

# Militant

Solidarity price £1

The Marxist Paper for Labour and Youth 30p

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## Inside...

Manchester engineering feature

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Student week of action

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## For the full claim! No strings!

# Telecom strikers must win

THE BOSSES at British Telecom, backed by the Tory government are offering us nothing but a kick in the teeth. That is why our strike has shown unprecedented solidarity and determination for the full claim with no strings and no victimisation.

By Phil Holt  
(National Chairman NCU Broad Left)  
and Donald Macdonald  
(Vice-chair Stirling NCU)

Under a Tory capitalist government, workers are always under attack. If you are in an older supposedly 'outdated' industry or one with low profits you get the sack. If you work for a high technology industry like telecoms, you watch the profits climb sky high, you see top management getting exorbitant increases on their massive salaries.

But what do we get? Peanuts suspended on strings. A few per cent rise with compulsory overtime and a loyalty oath to say we'll do everything management want from now on.

But what do management want? A recent report suggests that they 'need' 70,000 redundancies by 1992. Fibre optic cables, System X and



Around 15,000 workers joined the NCU rally in London on 4 February. They were determined to stay out for the full 10 per cent with no strings. Strikers heard NCU members including Phil Holt, together with Terry Fields MP and John Bryan, Labour PPC for Bermondsey.

now System Y, with probably System Z in the pipeline, are potentially useful technical advances. Unfortunately under System Capitalism they also mean severe job losses.

NCU members are not Luddites; we have already accepted many innovations. The union's Broad Strategy accepts such advances but on

the basis of reducing the hours worked not of compulsory overtime. We will fight all attacks on conditions and the loss of jobs, and demand full retraining of BT workers for the new needs of industry.

We've got to win this strike and unity is the first need. Engineering and clerical sections must have

no separate deals, joint action for a joint claim is the only way to beat BT bosses.

We should be looking towards the proper merging of the two groups, the UCW and then later the STE the junior management union for one union in post and telecomms. Manchester area NCU members have decided to withdraw the nationally

### No secret deals

AFTER SECRET negotiations it is understood that the NCU Engineering Group Executive Council has organised a consultative forum for Monday 9 February.

This forum will only involve district council chairs and secretaries, many of whom will not have had a chance to convene district meetings of all branches.

At present there are no documents or known subjects for discussion. The *Financial Times* (4 February) quotes John Golding as telling BT if it doesn't improve its offer, he would recommend a return to work with no agreement, refusing to introduce changed work practices and waging a campaign of non-cooperation.

Branches should flood the EC with telexes and telemessages letting them know we are prepared to stay united and stick it out until we win the dispute. Branches should lobby the meeting, details will be available later.

NCU reports P 15.

## Militant Fighting Fund

£250,000

250,000

240,000

230,000

220,000

210,000

200,000

190,000

180,000

170,000

160,000

150,000

140,000

130,000

120,000

110,000

100,000

90,000

80,000

70,000

60,000

50,000

40,000

30,000

20,000

10,000

WITH £9,745 coming in this week, we have now raised an historic £202,089.

Readers in Hackney raised £725 including £98 from Dr. Kaplan, showing how easy it will be to raise our £250,000 target.

The NCU rank and file have been marvellous, often showing great initiative in (Continued on back page)

# Militant

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## Gorbachev's democracy

THE SPEECH of Gorbachev to the Central Committee of the Russian Communist Party at the end of last month, represents a very significant change for the bureaucracy. He proposed more than one candidate for local and supreme soviet elections and more importantly elections and secret ballots for Communist Party posts, even for the powerful regional party secretaries.

Formally all these rights already exist, enshrined in the constitution. And along with them are many more, unmentioned by Gorbachev—the right to strike, to free assembly and free speech. To which Marxists would add—to organise genuine, independent unions and to establish alternative parties.

Gorbachev is terrified by the prospect of real democratic rights, with which workers would get a taste of their collective strength. During the short life of Solidarity, the Polish working class began to see clearly the parasitic role of the bureaucrats, and their own potential power to throw them off their back.

Above all Gorbachev aims to preserve the control of society by the bureaucracy. Gorbachev is a bonapartist dictator who represents the privileged bureaucracy of state, army and above all the so-called Communist Party. But balancing between the different classes and groups in society, like even Stalin he can sometimes lean on the masses to strike blows at the most arbitrary and corrupt bureaucrats in the interests of the ruling elite as a whole. Their corrupt mismanagement and waste is squandering the enormous advantages of state ownership of the means of production and the planned use of resources.

Gorbachev's enthusiasm for 'openness', therefore, includes opening up the controlled press to the workers' complaints about bureaucratic high-handedness and corruption. 'Openness' of course will not tolerate opposition papers or the right to circulate the works of Trotsky.

But Gorbachev can feel the terrible drag that the bureaucracy has become on the Russian economy. The economy is seizing up, growth rates had slipped below those of the crisis ridden West. Three times in his speech he condemned rule by "administrative decree".

It was possible, at a cost, for the industrial basis of the Russian economy to be assembled by diktat from above. But now it is a modern sophisticated world power. He attacks precisely those officials whose ideas were shaped in the mould of 30-40 years ago.

He particularly condemns "the situation which took shape in the late 1970's and 1980's."—the Brezhnev years, when corruption and complacency thrived, but when the indicators of an economy in stagnation registered most clearly.

Gorbachev's major economic changes were announced at last year's Party congress—decentralisation of decision making, especially down to factory managers, material incentives to boost production and a drive against too obvious corruption. Temporarily they have had a certain impact on economic growth. With his latest speech he wants to turn the workers and lower officials against the more 'conservative' opponents of his new measures within the top layers of the bureaucracy.

But under Khrushchev also, attempts were made to get round the barrier to economic development that the existence of an uncontrolled bureaucracy creates. Decentralisation after a short time led to corruption and mismanagement at many more levels. It swung back to tight central control, as will inevitably happen with Gorbachev's 'reforms' as their initial impact breaks down.

The bureaucracy is now an absolute fetter on the further development of production. Even Gorbachev admits "the development of democracy in production is the most important trend... to avoid many blunders and miscalculations." But tapping the initiative of the workers, opening up to them the accounts of society, real control by the workers over those organising industry, is absolutely incompatible with the continuation of a privileged elite.

Under capitalism, albeit chaotically, the market acts as a check on the economy, though much less so with the development of giant multi-national monopolies. A nationalised, planned economy requires the free, conscious check of the masses, over what is produced in what quality and of what quantity.

The restoration of Lenin's four fundamentals of real, workers' democracy is essential for the further development of the economy and society in Russia. Election and recall of all officials, no official to receive more than a worker's wage, no permanent bureaucracy, no means of coercion except an armed people. But this is only possible with political revolution and the driving out of the bureaucratic caste.

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# Tories stamp on civil liberties



## THE POLICE raid on BBC Scotland exposes the Tories' contempt for civil liberties.

A government which stands for 'freedom from state interference' when tycoons are amassing profits is presiding over a relentless growth of state suppression of political freedoms.

At Wapping, the riot police are unleashed to protect Murdoch's profits. Photographers are singled out for special treatment by the police, who then try to get hold of their pictures to identify demonstrators.

### Phone-tap

John Golding, leader of the telecommunications union, reveals that his phone is being tapped. He has 'complained' that it is being done ineptly.

The *New Statesman* office, Duncan Campbell's house and the BBC are raided by Special Branch officers, who seize film and documents which have nothing to do with the film about the Zircon spy satellite they are supposed to be investigating.

The Police and Public Order Act, the Criminal Evidence Act and the Employment Acts threaten rights won by the trade union movement in a century of struggle. The British capitalist state is adopting all the methods appropriate to the third rate economic power that Britain has become under Thatcher.

This government is not even prepared to tolerate

a bastion of the ruling class like the BBC. Contrary to Tebbit's ravings it is seen to be consistently biased towards the right-wing. A survey on Attitudes to Broadcasting has shown that 18 per cent of those asked thought BBC1 favoured the Tories while five per cent saw a pro-Labour bias. For BBC2 the figures were ten per cent and two per cent respectively.

## The Tories are using the state to crush the opposition which their policies provoke.

The Tory government already has an overwhelmingly servile press and now it wants the BBC to perform the same role, as an open mouthpiece for the government. The Board of Governors has been staffed by Tory establishment figures. The token 'Labour' representatives Lord Barnett and John Boyd, former general secretary of the AEU, have done nothing to alter the overall right-wing majority. They will now be looking for a poodle to replace Alisdair Milne, who was forced to resign because he was not "one of us".

Labour's counter-attack has been stifled by Neil Kinnock's support for the government ban on the Zircon film. "If

secrets are worth having", he said "they are worth keeping". Such arguments play into the Tories' hands. It leaves the Labour leaders confined to secondary charges of 'incompetence' or 'over-reaction', while backing the government's defence of 'official secrets'.

The Tories want to keep their schemes secret not from their 'enemies' in the Russian bureaucracy, but from British workers who are right to demand to know what costly prestige projects like Zircon are being planned.

These episodes provide Labour with the perfect answer to the Tory cant about 'freedom of the individual'. This government is the most repressive for decades. Having allowed the economy to degenerate, it is now using the state to crush the inevitable opposition which their policies have provoked.

### Commitment

Labour must stand firm on its commitment to the repeal of the Official Secrets Act and a Freedom of Information Act. The Tories must be answered with socialist policies to end poverty and unemployment and create the prosperity and security for all to provide the fullest liberty for individuals.

By Pat Craven

## Out of order

21 LABOUR MPs have signed an 'early day' motion by Terry Fields which condemns the decision of British Telecom management to lock out 40,000 workers and send them home. It notes the hypocrisy of the BT directors in expecting their workforce to accept a wage rise of five per cent with strings, whilst they awarded themselves pay rises of 42 per cent in 1986. It congratulates the members of the National Communications Union (NCU) on their determined stand against tyrannical management tactics and condemns the management's scare stories about the effects of the strike.

Terry Fields moved the motion at the request of NCU members in Liverpool. He was amazed therefore to see an amendment, in the name of NCU sponsored Labour MPs, Roger Stott and John McWilliam, to add at the end: "but notes that our union, the NCU sees this totally as an industrial dispute and does not wish the Tory government to intervene in any way whatsoever".

Even more extraordinary was a letter to Terry Fields from the Deputy Chief Whip, Norman Hogg, advising him that the sponsored MPs from the NCU had protested about the motion. "It is the view of the union" he claims "that no parliamentary initiative of any kind should be taken at this time in the dispute".

NCU members will be demanding to know how they are being served by their sponsored MPs if this is the kind of "support" they are giving in parliament. Labour Party members will be demanding that the Whips stop hampering a move to back the struggle of the BT workers.

Terry Fields—a worker's MP on a worker's wage is showing what a Labour MP should be doing, using the Commons as a platform to campaign in the interests of workers who elected him.

## Tribute to a Scottish comrade

WE WOULD like to pay tribute to Iain Taip, a comrade who tragically died on Sunday 21 January from lung cancer at the age of 24 at his home in Glasgow. Iain had undergone many months of treatment but failed to respond.

He became politically active after attending the *Militant* national rally in November 1985.

During treatment he also attended many meetings, the highlight of which, he said was meeting Ted Grant who Iain had great respect for.

His understanding of the absurdities and inequalities of capitalism, and his bravery, made Iain determined to see socialism in his time. Unfortunately he did not have time on his side.

For those who knew him, Iain's death will make us more determined to rid the planet of capitalism. His presence and regular contribution will be sorely missed.

His friends and comrades in Glasgow send their condolences to his family.

From Maryhill Militant supporters

# Spanish students plan new strikes

Madrid: 4 February

**AFTER SIX weeks of mass activity, the Spanish School Student's Union has forced the government to negotiate. Talks have continued over the last week, with the education ministry deliberately employing delaying tactics.**

The socialist government is split. One section is considering conceding to the students. But the hardline faction, centred around the minister for industry, Carlos Solchaga, is most under the influence of the banks and big business. It is their austere line that seems to be prevailing.

They are prepared to offer some concessions, but totally insufficient to meet the demands of the

students. As a result it is most likely that militant struggle will be renewed.

The students have already laid plans for another week long strike for 9-13 February, if the negotiations are unsatisfactory. This will coincide with a national strike of teachers, in both public and private sectors and with the strike of the agricultural labourers in Andalucia and Extremadura.

The Marxists around *Nuevo Claridad* have launched the call for a march in Madrid on 11 February. Already the backing has been obtained from the Workers' Commissions union federation, and a declaration of support is awaited from the socialist UGT federation.

Having come this far the school students will not be fobbed off with minor concessions.



Stewards hold demonstrators together, linked with their staves, when demonstration in Madrid was attacked by police on Friday 23 January. A new opinion poll in *El Pais* has shown the problems facing the ruling class, amongst the under 25s only 25 per cent thought capitalism was legitimate and efficient, amongst adults 30 per cent. 45 per cent amongst both groups opposed capitalism. With economic crisis, riots in N African territories, the struggle of the students, the right wing socialist government is in desperate straits.

## Labour's NEC

# More expulsions, more inquiries

Reports by Militant reporters

THE LABOUR Party National Executive Committee (NEC) on 28 January once again spent its time attacking its own rank and file. They are supposed to be preparing for a June election, yet since the party conference, their meetings have been dominated by discussion on expulsions and inquiries.

The NEC considered a letter from the Welsh regional organiser regarding the disciplining of Chris Peace and Tony Wedlake. General Secretary Larry Whitty warned the meeting not to take action as the evidence was insufficient to prove that the two were Militant 'members'. David Blunkett moved that proceedings be dropped, but it was agreed by 20-8, with Diana Jeuda abstaining, to refer the case to the National Constitutional Committee (NCC).

Larry Whitty announced the Blyth Valley Labour Party 'clean' of a Militant takeover and Ronnie Campbell was endorsed as parliamentary candidate. But without producing any evidence, Jack Rogers of UCATT called for Bob Newall,

the Blyth party chair, to be investigated by the NCC for allegedly selling Militant and organising their meetings. Despite another warning by Whitty, this was agreed by 16-8.

The appeal against expulsion by Pete Jackson of Wrekin Labour Party was rejected, despite objection from Audrey Wise that they were expelling "a young, hard-working party member." Ken Cure argued that they must "accept what the constituency party wants."

Finally Bob Whitehead of Birmingham Selly Oak was expelled. He is a left-winger who does not support Militant and was expelled against the wishes of his constituency party. So much for Cure's argument about accepting what the local party wants!

Recent polls have seen Labour level with or behind the Tories. The NEC must end these witch-hunts. By continuing with them, the leadership are showing how out of touch they are from the rank and file who want to get on with the election campaign.



Terry Fields MP, Liverpool Broadgreen.

## Broadgreen canvass

ELECTION YEAR got off to a flying start in Liverpool Broadgreen when scores of Labour Party members turned out on 24 and 25 January to canvass for Terry Fields MP.

Canvassers received a warm welcome. The mood was overwhelmingly anti-Tory. Terry Fields was kept busy all weekend, chatting with constituents and discussing their problems.

A number of people signed up to join the Labour Party and still more offered to help in the election. One lad, explaining why he felt it was time to get involved said: "My father's just been finished up at Vauxhall's and even his redundancy and pension combined would hardly be enough to buy one of the cars he's been making for the past twenty years. That makes me think the whole system's got to be changed."

Broadgreen's campaign committee is looking forward to a repeat of Labour's historic 1983 success in Broadgreen, as part of a nationwide Labour victory.

## Bermondsey Labour backs tenants

THE RECENT severe weather brought Bermondsey Labour Party a barrage of calls and visits from tenants seeking help. On many of the pre-war estates burst pipes have ruined hundreds of families' homes and possessions.

The Arnold estate has been without water for three weeks. Doctors have warned of a health threat. Children have been taken ill through drinking dirty water. Old people, unable to carry buckets up three flights of stairs, are living in insanitary conditions. Single parents on supplementary benefit have had to pay £5 a week or more on launderette bills.

Last Friday, 100 angry tenants attended an emergency meeting called by Riverside ward Labour Party to discuss the water crisis.

Valarie Ross, head of Rotherhithe district housing office, said it was the worst she had ever seen in 21 years. In her district alone, there had been over 2000 call-outs in three weeks. In the whole borough, 27 estates had been partially or totally without water.

Her assurance that contract plumbers were working 12-15 hours a day was greeted with laughter and shouts of "Where? Where?". Tenants have been told that they could still have to wait up to two weeks before the water is back to normal.

Although eight of the nine local councillors are Liberals, it has been the Labour Party

which has fought for tenants. When the chair explained that the meeting had been organised by the Bermondsey Labour Party, someone piped up: "Yes but Simon Hughes started before you". "Where is he then?" others shouted: "Where is Simon? The only time you see Simon Hughes is when there is a TV camera around."

Summing up the meeting, Labour candidate John Bryan said, to great applause: "It is a credit to the local Labour Party that the meeting has been organised, but it is to the discredit of Southwark council that they had to do so."

The meeting unanimously passed a resolution demanding immediate repairs and compensation for all tenants affected. John Bryan and the Bermondsey Labour Party are now pushing for an emergency meeting of the council's Housing Committee to take up the tenants' demands. For further details, contact Bermondsey Labour Party on (01) 237 3457.

By Willie Griffin

### Bermondsey LPYS Mass canvass

Saturday 7 February  
11am-2pm, 133 Lower Road,  
(nr. Surrey Docks stn)

Sunday 8 February  
10am-2pm, Tabard TA,  
Hankey Place, SE1 (nr  
Borough stn)

## Fulham

FULHAM CONSTITUENCY Labour Party (CLP) has voted by 28 votes to 17 (with over 10 abstentions) to outlaw the selling of *Militant* in the constituency. Any person who supports *Militant* is asked to stop activities associated with the paper or face being referred to the CLP executive and having "appropriate" action taken against them.

## Redcar

FOR A second time, an inquiry by the Labour Party National Agent David Hughes into Redcar Labour Party has had to be adjourned, after two more days hearing 'evidence' from supporters of the MP, James Tinn, who has been asked by the constituency party to stand down.

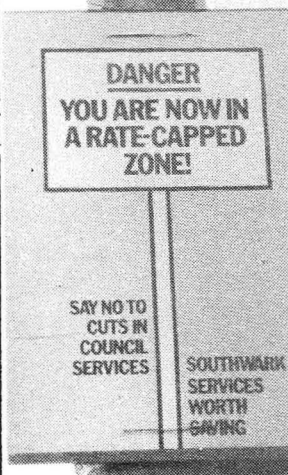
For fifteen hours, unsubstantiated allegations of malpractice and *Mili-*

The two *Militant* supporters on Fulham general committee have over 25 years of party membership between them. They were defended by many delegates from the left of the party who applauded the work done by *Militant* supporters in the by-election and local government elections. A delegate from the EETPU said that the history of his union showed that witch hunts led to intolerance and victimisation far beyond their original intended victims.

*tant* infiltration were made. The MP expressed disquiet at the number of young people being recruited and the officers of one ward party were asked to account for its high recruitment rate!

The constituency officers had just begun their repudiation of these allegations when the inquiry had to be adjourned until 28 February. This has thrown the party's preparations for the general election into confusion.





**CHILDREN WITHOUT teachers, housing repairs and renovation ignored, social services unable to cope with demand—these are the results of Thatcher's war on local spending. Since 1979 the Tories have stolen £21.9 million in government grant reductions to local councils. As Labour authorities reach the limits of financial devices to avert some of the worst cuts, they are looking to a Labour government to rescue them from the crisis of local government.**

# DANGER—Save local services

A FRIGHTENING picture for local government has been painted in the new report of the Audit Commission into eight Labour controlled inner-city London boroughs. It fears they could "become all too easily like parts of New York and Chicago... in danger of spawning a poverty stricken underclass locked into a vicious circle of family breakdown and crime."

It details over 5,000 families in bed and breakfast accommodation, housing lists of over 150,000 and 95,000 children leaving school without qualifications. Yet the situation can only get worse. This year just these eight face a deficit of £290 million out of a total £400 million for all 32 London boroughs. As a result 491 Labour councillors face the prospect of surcharge and disqualification.

These eight councils in attempting to defend their services have built up enormous debts from creative accounting, deferred purchases etc. (Islington even leases its own dustcarts). As a consequence they have an extra £1,000 per household debt compared with another eight 'typical' London boroughs looked at by the Audit Commission.

It was the eight that along with other Labour authorities backed away at the last minute from supporting Liverpool in a united battle to force more money out of the Tories. Now they are having to pick up the bill for it. They followed the advice of the national party leadership—stay in office, stay within the law, defend local people with a 'dented shield'.

But there is no gratitude. Labour local government spokesman, Jack Cunningham,

questioned about a Labour government's response to the 'inner London eight's' debt crisis replied: "We do not have a specific solution in mind. A solution cannot be simply picking up the bill."

### 'Normal debts'

A consultative paper presented to the Labour National Executive Committee's January meeting only gives the guarantee that these debts will be treated as "normal debt repayments." Yet nationally through creative accountancy measures, councils owe £2 billion. Already 20 to 25 per cent of councils' budgets just go to service the debts, more than some councils spend on their social services. Islington spends one third of its budget on its debts.

But then the paper states: "Local authorities will have a central role to play in helping the next Labour government cut unemployment. Our commitment is to create one million new jobs within two years of Labour taking office." But if the debt burden is not lifted from these Labour authorities who have the best record in employment, they will be forced into freezing recruitment and even redundancies.

"We shall increase the rate support grant to allow local authority expenditure to grow in line with Labour's plans for economic recovery." Under these plans Labour will be putting into the economy £6 billion. But since 1979 £21.9 billion has been stolen from local authorities. Labour's policy amounts to trying to bale the ocean with a teaspoon.

By Davy Brown

## ILEA... ILEA... ILEA...

KENNETH BAKER has thrown down the gauntlet! The Inner London Education Authority faces its worst ever financial crisis.

"Even more severe than that faced by Liverpool City Council," says the *Guardian*.

Baker has presented the authority with a choice of making up to £80 million in cuts or declaring an illegal budget.

To its shame two alternative cuts' programmes are being studied by the Labour Group. Some of the cuts proposed include compulsory redirecting of 500

teachers who are apparently surplus, and a drastic recruiting freeze with only one in three vacancies to be filled.

### Redeployment

The ILEA group has to be asked what they think they are doing? Where are the surplus teachers? Bernie Wiltshire, Deputy Leader of ILEA, blamed the unions' refusal to accept redeployment for the problems of shortages of teachers in some areas. He named a school in Hackney which has 22 in a class. Surely this should be

what ILEA is aiming for.

The possibility of ILEA deliberately not recruiting is unbelievable. Areas like Hackney had 23 classes excluded through lack of teachers in the second week of this term, some indefinitely. My own seven year old had no permanent teacher from September right until January.

Further proposals include cuts in holiday play centres for the poorest areas, which would hit 2,000 children of one parent families, scrapping the holiday meals service, cutting the school meals service, cutting clothing grants and abolishing grants to pre-school playgroups, introducing charges for school milk and further cuts in building and maintenance.

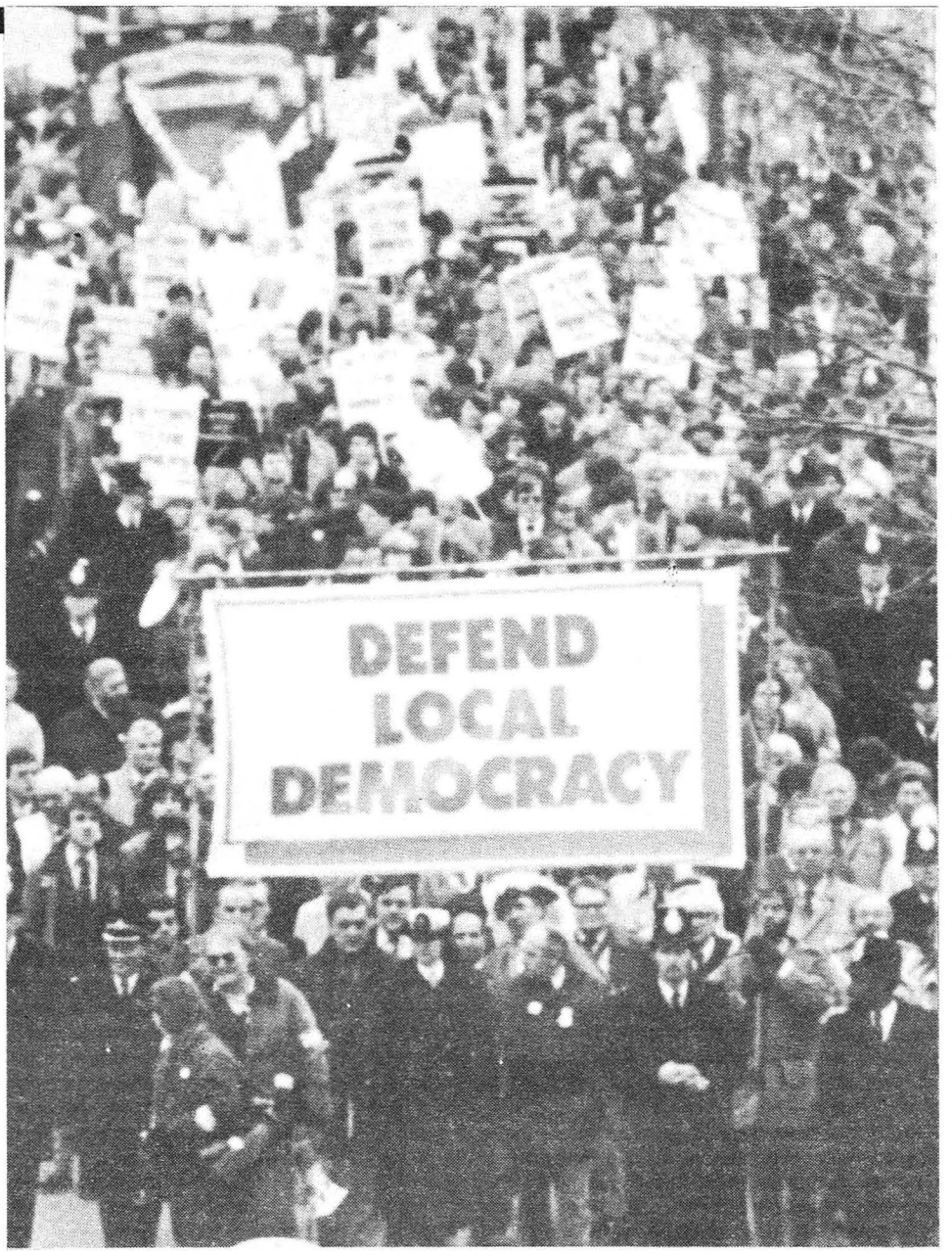
Is Frances Morrell going to dirty her hands by consenting to these assaults on our children's education? Or will the Labour members stand up for a service worth fighting for, while it still is.

By Louise Birch (Hackney parent)

## Sheffield... Sheffield

SHEFFIELD COUNCIL led by soft left David Blunkett, has a deficit of £41 million for 1986-87. Already the council has announced a complete freeze on recruitment, except for 'essential' posts, and a £2 rent rise. It hopes to knock £14 million off the deficit by "income

generation"—selling land and property. But a further £15 million will have to be recouped through employee savings. Management have suggested to council unions a two hour wage cut per week.



## Manchester... Manchester...

MANCHESTER is in the top bracket of councils that have taken on massive deferred purchase debts, to escape Thatcher's cuts. But Labour Party members in the city are not prepared to accept any retreats from the promises given to the working class.

The city council owes over £100 million to finance houses through deferred purchase agreements. It was only through this device that last year's budget was balanced. Local Militant supporters backed that budget which safeguarded jobs and services. But they explained that it was only a stop gap. For this year a campaign would have to be launched making the financial situation clear to the people of the city, and preparing for all out struggle with the government for extra resources.

Manchester has been talking about confrontation looming, for the last few years. Now it has arrived. The city faces a gap of £116 million for the coming financial year. The government has closed off the deferred purchase loophole. But even with some financial manipulation Manchester still faces an unbridgeable £50-£60 million gap.

At the District Labour Party budget strategy conference on 25 January, a resolution, initiated by council leader, Graham Stringer, proposed a £1 rent increase. It suggested: "While we are against excessive rate

rises, we should not be wedded to a single figure rate rise." And it ruled out the fighting option of a deficit budget.

But this would have meant in general election year, imposing extra rent and rate burdens on ordinary families.

### Unthinkable cuts

The Women's Council and Withington Labour Party submitted motions, supported by Militant supporters, of no rent increase, no rate increase above the rate of inflation and an expansion of expenditure to meet the council's commitments on housing, ending low pay etc. In the main it was this position that was adopted.

If it is now implemented by the Labour group it means a deficit budget. It means taking on the government. It needs the linking up with other Labour councils, which are faced otherwise with unthinkable cuts. Immediately a conference of Manchester's labour parties, trade unions (especially the council unions) and tenants' organisations must be called, to organise the campaign to solve the city's budget crisis.

By Mike Lee (Manchester Withington Labour Party)

## Grimsby... Grimsby...

LABOUR COUNCILLORS in Grimsby, had planned to boost local spending by 19 per cent this year, but the government is limiting them to 4 per cent. Rather than resist, the right wing controlled Labour group is discussing a 61 per cent rate increase and cuts.

And these same councillors are behind the attempts to attack the local Young Socialists and to expel Militant supporters, who were the advocates of the 'Liverpool alternative' for Grimsby.

Labour only gained control of the council last May. Since then they privatised the buses before everyone else, built just 24 council houses

(when there is a three and a half year waiting list) and reintroduced the dog catcher!

Council cuts and witch-hunts have not surprisingly resulted in serious problems, financially and in membership for the constituency Labour party. Five of its

twenty ward branches do not meet. And right wing Labour MP, Austin Mitchell, is still sitting on a marginal seat.

By G Cabbitas (under threat of expulsion)

**Labour Party Local Government Conference. Liverpool City Council fringe meeting— Crisis in local government, Saturday 7 February 1.00, Swarthmore Centre, Woodhouse Sq, (end of Great George St), Leeds. Speakers include Tony Byrne and Paul Astbury.**

# Students protest over cuts

THE GOVERNMENT announced this week its measly three and a half per cent increase in student grants for the next academic year. This will mean a further drop in living standards of students.

Draconian powers are being introduced under the current education bill to limit the autonomy of the student unions, aimed at trying to weaken the ability of the students to fight the cuts.

Individual university authorities are also going to considerable lengths to break local union strength. Recently Sussex university students' union was fined £130,000 for an occupation protest against education cuts. Union leaders at Warwick university have had an injunction made against them to curtail protests.

But with no serious strategy from the national union leaders to fight back, the week of action from 4 to 11 February must be used to build up links with campus and college trade unions, as a first step towards defending education.



Dave Nellist MP talks to Warwick University students involved in rent strike and consumer boycott.

Photo: John Harris (IFL).

**STUDENTS AT Warwick university, already angered over grant cuts, are protesting at the denial of housing benefits over Christmas and Easter holidays, which has meant a further loss of around £115.**

They have been on rent strike since the beginning of term, and £100,000 has been withheld from the university. The action followed a

promise by the university to reduce rents after a student union meeting on 4 December last year threatened a rent strike and demanded the halving of rents over the holidays. But the university also wanted to cut heating by 15 hours a week, which was unacceptable to the union.

At first campus workers weren't approached for support and a consumer boycott

on the campus led to some lay-offs of part time workers. University authorities sought an injunction against student union leaders to prevent any further action. But a peaceful demonstration was held on 24 January in the Arts Centre, despite heavy policing. Even discussing any action was deemed to be in breach of the injunction, with the threat of sequestration of

union funds of £2.1 million.

The consumer boycott was re-imposed, this time with consultation with campus workers, and a rally outside the administration block took place on Monday this week, which was addressed by Dave Nellist. A hardship fund has been set up for any workers in difficulty and campus trade union representatives initially pledged support for a 24

hour strike on Monday to coincide with the students' action. Support by campus workers is crucial for a successful outcome to the students' action. But the issues affecting workers as a result of education cuts should also be taken up in a united campaign.

**By Aled Frances**  
(Rent Strike Committee, TU Liaison committee)

## Consultation starts on age limit

PROPOSALS PUT by Tom Sawyer to cut the age limit of the Labour Party Young Socialists, are being circulated to constituencies and LPYS branches for consultation.

The proposals would drastically cut the number of activists in the LPYS and undermine its ability to effectively campaign amongst the youth. The process of consultation ends on 24 April when a decision will be made. Resolutions should be sent to Joyce Gould for the NEC.

## Youth march for jobs

'YOUTH MARCH for jobs' is on the road this week in the north east, highlighting the problems facing young people in the region.

Traditional industries have been butchered by the Tories, and now a whole generation of young people have passed through school with no chance of real employment.

The march, organised by the northern region Youth Trade Union Rights Campaign, passes through almost every major town and city in the region, with meetings and rallies along the route. A hardcore of about 20 are taking part representing a cross-section of youth, from school leavers to sacked miners.

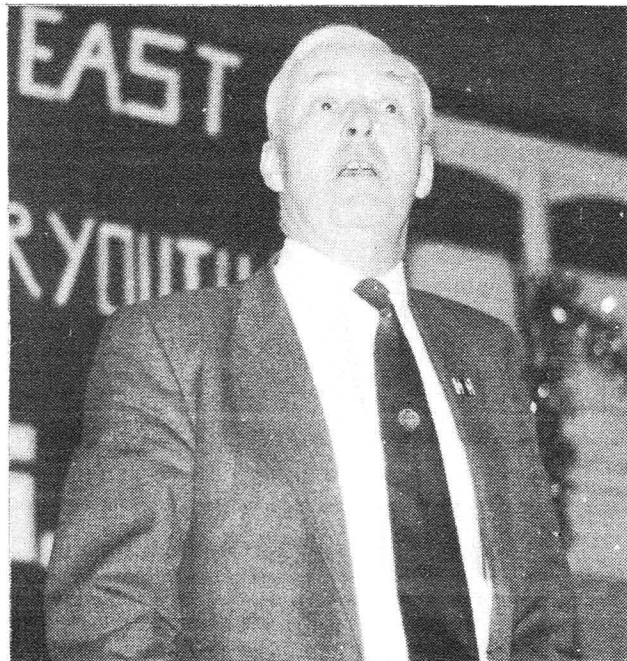
Leaflets are being handed out urging people to vote Labour. But the northern region Labour Party executive has refused to give their

backing, saying that YTURC is not an official Party section and they cannot endorse it.

This hasn't stopped a flood of donations, letters of support and offers of help coming in. The march will take a tone of optimism into the communities of the north east with the message that Thatcher and the Tories haven't got long to go.

Graeme Kennedy, unemployed from Gateshead said: "I've never had a job since leaving school and its not through lack of trying. I've just been for my restart interview—they just give you free pens and paper to write off for job interviews. But there are no jobs to write for. This march is about giving youth a future, a job and a living wage. Thats why I'm on it."

By Andy Walker



TONY BENN told 350 mainly young people, at a Labour Party Young Socialists public meeting in Leicester, that Labour must campaign on policies, not personalities. You cannot expect a few hundred MPs to change society, "you must build solidarity among yourselves", he said.

Despite the cold weather the meeting was a big success. Leicester East LPYS had distributed 15,000 leaflets for the meeting, backed up with flyposting and the constituency party's van and PA system. Over 50 copies of *Militant* and *Socialist Youth* were sold at the meeting. By Di Finlay and Kath Glock.

LPYS

## Democratic representation for union youth

A DELEGATE at the recent TGWU youth conference explains how the union's young members could be more democratically represented.

THE TGWU is one of the more advanced unions, and must be congratulated for the initiatives in recruiting and organising youth over the last year. But we still need to build a democratic youth structure involving large numbers of young people in the activities of the movement.

The agenda of the union's youth conference was set by

the officials, but the majority of the delegates were on the left, who wanted to see changes in the rule book. It seems that when it comes to youth matters trade unions think we should all get together over a cup of coffee, listen to the older and more 'experienced' officials, ask some questions, and go home for another year.

The whole trade union movement needs to wake up to the needs of its young members. Union members should push for more democratically elected youth representation.

In the TGWU, youth

forums should be set up in every region for all views to be debated, and to elect a youth committee to deal with recruitment and organisation. District forums should also be established to involve the youth in the branches. I would like to see the regional forums elect a full time officer, paid by the union. Then we could have a truly democratic national youth conference, with delegates elected by the regions.

The conference could then elect a national youth committee to co-ordinate national events, and campaign at a national level on youth

issues—from YTS to AIDS. A youth charter, based on discussions at the conference could also be produced. A national youth officer could also be elected to organise the work of the national committee between its meetings.

Youth in all unions should be looking towards this sort of structure. Then inter-union committees could be set up as the basis for a democratic TUC youth conference, bringing together young people from all walks of life, to discuss the problems we face and agree on the action to be taken.

## Closed

FOLLOWING A very successful Red Wedge style concert organised by the LPYS in Grimsby, both LPYS branches, Grimsby and Brigg and Cleethorpes, have been closed by the right wing officers of the constituency parties.

Although the Cleethorpes ward party had agreed to holding the concert, and even had its own stall there, the Brigg and Cleethorpes constituency party closed down the LPYS branch without any inquiry or consultation with LPYS officers, alleging that the LPYS had organised the concert without permission. The Grimsby party then followed suit after receiving a letter from Brigg and Cleethorpes.

## Old Bolsheviks remembered



## Zinoviev

GRIGORY ZINOVIEV, a founding member of the Bolsheviks and active in workers' education circles at the turn of the century was a prolific writer. He became an editor of *Pravda* in 1917 and wrote many documents for the Communist International.

After the revolution he became chairman of both the Petrograd Soviet and the Communist International.

Throughout his political life he was one of Lenin's closest collaborators, one of those who returned to Russia with him on the train from Switzerland.

It was under Lenin's guidance that Zinoviev was at his best; on his own he was prone to make political mistakes. He opposed the moves to insurrection in October 1917 which he described as an act of despair. In 1923 he formed a block with Kamenev and Stalin against 'Trotskyism'.

But when Stalin made his formulation of 'socialism in one country', designed to protect the interests of the rising bureaucracy, Zinoviev broke away. Together with Kamenev and Trotsky he formed the United Opposition. For this they were expelled from the party in 1927.

Unfortunately Zinoviev did not have the determination to carry this battle to the end, as Trotsky pointed out in relation to another issue:

"Zinoviev was the very centre of general confusion...in good times when, as Lenin put it 'we had nothing to fear', Zinoviev went into seventh heaven...But when things were bad Zinoviev lay down on a divan and sighed.....This time I found him on the settee."

In 1929 he capitulated to Stalin, denounced Trotskyism and was readmitted to the party. He was expelled in 1932 for supposedly trying to reinstate capitalism and in 1936 he was brought to trial in the first of the Moscow show trials, accused of having formed a terrorist group with Gestapo units as part of an attempt to kill Stalin. As a result he was murdered for this trumped up charge.

But perhaps it was logical to begin with him. His links with Lenin and the era of international revolution meant that the bureaucracy had to destroy him.

Grigory Zinoviev, will go down in history as one of the martyrs of the revolution—he did make mistakes, but as Leon Trotsky remarked, when he referred to Kamenev and him:

"Both of them were deeply and unreservedly devoted to the cause of socialism".

# Stop Sizewell plans

**THE LABOUR** movement can have no confidence in the Layfield report's recommendation to allow the building of a nuclear reactor at Sizewell in Suffolk.

By Pete Dickinson

Layfield justified his finding by claiming that the small risks involved were outweighed by the economic benefits to the country. Examination of these issues, safety and economics, shows no grounds to support the building of a pressurised water reactor (PWR).

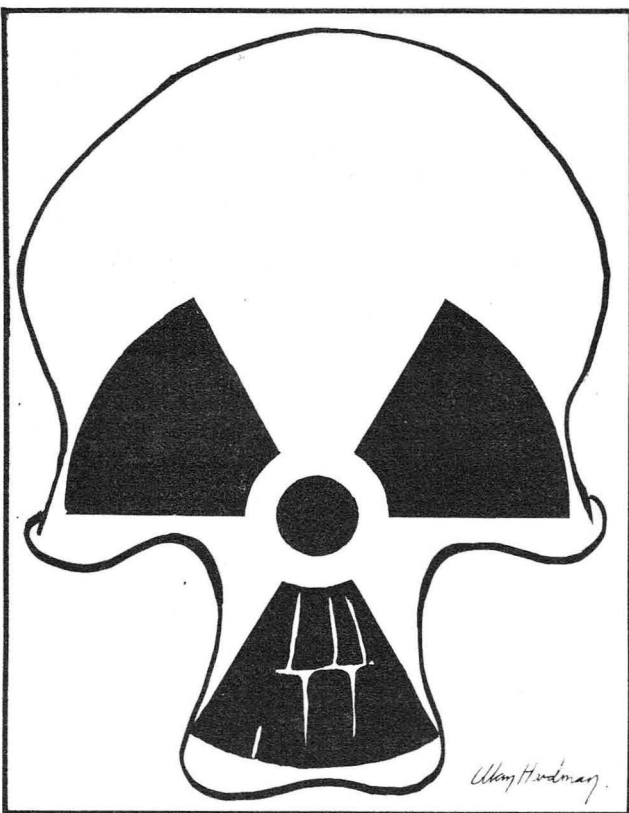
The disaster at Chernobyl happened after the inquiry's evidence had been collected and the lessons are not considered in the report. Tens of thousands of people were affected by the accident and the final death toll will not be known for 10 to 20 years.

If the wind had been blowing in the opposite direction at the time towards Kiev, millions could have died. This shows the possible catastrophe which could result from a nuclear accident, however small the risk of its happening.

The second lesson of Chernobyl is that human error played a large part in causing the accident, something that can never be completely designed out of the safety systems. This was also the case in the Three Mile Island disaster in the USA, where no new nuclear reactors have been ordered for nearly ten years.

Many engineers believe that water cooled or moderated reactors, such as the one at Chernobyl or the PWR, are inherently unsafe because of the risk of clouds of radioactive steam being released in any accident.

Layfield's economic case is even weaker. Even he admits that the area is clouded



with uncertainty. This is not surprising considering the impossibility of predicting the anarchy of the capitalist economic system. The sudden collapse in oil prices has undermined many calculations and the perspective of deeper slumps in the future will tend to force the price of oil and coal down, further undermining the economic arguments for nuclear power.

### The real cost

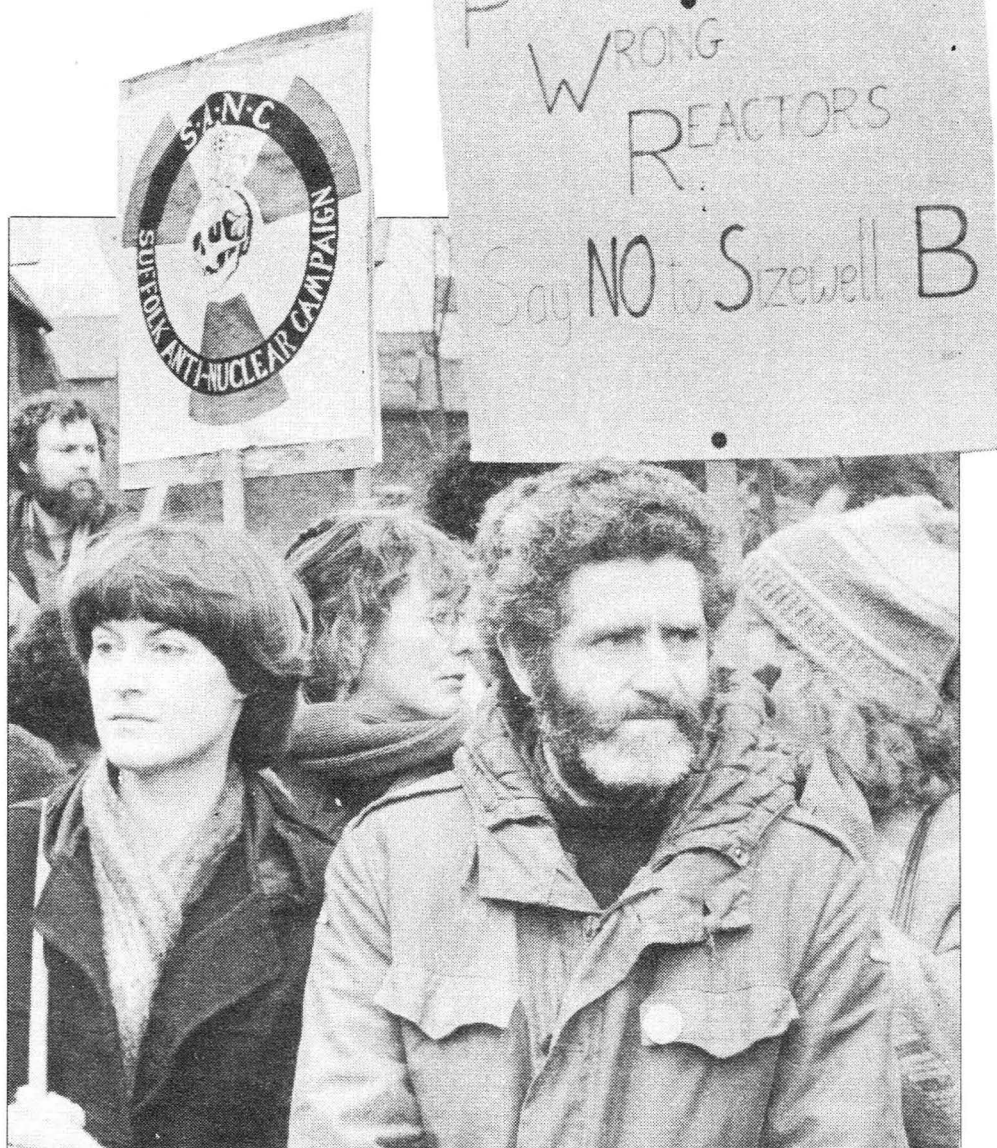
The CEBG figures for the efficiency of the PWR have been accepted by the report. An analysis of the large number of PWRs already built, particularly in France and the USA, shows that the actual performance of the reactor is significantly below the theoretical value calculated by the CEBG.

If the true costs of research and development

are included plus the large unknown costs of decommissioning existing reactors the economic case is further undermined.

The real reason for the Tories' enthusiasm for nuclear power is political. They want to undermine the strength of well organised workers and have power produced by workers in nuclear stations under semi-military discipline. This was shown by a leaked Cabinet document in 1979: "A nuclear programme would have the advantage of removing a substantial portion of electricity from disruption by industrial action of coal miners and transport workers."

The Labour leadership must mount a vigorous campaign to oppose the Sizewell reactor and link this in with the need for a socialist energy programme.

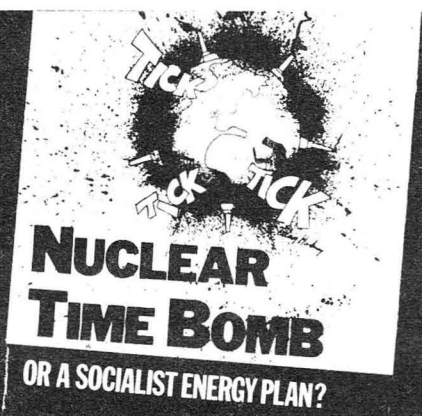


Local protestors show their opposition to Sizewell B.

Photo. John Arthur.

## "Nuclear Time Bomb or Socialist Energy Plan"

Militant pamphlet available from World Socialist Books, 3/13 Hepscoot Road, London E9 5HB. Price 60p including post and package.



## ◀ Left and Right ▶

### Outstanding management

A BT MANAGER in Tameside, faced with a walkout over victimisation of NCU members, begged the union not to take strike action just yet. "There is a large backlog of repairs outstanding!"

### Western gunslinger

PROBABLY NEARER to BT top management's idea of a perfect boss is a Mr Carter, industrial relations (!) manager of Western Mining Corporation in Australia. After he made 190 workers redundant, the unions sent telexes asking for reinstatement of workers and continued recognition of sacked stewards.

Carter's reply? "Contrary to the belief of some unions, shop stewards are not members of God's chosen race and therefore have no specific immunity when retrenchments are decided. The company will not recognise retrenched shop stewards no longer employed by the Company. The proposal is novel and original but stupid. In response to your second telex the company will not repeat not reinstate 190 retrenched workers. If you find this reply unclear please advise and we will reduce it to two words one of which will have sexual overtones." How cultured the bosses are.

### City morality? . . .

THE GUINNESS affair has left large numbers of rich and famous business names swimming frantically around in the slops. So many firms doing favours for Guinness—for a price.

But only a few heads will roll. Others will still be eyeing up their profits. Casenove, Guinness' brokers who are under pressure to spill a few more beans, also work for Cable and Wireless who run Mercury Communications, BT's main telecom rivals. Mercury hope the Tories increase their profits further by handing out more business of BT's.

### . . . don't make them laugh

THE GUARDIAN recently reported that the City whizz kids were confident that, despite the scandals, their quick bucks were all safe. Tory Ministers talking about putting insider dealers in handcuffs were just amusing. But the Guardian also comment: "There is no terror in the Square Mile at the prospect of Roy Hattersley at 11 Downing Street"

Left wingers like Tony Benn were different. "At least he understood that if the country really wanted them tamed it would have to . . . take them over. Until that day, morality would be a bit of a laugh."

## Tories threaten legal aid rights

THE TORIES are introducing a White Paper which recommends severe attacks on legal aid. It is based on a report published last June.

The Tories could see the growing demand for legal aid, undoubtedly caused by high unemployment and the growing number of low paid workers. The report says: "In 1975-76 the bill for legal aid—the arrangements for giving legal help when the matter involves court procedures was £49 million.

"In 1985-86 it was £257 million and it is expected to grow rapidly to the end of the decade".

The most far reaching recommendation is the abolition of the "Green Form" scheme which enables any person who satisfies the means test, to obtain £50 worth of advice from any solicitor operating the scheme on any question of English law.

### Expert help

This £50 limit can be extended if it is not possible to complete the advice within the initial limit. The report shows that nearly a million people received such advice in 1984-85. If the White

Paper goes through, workers will only be able to seek advice from the already overstretched Citizens Advice Bureaux and Law Centres who operate largely without qualified staff.

So expert legal advice will not be available for problems such as divorce, employment, housing, welfare benefits, immigration, consumer matters and debt problems.

The labour movement must campaign for free legal advice on demand. Otherwise it will be, more than ever, one law for the rich and another for the poor.

## Sell Militant—the workers' paper

THE OUTBREAK of industrial action has made Militant's sales flourish. On a march of GCHQ workers in Cheltenham 120 papers were sold by just 15 sellers.

With jobs and conditions under attack in industry after industry, there's a big market for a paper that shows a way forward for workers in struggle.

This month, sellers should be targeting a workplace to get regular sales there. In the British Telecom dispute, find out where your nearest BT exchange or depot is and get

down there early to help stop any scabs. Brian Kelly sold 12 papers just in his Bristol strike headquarters last week and wants to raise the sale to at least 15 this week.

After the articles on Kingsmead estate, Hackney, 90 Militants were sold there last week. Also in London the Further Education Labour Students conference had sales of at least 30. It's your paper, fighting for all our futures, make sure everyone gets a chance to read it.



# John Tocher talks to Militant

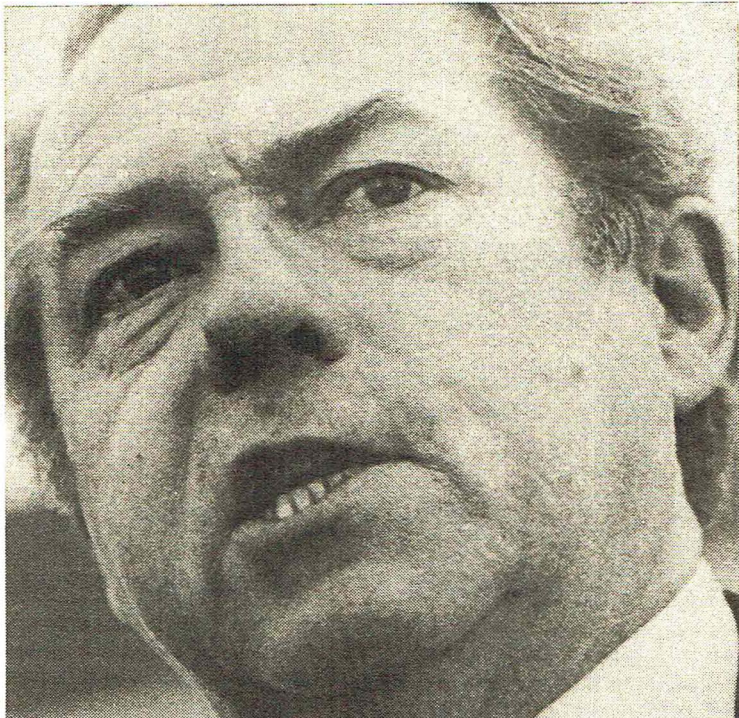
MANUFACTURING investment is the seedcorn. But the manufacturers have opted out. UK engineering in 1985 employed 2.2 million workers (16 per cent of all trade unionists), yet Britain was a net importer of engineering goods with £30 billion exports and £32 billion imports.

In Salford we have a University tailor-made for industry yet its academic staff is being reduced. We have factories like GEC Traction which have not started a new apprentice in three years. British engineering has just 40,000 apprentices compared to 500,000 in Germany at the same standard.

Manchester was the world centre of machine tooling—Churchills, Cravens—now they are virtually all gone. We were the centre for the world's textile machinery—now there's only Scraggs, and that is Swiss owned. Heavy industry—turbine, traction, diesels and switchgear, they're all in the mire. It's crazy when you consider that all UK switchgear will have to be replaced in the 1990s—but there will be no firms left to do it. Instead Ferranti's, the defence firm, has seven factories in the area.

Employment has been devastated. Half the jobs have gone since 1977. It's madness. We have the skills, the back-up industries and two scientific universities with the knowhow. Inner City decay is as much about neglect of Britain's manufacturing base as anything.

It's a warning to any incoming Labour government. The vital jobs programme that they are putting forward for construction, local authorities, etc will come to nothing unless there is a plan for investment and research into manufacturing.



John Tocher, AEU Divisional Organiser for the North West and Broad Left candidate for president in 1986. Photo: John Smith.

I REMEMBER prominent trade union officials at the end of the fifties and in the sixties saying that the class struggle was over. My experience is that the struggle was never over. New realism, Mondism, Spenserism—we've seen it all before. All my experience strengthens my belief that the ultimate solution to our problems is socialism. The trade unions must adapt themselves to struggling with adversity.

New realism is behind the attempt to get engineering workers to accept the surrender of the gains they won in the sixties and seventies. There are those in our union

and others who say that we can do nothing until a Labour government is elected. As a result they are going along with all manner of things.

But unfortunately, there is no guarantee that Labour will win this time. And if we continue on the road proposed, it will be difficult to win back all that we have lost even under a Labour government. What we will need most under Labour will be an enlightened, confident membership to be pushing and shoving it forward. That's when the fight will really start. Only the membership will shift the employers.



Trafford Park industrial estate, Manchester.

Photo: Alison Dixon.

THE LATEST proposals by the Employers Federation have met a groundswell of opposition in this area such as I have not seen for a long time. Confed. stewards at British Aerospace, Mirlees, Simon's, Fairey's, Gardner's, Scholes, Volex, Matthew & Yates, Monopumps, Thorn EMI, Baldwin & Francis, Kelloggs, Lancro, Metal Box, GEC Switchgear at Trafford Park and Openshaw have all come out against the deal. At Francis Shaw's every employee has signed a petition against the deal. In fact, I have not come across one worker who is in favour.

The employers are making various proposals around the issue of flexible working but, let me make it clear from the outset—the issue itself is not flexible working.

We welcome new technology and recognise the need for some working arrangements to change with it. Some factories have already struck some good deals for their members. The real question is who controls flexibility and alongside that, who gets the benefits from new technology. The employers want more profit. The workers want shorter hours and a better life. But under the employers' proposals we surrender everything to gain virtually nothing.

The employers are dangling the prospect of a 37 and a half hour week. But the membership are seeing through this. They say what good is a 37 and a half hour average week when the employers can decide when it is worked. Most factories currently finish early on a Friday afternoon. A gain in this respect would be a four and a half day week finishing at Friday lunchtime. But under the deal the working week would be all over the place, with the employers being able to manipulate the hours and open the way to casualisation and short-term contracts. The guaranteed maximum 39 hour week as such would go and with it

all established premium rates, such as for weekend and night working.

On the other side the employers want to do away with the gains of the procedural agreements won in 1976. They want their hands freed from the dismissals procedure and for single union agreements. For the first time they are trying to involve ACAS as an integral part of national negotiations, which would give the bosses more room for procrastination and delay.

The danger is that the national agreements which have been seen as a minimum basis for negotiation at plant level could get through by default. What has to be driven home is that these proposals give the green light to an employers' offensive against our members. If they are defeated it will be a victory for the Broad Left and for the rank and file. If they are passed then whole regions of the union could find themselves in dispute.

Of course the Manchester sit-in strikes in 1972 only emphasised that national disputes cannot be won at regional level. If this were to happen again then the membership up and down the country would have to be drawn in.

# Man

## Engineering w

**MANCHESTER IS a city under attack, with growing poverty, homelessness and unemployment. Since the Tories came to power unemployment has more than doubled to nearly a quarter of the workforce. 43 per cent of these are under 20.**

About half Manchester's residents are living below the poverty line. Of those in work in Greater Manchester, 47 per cent earn poverty wages. Almost half of all school children get free meals and the number of people receiving sickness or disability benefit has risen by a quarter since 1978.

Poverty deaths an cent high rate for b: Mancheste unhealthy lung can Central devastat whose nar tion and t crisis of E But the

### From the shopfloor

"A FEW years ago we had about a thousand workers on the shop floor; now we have about 230. Most of the light-weight chains we used to make are now made in France and Germany. Before the large-scale redundancies three years ago, this factory suffered from a lack of investment; it was run down for years. There has been more investment in the last 18 months than the previous ten years. As for the future we can only look six months in advance and keep our fingers crossed.

"John Tocher to me was always a very worthwhile member, I'm only sorry he's not President. He's a man who's in touch with the grass roots in the factories and realises the problems. He's a good man for the workers."  
Ken Ryder (Convenor at Renold Chain Burnage)

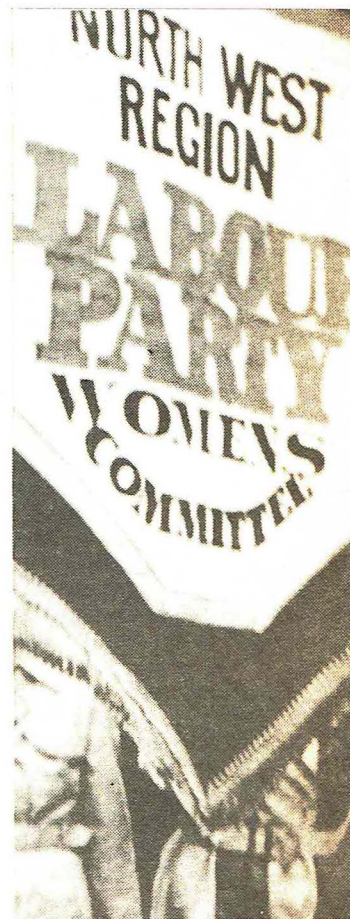
"THE MAJORITY of my members are women and this 'flexibility' looks like an attempt to get rid of women workers, who can't work for a few hours one week and 50 or 60 the next. It's impossible to sort out the kids etc. It will also affect premiums and we earn almost half our wages through bonuses."

Anne McCormack (AEU convenor at SEI, Heywood, Rochdale)

"THE SHOP stewards have voted to oppose the new national deal being proposed and the general consensus in the workforce of 600 is opposition.

For our industry (with the ups and down of the market) it would mean one week at 50 hours and another at 30. The proposed flexibility of trades will lead to large-scale loss of jobs. The implication is that if we do not accept the deal we forfeit the one-and-a-half hours shorter working week, (over 3 years down to 37 and-a-half hours) and this is unacceptable. The District Committee have opposed the deal and sent resolutions demanding that instead we pursue the 35 hour working week. In division we are actively campaigning against these disastrous proposals."

Ray Mallinson (AEU District President, Oldham and shop steward at Seddons-Atkinson)



Labour women march through Manchester.

### 1972—Man

THE ELECTION of the Broad Left Hugh Scanlon, as president of the late sixties marked a decisive change right wing years under Carron. In the urgent desire of engineering v realistic minimum wage, better cc an end to the package deals spre years which gave little to the wor down their ability to fight.

The Manchester area provided basis for this election victory. T muscle of the Manchester engin pressive. At that time they cc greatest concentration of enginee in Europe—about a quarter of :

The 1972 wages and conditions Confederation of Shipbuilding and Unions (CSEU) raised the hopes tions of the mass of workers. It c hour week, sick pay (then unhea shop floor) and longer holidays. I tremendous faith was placed in the Communist Party dominated Br establish decent conditions for w industry.

The Engineering Employers Fede made a derisory take-it-or-leave £1.50. They refused to negotiate conditions and prepared to take o: In the face of this intransigence

#### Militant engineers meeting

7.30 Wednesday  
18 February  
The Unicorn, Church Street,  
Manchester.



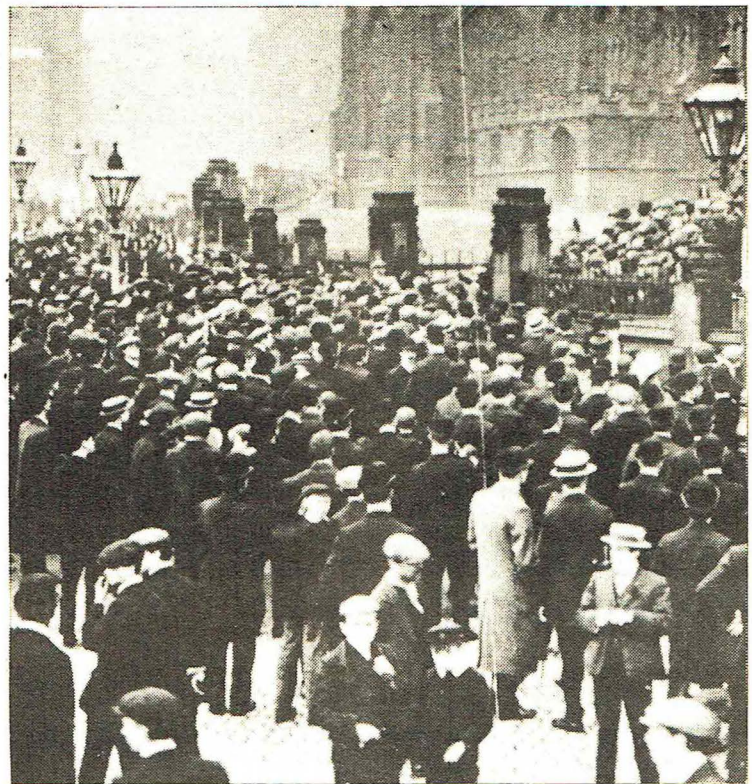
# Manchester

## Workers fighting back

leads to poor health. In inner-city areas, amongst people under 65 are nearly 80 per cent more than the national average and the death rate is twice the national average. North Manchester was recently diagnosed as one of the most deprived places in the industrialised world, with 100 deaths twice the national average. Manchester's decline has been the result of its manufacturing industry. The city is synonymous with the industrial revolution and the growth of capitalism now typifies the British capitalism in its decline. Manchester working class, after two cen-

turies of struggle, is maintaining its fine traditions. In the key engineering industry and elsewhere, there is a wave of strikes. The workers are demonstrating in action that they are not going to submit to the dictates of the bosses and the Tories. They are continuing the fight of the Chartists to transform society from capitalism, where factories are closed and wages cut to raise profits, to socialism, where production is increased and the wealth used to benefit those who create it.

In this feature, Manchester workers talk about their past and the present battles to win a future for the next generation.



Demonstration of the unemployed outside Manchester Cathedral in 1908.

## A 170 year history of workers in struggle

**“YOU KNOW, Manchester has always had a militant tradition. You can go back to the days of the Peterloo massacre in 1818. It was the first real home of industry, ‘Cottonopolis’, the city of the tall chimneys. Engineering developed partly from the textile industry and these two trades came together to form the basis of the area’s Chartist movement in the first half of the nineteenth century.**

Chartism had a strong base in the area. At its height there were 18 to 20 branches and they also attempted to build factory branches. In 1842, Manchester was the storm centre of the great General Strike. This movement was one of the greatest examples in the world of how what was a wages strike could turn into a political strike. In the course of two weeks of experience in struggle and debate in the workers’ councils, the demand was raised for the implementation of the Peoples Charter’s demands. Despite the defeat of the general strike and a further defeat inflicted by the 1852 lockout of engineering workers, the trades union movement continued to grow.

The early struggles established the tradition of the city’s workers. Much of our history remains unwritten. For example, we are just now unearthing the facts about a city-wide general strike that took place in Salford in 1911. It was a marvellous movement led by the local dockers and carters. They were followed out by the miners from Pendleton pit and then thousands of low paid, mainly women workers from the sweated trades followed them. The bosses, taken by surprise were forced to sue for peace offering big wage increases.

These were the years of ‘the Great Unrest’. Tom Mann would address huge mass meetings in the area. When the troops were sent against the local dockers, he read out a leaflet appealing for them not to shoot on their brothers, and was arrested.

Shop stewards at first were no more than card checkers. But in the First World War when the union leaders went over to becoming the recruiting sergeants of the coalition government, the shop stewards were left to lead the struggle on the shopfloor. In 1916 there began a rank and file revolt of engineering workers. Called the ‘Dilution Strike’ it began in Rochdale and spread to the rest of the country. I was a shop steward for the toolmakers. When I was a lad, the first socialist book I read was

Lenin’s *State and Revolution*. The next was his *Left Wing Communism*. This was regarded as the bible. It was widely read and discussed. The Russian revolution—still the greatest event of the century—was a living example to us.

Our biggest weapon as shop stewards was the departmental or factory gate meeting. I would always call meetings of the men. When we had a national claim they were vital because the employers would have to respond to us if they saw that we had full support of the men.

Our most common problem was victimisation of the stewards. This was only combated when the members were prepared to take strike action to defend their stewards. Even then despite big strikes we didn’t always win. But it didn’t stop the march of the stewards movement.

In 1951, the Confed organised a torchlight procession from Manchester’s factories for the national claim. 12,000 marched from all over the city to Salford Central Mission. It was the biggest mobilisation since 1926, with special youth and women’s contingents and banners saying ‘Patience Exhausted’ and ‘United for the £1’. It gave the workers enormous confidence, 40,000 then struck in a local token stoppage and, though the national leadership sold us out, they were forced to wring some concessions out of the bosses. What we gained most of all was the heightened understanding and confidence of the members—the increase in class consciousness.

Marx’s dictum was that the proletariat is the revolutionary class and although our industrial proletariat in Britain may have declined, I think the role of the tiny working class in the Russian revolution points to the fact that our class is still the most important in shaping modern history.

By Eddie Frow

(Local labour historian and lifelong Communist)

**PUBLICATIONS BY Eddie and Ruth Frow:**

★ *Shop stewards and workshop struggles*. 40p + 20p postage.

★ *Manchester’s big house in Trafford Park: Class conflict and class collaboration at Metro-Vicks*. £1.50 + 30p postage

Obtainable from: The Working Class Movement Library, 111 Kings Road, Old Trafford, Manchester M16 9NU. Tel: 061 881 9269.



Manchester in low pay protest, May 1986.

Photo: Mick Carroll

## Manchester workers fight for the full claim

candidate, UJEW in the industrial represented workers for a conditions and over three rs and tied

leadership called for action to be organised locally on a factory-by-factory basis.

The shop stewards and activists instinctively understood the need for wider, co-ordinated action. In reality the so called guerrilla tactics boiled down to a struggle in Manchester and Sheffield, with a few other isolated factories in the country taking action.

In Sheffield and Manchester the area leaders organised to develop the fight. The CSEU district committee in Sheffield called a mass rally to launch a district wide strike. In Manchester the CSEU DC instituted a go-slow in line with a local piecework agreement, which allowed for workers who disagreed with the piece rates to register their disagreement and receive pay for only the minimum time rate.

Under pressure from the EETPU, the national leaders blocked the movement in Sheffield. The rally was cancelled and the movement was left headless and unco-ordinated.

But the action in Manchester was enthusiastically backed by the workers. The employers replied to the go-slow with a district lock-out. The bulk of the workers replied with factory occupations. Mass delegate meetings of more than 1,000 local shopstewards were held to organise the dispute. These reported back to mass meetings in the factories. Battle was joined and the call was taken up that no group

should settle for less than the full claim.

Then as now, the engineering industry in the Manchester area was dominated by multinational companies such as GEC and Hawker Siddeley (now BAe). The EEF set up an employers’ solidarity fund, pledging £10 per man per week to the employers. They threatened expulsion and commercial blacking for any firm that settled on the union’s terms. In effect the powerful nationally co-ordinated policy of the employers stood in opposition to isolated pockets of union struggle.

Throughout the battle the national leaders kept away from Manchester. Without spreading the struggle, as the miners did in the same year with their successful flying pickets, a victory was impossible. After a heroic battle, factories in Manchester began to settle. Two firms were expelled from the EEF for making concessions on hours.

The Manchester engineers were not defeated. They returned to work as there was no perspective of extending the struggle. It was David versus Goliath. The experience however left an indelible mark.

By John Byrne

(AEU shop steward, GEC Openshaw)

**Philippines: Exclusive report**

# Aquino's win cannot bring stability

**THE OVERWHELMING 'Yes' vote in the Philippines, installing Cory Aquino in the Presidency until 1992, shows a universal rejection of the old dictatorship and opposition to the threat of military rule.**

**However, it will not in and of itself create "political stability", as the capitalists and the media so fervently hope. Our correspondent in Manila reports.**

In the aftermath of last week's coup attempt, a massive 'yes' vote was assured. It was a vote for continued civilian rule.

No lead was offered by the opposition movement. The National Democratic Front (NDF, led by the Communist Party of the Philippines) called for a "principled no" to distinguish itself from the hard right's "no" position. The PnB (the biggest legal mass party) called for a "critical yes" but, following the massacre of peasants in Manila last month, decided to leave it to the conscience of individuals which way they voted.

The peasant movement KMT changed from "critical yes" to "principled no" following the massacre (though in some areas it continued to call for a "critical yes").

The new constitution, written by Aquino's hand-picked 'experts', in reality repudiates all the major democratic demands which the masses have fought for in the revolution.

It excludes major land reform, nationalisation of the monopolies and self-determination for the national minorities. It guarantees certain democratic rights, but hedged about with qualifications.

## Living standards

It aims at a system of government modelled on that of the US. However, the stability of the US system has depended entirely on the high living standards which it was possible for the majority of workers to achieve.

In the Philippines, the latest official figures show that 60 per cent of the population now live below the poverty line. There is no prospect of the masses accepting their lot and remaining satisfied to choose between rival cliques of capitalist politicians.

The Aquino regime is preferred by the majority of the capitalists at present. They are in deep economic crisis. They are faced with an immediate cash shortfall of \$7 billion. They are seeking a further \$2 billion in foreign aid, and endorsement of their economic policy in order to raise \$3.5 billion more in bank loans.

Above all they need political stability. With the revolutionary movement not yet exhausted, Aquino's "democratic order" represents their best available option for buying time and getting aid.

The capitalists know they have nothing to fear from Aquino's "democracy". Land reform has still not been carried out. Workers are still being shot down when they struggle.

Last Sunday, three were killed by para-military police on the picket line in the Bataan free trade zone. One of the dead was a 12-year-old boy, shot in the back while fleeing.

But the class character of the Aquino regime is perhaps shown most clearly by its attitude towards the military reactionaries who have repeatedly attempted to topple it.

The coup plotters of July 1986 were subjected to the draconian punishment of—30 press-ups. Enrile, former Defence Minister who led the November 1986 coup attempt, was rewarded for his services.

The leaders of the latest coup were class-mates of military Chief of Staff Ramos at Military Academy and so, naturally, no action has been taken against them. An officer, shouting through a megaphone at the rebels inside the Channel 7 television station, made himself more than clear:

"The Filipino people ask you to please think this over so we can solve this problem. We beseech you to come out."

The general in charge revealed that "the armed forces as a matter of policy hate to use force".

Eventually two generals together with Cory Aquino's aide, Benigno, were sent in to negotiate. The coup leaders refused to meet with Benigno; the generals accepted this. The coup leaders demanded to meet Defence minister Iletto; the generals arranged it.

After they came out the rebels were "not under arrest", and the word "surrender" was not used once.

Contrast this with the treatment of the peasant demonstrators in Manila on 22 January. Over 100 were shot down in cold blood after Aquino refused to meet them.

Nevertheless the military remain unreconciled to the Aquino regime. They are irritated by the democratic promises, by the talk of "love" and "people's power" in the preamble to the constitution. They cannot accept the reform of the armed forces which Cory Aquino has been forced to promise in the effort to save her credibility.

But most of all they believe that Aquino has let them down in the war against the peasant guerrilla forces by seeking a settlement with the CP leadership. The overwhelming majority of officers want a free hand to fight the war, not realising that in the long run they cannot win.

The armed forces are out of Aquino's control. About 70 per cent support the right-wing "Guardians' Brotherhood". There remains a small pro-Marcos faction, while the remainder are split between Enrile, Ramos and Cory Aquino.

Ramos is the key military leader at this stage.

One officer summed up the regime's dilemma: "If your society is split, the army is split. Aquino has not been able to mould a unified society. I'm afraid it's going to be a struggle for survival



**Manila 22 January: police and troops attack peasant demonstrators demanding land reform. Over 100 were shot down and 18 killed. (Left) Aquino weeps for massacre victims while Army chief Ramos (right) acts as 'referee' between conflicting capitalist factions.**

from month to month."

Another officer said: "There will be many more coup attempts as long as the power centre is perceived to be weak."

The government in fact has two policies: the liberals negotiate with protesters while the military shoot them down. The great weakness of the liberals is that they have nothing of substance to offer to the masses.

There is no prospect of a peaceful settlement between the landowners and the peasantry. The objective need of the ruling class is to continue fighting the war. But this cannot be done effectively under a liberal-democratic regime.

## Civil war

Aquino has inherited a state machine trained in civil war.

The following political discussion between Chief of Staff Ramos and Colonel Canlas, leading the rebels inside Channel 7 TV station, is revealing:

**Canlas:** "We want to save the country from communism, to express our feelings about the threat of communism and how everything has been ruined since Cory Aquino took office and began negotiations".

**Ramos:** "Combat alone will not solve the insurgency. Before we can fight communism, we must first be together. With this rebellion you are speeding the process of communist takeover."

Ramos is more sensitive to the interests of imperialism and the capitalists. He understands the need for a facade of reform to coax

some peasants away from the NPA. The colonels, on the other hand, want to get the gloves off. In this there is a certain parallel with the situation prior to the "colonels' coup" in Greece in 1967.

Cory Aquino has been forced (naturally) to condemn the coup attempt against her regime and to threaten, this time, to purge the "undesirable and misguided element" from the military.

Yet, in a civil war, it is precisely this type that is most "desirable" to the ruling class. That is the dilemma the regime is caught in.

The artificial nature of Aquino's "democracy" was perhaps shown most ironically by the reminder printed on the inside of the riot police shields at the protest against the Manila massacre on 26 January: "Maximum tolerance". Undoubtedly, in future clashes with strikers, with the youth, with the hungry and the homeless, the reminder will be removed.

Cory Aquino's government, as it moves into increasing conflict with the masses who swept it to power, is destined to take on a more and more openly bonapartist (military-police) character. There is absolutely no basis for the consolidation of democracy in the crisis-ridden, poverty-stricken Philippines. The revolution that has begun will, in the coming years, be fought to a conclusion.

While the capitalists will support Aquino for as long as her influence over the masses lingers on, their underlying strategy is a "creeping coup" to purge 'unreliable' liberals from the regime and restore the grip of the right.

Already the "left" minister of Labour, Sanchez, has been replaced with the union basher Drilon. The next target seems to be the pathetic Joker Arroyo, Presidential spokesman, who has been the subject of a series of frame-ups.

Sooner or later, military pressure and repeated coup attempts will reduce Cory Aquino to a puppet. As happened to Sukarno in Indonesia after the bloody military coup in 1965, she may be allowed to remain in office as nominal President for a period. In the end, however, the logic of events will be to remove her.

## Volatile

There is nothing she can do, on the basis of capitalist rule, to curb the excesses of the state or avert the fate which is hanging over her own head.

The mood in the country remains volatile. This could be seen at the protest rally. Local people were out in their thousands, lining the streets, clearly against the military. There are still huge untapped reserves of revolutionary feeling.

But the policies of the CP leadership, centering on the guerrilla war, cannot effectively mobilise the working class and urban youth.

The working class still has the power to draw the peasantry and youth behind it, to show a way out of the country's impasse by smashing capitalist rule and replacing it by a genuine workers' democracy. But this will only be achieved with Marxist policies and leadership.

## Sri Lanka, South Africa, France

# 'Killing Tamils is government routine'

200 Tamils, including many workers, were butchered in a single military "operation" in Sri Lanka's Eastern Province last week. This week six were killed in a retaliatory attack by armed Tamils. Our correspondent in Jaffna reports.

THE NATIONAL question in Sri Lanka has reached such disastrous proportions today that it is threatening to tear this island-country apart. Protracted negotiations over the last three and a half years have produced precious little results.

President JR Jayawardena's capitalist UNP government is impotent to find a solution. It continues to flex its military muscle, hoping to smash the national liberation struggle of the Tamil minority in the north and east, and dictate a solution from a position of strength.

Lalith Aththulathmudali, Minister of National Security, said on his departure for a tour of the US on 7 December:

"While steps are being taken by us to solve the national question in Sri Lanka, terrorism is daily threatening us. In this fight the government will finally be victorious. My visit to the US will pave the way for this".

## Arms supply

Presumably this intended to mean that American arms are to be made plentifully available to the Sri Lanka government. Moreover, it is significant that Israeli President Hertzog stopped over recently in Colombo. One cannot rule out the possibility that the question of arms for Sri Lanka from or through Israel would have been on the agenda.

The northern Jaffna peninsula is supposedly under the control of the LTTE, the major Tamil guerilla organisation. The rest of the Northern province continues to be subject to government attacks by land, sea and air, resulting in heavy losses of life and property.

Even in the Jaffna peninsula aerial and naval attacks are launched. Hundreds of

houses abandoned by families in the northern coastal belt have been destroyed by the armed forces. In Jaffna itself lives are frequently lost in shell fire from the Fort army camp, in the very heart of the town.

The situation in the East is even more grim. Killings by the armed forces take place almost daily. In one incident on 8 December, eight people were shot dead at Sampativu—five fishermen, a retired government officer and a young couple.

The other Eastern districts of Batticalao and Amparai also remain under attack by the armed forces. Among the hundreds killed thus far are many ordinary working people.

For instance, about six months ago 103 farm labourers threshing paddy in the fields were shot dead by the armed forces. On 7 December, 16 Tamils were killed, 12 of them workers of the Sri Lanka Transport Board.

It has been evident for a long time that the government has been trying to play off the Muslims against the Tamils, to put the Tamil-majority Batticalao district and the Muslim-majority Amparai district at loggerheads, and thus divert attention from the burning national question.

Killing and maiming Tamils, destroying their property etc. has come to be regarded by the government as normal routine. Since Jayawardena came to power in 1977, over 11,000 Tamils have been killed, around 300,000 people have been made refugees and some 10,000 homes, temples etc. destroyed or damaged.

Schools and libraries have been attacked and destroyed. Even hospitals have not been spared.

At least 272 persons are still missing, according to

Amnesty International. Over 2,000 Tamil detainees are languishing at the Boosa and Welikade jails under the barbarous Prevention of Terrorism Act, without trial.

It was in Welikade jail, in July 1983, that 52 detainees were wretchedly cut and axed to death and the eyes of some of them gouged.

More and more persons are being arrested and detained in the Trincomalee, Batticalao and Amparai districts.

The government now keeps sending reinforcements to Jaffna, obviously preparing to launch a merciless attack. Several hundreds of specially-trained commandos, additional bombers, helicopters etc. have already arrived.

Is it any wonder, then, that the government's military expenditure has jumped from 1,700 million rupees in 1983 to Rs 9,700 million in 1986, and again to Rs 12,000 million projected for 1987?

## United front

It is quite possible that the government is planning to carry out an operation as in Biafra (the eastern state of Nigeria where, in 1969, the federal government carried out a full-scale military invasion to crush an attempt at setting up a separate state—*Editor*) to re-establish its control over Jaffna.

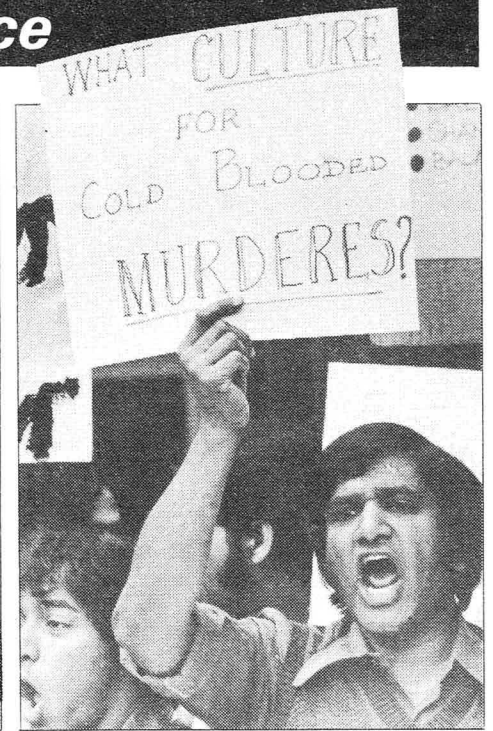
The Joint Committee of Trade Unions in the North and the mass organisations have been struggling through their united front, the Coordinating Committee for Struggle Against the Oppression of Tamil-speaking People, on the following main demands:

1 Withdrawal of the armed forces from the North and East;

2 Withdrawal of the Prevention of Terrorism Act and release of detainees;

3 Solution to the national question on the basis of the right of self-determination of the Tamil-speaking people.

It is the duty of the working-class movement,

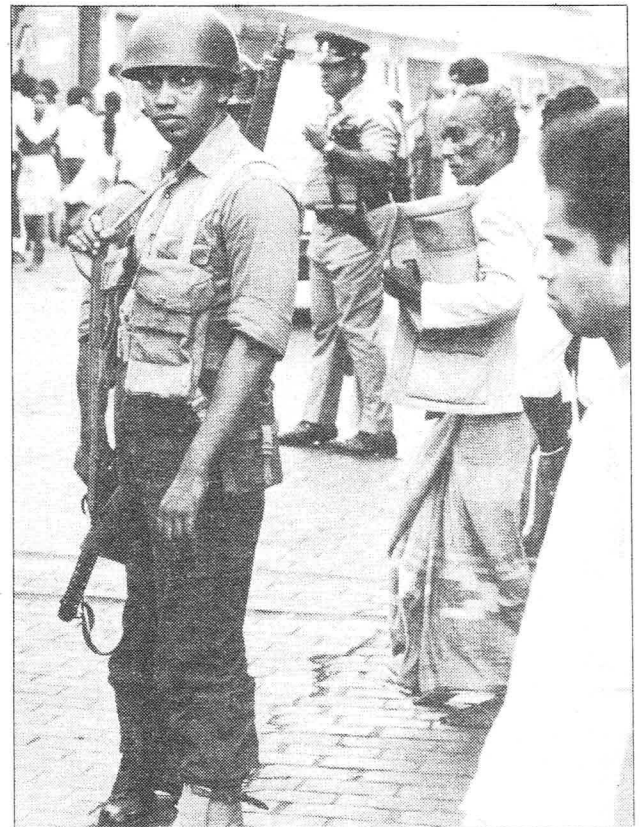


nationally and internationally, to campaign against the genocidal oppression of the Tamil-speaking people.

In Sri Lanka, the resolutions adopted at the 5,000-strong Workers' Delegates' Conference held in March last year must be implemented without further delay. The staging of the National Protest Day, linking the national question to economic demands of the workers, as decided by the Conference, would pave the way for wider and deeper struggles heralding the downfall of the government.

Unfortunately the leaders of some of the trade union organisations are still dragging their feet.

Workers in the aid-giving EEC countries—mainly Britain, the US and the Sri Lanka aid consortium countries—should be mobilised to oppose their respective governments pumping 'aid' into Sri Lanka, most of which is used to destroy the lives and property of the Tamil-speaking people.



Top left: President JR Jayawardena. Top right: Protest against opening of cultural centre in London by the Sri Lankan government. Above: Naval guard in Colombo.

## SA Marxists welcome reinstatement

FOUR MARXISTS previously suspended and expelled from the African National Congress of South Africa have welcomed an announcement by ANC President Oliver Tambo as signifying their readmission.

At its 75th anniversary celebrations in Lusaka on 8 January the ANC publicly invited back those it had previously expelled, provided they 'recanted' errors.

Paula Ensor, David Hemson, Martin Legassick and Robert Petersen were victimised after expressing differences with policies of the ANC leadership. They argued for a clear strategy of mass working-class action to defeat the apartheid regime and the capitalists together.

Neither alliances with capitalists nor guerilla methods would win freedom in SA. The ANC should be built as a force of millions capable of eventually carrying out an armed insurrection, with a program for a socialist democracy.

These Marxists also spoke out against the ANC leaders' dealings with Gatsha Buthelezi at the time of their suspensions.

The comrades maintained throughout that they were victims of SACP Stalinists and right-wingers, influential in the ANC in exile, who were opposed to genuine Marxism in the ANC.

Interviewed by *Inqaba* banned Natal trade unionist

David Hemson welcomed the readmissions and said: 'The movement needs to unite against the enemy—the murderous apartheid state and the bosses it defends. Our suspension in 1979 and expulsion in 1985 were unconstitutional, undemocratic and politically damaging to the ANC.'

'Unity cannot be sustained by suppressing political debate. Today, when reaction is trying to regain the initiative after two years of unprecedented revolutionary upheaval by the workers and youth, full and open discussion on how the movement is to go forward to victory is more important than ever.'

### Loyalty

'Events since 1979—above all in the last two years—have only confirmed the policies we have consistently stood for. The necessity for socialist revolution, led by the working class, is increasingly widely recognised among active strugglers.'

'Despite our victimisation, we have continued in unflinching loyalty to the ANC. Who, after the banners hoisted at the mass funerals of the last years, after the huge sacrifices of the youth, after the foundation of COSATU, can doubt that the workers and youth want to build a mass ANC to carry through the democratic and socialist transformation

of South Africa?

'The ANC leadership invites those who are reinstated to recant their errors. When I make mistakes I am always prepared to correct them. But, in this instance, the policies we put forward have been completely vindicated. There is nothing to recant.'

'The allegations of 'misconduct' made against us to justify our suspension and expulsion were always untrue. We welcome President Tambo's recent statement as in effect a correction of its mistake in suspending and expelling us.'

'Within the discipline of the movement, which we have always observed, we will continue to struggle for socialist policies. Unfortunately, the need for these policies is still not accepted by the leadership.'

'The reinstatement of expelled Marxists may give some political reassurance to the socialist rank-and-file of the ANC, but at the same time the quite mistaken policy is being pursued of apparently discussing compromises over democracy and socialism with the leaders of imperialism, such as George Shultz, in Washington. That cannot strengthen, but only weaken, the working-class struggle for liberation. Thus we must continue to do our duty as socialists within the movement.'

## Angry French teachers go on strike

FRENCH PRIMARY school teachers' anger at government proposals to give headmasters, and therefore the Minister of Education, full control over teachers and teaching methods has exploded in strikes, demonstrations and the occupations of school inspectors' offices.

The opposition movement begun by the university students and youth, then taken up by the rail workers, is continuing.

On Tuesday 27 January 75 per cent of primary teachers took part in a one-day strike. In Paris some teachers have been on strike since the 12th. Under pressure, Monory, the Education Minister had said he would delay implementing his proposals while discussions took place—an example of the government's

new emphasis on 'dialogue'.

Last Thursday, the 29th, however, Chirac showed what this was worth when he said he was going to sign a decree. Teachers across France responded with strikes and occupations which have continued this week, even in traditionally non-militant areas.

On 4 February most teachers are expected to take part in strike action with demonstrations in Paris and other cities.

The teachers are also angry about deteriorating pay and conditions. Monory has announced 800 jobs are to go this year while they are being offered a wage increase of no more than two per cent along with other civil servants.

## Support for ecology policies

Dear Comrades,  
Do you think *Militant* should have a 'Green' policy? Environmental politics is commanding larger and larger sections of young people's hopes and aspirations.

This week ecological politics captured ten per cent of the electorate in West Germany, and whereas I'm not saying we should jettison all our other policies, I want to be able to speak advisedly when next asked.

Yours fraternally  
Michael Supko  
Hackney North, London

## French rail 'wrecker' killed

Dear Comrades,  
During the recent French railworkers' strike, the right weren't slow to attack the strikers as 'wreckers'.

A few nights ago however, a 40-year old railman in France went to free some frozen points. He should have had someone with him as a lookout but there was only a ticket clerk on duty at the station with him.

He avoided one train but didn't see an express coming in the opposite direction. He was killed immediately. Decapitated.

We are still waiting for the outcry against his death and the manpower shortage on the railways from those who were so quick to condemn him as a 'wrecker' a few weeks ago.

Yours fraternally  
A correspondent in France.

## Reagan launches attack—on poor

Dear Comrades,  
Reagan's new budget of one trillion dollars is heading for a stormy 1987 as he seeks to slash human needs programmes while increasing military spending.

Legislators returning to Washington as it convenes in January will face strong pressures from the people

back home to reject Reagan's spending priorities.

Despite the wave of farm foreclosures and bankruptcies which have hit our farmers, farm programmes in the budget will sustain heavy cutbacks.

There are to be more cuts in welfare benefits. 'Single' mothers on welfare would be

compelled to work at minimum wage jobs or face termination of benefits. Tighter eligibility standards could force millions off the welfare rolls.

Yours fraternally  
Betty Traun  
New York, USA

## Labour's journal—ideal for 'armchair cynics'

Dear Comrades,

The Labour Party's journal *New Socialist* seems to have provided a home for many cynical and worn out intellectuals who write lifeless articles which sneeringly deride the working class and its role in modern society.

Workers are 'upwardly mobile' and ready to embrace Alliance politics. Strikes are ineffective and unpopular and new social groups are growing in political and social importance.

Perhaps a visit to a Telecomms picket line and an interview with a group of NCU 'Yuppies' might cast some light on the real state of British society.

Just a thought... but of course the armchair is cosier than a picket line in January.

Yours fraternally  
Robin Clapp  
Bristol South  
Labour Party

# Tory AIDS hypocrisy



Dear Comrades,

I would like to congratulate John Pickard for the centre page article (*Militant* 831) on the 1986 report of British Social Attitudes.

When I read about this report in the *Guardian* last year, it struck me straight away that it was a good answer to the pessimists in the Labour movement.

However, the questionnaire found that attitudes against gay people had hardened since 1983. This is undoubtedly a product of the hysteria kicked up in the gutter press over the AIDS epidemic.

I feel this should be mentioned in order to highlight the oppression that gay people face.

Yours fraternally  
Richard Finnigan  
London

Dear Comrades,

A leaflet is being distributed in working class areas in Stafford.

Apparently, God has sent AIDS to teach us a lesson.

Obviously haemophilia, homosexuality and sex before marriage are worse sins than rape and murder.

The Tories seem to be encouraging AIDS mania, with certain police chiefs and members of the church claiming to be prophets from God who say they are the only ones to make the world good.

It's the Tories' way of going back to the Victorian Values. We've got to get rid of the Tories as soon as possible to get rid of the 'looney righties' in society.

Yours fraternally  
Lorraine Williams  
Stafford

Dear Comrades,

The party of morality's attempt to educate two and a half million households with their feeble AIDS leaflet can only be seen as a token gesture.

Thatcher has left the real work of education on AIDS to underfunded charities such as the Terrence Higgins Trust.

But can we seriously expect much more from a future Labour government? A friend of mine had workers refuse to work with him at a print factory in case he sneezed and they caught AIDS. Although this can be put down in part to rags such as *The Sun*, blame can

also be laid at the door of the trade union leaderships.

It's the duty of the Labour and trade union leaderships to work for true education, prevention and cure for AIDS.

Kinnock must adopt *Militant* strategy on spending and building for the health and social services generally, combat AIDS and the ignorance and prejudice surrounding it.

Yours fraternally  
Craig Wilson  
Portsmouth Labour Party  
Young Socialists

## Classified ads

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 first post on Friday, the week before publication.

○ Socialist '87 Year Planners, themes: "Forward to a Labour Victory"—proceeds to Bradford YS. Or "70th Anniversary of Russian Revolution"—proceeds to FF. A3 size, 12 pages. Includes anniversary dates. £2.50 each plus 30p p&p. 10 or more £1.50 each, £1 p&p. Order from: Hamid Khayam, Flat 7, 5 Oak Ave, Bradford 8, BD8 7AQ.

○ Chile Socialist Defence Campaign slide video: *Chile on the brink*. 20 minutes long. Analysis of recent struggles in Chile. Order from CSDC, PO Box 448, Emma St, London E2. £10 including postage. Cheques payable to "CSDC".

○ Militant enamel Red Flag badges. £1 each with SAE. Send to Mick Griffiths, 20 Trilby St, Wakefield, W Yorks. Tel. Wakefield, 375 022.

○ Banners 6'x 4', one colour lettering, £60 including poles. Extra colour, sizes, logos available. 25% discount for LPYS enquiries—Phil 051 260 3111.

○ Congratulations to Arthur and Kath on the announcement of their engagement.

○ Militant '87 Calendars celebrating the Russian Revolution. Limited stocks now available again, only 50p each plus 20p postage. Rush your orders in before they all go, to: Finance Dept, 3/13 Hepscoot Rd, London E9 5HB.

○ Cassette tapes with two issues of *Militant* (one each side). Available fortnightly. Tapes £3.50 per quarter, £13 per year. To be returned or send blank C-90 tapes. Contact Dave: 14 Harrowby Rd, West Park, Leeds 16. Tel: 0532 624917.

○ *The Burden is Heavy*: video on the growth of the workers' movement in Zimbabwe, with important conclusions for all socialists. Cost of hire: £20 (£10 for YS branches/women's sections). Order from Zimbabwe Trade Unionists' Defence Campaign, PO Box 77, London E8 4TB.

○ LPYS Public meeting. "Support the Caterpillar workers". Thursday 12 Feb. 7.30pm. View Park Community Education Centre. Speakers from Caterpillar occupation committee and Motherwell LPYS.

□ Bradford Militant public meeting "Women and the Struggle for Socialism". Speakers include Margaret Crear (National Labour Women's Committee, personal capacity). Queen's Hall Morley St. Saturday 21 February 2pm. Crèche available.

## Laws for the rich

Dear Comrades,

No one would condone theft but nothing shows the true class nature of our legal system than the way rich and poor men's crimes are treated.

Just sit back and watch what, if any, penalties are given to those involved in the multi-million pound Guinness scandal.

Compare it to the Loughborough magistrate who is threatening to jail people who fiddle extra welfare benefits.

Mind you, I can see why the rich object to the poor getting a few pounds extra—it leaves less in the pot for them to rob.

Yours fraternally  
Alan Horne  
Leicester

## Government aid for union-buster

Dear Comrades,

Rupert Murdoch a millionaire Australian union-buster buys our country's biggest-selling 'newspapers', recruits a scab workforce at Wapping, sacks 5,000 of his former employees, becomes a US citizen, and uses the profits from his exploits over here to finance six TV companies across the Atlantic.

The Tories provide him with a free private army in the form of the police, paid for out of our taxes.

To add insult to injury, Thatcher proclaims that Murdoch-style management will boost productivity, and consequently the economy.

Murdoch's profits from Wapping are invested abroad, how this can be good for the British economy is anybody's guess.

Yours fraternally  
Jon Rubidge  
Essex (CPSA)

## Give a little, take a lot

Dear Comrades,

Regarding the recent debate over elderly people dying in extremely cold weather and Tory payments of £5 per week for two weeks.

Until 1st April 1987, if you have your loft insulated, to keep your house warm, you could get a grant from the local

council. After 1st April 1987 the money from the government is to be withdrawn. So much for helping people keep warm.

Yours fraternally  
Pete McNally  
Coventry

## Penalised for commitment

Dear Comrades,

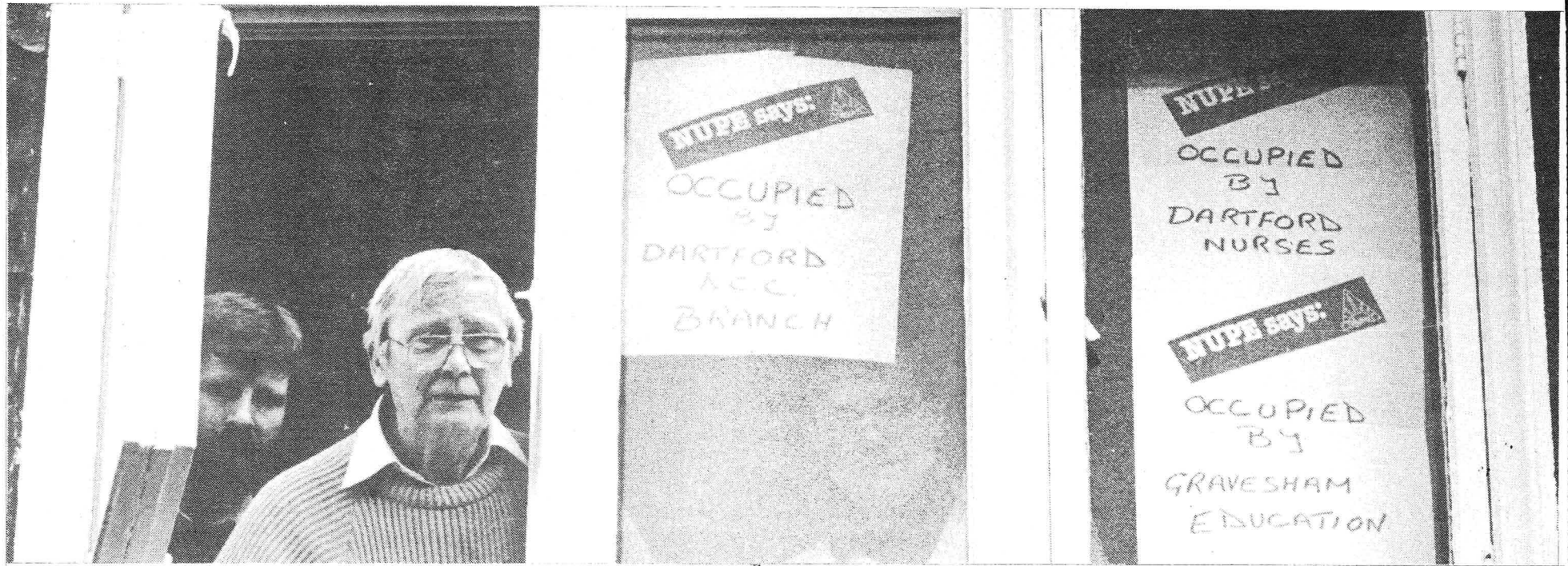
According to a recent article in the *Daily Mail* the NHS has had a massive increase in expenditure under this government of 26 per cent. But ask any nurse, doctor or patient and they'll tell you—the NHS has been cut to the bone.

The Flemings Childrens Hospital in Newcastle is the latest hospital for the chopping block. It's patients are being moved into two wards at the Royal Victoria Infirmary. This is the kind of cuts which the new administrator (ex-Sainsbury's supermarket management) deems necessary in terms of cost efficiency.

The meanness of this administrator reached new depths during the recent snow storms. Several nurses from outlying areas realized that they wouldn't be able to get home and back into work the next day so they offered to sleep overnight at the hospital.

They were told they could stay at a cost of £3.50 per night! This is how conscientious staff are treated in our new 'efficient' health service.

Yours fraternally  
Ged Grebby  
Benton Labour Party  
Young Socialists



Nupe members occupying their Kent divisional headquarters in support of their official Nick Bradley.

Photo: Dave Sinclair.

# Support for victimised Nupe official

**NUPE HAS long had a reputation of being a progressive, campaigning union. Only in the last week Tom Sawyer (Nupe's deputy general secretary) has been featured in a number of newspaper articles arguing for "extending union democracy whilst recognising the importance of key activists" and explaining the potential for the trade unions to become "a radical reforming movement."**

Many activists in the labour movement will have difficulty squaring this reputation and image of Nupe with the activities of the union's leadership in the South East Division. Rank and file Nupe members in North Kent have been angered over what they see as the victimisation of their full time official, Nick Bradley. So incensed are the North Kent branches that in the last week alone they have occupied their Divisional office and lobbied both the Executive Council and the national headquarters.

The Southern and Eastern Division of Nupe has been in turmoil for the past seven months since Divisional Officer, Shaun Hilliard, announced unilateral changes in the areas covered by full time officers.

In June 1986 Hilliard announced four full time officials—including Nick Bradley—would move into new areas. There had been no attempt to discuss this with either the officers or branches involved.

The branches were outraged. In Nupe full time of-

icials are appointed by the Executive Council and the branches believed that the Executive would consult them before making changes in full time officials.

Every single branch in his area wrote to Hilliard expressing their total opposition to his plans. Many of them asked for a meeting with him. They did not receive a reply to any of their letters.

In frustration branch officials from North Kent travelled to the TUC at Brighton and approached General Secretary, Rodney Bickerstaffe, at the Nupe reception for delegates. It was very difficult for them to discuss the matter seriously in this situation so they made a request to meet Bickerstaffe at a later date.

## No replacement

That meeting was never arranged but Hilliard called together Kent branch officials in October. He attempted to explain why he was moving Nick Bradley. In May 1986 he agreed to the temporary release of the Cambridgeshire officer Margaret Dunn, for twelve months. Incredibly he made no attempt to obtain a replacement for her. And to this day the Cambridgeshire branches have been without an officer.

Hilliard wanted to move the Essex officer to Cambridge and Nick Bradley to Essex. He was then rather vague in his plans but admitted that a new official would be brought into Kent. Branch officials wanted to know why the new official couldn't start in Cambridge.

Why move Nick Bradley?

Nick Bradley's reputation amongst the Kent Nupe members is that of a fighter—and a successful one at that. He led a three year battle against Kent County Council who broke the school meals workers' national agreement in 1982. The struggle started with a six week strike and ended with over £250,000 being paid in compensation.

He led one of the first battles against privatisation when workers at All Saints hospital, Chatham, struck when their management put their jobs out to tender. On dozens of individual cases he has successfully defended members and won—often against all the odds.

Branches and members from outside North Kent joined in the protests against moving Nick Bradley. Hilliard was accused of using his position to protect the powers and privileges of the right wing.

District Committees tabled resolutions for debate at the Divisional Conference in November. All the resolutions were ruled out of order on the grounds that the displacement of officers was a matter for the Executive Council! This despite letters to branches from Rodney Bickerstaffe in which he had claimed that the disposition of officers "was a matter for the Divisional Officer."

The reference back of the standing orders report was moved and carried. The chairman refused to accept the decision. The resolutions were never debated.

Hilliard then announced new moves in December. The previous ones were

scrapped. Now Nick Bradley was to be moved to Hertfordshire. Once again there had not been any consultation with the branches or officers.

A new full time official was appointed and in January 1987 Hilliard wrote to Kent branches informing them that the branches covered by Nick Bradley had been reallocated to three other full time officials.

With the support of the branches, stewards and members he has carried on his duties for the Kent members. Even with the internal fighting in the union—and uncertainty over his position—he threw himself into a battle at the Dartford tunnel. Just before Christmas a number of Nupe members were arrested. They were suspended without pay. Mass meetings of Nupe members at the tunnel with Nick Bradley's full support threatened strike action unless the suspended workers were paid. The members voted by a 6 to 1 majority in favour of a strike—the management caved in and the suspended workers were paid. The dispute continues and he has shown his normal determined leadership on behalf of the tunnel strikers.

## Occupation

Meanwhile the incensed Kent members—who had tried every procedural way of getting their voice heard—decided to take direct action. On Wednesday 28 January branch officials occupied their divisional headquarters at Orpington. All the staff were locked out

and the North Kent branch officials spent the day arguing support for their case amongst other Nupe members who had telephoned their office. Radio stations and local papers publicised their actions.

On Friday 30 January a small delegation presented themselves at the TUC headquarters—where Nupe's executive was meeting—to hand in a letter of protest.

One member of the EC incensed the Kent Nupe members when she informed them "that branches had no rights at all." The executive, however, endorsed their sub-committee which had recommended that Hilliard be allowed to move officers however he saw fit.

The possibility of taking disciplinary action against lay officials in Kent was also raised at the executive. It was claimed that their actions were bringing the union into disrepute.

Nupe's North Kent members are angry and incensed at their union's behaviour. The members have had their rights stripped.

Support for Nick Bradley is now growing throughout the South East. It is believed that the union may even take disciplinary action against him. Nevertheless the members are unbowed. They believe that he is being victimised because he refuses to do secret deals with management. He never meets management alone—unlike some other Kent officials—and is respected for his honesty among the members.

The fight to keep their official is now turning into a

battle to make Nupe a democratic union—one where the members voice is heard and not ignored. The leadership of Nupe has moved carefully to the right in the past few years. The union executive has just agreed to introduce postal balloting for its executive positions. The decision was taken by the executive alone—without reference to a rules revision conference—and in contravention of its own rules.

Nupe withdrew support from the workers at Addenbrookes hospital fighting privatisation. Hilliard himself issued instructions that they should be ejected from any Nupe events. In the South East, thousands of members are employed on terms outside the national agreement. Often there was only token opposition—sometimes there was a nod and a wink given to employers to proceed with their wage cutting. In contrast in Kent, Nick Bradley was identified in a highly significant struggle in defence of the school meals workers national agreement.

The next moves in the campaign to prevent this victimisation are now being discussed by branches in North Kent and elsewhere. One thing is certain. They will not be giving up even if it means touring the length and breadth of the country. They plan to make sure that Nupe members everywhere know just exactly how their own union is run.

**Nick Toms spoke to Nupe branch officials in North Kent outside their Divisional headquarters**

## 'Nick's worked hard for the people of Kent'

Martin Craig (steward—Dartford Kent county council branch)

"I'm here because they want to move our area officer. The members don't want the guy moved, he doesn't want to move so why move him. He's done a lot of good work. It seems like victimisation to me.

"Going by the facts which is the only way I can read the situation they're saying there are too many officers in Kent. I'm not saying they've not got a right to move officers but why then bring in another guy to take his place.

"We're paying these people's wages so we should have a say in where they are and what they do. That's what local democracy is all about."

Brian Ellis (steward—Dartford hospitals branch)

"We're all in agreement. We don't want our Area Officer moved. I've known him since I've been a steward. He's done a lot of work and won a lot of cases. It's all wrong. He shouldn't go in the way it's being done.

"Whatever happens here in the next few weeks they'll see reason. We mean what we are saying. It's not just us but the members in the branches."

Margaret Atkinson (branch secretary—Sheppey Education)

"It's not democratic. We're supposed to be a democratic union. A union's made up of its members but we've not had a say. There's been no discussion. One man's made a decision. He thinks he's god but he should remember that Jesus was crucified and if he doesn't watch out the same will happen to him.

"We are fighting for our rights as members. They won't listen to our views. Up until now the Divisional Officer has said that he's made the decision but now he's trying to pass the blame to the EC."

Madge White (Home help steward)

"Nick's worked hard for the people of Kent and now they're going to take him away. They're putting in these

other creeps, management men who we don't trust.

"It seems so much wasted effort. I'm a home help and no-one has ever fought so hard for us as Nick Bradley."

John Warren (steward—Kent County Council PSD)

"I've come down on behalf of my members. They have stated to me that if Nick Bradley has to be moved then all the members in Medway Town PSD will resign.

"Nupe's leaflets say that we're the most caring union. How can you say that the way they're treating their staff?"

Jack Osborne (Secretary—Medway Local Government District Committee)

"We're determined to continue this struggle on the question of union democracy for as long as it takes. We will be lobbying the EC this Friday and our national headquarters next Tuesday. Other actions are under consideration. We can go on forever."

# Industrial Reports

## Police infiltrate Liverpool picket line

**DESPITE THE evidence of the miners' strike and over 1,300 pickets arrested in the print dispute at Wapping, the press continues to perpetuate the myth that the police are 'neutral' in strikes.**

But a small incident in the A-One Feed Supplements battle in Liverpool, which we reported recently, completely shatters this myth. *Militant* readers will rub their eyes at the headline in the *Liverpool Echo* "Stone Hurlled at Picket, says Cop". Perhaps this is a misprint. After all, it usually reads the other way; "Pickets attack non-strikers" or "Pickets use violence to prevent the right to work". But this is no misprint or a mistake!

### Puzzling

The article starts: "A plain clothes policeman was narrowly missed by a stone thrown at a picket line, he told the court". *Militant* readers will be even more confused. A stone is thrown at police by non-strikers who usually defend them against pickets! But the puzzle is solved by the next paragraph "PC Patrick Kerwin had been told by his senior officers to join the picket to observe what happened at the scene of a long running industrial dispute at the Animal Feed plant."

In other words the police had secretly infiltrated a picket line with plain clothes police presumably, to gather 'intelligence' on the strike.

This is only one step

By Dave Cotterill

removed from what has recently happened in France when agent provocateurs, policemen dressed as students, were inciting demonstrators to attack the police. In fact one photograph was published of ordinary riot police in uniform, beating up a plain clothes policeman dressed as a student demonstrator who had just thrown stones at the police!

A somewhat similar incident in reverse resulted from the police's infiltration of the A-One Feed Supplements picket line. Five pickets have brought an action against the firm and three named employees and are seeking an injunction protecting the right to picket without interference.

As part of their case they called the plain clothes policeman as a witness. The *Echo* reports: "PC Kerwin told Liverpool County Court that he'd been sent to the picket line on 30 April some three months after the dispute began". He went on: "workers shouted from a window inviting pickets to go into the factory yard to collect broken pallets for use as firewood". But when the pickets went in to collect



On the A-One picket line.

Photo: Dave Sinclair.

pallets "a group of five or six men—including some he said he believed had shouted the invitation—came from behind a building and demanded the pallets be put back.

### Stoned

"The officer said one of the men picked up a large stone and and threw it towards the gate. The stone struck a picket who fell to the ground. The con-

stable...summoned assistance on his radio and went into the factory with two uniformed colleagues. He said the manager told the uniformed police officers some pallets had been stolen. The officer said 'two men have stolen pallets and this is one of them' pointing to me."

This incident gives just a small glimpse of the methods which the ruling class and their state are ready to employ in order to defeat

workers who are forced to go on strike. CS gas, rubber bullets and other repressive measures are being stockpiled by most police forces in Britain.

### Dirty methods

The ruling class are preparing for confrontation with the labour movement in the future. But even now they are not averse to employing the methods of "secret surveillance",

phone-tapping and all the other dirty methods which the capitalist state are prepared to use to undermine and weaken the labour movement.

Labour MPs should demand a labour movement inquiry into the scandalous and vicious methods employed by the A-One Feed Supplement bosses and also the collaboration of the tops of the police force with this anti-union outfit.

## New attacks on train drivers

**IN THEIR malicious drive to make railway workers pay for their own jobs, British Rail management are sticking the boot in further, with the implementation of new productivity measures.**

"Decision 92", as it is called, was implemented on 19 January. It is the worst attack upon footplate staff since flexible rostering in 1982.

The main implication is the loss of 1,500 drivers assistant jobs. Their fate will be to sit spare, or to collect tickets until absorbed into drivers' posts, which could take years.

When they do become drivers things won't be much better because a central plank of these conditions is the squeezing of yet more productivity from drivers, who will be working longer hours at the controls, and going further distances.

The right to a physical needs break between the third and fifth hour of at least half an hour, although retained, will be restored to the maximum economic benefit to management.

To add insult to injury BR also intend to withdraw the right of our democratically chosen local reps to "scrutinise" these new rosters.

For all this, BRB have given a dismal payment of £1.65 per shift but not payable to those in receipt of DOO allowance or mileage bonuses.

Before the ink could even dry on Decision 92 management handed the ASLEF

NEC even more dire demands for changes in working conditions, the trainman concept.

This is an all out attack by management. Flexible rostering, Decision 92, and now the trainman concept are all linked and have been planned for years.

Flexible rostering was to do away with the 8 hour day so that longer hours could be worked; Decision 92 so that actual driving time can be increased; and the trainman concept means future drivers will be general dogsbodies before getting a driver's job.

Guard's jobs have been attacked by the introduction of driver-only operation. The last couple of years have been geared to the introduction of the trainman concept.

### New grade

By doing away with the guard and driver's assistant and creating a new grade incorporating both jobs, the workers left can be called upon to collect tickets and the next day drive trains.

The introduction of 'suitability of applicants' criteria means trade unionists and activists won't get promotion. Throughout the proposals suitability and not seniority is stressed. They state that "suitability is determined by further selection tests, performance assessment in current grades, and interviews". Surely passing the training courses and examination should determine suitability instead



of an interview with a management stooge.

These proposals have a number of other implications:

1. Promotion and redundancy agreements will be regional instead of national
2. Cover of other depots' work when required.
3. Where economically justified, four terms of 9 hours 45 to be introduced as a week's work
4. Present promotion, transfer and redundancy agreements to be withdrawn and new ones to be introduced.
5. Less training of future drivers meaning safety standards will drop. In other words minimise expenditure and maximise the profits.

This time the ASLEF executive must give a lead. There is a degree of apathy among the footplate but that is because our leaders have generated it. If these proposals are clearly explained and a strategy to fight them put across the anger against the trainman concept can be turned into action.

## Thompson's Industries

**400 WORKERS** at Thompson Industries, Wolverhampton, recently came out on a one day strike over the loss of 60 jobs.

These compulsory redundancies were announced on New Year's Eve, when a letter was sent to all the shop floor workers. The management didn't make it clear who had been made redundant but deliberately sowed confusion and anxiety among the men.

The timing of the redundancies was calculated to catch the workers off guard. An exiled Scot—a life long trade unionist and activist had his letter delivered by a man with an alsatian at 10 to midnight on Hogmanay. He said, "I just didn't tell the wife, but carried on the celebrations."

The mood on the picket line was angry. The redundancies were seen as an attempt to weaken the union to prepare the way for further attacks on jobs and conditions. The full time convenor and leading stewards were among those made redundant.

An older worker who had been at the factory for 37 years summed up the mood of the pickets. "We are the union and we'll have a go. You have the choice to lie down or put up a fight. Mind you—we don't have any leadership—we're left to struggle on our own like we were still at Dunkirk".

By Diane Simcox

## B&I officers strike

**A STRIKE** by ships officers of the B&I shipping line has halted all the company's freight and passenger services following a ballot for industrial action by the Federated Workers Union of Ireland. 1,000 of the 1,400 workforce has been laid off.

The background to the ballot is that Southern Irish state owned B&I and Sealink operate a cartel on the Irish Sea routes.

### Cartel

The companies came to an agreement that when the Sealink Ferries were in drydock B&I would cover their runs by increasing the number of trips their vessels made to 28 per week.

At present Sealink operate that schedule with five teams of officers, whereas B&I use only 2.6 teams of officers.

The B&I men were unwilling to take up this service without improvements in manning. Also they didn't want to undercut the Sealink negotiations.

Negotiations between the union and B&I broke down and, instead of negotiating, the company put forward a plan which included the redundancies of 35 marine officers and a return to 1960 work practices.

Following the officers' refusal to take up these sailings B&I laid off 123 officers and two ferries and one cargo ship were laid up with officers occupying to prevent the management moving them. In the long term the company want 400 redundancies.

Dave Clark spoke to Alan Taylor, FWUI member laid off by B&I

## Strathclyde council

**STRATHCLYDE REGIONAL** council have begun negotiations with manual workers unions to cease all cash payments to staff and transfer all wages to direct debit into the bank.

NUPE's shop stewards committee decided that if the SRC wished workers to give up their right to receive cash wages then the SRC should buy that right off them. SRC however offered a loan of £300, repayable at £1 per week.

This amounts to workers borrowing their own

money for the privilege of giving up their rights. The shop stewards committee rightly rejected this proposal.

The shop stewards committee are urging all members to refuse SRC's loan offer and to hold out for a straightforward cash payment. This is in line with the experience in other authorities where workers have received lump sums of up to £300.

By Stephen Smellie  
(NUPE shop steward,  
Hamilton LA branch)

# National backing for Telecom strike

## Clericals demand united action

Bill Boyle spoke to June, an NCU Clerical Group branch committee member in London: Around forty of us refused to cross the engineers' picket lines on Wednesday the 21st. Instead we joined the picket and went to the engineers' rally in Central Hall. The mood was electric.

The next day we were suspended for refusing to sign the loyalty pledge so we organised a meeting for those still in work and even more came out in support, including some who've never had a good word to say for the union. A lot of us are new to this sort of thing but we're all learning fast.

### DERBYSHIRE

About 700 NCU members from all over Derbyshire attended a rally in Derby last Monday. Bob Laxton, Derby branch secretary told the meeting that he had been approached by the manager of a local computer company claiming that all of his telephone data links had crashed.

Local management have refused to allow the union to provide emergency cover. Local manager Roy Kerr was quoted as saying that BT was "not prepared to abrogate their responsibilities to the unions" by allowing strikers to repair emergency circuits.

### HACKNEY

Pickets at Paragon Road Exchange, Hackney, have got some amusement laid on in the form of three phone boxes.

Even before the strike these pay-phones didn't work too well. Today, despite the obvious NCU picket, there are still people trying to use the phones.

What usually happens is that a frustrated would-be caller will run up and down the boxes to try and find one that works. This morning one thwarted caller went even further.

In full view of the pickets he tried to dismantle the phone to get his 10p back. Various suggestions were offered by the pickets. One jokingly suggested arresting him; another was going to give him his 10 pence back. However before they could offer any solution he walked off.

They didn't have the heart to tell him he was on candid camera. Now the lads are thinking of putting up a sign on the boxes: "These fruit machines don't pay out".  
By Tim White

### READING

Reading remains absolutely solid. Intensive picketing has been taking place outside several exchanges where a few engineers are working.

Management have gone to incredible lengths to limit the impact of the strike—a "bunker" has been set up at the district HQ with emergency lines across the district.

From the very beginning of the dispute Langley Exchange in Slough has been on the brink of collapse. It is virtually impossible to phone into the area, and management's at-

The engineering and clerical group executives have got to get their act together. So far there's been no real lead from the top, which leaves people confused. John Golding has complained in the past that we've acted like two separate unions, but now we've got a golden opportunity to act as one.

We should all be out together till we win, with joint pickets on every BT building and joint meetings to keep everyone informed. BT have started writing to people at home so the union should do the same so that every member knows exactly what's going on.

tempts to maintain it have been thwarted by picketing.

It is reported that the district engineer broke his bolt cutters as he attempted to cut the lock, rather than the chain. They brought an angle grinder to do the job, but again had to give up when they couldn't get into the exchange to connect it to electricity!

By Ben Rayner (Reading NCU)

### LIVERPOOL

Morale in the Merseyside area was boosted last week by a demonstration through Liverpool followed by a rally at the Pier Head. Clerical workers joined engineers and swelled the demo to 2,500. The district council is planning regular mass meetings to keep the members informed of latest developments.

Round the clock picketing at the central depots and offices continues. Particularly effective has been the picket of the Telecom shop where customers pay their bills. Ordinary users have respected the advice of the pickets not to pay their telephone bills.

They have been joined, surprisingly, by businessmen who are not crossing the strikers' picket lines. It is felt however, that this is less a gesture of solidarity with the strikers than with their bank balances!

At other picket sites workers have been devising means of passing the time. In Aintree, armchair pickets watch TV and in Bootle they had an after-hours wine party. In Stanley, pickets have been trying to take over the world by playing Risk. However, when questioned, they said they would stop short at the BT national board.  
By Mick Whale

### LIVERPOOL COUNCIL

Liverpool City Council's new deputy leader Paul Astbury has issued the following statement backing the strike: "Engineers, with union blessing attended out of hours to put back into service our Works Department's failed telephone system...because of flooding and the consequent electrical dangers to householders

"The NCU have done everything to provide service out of hours...The provocative action by BT in sending their engineers home for refusing to perform non-essential, non-emergency overtime has now put all our services at risk. We

can only deplore the short-sighted and dangerous move by BT."

### LEWISHAM

Lewisham Labour Party Young Socialists was one of a number of LPYS branches to hold public meetings in support of Telecom workers. Telecom strikers from four districts attended, all stressing the need for a united fight by all BT employees.

The meeting was upstairs in a pub. Below a jazz band was playing—minus one of their musicians who was an NCU picket. The band are now considering doing a benefit for the strikers. They finished the evening with a rendition of 'Maryland, my Maryland' better known to socialists as the Red Flag!  
By Roger Shrives

### BIRMINGHAM

The strike in Birmingham and the black country remains solid. Gordon Macmillan, assistant branch secretary of the Birmingham Internal branch, NCU, explained to a *Militant* meeting the issues behind the strike.

"Ian Vallance of BT has said this strike is a trial of strength with the NCU, but his attempt to break the union has failed.

"BT has done us a favour. Now workers are paying up to £40 to rejoin the union so as to be able to join the strike.

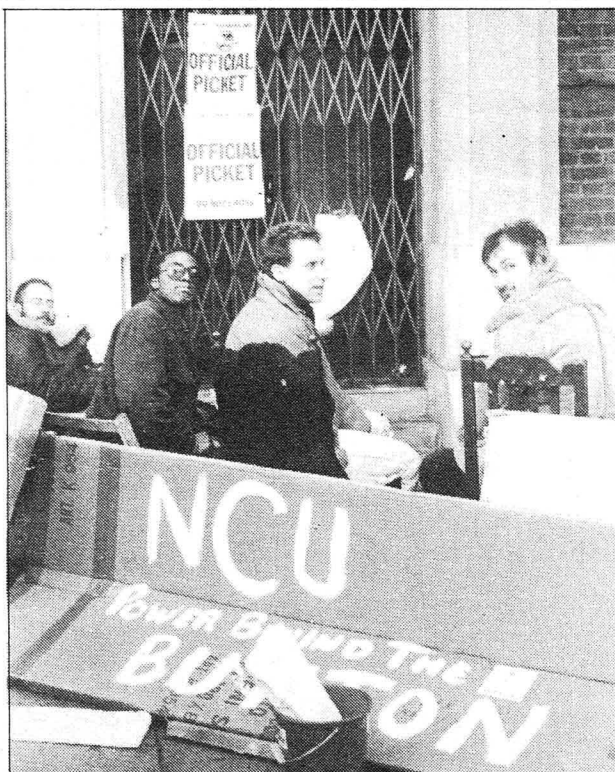
"The strike isn't just about wages, but is also about jobs. With the introduction of System X in two years we face massive job losses.

"As regards emergency cover, management has deliberately sent home volunteers because they refused overtime on non-emergency work. The system is breaking down. If the strike continues for another two weeks there won't be a system left.

"But win or lose things will never be the same again—they've turned moderate members into militants."  
By Bill Mullins

### COVENTRY

A picket at Little Park Street Exchange, Coventry: "Management don't know what's hit them. They didn't realise the strength of feeling. They insisted the union ballot the members. The result was four to one in favour of action. You see, they've picked on the ordinary blokes. 52 out of 900



Pickets at Grays Inn Road, London.



A thousand Telecom workers march in Bristol.

have been suspended in Coventry.

"We realise this overtime issue is the thin end of the wedge. If they get away with this, they'll walk all over us. They've brought in the new digital exchange. It takes up one part of one floor and will replace all five floors of the old exchange. Thirty of us work there now, but they'll only need ten on the digital exchange.

"This is the first indefinite strike in the 100 year history of the union. But we're not going to let them walk all over us, not like this. No way."

### NEWCASTLE

A mass meeting of the Newcastle NCU Clerical branch voted overwhelmingly for the three day strike. Clerical branch secretary, Mary Coxon talked (in personal capacity) to Fred Gent:

"Probably more than the low pay offer it is the strings which have infuriated the members—mainly downgrading of work, including the introduction of a new 'office junior grade' starting at under £60 at 16. Adult clerical assistants now start at £73.47.

"The strike was solid. Only about 20 out of 620 members went in. STE members are angry at their executive instructing them to cross picket lines. Yet at least one manager has been speeding at pickets outside Swan House. Members were rung up at home by their managers asking if they would be back on Friday.

"We expect BT to go for an early settlement to try and split us from the engineers who have been 100 per cent solid."

### NORWICH

900 Norwich engineers have been out since 16 January, surprising management who thought this traditionally moderate area would not res-

pond to provocation. Instead they walked out leaving the county without emergency cover.

There are picket lines on all BT buildings, with a strike office set up in the local Labour Party building. A CB radio network is being used to keep branch officials in touch with pickets and mass meetings of four to five hundred held daily.  
By M Colk, NCU Norwich

### SHEFFIELD

A mass meeting of 2,000 South Yorkshire engineers in the City Hall on Monday night voted unanimously against continuing emergency cover. It is a big question because management are letting engineers do emergency work whilst they carry on with commercial work.

Sheffield general manager Mike Townsend has sent letters to level one managers saying relations will never be the same again and should not be.

Last Tuesday Rotherham was cut off from all emergency calls and many others. BT told the local media that service to the customer, especially emergency calls were the engineers's responsibility.

But at a *Militant* readers' meeting in Rotherham Martin England from Harrogate NCU put the record straight. Since privatisation phone box faults are no longer treated as emergencies and as they are emptied by Securicor on a rota, if they get full they cannot be emptied until it is their turn.

Karen Aldale, Sheffield internal branch committee told *Militant* (in personal capacity): This dispute isn't about pay but the credibility and existence of the union. BT has been putting the frighteners on, or at least trying to. But the solidarity of the strike has been magnificent despite the leadership leading from behind."  
By Jane Hartley

## Impact of London action on system

BT workers in the provinces will be looking to London for the effect of the strike on big business. Impact has been difficult to ascertain. There is an organised veil of silence that is proving difficult to penetrate. Simple logic dictates that it must be considerable.

Before the strike unprecedented overtime by 7,000 engineers was still insufficient to meet demand, so much so that a special Task Force drawn from the Provinces was drafted in to deal with the 'Big Bang'.

Some 360 engineers were put up in London hotels on night subsistence (expenses). Both the 7,000 central London engineers and the Task Force are now on strike, and yet there is not a peep from the City of London. The solidarity of the bosses club is nearly as impressive as our own.

Here is a sample round up of faults the Broad Left has been able to verify so far, from *Impact* collated by Colin O'Callaghan. This is on the basis of a limited phone round last weekend. Without doubt there are far wider effects and BT employees, bank workers, anybody with information on the effect of the strike on BT operations should contact the Broad Left to help provide a fuller picture, including the provinces next week if the strike continues.

**North London:** 50 exchanges affected by junction cable breakdowns. 26 trunk cables have broken down. Severe congestion on calls out of the capital. Tottenham exchange regularly going off the air. Many common control exchanges in a similar position.

**West London:** congestion on Northolt and Uxbridge exchanges. A 400 pair down and a 1600 pair on its way. Strowger exchanges are giving big problems. There are problems on Megastream. Some junctions to sector switching centre, down. Many autobanks are malfunctioning. Many lines down in Abbey National.

**City:** the most difficult area to get hard information. But postponement of a major Telex switchover is causing much confusion. A 400 pair down and big cables down. Large subscribers PABXs are giving big problems. Long Distance Faraday branch report a big backlog of faults. First line supervisors are just logging not clearing faults. Major impact on Megastream and Kilostream.

**Telecom Tower:** evidence of deterioration but yet to crack. ITV can no longer switch through the Tower but have been routing around using Channel 4 equipment. ACTT have been contacted and they say they will get it stopped this week. Two large companies are completely off the air

# Militant

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Labour local government  
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## Workers— victims of bosses' remedy

THE OCCUPATION of the Caterpillar plant at Tannochside has become a beacon to workers throughout redundancy-ravaged West Scotland. Donations and support are flooding in to the 1,121 workers.

A seven year old boy came down from the nearby housing scheme to give his £3 savings to the occupation appeal. An OAP donated her severe weather allowance.

Dozens of examples such as these fill the workers conversations: 'We raised £1,400 at Ibrox (Rangers Football Club) before Saturday's game. We collected £1,200 in Argyle Street in an hour and a half!'

£9,100 was raised last week in collections in shopping centres and football matches, in donations etc.

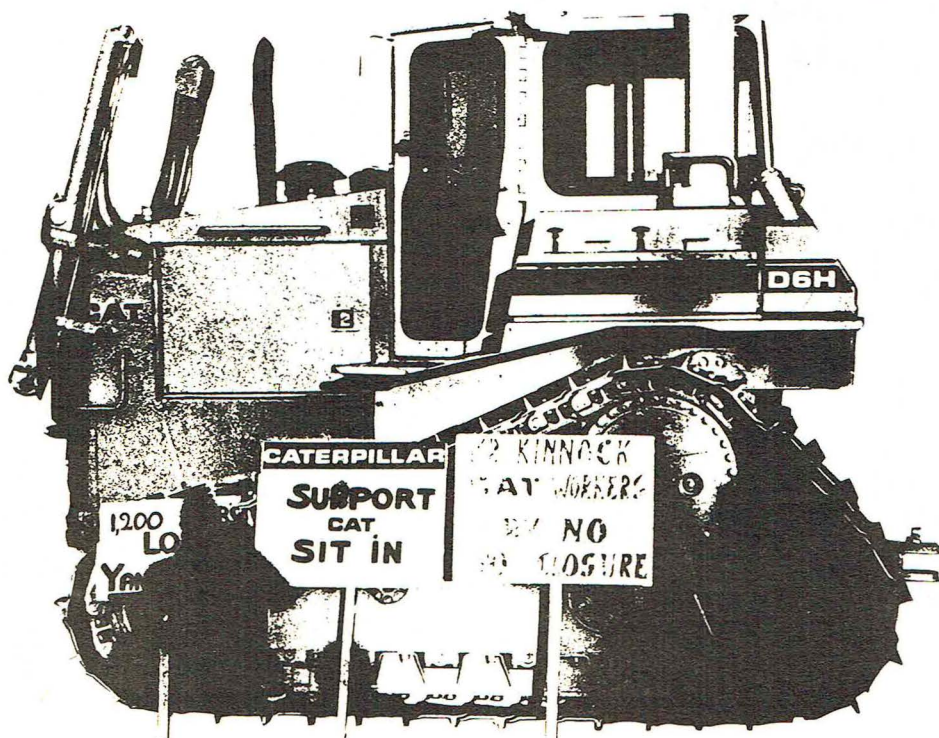
The £75,000 'Pink Panther' tractor, assembled during the occupation for Band Aid, now sits outside the factory for all passers by to admire. It is a symbol of the workers' determination to continue producing tractors here. Within the plant there are enough materials to produce at least 12 tractors. It has been suggested that one of these be offered to suppliers in exchange for more materials.

### Decision time

Understandably the workers have had little time to consider a long term strategy. Caught up as they are in the 101 tasks involved in keeping the factory going under the glare of international publicity.

But after four weeks hard decisions have to be made. Until now the stewards' strategy was to politically pressurise Caterpillar management into reversing its closure decision. Such a decision would have been against the trend of all previous announcements by multinationals. It was probably a sign that the workers were still reeling from the initial closure announcement. But now Caterpillar, after meeting with the Scottish Office and the workforce on consecutive days, have killed

# Nationalise Caterpillar



ed off any prospect of withdrawing their closure plans.

The stewards will probably immediately attempt to try for a takeover. But Comatsu of Japan (Caterpillar's main world-wide competitor) has already said it is not interested. Caterpillar's original decision to close Tannochside was due to overcapacity. "You are a victim of the remedy" John Brannan, AEU convenor, was told by the management. A takeover, it seems, is just not on, if the plant is to remain producing tractors, and with all 1,200 jobs.

The second alternative that could be considered is that of a workers' co-operative. But as Tam Sutherland of the AEU said: "We consider this an extremely unlikely solution. To finance a loan would be a huge problem for a workers' co-op in this industry."

### No to co-op

The chance of a co-operative competing with giants of world tractor production like Comatsu and Caterpillar itself, would be extremely slim.

The third option, which

all socialists must push for, involves continuing the occupation to build a campaign for the nationalisation of the plant. If Thatcher and the Tories can nationalise Johnson-Matthey Bank for £1 and immediately write off hundreds of millions in debt, how can a profit making factory and its workforce be sacrificed?

The workers must organise in the labour movement to commit the Labour Party leaders to back the nationalisation call. If necessary a new Labour government should be made to honour it.

The workforce were appalled that Neil Kinnock on his visit to the west of Scotland on 30 January was unable "to fit them into his schedule." Kinnock had come to Glasgow for a Scottish Executive meeting and a Burns supper in nearby Motherwell, but failed to be seen publicly supporting the occupation.

The demand for tractors in the third world is enormous. A publicly owned factory could sell them at non-profit levels to satisfy the demand.

Of course, Lanarkshire is well aware of the flaws in the present nationalised corporations. Steelworks and collieries closing all around them, have taught bitter lessons.

The demand of the workers must be for Caterpillar to be run under democratic workers' control, and management.

Now management is threatening to seek a writ within two weeks, to evict the workers. All LPYS branches and union branches must keep up the donations and messages of support to the occupation, and push for Labour's leadership to give firm backing to the workers and their demands.

Messages of support to: Caterpillar Occupation Committee, c/o Thomas Stevenson, 17 Campsie View, Bargeedie, Glasgow.

By Colin Fox

Labour Party  
Young Socialists

### Public Meeting

Support the  
Caterpillar  
workers

Thursday 12  
February 7.30pm.  
View Park Community  
Education Centre. Speaker  
from Caterpillar occupation  
committee and LPYS.

(continued from front)

volving union members. If the NEC had been preparing the members over the past year with mass meetings to explain BT's plans, management would never have taken us on.

The union must stand up to BT management's bullying tactics which are designed to soften up the union for further attacks. It makes no difference whether the strings are accepted over one, two or ten years. If the NCU start putting forward a real campaigning alternative, the support from ordinary phone users could become a major factor in our fight.

In BT's priority list for emergencies, domestic users come fifth, well behind business phones. This reflects the few big shareholders who really run BT. The NCU should draw up a Telecom charter calling for BT's renationalisation under workers' control and management.

This would allow the planning of a dynamic high tech industry with shorter hours and better conditions for workers and a better service for consumers.

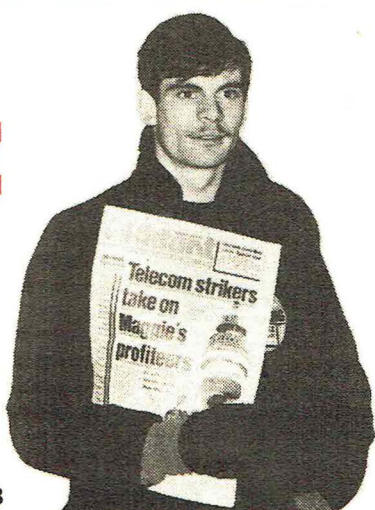
The NCU must go on the offensive.

- ★ For the full claim with no strings!
- ★ No victimisation!
- ★ Fight for a future!

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