

Militant

The Marxist Paper for Labour and Youth

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Big Sale for rich...

FOR THE rich, 1986 promises to be an even more prosperous new year. The sale of British Gas is the latest, and biggest opportunity so far for public assets to be looted so that fortunes can be made by speculators.

British Airways will follow, with more sales planned in the water and bus industries and services run by local authorities and hospitals.

"It is immoral and obscene" said John Edmonds, leader of the General Municipal Boilermakers and Allied Trades Union, "to put public money into the pockets of those few people who can afford not only to buy the initial shares but can also trade on the markets

to build up a substantial holding."

In all the other privatised industries, initial plans to limit the size of shareholdings and maintain a high level of ownership by employees have come to nothing. As Neil Kinnock has pointed out, nearly half of British Telecom's £900 million profits made in the year since it was privatised went to shareholders who owned 98 per cent of the shares. "Workers in the industry only own 1.9 per cent of the shares", he added. Denationalisation is a blatant device for transferring wealth from the state to a tiny minority of individuals and giant companies.

Labour must back re-nationalisation

IT IS the clear policy of the Labour Party that the next Labour government will re-nationalise all public assets hived off by the Tories. This has always been regarded as a top priority.

It is scandalous therefore that Neil Kinnock has now said that renationalisation will have to take its place at the end of a long queue. Priority, he declared, will be given to regenerating production, investment and unemployment. Even right-

wing MP John Golding has demanded that rena-

tionalisation must be given top priority. Public ownership, not just



Neil Kinnock

of the privatised industries, but all the major private monopolies which control the economy, under democratic workers' control and management, is the key to regenerating the economy. So long as industry stays in the hands of the sharks who are about to sink their teeth into British Gas, British Airways and all the other industries planned for sell-off, there can be no hope of providing jobs or decent living standards for working people.

The December meeting of the Labour Party Na-



tional Executive Committee should have been an opportunity to draw up plans for a new offensive against the Tories in 1986. Yet it devoted the whole of the meeting to more expulsions, internal wrangles and attacks on the democratic rights of Labour Party members.

Not one anti-Tory decision was taken. It heard the appeal of Sheffield City Councillor Paul Green who has been expelled for his support for *Militant*. Despite him having the backing of the Sheffield Council Labour Group, his expulsion

went through—but only by one vote which shows the growing hesitation of the soft left to back Kinnock and the right wing in their attacks.

Undemocratic

Much to the fury of ordinary Party members, the NEC went on to interfere with the affairs of local parties. It ordered the reselection procedure in Stoke-on-Trent North to be retaken. It gave the new reselection in Bristol South the go ahead.

It suspended St Helens South and St Helens North for alleged 'irregularities'. It is no coincidence that all four parties fingered by the NEC are seats of MPs facing reselection. This will be seen by the party ranks as little more than a crude attempt to protect the parliamentary careers of MPs acceptable to the Labour leadership, despite the wishes of the local parties.

As *Militant* warned, this is the cost of a witch-hunt. The attacks on *Militant*

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Make socialism the priority for 1986

NEIL KINNOCK recently complained to an interviewer that the press were paying too much attention to Labour's internal affairs and not enough to its policies. Why then, the interviewer could have replied, did the last Labour Party NEC not discuss the Anglo-Irish agreement, the JMB scandal, the Social Security cuts, the economy or any other important issue? Why did they devote hours discussing only expulsions, inquiries and other forms of policing its own membership?

In fact the preoccupation of the leadership with disciplining Marxists in the Party is both a cover and a necessary part of a significant rightward shift in policy last year. Despite six and half years of the most reactionary post-war government, the Labour leadership are moving away from any firm commitment to roll back the tide of Thatcherism.

A policy of "full employment" has given way to a "full policy of employment", whatever that

means. Guaranteed jobs for school leavers are dubbed "impossibilist". The most recent retreat has seen the demand for renationalisation pushed back to "low priority", meaning it will not be done at all.

The Tories have plundered public assets by selling them off cheap to their City friends, giving the money back to the same people as tax cuts. Billions of pounds are made by City sharks in this way yet there is no urgency to take back the stolen goods.

Neil Kinnock has argued that the priority for the next Labour government is to create jobs and investment. But in a capitalist system investment will only take place where there is a guaranteed profit and that can only mean sacrifices by working people. The logic of the Labour leadership's policy leads inevitably to attempting to manage capitalism better than the Tories, to a Hattersley-TUC wages policy and counter-reforms.

Kinnock's condemnation of the most modest demands of a future Labour Government as "impossibilist" are an indication of the decay of traditional reformism in the modern Labour Party.

Unfortunately, the trade union leaders, left and right, have accepted the same limitations as the Labour leaders, the limitations of the capitalist system. They now argue against their own members' wish to struggle against the tide of Toryism and are content to negotiate the "least bad" cuts and redundancies they can get away with. Even many former "lefts" in the party have swung across to the right

and accepted the rigid restraints of capitalism with its logic of cuts, wage restraint and new realism... and of witch-hunts in the Party.

It is not an accident, therefore, that the Marxists in the Labour Party are under attack from all sides: they are the only authentic voice to articulate the aspirations of workers. Ironically, the Marxists are the only "reformists" left in the party.

As the leadership have moved right, the rank and file, and even more, the workers not yet involved in the party, have moved left. The bitter experiences of the Tory government and the growing excuses and prevarications of the Labour and trade union leadership will continue to push workers towards the Marxist wing of the Party. The experience of Liverpool City Council, considerably influenced by Marxist ideas, has shown that it is possible to mobilise and fight against the Tory government.

The supporters of *Militant* will fight every inch of the way against every expulsion, through Party branches, CLP's, conferences, and above all through shop-stewards committees, trade union branches and recruitment to the Party. Moreover, they will do so in the knowledge that ideas cannot be suppressed.

This year will see a big growth in support for Marxism. With the collapse of the former lefts into a new right, Marxism will become the official left opposition in the Party, and that in turn, will be only a prelude to such ideas becoming a majority in the organised working class.

Claims on Militant refuted

Hatton grilled by 'McCarthyite' TV

BEFORE CHRISTMAS *Channel Four News* claimed it had discovered the 'constitution' of a group called the 'Revolutionary Socialist League', which they said proved that *Militant* was an organisation.

Leading the 'investigation' team, was *Channel Four* reporter and author Michael Crick whose books on *Militant* and Arthur Scargill have been used by the Tory press to attack the left of the labour movement.

Crick claimed he had unearthed documents given to Manchester Polytechnic by life long socialist Jimmy Deane. Crick could not actually produce them but said an academic friend had taken notes.

Jimmy Deane wrote to *Militant* after he had been visited by Crick: "Mr Crick did not mention or show me any document other than the so-called 'RSL constitution'. This was written in long hand—not by him but a friend.

"I was amazed to see the *Channel Four* news later which produced 'minutes of a finance committee' with names of those who attended. This is an absolute forgery.

"I agree that way back in 1956 I may have written or been party to this or that document. Of course, the Marxists have to organise in the same way as the right wing in the Labour Party, who have all the funds and the trade union block votes in their favour. That is my opinion."

"It in no way involves *Militant* which is a tendency paper like *Tribune* and like them has its editors, reporters, supporters and sellers.

"The capitalists and their agents will twist and distort everything—history, religion and so on, to maintain their power. The hysteria of the *Mirror*, or the concern of the *Times*, is simply because they fear the voice of Marxism."

The World in Action programme on Derek Hatton (ITV, 16 December) was, under the auspices of news reporting, a vicious attempt at character assassination.

In McCarthyite style it raised all the old allegations that have been answered time and again by Hatton and Liverpool City Council. Much of its 'evidence' was based on the unsubstantiated outbursts of a former 'friend', Irene Buxton. Hatton's former boss was also produced. The outrageous claims were treated as fact—any attempt by Hatton to give a reply was either shouted down or edited out.

Such was the rabid nature of the programme that even sections of Fleet Street were forced to question its validity. The *Sunday Times*—not noted for its support for left wing labour councils—admitted (December 22) "...this was not an interview, this was an interrogation."

The *Sunday Times* TV reviewer Byron Rogers went on to write of chief "public prosecutor" Irene Buxton: "I saw Madame de Farge on

Monday night. She was not knitting under the guillotine, she was too busy building the thing. No one who saw *World in Action* will forget that vision of vengeance. 'Did you see the eyes?' asked a man in a pub in Stoke-on-Trent."

Dismissed

The programme's allegations were dismissed by columnist Jack McLean in the *Glasgow Herald* (20 December) who described: "...how Hatton had been approached first and told they would go ahead with all sorts of allegations whether he appeared on it or not. About how they managed to insinuate at one point that Hatton drank. There was an implication that he drank heavily in shady boxing clubs. In fact, Hatton is one of those chilly political fellows who sips a half pint all night. The boxing club was in reality raising money for charity.

"The well-made point about Hatton's use of the municipal car avoids the reason why he uses it. He writes in the back of it in-

stead of driving himself. So does our own (Glasgow) Provost Bob Gray and it makes bloody sense at that. As for all that blah about using Swiss bank loans—so does every local authority in Britain."

It would take a book to answer the lies and smears that the producers of *World in Action* packed into that half hour programme. But such was its vehemence that most workers will see through it. The attitude of ordinary Labour voters was best summed up by a 75 year old man who wrote in the *Glasgow Evening Times* shortly after the *World in Action* diatribe:

"I shook hands with Derek Hatton twice on Thursday evening. I attended a meeting organised by the Militant Tendency. Derek was the principal speaker. I sat on one of the front seats facing him and I paid particular attention to his forehead and feet. There was no sign of horns or shape of cloven feet, as I had half expected after reading so much about him lately."

By a Militant reporter

The Tory press will have a field day in presenting the Labour Party as split as divided.

The next two years will see the build up for what may be the most important general election in post war Britain. Labour Party members and trade unionists want a united party. They want to get on with the job of fighting the Tories around the socialist policies democratically decided by the movement.

The Labour leadership must be told firmly that there must be no repeat of the disgrace of the 18 December NEC—the witch-hunt must stop here, the offensive against the Tories must begin.

By Bob Wade



Kate Losinska, right wing president of the CPSA who was awarded the OBE in this year's honours list. Socialists in the union will look for their honours from the union's rank and file.

Anger at expulsions

THERE HAS been widespread anger in Wales at the expulsion of three *Militant* supporters from Cardiff South and Penarth Labour Party—the seat of former prime minister Jim Callaghan.

The party general committee voted, on 13 December, by 32 to 18 for the expulsions.

The three—Andrew Price, Dave Bartlett and Dianne Mitchell—refused to attend

the meeting. They kept away after the outrageous treatment they received at the previous executive meeting where they were denied a proper hearing, while they were only given three days notice of the general committee meeting which would decide on their expulsion—which is against Labour Party rules.

Action against these undemocratic and unjust expulsions will be continued.

Defeat for right wing

A RIGHT wing plan to expel ten Labour Party members in Stevenage has been thwarted by legal action.

The expulsion of ten *Militant* supporters was to be bulldozed through at the December general committee of the Stevenage party. However, the right wing's move for expulsion was made at an unconstitutional executive meeting while the rights of those facing expulsion, as outlined in the Labour rule book, were trampled over.

The ten under threat sought a High Court injunction. On the advice of Labour Party headquarters, the right wing then called off

the December party meeting. One of the ten, president of Stevenage Trades Council Steve Glennon, told *Militant*: "This is a victory. Labour Party members here have shown they will not let the right-wing ride roughshod over the democratic rights of individual members.

The tragedy is that we had to go to court to find basic justice. We want to get on with the job of fighting the Tory government, yet we have to continually look over our shoulders to watch out for the right-wing."

A campaign has been launched to finance the defence of those under threat.

Liverpool, Old Swan by-election

Council stands by its record

DESPITE THE suspension of Liverpool District Labour Party, members of the party are canvassing hard to ensure that Ann Hollinshead, a Merseyside county councillor, wins the seat for Labour in the Old Swan city council by-election on 9 January.

Every obstacle has been put in the way of a Labour victory. The smears in the press, and the allegations against the party and the council have been designed to divert attention from the council's record on housing, education and the defence of jobs and services.

The Alliance candidate, managing director Glynn Parry, is hoping to capitalise on the concert of attacks on Labour—but the Alliance has nothing to offer the people of Old Swan except a reversal of all Labour's reforms and a return to cuts in jobs and services and high rents and rates.

The support for Labour's programme was shown in 1984 when Peter Lloyd, who was since killed in a car crash, overturned a Liberal majority of 1,000 and won a Labour majority of 990.

Housing repairs for local needs

HOUSING REPAIRS is one of the main issues among Old Swan council tenants.

Contrary to the critics who accuse the council of being over-centralised, in Old Swan housing maintenance has been re-organised to ensure the service is in touch with local needs.

The council inherited problems from the Liberal/Tory administration of lack of funding and a demoralised workforce.

Mary Jennings spoke to councillor Peter Ferguson, deputy chairman of housing about these problems and how the council is solving them.

"Previously other authorities spent £200 per dwelling per year on repairs and Liverpool only spent £64. People were waiting for months and months for basic repairs and weeks for emergency repairs. This was a situation we just couldn't allow to continue.

"We are trying to solve the problems in two ways. Firstly, we are introducing a system of 'cyclical maintenance', which means that Old Swan will have its own team of workers based in the area operating out of a caravan instead of a depot several miles away. The system works on a four week cycle, so instead of a plumber travelling half way across the city finding the tenant is not in and travelling back to his depot again, he

will be given a number of jobs in one street.

"A tenant can go to the caravan and arrange another appointment with the foreman for the work to be done later if they were out.

"Not like the nonsense you have had where a joiner will call and fit a window frame and then it won't be painted for months—all trades will operate from the caravan. If the tenant is not satisfied with the job, there is easy access to the workmen to make a complaint.

Neighbourhood offices

"The second way in which we are trying to solve the problem is by getting rid of the old housing offices, which are bad for both tenants and staff, and replacing them with new neighbourhood offices. These will be open plan, not like the ones we have at the moment which have a very hostile atmosphere with iron grills.

"There will be 19 of these offices spread throughout the city. The person you see behind the counter will see your case through to the end. At the moment, cases pass through many people.

"This would be beneficial to staff and tenants as the staff will take a lot more interest in their work and develop a more caring attitude, and the tenants will get a better service".



Canvassing in Old Swan in new housing estate built by council.

A pensioner who has moved to a council bungalow in Old Swan from where she used to live in a housing estate just on the outskirts of Liverpool said:

"I used to live in a high rise flat which as you can imagine was terrible for an elderly person to have to climb several flights of stairs every day to go shopping. Some elderly folk never go out because of invalidity. They become a virtual prisoner in their flat. I have just moved into one of the city council bungalows that has recently been built. As far as I am concerned it is a palace. It has a front and back garden and part of the nearby road has been blocked off for more privacy. I really would not have predicted living in something like this five years ago. I'm just sorry that other elderly folk are still stuck in

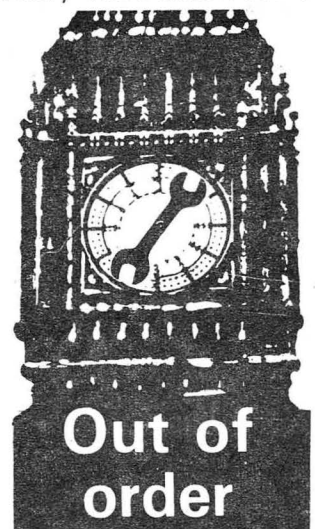
those ridiculous, concrete monstrosities. I hope the council keeps up the good work and builds a lot more of these bungalows."

A further education student at Old Swan Tech said:

"If the city council carried out cuts in education then the FE colleges would be abolished overnight. The council has got to stand firm. If I was not at college I would just be rotting on the dole with nothing to do... The Tories talk about re-training and learning new skills but if the City Council carried out Tory cuts it would destroy the very institutions that offer training facilities. I certainly will not be voting Liberal or Tory because leaving them in charge of the city education budget would be like leaving Dracula in charge of blood bank.



Croxteth community school saved after Labour took control. Labour's reforms in education would be swept away with the Alliance in power.



DAVE NELLIST MP for Coventry South East condemned the proposals in the White Paper on social security reform as disgraceful. He especially deplored the intention to deprive 16 and 17 year olds of any right to benefit:

"The Tories are once again attacking the weakest and most needy sections of society. Pensioners, the unemployed and young people in particular, are being pushed into the most abject poverty. This White Paper clearly shows that the Tories are the party of the rich, and for the rich. They are not interested in maintaining even the minimum levels of welfare for those whom they consider surplus to requirements.

Once again young people are bearing the brunt of the attacks. Sixteen and seventeen year olds are being stripped of any benefits in their own right; they are being classed as children. This is clearly an attempt to further coerce young school leavers into accepting YTS places or other slave labour low paid jobs.

"In addition young single people under 25 years who live on their own will no longer be entitled to additional money as householders. Young people are being forced by vicious attacks to live off their parents until they are 18 years old and even after then they will be forced to remain living at home until they reach 25. The Tory government, not working class families, is responsible for this sick society which is incapable of providing jobs for youth.

"Young people should join with the Youth Trade Union Rights Campaign and the Labour Party Young Socialists to overturn these proposals, to get rid of this Tory government and to fight for a decent future for youth".

Support for purge narrows on Labour's executive

By a Militant reporter

THE OUTRAGE of the ranks of the Labour Party at the new witch-hunt is beginning to bring pressure on the Labour leadership.

At the December national executive meeting, the leadership pushed through the expulsion of Sheffield councillor Paul Green—but only by one vote.

Many of those on the soft left voted against the expulsion, including David Blunkett, Michael Meacher,

Eddie Haigh, Tom Sawyer and Audrey Wise.

It is hoped the soft left are beginning to realise the dangers of the path they are taking. As Paul Green pointed out, speaking from the floor at an LPYS public meeting in Sheffield, the 'left wingers' who previously supported the inquiry into Liverpool, including David Blunkett, must now realise that they have opened up a floodgate for more expulsions, witch-hunts and in-

quiries. They must stop now. He added that although his expulsion went through, the fight goes on.

Despite the fact that the attack on Liverpool and the continued expulsions was launched during the lull of the Christmas holiday period, the ranks of the movement are already making their protests felt. At the Sheffield LPYS meeting, which heard speaker Tony Mulhearn of Liverpool City Council, two leading shop

stewards from current major disputes in the city—at Sheffield Forgemasters and Craven Tastan—made it clear they wanted to fight the Tories and defend trade union rights, not attack other socialists.

Paul Green also has the backing of the Sheffield City Labour Party leadership and the Council Labour Group.

In the Midlands, in the wake of unprecedented media attention after Tory

Party chairman Norman Tebbit's outburst in parliament against *Militant*, a very successful anti-witch hunt rally was held in Birmingham. Despite being held on the main shopping day before Christmas, over 100 people attended, raising £300 for the fighting fund.

Bristol Labour Party members have also registered their opposition. The right wing on Bristol North West party executive attempted to suspend the local LPYS

branch and dismiss the youth officer. The Party's general committee refused to take the resolution and referred it back to the executive.

The executive of Bristol East Labour Party has condemned the inquiry into Liverpool. Party spokesman Ron Thomas said: "We feel that such moves are divisive and destructive and are used by the media to split and divide the labour movement."

Protest now!

ALREADY *MILITANT'S* petition against the inquiry into Liverpool District Labour Party and the generalised attacks on *Militant* has received enormous support. Up and down the country labour movement activists are registering their anger at the Labour leadership's actions. The Regional Committee of the DHSS South West and Wales Civil and Public Services Association have passed a resolution against the CPSA General Secretary Alistair Graham's attacks on *Militant*. At the meeting, 15 committee members also signed the petition and donated £11 to the fighting fund. It is not only the labour

movement who are protesting. At the Youth Trade Union Rights Campaign celebrity football match before Christmas, members of Madness and Style Council, along with three journalists from the *New Musical Express* signed the petition. Meanwhile despite Christmas and New Year being a 'quiet' period for the movement, protest resolutions are flooding into Labour Party headquarters. Besides Constituency Labour Parties and trade unions (see below) already seven Labour Women's Councils, over 45 ward Labour branches and numerous Labour Party Young Socialist branches have condemned the action.

Registering their opposition so far are:

Constituency Labour Parties

Garston, Mossley Hill, Withington, Blackley, Stockport, Rochdale, Sheffield Hillsborough, Sheffield Healey, Glasgow Shettleston, Birmingham Ladywood, Coventry North West, Coventry South East, Eastbourne, Hertford and Stortford, Bedford, Luton North, Hertsmere, Bethnal Green and Stepney, Hammersmith, Hampstead, Brent East, Deptford, Feltham and Heston, Hackney North and Stoke Newington, Hackney South and Shoreditch.

District Labour Parties

Besides the obvious opposition of Liverpool DLP, also Manchester City, Basildon, Brighton, Thamesdown.

Trade union organisations

Bakers' Union national executive, Bold NUM, Sutton Manor NUM, Wearmouth NUM, Seafeld SCEBTA, TGWU branches 6/612, 6/631, 6/51, 6/552 and 6/171, Wirral District Health NUPE, Gateshead NUPE, Guys Hospital NUPE shop stewards' committee, Paddington and Kensington NUPE, Tower Hamlets NUPE, East Ham NUR, Willesden No 1 NUR, Bedford and Luton NUR, GMBATU branches No 5, No 24, No 40 and Glasgow Cleansing Works, Bakers' Union North West Region, Liverpool NALGO, Liverpool Shipping ASTMS, Royal Insurance ASTMS, AUEW-TASS No 11, CPSA Longbenton, CPSA South West Regional Committee, Executive of NCU London Centre GMO, East of Scotland USDAW, Liverpool City Council Joint Shop Stewards' Committee, Rolls Royce Joint Staffs' Trade Union Committee.

Strike leader elected governor

THE TORY press have blown a gasket at the appointment of Young Socialist Ian Brooke as a school governor for the school from which he was expelled.

Ian Brooke, of Holme Valley LPYS in Huddersfield was nominated for the governor's position at Honley High School by his ward Labour Party. He was suspended from the school following his leading role locally in the school students' strike on 25 April. He was only allowed back to sit exams and despite the obvious difficulties he faced being barred from school, he passed two 'A' levels out of three.

The NUT at Honley are backing his appointment but the Tories are trying to claim he will be a 'disruptive influence on the school'. The local Tories have already demanded the Labour council remove him, obviously inspired by the Labour national leadership's current witch-hunting antics.

However, Brooke says he will use his position to fight education cut-backs and defend the rights of school students and staff—a task he has proved himself well qualified to carry out.

Sparkbrook expulsions

EVERY SECTION of the left in the Labour Party is at risk in the current atmosphere of witch hunting.

Birmingham Sparkbrook Labour Party expelled its only black councillor, Amir Khan, and another party member Kevin Scally on 26 November. Sparkbrook is Roy Hattersley's constituency and both party members had opposed the local party's right-wing positions on a number of issues. They were expelled for "bringing the party into disrepute". There

is no such rule in the party's constitution. Amir Khan had been involved in a campaign to establish a black section in the Labour Party.

Militant does not agree with this policy; we have consistently argued for active socialist campaigning on class issues and against racism as the best way to increase black and Asian worker's participation in the Labour Party. But such ideas need to be discussed inside the party, not used as an excuse to drum socialists out of the Labour Party.

Forgetting the past

IN THEIR support for the Labour leadership's attacks on *Militant* and Liverpool, the leaders of the white collar union NALGO are undergoing convenient amnesia.

At the annual general meeting of NALGO's North West and North Wales District Council, the union leaders backed the witch-hunt—even though the union is not affiliated to the Labour Party.

National Executive member Bill Gill spoke of the 'problems in Liverpool' and talked about the need to 'avoid a strike'. He forgot that strike action to back Liverpool council was actually the original recommendation of Liverpool NALGO branch.

General Secretary John Daly spoke scathingly of "Councillors Mulhearn, Byrne and Hatton" and told delegates to watch out for "resolutions from a par-

ticular tendency" at national conference. The leadership clearly intend to try to reverse the union's policies which call for joint council and union campaigns to defend local government jobs, and support for councils which are forced to approve deficit budgets to avoid cuts and massive rent and rate increases. This policy was first adopted by NALGO in 1984—moved by Derek Hatton, to a standing ovation.

Isolated

Along with amnesia comes bouts of unreality. The leadership is increasingly becoming isolated from the feelings of their membership. For example, Cheshire County branch, normally regarded as right wing, rejected a resolution at its AGM which called for "full opposition to *Militant* wherever it attempts to foist its policies on the membership."

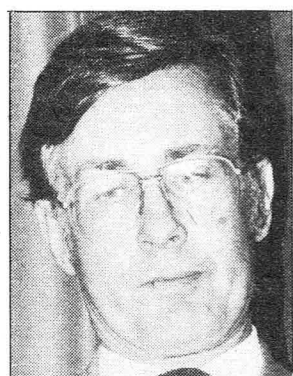
What the soft left said back in 1982

THE LABOUR leadership and the right-wing have been able to push through their witch-hunt mainly because of the acquiescence of the so-called 'soft left'.

By Bob Wade

article for *London Labour Briefing* titled "Resist the register—don't let them split us!"

In it she defended *Militant*: "I am a candidate for the NEC. But I certainly do not wish or expect all party



Micheal Meacher MP

members to be 'acceptable' to me, in their ideas, activities, or associations. I would have one criterion only—members would deserve expulsion if they stood against Labour candidates in council or Parliamentary elections..."

"...No-one has the right

to declare it (*Militant*) illegitimate. Supporters of *Militant* range from people of over 30 years membership to those who joined last month, and they all have as much right in the party as anyone else who signed the form.

"...I must say loud and clear that this persecution of the left is electorally damaging".

NEC member Michael Meacher MP, who backed the Liverpool inquiry and backed Kinnock against the NUM at last year's conference also warned of witch-hunts. In *Labour Weekly* (18 February 1983) he wrote that leading witch-hunter John Golding was "bleeding the party's election prospects to death."

Likewise, Labour Party officials would do well to re-read the editorial of the Labour Party magazine *New Socialist* of September/October 1982. Most Labour Party members would agree with its sentiments:

"...The expulsion of leading *Militant* supporters (is) wrong. The Labour Party always has been a broad collection that includes Marxists among its ranks. The *Militant* Tendency, drawing as it does upon

Trotsky's critique of Stalinism, belongs to this Marxist tradition and has a legitimate place within the Labour Party.

"The charge levelled against *Militant* is that it is a 'party within a party'—with closed meetings, a separate organisation and self-appointed leaders—is one that can be levelled with equal justification against other groups within the Labour Party on both the left and right.

"...The very existence of *Militant* and other groups within the Labour Party is a source of strength rather than of weakness. By working for the adoption of alternative policies and candidates, they assist the democratic functioning of the party".

Warning

The warnings of the left proved correct. The 1983 general election was a disaster for Labour, not only because the party was presented as being split and divided, but also because it detracted from Labour's policies, which in any case were hesitantly and half-heartedly presented by the leadership.



Photo: Militant

Kinnock on his way to the 1983 NEC meeting which expelled the *Militant* Editorial Board.

Since 1983 and the re-election of Thatcher, there has been an intensification of class battles, notably the miners' strike and Liverpool. The soft left, moving up the ladder behind Kinnock towards the Labour leadership, looked on those stark class struggles with horror and backed away. They justify their political nakedness with continual calls of 'don't rock the boat' and 'it'll be alright when Neil's elected...'

All the while the Tories through their control of Fleet Street, have stepped up their propaganda which—all in the interests of the Labour Party of course—is saying that Labour will only get to

power if it steers a 'sensible' course and ditches *Militant*, the miners and the left.

The soft left have fallen for it, they have learnt nothing. The Labour leadership are repeating the mistakes of 1983, and more so. The intensified attacks on *Militant* have split the party further. The leadership are now openly declaring they will abandon any semblance of Labour's programme once in office.

The soft left would do well to ignore the editorial columns of the millionaire-controlled national press, and spend more time pondering labour movement journals of 1982. Especially the articles they wrote.

Patronage and corruption

Second part of a two part article

IT IS ironic that the NEC has launched an inquiry into the Liverpool District Labour Party after a heroic struggle against the Tories. When there was ample evidence of real corruption and favouritism in the past this was covered up.

In "Liverpool on the Brink" by Michael Parkinson, the real position of the 1950s and 1960s Liverpool labour movement is graphically outlined:

"The importance of Catholicism meant Labour always had a very powerful right-wing presence, which guaranteed continuing ideological conflict within the party. It also contributed to a politics of personality, patronage, corruption and bossism in the Liverpool Labour Party which reached its acme under the Braddocks who ran the city in the 1950s and early 1960s, and has never been completely eliminated."

"Labour has also had a long tradition of appointing right-wing MPs who spent much of their career locked in conflict with their more left-wing constituency parties. Indeed in the late 1970s three of them defected to the Social Democratic Party either before or after being deselected. The classic case was Sir Arthur Irvine, the right-wing absentee MP for Edgehill, who had been Solicitor General in Wilson's Cabinet and survived many attempted coups before finally dying in office. But his inadequate tenure of office had laid the ground for the Liberals and David Alton to take over the constituency... Also at this time in the late 1960s, Labour was a typical inner city party machine—organisationally and politically bankrupt. It was short of money, members and organisation. Many of its sitting councillors were old, patronising and out of touch with their constituents. As a former councillor admitted, the party should have got rid of many of them but didn't. So the electorate did it for them."

Such was the real patronage, corruption and gangsterism in Liverpool under the domination of the old right-wing. In many cases those applying to join the moribund Labour Party were informed that their applications were being turned down because the party was 'full up'. There were no inquiries into these scandals, which led to the victory of the Liberal/Tory alliance between 1973 and 1983. This

By Rob Sewell

situation is a million light years away from the position of a thriving, democratic Labour Party that exists today.

Similarly, eleven years ago the NEC refused to hold an inquiry, demanded by many Party members into the real corruption in the North East which led eventually to 21, people nine of whom were local councillors, being convicted on corruption charges. Reg Underhill, the then National Agent and chief witch-hunter stated: "It is not the job of the National Agents of the Labour Party to set themselves up as CID". That has never stopped them before or since if it meant an attack on the left.

The corruption scandal led to the imprisonment of the builder and 'brains' behind the affair, John Poulson, T Dan Smith, and Andrew Cunningham, ex-member of Labour's NEC the then chairman of Durham County Council, the Northern Regional Council of Labour, Newcastle Airport Committee, the Northumbrian Water Authority and district secretary of the biggest union in the North East, the GMWU. Andrew Cunningham is the father of John Cunningham MP, Labour's present spokesman on local government. John Cunningham is the man who has constantly denounced the Liverpool councillors for breaking Tory laws to defend working people and has joined in the attacks of the 'evils' of *Militant*.

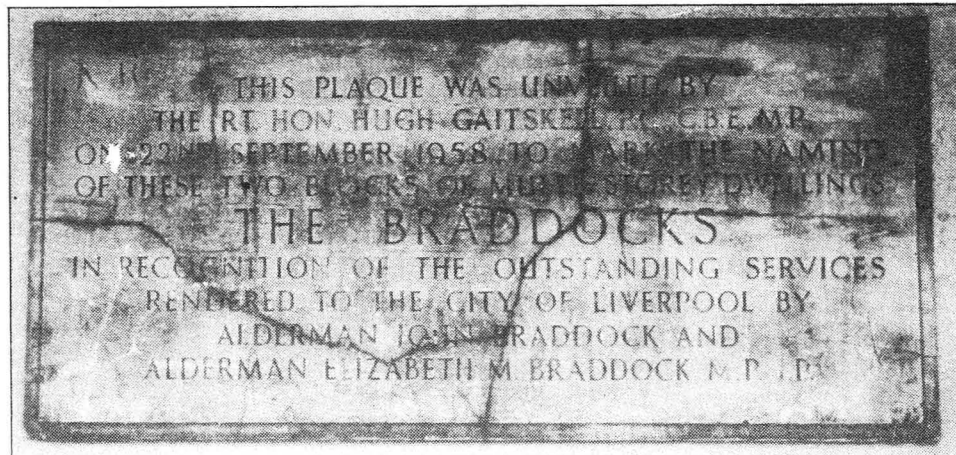
There is no suggestion that John Cunningham has ever been involved in corruption himself, but can he explain why the Labour leaders are so keen to investigate the left, but showed marked reluctance to expose right wingers involved in dubious patronage or corruption?

Andrew Cunningham did well for himself. As soon as he became GMWU District Secretary, he advised that John Poulson be engaged to design a new union building in Middlesbrough at a cost of about £17,000. According to the authors of the book

What Labour should be investigating



John Cunningham and Neil Kinnock on visit to Liverpool.



A cracked plaque on 'The Braddocks' some of the worst post-war housing in Liverpool—a fitting memorial to the former party bosses.

Web of corruption by Raymond Fitzwalker and David Taylor: "Poulson firmly believed that once a client was in for a penny, he was in for a pound".

Bungalow

As soon as the architect's plans were examined the costs had rocketed to £105,000, excluding fees! The union subsequently agreed on a three-storey building costing initially £40,000, but a second phase development could be undertaken later. It was opened in February 1968, after which Cunningham took his family to the Acapulco Hotel, Palma. His friendship with Poulson resulted in Cunningham getting £6,756 for holidays and monthly cheques to his wife. There were many other payments and back-handers from Dan Smith's companies. This was cheap, as Cunningham had pushed £½ million worth of

building in his direction.

Apart from a further £1,250 a year for Cunningham Senior, he moved to a posh bungalow in Chester-le-Street which he got for nearly half-price. He got the GMWU to give him a 110 per cent mortgage on it and insured it for more than twice what it actually cost him. It had been built and decorated by the contractor, Sid McCullough, who also sold John Cunningham (the present MP) a house. He was then a research officer of the GMWU.

McCullough made a considerable profit due to his contacts in politics. Three powerful Labour councillors—one related to Andy Cunningham—were all receiving gifts from him. Some of those involved in their intrigues were known as the 'Cunningham Gang' and met every Saturday morning at the Three Tuns in Birtley.

Andrew Cunningham used his influence over the

GMWU to gain control of the Chester-le-Street Labour Party. He split his union branches as soon as the membership reached 500 in order to increase his delegates to the party. The GMWU captured all nine trade union seats on the executive and the seat became GMWU sponsored.

Whitehaven

However, such 'skills' were also employed to good effect in the Whitehaven Labour Party. The sitting MP Joe Simon announced his retirement. According to Fitzwalker and Taylor, his likely successor, a GMWU official, Reed, was 'encouraged' by Cunningham Senior not to stand: "He could continue in his union job and be Mayor of Whitehaven but he could not be a parliamentary candidate as well. Reed dropped out of the running for the Whitehaven seat".

A union official was despatched to Whitehaven and soon increased the number of GMWU affiliated members, won over some other sections and got some nominations for his son, John Cunningham. On selection day, Cunningham junior won and subsequently became MP for Whitehaven (now Copeland).

Poulson went bankrupt and criminal charges were brought against him. On 15 March Poulson—tracked down and brought to trial—pleaded guilty to charges of conspiracy together with Andrew Cunningham, T Dan Smith and others. At the Leeds Crown Court, Smith was accused of organising a fifth column of councillors and aldermen for Poulson. Peter Taylor QC stated: "It was their clear object to extend this web of corruption over local councils the length and breadth of the land". Together with Cunningham Senior they were all found guilty and given long prison sentences.

Tip of iceberg

These incidents are merely the tip of the iceberg. The more 'inquiries' and witch-hunts take place against genuine socialists, the more rank and file Labour Party members will demand an inquiry into patronage, business links, and possible real corruption of some right wing MPs and their ominous links with bodies funded by intelligence organisations.

The only reason why the capitalist press had launched a campaign of character assassination and lies against Liverpool Labour Party is the heroic stand that they took. The Labour and trade union leadership are embarrassed by their lack of fight. It is to deflect this scandalous inactivity and even capitulation to the Tories, that *Militant* and the Liverpool DLP have been singled out for a show-trial. Despite these attacks, *Militant* and the struggle for socialism in Liverpool and elsewhere will grow from strength to strength.

- End business patronage and corruption!
- Defend the Liverpool Party!
- Defeat the witch-hunt!
- For a democratic, accountable Labour Party and trade unions!
- Labour to power on socialist policies!

When NEC blocked Poulson inquiry

THE LABOUR Party NEC has expressed its determination to investigate thoroughly all the allegations of "intimidation" and "malpractice" in Liverpool, dreamed up by the Tory press.

To add fuel to the raging campaign of lies and abuse, the press have also added that the NEC inquiry will be prepared to hand over evidence "to the police", im-

plying that the smears have substance.

Eleven years ago the NEC refused to hold the inquiry so many party members demanded when there was real corruption in the North East, leading to the jailing of Andrew Cunningham, father of Labour's Environment spokesman John Cunningham.

He was described as the most powerful man in the county of Durham. His

union was, and still is, the largest union in the Northern Region.

Jailing

In May 1974, Northern Region Labour Party conference passed a resolution moved by Joan Maynard calling for a Labour Party inquiry into the question of corruption following the jailing of councillor Andrew Cunningham, an architect

named Poulson and others, including Dan Smith, once leader of Newcastle City Council.

It was carried by 306,000 to 166,000. However, the National Executive Committee was opposed to it.

Although an investigation was sent to the Northern Region by the NEC, it was specifically *not* to deal with the question of corruption, merely to look at the state of the Labour Party



Joan Maynard MP

and make a few recommendations about the relationship between the District Labour Parties and their

councillors.

The "Poulson Affair" as it came to be known, had a seriously damaging effect on the Labour Party—an effect which lasted for years. Many Party members believe that would not have been the case if the NEC had shown the same vigour in launching an inquiry then as it is now against councillors and Party members in Liverpool whose only "crime" is embarrassing the leadership by fighting for jobs, services and a housing programme.

By Bill Hopwood

Keep it coming!

THE MOVEMENT is giving its reply to the witch-hunters and the Labour leadership—over £11,000 collected for the *Militant* fighting fund in just three weeks; and at time when the movement 'goes to sleep' over Christmas.

Ordinary Labour Party members and trade unionists have shown their anger at the Labour leadership's attacks against Liverpool and *Militant*, by sending us donations. For every column inch of lies, abuse and distortions that pour out of Fleet Street, so the Christmas fivers for *Militant* have come through the post.

Money has come from Labour organisations, such as £20 each from Tenantry branch of the Brighton Labour Party and Brighton LPYS. At the National Union of Students conference—where Liverpool deputy leader Derek Hatton was voted top of the guest speakers poll—a fantastic £443 was collected at the conference readers' meeting.

Some of the best donations though have been from individuals. A Mr Chowney of Hackney sent £50 describing himself as "a member of Hackney NALGO who hopes Hackney will do a Liverpool next year".

The money has not only come from labour movement activists. From St Albans a retired former RAF Squadron Leader sent £20 subscription to *Militant* and a tenner for the fighting fund.

At *Militant* Readers Meetings currently being held up and down the country, hundreds of pounds have been collected. When *Militant* gets the chance to answer the lies of the Tory press about Marxism or the struggle in Liverpool, workers are eager to show their support.

But this must be just the start. As the labour movement gets back into motion after the Christmas break, make sure you ask for a donation as a measure of opposition to the Labour leadership's time wasting witch-hunt.

DONATIONS

L Demaine (Skipton Labour Party) £6, P Stamp (SCPS Leicester) £20, K Jackson (Leicester) £5.25, E Buchanan (Leicester) £1.25, A Potter (USDAW Leicester) £1, A Farnese (UCW Westminster) £5, M Perry (Islington Labour Party) £2.75, A Beer (Pensioner Islington) £2, P Bell (unemployed Gowerton) £10, S Meyler (unemployed Llanelli) £5, G Birks (UCATT Middleton) £3, T Woodman (Redhill) £1, B James (SOGAT) £2, T Winship (Lazenby Cleveland EET-PU) £10, R Staples (Keresley NUM) £4, FW Vasey (Batley) £6, A Vasey (Batley) £4, C Harvey (Battersea) £11, A Tees (NALGO Strathclyde) £15, D Cozens (Coventry) £25, J McLaughlin (NUPE Coventry) £3, S Partin (ASTMS Sheffield) £12, D Holmes £50, C Gould (COHSE Islington) £5, M Conway (NUT Leyton) £4.75, C Evans (NUJ Islington) £4.25, J Riley (Lambeth) £10, T Healey (NUPE Southwark) £11, A Winslade (Leyton Labour Party) £10, D Winfield (Liverpool) £10, P Shepherd (Brighton) £75, I Kemp (Rotherham LPYS) £10, C Hughes (CPSA Great Hampton) £10, A Buckley (Bristol) £25, B Kidd (Tooting) £4.

MILITANT READERS MEETINGS COLLECTIONS

Macclesfield £90, Paisley £17, Skipton £61, Glasgow £250, Birkenhead £95, Wakefield £45, Oxford £45, Bristol £75, Birmingham £103, Hull £200, Southend £165, Southwark £58, Stevenage £54, Enfield £53, Islington £56, Cardiff £66, Swansea £320, NUS Conference £443, Battersea £46.

CHRISTMAS SOCIALS

Wirral £96, West Wales £29, Harlow £18, Nottingham £41, Dagenham £33, Stevenage £33.

Sell Militant...

UNCONSTITUTIONAL threats of expulsion from the Labour party for selling *Militant* have not deterred our supporters. Far from it. Mass paper sales were held throughout the country on 14 December.

The West of Scotland did particularly well with 110 being sold in Glasgow City Centre, 30 in Motherwell and 37 in East Kilbride.

Sales were especially pushed in the areas where *Militant* supporters are being attacked. 50 were sold in Cardiff the day after Cardiff South Labour Party voted to expel three supporters. In Telford where local *Militant* sellers are also being witch-hunted another 50 were sold.

Up in Sunderland where shamefully the local Labour Council has even tried to ban sales of *Militant* in the

Civic Centre, 25 were sold along with a further 17 outside the Labour Club the previous evening.

Wrexham sellers sold 60, and went round door to door in the Gwersilt area, where one of the leading local party right wingers lives.

Other examples of good paper sales were 33 in Sheffield city centre, 52 in Southampton, 25 in Ashington and 28 in Stoke.

These sales show the real sympathy and support amongst ordinary people towards *Militant* when it is being attacked. Our sellers will be redoubling their efforts in 1986 to turn sympathy into new readers and new sellers.

By Jeremy Birch

FIGHTING FUND

Total since last paper £11,284

Quarter ends 31 January

Area	Received	% of target achieved	Target
1 London South West	976		1200
2 London West	1333		2750
3 London South East	890		2200
4 Humberside	783		2150
5 London East	1148		3350
6 Southern	1728		5450
7 Scotland West	1143		3800
8 East Midlands	854		3050
9 Eastern	926		3450
10 West Midlands	969		4500
11 Manchester/Lancs	827		4200
12 South West	427		2150
13 Wales West	597		2950
14 Northern	837		4650
15 Scotland East	533		3100
16 Yorkshire	954		5650
17 Merseyside	904		6850
18 Wales East	288		3050
Others	6503		5500
Total received	22620		70000

ads

CLASSIFIED
15p per word, minimum 10 words.
SEMI-DISPLAY

£2 per column centimetre. Three weeks for the price of two. *Militant* meeting ads free.

All advertisement copy should reach this office by Saturday.

SWINDON *Militant* Marxist Discussion Group meetings held monthly. Phone Martin on 24796 for details.

NOW AVAILABLE 1986 *Militant* poster calendar. £1.00 each plus postage and package. 50p each on orders of 10 or more—profit to your area Fighting Fund. Orders to 3-13 Hepscoot Road, London, E9 5HB. Cheques payable to *Militant*.

1986 DIARIES 60p, address books 60p, bookmarks 40p, plastic paper sleeves 20p, sew on badges 40p. Cheques to *Militant*, 10 Rodney Ct, Anson Drive, Sholing Southampton SO2

ENAMEL *Militant* badges: now available. Cost £1. Bulk orders (10 or more). Cost 75p each + 25p post and package. Contact: Fighting Fund Department, 3-13 Hepscoot Road, London E9 5HB.

Militant Winter Draw

Registered Promoter: D Smith, 14 Station Road, Brighton, Essex. £1,000 worth of prizes to be won.

- 1st prize Video Equipment worth £500.
 - 2nd prize Stacking Hi-Fi worth £300.
 - 3rd prize Portable TV worth £100.
 - 4th prize—5 prizes of £20 worth of socialist books.
- The draw takes place on Saturday 4 January, 1986. Price of tickets: 10p (ten pence).

All counterfoils, cash and unsold tickets to be returned to *Militant*, 3-13 Hepscoot Road, Hackney, London E9 by first post Saturday 4 January, 1986.

A3 POSTERS for sale. "Stop the racist attacks". 50 for £3 + £1 P&P; 100 for £5 + £1.50 P&P. Post free on orders of 200 or over. Send orders to: Bow and Poplar LPYS, c/o 172 East India Dock Road, London E14, or phone 01-515 1718, or 01-515 6222.

NEW PAMPHLET: "A socialist Programme for Brighton". Written by members of Brighton Labour Party. Which way forward for Labour councils after next May? Price 70p including postage from Geoff Jones 70 Hartington Road, Brighton, BN2 3PB.

New video: Liverpool fights the Tories

THIS INSPIRING 30 minute video was produced as a tribute to the courageous stand taken by Liverpool City Council to defend jobs and services against Tory cuts.

Made in the run up to the one day strike of council workers on 25 September this year, the programme captures the mood of the campaign, with 'on the spot' interviews with council workers as well as with the familiar faces of John Hamilton and Derek Hatton.

Cutting through the media hysteria about 'Red Wreckers', the video reveals the tremendous support for the council from broad layers of Liverpool's population who responded to the fighting lead offered by Labour.

Fight

As one of the city's unemployed puts it, "people have sat back for too long. Now they've seen someone doing something they've stood up and said 'count me in, like'. And they're not going to see that taken away from them. They're going to have to fight."

The video also deals with



The Liverpool City Council leadership march against the Tories.

the smear campaign conducted by the media against *Militant*. Richard Venton, Merseyside *Militant* spokesman answers some of the critics who have preferred to make personal attacks on individual council members' support for Marxist ideas, rather than highlight the important contribution *Militant* supporters have given to the campaign: "Liverpool Fights the Tories will be of interest to any socialist or trade unionist as it explains some of the background to the campaign, the need to build support amongst the

workforce, the important tactical considerations at setting a deficit budget and how the campaign was successful last year.

Made as it was in the heat of the struggle, it also gives an insight into the emotional side of struggle, as for example, when NUPE members supporting the council were refused a proper vote at one of the crucial pre-strike meetings. TV crews refused to film the scene outside the meeting where NUPE members expressed their disgust with Jane Kennedy's 'leadership.'

For a historic record of

Sell the MIR

YOUNG PEOPLE, miners and firemen are among the wide range of people in the Lothians who have brought copies of the latest *Militant International Review (MIR)*.

Workers understand the need for theory, and an analysis which gives a long term view. They see the need to master the method of Marxism in order to participate consciously in the struggle for socialism. That explains why 90 copies have already been sold in this area.

Alternative

One reader, who is a fireman, took five copies to his work and sold them all. In addition, many miners have brought copies, recognising as a result of the strike the need for a clear understanding of the way forward. Only *Militant* and the ideas of Marxism offer any feasible explanation and alternative to the Tory system we fought so bitterly for a year in the coalfields.

The *MIR* is by far the best theoretical and educational document produced in the labour movement. The highest level of discussion that Marxism can offer is contained in its pages. For every serious socialist the *MIR* should be an essential and indispensable weapon in his or her theoretical armoury. Buy it! Sell it! Use it to increase your level of political understanding.

The challenge is there to all readers—give the *MIR* the prominence it deserves. Make sure that you are using it properly. It can make socialism a lot clearer and victory for our class nearer.

By Joe Owens
Bilston Glen NUM

LIVERPOOL VIDEO 30 minutes on the achievements of the council and how the struggle developed. £5 to hire plus £5 deposit. £10 to purchase. Order from WEG, c/o 3-13 Hepscoot Road, London E9 5HB.



1985 - Year of struggle

THROUGHOUT ITS 21st anniversary year, *Militant* not only reported and commented on the news but was itself prominent in the events reported. Articles, TV programmes and speeches about the *Militant* and its supporters poured out, reaching a climax in December with the publicity surrounding the inquiry into Liverpool District Labour Party.

The bulk of this publicity was designed to distort and discredit our ideas and the personalities of those who support them. It was no accident that such a barrage of lies and vilification should have been fired in our direction. It expressed the fear of the big business interests who control the press, who reflect the thinking of their class in the boardrooms and corridors of power. They understand the potential attraction of Marxist ideas for millions of working people and are determined to try to blacken our name and force the Labour leaders to act on their behalf to drive our influence out of the Labour Party.

They have not the slightest hope of succeeding. The ideas of Marxism are increasingly attractive to workers because of the underlying crisis of British capitalist society, which *Militant* alone has fully understood and explained. Even the bad publicity will only serve to bring our paper to the eyes of wider layers of the working population.

1985 WAS a memorable year. It began with the closing chapter of the miners' strike, which was not the humiliating rout reported by the press and all too many within the leadership of the labour movement. It was an epic struggle which revived all the finest traditions of working-class combativity. The miners' fighting spirit helped to inspire the workers who have followed them into battle, like the Labour councillors and workers in Liverpool and the strikers at Silenight.

Although ending in a defeat, the miners' struggle proved that the Tories can be taken on and that the labour movement has not been ground down by the recession and all the attacks it has faced since Thatcher came to power.

Social chasm

The strike revealed the enormous chasm which has opened up within British society. At one end are the four million unemployed, the lost generation of the inner-city young whose anger exploded into riots, the low-paid workers who have seen the government wage a campaign to push down their meagre incomes even lower and the workers who face the future with no confidence that their job will still be there in a year's time.

At the other end are the sharks of the City of London, who have had an unprecedented year for making fortunes. London has now become the fraud capital of the world. The scandals at Johnson Matthey Bank and Lloyd's were just the tip of the iceberg of cor-

ruption and embezzlement, involving hundreds of millions of pounds. Company profits and directors' salaries reached new peaks, with ICI chairman John Harvey-Jones taking a rise of £2,230 a week to bring his annual salary to £287,261.

While the Tories were pussy-footing about over new laws to check big business crime, arguing that 'self-regulation' was the best method of policing the City of London, the new Public Order and Police and Criminal Evidence Acts were brought in to make it easier for the police to crack down on political opposition from the labour movement.

While new fortunes were being made through the privatisation of British Telecom and other nationalised industries, the Fowler proposals on Social Security foreshadowed new ways of paring down the already paltry payments to the old, sick, the bereaved and those in greatest need.

Underlying this widening gulf between the classes is the continuing crisis of the British capitalist economy. Throughout 1985, the Tory ministers tried to paint a picture of an economy moving ahead. "Production is at an all-time high" boasted Thatcher; "steady growth with low inflation" claimed Lawson. The reality is that manufacturing industry was producing less than in 1974. Britain now has a trade deficit in manufac-

tured goods of £4 billion.

Only the American economic upswing and revenue from North Sea oil saved British capitalism from catastrophe in 1985. The US boom is now faltering and the likely drop in world oil prices could well blow apart all the Tories' schemes for vote-winning tax cuts. By the end of 1986, the advanced capitalist countries will be heading for a new downswing. Many 'third world' countries meanwhile face devastation, through the fall in commodity prices. The possibility of a banking collapse, as a result of a country like Mexico or Brazil being unable or unwilling to repay the interest on their loans from the Western banks, is still a very real threat to the whole financial system.

Liverpool council shows way forward

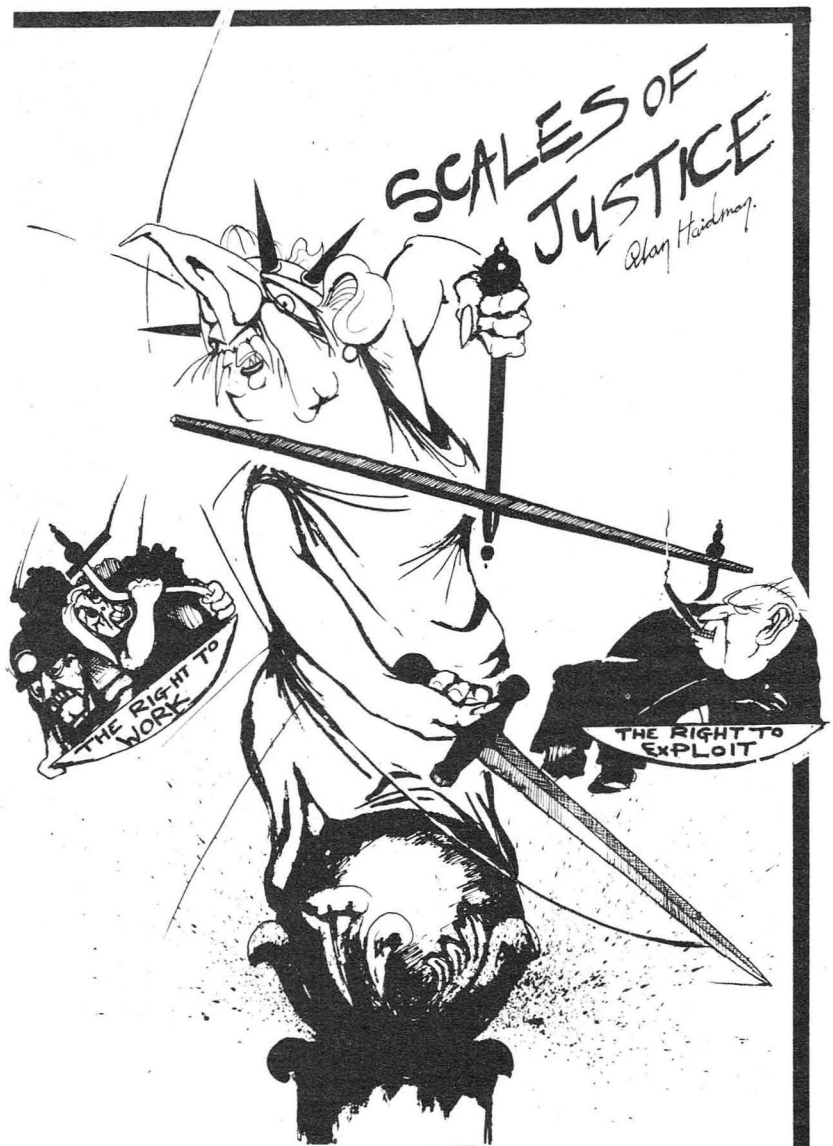
THIS UNDERLYING crisis of the capitalist system and the growing polarisation of society between the rich minority of speculators, big businessmen and financiers and the majority of workers and unemployed, ought to have made 1985 an ideal year for Labour to go on the offensive against the Tories. The basis could have been laid for landslide victory at the next general election.

Unfortunately however the Labour Party has failed to rise more than a few percentage points in the polls above either the Tories or the Liberal/SDP Alliance, and the rise that was recorded took place during the miners' strike. Rather than go on the attack against the Tories, the Labour leaders, responding to pressure from the press and the Tories themselves, spent much of 1985 in an internal struggle with their own party members who support the ideas of *Militant*.

In particular they have waged a campaign against Liverpool City Council, despite the fact that the council has been doing in Liverpool what the Labour Party should have been doing nationally. By standing up to the Tory government, prepared to defy Tory laws if necessary, the councillors have risked everything they own to press on with the programme on which they were elected. They have built new homes, saved and created jobs, opened nurseries and sports centres and given back hope to a city ravaged by the recession.

Opinion polls have revealed rising support for the council, from 46 per cent to 55 per cent. Massive demonstrations filled the streets in support of the council. Yet Neil Kinnock's response was to suspend the District Labour Party and conduct an inquiry into its affairs, with the threat of expulsion hanging over the leading figures in the council's fight.

The attack on *Militant* and its supporters is not the only significant development within the Labour party in 1985. In the years to come, last year will perhaps become best known for the rapid 'realignment' which took place within the leadership. One leading figure after another such as Ken Livingstone, David Blunkett and Tom Sawyer, who began the year pledged to defy the Tories over rate-capping, to defend party



members against expulsion threats and support the party's programme as agreed at conference, ended the year supporting council cuts, backing the Liverpool inquiry and questioning the 'practicality' of Labour's policies.

A whole stratum of mainly middle-class left-wing leaders has swung to the right at an unprecedented pace. Under the influence of 'Communist' Professor Hobsbawm, they have drawn all the wrong conclusions from the vents of 1985. They interpreted the miners' strike as 'proof' that the working class has declined to a point at which it is no longer capable of transforming society.

Capitalism they argued is no longer the root cause of society's problems, but what they define as 'Thatcherism', a new form of popular Toryism, which requires all who oppose it—right-wingers, Social Democrats, Liberals and even Tory dissidents—to unite around some form of 'broad alliance'.

The root of this shift to the right is their failure to understand the crisis of capitalism. Thatcher represents a more virulent and openly anti-working class kind of Toryism because the interests of her class demand such an approach at a time when their profits are threatened by the looming economic storms. The splits within the ruling class, major and significant through they are, are essentially about tactics. There is no alternative government, within the Tory party, the Alliance or Labour's old right-wing which can administer the capitalist economy any more compassionately or efficiently than this government.

Discredited ideas

There could not be a worse time for the Labour leaders to return to the old discredited ideas of the right. Even in the relatively prosperous years of the post-war boom, Labour governments were forced by the pressure of big business and the working of the capitalist system to replace reforms with counter-reforms. For the next Labour government, these pressures will be far greater than in 1964 or 1974. It will be a government of crisis, forced either to challenge the power of capital and adopt the socialist programme advocated by the Marxists, or bow down to the will of the capitalists and ditch its programme.

Sensing this, the Labour leaders

in 1985 put forward the idea that in order not to let down Labour voters after the election, it is better not to promise any substantial reforms before the election. Hence 1985 saw the coining of the word 'impossibilism', to describe the modest proposals put forward by the Marxists for a 35-hour week, a £115 minimum wage and a guaranteed job for those leaving YTS schemes.

To renounce even such basic reforms as these is electoral suicide for Labour. As Liverpool has shown, working class voters do not respond to personalities, media campaigns or public relations. They want to see concrete benefits for themselves and their families. It was houses, jobs and services which won that extra support for Liverpool Labour. It is only by firm promises to do the same nationally that can assure Labour a victory in the general election.

Filling vacuum

The ferocious attacks against *Militant* stem from the fact that Marxist ideas are now filling the vacuum left by the rightward retreat of the former left-wing leaders. Ordinary workers and party and trade union activists have not followed their leaders to the right. They desperately want to see the back of the Thatcher and Neil Kinnock in No 10 Downing Street, but not at the price of throwing overboard the very policies they want Labour in government to implement.

The union ballots on the political funds have shown how firmly the trade union movement is tied to the Labour Party. They have shattered the idea that workers are becoming infected by 'Thatcherite' ideas. But their support cannot be taken for granted. If the organised workers are to be inspired to go out to campaign and draw the wider layers of Labour supporters behind them, the kind of clear concrete policies advocated by *Militant* and implemented by Liverpool City Council will need to be adopted by the whole movement.

There is no way that Marxism will be purged from the Labour Party. We are confident that 1986 will see further support for *Militant* and what it stands for. Anger will build up against any move to expel socialists from the party. Marxist ideas will be accepted by more and more activists and will begin to assume a dominant position within the British labour movement.



NCB - SERIOUS GEOLOGICAL CHANGES NOW AFFECT MANY COALFIELDS.

Dilemma facing world's capitalists



New York stock exchange—stormy year ahead.

CAPITALISM'S GOOD times have gone for good. The capitalist world is now coming towards the end of a lengthy period of upswing. The last few years are the best the system can offer working people.

Capitalism is confronted by a series of dilemmas. According to the dictionary a dilemma is a choice of two options, each of which is impossible.

Take interest rates. Throughout 1985 they have drifted down from the impossible levels of the past few years. The upward twist of world interest rates in the early 1980s doubled repayment charges from the third world debtor countries and precipitated the rumbling banking crisis that still threatens to hurl debtor nation and creditor banks alike into the abyss.

But capitalism cannot let interest rates slide much further. For President Reagan has to offer prime rates in order to attract money capital from all over the world to subsidise the monster US government deficit. And every other country has to keep rates high enough to stop money from ebbing away to the USA!

The rise in interest rates in its turn has attracted money into America, in the process forcing up the dollar to hopelessly uncompetitive levels. This has all sorts of repercussions on world trade and finance. As one example, look at the unhappy subsidiary of Midland Bank, Crocker Bank, based in California.

Crocker has hundreds of millions of dollars of "unperforming loans" to local grape farmers on its books. These farmers cannot sell their wares because foreign goods are now so cheap in the States that you can buy a bottle of French wine in a California supermarket for the same price as the local plonk.

The "superdollar" in turn puts tremendous pressure on hard-pressed US manufacturers

and farmers to demand protectionist measures, which, if implemented could trigger a full-scale trade war.

The counterpart of the massive trade surpluses that Japan and West Germany in particular are racking up with the USA are almost exactly matched by movements of capital from Japan and Germany into America to pay for US government spending. In effect Japanese and German capitalism are lending the Americans money to buy their goods!

US government spending on arms has been the motor of the past upswing but as the USA becomes for the first time a net international debtor, that motor too seems to be spluttering out of fuel.

Economists are poring over the statistics for economic growth in the third-quarter of 1985 issued by the Reagan administration. They are like Etruscan high priests looking at the intestines of a sacrificed goat to foretell the future. The favoured "solution" seems to be that Germany and Japan should reflate. But if their governments start to spend more money, that causes problems of its own. The Yen and the Deutschmark will fall relative to the dollar as imports are sucked in—and US manufacturers will be still less able to sell on the world market.

We have seen a few years of "boom" with no significant rise in employment. Investment has been concentrated in cost-cutting and in the service sector, not in wealth creating production. With the world economy at the mercy of profitability, every choice facing capitalism already has its highly unpleasant side. And within a year, or two at the most, this miserable respite will come to an end, and socialism will be even more of a necessity to prevent an even deeper economic catastrophe.

THE CRISIS in the world tin market has highlighted the insane way in which basic commodities are bought and sold in a capitalist economy. MICK BROOKS (article left) looks at

the problems facing capitalists in 1986 below he examines the commodity forecasts further cr

Chaos on the commodity market

Price crash could mean bank crisis

EVERY DAY at 12.40 in the City of London, 28 men troop into a room and start shouting at each other. These men are fixing the day's world market price of the metals that we all need and millions depend on mining to make a living.

By Mick Brooks

The recent suspension of trading in tin on the London Metals Exchange threatens to spread to other commodities (metals and raw materials), bringing chaos in their production and trade all over the world. The threatened default of the International Tin Council on its debts could drag down some banks. Commodity prices, themselves a victim of the world economic crisis, by plunging still further, threaten to contribute to making that crisis deeper.

The producers of the basic commodities are scattered all over the world. They have no idea how much of their product can be sold at any given moment. All they can do is watch the price. Their activities are knitted together through the operations of the London Metals Exchange and the other great metropolitan commodity exchanges. The activities of these merchants and speculators cannot abolish the anarchy inherent in capitalism, but reproduce that anarchy on a global scale.

The commodity producers need money now to invest so as to continue producing for the future. For instance a tea bush cannot be picked for seven years after planting. The money will be advanced in exchange for a piece of paper entitling the bearer to a share of the Kenyan tea harvest in 1992. These 'futures' then become an object of speculation.

Money men may bet that late frosts in 1991 will hoist the price of tea for 1992, or on any other of a thousand things that could happen

to a 'harvest' that has not even been planted yet. Typically on the commodity exchanges a hundred transactions will just pass the piece of paper from hand to hand for every one that actually leads to a delivery of a commodity.

A common objection to socialism is that it will have to involve rationing. Capitalism works through rationing through price. Only the rich have many more ration tickets than the rest and can ride out a shortage-induced price hike.

These can occur for the most obscure reasons. Once every ten years a cold current off the coast of Peru—'el nino'—often drives the anchovies into deep waters away from their usual haunts. This hoists fishmeal prices, which in turn can make meat prices soar. Apologists for capitalism praise the usefulness of the speculators. For by driving up the price of meat they encourage farmers to turn to livestock raising and so overcome the shortage.

In reality market laws wreak havoc on producer and consumer alike. Unfortunately a rise in the price of beef does not call for an immediate increase in the supply of full-grown cows. They will take years to breed up. But by that time there will usually be a massive oversupply as farmers all over the world have jumped on the bandwagon. As the price collapses, calves are slaughtered and governments pay out subsidies to stop farmers over-producing in a vain effort to keep the price up. Such is the 'magic of the marketplace'!

Supply and demand

Commodity prices are extraordinarily susceptible to fluctuations in supply and demand. A small overshoot can lead to a collapse in prices with disastrous effects on the producers, while a slight shortfall can crucify consumers through impossibly high prices. And such fluctuations are inherent in an unplanned system and magnified enormously by the speculators.

Commodity prices basically depend on the boom-slump cycle of

capitalism—rising in a boom with the rise in demand, and collapsing in a slump. The fall in the price of raw materials at length helps capitalism to recover enough to prepare for the next hurdle in the steeplechase. In fact the major reason for the fall in the rate of inflation in the west has been the collapse in the current recession of commodity prices to their lowest levels since the 1930s. As the *Economist* points out, the 10 per cent fall in prices this year alone represents a £65 billion gift from the poor countries to the rich.

The price collapse of the 1930s, though, was not all good news for the capitalists of the advanced countries. The major reason for the rash of national bankruptcies that took place in the underdeveloped world in the 1930s was the collapse in the price of the raw materials they lived on by exporting. These bankruptcies in turn gave the banks of the imperialist countries who had lent them the money no end of jitters.

Now once again we have a crisis of capitalism. Once more there is a world debt crisis. Again a deeper collapse in the price of commodities could trigger off enforced bankruptcies and a banking collapse.

The post-war economic order was supposed to have learned from the problems of the 1930s. In fact these problems are rooted in the inner nature of the system. Trade in commodities was regulated by international agreements like the International Tin Council composed of both producing and consuming countries. The aim was to iron out unpredictable price fluctuations which disrupt the harmonious development of the capitalist world.

The poorer commodity-exporting countries have been inspired by the success of OPEC in yanking up oil prices to establish their own price-fixing rings. They have appointed buffer stock managers to intervene in the anarchy of the market by buying up surplus stocks and taking them off the market to keep prices up.

The problem, as with all cartels,

g the world's
In the article
the workings of
markets and
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he ity ets

s that it is easy enough to buy com-
modities on the market when prices
are high and the producer coun-
tries' revenues are good—but in
times of prosperity, intervention is
unnecessary to bolster prices. It is
quite another matter in a period of
slump, which means depressed
commodity prices and therefore
low earnings just when they need
to intervene, the producer countries
do not have the wherewithal to do
so.

This is what happened to tin.
The buffer stock manager ran out
of money and eventually was bor-
rowing from the banks to buy un-
wanted tin at a loss. The credit lines
stretched beyond endurance. The
ITC then reneged on debts of up
to £1 billion and a stockpile of
8,000 tonnes of tin.

Price crash

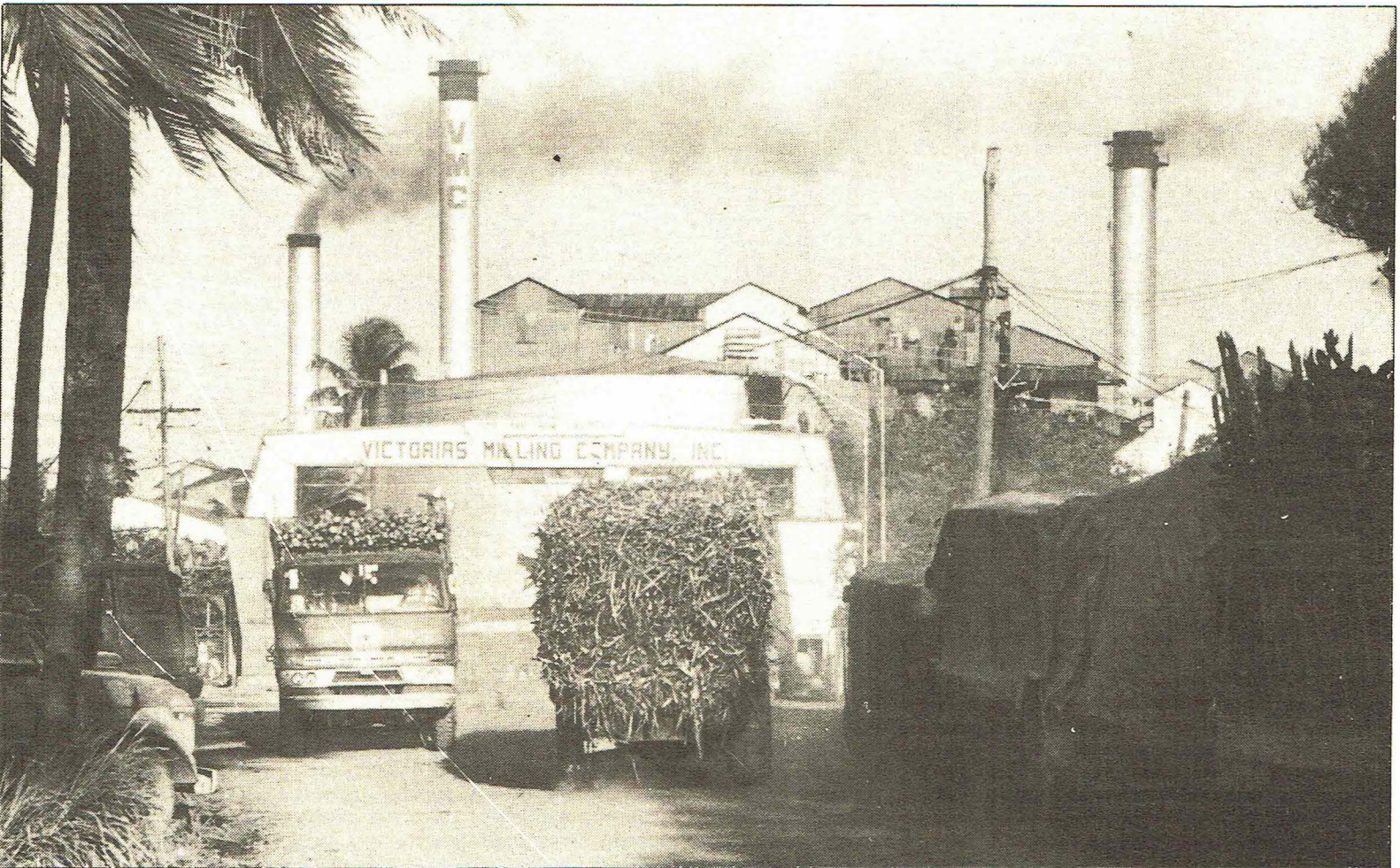
The ITC buffer stock manager
built up his £1 billion debt by us-
ing the stockpile as security. It was
assumed to be worth
£8,500—£9,500 per tonne. But
when trading in tin reopens the
price could crash to as low as
£4,000 per tonne. At that price the
ITC could not repay its debts and
the banks that have lent to them—
such as Standard Chartered, Ham-
mors and Kleinwort Benson—could
be on the skids together with a
sizeable chunk of the financial
establishment.

The buffer stock would still have
to be sold off even at only £4,000
a tonne to recoup part of the losses.
A £1 billion stockpile would sud-
denly become a £300 million
stockpile—up to £700 million lost
at the stroke of a pen. In that case
the buffer stock could keep the
world supplied for nine months
without an ounce being mined
anywhere.

For at £4,000 a tonne, only 22
out of 400 mines in Malaysia (the
world's largest producer) would
survive. In Thailand 275 out of 600
would go, folding up 24,000 of
15,000 jobs.

If tin does crash, and they are
desperately trying to stitch up a
deal to avert that possibility, the
consumers will not get the benefit.

Photo: Piers Cavendish (Reflex)



Third world poverty in the Philippines: top a street market and, below a sugar cane refinery, hit by the drastic fall in world sugar prices.

For, superimposed over the boom-
slump cycle of commodity prices,
are longer-term trends. One of
these trends is that with the ad-
vance of technology, there is an
economising on scarce raw mate-
rials. As a result, tin is only 2
per cent of the cost of tinplate,
traditionally its biggest use. There
is only 50p worth of tin in the
solder in a whole television set.

The tin crisis has caused trade in
other metals to dry up. The Lon-
don Metals Exchange is walking on
eggs.

Sugar is the most depressed com-
modity of the lot, because the in-
stitutionalised overproduction of
sugar beet in the Common Market
is driving the traditional cane pro-
ducers to the wall. Sugar was
recently selling as low as 2½ cents
a pound and being fed to animals.
That price is less than 4p for a stan-
dard kilo bag. Did anyone notice
a dramatic drop in the price to the
housewife?

Rubber is losing bounce and
could be the next commodity to
come under pressure. The Interna-
tional Rubber Organisation's buf-

fer stock manager has spent \$390
million since 1981 building up a
400,000 tonnes stockpile. Now he
is passing round the hat for another
\$3,000 million to buy an extra
150,000 tonnes. As the price drops,
he runs out of money.

In a crisis, cut-throat price wars
break out between different pro-
ducers rushing to offload their
surplus by almost any price. In
other words they respond to the
glut by overproducing and to the
price collapse by offering
discounts.

Cosy cartel

Indonesia for instance plans to
expand its rubber production by 8
per cent a year for each of the next
four years. Yet Indonesia was a
major pillar of the tin agreement
and was stitched up by cowboys
like Brazil and China who unloa-
ded their surplus on the world
market, breaking up their cosy
cartel.

It is precisely the countries that
caught a cold on tin—Indonesia,
Malaysia and Thailand—that could

get pneumonia off rubber. Three
million Malaysians, one quarter of
the workforce, depend on rubber
tapping to make a living.

This tendency to economise on
the consumption of scarce raw ma-
terials is going on all over. Miniaturised batteries mean less de-
mand for lead. More and more
metals are replaced by cheap
plastics. The computerisation of
stock records means smaller stock
holding throughout industry. All
this is an extra twist of the knife for
commodity producers.

Another and relatively long-term
trend is the movement of what are
called the terms of trade away from
the countries producing raw ma-
terials. This trend is disrupted
from time to time by the chaos of
international trade, but it
represents a robbery of the poorest
countries. They have to export
more and more to pay for the
manufactured goods they import.

Thailand for instance exported
30 per cent more rubber this year,
but its earnings on rubber fell by
8 per cent. Malaysia depends on
five export earners—crude oil,

palm oil, tin, rubber and timber.
Whereas in 1980 it was earning 72
per cent of foreign earnings from
the five, by 1985 it was down to
56 per cent. This was before the
recent collapse in the price of palm
oil and the tin calamity.

Starvation

As pointed out earlier the change
in the terms of trade has awarded
the rich countries £65 billion this
year, responsible for a quarter of
their growth. Generally com-
modities (except oil) are at 75 per
cent of their 1970 level now. Sugar,
one tonne of which would have
bought 41 barrels of oil in 1975
would now buy only four barrels.

We are now supposed to be in
the middle of a world boom. It is
a boom which has done nothing for
the unemployed at home. It is also
a boom in which commodity prices
are still falling, bringing starvation
to the poorest countries. As the
Financial Times put it the question
is "that (commodity producers) will
miss out on the booms while still
suffering the busts".

Peru, India

Bosses put pressure on government of reform

STEVE HIGHAM concludes his series of articles on Peru. The first article dealt with the rural crisis. The second looks at the cities and political developments.

WHAT DOES the ex-peasant find when he or she arrives in Lima? Living standards lower than since the 1950s. The entire shanty town quarter on unpaved, sometimes unnumbered and unnamed streets with no sewerage, no running water and no electricity.

They call Lima the Calcutta of South America. A quarter of the city's people live in the shanty towns, with partial or total unemployment rife, and no unemployment benefit. Lima has the biggest black market economy in the world, six out of every ten working hours are 'informal'.

The whole country is being held back by the agricultural backwardness. The consumption of industrial products in the villages is extremely low, one factor keeping industry working at 50 per cent of capacity and adding to unemployment. Historically, economic growth has been tied to its role as a supplier of raw materials ie. to external needs, first those of Spain in the colonial era, then those of the world market, particularly Britain and the USA.

The US is now the chief customer and supplier. In 1971 Peru absorbed 5.2 per cent of all US investment abroad and 67.5 per cent of all investment in Peru came from the USA. The largest bank is controlled by Italian businessmen.

Debts league

This foreign domination has further held back industrial development. The 4 per cent growth in 1980 became an 11 per cent collapse by 1983. Income per head was less than in 1970.

The crisis was aggravated by the return to civilian rule in 1980. The reactionary President Belaunde Terry once more abandoned land reform and denationalised foreign companies. The government's term of office was marked by strikes, riots

and states of emergency.

Early in 1985 the *Sunday Times* commented that the government was "sinking under the combined weight of incompetence, bad luck and corruption". While he was systematically dismantling subsidies on basic foodstuffs he was spending colossal sums on arms to placate the military. For instance in 1982 the government raised more than \$1 billion plus \$350 million Eurocredits and placed an order for \$600 million for Mirage interceptors.

Peru is only in the second division of the debts league—owing a trifling \$13.5 billion—but this profligacy occasionally upsets the moneylenders. "There is no prospect of any improvement in the lamentable state of Peru's public finances. The irresponsible Peruvian armed forces continue to insist on an increasing proportion of the scarce public resources being earmarked to finance their expensive playthings" (*International Currency Review*, December 1984).

What can the future hold? The recent elections represent a step forward for the Peruvian masses in that their traditional party, APRA, the American Popular Revolutionary Alliance won. Usually the military have seized power in the past when APRA seemed about to win an election.

Alan Garcia Peres, APRA's leader gained 48 per cent of the vote in April with a large vote for other, more left parties. APRA promised to redistribute income to the poor and to create jobs. There is however absolutely no prospect of such reforms bearing fruit while Peru is dominated by the oligarchies.

Nothing short of a struggle against capitalism at home and abroad offers any hope. Trotsky in the *History of the Russian Revolution*, pointed out that in colonial and ex-colonial states, "the bourgeoisie...notwithstan-

ding its envious hatred of foreign capital always does and always will in every decisive situation turn up in the same camp with it."

Peru's landlords and bankers may talk anti-American and try to threaten and blackmail the IMF but they are dependent on the banks and commercial trusts, in reality agents of foreign capital. Whatever conflicts and rivalries may appear they will huddle together against any struggle by workers and peasants.

Homegrown and foreign exploiters will put enormous pressure on the APRA leadership to abandon its promises, which have aroused the expectations of the people and worried US and Peruvian bosses.

Austerity

Talks have already begun on a social contract and Garcia, modelling himself on Felipe Gonzales, Spain's prime minister, has coined the expression "austerity without misery" to describe his economic priorities.

The APRA programme including freezing prices and exchange rates but, *The Guardian* has commented, the industrialists "are likely to resist any attempt to extend price controls indefinitely. No-one in the government seems to know how to move to the next stage of reactivating the economy without setting inflation surging again." A 160 per cent inflation rate is not considered a 'surge'!

Only feeble measures have been taken against the gangsters in Peru's armed forces. Despite the recent dismissal of the highest ranking military officer General Enrico after an official investigation revealed the hand of the army in civilian killings, the cannon is still an important part of the constitution.

In September one newspaper reported that soldiers massacred at least 40 and possibly 70 civilians near the Andean village of Accomarca.

This added to the 6,000 reported killed in recent years and the thousands of other *desaparecidos*, the

missing. Nor does Garcia's government show any sign of lifting military control over 25 of Peru's 176 provinces.

A revolutionary transformation of society, overthrowing landlordism, distributing land to the peasants and for a start nationalising the interests of foreign capital would be the only way to give a glimmer of hope to the poor of Peru.

Workers and peasants will have to rely on their own strength and traditions. Peru has a long history of revolutionary struggle. In 1932 for example, 27 APRA MPs were arrested by the army. Party activists responded by imprisoning and killing 26 officers and soldiers. In retaliation the army rounded up 6,000 youth and shot them on the spot.

In 1976 the government violently crushed a major strike by the strong fishermen's union, over falling living standards and repression. In July that year the government declared a state of emergency and in November suspended the job security law; measures which set the scene for the biggest general strike in the country's history.

The strike's demands on wages, prices and workers' rights, for the reinstatement of sacked workers and the cancellation of peasant debts gained a huge response, forcing the government to lift the state of emergency and prepare the way for civilian rule.

Between 1976 and 1980 there was another general strike, agricultural workers occupied land in the sugar plantations and teachers went on a four-month strike. Belaunde returned to office; he ended his term despised for his capitalist policies such as opening up Peru for all kinds of imports. A wave of strikes and general strikes second only to neighbouring Bolivia heralded the end of Belaunde's rule.

Revolutionary struggles lie ahead, the working class and peasantry will learn from their past experience the need to use their own political strength and fight for socialism.



Police stand guard over a murdered peasant, said to be a Senderist.

The shining cul-de-sac

THE LONG lasting crisis in the towns and countryside of Peru, the poverty, super-exploitation and state repression, has fostered the growth of a left wing guerilla movement Sendero Luminoso, the Shining Path.

Every murder, every atrocity, particularly in the remote mountain area of Ayacucho is blamed on the guerillas. There is ample evidence that trigger happy troops have committed massive arbitrary 'revenge' slaughters of peasants and blamed the killings on the Senderists.

The guerillas have gained a certain support due to mass hatred of the ruling class. Assassinations of individual capitalists, landowners and state officials cause few tears to fall in the most depressed and repressed areas.

But the heroism of the guerillas cannot transform Peruvian society. There is no substitute for the full involvement of the urban and rural masses, particularly the

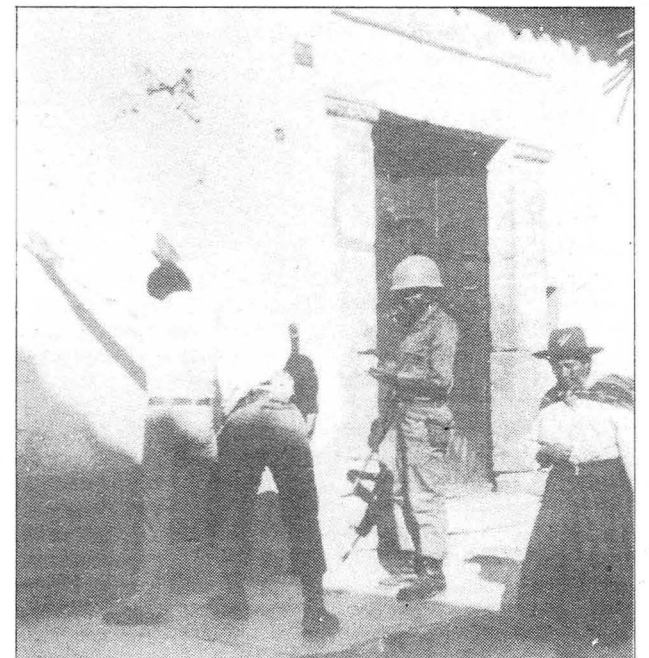
working class who have a heroic tradition themselves, in an organised political attack on the capitalist system.

So far the strength and bravery shown by the working class has not been welded into a force which can overthrow the system. Guerilla struggle, relying on a few heroes, however self sacrificing, ignores the mass of the people, and disregards the power of the working class. The state apparatus could not easily use their revenge tactics against oppositionists if they faced a mass movement.

Transformation

If the government fails to tackle the problems caused by capitalism, the Senderists could grow. The working class and poor of Peru can take two paths. One is the well worn guerillaist cul de sac of Sendero Luminoso.

The other leads to the independent organisation of the workers and rural masses for the socialist transformation of society. That must be the priority for Peru's labour movement.



Street patrol by state forces in Ayacucho.

A lucrative business

THE GOVERNMENT has taken one measure to pay off the huge overdraft. It has taken to the export of cocaine. Since 1984 the amount of cocaine paste has risen 30 per cent. Half the world's supply comes from Peru. "People live from cocaine like Venezuelans live from oil" admitted an army brigadier.

The armed forces have allowed the coca bush to grow undisturbed. From Lima, banks send their own planes to the coca-growing areas several times a week on "currency transactions". It is a lucrative business, maybe adding £1,000 million a year to Peru's revenues.



Photo: Mark Salmon

On 7 December trade unionists and Labour Party members marched in solidarity with the people of Bhopal, India, one year after the world's worst ever industrial disaster. Over 2,000 were killed and hundreds of thousands affected by poisonous gases after an explosion turned much of the city into a vast gas chamber.

Italy, Philippines, Argentina, Guyana

The year of the school strike

1985 WAS the year of school students' strikes and not just in Britain. Dutch school students struck this Autumn, originally as part of the campaign against Cruise missiles, though this developed into wider agitation.

In Denmark the massive general strike in the Spring sparked off nationwide school strikes over conditions, which demanded the downfall of the Tory Schluter government.

The biggest movement, though was in Italy, as a correspondent reports below.

ON 16 November 200,000 school students from all over Italy marched on the streets of Rome, the biggest ever student demonstration in Italian history, bigger than those of the 1968 students' movement.

Slogans such as "'68 wasn't bad but '86 will be incredible" "if things don't change there will be a big battle" showed the fighting mood of the students. On 9 November there were mass demonstrations and strikes in more than 180 cities all over the country, with more than 700,000 students taking part.

This movement has taken the government and all

By an Italian correspondent

political parties by surprise. For years the myth had been sustained that today's youth are not interested in politics. This shows how far removed the political leaders, including those of the Communist Party, are from the conditions of youth.

Three out of four of the

unemployed are under 29. All the contradictions had been building up such as ever-increasing unemployment and worsening conditions in schools. Sooner or later there had to be an explosion.

What provoked the movement? At the beginning of the school year the "II Liceo Artistico" a secondary school in Milan found itself with the same old problem: not enough classrooms for their students. This is just one of many problems: like lack of facilities, dangerous



Demonstrations were sparked off across Italy

and unhygienic buildings, overcrowding in classrooms and poor standards of teaching.

The protest quickly spread to 35 other schools in Milan, as the government had just announced its new budget which plans to make £1 billion cuts in education. At the same time the school registration fees (compulsory for anyone who stays on after the school leaving age of 14) are to go up. Students are paying more for less.

On 16 October in Milan there was a demonstration of 20,000 students. A spontaneous struggle was sparked off in the whole of Italy. The students taking part are

mostly 15, 16 and 17 year olds. Although many of their demands have led them to the conclusion that they are fighting against this government, they don't as yet see the need to link up with the labour movement as a whole... although in certain cities such as Naples and Palermo in the south where conditions are much worse, students have marched with the workers.

The press, and CP and the union leaders are all bending over backwards to make out that this is a "reformist" movement because the students are only demanding a better school and a job at the end of it, but that is how the 1968 movement began. Italian capitalism cannot satisfy any of these demands—the accumulated public sector deficit is now equal to one year's total GNP.

Coalition splits

The students see the political parties as only being out for their own interests. The Communist Party (PCI) (the mass workers' party) has done nothing to differentiate itself from the other parties, indeed it itself proposes cuts in public spending. The leaders of the PCI's youth section (the

FGCI) have not explained to the students that they can't solve their problem alone, or that they must link up with the labour movement to bring down the bosses' government.

Instead they have taken up the students' slogan of "non-exploitation" by the political parties. They have brought out leaflets with no FGCI symbol on them—revealing their complete lack of faith in their own organisation.

The movement has also revealed the paralysis of this supposedly stable coalition government. All parties have attacked one another on the question and even the under-secretary of the Minister of Education has criticised the cuts (imposed by the Minister). They are both from the same bosses party, Christian Democracy. In fact the Minister of Education has herself criticised the government! They can't even agree on how to cut the workers' living standards!

The students will learn from this first experience. Even though there may be a temporary lull due to the lack of leadership, the problems will not go away. In the future they will reach the conclusion that to solve their problems they need to change this society.



School students from "Il Liceo Artistico" on the Milan demonstration.

Guyana's tear gas 'democracy'

THE PEOPLE'S National Congress government called a snap election in Guyana on 9 December to show the world that the electoral corruption associated with the late President Forbes Burnham was a thing of the past.

Elections in 1968, 1973 and 1980 were blatantly rigged. The PNC candidate Desmond Hoyte, won the presidency in 1985, but opposition candidates claim widespread malpractices. The army forcibly holds all the ballot boxes and the People's Progressive Party and Working Peoples Alliance both claim injustice.

Tear gas was used on a number of occasions and ballot boxes went missing. "Vote early vote often" was allegedly as much a feature of these elections as any other. Press statements and public meetings were restricted. The PPP got a full voting list only on the last day. Many opposition supporters favoured boycotting the election.

The malpractice was accepted by the Western powers when Burnham was merely a glove puppet of the US, installed to pre-empt a more left-wing PPP government. But when in the '70's

the economic impasse of capitalism led Burnham to nationalise 90 per cent of the economy and establish links with the Stalinist regimes, the capitalist powers grew cooler.

The administration has never been in any way "socialist" and his regime was forced more back into capitalist favour, particularly through the US and IMF holding out the offer of aid for Guyana's beleaguered economy.

Like all countries in the Caribbean basin, Guyana has been hard hit by falling prices for commodities such as bauxite, sugar and rice on the world market. Guyana now can not feed its own population. The government have put a ban on all food imports, adding to the malnutrition.

With foreign debts of over US \$1.3 billion and servicing debt costs eating up half of Guyana's export earnings, the Hoyte government may go to the IMF and allow more private investment in bauxite.

Whatever happens is not likely to be good news for the working class or the poor in the rural areas.

The 'innocent' generals

Argentina

TWO FORMER leaders of Argentina's bloody junta, which fell in 1983, General Jorge Videla and Admiral Emilio Massera were sentenced to life imprisonment but General Galtieri and three others were acquitted after human rights trials in December.

The trial clearly shows that, apart from punishing a couple of scapegoats, the Alfonsin government and the capitalist class behind it, are not prepared to take serious action against their own repressive apparatus, their own state machine.

The government are in effect condemning "irregularities" in carrying out the law but condoning the military coup under which Argentina suffered for seven years.

Alfonsin has neither the power nor the will to carry out a thorough purge of the reactionary officers, because doing so would put in jeopardy the bosses' own class interests and open up splits and challenges from many right wingers who openly collaborated with the junta.

The government hoped the trials would appease public anger. Instead they are likely to make more Argentinians doubt their ability to achieve justice in the interests of the people. A strong workers' organisation is needed in Argentina, prepared to struggle for socialism.



General Galtieri



Philippines President Marcos—hand picked the judges

Photo: Piers Gavendish (Reflex)

Philippines

GENERAL FABIAN Ver has been reinstated as armed forces chief in the Philippines after a court found him and 25 other officers not guilty of involvement in the murder of opposition leader Benigno Aquino.

Very few people in the country agree with the acquittal by three judges appointed by President Marcos. Nor do they believe the official verdict that Aquino was killed by a "Communist gunman" who acted alone.

Credibility fears

'Elections', likely to be rigged, are due in February. Aquino's widow Corazon Aquino may now stand against Marcos. Many capitalists now consider Marcos a liability, he is losing popularity daily. Others are worried about how they would fare without Marcos' massive repressive apparatus, when the left-wing New People's Army is making gains.

Cardinal Sin (sic), the Archbishop of Manila expressed the worries of the Philippines' ruling class after the acquittal verdict: "An historic opportunity to restore the credibility of the government to satisfy our people's aspiration for truth and justice was lost".

The bosses' message is obvious. If workers don't overthrow capitalism, capitalism still has the power to overthrow democracy once more, and return to savage repression.

Welcome to Britain



Awaiting deportation in the 'illegal immigrant' wing of Ashford Remand Centre. Photo: Reflex.

RECENTLY I came through Heathrow for a short holiday in England and witnessed what was for me the most humiliating treatment of immigrants.

I was detained in Terminal 3 initially because I had a wrong endorsement previously from the same airport. So, for some careless officer's mistake, I was detained until the Home Office could verify my "story".

That was only the beginning. My baggage was searched down to the last seam, including tearing open some sealed letters I had, which were consequently read.

Not finding anything of excitement in the baggage, I was taken to the "detained immigrants' room"—a small miserable room with only a vending machine for the immigrants' comfort. You have to ask for permission to go to the toilet.

There were 10 or 12 other immigrants in the room, mostly of Indian origin. Immigration officers came and went through three doors, questioning immigrants on all kinds of personal matters.

I had to say why I came to England, how I knew the friends I had come to visit, their physical description and God knows what else. The friends were called and asked personal details about me.

While I thought my ordeal was rough enough, I was more horrified to see 'England' deporting immigrants from that room literally by the minute! An officer would come with a batch of passports and call out names for those to go on the next plane.

Deportation

The best show of airport justice came when an officer came in with a clipboard and called one immigrant. The young man (Bangladeshi or Pakistani) came up and indicated that he did not understand the language well. The officer shouted out for anyone who could speak the young man's language.

Three men jumped to their feet to help. The officer, still shouting, told them that he wanted them to explain to the young man that he (officer) wanted him to sign the

By a visitor to England

form which said that "he wants to be deported". Emphasis by officer.

I watched this scene and regretted terribly that I could not speak the young man's language, especially as I watched him sign the form. However, I sat and waited for my turn to sign the "I want to be deported" form.

Fortunately for them, they did not give me that pleasure, but instead prolonged the anxiety by allowing me a week in the country while they 'investigated my case'; investigations which included inquiring from my country of origin if I had left with intentions of going back.

Assistance

On my part, having seen what happens to detained immigrants, I lost faith in all those airport officials and, to help me, my hosts were forced to appeal to an MP for assistance.

So when I went for another day of questioning at Heathrow after the week elapsed, I had at the end of the day a normal visitor's stamp...all for a month's holiday in England!

In the last few days, there have been complaints in the papers about MPs intervening in immigration cases. Judging from what really goes on at Heathrow, MP intervention probably makes only a small contribution to alleviating the humiliation suffered by immigrants to this country, especially those of Indian origin.

The task of stopping the humiliation altogether, of making sure that immigrants get fair treatment lies not so much with the MPs but with trade unions like the CPSA. Only conscious, organised workers can effectively change the conditions for immigrants at the airport by organising airport staff and exposing those that still entertain this inhuman treatment of immigrants.

An 'utter farce'

What is most amazing about the Liverpool inquiry is that unsubstantiated, anonymous allegations can be taken seriously when there is no opportunity to cross-examine those making the outrageous claims. It is an utter farce. The Tory council I work for would never consider such a

ridiculous and unfair manner in conducting a disciplinary hearing. But the 'inquirers' know full well that if they allowed cross examination, the shallow evidence produced would be shown up for all to see.

Steve McKenzie
Bexley NUPE secretary

Letters

Send us your views, comments or criticism. Write to *Militant*, 3/13 Hepscoot Road, London E9 5HB

The *Militant* letters page has been inundated with letters from irate Labour Party members and trade unionists, angered by the Labour leadership's attacks on Liverpool. Here are extracts from just a few:

I am a *Militant* supporter and I resent the fact that people like myself are accused of harming the Labour Party. I work very hard for my local branch...The only harm done to our party has been by a small group of individuals intent on taking over the party by expelling those who oppose them. They have dragged the party

in and out of the press and given the Tories every opportunity to cry 'split'!... They do not talk about policy—merely expulsions. I am all for party unity but not by expelling everyone that disagrees with Neil Kinnock...

Mara Dale
IOW Labour Party

When the press, including the so-called 'Labour paper' the *Mirror*, go on about Derek Hatton's council expenses, they conveniently forget to tell the public the amounts he returns to the wider labour movement... Fleet Street dictators like Maxwell imply that it's a paradox to be a socialist and at the same time own a "nice house etc". How many homes does Maxwell have?

Bill Buchanan
Gedling CLP

Comrades will have heard that Alistair Graham, for the time being general secretary of the Civil and Public Services Association, has opened up his own witch-hunt of *Militant* supporters in CPSA... The CPSA Broad Left will be running John Macreadie for general secretary on a ticket of supporting and implementing conference policies, including affiliating CPSA to the Labour Party, advancing



Neil Kinnock-facing anger of Party ranks.

the membership's interests and opposing witch-hunts... CPSA members have had enough of Graham and the right-wing and the campaign is now underway for the return of a Broad Left National Executive and senior full-time officials, which will be the best possible response to witch-hunters whether they be in the Labour Party or CPSA.

Frank Bonner
CPSA

NUPE anger at inquiry

We are shocked at the attitude of NUPE 'leaders' in Liverpool who, having refused the rank and file the right to vote on whether to strike, now have the gall to support the secret investigation into Liverpool claiming fears of 'intimidation'. Mrs Jane Kennedy of Liverpool NUPE has good reason to feel 'afraid'—afraid of the wrath of ordinary NUPE members that are fed up with the compromise deals and sell-outs from so-called lefts like herself. It is high time that Sawyer, Kennedy and their ilk were fully exposed to the rank and file of NUPE and that serious left opposition to Kinnock is built within NUPE.

NUPE hospital steward
London



Workers in Liverpool show their support for the City Council.

The Church of England attacks the government's policies with vigour. During the miners' strike, Bishops leapt to the defence of the miners. If churchmen stood for Parliament they would probably get more workers' votes than Kinnock. Even the bosses' newspapers are

having to bring the Tory government's policies into sharp focus. Yet Kinnock is busy preparing an inquiry into the most successful and fastest growing Labour Party in the country!

Rick Grogan
Barking CLP

I have been on the scrapheap for the past four years. I have been a Labour Party member that long, having joined because I thought the Labour Party stood for the working class, the poor and the downtrodden... It is therefore a disgrace that Kin-

nock should squander the energy of the party with an inquiry into Liverpool when we should be launching an offensive against the Tories—why not enquire into Johnson Matthey?

Colin Toogood
Bristol West CLP

Kinnock cannot be helping the workers if the Tories are praising him for what he is doing... My constituency party is expelling three or four members. I am supposed to represent one of them next week, but as Kinnock has told the constituency to expel them what chance have we of a fair hearing? They may want to expel me, only

if they do not do it before the end of the year they will not have a member to expel. I will hold up my membership until the Labour Party is ready to fight for socialism.

R Macted
IOW (Labour Party member for 35 years, former councillor for 28 years)



Going to blazes

THE REPLACEMENT of GLC bodies with government quangoes has already begun, with predictable results. The new Fire and Civil Defence Board has already met, and has decided to expand the staff of its emergency war planning unit from nine to 38 this year. The same time as 310 firefighters' jobs will be cut from the London Fire Brigade.

Monumental blunder

A WHOLE section of parliamentary business was put aside recently to discuss ancient monuments, with the Tory minister in charge saying that Britain

has some of the "finest examples". Labour MP for Coventry South East Dave Nellist asked: "Is the minister aware that we have 20,000 ancient monuments in Coventry—1,000 of them unfit for human habitation, 6,000 without hot and cold water, baths, showers or inside toilets, and 14,000 requiring repairs of over £5,000 to make them fit for people to live in?" He did not get a very helpful reply.

Living it up with NUPE

MEMBERS OF the National Union of Public Employees have been angered by the union's 1986 diary. Already stewards of one London hospital branch have refused to hand them out. In the information section there is a whole page of 'Principal West End Clubs' including details of the Athenaeum, the Cavalry and Guards and the Carlton clubs. There's two pages on air travel, a page on hotels—including details for the Hilton—and one for restaurants, including the Cafe Royal. Not to mention a vintage wine chart, while 'Events for 1986' tells members when the grouse and pheasant seasons start and finish. It seems that the NUPE leadership are becoming so removed that they have a very bizarre idea of the lifestyles of their low paid members.

How big business runs the press

THE TAKEOVER of the *Daily Telegraph* by Canadian businessman Conrad Black is yet another step towards the concentration of the press into the hands of fewer and bigger monopolies. The rabid campaign of lies and abuse directed against Liverpool City councillors has once again drawn attention to the power of the media as a weapon against workers in struggle. ANDY BEADLE looks at who owns the papers and explodes the myth of a 'free press'.

THE BRITISH press is under the tight rein of a tiny handful of newspaper proprietors, whose extensive big business links, nationally and internationally, dictate their pro-capitalist policies.

The newspaper industry, much more than others has tended not only to monopolisation but towards domination by a single proprietor within each corporation.

This has resulted in the domination by just six families over sixteen out of eighteen national daily and Sunday newspapers.

Five national daily and five Sunday papers are controlled by three of these monster monopolies.

Rupert Murdoch's News International runs the *Sun*, the *News of the World*, the *Times* and the *Sunday Times*.

Maxwell

Through his Pergamon empire Robert Maxwell reigns supreme at the *Daily Mirror*, *Sunday Mirror* and the *Sunday People*, as well as the Scottish papers the *Daily Record* and *Sunday Mail*.

Fleet Holdings, recently taken over by United Newspapers (which publishes the *Yorkshire Post*, *Punch* and several regional papers) owns the *Daily Star*, *Daily Express* and *Sunday Express*.

These three companies control around 83 per cent of Sunday and 75 per cent of daily circulation of national newspapers.

If you include the regional press they command over two-thirds of the circulation of all daily and Sunday papers.

In regional publishing the five leading chains in 1983 controlled 54 per cent of evening circulation and 72 per cent of regional dailies.

For local weeklies the figure was 29 per cent, but previous figures (1947: 8 per cent; 1961: 13 per cent; 1976: 25 per cent) show the trend



is markedly upwards.

In general Britain has had a high concentration of press ownership since the last war. The only new national papers to be established since before the First World War have been started by existing proprietors. In recent years the monopolies have been mopping up the small fry.

Between 1969 and 1984 six multinationals—Reed, Trafalgar House, Lorrho, Pergamon, Pearson and News International—have bought up over 200 papers with a combined circulation of 44 million.

The newspaper industry, and in this respect it is typical of the economy as a whole, is not only highly monopolised but the tendencies are for this process to go even further.

Pearson

This development has taken place not just within industries but across them. Today the bulk of the British press is linked in with worldwide interests in oil, mining, manufacturing, communications and

finance.

In particular these newspaper combines have shown a predilection for buying into other sectors of the media. Every big newspaper owner now has a stake in TV and/or radio companies.

Take S Pearson, which controls the *Financial Times* and the largest chain of weekly papers in the country.

Pearson's other media interests include magazines—*The Banker* and *The Economist* and books—Longmans, Penguin (Britain's largest paperback publishers) and Ladybird Books (the world's largest children's publisher).

Pearson has a 25 per cent stake in Yorkshire Television and a leading role in Goldcrest films. They operate Fintel, which provides business and financial information for the Prestel system run by British Telecom. BPM Holdings, in which Pearson have an important stake, is also a major news provider for Prestel.

Pearson controls 'leisure'

interests in Madame Tussauds, the London Planetarium, Chessington Zoo, Warwick Castle and Wookey Hole.

Also, through stakes in industry and commerce, it controls Lazard Brothers, the merchant bank. It controls the Doulton tableware and glass group and Fairey Holdings the engineering group which makes nuclear and defence equipment. It controls London Merchant Securities, a leading investment group.

It also has significant stakes in the American oil company Ashland and controls Blackwell Land Co with its extensive interests in fruit and nut growing in California.

Tycoons

Viscount Cowdray, director of Pearson and one of the country's richest men has a personal wealth amounting to millions of pounds in shares in Pearson alone and his incomes both as a director and as a shareholder are each well into six figures.

He is typical of the small handful of tycoons who control the national and regional press. These people through interlocking directorships, their Oxbridge education, clubs, friends, contacts and social background are integrated into a capitalist class whose only interests are their own well-being and continued rule.

Despite the ultra-patriotism and even racism in many papers, their owners have built up a network of international investments.

Indeed some of these multinationals are foreign-owned. Murdoch's News International is primarily Australian and the parent company of Thompson—a big publisher of regional newspapers—is based in Canada.

In the light of all this, what is the meaning of 'press freedom'? It is whatever the newspaper owners want it to mean.

No one can explain it better than the three big men themselves.

Lord Matthews, former owner of Fleet Holdings, admitted: "by and large the

editors will complete freedom, as long as they agree with the policy I have laid down".

Rupert Murdoch, explaining his freedom to change and re-write the *News of the World* explained: "I did not come all this way not to interfere".

Freedom

Finally readers of the *Daily Mirror* won't have failed to spot the 'improvements' since Robert Maxwell took over. Unless, of course they are among the hundreds of thousands who no longer read the paper since Maxwell started his 'sales drive'.

Maxwell has already rearranged the editorial team on Mirror Newspapers.

Now this former Labour MP is trying to use his freedom to 'rearrange' the jobs and livelihoods of thousands of print workers after running a smear campaign accusing Liverpool City Council of destroying jobs and services in a classic example of Fleet Street 'big lie' tactics.

Northern Ireland

RECENT developments in Northern Ireland pose a serious threat to the labour movement throughout Ireland and Britain.

By Roger Shrivies

The Tory Anglo-Irish agreement, far from bringing peace has brought about a more dangerous polarisation on sectarian lines than for around a decade. The misnamed 'accord' does nothing for any worker, north or south, Catholic or Protestant. It has alienated the Protestant population in the North with fears of eventual absorption into a capitalist united Ireland. At the same time it offers no end to

Agreement boosts sectarianism

repression and no hope for the future for the Catholic minority. Workers in both communities remain in poverty.

The labour movement has so far failed to come up with class alternative to this sham. In consequence sectarianism is likely to grow. Last weekend, a fortnight after the 150,000 strong loyalist rally in Belfast more mass meetings were held in small towns. Addressing 5,000 people in Coleraine, Peter Robinson, deputy leader of Paisley's 'Democratic Unionist Party' called for farmers to leave their tractors, factory workers their workbenches, housewives their Hoovering to protest when the first Dublin civil servants arrive in the North. The paramilitary thugs of the Ulster Volunteer Force are openly recruiting.

The Provisional IRA have added to the sectarianism when attacks on two police stations were followed up with threats to any building contractor which took on the task of rebuilding the stations.

Common enemy

Workers in Northern Ireland, from both Protestant and Catholic areas face common problems and a common enemy, capitalism. The bosses' system has failed to provide jobs and decent housing for the entire population. It was capitalism and British imperialism which built sectarianism into the monster which has already cost the lives of thousands and now threatens to break the growing class unity shown in many disputes over the past decade.

The working class have the power to overcome the bigots. Almost exactly a decade ago in December 1975, strike action by workers in Derry and other towns against a spate of sectarian murders stemmed the tide of four years of violence which at times approached civil war and gave the chance for class unity to re-emerge.

Yet many of today's leaders of the workers' movement in the North have made a virtue out of silence over the accord. Other labour movement organisations in Britain and Ireland have accepted the deal.

Neither capitalist unification nor a capitalist Northern Ireland offers a future for workers or youth. The unions must achieve working class unity and fight for the overthrow of capitalism in Ireland and Bri-

tain; on this basis a socialist united Ireland and socialist federation of Britain and Ireland could be achieved.

Class alternative

Even at this hour, an initiative by the Irish Congress of Trade Unions, with a socialist alternative to the Tory deal, circulated to the unions, followed by a conference to discuss and adopt the alternative, could build a movement to counter the bigots. Workers can still be united around their common interests if there is a serious fight for a better life for all workers. The labour movement in Britain and Southern Ireland must give their backing to a class alternative. For workers' unity and socialism!

INDUSTRIAL REPORTS

Social workers pilloried for crimes capitalism commits

THE INQUIRY into the murder of Jasmine Beckford has highlighted the human suffering which lies behind cold statistics of social deprivation and public expenditure cuts.

The report severely criticises the supervision of this case by the social workers involved, and it cannot be denied that there was a scandalous failure to discover the extent of Jasmine's suffering and to take action to save her. But the report went much further than this, pointing in particular to the problems of staff shortages, inadequate lines of supervision and flaws in professional practice.

The immediate response of Brent council was summarily to dismiss three relatively junior staff involved in the case. NALGO members in Brent Social Services were incensed at this, seeing it as a way of using fellow trade unionists as 'scapegoats'. Relatively junior staff were being made to carry the can for problems not of their own making.

Under-staffed

Social workers' training, particularly in child abuse, is inadequate. Statistics reveal that Brent, an area acknowledged to have acute social problems, has only four-fifths the number of social workers it needs. The office concerned in the Jasmine Beckford case was supposed to have four senior social workers but most of the time during the management of the case, only one worker was in post.

When the senior social worker involved went on maternity leave, the request for a locum replacement was turned down. Labour councillors were responsible for this decision and the same councillors have been prominent in calling for 'resolute action' against the staff concerned with Jasmine's case.

But it is the employers' responsibility to ensure that employees work effectively and the blame should rest with them and with all who condone public expenditure restraint.

Since this tragedy, the council's child abuse procedures have been changed. The old procedures were not set up by the staff who have been sacked and the employers must not be allowed to get away with their actions which by-pass agreed disciplinary procedures in order to placate the media and hide the underlying social causes of the tragedy.

By Paul Kershaw
(Brent NALGO)

ADDENBROOKE'S HOSPITAL

Addenbrookes hospital stitch up?

STRIKING DOMESTICS at Addenbrookes Hospital, Cambridge, are angry at what they call a 'stitch-up job' organised by the hospital management and their own unions.

By Robin Pye
(Cambridge LPYS)

At a meeting on 3 December a deal proposed by union officials from NUPE and COHSE was unanimously rejected by the strikers who gave the officials a hot reception.

After the meeting the strike committee chair, Sylvia Burton, said that the strike would continue even if it was declared unofficial by the unions.

Striking porter Graham Heneghan said: "When we have seen a national official it is to tell us that such and such a hospital has settled with the implication that we should too". The strikers have learnt to treat these utterings with suspicion. Rumours that the strike is over are sometimes traceable to NUPE officials.

They even reached the TUC education centre in London, and at NUPE offices in Doncaster officials are reported to have confiscated posters and leaflets advertising a meeting for the strikers under the pretence that the strike was over.

Addenbrookes' strikers recall that striking domestics at Barking Hospital faced similar rumours and lies last year.

These rumours have been countered by intensive speaking tours around the



local labour movement which have brought in fresh support, both in cash and on the picket line.

The true picture of the Addenbrookes strike is reported in the *Militant* and to the rest of the health service unions via the National Action Committee which exists as a pressure group within the unions to campaign for an organised and co-ordinated national campaign against privatisation.

The NAC produces a bulletin called *Action News* which provides an update on privatisation disputes that have not ended and will not go away.

The union officials' attempts at ending the strike go beyond rumour-mongering, however. A resolution instructing the Southern and Eastern Divisional Council of NUPE to buy a

minibus for the strike committee was carried unanimously by the floor at Divisional Conference in October against the wishes of the platform. Yet, no steps have been taken to buy the minibus.

£500 in NUPE contributions to the Addenbrookes strikers' hardship fund has been mysteriously held up "in the system".

Management threats

Thus the meeting to announce the "stitch-up" came as no surprise when strikers found out about it via the management! The meeting was referred to in letters to those porters out in sympathy with the domestics, which carried thinly veiled threats to sack

them if they did not return to work.

That threat has since been carried out in one case. It is here that strikers suspect management-union collaboration against them. The deal as it stood did little more than offer strikers the possibility of jobs elsewhere.

NUPE and COHSE are considered left-wing unions. Something is very wrong when members of these unions in a dispute should become so disgusted with the leaders and have to face such underhand tactics from full-time officials.

What is needed is a leadership prepared to lead. It shows once again the need for rank and file organisation like the National Action Committee and the building of Broad Lefts in the unions.

Irish electricity

THE LONGEST strike in the history of the Irish Electricity Board (ESB) continues in Cork. The strike is in defence of written agreements made in the early seventies with the ATGWU. (ATGWU Ireland is region 11 of the TGWU).

The ESB projected 8 per cent annual growth in electricity demand and borrowed huge sums to finance the building of power stations and made agreements with the unions to maintain industrial peace.

The international capitalist recession has meant that the projected growth in electricity demand has not materialised—but the banks still want their interest. Debts are now £1,034 million and repayments £400,000 per day.

So management have decided that the workers will pay. 'Consultants' have been brought in and two reports on 'overmanning' show that 30 per cent of the 12,000 workers could be got rid of.

In Cork the management have been trying to railroad changes in working conditions and manning levels without negotiations, which would lead directly to job losses. In August workers downed tools after 42 men were taken off the payroll in one week for refusing to work in breach of contracts. Incredibly the union full-

time official refused to sanction the strike despite serving strike notice in May on exactly the same issue.

The elected executive of the branch (11/61 T&G) voted to support the strike and the senior official in the republic, Matt Merrigan, supported the strike and applied for official sanction. It is unprecedented that with this support the strike is still 'unofficial'.

The Regional Secretary, John Freeman refuses official sanction "in the past or future tense" because of the "circumstances surrounding this dispute".

This outrageous behaviour is an affront to all the democratic procedures of the T&G. It seems that the 'credibility' of a full time official in the eyes of management is more important to the union bureaucracy than the defence of members' jobs and conditions.

Four months on and the workers are still determined, though facing increasing hardship. A women's support group has been set up to collect food and money.

T&G members are urged to demand that the union put its considerable resources behind the Cork members' struggle to protect their conditions and their jobs.

Messages of support:
ESB/ATGWU Strike Committee,
59 McCurtain St, Cork. Tel
Cork 508888.



Irish Electricity Board pickets.

Pattern to carpet strikes

FROM 1979 as a result of monetarist policies, foreign competition and underinvestment in the carpet industry, Kidderminster, not for the first time, has suffered with mergers, factory closures and a steep increase in unemployment.

However, after retreating there are now signs of a trade recovery and increase in working class confidence. In the past three months two strikes have taken place in the industry.

Currently, practically the entire workforce of Woodward Grosvenor carpets are on an indefinite strike.

The issue which has precipitated it is the demand that the storemen, currently paid £88 for a 39½ hour week, should receive a further £17 per week to bring them into line with shop floor labourers.

The union conducted a workplace ballot and received a 75 per cent vote for a strike. That workers should come out on strike a few weeks before Christmas speaks volumes for the level of discontent within that factory. The dispute is official.

Pickets were organised and the strike has been solid. On the 5 December management predictably issued warning letters threatening closure and redundancy.

Consequently on Monday 9 December, expected some members to be worried, a mass picket was organised.

In order not to aggravate the Hereford and Worcester Constabulary unnecessarily, six pickets were outside the entrance, but 30 were on the other side of the road. In the event nobody went in.

By Mike Waldheim

Fleet Street crisis...

Murdoch talks end-prepare for action

FLEET STREET confrontation over Rupert Murdoch's plans to publish a new London evening paper in mid-March without union agreement looks imminent.

It is also likely that Murdoch will try to move the printing of other News International titles out of Fleet Street to the new plant at Wapping in the London borough of Tower Hamlets.

It is reported that the company TNT, which is tied up with News International, has brought a fleet of vans in preparation for a non-union distribution operation.

The print unions have rejected a draconian agreement which Murdoch has tried to impose.

It would be a legally binding commitment by the union and its members not to: "instigate, promote, sponsor, engage in, finance or condone, any strike or other industrial action for any reason whatsoever."

Embodied in the agreement is acceptance that: "All employees who take part in strike or other industrial action will be subject to immediate dismissal."

The agreement also specifies that there will be no closed shop, no "discrimination" against non-union members, complete flexibility in working practices and no minimum staffing agreements.

Acceptance of these conditions would mean acceptance of a death sentence by the print unions.

Significantly, however, EETPU general secretary Eric Hammond looks willing to help Murdoch out: "We find no objection to legally binding strike free

agreements, in particular in the newspaper industry..."

SOGAT '82 have written to Murdoch asking him to guarantee their members' jobs in News International are safe and that transfers to the new plant in Wapping would not involve compulsory redundancies or the destruction of existing agreements.

SOGAT vote

If Murdoch refuses, according to national official Bill Miles, the union will ballot its members in News International for industrial action.

Despite past disagreements on News International negotiations the print unions must come together in a united stand.

Action must also be demanded from the TUC, both for solidarity and for

action against the EETPU if they agree a single union deal with Murdoch.

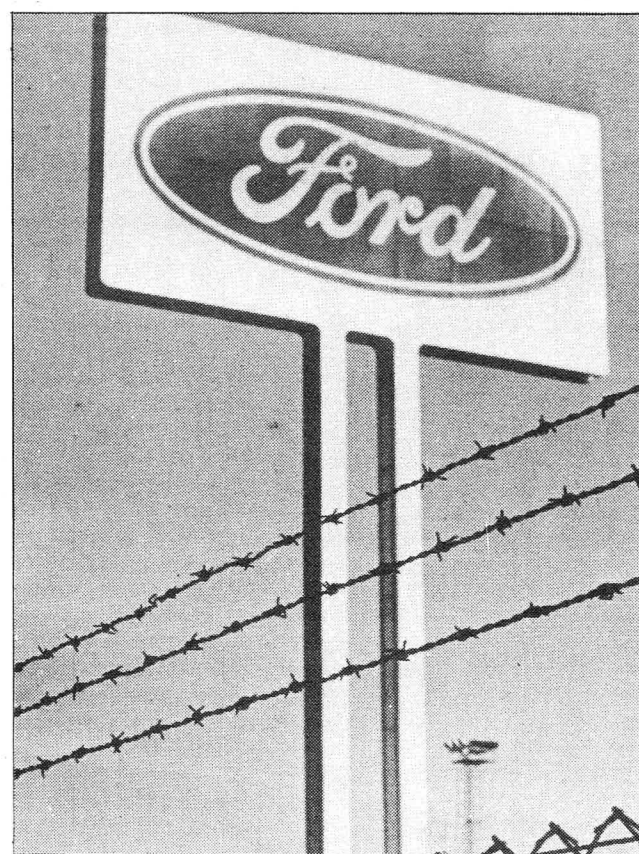
★ No selling of jobs
★ United union approach
★ Mass meetings throughout the industry, prepare for action

★ Rank and file pressure on all print union leaders to resist blackmail or divisive tactics by the bosses. Stand firm!

★ Resist legal blackmail
★ Appeal to the TUC to honour section five of the Wembley agreement—for solidarity action in defence of any union under attack

★ National blacking of the companies of any Fleet Street proprietor breaking agreements with the unions

★ Prepare for immediate one-day national print strike and mass picketing to shut down any plant to which a Fleet Street title is moved without union agreement.



Ford pay ballot decisive for jobs

FORD HOURLY-PAID workers will be balloted on 13 January for industrial action over the company's pay offer. It is a two year deal of 3 per cent on basic rates in the first year tied up with productivity and flexibility strings.

By a Ford worker

A secret ballot will take place following mass meetings. They will be conducted by the individual unions and the result be decided by an overall aggregate of all votes.

The ballot form will state that strike action would be a breach of contract. The EETPU will hold a postal ballot.

The unions' joint negotiating committee will decide the form action takes if there is a vote for rejection of the 'final' offer.

In many ways this is the most important wage deal for twenty years.

If the offer is accepted it will mean a massive change in work practices which have been built up over decades. They would prepare massive job losses in the future.

The offer hits skilled workers doubly hard. The company propose an amalgamation of skills

leading in their words to an "Electrical Maintenance man". It would break down the barriers which have protected skills and jobs.

They will be expected to take on some of the supervisors' responsibilities, operate the Maintenance Communication System, carry out line patrol and be prepared to move anywhere.

The stewards have pointed out that they are not against change in principle but this is a recipe for industrial anarchy. And the offer of 4% for acceptance of the changes is an insult.

In an attempt to split the workforce the company have offered an extra 2% increase to line workers in the form of special allowances.

Under the new deal workers would have to sign a new contract of employment which would open anyone refusing to carry out new functions to immediate disciplinary action. Workers' rights under the grievance procedure would be undermined.

All Ford workers must unite in rejection of the company's divide and rule tactics. The joint negotiating committee should be campaigning for rejection of the offer and strike action if need be.

Silentnight's striking Christmas

THE MANAGEMENT of Silentnight Beds in Lancashire, where union members have been on strike for nearly seven months, ended 1985 with the joke of the year, announcing that they had made a no-strike deal with the scab workforce.

By Linden Stafford
(Skipton Labour Party)

The Silentnight scabs—who include former workers as well as people recently recruited to replace 500 sacked strikers—have so far not been remarkable for their enthusiasm for striking. However, management have agreed to pay an across-the-board wage rise, in return for a pledge not to go on strike for two years!

This is a crude attempt to persuade investors that Silentnight's production is about to be healthy again, despite the fact that the official strike at the factories in Barnoldswick, Lancashire, and Sutton, West Yorkshire, is still causing blocking of raw materials and products, and union drivers are still refusing to cross picket lines.

The pay rise will be offset by management's other plans. Their next move will be to re-time the jobs and force workers to do even more jobs per shift than at



Strikers Tommy Pratt, Gerry Cumiskey, Paul Rogan, Baby John Robert Cumiskey joins the class war early.
Photo: Phil McHugh

present, so that they will lose out on bonus payments. Already they have had to work overtime, to push up production levels.

Even before the strike, the Silentnight factories were sweatshops, where every time workers increased production, jobs were re-timed so that even more work had to be done to earn the pittance that was paid. This time there is no union inside the factories to fight back against management's tricks.

The company's other main weapon will be the wage cuts they will force in 1987, with what is described as 'a formula linked to changes in the retail price

index'.

Even some members of management are finding chairman Tom Clarke's methods intolerable. In the course of one week in December, two managers, one from production and the other in time and motion, handed in their notice.

Prospective customers—particularly during the January sales—may wish to give some thought to the quality of Silentnight products and the speed of deliveries, in view of the lack of skilled production workers and other problems in the factories.

Beds produced by the Silentnight group include

Perfecta, Sealy Sleep, Lay-E-Zee, Hackney, Sleepy Lagoon and Restmaster, as well as Silentnight. Upholstery and other products include the names Buoyant, Contessa, Welbeck House, Silentnight Cabinets and Silentnight Kitchens.

With the help of their many supporters in the labour movement, strikers were able to enjoy Christmas, with donations of food parcels, toys, and so on. However, with a new year beginning, it is vital that Silentnight strikers are assured of continued assistance.

The Furniture, Timber and Allied Trades Union (FTAT) is asking other unions, factories, workplaces, Labour Parties and support groups to 'adopt a family' by taking over some of the responsibility of supplying food, clothing and financial help with bills, etc.

Details can be obtained from Dennis and Florence Williams, 41 Lower West Avenue, Barnoldswick, Colne, Lancashire, BB5 6DW (tel: 0282-814556). Donations to FTAT No. 92 Branch Strike Fund, c/o Ann King, 10 Rainhill Crescent, Barnoldswick, Colne, Lancashire.

ing families; Plus regular features: Manager of the Month (Robert Haslam), Around the Coalfields (including revelations about a major new coal seam discovered in Kent, NCB undermines the new review procedure at St Johns, breaking through to a new face at Polmaise.

Pitwatch is available at 25p plus 15p post and packing, post free over 5 copies, from World Socialist Books, 3-13 Hepscoth Rd, London E9 5HB.

ISSUE NO 3 of Pitwatch an independent magazine produced by supporters of the miners' strike has just been published.

It includes articles containing new information on: The working miners and their Tory backers by Paul Foot; The social costs of the new NCB Plan for coal by Andrew Glyn; Coal and the international energy markets by Huw Beynon; Rebuilding the Notts NUM; Continuing hardship in min-



FORGEMASTERS

THE SHEFFIELD Forgemasters Steel strike is now eleven weeks old, the mood is determined, support has grown.

Management have now issued all strikers with dismissal notices: "A great Christmas present", as one picket said.

Fellow workers at the firm's River Don site are preparing to take solidarity action after the holidays.

Talks have been a charade—with management refusing to talk to stewards.

They are now threatening closure or to hire new workers or trying to entice

strikers back to work by offering to reemploy them with new conditions.

But the steelworkers are confident they can hold the line and that whatever the Ian McGregor of private steel, Phillip Wright, tries, he cannot browbeat or bully them into submission.

The key now lies in stepping up the action and increased support from the rest of the movement.

Messages of support/donations to Forgemasters Dispute Fund, Dispute Centre, AUEW House, Furnival Gate, Sheffield S1 3HE.

By Alan Anderton

Militant

Liverpool Fighting Fund launched by the Council Labour Group. Send donations to: Councillor Tony Hood, Chairman's room, room 42, Municipal Buildings, Dale Street Liverpool L69 2DH.

Liverpool Council by-election

Vote Labour for jobs and homes

LABOUR IS out to win in Liverpool's Old Swan council by-election.

The Labour council is confident that its record on housing and protecting jobs and services will win the support of voters.

The Labour candidate, county councillor, Ann Hollinshead, has worked with the city council team in Old Swan and knows the everyday problems in the area.

The city councillors, she says, decided that enough was enough and pledged to build new houses, defend and improve services and not make any cuts. The previous Liberal administration was a disaster, with cuts in every service, and no houses built for almost five years.

Surcharge

The 48 Labour councillors now face surcharge because they stood by their promises. They have put their livelihoods on the line even though many have families to support.

Anne Hollinshead says: "I feel privileged that I have been asked to stand for the city council and to stand alongside my colleagues."

For standing up against the Tories the Labour council has suffered a continuous campaign of attacks from the press, radio and TV, egged on by Tories and Liberals. The City councillors have made a stand that the rest of the country should follow. That is why the inquiry into Liverpool Labour Party, and its suspension is completely unwarranted. These actions

By Mary Jennings
(Liverpool District Labour Party)

only hinder the campaign. The fight must go on not only to get Labour re-elected in Old Swan but to maintain and improve the services for the people of Liverpool.

It is the Tory government who should really be on trial. They want to run this city 250 miles away without caring for its problems. They are willing to use £200 million worth of North Sea oil to pay for unemployment instead of investing it in places like Liverpool.

The Tories, the Liberals and the press all share the same interests—to look after their own and the system they support. They want the people of Liverpool and elsewhere to pay for the crisis that they have created.

But the Liverpool Labour Party, and the Labour council will not lay down to be trampled on. We will stand up and continue to fight for the people of Liverpool.

● Liverpool Council Labour Group has launched an urgent appeal for funds to defend the 48 councillors threatened with surcharge £100,000 is needed by 13 January to defend the councillors in court. (Details top right corner above)



Since Labour was elected in 1983 Liverpool City council has:

- ★ Stopped a three per cent cut in the council workforce, saving 1,000 jobs.
- ★ Created an extra 1,000 jobs in day-care facilities, nurseries, etc. It has taken on a further 100 YTS trainees, topping up their wages to £52 a week with proper training and a guaranteed job at the end of their scheme.
- ★ Plans a £100 a week minimum wage and a 35-hour week for all council employees.
- ★ Started building 2,369 new municipal homes.
- ★ Committed £51 million in grants to home owners, £12.7 million improvement funds for Housing Associations and Co-operatives and £3.6 million to improve the environment of Housing Association areas.
- ★ Six new nursery class projects are being built.
- ★ Built four new sports centres.

N. Ireland—repression no solution

THE ANNOUNCEMENT that 550 more troops are to be sent to Northern Ireland and the arrest of 18 members of Sinn Fein at the weekend are attempts by the British government to demonstrate that they are still prepared to 'crack down' on 'terrorism'.

But gestures like these will not convince Protestant Loyalists that their opposition to the Anglo-Irish agreement is unfounded.

Neither move represents anything new. The numbers of troops in Northern Ireland is frequently changed. That this increase has been announced shows that

it is merely a publicity exercise designed to appease the Loyalists. Similarly the Sinn Fein arrests are typical of the kind of harassment which the Catholic population suffer day in day out. Only one of those arrested has been charged, and that with the ridiculous 'offence' of being in possession of an illumination flare. There is little confidence from Catholics that the agreement will change anything.

This has been highlighted by the hunger strike by 27 members of the terrorist group the Irish National Liberation Army in support

of their demand for the end of the use of 'supergrasses' and the dropping of all charges and convictions based on their evidence.

Supergrasses

This has already forced the British government to hold a further unscheduled meeting with the Southern Irish Foreign Minister. The Irish government is on record as being opposed to 'supergrasses' and there is massive opposition to their use within the South. If the hunger strikes are kept up, it

will force the Fitzgerald government into a corner. If the prisoners starve to death, it would be impossible for the Southern government to keep to the agreement.

For Catholic and Protestant workers alike, the new year offers a grim prospect of rising sectarian tension, and worse army and police repression, which the Anglo-Irish agreement has done nothing to stem, but has only made more serious.

(See also article on Page 13.)

By Pat Craven

MILITANT CHILDREN'S PARTY: Saturday, 4 January 1986, 2.30pm to 6pm, John Marshall Hall, Blackfriars Road, London SE1. Any ages welcome. Ring Marie Walsh on (01) 767-6061 to let us know who's coming. If possible please bring £1 for each child.

There will be a social afterwards at the same hall. Make a note in your new diary and come along. Bring your own drink and we'll provide the food and entertainment.



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