

Militant

THE MARXIST PAPER FOR LABOUR & YOUTH

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Lebanon— Reagan's scheme in ruins

LEBANON is careering towards a new round of bloody and devastating civil war.

It has become abundantly clear that the policy of Imperialism—supporting the unrepresentative and reactionary regime of Amin Gemayel—offers no solution to the sectarian conflicts that have torn the country limb from limb.

Reagan's declared commitment: to the "dream of a rebuilt and re-united Lebanon" remains precisely that... a dream.

The Multinational Force (MNF), composed of troops from Britain, France, Italy, and the USA, has temporarily shored up Gemayel's position, but has not made one iota of difference to the chronic instability of Lebanon; all these MNF governments have been under pressure to get out and US and British troops have now withdrawn to ships offshore.

The international labour movement has the duty to oppose the intervention of the USA and the European capitalist powers in Lebanon, an intrusion designed to protect the interests of international capitalism and not at all of the Lebanese masses.

The Gemayel presidencies (Pierre Gemayel was president for a brief period up to his assassination, then his brother Amin) represented the balance of military forces created by the Israeli invasion of Lebanon in 1982, a balance that no longer exists after the Israeli withdrawal to the south.

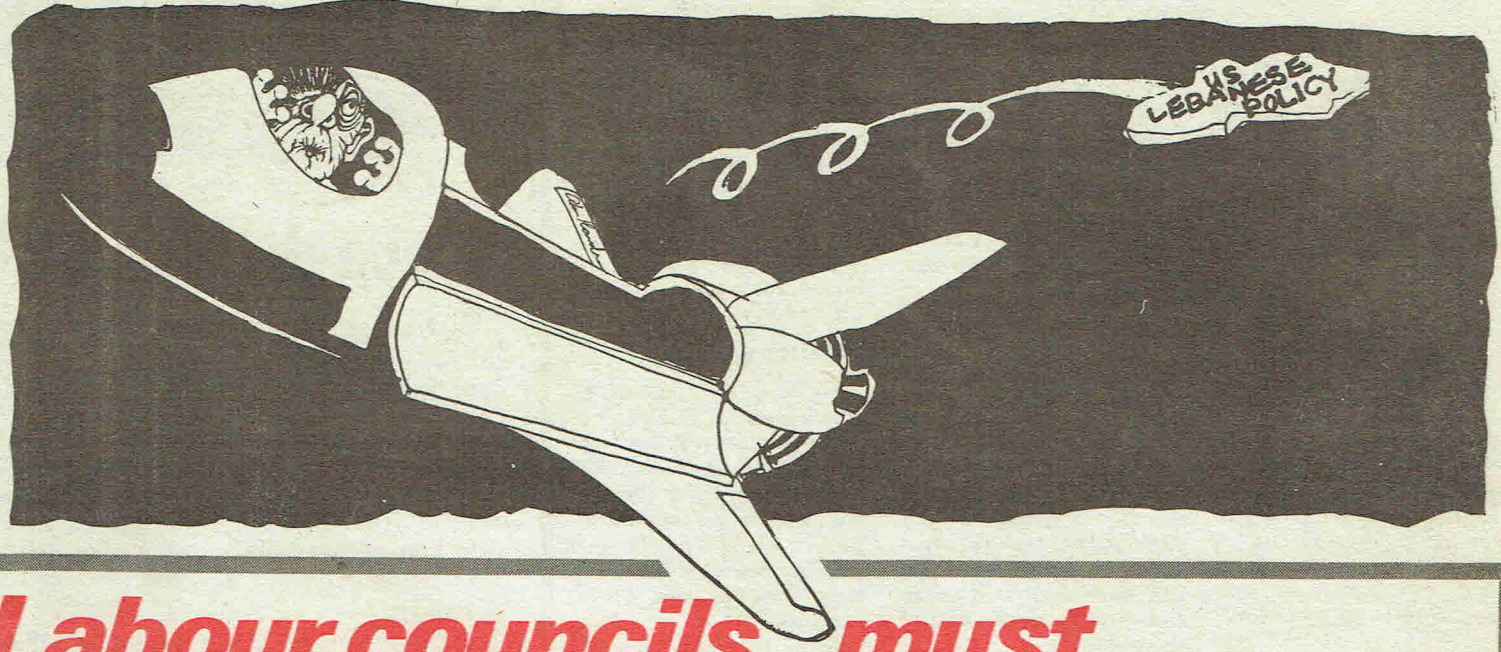
The Gemayels' power base has always been among the minority Maronite Christian community, and especially the extreme right wing Phalange militia, those responsible for the massacres at Sabra and Chatilla refugee camps. Neither president has ever had the support of the Muslim population who constitute the majority of the Lebanese people.

Gemayel may now try to maintain what little authority he has in the small area he controls, but his 'national' army is falling apart in front of his eyes. His Druze soldiers deserted last year after the government tried to use them against the strongholds of the Druze militias in the Chouf mountains to the south of Beirut.

Thousands of other Muslim troops are now declaring themselves "neutral" or are deserting to the Shia and Sunni Muslim militias ranged against the government.

The new Lebanese 'national' army, predominantly Muslim, carefully and painstakingly built up with US training and finance, was supposed to be the solid base upon which Gemayel could begin to rebuild and reunite the coun-

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Labour councils must.....

Fight for every job

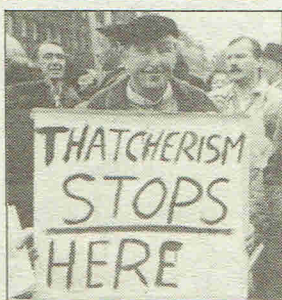
LAST MONTH, no less than 120,300 more joined the dole queues, the biggest monthly increase for a year. For the 3,199,678 officially unemployed and the million or so more who are not registered or on YTS schemes, the talk of "recovery" by the government and the bosses is sickening.

The rise in jobless has been condemned as "appalling" by Labour employment spokesman John Smith. But one section of the movement is not merely condemning the level of unemployment—Liverpool City Council is taking action to create jobs.

"My biggest break"

John Dunn and Kevin Putt are two young workers who have recently been given jobs by the Labour-controlled Coun-

By Brian Hayes
(Broadgreen LPYS)



cil. Both finished school with numerous 'O' Levels, and set about finding work.

John couldn't get a job and enrolled at an FE college. Then he finally got a job—"the type that offers a thousand pound per week... I packed it in after two weeks without a penny in earnings, having spent money for travelling expenses." It

was commission only—no sales, no salary. He ended up on the dole for 2½ years, including a year "on his bike",—in Bradford.

Kevin was a little luckier. He has had a number of jobs—all low paid with no prospects. The only "proper" job he ever refused was the job of somebody who would then be made redundant.

"I passed the police entrance exam and at an interview later I was asked

CONTINUED ON
BACK PAGE

"Now I have a job, I have regained my self-respect. I'll back the council all the way."

THE GOVERNMENT claims it cannot afford to provide Liverpool City Council with the money to employ additional council workers.

★ But every unemployed worker costs the government £100 a week in benefits and in tax not paid.

★ The Council have worked out that the real net cost to the government of employing a single non-householder at £95 a week is only £16.50, a married person with 2 children at £144 a week only £24-52.

Union lefts organise

WORKERS WANT a fight against unemployment, redundancies, low pay and attacks on the unions. And they want a fighting union leadership that will take on the Tories.

That is the message from the Broad Left Organising Committee (BLOC), seeing the early response to their initiative in calling for a conference on 24 March (see details page 3 and interview page 13).

Latest delegates are five strikers from Morris textiles in Wigan (see page 14) five from Bradford Trades Council, three from the

Signals section of the NUR West Midlands district council, five from Liverpool Internal POEU, two from Teesside General Hospital NUPE and one from Stockport No 3 UCATT.

Speakers now include Alan Quinn, a member of the general executive of TGWU (in a personal capacity). Sheffield City Council are generously providing buses from the station to the conference centre. Crèche facilities will be available.

Make sure your branch or shop stewards' committee sends delegates.

Liverpool needs national support

"HISTORY HAS shown that one section of the movement always comes into the front line before the rest. We saw it recently with the NGA dispute; we are now seeing it with Liverpool City Council."

This was how Tony Mulhearn, President of Liverpool District Labour Party, summed up the challenge facing last weekend's Labour Party Local Government Conference.

"We do not have the luxury of choosing the battleground or the timing of the battle. It is the duty of the rest of the movement though to respond and support those in the front line."

Equivocation

During the course of the conference the position of the City Council was clearly explained to the delegates and by Sunday morning, any reference by delegates to supporting Liverpool was warmly applauded by the conference.

It is now up to the party leaders to translate this support into a clear commitment to throw the full weight of the movement nationally

behind Liverpool. At the "Liverpool in Crisis" fringe meeting, Jack Straw, the Party's environment spokesman, offered his support for Liverpool and said that the Labour leadership would discuss with Liverpool City Council the tactics that should be used.

Yet in Monday's *Guardian*, 6 February, Straw was quoted as having told the conference that the Parliamentary leadership "could not promise open-ended support without knowing what action Liverpool might take." But it was made perfectly clear at the weekend what action they intend to take, and there must now be no equivocation on the part of the leaders.

The same *Guardian* report alleged that "many left-wing council leaders have argued privately that any confrontation should be deferred until the spring of 1985 when 20 authorities could be faced with government legislative controls." If that is true, it amounts to nothing less than a betrayal of the stand being taken by the Liverpool party. They cannot possibly "defer" their struggle; it has been imposed upon them by the Tory government.

David Blunkett, NEC member and Leader of Sheffield City Council, at the weekend's *Tribune* meeting, committed himself to "campaign and refuse to implement any cuts". "Our skill with the scalpel", he said, "is no better than the Tories."

Yet in last week's issue of *Tribune*, 3 February, Blunkett was quoted as saying: "There will be a great deal of sympathy for Liverpool. But the other left-wing authorities are not in the same position as Liverpool so there is no way they can take the same stand." This contradicts his statement at the meeting—"refusing to implement the cuts" means taking the same stand as Liverpool!

Contradiction?

He went on, in *Tribune*, to admit that, "if Liverpool is defeated that will have an enormously detrimental effect on the rest of us. We are not going to stab them in the back." Yet in the very next sentence he says, "but we'll have to tell them that if they can stick with us, they then should. We want to unify people where we can, but we obviously want to be frank with each other."

Is this not a veiled version of the "private" position of waiting until 1985? The ranks of the movement are looking for a positive and unambiguous statement from the NEC and the PLP that they support Liverpool NOW and will use the great authority they have within the labour movement to mobilise action to back their stand as soon as it is needed.

Witch-hunt spreads to LPYS

THE OFFICERS of Blackburn CLP, not satisfied with expelling six socialists from the party are pressing forward an attack on Blackburn LPYS. The CLP secretary has written to the LPYS calling into question the correctness of the LPYS AGM regarding notification to members about that meeting. He is obviously unaware that National Standing Orders state that only party member who have expressed "a desire to be members of the branch"

need be notified and that had been done.

The CLP secretary has instructed the Youth Officer to regularise "what appears to be an extremely bizarre set of circumstances." We presume the bizarre set of circumstances to be that the Youth Officer has rarely attended LPYS meetings and has made numerous unfounded and scandalous allegations including that the LPYS hold secret meetings.

And yet a public meeting officially organised by the

LPYS in the local public library about fighting the cuts has not been allowed to go ahead following a committee decision of the Labour-controlled Lancashire County Council. It appears that if the right wing of the Labour Party had their way the LPYS would only be allowed to have secret meetings, if any meetings were allowed at all!

By Mick Greenwood
(Secretary, Blackburn LPYS, personal capacity)

Lebanon

(Continued from page 1)

try. At the first sign of conflict, it has come apart at the seams.

Any attempt to deploy the army on a large scale will shatter it completely, as it was broken in the civil war of 1975-'76. Gemayel's only reliable basis of support was the Phalangist militia and the beleaguered Multinational Force, but short of a large-scale US intervention on the ground—something that would have had incalculable results in the USA and in relation to American interests in the Middle East—there seems to be nothing that can now save him.

The Lebanese 'national covenant', whereby the President would always be a Maronite Christian, the Prime Minister a Sunni Muslim, the Speaker a Shia Muslim, and so on, dividing all the offices of government and state along confessional lines, is a dead letter.

The institutionalisation of religious difference through

this unofficial agreement always acted as a divisive brake on the workers' movement and guaranteed the interests of landowners, financiers and capitalists, both Muslim and Christian, but above all of the Maronites who were most closely tied to French imperialism.

But the covenant was already out-dated by the time it was swept away in the civil war eight years ago. The Maronites, once supposedly the largest national group, are now only about 20% of the population and even among Muslims, the Sunni no longer have a majority over the Shi'ites.

Possible war

Without an outright bloody victory, over the bones of the Shia, Druze and other Muslim militias there is no way that the Maronite ascendancy can be re-established across the whole of Lebanon. At best it will remain in the small enclave held by the Phalangist militia in the north of Beirut.

The Syrian government, arming and supporting the opposition Muslim militias, is cynically using the divisions within Lebanon for its own strategic interests. Firmly in control of Northern and Eastern Lebanon, the Damascus regime is not prepared to see its position there threatened, and has therefore every interest in destabilising Gemayel's government. Behind Syria, there stands Moscow, furthering its own strategic position in the Middle East by weakening the diplomatic and military position of Imperialism, especially the USA.

The imperialist powers are in an impasse, or perhaps more appropriately, a morass, in Lebanon. The Gemayel regime is inherently unstable and incapable of unifying Lebanon. Withdrawal of the Multinational Force would leave it to collapse, perhaps leading to the establishment of a government based on Syrian support, or, they fear, a leftward leaning regime in the throes of revolutionary fer-



Above and Below: part of the audience at last Thursday's debate. Photo: Tom Carroll

Peace debate with young Tories

"WHAT A pathetic bunch of misfits," said the Young Tory speaker about the Greenham Common women, during a debate with Merseyside Young Socialists last Thursday, 2 February.

Well over 200 young people packed the AUEW Hall at Mount Pleasant to hear the debate on "Peace" between speakers for the LPYS and the Young Conservatives. His comment, including, amazement that a member of this "dirty spectacle" at Greenham had somehow become pregnant, did not go down too well with the mainly LPYS audience.

Very subtle

Manchester Tory councillor John Kershaw tried at "subtler" approach. The LPYS might think he came like Daniel into the lions when he said, but "I've come to fight for you...to defend your rights to disagree with your government".

Only our free society makes peace worthwhile, we have to be strong and vigilant to defend our way of life, he patiently explained. The many young unemployed in the audience weren't convinced. At times they were loudly unconvinced.

He was also there because he "studied Trotsky at university" and "as followers of Trotsky" he an-



nounced "you should know you would be the first to go if the Russians took over." His studies had not revealed him what the debate soon did, however that there is a world of difference between the ideas and methods of Marxism and Stalinism.

Profit or peace?

Tony Aitman and John Neetch from the platform and a stream of speakers from the floor nailed the Tory lie. Their socialist message was that from Britain to Russia the Tories of

various kinds have always trampled on democratic rights. Throughout history the ruling class have cast working people into the suffering of war in the interests of profit yet they have the audacity to talk about peace in the national interest.

Though the chair made sure the proceedings did not get out of hand his repeated appeal for a Young Tory to stand up and be counted did not convince them to show their heads. Not very promising for their performance in a third world war, as one Young Socialist speaker pointed out.

ment, affecting all the other Arab states in the Middle East, as well as Israel and the occupied West Bank.

But the increasing danger for imperialism was that the price they would have had to pay to prevent the complete collapse of Gemayel would have been an increased degree of military intervention and—especially in the case of Israel—the possibility of war with Syria.

Socialist alternative

It could not be ruled out, therefore, that renewed civil war in Lebanon could lead to a new major war—something that in the medium and longer term would have huge repercussions in Israel, and the USA, and in Europe if the American, French, Italian or British contingents of the MNF became involved.

Socialists must judge all these developments from the point of view of the interests of the Lebanese and international labour movement, which can give no support to

the regime of Amin Gemayel.

There is no possible solution to the Lebanese crisis on a capitalist basis. The system that had spawned and promoted sectarianism in the first place offers only an endless nightmare for the mass of the population.

Neither can the specific Lebanese crisis be solved outside of a general Middle East context. The civil war in Lebanon is only a horribly exaggerated form of national conflicts created by the crisis of landlordism and capitalism throughout the area and the whole world.

Marxists have explained that war is often the midwife of revolution. The invasion of Lebanon by Israel was supposed to secure peace in Northern Israel, yet it has brought in its train enormous social conflict in Israel, the deepest class divisions in the history of the state.

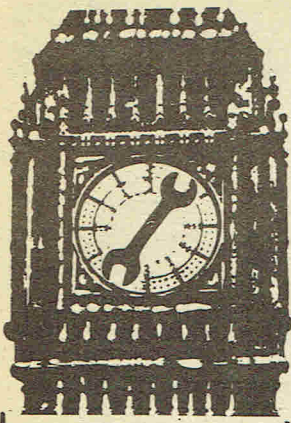
Last weekend, for example, in the biggest-ever political demonstration in Jerusalem, 40,000 Israeli workers showed their opposition to the continued

Israeli occupation of Southern Lebanon. There are also signs that poorer 'Oriental' Jews are deserting the right wing Likud party which they formerly supported.

Throughout Israel and the Middle East, the conditions for the creation of a genuine workers' movement are quickly maturing. It is only such a movement, based upon Marxist ideas and resolute internationalism, that can bring peace and stability to Lebanon and the Middle East.

A genuine socialist appeal could shatter the bases of support presently held by sectarian warlords in Lebanon. Within the context of a Federation of Socialist States in the Middle East, a socialist Lebanon could guarantee the basic necessities of life for the whole population and at the same time protect the democratic and national rights of all religious and national groups.

By John Pickard



Out of order

DEBRETTS' Peerage Ltd wrote to me recently, and I presume to other Labour members, asking for details of my background and life. They enclosed an advert for Debretts' Book of Royal Children which includes such essential information as the favourite or most hated nannies and tutors of royal children.

Well, they didn't actually ask me who my favourite nanny was, but the questionnaire did ask some interesting things: my title/rank; any orders or decorations (and they're not talking about my taste in wallpaper); and my father's full name, rank and residence.

They then went on to inquire about my heir, my recreations (including names of yachts/racehorses) and my principal clubs. They didn't ask for the name of my butler, or which hounds I rode with, but every question presumed I was one of the gentry or the youngest son of the Duke of Bootle.

I imagine quite a few aristocratic Tory MPs and others with delusions of grandeur avidly filled it in. I trust no Labour MP did—or should I say I hope so.

IN A letter to all Labour MPs last week the Secretary of the Parliamentary Labour Party asked for a donation of at least £100 towards a "research fund". The PLP suggest that this should not come from the MPs' £16,000 salary (plus expenses) but from the secretarial research allowance of £12,000 out of which comes wages for MPs' staff (sometimes two secretaries and one researcher) and office equipment.

The unions involved (APEX and TGWU) were not consulted. They have been pushing for an increase in these allowances to employ more staff.

The Campaign group of Labour MPs has unanimously rejected the circular. Many of them are concerned that the PLP should be getting more research staff whilst Labour Party headquarters at Walworth Road are facing redundancies. Some MPs fear Parliamentary researchers could be used to fight against policies of the Labour Party decided at conference.

By Terry Fields MP

GCHQ workers resist blackmail

THE MOOD of workers at GCHQ remains determined despite all the attempts by the Tories to bully them.

It is clear that only a minority of the workforce have given in. The packed mass meetings at Cheltenham prove this. The workers are not prepared to be sacrificed on the Tory altar to the icon of anti-trade unionism.

What's Howe hiding?

The Tories are now in disarray. Last week Geoffrey Howe found himself caught in crossfire meant for the Civil Service. On Thames TV he disagreed with a statement from Civil Service minister Barney Heyhoe that anyone who refused the £1,000, stayed in the union and refused to move would be dismissed without redundancy payment. The next day he reversed his position, agreed with Heyhoe's position and claimed he had misunderstood Thames TV's question, and they had since apologised to him. Needless to say Thames TV had not apologised, nor had they been asked to do so.

But if Howe is caught out on such relatively minor matters, what else is he hiding or misleading us about?

While the Tories are in complete disarray and the unions have a strong case it is therefore staggering, especially after the mass walk out last week by Civil Servants, to watch the antics of the leadership of the TUC and the Civil Service unions; they have all but prostrated themselves at Thatcher's feet protesting the moderation of themselves and their members.

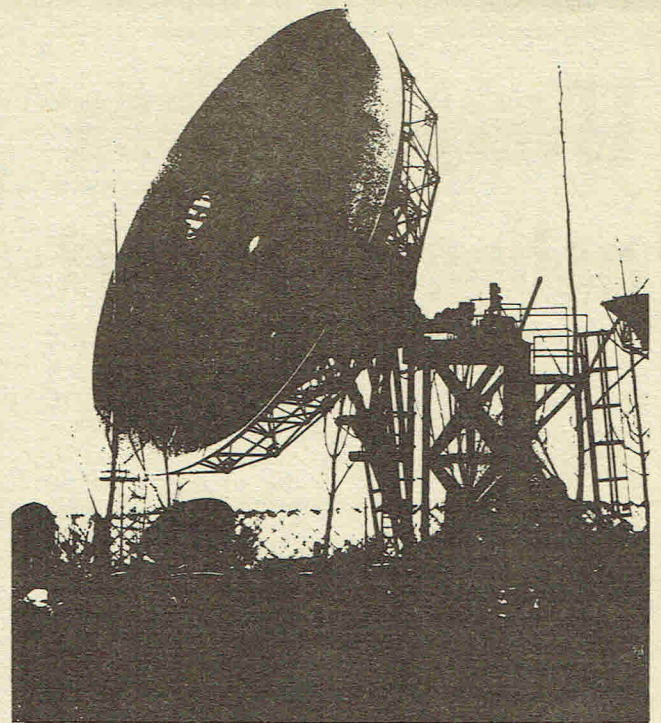
John Sheldon of the Civil

Service Union went as far as to say "if they tell us what they want, we will give it to them." Instead of stretching out with a begging bowl, the TUC should take the example set by Thatcher and respond in kind—as unyielding in the defence of the working class as she and her government are for the capitalist class.

Surely by now the TUC General Council must be aware that their failure to support ASLEF in 1982 and more recently the NGA in their dispute, have paved the

way for this new onslaught from the Tories?

The Tories have been attempting to introduce more military personnel into the Ministry of Defence, in place of civilian staff, since they came to power. This policy has obvious advantages for them. Soldiers can be members of a union in a minority of cases but the unions cannot negotiate for them. In the majority of cases they cannot belong to a union at all. GCHQ is part of a wider Tory anti-union drive.



Above: Mass meeting of staff at GCHQ, 2 February. Top right: Cheltenham GCHQ.

Photos: John Harris (IFL)

...but leadership hesitates

THE CIVIL Service leadership have responded far too sluggishly to the threat. It took a week before the CPSA NEC met, and then it only rubber stamped the actions of its General Secretary.

They agreed that there should be no strike action over Cheltenham. Instead they have agreed upon what Alistair Graham calls a "Lloyd George style" campaign of protest and public debate which will "climax" in a day of action on 28 February. But this day of action will not be co-ordinated strike action.

Attempts by Broad Left members of the executive to strengthen and co-ordinate action were defeated. This decision is in flat contradiction to the wishes of the GCHQ branch itself. A motion calling upon the unions to halt talks with the government was easily dealt with by CPSA president Kate Losinska; she refused to call it for a debate.

Limited action

Instead of adopting a programme put forward by Militant supporters on the NEC which would have

demonstrated the anger of our members, forced the government to back off and warned against the repetition of such action elsewhere, the NEC has limited the action and left it until the end of February.

A motion calling upon the leadership not to relinquish the right to strike at GCHQ was not called for debate. Kevin Roddy, past president of CPSA, was not allowed into debate at all during the whole three and a half hour meeting. This was without parallel or precedent. The meeting was swept through without proper debate or

discussion.

CPSA and other civil service union members will be appalled at how easily their hard-earned rights are being traded away. There must be no negotiation on a no-strike clause, no weakening on the right of GCHQ staffs ability to appeal to industrial tribunals and independent arbitration.

- ★ Defend all civil service jobs and trade union rights.
- ★ For a one-day civil service strike.
- ★ Appeal for support in the wider trade union and labour movement.

By Bill Boyle

Tory MP in Nazi regalia

LAST MONDAY *Panorama* presented some very well documented evidence of some of the fascist scum that has floated into the main sewer of the Tory party.

One named in the programme was Neil Hamilton MP who, *Panorama* stated, once dressed up as a Nazi in his student days.

Hamilton, now MP for Tatton, was a student in University College Aberystwyth in the late 1960s. I was a student there at the same time and can confirm the correctness of *Panorama's* statement.

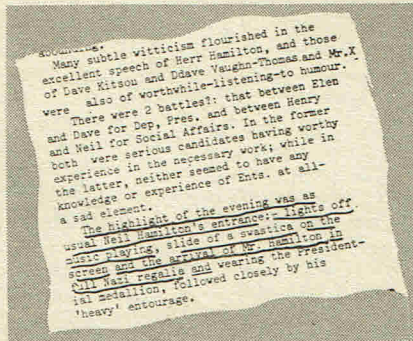
In an interview at the end of the film Tory chairman, Gummer, bleated that Hamilton had not dressed up as a Nazi, but as an "Italian ice cream seller". Either Gummer is a liar or someone has really pulled the wool over his eyes.

Perhaps Mr Gummer will reject my memory of events, but he can hardly challenge the report of the official student union newspaper,

Courier. Writing in 1972 of the hustings for student union presidency for 1971, the paper says: "The highlight of the evening was as usual Neil Hamilton's entrance; lights off, music playing, slide of a swastika on the screen, and the arrival of Mr Hamilton in full Nazi regalia" (my emphasis).

The fact that the student editors found this somewhat amusing speaks volumes for their middle class flippancy. The relatives of the six million Jews exterminated by the Nazis or the workers who died in the "war against fascism" will not share the joke.

The labour movement should not treat Hamilton, Proctor and the other Tory racist sympathisers as a joke either. The demagogic ap-



Aberystwyth, University College of Wales, *Courier*, February 1972.

peals to the base and filthy sentiment of racism stands as a cover behind which they will seek to develop a movement mainly based on the middle class, but involving demoralised sections of the working class to smash the trade union movement and democratic rights.

By Andrew Price
(Cardiff South and Penarth CLP)



Neil Hamilton (centre) demonstrates his support for South Vietnamese dictator President Thieu back in 1973. The character on the left is a member of the MSI, the Italian Fascist party.

In last week's *Militant* the caption for the above photo was wrongly put underneath one of Harvey Proctor and friends.

BLOC National Delegate Conference
BROAD LEFT ORGANISING COMMITTEE

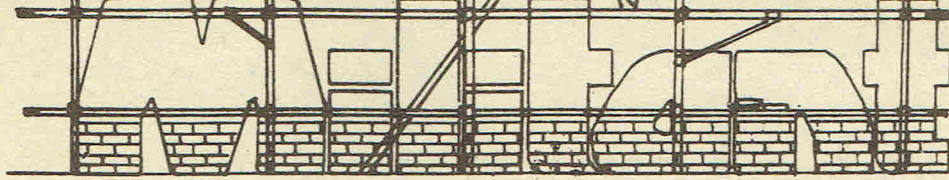
Saturday 24 March
11 am—5.30 pm at Octagon Centre, Western Bank, Sheffield 10

Sessions to be opened by David Blunkett, Leader of Sheffield Council and LP NEC, and Joan Maynard MP. Main speaker: Tony Benn.

Any bona-fide trade union body is welcome to send up to five delegates. For credentials and further information contact: George Williamson, Organising Secretary, 11 Sutton Place, London E9 6EH.

TRAVEL FROM LONDON
Reserve seats on 07:45 St Pancras to Sheffield for only £12.50 return (normally £15.00). Train leaves Sheffield 19:25. Bookings must be made in advance. Cheques payable to "BLOC (London Organising Committee)". Send to W Boyle, c/o 59 Offenbach House, Roman Road, London E2.

BUILDING FUND



Wanted: Biggest flood since Noah!

FOR THE second week running, the flood of money into the Building Fund has been staggering. £13,546 came in during the week taking the total now raised to £75,447.

Support has even come from the hallowed halls of Parliament. MPs Terry Fields and Dave Nellist have given £100; Eddie Loyden has given £50; Bob Wareing, Bob Parry, and Allan Roberts have promised £50; and Mark Fisher has promised £25.

The best investment

The figure we are going for is an enormous sum given the financial difficulties of our supporters but it is a mere bagatelle compared with the dealings of George Wimpey. This huge construction, engineering and property development group is expected to announce a profit of about £55 million for 1983/84.

So large is its profit that it has been able to "write off" unprofitable contracts worth £35 million. It has also just sold £63.7 million worth of commercial property, at a profit over the original cost of £60 million.

For example, Wimpey paid just £23,000 for a 10.26% holding in Harry Hyam's Oldham Estate Company, (who gave us the infamous white elephant, Centrepoint). It will sell half of this stake for £17 million cash with a possibility of selling the other half for £17.4 million. £34 million profit without lifting a finger! Some "Building Fund" they've built up.

Unfortunately, we do not have any contracts with Wimpey which they can write off or holdings in Harry Hyam to realise. But we do have the best investment available for the working class.

Realising our assets

The ideas of Marxism and the working class struggling for socialism are the only assets we have any confidence in. With your support we can improve our

holdings by acquiring the much needed premises to produce a daily Marxist paper.

The donations received this week include a cheque for £2,323 from supporters in Bradford; Stevie Lees, Glasgow, has given £500; Neil Hargreaves, Hounslow, £350; Bob Law, Bermondsey, £500; Andrew Patterson, Falkirk, £200.

Follow these leaders

Donations of £100 came from Brian McCrossan, Glasgow; Tony Holmwood, Croydon; S O'Rorke, Kent; Richard Hudson, Birmingham; and Andy Viner, Stevenage. Many other amounts ranging from £25 to £250 and above have been received with news of many more still to come.

Make sure you send in your contribution today. Follow the lead of the donations sent in so far and worry about the bills next week! Bills will always be with us until we get rid of capitalism.

By Nick Wrack

FIIGHTING FUND

This Week: £1,784

Area	Received	% of target achieved	Target 7 April
Eastern	213		2500
East Midlands	231		2900
Humberside	153		1500
London East	562		3250
London West	209		2050
London South	209		2650
Manchester & Lancs	233		3520
Merseyside	200		4000
Northern	342		3350
Scotland East	202		2150
Scotland West	175		3000
Southern	408		4300
South West	166		2000
Wales East	337		1880
Wales West	266		1650
West Midlands	263		3500
Yorkshire	496		4100
Others	91		2000
Total received	4755		50,000

WHEN "TARZAN" Heseltine decided to come back from the Falklands last week, to resume his role as the 'Golden Puppet' of the American war effort, he came back in style.

He didn't swing through the vines of the Amazon. He didn't tackle the alligators and snakes of the Everglades and the only bears he knows are the ones he speaks to each day in the Ministry of Defence.

Instead Tarzan decided on a non-stop flight lasting over 17 hours. It cost the taxpayer £90,000.

Our Fighting Fund target for this quarter is just over half that cost. But our fund is devoted entirely to battling the horrors, degradation and corruption of the capitalist system.

We must win, but we need your help to build the resources to guarantee a genuine socialist society in

which we all have a part to play, with greed and profit gone forever. Support the only paper that continually fights to defend all sections of the working class. As times get more and more tough the cash needed to fight the Tories gets more and more necessary.

Another "con" the Tories are implementing, which as usual will be hardest felt in the working class, is the abolition of the halfpenny. Sir John Sainsbury, chairman of J Sainsbury, said: "We will ensure that we round down more prices than we round up." Is he looking for a comedian's job at the London Palladium? We don't believe him.

Make sure you donate to the Fighting Fund. Every halfpenny counts!!

By Ian Robertson

DONATIONS THIS WEEK INCLUDE:

George Knell, Huddersfield CLP, £50; Brixton DHSS, collection, £23.50; J Langford, Leeds, £7.00; Liverpool NGA, £13.00; Knowsley NALGO, £10.00; JW Day, Hayes CLP (Retired), £5.70; Isobel Wilson, NALGO, Strathclyde, £5.00; Pete Ball, Wakefield, £5.00; S Lawton, Walsall, £2.00; Gateshead LPYS, £2.13; Jim & Stuart (Staggs pub) Edinburgh, £2.00; Liverpool Local Authority NALGO, £2.00; Johnny Woodleigh, Unemployed, Neath, £1.00; Mike Gibbs, Wakefield, £1.00; Cathy Wilson, IOW CLP, £1.00; John Kearney, OAP, Stirling, 80p; C Malcom, OAP, Ryde, 80p; Tony Taylor, Leicester, 80p; Gilbert Jeanen, Leicester, 30p.

ADS

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

Accommodation

ROOM to let, all in, £20 per week. In Tooting Broadway. Contact Box 3, *Militant* Circulation, 1 Mentmore Terrace, London E8 3PN.

For Sale

MILITANT STICKERS. Still available. 200 for £2.30; 500 for £5.60; 1,000 for £11.00. Contact: *Militant* Circulation, 1 Mentmore Terrace, London E8 3PN.

"*Militant* Turn left for workers unity and socialism"

T-shirts—£3.50-white, yellow, navy black. Sweatshirts—£6.75—grey, pale-blue, navy, dark green.

Small 32"-34" chest medium 34"-36" large 36"-38" extra large 40-42"

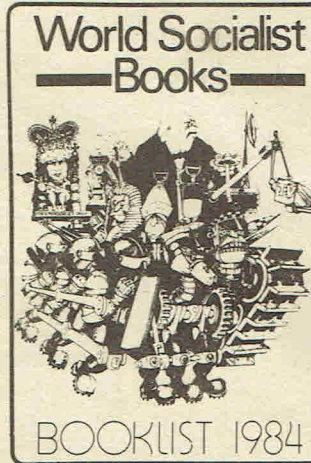
All proceeds to *Militant* Fighting Fund. All cheques and postal orders with size and colour preference to R. Harris, 2 Dukes Brow, Blackburn, Lancs.

Birmingham Youth Trade Union Rights Campaign DEMONSTRATION AGAINST TORY ATTACKS ON YOUTH SATURDAY, 11 FEBRUARY

Assemble 11.30 am, Chamberlain Square, City Centre. March to Rally 1 pm. Duddeston Manor School. Speaker: D Nellist MP

ADVANCE NOTICE! ADVANCE NOTICE!

Militant's 20th Anniversary National celebration and rally on SATURDAY 20 OCTOBER, 1984 At the Wembley Conference Centre. Speakers from the British and international labour movement. More details in later issues.



HUNDREDS of books and pamphlets available by Marx, Lenin, Engels, Trotsky, Luxemburg, Connolly, Plekhanov, Grant, Cannon, Gramsci and many others. Writings on economics, philosophy, politics, science, war and peace, nuclear weapons, socialism, women, international developments, etc. Send for your copy of our new booklist. Available (free) from World Socialist Books, 1 Mentmore Terrace, London E8 3PN.

Militant

MEETINGS

For events in your area contact your local *Militant* seller.

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

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

BLACKBURN: Thursday 15 March at 7.30 pm, at King George's Hall. Speakers: Peter Taaffe (Editor, *Militant*), Terry Fields MP. Note new date.

STIRLING: Thursday 9 February, 7.30pm, Cowane Centre. "Scottish Labour History—the lessons for today." Thursday 23rd February 7.30pm, Cowane Centre, "Britain—Reagan's Back Yard?"

HULL: "TUC—Abdication of Leadership" Thursday 23 February 7.30pm, Spring Bank Community Centre Hull. Speakers: Jeff Price USDAW (Broad Left), Steve Cawkwell, Sec. Humberside CPSA (Broad Left).

MILITANT MEETING

at Greater London LPYS Regional Conference Speaker: Peter Taaffe Saturday, 11 February at 5.30 pm, Kingsway-Princeton College, Sidmouth Street WC1

LLANHILLETH: *Militant* Readers' Meeting: "Defend Our Unions—for a Fighting Leadership" Speaker: Roy Davies, (EETPU) at Llanhilleth Workmen's Institute, Llanhilleth, Gwent, Wednesday 8 February, 7.30 pm.

SOUTHWARK: "No to council cuts. Save jobs. Save services. Tuesday 6 March at 7.30 pm. Speakers: Peter Taaffe (Editor: *Militant*), Derek Hatton (Deputy Leader, Liverpool Council). Chair: Brian Kelly (Southwark Councillor). At North Peckham Civic Centre (corner Old Kent Road/Peckham Park Road).

FOR HANDICAPPED READERS

Cassette tapes with two issues of *Militant* (one each side). Available fortnightly. £3.50 per quarter, £13 for year. Write to: 'Militant Tapes', 26 Aston Terrace, Harehills, Leeds 8, or phone (0527) 73795.

Selling socialism in Oxford -and Bristol

By Chris Tharios

THE NGA dispute last year saw factory sales double in Oxford as new sales were set up at the Oxford University Press and Oxford Mail/Times. Comrades learnt to dodge cars with renewed vigour in the cold mornings, keeping the headline prominently displayed at all times of course!

Selling like a lamp post got us nowhere, but going forward and asking people if they wanted a copy got a brilliant response. Places where we've never done well before are transformed and we often sell 12 or 15 papers in an hour if we go forward.

As well as factories, Saturday street sales have been set up in Abingdon, Witney, and Cowley Shopping Centres. The largest sales increases though have come from the local ever swelling dole queues, where paper sales of 10 an hour three days a week are now common. The successes, including also good sales at the telephone exchange and the huge BL Cowley Works, have given local sellers renewed enthusiasm. We've not only got new readers but new people selling *Militant*.

By Steven Rose

ON JANUARY 27, Neil Kinnock visited Bristol. Throughout the day nearly 200 copies of *Militant* were sold, 130 outside the meeting which he spoke at in the evening. At least £10 was raised in paper extras for the fighting fund.

Youth training SHAM!

THIS SATURDAY the Youth Trade Union Rights Campaign will march through Birmingham City Centre in protests at the Tory attacks on youth.

In Birmingham, as in the rest of the country, youth have borne the brunt of the government's attacks on the working class. Apprenticeships are now a thing of the past in the engineering industry. The only training offered to young workers these days is YTS.

The Labour Party Young Socialists have been the driving force in the build-up to the march. One of the many activities carried out leading to the demonstration was a street poll of young people. The early reaction to this has been excellent and many young people have been expressing their anger at the present government. Nearly everybody questioned, who expressed a political opinion, supported Labour.

Two YTS trainees from a scheme in Wolverhampton described to *Militant* the conditions they have faced:

One big charade

"On Friday we had our regular 'life social-skills' sessions. We were given a piece of A4 paper and asked to make a paper cup. After five attempts of trying to make it I called the supervisor over and told her I could not do it. She cynically replied: 'of course you can'. I said, 'no I can't'. She repeated her claim that I could, to which I asked her if she was calling me a liar. She said 'if you are going to take that attitude you might just as well go home'. I said, 'I might just do that'.

"I then asked her its relevance to life and to society. She replied, 'I am not asking you to see the point, but what would you do if you were in a desert and didn't have anything to drink out of?' I pointed out to her that the only desert around here was an industrial one.

"After she conceded that I need not make the cup, the rest of the session was made up of the class playing

Youth wages driven down

THE TORIES did not only introduce YTS schemes to conscript unemployed youth as a source of cheap labour for the bosses. They are also using YTS to drive down you workers' wages by setting the YTS pay of £25 as the 'norm'. A survey by a government body, the *New Earnings Survey* shows the Tories are achieving this aim.

The average earnings for

under 18s have fallen. Ten years ago, on average under 18s received 38% (male) and 58% (female) of adult workers' average incomes. Now it is 36% and 51%. Wage rises are going down too. Whereas in 1979 the average annual increase for this age group was 20% (male) and 21.5% (female), today it stands at a miserly 1.8% for males and 3.2% for females.

MP launches YTS 'charter'

A NEW Bill has been launched by Dave Nellist MP to improve conditions for YTS trainees. Among the improvements it calls for a legally enforceable contract of employment for trainees, no YTS placements in non-union factories or those not registered by the Factories Inspectorate, a guaranteed job at the end of the scheme

and trade union rates of pay or a £52 minimum.

Dave Nellist says the Bill will be "fiercely resisted" by the Tories, but he is circulating the Bill throughout the trade union movement in an attempt to see its provisions become part of negotiations between local trade unions and YTS sponsors.

charades!"

The other YTS trainee hit out at the claim that these schemes give you adequate training:

"My experience on YTS has been a great disappointment, for me and many of my friends. The scheme I am on deals with radio and TV work, consists of 13 weeks 'off the job' training and 37 weeks on 'work placements'.

"Shortly before I went on work placements I was told that I couldn't start until three weeks after the original placement date. I was then told I would be at the training centre doing various practical work.

Wasting our time

"The boss had told us, 'there wouldn't be any time wasted.' However, two of my friends and me were given nothing to do during this time and we were being sent home every day before noon.

"When I did get onto my placement I was used as cheap labour. I was supposed to be learning about audio repairs, but I was in the shop

serving the month before Christmas. I think I was just used for the Christmas rush. When I was placed in the services department I just cleaned up and did other menial tasks all day. I learnt nothing at all.

Cheap labour

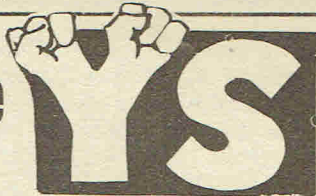
"Soon after I left the placement, and it was five weeks before I worked again as another placement could not be found. Most of this time was spent at home.

"Things aren't much different for my friends. One had a placement with a large audio service firm, and was told that he would be doing bench work. But instead he did stock-taking and cleaning up all day. He too found he was being used as cheap labour and left the firm. He didn't work for six weeks until he was placed again.

"Thatcher's YTS has turned out to be a cheap labour force, where bosses make big profits out of trainees, rather than pay employees money."

By Brian Debus

Why I joined the



THIS WEEK a member of Hackney North LPYS explains why she became involved.

Kate, aged 18 and an FE student, said:

"I joined the YS when some YS members came to my college. I've always thought it was unfair that people like the Queen should live like she does, when other people have to live in bad council flats and can't get jobs.

"When I left school, I knew I couldn't get a decent job, so I decided to go to college. I wanted to do a drama course, but they said there was 'too much competition for that sort of thing', so I got lumbered with an 'O'-level course—it was that or nothing.

"I don't get any grant, so I dropped from full-time studies to part-time, so I could sign on. But they said I couldn't get any money.



Defend the education services. A demonstrator on the London GLC/ILEA protest on 24 January.

But because I'm at college, my mother doesn't get any child benefit any more, so we don't get any money at all now.

"I now do a cleaning job, and waitressing and kitchen work on Saturdays. Because of that, I've fallen behind with my homework. Because of the cuts, the college can't afford to enter everyone for the exams, so I won't be able

to take them because I've fallen behind. Then when I leave I won't have any qualifications, so I won't be able to get a decent job.

"I don't see how people are meant to be able to live and go to college without money. It's good that the YS is fighting for £25 a week grant for FE students—we need it"

Photo: Militant



GIVEN THE conditions, many young workers have seen through YTS. The Tories have approved 415,000 YTS placements—but only 251,000 youth have taken up the schemes. That's only 55% of the Tories' target.

No West End glitter

WORKING IN the West End of London for the past year is an experience I must share with you—in case you try for a job down there.

The management are under constant threat of dismissal and work untold overtime without pay, with the promise of a 'rosy future' (something akin to life after death).

This has a knock-on effect. The staff in the Oxford Street shop where I work are constantly bullied and threatened by management. Illegal body searches take place when staff leave the premises for dinner-breaks or to go home. Lockers have been searched by management without staff or security staff present.

Tea breaks are cut to 10 minutes if the staff room is not kept tidy.

The other morning the manager of the store (an ex-Army type) said that the staff looked dozy—so instead of a "staff training" session the staff would have to do exercises to liven up! After 20 press-ups, 15 sit-ups and 15 squat thrusts, we had to pick a partner and piggy-back him up the stairs and

down again and then change places.

Following this we had a product knowledge quiz—anyone getting the answers wrong had to do another 20 press ups.

We have a few union members in our shop and a strong body in our Selfridges branch, but staff turnover is so great that it is hard to consolidate a team with a staff that is constantly in flux.

Getting organised

We have recently started to have after work get together to talk about the problems and a way forward. These discussions have naturally taken on a political line and have resulted in some of the workforce joining the LPYS in their areas. I think another five will be joining in the near future.

The saying goes that an ounce of experience is worth a ton of theory. These workers have experienced hard times and are now prepared to fight back.

By Rick Grogan
(USDAW)

YS around the country



IT WAS third time unlucky for East Kilbride LPYS recently. For the third time they had arranged a debate with the Young Tories, and for the third time running the Tories failed to turn up. Even so, in heavy snow 40 people turned up for the meeting, and despite the disappointment that the Tories had bottled out again, they listened to the ideas of the LPYS and gave them an enthusiastic response.

THE EAST Midlands LPYS held its largest regional conference yet on Jan 28/29. Speakers included Dave Nellist MP, and Notts NUM

leader Henry Richardson, who praised the LPYS for its campaigning work.

SOUTHERN Region LPYS conference was a huge success. Before the event a demonstration was held through Brighton, made up of 200 Young Socialists. The conference itself had a record number of resolutions, delegates and visitors, discussing a wide range of topics including trade union rights for the armed forces. Marxist Martin Smith of Brighton LPYS was elected to the National Committee with a large majority.

us?

about

what



GEORGE ORWELL 1984

Animal Farm has been an enormous international success. Right—covers of different language editions—left to right: Japanese, Russian, Vietnamese, Ukrainian, Swahili, Polish and Burmese.



Destroying the Soviet myth

IN A 1947 preface to a Ukrainian edition Orwell explained why he wrote *Animal Farm*: "...for the past ten years I have been convinced that the destruction of the Soviet myth was essential if we wanted a revival of the socialist movement.

"On my return from Spain I thought of exposing the Soviet myth in a story that could be easily understood by almost everyone and which could be easily translated into other languages..."

He decided to use animals for his book when he saw a huge cart-horse being driven by a young boy, and became aware that "men exploit animals in much the same way as the rich exploit the proletariat", and that the power over the animals would be destroyed if they became aware of their own strength.

The result is a cynical tale of one set of exploiters being overthrown only to be replaced within a very short space of time by another set.

Throughout the book parallels can be seen with Russia. The exploiter is portrayed as man: "Man is the only creature that consumes without producing... Yet he is lord of all the animals."

The rebellion is made easier by the neglect of the farmer as he sinks into a life of drinking and apathy. The pigs, who had been the teachers before the revolution, quickly assume control.

After a power struggle,

one pig, aptly named Napoleon, with the help of his private police force dogs, becomes dictator, and quickly abolishes all vestiges of democracy. Only fossilised and formalised traces of the ideology on which the regime was originally based remain such as the so-called "spontaneous demonstration", at a set time each week.

The sheep are used very cynically by the new masters. Being of limited intelligence, they can be relied on to drown out any protests with a chorus of the condensation of the commandments of animalism: "Four legs good, two legs bad". This is replaced (when the pigs learn to walk upright) by "Four legs good, two legs better."

Throughout the novel, the animals are duped by the pigs into working harder to

achieve things that would have been unthinkable under the farmer; they think they are working for themselves, and accept less food with virtually no rest.

But their rebellion is isolated. They start off by sending envoys to other farms, but this seems gradually to cease. The rebellion does not spread, and the animals on other farms are told that the *Animal Farm* inhabitants are starving.

Socialist revival

Orwell states his reason for writing the book was to destroy the Soviet myth in order to revive the socialist movement.

Ironically for a novel which the capitalists now

portray as being anti-Communist, at first the book could not get a publisher.

Orwell had to wait two years for publication; in 1943 and 1944 it was deemed to be too "left-wing" because of its criticisms of Stalin. His normal publisher, Gollancz refused to touch it. Finally it was published by Secker and Warburg. Then as the Cold War intensified the novel was appropriated as a brilliant 'anti-revolutionary' story.

Whatever the twists of this capitalist propaganda, part of the blame for the novel's mis-interpretation must lie with Orwell. He does not explain fully why the revolution failed. He seems to be saying that the pigs are dominant solely because they can read, and that the other animals are too stupid and

blind to see what is happening. They are unable to think for themselves; in other words they need to be exploited.

The only choice left to the reader at the end of the book is: under which set of exploiters do animals fare better. One system merges with the other and they become the same thing: "No question now, what had happened to the faces of the pigs. The creatures outside looked from pig to man, and from man to pig, and from pig to man again; but already, it was impossible to say which was which."

Lorna Watson reviews *Animal Farm*, price £1.25, incl. p&p, from World Socialist Books, Mentmore Terrace, London E8 3PN.

Hard Times

HARD TIMES—the world economy in turmoil. By Bob Sutcliffe. Pluto Press. £2.50. THIS BOOK is one of a series intended to provide "popular and provocative books which deal with the economic and political crisis in Britain today." It deals with the nature of the crisis of capitalism, and the particular problems of British capitalism.

As a source of general facts and information on that crisis, it is a readable and concise assessment.

Its conclusions are clear enough; capitalism's future depends on its ability to increase the exploitation of the working class. The particularly severe crisis in Britain requires serious attacks on the trade unions and the welfare state.

But how is this strategy of

the capitalists to be answered by the labour movement? This is where the book fails. The book is critical of both left and right in the Labour Party, often correctly so, but no clear conclusions are drawn. The potential for organised workers to fight back is underestimated.

The final chapter of the book provides a fair criticism of the Alternative Economic Strategy of the Labour left, but offers no programme other than a 'broad alliance' of workers and 'oppressed people' to make a more radical challenge to capitalism.

The book condemns capitalism, argues for 'socialism', but the reader is really no wiser as to how this can be achieved.

Review by Paul Traynor

Finishing at the top

DID ANY other comrades subject themselves, as I did, for three-quarters of an hour to this incredible BBC documentary about three English women who went to a Swiss Finishing School?

Well, if you didn't, I can tell you that for a mere £15,000, you too could join the daughters of the international rich. You could spend a year in a glorious mansion three miles down the mountain pass from the one Princess Diana went to, "finishing".

In plain English, that means teaching the upper class to do a little, tiny bit of what working class women have always done. But from their obvious lack of familiarity with such chores as cooking, washing-

up, laying the table and looking after babies, these aren't things that upper-class women do very often.

How do you shake hands?

Except, apparently, when the Pope or a member of the Diplomatic Corps comes to tea; hours were spent teaching them the intricacies of how to shake hands with a VIP. I know what I'd do if I met one, and it wouldn't be shake hands! Another half a day was spent making

MANDY LANGMEAD reviews BBC 2's *Forty Minutes: Swiss Finishing School*

sure the future wives of the bosses got the size of cherries right for the biscuits—to the millimetre!

Well, just why do they spend the equivalent of twelve years' dole money there? They could do all my housework for me, for now, for ever, if they want to. One said she went because she wanted "to achieve something". (Dishpan hands?—not much danger of that in her case!) Another said she'd had nothing better to do for a year and didn't like work much.

The third showed her complete contempt for the likes of me when she said that despite this 'education': "I don't want to spend fifty years of my life as a feeble little housewife with two screaming kids."

I have this to say to her: 'I already know how to wash up and it didn't cost me a penny to learn. As long as the men and women of your class are allowed to spend their lives idling away their ill-gotten gains, working class women will remain forced into living as "feeble little housewives with screaming kids".'

The life these women are being trained for and the life I was brought up to are a million miles apart. So when one of them said of Finishing School that people generally "don't understand the work behind it", I could have died laughing, if I hadn't had the ironing to do.



Above the law?

"Trade unions are not above the law", "Parliament is supreme" screamed the editorials of the Fleet Street press during the *Stockport Messenger* dispute. A short excerpt from *The Times* gives the bosses' true attitude towards the law and Parliament when it affects them. It was from an obituary for Keith Grand, a railway manager for the old, private Great Western Railway.

"For Keith, state ownership was anathema, and though he loyally carried out his responsibilities after the take-over in 1948, he never made any secret of his loathing of the tight control by the British Transport Commission and its agent, the Railway Executive; or of his determination to do all he could behind the scenes to destroy it.

"With Sir James Milne, his former chief, he missed no opportunities to brief Conservative ministers on the follies and failures of the new set up, and Churchill's decision to abolish the unwieldy top-layer of BR by the Act of 1953 was largely due to the ruthless and skilful campaign led by these two Paddington pirates."

The obituary was by Sir John Elliot, himself a former chairman of the Railway Executive and London Transport, Pullman Cars (part of BR) and the British Airport Authority. He is very tolerant of Mr Grand. What would he say if it had been the trade unions who had brought down the Railway Executive?

Waiving the profits

Media and military eyes may be fixed on space but private companies have their sights firmly fixed on the last exploited frontier, the seabed. The resources of over 60% of the earth's surface are still virtually untapped.

Last month the right wing think tank, the Institute of Economic Affairs proclaimed that such riches should belong to the private sector rather than to national governments or inter-governmental agencies. They were particularly annoyed by the third UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (Unclos 111) which said there should be an international agency to licence and dispose of seabed resources in international waters. It would also establish a company to force deep sea operators to transfer their technology and operating methods to poorer countries.

But there is little for the private deep sea sharks to worry about. Although 125 nations have signed Unclos 111 in principle, only three have ratified it. The big business government of the USA is firmly against it and there is little chance of it ever becoming more than another ineffective UN document.

Fresh face Britain?

The decline of Britain as a manufacturing country sometimes has its farcical moments. The 2,000 workers at Ford's Foundry at Dagenham, threatened with the sack, have been invited to take up alternative work as cosmetic salesmen, selling face cream and bust beautifiers. The company has offered applicants a two weeks' training scheme during which they can test out the firm's products themselves. A spokesman for the firm "can't think why" no one has taken up the offer yet.

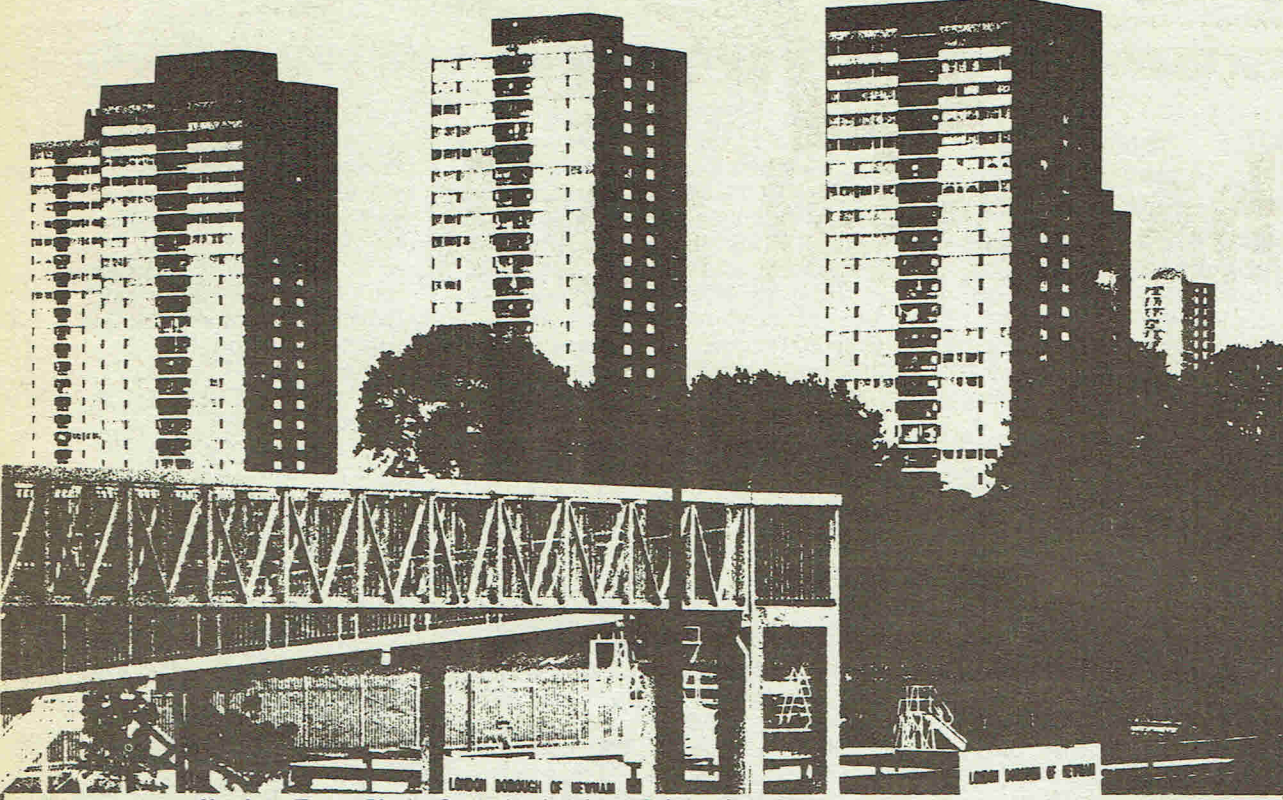
Green Mould

Only a year after its major breakthrough into West German politics, the libertarian, environmentalist Green Party is in crisis. One of its leading MPs, 'moderate' Gert Bastian, has threatened to resign and may take three other Green MPs with him. He has accused the party of being full of internal "intrigue, dishonesty and power struggles", and its membership made up of "muesli-eaters, ecology freaks and loony leftists".

The Greens have already lost two other MPs. One went after he was reported to be molesting his secretarial staff. Another MP, who was a prominent peace campaigner, also had to resign. It was discovered he was former member of the SS.

(Amongst the contributors to this week's *Left and Right* was Dave Cumberland)

Tower blocks - "like living in a coffin"



Over the last year Newham Tower Blocks Campaign has been fighting for a better deal for tenants. Photo: Dave Vanderhoven

NEWHAM HAS a greater number of tower blocks than any other housing authority in the country—107 in all. Over the last few months Newham South LPYS has been campaigning for a better deal for council tenants.

Clifton and Judith live on the ninth floor on Ronan Point with their young baby. They told us:

"We have been to the Housing Department many times to ask about a transfer. They have told us that we're going to have to wait a long, long time. When we moved in we were told that it would be for six months maximum. "By the way, are you hot? We can't control the heating; it's either full on or off. To cool the place down we have to open a window but that creates a draught. We daren't open the balcony door in case the baby gets out.

"We don't like taking the baby out with such a big drop in temperature leaving the flat. Besides these sort of things we quite like the place! We complain to the council quite often just to show them that we're still alive."

LPYS campaign

The LPYS campaign has been concentrated around four tower blocks in South Newham. The conditions are terrible in all them: infestation, overcrowding, structural problems, maintenance delays, filth and so on.

One tenant at Ronan Point told us: "You should see the bugs creeping up our walls. We've had the place fumigated three times but they keep coming back!"

Children on 17th floor

There are many young children in the blocks quite often sharing a single bedroom with their parent or parents. The tenants live with the constant fear that their children might fall out of the building. Last year, a young boy called Dave Cash fell to his death from Abrahams Point in Custom House, Newham.

The council has a policy of not putting families with children higher than the eighth floor. At present there are 800 such families living above the eighth floor.

Sharon lives alone on the 17th floor in a one-bedroomed flat with her one-year old daughter. She is pregnant.

"It's like living in a coffin. I was put in here after my boyfriend kicked me out of our place when I was eight months pregnant. A friend put me up but we were too overcrowded.

"I went to the council and

told them I was homeless; that my friend couldn't put me up any longer. They said that if I was homeless I should go back to my boyfriend.

"But he was beating me up. Did they want me to lose the baby? They told me I would have to get on to a solicitor so I did.

"I was put in a bed and breakfast for one night. Next door there was an alcoholic banging bottles and coughing all night. I was scared but there was no lock on my door. The fridge outside my door made a horrible noise. I didn't sleep at all.

"The next day they gave me a key for a flat in Ronan Point. I couldn't get the key to work so I had to stay the night at a friend's place.

"When I finally got in I saw purple walls, a black ceiling and plaster coming off the walls. God knows what colour the kitchen was. I was told that when the baby was born I would be moved out; I'm still here a year later."

Cuts in housing

There are 28,000 tenants in the 107 Newham tower blocks. A Newham Tower Blocks Campaign was set up last year and they have had a week of action and a conference. The LPYS has actively supported this campaign.

Also, in our own leaflets we have tried to put the blame for the crisis where it belongs: on the Tories. In 1981/82 the housing budget was cut by 40%. Only 28 new homes were started and a quarter of the manual jobs disappeared.

Interest charges

Working class people have suffered because of the Tories' determination to cut spending so they can give tax cuts to the rich.

In 1981/82 2,350 people joined the council housing waiting list. 543 tenants got transfers but the transfer list increased to 4,183. Without a fight back from the Labour council, the situation is getting worse. The LPYS is demanding:

- ★ A rent freeze.
- ★ Reverse the cuts.
- ★ No rate rises.

The council is being bled dry by the big banks and insurance companies. In 1981/82 £42 million was paid in interest charges. Total rents only amounted to £18 million so for every £1 paid in rents by tenants, £2.30 was paid out in interest to the banks. The next Labour government must nationalise the banks and insurance companies under workers' control and management to make cheap credit available to councils for decent housing building.

Our Alternative —

A socialist plan for housing would tackle the causes of Britain's housing crisis. It would:

★ **Cancel crippling interest charges that force local Councils to pay most of their housing budget to the money lenders.**

★ **Take over the banks and insurance companies to provide interest-free loans to local authorities.**

★ **Put 500,000 unemployed building workers back to work by taking over the construction industry and running it in ordinary people's interests, not the shareholders.**

★ **Involve tenants and workers in drawing up housing plans.**

★ **Ensure special sheltered accommodation is built for the disabled and old.**

★ **Re-house families, so that none have to live in tower blocks.**

★ **Build 1 million new, decent homes a year, modernise and repair existing homes.**

Unemployed? -Sorry no flat

FOR ABOUT two months myself and a friend were homeless. During that period as we were both unemployed it was difficult to find somewhere to live. Only one housing agency accepted us onto their lists; all the others turned us down due to the fact we were on the dole.

Everyday we hunted through the local papers, having the same response....professional people and students welcome, unemployed not welcome.

Sleeping on floor

As we had nowhere to live and no relatives in the city we had to rely on friends helping us out. We were lucky in the sense that we didn't have to sleep rough, but even so sleeping on people's floors does have an effect on you.

Dossing on floors you start to get a physical pain, with aching back and neck etc. Also living in small

rooms people start getting feisty to each other. On the one hand you feel glad you've got somewhere, but on the other you feel ashamed because you're burdening your friends and causing trouble because you're homeless.

Rejected from waiting list

In Bristol since the Tories took control if you're single and under 50 you are not allowed on the waiting list; if you're single and under 25 you're not even allowed on the secondary waiting list. Eventually we ended up sharing one room. The only reason we got that was because we lied to the landlord, saying we were working.

In this society if you are young and unemployed you're an outcast but then to become homeless you're an alien who's not wanted and told your only hope is tophone home.

By Steve C.
(Bristol LPYS)

This is upward mobility?

MUCH HAS been made recently about home owners being "upwardly mobile" and no longer working class because they don't live in council houses. In Bristol many working class couples now buy their own home because it is cheaper than paying council rents.

The average council house rent in this low-paid area is now £28 a week for a three bedroom house, if you are lucky enough to be offered one; but with the Tory coun-

cil selling these off this is very unlikely. You are lucky if you are offered a two bed maisonette, near a main dual carriageway, as I, my wife and baby were. They wanted £22 a week for a very small maisonette.

Small mortgage

So in the end, we took out a small mortgage. But the only place we could afford to buy was in Easton which is the most run down inner city area of Bristol, where 15% of houses have no inside toilet and the infant mortality rate is three times the average.

Our own house is damp and the roof leaks so you can see that though the houses in Easton are all owner-occupied the people still suffer the worst excesses of the capitalist system and are as much a part of the working class as anyone on a council estate. If Labour campaigned on radical socialist policies of a massive programme of house building and repairs, improved street lighting etc they would gain overwhelming support from the people of Easton and other areas like it all round the country.

By Neil Vann
(Bristol East LPYS)

Building a future ghetto

FIVE HUNDRED people from the Patchway and Little Stoke areas of Bristol piled into a local secondary school recently to discuss plans to build 8,500 homes, more than doubling the population of the area.

Speaker after speaker from the audience asked if the Tory district council could guarantee that basic facilities such as shops, health clinic, leisure centre would also be built.

They refused. They said they preferred to leave such matters to the 'goodwill' of the construction firm. But as a number of people in the audience pointed out, such

firms build for profit not the needs of working people.

Facilities on local estates are already totally inadequate. In the past building contractors have shown themselves to be quite consistent. They have been out for quick profits, building houses and leaving land for facilities that somehow never materialise.

The council can't even find the money to repair a dangerous local bridge—yet they plan to go ahead with this development. If it is left in the hands of the Tories and private construction firms, such a development would create more social problems, such as glue sniff-

ing, vandalism and tensions within families.

The Tories are forcing councils up and down the country to carry out developments such as this, not in the interest of decent housing, but in the interest of the large construction companies. Green belts are being destroyed at an alarming rate and estates on the outskirts are rapidly becoming little better than ghettos of unemployment and deprivation just like the inner-city areas.

By Chris Thomas
(Bristol Stoke Gifford Labour Party)

RATES BILL: Tories launch new a

United resistance needed

SINCE 1979, the Tory government has been turning the screw on Labour councils, trying to force them to inflict savage cuts in services and jobs. The "rate-capping" bill, now before Parliament, is the latest turn, which will close the escape route of rate rises as an alternative to cuts. There are now only two routes for Labour councillors — capitulate or fight!

THE TORIES' "rate-capping" legislation, due to take effect next year, heralds a new and even more savage attack on local authority jobs and services.

Together with the plans to replace the GLC and metropolitan County Councils—all Labour-controlled—with unelected quangos, the new proposals demand an immediate response by the entire Labour movement.

The "rate-capping" bill centralises control over local authority spending with the Environment Secretary, Jenkin, by stripping councils of any real control and thereby reducing "local democracy" to a sham. The bill gives selective power to act against an unspecified number of "high-spending" councils, by determining what their level of expenditure should be and fixing a maximum rate level, enforced by law.

In addition to this "selective" power, thought at present to be aimed at between 12 and 20 Labour councils—although there is nothing to prevent Jenkin from widening the net—he will also have "general" power to take the same action against all authorities.

Nationally, it is anticipated that, on present trends, council spending will exceed the government's targets by 8 or 9 percent in the course of the coming year.

Yet it has been estimated that that even a 5% cut in councils' present outlays would have catastrophic effects. In education alone, cuts on this scale would mean sacking 40,000 teachers in the space of a year, and eliminating a further 20,000 posts through natural wastage.

Even before Thatcher came to power, big business were demanding huge cuts in "wasteful" council spending. Under the last Labour government, which unfortunately succumbed to this pressure, local authority spending declined as a proportion of Gross Domestic Product from 15.9 per cent of GDP in 1975 to 13.2 per cent in 1979. Since the Tories came to power there has been a further fall to 12.8% of GDP in 1983.

This has meant cuts of more than 40 percent in expenditure on building and house repairs, schools, roads, old people's homes and other vital services. 83,000 council jobs have disappeared since 1979.

This squeeze on local government finances has been achieved by a huge reduction in the Rate Support Grant (RSG)—the government's contribution to council spending. Whereas RSG accounted for 66.5 percent of local authority expenditure in 1975, it has been slashed to just over 50 percent in 1984.

Unfortunately, rather than organise a determined campaign of opposition, Labour councils have attempted to muddle on within this financial strait-jacket. As a consequence they have faced two unacceptable alternatives—either carry out the Tories' dirty work and cut, or pass on the misery in the form of rate-increases, notwithstanding the fact that since 1981 this has involved further reductions in grants due to Government imposed penalties.

The latter, supported by sections of the Left in the Labour Party, has resulted in huge increases in the rates in a number of Labour towns and cities. Rates as a whole have increased by 94.8 percent since 1979, compared to a 57 percent increase in prices generally. An estimated £10,000 million has been added to the rates bill in the last four years—a burden that has naturally hit working class families hard, leading to growing disillusionment with the councils concerned.

By closing off this "option", the new legislation demands a complete rethink on the part of those Left-wingers who have mistakenly advocated rate rises as a "solution". The stark choice that now faces Labour is either to confront the Government, which will require the mobilisation of the entire Labour and trade union movement in defence of Labour councils—or surrender—and have Labour councillors forced to act as instruments of Tory policy.

A CAMPAIGN on a scale never before seen, must be undertaken immediately. Labour councillors should use their position as a platform to rally mass support—taking the issues on to the estates, to the council workforce and out to workers in industry. Mass leafletting, demonstrations and rallies must be organised to build support amongst every section of the community—explaining that only a mass campaign, involving industrial action, will be capable of forcing Jenkin and the Tories to back off.

The central demand of Labour's campaign must be to force the Government to repay the millions it has stolen from the local authorities over the years. The demand raised by some on the Left—for Labour councils to be *free to put the rates up*—will get no echo whatsoever from working people. On the contrary, such a call can only weaken the party's ability to rally mass support.

It must also be understood that the gimmickery and "stunts" taken up by some Labour councils are no substitute for mobilising the working class. The GLC's plan to bombard Patrick Jenkin with Valentine cards, bearing the inscription "We love London", is a case in point.

In a similar vein, Hackney Council are organising the sending of "New Year's Resolutions", urging a change of heart on Thatcher. Instead of preparing local workers for action, the public are advised to deposit the "Resolutions" with the Council and "we will do the rest"—implying that this, in itself, will suffice.

IN STARK contrast, the campaign launched by the Liverpool Labour Party is a model to the movement nationally. The Liverpool City Council's speedy implementation of a number of important reforms, and their determined refusal to either make cuts or increase the rates has aroused enormous public sympathy.

But the Liverpool party has maintained from the outset that they can only succeed in their aim—to force the Government to pay back part of the £120 million it has withheld from the city—if they are supported by a mass movement outside the council chamber. To this end, a campaign is being conducted to take the issues to every corner of the working class—explaining that the alternative to making a stand now is either 5,500 redundancies—nearly a fifth of the council's workforce—or a 200 percent rate rise, neither of which is acceptable to the council.

Following the huge success of last November's demonstration, meetings are now being organised on the estates, at the factory gates and in the council depots, linking the Tories' attack on the City Council to the other issues facing the working class in an area that has been devastated by Tory policies.

London schools under threat

For the third time since the Tories came to office in 1979, the Inner London Education Authority (ILEA) is threatened.

On two previous occasions pressure from the ILEA workforce and from parents has forced the government to retreat. Now, however, in a changed political and economic climate, the threat is even more serious. It demands a more serious and determined response.

The ILEA, judged by the government a profligate overspender, receives no rate support grant at all and relies solely on what it gets from the rates raised by Inner London Borough Councils. Irrespective of the Tories' legislative plans, all so-called overspending authorities face an immediate crisis. Lawson's public spending cuts, laid out in August 1983, combined with the new more stringent penalties for overspending, pose the problems facing Labour councils very sharply.

The penalties start with the loss of grant equivalent to a 2p rate for the first 1%

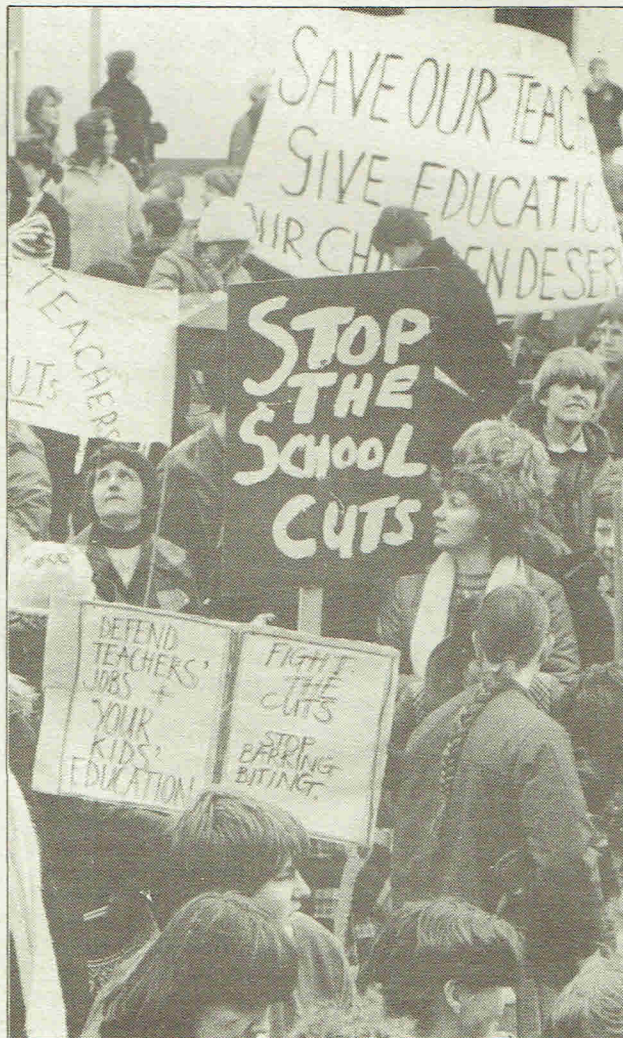
overspent, then rise to a 9p rate equivalent lost for the fourth and every subsequent 1% above the government imposed target.

For ILEA, however, which is already deemed massively overspent, two pieces of legislation currently before parliament will finish off the job. The "Ratecapping" and the "Streamlining the Inner Cities" bills, provide the financial and political ammunition to deal with recalcitrant authorities like ILEA.

Crippling cuts

Since ILEA is currently spending about £120m more than the government's target, the Tories would demand cuts resulting in:

- ★ 2500 teaching posts lost, with a devastating effect on the curriculum.
- ★ 1500 non teaching posts lost across the service.
- ★ A 75% cut in school allowances from which books and equipment are bought.



Anti cuts protest in Barking 1982 —Inner London threatened 1984.

- ★ Abolition of welfare benefits such as school journey grants.
- ★ Cuts in the maintenance

such a cut would have a crippling effect on all aspects of London's education. The government is breathtaking in its hypocrisy when it says ILEA is rating too highly. They are that high because since 1981 the government has paid no grant. ILEA has probably lost £150m a year in this way.

ILEA and the authority unions should call for:

- ★ No cuts! No job loss!
- ★ An end to government intervention in the ILEA!
- ★ A return by the government of the £150m per annum stolen from the people of Inner London!

Mobilise

Of course, the government is not simply going to accept such demands. They have to be won. The coming fight with the Tories is inevitable; if the ILEA is serious about winning it, then it must mobilise the population of Inner London behind it, on the basis of maintaining services, while declaring that it no longer intends to finance its expenditure through continued massive rate increases.

There are only two options now open—caving in or defying the government—linking with those Labour councils, notably Liverpool, which have already taken that road.

This becomes even more

apparent on examination of government plans to deal with the abolition of the metropolitan councils and the GLC, which are contained in the misnamed white paper "Streamlining the Inner Cities".

Joint board

"They might have said the same thing about Dresden," commented the *Times Educational Supplement*.

ILEA is threatened through the abolition of the GLC, to which the ILEA is linked and on which it is dependent for many of its services. It is also threatened directly.

At present ILEA has 48 members, 35 elected via GLC elections, 13 being appointed by inner London boroughs. This mainly directly elected authority, would be replaced by a 'Joint Board' consisting solely of borough representatives (3 nominees from the smaller boroughs, 5 from the larger.)

The government would directly control the resourcing and staffing of the board for its first three years between 1986 and 1989.

The intention of these administrative changes is to create a Tory inclined ILEA that would be willing to administer the cuts with no questions asked.

By Bob Sulatycki

Attack on councils

It is crucial that the Labour leadership nationally conduct a campaign on the same lines. The splits and divisions that have erupted publicly in the Tory Party are an indication that the Government can be beaten. The rebellion by "wets" like Heath reflects their justifiable fear that the scale of cuts being demanded by the Thatcherites will, in the wards of Tory MP, Anthony Beaumont-Dark, "reap a whirlwind".

Even Tory authorities, only too keen in the past to cut their cloth in accordance with Government demands, are now falling foul of the Government's plans. Essex County Council, which Jenkin recently praised for running a 'tight-ship', now faces a penalty of £7.3 million and has admitted that it will be unable to meet next year's target. The London Borough of Barnet, where Thatcher's own constituency is situated, is another Tory council "in difficulties".

Another consideration that weighs heavily on the minds of the Tory opposition, is the danger involved in a greater centralisation of the state. The new measures, by emasculating the powers of local authorities, represent a major break with past tradition. The fact that the ruling class is prepared to take such a step underlines the desperate plight of British capitalism.

By removing decision-making from the localities and concentrating it in their hands, the Government take full responsibility, and therefore all the blame for the impact that these measures will have. The more astute representatives of capitalism recognise that by centralising power at Westminster, the Government also runs the risk of centralising the opposition.

Unfortunately the Labour leadership have drawn entirely wrong conclusions from this disarray in the enemy camp. While it is true that the Labour movement must make the maximum mileage out of the divisions among the Tories, the right-wing have drawn the incredible conclusion that Labour must link up with the Tory rebels in a "non-political" campaign against the Jenkin proposals. Such a strategy—or lack of one—is disastrous.

Right-winger, John Cunningham, Labour's environment spokesman, has gone so far as to suggest an amendment to the Rates Bill, limiting its measures to a "par-

ticular number of authorities in any one year"! By restricting their opposition to the parliamentary arena, instead of linking resistance in parliament to a movement outside, the Labour leadership are apparently looking for a compromise, hoping to woo enough disaffected Tories to carry the day.

Like the right, some on the left have succumbed to the idea of a joint campaign involving Liberals, Social Democrats and Tories. For example, at the recent, highly successful London demonstration in support of the GLC and ILEA, Tory councillor George Tremlett, and Labour defector, now Social Democrat, Anne Sofer, shared a platform with Ken Livingstone.

THIS COLLABORATION with

Tories and other bitter enemies of the working class only serves to confuse issues and hide the real role of these people—as supporters of cuts. Their only disagreement with the government is the degree or the means by which the cuts are to be administered.

The price the labour movement pays for this 'support' is the renunciation of the one weapon that can ultimately defeat the government—industrial action. Far from relying on these individuals in the coming struggle, workers can only rely on their own strength and organisation.

The TUC have designated the last week of March as "Defend Local Democracy Week", culminating in a day of action on March 29.

In Liverpool, the leadership of this campaign have correctly decided that if this is not to be a demonstration with folded arms, the week's events must be seen as a major show of strength by the whole labour movement against the Tory attacks. They have therefore called for a one-day stoppage on 29 March to serve as a warning to the government.

The movement in Merseyside cannot be left to fight alone. The TUC, if it is serious, should call a national stoppage on 29 March, as part of their campaign to defend councils, organising demonstrations and meetings up and down the country, explaining what is at stake. Too much is at stake—in terms of local jobs and services—for the labour movement to lie back and accept Tory measures.

By Laurence Coates



Part of Liverpool's massive demonstration on 19 November last year.

Photo: Tina Carroll

£12m cuts for Newcastle

Last December, Newcastle City Council announced that the Tory government were forcing them to make cuts in expenditure totalling £12 million.

Labour Council leader Jeremy Beecham presented this as giving the council direct choice between a programme of cuts and 1400 redundancies or a 40% rate rise.

Given Minister Jenkin's obsession with the rate-capping bill, this in effect means that the council is committed to cutting jobs and services.

Beecham and his colleagues wasted no time in drawing up a hit-list of services, including cuts in students grants, school swimming lessons, school library services, less money for youth and community work, closing primary schools and sacking teachers—and that's only education cuts.

They also plan to cut social services by stopping meals on wheels, closing a childrens unit and a day centre, while social workers will be sacked. There are also cuts affecting housing, recreation, and environmental

health planned, as well as an across-the-board sackings plan.

What Beecham and his allies have never mentioned is that there is a real alternative, and that is to fight the policies of the government. Rather than organising mass demonstrations in a campaign for working class solidarity to fight the cuts, they are spending all their time trying to pacify the people who elected them and whom they are now selling out by presenting the issue as one of "inevitability".

However, if they expect the workers of Newcastle to fall for this, they are going to be disappointed. Moves are afoot to organise a Newcastle Public Services Alliance to fight for: no redundancies, no cuts in services and no rate increases, and a 24 hour day of action involving all public sector workers.

It would be a mistake, though, to treat this as an isolated issue. All efforts must be made by the labour movement to build support within the area for an attack not just on the council cuts issue, but also to oppose abolition of Tyne and Wear County Council, and to protest against the appalling levels of unemployment and industrial decay in the North East.

By Glyn Holroy
Tyne Bridge Labour Party

Fight Privatisation

Local authorities and the National Health Service area authorities have been directed by the Tory government to consider privatising as many of their services as possible.

This is an attack on the consumers whose service is bound to deteriorate and on the workers who—if re-engaged by a private contractor—will see a marked decline in income, working conditions and job security.

All public service trade unionists are committed to resist privatisation and we should be standing together as one to support our struggles, if necessary, with supportive industrial action.

An article in the *Local Government Chronicle*, 17 June 1983, gave an inside view into the private objectives and views of the employers.

The *LGC* is the magazine contributed to and read by senior management of local authorities. It carried out a survey of local authorities on councils' actions in the twelve months up to April 1983 in privatising services.

The survey showed that, "privatisation has acted as a catalyst for savings"—in other words, that the threat of privatisation has been used to frighten, cajole and bully local authority workers into reduced manning levels and earnings.



Council jobs threatened by Tories.

Photo: Militant

Of the 314 replies from councils, only 150 authorities were considering or had considered, privatisation. In many cases the privatisation was of a comparatively small nature, such as the introduction of vending machines.

Savings

Nearly one-fifth of all district councils rejected privatisation of refuse collection, eighteen had managed to force "savings" deals on their workers which produced total savings of more than half a million pounds.

This should be compared to the total savings by privatisation of all authorities surveyed in 1982/83 of some 4½ million pounds. In other words, much greater comparative

savings were made by those authorities that rejected privatisation, than those which actually privatised services.

Such is the labour intensity of local authority services that the savings have come, almost exclusively, from the wage packets of their workers, or from redundancies and early retirements.

This becomes insidious as authorities attempt to frighten trade unionists, saying that unless substantial savings are achieved by negotiation, they will be achieved by other means.

This threat has clearly been successful in many cases. Unfortunately, Tory authorities are not the only ones to negotiate in such a way. We must ensure that Labour-controlled authorities resist Tory government

directives and support their direct labour departments. That includes defending earnings and working conditions.

The foundation stone for our resistance to these attacks rest with good union organisation in the workplaces.

Fighting strategy

It is surprising to see the number of local authorities where trade unions negotiate separately with management. The construction of joint shop stewards' committees, accountable to and in touch with their members, is an absolute necessity.

From that, a national conference of joint shop stewards' committees could develop a real fighting strategy to take on this Tory onslaught.

Local authorities' managers are forever meeting privately and circulating documents amongst themselves. The employers compare notes and act in unison. So should we.

Such a movement, whilst needing encouragement from our union's national committee structures, could only be effective where it linked shop stewards together, to consider problems and share ideas and experiences. This movement would be an effective complement to the existing union representation on the local authority negotiating structure.

By Nick Bradley
NUPE (personal capacity)

Nigeria, Venezuela, West Germany, Sri Lanka, Spain

Letter from a Nigerian socialist

Dear Comrade,

The recent military coup was welcomed by most Nigerians with the expression "any regime but the Shagari administration". The situation had become so bad and the regime had become so insensitive and inept that it could not even protect enlightened bourgeois interest.

The coup is of course an indictment of the Nigerian left. The workers and other poor people were thoroughly disgusted and the bourgeoisie was divided while the economic crisis was deep rooted.

But the left of Nigeria is thoroughly disorganised. It is fragmented into little groups with no ideological coherence. In one little group you find those who claim to be Maoist, as well as those who are die hard Stalinist of the Albanian type and also those that claim to be Trotskyist.

A credible national organisation based on the working class has failed to emerge. The trade union leadership is dominated by a socialist orientation of the Moscow type which is very much afraid of the independent action of the rank and file.

So the arena of politics is left to the whims of smart capitalist politicians. They make gains even out of the struggle of the working class as indeed the present regime cashed in on the peoples' expressed discontent against the last regime.

The argument of preserving democracy does not make sense to the people who could not see how the last constitutional regime was any more democratic than the past military regimes they have known. But coming to the actual character of the present government it is nothing but a faction of the ousted dominant party—the NPN.

It stands for "prudence", less corruption and better management of the economy within the framework of neo-colonialism. It came to power on the eve of the spontaneous mass uprising that was bound to take place had the regime continued. In the final analysis what it all means is that the show-down will still come in the future but whether the working people will be defeated and suppressed will depend on the subjective factors.

The objective factors are on the side of the workers. Another possibility is of course a left putschist takeover that will rapidly go over to the Soviet Union's camp as imperialism is likely to put every obstacle in its way. This possibility is quite high.

Yours fraternally
A Nigerian socialist

The end of the good days

A NEW president of Venezuela, Jaime Lusinchi, took office on 2 February.

The landslide victory for the 'social democratic' Accion Democratica in the recent elections is another proof that the country's long epoch of stability has ended.

By Steve Higham

Since the 1958 general strike overthrew the dictatorship of Jimenez, Venezuela has escaped the turmoil of its neighbours in Latin American and the Caribbean.

There have not been the wild swings from 'democracy' to dictatorship as in Chile or Bolivia. For over a quarter of a century successive governments have avoided caging its population as they have in Uruguay, Argentina etc.

Wealth based on oil

Like most Latin American countries, Venezuela depends on a few commodities. Iron has bought massive profits for American capitalism but precious little for the Venezuelan people. But one card they held was an ace—oil.

Even with the collapse in prices, oil income for 1983 is about £9 billion; it is one of the biggest producers and exporters on the globe. The working class is strong and highly unionised and workers have secured some of the left overs from the overflowing tables of oil tycoons like the Rockefellers.

Living standards rose to give the highest wages and family incomes on the continent. Health improved with better diet, and life expectancy far outstripped that of neighbouring countries, 66 years compared to 63 in Colombia and 48 in Bolivia.

But the oil boom years of 1973-78 are vanishing into history; profits fell 35% in 1978. Venezuela had lost its immunity to disaster and years of world recession since have not restored it.

The overwhelming Accion Democratica (AD) victory reflects the tremendous discontent of the mass of workers and the middle class at the record of the COPEI (Christian Democrat) govern-

ment. Unemployment reached at least 20% and will probably get higher, even university students are jobless. The government reeked of corruption.

For the opulent upper layers of society, life would carry on as before with expensive foreign holidays, large 'gas guzzler' cars and a phenomenal consumption of scotch whisky. Regular calls by the central bank for austerity have not made too much difference for them.

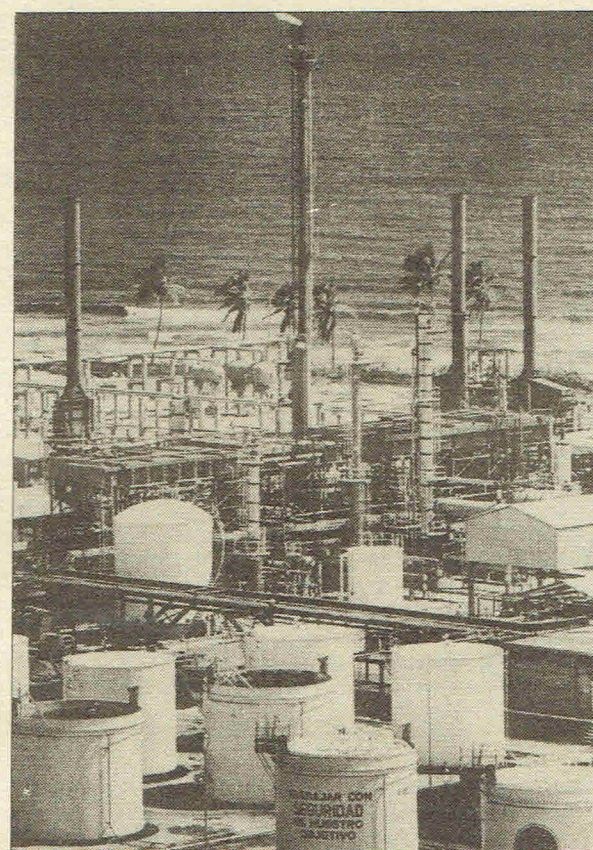
It has been different for even the middle class. For workers, in particular the 2½ million (one sixth of the population) earning under £200 a month it has been disastrous.

The right to strike is legally very restricted in Venezuela and arbitration procedures are mandatory. Only 4 strikes out of 282 in 1975-76 were legal. Public sector workers have absolutely no right to strike. After 90 days, disputes are referred to a government committee weighted against the workers, with no appeal.

Raised expectations

So the AD victory has particular significance. The AD also have a majority among the leadership of the Venezuelan TUC, the CTV which comprises 90% of organised labour, (political parties are represented on the CTV national executive). The CTV claim two million members, including members of FEDEPETROL the oil workers' union, a mere 6,000 strong but the most powerful body in the country.

The mass of these trade unionists and those of the 'Communist' Party controlled CUTV will be expecting answers from the new government, especially those in what the *Times* has called the "sprawling forest of



A Venezuelan oil refinery—The source of the country's income, and its past stability.

slums" around the capital Caracas.

Even in the oil industry, conditions are tough; exhausted wells mean the end of jobs. Workers have had to fight for everything and class traditions are very militant. In 1979, the threat of a general strike forced the government to reinstate 700 workers in disturbances and gained victory for the CTV

wage proposals against government opposition.

New cabinet—old policies?

First signs are that the AD government will not take decisive action to solve their supporters' problems. The new finance minister in Lusinchi's cabinet is a businessman, there to

reassure private industry in the hope that they will create jobs.

The banks continue to press for austerity, and the government are trying to avoid the worst political effects of the massive debts by sidestepping the IMF. Elimination of food subsidies or of price controls, which the IMF might favour, would be political dynamite. So they are trying to reschedule debts directly with the creditor banks.

Power of the workers

Oil represents 95% of national revenue and the government's main hope is that the price of oil rises, due to increased demand in a new world boom or due to problems in the Middle East. If prices carry on falling, the debt problems will get worse and the problem for Venezuelans clearer—in whose class interest is the country run?

The flight from the countryside to the towns and oil fields has made Venezuela a modern capitalist economy with a powerful working class. Agriculture only represents 6% of GDP, industry represents 20%. The oil workers and the industrial proletariat will need every ounce of their strength for the battles ahead.

West Germany's 35-hour war

WEST GERMANY's biggest union, IG Metall, with 2.5 million members in car plants, steelworks, engineering etc. is putting a big cut in the working week at the centre of its pay claim this year.

Unemployment has been very high for the past few years by post-war German standards, reaching 10% this month, with 2.5 million on the dole. IG Metall want reduced hours to bring down the jobless figures and to save other jobs threatened by technological innovation.

The DGB trade union federation have given their backing to IG Metall but the employers and the right wing Christian Democrat government are opposed to the reduction, so a strike could be on the cards.

The government favour early retirement at 59 as a cheaper alternative. It would



Previous action for the 35 hour week.

also save fewer jobs. This is potentially the biggest problem for the government since they won the election last March, overshadowing the scandal over the sacking and rehabilitation of NATO chief Kiessling.

They might try for a compromise where the unions bargain away part of any pay rise for reduced hours, or have an hours reduction in stages.

The government have published very optimistic

figures predicting a 2.5% rise in gross national product and a boost in all internal markets. In the new boom, however long it lasts, workers will be determined to take back everything stolen from them in the last few years; jobs, pay and conditions.

Helmut Kohl's government, reflecting the continuing crisis of capitalism will want to use the boom to restore profitability. Further conflicts are inevitable.

International Notes

Sri Lanka: Union leader arrested

A TRADE union leader with the United Federation of Labour in Sri Lanka, Neil Wijetilleke, general secretary of the Co-operative Commercial and Mercantile Union, has been arrested and harassed for putting up

posters protesting at increased bread prices.

Neil was one of the leaders of the 1980 general strike. Workers' leaders have been continually targets for attacks by the Jayawardene government.

Spanish workers strike

WORKERS in Spain have been fighting the right wing policies of Felipe Gonzales' Socialist Party government, which plans to "streamline" heavy industry. This would add to the dole queues already nearing 20%. General strikes took

place in the shipbuilding areas of Galicia, the steel centres of Asturias, in Andalusia and the Basque country and in industrial suburbs of Madrid. Police fired rubber bullets and tear gas at demonstrators in Gijon.

Letters

Send your views, comments or criticism to Letters, *Militant*, 1 Mentmore Terrace, London E8 3PN

Support the bakers

Dear Comrades,
The strike at Scotts bakery in Liverpool must be officially supported by the TUC.

As an ex-bakery worker who spent seven weeks on the picket line during the last bakers' strike, I have every sympathy for them.
The two major baking

giants, ABF and RHM, are both multi-million and multi-national concerns. If ABF can fork out vast amounts for a kidnapped executive they can give their employees better wages and civilised working conditions.

Yours
D.Thompson
Fylde LPYS

Heroin boom

Dear Comrades,

I was extremely distressed, though not surprised, to read of the experiences of a young woman whose life has been ruined by heroin addiction (issue 684).

She said: "I think the reasons for the mass import of heroin are political." She's dead right.

In the 1960s addicts could legally obtain heroin by prescription, but they numbered less than 1,000. The ending of the system didn't end heroin addiction. Indeed, the abolition of legal sources for the drug has

merely opened up a highly profitable black-market, and the number of addicts has risen to over 100,000.

You can only reach one conclusion from this. Tory 'morals' are a sham. They merely open the way for pushers to rake in profits by destroying people's lives.

Socialism could eradicate the problem completely by providing proper centres where drugs could be legally obtained under the supervision of doctors with the time and the training to help addicts kick the habit.

Yours fraternally,
Tim Kaye,
Coventry

All awry at AWRE

Dear Comrades,

I was interested in the article on the Atomic Weapons Research Establishment in Aldermaston. As it said, profit comes before safety. You'd think a place like AWRE would place an ultra-high priority on security. But I was reminded of a couple of anecdotes I heard when I used to be on day-release at Tech college where I met some lads from AWRE.

They went through a phase of playing games with their security passes, one swapped his photo for one of Chairman Mao but was still able to get into work. Another worker was pin-

ching mercury from his workshop. Mercury is a highly dense and poisonous liquid metal. It is also very expensive. This villain was smuggling it out by sliding tiny bottles of the stuff into the frame of his bicycle. It was a great little racket until one day he fell off his bike at the gate. The security man got suspicious when he couldn't lift it up again!

AWRE should be closed down but if their security is bad, just think what it must be like at some other places. Maybe not all workers can be trusted, but as a class we certainly couldn't do a worse job of running things than the present bunch.

Fraternally
Andy Beadle

Lives at stake

Dear Comrades,

I was talking to somebody who regularly buys a Militant. She told me she had to wait 25 minutes for an ambulance to take her daughter to hospital.

Being in an uptight state when the driver arrived she started shouting at him. His

reply was: "Sorry love, it's the cuts."

Even though you know it's true, it's hard not to get mad when your daughter's life is at stake. That woman is now a Militant supporter, so she can take her anger out on capitalism which puts money before children's lives.

Yours
Gill Buchanan
Mansfield

Prevention is the best cure

Dear Comrades,

I've just seen an advertisement in a magazine that turned my stomach, it was a picture of a young girl with her face smashed in. It's a plea from the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children for donations to be sent to help the charity.

It says that the damage has already been done and the child only needs help now.

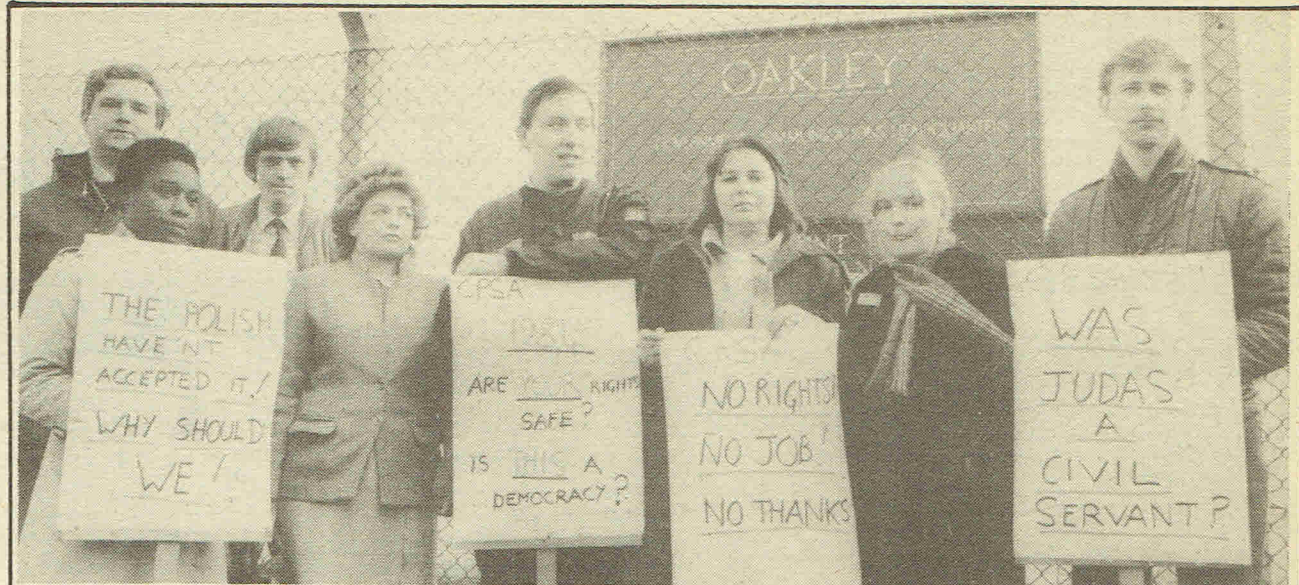
Well, I think prevention is better than cure and instead of giving money to well meaning charities—who with the best will in the world will never stop child abuse—we

must get rid of the system that forces people into such an anguished state that they take it out on their own flesh and blood.

I must just say that as a mother of two boisterous little boys I do know that children can drive you up the wall. If I didn't have such a supportive husband to discuss problems with, they may have needed the NSPCC.

I do not dispute the fact that the NSPCC help so many poor youngsters but I do feel that maybe they help to prolong the problem by just dealing with the cases when they happen, not in trying to stop it completely.

Yours fraternally
Lynne Tice
Westhall LPYS



Civil servants picket GCHQ at Cheltenham against the Tory ban on unions.

Photo: John Harris (IFL)

Sparks fly at Cheltenham

Dear Comrades,

Watching 'Weekend World' on TV, with Len Murray's procrastination over what the TUC should do about the Tories' attacks on workers, was like a horror show.

Instead of firing a 'rocket' against the Tories (mobilise the strength of the labour movement and campaign for a 24 hour general strike) he

holds out a 'sparkler' in the hope that the Tories will somehow 'see sense' and reduce their attacks on workers (ie continuing a dialogue with the government).

Unfortunately the Tories have not played the game, placing a 'banger' in his box of fireworks, which went off in the faces of Alistair Graham and his moderate

friends, when they announced that trade union rights were to be abolished in GCHQ Cheltenham.

Alistair Graham (the voice of moderation) said during the NGA dispute that trade unionists should not break the law. When told he would not be in a job today if it had not been for the Tolpuddle Martyrs defying attacks on working people in the last

century, he replied, "when trade unionists start being transported to Australia we will act".

Left to the likes of Murray and Graham that day will not be far away.

Yours fraternally
Dave Hardy
Nottingham and District
NUR

Tory's one week on 'social'

Dear Comrades,

Recently I watched the World in Action report on Conservative MP Matthew Parris who spent a week 'living' on supplementary benefit of £26.80.

Mr.Parris believes that living on the dole should be uncomfortable, to give people the incentive to work. After his one week, he had to agree that, yes, it was uncomfortable.

The thing which most struck me about this little ex-

ercise of his (apart from the ludicrous idea that he could appreciate in one week what life on the dole was like) was the fact that not once did it occur to him that there are thousands of people in this country who are earning equally low amounts of money after working all week!

A girl left the catering department where I work after seven months of receiving £1.42 an hour working 11am to 4pm. She had continually been refused more hours, although many more part-timers have been taken on more recently.

The majority of women

working in this section (including myself) receive £1.68 an hour. Any visit to the local Job Centre shows this to be the average wage for 'unskilled workers'.

Work it out for yourself—£54.60 for 32½ hour per week. Once you deduct tax, National Insurance, bus fares and rent, it doesn't leave a lot. So where does the incentive to work come in?

On the dole or in a low paid job—tell us about being uncomfortable Matthew!

Yours fraternally
NUPE member
Bath

Work scheme con trick

Dear Comrades,

Being unemployed for 2 years, sending letters for various jobs, not even getting a reply to most of them, made me understand just what the Tories have to offer the working people of this country—absolutely nothing. You spend time visiting the Job Centre and writing letters in the full knowledge that you are only one in hundreds applying. I did eventually get a job

on one of the MSC's Community Programmes. On the scheme I was on there were 20 posts, 4 full time, 7 at 4 days and 9 at 3 days. The average wage has got to be less than £60 a week on the top line but that meant that the 3 day-a-week people were coming out with only £37 a week. For those 20 jobs there were over 120 applications after the advert had been in the Job Centre for less than a day.

The work that I did on the Scheme was actually quite good, and it was useful to the community but it was

work that should have been done anyway. You work away for a year and develop a false sense of security until the truth finally hits you when with a month to go you realise that you're heading back onto the dole.

Now I'm unemployed once more, and I can look back and say that my year on the Community Programme has done absolutely nothing for my future.

Fraternally
Unemployed
East Kilbride

Union power and the Tories

Dear Comrades,

Last week at a Militant readers meeting we had a very good lead off about the role of trade unions. The main point that came out to me were that under a capitalist society you have those who sell their labour, and those that profit from the exploitation of that labour.

Under Thatcherism it is necessary to undermine the role and therefore the power of trade unions. That is why we have the legislation from

Tebbit etc.

If you have trade unions with no power you can exploit workers by paying them less, get them to work longer hours with less holidays etc.

This then leads, supposedly, to higher profits for the capitalists and therefore they will re-invest in their own company instead of abroad.

That cannot and will not work. Concessions won by the trade unions such as extra holidays, shorter working week and so on will not be handed back by the vast majority of trade unionists. But we need true leadership. At the moment the leaders are selling their very own members down the river as we have seen with the NGA dispute and Len Murray.

Our members who are struggling to live on a poor wage, and are still willing to take on the capitalists, often ask how their leaders who are earning two, three and as much as five times as them, actually understand the needs of the people they represent.

The labour movement is the only threat to capitalism, but what it needs is true leadership and true facts about how socialist, marxist policies can work for the working class. That is why we need a daily Militant paper so everybody can see there is an alternative.

Yours fraternally
Andy Holland
AUEW Convenor
Rotherham

NEC double standards

Dear Comrades,

Some months ago my CLP sent a letter to the NEC asking that Frank Chapple no longer be allowed to remain in the Labour Party, after having publicly urged support for the SDP during the General Election.

This week we received a reply. It is apparently a matter for Mr Chapple's own CLP, and not one for the NEC.

Perhaps my memory is failing me, but I seem to recall the NEC saying quite the opposite when it came to the expulsion of Militant's Editorial Board. Not to mention being a darned sight quicker off the mark!

Yours fraternally
Helen Gasking
Thanet South LPYS

Incensed

Dear Comrades,

I have just watched Panorama on TV (30 January) and was incensed that the extreme right wing, neo-fascist groups were described as 'not as big and serious as the Militant Tendency'.

Do readers of Militant go around beating up Jews and coloured people? The answer NO!

Do readers call coloured people 'wogs', 'coons', and 'niggers'. The answer NO! Most of the leaders of these right-wing groups seemed to speak very well (public school educated perhaps). All were upper class twits.

One of the slogans of the Young Socialists is 'black and white unite and fight, kick the Tories out'. That is what we should be doing to bring down these people who seem to be living in cloud cuckoo land.

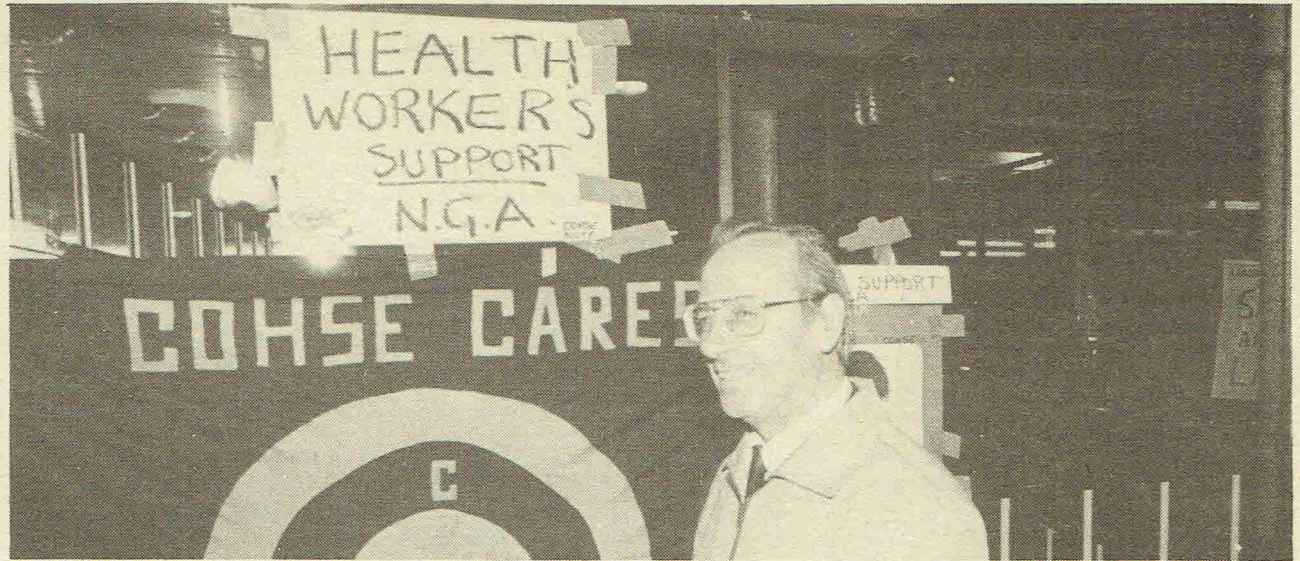
Yours fraternally
Julie Parker
Cleethorpes and District
Women's Section

Time to organise

BLOC

BROAD LEFT ORGANISING COMMITTEE

THE Broad Left Organising Committee is holding a national one-day conference for trade union Broad Lefts and union activists. This event has already generated wide interest in the trade union movement. *Militant* interviews the Organising Secretary, **George Williamson** (right), to find out more about the background to the conference.



Moss Evans of the TGWU greets the lobby of the TUC in support of the printworkers on 28 November. The mood for union solidarity to take on the Tories was there.

Photo: Militant

What is the BLOC?

The Broad Left Organising Committee comprises representatives from some twenty individual trade union Broad Lefts which exist on a national and in some cases a regional basis. It was formed in 1981 and comprised a few Broad Lefts, but since then has accumulated some additional support.

It is up to the individual Broad Lefts to decide who should represent them on BLOC, but usually the chair and secretary of the body are the two representatives. Some of the Broad Lefts involved are: Group '81 (COHSE), CPSA, UCW, ASTMS and BIFU.

Jock McPherson-Quinn of the AUEW Engineers Broad Left is the BLOC Chairman. He is President of the AUEW Engineers No 26 District and is the editor of the AUEW Engineers Broad Left journal *Engineering Gazette*.

The Secretary of the BLOC is Phil Holt of the POEU Broad Left who is a member of the POEU NEC.

The Organising Secretary is of course myself, and I am the Chairman of the USDAW Broad Left and am the secretary of my union branch which covers North London.

What is the purpose of the BLOC?

We see ourselves as the body which links up the individual Broad Lefts and have the aim of assisting and co-ordinating the building of these bodies. When the BLOC was formed we looked in particular to the struggle taking place in the trade unions affiliated to the Labour Party to democratise the party. We saw part of our role as being a focal point of opposition to the undemocratic use of the trade union block vote by the right wing trade union leaders. The BLOC has produced material on the democratisation of the use of the block vote and has circulated this to the various Broad Left activists for discussion. Hopefully we will extend this activity further in the future.

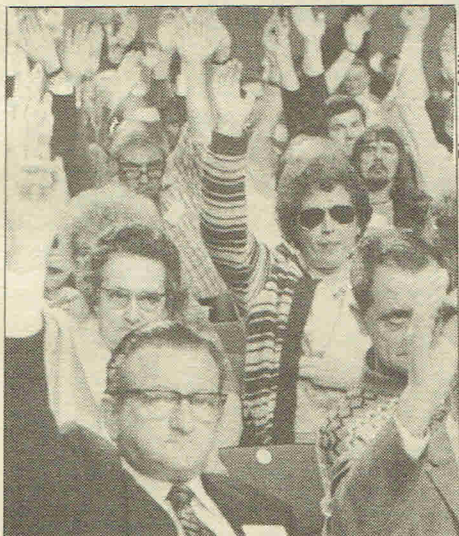
We have been considering our position regularly since our formation, and discussing ways of raising the profile of the BLOC, as we've steadily grown. We have now set ourselves on a whole new direction—into building the Broad Left movement throughout the trade unions nationally into fighting, campaigning organisations.

The BLOC took a decision to launch a campaign around a national rally which would provide all the Broad Lefts with an opportunity to campaign in their own unions around a common theme, and with a central aim of demonstrating the collective strength of the left in the unions—by holding a large rank and file BLOC conference. We are confident that the BLOC conference will be a huge success, and that the BLOC from its small beginnings will from there begin to develop widespread support among rank and file trade unionists

right across the the whole range of the trade union movement. The onus of course is on the individual Broad Lefts to make it a success.

Why has this conference been called?

This conference will bring together rank and file activists to thrash out a strategy to defend the working class against Tory attacks. All aspects of working class life in Britain are under threat. The Tories are trying to demoralise workers through mass unemployment. They hope that by having four million unemployed, workers will be unwilling to combat the various attacks on their rights and living standards for fear of joining the dole queues.



The TUC in full session. The strength of the trade union movement has not been fundamentally changed.

Photo: Militant

The Tories and the millionaire press have systematically churned out their message that the driving down of living standards *en masse* is the only way to lift the economy out of its crisis. They claim support from wide layers of trade unionists. According to the Tories, a "new realism" exists within the ranks of the trade union movement. They point approvingly to the level of days lost through strikes in 1983—the lowest since 1967—as confirmation of their claims.

The Tories are in for a shock. Their "new realism" theory will be blown apart. Enormous anger is being accumulated in the ranks of the trade unions. Everywhere there are workers trying to improve and extend their conditions and build their organisations, but, first and foremost, to get rid of the Tories. They want their unions and their leaders to act on their behalf with the same determination and tenacity which the Tories show on behalf of the bosses. Unfortunately, the right wing TUC leadership have shown no willingness to fight. They cling to the belief that through negotiation, the Tories can be reasoned with. The right wing leaders, it is true to say, have swallowed the Tories' "new realism" whole.

The present recession has seen the overall number in the trade union movement drop by some two million. The Tories have pointed to this as an indication of the growing "weakness" and "unpopularity" of unions in Britain. The trade unions still have nearly ten million members. The loss in membership can be accounted almost entirely through the avalanche of redundancies of the past four years. As workers have been forced out of industry, so union members have been lost.

The overall proportion of the workforce in Britain which is unionised has only slightly fallen, and this is due to a massive collapse of the heavy industries which were traditionally well organised. The loss of these members reflects the absolute disaster which has struck manufacturing industry in Britain. In many other sectors of the economy, the proportion of unionised workers has hardly changed, and in some has actually increased.

The trade unions and the enormous strength of the working class in British society is still intact. What is required—for this strength to be fully mobilised—is a determined and bold lead from the leadership of the trade union movement, around a clear programme to defend all the rights and conditions of trade unionists and, above all, drive the Tories out of office at the earliest opportunity, replacing this hard faced government of the rich by a Labour government committed to a fundamental socialist change.

At what point did the BLOC decide to call this conference?

The outcome of the 1983 TUC rally was the point of departure for this BLOC Rally. The TUC General Council composition has been rigged to favour the right wing and the white collar unions. The Congress itself saw the right wing forcing through an agreement to have talks with the Employment Minister, Tebbit. All this was in line with the "new realism" theory. The right wing TUC leaders seem to think that they, as "skilled negotiators" will be able to make the Tories see sense.

The Tories have other ideas. A major curtailment of the power of the trade union movement is absolutely central to their strategy to create an acquiescent working class so that they can push the brunt of the crisis onto their shoulders. Unfortunately for the trade union leaders, the rank and file have no intention of allowing their organisations, built painstakingly over decades of struggle, to be undermined and their gains frittered away over beer and sandwiches at the Department of Employment. All the attacks will be forcefully resisted: postal ballots, political levy restrictions, enforced ballots on industrial action etc—all of these present the Tories

with a potentially explosive minefield of opposition.

It was in this situation that the BLOC decided to hold this rally. It was clear that a concerted campaign to transform the trade unions and to build the Broad Lefts was necessary.

Did the recent printworkers' dispute emphasise BLOC's decision?

Oh yes, the campaign for the conference had hardly got underway, when the NGA dispute blew up. This dispute demonstrated the willingness of the rank and file to fight and defeat the Tory laws. It showed that the more vicious the attacks on the working class become, the more unable to lead a fightback do the leaders appear to be. The decision of the TUC General Council not to support the NGA in the dispute underlines even more clearly the need to campaign in the trade union movement to take the movement as a whole to its fundamental principles of defending working class rights; and the need to transform the unions, from top to bottom. The BLOC conference is the first step in the campaign for fighting trade unions.

What sort of response have you had so far?

Already there is enormous interest in the conference with the enquiries and applications for credentials from all over the country. Already the Bakers' Union, SOGAT '82 and the Derbyshire Miners have agreed to circulate their branches with BLOC material, and Rodney Bickerstaffe, Ray Buckton and Arthur Scargill have wished the conference success.

Leading figures from the labour movement have agreed to address the conference—Tony Benn, Joan Maynard MP, Terry Fields MP, Joe Marino (General Secretary, Bakers' Union), Phil Holt (POEU, NEC member) and the conference will be opened up by David Blunkett (Leader of the Sheffield City Council and Labour Party NEC member).

In view of the overwhelming interest, it may be necessary to limit the delegations, and therefore applications will be dealt with on a first come, first served basis. I would call on every trade union branch, shop stewards' committee, divisional council, combine committee, regional executive, district committee, trades council, etc to send delegates to what will be most important rank and file trade union conference of the year.

THE CONFERENCE will take place on Saturday, 24 March at the Octagon Centre, Western Bank, Sheffield 10, commencing at 11.00 am. Each organisation may send up to five delegates (delegation fee £2 per delegate). Send for application form to: George Williamson, Organising Secretary, 11 Sutton Place, London E9 6EH.

INDUSTRIAL REPORTS

Merseyside militancy

YET AGAIN the hammer blows of redundancy have hit the working people in Liverpool. On February 3 massive redundancies were announced at the British and American Tobacco factory on Commercial Road in Liverpool.

On this same day no fewer than four other major workplaces in the city were taking strike action (see articles) over closures and redundancies, and dozens of others were involved in long-term battles.

1,100 jobs go

On the 3rd the union representatives were in London, being presented with a 13-page document. In it management announced 1,100 job losses in Liverpool and 400 in Southampton. 465 jobs were immediately to go and 90-day notices were issued at the meeting. The balance of the redundancies will be implemented over a 15-month period.

Being the kind-hearted bunch that they are and, as their secret document for security says "not wanting to show the company in a bad light", BAT raised the redundancy money on offer

from 2½ weeks per year's service to 3½ weeks. Very kind.

As far as they were concerned there must be no negotiations and the unions were presented with a *fate accompli*. Anticipating this blatant attack on negotiations rights on trade unions, the stewards in Liverpool called for one-day strike action on the 3rd, which was supported by the members.

A mass meeting was called for Monday, 6 February. Support for the workers at the Commercial Road factory has been quick in coming. Declarations of support from the Liverpool City Council Labour Group and the County Council Labour Group have been made and the Merseyside MPs have rallied round, with Terry Fields, Eddie Loyden and Bob Parry (the MP for the local Riverside Constituency) addressing the mass meeting.

The virtual 100% turnout of the workforce heard appeals for solidarity and unity. Speaker after speaker condemned the multi-nationals' chase for the fastest and fatest profit. The management intend to transfer a third of Liverpool's production to Southampton and eliminate three-quarters of the workforce.

Plan of action

A plan of action must now be developed to combat these redundancies. Contact will now be made with the International Food Federation to rally support from BAT factories in Western Europe. Ironically, other companies are hitting peaks for overtime production around the country. A campaign to achieve an overtime ban must be launched immediately.

This issue must be developed as an industry-wide problem and not localised to any one factory or workplace. The exposure of BAT's arguments will be no problem. They claim to be losing in the home market, saying that they have lost £53 million in the

last five years. What they've failed to say is that they expected to make a loss for the two years that they broke into the home market, but are now through that period and have made £56 million overall profit in the past two years, and are expecting a profit of £25 million this year.

Furthermore, the demand in the home market for BAT's brands is not being met. Sales representatives are only being allocated 12½% of their orders by the company. One representative had to buy up £30,000 worth of cigarettes of one of BAT's own brands, made in Liverpool, from a local wholesaler, to satisfy a customer. All this time machines and workers are idle and BAT announce redundancies!

The mood now amongst the workers in Liverpool—even those previously 'pro-company'—is overwhelmingly of anger and contempt for BAT. They have had a bitter lesson in the nature of multi-nationals.

Chris Williams
(BAT Convenor)
spoke to **Jim Hollinshead**
(Walton LPYS)



Pat Campbell and Bob Higgins, the two stewards sacked by John West.

The workers John West reject....

JOHN WEST is not "best", according to their workforce at the Liverpool distribution centre. They are out on strike until their two shop stewards, Paddy Campbell and Bobby Higgins, are reinstated by management.

Stewards sacked

They were sacked after procedural warnings for failing to work hours imposed by management. John West's have failed to honour an agreement made with their union USDAW. This was to try the management hours for a trial period, rather than have them impose them.

The plant is John West's only distribution point. Pickets have had good success in turning back delivery lorries. Contact is to be made with the dock stewards and lorry drivers' branches of the TGWU. The workforce are expecting the strike to be made official. The union could be very effective in blocking off many major retail outlets in which they have membership.

Abysmal pay

A tin of John West salmon is expensive. The wages here are abysmal! Paddy takes home £60 for a 38-hour week. The other steward, who has a wife and family receives £65 and has to top-up with FIS. So do many others working there. The workforce is determined to win, and picket rotas are being organised. Messages of support to Paddy Campbell, 14 Anderson Avenue, Bootle, Merseyside.

By Terry Harrison

Scotts—beat the anti-union bosses

THE DISPUTE at Scotts Bakeries, Liverpool, reported in previous issues has taken a new and harsher turn. Following meetings with management the workers at the factory have now been told that a further 150 redundancies will be required on top of those already announced.

The management are also adamant that directly employed cleaning staff will be made redundant, to be replaced by contract cleaners. At the same time management are insisting no one will be allowed back into the factory until a no-strike clause has been signed. Faced with this, the

unions have refused to have any further talks with management or ACAS as long as the no-strike clause hangs over their heads. They are now stepping up the action, with pickets visiting other factories in the combine, and also picketing plants producing scab bread.

Taking their cue from the Tories' actions at the Cheltenham GCHQ, Scotts employers have seized on the no-strike plan in an attempt to further cow their workers and prevent any future fight back against redundancies or victimisation.

Finance needed

The experience of the last bakers strike showed that with a relatively small union management could sit the strike out until they have

been drained of resources.

As a result, the union decided in 1976 not to pay strike pay. Collections and donations are therefore vital for their victory in this dispute.

They should be sent, together with messages of support, to the Bakers' Union, Priory Road, Anfield, Liverpool 4.

Mersey Foods

MAINTENANCE workers at Merseyside Foods are on strike against a miserly wage offer. Management offered them 2.7% rise only. The strike has resulted in 300 workers being laid off, bringing the factory to a virtual standstill.

BICC strike

"THIS FIRM started out about 100 years ago. Since then the people in this town have made them millionaires."

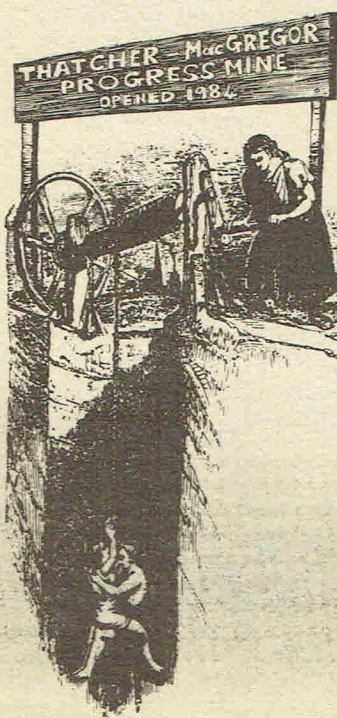
That was how Keith Pemberton of the TGWU explained the bitter feeling of workers at BICC in Prescot, the wire manufacturers. Last Friday the 3,000 workers in the eight plants came out on a one-day strike.

The strike is over what the stewards now describe as the "annual redundancy". This time one plant is due to close and with the part closure of another plant, 350 jobs will be lost. Stewards fear that these will be compulsory redundancies.

Over the past ten years the Prescot site has lost nearly 7,000 jobs. Now the company are only willing to give assurances on a monthly basis. The strike was called to demand a statement from management on the future of the Prescot site.

By Richard Knights

Defend Polmaise from NCB axe



MINERS AT Polmaise colliery at Fallin, near Stirling, are determined to fight the intended closure of their pit.

Their anger was heightened when just over a week after the NCB announcement to close Polmaise, Bogside pit in Fife which employs 850 men was closed down. The NCB claimed Bogside was severely flooded.

Added to this has been MacGregor's stupid remarks about sending women back down the pits.

Over the past few days a pithead campaign in support of Polmaise has been carried out in the Scottish coalfields. The 260 Polmaise miners now want this followed up with all-out industrial action to support their fight.

"If Polmaise dies it will

die on its feet, not on its knees", was how one miner expressed his anger.

Closure would be a disaster for the local community. Fallin only exists because of the pit—there are no other employers, and no work to be found in near by Stirling. Fallin already has around 25% youth unemployment.

Not only will 260 jobs be lost, but another 450 jobs—promised when the pit was due to go into full production—will now never materialise. The NCB is tearing up its agreement to develop Polmaise, which is sitting on 20-30 years supply of coal.

The Coal Board have blamed a geological fault as reason for the closure. But as John McCormick for Polmaise NUM put it, "If you allow Polmaise to close they will take this fault

around every pit in Scotland and use it as an excuse for closure". The fault is only 25 feet high and easily negotiated. Even without tackling it the pit could produce coal for four or five years.

At a mass meeting last Saturday, John McCormick called on the miners to reject the carrot of early retirement payment: "Once these jobs have gone we will never get them back. They're not ours to sell".

The fight to save Polmaise is a fight for the whole Scottish coal field. The Scottish executive of the NUM must now give a decisive lead and call the whole Scottish coal fields to a halt in support of Polmaise.

By Alastair Wilson
(Secretary, Fallin Labour Party)

Out the gate for 13 weeks

ALTHOUGH THE workers of S Morris & Sons textile factory in Wigan have been on strike for 13 weeks now, they are still as determined as ever to win their struggle.

Whilst addressing the NW Regional Conference of the LPYS, Colleen Cotterall, the shop steward, spoke out in anger about the Tory government, saying they had aided employers such as theirs in driving down the living standards of the working class. She urged the labour movement everywhere to support them in their struggle against two pay and exploitation.

Most strikers are women, and Colleen said that they had not been working for 'pin money'—in some cases the low wages they were receiving (and which their

employer had attempted to cut) was the only income in the family.

Good support

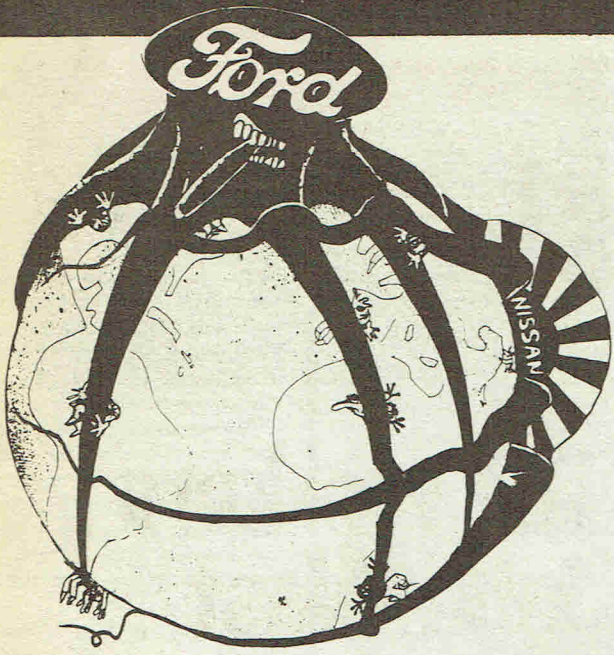
The labour movement in the region have shown their solidarity so far with good financial donations, and messages of support have been received from as far afield as Northern Ireland. However, if they are to continue their fight they urgently need more financial and moral support.

Send messages of support and donations to: Mrs J Atherton, 37 Sycamore Avenue, Beech Hill, Wigan.

By Janice Hall
(Wigan LPYS)

INDUSTRIAL REPORTS

The money grabbing car giants



NISSAN

THE announcement that the Japanese car firm Nissan are to set up shop in Britain spells danger for car workers.

The Tories have trumpeted the arrival of Nissan, giving the impression they are 'bringing jobs back to Britain.' Yet Nissan's initial Phase one, setting up an assembly plant to build 24,000 cars from Japanese kits, will only create 400-600 jobs by 1986.

Even when Nissan go into Phase two (enlarging the plant only if Phase one is successful) it will create 2,700 jobs with vague promises of 6,000 jobs in the service industries in the 1990's. Compared to the

four million the Tories have pushed on the dole, this is chickenfeed.

£77m carrot

What the Tories are really interested in Nissan bringing to Britain is not jobs, but Japanese capitalism's working conditions and 'company union' attitudes. For this the Tories are prepared to dangle the carrot of government subsidies—to the tune of up to £77 million in combined development grants, made up of taxpayers' money of course. Nissan have grabbed at this, despite the fact that their latest pre-tax profits, announced this month, are a staggering £378.8 million.

Already Nissan are declaring that they want 'no strike' agreements and want to negotiate with a 'single

union' at their proposed plant. The main contenders for this position are the TGWU or the AUEW.

In his usual style, AUEW president Terry Duffy has already stated, "Although we can never give a guarantee that there will be no strikes at any plant, including Nissan, I am confident that we can get an agreement which will prevent strikes."

'No strike'

With negotiating rights withdrawn from many of the smaller unions and—as Nissan are no doubt planning for—a tame leadership at the head of the proposed 'one union', working conditions won over the years by the industrial strength of the car workers would be rolled back and wages driven down.

With this alongside new technology, Nissan—despite their assurances to the contrary—could soon outstrip its competitors. To survive, other car manufacturers would have to adopt Nissan's tactics, leading to mass redundancies.

The Tories are hoping for this knock-on effect on the rest of the car industry. For example, the *Financial Times* (2 February) reported, "(Nissan's) new workforce with total labour flexibility from the start...will make more urgent Ford's task of putting its UK house in order."

If Nissan's plans go ahead, it may mean a few thousand jobs (eventually) for one economic blackspot. But in the future it will lead to more redundancies in the car industry as a whole, with working practises and wage agreements put back years.

NUJ: union strength can beat Tory laws

THE NATIONAL Union of Journalists is continuing its fight against anti-trade union laws, arising from its dispute with the Dimbleby Newspaper Group.

The strike by journalists on the Dimbleby newspapers arose when he transferred printing to T Bailey Forman, a firm officially blacked by the NUJ since the battle against TBF's *Nottingham Evening Post* in 1979. The courts have ruled the Dimbleby journalists' action illegal.

On 21 January, the NUJ held a Special Delegate Meeting to discuss strategy. This national meeting overwhelmingly supported a policy statement which reaffirmed "the right of the NUJ to refuse to comply with such (anti-union) laws in accordance with the decisions of the TUC Special conference at Wembley in 1982" and demanded "the unqualified support of the TUC General Council... and calls on it to mobilise the full support of the trade union movement in defence of basic trade union rights."

It went on, "In the event of the General Council failing to provide such support the union will seek to build full support from affiliated unions with a view both to reversing the General Council's failure to support us and to defending union rights despite the General Council."

However, this decision was taken, "notwithstanding the House of Lords ruling"; the

NUJ leadership have withdrawn official support for the Dimbleby strikers in order not to break the law while they take their case to the House of Lords which is being heard at present. If their appeal fails there is talk of then going to the European Court of Human Rights.

The vulnerability the NUJ feels given the recent defeat of the more powerful NGA is understandable. But at the same time illusions should not be put in the courts, which rarely act as saviour to the labour movement.

There is also a danger that while the NUJ case is dragged from one court room to another, the morale of the membership may begin to sag and the bosses will take the union's inaction as a green light to go on the offensive. As one SDM delegate put it, "Don't fudge now—otherwise it will be open season for the employers to put the boot into the NUJ."

The solution lies in uniting with the unions prepared to fight and make a stand against the Tories—as pointed to in the SDM motion—at the earliest possible moment.

● The SDM also agreed to call on all trade unionists and Labour party members to refuse to speak to Dimbleby while the dispute continues, which will make Dimbleby's work for BBC television very difficult.

By Bob Wade
(North London NUJ)

NGA BROAD LEFT OPEN MEETING

"Prospects for the Print Industry"

Saturday 11 February, 3 pm

At St Pancras Church Hall, Lancing Street, London NW1

Speakers: George Jerrom (NGA '82)

Ann Field (SOGAT '82)

Ernie Roberts MP

All speaking in a personal capacity for:

- 1) Jobs, short hours, peace.
- 2) 'Warrington, *Radio Times*, T Bailey Forman'; we need one fighting union for the industry.
- 3) Government hands off the union.

GEC's low wages

THE 1984 wage negotiations of the shop floor members of the AUEW, EETPU and GMBATU at GEC Measurements, Stafford have broken down.

After years of low wage settlements the average wage is £93 gross, which is a considerable drift below wage rates for comparable skills locally. One steward reported that in his shop two out of five workers are dependent on FIS and rent/rate rebates.

With a return of confidence due to a recent flood of time-dependent orders, the workers have accepted the stewards' recommendation for an overtime ban in rejection of the offer of 4%, and are to hold a one-day strike.

This is the first strike since the 1979 Confed action. Messages of support from other GEC factories will be vital in a struggle to build a shop floor movement for a combine committee.

Messages of support to GEC Measurements shop stewards' committee, c/o 160 Cannock Road, Stafford.

By an ex-GEC worker

FTAT fight

AFTER LENGTHY negotiations over clerical wages, management at Eastham's furniture producers in Lancashire, broke off talks with the furniture workers' union, FTAT.

The clerical workers' offer amounted to a rise of £5.50 a week as a supplementary payment, which fell far short of our claim. All other workers at

FORDS

THE CYNICAL drive for more profits by Fords has been battered home to car workers, not only by the threatened closure of the Thames Foundry in Dagenham but also the news that Ford would be investing \$500 million in Mexico.

"The venture, believed to be the largest single investment in the Mexican motor industry, will be located at

Hermosillo, which offers low-cost labour, less than 200 miles from the U.S. border. Production of 130,000 cars a year will begin at the end of 1986 and most will go to the US." (*Financial Times* 18 January). This move will obviously threaten the jobs of American car workers.

Fords close and open plants—not to benefit the area—but to increase their profit at the expense of their employees.

Fords in Mexico by the way are taking advantage of

the law to make a bit extra, by also exporting lead oxide, zinc and honey.

Cheap labour

Fords only built the Dagenham complex when land was cheap and labour cheaper, so we can't really be surprised that the conditions of Mexico's repressive regime provide more fertile fields for Ford profits.

The Mexican investment proves that Fords have the resources to invest in new plants.

But the fight for jobs is not between Mexican and American workers, or between British and German workers. The international working class must not tear at each other's throats in the scramble over the amount of jobs the Fords millionaires deign to provide. The fight is against the system itself—the system that allows small bands of superwealthy parasites to dictate the fortunes of whole nations.

By Mike Waddington

JCB workers stand firm

ACCORDING TO management at JCB's factory in Rocester, Staffordshire, 'normal working' consists of 60 hours!

When JCB workers refused to call off an overtime ban in support of the 1983 wage claim, management locked them out. The overtime ban from last year had been effective at the factory which produces the earth moving machinery—one production line was closed down.

On Monday (6 February) management delivered an ultimatum to return to "normal working" (end the overtime ban) or "go home". However, the workers will not be intimidated and have formed picket lines with full backing from their union, the GMBATU.

After three years of single figure wage rises they are determined to pursue their claim for £20 across the board to the bitter end.

By Alan Pratt
(North Staffs Poly Students Union, personal capacity)

Eastham's two factories had already agreed a £7 across the board increase.

We began one day stoppages, despite management threatening to dismiss those who took action. Clerical workers are not normally regarded as 'militant' but every clerical union member took part in the action.

Sadly the shop floor FTAT stewards refused to support us, although some workers refused to cross the picket lines. Lack of support and management threats forced staff to back down and accept the the £5.50. But for most of the staff this was their first taste of industrial action and they have learnt a lot from this dispute.

By Gary Wareing
(Senior Rep, FTAT Clerical Committee, Eastham)

Thornton View occupation



Thornton View marchers protest against closure, last year.

Photo: John Smith (IFL)

THE OCCUPATION by staff at the Thornton View hospital in Bradford is six months old and still resisting the closure decision of the district health authority. The management are trying it on. They closed a ward last week and moved a male patient into a female ward. The response of the occupation committee was to re-open the ward and move the patient back in. Alex Corina, NUPE branch secretary, described this move by management as degrading and called upon the management to consult the occupation committee in future.

Betty Elie, COHSE "fighter of the year", has now received a written warning for her absence when she went to London to petition a Tory minister despite the fact it was correctly recorded in the ward diary. But as Betty said, "they won't get shot of me that easy". A decision is expected soon about whether or not the hospital should stay open. All support is needed and the staff there are continuing the fight.

By Steve Wilkinson
(Chairman, Shipley CLP)

United stand beats bosses' plans

THE WEEK before and including 'bull week'—the period in December which gives my members a £50 Christmas payment—was to be lost when our management at Cooper and Turner (Glynwed) engineering firm in Rotherham said they were going to instigate short-time working.

Management blamed insufficient workloads. Being the worst two weeks in any year to be short of money, naturally the members were upset to say the least.

We were laid off on Friday and Monday (9 and 12

December). But on returning to work on the 13th, management informed us that a sudden influx of orders over the weekend meant there would be no more

Short time

short-time working. I told management that they had prematurely implemented short-time working and it was being used as a tool to pay for extra bonus and holiday pay.

Management denied this, but the workers decided to seek compensation for being laid off and immediately downed tools.

Our members, generally 'moderate' people, decided to make a stand.

After prolonged negotiations by myself and the GMBATU steward, management agreed to compensate for the two lay-off days and also paid average earnings for the time lost whilst taking industrial action. This shows that 'moderate' workers can unite and achieve their aims.

By Andy Holland
(AUEW convenor & chairman JSSC, Cooper and Turner)

Unite to save shipyards!

THE THREAT to the two Scottish shipyards Henry Robb and Scott Lithgow must be met head on.

A national conference of shop stewards must be organised to work out a fighting strategy to stop the Tories bleeding the industry.

Scott Lithgow

SCOTT LITHGOW workers showed their willingness to fight for jobs when the 300 workers temporarily laid off reported for work as usual.

"The mass meeting's decision to keep workers on the books and levy the rest of the men to pay them has lifted the spirit of the workforce", according to Sean Balfe, the young platers' shop steward.

"The mood has changed from one of resignation to 'let's show them'. We've broken down the isolation lay offs can cause." The Tories' decision to give the yard to any private buyer as cheaply as possible cuts no ice.

"British Shipbuilders wanted to shut us. Trafalgar House or any other conglomerate want to cut the workforce to make big profits on current orders, and then who knows what future they have for us. The mood to occupy if any compulsory redundancy is declared is growing. People who'd have ducked it last year are now right behind the stewards."

Bosses new tactics

The message must be taken to the rest of the West of Scotland particularly other areas threatened such as Albion, Bathgate and Ravensraig and other shipyards too. Scott Lithgow is a testing ground. The tactics of cutting permanent workers and using short-term labour wherever work arises is what the bosses have in mind. They must not succeed.

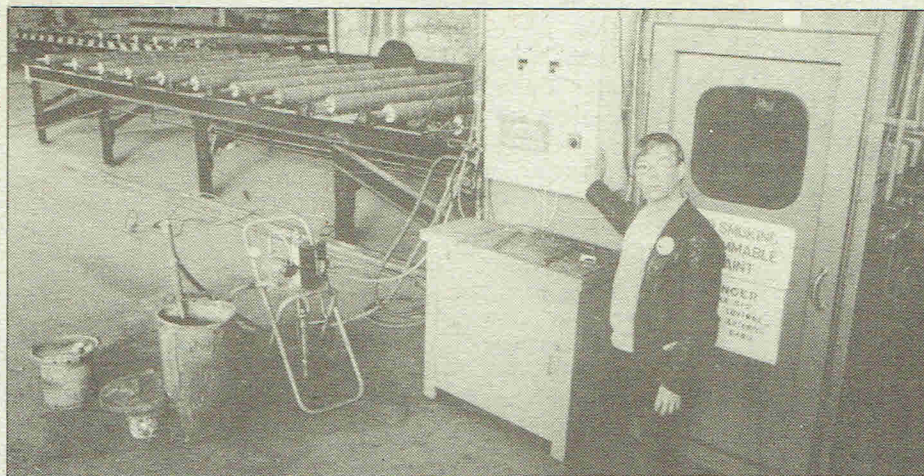
The stewards must make preparations for occupations more definite. Last week over 1,000 stewards from all over Scotland met in Glasgow to discuss the threatened closure, gaining

AT THE Militant Readers' Meeting in Greenock, John Hepburn, leader of the Linwood stewards' committee; whose fight against closure was unsuccessful, shared his experience while Hugh Kelly, an older Lithgow shop steward said we need to fight like in the days of Red Clydeside. The stewards' committee welcomed Militant's support in their fightback.

enthusiastic response to the call for a one-day stoppage in Scotland and for Scott Lithgow to remain part of British Shipbuilders and complete the Britoil Rig.

The STUC must act with urgency and build on that response instead of propos-

Photo: Rick Mathews (IFL)



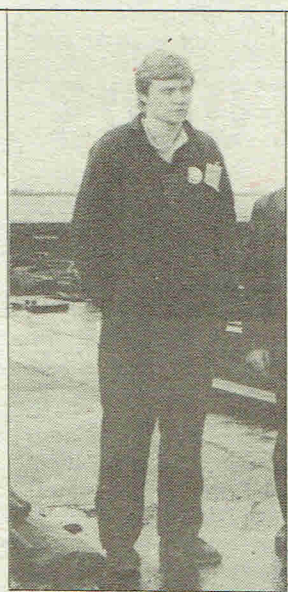
Ronnie Mitchell, a leading steward at Henry Robb points out an expensive new paint spraying unit installed just 5 months ago.

ing to consider the issue sometime in March.

The next few weeks will be crucial. Privatisation offers no long-term future, every job must be fought for. The anger of the locality, the new-found confidence of the workforce, and the support from the rest of Scotland including industrial action, if necessary, must be captured by the Labour leadership in Scotland.

It must be directed with all vigour to force the Tories to back down and maintain British Shipbuilders' presence at Scott Lithgow in the off-shore industrial field.

By Ronnie Stevenson



John Keggie, convenor of Henry Robb.

THE ANGER of local people was demonstrated in Port Glasgow, at a meeting called by the local district council (Inver Clyde) in mid afternoon.

An audience of 600, comprising mainly housewives, unemployed and delegates from various factories shouted down local Thatcherite MP, Anna McCurley, when she said the government was committed to shipbuilding, but it had to pay its own way.

The Scottish Secretary of State, Younger's comment, that Trafalgar House would be able to make a profit in the deal he was offering shows what the Tories' "commitment" is.

Photo: Rick Mathews (IFL)

Henry Robb

John Keggie, Convenor of Henry Robb, Leith, spoke to a Militant reporter.

"We have effectively taken over the yard and nothing will leave without the say-so of the Occupation Committee. All the men who agreed to take part in the occupation have turned out.

There were 950 men in the yard in April last year. That figure reduced to 390, including 85 apprentices and 120 staff. Now we still have the 85 apprentices and 90 manual workers taking part in the occupation.

The rest decided that redundancy was the easy way out, but the 90 men here are prepared to stick it out and keep this yard open. We are still waiting to see if 120 staff members will back us.

We are operating night shift and day shift, as the

yard had to be manned 24 hours a day. We are having meetings of both shifts to keep them informed, keep morale up and keep the fight going on.

In the yard are two vessels belonging to the Ministry of Defence—a submarine and a diving bell used as a target to train officers in hunting submarines that lie low at sea. We will be keeping these, and everything else in the yard for the time being.

We were still tendering for ships up until Friday when British Shipbuilders announced the complete closure of the yard by 27 April. We were on the short-list for orders from the MOD and for a Caledonian McBrayne ferry, but we were informed last week that we were no longer being considered for the MOD tractor tugs and that the tender for the ferry had been stopped.

What annoyed the men was that we were stopped from tendering for work when there was still the chance of an order coming here. Obviously BS made their mind up this yard was to close, even in the light of the orders still being there. We are not prepared to accept that.

"We need your support"

We are looking for financial and moral support from the trade union movement throughout the country. We probably sacrificed some support when we decided on 23 December not to take part in the national strike, but, we took that decision because we had it on good authority this yard was due to be closed and that if we went on strike, we would not have been back in the yard, because there was no work.

They were going to lock the gates, and we would not have been fighting now to

keep the yard open. Our main concern was maintaining our yard here and maintaining our jobs.

We would say to the trade union movement—don't hold that decision against us, that was the only way we kept this yard open. Back us because it is not just Henry Robb's; we are carrying the flag for the whole trade union movement.

We have had phone-calls from shipyards on the Tyne with financial support, and confirmation from yards on the Clyde that they understand our position and will support us. We are looking for as much support as possible to win this fight.

This is a fight to save the whole shipbuilding industry, and we can show an example to other small yards how to fight back and not just accept things.

Please send messages of support and donations to: The Henry Robb Occupation Committee, c/o Leith Labour Party, 12 Leith Walk, Edinburgh.

Tory democracy?

THE TORIES' proposals for electoral reform, published last week show the lengths to which they will go in order to prop up their vote.

Britons living abroad will now be entitled to vote in Parliamentary and Euro-elections, but not local elections. It seems the Tories are prepared to go to great lengths to accommodate their tax-exile friends.

Polling stations will now close at 9 pm, not 10 pm as before: this will especially hit shift workers, not the Tories' main voters.

Deposits, which have to be paid before the election, will be raised from £150 to £1,000. When combined with the attack on the trade unions political levy it is a clear attempt to hamstring the Labour Party. Instead of having to raise £100,000 for deposits, £650,000 will be needed in future.

Political chicanery is nothing new to the Tories and the ruling class and these new undemocratic attacks must be resisted by the labour movement.

By Paul Homes

Fight for every job

Continued from page one.

what I thought caused the Toxteth riots. When I said I thought the police were partly to blame, I was never asked back."

"It was the biggest break of my life when I started for the Council", said John. "On the dole, every giro would be used up as soon as it arrived and I began to fall further and further behind with my rent. From my first full week's wages of £90 I paid £60 in rent arrears."

Kevin talked about the expected confrontation between the city council and the Tories. "As soon as I get a job the government want to take it off me. But they're going to have a hell of a fight to do that."

John added, "if Councils are willing to risk everything to give me a job and a future then I'll back them all the way; all the council's workforce are behind them. I have seen the bottom of the pit; now I have a job, I've re-gained my self respect and nobody's going to take that away from me."



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Nicaragua, El Salvador

LAST WEEK Wille Griffin, recently returned from a visit to NICARAGUA, outlined the advances made since the revolution in 1979.

This week, he looks at the threats to Nicaragua from the capitalist class as US troops based in Honduras openly operate over the border.

A revolution in danger

THE UNITED STATES' ruling class has had a long and bloody history of military involvement in Nicaragua.

In the middle of the last century William Wallier, operating on behalf of the bankers Morgan and Garrison, invaded Central America with a band of hired assassins.

Wallier proclaimed himself President of Nicaragua, El Salvador and Honduras and restored slavery to Central America. This proud exponent of slavery was some years later welcomed back to New York with a ticker tape parade and given the status of National Hero by Wall Street.

US Marines occupied Nicaragua from 1912-25 and again in 1926 after civil war broke out over the outcome of a US supervised election. The US intervened to "protect American lives and property" General Smedley D Butler, who headed many of the expeditions, gave the real reason for US military involvement when he wrote in his diary in 1935:

"Racketeers for capitalism"

"I spent 33 years and four months in active service as a member of our country's most agile military force—the Marine Corps. I served in all the commissioned ranks from 2nd Lieutenant to Major General. And during that time I spent most of my time being a high class murderer for big business, for Wall Street and for the bankers.

"In short I was a racketeer for capitalism... Thus I helped make Mexico, especially Tampico safe for American oil interests in 1914. I helped make Haiti and Cuba a decent place for the National and City Bank to collect reserves in... I helped purify Nicaragua for the international banking house of Brown Brothers in 1909 and 1912. I brought light to the Dominican Republic for American sugar interests in 1916. I helped make Honduras "right" for fruit companies in 1903." The underlying motives have not changed.

While wholeheartedly condemning any intervention by US imperialism in Central America, serious socialists also have a duty to examine potential weaknesses of the regime in Nicaragua.

No trust in the capitalists

The leaders of the Sandinistas time and again outlined to us that the aims of the Nicaraguan revolution were, "for national sovereignty, the mixed economy and democracy". They argued against nationalisation of big factories and landowners because of the need to build an alliance with the "patriotic bourgeoisie" or to avoid "provoking US intervention".

This is a disastrous policy; the same arguments were used by the

Popular Unity government in Chile right up to the coup d'état in September 1973 when the "patriotic" capitalists supported the so-called "democratic" army chiefs in crushing the government and the working class movement.

The FSLN regime have bent over backwards to assure big business that capitalism is safe in Nicaragua and that they are not in the business of fermenting revolutions throughout the region. Yet this policy far from placating big business has only emboldened them.

The *Wall Street Journal* (3 January) said: "For the past two years, US policy has been to pressure the Sandinistas to end their support for insurgents in El Salvador and move towards democracy at home... but US policy makers now believe that these concessions aren't enough. They contend that only the replacement of the Sandinista government will promote long-term stability in Central America."

Capitalism is absolutely incapable of developing any of the countries of Central America. Throughout its whole history capitalism has underdeveloped the region. In Nicaragua capitalism can play no "progressive" role whatsoever, the capitalists along with the big latifundists are reactionary to the core.

Since 1979 the capitalists have failed to invest a single cordoba. They are maintaining industry on a "care and maintenance" basis. Given the opportunity the openly capitalist daily *La Prensa* would join the employers' federation COSEP in openly supporting the Contras.

Dangers of bureaucratism

If the Sandinistas were to reverse their present policy of support for the 'mixed economy' and end the last vestiges of landlordism and capitalism that would be a tremendous step forward—and greatly facilitate defence of the revolution. But for the building of socialism, this would not be the end of the matter.

The FSLN at present enjoy massive popular support but that does not alter the fact that no organs of workers' democracy—like the soviets in Russia in 1917—exist in Nicaragua. In fact in the last four years a number of left wing union leaders have been imprisoned by the FSLN regime when they agitated for higher wages which the FSLN say "the country can't afford".

The working class are not as numerically dominant in the Nicaraguan population as they are in the giants of Latin America. If capitalism was abolished without



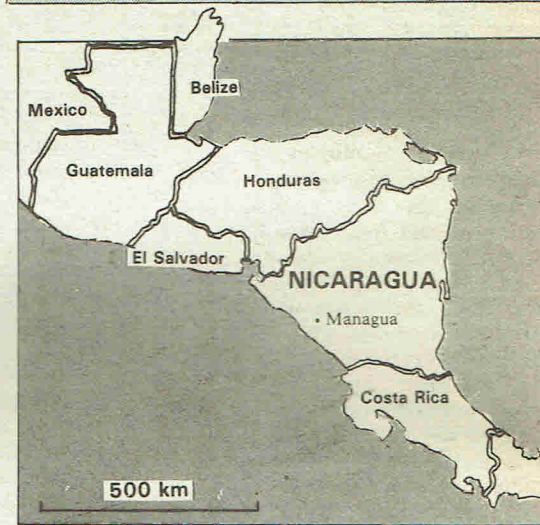
Photo: Pietro Gigli (IFL)



Photo: Pietro Gigli (IFL)

ABOVE: Funeral of reservists killed fighting the contras.

BELOW LEFT: Sandinistas wounded in a skirmish in the northern part of Jinotega region.



Demoralisation hits El Salvador's army

EL SALVADOR is the country at the centre of events in Central America.

The military victories in the new year offensive of FMLN (Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front) guerrillas has highlighted the state of demoralisation in the Salvadorean armed forces.

Guerilla gains

The spectacular destruction of the Cuscatlan bridge on the Pan-American Highway on New Year's Day was attributed to the fact that the 200 troops guarding the bridge were either drunk or absent from duty. One senior US diplomat reported "an over-

whelming collapse in morale in the Salvadorean army." (*Daily Telegraph*, 4 January, 1984)

The Kissinger Commission representing both Democrats and Republicans in the USA has recommended that the Salvadorean Army must have \$300 million in military aid in 1985 to stand any chance of defeating the guerrillas. Congress has already approved \$64.8 million in military aid for this year although the Reagan Administration is seeking to increase this by a further \$100 million.

Gone is the "democratic" facade of the Carter administration which was forced to at least publicly link

increased aid to regimes in Central America with improvements on their human rights record.

New aid from USA

Now aid will be given regardless of the fact that right wing death squads have claimed between 25,000 and 40,000 victims in recent years. This change in policy represents the growing desperation of US imperialism in the face of increasingly successful guerrilla movements in Central America inspired by the victory of the FSLN in Nicaragua in 1979.

The United States have made the military preparations for war in

Central America. The Kissinger report has fully backed the policies of Reagan in Central America. It aims to prepare American public opinion for the possibility of US military intervention.

Military intervention

If increased aid to Salvadorean Army fails to stem the growing success of the FMLN guerrillas the US could have "no alternative" but to intervene directly in El Salvador but such a conflict by its very nature would not be limited to El Salvador. It would involve the whole region including Nicaragua.

the establishment of workers' committees, the FSLN would inevitably travel in the direction of a regime in the image of Cuba.

Already there are examples of how the FSLN, with their membership restricted to 5,000 members are becoming a privileged elite. Along with other shortages Nicaragua faced a shortage of toys at Christmas but membership of the FSLN gave special access to toys.

The victory of the Nicaraguan revolution in 1979 was a shattering blow to imperialism and remains an inspiration to all the oppressed in Latin America.

Nevertheless, every worker and youth fighting to transform society must recognise that the model of the Nicaraguan revolution based on guerrilla struggle and refusing to go

beyond the narrow borders of Nicaragua has severe limitations. At best it can achieve a society in the image of Cuba or Russia after the bureaucracy usurped control—a proletarian bonapartist regime. At worst it could be crushed by Reagan and the capitalist class.

Workers democracy

The model of the Russian revolution of 1917 where the working class in the towns took power and established workers' democracy as the first step to international socialism is more relevant to the countries of South America and to El Salvador where there is a strong working class.

The establishment of one workers' democracy in any coun-

try in Latin America, with a policy of internationalism would inevitably inspire workers throughout South, Central and North America and make possible a socialist federation throughout the continent.

Correction 3 February

The editors wish to apologise for any confusion caused by the wrong placing of type in last week's article. We hope this did not detract from the value of the report.