

TUC Demo
20 page special
Four page supplement
for new readers
pages 9-12

ONE DAY GENERAL STRIKE

BLOC
BROAD LEFT ORGANISING COMMITTEE

STATEMENT

AFTER 5 MARCH:-

- ★ Pass a resolution at your union branch/shop stewards committee for a one day general strike on 14 March.
- ★ Invite a health worker to speak at your workplace to appeal for solidarity action.
- ★ Campaign to get your workplace committed to strike action on 14 March.
- ★ Build support for solidarity action in other workplaces near yours.

**MARCH
14**

By John Macreadie

TUC General Council member (personal capacity)

AFTER EIGHT years of unrelenting Tory attacks, the fight back has begun. That is the meaning of the mass demonstrations on 5 March. Hundreds of thousands are demonstrating their support for the NHS.

The health service is one of the most treasured possessions of the working class. It was only secured in the teeth of bitter Tory opposition. Hypocritically Thatcher claims it is safe in her hands. But the Tories are hell-bent on a two tier health system, with decent care only for those who can afford it.

The super-exploited health workers have been driven beyond endurance. They are determined to take the future of the NHS into their own hands.

Spontaneous movements from below by health workers have focused the attention of the whole trade union movement on the need for national, united action to save the NHS. With workers throughout the country taking action in solidarity with the health workers, under pressure, the TUC called the mass demonstration.

The London march will be a tremendous show of working class strength. But it can only be a start. At the last TUC General Council meeting, I asked: "What next?" The Tories could ride out one demonstration.

They showed their contempt for the union leaders, by increasing prescription charges just days before the General Council was to lead the march through London.

I urged that 5 March should not just be

a rally with fighting speeches, but that it should be used to launch a one day general strike in support of Cohse's day of action on 14 March.

The strike by 39 Manchester nurses forced the Tories into a U-turn. It answered all the defeatist nonsense that militancy does not pay.

Just imagine the effect of a properly organised one day general strike. It would give Thatcher an idea of the full power of organised labour, ready and willing for further action if she does not provide the necessary resources for the NHS. Also it would enormously raise the self-confidence of the ranks of the organised working class.

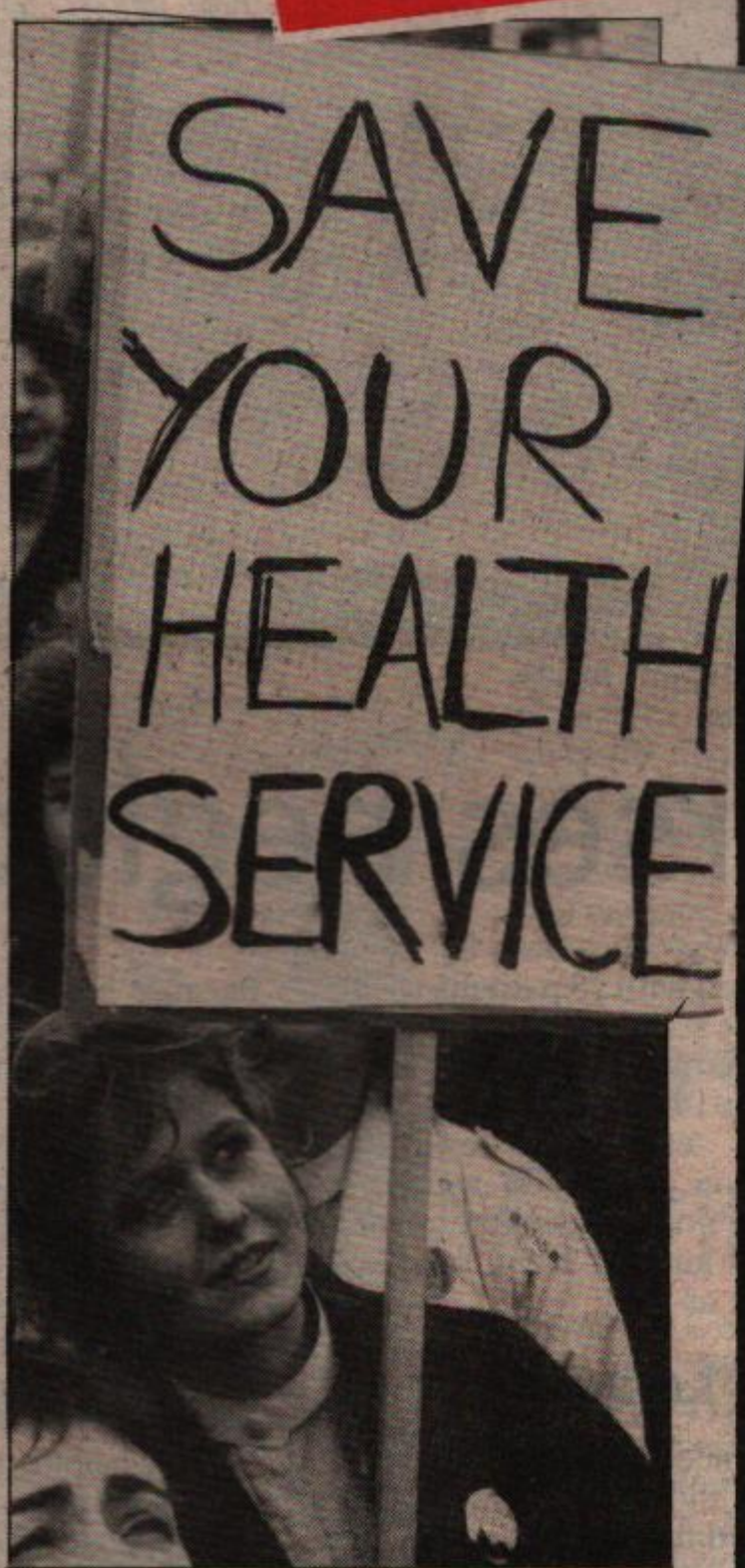
Fight victimisation

But at the recent General Council meeting, just five minutes were spent discussing the health dispute. I warned that without a co-ordinated lead, individual groups of workers taking solidarity action could be singled out for victimisation.

Now Thorn-EMI stewards in Manchester face a writ. Civil servants have also been threatened. If any workers are picked on for striking for the NHS, the trade unions must organise the fullest action to defend them.

But the best way to ensure there is no intimidation is to organise the most widespread action possible for 14 March. A one day general strike could trample underfoot all the anti-union laws the Tories have piled up.

Rank and file workers have been demanding a lead from the TUC. But



they have been continuing to take the lead themselves, calling for solidarity action throughout their industry and unions for 14 March. In the offices and factories we must prepare now to give the health workers our full support.

Give us one day's pay by March 9

WITH JUST one week to go we need another £30,000.

We appeal to every reader to send at least one day's pay to help pay for the thousands of leaflets, posters and placards we have produced explaining the need for a one day general strike.

Mike Luff, Bradford, sent £100 and Nicky Major, a Bristol health worker, sent £20. Follow their example.

On the Glasgow and Edinburgh health demos 70 supporters selling stickers raised over £700. Every supporter on 5 March should aim to match their achievement. (See page 13).

Inside

Peter Taaffe on a one day general strike see page 14/15

Rover privatisation see page 18

Left victory in TGWU see page 18

Michael, aged six, needs a new heart

Why his parents are fighting for the health service



Yvonne, Colin and Michael present a cheque for a gamma camera to a doctor and nurse.

IN FOUR WEEKS' time, our six year old son Michael goes to Harefield Hospital for a heart and lung transplant assessment. His illness has had a massive effect on our lives, which have become intertwined with the NHS.

By Colin and Yvonne Cheseman, Liverpool

From early on we needed to stand up for ourselves. Michael was very ill as a baby and a social worker was assigned to us. We were told of a case conference, but when we got there they had already had it. You feel guilty anyway when your kid's ill, even though you know it's not your fault. They told us we wanted Michael adopted—which we certainly did not!

From 14 months old, he spent a year at Heswall Hospital, Wirral. They were brilliant and built him up—although it was a big strain on the family. Yvonne took the

eldest lad to nursery, then spent four hours on buses for a two hour visit each day. I was working and spent my weekends at the hospital.

In 1983, Heswall was closed. We protested and wrote to Thatcher, Clarke and Fowler, explaining that this hospital was home to these children, and many would die if the hospital closed. Unfortunately this subsequently came true.

When they close hospitals, they say patients should be cared for in the community—but there aren't the facilities. There should be accommodation at hospitals for parents like ourselves, and for the whole family.

When we go to Harefield, we will have to leave our other three children with Yvonne's mum. Our family will be split up probably for months, which adds to the strain.



Our friend who went down with her little girl had to come back as she was asked to pay £7 a night to stay in a village near the hospital. When we knew we were going down we hoped it wouldn't happen after April or we wouldn't be able to claim our fares.

These are all extra worries—our major concern of course is Michael. Sometimes Harefield can't put people on the donor programme because of lack of money. If this happens I don't know what we'll do.

We sympathise with those parents who took a hospital to court. But we think they were wrong—they should have taken Thatcher to court!

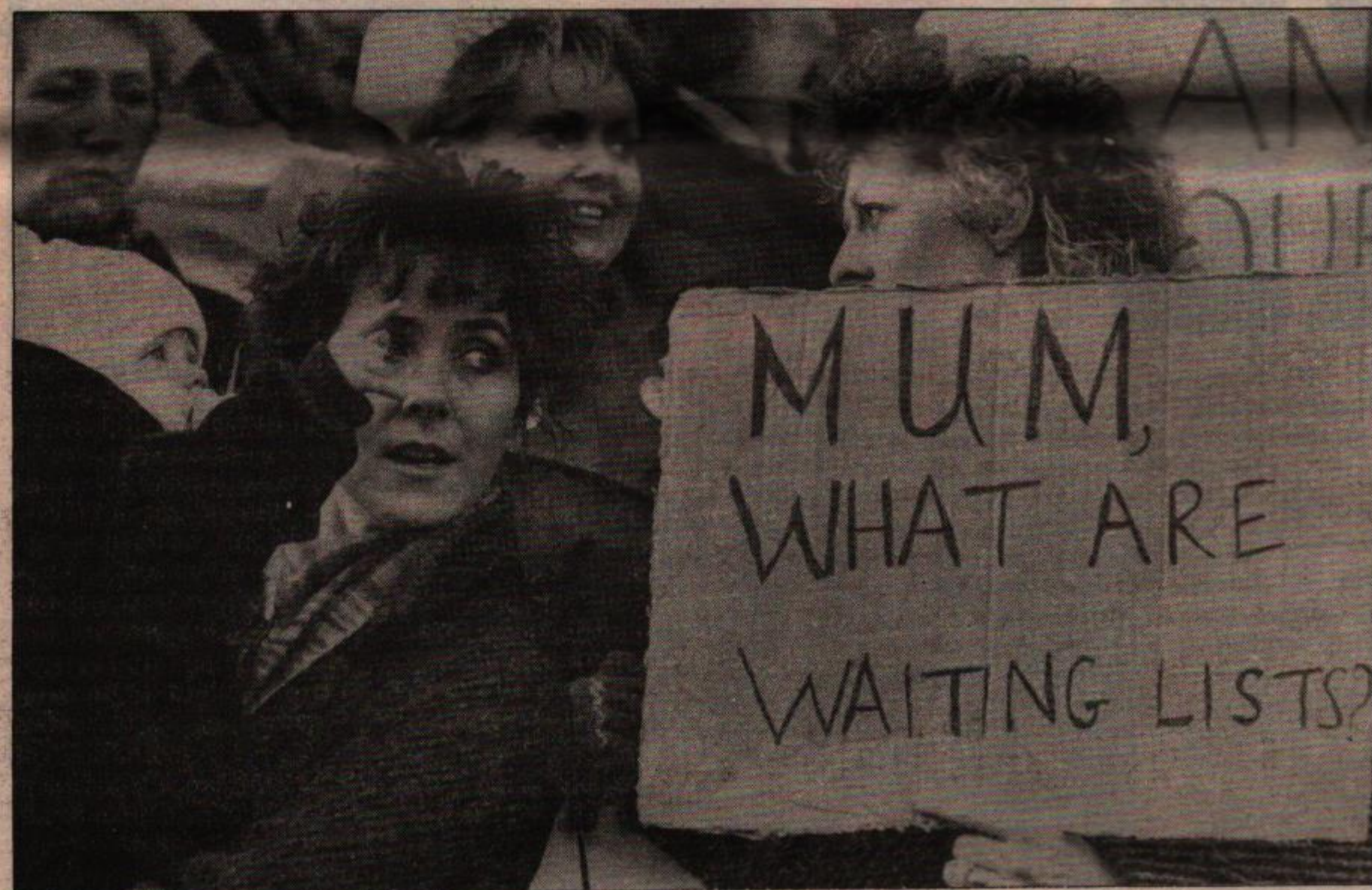
Over the last three years I have raised £7000 in 42 nights' pub collections dressed up as Father Xmas, Easter Bunny etc to pay for a gamma camera. Don't get me wrong, no way should it be charity that pays for these machines, but you're forced to do it to stop your kids suffering.

Down there they write Liverpool people off but if it hadn't been for them I couldn't have done it. Yuppies give you coppers where the working class will give you a pound.

Me and my mate and my eldest son collected 1,387 signatures against NHS cuts in six hours. We don't think there should be any limit on NHS spending.

We completely support nurses who go on strike—even if Michael was ill in hospital we would support them.

And if there was a one day general strike and thousands went down to Downing Street creating hell, Thatcher would have to listen!



Liverpool NHS day of action, 10 February.

Photo: Dave Sinclair.

Agency nursing covers up crisis

AGENCY NURSES are used to cover up shortages as tens of thousands of nurses have left. Some hospitals even ask nurses to work for agencies on their days off. You may work weeks without a day off or even work a night before an official day shift. Nobody monitors the days worked so patients, staff and agency nurses all suffer.

By Rosey Wrack

As agency staff cover vacancies, they get shifted from ward to ward and never settle in. Permanent staff have to show new nurses the procedures.

Nursing agencies are found in most areas, allowing nurses to work as many shifts as they like on higher pay rates than on the NHS. But they give no holiday or sick pay and staff find difficulty in joining a union branch.

Poverty pay causes a shortage of nurses which means hospitals depend on agencies, which further destroys NHS nursing.

Decent pay is the first priority to fight for. Staffing levels in hospitals should be designed to cover for sickness and other inevitable absences. There should be a proper establishment of

relief nurses at hospital and/or district level to cover short term gaps on the wards.

The NHS should also control the supply of temporary nurses. Some health authorities operate 'banks' of nurses who can't work regularly but join a register to work occasionally depending on their commitments.

Properly controlled by the health unions, this would be a way of replacing agencies. Nurses would be linked to one hospital or health district and be employed on NHS conditions of service.

These reforms would need a massive influx of funds. The labour movement must force this out of the government by action—or force them to resign.

AGENCY NURSES provided cover during recent nurses' strikes. How many other unions would allow other people to do their work during a dispute?

Ward management and the level of cover should be controlled by the union. If necessary nurses should be brought back into the wards from the picket lines, with some visible sign that they are strikers providing emergency cover.

Student nurses neglected

"I SUPPORT our industrial action because cuts affect patient care. People ask for an extra pillow but I can only give them a blanket wrapped in a pillow case!"

"You can only do things like washing, changing beds and giving out dinners. Usually you haven't got time to sit and talk. Yet that's so important."

"The other day I found time to sit with an old man who's partially blind and has problems feeding himself. I told him where the food was on the plate and helped him get it into his mouth. Usually it falls on the floor. He said it was the most he'd eaten in days."

"In school you learn what you are supposed to do but on the ward you are thrown in at the deep end. The staff are busy and have to let you get on with it."

"A ward with 28 patients usually has five staff including students—one in charge and two pairs looking after 14 patients each. That was the 'emergency level' we worked on our day of action! If someone's off sick you try to get a nurse off another ward, but they are short as well."

Learning

"You need eight or nine staff. Students should be there to learn but sometimes there has been one nurse with two first year students on a ward."

"On a medical ward we had a cardiac arrest so I was left to look after 28 patients while the other three nurses dealt with that."

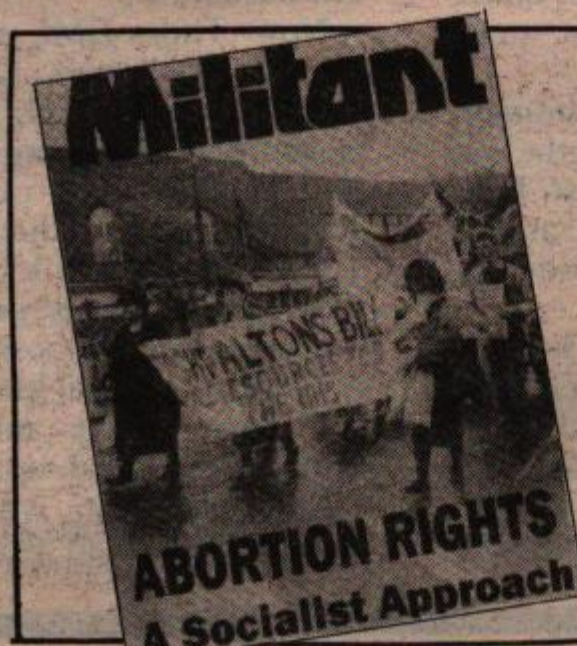
"Patients sometimes wait hours for an ambulance in the day room when they are being transferred

because somebody else needs their bed. People have come in for surgery and the beds haven't been vacated."

"Most student nurses feel neglected because of staff shortages. A couple of us want to set up a student nurse group. At our first meeting we'll discuss the Nottingham demonstration on 27 February, as well as 5 March and 14 March."

"A 24 hour general strike is a good idea. Health workers need the support of other workers. It was good to see Nacods and other union banners on the march the other week."

A student nurse and Cohse member at Queens Medical centre, Nottingham spoke to Militant



Militant Pamphlet

price 50p

cheques to World Socialist Books 3/13 Hepscoot Road, London E9.



At the 300-strong Broad Left Organising Committee (Bloc) lobby of the 24 February TUC meeting, members of Cohse and Nupe challenge Hector MacKenzie, Cohse general secretary to call a one day general strike. Photo: Militant

Tories exploit health workers' dedication

THE TORIES' show of concern for the NHS cuts no ice with health workers. They know from daily experience that Thatcher is taking advantage of their dedication by trying to run a health service on the cheap.

By a Nupe member

Two thirds of them work overtime to make up their poverty wages and to keep the under-staffed service running.

Health workers are super-exploited. 40 per cent of nurses are on less than the Low Pay Unit's threshold of £132.27 per week. And they are not just working for themselves. Nupe discovered that for 70 per cent of nurses their pay made up 40 per cent or more of the household's income.

But the Tories blackmail NHS staff by saying patients will suffer if they demand more pay, as increases can only be met at the expense of other health spending. Thatcher's 3 per cent offer this year is a slap in the face for nurses.

The offer includes a new grading structure with special extra payments for working in regions with acute shortage or in particular aspects of health and for taking extra responsibility. Higher grades would get more, but some basic grades could get very little.

Cynically the Tories want to appear to respond to nurses' demands and public disquiet, while trying to dis-



"A COMBINATION of low inflation and the tax reductions in 1987 means that pay rises of just under three per cent would compensate the average earner for price rises over the last 12 months."—Government submission to nurses' pay review body. In 1987 MPs awarded themselves a 21.9 per cent pay increase.

sipate the health workers' action and divide the nurses. But nothing fundamental will be solved.

Up to 50,000 nurses, around 10 per cent are leaving the health service each year because of low morale created by cuts, staff shortages and pay.

Vicious circle

There is a vicious circle. Nurses leave, unable to take the pressure any more; so the demands become more intense on those who are left who become desperate too. The Department of Health itself reports that nationally there is a 12.2 per cent shortage of nurses, 28.7 per cent in

★ HEALTH WORKERS receive £930 per year for London weighting: the police get £2000.

★ The Tories introduced 'realistic' charges for accommodation in nurses' homes in 1982 and then started a major drive to sell the homes off: the police get rent-free accommodation or a rent allowance, which amounts to between £1861 and £3722 per year in London.

★ Midwives and staff nurses reach their maximum pay level of £8600 after eight or nine years. They spend their first three years as student nurses on around £4000: a police constable's starting pay is £8352.

inner London.

But the number of patients being treated is increasing all the time.

Traditionally, nursing is the largest recruiter of young girls leaving school. But the numbers interested in nursing has fallen and there will be a 30 per cent drop in the number of 18 year olds by 1992. Unless male recruits can be attracted to nursing the NHS would have to recruit one in three suitably qualified female school leavers to maintain its complement of nurses.

When health workers act to improve wages and conditions they really are fighting for a better health service, with better staffing levels, providing better care for their patients.



Manchester NHS demonstration.

Women and the health service

THE HEALTH service is the largest employer of women in Britain, but its provisions for women workers are appalling.

Nearly nine tenths of all nurses are women but a nurse on maternity leave is not replaced. She is still included in the staff complement so other nurses have to work harder still until she returns.

The NHS management concentrate on "savings" which further discourage women, who could use their training and experience, from ever coming back. The

money is poor. There are few creches, preschool playgroups or childcare arrangements in the NHS and local government cutbacks make things even worse.

8 March is international women's day. This year, the British labour movement's first priorities in the fight for women's rights must be supporting in action the battle to save and improve the NHS, and opposing Alton's bill restricting abortion rights, which recently had its second reading.

Don't let Alton turn the clock back

ALL THE gains made by the working class in the post war boom are being attacked and women will suffer most of all.

By Angela Anderson

The health service made life better for working class women, now the Tories cut the NHS and talk of the community taking responsibility without any facilities being made available.

The reactionary Bill pushed through Parliament by Liberal MP David Alton is another part of this turning back of the clock. Many health authorities have been forced by lack of money to introduce in effect a 12 week limit on abortions. Alton's bill will put the statutory limit down from 28 to 18 weeks.

As with the Tories' cuts, the affluent will be able to afford private abortions. In the working class, we could see again women dying in casualty departments or on blood soaked mattresses in dingy back rooms.

A recent TV programme spoke to a man who paid £200 in 1964 to get his girl friend an illegal abortion from a Harley St doctor.

Before the 1967 Abortion Act abortion was illegal and the pregnant woman and anyone involved could be prosecuted. The 1967 act did not give abortion on demand, you still needed two doctors' opinion on the woman's health or the risk

of handicap.

But even before 1967, no restrictions applied if you had £200 and the right contacts. £200 was a lot; my wages in 1964, two years after leaving school, were £6 or £7 a week. A skilled male engineering worker got no more than £20.

It makes my blood boil that Alton and co want working class women to go back to the days of ignorance about sex, lack of contraception and fear of pregnancy.

In 1942, my mother was newly married, pregnant, living with in-laws in gross overcrowding far from friends and family in Ireland. Her only money was the small allowance from my father in the army in Africa.

Mental scars

After pressure from relatives she went to a back street abortionist. She had a massive haemorrhage and nearly died but my grandparents held off calling for help until the last minute, fearing prosecution.

To her dying day, my mother carried mental scars from her experience and blamed my grandfather. But the real culprit was the system which gave no alternative between unbearable conditions and back street surgery. It is the same system which leads to poverty, NHS cutbacks and attacks on abortion rights today.

Nurses defeat Canadian Tories

HOSPITAL NURSES in the state of Alberta, Canada have won a victory over the Tory provincial government after a 19 day strike (see Militant 29 January).

When they struck against the threat of a pay cut and deteriorating health care, 54 members of the United Nurses of Alberta (UNA) were fined, 139 were sacked and the UNA was fined \$250,000.

But determined picketing

with huge solidarity rallies forced the government to back off, to rehire all sacked nurses, to drop civil contempt charges and institute wage rises.

After the return to work, UNA members felt confident in their fighting abilities but many of them realised it was just the first skirmish in a battle against the most reactionary, anti union administration in Canada.

Militant calls for:

★ A massive injection of funds into the NHS. The £2 billion tax cuts should go to the NHS right away just to restore the standard of service to levels before the cuts.

★ A pay increase equal to at least 20 per cent for all health workers, including nurses. The unions should work out a clear demand for the allocation of the increase, but with a minimum base line of £135 per week.

★ No to the Tories' divide and rule through regional pay deals. Any regional differentials in health workers' cost of living to be covered by union-negotiated weighting allowances.

★ A 35 hour week for all health workers and a programme of recruitment and training to restore staffing levels in the NHS.

★ Reversal of all privatisation and an end to private contracts.

★ Abolition of all private

medicine. The private sector must be integrated into the NHS and consultants stopped from doing private work on NHS premises. All NHS workers to have the same conditions of work.

★ No more government appointed officials—for a democratically run NHS. Regional and district health authorities to be run by democratically elected committees of health unions, other trade unions and local community representatives.

★ Abolition of all charges for prescriptions, dental and optical care.

★ Nationalisation of the pharmaceutical industry under democratic workers' control.

★ Nationalisation of the 200 key monopolies and implementation of a socialist planned economy to fund a modern fully equipped and staffed health service.

State terror in N Ireland

AIDAN MCANESPIE, a shop steward for the Federated Workers' Union of Ireland, was shot dead in his home town of Aghnacloy, Co Tyrone, on 21 February. A British soldier fired from a border checkpoint where Aidan had been constantly harassed.

By Anton McCabe

"It was murder." his sister, Eilish McCabe, told *Militant*: "There is no way it was accidental. Aidan had been working in Monaghan Poultry Products for seven years and the harassment had been going on since he started working there.

"Two soldiers had on separate instances threatened his life. Aidan said: 'The scary thing was, what if they meant it?' At the end of September 1985 he was detained seven times in eight days.

"He wasn't involved in Sinn Fein, the IRA or anything. All he was in was the Gaelic Athletic Association."

Paul Clark, Federated Workers Union of Ireland



March in Dublin in protest at rejection of Birmingham Six's appeal.

Photo: Derek Speirs (Report).

branch secretary in Monaghan, told *Militant* that on at least two occasions Aidan spoke to him about the harassment:

"It took the form of delays of up to two hours which could happen twice daily. They took the seats out of the car and put them on the road. He made complaints to the RUC and they had a reverse effect.

"He was a very popular lad as a trade union representative, very efficient and reasonable. The branch members are shocked and angry."

EVENTS LIKE Aidan McAnespie's murder continue to expose the Anglo-Irish Agreement for the sham it is—nothing more than a cover for naked state repression.

Incredibly, only two days after Aidan MacAnespie's death, the British government announced the release of Private Ian Thain, sentenced to life for the killing of a West Belfast man, Thomas 'Kidso' Reilly, in 1983.

Thain, the only British soldier to have been convicted for the killing of an

unarmed civilian in N Ireland, despite the huge numbers of such killings since the beginning of the troubles, had spent only two years and two months in jail.

Reilly's father commented: "Who now can have faith in the system? Soldiers are going to think they can get away with serving only a couple of years for murder. It's horrific."

The Tories' decision to make permanent the Prevention of Terrorism Act confirms that they see

no stability in sight in N Ireland.

Repression

Hot on the heels of the decision not to prosecute the RUC officers involved in a shoot-to-kill policy and the rejection of the Birmingham Six appeal, these developments have placed strains on the Anglo-Irish Agreement. It remains alive only on paper. But the repression in the North continues.

The labour and trade union movement should

campaign strongly for an end to repression, sectarianism and poverty and for the building of a mass Labour party, fighting for a socialist non-sectarian programme.

It could mobilise the mass of catholic and protestant workers behind its banner, driving back the bigots and providing a socialist solution to the situation in the North.

By Manus Maguire

Botha cannot ban workers' struggle

BOTHA'S CLAMPDOWN on 17 opposition organisations, including the Congress of South African Trade Unions (Cosatu), the United Democratic Front (UDF) and the SA Youth Congress, has outraged workers internationally.

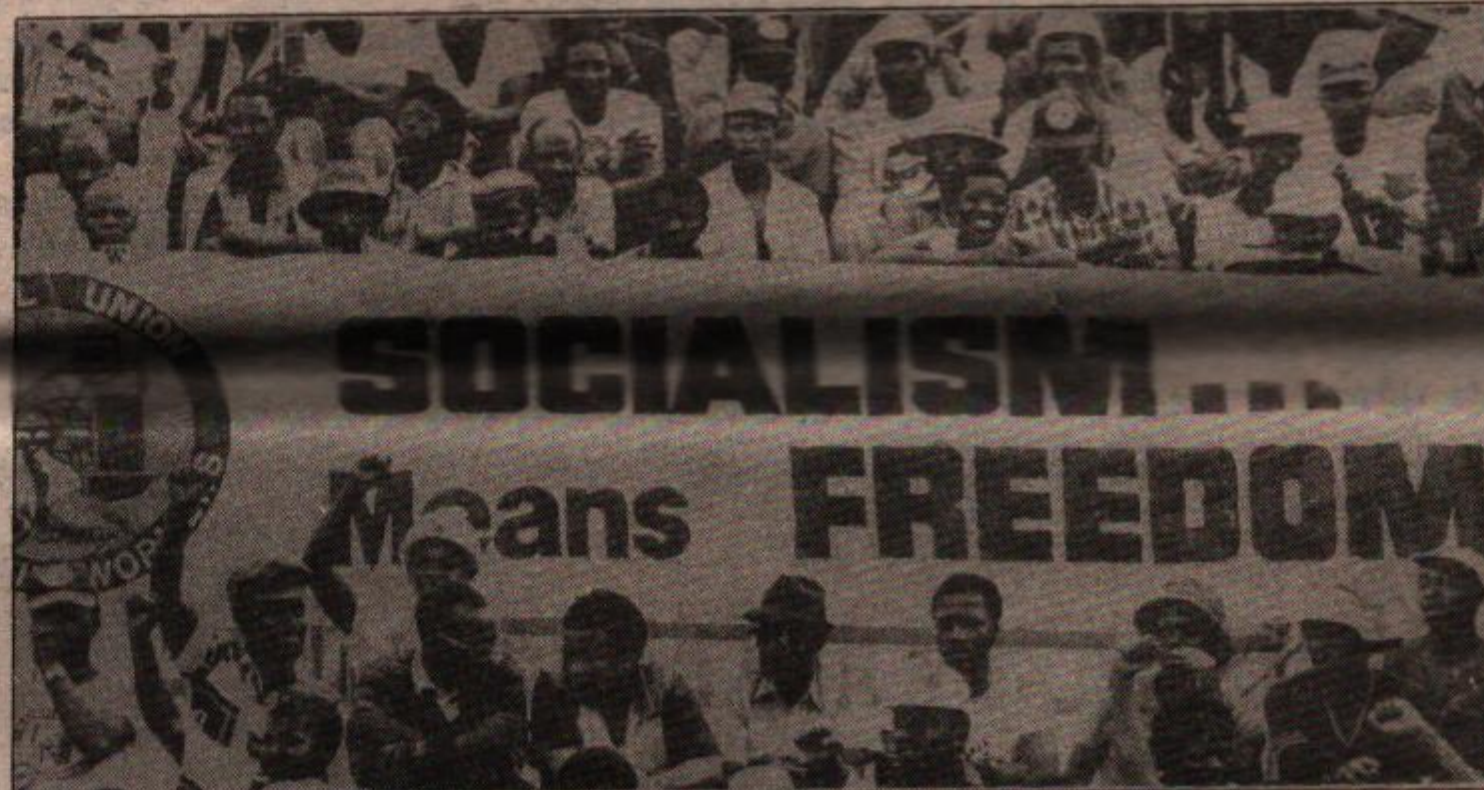
By George Collins

Legally the organisations "can do damn all from now on", as a government spokesman put it. Cosatu is allowed to carry on 'trade union' activities but barred from 'political' activities, such as campaigning for the release of metal workers' leader Moses Mayekiso, who is on trial for treason.

Botha is "turning the clock back 28 years" (to when the African National Congress was banned) declared Cosatu press officer Frank Meintjies.

But unlike 1960, the underlying strength of the working-class movement is intact, while the ruling class are split, demoralised and desperately searching for a solution to the crisis. Botha's measures have been greeted with dismay by the Tories and big business who want to steer the revolutionary movement towards a negotiated compromise with the regime.

Botha wants to impress



National Union of Mineworkers rally in Soweto.

white voters (who have been turning to the ultra-right opposition parties) particularly in two by-elections. More importantly, with elections to the new black municipal councils, he hopes to split the leadership of the mass organisations and limit the scope for opposition in the townships.

"Every single peaceful action we can take has now been criminalised", says UDF leader Alan Boesak. But narrowing down the scope for legal organisation will not prevent the struggle from continuing in defiance of the law.

Worker and youth activists have always faced repression. The latest

measures underline the revolutionary nature of the struggle and the need to combine legal with illegal methods.

Undefeated

The heroic fightback in Natal against the murder gangs of apartheid stooge Buthelezi illustrates the tasks facing the movement—to link the youth and workers together to fight on their daily demands, defend themselves arms in hand and prepare to overthrow the regime and abolish the oppressive capitalist system.

A serious movement by the working class and youth would force the regime to

retreat. The sit-in by 2,800 Mercedes Benz workers in East London, Eastern Cape, protesting at the arrest of a Cosatu official, shows the undefeated mood.

Activists will be turning with redoubled urgency to build the African National Congress underground as a revolutionary organisation of the working class and youth, to strengthen the trade unions and to prepare the next mass offensive.

IN LAST week's Militant we reprinted an article from Amandla, described as "paper of the Cape Youth Congress in South Africa". Amandla is the paper of the Bellville branch of CAYCO.

Armenians put 'reforms' to test

DEMONSTRATIONS OF over 200,000 in Armenia, possibly up to one million (the largest since 1917) have compelled Gorbachev to negotiate with representatives of the protestors and to offer the possibility of some concessions.

Troops were sent to Armenia and the regional Communist Party secretary was shouted down when he appealed for a return to work.

Despite Gorbachev's 'reforms', the national problem in Stalinist Russia is more intense than ever.

The protestors are demanding the reinclusion into the republic of Armenia of the autonomous region of Nagorny Karabakh, whose population is 80 per cent Armenian but is part of the republic of Azerbaijan.

Probably Gorbachev's glasnost gave the impression to the Armenians that there would be more tolerance of protests and the regime would listen to demands.

But the fact that 70 years after the Russian revolution, there should be a major controversy about where a region of 160,000 people should be allocated gives the lie to any idea that, apart from a nationalised economy, the Soviet regime has anything in common with socialism.

Within a democratic workers' state, with all subjugation eliminated, national rivalries would rapidly dissolve. Under Stalinism they have intensified.

Nothing remains within the Soviet Union of the legacy of Lenin of how to tackle the national question, without which the revolution would not have succeeded. By sympathetically handling the indignation of the oppressed nationalities, while not

conceding to national divisions amongst the workers, the unity of the working class was cemented and they were victorious throughout Russia.

But the overwhelmingly European Russian bureaucratic elite has been guilty of numerous crimes against the rights and sensitivities of the national minorities.

The bureaucracy jealously guard their unwarranted privileges by clamping down on all democratic rights. Genuine trade unions, free speech or free press and the right to self-determination for the nationalities, are all incompatible with Stalinism.

The bureaucracy is responsible for the situation now in Nagorny Karabakh. If it had enjoyed genuine autonomy the pressure for reincorporation into Armenia (they were separated in 1923) would probably not have arisen. But clearly the Armenians there have suffered at the hands of the Azerbaijani bureaucrats. As a sop the local Party chief, an Azerbaijani, has been sacked and replaced by an Armenian.

Gorbachev has been given one month to come up with a solution. But he must be concerned that if he yields too much this will only encourage new movements among the other national groupings.

The rights of the national minorities will never be respected under the rule of the bureaucracy. The realisation of the right to self-determination is only possible with the carrying through of the political revolution, driving out the bureaucrats, by all the workers of the USSR.

By Jeremy Birch

Natal bus drivers murdered

IN THE past ten weeks eight bus drivers in the Transport and General Workers Union (TGWU) employed by Sizanani Mazulu Transport in Pietermaritzburg, Natal, have been murdered, according to reports received by the Southern African Labour Education Project (Salep).

The Bantustan-based Inkatha and its gangster 'union', UWUSA, are turning their fire against TGWU activists. The bus drivers

played a crucial role in the general strike against the white election on 5 May 1987. Since then Inkatha and the state have singled them out for terrorist attack.

On 17/18 January TGWU bus drivers in the city came out on strike against the death of driver Phineas Mdluli. Gangsters in two cars had chased his bus and shot him. The drivers demand bullet-proofing of cabs, two-way radios and the arrest of all those

suspected of the killings.

Instead the employers, police and army prepared to dismiss 140 out of 200 drivers. The dismissal notices have now been withdrawn, but management has conceded none of the workers' demands. And the TGWU vice-president and Cosatu Natal regional chairman, Alfred Ndlovu, and at least seven other leading TGWU bus drivers have been detained indefinitely.

Salep calls on workers

in Britain, particularly TGWU members, to send messages of support to the TGWU drivers demanding the release of their leaders and supporting self-defence units against the death squads.

Messages to: TGWU, 1st floor, Jasat Building, 525 Berg Street, Pietermaritzburg, Natal, South Africa. Copies to: Salep, PO Box 77, London E8 4TB.

Scotland's biggest protest since 1971

ON WEDNESDAY 24 February Scotland held the biggest strikes and labour movement demonstrations since the fight for Upper Clyde Shipbuilders in 1971.

Nearly 100,000 workers took to the streets against attacks on the NHS and against privatisation.

Demonstrations in Glasgow and Edinburgh attracted 50,000 and 20,000 respectively.

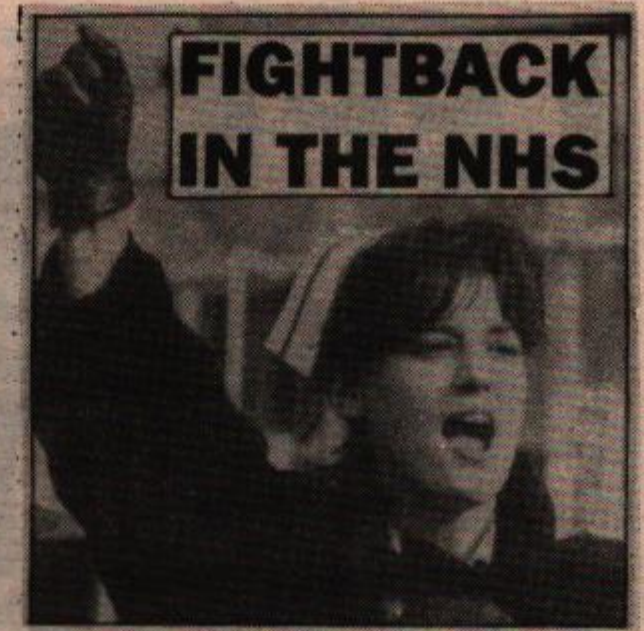
In Dundee, at least 5000 attended the demonstration, with workers from Timex and Michelin factories coming out. 10,000 demonstrated in Aberdeen, 4000

in Inverness.

There were protests in small towns like Dumfries and even in remote rural communities of the highlands and islands such as the Orkneys and Lochgilphead in Argyll.

It will be a bitter battle. Right

wing Scottish health spokesman Michael Forsyth's condemnation of the strikers as "disgraceful" shows that the campaign will have to be escalated to force the Tories to back down. But Wednesday's message was clear—the Tories must be stopped.



All out on 14 March

MANY UNION organisations now back the call for a one day general strike in defence of the NHS.

In Coventry, a conference organised by the health service joint union committee, engineering unions in the CSEU and the Trades Council passed a resolution from Coventry South East Labour Party, with only one against, for a one day general strike on 14 March with a major rally in the city.

Meetings are being organised at workplaces locally. Massey Ferguson workers are the first in the city to ballot for a strike.

Coventry SE MP Dave Nellist also put forward an 'early day motion' in Parliament, welcoming Cohse's day of action, and looking forward to a massive mobilisation.

Swansea Trades Council voted for a 24 hour general strike on 14 March and is inviting health union stewards to address workplaces calling for support. In Stevenage, the 'workers' council' with union representatives from British Aerospace and other workplaces plan action in defence of the NHS.

Other union bodies to back the 24 hour strike call include branches in the Stoke area such as Cheddleton Cohse, Stollington Nupe and Bagnall Nupe. Many CPSA branches back the call, not all in industrial areas, for instance Land Registry branch in Tunbridge Wells!

Council workers facing cuts such as Ilea Schoolkeepers, Southwark Nalco, North Tyne Council JSSC and Manchester Nalco EC are also saying all out on 14 March!

★ In contrast, most union leaderships are doing their best to stifle initiatives. When Ealing NUT sent a resolution backing a 24 hour general strike to NUT general secretary Fred Jarvis, he replied that "there will be no question of the TUC calling for a one day strike." The letter was posted on 23 February, the day before the TUC meeting.

IN GLASGOW, a massive phalanx of 40,000 to 50,000 health workers, local authority, civil service, engineering and shipyard workers was still winding its way through the city centre two and a half hours after the first contingents arrived at the rally.

One incident vividly illustrates the overwhelming public support. The Tory-appointed Greater Glasgow Health Board told newspaper reporters and TV crews to descend on Duke St. geriatric hospital. They promised them blood-curdling stories of horrific suffering as a result of union action.

Instead they found both the nursing staff who remained on duty and the patients solidly behind the strike. Nursing officer Mrs Moira Shanks told the press: "A lot of old folk in here remember the 1926 general strike. They wanted to join the picket line but we told them it was far too cold."

By Alan McCombes



Over 700 Militant stickers were sold on the Glasgow demonstration together with over 10,000 Militant stickers calling for a one day general strike. Photo: Militant

'We won't be intimidated'

OVER TWENTY thousand marched in Edinburgh, the biggest demonstration in the city for decades.

Workers from scores of factories, offices and pits struck in solidarity with NHS workers. Bilston Glen miners, postmen, firefighters, local authority workers, dockyard workers from Rosyth, trade unionists from Ferranti and many other factories

came out.

Members of the public applauded and shouted support as the march went by. The response took the organisers by surprise. The hall they booked, holding 3,000, was full before many demonstrators had even left the rallying point.

Literally thousands wore Militant stickers calling for a one day general strike—most demon-

strators agreed with our demand.

In a whisky bottling factory in Edinburgh, the predominantly women workforce defied management threats and went on strike. The women said they would go back to work with the stickers on their overalls to show they would not be intimidated and to show their support for further action to defend the

NHS.

It was mainly union activists who organised walkouts from their own factories. If the union leaders had called and campaigned for solidarity action in the workplaces, there would have been an even greater response.

By Eddie Donaghy

Message for Labour

THE DRAMATIC impact of health workers', car workers' and seafarers' struggles broke into the shuttered atmosphere of Labour's national executive (NEC) meeting on 24 February.

The union representatives, though mainly on the right, can feel pressure building beneath them. Eddie Haigh of the TGWU said: "There is a change in the mood of workers and the movement is coming from below."

Sam McCluskie from the seafarers showed the dilemma of right wing union leaders, warning that if anyone told his striking Dover members to go back to work, "they would hang you!"

But the parliamentary leadership is still obsessed by the supposed electoral damage from strikes. Neil Kinnock thought the strike wave might just be "a series of coincidences. None of us must mistake individual enthusiasm for a mass movement. We shouldn't fall foul of the two feet syndrome." If this means anything at all, it means Labour should not as a

matter of course support workers in struggle.

Kinnock was even reluctant for the NEC to send a message of support to the Scottish NHS day of action that very day, claiming at first that support from the party in Scotland was sufficient.

Having dealt with the class struggle, the NEC then moved on to its standing item—purging socialists. General Secretary Larry Whitty had received a letter from his predecessor, Jim Mortimer (now a Labour activist in Bermondsey), complaining about the behaviour of London Labour Party officials.

They had decided who to appoint as ward organisers in place of the suspended Bermondsey party branches, before the NEC had even met to decide on suspension! They had also drawn up lists of Bermondsey general management committee members' political views. Jim Mortimer objected that he was classified a "Militant fellow-traveller."

This raised issues of "legal and

political morality" Whitty declared: "The term fellow-traveller should never be used in the movement because it means guilt by association."

This is the same Larry Whitty who at last year's Labour conference justified expelling Felicity Dowling, former secretary of Liverpool District Labour Party, saying that even though there was insufficient concrete evidence, she was "guilty by association" with Militant.

Whitty now says that once the Bermondsey inquiry finishes, they will have to investigate what has been going on at the London office!

But national party leaders are to blame if their local officials ignore elementary justice. The leadership has deliberately created an atmosphere of intolerance in the party.

Labour's ranks must tell the leaders: "Back the health workers against Thatcher, and bury the witch-hunt".

By a Militant reporter

Livingstone vindicates Liverpool

OVER 800 students packed into a meeting called by Liverpool University Labour Club, in support of the 47 surcharged Liverpool councillors. They enthusiastically greeted Tony Mulhearn who spoke on behalf of victimised councillors and recounted the struggle they waged.

Following him, Ken Livingstone had to admit of the rate-capping battle: "Liverpool stood firm, while we in London



Ken Livingstone could not deliver." He also said that he supported a 24 hour general strike in defence of the NHS on 14 March.



Addicted to expulsion
FORMER LABOUR MP, Robert Kilroy Silk, is not satisfied with trying to throw socialists out of the Labour Party. Now he wants a political refugee thrown out of the country.

In an article written in the Police Federation journal, entitled "No such thing as sanctuary", he calls for police action to evict Viraj Mendis from the church in Manchester where he has been forced to stay while fighting deportation back to Sri Lanka.

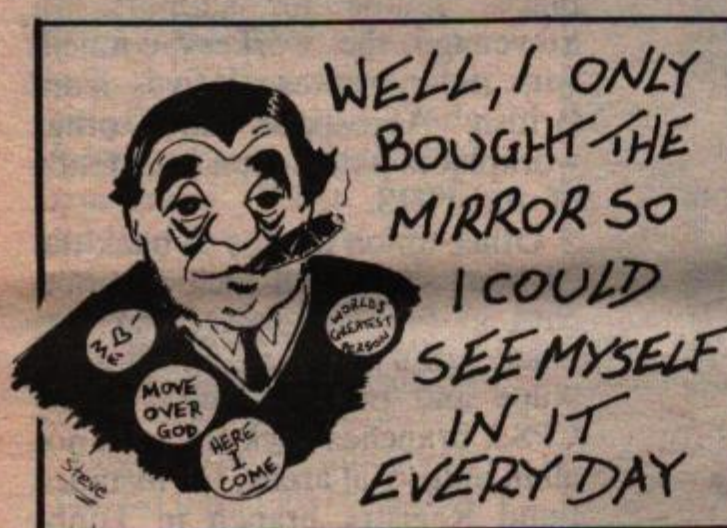
Did anyone ever remember to expel Kilroy from the Labour Party?

An alternative to Alton

DAVID ALTON is an ex-student of Liverpool Institute of Higher Education, a voluntary college partly funded by the Catholic church. For the last two years the student union has opposed abortion.

It recently discussed a motion to oppose Alton's bill, which was seconded by Fels member Colette Williams.

Despite their illustrious predecessor, the students voted against Alton's bill by 79 to 70.



Miraculous conversion

"RED-FACED AND shaking his fist, (he) said he would have to be 'dragged through the door to work for a crook and a monster like Robert Maxwell'."

Who was this courageous man of principle, quoted in John Pilger's book *Heroes*?

None other than Joe Haines, Militant-hater, ex-press secretary to Harold Wilson and now author of "the incredible Robert Maxwell story-official".

Haines's incredible display of sycophancy is billed in the *Mirror* as "the definitive biography of one of the century's most extraordinary men".

A free press? Of course!

Cry Freedom

"WE THOUGHT we had come to freedom," said Sherwan and Sayran Rashid, Kurdish refugees from both Iran and Iraq.

But 'freedom' had an ugly face in the form of the British immigration service. Sayran was taken away and hit in the face when he struggled. They were strip-searched and questioned, "but we were not sure what information we should give."

The couple and their children were detained for ten days and then returned to the airport.

"Two men and two women officials handcuffed me with my hands behind my back and straps around my feet. My husband was handcuffed too. The officials said: 'If we don't restrain you, you might try to kill yourselves'."

Such racism and brutality are the inevitable products of immigration controls.

An attack on unemployed and unions

NORMAN FOWLER, secretary of state for 'employment', wants to reduce the unemployment figures to under 2 million by the next election. The Tories have achieved their greatest successes so far in this field by disguising unemployment with their so-called training schemes.

By David Archibald
YTURC National Secretary

So Fowler proposes more of the same in the new White Paper, *Training for Employment*. He intends to introduce a New Adult Training Programme (NATP) in September.

NATP will be a malicious attack on the unemployed—and on the trade union movement.

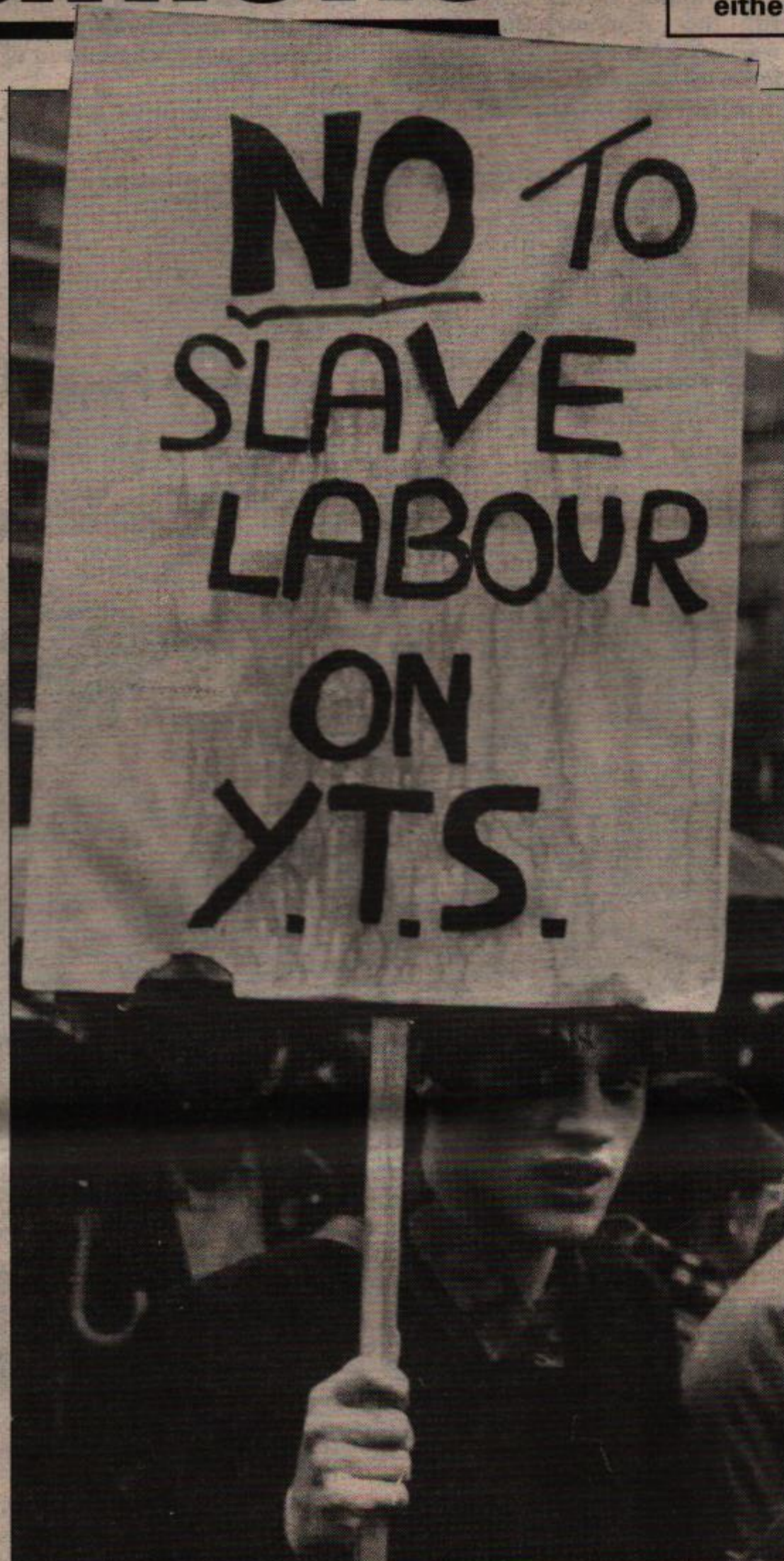
It will supposedly provide training for 600,000 long term unemployed every year. The 350,000 between 18 and 24 will be guaranteed places on the scheme. They will have to work a 40 hour week for their benefit plus £10!

There is little doubt it will be made compulsory. Fowler refused to deny this when questioned in Parliament. The new Employment Bill states that claimants will lose up to 40 per cent of their benefits if they refuse to work on "an approved training scheme".

The Tories intend to create a pool of cheap labour to boost profits. The White Paper says that training will be based on the YTS model.

What a model! There have been 41 deaths, 1,437 major injuries and 14,312 other accidents on the scheme. "The potential benefits to employers will be great," brags the White Paper!

The new scheme will also have serious repercussions for the unions. Part of the Tory strategy has been to lower the



On YTURC's lobby of parliament last year. YTURC has been fighting YTS conscription plans for six years. Photo: Dave Sinclair

sights of youth through YTS. It has led to young workers' wages falling by eight per cent for males and 12 per cent for females relative to adults.

NATP will escalate this process. The low income on it will be used to bring all wages down and employers will cut back on their existing workforces. The

Frauds!

ONE AREA where the Tories have created jobs is in hounding the unemployed. Although they admit that £1 billion of benefit goes unclaimed, they are obsessed with finding benefit fraud among the unemployed.

Their White Paper boasts that they have doubled the number of fraud investigators in the last four years and will carry on adding staff. And they're not on YTS or JTS, either!

Employment Gazette estimates that up to 62 per cent of proper jobs in firms with less than 100 employees have been replaced by 'trainees'.

The unions must have no truck with this scheme. Labour employment spokesperson, Clare Short, has called on unions and local authorities to refuse to run it.

But unbelievably, some TUC leaders have suggested that the scheme is a step forward. Roy Grantham, right-wing leader of the white collar union APEX, tried to get the scheme endorsed. He said "the proposed new programme guaranteed a significant lead over benefits"! Well, he won't have to live on the money, will he?

TUC

The TUC General Council are still undecided on the issue. At their February meeting they agreed to write to Fowler "seeking assurances" that the scheme will not be compulsory.

They must go further than this! They must fight for:

- ★ No compulsory schemes (YTS or NATP)
- ★ No job substitution
- ★ Union agreement of all schemes—both nationally and locally
- ★ Union rates of pay for all trainees
- ★ Employee status for trainees
- ★ A guaranteed job at the end of training

There are 900,000 children in the families of the long-term unemployed. Youth must fight, whether the TUC is prepared to or not. That is why the Youth Trades Union Rights Campaign has called its youth strike on 14 March. We need the support of the organised working class to win. If workers and youth fight together, we can force the Tories to back down.

Stop the decline

MEMBERSHIP DOWN by more than 500, 15 Labour clubs threatened with disqualification, rules being swiftly changed. This is the background to the annual conference of the National Organisation of Labour Students (Nols), this weekend.

Amidst a hail of attacks from the Tories, including the threat of replacing grants with loans, privatisation of education, and cuts in grants, Labour students desperately need to hammer out a socialist strategy to fight back.

Unfortunately, the conference has been organised so as to preserve the present 'Democratic Left' leadership rather than halt the Tories' attacks.

The Nols leaders have run Nols abysmally this year, and their National Committee report openly refer to their "doom and gloom". No independent Nols campaigns have been run and their leadership of the National Union of Students (NUS) has been disastrous. No efforts have been made to link students with workers involved in the defence of education.

But the Tories are still aware of what a threat NUS could be and over 200 Tory MPs have signed a motion calling for an end

to the NUS 'closed shop'. The signatories of the motion include Rosie Barnes of the SDP; but Pauline McNeil, the Democratic Left Labour president of NUS Scotland recommended, at last NOLS council, that the SDP should be represented on the NUS Executive.

With 'leaders' like that, there is no doubt that genuine democratic debate within Nols would lead to a Marxist leadership for the organisation. Aware of this, the Labour Party student organiser, Sally Morgan has again attempted to block opposition by totally bureaucratic means.

Contempt

Portsmouth Poly Labour Club have been ruled out because the letter informing Nols of their delegate selection meeting was held up by strike action of student union workers who deal with the post. Despite a letter from the Nupe branch secretary explaining the delay, the Conference Credentials Committee of Sally Morgan, Joyce Gould, and Diane Jenda viewed the appeal with contempt. Incredibly, delegates will be sat in a tiny conference as a mass

Labour students' conference

march will be taking place just down the road in defence of the NHS. The Democratic Left majority on the Nols National Committee voted against calls for the conference to be postponed by one week and lied to the membership, accusing Marxists of trying to cancel Nols Conference altogether!

The Conference will not represent the real views of ordinary Nols members. All members must fight now for democracy in Nols and build mass Labour clubs in their colleges. At the moment Nols is a tiny organisation providing a step ladder for the careers of a clique. But with mass Labour clubs in every college Nols can become a campaigning socialist organisation linking students with the strength of the labour movement to defeat the Tories.

By a Nols national committee member

NO TO SLAVE LABOUR SCHEMES SUPPORT THE HEALTH WORKERS



Youth STRIKE MON 14 MARCH

Midlands set to fight

"I REMEMBER leaving school. We felt that we got nothing. It's alright for me, I'm an apprentice now. But I'd still strike for the school students and YTS trainees. They've got no future." Bob, 16 year old tool-making apprentice.

The mood amongst West Midlands youth is to fight. Up and down the region colleges and schools have been voting to come out on strike.

Already three colleges in Birmingham have voted for strike action. At one meeting of 23 college students, 20 joined the Young Socialists then and there. In Coventry and the Black Country meetings have been held at several school gates of 120 to 150 youth, who've agreed to join YTURC.

Rover

The strike committee in Birmingham has now met four times and is being attended by the best organisers from every school and college. When a young Rover shop steward spoke at the last meeting school students volunteered to take petitions to school so as to raise money in solidarity.

Some unions have given us a good response, but most of our finance has been raised in buckets outside concerts. We are confident that we will fill the Hummingbird night club in Birmingham with 5,000 youth on 14 March.

By Chris McCann Birmingham YTURC secretary

Social Security Act

Student benefits slashed

CHANGES IN the social security system in April will seriously affect students in higher and further education.

Many students already have debts of hundreds of pounds. The Tories will push them still deeper into debt.

Supplementary benefit will be abolished and replaced by allowances determined by age. If you're over 25, you'll be worth £33.40 but if you're between 18 and 24, like the overwhelming majority of students, you'll only get £26.05. Extra payments will be available to other students with children and disabled students.

Even housing benefit payments will be determined by age!

Heating and laundry allowances will be abolished and the government will only fund 80 per cent of rate charges, so students will have to find more for the rent.

This could mean London students losing £9.50 in housing benefit, says NUS. Students outside London will lose up to £4.50.

But the Tories may be kind and relieve students of the worry of coping with these changes. A Department of Education and Science review of student maintenance coming out in the summer is expected to propose taking them out of the social security system altogether!

Very few students are aware of

Socialists (LPYS) afterwards.

Now YTURC speakers and nurses are being sent to Doncaster NUM branches and an LPYS speaker has been invited to a Cohse learner nurses' meeting.

YTURC in other areas should try to repeat this initiative.

By Angela Maclean Stocksbridge LPYS secretary



20,000 students demonstrated against the Education Reform Bill on 27 February. Thousands more FE students would have attended if NUS had organised the march on a weekday. Photo: Steve Gardiner.

Evil force in Pollok?

THE REWARD for success has been suspension for one of Pollok's two Young Socialists (YS) branches.

The branch has 110 members, a quarter of the local Labour Party's membership, and a campaigning record second to none. An additional branch has just been formed, because of the growth in membership.

But right-wingers submitted a report to the party's general committee (GC) about the new branch's inaugural meeting.

It arrogantly asserted that most of the 35 youth at the meeting didn't know what they were doing or why they were there, didn't know the rules of the Labour Party and didn't show "respect to the constituency officers present".

Threats

There were also disgraceful claims of "veiled threats" against any member who raised opposition to the majority. Two of those who were supposed to have been threatened denied it at the GC, but this was ignored!

The real reason for the suspension was revealed by the MP's wife at the GC, at which there were 30 odd YS delegates and visitors. In her well trained, lecturer's voice she said: "There is an evil force that is leading these youth...that has to be tackled."

The right wing are determined to carry out a witch-hunt against youth for political reasons.

They are going to have an "investigation" into the YS branch. They won the vote, but only by 40 to 33 and so we will campaign to build our YS.

YS members at the meeting could not refrain from laughing at these ravings.

We know why we joined the LPYS. Not for careers but to change society!

Send letters of protest to:

Fred Adams Pollok CLP secretary 54 Terreagles Ave. Pollokshields Glasgow.

Where's the training?

AHJAZ CHOUDRY went on a Bradford council YTS for clerical work in August 1986 and worked in four different placements.

"The first place I went to I got a right shock when the boss gave me some overalls to put on. I thought I would be working in an office.

"After that I worked in a library. But I learnt all the work I had to do in one week

"I felt like leaving

several times but my parents persuaded me not to, and also because I would get no benefits for 13 weeks.

"I was told at the beginning that there would be no chance of me getting a job after YTS.

"When I did leave I went straight onto the dole and have been looking for a job ever since. Any chance of getting a job is nil.

"My cousin was fired from the YTS because

she swore at the manageress who had been picking on her all the time. My sister is also on YTS as a nursing assistant, which is a skilled job. I've got about ten mates who have all been on YTS. They are all in the same position as me."

This is why YTURC demands proper training on YTS and a guaranteed job at the end.



Youth Trade Union Rights Campaign NATIONAL CONFERENCE 1-3 APRIL WINTER GDNS BLACKPOOL

For more information contact: YTURC national secretary, PO Box 390 London SE4 1NS.

Ershad's election fiasco

SINCE LAST November Bangladesh has been shaken by a continuous wave of unrest.

In desperation the regime of President Ershad has returned to its traditional method of dealing with opposition: the baton, the riot shield and bullet.

In the face of demands for his resignation, Ershad has called presidential elections for 3 March. But with the opposition leaders threaten-

ing to boycott the election, the regime is faced with a disaster.

The crisis in this country of 115 million people has serious implications for the Indian subcontinent and South Asia as a whole. MATT WRACK looks at the rich traditions of revolutionary struggle in Bangladesh which form the background to the present situation.

Bangladesh's revolutionary traditions

IN 1947, when British imperialism was forced out of India, they partitioned the subcontinent along religious lines, creating the new states of India and Pakistan.

The division was totally artificial. Pakistan existed as two sectors, East and West, divided by 1,000 miles of Indian territory. Their only common feature was the Islamic religion.

Pakistan was dominated by the capitalists, landlords and generals of the West. Industry and the civil service were controlled by the elite of West Pakistan.

Urdu, spoken by only 7 per cent of the population, was declared the national language. The Bengali language of the Eastern sector, spoken by 50 per cent of the population, was not recognised.

East Pakistan was exploited by the Pakistani ruling class. Between 1948 and 1969 an estimated \$2.6 billion was transferred from the Eastern to the Western sector.

These factors created the demand for regional autonomy, and later independence, for East Pakistan.

Mass support

The Awami League in the East, led by Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, built mass support for its programme of a federal Pakistan with regional autonomy.

Following enormous upheavals in 1968-69 the generals were forced to call an election. In East Pakistan the Awami League won 167 out of 169 seats, giving it an overall majority in the National Assembly.

The Western ruling class was shocked. General Yahya Khan, the Army Commander in Chief, decided that things had gone too far, and refused to allow the Assembly to convene.

This provoked a storm in East Pakistan. Yahya Khan responded by drafting 100,000 troops into Dhaka. On 25 March 1971 they launched their attack to wipe out the Bengali opposition movement.

This was the beginning of a civil war in which three million died and ten million were turned into refugees.

The genocidal attacks by the Pakistani forces created a mood of fierce resistance among the Bengali masses. Rapidly, opposition was or-



Ershad's method of dealing with opposition.

ganised by the workers, students and peasants. Twenty thousand Bengali troops and police joined the resistance.

The creation of this liberation army, the Mukti Bahini, denied Pakistan the quick victory that was expected. With the prospect of a long guerilla war, the imperialist powers became increasingly concerned.

They feared that the struggle would develop along the lines of Vietnam or Cuba, leading to the overthrow of capitalism and landlordism, with the emergence of a deformed workers' state under military-bureaucratic rule.

The Indian ruling class was especially concerned. The last thing they wanted was a 'Vietnam' on their doorstep. They needed to cut across the revolutionary development in East Pakistan and the advance of the Mukti Bahini.

They also saw the opportunity to deal a major blow to Pakistan and assert In-

dian domination in the subcontinent.

These factors led India to intervene. By December the Pakistanis had surrendered. The new state of Bangladesh was independent—and capitalism had been saved.

Devastated

Bangladesh faced enormous problems. Already one of the poorest countries in the world, it had been devastated by the war. The influx of aid led to massive corruption among officials.

Joining the Awami League came to be seen as a ticket for the gravy train. The crisis was intensified by serious floods in 1974. Opposition began to develop to Mujib's government. Within the Awami League itself numerous factions appeared.

In 1975 Mujib resorted to repressive measures; this opened a year of enormous upheaval. In August Mujib

was murdered by a group of junior officers. This was met by a counter-coup on 3 November.

Then, on 7 November, the troops began to mutiny. Organised into a Revolutionary People's Army and a Revolutionary Soldiers' Organisation, they presented 12 demands to democratise the army and society.

Seventy per cent of the officers fled their units or surrendered to the troops. Sections of the mutineers, influenced by the JSD (Socialist Nationalist Party), saw the need to link their struggle to that of the peasants and workers.

What was lacking was decisive leadership. Instead of organising workers and peasants to take control of society, the JSD and the mutineers gave support to General Zia-ur Rahman, the Army Chief of Staff.

Initially, General Zia was obliged to sign the troops' demands. But by 23 November he felt strong



enough to start 'restoring order' in the armed forces.

Zia's counter-coup led to fierce repression against the left. His intervention also showed where real power lay in Bangladesh. Having done the dirty work for the ruling class, Zia was not a man to step back into the shadows. In less than two years he was declared the President of Bangladesh.

But far from providing strong and stable rule, Zia could only perform a desperate balancing act. Faced with the opposition of all political parties, he decided in 1978 to create his own—the Bangladesh National Party.

Unfortunately for Zia, all his efforts led to alienation among his erstwhile supporters in the military. There were no less than 20 attempted coups and mutinies against his rule. Finally, in May 1981, he was assassinated.

Ershad

Bangladesh was threatened with a further period of chaos. Once again the Army Chief of Staff stepped in to 'save the day': General Hossain Mohammed Ershad, following in Zia's footsteps, ensured that 'law and order' was maintained.

In fact, real power had again been shown to lie with the 'armed bodies of men'. In March 1982 Ershad declared martial law 'to save the country from social, economic and political bankruptcy', and dismissed the elected BNP President.

Ershad's period in power has in many ways been a farcical rerun of the Zia years. He has held blatantly fixed parliamentary elections and a bogus presidential election. If opposition grows, the iron fist of the military is always present.

But Ershad's regime is far from being strong. Like other military regimes, it has arisen from the enormous crisis in society, and reflects the inability of the ruling class to maintain control through 'normal' methods.

At best, military rule provides a temporary reprieve for the ruling class.

Ershad's attempt to make the transition from military ruler to civilian president has been a disaster. His own Jatiya Party is now his only visible

support.

In the army, the officers are increasingly unsure that Ershad can control the situation. The rank and file have enormous sympathy for their brothers and sisters demonstrating on the streets.

A section of the army may try to dump Ershad if the opposition movement continues. One option would be to attempt a deal with the BNP and its leader, Zia's widow.

After all, Mrs Zia's main disagreement with Ershad has been that he got in the way of her own political ambitions.

Meanwhile, both Sheikh Hasina (daughter of Sheikh Mujibur), leader of the Awami League, and Mrs Zia have refused to compromise with Ershad. They believe they can get more by rejecting his elections and relying on the pressure of the masses.

The greatest danger to the revolutionary movement in Bangladesh now is the weakness of its own leadership. Neither the Awami League, nor the BNP, is putting forward any alternative to capitalist and landlord rule.

The mass movement cannot continue indefinitely without a clear programme for overthrowing Ershad. But, having achieved this, the masses will want to continue and solve their real problems. This would mean the end of capitalism—a danger Sheikh Hasina and Mrs Zia are determined to avoid.

'Just enough'

That is why they attempt to turn the mass struggles on and off like a tap, in the hope of applying 'just enough' pressure to dislodge Ershad and open the way for themselves.

If this strategy is pursued, it will eventually tire the masses. But as long as the fundamental problems of poverty and exploitation continue, they will return to the struggle again and again.

Increasingly, activists among the workers, youth and peasants will search for a socialist programme capable of uniting the masses in the struggle for power.

Ershad's election will solve nothing. It will only exacerbate still further the revolutionary tensions that are building up in Bangladesh.

Militant and the future of Labour



Militant Albert Hall rally 1986.

THERE HAVE BEEN few press campaigns as vicious as the one conducted against *Militant* and its supporters in the Labour Party. In four years there have been over 2000 items in the national press alone, almost every one distorting the views of the paper, and spiced with hair-raising allegations.

By John Pickard

A recent article in *The Sunday Times*, typifying the paranoia, reported that 30 NUM lodge secretaries in South Wales were supporters of *Militant*, although there are only 12 pits in the area. Right wing Labour Party leaders have dutifully taken their cue from the Press, framing and expelling *Militant* supporters, parroting the Tories' abuse and ludicrous allegations.

New readers of *Militant* should ask themselves why this is so. Why do the Tories and Labour's right wing echo each other in their condemnations of *Militant* and the ideas of Marxism? The answer lies in the fact that *Militant's* ideas are gaining wider support within the working class. The experiences of workers increasingly bring them to agree with the policies advanced by Marxism over many years.

In the 1950s, 60s and 70s, Labour's right wing peddled the idea that capitalism had overcome the evils of mass unemployment and hardship. The prevailing view of the leadership was that the horrors of the 1930s were an aberration unlikely ever to be repeated.

Marxists were tolerated in the Party then because they had little support and it appeared that their basic analysis was wrong. But the end of post-war boom and the development of mass unemploy-

Photo: Militant.

ment again in the mid-1970s have brought home to many labour movement activists that it was not the 1930s but the post-war decades which were the aberration. Society has now moved irreversibly into a new period of mass unemployment, hardship, insecurity and social instability.

The living standards that workers have taken for granted are all under threat. In the last decade, the rights of the trade unions, the only means of self-defence workers have, have been undermined. The social wage of the working class—education, health, social services and public amenities—is all under the axe, with one drastic cut after another.

Yet even in this period of sharp attacks on living standards, the leadership of the labour movement still cling to the political philosophies dictated by the

Tory press. The TUC's "New Realism" is simply appeasement towards Thatcherism, an attempt to make the trade unions respectable, in the eyes of a press which has never supported the trade union movement on anything, by avoiding serious struggles over jobs and conditions. Despite all indications to the contrary, the trade union tops have swallowed completely all the media lies about the supposed "unpopularity" of trade unions.

The Labour leadership have opposed any resistance to the Tories other than the ineffectual protestations of opposi-

tion MPs in the House of Commons. Millions of council tenants face rent rises, workers have the horrendous poll tax hanging over them and Labour councils are drowning in debts. Yet the Labour leadership urge Labour councils to carry out the Tory cuts dictated from Westminster.

The NHS, the last bastion of the welfare state set up by the post-war Labour Government, now faces collapse. It has been the NHS domestics, porters, ancillaries and above all the nurses, who have taken it in their own hands—without their "leaders", and often against the discouragement of their union executives—to defend the service, even if it means taking "unpopular" strike action.

continued on page 10

Militant and the future of Labour

continued from page 9

It is precisely because of the failure of the official leadership of the labour movement to provide a fighting lead against the Tory onslaught that workers are increasingly turning to the ideas of the *Militant* supporters in their local Labour Parties, Young Socialists and union branches.

At present, the Tories are boasting about the "boom" in the economy, but this rosy propaganda has stimulated workers into action, to defend their living standards and demand their "cut".

While the economy has recovered from the slump of 1979-82, *Militant* has explained that it has largely been achieved on the backs of the workers. British industry has not increased productivity by modernisation of plant and equipment, but by intensifying the exploitation of workers: by speed-ups, declining health and safety standards, worsening conditions, and by closure of older factories. This short-lived boom has been extracted from the nerves and sinews of the workers.

The determination of workers to take "their share" can be seen in the Fords and other car strikes. Before the strike, one Ford worker described to the *Financial Times* how the 1985 deal worsened working conditions.

"Every 102 seconds a car comes by, and in between you have to tidy up, make sure your tools are repaired, make sure you've got components, check faults and quality. Before (the 1985 agreement) you had time, but now they shift you around so you are working all day for £115 a week take home pay...I arrived a moderate, but coming to this place has made me a militant."

Decisive break

NHS workers have also had their tolerance stretched to almost superhuman limits by incessant cuts and they too have decided that "enough is enough". They have been further angered by the fact that cuts are still made while Nigel Lawson is preparing to hand out billions in tax cuts to the rich.

Over the last few years, while the leadership of the labour movement has been going full steam to the right, as *Militant* has explained many times, the rank and file have been moving to the left. In the last issue of *Militant International Review*, we wrote:

"Underneath the surface of events is anger, frustration, resentment and a deep politicisation, waiting to erupt onto the surface. When, how and among what group of workers the decisive break will come can not be predicted. All that can be indicated is the combustible material now beginning to build up in all the different sectors of industry."

As this article predicted, it only took one event—the strike of nurses in Manchester—to open the floodgates. This strike brought an immediate climb-down by Thatcher, showing millions of workers that the Tories can be beaten. It was soon followed by others in the NHS, by seafarers, pit deputies, gas workers, bus workers, teachers, and car workers.

In many instances it has been *Militant* supporters who have articulated the leftward moves in

the unions. The paper carries unequalled coverage of industrial struggles, always representing the issues from the point of view of the workers involved, by interviews and articles from the workers themselves. The paper has provided an indispensable tool to trade union activists, analysing major trade union battles and, at each stage, pointing a way forward for the struggle.

The supporters of *Militant* have played a key role in the establishment of the Broad Left Organising Committee (Bloc), bringing together the broad lefts in all the major trade unions. At the recent Bloc conference in Sheffield, there were 1200 delegates from trade union bodies, the biggest conference of trade unionists outside of the TUC itself.

In the trade unions *Militant* supporters fight for genuine democracy, for all officials to be elected, subject to recall and to be paid the same wages as the workers they represent. To the horror of right wing trade union leaders, interested only in their own careers, where supporters of *Militant* have been elected into leading positions, they have carried this policy out in practice.

John Macreadie, a *Militant* supporter elected as deputy general-secretary of the CPSA and then onto the General Council, has with Arthur Scargill, provided the only opposition among the TUC leaders to "New Realism" and the cringing accommodation to Thatcherism.

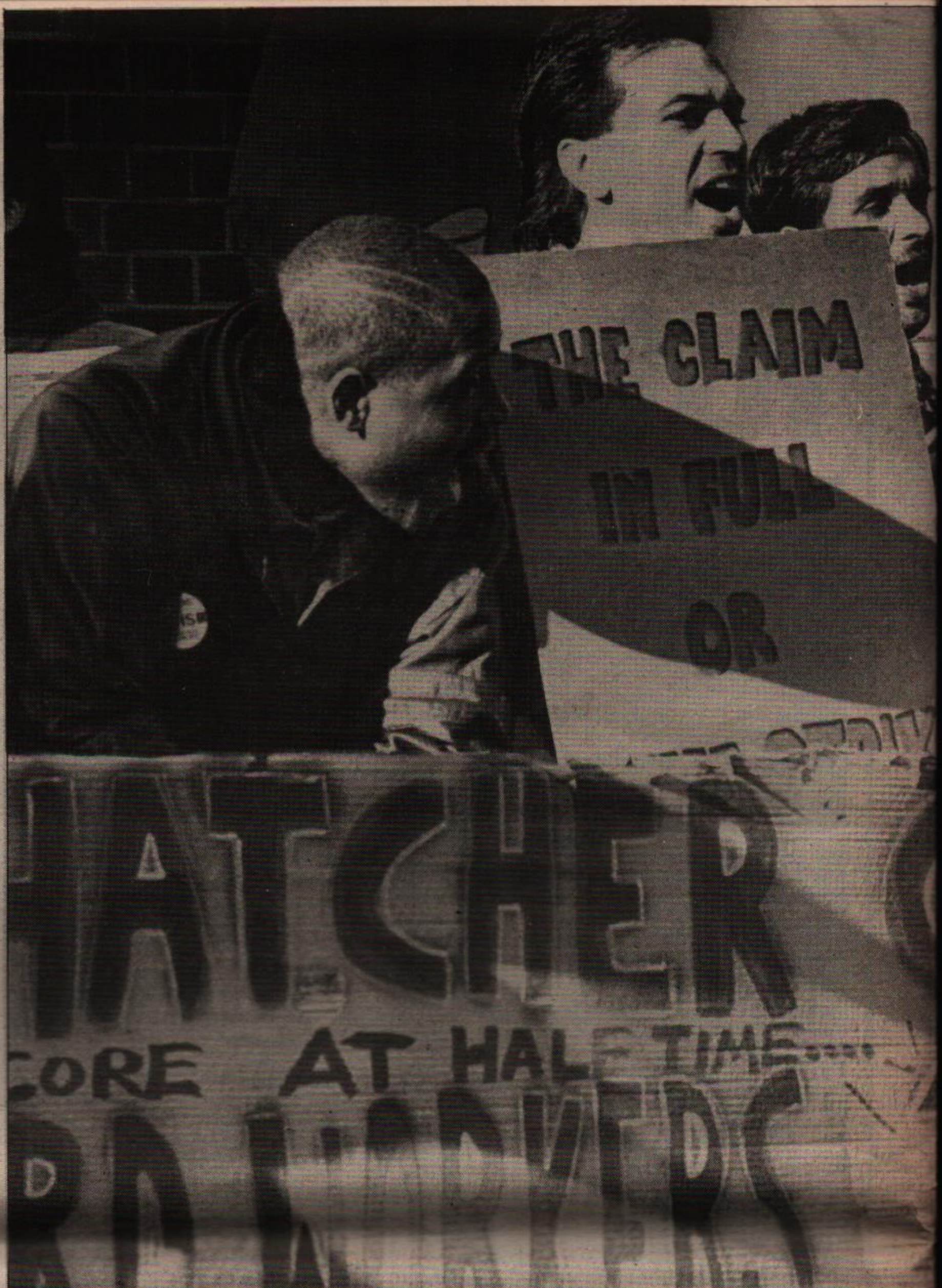
On the General Council, he moved that the TUC organise a campaign against the new anti-union laws, and for a mass TUC demonstration against the Alton bill. More recently, he moved that the TUC organise a 24-hour general strike in defence of the NHS, a call that fell on deaf ears around that table, but has found an enormous echo among workers outside.

In the Labour Party, the leadership have been steadily pushing the party to the right, towards the eventual abandonment of its fundamental socialist aims. The Tory press have again set the agenda and the Labour leaders have taken it up. All the trendy ideas about a "share-owning democracy" have been repeated by the right, even to the point where Bryan Gould addressed a conference fringe meeting paid for by the Stock Exchange.

Militant has answered the argument many times, explaining that the supposed widening of share-ownership has made no fundamental difference to the concentration of wealth in the hands of a few institutional shareholders and multi-millionaires, or any difference to the life-style and outlook of workers. But last October's stock-exchange crash has not dented the confidence of the right wing in their re-hash of "popular capitalism".

The willingness of the leadership to turn its back on the Party's socialist traditions is best typified by the draft policy document of Neil Kinnock and Roy Hattersley. In it, they declare that apart from health care, education and social security, "in the case of the allocation of most other goods and services the operation of demand and supply and the price mechanism is a generally satisfactory means of determining provision and consumption."

Party members are being asked to come to terms with capitalism,



Ford workers have shown their determination to have their share of the company's prosperity.

which, as own their experience shows is a "generally satisfactory means" of bleeding the NHS through drugs profits, of building hotels and office blocks instead of homes, of artificially maintaining high food prices and of periodic economic cycles of unemployment and slumps!

Instead of adopting second-hand Tory ideas, the Labour leaders should be explaining that the Tories' temporary "boom"—which, in any case, has left millions in poverty—is soon to go "bust". Despite the increases in profits, there have been no serious attempts by the British bosses to invest for the long-term. There was a 26 per cent increase in profits last year, but only a slight rise in investment. Manufacturing investment in 1988 will be below the 1979 level, when the Tories came to office, and that in turn was lower than in 1974.

Industrial decay

The ten per cent decline in orders for the British machine tool industry last year, despite rising profits, is a rough barometer of the decay of much of British plant and manufacturing capacity. According to a feature in the *Financial Times*, "foreign machine-tool producers...are shocked by the age of the plant in many British factories." There are many examples that can be given to show the decline of domestic industry, relative to the competitors of British capitalism abroad.

In the long run, the living standards of 50-odd million cannot be maintained by the service sector and by reliance on shrinking oil production. The Tory "boom" has done nothing to

modernise industry and build a solid foundation for the future.

On the contrary, tens of billions of pounds have gone abroad while at home profits and productivity have been increased by job cuts and by squeezing the workforce. The coming world slump—signalled by the world stock-exchange crash—will find the British economy less able than it was in 1979 to withstand intensified world competition.

It has been the Marxists around *Militant* who have been the main standard-bearers of socialist ideas in the Labour Party in the recent period. While former "lefts", like the newspaper *Tribune*, the LCC, and individuals like Tom Sawyer and David Blunkett have moved rightwards with the leadership, it has been the Marxists who have fought most resolutely to defend socialist policies.

Militant supporters argue for socialist policies based on nationalisation of the commanding heights of the economy: the 200 top monopolies, banks and insurance companies whose tiny handful of share-holders and directors dominate the economy and everybody's lives.

It would be possible for a Labour government, on the basis of an Enabling Bill, and with massive support outside Parliament, to introduce a democratic socialist plan, to utilise the nation's enormous resources and wealth a rational way for maximum social benefit.

There is no logical need for cuts and sacrifices in a society with technology advanced enough to put men on the moon, and with scientific knowledge and technique advancing year after year. A socialist planned economy, utilising resources properly, would be able to provide all the basic

necessities of life, raise living standards and at the same time reduce the working week.

Labour's leaders, as a means of mobilising support for socialist policies, and at the same time beginning a serious fight against unemployment, should campaign now for a 35-hour week without loss of pay.

The ideas of socialism have found increased support in the Labour Party in the recent period. The majority of the Labour Party Young Socialists support the policies of *Militant*, as do many sections of the Labour Women's Organisation.

Counter-reforms

The experience of local authority cuts have also produced ferment in the Party, and increased support for the left. The policy of the Labour leadership, summed up in the "denited shield" philosophy, is that Labour councillors should carry out Tory cuts.

The programme of what used to be the "reformist" wing of the Labour Party has become one of counter-reforms. Many even former "left" councils are now carrying through massive cuts in jobs and services rather than step outside official legal guidelines. These are in stark contrast to the heroic stand made by Liverpool council between 1983 and 1987, in which the supporters of *Militant* played the key role.

Even at the risk to their own personal position—47 councillors eventually being surcharged and disqualified—these selfless workers' representatives were determined to build houses, maintain services and create jobs even if it meant going beyond the law. Their motto, "Better to

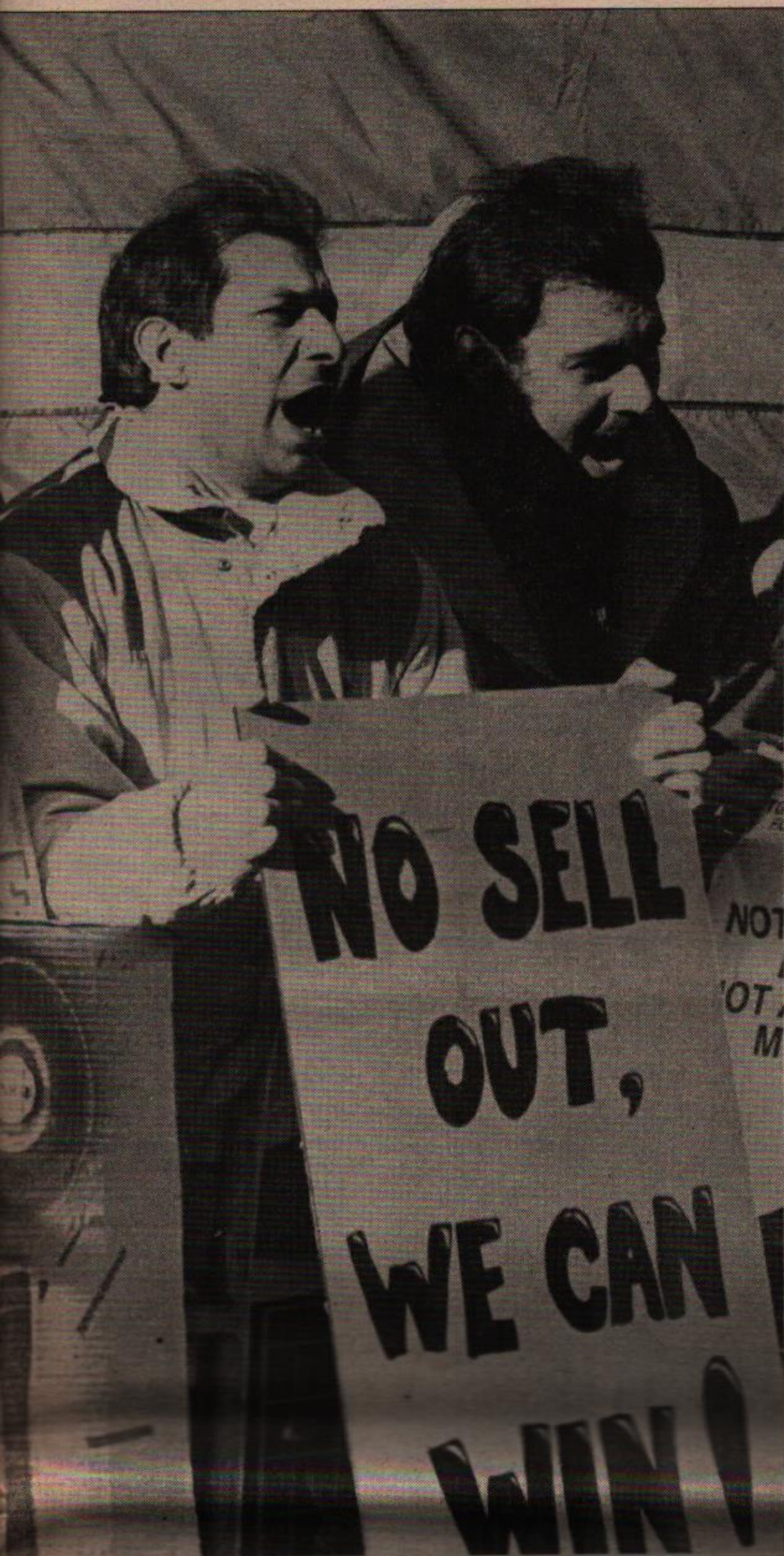


Photo: Militant.

In the inevitable struggles that the working class will be forced to wage in the future, the supporters of *Militant*, including those just reading the paper for the first time, will play a decisive role.

break the law than break the Poor", should be taken up by Labour representatives on every local council and health authority around the country.

The ideas of *Militant* have gained ground in the Labour Party precisely because they articulate the needs of so many rank and file members for genuine socialist ideas to answer the Tories and because of the need for a determined leadership in the struggle against cuts and job losses. Unfortunately, such a lead is not being given by those at the top of the party.

Rather than attacking the Tory enemy, too much time has been spent by the Labour leadership attacking socialists in the party. Tens of thousands of pounds was spent breaking Liverpool council's resistance to the Tories. Chasing after the 'respectability' of the Tory press, the Labour Party NEC closed down the Liverpool Labour Party and expelled several of its leading members.

The LPYS national conference has been unconstitutionally suspended by the NEC, as have many regional conferences. The LPYS age limit has been reduced from 26 to 23, in an attempt to behead the organisation. At a time when there is supposed to be

an internal debate over the future of the Party, the leadership are not prepared for an open and fraternal discussion of differences. Instead, they are creating a climate of intimidation and repression against any dissidence.

But no matter how much the Tories may complain and the right wing Labour leaders comply with their urgings to expel socialists, such administrative measures can never eliminate Marxism from the labour movement. British society is moving towards economic and social convulsions, and it will be the ideas of Marxism and *Militant* to which workers will increasingly turn.

In twenty years, support for Marxism in the Labour Party and trade unions has grown from a few dozens to thousands. The paper has expanded through the thousands of pounds collected from workers in countless small donations. In the foreseeable future, the support for the paper will be sufficient for it to become a twice-weekly and then a daily. In the inevitable struggles that the working class will be forced to wage in the future, the supporters of *Militant*, including those just reading the paper for the first time, will play a decisive role.

What we stand for

★ A 24 hour General Strike to back the health workers.

★ Opposition to privatisation.

★ Tories out, for a majority socialist Labour Government.

★ The immediate introduction of a 35 hour week without loss in pay, as a step towards the elimination of unemployment.

★ A guaranteed job for all.

★ Reversal of all Tory cuts and a massive programme of public works in housing, education, the NHS etc.

★ A fully comprehensive NHS, free at the point of use.

★ Nationalisation of the parasitic private health industry and the pharmaceutical industry to create a fully integrated and democratic NHS.

★ A minimum wage of £135 a week, tied to the cost of living, for all, including the sick and disabled, with pro-rata payments for part time workers.

★ Opposition to all sex discrimination. Equal pay for work of equal value. For an emergency programme to build nurseries and schools and expand childcare provision, and paid maternity/paternity leave.

★ An end to racism and all forms of discrimination.

★ Opposition to the Tory Government's attacks on the trade unions and reversal of all anti-union laws.

★ Total opposition to the dictatorship of the Fleet Street press who pour out their poison daily against the Labour movement. A Labour government should nationalise radio, TV and newspaper printing facilities, and allow political parties and organisations access to these in proportion to their support.

★ Abolition of the monarchy and the House of Lords.

★ Massive cuts in arms spending. Support for unilateral nuclear disarmament, but with the recognition that only the socialist transformation of society, in Britain and internationally, can eliminate the danger of nuclear holocaust.

★ Nationalisation of the top 200 monopolies, including the banks and the insurance companies, which control 80-85% of the economy. This should be through an Enabling Bill in Parliament with minimum compensation on the basis of proven need.

★ Democratic workers' management of the nationalised industries and the NHS, by elected committees with one third of the places from the unions in the industry, one third from the TUC, representing the working class as a whole, and one third from the government.

★ A socialist plan of production democratically drawn up and implemented by committees representing the government, the trades unions, other consumers, specialists and small business people.

★ For the socialist transformation of society.

Socialist change

The world is over-ripe for socialism. Despite the miraculous advances of science and technology, it seems that there is no end to the misery, poverty, degradation and despair faced by large section of the world's population. Millions face starvation, not because food is not available—world production is actually being cut back—but because the huge multinational companies that grow and distribute the food will only dispose of it when it is profitable for them to do so. If it is not profitable to give it to the starving masses then they will starve!

In Britain, people are dying because of cuts in the NHS, yet the government spends £2,500m MORE on armaments and means of destruction than it does on the health service. *Militant* believes in workers being 'defended', above all, from hunger, poverty, disease, unemployment and from all the other horrors of capitalism.

Capitalism experienced a period of enormous upswing in the two and a half decades after the war. This was a period in which living standards rose for most workers more or less uninterrupted. But the post war boom has come definitively to an end, bringing back a period of mass unemployment, hardship and poverty, like the inter-war period. If the economy had grown recently as fast as it did in the 1950's and 1960's then the world, Britain included, would be one-third richer! Capitalism is not only just unable to develop living standards, it can only exist now by savaging them.

Economic catastrophe now threatens. The October 1987 stock market crash was a warn-

ing of the slump to come. When it does, it will be workers worldwide who will pay in job cuts, wage cuts and crashing living standards.

Yet it need not be that way. We live in a world of a potential superabundance, restricted by the limitations placed it by the barriers of capitalist private ownership and the nation-state. In every country of capitalism, a few hundred multi-millionaire industrialists and financiers control and restrict the lives of millions for their own greed.

Just imagine what space-age technology could achieve, for example, in medicine, if the grip of these people could be broken? How many more are to die for want of a kidney machine or through neglected but curable cervical cancer? Yet the technology that goes into producing missiles, tanks or aircraft could save thousands of lives, if the defence industries were transformed to socially-useful work.

Capitalism wastes enormous resources. In addition, £15,000 million is spent annually keeping 3 million unemployed. Why not use this money to pay workers decent wages to build schools and hospitals? Why not take on unemployed nurses and doctors—and there are many—why not

employ the unemployed teachers wasting away on the dole to educate our children? The money to achieve this and much more is there if it was used properly.

If the resources of society were democratically planned for the benefit of the mass of the people the country would be transformed. However, as *Militant* has explained, this can only be achieved by the public ownership of the commanding heights of the economy.

There are well over one million companies in Britain. But the top 150-200, with a few hundred intersecting directorships between them, control over three quarters of the economy. This is where true power lies. A socialist policy would mean taking power from the hands of these unelected moguls and using the resources and wealth of the country for the benefit of the many, not the few.

In this way, at last, society could begin to overcome poverty, disease, homelessness and unemployment. With the resources made available for a healthy life, real education, and real leisure, society for the first time would witness the genuine development of the individual human personality.

**YOUR NEXT STEP...
OUR FIGHT IS YOUR FIGHT...JOIN IT!**

I wish to become a Militant supporter:

Name.....

Address.....

Tel:

or telephone 01-533 3311 NOW!

MILITANT has public meetings and discussion groups in most towns throughout the Country. Below is a listing of meetings or contacts for further information. If you want to know the nearest one to your area telephone the 'MEETING LINE' (01) 533 3311 ext227.

Where to find us

STRATHCLYDE

For details of meetings in the following areas contact: 041 221 1443.

Clydebank
Cumbernauld
East Kilbride
Cathcart Central
Garscadden
Govan
Hillhead
Maryhill
Pollok
Rutherglen
Shettleston
Springburn
Hamilton
Monklands
Motherwell
Paisley

EAST SCOTLAND

For information of meetings in the following areas contact: Andrea Charles-031 659 6187.

Edinburgh
Aberdeen
Dundee
Stirling
Livingston
Bathgate
Falkirk
Inverness
Perth
Glenrothes
Forfar
Dunfermline

NORTHERN

For details of any further meetings contact: Bill Hopwood 091 276 1736.

Wallsend: Richardson Dees School, Wallsend. March 10th 7.30pm.

Sunderland: Poly Library. March 14th 7.30pm.

Heworth: 'The Swan' Pub Heworth. March 9th 7.30pm.

Teesside: Hardwick Community Centre, Stockton. March 10th 7.30pm.

Wear Valley Hotel, Bishop Auckland. March 8th 7.30pm.

Newcastle
Copeland
Carlisle
Washington
Hartlepool
Ashington

YORKSHIRE

Cleethorpes Library, COHSE Speaker. March 9th 7.30pm.

Mexborough: Old Masons Arms Mexborough. Speakers include: Sister Howell-NUPE, Personal capacity. March 8th 7.30pm.

Sheffield: Sheffield Campaign centre against unemployment. March 11th 7.30pm.

Rotherham: 'White Swan' Pub, Westgate, COHSE speaker. March 10th 7.30pm.

Leeds: Swarthmore Centre, Woodhouse Square, COHSE speaker. March 17th 7.30pm.

Barnsley: 'King George' Pub Peel Street Barnsley, COHSE speaker. March 17th 7.30pm.

MERSEYSIDE:

For details of meetings in the following areas contact: Richard Venton 051 260 3111 2 Lower Breck Road Tuebrook:

Wrexham
Ellesmere Port
Northwich
Winsford
Chester
Rhyl
Bangor
Colwyn Bay
Bootle
Crosby
Formby
Birkenhead
Wallasey
Kirkby
Huyton
St Helens
Halewood
Skelmersdale
Runcorn
Widnes
Southport

Liverpool:
Broadgreen
West Derby
Mossley Hill
Riverside
Garston
Walton

MANCHESTER/ LANCS

For details of discussion groups held in the following areas contact: Mike Johnson on 061 273 8678

Barrow
Preston
Blackpool
Morecambe
Chorley
Blackburn
Burnley
Pendle
Rochdale
Bury
Oldham
Salford
Wigan
Eccles
Warley
Stockport
Tameside
Macclesfield
Manchester:
Blackley
Gorton
Moss-side
Clayton & Hulme
Stretford
Sale
Wythenshawe
Withington & Chorlton

WEST MIDLANDS

For details of meetings in Birmingham contact: Bill Mullins 021 552 7624 For details of meetings in Stafford and Stoke area contact: Dugald Mckinnon 0782 633568.
Coventry: Stoke Green Community Centre. March 8th 7.30pm.

Redditch: 'The Queens Head' Pub Redditch Town Centre. March 10th 7.30pm.

Bromsgrove: Bromsgrove Public Baths. March 8th 7.30pm.

Rubery: Rubery Community Centre Rubery New Road. March 9th 7.30pm.

Selly Oak: 'Dog and Partridge' Pub Bristol Road. March 9th 7.30pm.

Walsall: Digbeth Social Club. March 13th 7.30pm

EAST MIDLANDS

For details of further meetings contact: Andy Jackson 0602 623112.

Leicester: 'Princess Charlotte' Pub Leicester. Speakers incl. Local Nurses. March 9th 7.30pm.

Lincoln Boston
Grantham: Guildhall. March 8th.

Mansfield Bolsover
Chesterfield Derby
Nottingham
Burton-upon-Trent Kettering Northampton

EASTERN

Ipswich: Room 4, Town Hall Ipswich. March 11th 7.30pm.

For details of meetings in the following areas contact: Teresa Mackay 0473 713179.

Cambridge
Peterborough
Norwich
Colchester
Harlow
Southend
Basildon
Stevenage
Bedford
Luton
Maldon
Chelmsford
Kings Lynn
Lowestoft
Felixstowe

LONDON:

For further details of meetings contact: George Roberts 01 739 9123.

Southall: Southall Town Hall. March 9th 7.30pm.

Harrow/Wealdstone: Co-op Hall Masons Avenue, Harrow. Speakers include Brent COHSE speaker. March 7th 7.30pm.

Harlesden: Harlesden Library, Craven Park Road NW10. Speakers include Brent COHSE speaker. March 9th 7.30pm.

Camden: Teatro Technis Community Theatre, Crowndale Road NW1 (Nr Mornington Crescent Tube). March 16th 7.30pm.

Kensington: Westway Luncheon Club Melton Road (Nr Ladbroke Grove Tube). March 8th 7.30pm.

Waltham Forest: Leytonstone Library, Church Road. March 10th 7.30pm.

Haringey: Winkfield Road Community Centre, Woodgreen. March 9th 7.30pm.

Homerton: Wally Foster Centre Kingsmead Estate, Homerton Road. March 17th 7.30pm.

Stratford: Upstairs Room, 'The Swan' Pub Stratford. March 14th 7.30pm.

Barking: Barking Library. March 15th 7.30pm.

Newham:

Woolwich: Woolwich Town Hall, Wellington Street, Woolwich. March 8th 7.30pm.

Welling, Kent: Welling Library, Bellgrove Road. March 15th 7.45pm.

Peckham: 'Station' Pub Camberwell, New Road Camberwell SE5.

Dulwich: Allbrighton Centre, Dog Kennel Hill Estate Dog Kennel Hill SE5. March 2nd 7.30pm.

Brixton: St Matthews Meeting Place opposite Lambeth Town Hall SW2. March 9th 7.30pm.

SOUTH EAST

Brighton: Brighthelm Centre, North Road. March 7, 8pm.

N Kent: contact Billy Davies 0634 813 504.

HAMPSHIRE/THAMES VALLEY:

Oxford: Oxford Town Hall. March 10th 7.30pm.

Reading: St Marys Centre, Reading. March 10th 8pm.

Bracknell: March 7th.

Oxford: Town Hall. March 10th.

Portsmouth: Central Library. March 8th.

Southampton: St Matthews' Hall, Britons Road Southampton. Speakers include Mick Barwood. March 8th 7.30pm.

SOUTH WEST

Bristol: Shepherds Hall, Bristol. March 8th 7.30pm.

Plymouth: Plymouth Polytechnic, General Teaching Block, Lecture Theatre 6. Speakers include Lynn Walsh. March 3rd 7.30pm.

WALES

For details of further meetings contact: 0222 736682.

Llanelli: Llanelli YMCA March 8th 7.30pm.

Swansea: POEU Club, Swansea. March 14th 7.30pm.

Cardiff: Roath Community Centre, Cardiff. March 2nd 7.30pm. Moorlands Hotel, Cardiff. March 14th 7.30pm.

Bridgend: Dunraven Arms Hotel Wynnham Street, Bridgend. March 15th 7.30pm.

Caerphilly: 'Boars Head' Pub Caerphilly. March 10th 7.30pm.

Pontypridd: 'Rose and Crown' Pub Graig. March 9th 7.30pm.

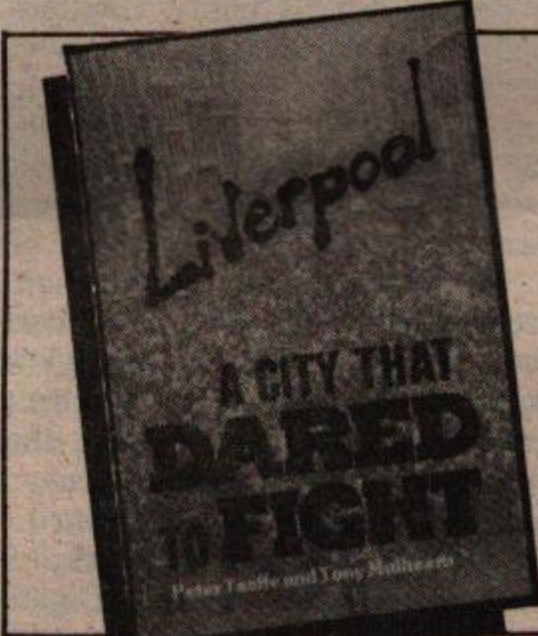
Newport: Kings Hotel, High Street. March 8th.

Pontypool Rhondda Neath
Port Talbot
Carmarthen
Aberystwyth



WINTER 1988 issue.
★ Future of the trade unions.
★ 1929 crash.

90p+20p post from World Socialist Books, 3/13 Hepscoot Road, London E9 5HB.



With the lessons of Liverpool so relevant to workers many copies of *Militant* - a City That Dared to Fight are being sold in workplaces.

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Paperback: £6.95 (+90p post).
Hardback: (+£1.20 post).

WHAT THEY SAID ABOUT OUR 1985 & 1986 RALLIES:

'SOME SIDE SHOW' Daily Mail 4/11/85.

'LENIN AND LASERS' Militant is a perplexing beast. Despite everything it seems to be thriving. 7 Days 21/11/86.

'This spectacular five thousand-strong Militant Tendency rally in London's Albert Hall on Sunday was an

RALLY '88

ALEXANDRA PALACE
19TH JUNE 1988

12-6pm £6.

Impressive show of strength'. Frank Chapple in the 'Daily Mail' 20/11/86.

WHAT THEY ARE SAYING NOW: "The size of this rally clearly shows that Militant is thriving despite Neil Kinnock's claims to have moderated the Labour Party". From a Tory Councillor in the 'Hampstead and Highgate Express' 19/2/88.

TICKET APPLICATION FORM

Please send me.....Tickets. I enclose £.....
Please send me details of transport:.....
Please send me a creche booking form:.....
Name.....
Address.....

Return to MILITANT RALLY: 3/13 HEPSCOTT ROAD LONDON E9 5HB.

Sell Militant

Workers all over Britain are fighting back. Health workers, seafarers, car workers and many others are standing up for their rights. As usual, the bosses' papers pour abuse down on ordinary trade unionists.

A vital part of winning these disputes is making sure that other workers know the truth about what is going on. That is why we are appealing to all new readers to help us sell *Militant*.

There has never been a time when it was more important to explain the ideas of socialism nor a time when these ideas have found a readier response.

Our coverage of the NHS dispute in particular has resulted in record sales. Sellers in Glasgow have led the way this week with over 700 sold on the NHS demonstration on Wednesday. Sellers in Edinburgh managed over 200.

The lobby of the TUC General Council also aroused great interest, with over 250 papers sold, mainly to passers-by on their way to work. In the West Midlands, 50 papers were sold on the Freight Rovers picket line. There are more people than ever before prepared to get *Militant* - and we need your help to reach all of them!

Lives before profits

IT IS a year since the Zeebrugge tragedy, when 193 people died in the *Herald of Free Enterprise*. VIVIEN SEAL examines the lessons of the disaster and how ferries can be made safe and SUE HANEY, whose brother Geoff was one of the victims, describes how the relatives and survivors have fought for justice.

Campaign for justice

GEOFF HANEY died 12 months ago, killed by the greed for profits. He was second cook and a union activist on the *Herald of Free Enterprise*, which capsized outside Zeebrugge on 6 March 1987, in Britain's worst maritime disaster since the *Titanic*.

The disaster was entirely preventable. The Royal Institution of Marine Architecture (RIMA) says that the roll-on roll-off (RO-RO) design is inherently unstable. Since 1953, Lloyd's register has recorded 30 RO-RO ferry accidents in which lives were lost.

They are top-heavy and the open space on the car deck means that a slight tilt makes even a shallow depth of water rush over to one side.

RIMA recommends the installation of transverse bulkheads to improve stability. They would also slow down a capsize enough to get everyone life-jackets and into lifeboats.

But the ferry companies will not hear of it because capacities would be reduced and the loading and unloading of vehicles slowed down, thus reducing profits.

Because the *Herald* fell against a sandbank, 'only' 193 lives were lost. In deep water it would have turned right over, possibly killing all on board. The English Channel is the world's busiest seaway, so a collision in mid-channel causing capsize is quite possible.

In 1987 20 million people a year used cross-channel ferries, the majority of which failed to meet the safety standards recommended by the Zeebrugge inquiry.

Competition from the Channel tunnel will mean more pressure to cut ferry costs by cramming more



(Top) Sue Haney, right, campaigning at Dover docks and (below) the *Herald's* sister ship the *Pride of Free Enterprise*.

people on to the boats and by using larger boats. The *Pride of Dover*, in which P&O has invested £40m, built to the same basic RO-RO design, carries 2,000 or more passengers.

Margaret Thatcher's first reaction to the news of the *Herald* disaster was: "It is the fundamental design of the ferry that is the problem", but subsequently the government has taken the attitude that the ferries are not inherently unstable.

They have only tightened up operational procedures, such as making it an offence to set sail with doors open and insisting on TV cameras and warning lights.

Thatcher's friend, P&O chair Sir Jeffrey Stirling,

says that not the company but assistant bosun Mark Stanley was to blame. The government wants the law to hold the crew legally responsible for safety. But the *Herald* Families Association has creditably fought attempts to blame the crew instead of the company.

The *Herald* was not Townsend Thoresen's first accident. Their *European Gateway* capsized in 1982. The company was held to be negligent, but the recommendations of that inquiry have yet to be implemented. The company treated several safety proposals with derision.

Last year P&O made £174m pre-tax profits, but the Dover-Zeebrugge run was not profitable when it

took over Townsend Thoresen.

"So they cut the crews to cut costs and constantly tried to speed up turn-around. An internal P&O review, which talks of "putting pressure on the first officer if he is not moving fast enough during turn around", shows what stress the crew are under.

Profit stands in the way of safety. Passengers and crew will not be safe while shipping is run for profit.

National Union of Seamen

Zeebrugge Commemorative March and Rally Sunday 6 March, Assemble 9am Railway Club, River, Dover. Marching to Dover Town Hall.

AFTER THE capsize, grief began to give way to anger. Relatives of P&O's victims became increasingly incensed as we realised just how predictable the disaster had been. We decided to call a meeting.

This was more difficult than we had thought. The *Herald* Assistance Unit refused to give Alan and Jean Reynolds (who had lost their son, his fiancée and her 13-year-old sister) the names and addresses.

Yet the relatives who had rushed to Zeebrugge in the first few days had collected many of the names of passengers to help the authorities in the first place.

Eventually, months after the disaster, the first meeting was held, with 120 relatives and survivors, crew and passengers. By then many had already met at the inquest.

Sloppiness

Meanwhile several relatives had been to the High Court to try to get the coroner to consider evidence against the company and not just individual members of the crew.

The Sheen report of the inquiry found the company "infected with the disease of sloppiness from top to bottom". The judge however decided that the directors had been "too remote" to be held liable.

The jury thus had an unenviable task. They had no alternative but to return a verdict of unlawful killing against three crew members. We were glad that this verdict was returned, but furious that the company should get off scotfree.

The *Herald* Families Association elected a 12-strong committee to provide mutual support for all those affected, to fight to get the company prosecuted for manslaughter and to ensure that such a tragedy never happens again by fighting to

make the ferries safe.

We have now raised more than £50,000 and are determined to bring a private prosecution against P&O if the Director of Public Prosecutions does not.

We have also lobbied MPs over the Merchant Shipping Bill. We want a clause relating to the design of RO-RO ferries and to require ships to be licensed, like aircraft, with unsafe operation as grounds for revoking the licence.

We put these points to Transport Secretary Paul Channon and Aviation and Shipping Minister Lord Brabazon. Incredibly these people still insist that RO-RO ferries are not inherently unstable!

The National Union of Seamen (NUS) could and should have swung into action immediately. 38 of their members and 155 passengers were killed as a direct result of P&O's greed for increased profit. They already had evidence against the RO-RO design.

Unfortunately the NUS does not have the leadership it deserves. They felt they would not get the necessary backing from their members to take on the government or force the ferry owners to make their ships safe.

But the willingness amongst rank-and-file members to fight for their rights has been shown during the strike in Dover. They have been rock-solid in their determination to prevent P&O cutting the number of crews per ship from three to two, which would force them to work a 16-hour day.

Liverpool NUS have a resolution to the NUS national conference calling for a campaign to be waged to make the ferries safe. The whole labour and trade union movement must now take up the campaign for safety, justice and support for the seamen in their struggle.

Fighting Fund

| Area | Received | % of target achieved | Target |
|--------------------|--------------|----------------------|---------------|
| 1 London | 3804 | | 7080 |
| 2 East Midlands | 1164 | | 2530 |
| 3 Scotland East | 992 | | 2150 |
| 4 South East | 691 | | 1570 |
| 5 Northern | 1185 | | 3270 |
| 6 Manchester/Lancs | 1008 | | 2890 |
| 7 West Midlands | 1213 | | 3960 |
| 8 Merseyside | 1401 | | 5000 |
| 9 Southern | 550 | | 2020 |
| 10 Scotland West | 663 | | 2520 |
| 11 South West | 311 | | 1270 |
| 12 Eastern | 506 | | 2260 |
| 13 Yorkshire | 1172 | | 5950 |
| 14 Wales | 568 | | 3510 |
| 15 National | 2598 | | 4000 |
| Total | 17826 | | 50,000 |

Give us a day's pay

WHILE YOU'RE campaigning for a properly funded NHS, spare a thought for Britain's richest 200 families who now own a mere £26.5 billion. Black Monday's stock market crash wiped out £100 million—how tragic!

We're looking to the day when the profit system that enriches these lords and ladies—at our expense—is abolished. To that end, we want you to invest in a socialist future. To begin, help us campaign for a one-day strike by sending a minimum of one day's pay.

Andy and Terri Paterson from Falkirk have sent £75; Nigel Kerrigan, Manchester health worker, £50; Ken Spearpoint, Nupe nursing

steward from Thamesmead, £25, and Ruth Herdman, Cohse nurse from Sheffield, £10.

Sue Tebb, NUT, and Philip Green, both from Southampton, donated £30 and £26 respectively; Chetan Patel, AEU Peckham, £30; Dave Gorton, NCU Peckham, £30; NUM member Gelding, Notts, £5, and J Molyneux from Newcastle £30.

Stickers

M Shawcroft donated £8 from her pension money and £8 was collected from visitors to Heath Road Hospital, Ipswich.

But our readers have not stopped at making a personal sacrifice. They have

raised money by selling stickers and the *Militant* for the solidarity price of £1. Seven sellers raised £90 doing that at the local bus station in Livingston, Scotland.

A nurse on the STUC demo in Edinburgh raised £45 selling stickers, while on the Glasgow STUC demo a school student sold £34 worth. Two sellers at the Bloc lobby of the TUC sold 68 copies of *Militant* and raised £35. On the NUS demo last Saturday, 15 sellers raised £146.

If you have donated to our day's pay campaign, ask your workmates and friends to donate. On the 5 March TUC demo, every reader could raise a minimum of £10, so order your tins and stickers now!

A one day general strike would mark an immense step forward for the working class. Neither Britain nor the working class would ever be the same again

(Left) Massive support for health workers day of action in Glasgow. (Centre) Maudsley Hospital nurse with a question for the TUC and (right) part of the quarter of a million on 1971 demo against the Industrial Relations Act.



Photo: Dave Sinclair

One day general

WHEN ASKED, on a recent demonstration, to sign a Broad Left Organising Committee's petition for a one-day general strike, Rodney Bickerstaffe, leader of the national union of Public Employees (Nupe), declared 'never'!

His deputy, Tom Sawyer, in Llanelli said recently: "In the NHS unions we have got the power of patient care, the power of love and the power of compassion. This power is bigger than the power of force."

"The people selling papers on the demo calling for a one-day general strike are wrong. There are many ways to win. The power of restraint is better than the power of force. With the power of restraint we will win."

"We will look to the future for different methods of struggle, not to the past. A one-day general strike would lose support. It is a battle between the forces of good—the health workers and the public—and the forces of evil—Moore, Curry and Thatcher."

This hostility to a one-day general strike is shared by the majority of the trade union leadership. John Macreadie's proposal for the TUC to organise effective one-day general strike activity elicited the support of just one other vote, Arthur Scargill.

Yet speakers who have advanced this demand in the mighty demonstrations in support of the health workers have met with tumultuous applause. *Militant* stickers for a 24-hour general strike have sold out!

The strikes of Merseyside Vauxhall workers and the Frickley miners are symptomatic of the widespread thirst for action in support of the nurses and other health workers. Moreover the days of action in Scotland and Manchester took on the character of a partial one-day general strike.

The ranks if not the tops of the labour movement well understand that it will take more than 'love' to shift Thatcher and her government from their implacable hostility to the nurses and the health service.

A gulf has opened up between the union leadership and the ranks. In the aftermath of the general election both the trade

union and Labour leadership, like rabbits mesmerised by a stoat, were in awe of Thatcher's victory.

It was not the TUC general council, with nine million workers behind them, but 38 nurses in Manchester who inflicted a humiliating reverse on the Thatcher government, which granted their claims within 48 hours.

Joan Foster, one of their leaders, explained why they had not told the Nupe and other health union leaders, let alone the Labour Party leaders, that they were to go on strike: "This was for one good reason; we didn't want to be told that we couldn't go out on strike."

These and other workers have instinctively understood that the national, and increasingly local, leadership of the labour and trade union movement, in the aftermath of Thatcher's victory, have acted as a firehose.

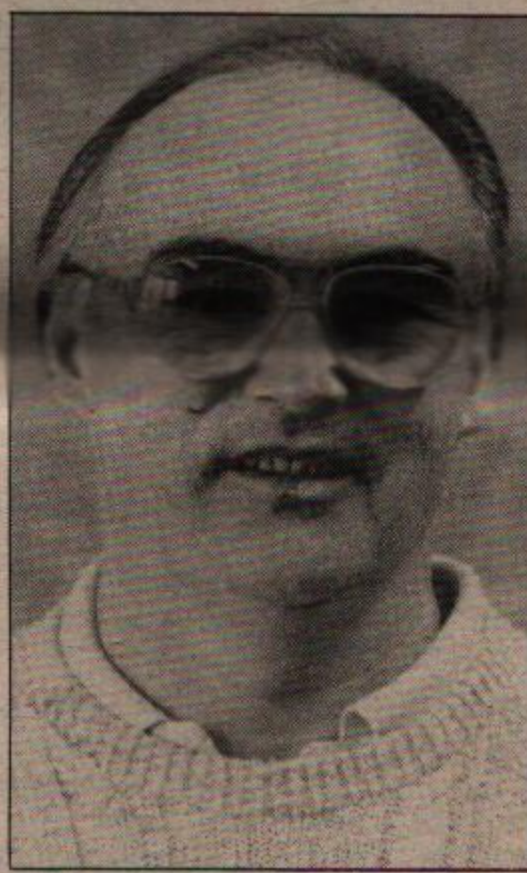
They have given the impression that they would choke on the word 'strike', let alone 'picket line'. All their efforts have been bent to eliminate 'industrial action' from the unions' vocabulary.

Industrial power

In its place are 'vigils' and 'manifestations', buttressed by the 'power of love'. Yet every worker instinctively understands that despite the overwhelming support for the nurses and the NHS, this government will only be budged by the mobilisation of the full power, yes the industrial 'force', of the labour movement against them.

It is not because of the 'forces of evil' that the government has set its face against the nurses' claims and is preparing to undermine further the NHS, but the fact that British capitalism spends only six per cent of its gross national product on health as opposed to nine per cent in Germany and France.

Thatcher and Co may be



By Peter Taaffe

'wicked', but this arises from the organic crisis of British capitalism. Thatcher's task was to boost the flagging profits of big business by holding down wages while prices went up and slashing public expenditure on health, housing and the social services.

Because of the ineffectiveness of the right-wing Labour and trade union leaders, she has succeeded in driving down the living standards of big sections of the working class and in the process created an army of the poor which now accounts for 47 per cent of the population.

Her intransigence towards the nurses and others arises from her defence of capitalism and not from some whim or 'wickedness'. The government will remain impervious to both the cries of agony from patients and nurses and the most cogent and powerful case in defence of the NHS from the Labour leaders.

NHS expenditure will not be substantially improved and even if concessions are given to the nurses, it will most probably be done so as to divide nurses in the north from those in the south and nurses from other health workers.

The NHS will continue to deteriorate and privatisation will

Will it stop

continue unabated if the labour movement restricts its opposition to the government to speeches and demonstrations alone.

The support for the nurses and health workers is overwhelming. Even the *Daily Telegraph*, which kneels at the shrine of Thatcher, has pointed out that 80 per cent of the population supported the nurses, and, more significantly, 66 per cent of Tories polled supported them.

Moreover, at a hospital on the outskirts of Manchester, *Militant* supporters were surprised that alongside them on the picket line were active members of the local Conservative Association!

100 Tory MPs have signed a Commons motion demanding increased expenditure on the NHS. The British Medical Association and the consultants have displayed their overwhelming hostility to the government.

The cars which have been hooting support as they pass hospital picket lines have not just been humble Fords or Metros, but Mercedes, Porsches, Jaguars and even the occasional Rolls Royce!

Yet as with previous opposition, Thatcher and Lawson are confident they will be able to ride out the storm.

Counter-reforms

This is because the trade union and Labour leaders are haunted by what they consider is the 'spectre of 1979'. They do not want a repetition of the 'winter of discontent', which they allege brought down the 1974-79 Labour government.

But this is a myth. The defeat in 1979 was caused by the retreat of the right wing within that government. After initially cancelling Tory measures, they moved into counter-reforms, presiding over a doubling of unemployment and a worsening

of the conditions of particularly the low-paid through the 'social contract'. This resulted in the revolt of low-paid workers in 1978-79.

But the situation today is entirely different. Health workers have enormous support and, learning from that struggle, have ensured that full and effective 'emergency cover' is maintained by the unions.

The myth has been shattered that Thatcher has established 'selfishness' as the dominant creed amongst workers, as opposed to the traditional concepts of 'solidarity'.

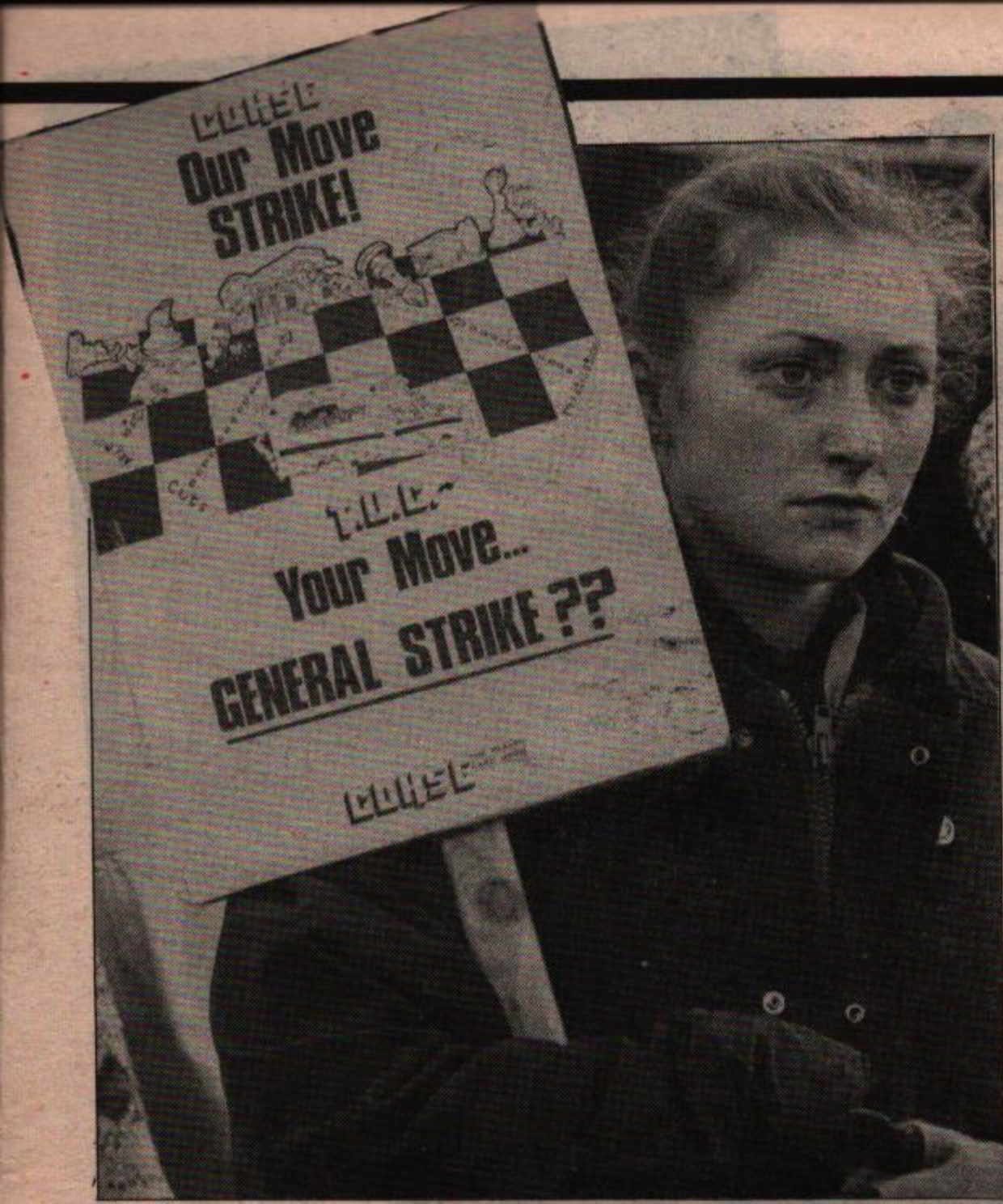
Workers, sometimes reluctant to strike on their own behalf, have indicated a willingness to come out on strike in support of the nurses. They themselves are striking as much in defence of the NHS, for the interests of all but a handful of the rich, as to improve their own standards and conditions.

It is utterly false to suggest, as the leaders of the movement do, that strike action will alienate the present support for the nurses amongst the 'wider population'. Nor will it undermine support for Labour, as Neil Kinnock seems to think.

The decisive action of the miners did not alienate the small businessmen and shopkeepers in the pit areas. They understood that the success of the miners' strike was vital to the local economy and their own future.

Nor did the action of the Caterpillar workers in Scotland alienate the middle class. On the contrary, it showed that the labour movement was fighting for the maintenance of a manufacturing base in Scotland on which the livelihoods of all sections of the population apart from the rich depended.

This paid huge political dividends for Labour in the general election. So did the action



strike

the Tories?

of Liverpool City Council, which resulted in 57 per cent support for Labour in the general election.

Indeed it is only by Labour identifying with the struggles of all those fighting against the Thatcher government that a general election victory will be assured. At the end of the miners' strike, Labour's support had risen by more than ten per cent compared to the previous general election in 1983.

Pentonville Five

Unfortunately this political capital, which resulted in massive victories in the political levy ballots in the trade unions, was dissipated by witch-hunts against socialists in the party.

The leaders of the movement never heed the lessons of history. This is not the first time that the general council of the TUC has opposed the slogan of a one-day general strike, only to be forced to eat their words under the pressure of a mass movement.

In 1971, Vic Feather dismissed the idea of a general strike, saying: "Such things happen in Italy and France, but not in Britain".

But when the Tories imprisoned five dockers' leaders in Pentonville in 1972, a wave of strikes developed from below to secure their release. The general council went on record in favour of a 24-hour general strike, only, it is true, after it appeared the dockers were on the verge of being released!

Thus in words at least, the demand for a 24-hour general strike, consistently advanced by *Militant*, to defeat Tory Prime Minister Edward Heath's Industrial Relations Act, became the official policy of the TUC.

The demand for a 24-hour general strike is not something that can be put forward irrespective of time and circumstances, as some of the insignificant sects on

the outskirts of the movement imagine. But now it has come back on to the agenda.

For the tops of the trade union movement, the present limited action in support of the health workers is seen merely as a means of letting off steam.

The working class however would see a one-day general strike entirely differently. It would serve as a warning to the government and, by bringing industry and transport to a halt, bring home to the working class its own colossal power.

It would fuse them together as a class opposed to capitalism. For Britain it would represent a political earthquake.

A glimpse of this was given in the events under the Tory government of 1970-74. The magnificent quarter of a million demonstration against the Industrial Relations Act on 21 February 1971 had a profound effect on even the least politically aware workers, participating for the first time.

In what the right-wing trade union leaders imagined would be a carnival-like atmosphere, workers saw the reality of working-class power in action.

The footsteps of a quarter of a million working people through the streets of London shook not just the government but the right-wing union and Labour leaders as well. It prepared the ground for the solidarity action which secured the release of the Pentonville Five.

Only when the movement reaches fever-pitch will the TUC general council ratify a 24-hour general strike. The workers' movement, not just in Britain but internationally, must develop from below before the trade union and labour leaders give support. Even then it will usually be luke-warm, with the purpose of derailing the movement at the first opportunity.

In Belgium in 1982-83 a series

of rolling strikes compelled the union leaders to give luke-warm support. But just as this movement was gathering greater momentum, it was called off by the union leaders, with nothing like the concessions which could have been extracted from the government and the employers if it had been pursued to the end.

Many workers have asked whether a 24-hour general strike would force the government to retreat. After all, in Italy we have just seen a one-day general strike of 15 million workers, which did not shatter the foundations of capitalism in that country. Similar movements have taken place in Spain and France.

A 24-hour general strike in Britain, however, if properly prepared, would completely undermine the Tory government. It could be an occasion not just for parades, but for mass meetings to reach to every corner of British society.

First it would reach the mass of the working class, not just within the trade unions but the unorganised workers, to explain the character of the government's attacks on the working class.

Then, by hammering home the realities of capitalist society and the need for a socialist planned economy, it would prepare the ground for forcing a general election and chasing Thatcher from office.

The trade union leaders shrink in horror from such a demand—did not Thatcher receive a mandate from the last general election only nine months ago?

But a general election is one moment in history. The present strike wave shows a massive rejection of government policies. The actions of the government in backing up the employers through legislation, in attacking health workers, local authorities and the public sector in general, invests every strike with a 'political' character.

The trade union leaders' approach seems to be to call for local one-day 'protest action', without thorough preparation or an attempt to involve other workers, in the vain hope that the 'power of love' can force the most brutal anti-working-class government

we have seen this century to grant concessions to the health workers.

At this stage the only way a one-day general strike will be called is through colossal pressure from below. 'Action committees', particularly based on shop stewards and trades councils, could act as a focal point for preparing such a development.

A one-day general strike, despite any of the limitations imposed by the leadership, would mark an immense step forward for the working class. Neither Britain, nor the working class would ever be the same again.

Afterwards the workers would be taking stock of the situation. With further attacks on their living standards and the failure of the government to retreat in the face of working-class resistance, pressure for further action would grow.

Once having felt their power, the working class will be eager to show it again. A number of one-day general strikes could unfold. This would mobilise and rouse new layers of the working class, particularly those outside trade unions, who had not been affected by previous action.

But the Marxists would oppose 'general strikes' on the pattern of Italy over the past 15 years. There the one-day general strike has been used as a safety valve to dissipate the anger and opposition of the working class to the various capitalist coalitions.

Not just one-day strikes, but half-day, one-hour, half-hour and sometimes even five-minute 'general strikes' have been irresponsibly called by the union leaders.

At a certain stage, even an all-out general strike will be posed in Britain. However we are not at that stage. A general strike is an 'either/or' situation. Two forces, two states, are established which vie for supremacy, as the 1926 general strike indicated.

The working class then, through councils of action, established the embryo of what would have become a new state machine if the Labour and trade union leaders had been prepared to base themselves on the workers' movement to take power.

The task today is to win the

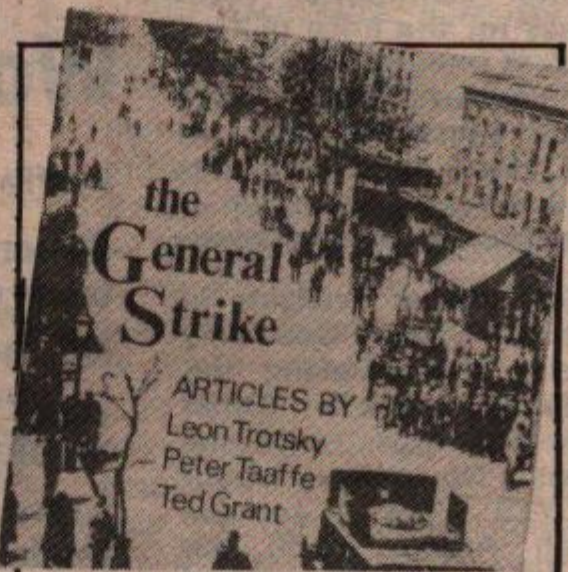
vast majority of the labour movement to the task of forcing the resignation of this Tory government and the coming to power of a Labour government on a socialist programme.

The health workers, shop stewards, Labour Party branches and all active trade unionists should demand that the leadership of their organisations stop retreating in face of the Tory offensive.

A clearly worked-out strategy to mobilise the enormous power of the labour and trade union movement in Britain would stop this Tory government in its tracks. A one-day general strike is central to such a strategy.

Active workers should not stop at demanding this, but must find the ways and means at local, district and regional level to organise the most effective industry-wide support in the form of strike action on 14 March in support of the health workers. Widespread strike action on that day would itself have an effect on the Tory government.

If 5 March and 14 March fail to shift them, a massive campaign must be exerted on the TUC general council to stop their prevarication and use the power of the movement in a one-day general strike to secure victory for the health workers and prepare success for other sections of the working class in their battle against the Tory government.



Available from World Socialist Books.
Trotsky, Taaffe and Grant—The general strike—only £1.
Single copies £1.20 including postage from World Socialist Books, 3/13 Hepscoot Road, London E9 5HB.

Readers' comments

Dear Comrades,
Liverpool-A City that Dared to Fight highlights the dirty tricks used by the Liberals at election times -including the leaflet with the photograph of the Pope headed 'Why no catholic can vote Labour on Thursday', claiming that Labour would close Christian schools.
 As well as the Pope there is a photograph of the Liberal candidate, Ron Flood, holding his two children, saying he will fight for their education.
 Ronnie did indeed fight

for the education of his children by coming over to support the Labour Party! Immediately after the election he became a firm supporter of the Labour council, helping to organise many fund-raising events for the 47 surcharged councillors.

He produced the famous fund-raising 'Jogs for the Boys' record in support of the 47, buys *Militant* regularly and was one of the first to buy the book.

By Tony Aitman

Dear Comrades,
 On seeing the advert on *Liverpool-the city that dared to fight*, I went to local bookshops and placed an order. I went into one shop and asked the old lady behind the counter: "Do you have a copy of *Liverpool-*

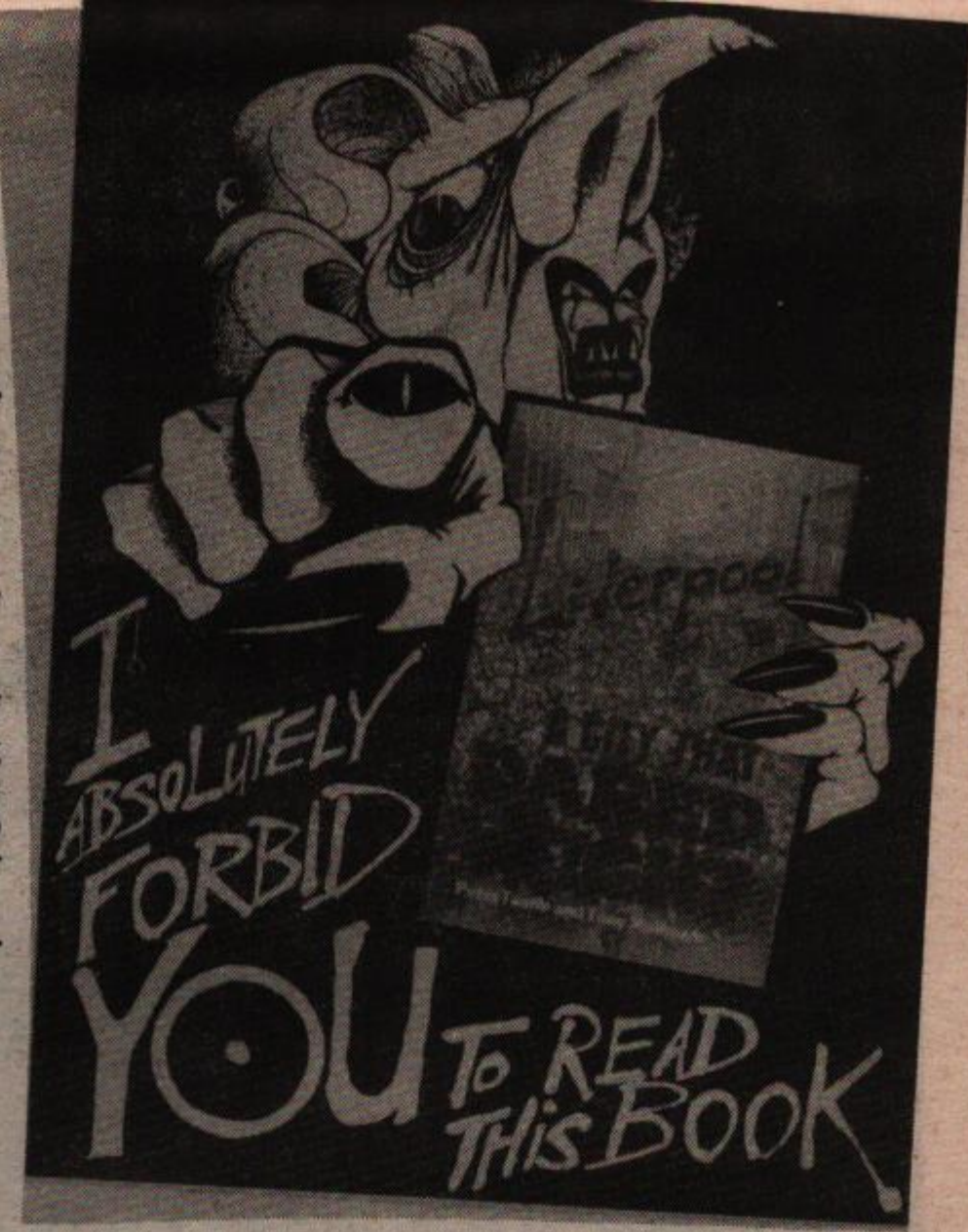
Dear Comrades,
 I have read your book and sent it back in mint condition for you to put it to further use if required.

I commend its contents as a momentous chronicle of local Liverpool history. Past events

the city that dared to fight?"
 "No" replied the old dear, "but we do have a copy of Manchester the team that wouldn't die."
 She was slightly bemused by the huge grin on my face.
 Ruth Beeves Calder Valley

are always history even if subsequent tentacles spring from them and in this case the repercussions are unlikely to be a mere ripple. Thanks for the read.

Walter Ursell, South London pensioner



Some things never change

Dear Comrades,
 For the launch of Derek Hatton's book in Birkenhead eight *Militant* sellers were outside WH Smith's, just along from where Michael Heseltine sneaked into the town last week to collaborate with the Labour Lord Mayor.
 Commenting on the sellers, Heseltine said "Some things on

Merseyside never change. There will always be happy, smiling people-and there will always be demonstrations."

Flabbergasted by the ferocity of the heckling he could only reply: "I could argue politics with you but I didn't come here to talk about politics."

Outside Smith's a school-girl bought the paper and

when asked if she would like a regular copy replied, "I only want a copy because I'm doing a project about *Militant* at school."

Another paper sale said "You don't need to persuade me I know all about it, Kinnoch's just like Thatcher. He'll not change anything."

Phil Cooper Birkenhead

Dear Comrades,
 Over the years the *Guardian* has been the keenest newspaper in Fleet Street to regurgitate myths about *Militant*.

Now the publication of *Liverpool-a city that dared to fight* has upset them so much they've carried not one but two articles denouncing it in the space of one week. And both contain the greatest lies they've yet dared stoop to.

Their review alleged that unlike local election results from 1983 to 1986 in Liverpool, Labour's national standing in opinion polls went from 11 per cent behind the Tories to 14 per

cent ahead over the same period. Come again? Does anyone remember this sensational poll?

Next came David Blunkett with yet another in a long line of articles giving free publicity to the soft left/new right in Labour's ranks. He actually wrote that Liverpool council cut jobs and services during 1985 in its battle with the Tory government. What a whopper!

Blunkett was clearly upset that Liverpool

pursued a different course from other councils which he laughingly still calls 'radical left'. Such as Camden council, I suppose, which has just issued redundancy notices to three and a half thousand of its workers.

It's odd really that he hasn't attacked this in the same terms as he attacks Liverpool council. It's even odder that the *Guardian* hasn't reported these developments in its news.

Ian Pollock London

The dying can't wait

Dear Comrades,
 This week my father died having fought cancer for the last 18 months. About a week before he died, a social worker at the hospital advised us that they could not provide the specialist care needed in

making my father's last few weeks of life more comfortable.

He recommended his immediate transfer to a hospice in Esher (the only one in the area).

Unfortunately there are now waiting lists for

hospices-denying people the basic right to die in dignity. Needless to say my father never made it to the hospice and died in hospital six days later.

From a reader in Hounslow

Letters

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

Send us your views, comments or criticism.

No option for youth

Dear Comrades,
 At 16 Bob earns 99p an hour working on a conveyor belt in north Tyneside. He spends 40 hours a week loading empty gas cylinders onto the belt to be filled with lighter fuel.

Most of the people at his place of work want to leave but their only option is a YTS scheme or the dole-an

option which will disappear in September anyway.

Last year in north Tyneside only 60 young people found work in the shipyards or related industries-a mere 4 per cent of the total number who found any sort of work. Another 7 per cent were employed under a council subsidy mostly in small workplaces. There are 1500

people on YTS schemes in north Tyneside.

Mr Lawson will no doubt crow about the so-called British economic miracle but to the majority of working class youth this is rubbish. Isn't it about time Neil Kinnoch listened to people like Bob and not to the Tory press for ideas.

Terry McPartland, Whitley Bay



The Tories' plans to make YTS compulsory will force young people to accept low wages and dangerous work conditions. Youth aim to fight back on 14 March.

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.

□ New sticker available in rolls of 250. 'One day general strike-Defend the health service'. Other stickers: 'Kick out the Tories', 'No to slave labour on YTS', 'For a socialist South Africa', £2.50 per roll. 'Militant for labour and youth' enamel stud badges £1 each. A3 size posters of Marx, Engels, Lenin, Trotsky, Luxemburg 50p each collecting tins £1 each, 10 or more 75p each. Available from Fighting Fund Dept, 3-13 Hepscoot Rd, London E9 5HB. For all orders add 25 per cent P&P. Cheques payable to *Militant*.

Workers' Education Group Summer Camp '88. Saturday 6-13 August

Bracelands Campsite, Gloucestershire.
 Cost: £40 approx for the week.
 Book your holidays now!

World Socialist Books

- Taaffe-Militant: what we stand for 30p
 - General election 1987: lessons for the Labour and trade union movement 50p
 - Northern Ireland perspectives (just out)..... 50p
 - Grant-Russia: reform or political revolution 30p
 - Grant, Taaffe and Walsh-The state; a warning to the labour movement..... 70p
 - Classics of marxism
 - Marx and Engels-Communist manifesto 45p
 - Trotsky-Transitional programme 30p
 - Luxemburg-Reform or revolution 70p
- Special offer-the lot for £4 including postage. Orders to World Socialist Books, 3/13 Hepscoot Road, London E9 5HB. Please add 25% to cover postage.
 Out now free comprehensive 1988 booklist.

Tories make us sick

Dear Comrades,
 I was disgusted to hear of Edwina Currie's speech in which she asserted that people should postpone re-decorating or renovating their house in order to pay for private medical treatment.

She is completely out of touch with the poverty many people face. She is also unaware of the cost of private care. The cost of serious operations requiring long periods of hospitalisation would be con-

siderably more than re-decorating the living room or the average summer holiday.

This cost may not even be covered by an insurance-based system. The unemployed and pensioners would certainly be in no position to pay. Perhaps she should be reminded that non-payment of medical bills account for 50 per cent of personal bankruptcies in the USA.

Clive Walder Brighton

Grounds for expulsion

Dear Comrades,
 The *World in Action* team exposed the Economic League on TV. Knowing the press and media is controlled by a handful of millionaires, why do they expose their system to the working class, showing the lengths they will go to defend their system?

The conclusion we came to was one of 'terror'. Yes-you step out of line, you will never work again.

The programme ended listing some 200 firms contributing £100,000 a year to the Economic League. The name that stuck in my mind was Maxwell Enterprises. Good old general Bob, ex-Labour MP, champion of Labour and the working class.

Is financing a right wing Tory front grounds for expulsion?

A Davison, North Humberside

A SALUTE to Geoff Haney and all those who lost their lives on the Herald of Free Enterprise at Zeebrugge, 6 March 1987.

Geoff Haney, crew member aged 32, had been a *Militant* supporter for five years. This humble, kind worker showed all the qualities on which the new society he strove for will be built.

The struggle of his sister Sue and the Marxist MPs to expose the truth about

Zeebrugge and to fight for safety at sea have vindicated Geoff's faith in Marxism. Even now the strike of Geoff's fellow P&O workers in Dover stands as a tribute to the cause he espoused.

Our sympathy goes out to his family and to all those bereaved. We will honour the dead by increasing our efforts to eliminate the callous rule of profit and bring closer the realisation of a socialist world.

Strike to save Ilea!

London Labour conference

THE LONDON-WIDE education shut-down on 8 March should mark the beginning of a real fight to defend jobs and conditions and ultimately to save the Inner London Education Authority (Ilea) and state education in London.

By Linda Taaffe,
Hackney NUT, personal capacity

Ilea has over 90,000 employees each of whom will be affected. Job loss and changes in working conditions will affect schoolkeepers, lecturers and teachers, kitchen staff, technicians, school secretaries, cleaners and librarians alike. Only a few at the very top will escape. William Stubbs, director of education, has already jumped off the sinking ship to land himself a plum job as head of the new, as yet non-existent, Polytechnic and Colleges Funding Council, on £50,000 a year. For the rest of us there is no alternative but to stay and fight.

The strike has been called by the joint trade union committee in response to the onslaught of attacks by various bits of Tory government legislation.

Unanimously

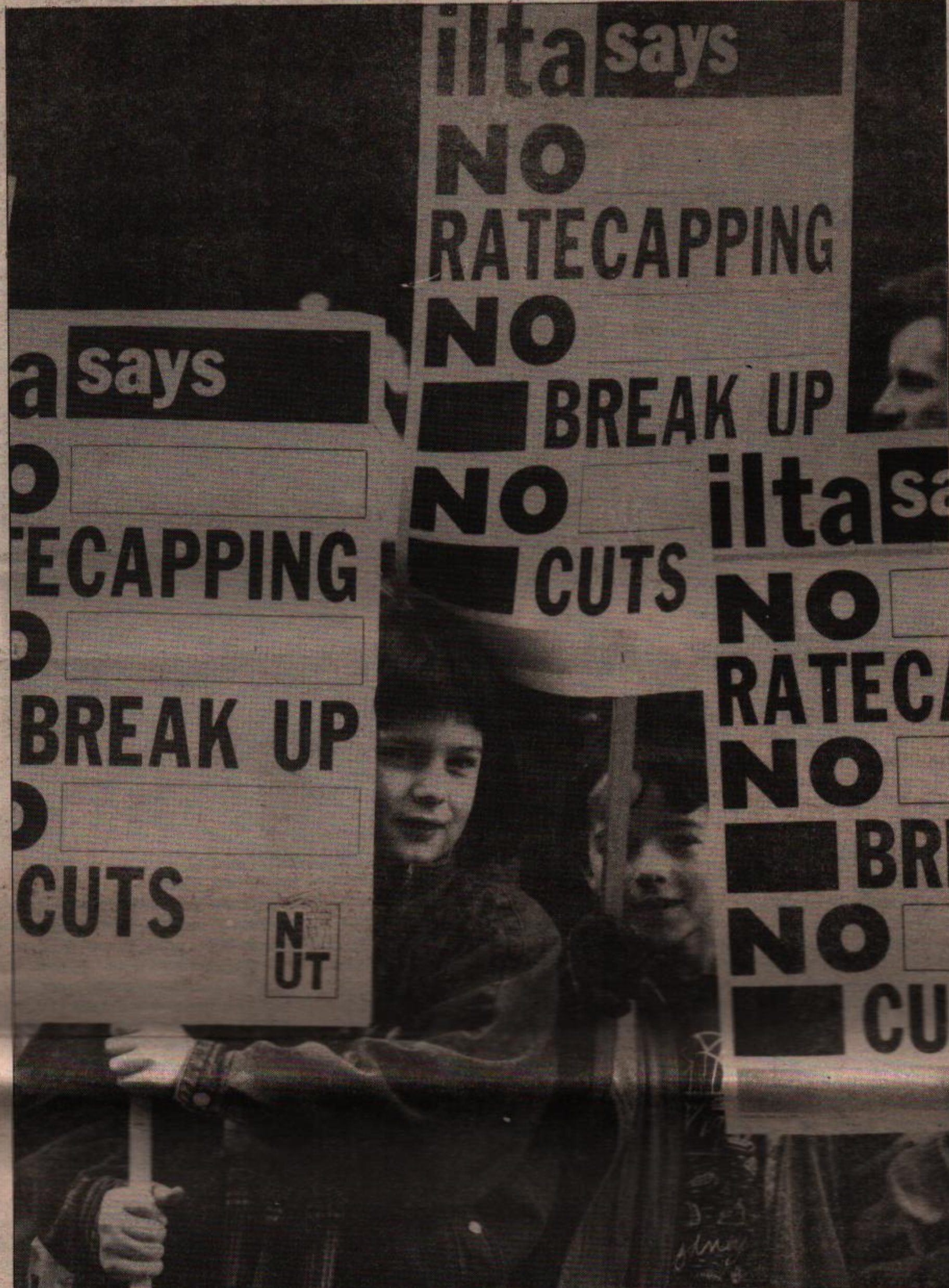
Ilea faces attacks on three fronts. Most immediate is the effect of ratecapping, which has created a £129 million gap in the budget. Despite weak reassurances by some Ilea members that compulsory redundancy will be stayed off this year, it will inevitably mean massive job losses through other measures such as vacancy freeze, voluntary retirement and re-deployment.

Secondly, privatisation of school meals and cleaning services will lead to job loss and worsened conditions. Finally, the Education Bill itself will mean the complete abolition of Ilea, with Baker saying that he envisages 80 per cent of the workforce transferring to the local boroughs. He didn't say what he envisages for the other 20 per cent!

An open conference of 600 Ilea shop stewards has decided unanimously, despite the low key approach of the organisers, to campaign to come out on 8 March. Schoolkeepers in Nupe have voted to strike on that day and have called a strike committee to organise. Three quarters of all Ilea schools could be shut.

Ilea Nalgo, 3000 strong, have voted to strike. A positive response by their national union would ensure a total shut-down.

Members of the National Union of Teachers, with 12,000 members, are keen to come out and many schools and branches have already declared their support. However, the national union leadership is dragging its



The Tories have abolished the GLC. They mustn't be allowed to do the same with Ilea. Photo: Militant.

feet about giving official backing—as usual! This could be bypassed by the Inner London Teachers' Association reps, who may well be forced to respond to pressure from the schools and call on all members to join in the strike alongside their colleagues.

The National Association of Schoolmasters and Women Teachers has been balloting its members. The smaller manual unions like TGWU and Ucat are calling mass meetings and there is little doubt there will be overwhelming votes to join the strike.

Parents are also organising in support. A meeting on the Education Bill in Hackney was attended by over 300 parents who gave their backing to 8 March.

Now the Hackney Save Education Committee is setting about the mass distribution of leaflets.

With such support the strike will be a huge success—but it still can only be seen as the beginning. The links that are being forged between unions in workplaces and across the authority must be maintained and reinforced.

Regular joint shop stewards meetings must be held and a strategy drawn up to defend our jobs and our education service. The Ilea Broad Left has a key role in drawing together all those who want to change the unions into real fighting organisations capable of defeating all the attacks from this hated Tory government.

Save Ilea march

TUESDAY 8 MARCH, starting from Kennington Park at 10.30am and marching to Jubilee Gardens 11.30am. Lobby MPs from 2.30pm.

Ilea Broad Left
Tuesday 8 March
7.30pm
Kingsway
Princeton College,
King's Cross
All Ilea workers welcome

Left candidates

DELEGATES WISHING to see the London Labour Party begin to address the real problems facing the working class should vote for Jeremy Corbyn for chair, Joan Twelves for vice-chair, George Williamson for Hackney, Tower Hamlets, Camden and Islington, John Bryan for the Southwark, Lambeth, Westminster seat and Dave Sirockin and Dan Lewenstein for the youth seats.

Chaucer election defeat warning

DESPITE AN excellent campaign run by local party members and the Labour candidate Alex Moore, Chaucer ward, Bermondsey has been lost to the SDP/Liberal Focus by 219 votes.

Right in the middle of the campaign, the Labour council announced a rent increase of £3 per week to begin in April. This followed two increases during 1987.

Alex pledged his opposition to any rent or rate increases to compensate for Tory cuts but unfortunately his pledge couldn't compensate for the increases themselves. Without the excellent campaign, defeat would have been

much worse.

If this result was repeated, in the 1990 local elections or in the by-elections expected this summer, it is clear that all 23 Bermondsey seats would go to the SDP/Liberals, threatening Labour's majority on Southwark council.

However, the swing of 5.2 per cent is much less than that experienced in other recent London by-elections such as the 13 per cent swing to the SDP in Greenwich. On the very same day as the Chaucer by-election, Labour lost a seat in De Beauvoir ward, Hackney.

The common factor behind these results is the cuts in services and

jobs and the increases in rents that Labour councils are imposing to meet Tory induced budget deficits. Labour councils are carrying out Tory cuts and taking the consequences.

The main lesson of this defeat is that Labour councils have to deliver on housing, childcare and other key services. Otherwise, more losses can be expected.

Unfortunately, the Labour leadership seems bent on carrying through a programme of even greater cuts and further rent increases and disciplining the Labour councillors who have shown opposition to this policy.

THE GREATER London Labour Party conference this weekend has an agenda which hardly begins to address the problems facing Londoners.

The local authority cuts might as well be happening on another planet for all the interest the regional executive is taking. The 'new realists' on the committee say that militancy does not work. Without a whimper from the London Labour Party, one Labour-controlled authority after another cuts its spending.

It is little wonder therefore that the party conspicuously fails to inspire mass support amongst London voters. Only where a fighting socialist alternative is put forward does Labour increase its support, as in Bermondsey in the last general election. That party is now being witch-hunted for its efforts.

This year's conference will see one important new departure. The two executive committee seats held by the Labour Party Young Socialists will be elected by the constituency delegations who have a youth delegate (an LPYS member under 23) among their number. This change in the rules means that the LPYS is the only section of the party not directly electing its own representatives.

Every LPYS branch should make sure they get their youth delegate as part of the constituency delegation.

By George Williamson,
Greater London Labour Party executive committee, Hackney and Tower Hamlets boroughs, in personal capacity.

Witch-hunt leads to arson attack

THE LONG-RUNNING attack by the Labour leadership on Militant supporters within the party has created an atmosphere which can only be described as intimidating. In many areas right wingers have been given the green light to attack good socialists. Anything goes, it would seem, in some constituencies.

In the worst of the recent incidents, a single mother with a young son in Kent received two anonymous letters threatening that if she didn't resign as secretary of the women's section, life would be "made difficult" for her. She was then told "resign—or else". A few evenings later she discovered paper burning on her hall carpet. It had been shoved through the letter box. The comrade concerned is a Militant seller.

The youth of the party are once again under attack. Blyth Valley Labour party have started an inquiry into "potential Militant infiltration of the Labour Party Young Socialists", who recruited no less than 32 new people to the party during the general election—more than any other section. Is this a crime?

In Bracknell an investigation has been started into five members of "alleged membership of the Militant party"(!) Meanwhile, the witch-hunt has spread to the trade unions in Grimsby. John Rathbone has been taken off the Labour party delegation from his branch of Gmbatu and Ian McEwan has been refused admission to the trades council even though his union, the AEU, nominated him.

By Militant reporters

Nellist backs Land Rover workers



Workers must fight sell-off plans

"PARASITES, PARASITES!" is the chant most often heard as Land Rover managers drive through the picket line in their company Range Rovers. One day last week, pickets counted 85 of these in the car park. "That's where all the profits go lads," one worker shouted out.

Into the second week on strike the mood on the picket line is still electric with hundreds of pickets still turning out. Years of having to tolerate the brutal regime dished out by the company has resulted in a wave of anger and determination not seen in Birmingham for many years.

Dave Nellist MP addressed a mass meeting of pickets and received big applause after explaining what he had done so far to help the strikers and to highlight their cause. However, many Land Rover workers must be asking why actively supporting the strike has been left to a Coventry MP while east Birmingham Labour MPs, who have thousands of Rover workers in their constituencies, have so far remained silent.

Little has happened on the negotiations front with management. They are not prepared to talk and the strike has remained 100 per cent solid. As yet, management have not been able to find any potential scabs to try and weaken the strike. One anonymous letter criticising the strike was given prominence in the local press. But as one union official commented, "What's one as a percentage of 6000?"

While the strike has received extensive local media coverage,



Hundreds on the Land Rover picket line, with Young Socialists' banner supporting them.

nationally the press are trying to keep it low key, considering the industrial situation generally. After Ford, many Land Rover workers now feel that the Tories are looking to their company bosses to try and inflict a defeat.

For this reason the feeling that

it will be a long dispute is prevalent amongst many pickets. Thousands of strikers have already visited the bank manager to delay on the mortgage repayments. If the workers' confidence and determination were the only factors in winning, then they can be sure of victory.

Militant supporters in the factory have produced two bulletins which have gone down well on the picket line.

After the first week over 50 Militants have been sold.

By Les Kuniata

Photo: John Harris (IFL)

AS THE Land Rover picket line stands firm, the Tories are planning to flog the company off. The government has announced that it has agreed to open negotiations with British Aerospace for the whole of the Rover group.

Trade and industry secretary Kenneth Clarke stated that the Rover group board would negotiate the take over with Aerospace exclusively. In other words, although a time limit of April has been announced the deal is virtually cut and dried. Is it a coincidence that Norman Tebbit is advisor to BAe?

Dave Nellist MP said in the Commons debate on the issue that "despite the climbdown two years ago by the government, they have used the ensuing time to raid the pension fund of £80 million, in effect workers' deferred wages, in order to make the balance sheet more attractive for a bidder such as Aerospace."

Jobs

"What guarantee has the government sought to safeguard employment in Rover group? Past experience in Coventry has been that workers have paid the price for privatisation through job losses."

In recent years there has been no state subsidy to the Austin Rover group and in fact the profitable parts have been privatised—Unipart, Freight Rover and Jaguar.

Now the government are intent on ransacking the rest of the cupboard to please their friends in big business and give them the rich pickings such as Land Rover which made £15 million profit last year.

This latest attempt to sell off the state owned car company must be fiercely resisted by Rover group workers. Already, Land Rover workers in their second week of a rock solid strike lead the way.

Mass meetings at all other Rover plants must be arranged to plan an immediate fight back. An all-out national strike of the Rover group would stop the Tories in their tracks. This would only be the start. With nine other jobs in the car component industry reliant on every one car worker, a massive campaign is essential in order to defeat the plans of the Tories and the Rover board.

As Dave Nellist said in the Commons, Graham Day was brought in as an undertaker dressed up as a physiotherapist, to prepare for privatisation. There can be no half measures to defeat this bid. Total opposition by all the trade unions in the car industry is a must.

By a car worker

Left victory in transport union

THE TRANSPORT and General Workers Union (TGWU) elections represent a major victory for the left and a severe blow to the right wing, backed by Kinnock and the 'new realists'.

Over the coming months the left executive must use its majority to lead the trade union movement against further Tory attacks on organised labour.

Once again the right wing are crying "foul". Their friends in the press and media, amid frenzied claims of ballot rigging and 'interference', are trying to stampede the union into a re-ballot. If the result doesn't suit them, anything goes in order to get their own way.

Familiar

This happened in the general secretary elections where Ron Todd, the left candidate, was forced into a re-run when the right were defeated.

The story has a familiar ring to it. John Macreadie, the real general secretary of the Civil and Public Services Association, was also forced into a re-ballot and subsequently lost, allowing the right to temporarily hijack that union. More recently, the presidential election in the National Union of Mineworkers has come under fire from the very same 'democrats'.

The fact is that the right wing only support democracy when they win. The attempt to use Militant as the 'bogey man' against democracy will rebound on them and result in increasing support for Marxism amongst rank and file TGWU members.

Part of the motive behind the hysteria for a re-run became clear in a recent article in the London

Evening Standard. It says "The ballot must now be re-run...the government should also bring forward the implementation of the postal balloting provisions, via a one clause bill, to catch other important elections this spring: in the CPSA and the National Communications Union. Workplace and branch voting catapulted Militant John Macreadie to national prominence..."

This is a gross distortion of reality. The reason John Macreadie was elected first as general secretary was because of his record as an officer of the CPSA, fighting on behalf of his members' pay and conditions. But also because his policies for the union, those of the Broad Left, obviously corresponded with what ordinary CPSA members wanted from their national leader.

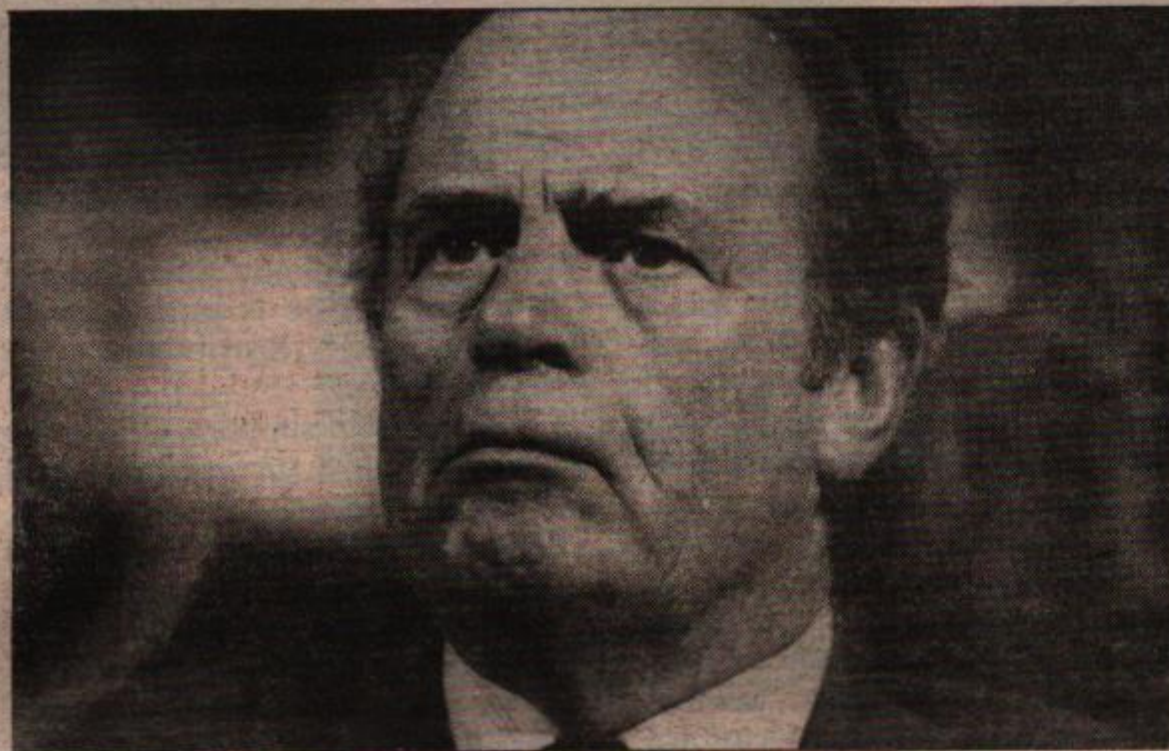
Any attempt by the right in the TGWU to try and force another election will be tenaciously resisted by the rank and file.

The right wing in the trade union movement are absolutely terrified of the implications of the left victory. They are so far removed from the everyday life of the members they in theory represent that they didn't believe the left could win a majority. They have had a rude awakening. As Militant has explained before, the rank and file are moving to the left while the leaders are moving rapidly in the opposite direction.

Just how out of touch they became was graphically illustrated in the Ford strike.

There were a number of times when recommendations by Murphy, Airlie and other national leaders were overturned by the rank and file.

The turn to the left in the



TGWU General Secretary, Ron Todd.

Photo: Dave Sinclair.

TGWU is a reflection of the general process of the changing mood of ordinary union members who see that their needs will best be met by the new executive.

When the new executive takes office on 7 March a review of all union positions in the movement has to take place. The role that right winger, Haigh, played on the Labour Party NEC in opposing TGWU conference policy on witch-hunts against the Militant cannot be forgotten.

Labour Party

The new executive must also urge Tony Benn to stand for the Labour Party leadership. This would start the process of bringing the leadership of the movement 'into line' with the shop floor.

This position must be built upon. In the absence of a conference this year the left should call a meeting of activists to discuss and determine how this majority can be consolidated.

Already, Ron Todd, reflecting

the new left majority, has stated that Kinnock and the Labour Party will not have a blank cheque. The 1.2 million votes at this year's party conference will be crucial in the battle against any further watering down of policy. This is also the case within the TGWU itself. In fact, there should be a reassertion of the left's position on policy and programme and no pandering to the so-called 'middle ground.'

The Ford strike, now Land Rover, with other car manufacturers biting their nails in anxiety, as well as the massive strength of feeling against the Tories by workers in the NHS shows what the real feelings of the working class are. The lefts on the TGWU executive have an enormous responsibility to ensure that the maximum pressure is exerted on the leaders both within the TUC and the Labour Party in order to lead the NHS and other workers to victory.

By Ian Parker



Photo: Dave Sinclair.

Department of Employment workers lobbying the DE head office recently.

DE civil servants' strike spreads

THE STRIKE action by London civil servants against compulsory transfers, staffing cuts and the sacking of casuals continues to grow.

By Charlie Parker
London regional chair
(personal capacity)

There are now 13 Department of Employment (DE) and DHSS offices affected by indefinite strike action.

At least five more offices are expected to vote for action this week if management proceed with suspension notices. The growing momentum behind this dispute follows the recent successful one-day strike of 2000 DE and DHSS members. The strike raised the issues amongst a much broader layer of members and succeeded in putting more pressure on management and the government. This was shown by the comments of John Lee, the DE minister who indicated that

he would be prepared to set up negotiations with the union.

While every member would welcome meaningful talks to settle this dispute, it would be a mistake to take such statements at face value. Therefore the union is continuing to build the pressure on management to force them back round the table. The NEC and the strikers have agreed a four point strategy. This strategy gives us flexibility by allowing us to keep our options open.

Offices will continue to be brought out on strike on a controlled basis. In addition, members at the Reading and Livingston computer centres will be approached to take solidarity action. This means that no Giro cheques will be sent out from

strike-bound offices. Finally, immediate steps are being taken to build towards a London-wide all-out strike.

Every office in DE will be visited to explain the implications of this strategy and what's at stake. Undoubtedly, the recently announced 'IBBS' proposals highlight the real issues in this dispute. The creation of an autonomous Employment Service agency is the first step to the service being contracted out which will mean substantial cuts in jobs and wage levels.

Just claim

Management are clearly worried by the scale of the action. They have made concessions in the Bristol disputes, they have backed down from proceeding with

sackings and transfers in some areas and in others have started recruiting in order to stop the strike spreading.

Every CPSA member must play their part in this campaign. Branches should invite strikers to address meetings. Every member should contribute to the national levy. If the support of CPSA members matches the determination of the strikers we can force management to recognise the justice of our claim and in the process, strike a blow against the government's plans to privatise the employment service.

Donations, messages of support, requests for speakers should be sent to Phil John, CPSA, 7 Fowler House, South Grove, London N15 5QJ. Phone 485 6352.

Electricity sell-off

PRIVATISATION IS now looming in the electricity industry. Privatised, under the Tories it will be just another avenue for private gain. We have to learn the lessons of previous sell-offs. The carrot of cheap shares is only a short cut to the inevitable ruin and death of the industry.

Cecil Parkinson has already said the electricity supply industry has a wage bill that can and will be cut. This is a direct indication of his intentions.

When are the leaders of the unions in the industry going to give a lead? As a shop steward, I can vouch for the strong feeling in Liverpool against privatisation but also the feeling that union national officers seem oblivious to the fears of their members.

Even now, management are stiffening their resolve. A move towards introducing non-union workers in a depot in Liverpool was only averted by alert and vigilant shop stewards.

A call for strike action would be well supported. If we are not given a lead by our union leaders, we, as concerned workers will have to provide that lead ourselves.

By Frank Duff

EETPU shop steward, Manweb electricity

International support for P&O seamen

THE P&O strike affecting Dover and Folkestone is closely being followed by all cross-channel sailors, both sides of the water.

All realise that a defeat for the strike would result in the introduction of similar cuts in manning, increases in working hours and so on for all ferry crews, whether working for P&O, Sealink, RMT, SNCF or others.

Agreements have been signed between the National Union of Seamen (NUS), the ACOD and CVCC unions in Belgium and the CGT and CFDT in France, meaning that in the event of strike action no extra ferries would be operated by union members.

This has been extended to disallow ships from docking unless their respective crews are serving under acceptable union approved conditions.

The Belgian and French sailors were surprised that the NUS did not call for solidarity action, nor send over delegations to explain the issues.

They are afraid that the strike will be lost if not expanded again to all NUS crews, P&O and Sealink. RMT and SNCF members are prepared to take action in support. Delegations should be sent to visit the Dutch unions as P&O threatens to put Dutch crews on their ships in Rotterdam.

Under P&O pressure, the Belgian RMT management decided to start some extra departures. That decision was immediately countered by strike action which forced RMT to back off. This international solidarity strike was the first ever achieved on the cross-channel ferries.

By a Belgian shop steward

What's happening in your workplace?
Phone in your reports to
the Industrial Editor
on 01-533 3311
before 5pm on Monday.



News in Brief

DHSS strike ballot

CIVIL SERVICE staff in DHSS offices across the country have begun balloting on indefinite strike action over government plans to cut 8000 jobs

over the coming year. The CPSA has recommended that its 50,000 members in this section vote for an all-out strike from 14 March.

Brighton fights

BRIGHTON COUNCIL workers in the National Union of Public Employees (Nupe) are continuing their campaign against cuts in jobs and services. Their branch refuses to do the Tories' dirty work. They also responded to the trades council's call for solidarity on the recent Cohse day of action.

The 600 strong Cohse branch had voted to strike against Tory attacks on the NHS. Nupe council workers drew attention to the united battle against Tory cuts in funding to the public sector by joining those health workers on strike.

The trades council has given backing to a Nupe initiative for the creation

of a public services defence committee. Cohse branch secretary Richard Pymont said: "The committee is very important. Real power lies in the various unions sticking together to combat the sectarianism of most trade union leaders and to link up against the Tory attack".

The committee's first task will be to link up public sector workers to the NHS rally and demo on 5 March and to campaign for a general strike on 14 March. The trades council looks certain to back that day's action.

By Paul Cadman
Brighton Nupe
(personal capacity)

Teachers sued

HEREFORD AND Worcester county council, using Tory anti-union legislation has won a High Court case against the teachers' union NAS/UWT for taking half day strike action in 1986. They claimed that 590 teachers caused financial loss by following a union instruction to strike without a ballot.

The result of the case

means that the union is liable for the amount the council claims was lost as a result of the action—over £57,000. This is the first time a council has won such a case. Many teachers will be angered to know that the lawyer acting for the council was Labour Party member and former Brent councillor, James Goudie QC.

Drake refrigeration

WORKERS AT Drake Refrigeration in Poole have been on strike since 28 January after engineer Chris Barrett was accused of removing one of his firm's tools.

He was sacked, accused of gross misconduct. Workers were already on an overtime ban for better pay and conditions and management underestimated the mood. Since then management have tried to intimidate workers, issuing every-

one with a letter saying they are sacked.

They also tried to get a court injunction saying the strike was illegal. MSF (the new merged Astms/Tass) and Ucatt fought the injunction and won. The strike carries on with most lorry drivers respecting the picket lines.

Donations and letters of support to C.R.Barker, 19a Markham Road, Charminster, Bournemouth.

Fleetlands, Gosport

WORKERS AT the Royal Naval Aircraft Yard at Fleetlands, Gosport, have taken action in support of a victimised worker and are ready to do so again.

A fitter at the yard, Stewart Todd, was sacked last week after the workers had gone home and no union officials

were present. The sacked worker's case has been taken to the Civil Service appeals board but AEU convenor, Syd Rapson, warned that there could be a walkout at any moment, such was the mood of the workforce.

By Eddie Truman

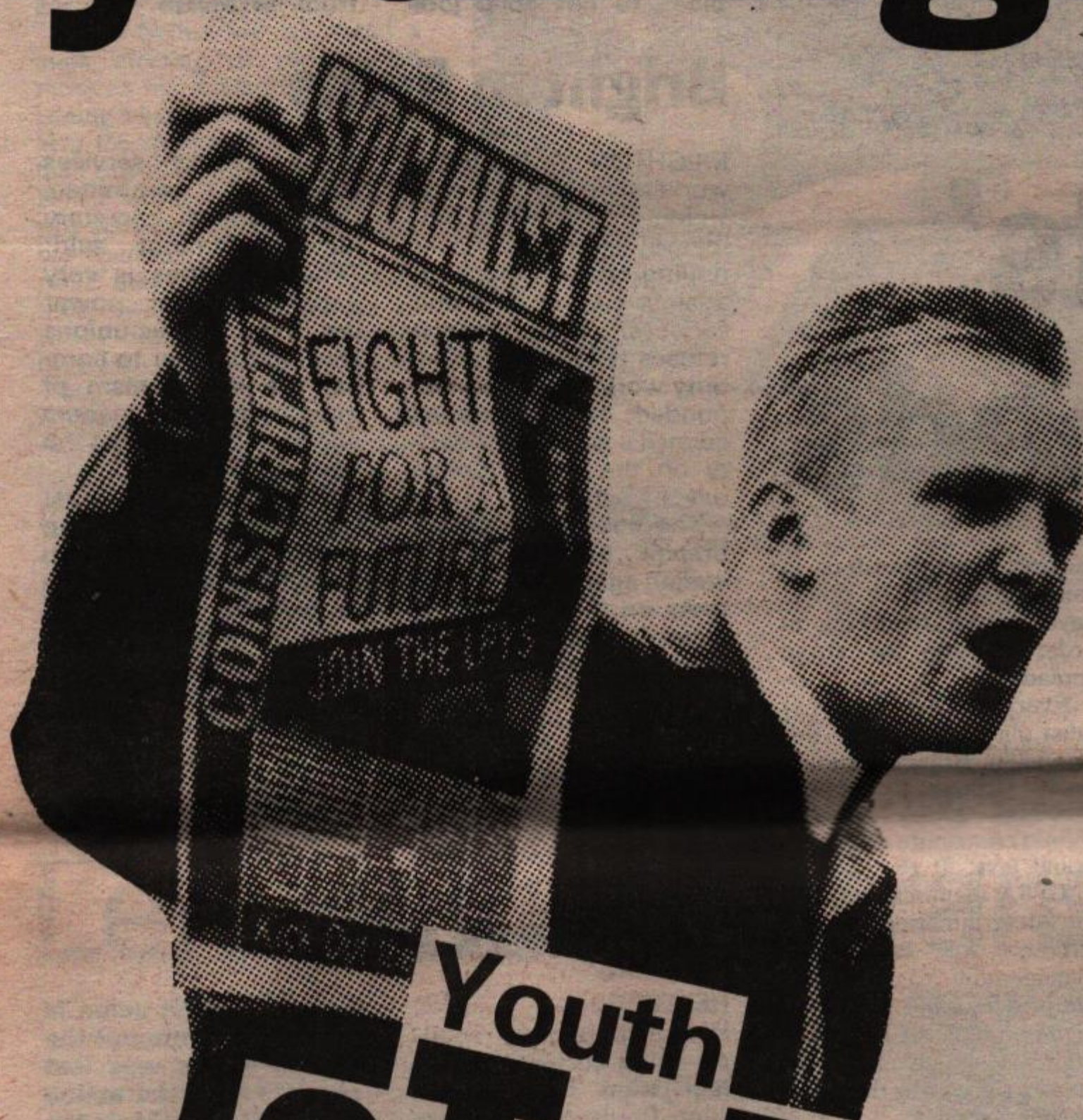
TUC rally 5 March

Assemble: Enbankment from 11am
March: from Enbankment 12 noon
Rally: Hyde Park 2.30pm

Militant papers can be collected from
Cleopatras' Needle.

Youth – Fight for your rights

TO YOUNG PEOPLE I'd say: "Get in the union and fight for your rights. Keeping their mouths shut got the workers in the Castle where they are today. Only by getting in the unions and sticking together are you ever going to win anything. Come out on 14 March!"—Victimised hotel worker.



Youth
STRIKE
MON 14 MARCH

THE TORIES want Britain's youth to be a slave labour workforce. Their Social Security Act will reduce benefits so that young people will have to accept work at any price. They will withdraw benefit from 16 to 18 year olds who refuse to go onto YTS, in other words YTS conscription.

The Act is due to be passed in April. The Youth Trades Union Rights Campaign has called a youth strike on 14 March against the Tories' plans.

Mark Haslehurst of Wallasey Labour Party Young Socialists spoke to one young worker who experienced Tory slave labour conditions and is fighting against them:

"When I went for a job at the Castle hotel, I had to work a month's trial without pay. I was working in a filthy kitchen with a rat-infested tip behind. We never had a tea-break and had to eat dinner while we were working.

Then I was taken on at £1.85 an hour supposedly for 48 hours. In reality, we were expected to work unlimited unpaid overtime. I broke my finger at work and, although my doctor told me to have six weeks off,

I had to return early because my boss didn't pay me regular sick pay. As a result, my finger is permanently disfigured.

Worse

Worse was to come. One day I was told that 15 50lb bags of spuds had to be peeled and chopped in an hour. I went into the room and it was so cold there was ice on top of the spud bucket. My fingers went numb. I cut my thumb, but when I showed it to the boss, he just said: "Put a plaster on it and carry on working."

Then I found out that I couldn't move my thumb any more. So I went to hospital. They told me I had cut the tendons in the thumb of my left hand and would probably never be able to use it again.

Someone tried to organise us into the union and I decided to join. With the help of a Militant supporter and Young Socialist I tried to recruit some of the others while I was off sick.

When I took another sick note in the boss told me I was sacked. He had trumped up charges of not being qualified enough, even though I

had been training YTSers. In fact, I'd recently been promoted.

Now I've lost the use of my thumb. I've lost my job and I'll never be able to work in catering again.

I've got nothing to lose any more. I used to be a scag-head. I beat that. I used to be homeless and I got out of that.

I won't sleep easy till I get my job back, get everyone from the Castle in the union and get decent health and safety and wages there.

Tory plans for youth, pages 6 and 7.

STOP PRESS

THE NUM's South Yorkshire panel has voted to call out all its members on 14 March after an appeal from health workers who lobbied its meeting.

All eyes are now on the Yorkshire area council which meets on Monday 7 March. Will they follow South Yorkshire's lead?

Stewards victimised

FOUR SHOP stewards are to be disciplined and served with writs by Thorn-EMI. Their crime was to lead 500 workers at the company's Stretford factory onto the Manchester health workers' demonstration on 19 February.

By Phil Frampton

The stewards, in the AEU and Gmbatu, face the sack and the threat of a writ for £45,000 each.

"The employers have written to our union leaders indicating that they intend to go ahead with legal action, one of them told Militant. "It's significant

that on the day of the first disciplinary hearing a member of the employers' federation was on site.

"What we did was right, but today I felt like a prisoner waiting to be put on a boat to a penal colony. But the workforce is fully behind us. Even some of the 'dirty dozen' who gave statements to management have retracted."

The trade union movement must respond immediately. This is an attempt to frighten workers off striking in defence of the health service.

Already the employers have lost millions of pounds of production due to sym-

pathy action. Such mass strikes have been decisive in splitting the Tory ranks.

All attempts to impose anti-union laws to obstruct the struggle must be rebuffed.

Deluge the leaders of Gmbatu, the AEU and the Confed (CSEU) in Manchester with telex messages and phone calls! Demand they call workplace mass meetings now to prepare for immediate city-wide strike action if the sackings or legal action take place!

Other Thorn-EMI workers should contact the Stretford workers to prepare for solidarity action if needed.

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