labour County Councillor, Salisbury.

P.S. I've sent £5 to the Fighting Fund. It's my council travel allowance, I urge all of your readers who are councillors to do the same.

An extremist?

Dear Comrades,

I wouldn't regard myself as an "extremist"—as the Tory press label us. It isn't extreme to want full employment, adequate social services and education for my children. It isn't extreme to want international socialism.

Locally, the Labour Party (with the Young Socialists taking the initiative) have opposed the building of bombproof shelters at the Boscombe Down Airbase which will be used to house USAAF Fighter Bombers. It

Why rail unions have to fight

Comrades,

Serpell's recent report on the future of the railways (see *Militant* 28 January) offers no hope of any improvement in railway workers pay, conditions and only a threat of more massive redundancies in the offering.

The "joint approach" between BR and rail unions to industrial relations will now be seen to have ended in disaster for the unions' rank and file members. Unions have co-operated in yard, parcels collection and

Marxism and religion (1)

Dear Comrade,

I would like to alleviate the concern that Brian Foster, (Letters, Issue 633) undoubtedly has over the future of religious worship in a democratic Marxist world.

Marxism is, of course, fundamentally opposed to religion, though not in a dogmatic fashion like the Stalinists, but in a scientific manner. When Marx and Engels founded scientific socialism well over one hundred years ago it wasn't to stop people worshipping, it was merely a culmination of years of historical analysis on how humanity had advanced through different social changes.

We as Marxists, understand why people worship, particularly the sorely oppressed. The great maxim of Marx still holds true today, that is "...religion is the sigh of the oppressed".

Humanity's objective outlook of the material world is making great strides under science, and of course dialectics is the wonderful legacy left to mankind by Marx and Engels. The more science explains to us the things that were once unexplainable, and of course the things that still have to be explained, the less humanity will have to rely on God.

Just to conclude, if there were to be a socialist transformation of society tomorrow, with *Militant* at the head, Comrade Foster need hold no fear about not

being allowed to worship, the church doors will remain open. It is after all not the Marxists who won't recognise the Rastafarian religion, but Thatcher and the Tories.

Fraternally,
Bill Buchanan,
Nottingham.

Marxism and religion (2)

Dear Comrades,

Marxists are often branded as atheists because they point out that the hierarchies of power in certain organised religions and churches have been used by the ruling class, to hold back the working class, to teach them to "know their place" and to accept the status quo as the "Will of God."

Marxists also point out that some churches, while preaching humility and obedience, have amassed great fortunes over the years and consequently power and influence within capitalism. The Vatican holds controlling shares and investments in almost every major company in all of capitalist Italy.

Could these vested interests in capitalism have anything to do with the poverty of masses of people in capitalist and Catholic Latin America, or in other countries where Catholicism is the dominant religion? Did the well-meant but disastrous pacifying in-

fluence the Catholic church had on the leadership of Solidarity in Poland have anything to do with the failure of Solidarity to make any gains for the Polish working class?

For working class Catholics these questions are probably hard to face because they suggest that their church and ministers rather than being benefactors and helpers of the poor and oppressed, are instead an instrument of their oppression. The faith of millions of working people has been turned against them, by a powerful elite.

This is not to say, of course that the Pope is a rabid capitalist who wants to profit personally from the poverty of working class Catholics. The Pope is clearly a good and holy man, but he is also the tool of the ruling class, by which people can be manipulated. These are some of the reasons why, to many Marxists, religion and Marxism have come to be seen as mutually exclusive.

However I, like Brian Foster, am a religious Marxist although I choose not to belong to any church. To me God and Marxism are not mutually exclusive and I believe that socialism could liberate religion from capitalist manipulation, releasing all the potential for good inherent in the true love of God, which is the love of humanity.

Yours sincerely,
Rowan Metcalfe,
Norfolk.

Militant attracts workers

Dear Comrades,

I attend my union branch (AUEW) fairly regularly and I always manage to sell one or two *Militants*. The members of my union branch absolutely deplore the attempts of the right wing Labour Party NEC to expel good socialists from the LP.

One branch member approached me and asked if it would be possible to organise a discussion with some workers at Rolls Royce in Ansty and Dave Nellist PPC for Coventry SE. We succeeded in arranging a dinner time meeting. The success of this meeting was indicated by the fact that out of the ten workers who attended, seven bought a copy of *Militant*. As result of this very successful meeting I heard that they were planning to set up a factory Labour Party branch.

This should serve as an answer to those right wingers who claim that the ideas of socialism as laid down in the *Militant* frighten workers away.

Forward to socialism.

Yours fraternally,
Paul Smith,
Coventry South East LPYS.

Not so tough at the top

Dear Comrades,

The retail industry in Britain shows a dramatic contrast between the pay of directors/owners and the mass of shop workers.

January's *Labour Research* showed that the Sainsbury group of directors (David, John and Timothy Sainsbury) earned between them through pay and dividends on their shares £8,021,479, a massive 33% increase on the previous year. How many workers in shops get such a percentage rise on their small wages?

Real jobs—not cheap labour

Dear Comrades,

I am pleased to say that once again the Union of Communication Workers in Maidstone have prevented the introduction of cheap labour in the Youth "Opportunities" Schemes. Let's make sure we offer young people a full-time job, not a 6 to 12 month release from unemployment for a mere £25 a week.

In Maidstone we have postal cadets working for a wage of just under £50 and at 18 become full postmen.

The bosses are coining it while shop workers earn between £56 and £68 a week. We need a fighting union to organise shop workers. I urge all USDAW members to vote for the Broad Left candidates in divisional, executive and presidential elections to fight for a £90 minimum wage, a 35 hour week and a fight against all redundancies and the threat of Sunday trading.

Yours fraternally,
Simon Lawler,
Nottingham Area Holding Branch
USDAW, personal capacity.

Our UCW branch will always say to the Tory bosses we support full employment in our job with the possibility of a career in the Post Office, not cheap labour.

In any case why should post offices look to these Youth Opportunities Schemes when they stand to make another massive profit. It's just a pity the postmen don't see more of that profit.

Yours fraternally,
Andy Scott,
Vice Chairman,
Maidstone (Amal) Branch UCW.

possible 1983 General Election year.

If the Tories disastrously get re-elected the worst excesses of Serpell would be enacted. The return of a Labour government on a bold socialist programme is all that can save us.

Many rank and file trade unionists would be forgiven for thinking that the union leaderships are more concerned with expelling *Militant* supporters from the Labour Party than fighting these attacks. TUC sellouts in the ASLEF and Health Workers disputes in 1982 also don't help created a trustworthy union leadership

in the eyes of the rank and file.

Significantly though, on 22 September the health workers day of action received a massive response and active rank and file workers realise that a properly organised TUC-led 24-hour general strike with a campaign of rallies and leafletting will be the necessary first step in the fight back against the Serpells and the Tebbits and towards a Labour victory on a socialist programme.

Dave Hardy,
Nottingham and District Rail (NUR), personal capacity.

A WOMAN'S PLACE IS IN HER UNION!

Women fight to make union strong

THE WOMEN at our factory are far more involved in trade union organisation than ever before.

A large number of the women who have been made redundant in the past eagerly volunteered to go.

Approximately 25% of the workforce are women. They have suffered, in proportion, probably the highest amount of redundancies in the factory. They work in the final parts of the production line predominantly packing and getting the components ready for distribution, although there are women who work in other sections.

The majority of women workers left are dependent upon their incomes for their existence. Many have husbands on the dole, many are bringing up families by themselves and many are bringing home a wage that is vital because of the meagre income of their husband.

When I first became a shop steward the old right-wing leadership in the factory argued that we'd never get a strike vote because the women were more interested in going horse riding than they were in supporting the union. I never held that belief. I always believed that if you explained the issues correctly, even the women working to supply some of the so-called luxury goods in the home would respond.

Women shop stewards

We believe we have been proved absolutely correct. The women are probably the most organised, most militant and most unified section in the factory. That doesn't mean to say that they all like each other, or that they necessarily all agree with each other, but the response from the women is usually 100%, whether it is in taking action to defend their interests or the interests of other sections of the workforce.

By Steve Davidson

(AUEW Convenor, Anderton International, Bingley, Chairman, Aurora shop stewards' group)

In Militant's industrial feature this week, Steve Davidson looks at how the shop stewards involved the women workers at their factory. If you have any similar experiences or comments to the article, send them to the paper.

We expanded the number of women on the shop stewards' committee from one to two from the same section for several reasons. If a problem peculiar to the women arose, there would at least be a seconder to any resolution. There would be two voices to argue the case if ever there became a split on a man versus woman issue, although this has never happened.

The senior woman shop steward is active in the group shop stewards' organisation and there are times when she is not in the factory so she needs to have a deputy. Working women still unfortunately have all the domestic problems and with kiddies to look after, women tend to have slightly more time off work than men. Yet it is necessary always to have representation.

But the main argument is that we had to reverse the position where women were considered second class trade union members. If you look at wage agreements in the past, it was skilled men, semi-skilled, unskilled juniors, apprentices and then women at the bottom.

Discrimination between both the sexes and between the skilled and unskilled is something that we've attempted to overcome as a



Women workers at a print works in Southampton join the picket line after they were sacked for supporting the health workers on September 22 last year. Photo: Viewpoint

stewards' committee. We have continually posed the question of workers' unity. Instead of reviewing wages from skilled earnings downwards we have always attempted to base our negotiations on the basis of a minimum wage, and building the differentials on top.

That means more equality for women workers both in terms of wages and job opportunities. It was a deliberate attempt to make it abundantly clear, not only to the company but also to some of our own members, who still had a backward attitude, that women were no longer going to be a pushover. The girls were here to stay. They were an essential part of the trade union organisation and could contribute just as much, if not more so on occasions, as sections of the male membership.

In the 1979 January dispute, we took a delegation over to a major rally in Bradford. Of the 60 members that we took to the mass meeting in Bradford, 40 were women members. The girls played their part on the picket line. I believe we have some of the most educated women trade unionists in the district and a group of girls who understand the issues that face them and also understand the need for trade union organisation. In fact, having convinced the girls of the necessity to play a role, they are now probably the most loyal section of the membership in the factory and as committed as anyone to pursuing the struggle to maintain living standards and to advance them.

Health workers draw lessons from dispute

THE NUPE health branch in Tower Hamlets is large with 1,300 members, but this presents problems as they are scattered on four hospital sites—six before all the cuts and closures.

The annual general meeting has to be held separately, in working time on each site, although regular evening meetings to bring in the membership together is something to work towards.

The AGMs have now been held and members seem in remarkably good spirits after the long pay campaign, with a very clear understanding of why, despite good participation in Tower Hamlets, we had not succeeded in our full claim.

In fact, the smallest hospital, Bethnal Green, had approved a motion at the end of the pay campaign agreeing with the strategy of a common pay claim, a common settlement date and a common campaign waged by all the health service unions, but pointing out that the TUC Health Services Committee had not moved fast enough to take advantage of the common action and the

massive public support.

Our motion called for the setting up of joint shop stewards committees all over the country, with a direct input into the TUC so that we could direct the pace of future battles over cuts in services and job losses, instead of our waiting to be told what to do! This motion went to the NUPE District Shop Stewards and then to the area meeting at which the pay vote was to be counted and it was carried at area level also.

21 interested in socialism

Bethnal Green hospital was to provide another surprise. We all know the feeling of making the same points time after time without, apparently, much response. NUPE had sent out an appeal for members to join the Labour Party as individuals and I put this to a small group of about 30 people who had gathered to elect stewards. I don't think it was so much the fact that I put it to them with any more feeling on this occasion but from their own experience the need to take some form of direct action against the Tories was coming forward in their minds. Anyway out of the 30 present, 12 put up their

hands—yes they were interested in joining the Labour Party. For once the NUPE branch secretary and I were speechless at the same time—a unique event in more ways than one!

Flushed with success, the same appeal was made to the district shop stewards meeting. A lot were already in but up came four more names. Splendid. At the Mile End site 50 members at the AGM listened intently and clapped hard and, despite the efforts of a Communist Party steward to disrupt matters, five women gave me their names and addresses, while four more men giggled and gave the impression they were playing hard to get but were really interested.

If the Labour Party had work-place branches, then I'm sure that not only would they recruit more members but active participation in the Labour Party would also increase. 21 people ready to take a step forward from two small hospitals and a stewards' meeting—we haven't even tackled the London yet—about 1,000 people work there!

By Myrna Shaw
(Tower Hamlets Health District Branch NUPE, personal capacity)

Industrial Reports

A vital dispute

Waterworkers...

'100% Behind the strike'

Waterworkers have given a clear answer to Tory press accusations that they were being "coerced" into striking. There have been massive majorities against the Tories' contemptuous 'improved' offer.

Already the waterworkers have shown their determination and the potential strength to win both the full 15% claim and comparability with gas and electricity workers.

Tom King the Environment minister has been whining to the press that the unions have been "tearing up agreements" and he has been trying to brow beat union leaders into going to binding arbitration. But this government is a past master at tearing up agreements. Look for instance at the civil service dispute in 1981 when the Pay Research Unit which for over 20 years had compared civil servants' pay with outside industry was wound up without negotiation. They also persistently refused to go to binding arbitration throughout the 21 week dispute.

The waterworkers have a justified case and should get the full support of the labour movement. The TUC should not pretend to act as an "independent peacemaker" but should give a clear instruction to all union members to support the dispute.

The strike would be enormously strengthened if unions such as NALGO and AUEW were to give unambiguous backing to the waterworkers' strike.

The health workers' dispute shows the importance of maintaining all out action with only emergency cover, and the vital importance of combatting the venomous propaganda of the Tory press. Mass meetings at all levels and regular bulletins to keep all workers informed of developments can beat the employers £7 million propaganda campaign.

The TUC must also make preparations to pull the full support of the organised labour movement behind the strike. This dispute is of vital national importance, and not only to achieve the current pay claim.

Perhaps even more important is the fight to safeguard national negotiations against the Tory threat to bargain on a localised basis, which would seriously weaken the union in future negotiations. The waterworkers must win.

G Etherington and D Davies, two water workers at Stoke Newington picket lines, spoke to Dave Shaw.

"Some management, members of the Staff Association, are earning from £250 to £800 a week taking advantage of the strike, working shifts of over 12 hours, and in some cases in the chlorination plant, which is very dangerous, manning 24 hours a day.

"There is a continuous shift for one person from Sunday night until Friday evening. This person is quoted as saying, 'It's not worth going

Warrington A fight against the Tories

Water workers in Warrington greeted *Militant* enthusiastically after reading the lies in the capitalist press.

Six AUEW fitters arrived at work two hours early to avoid pickets and NALGO had been given contradictory instructions. "If Len Murray's going to step in, it should be to pull the whole TUC behind us and bring out AUEW and NALGO."

There was no real shortage of Water Board cash: "They've just laid a new carpet at Dawson House (North West Water Authority HQ)—£40 a square yard, and stocking the drinks cabinet cost £3,000 last year."

At Howley works, news arrived that a breakdown in Bewsey plant had been repaired by a scab carried in a boss's car. The scab lost a few friends, but had the cheek to ask the strikers if they wanted their pools coupons that week (he is a collector on 20% commission).

George Catterall (GMBATU) asked, "If Tebbit says our strike's not legal, is it legal for the Water Board to send inflated pay rates in a letter to try to get our wives to persuade us back?" The rates quoted included overtime and bonus when many blokes hadn't seen a minute overtime in 20 years.

Howley works produces industrial water for Thames Board Mills which is threatened with closure so they see how the pay dispute is linked to the fight for jobs and to get rid of Thatcher. "But we want a Labour government that'll fight for the working class.

"The *Militant's* doing what all Labour should do—fighting for a decent standard of living on the picket lines. Arguments and shouting in the Commons does us no good at all."

By Chris Edwards

home.' At £800 he could be right.

"But the hours are in direct conflict with Health and Safety regulations especially in the chlorination plant where, if unattended, a deadly poisonous cloud of gas could spread quickly over a distance.

"The workers have asked management to come out in sympathy but were told that only if the Army came in would they consider walking out. The men are totally disgusted with this exploitation of the industrial action."



Waterworkers need the support of the entire trade union movement. Photo: John Arthur

Sheffield

"Fifty years of industrial peace—then Thatcher!" says a GMBATU placard in Sheffield's Blackburn Meadows sewage treatment plant.

Of the 80 manual workers, only one has refused to picket. Everyone else is on the rota and even coming out of turn to supply coffee, sandwiches, etc. The mood is hardening to stick out for 15%.

Tory proposals for abolishing the National Water Council are seen as a retrograde step also, because regionalisation means less negotiating power, and less well organised regions, particularly rural areas will become worse off.

At the sewage treatment plant are some of the most undesirable jobs imaginable. Raw sewage which can also include dead dogs and rats, arrives at the screen house where it is filtered through to settling tanks—water is passed over and the resulting sludge goes into filter presses, lime and coprous are added, when it is ready for incineration and loaded on to lorries and locomotives to be dumped.

Throughout, waterworkers are used to keep

filters clear; pump sludge, mix, burn and load it, and weed the tanks of algae. Although they get acclimatised to the smell, a new chemical is being experimented with that smells even worse! There are no regular medical checks despite regular cases of diarrhoea.

Waterworkers are determined to win this dispute—not only to improve conditions, but to smash the Tories' policy of making workers pay for their crisis!

Alan Anderton (Park LP) spoke to Sheffield waterworkers

Bristol: Tebbit fuels the anger

"They keep telling us on the telly that the offer would mean £10 more on average. To get that you would have to be a Grade 1 worker, on shifts, weekends plus two hours' overtime," said pickets at Sanwell depot, Bristol water works.

"Since Tebbit opened his mouth, feelings have

sharpened. We are now 100% behind this strike. We haven't been a militant union up till now, but we are learning fast."

Shop steward Derek Adams told me, "They've been messing about for ages. All we want is parity with gas and electric." The response has been overwhelming, but it could be strengthened if white collar workers in NALGO and MATSA were called out as well. As Derek pointed out: "This is their fight too. Whatever we get, they get—plus."

Another striker told me: "This is a battle for the whole TUC. If the TUC leaders were on the same pay as water workers they would have the same fight."

Bristol water works, a private company, have been cutting staff for years, and 75 manual workers were made redundant on 4 January. Sanwell Road has declined in 15 years from over 100 workers to 40.

The men feel it is especially important to confront this latest onslaught because they can see the guiding hand of the Tory cabinet behind the employers.

By Paul Moorhouse (Bristol LPYS)

Weaverham

At Weaverham Grange, Cheshire, the prospect of troops would only harden the strike further. "There's not one of us wouldn't go out to a hospital or old people but if the troops came in, that would stop."

One picket, an ex-marine based at Plymouth in the 1966 national seamen's strike said, "The officers didn't know what to tell us to do. At Avonmouth we upset the apple cart by twisting slings; there was a right mess in the dockside. Soldiers wouldn't want to scab on their own people."

Harlow

After 20 years' service one sewer man at Ryemeads works near Harlow was declared unfit, partly as a result of rheumatism due to damp conditions down below.

He was transferred to the service where part of his duties involved climbing a 98 foot floodlights to replace bulbs. They sway at least a foot in a slight wind—some light duties!

Ryemeads sewage workers are even more solid now. "Who would tolerate being up to your neck in sewage for our pittance? Those who talk as though our job's a doddle haven't attempted to cross muddy fields in 7 pound sewer boots, inspecting man-holes.

"You can end up pounds heavier and a foot taller with the amount of muck you pick up. Nor have they stumbled in a sewer and kicked up a cloud of obnoxious gas from the septic sludge. We fight on."

By Bob Edwards

Tyneside

Fifty water workers lobbied Northumberland Water Board from as far away as Berwick, South Durham, Hexham and Newcastle.

Ray Gray, the NUPE shop steward, said, "The feeling is getting stronger and this meeting has made them much more determined to hold out for the 15%. Coming together makes us realise our strength."

The press has hardened attitudes. The local *Evening Chronicle* displayed pictures of a pregnant woman carrying a bucket, of old age pensioners and people on dialysis machines. The favourite joke is that the *Chronicle* is looking for an 80 year old pregnant woman on a dialysis machine to photograph.

By Ed Waugh



Industrial Reports

THE TORIES are threatening to push working hours in the retail trade back to the 1890s.

On 4 February, parliament will debate the second reading of a private member's bill, from Tory Ray Whitney, to abolish the restriction on Sunday Trading laws.

There are many anomalies and contradictions in these laws, and many workers are attracted by the idea that seven day shopping would be in everyone's interests because it would allow workers to shop on their days off.

In reality though, as many USDAW members know from experience, the reverse is the case. For many years now, the Tories, backed by their rich backers in the retail trade, have attempted to scrap the laws introduced under the 1945-51 Labour government to protect shopworkers' rights and working conditions, especially the 1950 Shops Act. The bosses, finding the law restrictive, have pointed to all the discrepancies that exist over what can or cannot be sold on a Sunday in different parts of the country.

In recent years a price war has developed among the big retail consortiums in the High Streets. With the

worsening economic situation, the bosses have intensified their campaign to abolish the trading restrictions, believing that Sunday trading will enable them to drive their competitors out of business and give them a monopoly in the High Street. Then they will be able to end the price war and push up prices, make all 'unnecessary' staff redundant and make a fat profit.

We are not against changes on religious grounds. A change in the law, while undermining the working conditions of those retail and distributive workers who are organised, would be catastrophic to those whose union organisation is weak or non-existent. The bosses could run supermarkets on a slave-waged skeletal staff.

USDAW is waging a campaign to stop this situation coming about. All Labour MPs are being asked to be present on 4 February at the House of Commons to kill

By George Williamson
(Eastern Divisional Council Candidate)

SUNDAY OPENING -

A threat to shopworkers conditions

the bill in its early stages. The union will be conducting a ballot of the entire membership on this issue during February and March and asking them to back the Executive Council's proposals to fight the Tory Bill.

The Executive Council of USDAW has conceded that the present laws are confused and contradictory, but asserts that if the law must be changed, it should be done with the workers' interests in mind.

Outright opposition to Bill

Militant supporters would agree with this, and do sup-

port the Executive Council so far as their proposals go. However, it is clearly impossible to expect the Tories to bear the interests of workers in mind. Only a Labour government can be expected to change the law, to improve the conditions of the retail and distributive workers, and to safeguard the interests of all workers.

In the absence of a Labour government the union leadership should be prepared to wage outright opposition to the Tory Bill by utilising the whole industrial strength of the union if necessary. The leadership to date have tried negotiation, and proposed com-

promise with the bosses. In some cases they have even tried to recruit their support! The only supporters that the USDAW EC should rely on are the USDAW members themselves. There is no lack of determination among the activists of the union to fight this Bill.

What is needed is a concerted campaign, involving other unions organised in the retail and distributive trades (T&GWU, GMBATU, B&FAWU) to show the bosses that the shopworkers will not accept a deterioration of their working conditions. A TUC retail and distribution sub-committee should be organised to co-

ordinate such action. By campaigning for a 35-hour week for all workers in the trade, coupled with a national minimum wage of at least £95, the union membership could be united as never before to win.

Clearly USDAW must equip itself with a leadership capable of waging such a campaign with the determination necessary. By voting for the Broad Left candidates in the union elections now taking place, and in particular by voting for Jeff Price for president, USDAW members will have a leadership capable of winning this struggle.

GEC Openshaw

ON JANUARY 31, the joint staff unions at GEC Openshaw voted by 3-1 to return to work. They had been on strike for three weeks on the issue of the introduction of new technology. Senior management at GEC had intervened in the dispute. They made it a major issue threatening to drag the strike out with the possibility of closing the factory.

It must be said that a small section of the staff workers appeared to be in collaboration with management and gave the impression that the strike was crumbling. With this background, the trade unions full-time officials failed to give any recognition to the mass meeting. Given certain commitments by management to work with the unions on the introduction of new technology and the re-instatement of all suspended workers, this put the negotiating committee in a very difficult position. So they recommended a return to work.

The feeling of the mass meeting was one of antagonism to the management and the real desire to build the GEC combine committee so that when workers enter a dispute about working conditions the threat of a major factory closure will not be held like a gun to their head.

In no way did the workers vote in a cowered fashion for a return to work but will be going back with a spirit of unity among the staff. Because of the support from the shop floor, a unity between office and factory can and must be built throughout GEC.

Reg Sidebottom
(AUEW-TASS)
and John Byrne
(AUEW)

Odhams and the missing bike

WORKERS at Odhams printing firm are still reeling from the takeover of their company, previously owned by Reid International and now owned by Robert Maxwell's BPCC. They are wondering why Reid did a deal with a man they hated so much they dubbed him 'the bouncing Czech'.

Robert Maxwell sent a letter to the workforce in which he wrote:

"...I am setting up a special Department at BPPC to assist those who accept voluntary redundancy. Some may wish to start in business on their own. Others will be looking for new employ-

ment. The Department's task will be to seek the assistance of every authority and other body which can help. In Watford, in particular, we shall do our best to see that substantial employment opportunities are created at the Odhams site and on the surplus Sun Printers land..."

The Association of the Fathers of Chapels replied, "this is pure 'Norman Tebbit clap trap' all that is missing is the bike."

By an Odhams worker

Bell Fruit, Nottingham

200 WORKERS at Bell Fruit in Nottingham went out on strike for a week over the sacking of a shop steward. Paul Brett, T&G convenor, explained:

"The company disciplined a number of workers for absence prior to Christmas but broke the normal procedure. They sacked one of our stewards Des Gibbons, who had received a final warning for a previous offence. We argued the two offences should be treated separately. When management refused to accept this we came out on strike."

Some workers felt the management were trying to undermine the union. In this case they failed. Despite letters sent to put pressure on workers to return to work, warning of the company's difficult financial position, only a few scabs crossed the picket line.

They have now agreed to review the disciplinary procedure with the union. As a result, the workers voted at a mass meeting on Friday 28th to return to work, hav-

ing shown they won't allow management to get away with victimisation and ready to take further action if necessary.

By Chris Ridge

AG Standard

On Wednesday 26 January 170 people turned up to a mass picket and rally at A.G. Standard, Borehamwood. Workers have been on strike over trade union recognition for 15 weeks. The Company has been feeling the pressure from the Trade Unions and recently offered the strikers £500 each to go away, this was of course, turned down. The speakers from SOGAT made it clear that they were preparing secondary action over the coming weeks, and were ready, willing and able to be in the forefront of the fight against Tebbit's bill.

By Mick Packer
(South Herts LPYS)

SHEFFIELD STEELWORKERS DEMONSTRATE

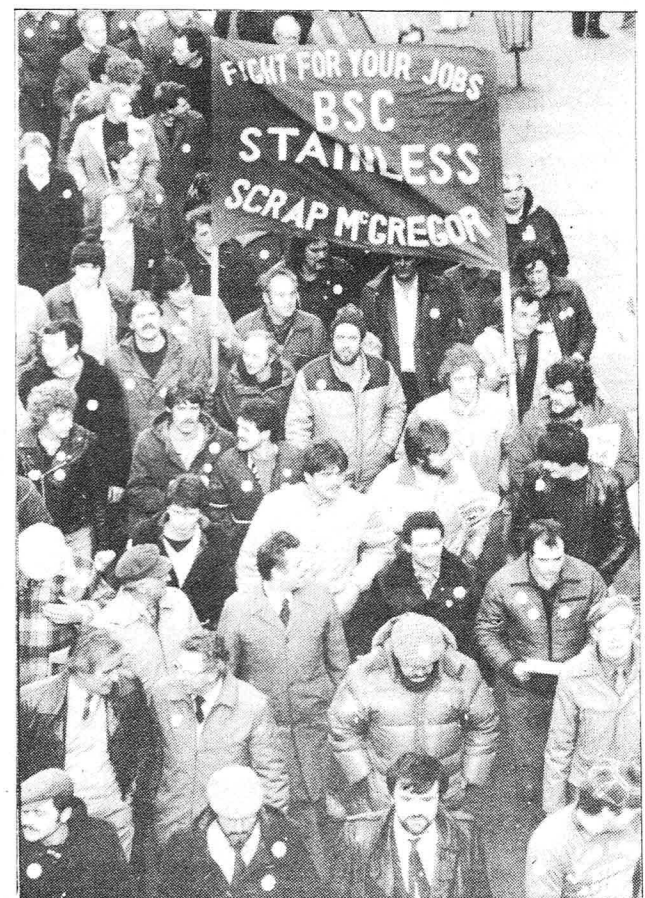
ABOUT 1,000 steel workers marched through Sheffield on 29 January on a demonstration organised by the South Yorkshire Action Committee against further job losses in the steel industry.

At the rally, David Blunkett, leader of Sheffield City Council, called on the steel unions to follow the example of Belgium, French and Italian workers of demonstrating on the streets in their thousands.

By Wendy Cooks
(ISTC Phoenix staff branch, personal capacity)

Gavin Laird, General Secretary of the AUEW called on the next Labour government to rebuild the steel industry with the same enthusiasm with which the Tories have destroyed it. A delegate from the floor stood up and asked if the speakers from the platform, instead of giving reams of facts and figures, could give a strategy to fight redundancies. This received enthusiastic applause from the rally. The point was taken up by Roy Bishop, ISTC full-time official who said that the ISTC would fully support any determined effort to save jobs.

A warning was given to the rally by a former steel worker, now unemployed,



Steelworkers in Sheffield demonstrate their determination to defend jobs.

who said that he was the ghost of Christmas to come unless a fight back takes place within the steel industry. A resolution put to the rally by the action committee calling for no movement of machinery, workforce or materials was passed unanimously. Steel workers were called upon to

demonstrate their opposition to Thatcher and her Tory policies when she visits the Cuttlers Hole on 28 April in Sheffield. Clearly the mood has never been greater of steel workers in both the public and private sectors to unite and fight against job losses.

Photo: John Arthur



Workers at the Copper Mill Lane depot, East London, vote to reject the latest pay offer.

Photo: Denis Doran (Militant)

WATERWORKERS

Continued from front page

Authority.

But this is not enough for the Tories. If their plans go through, the Authorities will be reduced to small appointed Boards of 12 to 15 members accountable only to the Environment Secretary.

If they do make Water Boards even less representative, the way will be cleared for a favourite Tory idea, the metering of water. This would mean rationing by price, and the devil take the poorest.

And the Tories have the cheek to accuse strikers of jeopardising water supplies for the old and sick! We must fight to keep water supplies free at the point of use. And as with many other demands, we will have to fight the Tories and the bosses to get it.

Big business, meanwhile, makes rich pickings from the water industry. The supply side is mostly private and most capital developments go out to contract. The private companies pay large dividends.

Debt charges bleed the public sector (for example, over half of the NWA's spending in 1980/81 was in interest charges). Private industry, the Tories' friends,

benefits from cheap rates for water—the commercial rate of the NGWC varies from 54% down to 29% of the rate we pay, the domestic rate.

We can get a living wage when we get these parasites off our backs. We should campaign for the nationalisation of the private water companies with compensation only on the basis of need, introduce workers' control in the day to day running of the industry, and a democratically elected accountable board of management, with workers in water and related industries and domestic consumers making a majority of members.

We need a programme of investment to expand the industry; to renovate the crumbling sewerage system, clean rivers, improve water quality, create new supplies and start a national grid to avert water shortage etc.

We also need a socialist planned economy to stop the profit-crazy system closing down industry after industry, thus reducing "demand" for water the same way they do for steel, coal etc.

The water workers are sick of the Tories. We have a major role to play in getting rid of them and fighting for a socialist answer to our problem.

'We won't let Timex die'

"If Timex pulls out of Dundee, the whole watchmaking industry in this country will be killed."

"These jobs represent a whole industry," warned Jim Tinnon, AUEW Tass steward at Timex.

Dundee's unemployment would increase from 15% to 17%.

As far back as September, stewards obtained a signed agreement by Timex management ensuring a future for the plant. After the Christmas break, rumours again began to circulate about redundancies and again union representatives were given an assurance that there would be no redundancies.

Three days later on January 10 the management announced that 1,900 jobs were to go in watchmaking and Nimslo cameras. "What angered the union stewards", said Jim, "in addition to the broken assurances, was that the announcement was released to the press on the Saturday before the management informed the union representatives."

Two reasons were stated for the redundancies—the world market for mechanical watches had plummeted and the works were unable to produce sufficient numbers of the Nimslo cameras because of the laziness, inefficiency and

By Eddie Donaghy
 (LPYS Scottish Committee)

Ewan Duncan
 (Chairman Dundee Plumbers lodge personal capacity)

poor industrial relations, which the management of Nimslo referred to as 'industrial bloody-mindedness'. The strike record of Timex is only 21 days lost through strikes in 30 years.

The new 3D camera was developed by the Dundee workforce. Timex workers had to make over 1,000 engineering and design changes despite no investment in new machinery. Documents reveal that the management were preparing cuts in staff and production as far back as July 1982.

It is not a question of Timex stopping making watches. Olsen and Timex are shifting a section to France to take advantage of the £90 million grant from the French government. Some of the watches will be made in the Far East countries like Taiwan. Taiwan is infamous for its slave labour where children as young as 9 and 10



Dundee unemployment is already at 15%.

are forced to work 12 hours a day in Victorian conditions. Olsen has exploited the expertise of the Dundee workforce, especially in developing the camera and then taking advantage of lower costs.

Any firm adopting these tactics should be nationalised by a future Labour govern-

ment, with compensation paid only on the basis of proven need. With democratic workers' control and management, working people could then run industry in the interests of the whole society and not just a handful of individuals like Fred Olsen. In the long term, that is the only way to secure jobs.

The bosses have shown their callous disregard for workers' livelihoods. They will go to the country or region where they can get the richest pickings in subsidies. With the co-operation of the Tories, they have vandalised factories up and down the country, by closing them down and moving out equipment. Watchmaking is just one of many industries that is in danger of disappearing.

It's not that there's a shortage of money.

Fred Olsen's fortune is estimated at over £500 million. The Dundee workforce can look forward to a personal 'fortune' of unemployment benefit for life if Olsen is allowed to get away with redundancies.

By using scare tactics the management have been able to achieve 900 voluntary redundancies. A meeting of 500 Dundee shop stewards representing all major unions agreed unanimously to fight to retain Timex. The Dundee workers must win this fight.

Messages of support to Gordon Samtoon, 32, Elgin Terrace, Dundee. Donations to Sandra Walker 9, Butters Place, Dundee.

TORY NUKES CAMPAIGN

Continued from front page

from this incident are likely to be J Walter Thompson—to the tune of up to £1m of our money. They'll just have to concentrate their attentions on existing customers Pepsi Cola, Unilever, Nat West Bank and the *Guardian*

newspaper.

Of course the government could launch a similarly massive campaign using TV, newspaper advertising and other literature to persuade people to claim all the state benefits to which they are entitled but at present don't take up.

We doubt if Mr Heseltine would be so keen.

By Ian Ilett

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