

# Militant

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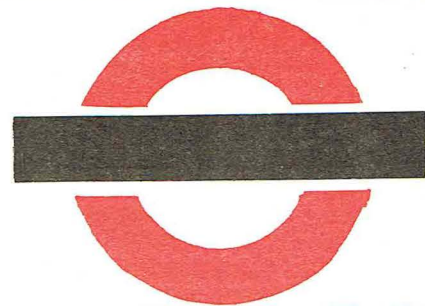
## Marxist Weekend School

University of London Union  
Malet Street, London WC1. (nearest tube—Euston)  
Courses start 10am Saturday 28th.

Debate: Can Gorbachev's reforms succeed?  
Sunday 2pm.

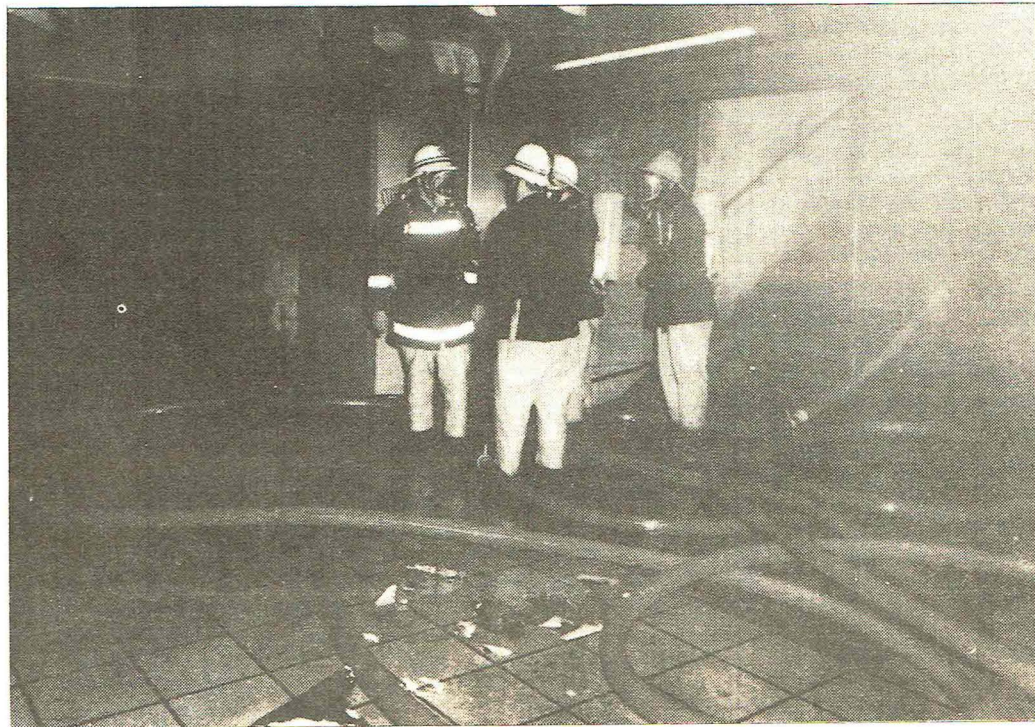
Venue as above See page 6.

# KINGS CROSS



# Tory cuts

# Kill



THE DAY after the King's Cross tube horror, Thatcher visits the stricken station. Edwina Currie goes to University College Hospital where the maimed and dying are cared for. What sickening hypocrisy! For a moment they weep crocodile tears for the bereaved and suffering. Then callously carry on with their cuts in health spending, their attacks on local authorities and therefore on the fire and emergency services.

University College has just lost 200 beds. One nurse tending the injured said she felt like spitting in Currie's face.

### Profiteers

The Tories worship at the altar of profit, privatisation and free enterprise. How dare they come to mourn the victims of their system.

They took London Transport out of the hands of the GLC, and appointed their own hand-picked board of London Regional Transport. Its subsidiary—London Underground Ltd.(LUL)—has its instructions: cut back on spending until no gov-

By Jeremy Birch

ernment subsidy is needed. Yet no other underground in Europe runs without a subsidy.

Under government orders transport in London was not to be a cheap, efficient and safe service for the people. It was a business to make money.

So one-man operation on tube trains and cutbacks on station staff have been forced through. LUL chairman, Dr. Tony Bright, who is "gratified" that the government takes such a tough line on subsidies, wants "an arrangement where fewer staff are

# For a workers' inquiry

ON THE TUC general council John Macreadie suggested that the TUC general secretary, in discussion with the unions in the industry, look at the idea of a trade union inquiry.

employed but with greater flexibility".

At King's Cross 'flexibility' means general staff had been cut from 16 to 10, and full-time cleaners from 14 to two. And there have been cutbacks throughout the system in workers engaged in escalator maintenance. By 1988 London Regional Transport as a whole will

have shed 9,350 jobs.

And how much has been spent on safety, especially fire safety?

### Cover-up

Almost nothing has been done since the Oxford Circus fire three years ago, and the report recommending drastic (and costly) improvements.

Now, cynically, Transport Minister, Channon, says he wants an enquiry "as extensive" as the Zeebrugge enquiry.

But that inquiry has been a complete cover-up. Criminal proceedings are now being considered, but not against Townsend-Thoresen and P&O but against three unfortunate crew

## Inside Urgent

Labour Party Young Socialist conference closed down

See page 2

Gorbachev's reforms pages 8-9

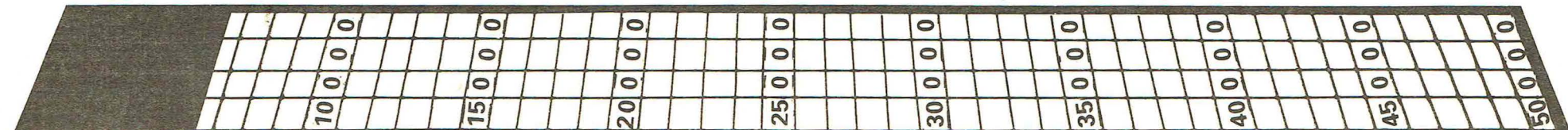
King's Cross disaster page 2-3

members. Now will some poor ticket collector be blamed?

How can any inquiry set up by the Tories ever be trusted?

The firefighters and rail unions, along with the transport users' groups, have access to all the technical knowledge to conduct their own workers' inquiry. They will have only one priority—the safety of workers and passengers. And they will not be afraid to charge the real criminals.

London Regional Transport should be a service run for the benefit of ordinary passengers. It is virtually nationalised already. But only under the control and management of rail workers and the working class generally, will transport be run for people not profit.



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# Militant

Editor: Peter Taaffe  
Militant, 3/13 Hepscoot Road, London E9 5HB.  
Phone: (01) 533-3311

## Recession still looms

THE MEASURES agreed by President Reagan and the US Congress to cut their budget deficit will do nothing to avert the looming recession in the capitalist world economy. There has not even been a short-term rally on the world's stock markets, which remain around the level to which they crashed five weeks ago.

The deficit for 1987/88 is now projected to be \$180 billion, yet they have agreed to aim for only a \$30bn cut and a further \$46bn the following year. But no details have been worked out and the agreement could still be wrecked by either Congress or the President before it is ratified.

The US deficit exploded as a result of Reagan's policy of cutting taxes while spending more on defence. As a by-product, this policy helped to promote growth in the capitalist world as a whole. Contrary to his monetarist rhetoric, Reagan was stimulating the economy through 'Keynesian' methods of increased state spending.

But the resulting 'boom' was not like the sustained period of growth between 1950 and 1975. The price the American economy was paying for Reagan's policy was a huge influx of capital and imports from Japanese and Western European capitalists. They were buying government bonds, investing in US industry and exporting goods made cheap by the high value of the dollar. Hence the deficits in the government budget and the balance of trade.

As a new recession loomed nearer, it was always possible, as we predicted, that these deficits would lead to a sudden crash on the stock markets. Shares were reaching levels which bore no relationship to the real value of the companies they represented and the deficits were undermining the illusion that they could go on rising.

The dollar began to slide and a move to raise interest rates to support it led to the sudden crash which then reverberated round the world.

After the 1929 Wall Street crash, President Hoover raised taxes and cut government spending, which accelerated the slump. His ideas are echoed by Thatcher and Lawson, who have arrogantly demanded that Reagan act to cut the deficit. If however he seriously attacked the deficit by tax increases and cuts, this would reduce consumption and the American market for other capitalist countries and thus hasten worldwide recession.

Other capitalist commentators argue that Reagan should do the exact opposite—cut taxes further, let the dollar fall and raise government spending—to stave off recession. But that would make the deficits even bigger and exacerbate the crisis just as much.

It is also argued that the countries with trade surpluses, especially Japan and West Germany, must cut interest rates and raise government spending to stimulate consumption and provide a bigger market for American exports.

But these countries already have budget deficits of their own. It is impossible under the capitalist system of 'every man for himself and the devil take the hindmost' for capitalist countries to agree to work harmoniously for the benefit of the capitalists as a whole.

They are already looking after their own national capitalists, with thousands of tariffs, 'non-tariff barriers' to keep out imports and the use of currency fluctuations to make their exports more competitive.

The US has deliberately let the dollar slide in the hope that it will boost American exports. Now there are growing calls from within Congress for direct tariffs and import controls to put 'America First' and keep out foreign imports and investment. Nothing would be more certain to bring the world economies crashing into recession.

There is no way out of this crisis on a capitalist basis. The system has come up against the barriers of the nation state and private ownership by a few giant multi-national monopolies. It is impossible for a system based on private profit to provide even the basic necessities of life for all, even during 'booms'.

Now the capitalist world is entering a new slump, the case for the socialist alternative of a democratically planned publicly-owned economy to produce for need and not profit will be taken up by more and more millions of the world's workers, who as always will be left to pay the price of recession in lost jobs and poverty wages.

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# Tube terror



Photo:PA

Thatcher at the scene of the fire. Cuts imposed by the Tories have reduced safety but hypocritically the prime minister praises emergency staff.

## Mad dash to safety

**Mark French of Tottenham Labour Party Young Socialists describes how he escaped death by seconds, as he was on his way home from college and had to change from the Northern line to the Victoria line at King's Cross.**

Unbelievably, even though there was obviously a fire going at about 7.40-7.45 when I arrived at King's Cross, the service was still running as normal. From all the different lines trains were still arriving, bringing people into a death trap.

I stepped onto the platform along with dozens of other passengers, totally ignorant of the calamity that was about to happen.

By the time I got a first whiff of smoke, the train was already pulling out of the platform. Besides, I thought it was probably just kids letting off fireworks, so I didn't think much of it.

### Black smoke

As I was crossing over to the Victoria line platform, the smoke was getting rapidly thicker and blacker.

As I turned the corner to the platform I saw several policemen and firemen running down from the escalators shouting desperately for people to leave the station.

At this point passengers from the platforms started walking past and

then running towards the escalators and then up them.

This evacuation quickly turned to panic, with people pushing and falling all over each other in the rush to escape. I was lucky as I was fairly near the front of this stampede to begin with.

### Panic and fear

The ones at the back who had been waiting at the other end of the platform obviously didn't all make it, as we were running straight into where the fire, which was growing by the second, was raging.

As I was running up the escalator it got unbearably hot very rapidly. This added considerably to the panic and

fear. I only just made it to the top of the escalator and out of the ticket hall in time to reach the steps to Euston Road, coughing and spluttering.

People 10-20 seconds later must have had no chance to get out alive, as the ticket hall literally ignited, turning into an inferno. In recollection, it was a tragic mistake to direct people up the escalators, even though they weren't the ones on fire. All the escalators led to the ticket hall where the fire spread to.

However the blame doesn't rest with the LT staff or the firemen, who were heroes. It lies with the LT management who completely neglected implementing any safety procedures to deal with such an event.

## Warning from Labour MP

**TERRY FIELDS MP, spoke on the fire in Parliament: "As a fireman for 26 years before coming to this place, I understand the conditions that were encountered and the tragedy that last night's events have inflicted on families. I add my condolences to those families, particularly to the family of Colin Townsley, a 45 year-old station officer from Soho, and to the other firemen who were**

**injured. They typified the dedication and self-sacrifice of our emergency services."**

He demanded the government give an assurance that the safety measures in all rail premises would be looked into. He also warned that if the proposed job cuts in London's fire service go ahead, the King's Cross tragedy would pale into insignificance.

## Labour's youth attacked

THE LABOUR Party Young Socialists has been dealt a body blow, and its very future as a national campaigning body is under threat. That is the meaning of the decision taken by the right-wing dominated Labour national executive, at its 25 November meeting, to cancel the LPYS conference.

This is the most savage attack yet on the Party's youth section, and marks a major stepping-up of the Labour leadership's 'holy war' against the left. The right did not even attempt to put forward any grounds for closing the conference.

What a disgrace, just a week after the hugely successful YTURC lobby of Parliament, the NEC hits out again at Labour's youth. This is not just an

attack on the LPYS but against all young people looking for a lead to fight back against YTS conscription, unemployment and low pay.

Only four NEC members, Dennis Skinner, Linda Douglas, Ken Livingstone and Jo Richardson voted against. (Tony Benn was abroad) The right wing majority is riding rough shod over the democratic rights of the Party membership, throwing the rule book over their shoulder.

According to Labour's constitution, the LPYS like any other constituent section of the Party must hold an annual conference. In October, the NEC had to steer through the Party conference a constitutional amendment to dispense with LPYS regional

conferences. The LPYS national conference is closed just by administrative decree.

The Party leadership do not want an active, campaigning and critically-minded youth section. If they cannot rule it, they want to close it down. They are terrified by the impregnable position secured by Marxism in any democratic LPYS.

Labour Party and Young Socialist members must not let them get away with this new witch-hunt, and must flood the NEC with resolutions and letters of protest, and take the campaign to the workers in the workplaces and the unions.

By Militant reporter.



# who is to blame?

WHAT COULD cause such a devastating fire? The fatal first spark broke out on the escalator. Then the plywood panels down the side of the escalator, the rubber handrails and the wooden treads provided the inflammable components to feed the flames.

An automatic, heat or smoke sensitive sprinkler system might have doused the fire before it could have spread. But the King's Cross sprinkler system has to be manually switched on.

In the ticket hall plastics and

other materials readily ignited, even asbestos which failed to slow the fire but gave off noxious fumes.

## Flash-over

Eye-witnesses talk of a flash-over—when fire at searing heat spreads quicker than anyone can run away from it. Spreading across the ceiling of the ticket hall at temperatures up to 1000 degrees centigrade, hair and clothes would spontaneously com-

bust, without even touching the flames themselves. It was a raging inferno.

A GLC pamphlet, *Notes on the Underground*, described the Oxford Circus fire of three years ago: "Firefighters attending the Oxford Circus fire had to travel through thick smoke and extreme heat over 140 metres down...The bitumen/asbestos sheeting burnt with a ferocity which became familiar in the Bradford football stand inferno. The dense fumes were laden with asbestos".

The report into that fire, produced by the independent London Passenger Transport Research Group, recommended: alarm bells, emergency exit signs, smoke detectors, sprinkler systems, smokeproof doors in passages which would normally be secured open but could be released by an alarm, "an urgent review to be carried out of all plastics and treated woods...note being made of the amount of smoke given off by each substance", "the planned staffing cuts to be strongly reviewed, staff

training procedures to be overhauled".

But with London Underground's obsession with saving money, virtually none of these proposals have been implemented.

Ominously the Research Group warned at the time: "London Transport and now London Regional Transport have been extremely fortunate that no lives have been lost in fires on the underground...Luck has a habit of running out".

Reports by  
Soraya Lawrence and  
Jeremy Birch

## London Brigade faces job cuts

THE GOVERNMENT and press heaped praise on the firefighters who dealt with the King's Cross blaze. Yet just at the time of the fire the firefighters of London had begun to hear details of the latest attacks on our jobs and conditions.

The management of the London Fire Brigade have plans which would lead to the loss of about 800 jobs as well as major attacks on working conditions and changes in work practices. Almost every area of work will be affected from annual leave to sickness, training, rest and recreation facilities. There is even a proposal to stop firefighters parking their cars on Fire Brigade premises.

These proposals sound like a sick joke after King's Cross. Members of the public will probably be shocked that the 'heroes' of the King's Cross fire are coming under attack in such a way. The history of the Fire Service has shown that, like any other group of workers, firefighters have had to get organised and fight to improve and defend conditions. We may soon have to call on those traditions again.

By a London Firefighter

The fire in King's Cross was a major disaster but fires are not uncommon in the underground stations. The following fires have taken place in the last seven years:

- 31/8/80 at Turnpike Lane
- 8/5/81 at North Acton
- 11/6/81 at Covent Garden
- 11/6/81 at Russell Square
- 21/6/81 at Goodge Street
- "It's a wonder how any of them got out alive." Policeman
- 11/8/82 Wood Green/Bounds Green
- 12/4/83 at Seven Sisters/Finsbury Park
- 12/12/83 at Holborn
- 23/11/84 at Oxford Circus
- 25/1/85 at Green Park
- 6/8/85 at Covent Garden
- 16/9/85 at Warwick Avenue
- 23/12/85 at Holborn
- 18/6/86 British Museum
- 1/10/86 Kennington
- 30/7/87 Bank fire under escalator



Oxford Circus tube fire in 1984—warnings were given then.

Photo: courtesy of GLC Media Resource Group.

## Underground: safety last!

LONDON underground chairman, Dr. Tony Ridley, told *Newsnight*: "The emergency exit from an underground railway station is by train." Yet panic-stricken passengers fled back down to the platforms only to see trains pass through without stopping. Desperately they banged on the doors. One woman jumped down on to the track hysterically shouting at a train disappearing into the tunnel.

Why were trains not emptied at the previous station and then sent in to pick up the frightened and possibly injured passengers?

Yet such was the chaos some (loaded) trains, especially on lines other than the Piccadilly, continued to stop, picking up and incredibly dropping off passengers well after the fire had taken hold.

London Underground has no adequate emergency procedures, including proper control facilities for directing trains and staff. It has completely inadequate means of communication with drivers on trains, and does not even have proper communication with the platforms.

### Mix up

London Transport police radios are out of range once they go underground. Hence the unbelievable mix up of passengers, fleeing the fire on the Piccadilly line escalators, being shepherded up the Victoria line escalator which emerges in exactly the same spot, in the ticket hall which was rapidly becoming engulfed.

London Underground knew that the tube network was a serious fire risk long before the King's Cross disaster.

They had started a two-year programme to fit safety fire-breaks. But it was halted in August when money was diverted from a £15m budget to be spent on precautions against vandalism and the introduction of automatic ticket machines to cut down further on staff.

King's Cross was one of 32 stations targeted for emergency fire-breaks. Some sections of the station had already been fitted with the metal and ceramic overhead shut-off barriers which come into effect dur-

ing a fire. However the areas of the Piccadilly line and Northern line where the fire occurred remained untouched.

When work stopped on the project a London Regional Transport official told contractors: "It's a gamble but we just have to pray there won't be a fire until March 1988 when we can start spending on this again."

A senior LRT official told the press: "If we had unlimited funds we would have done a major renovation on fire safety. But we were stretched for cash and did the best we could with what we had." The Oxford Circus fire had made apparent many of the fire hazards. Contractors have explained that melamine panels covering ceilings of bitumen-clad material allow the fire to spread and give off choking fumes. These materials were widely used in the Jubilee and Victoria lines.

**The underground desperately needs investment. Most of the system is pre-war or older. 34 lifts are over 75 years old, 65 escalators are over 40 years old and a significant proportion of plant and machinery is over 30 years old.**

So what extra safety will be provided by the new automatic floor-to-ceiling ticket barriers, that all that money is being spent on. They will make it even more difficult for passengers to escape in an emergency. The barriers will be ticket-operated, so another 1,500 jobs can be done away with. That will mean even less staff available to accompany frightened passengers in an emergency.

The barriers will be equipped with an emergency panic button, to allow passengers to escape. But how would they be able to find it in dense smoke?

Station planners are expected to present designs which will minimise the need for staff and at the same time discourage fare-dodging. This means severely restricting the number of entrances and exits. Yet to minimise fire risk the exact opposite is needed.

Saving money, catching a few fare dodgers and cutting the wages' bill is more important to London Underground than ensuring people's safety.

## 'Only a matter of time'

I AM a driver on the underground and like all underground workers I knew it was only a matter of time before a catastrophe happened.

In all the years I have worked there, I have only had half an hour's firefighting instruction. This consisted of playing with fire extinguishers and that was it.

Even when I trained to become a ticket collector (leading railman) my training only consisted of how to

By NUR member

evacuate lifts and how to stop and start the lifts and escalators.

I was once sent to King's Cross and I shudder when I think of my knowledge of the station. I knew where the inspector's office was and little else. I was not shown round the rest of the station.

As a guard and driver I was trained how to evacuate the train in an emergency but only as far as the station in advance. Once the passengers reach the station the station staff take over. With a few exceptions I know less about the individual stations than the passengers because I have never gone beyond the platforms.

The rail unions have pressed for refresher training but the answer has always been one of lack of money.

## Rail workers' victory on safety

Dear passenger,

### BR SAFETY: FROM BAD TO WORSE

**MOORGATE: DRIVER ONLY DEATH TRAP**  
From November 30th British Rail intend to reduce safety standards further by running trains between Drayton Park and Moorgate without a guard.

In November 1985 it was recognised by all concerned that guards should be retained on trains in the single bore tunnels between Drayton Park and Moorgate.

Moorgate is a particularly sensitive area following the train disaster in 1975 when 48 people were killed.

Unlike most railway accidents, and despite lengthy investigation, there has never been a satisfactory explanation of the disaster. London Transport's only solution to the problems outlined by the Health & Safety Inspector was to hand the section of line over to British Rail.

**IS IT SAFE NOW?**  
As practical railway workers we are convinced that any plans for Driver Only Operation between Drayton Park & Moorgate put your safety at risk.

BR shared our concern in 1985, but now they have changed their mind. Why?

Nothing has been done in the tunnels that could not have been done in 1985. In fact, our experience shows the equipment doesn't work at ordinary stations, never mind under the ground!

First and foremost, in the event of any accident or emergency... in particular a fire... a single bore tunnel is the worst place to be. Communication between the driver and other staff is difficult to say the least.

Can you imagine a fire on a packed rush hour train in one of the tunnels? BR may say electric trains don't catch fire, but they do...

and indeed have between Essex Road and Old Street the train crew staff were almost suffocated before the tunnel. More recently one person died and many from smoke inhalation when an Electric train on Northern Line, at Goodge Street.

BR have introduced new Rules to deal with some managers admit they are unworkable.

**TRAIN ON FIRE**  
Passengers will not be allowed to leave a burning train to the other in the rush hour... a driver just at one end of a burning train to the other... those conditions at some points underground would still switch off current to the live electric rail. Remember track, through the tunnel would be your only way out, no one will panic.

We know how difficult passengers find it to get from train to the other in the rush hour... a driver just at one end of a burning train to the other... those conditions at some points underground would still switch off current to the live electric rail. Remember track, through the tunnel would be your only way out, no one will panic.

**NOT JUST FIRES**  
Similar problems could occur in collisions, or in cases of train failure, the existence of one or two doesn't help as they are often locked to keep vandals out. The removal of the guard also reduces the protection of passengers from the vandalism attacks that have taken place between Drayton Park & Moorgate.

The Transport Police just haven't got the resources to patrol public place known trouble spots, and we now understand the surveillance cameras specially fitted at Essex Road have been stolen!

There is no scare-mongering, the facts can all be checked. We are seriously concerned at the threat to your continuing safety caused by BR's plans and by their failure to properly maintain safety equipment.

If you share our concern please write to: Mr P. Berham, Area Manager, Room 194, West Side Offices, Kings Cross Station, London N1. Tel: 01 837 4200 ex 4518.

Can you imagine a fire on a packed rush hour train in one of the tunnels?

It can take longer than 20 minutes for emergency services to arrive. How long does it take for asphyxiation to take place in the event of fire?

THE MORNING before the fire British Rail workers handed out this warning leaflet at Kings Cross. Management threatened the sack. But in the wake of the tragedy the bosses have backed off, suspending the controversial introduction of driver-only operation on the Moorgate line. As ever it is workers who fight for safety.

### YOUR SAFETY MAY BE AT RISK

If the driver is incapacitated in an emergency between Drayton Park and Moorgate you would be on your own. You may have to take charge. Would you know what to do?

It can take longer than 20 minutes for emergency services to arrive. How long does it take for asphyxiation to take place in the event of a fire?

Do you think the person next to you may panic?

Do you know how to operate the Fire extinguishers? Do you know which one to use without electrocuting yourself? Do you know which one gives off poisonous gases in an enclosed space? Do you know where the ladders are to climb to track level? Do you know how to turn the electric power off? Do you know how to put lights on to see where you are going? Do you know how to contact the signaller, or whether another train is coming towards you?

The guard does and is there to help you. Without the guard your safety is at risk.



# Liverpool's shift to right

TWO YEARS ago this week the Liverpool District Labour Party was suspended. Since that time there has been no central body to coordinate opposition to the Tory attacks on Liverpool.

By Martin Lee

As with Broadgreen constituency, Peter Kilfoyle, the appointed Party official in Liverpool in tandem with the trade union bureaucracy has decided the District Labour Party will be reformed on 2 December.

## Moderate

Contrary to past practice when notices were sent out in November for the District Labour Party AGM in the following March, trade unions and affiliated organisations have been given just 28 days' notice to submit delegates and nomination. It is hard to believe that past officers of the district party, such as Felicity Dowling and Tony Mulhearn were expelled for amongst other things not giving sufficient notice of meetings!

The whole procedure is being rushed to confuse and disorientate Labour Party officers who have had to reorganise their normal meetings and give seven days' written notice. The



As Liverpool City Council wavers "the 47 haunt everything we do."

Photo: Dave Sinclair.

aim of the right wing officials is to produce a tame District Labour Party, to form a rubber-stamp for the new moderate labour group.

Frightened to directly challenge the old DLP policy of no cuts in jobs and services, no rent or rate increases to compensate for Tory cuts, the aim of the right wing is to gradually

change policy with the support of a tame DLP and its sub-committees.

## Rubber-stamp

In the last two years in Liverpool, as nationally, there has been a polarisation in many wards and constituency Labour Parties.

Aided by supposed lefts

in the T&G and the party apparatus, Walton and Broadgreen have seen a shift to the right altering the composition of the constituency sections to the DLP.

The composition of the trade union sections to the DLP is unclear as yet, but there is evidence to suggest that a number of previously unfilled places from unions

such as ASTMS and US-DAW have been taken up.

An indication of the rightward shift of the left in Liverpool is the decision of the transport workers' Broad Left executive to recommend the right wing slate for District Labour Party officers with the sole exception of Eddie Loyden as president.

Incredibly they are not to support Paul Astbury, one of the disqualified 47 councillors and a T&G member, for the position of vice-president.

It is likely therefore that the Marxists will be a minority in the newly formed District Labour Party. The press and their shadows in the labour movement will hail such an outcome as proof that *Militant* is finished in Liverpool.

## Resistance

This is exactly what they said when moderate Harry Rimmer became leader of the Labour group in May. In less than six months he was forced to resign amid claims that "the 47 haunt everything we do". A sizeable minority Marxist group in the new DLP with the best of the lefts will act as the conscience of the policies of the 47 in the same way the Broad Left councillors do in the Labour group.

In Mossley Hill, Kilfoyle's own constituency the Marxists came within six votes of winning the nominations, the best result for some time. Any attempt to dilute the policies of the DLP will be met with fierce resistance. The building of a real and representative Broad Left in unions such as the T&G will ensure that there is no retreat on socialist policies.

# WITCH-HUNT ALERT

## Bermondsey

# Biggest purge yet is started

A REPORT calling for the closing down of Southwark-Bermondsey Labour Party and the expulsion of 40 'Militant' supporters would mean, if carried through, the biggest attack yet launched on a local Party.

By members of Bermondsey Labour Party

Terry Ashton, general secretary of the Greater London Labour Party, has compiled a convert report recommending suspension and reorganisation of the party. The report is to go before the Labour Party NEC on 16 December.

A report carried in the *South London Press* stated: "The action is seen as the most significant attack on the Militant Tendency since Derek Hatton and eight members of Liverpool Labour Party were expelled last year. And it is sure to provoke fierce opposition."

Officers of Southwark-Bermondsey Labour Party have condemned the report. One officer said "At no time have regional party officials informed Bermondsey Labour Party that they were preparing a report. The first we heard about it was when the press contacted us for comments! Terry Ashton is still refusing to give the party a copy of the

report".

One of the main charges against Southwark-Bermondsey Labour Party is that they produced a policy statement that called for "a people's rebellion against Government cuts". This statement, adopted unanimously by the local GMC, was a reply to a policy statement by Anne Matthews, leader of Southwark council, which was sent to local parties for consultation and comment.

Southwark-Bermondsey Labour Party has been prominent in opposing the programme of rent increases and cuts in jobs and services now being pursued by Southwark council.

## Opposing cuts

Bermondsey Women's Section set up a Bermondsey Childcare Campaign and successfully campaigned with parents and workers to reverse a decision of the council to close a local nursery.

With Southwark Council now preparing a budget for 1988 that will include over £32 million worth of cuts many local party members believe the real reason for this attack is an attempt to prevent the local party from successfully campaigning against the council's plans to carry out Tory cuts.

By campaigning boldly on socialist policies Southwark-



Photo: Mick Carroll

Campaign against nursery closures. Bermondsey Labour Party called for a 'people's rebellion' against cuts.

Bermondsey Labour Party had one of the best results for Labour in London at the general election. The seat is now a key marginal for Labour but many party members now believe the NEC are prepared to wreck Labour's chances of winning the seat rather than having a fighting socialist MP. One member of Bermondsey Labour Party said "NEC interference was responsible for Labour losing Bermondsey to the Liberals in 1983. Now they want to expel 40 of the hardest workers it will play right into the hands of the Liberals."

Former Labour General Secretary Jim Mortimer, a member of the local party, has condemned the moves as 'disgraceful'.

The membership of Southwark-Bermondsey Labour Party are determined to fight and defeat this attack on the local party for their socialist beliefs. A Bermondsey Labour Party Defence Campaign has been set up. Messages of support and donations should be sent c/o 91 Mina Rd, Bermondsey, London SE17 2QS.

## Springburn

# No evidence and no justice

"YOU'RE NOTHING but scum, a shower of scum" were the words of Michael Martin to 30 young Labour Party members who lobbied the meeting of Springburn Labour Party. They were protesting against the inquiry into and the threatened disciplinary action against four young members of his constituency.

The findings and recommendations of the investigation committee were read out by the party secretary who offered not one shred of tangible evidence to back up her remarks.

Despite this the meeting voted by a 2-1 majority to recommend the expulsions of Emma Phillips, Stevie Lees and Charles Robertson, and to severely reprimand Ann Petrie because of their alleged activities during the general election campaign of Michael Martin MP.

## Accusations

They were accused of illegal coin collections—an allegation investigated by the police and which was subsequently dropped—a lie manufactured by the right wing. They are also accused of selling *Militant* in one hand and giving out 'vote Martin' stickers and labels with the other.

When they attempted to defend themselves at the meeting they were howled down in a torrent of abuse by the frenzied right wing delegates. The meeting agreed to take these recommendations to the party's National Constitutional

Committee. Stevie Lees and Emma Phillips withdrew from the inquiry after an hour's debate as to whether charges existed and when it was finally admitted by the investigation team that a list of ten charges did exist they were refused any adjournment to consider them or to take legal advice.

In the case of Charlie Robertson, now a member of Glasgow Central CLP, he was not even called to the committee of inquiry in order to give evidence.

Two prominent figures in the Labour Coordinating Committee, Sandy Smeaton and Eddie Mars, voted in favour of expelling two of the accused and abstained respectively. So much for the so-called 'left'.

The whole affair has been instigated by the right wing MP, Michael Martin, who has waged a political vendetta against the socialist ideas represented by the four comrades.

Resolutions and letters of protest to Mary Beckett, Secretary Springburn CLP, 59 Wallacewell Rd, Glasgow G21, and to the Scottish executive: Kier Hardy House, 1 Lynedock Place, Glasgow. Copies to Stevie Lees 182 Ark Lane, Dennistoun, Glasgow G31 2JS.

## Public meeting on Thursday 26 November

Speaker: Tony Mulhearn, Hawthorn primary school, Bardowie St, Possil Park, Glasgow.



# Y TURC March and lobby of Parliament

## Marchers say no to slave labour

Youth Trade Union Rights Campaign

By Militant reporters

### Jobs not Tory lectures says MP

WHILE THE marchers were assembling, Labour MP Dennis Skinner told of a discussion in Parliament on YTS. One Tory had said:

"These unemployed want a boot up the backside."

#### Geriatrics

"Young people don't want lectures from Tory MPs," said Dennis Skinner. "They want jobs." He went on to describe the training scheme already in existence in the House of Lords; a scheme for geriatrics where they get £55 a day for doing nothing! Included Linda Douglas, the LPYS member on Labour's National Executive, Colette Williams, an FE student on the NUS executive, and Cheryl



Photo's: Militant

Varley, a member of the NUS FE committee.

The final speaker was general secretary of Holland's trade union youth section. Dutch youth are facing YTS-type schemes:

"If the capitalists get their way, a whole generation will be brought up as slave labour. A giant struggle is needed. We have to link up the struggle on an international scale. We must win the war and kick Thatcher out."

## 'Change society'

**HUNDREDS PACKED** into the *Militant* meeting, which gave them welcome shelter from the downpour and some inspiring speeches.

"Young working-class people must join together to fight back" said Angela Molyneux from Barking College: "We can bring down this government, but to do this we need the political programme of *Militant*."

YTS trainee Andy Allum of Gosport said he had joined the LPYS because they were the only people fighting against YTS. He had worked for 12 employers in six months. He had been for an interview for another YTS job the day before: "But the manager had forgotten all about me. He told me to come back tomorrow, but I said no-tomorrow I am going on a march against YTS."

Danny Sapani, a student from Kingsway Princeton College, said that: "Mum told me not to go near *Militant*. But now I have left home and live alone and know that we really must change society."



## Raise your sights

### Says Pat Wall MP

BY MID-AFTERNOON, 250 young people were in the Grand Committee Room, listening to MPs Terry Fields and Ronnie Campbell.

Others were lobbying their MPs, telling them what they thought of YTS conscription. And still more were queuing for the next meeting which heard Tony Benn MP, Pat Wall MP and Tommy Sheridan of the LPYS National Committee.

Tony Benn received rapturous applause when he called for an end to the misery of YTS. When he had toured a YTS workplace in Chesterfield, he had asked one of the slave labourers if they would rather there were real jobs to be had. The supervisor had quickly moved him on, telling him they weren't allowed to discuss politics on YTS.

Pat Wall raised the lobbyists' sights to what would be achieved by socialism. Instead of the slave labour schemes, people could work on what they enjoyed and use their talents for need not exploitation.



David O'Hara and Lee Oversby 'Those who want compulsory YTS should see what's on offer.'

## Boost YTS pay

DAVID O'HARA, and Lee Oversby are from Gatehead tech. David has a part-time job so he can afford to stay at college.

He gets no grant, no allowance from his family and nothing towards his bus pass. He was on YTS but says he would never go again.

"These people who want compulsory YTS and sit behind desks have never come to a careers office and seen what crap is on offer".

Lee applied to YTS to do physiotherapy, which he did as work experience in

a special school for spastics and says was 'dead good'. But there were no placements available without O-levels.

"YTS trainees should get the proper rate. Some of my mates have to give their YTS money to their families because their parents are unemployed. They are so poor that there's a crisis in the house if they leave the electric light on." A Labour government should

"scrap all the crap YTS schemes and boost the pay", they said.

## 'Nothing was going to stop us'

KALVINDER HEER and Adam Langley are students at Coventry Tech. "Students at our college forced the Students Union to call a meeting to discuss the YTURC lobby and striking to support local hospital workers.

"It was the biggest meeting ever. But the student union still called the meeting invalid. The meeting went ahead and at the end all the students agreed that nothing was going to stop us from attending the lobby.

"By hijacking every class we got a second meeting and the Students Union were the only ones who spoke against sup-

porting the health workers. They walked out when we went on to discuss the lobby."

"When YTURC supporters spoke, they made a lot of sense," says

Adam. "I decided to try and get something done. The country is like a cesspit at the moment. Jobs should be made available, there's got to be some way of doing it."





# Liverpool— the full story

LIVERPOOL—a city that dared to fight, the eagerly awaited book by Peter Taaffe and Tony Mulhearn, will be published in the new year.

A perceptive and penetrating 480-page analysis of the class struggle in Liverpool and the role played by Marxism, it also includes chapters on the origins of the Liverpool labour movement and the 'Sam Bond affair'.

Complete with photographs, detailed appendices and a chronology, it is a must for every member of the labour and trade union movement.

World Socialist Books are making a special pre-publication offer. Send £5, plus 70p postage and you will receive a paperback copy of this book as soon as it is printed in January, signed by one of the authors. Send £8 plus £1.50 postage and you will get the hardback edition.

Are you looking for a Christmas present for someone? Send £6 (paperback) or £9.80



Peter Taaffe

(hardback) and their address and we will send them a special Christmas card informing them that their present from you will be on its way early in January.

Please make cheques payable to World Socialist Books, 3/13 Hepscoot Road, London E9 5HB.

## Come to the Marxist weekend school

PETER TAAFFE will be previewing the book in a special course at the Marxist Weekend School in London this weekend, 27-29 November.

The school begins on Friday night when Tony Saunois will be speaking on the effect of the October stock exchange crash on the international labour movement.

Then on Saturday at 10 am, Ian Isaac, S Wales NUM Broad Left will speak on the lessons of the miners' strike and the trade unions today, John Pickard will speak on political philosophy and there is a course on the history of workers' struggles in South Africa.

For new readers of the paper there will be an Introduction to

Marxism by Jeremy Birch and Bill Boyle, and Saturday night includes a session led by Ted Grant on a Marxist view of society followed by the film *The Killing Floor* and a disco.

*Militant* alone spoke of an inevitable economic crash. In the course on political economy, Bob McKee and Pete Watson will develop these ideas further. Another highlight will be the debate on Sunday afternoon between Lynn Walsh for *Militant* and Monty Johnstone of *Marxism Today* on 'Can Gorbachev's reforms work?'

The school is at the University of London Union, Malet Street, London WC1. Don't miss it!

# ★ Star discovers democracy ...too late

"THIS SECTARIAN, dictatorial approach has solved nothing. Administrative means do not resolve political problems. That can only be achieved by honest dialogue, held in a comradely atmosphere in which personal animosity, subjectivity and threats have no place."

By Tony Cross

These words from a *Morning Star* editorial give a glimpse of bureaucratic manoeuvring and bitterness in the Communist Party during recent years of faction fights.

And who can disagree with the principles they express? They are vital for any workers' organisation to remain healthy.

But the practice of Communist Parties all over the world for the last 50 years are a stark contrast to the *Morning Star's* fine sentiments.

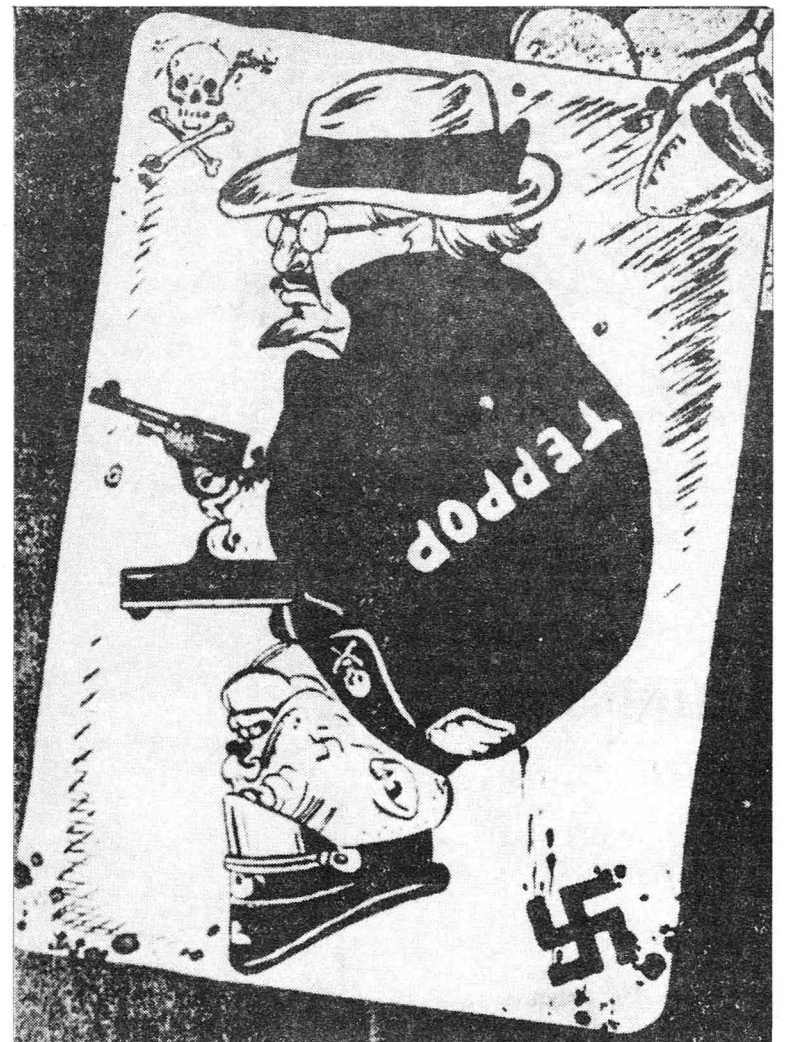
Where was the honest dialogue in Stalin's one-sided civil war with Trotsky's Left Opposition in the 1920s and 30s, when millions of the most devoted Bolsheviks were purged and murdered? Was the atmosphere comradely at the Moscow purge trials, when members of the first revolutionary government were forced to 'confess' to blatantly trumped-up charges?

And did these lofty principles apply when Trotsky, Lenin's co-leader in the Russian revolution, was murdered by Stalin's agent?

The *Morning Star's* fore-runner, the *Daily Worker*, cheered on Stalin's atrocities when they were committed and hounded those who protested against them. To this day, the *Morning Star* has failed to explain seriously how such horrors could come about in 'socialist' countries and in 'communist' parties.

They limit themselves to the slavish repetition of the Russian bureaucracy's lying account of history.

But now that a small part of



Stalinist cartoon from the 1930s implying that Trotsky was comparable to the Nazis.

these traditional Stalinist methods are used against them, they discover democracy, for themselves alone of course!

Real Marxists can have little sympathy for any of the factions

in the splintering relics of the 'Communist' Party. Workers looking for comradely discussion and a genuine socialist programme will have to look to *Militant*.

## ◀ Left and Right ▶

### Profit safety first

UNIVERSITIES HAVE been told not to apply for government money to research the causes of death on the roads unless it will "further the aims of the vehicle companies".

A European research scheme, Prometheus, is jointly funded by the government and the motor industry, and other firms like Lucas are expected to join in financing the programme next year.

Many researchers believe that the scheme may help to make cars safer for drivers but that there will be no money for looking into the safety of pedestrians, who constitute 35 per cent of road deaths.

So unless some enterprising motor manufacturer can make a profit by designing a stronger human chassis, walking will still be a hazardous activity.

### Art of advertising

IT IS not only in science that big business wields its financial muscle. They are also using the arts to advertise themselves and promote their image as public benefactors.

The Tate Gallery, named after the sugar magnate, now also has its Turners in a Clore Gallery, named

after the shoe millionaire Charles Clore. As the *Observer* art critic points out, it "can't be called the Turner Gallery because Turner didn't pay for it".

Another gallery is known as the Duveen, named after the Tate's second biggest benefactor.

Now there is an exhibition of the works of Beatrix Potter—sponsored by the Ford Motor Company. And next will be the £1.5 million Nomura extension, paid for by the giant Japanese bank.

Many great artists died penniless, yet their paintings change hands for millions. Now the people who go to admire their works are constantly reminded that art is big business.

£25,000 a week

NEXT TIME you are staggered at the price of a suit in Burton's, you will know why. Sir Ralph Halpern, the company chairman, is set to break new records this year by 'taking home' £1.3 million! 'Home' in his case is a £2.5 million Regency house overlooking Regent's Park and a £1.5 million country house in Surrey, complete with stables and tennis court.

His £25,000 a week also helps with the running costs of his Aston Martin and bullet-proof BMW.

## Contemptuous Tories

100 PEOPLE demonstrated outside Berkshire County Council's Shire Hall in an unsuccessful attempt to stop councillors from voting to close down Berkshire's unemployed centres. The demonstrators, mainly from the Reading Centre for the Unemployed, presented to the council a petition with 2,500 names.

Ben Raynor spoke to IRENE LAWLOR, the creche supervisor at the centre.

The centre, which has been going for four years, has a proud record of offering expert advice, creche facilities, refreshments and

education, not only to the unemployed but to workers on strike, battered wives and so on.

At the council meeting, Ron Jewitt, Berkshire's Tory leader, showing complete contempt for Reading's unemployed, claimed that they were unemployable and that the papers were full of jobs. Other Tories expressed their concern for the area's unemployed by reading holiday brochures or sleeping.

In spite of the Tories' attitude, trade union leaders still insisted on a 'softly-softly' non-political approach, to 'convince'

these ladies and gentlemen—no demonstrations, no action, just letters and petitions.

Reading bus drivers did not agree with that and stopped their buses to and from Shire Hall for the duration of the meeting. This earned them a reprimand from their union official.

Workers at the centre feel that if the union leaders showed the same solidarity as the bus drivers they could force the Tories to back down. The fight for the centres has only just begun.

## Rugby sales triumph

"RUGBY IS a small market town with a Tory MP, yet the ideas of Marxism are beginning to catch on," writes Rob MacDonald and Bert Harris. "We have enjoyed an excellent sales drive. We sold all our papers one week and have had to increase our order by 50 per cent. We also doubled our regular sales—most of which were sold by two single parents!"

"We now have a regular

sale of 8-10 each week at the dole office and 11 were sold in one dinner time at the local FE college. We also have regular town centre and factory sales at the GEC. £240 was raised for the Fighting Fund in only three weeks."

"Rugby *Militant* support in the last two months has doubled. Other areas should take confidence from what has happened in Rugby and take *Militant* onto

the streets."

*Militant* is too good to keep to yourselves. If you want to help sell it, give us a ring and we will send a trial order or put you in touch with local sellers?

For details and orders ring our circulation department—01 533 3311 or write to 3/13 Hepscoot Road, London E9 5HB

By Ruth Campbell





Kenneth Baker being lobbied by parents and teachers in Bradford during the general election. Photo: Dave Sinclair

**Fight Baker's bill**

# No race divide in schools

**TORY MINISTER** Baroness Hooper has admitted that her government's education bill allowing schools to opt out of council control and parents to choose where to send their children could lead to racially segregated schools.

By Jai Agarawalla

This could lead to the kind of crisis already seen in Dewsbury, where 25 white parents are still refusing to send their children to Headfield School, where 85 per cent of the children are Asian. They want them to go to the predominantly white Overthorpe School.

Their protest has involved the occupation of Overthorpe School and the disruption of a civic reception in the Town Hall.

A right-wing group, the Parental Alliance for Choice in Education (PACE), is advising the parents to take their case to the European Court of Human Rights.

The campaign is now clearly emerging as racist motivated. It is nothing to do with 'parental choice'—the parents have been offered 10 other schools apart from Headfield.

One of the parents, Avril Carter, has openly stated: "I am a racist. I don't like Asians. I wouldn't want my children to be in a class with mainly Asian children".

She said that she agreed with the immigration policies of the National Front

and that there should be a referendum of Asians to find out how many wanted to go back to their original countries!

The other parents have tried to disassociate themselves from these blatantly racist remarks. They claim however that Headfield School "will affect the educational and cultural upbringing of white children".

Ray Honeyford, the former headmaster of Drummond School in Bradford, has said that the Dewsbury parents' case has vindicated his claim that too many Asian children affect the education of white children.

But Bradford's education authority conducted a survey to investigate such claims and found no evidence that white children are affected educationally in a black or Asian dominated school.

Children at Headfield School do not receive an 'Asian' cultural upbringing. The school is attempting to give them a multi-cultural

education. The Dewsbury parents' opposition to this has racist overtones. Their leader, Eric Haley, has said: "What the hell do we want to learn Urdu or Hindi for? We want Christianity".

The fascist British National Party have tried to latch on to the parents' campaign by organising a march demanding separate schools.

## Muslim schools

Orthodox Muslims have intervened to support separate schools. A spokesman for the Muslim Parents' Association, Riaz Shahid, has said that "inter-faith education is a farce and a fraud, perpetrated on all of us". In other words he is demanding separate Muslim schools.

The Asian parents' themselves realise the reactionary nature of this demand. "Separate schools are a bad idea", one told *Militant* as he collected his kids at Headfield School: "It would only lead to more

racism". "We have enough divisions between white and black" said another: "it is time to end them".

Kenneth Baker's Education Bill is a classic example of the Tories 'playing the racist card' to divide working people in order to push through a general attack on them all. It will only mean a real choice for the rich. Labour must lead a mass campaign to defeat the bill.

To combat racism locally, Labour councils should encourage the use of teaching materials which fairly reflect the ethnic composition of the school and carefully worked-out policies to deal with allegations of racial discrimination.

This however requires additional teachers and resources, which means a struggle with the Tory government. Labour must unite black and white in that struggle against education cuts and divisive racially segregated schools.

# National black youth rally

BRITAIN'S BLACK community is under attack from the Tories. They face the Immigration Bill, high unemployment, police harassment and racial attacks. Young blacks especially are looking for a way out of a dead-end society.

The marvellous response to the Labour Party Young Socialists' Black Youth rally demonstrates the thirst for discussion on how to fight back against the Tories.

Coaches have been booked from Bristol, Merseyside and the West Midlands and three minibuses from Bradford. Now there

is just a week left for a final push to make this rally a major success, which can have a big effect within the black communities.

Speakers are MPs Pat Wall and Keith Vaz, Tyrone Simpson of Salep, with a video about S African workers' struggles, Derek Richards and Nina Rahel from the LPYS and a speaker from the Trevor Monerville Campaign, with Linda Douglas of the Labour Party NEC in the chair.

The rally is at 1pm on Saturday 5 December at Lambeth Town Hall, Brixton, London SW2.

# TRIBUNE

**PERSONAL**  
BEAUTIFUL FILIPINO LADIES  
16-30, seeking considerate, intelligent British husbands  
Eastern Promise Introductions

## Filipino brides scandal

THE ABOVE advert from the personal column of a newspaper was spotted by Dawn Churchill of Derby, who asks:

Can you guess which paper this was in? No, not the *Sun* or the *Star*. It is from *Tribune*, 'Labour's independent weekly', a paper which also included an article by Bryan Gould extolling the virtues of share ownership—after the stock market crash.

Recently I saw a programme on TV about the sale of Filipino wives to western men, and I was horrified that such a practice, which is virtually slavery, should exist in the world today.

It is understandable that Filipino women should want to escape from the conditions they face in the Philippines, where the only escape from grinding poverty for most women is to become a prostitute.

The Philippines have developed as one of the largest importers of 'sex tourists' in the world. In Olan-gapo, out of a female population of 55,000, 14,000 are

'hospitality girls'. One lakeside resort, Pagsayan, is known as the child prostitution centre of Asia, where hundreds of foreign paedophiles flock, safe from the risk of prosecution.

No doubt now, with the risk of Aids, many women from the Philippines feel that it is preferable to sell themselves to one man, and at the same time escape from the conditions of their own country, than to sell themselves to dozens of 'sex tourists'.

## Unbelievable

It is horrific that women should have to make this choice and demonstrates that the horrors of capitalism are ended the better.

However it is unbelievable that a so-called paper of the left, which purports to support women's rights, should sell advertising space to such agencies, rather than exposing the practice in an article.

Thank goodness for the *Militant*.

# Rush the cash in

A PROBLEM deciding what to buy for the family for Christmas? Well, you're in luck. An advert in last Sunday's *Observer* has come to the rescue! What about a case of Laurent Perrier champagne for Dad—a snip at £190?

Or, to help feed the hungry hordes over the holiday, a selection of pheasant, partridge, quail and wild duck, not to be missed at £170. And to round the meal off nicely, a bottle of port and a jar of English Stilton for only £26.50.

If that kind of extravagance makes you feel sick, remember, the only way to get rid of the parasites who have that kind of lifestyle is to change society. *Militant* is leading the

way—but we need cash urgently—£50,000 by 5 January to repair our roof, damaged in the storm. So make sure *Militant* is top of your Christmas list.

We've had an excellent response in the last week to our appeal, including £250 from Paul Shepherd, Brighton; £50 from Hope and Hugh Deeney, London; £50 from Beryl Donovan and £35 from Ray Goodspeed, both Bermondsey and £24 from M.Kelly Birmingham.

Have you made a contribution yet? Have you asked all the readers and sympathisers you know? Smashing the £50,000 target should be easy if you don't leave it until the last minute—we're already in Week 3! Our Raise The Roof raffle

tickets—with £1000 worth of prizes—will be snapped up if we just ask!

Use our stickers to sell at the colleges—follow up on last week's marvellous lobby of Parliament against compulsory YTS.

Finally, celebrate the festive season with socials and parties for our appeal. Blockbuster events are already planned in Liverpool, Glasgow and London. What's happening in your area? Don't delay, rush the cash in now!

Thanks also to: Russian Revolution Rallies—Sheffield £350; Stevenage £400; Southampton £287; National Labour Women's Conference £400; Northumberland readers' meeting £15; Glasgow Tech extras £5.55.

**special appeal**  
**Raise the roof**

**This week**  
**£2,386**

Area	Received	% of target achieved	Target
1 Eastern	397		2260
2 Southern	355		2020
3 West Mids	592		3510
4 Wales	433		3510
5 London	585		6670
6 Scot West	219		2520
7 Yorks	522		5950
8 South East	127		1570
9 South West	55		1270
10 East Mids	57		2500
11 Scot East	33		2150
12 Northern	51		3270
13 Merseyside	55		5360
14 Man/Lancs	5		2890
15 National	182		3790
<b>Total</b>	<b>3668</b>		<b>50000</b>

**50,000 BY THE 5TH JANUARY**



# The meaning of Gorbachevism

IN THE second of two articles on Gorbachev's Russian Revolution anniversary speech, Alan Woods examines the meaning of the perestroika reforms, and the growing crisis for Stalinism.

FACED WITH the organic crisis of world capitalism, the apologists of the decaying system of 'private enterprise' hypocritically try to discredit the idea of socialist nationalisation by pointing to the impasse of bureaucratic planning in the East.

They conveniently forget that the initiation of the five-year plans in the 1930s gave the USSR the fastest sustained rate of growth known to history: an average of 20 per cent every year before the war.

Despite the horrific destruction of the war, the Soviet economy was rapidly reconstructed, to the point where today it is the second industrial power—and the first in military might. In comparison to this the Japanese and German 'miracles' seem almost insignificant.

To Marxism, the development of industry, science and technology constitute the key to the development of human society. Marx explained no social system ever leaves the stage of history until it has exhausted all the potential for the development of the productive forces inherent within itself.

That was the secret of the relative stability of world capitalism in the period 1950-75, when it revealed, for the last time, the potential which lay within it. Likewise, despite all the horrors and crimes, Stalinism in Russia played a relatively progressive role in developing the productive forces in the past, albeit at a fearful cost.

The Soviet economy increased nine times in 50 years and five times since 1945. This formerly backward economy is now the world's foremost producer of oil, steel, asbestos, cement, tractors, cotton, coal, iron ore and many machine tools.

It is fashionable in the West to denigrate Soviet technology. Yet in the field of computers, where in the 1970s, the USSR was supposedly 10 years behind the West, the CIA's latest calculations place the gap at no more than two to three years.

The latest five year plan envisages a staggering increase in the production, not only of computers, but also industrial robots, micro-processors and other essential components of technology. The Soviet Union has more scientists and technicians than the rest of the world put together, and the number of scientists doubles every seven years.

The enormous potential of the nationalised planned economy is seen in the Soviet space programme, which is 10 years ahead of the USA. The USSR is now selling a cheap and reliable rocket (the 'Proton') at £10 million less than the EC's 'Ariane'.

In 1940, two-thirds of the population still lived in rural backwardness. Now the proportion has been inverted—only one-third live on the land. Almost one

worker in three has a university degree or special skill of some sort. The new five year plan envisages the retraining of 2.1 million workers in vocational schools and 3.9 million in workplaces. Compare these grandiose achievements with the pettifogging schemes of the Labour leaders in the West.

In the 1950s and early 1960s, the Soviet economy continued to advance at quite a rapid speed—about 10-11 per cent a year, still two to three times faster than most capitalist countries. This permitted a steady increase in living standards, particularly given the absence of unemployment and inflation.

The average industrial wage is about 200 roubles a month (1 rouble = £1). But a flat in Moscow with central heating, unlimited hot water, electricity and gas costs only just over 11 roubles a month, compared to the inflated rents which eat into the workers' wage in the West. Rents in the Soviet Union last increased in 1928!

## Privileged caste

Western observers hypocritically point to the recent (small) increases in food prices in Russia. Yet the last time meat and dairy produce rose was in 1962. Bread costs only 16 kopeks (16 pence) a kilo and, like most basic food-stuffs, last went up in 1955!

These facts go a long way to explain how the bureaucracy was able to maintain itself in power for so long. The Soviet workers hate the bloated caste of powerful and privileged officials which rule in their name, but while the economy was making progress and life was becoming easier, they swallowed their anger and continued to work, hoping for an improvement in the future.

But now time is running out for the bureaucracy. The growth rate fell to a mere 3 per cent in the 1970s. Khrushchev boasted in 1960 that in 20 years the USSR would overtake the most powerful capitalist nation, the USA. And that would have been entirely possible if the then rate of growth had been maintained.

Instead the economy under Brezhnev was grinding almost to a standstill for a decade. Industrial productivity is still only about 55 per cent of the USA. The situation in agriculture is still worse. It takes four Soviet farmers to produce the same as one American farmer.

A growth rate of only 3 per cent meant that the USSR was no longer capable of producing better results than the terminally sick capitalist economies. The historical justification for such a system therefore ceased to exist. From being a relative brake on the development of the productive forces, the bureaucracy has become an absolute fetter.

It is no longer a problem of



Gorbachev at the Likhachev auto plant. He meets the workers, but really he fears them.

backwardness. The Soviet Union is now an advanced, modern economy. No fewer than 80,000 new inventions are patented each year in Russia, the same number as the USA and way ahead of Japan's 50,000 and the meagre 10,000 of Britain and France.

Yet the tremendous advantage of a planned economy, in drawing on the resources of a sub-continent and a highly-developed scientific infrastructure, are being cancelled out by a suffocating regime of bureaucratic control which clogs up every pore of society.

When it was a primitive economy in the 1930s, confronted with the relatively simple task of building heavy industry, the method of 'command from above' could get results. Today, in a sophisticated modern economy, the same bureaucratic methods have a disastrous effect.

Unlike capitalism, where in the past the market mechanism 'regulated' the economy in an automatic fashion, a nationalised planned economy requires the conscious control of the working class. As Trotsky put it: "A nationalised planned economy needs democracy, as the human body needs oxygen."

The contradiction between the almost unlimited potential of the planned economy and the dead hand of bureaucratic administration is graphically expressed by Gorbachev himself:

"An absurd situation was developing (in the late 1970s—AW). The Soviet Union, the world's

biggest producer of steel, raw materials, fuel and energy, has shortfalls in these due to wasteful and inefficient use. One of the biggest producers of grain for food, it nevertheless has to buy millions of tons of grain a year for fodder."

Examples of bureaucratic bungling now appear every day in the official press. Soviet premier Ryzhkov told the Party congress that some ministries were only starting construction work on projects originally designed 20 years ago!

To their inflated salaries and unchecked expense accounts, the bureaucrats have added millions of roubles' worth of illegal perks and outright theft. It is this aspect which Gorbachev seeks to clamp down on by administrative means, sacking, arresting or even shooting some of the worst offenders.

## Four conditions

A year ago, the police arrested one official and found his property included 12 cars, 47 tape recorders and colour TVs and 3,000 bottles of wine and cognac. But this is small fry compared to another official who had three Volga cars, 23 dinner services with 380 settings, 74 suits and 149 pairs of shoes.

"He had hidden some things away for emergencies," reported Radio Moscow, "including 735,000 roubles (nearly 3/4 million pounds) in cash, 18,300 roubles' worth of three per cent loan

bonds, 450 gold coins and 39 gold wrist watches."

In his classic work *State and Revolution*, Lenin explains the four conditions not for socialism or 'communism' but for the immediate inception of workers' rule: 1) free and democratic election of all officials with right of recall, 2) no official to receive a higher wage than a skilled worker, 3) no standing army but the armed people, 4) gradually, all the tasks of running industry, society and the state to be performed by the working class on a rota basis ("when everyone is a bureaucrat in turn, no-one is a bureaucrat").

Today not one of these principles of Lenin remains in force in the Soviet Union.

What existed in Russia in 1917-24 was not 'socialism' but a workers' state ('with bureaucratic deformations' as Lenin honestly added)—a transitional state between capitalism and socialism with the inevitable contradictions and inequalities inherited from the past.

But these inequalities were kept to a strict minimum. And to the degree that the material and cultural level of society increased and Russia moved in the direction of socialism, such inequalities would steadily diminish.

70 years later, despite the enormous development of industry and technique, Soviet society is further away from socialism than in the days of Lenin and Trotsky. The differentials between the working class and the bureau-



of



The Russian Politburo; "profoundly split, pessimistic and demoralised."

economy threatens the bureaucracy with a catastrophe. As living standards are affected, the discontent of the workers will reach boiling point. The memory of what happened in Poland must haunt the men in the Kremlin. And here there is no Roman Catholic Church to mislead and divert the masses.

The only tradition of the Soviet workers is the tradition of October, of Lenin and Trotsky. That is why Gorbachev, despite all the weasel words about "openness" and "historical objectivity" is compelled to lie about Trotsky's role.

There can be no question of Gorbachev instituting real workers' democracy in Russia. The first question the Soviet workers would ask would be:

"Marx said that in a workers' state, all you, the officials, would be entitled to would be the wages of superintendence. How do you explain these enormous salaries? These chauffeur-driven limousines? The luxury apartments and 'dachas'? The private restaurants, shops and clinics? We believe, like Lenin, that such things are incompatible with a society that is moving towards socialism."

The very language used by Gorbachev exposes him as a haughty bureaucrat who graciously offers to 'do good' to the benighted masses from above, on condition they do not question the 'divine right to rule' of the bureaucracy.

"People", he explains "must be taught in practice (!) how to live in the conditions of deepening democracy (?), to extend and consolidate (?) human rights, to nurture a contemporary political culture of the masses."

What a contrast to the attitude of Lenin, with his boundless faith in the initiative and creativity of ordinary working people! Lenin's programme for workers' democracy could not be maintained because of the extremely low material and cultural basis of Russia at that time. But now, with a developed economy, and the most educated working class in the world, Gorbachev thinks the workers must be 'taught' democracy!

He wants to carry out reforms from the top to prevent a political revolution from below. He plans to defend the power and privileges of the bureaucracy as a whole by striking blows at the more corrupt elements, attempting to lean on the workers in order to do so, but without giving them real power.

The introduction of more than one candidate in elections is an attempt to camouflage the existence of a totalitarian one-party system. But as all candidates will either belong to the ruling 'Communist' Party (in re-

ality not a party at all, but a bureaucratic club), or else will have to argue the programme of that Party, it amounts to a minor variation on the same theme. All the other 'reforms' have a similarly hollow nature.

Yet despite their cosmetic character, they have come up against fierce resistance from a section of the bureaucracy.

Behind the confident new image, the bureaucracy is profoundly split, demoralised and pessimistic about the future. The section around Gorbachev realises that unless something drastic is done to get the economy moving, an explosion is inevitable. But the 'conservatives' have realised that even Gorbachev's half-hearted reforms, will take the lid



Yeltsin—sacrificed by Gorbachev to the hard-liners.

off a seething pressure cooker, jeopardising the bureaucracy's rule. The problem is that both are right.

Perestroika (restructuring) initially acted as a stimulus for the economy. The campaign against alcoholism (itself a damning comment on Soviet society), the crack down on corruption, and appeals to the masses, led to an increase of growth. But this seems to be already running out of steam. In the first nine months of this year, *Pravda* reported an increase of industrial production of 3.6 per cent, as against 5.5 per cent in the same period last year.

Foreign trade showed a decrease of 3.6 per cent as against the same period in 1986. Exports were down 0.5 per cent and imports up 4.2 per cent.

Significantly, in his speech Gorbachev complained that "resistance can be felt not only at management level but also in work collectives".

Like the western bosses, his idea of solving economic difficulties is at the expense of the workers' sweat, by squeezing extra productivity through speed-ups, bonus schemes and greater differentials. His policy is not aimed, as was Lenin's, at greater equality, but greater inequality. Not towards socialism, but away

from it.

This explains the resistance of the workers, which has already led to a spate of strikes, like in the Likino bus manufacturing plant in the Urals, where perestroika has meant a wage cut of 60-70 roubles a month in lost bonuses.

Bureaucratic bungling has given rise to all kinds of distortions in the Soviet economy. While some sections are very modern, others have suffered lack of investment. The Likino plant is producing the same model as in 1970, and the workers have to use machine tools built 40 years ago. Small wonder that over the last year \$67 million worth of goods were rejected as defective or of too low quality.

The application of Gorbachev's reforms would spell wholesale price increases through the removal of subsidies, an enormous increase in wage differentials, and possibly even sackings. One of Gorbachev's pet economists, Abel Aganbegyan, has argued in favour of closing thousands of uneconomical factories.

## Profit motive

It is ironic that just when in the West the system of 'private enterprise' is in an absolute dead-end, the 'Communist' economists of the USSR should be trying to ape the market mechanism', arguing against central planning and in favour of the profit motive!

Such methods have been tried and failed in Hungary, and especially in Yugoslavia. Hungary's growth rate has fallen to zero in recent years. Yugoslavia has soaring unemployment and an annual inflation rate of 135 per cent—the highest in Europe—which has led to an unparalleled strike wave.

If Gorbachev was serious about solving the crisis in Russia, he would not need a four hour speech. All he would have to do is to go on television and appeal direct to the Soviet workers, basing himself on Lenin's four conditions.

Once the Soviet workers really felt that the factories were theirs, they would easily solve the problem of bureaucratic red tape, corruption and swindling. They would kick out the parasites and institute genuine workers' control and management, as envisaged by Lenin.

The use of such simple devices as computers would make a reality of checking and accountability by the workers themselves, who now possess a cultural level more than sufficient to run industry and society. Freed from the palsied grip of bureaucracy, productivity would quickly soar to

levels far in excess of the USA and Japan.

Lenin said: "Electrification plus soviets equals communism." Under modern conditions, industrial robots plus workers' democracy equals the material basis for a giant step towards a classless society, with an enormous leap in living standards, a six, four or two hour working day. A big increase in labour productivity would permit a reduction in prices, even from their present low level, and a big increase in wages.

The combination of a planned economy, with full employment, falling prices and rising living standards and a genuine workers' democracy would be an irresistible attraction for the workers of the West, particularly at a time of slump and mass unemployment. The reestablishment of workers' democracy in Russia would immediately sound the death knell of the bureaucratic totalitarian regimes of Eastern Europe and China too.

But such a movement in the direction of socialism is impossible without a head-on clash between the workers and the bureaucracy, as in Hungary in 1956 and more recently in Poland. The bureaucrats—whether 'reformist' or 'conservative'—will never give up their power and privileges without a ferocious struggle.

Gorbachev and his cronies will do anything for the workers—except get off their backs!

Gorbachev's speech, with its crude lies about Trotsky, its warnings against the 'overly zealous' advocates of reform, and its clear attempts at a compromise with the 'conservative' bureaucrats is proof that the Gorbachev road leads to a dead end. The rumblings of discontent in the factories indicate that the workers are beginning to understand this. The slowing down of the economy and the dismissal of Yeltsin, one of the most outspoken of the 'reformers', indicates that the 'reform' programme is already in deep trouble.

Nevertheless, in so openly stating the problem, Gorbachev has opened a new chapter in Soviet history. The final one will be written by the workers of the USSR, who have still to say their word.

## Russia—How the bureaucracy seized power

Marxist study guide no.1  
price 70p (inc. post for single copies) available from World Socialist Books 3-13 Hepscott Road E9 5HB.



cracy are huge and increasing.

The parasitic caste of officials, their wives and offspring live like millionaires, while millions of Soviet workers and pensioners eke out a living on 100 roubles a month.

Under capitalism the profit motive plays a necessary part in the productive process. An advanced worker might demand that the bosses' profits be cut so the workers' share can be increased. But nobody would demand the abolition of profit within the limits of capitalism.

## Bureaucratic perks

But what possible justification is there for the bloated salaries, privileges and perks of the bureaucracy under a nationalised planned economy?

Gorbachev, like Stalin before him, cracks the whip on that section of the bureaucracy which has 'gone a bit too far' in devouring the wealth created by the workers. But he cannot attack the roots of the problem, because he himself is the most consummate representative of the privileged ruling elite.

His wife dresses in the latest Pierre Cardin creations, specially imported from Paris. Meanwhile, ordinary Russian women stand hours in the cold to obtain the necessities of life. *Literaturnaya Gazeta* reported that 8 billion working days a year were lost by people hunting for essentials in short supply.

The slowing-down of the Soviet



# Haiti 'We want revolution!'

THE FIRST free presidential poll in Haiti for 30 years is due to take place on 29 November.

By Soraya Lawrence

A president and a National Assembly will be elected to replace the military-dominated junta that has ruled Haiti since the revolution drove former dictator Duvalier into exile in France 21 months ago.

The run-up to the election has been marked by a campaign of arson, machine-gun attacks against officials and the murder of two presidential candidates.

The electoral commission has disqualified 12 candidates with close ties to the Duvalier regime. The two murdered candidates had made statements supporting this.

No protection has been offered by the junta. In June it tried to strip the commission of nearly all its powers. This set off a wave of strikes and protests that paralysed the country for five weeks and left 40 killed by the troops. Tens of thousands participated in the demonstrations.

The junta also demanded that protests be held only with government approval.

Human rights campaigners claim that the army has swollen from 7,000 to 12,000 in the last year, recruiting heavily from the former Tonton Macoutes (the murderous militia established by the Duvalier dynasty and disbanded by the junta under immense pressure from the masses), who are generally considered responsible for the attacks.

The people of Haiti have few illusions in the elections. "They're all thieves," said one youth. "We want revolution."

Haiti is the western hemisphere's poorest nation. Its impoverished six million people expected immediate change when the dictatorship fell. They will not respect the limits of formal 'democracy' if it does not solve their pressing problems.

The Duvaliers during their 29-year family dictatorship milked the country dry. In 'Baby Doc's 15 years in power he siphoned off an estimated £120 million from government funds—more than Haiti's entire annual budget.

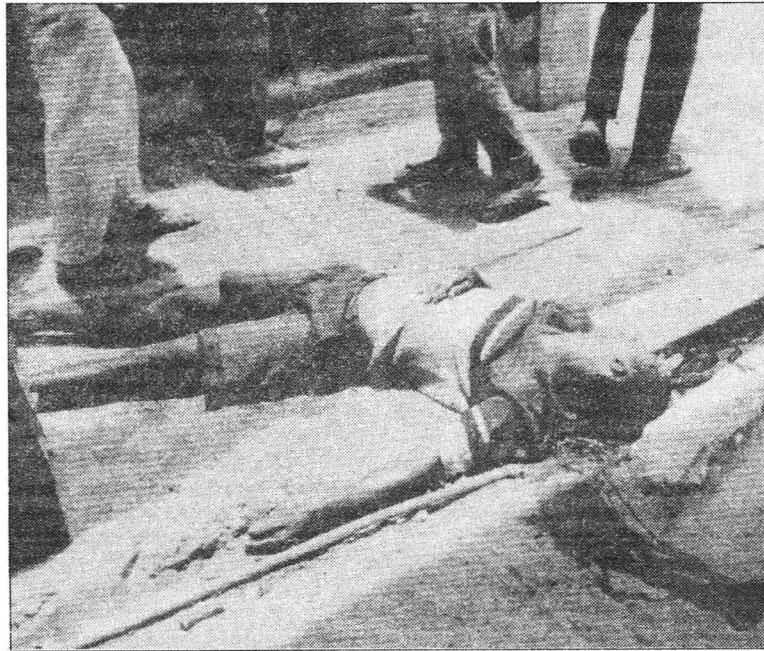
Seventy per cent of the population cook a meal only once a week. It is not uncommon for people to drink 'canal tea' or eat biscuits made from sand.

Unemployment is endemic. Those with jobs are often paid no more than the legal minimum of £3 a day.

Average life expectancy is 55. One in six children die before the age of one. A quarter suffer from malnutrition. Recently the country has been getting even poorer, with the per capita income declining towards £350 a year.

The junta estimates that the £120 million stolen by 'Baby Doc' could have provided the whole population with drinkable water in four years (80 per cent are without at the moment). It could have educated 240,000 children a year in a country with 90 per cent illiteracy.

With these conditions and the growing impatience of the masses, the ruling class are afraid. Even the Catholic church, proud of its opposition to the dictatorship, has exiled its most popular priest to a distant suburban parish because of his calls for revolution.



Youth shot by troops during demonstration in Haiti

tion.

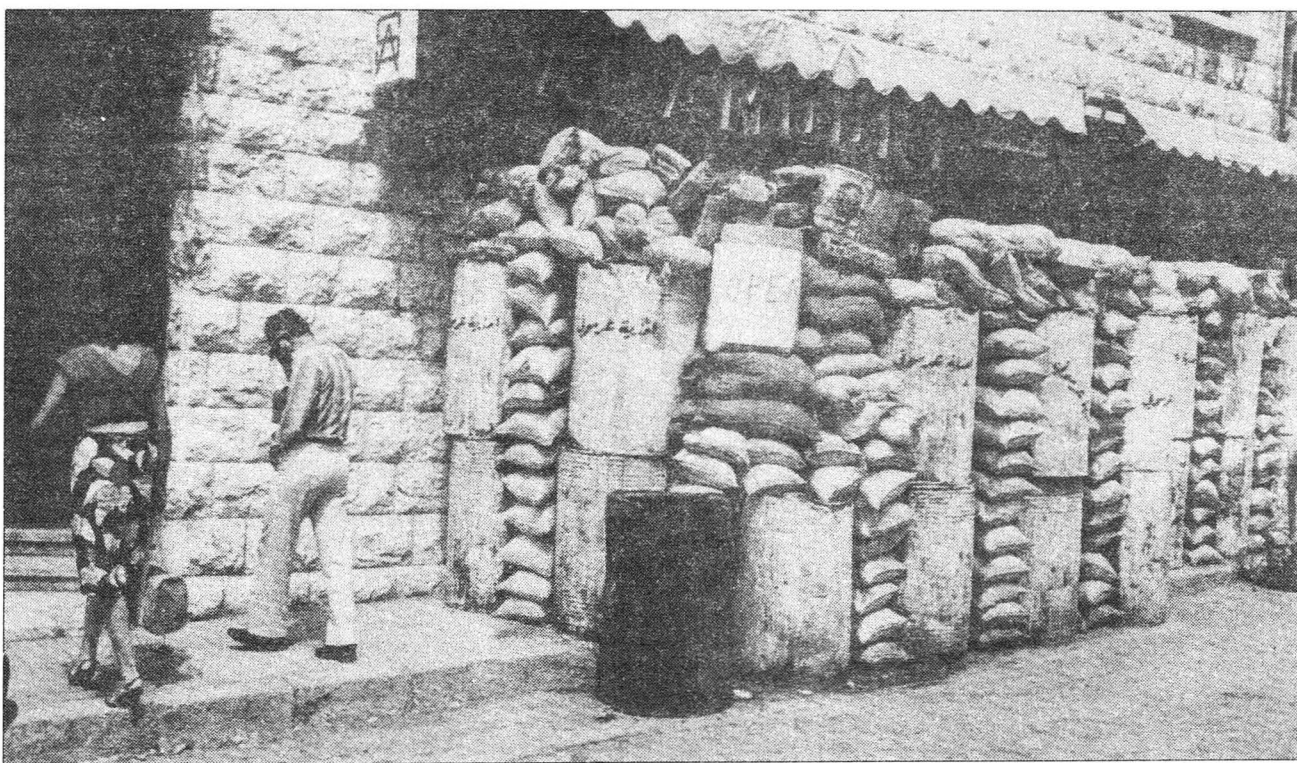
The US has threatened to withdraw its aid of £100 million a year if the junta does not defuse the situation.

Civil rights campaigner Gerard

Gourgue summed up the situation: "If there is not an answer to the needs of the people, an amelioration of their misery, there will be an explosion."

## Lebanon

# The face of catastrophe



'Business as usual' in Beirut

**"TO EXIST, militiamen now sell their guns. Socialites hawk their jewellery; parents tell their children they can't go to school any more. Frail old people pick over scattered mounds of refuse in the streets and alleys."**

Thus the *Financial Times* correspondent on 11 November described the economic and social catastrophe that is Lebanon.

The seeds of conflict sown by the imperialist carve-up of the Middle East after World War I have grown into a harvest of misery and a decade of civil war among the country's different national groups.

According to the United Nations Disaster and Relief Fund, more than a third of Beirut's 1.2 million people need "assistance".

The once prosperous Lebanese economy has been devastated by the war. The Lebanese pound's collapse of 80 per cent since the beginning of the year—a factor behind the recent 5-day general strike—means that the US dollar now dominates economic life.

The US dollar will now buy over 500 Lebanese

By Joe Owens

Bilston Glen NUM chairman, (personal capacity)

pounds, compared with 3.5 as late as 1984. Inflation has risen from 10-20 per cent in the early 1980s to 95 per cent last year. It was running at an annual rate of 400 per cent in the first quarter of 1987.

Now street vendors listen intently to the latest currency quotations on the radio in order to explain price rises to customers. There are makeshift currency booths on every street corner, dealing with millions of dollars a day.

Lack of confidence in the future has led most of Lebanon's 91 banks to shift their lending from industry to speculation.

The government is hopelessly divided—it has been

unable to hold a full cabinet meeting since 1985—and helpless in the face of economic and social disintegration.

Its annual spending has been rising by 40 per cent, yet revenues are drying up. For example, 40 per cent of public spending used to be provided by customs revenue. Now, with Lebanon's ports and roads controlled by various private militias, the government's customs receipts have ebbed away.

## Working Class

The full consequences of the economic disaster have been unloaded onto the working class. Two successive rises of 40 per cent and 100 per cent in the minimum wage have come nowhere near to compensating for inflation.

Just before the latest adjustment, 1kg of beef rose to £1,200, compared with a minimum wage of £4,300 per month. The day after the increase the dollar rose by a further

£22!

Basic items such as meat, eggs, cheese and fruit have been eliminated from the diets of many families. The charity Save The Children Fund speaks of "swarms of people standing outside our offices every day asking for food".

Beirut's garbage collection agency is handling 60 per cent less rubbish as people sift through it, looking for everything from paper to leftover food.

Even some militiamen are selling their guns. As one said:

"Our parties can no longer help us. How else are we to put food on the table? There is not much left to steal."

The tragedy of Lebanon will never be solved on the basis of capitalism. The struggle of the working class for socialist transformation throughout the Middle East is the only answer.

The magnificent united action by 300,000 workers, two weeks ago, shows the way forward.

# US-'Where did all that money go?'

THE DAY after the stock market collapsed I went down to my union hall to see what the people were saying.

By John Reimann  
Carpenters' Local 36  
Oakland, Ca.

There was actually a note of pleasure, like "at last those s.o.b.'s on Wall Street are getting theirs." Several jokes were made about having lost money on the horses for years, now it's their turn.

At Laney College, a local community college almost exclusively for children of the working class, there was some interest in the stock market crash and what it signifies. But many asked: "What difference does it make? I don't have a job anyway."

## Distant

The *Wall Street Journal* carried an article headed "Wall Street woes seem distant on Main Street." An assembly-line worker is quoted as saying: "It's been a nice week for the have-nots of the world."

A mental health worker called it "a case of the chickens coming home to roost".

Two weeks after the crash I had a discussion in Seattle, Washington, with two teenage McDonalds workers along with the mother and younger brother of one of them.

They spent an hour

and a half talking non-stop about the conditions for workers and youth in America, how terrible the school system is and how they make history so boring because, as one of them said, "those who haven't learned the mistakes of the past are doomed to repeat them"—and on and on like that.

The high point of the discussion came, however, when the ten-year-old brother chimed in:

## Protest

"You know what I really want to know? Last week the stock exchange crashed and they all lost those millions and millions of dollars, right? Well, what I want to know is—where did all that money go to? I mean, did it all just dissolve up into the air or something?"

Here in Oakland, the Youth Defense Campaign is organising a protest demonstration with the demands of jobs for all and a \$7.50 per hour minimum wage. Youth in the high schools are snatching up the leaflets, shaking their fists and saying: "Yeah! That's live! Seven-fifty an hour—that's what I want!"

And at Laney College a sign just went up advertising a meeting to protest about the poor food in the cafeteria and the lack of sports and recreational facilities for the students.



# Greek youth revolt

## Movement spreads as thousands take to streets



**THE WAVE** of militant struggle in Greece's universities and colleges (see *Militant* 874) is continuing and spreading.

Homeless students have taken over hostels in different cities and clashed with the riot police sent to evict them.

Police, fighting youth and workers on the streets of Athens last Wednesday night, were heard to say: "Machine-guns are what we need".

"If only we got rid of that bastard Papandreou [socialist prime minister—*Editor*] we could start using our pistols again," one exclaimed.

### Marxist

Among those arrested was Demetris Voulis, an ambulance driver and supporter of the Marxist paper *Xekinima*, who played a leading part in building support for the British miners' strike in 1984-85.

On Friday 13 November 25,000 students demonstrated in Athens and fought the police who tried to block their march. Four days later, 400,000 flooded the streets in a massive rally to commemorate the youth insurrection against the military junta at the Athens Polytechnic in November 1973.

For years the leaders of the left youth organisations and reformist parties had abandoned all confidence in the youth. They considered young people to be uninterested in politics, and even reactionary.

Only the Marxists grouped around *Xekinima*, living, working and campaigning among the youth, predicted the eruptions

that are now taking place.

The students' struggle has developed around immediate demands for accommodation, food coupons, books. The austerity policies of the PASOK (Socialist) government during the last two years have undermined all the improvements made in education after PASOK's election in 1981.

In Athens alone it is estimated that 47,000 students need accommodation urgently—yet only 6,500 can be housed. Students receive no grants, and cannot afford to pay the exorbitant private rents.

The hard-won gains of free food coupons and books have become almost worthless. A coupon to feed a student for a day is now worth only about £1—just enough for breakfast.

Universities have almost stopped providing books, because they have run out of funds.

Looming behind these demands is the enormous problem of unemployment, which is estimated at around 60 per cent among youth. Students know that after three to four years of hard work they will be awarded a degree, a place in the unemployment register, and no benefit.

The students have had enough of petitions, discussions and promises. So, when the first example was given, the occupations spread like wildfire.

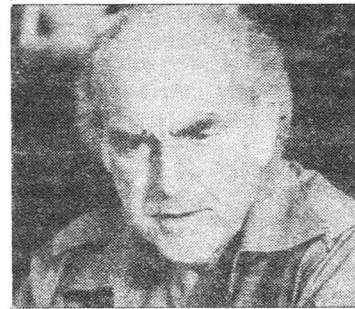
At that moment they found that all the mass youth organisations, of the left as well as the right, were against them—terrified that the struggle might follow the example of the great student movements in France and Spain in 1986-87.

PASOK's opposition isolated and split its activists on the cam-

pus, who lost all control over their supporters.

The Communist Party (KKE) at first opposed the occupations, but their rank and file threatened them with open insubordination. So, later, they decided to swim with the current for the time being. These tactics created enormous suspicions against them.

The New Democracy (the main capitalist party) also opposed the struggle. This split its ranks, and to avoid a major explosion the leadership gave their supporters a free vote.



PASOK leader Papandreou.

As a result all three official youth organisations, commanding about 80 per cent of the student vote between them, were defeated when the students' mass meetings voted overwhelmingly for occupations and elected strike committees.

Following the intervention of the riot police, the mood among youth has hardened considerably, and their demands have been extended to include the resignation of the Ministers of Education and Public Order.

The government, which has been trying to halt its rapid decline in the last period with left talk, is in disarray.

On the one hand, they are terrified and willing to make a

few concessions to defuse the movement. It has been revealed that the Executive of PASOK has warned the government that its actions might provoke even greater upheavals, as in France and Spain.

At the same time, the government fear that concessions to the students may spread the movement to the schools and the unions. Already the schoolteachers have decided to strike on 25 November for similar demands.

A main slogan during the Polytechnic demonstration was "Students, school students, workers, unite!"

At the moment the movement is still growing. It can win major concessions from the government, as in France and Spain. But to do so it must spread to the workers.

That is why the Marxists are calling for a 24-hour national strike of all the education sectors on 25 November together with the schoolteachers, and the formation of common strike committees.

As well as the immediate demands of students and teachers, this common front must fight for more money for education, jobs for youth, a living unemployment benefit, and accommodation.

Such a campaign will help to prepare Greek youth and workers for the battles ahead. The developing world recession will shake Greece's weak economy and all of society. In struggle it will be hammered home that only the programme of Marxism can show a solution to the problems we face.

By Nicos Remoundos  
Editor, *Xekinima*

# Workers challenge Stalinism

**FROM ONE** end of Eastern Europe to another, strains, tensions and struggle against the crisis-ridden regimes of Stalinism are breaking to the surface.

In Yugoslavia the wage freeze (reported in *Militant* last week) provoked immediate and powerful resistance from workers. In Skopje, capital of the Macedonian republic, 5,000 steel workers marched on Parliament to demand a 71 per cent wage rise. The government went into emergency session—and gave in.

The steel workers' example was followed a day later by aluminium workers, who also won big concessions. Elsewhere in Macedonia, 1,500 wood processing workers demonstrated against low wages.

These victories drive a coach and horses through the regime's austerity measures, designed to make the workers pay for the crisis of bureaucratic mismanagement, and sets an example for workers throughout Yugoslavia.

In the Romanian town of Brasov 7,000 workers—led by 2,000 workers from the showpiece Red Flag tractor factory—marched on the local 'Communist' Party offices, burned pictures of Stalinist leader Ceausescu, sacked the mayor's office, and made a bonfire of official files in the street.

"We want bread!" they shouted. Their grievances include harsh working conditions, poor food supplies, compulsory transfers and other hardships caused by bureaucratic misrule.

This challenge to the Ceausescu regime, the most repressive in Eastern Europe, is the biggest for many years. A western diplomat commented: "Something happened on a scale we've not heard of here before."

### Latvia

At the bottom of Romania's economic chaos is Ceausescu's policy of exporting everything not nailed down in an effort to meet payments on the regime's crippling foreign debt.

In Latvia, on the Baltic coast, thousands of demonstrators clashed with police on the anniversary of the formation of the republic in 1918 when, in accordance with Lenin's policy of recognising the rights of nations to self-determination, the Latvian state was formed.

The anniversary demonstration, following demonstrations earlier this year (see *Militant* 869), marks a militant protest against domination by the Stalinist bureaucracy in Moscow.

In Czechoslovakia as well as Poland, big price rises are on the way, raising the prospect of new struggles in the period ahead.

But it is in Russia itself that the decisive battles between the workers and the bureaucracy will be fought.

The protest by Moscow University students against Yeltsin's dismissal (the first political movement among students since the revolution), the two-day general strike reported in Sverdlovsk and the proliferation of 'Socialist Clubs' among intellectuals—over 400 in Moscow alone—are signs of the intense pressures building up against the rule of the bureaucracy.

These developments will be analysed in following issues of *Militant*.

By George Collins

# Chirac on the run

**THE PRIVATISATION** plans of Chirac's right-wing government in France are in disarray, following a decision last week to halt its latest sell-off.

By Andy Walker

Finance Minister Balladur announced that the £3.5 billion privatisation of Paris United Assurance had been put off until at least the new year. The shares had been due to be sold off this week.

It now seems likely that the franc will be devalued amid growing criticism of the Chirac govern-

ment's handling of the economy and widespread industrial turbulence (see *Militant* 874).

Privatisation had been one of its main planks. Like Britain's Tories, Chirac needs the money to pay off loans and balance the economy.

So far eleven state enterprises have been privatised, including a TV channel. But shares in all these firms are now selling at far less than their original value.

Indeed the most recent sell-off, the Suez Investment Bank, lost 18 per cent of its share values on its launching day last week!

Opinion polls have been showing Chirac to be way behind in the running for the presidential elec-

tion next May. On current figures Socialist president Francois Mitterand would win, which would set up the Socialist Party for a general election victory.

### 'Cohabitation'

'Cohabitation' (a Socialist president with a right-wing government) is a big issue in France. Following their disillusionment with the Left government of 1981-1986, many workers are asking if Mitterand can apparently work with Chirac, what difference would it make with the Socialists back in power?

With Chirac's government on the defensive, there has never



Prime Minister Chirac.

been a better opportunity to campaign for a Socialist government with socialist policies to end unemployment, low pay and the problems of the youth.



# The turning of the screw

A *Militant* reader writes from inside a London prison: Dear *Militant*,

I started writing a draft letter when it looked as if things were starting to happen around here, but my 'brief notes' ended up as a pamphlet, a sort of 'Ten days that nearly shook the nick'.

It's all about manning levels and from where I sit I can see they've got a point. To implement 'Fresh Start', which began on 1 November, management promised to fill the 70-odd short fall of staff by using screws from other nicks until all places were filled by an ongoing recruitment campaign. This in theory should have everything sorted out by 28 February next year. They haven't

even done this and all the staff that are supposed to be being recruited will be cancelled out by the cuts recommended for next year.

The screws were in a fighting mood and went to a meeting—only to hear that the national leadership advised them to go back to normal working.

A couple of screws had written to their national and local rags to explain their case. They got no joy of course so I showed them the articles *Militant* had done on prisons. I think they'd expected something along the lines of a *Class War* 'Shoot the Bastards' article so they were well surprised to get a good and fair write up, accurate as well. Nice one!

# Just different graffiti

Dear Comrades,

The Enniskillen bombing has brought the troubles in Northern Ireland into the spotlight again.

A recent radio programme called 'The Radio Four Generation' brought together Catholics and Protestants along with young people from England, Scotland and Wales to discuss the problems of Northern Ireland. They visited pubs, shopping centres and the Falls and Shankhill Roads.

A geordie said that conditions in Belfast seemed like any other northern England town such as Newcastle or Sunderland. Someone from Northern Ireland said that if the border was removed tomorrow most of the problems

would still be there, his biggest task was getting a job.

A Catholic youth went up the Protestant Shankhill Road. He said it was an education for him "Same as the Falls Road, just different graffiti, but better murals!"

A young woman felt Northern Ireland was treated like a third world country. The government and press bemoan the amount spent on aid "when capitalism bugged them up in the first place".

The basis for building working class unity with socialist policies is definitely there in Northern Ireland, especially amongst the youth.

John Hird, Newham, London.

Dear Comrades,

I was in Belfast last month and as a visitor I found it very intimidating. What I saw in three hours in the city was helicopters flying around with their spot-lights on and police and army patrols stopping cars and having road checks.

I had a bit of trouble getting into the country but after ten minutes' argument I was allowed in.

The people in Ireland want peace, the only way to get it is to fight for socialism.

Michael Jackson, Maidstone, Kent.

## Classified ads

20p per word, minimum 10 words. Semi-display £3 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.

Wanted co-op and green shield stamps. Loose, part or full books. All proceeds to the fighting fund. Send c/o *Militant* circulation, 3/13 Hepscoth Rd, London E9 5HB.

Tapes £1.50 each plus 30p p&p available from Tony Wedlake, 13 Cae Brackla, Brackla, Bridgend. *Unfolding Revolution in Latin America*—Phil Frampton. *Perspectives for the South African Revolution*—Richard Monroe. *World Economy Heads for Slump*—Ted Grant. *Lessons of General Election, which way for Labour?*—Ted Grant.

Inqaba T-shirts for sale £5.25 each inc postage. Logo black clenched fist "smash apartheid and capitalism". Available in white or lemon large or XL. All surplus to Campaign for a Socialist South Africa. Cheques/cash with orders to W. Blackstock, Flat 23, 425 Sauchiehall St, Glasgow.

Christmas cards. 25p each 5 for £1 "A worker needs Thatcher, like a turkey needs Christmas—Have a nice one". Order from: Tony Wedlake, 13 Cae Brackla, Bridgend, Mid Glamorgan. 0656 652289.

"Militant for Labour and Youth" enamel stud badges now available £1 each. Red plastic fighting fund collecting tins £1 each. A3 size posters of Marx, Engels, Lenin, Trotsky and Luxemburg, 50p each. Stickers available in rolls of 250; 'Kick out the Tories', 'No slave labour on YTS', £2.50 per roll. All available from Fighting Fund Dept, 3/13 Hepscoth Rd, London E9 5HB. For all orders add 25% p&p.

Unemployed Wigan socialist seeks shared accommodation in London area for one month. Please ring 0942 58042.

## Letters

Send us your views, comments or criticism.

Militant, 3-13 Hepscoth Road, London E9 5HB

## Racial abuse

Dear Comrades, On Thursday 12 November I found myself and another one million Irish workers in London being racially abused by Thames Television. It seems Camden council have a policy of deporting Irish people in their area, back to Ireland. They even pay your fare.

As the voice-over fed us this information the camera fed us images of Irish building workers sinking several pints of Guinness. So when the voice and the camera images were put together this is what it all appeared to mean: 1) Many Irish people are homeless. 2) Irish people work on building sites. 3) They are mostly alcoholic. 4) Send them back to Ireland.

Well, after 800 years of subjugation it still isn't safe to be Irish in this part of Europe. If 'they' don't put you in jail for bombings you didn't commit (ie Birmingham six) they'll send you home for a life sentence on an Irish dole queue.

Glenn Simpson, Tottenham.

## Sick decision

Stockbroker Moore swipes cash from caring families



WAITING: Dorothy Moran and husband Frank.

JOHN Moore, the glamorous and caring stockbroker who is Secretary of State for Social Security, is always saying how public money should go to the people who need it most.

Especially to families stricken by disability who try to stay independent.

So this week he has launched a devastating attack on people who care at home for epileptics, diabetics, mentally retarded children, congenitally deaf people, hyperactive children, asthmatic children and haemophiliacs.

He and his department have been furious ever since last March when the Court of Appeal decided in favour of Mrs Dorothy Moran, 57, an epileptic who lives in Birkenhead.

Mrs Moran claimed that her husband Frank, 55, looked after her all the time.

He had often saved her from injury while she was having fits. No one could tell when the fits came. They were just as dangerous as at night, when she ran the risk of choking to death.

Dorothy Moran gets 121.97 a week attendance

Devastating attack allowance because Frank looks after her full time during the day.

A DHB doctor said she wasn't entitled to an extra allowance for being looked after at night (£10.50 a week), because Frank was likely to be asleep.

The case went all the way to the Court of Appeal.

There, Lord Justice Purchas, Lord Justice Nicholls and Sir Rousley

Hovell, Thurlow-Cummings-Bruce decided unanimously that "the constant presence of someone ready to intervene" justified payment of the night-time allowance.

They ordered the case back to the Attendance Allowance Board, which is appointed by the DHB, and whose £18-a-day chairman is Professor John Marshall.

Mr and Mrs Moran celebrated a great victory. But seven and a half months later, they haven't got the money.

In the meantime, the Government has swiftly moved the goalposts.

The new Bill, as Mr Moore sensitively put it, "would restore the law to what it was believed to be before the Court of Appeal so rudely interrupted."

The Bill insists that the night-time allowance will only be paid if the carer is awake for a prolonged period.

Someone like Frank Moran must stay awake all day, and almost all night, if he wants his wife to qualify for an extra £10.50 a week.

Originally, the Bill was devised to take away the allowances even of people who have applied for it since the March Court of Appeal decision.

Outraged interventions by Labour spokesmen Frank Field and Robin Cook won a small concession. Ministers promised that "cases in the pipeline" would be treated as though the law had not been changed.

But the extent of his triumph should not be denied to stockbroker Moore.

He will have swiped £10.50 a week from many thousands who desperately need it, and who already save the State millions by looking after sick and disabled people at home.

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## Ignoring their laws

Dear Comrades, Please find enclosed a photocopy from the *Daily Mirror* concerning my wife's three and a half year battle for night time attendance allowance which she won in the High Court.

This government of 'law and order' are completely ignoring the High Court judges' findings and eight months after the verdict

she is still waiting for the money. I would like you to print this to show what lengths this rotten government will go to to deny sick people their due. They are now in the process of changing the law. This government is not just rotten it is truly evil.

F Moran, Birkenhead, Merseyside.

## Going over the top

Dear Comrades, Please find enclosed a copy of a letter circulated to 'progressive' members of Granby Ward Labour Party. It was posted to Cathy Wilson anonymously prior to our last ward meeting.

When confronted with the letter at the ward meeting, Semoff (Granby ward and acting Riverside Constituency Secretary) admitted to a flabbergasted meeting that he had circulated the letter and that he would continue to do so for as long as he saw fit.

Unfortunately standing orders decreed that the meeting was over and no action against Semoff was taken.

The 'headbanging' resolution on the budget was calling for no cuts in jobs and services, no rent or rate rises to compensate for

Tory cuts, no to redetermination of the budget and calling for a campaign to be launched to fight for more resources for the city of Liverpool. Whose head needs banging?

Is comrade Semoff's spelling of *Militant* (as

Dear Comrades

At the September ward meeting there were only 13 people present. A "head banging" Militant resolution on the budget from Cathy Wilson and her group carried.

At the special meeting to discuss the budget last month, there were only six regular ward members beside Cathy and her friends.

The Militant supporters are now more determined than ever and they won't give up until they totally dominate the ward.

Please make every effort to attend the ward meeting Tuesday 5th October. Be prepared to speak out against the Militant politics that ruled the Liverpool Labour Party in the past.

Sam Semoff

Flat 3, Princes Court  
5th October 1987

## Tender care?

Dear Comrades, In the Yorkshire Television region there is a programme called Jimmy's, a live broadcast following the day to day life of St James' hospital in Leeds.

A recent broadcast partly concerned the issue of competitive tendering of domestic duties. The NUPE shop steward in explaining the issue to several domestics suggested that there was nothing that could be done other than trying to ensure limited damage and job losses.

When one of the domestic staff made the point that she couldn't work any harder than she already did the representative from the District Health Authority said "there are 24,000 domestics up and down the country who have done just that in order to win a tender."

Why hasn't the national NUPE leadership worked out a fighting strategy to oppose not only competitive tendering, but also ward and hospital closures?

It should be explained that any moves towards competitive tendering will involve job losses, a worse service for the public and more pressure on nurses.

Dave Pollock, Scarborough.



# For a fighting leadership



BRITISH COAL plan to close a further 30-40 pits and destroy 30,000 miners' jobs in the immediate future. Their long-term plans will mean the closure of entire coalfields.

The Tories know that a fighting leadership for the NUM will be a major obstacle to their plans for the industry. Miners can expect a deluge of lies and slander about Arthur Scargill in the Tory press in the next month. They will make colossal efforts to prevent him being re-elected as the union's president.

Coal minister, Michael Spicer, has announced that British Coal can double its deficit to pay out more redundancy money and close more pits. The Tories were not prepared to subsidise the industry to keep pits open. But they are doing so to prepare it for privatisation.

Labour MPs who naively believed that British

Coal had finished closing pits, are reported to be taken aback. No doubt some NUM Area leaders who have put their faith in 'putting a good case' to the bosses feel the same.

That's why re-electing Arthur Scargill is vital for the miners' future. Rank and file miners know this. Right-winger John Walsh has been nominated by the small, right-dominated Leicester Area. But he could only manage one nomination in his home county, Yorkshire, where 17 out of the 18 NUM branches that have met so far nominated Arthur Scargill.

A massive campaign will still be vital however to cut across the Tory/right-wing propaganda machine. It can also help prepare the miners for the next stage of the battle for their industry's future. For a fighting NUM with a fighting leadership!

## Welsh miner says: Fight to save Blaenant pit

AFTER MANY months of mismanagement, British Coal have told us that our colliery, Blaenant in south Wales, would have to go through their infamous 'colliery review procedure'.

By Tudor Parsons

Blaenant NUM (personal capacity) and Miners' Broad Left.

This procedure was the carrot the Coal Board used to persuade the pit deputies' union, Nacods, not to join the 1984-85 miners' strike after they voted for strike action.

As Arthur Scargill warned at the time, this is not the balanced examination of a colliery's production levels and organisational problems which the Board was promising. Quite the reverse; it is being used to close down pit after pit, throughout every coalfield.

On 2 November, when Blaenant was under review, British Coal showed that they would judge the life or death of our colliery on the performance of one face alone, the new high-tech, heavy-duty face, the 130.

When the face captains tried to discuss other faces and the operation of the colliery as a whole, the area director quickly returned the subject to the 130 face.

As soon as the meeting ended, a press release was issued, saying that if the 130 face did not reach required production levels (112 ft per week, or three strips a shift on a three shift basis), then the

area director would recommend Blaenant for closure. BC had used the meeting merely to put pressure on the workers.

As every miner knows, the future of a colliery can never be allowed to rest on the performance of one face, because of the difficulties in predicting geological faults and overcoming them if they arise.

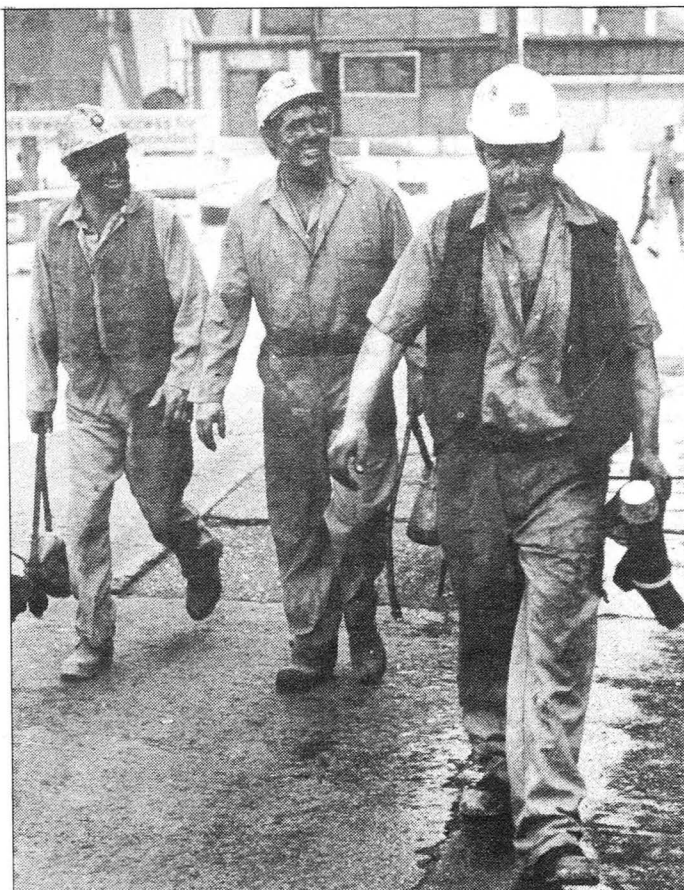
The men are bending over backwards to safeguard the colliery's future. The management are seriously hindering it. It makes one suspect area and pit management's promises at the review meeting that they would do everything in their power to ensure the success of the 130 face!

Tragically, the lodge officials who attended the review meeting failed to lay the blame where it belongs, on management. Instead, at the pithead meetings to report back on the review, they merely echoed the dictates of management that our future depended on the 130.

Accepting this line is utter folly for the lodge committee. We must represent our members, not become mere informants of Coal Board policy at pit head meetings.

There are sufficient reserves in other areas of the colliery to secure our future for many years to come. The lodge committee must press for development in these areas now.

If we are to defend our colliery against closure or run-down of manpower, which in itself will jeopardise the pit's future, we must begin by cam-



British Coal's short term aim is to reduce the number of miners in the country to 70,000.

paigning right now.

We must counter management arguments at all levels, producing our own lodge newsletter, holding regular meetings informing members of all developments, involving the women's support groups and linking up with other NUM branches like Lady Windsor and Six Bells.

### Build Links

We should start now building links with local rail, steel and power workers' unions who face rationalisation and privatisation. The whole community should be encouraged to get involved in the fight for our jobs and the health and dignity of our villages.

If the lodge officers and lodge committee refuse to treat this review with the

seriousness it deserves, then the rank and file must put pressure on them to do so.

The lodge committee should at all times carry out the wishes of the membership. But the Blaenant delegation voted to accept six day production at area conference, directly contradicting the membership's mandate.

The Miners' Broad Left will be holding meetings to discuss the future of the colliery, and a strategy to defend it.

This must run hand in hand with an active campaign to re-elect Arthur Scargill and defend the union's policies of fighting pit closures, rejecting six day working, flexible working and privatisation.

Enough of our collieries have closed already. Organise now to defend jobs and conditions.

## Bosses' bungling or sabotage?

MANY MINERS with a wealth of experience of underground work have grave misgivings about the new face in the light of management's plans. Management want the cogs to travel on top of a section of soft coal and muck in order to increase the quality of coal being cut!

On top of these operational problems, we also have to deal with their ineptitude. Over the past year, their record has been appalling. They have failed totally to organise the colliery's manpower and supplies to the face in a way which would lead to increased production.

On the 113 face, a few months ago, the pack areas on the gate and tail roads were allowed to fall behind the face line so much, it was diverting much needed air from the coalface.

Management tried to blame the men engaged in the pack work, even withdrawing the concession they receive for working with powder injurious to health.

### Unworkable

The truth is the packs were behind because management had failed to get adequate supplies to the face and had been taking pump packers off their jobs to do other work because they had failed to man the off shift correctly.

The 113 face has been fraught with management problems. The coke heading boys have had to carry their own supplies on to the heading or waste valuable time waiting for them because the gate haulage is not manned on afternoon and night shifts.

The 113 tail road is probably the most unsafe and unworkable ever seen in Blaenant. In a classic case of mismanagement, when the face was shortened due to geological problems, a 50 yard stretch of roadway was left between two and four feet high, making it impossible to transport enough supplies to keep up with the face, and making work very dangerous.

The problems on 113 are widespread throughout the colliery. Miners wonder whether it is sheer incompetence or deliberate mismanagement.



## Industrial reports

# Postal workers' dispute Action to win

EVERY RANK and file member of the postal workers union, UCW, has one overwhelming concern at present, winning the three hours off the working week.

Coming shortly after the vote for action, members expected last weekend's conference to have some discussion on developments. The conference was to discuss the restructuring of the union; we need to fit in with the carving up of the post office to suit Tory privatisation plans.

Most members thought our delegates would return

By a UCW member

to their branches at least with news of the executive council's plans for industrial action. But conference had to make do with two statements from general secretary Alan Tuffin. *Militant* supporters tried to get more discussion but they were ruled out of order. The executive claimed

that discussion would give the Tory press information about our tactics, but that is marginal compared to our members' need to know what is being done in their name. The talk around the hotels and bars was of industrial action and the word is that the EC intend pulling out the mechanised letter offices next week.

This must be supported but any selective action must lead on rapidly to all out action which is the only way to win our demand.

## UCW activist assaulted

THE POSTAL workers' union are fighting for a shorter working week to improve conditions and create jobs. Last July in Nottingham (see *Militant* 857) there was a dispute over bonus payments. Postal workers' walks could not be completed in the time allocated; this problem continues.

On 10 November, Simon Harris, the vice-chair of Nottingham Amalgamated branch was assaulted by a supervisor for following the nationally agreed rules on delivery. He told Gary Freeman: "Since the strike, the walks were retimed. But the situation is no better.

"I'm now taking part of a rural district by foot which used to be done by a driver. This supervisor kept pressurising me to

take more letters than I could carry legally and deliver in the given time. I kept refusing. He argued that I and others were inefficient, in order to get at me.

"This day the same thing happened. When I refused, he demanded I went to the floor office. I refused until my branch secretary was present, as there would have been two managers and only me. He swore and grabbed the bag round my neck, which had the legal limit of 35lbs in. I am now off with a badly bruised shoulder and neck injury.

"They're having a go at me as a union man. If they can beat the officials, they think they can beat the rest in the coming dispute which we can win."

## ILEA threatens teachers

THE NEW Education Bill threatens working-class parents, teachers and Labour education authorities. In particular, the Inner London Education Authority (ILEA) could face some inner London boroughs 'opting out' of its control.

But the prospects of a joint fight by ILEA and teachers are much reduced by the council's actions; redeployment of teachers, now escalated to the threat of thousands of job losses, and as a London teacher explains below, disciplinary threats to teaching staff.

A FEW weeks ago, my headmaster asked myself and two other teachers to take extra children from a class where the teacher was absent. We all refused, in line with our union policy of only covering in emergencies, not when absences are known in advance.

The head told us our names would be put forward to ILEA for docking of pay next month, even though we were teaching our own classes and carrying out all our duties. One teacher was threatened with a £43 fine which would mean she was working for nothing!

In what other job can you be fined by a foreman anyway? Prison officers were at least sent home while having their pay deducted in their recent dispute. The latest ILEA circular tells heads that teachers can be fined for refusing to attend meetings after school or refusing to carry out a



London school students support teachers against ILEA attacks last March

head's instructions. Teachers are being subjected to almost military discipline—by a Labour authority.

Like other workers defeated by the Tories, teachers face attempts to re-establish firm control. Our action can not be compared to the NUM's heroic fight, but teachers find that their heads have been given the right to fine teachers and determine whether or not to grant extra pay allowances.

The Tories want to break the unions, or buy off a section, to prepare for cuts and privatisation. Just as they started a propaganda war against councils for alleged 'squandering' so teachers are accused of left

wing bias or incredibly, blamed for so many young people being on the dole.

It seems that has nothing to do with employers systematically closing down industry. Young people are not educated enough—and that's our fault too, nothing to do with the starvation of education funds.

They will use this propaganda to cut education spending even further. The Tories litter their speeches with phrases like 'quality' and 'excellence', this means they want to concentrate on private education for those who can pay.

At the same time, the government are wondering how they can stop educating kids headed for the



Alan Tuffin, UCW general secretary. Photo: Militant

## Fighting demands

THE CONFERENCE turned over the EC on a number of occasions on restructuring, particularly over what looked like an attempt to do away with annual conference. Alan Tuffin for the EC said it wasn't necessary to tell the EC to do away with conference as they had no intention of doing so. In that case, said conference, why are you worrying about being mandated?

A successful *Militant* readers meeting and a packed Broad Left meeting showed the growing support for a fighting UCW. £313 was raised for *Militant* fighting fund.

## Fight local privatisation

MANY TRADE UNION leaders seem to have thrown in the towel even before the latest round of privatisation legislation has begun.

By Les Tudor  
Liverpool NALGO  
(personal capacity)

The leaders of Liverpool NALGO seem to be amongst them. The last meeting of the branch's anti-privatisation working party decided, with only one vote against, to recommend opposition to a Broad Left-inspired motion which goes before the branch AGM in December.

The motion, moved by Liverpool Labour Left supporters, called on all public sector unions to unite in a national campaign against the Tories' proposals, beginning with a one-day strike and non co-operation with the tendering process.

The committee, mainly long-standing branch executive members and officers, made comments like

"we might as well accept the legislation will be passed."

The latest bout of Tory attacks will devastate local authorities with massive pay cuts, job losses and reduced services as the cowboy operators come in. The latest legislation effectively closes all the loopholes Labour councils use to stave off the effects of tendering rules, such as contract compliance, minimum pay levels etc.

### Support

These will be illegal, and the Secretary of State will have wide ranging powers to hand out contracts if he feels a local authority has acted 'uncompetitively'.

The public sector union leaders have a duty to lead a national campaign on the most important battle we have ever faced. Building links with all Labour councillors prepared to fight, we can get support from tenants and the whole community.

## Oldham gas dispute

WHILE STRIKE breakers are enjoying free lunches at British Gas, Oldham a determined group of workers are braving wind and rain on the picket lines outside.

NALGO members voted overwhelmingly for action after they made no progress in a long battle over grading of workers given new tasks. Since management introduced a new computer system, Compass, Nalgo has been pushing for a review of grading because of new duties.

British Gas wanted to save between £5 million and £10 million and said that "due to new techno-

logy...it is felt necessary to cut 160-170 jobs over two years."

Posts were combined and admin workers became multi-function clerks; on different grades but doing the same job.

After the ballot most admin workers walked out despite the bosses telling them they were being taken off the payroll. They hope that an agreement will be reached which means they won't have to return to work under the old unfavourable conditions.

By Janet Hargreaves



## Conference '88 Sheffield City Hall Sat 13 February

CAR WORKERS, miners, postal workers and many other trade unionists are gearing themselves up for battles at present. The future of many sections of the working class will depend on the building of a fighting union leadership.

If you are a union activist, make sure you make preparations to come along to the Broad Left Organising Committee conference on Saturday 13 February at Sheffield city hall. It is open to all trade

union bodies (branches, workplaces, district committees, shop stewards committees, divisional councils etc.)

Each body can send up to five delegates (fee per delegate £3). For an application form and details of local transport to the conference, write to Broad Left Organising Committee, PO Box 464, London E5 8PT.

By George Williamson  
(BLOC organising secretary)

By Linda Taaffe  
(Hackney NUT)



## Industrial reports

# For the full claim -and no strings

**THIS YEAR'S** pay deal for 32,500 Ford workers may be the most important ever. If the company are allowed to win, the implication would be a "Japanese style workforce" which will inevitably lead to job losses, particularly among line workers and foremen.

Ford have offered a three year deal starting with a 4.25 per cent pay rise (now up to 5.5 per cent) with the other two years' index-linked to inflation. Coupled with this are draconian conditions.

These strings are to be negotiated locally, linked to individual plant output and efficiency, effectively breaking away from a nationally agreed pay deal. Skilled maintenance workers will be expected to work on the production line in between maintaining and repairing machinery.

This threatens both the skilled trade and the line jobs. After all, what is the point of having an unskilled machine worker unfamiliar with his or her machine when you can have a 'skilled operator' trained to maintain the machine.

Ford also want a system of 'group leaders', appointed by

By a Fords Dagenham worker

the company, who will receive 10 per cent of their hourly rate. They will organise their workforces to guarantee maximum output. This would virtually eliminate foremen on the shop-floor.

In Japan, where group leaders already function, they also become the workers' 'union representative', effectively stripping workers of the right to elect their own stewards. The group leaders are responsible to the company and would be seen as company spies.

Another of the strings will be 'quality meetings'. A group of workers will be expected to sit and discuss how to improve output and quality; the only aim will be to keep a check on individuals seen as not pulling



their weight in the company!

Ford stress that these strings all have to be negotiated locally, because all the plants have different needs. They have been ambiguous about the effect of their strings.

Workers on the larger plants like Dagenham and Halewood would be worst affected by changing work practices. But the outcome is the same. A latest offer of 5.5 per cent for far more strenuous jobs and inevitable further job losses. The foremen's union calculate that 60 per cent of their members would go. Line workers would also be cut as skilled workers replace them.

The shopfloor have never been so angry at management's arrogance; the bosses praise the improvement in efficiency, output and profits, but give us this shabby deal while awarding themselves 74.5 per cent pay rises!

Whole factories have walked out across Ford's empire, and we now have overtime bans and days of action to coincide with meetings of the national joint negotiating committee. Ford must not be allowed to get away with it. The union leadership must campaign to explain the real issues and prepare seriously for industrial action if Ford don't back down.

## Workers fight for the NHS Coventry

THREE THOUSAND protesters and strikers defied the atrocious weather to march through Coventry on 19 November in response to the health workers' appeal to save Whitley Hospital and three other wards in the city from closure.

This was the biggest demonstration in Coventry since the GCHQ demo in 1984. There was a solid turn out of health workers in each of the city's four hospitals; what really made the day was to see the demonstration swelled by factory and office workers, many taking strike action.

There were placards from Rolls Royce, Coventry pit, the post office, Jaguar, Massey Ferguson, Coventry and Nuneaton Trades Councils and practically every union locally.

People in the streets and offices around the city centre cheered, lorries and car owners beeped their horns, and thousands took leaflets. Sid Platt from Nalco called the march "a meeting of the shareholders proclaiming enough is enough."

### City-wide strike

There is a huge swell of opinion against the closure of Whitley; this demonstration has given a big boost to the fight. "We're still in the tunnel but at least we can see the light," commented a nurse.

Dave Nellist pointed out: "We've had lobbies and petitions, but the DHA say they still intend to close Whitley. There can be no confidence in these Tory monkeys. If they have no bottle to resist the cuts, they should resign to make way for those who will."

Links have now been built between workers around the NHS, the call must now go out for an all city shop stewards committee to draw up immediate plans for a city wide conference to defend Coventry from further cuts, and not just in the NHS.

A call for a 24-hour general strike in Coventry would get a wide echo. Any attempt to do a midnight stabbing on Whitley must be resisted, by occupation if needed, backed up by industrial action locally. The NHS is at stake nationally; the national union leaders must call a conference to discuss how to save our health service.

By a NUPE shop steward

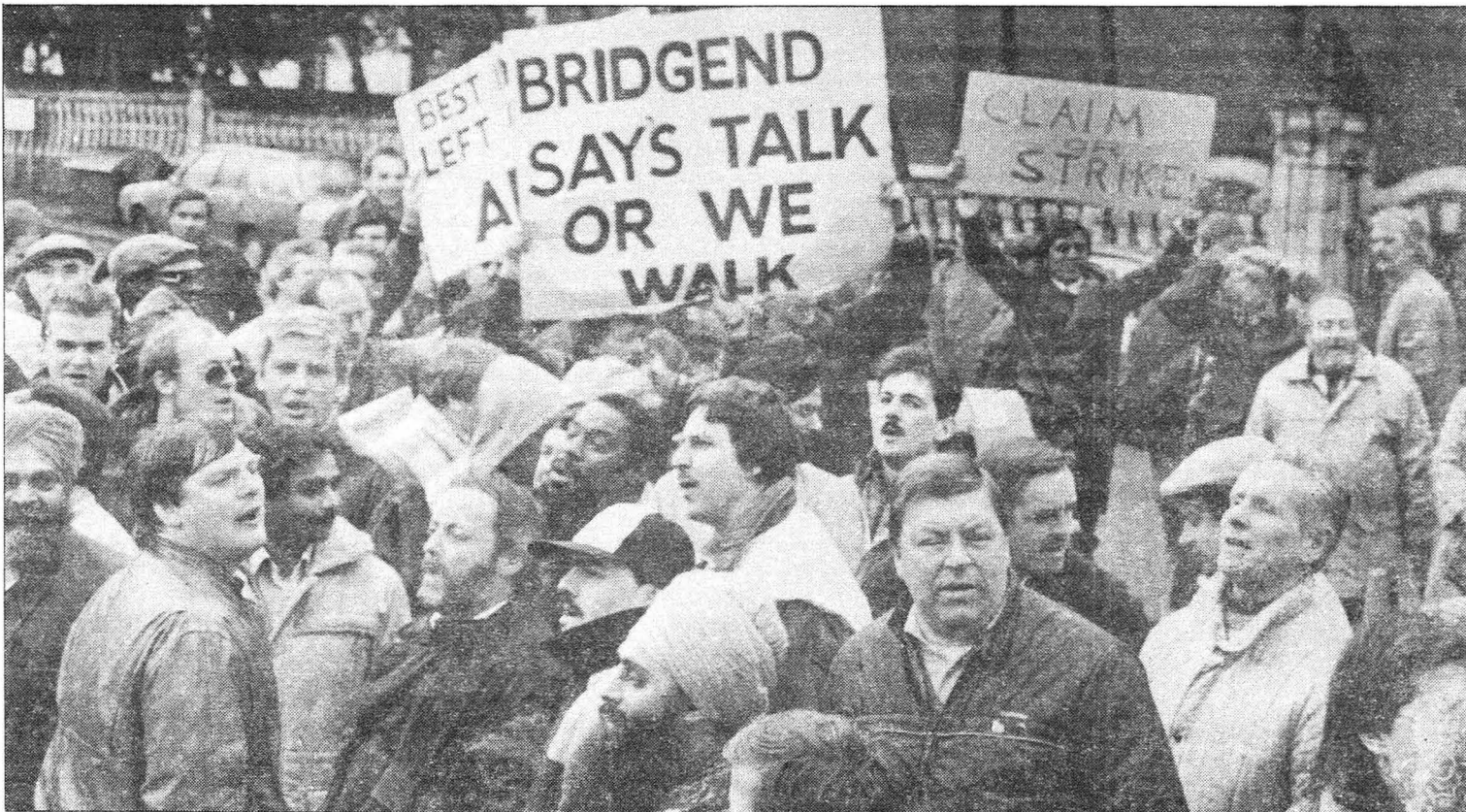
## Crewe

DESPITE CONSTANT attacks from the right wing of the local labour and trade union movement, Crewe Town Action Committee is now gaining the support needed from the rank and file to stop closures at Leighton Hospital and save jobs at British Rail Engineering (BREL) Crewe.

The Trades Council has now affiliated to the TAC, as have Mid-Cheshire Trades Council, TGWU Crewe, Cohse Crewe, AEU Winsford with financial support from AS11111 and CPSA. A regular bulletin is being produced and another public meeting is planned for 9 December.

The TAC believes that the 1020 redundancies at BREL and the loss of three wards at Leighton will affect everyone and the campaigns should be effectively linked.

The unity of the labour movement will be vital particularly as both attacks stem from the Tory government and reflect the crisis of their system. The TAC will explain the strategy to local working people and point out that ultimately only town-wide strike action can help to push back these attacks, and start the fight for a Labour government committed to socialist policies.



Ford workers lobby Monday's pay talks.

Photo: Militant

# Five per cent—no way!

"FIVE PER-cent no way. On strike we will stay" was one of the slogans chanted by Ford workers lobbying the pay talks in London on Monday.

After a series of one-day strikes, management 'improved' the offer to 5.5 per cent with the strings still attached. Coaches from Dagenham, Halewood and Bridgend brought 300 car workers to remind management and union representatives on the national joint negotiating committee that Ford workers are prepared to fight.

The talks coincided with the national one-day strike. Support at plants was 100 per cent. At Basildon tractor plant, 30 pickets were out and no-one reported for work. An agreement before the strike with lorry drivers ensured that no deliveries were made.

Dave Voss, convenor at tractors said: "The feeling on the floor is very strong. In a

survey, the joint shop stewards committee recorded 91 per cent support for negotiations to take place without conditions. Two ballots were held for strike action; the majority was bigger for the second one.

### Massive profits

"Prior to pay talks, we want a substantial pay increase, a shorter working week, and 100 per cent lay-off pay. The company is making massive profits, and has had the full cooperation of the workforce in increasing productivity. After six months of talks, last time, members thought there would be no conditions attached this time."

If the talks break down, Dave Voss said: "We will have to call a meeting of the joint works convenors to discuss future strategy, followed by mass meetings. This could mean a national ballot and an all-out strike

beginning in January."

Further negotiations are due in December. Management are undoubtedly trying to drag out the talks to try to demoralise union members. Union leaders still seem reluctant to call a national ballot and prepare for an all-out strike. They seem to fear a ballot could be defeated, but the longer they delay, the danger is that this could become a self-fulfilling prophesy.

The mood is there, particularly if there is a campaign of explanation through shop and mass meetings. Furthermore, the emphasis should not just be on the strings but also on the fight for the full claim.

Workers in many industries are now going into disputes and would give enormous backing to Ford workers fighting for a better deal. Ford workers have the power; with solidarity we can win a magnificent victory.



# Militant

**Inside**  
**Save Blaenant**  
**colliery**—p13

**Fords dispute**—p15

# Department of Employment strike

# Union fights

# YTS plans

**Exposed**  
**Tory plans**  
**to cut**  
**youth dole**

**CIVIL SERVANTS** who administer the Youth Training Scheme (YTS) are striking against its forced introduction in their own workplaces. CPSA members in the Department of Employment (DE) have voted for a one-day strike on 27 November against YTS starting in the civil service on management terms.

By John McNally, branch secretary, CPSA DE, Strathclyde, personal capacity

Our bosses have imposed the scheme without union consent. The vote for action shows CPSA members are ready to respond to this challenge. We voted to strike despite an unprecedented management campaign of lies and intimidation, propaganda and disinformation circulated to every member of staff. They even tried to stop activists speaking to meetings. But CPSA members recognised that the scheme is a threat to our jobs, wages and working conditions. We do not accept that the civil service scheme meant 'high quality' training.

There's a clear link between the arrival of YTS in the civil service and making it compulsory for every

unemployed school leaver. It is thought that 63,000 places are needed in the civil service and NHS to offer sufficient posts. If YTS become compulsory, how long before the new 'training for life' scheme becomes compulsory?

### Proper training

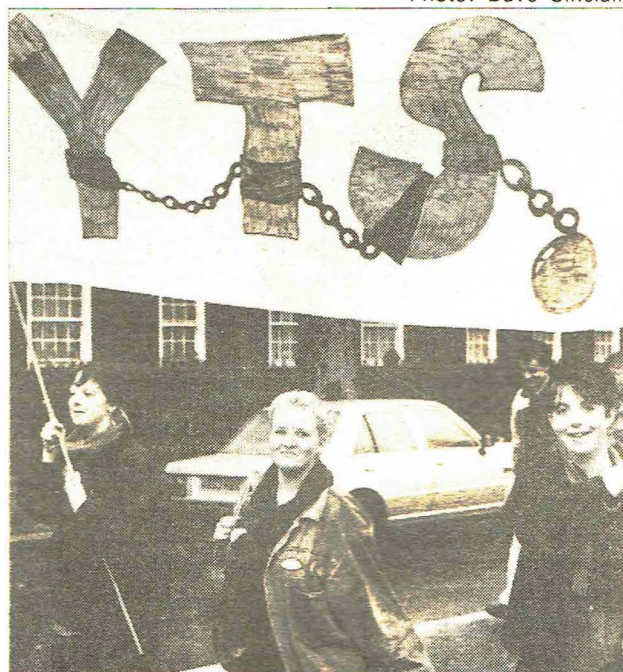
Our union is all for proper youth training. But we are not prepared to tolerate cheap labour schemes which can be used to replace our own jobs. Our action can also strike a blow for every trainee on a YTS scheme.

If the conditions we are fighting for are accepted, it could become a model for every other scheme. We demand:

- ☆ **No use of trainees to hide staff shortages or do the jobs of permanent staff.**
- ☆ **A guaranteed job for every trainee on completion of the scheme.**
- ☆ **Union rates of pay**
- ☆ **Extra staff to ensure trainees are properly trained and supervised.**

The one-day strike will be a great start. The NEC and DE activists must build on this and get a great victory for ourselves and every unemployed youth.

Photo: Dave Sinclair



**BECAUSE OF** the Youth Trade Union Rights Campaign's (YTURC) tremendous work in fighting the Youth Training Swindle, speakers from the campaign have been invited to speak at many of the civil servants' rallies.

Venues include: Glasgow, Cannon Cinema (11.30 am); Liverpool, Unemployed Centre (12.30 pm); Birmingham, Carr's Lane Centre (11.30 am); London, Central Hall, Westminster (11.30 am).

For reports of YTURC's lobby of Parliament last week, see page 5.

**THE TORIES** still intend to stop benefits for school leavers who don't get either a job or a YTS scheme. According to reliable information, they want to start next Easter.

By a Militant reporter

Families of next summer's school leavers will carry on getting child benefit until Christmas. Normally, this would stop at the end of August (unless the school student then carries on with full time education). The families of Easter school leavers will lose their child benefit from 30 June.

If you are a school leaver, all you will be able to get will be the YTS bridging allowance, once the child benefit stops. This will be a miserable £15 a week for no more than eight weeks in any twelve month period.

Once that eight weeks is up, you will get nothing, unless you have left a job or training scheme with what the Tories count as 'good reason'. Judging how 'good' a reason is will presumably be up to the MSC mandarins.

The only exception will be the severely disabled, single parents and young people living away from home because of the risk of parental violence.

The first two categories would not appear on the unemployment figures anyway. So the whole exercise is designed to harass school leavers into useless schemes which get young people used to slave wages, and at the same time, help Thatcher to lie about "reducing unemployment".

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## What we stand for

- The immediate introduction of a 35-hour week without loss in pay as a step towards the elimination of unemployment.
- Reversal of all Tory cuts and a massive programme of public works on housing, education, the health service, etc.
- A minimum wage of £120 a week tied to the cost of living for all, including sick and disabled people.
- A socialist plan of production democratically drawn up and implemented by committees involving the trade unions, shop stewards, the unwaged and small business people.
- Opposition to the capitalist Common Market, the EEC. For a socialist United States of Europe as a step towards a World Socialist Federation.
- Workers' management of the nationalised industries. These should be run on the basis of one-third of the places on the management board coming from the unions in the industry, one-third from the TUC representing the working class as a whole, and one-third from the government.
- Opposition to the Tory government's anti-union laws and reversal of attacks on the trade unions.
- Massive cuts in arms spending. Support for unilateral nuclear disarmament, but with the recognition that only a socialist change of society in Britain and internationally can eliminate the danger of a nuclear holocaust.
- Nationalisation of the top 200 monopolies, including the banks and insurance companies which control 80 per cent to 85 per cent of the economy. This should be through an Enabling Bill in Parliament with minimum compensation on the basis of proven need.