

RALLY '88

ALEXANDRA PALACE

19 JUNE 1988

12-6PM

Tickets £6

From Militant Rally, 3-13 Hepscoot Rd, London E9 5HB

see page 7

Solidarity with ferry strikers

THE SLOW handclapping begins as the coach gets to the Jubilee Way bridge over the port, police car behind and police escort in front. Then it gets quicker and the shouts go up "scab, scab".

"As the coach pulls up the pickets yell "off, off". A member of the Port Committee gets on to appeal to the strike breakers.

One or two climb off with him every time, and rejoin their fellow trade unionists on strike. They are in tears. The strikers embrace them. There are no recriminations, they are welcomed back to the struggle. One of those who rejoined the strike said: "I was prepared to face P&O management. But I was not prepared to cross the picket line and face you lads, my mates."

The determination of these Dover strikers will not be broken by any High Court judge. They are the union, not the buildings and the bank accounts.

But the ferry bosses, the Tories and the courts are out to break the National Union of Seamen.

The strikers at Dover are demanding full backing in action from the TUC. Addressing the mass picket at Dover on 4 May Terry Fields MP called on the TUC to organise a 24 hour general strike as an immediate response to this attack on fundamental trade union rights.

Speaking with him, NUS general secretary, Sam McCluskie, called for strike action by all the deep sea membership.

Michael Meacher promised the pickets that the first legislation a new Labour government would repeal would be the laws against secondary picketing.

Militant supporter and TUC General Council member, John Macreadie, has written to Norman Willis demanding an immediate recall General Council meeting. The TUC must be pressed to call a one day general strike.

If the sequestration of the NUS funds goes unanswered, effective trade unionism for all workers is in jeopardy. Solidarity, acting in support of fellow workers, is the most basic principle of the trade union movement. The TUC must not allow it to be taken away by Tory employers and Tory courts.

* For a national NUS strike, including all the deep sea fleet.

* For full solidarity action by dockers and customs and excise workers. Close every British port.

* For an immediate recall TUC General Council meeting to organise support for the NUS.

* For a 24 hour general strike in defence of the NUS and basic trade union rights.

* For Labour to give a firm commitment to repeal all the Tory anti-union laws.

From Eric Segal in Dover



CPSA leader writes to TUC

"THE VERY existence of the N.U.S. is threatened by the P&O management and the move to sequester the unions' funds.

The N.U.S. must win this dispute. P&O are receiving the backing of employers and the Conservative government. The N.U.S. must receive the full support of the Trade Union movement.

The General Council should be convening a meeting of all unions with members working at ports to discuss and co-ordinate action in support of seamen.

I urge an immediate recall of the General Council."

Fighting Fund: £30,000

OUR FINAL Fighting Fund total for the last eight weeks is £30,078. Two outstanding anonymous donations, one of £1,000 and the other of £250 have brought in £8724 in the last week, including £1530 from Merseyside.

We appeal to all readers to keep giving your support and help to meet our target for the next eight weeks.

Militant

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Defend union rights

WITH THE sequestration of the assets of the National Union of Seamen, the ruling class has thrown down a gauntlet to the trade union movement.

The dispute provoked by P&O is no longer just about jobs and seafarers' conditions. With the enthusiastic backing of the Tories and the gutter press, the company are out to break the NUS, and score a major victory over union rights and solidarity action in particular.

The Tories still have to reluctantly tolerate trade unions in their midst. But they are out to restrict workers' action to individual workplaces. Solidarity, the most fundamental principle of trade unionism, is completely outlawed according to the Tories and their courts.

What about the 'solidarity' of P&O, Sealink and the Tories against workers' rights and conditions? Sealink is just waiting for the result of the P&O dispute before introducing the same inhuman working conditions.

P&O have derecognised the union, pulled out of the maritime agreement and advertised for scab labour to take union members' jobs. They are following the path already trodden by Murdoch at Wapping. The TV technicians now face the same threat. Thatcher encouraged the TV bosses to challenge what she described as the last bastion of union abuse.

P&O boss, Jeffrey Sterling, is particularly close to the Thatcher government under which he was knighted. He is an advisor to the Department of Transport. And Thatcher herself took a close interest in the private bill allowing P&O to expand its Felixstowe container port last year.

The cold brutality of Justice Michael Davies' judgement against the NUS shows the bosses' determination. He said the union had "only themselves to blame" for a "flagrant and repeated grave contempt. It has been a deliberate attempt at suicide." But how else could the union defend itself against ruthless management?

The NUS had no alternative but to call a national strike. Now they have the right to expect the same backing and commitment from the TUC that the ruling class is extending to P&O.

The Dover workers had been fighting for their union's future for 14 weeks by themselves. In fact it was the lack of any clear national direction earlier in the dispute that led to many of those who have signed the 'yellow forms', to accept P&O's proposals, giving up.

One of them explained why he has now rejoined the strike: "It was because I found out what was happening here and that other people were coming out in other ports and from Sealink. If we had had that support before, I don't know if that plane would have gone to Rotterdam."

Hesitation by the union leaders encouraged aggression by the ferry bosses. When the courts found against the union earlier, in the battle against the Isle of Man Steam Packet Company, the leadership should have called on the members to stay out and defy the law. P&O would then have thought twice about taking on the union.

Now the national strike is on, the rest of the trade union movement must organise the widest solidarity action, starting with dockers and customs and excise workers. This would be the basis to ensure the backing of workers in European ports.

Very quickly every port throughout Britain and Europe could be tied up, with all traffic and freight stopped.

In Britain seafarers will be looking to the conference of the CPSA (which organises customs workers), beginning on 9 May.

But still more they will expect the new left executive of the TGWU to show it means business by calling on its members not to tie up any ferry in Britain. This would give enormous confidence to the NUS strikers.

If the courts then dare to threaten TGWU or CPSA funds, call their bluff. The workers' movement as a whole would have to meet that challenge head on.

But the TUC must act now. The funds of the NUS, built up by the sacrifice of thousands of seafarers, have been seized. This cannot go unanswered.

The TUC general council must be urgently recalled with the instruction to organise a 24 hour general strike to defend the P&O strikers, the NUS and the right to effective trade union organisation for workers throughout the country.

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IRA's bankrupt strategy

THE ASSASSINATION by the Provisional IRA of three young off-duty British servicemen in Holland gives another bloody twist to the spiral of terror and counter-terror arising from the Northern Ireland conflict.

By Lynn Walsh

How can such attacks, which arouse revulsion and anger amongst workers in Ireland and Britain, advance the interests of people in Northern Ireland?

Last Sunday's killings underline the bankruptcy of the IRA's strategy. It is true, as the IRA claims, that the crisis in Northern Ireland is the legacy of many decades of exploitation and oppression by British capitalism. But their solution is entirely false.

Terrorist attacks, carried out by a tiny clandestine minority, will never muster

the forces required to defeat the British state. On the contrary, the methods of individual terrorism, based on reactionary nationalist ideas, reinforce sectarian divisions.

Every series of attacks, with its inevitable cycle of counter-attacks, sets back the task of building class unity and of organising mass action around socialist policies—the only way out of the quagmire created by British capitalism.

The Provisionals may claim that the deaths in Holland are 'vengeance' for the deaths in Gibraltar. But does this bring them an inch nearer to victory?

The British state is resigned indefinitely to a bit-

ter war of attrition to contain IRA military units. But the IRA's indiscriminate bombings and gun attacks on 'soft targets', reinforce the climate of opinion which allows the state to strengthen its arsenal of repressive measures.

Threat

'Propaganda by deed,' is how anarchists once justified individual terrorism. But these killings could not be worse timed from a propagandist point of view.

Thames Television's documentary and Thatcher's unsuccessful attempt to stop its broadcast focussed attention on the government's actions in Gibraltar.

Their legal cover for the SAS shoot-to-kill operation was falling apart.

After Holland, the Tories will argue there is no further need to explain what happened in Gibraltar. If the Tories are allowed to get away with this, systematic use of shoot-to-kill as a routine counter-terrorist measure will be a step nearer.

Let us be clear, this poses a threat to the labour movement. Thatcher's attack on "the enemy within" during the miners' strike, deliberately linked the miners, trade unionists fighting for workers' jobs and rights, with terrorism.

'Extraordinary', 'temporary' measures directed against the IRA today will be aimed at a militant labour movement tomorrow. Implacable opposition to the methods of the IRA must go hand in hand with implacable opposition to state repression.

Gibraltar shootings

Executions on the street

THE AUTHORISED version of the Gibraltar shootings in March has been shattered. Thames Television's *This Week* documentary, *Death on the Rock* presented essential new evidence, which otherwise would not have come to light on the killing of three IRA members by the SAS (Special Air Service).

By Lynn Walsh

The Independent Broadcasting Authority refused foreign secretary Howe's personal request to "postpone" the programme, which showed that the SAS had deliberately executed unarmed IRA suspects.

Howe told parliament (7 March) that the three IRA members had been challenged, and "made movements" which led military personnel to conclude their lives were threatened. "In the light of this response," he claimed, "they were shot dead."

This Week's five eye-witnesses contradicted this. A woman who saw the events from her flat said three SAS men sped up in a police car and opened fire on Mairead Farrell and Daniel McCann, without any challenge.

"When they (the suspects-LW) saw these men had guns, they just put their hands up...like giving themselves up." When they were on the ground one gunman "went on shooting at them."

Another witness described how an SAS man ran after the third IRA man, Sean Savage, and shot him repeatedly in the back.

With Spanish police, they had been tailing them for weeks. The police knew of IRA plans to set up a bomb, but allowed them, under observation, to re-enter Gibraltar.

Were the security forces incapable of arresting the three or four members of



The SAS, in a shot for a propaganda film for the execution squad. Their role in the Gibraltar shootings has been exposed.

the unit they had under close surveillance? Hardly. Evidence points to a deliberate shoot-to-kill policy.

George Styles, a former Bomb Squad commander and now a security consultant told *This Week*: "I look on it as two active units waging war and, thank goodness, our side won."

Even more chilling was the comment to the *Daily Telegraph* from an anonymous 'source close to Ministry of Defence Central Staff'.

"As a result of earlier experience in Northern Ireland when efforts to capture terrorists resulted in SAS casualties, the regiment will not now mount operations which result in half measures." SAS "commitment" to "total success"... "is the ultimate deterrent in counter-terrorist operations."

In other words, a government decision to deploy these licensed assassins means a decision to carry out executions on the streets.

Northern Ireland Secretary Tom King claimed the operation averted the death of up to 200 people in Gibraltar. The Tories naturally play on horror at IRA shootings and bombings.

Press poison

But a massive bomb blast was almost certainly not an immediate danger. A photo of the IRA unit's car some time before the shootings convinced Thames' expert witness, George Styles, that it was not weighed down with a huge bomb. In fact, the bomb was later found 50 miles away. The IRA may have been on a reconnaissance run.

Styles dismissed as almost impossible the idea that the IRA could trigger off a car bomb one-and-a-half miles away, with no line-of-sight, by remote control.

If the forces really believed there was a massive bomb in the car, why did they not clear the narrow, crowded streets around it

until an hour or more after the shootings?

After Thatcher denounced the programme as "trial by television", her Tory press friends started a trial by muck-raking, with 'shock, horror' allegations about some of the eye-witnesses. Even if true, which is far from proven, they would not in themselves refute their accounts.

The Tories say the programme prejudiced the rights of individuals who may give evidence. This presumably refers to the SAS men, if the government even allows them to appear.

But these members of the security services were presumably acting on orders.

Thatcher has clearly licensed the security forces to operate beyond the strict limits of the law. Together with attacks on the press, she is using the 'rule of law' and 'rights of individuals' as a screen to stop government actions being examined.

NUS—the fight is on

JIMMY AND Ruby Haddow spoke to Chip James, a P&O seaman who is co-treasurer of the Thanet NUS support group.

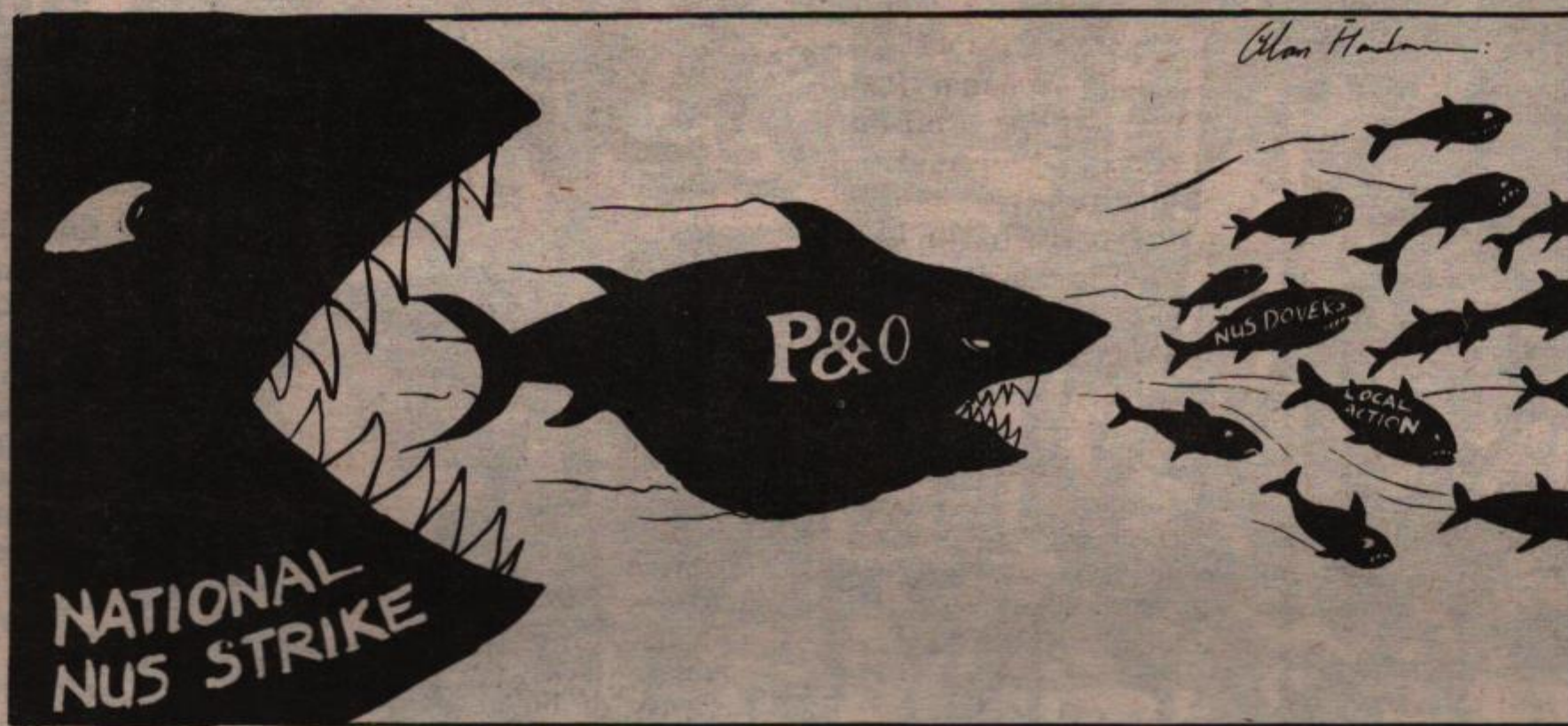
"Except for the fact that the three days on, three days off in the previous offer has been changed to 24 hours on, 24 hours off, the new contract is exactly the same.

Hours

They may have altered the wording, but the content is the same. In some respects, the new contract is worse than the old one. For instance the hours of both the Zeebrugge and Boulogne routes have actually been increased.

What started out as a strike against the work conditions of P&O workers is now in defence of our trade union. P&O have come out in their true colours.

The call made by the CPSA's John Macreadie and Arthur Scargill should be acted on. That was for a day of action, consisting of a 24 hour general strike. I'd like to see the Labour leadership, Neil



Kinnock and Hattersley especially, come down to the picket lines and show their solidarity.

I would also like to give a personal thank you to Tony Benn, Eric Heffer, Dennis Skinner and Pat Wall for their support on the picket line.

The money is pouring in helping our support group. But what we need is not only money, but

also messages of support as a morale-booster to the seafarers and their families.

Families

Dawn, my wife, is 100 per cent behind the strike, as with the majority of families of seafarers. In fact, when one of the seamen was conned by P&O management

into going back to work, his wife was so hostile to him that she was going to throw him out. We hope he will be standing with us again on the picket line."

Messages of support and donations should be sent to the Thanet NUS support group, c/o the Labour Hall, 147 High St., Ramsgate, Kent.

Jail threat

LIVERPOOL NUS branch officials could face jail for carrying on the dispute. Writs have been issued against them by the Isle of Man Steam Packet Company (IMSPC), who tried to impose a P&O type deal in January.

Those named are Jack Kinaghan, Tony Santamara and Kenny Usher. They are supposed to prevent any further spread of the dispute and actively instruct IMSPC employees taking action to return to work.

Kenny Usher told *Militant*: "Quite frankly, that has not been done and I am going to be too busy today so I won't be able to get to court."

Latest reports indicate that the IMSPC agreed in the High Court not to act on the writ immediately.

By Terry Harrison

North West

THE *PACIFIC Teal* and the *Pacific Trader*, who have berthed at Barrow-in-Furness, are the first crews in the North-west to respond to the NUS's strike call to the deep sea fleet.

After meeting a deputation from the Liverpool branch disputes committee, they have decided to come out on indefinite strike. The *Pacific Teal* carries nuclear waste between Japan and Barrow.

Pickets have been withdrawn from the Liverpool docks after an agreement with the TGWU dock stewards and the lock-gate men. Nothing will be allowed to move and this effectively boxes in the ferry boat *Buffalo*.

Liverpool Trades Council has called a conference of the Liverpool labour movement to organise support for the strike. It is on Friday 6 May at the Unemployed Centre, 24, Hardman Street, Liverpool 1, starting at 7.00pm.

Hull

THE CREW of the ferry *Norsea* voted unanimously to continue their occupation of the ship on Monday 2 May.

They were unmoved by the danger of legal action on the grounds that the occupation is "secondary action".

"We've gone too far now to worry about the courts," said one of the crew.

"Jeffrey Sterling has attempted to bust the strike in Dover and now there's another 20 broken out in the rest of the country," said another.

The ferry is berthed at Hull and the local Labour Party Young Socialists is setting up a support group to raise funds for the strike there and at Dover. They are planning a series of public meetings, including one during the NUS's national conference which is to be held in the city.

By Ray Duffill

Portsmouth

PORTSMOUTH FERRIES to France have stopped. The crew of the *Viking Valiant* walked off on Wednesday 4 May.

The captain of the *Viking Ventura* had previously enraged his crew by sacking some of the deck crew and ordering the engine room to stay on board. This ensured the strike was solid on the ferry.

After days of waiting for all out action, the morale of the port committee was high on Wednesday. They were looking round for something else to stop next.

By Alison Hill

P&O back Tories

★ THE NATIONAL Union of Seamen has 20,000 members and had assets of £2.8 million.

★ P&O is ranked 57 in Europe's top 500 companies. It has a market capital of \$4.5 billion and its profits were up 38.6 per cent last year.

★ £100,000 was donated to the Conservative Party in 1987 by P&O.

Gangster tactics

A CHAIN saw was used by persons unknown to cut the mooring ropes of the Isle of Man Steam Packet Company (IMSPC) ferry *Tynwald*, berthed at Heysham in Lancashire.

The NUS crew, who were sitting in on the vessel, attempted to repulse the attackers with fire hoses. They say they were instructed to do so by police who were on board.

Crew members took photos of these gangsters. Emergency action had to be taken to dock the ship in another part of the harbour.

This criminal behaviour has been of great assistance to the company. It leaves the ro-ro berth free for any other vessel that might get in.

Speculation is that it will be used by scab crewed ships, which run between Heysham and Belfast. The scab crews have been recruited in Holland.

The union expects the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) to take action against those who cut the mooring ropes.

A union spokesman has indicated that if the DTI take no action they will consider taking out a private prosecution against those responsible, so serious was the breaking of DTI safety regulations.

By Terry Harrison

P&O gambling with safety

P&O'S SCAB ship the *Pride of Bruges* is dangerously unsafe, according to BBC2's *Brass Tacks* programme.

The giant firm's thirst for profit has already cost 193 lives in the *Herald of Free Enterprise* disaster. But it has carried right on cutting costs and crews—dicing with workers' and passengers' deaths to increase its income.

The *Pride of Bruges* used to be known as the *Pride of Free Enterprise*. It was sister ship to the ill-fated *Herald of Free Enterprise*. The company seems to feel that free enterprise is no longer associated with safety in the public mind and have changed the ship's name.

But P&O haven't changed the indicator lights that tell officers if the main doors are closed, even though they were described as "notoriously unsafe" at the *Herald* enquiry!

Only a few months after the *Herald of Free Enterprise* capsized, P&O's addiction to profit drove it to gamble with safety again. *Brass Tacks* reported that the *Pride* sailed undermanned, without enough crew to provide a full back-up fire-fighting team.

If these allegations are true, they prove conclusively that the lives of passengers and crews are small change to wealthy monopolies like P&O.

Lives have been endangered again and again in the drive for bigger profits.

One ship's officer told *Brass Tacks* that the company is trying to maximise profits and has the wrong balance between making money and safety on board. Two others sent a memo to the company saying that safety of life at sea was being compromised by the long hours they are being forced to work.

De-manning

One of P&O's demands is that manning levels be cut from 3.6 crews per ship to three. They want longer hours and shorter leave for their workers. It will mean officers working up to 16 hours a day, 7 days a week when on duty.

Brass Tacks completely bore out ferry workers' claims that they are striking for safety at sea.

It's not just the name of free enterprise that should be eliminated from the ferries but its practice as well. The irresponsible shipping monopolies should be nationalised under workers' control and management. Safety at sea can only be guaranteed by the elimination of the profit motive from shipping.

By Tony Cross

Left MPs at Dover meeting



TONY BENN, ERIC HEFFER and LPYS chair Paula Hanford addressed a meeting of 300 in Deal on 28 April, in support of the striking P&O workers. That afternoon they had visited the pickets. Benn and Heffer had been handing out leaflets to port traffic.

Pat Wall MP had addressed the pickets at Dover's Eastern Docks on the morning of Thursday 28 April. He called for wider solidarity action by the whole labour and trade union movement. Many pickets said he was "bloody marvellous."

International solidarity

FIFTY BELGIAN seafarers celebrated May Day the way it should be celebrated—by showing international solidarity.

After the May Day march in Ostend, they went to Zeebrugge and set up a picket in support of the British ferry workers. Later their union told them to call the picket off, for now at least.

But this is an indication of the international support British seafarers will be able to call on. Belgian trade unionists report dockers are ready to take sympathy action, but expect all British ferry workers to be on strike before they are called on to take action.

By a Belgian correspondent

'Defend me' against deportation

"I HAVE no family, no home and no job to go to if I'm deported to Nigeria. It's devastating." This is how Olayinka Olatunji, a student at Liverpool City Further Education college, felt about her threatened deportation as a result of the new immigration legislation.

"It would mean the last two years' study at City college were a waste. I'm due to finish my course in July. So far I've not failed any exams. But with this threat hanging over me, it's on the way downhill now."

Students at Olayinka's college held a half-day strike against her deportation. Her tutors and college principal describe her as a "brilliant student with fine upstanding character."

Her daughter Nicole was born in Britain in 1986.

To add to her mental torture, the immigration authorities wrote to tell her the news last November but haven't hinted when she faces deportation.

"I came to Britain in 1964, aged one, and lived here ten years. During that time my mother got British citizenship. My brother and sister were born as British citizens. My mother applied for me also but I wasn't registered because of a technicality—they needed both parents' signatures and my father wasn't around at the time."

Yinka's family returned to Britain in 1984 but Yinka was left alone in Nigeria because it was then discovered she was not properly registered. In desperation she entered Britain on her sister's passport.

Appeal

"In Nigeria I was regarded as a foreigner, brought up in the British way of life. I always wished to return to Britain. I appeal to all students, black and white, to defend me. If we get deported, my daughter will never be able to return. This is not just for my sake, but for others who might face deportation. It makes me feel great to see there are people who back me. I beg of you, my fate is in your hands."

Cheryl Varley initiated support at the Further Education national committee of the National Union of Students. At the NUS national conference Further Education Labour Students members won the vote to invite Yinka as a guest speaker. She was given a standing ovation and unanimous backing for the campaign from the NUS executive who sent two representatives to the Liverpool strike.

Students' unions, trade unions, Labour parties, and Labour Party Young Socialist branches should send protest letters to Timothy Renton MP, with copies to City college students' union. For petitions, speakers and information contact Cheryl Varley, City college students' union, Myrtle Street, L pool.



30,000 demonstrate against Clause 28

LAST SATURDAY 30,000 people demonstrated in defence of the rights of lesbians and gay men, the biggest demonstration on this issue ever in Britain.

The demonstration was a warning to the Tories, that although the legislation to prevent local authorities publicising lesbian and gay issues has been passed, the battle starts now to defend those who will be victimised.

Over £1300 was raised by the Labour Party Young Socialists with their stickers.

A campaign must be launched to build on the enormous support gained so far. Pressure must be brought to bear to force the leaders of Labour councils and trades unions not to implement either Clause 28 or the rest of the Local Government Bill.

The campaign must expose the Tories' divide and rule tactics to cover over the destruction of jobs, housing and local services and their attempt to whip up prejudice and bigotry. The Gay Pride demo on 25 June will be another opportunity to show the Tories that lesbians and gays won't be intimidated.

Photo: Steve Gardiner.

Press use racism report to attack Labour councils

AFTER 12 months Manchester council's inquiry into the racially motivated murder of Ahmed Iqbal Ullah at Burnage High School has culminated in the Macdonald report. But the report has still not been published in full.

Ahmed was killed by a 13-year-old white boy, Darren Coulburn, when he tried to stop Coulburn bullying other Asian boys.

The delay in publishing the report has allowed the local and national press to use the issue to launch a general attack on the anti-racist policies of Labour councils, timed to damage Labour in the week before local elections.

An abridged version of the report has appeared in the Manchester *Evening News*, a paper which has not hesitated in promoting racism in the past.

The *Independent* suggested that the Department of Education and Science

should hold an inquiry into councils which operate anti-racist policies similar to Manchester's and calls on them to "desist at once". It is clear that the press would favour an end to anti-racist teaching methods rather than an end to racism.

Funding

The press has highlighted the criticisms in the report, taking them out of context. But one of the important points made by the report is the lack of money available for education, for which it blames the Tory government. "It is a national problem and the solution lies, not so much with the city council, but with central government. Extra funding is needed for black and white children alike, living in deprived working class areas".

Whereas the report rightly praises the council's at-

tempts to deal with racism in education it is critical of how these policies have been implemented, and points to a lack of consultation between the council and schools.

The report supports the view, which *Militant* has expressed many times, that racism is a class issue, and says that the council's rejection of this view in the past is "regrettable".

Any attempt to treat racism apart from the conditions which produce it, will fail. In implementing its anti-racist policy, Manchester council has effectively encouraged the view that white youth and white working class people are to blame for racism in schools and that all whites are inherently racist.

At Burnage this has increased the feeling of resentment and added to growing racist tension with disastrous results. No white pupils were allowed to at-

tend Ahmed's funeral as if by being white they had some collective guilt for the killing.

When the system is in crisis and resources are scarce the dangerous ideas of racism, promoted by the bosses and the Tory press, can take hold. Racism must be attacked at its roots—by eliminating the conditions of impoverishment, bad housing and unemployment. Anti-racist policies alone are not enough. They must be part of a wider, Liverpool-style campaign to improve the conditions of working people, both black and white.

Student union

The inquiry also said that "if a disciplined and well-organised, democratic and vibrant student union had been operating at Burnage High School, the school might have been able to avoid the great disruption

of March 1987".

It suggests that a disputes tribunal is set up consisting of students, parents and governors. But *Militant* would add that the role of the trade unions is vital in developing a successful anti-racist policy. *Militant* supporters warned after the Poundswick School dispute in 1985 that failure to involve education sector workers in decision making would lead to larger scale problems in the future.

It is clear that the report in its present state will not be used to fight racism in Manchester schools. Its suppression by the council emphasises the need for the labour movement to take up the issue, to hold its own inquiry into racism in education, and above all to launch a united campaign against racism involving all sections of the movement.

By Gail Frampton
Withington Labour Party

'We want to be treated equally'

FATIMA ULLAH, mother of Ahmed Iqbal, spoke to *Militant* about the findings of the Macdonald report.

What do you think of the inquiry's report?

The report should be helpful but the divisions between the senior and junior staff should be removed. The head and two deputies must be moved to allow staff to heal the divisions.

What do you think of the council's anti-racist policy?

These policies are theoretical but are not put into practice. When children needed help in the playground there were no staff

around. There was no supervision in the playground where trouble often occurred.

Anti-racist policies should not be used to treat black and Asian people differently. We just want to be treated equally. It needs to be explained to all parents and students that any help given is to make us equal and not to give us better treatment.

All the parents should be involved in developing anti-racist policy. It does not help to emphasise the differences—we are all human.

It was reported that the anti-racist policy at Burnage was implemented in a way to make the individual white students think they are all racist. What do you think of such a policy?

Not all white people are racist. Ahmed had many white friends. Racism goes back a long way. The way to solve it is not to make all white individuals feel guilty, but take up how racism has arisen and is used.

The report says that if a school students' union had been operating at Burnage the school might have been able to avoid the disruption last year.

Do you think a students union would have helped?

Yes, the school students' union could have been used to raise problems of bullying and lack of supervision in the playgrounds. 11, 12 and 13 year olds can express their needs. Ahmed was very intelligent and would have done well in a school students' union.

Are there any other points you would like to raise?

Firstly we resent the way the community leaders were asked to speak on our behalf. The head got in touch with them before us. We have our own voices

and can speak for ourselves. I would also like to comment on a column in the *Daily Mail* by Mrs Gough, the head's wife. She says her husband will now have to find a new career. What about my Ahmed—he hasn't had a chance to live.

Dr Gough has had a full life—a change of job is not much. There is nothing that will bring back Ahmed.

What do you think the report will do?

I hope that something can be learnt from Ahmed's death and that we can live in peace.



Please send us your contributions for *Left and Right* to the *Militant* office, by Thursday of the week before publishing.

An op from our sponsors

EDWINA CURRIE likes the idea of private industry financing hip operations-not through taxes, of course, but as charity.

Retirement World, a pensioners' magazine wants big business to transfer its sponsorship from cricket matches and ballet to providing private hip and cataract operations.

They paid for a hip operation for a pensioner, Mrs Law, who said "there is so much money lying around in the world of business" that some of it should be used to help people.

Nobody would begrudge Mrs Law her operation but this wealth was created by the working class. We need a socialist society to make sure operations for people like herself are available in a well funded NHS. They shouldn't depend on Littlewoods finding sponsored operations better publicity than a sponsored cup final.

Metered health?

MEANWHILE, NHS cuts are so severe that South Tees Health Authority rent out car parks at Middlesbrough General Hospital to people going to the football ground next door on Saturday afternoons to get cash.

What next? Rock concerts on the hospital roof? Occult rites in the operating theatres? Watch out for parking meters beside beds to stop patients overstaying.

Have no truck with bosses

ALSO IN Teesside, a young part-time worker in a large supermarket chain was paid for up to fifty hours overtime in cans of beer and lager. He was told to accept it or get out.

This incident reached the local press but local young people say being paid in goods instead of cash is normal. The Truck Acts are supposed to forbid such deals but "you can't complain: they'd sack you if you did."

The labour movement should make sure that young workers, part-time or full time are organised to get decent wages.

Thanks to **Jon Driscoll**.

Pollfax

THE **TORIES** claim poll tax will be a fairer way of paying for local services. Rich and poor alike use them, so rich people shouldn't pay more, they say.

But a Cheshire County Council survey proves that better off people use their services considerably more than the poor. Half their budget is for education and the children of professional and managerial class tend to stay at school after 16 more often.

The free provision of roads also benefits higher social groups most, they use roads in their own cars three times as much as workers do. When council housing is forced to be self-financing, the class disparity will get even wider.

Social Security-minor concessions

THE **GOVERNMENT** has been forced to make concessions on the Social Security bill. Their own backbenchers feared losing their seats and the political effect it would have on the poor.

The changes though help only a small proportion of those hit last month. The £6000 limit on savings above which no housing benefit could be paid is raised

to £8000. Owner occupiers are given a little longer to sell their property if they move into old people's homes.

And some claimants would, for a 'transitional' period, have their losses in housing benefit limited to £2.50.



Queuing at a London dole office.

In times of crisis

By Jackie Mulholland

have you got left in your purse?" he asked. "About a couple of quid."

"How much do you need?" he asked. "I was hoping for about £50." "Come back at three o'clock."

Eventually I got £40. This, according to the letter they gave me, was the "maximum regulations allow." It also said: "Before we can pay you.... you will have to let us know that you accept....the arrangements we have made for you to pay back the money."

BETWEEN OUR last dole cheque and my husband's first month's pay, we went almost two weeks without any money apart from borrowing from friends.

Under the new bill we had to apply for a Crisis Loan. I explained to the Social Fund officer that I needed money for food and other essentials for my family until my husband's wages came through.

The bloke behind the glass screen asked me: "How much food have you got in your cupboards?" "Only a few bits," I replied. "How much money

A MEMBER of our Jobclub got a job and needed money because she would not be paid for a month. Her friend helped her by pawning a bracelet but she still had to take out a crisis loan.

Despite being registered disabled as an epileptic, she was told that she could not get a bus pass as she could walk. After much argument, Jobclub leaders eventually 'fiddled' about £6 for fares to get her through the month.

By a Jobclub worker.

Repayments come to £13.50 a month. The punch line was: "If you.... do not accept the arrangements for paying back the money, we will not pay you any money." The poor are being robbed-and told to take it or leave it.

"Turning" a Tory

THE **TORY** turnaround came about because Tory MPs who normally just feel the soft Commons benches on their backsides have been feeling the fire of angry constituents instead.

A press release from Harlow Benefits Action Campaign shows the effect one meeting had on local right wing Tory MP Jerry Hayes. A small deputation of claimants had been arranged but when local people found out Hayes would be there, the conference room was full to overflowing. Many people in the room were losing from £10 to £26 a week.

A Labour councillor explained that the government were not allowing them to top up housing benefit at their discretion. Claimants who had paid this money in rates would lose a total of £280,000.

The welfare rights group had told Hayes for years that the new Act would cause suffering, but the MP seemed shaken by the number of people affected and how much money they were losing.

Hayes could see how angry they were. Tory votes were vanishing in his marginal constituency. He said he hoped people didn't think he would have voted for the Act in 1986 if he had known the extent of the cuts!

"Driving people into a pit"

By Max Neill, Preston LPYS

Recently I saw a young woman coming out of a tower block. She was crying and kept turning and shouting. She was being followed by a little girl of about four, who was crying too.

I think the woman was her mother but she kept shouting at her: "F*** off home and stop following me". I remember thinking I wish I hadn't seen that. What does that sort of thing do to a kid? How did the mother get like that?

Thatcher is driving people into a pit. I'm a socialist

IN **AMERICA** you can sell your blood and in Brazil you can sell your kidneys. Sometimes at the end of a fortnight's dole money, you would be tempted to do that.

It's hard to resist amusement arcades, they give some variety in life. You think "I've got £2, I might come out with £4 and be able to go out tonight." You end up putting in £2 and desperately hoping to win it back.

Unless we get socialism a lot of people like me will end up like the old man around here who spends all day picking up cigarette butts.

Nellist backed

COVENTRY SOUTH East Labour Party general committee has unanimously backed its MP, Dave Nellist's stance against social security cuts.

Dave had been barred from Parliament for persistently trying to question Social Services secretary John Moore on the new cuts.

Judy Griffiths, the UCV

delegate felt that nobody should criticise Dave Nellist's action "when I know a young girl who has miscarried because of inadequate diet after the DHSS gave her and her child £32 a week to live on." At this even the BBC *Newsnight* team who were filming the meeting joined in the applause.



because I've got self-respect and I want to fight. Too many Labour MPs seem to enjoy drinking with the Tories at the Commons bar. We need more fighters!

THE **LOCAL** council in Billingham described David Walker as a model tenant. But from 11 April, he had to find a 20 per cent rent increase because of cut housing benefit, plus a water charge, out of a long term unemployed's income. He could not afford to use his central heating system.

That week he plunged to his death from a block of flats.

Fenner Brockway—a left to the end

THE DEATH of Fenner Brockway, six months from his hundredth birthday, breaks the link with the old Independent Labour Party of the interwar years. He was a major figure of the left of that period.

He had been won to the labour movement by Keir Hardie, the father of the Labour Party. Brockway took an heroic stand, though pacifist not Marxist, against the First World War. As a result he spent more than two years in prison.

During the twenties, as a leading member of the ILP, he played an important part in pushing it to the left. It had become the organised left within the Labour Party by the time of the right wing MacDonald Labour

government of 1929-31.

In the thirties Brockway was prominently involved in the fight against fascism. He was one of the main organisers of the 'Battle of Cable Street', when Mosley's blackshirts were prevented from marching through London's East End. He was also a prime mover in the solidarity campaign with the Spanish workers during the civil war against Franco.

Split

When the ILP split from the Labour Party in 1932, Brockway rejected the reformism of the Labour leadership. His speeches and writings then were more radical than anything from the official Labour

left of today.

But Fenner Brockway never found his way to Marxism, or its modern expression—Trotskyism. He personified the political vacillation of the ILP. As a centrist organisation, the ILP stood halfway between reformism and Marxism. It strove to be revolutionary, but was incapable of taking the necessary critical political decisions to put this into action.

The break from Labour, over an organisational dispute, was an error. But Brockway and the ILP

leaders compounded it by turning to the Communist Party, then in the midst of its wild ultra-left period.

The ILP then recoiled from the CP's sectarian attacks. The *Daily Worker* harangued Brockway as "a hound of war and fascism." All this is conveniently forgotten by its successor, the *Morning Star*, in its glowing tributes to him.

But despite rejecting the socialist and communist internationals, he would not endorse Trotsky's call to prepare a new international socialist movement. He

preferred to organise an ill-fated loose grouping of other centrist parties in Europe.

He even accused Trotsky of "the same instinct for personal power as Stalin...were he head of the Russian state he would treat dissenters from his policy with a ruthlessness similar to Stalin's." This was a monstrous allegation. Trotsky sacrificed his life in the struggle for workers' democracy

Trotsky

While condemning the Moscow trials and the purges of thousands of heroic revolutionaries, Brockway would not participate in campaigns of opposition.

Outside the Labour Party, but without the rudder of Marxism, the ILP inevitably dwindled. Brockway unsuccessfully tried to convince the ILP conference to campaign for reaffiliation. In 1946 he resigned, rejoined the Labour Party, and within four years was again an MP.

Although his radical edge became blunted, Brockway remained on the left until his death, despite entering the Lords.

In the early eighties he attended a Militant meeting at Labour Party conference, and paid tribute to the new young generation of Marxists in the Party.

Where to find us

EAST SCOTLAND

For details of meetings contact: Andrea Charles—031 659 6187.

STRATHCLYDE

For details of meetings contact: 041 221 1443.

NORTHERN

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

MERSEYSIDE

For details of meetings contact: Richard Venton—051 260 3111.

Liverpool:

Marxist discussion group 8 May and fortnightly 2, Lower Breck Rd. 7pm

SOUTH WEST

For details of meetings ring 0272 631471

Exeter:

Lessons of France 1968 17 May. Steve Biko Lounge, Cornwall House Exeter University, 7.00 pm
Swindon: For a socialist South Africa Speaker—Nimrod Sejake (exiled South African trade unionist) 6 May, Plus One Centre, 7.30 pm

YORKSHIRE/HUMBERSIDE

For details of meetings contact: Henry Gregory—0709 371250

Halifax:

Marxist discussion group Every Wednesday 8pm at Griffs pub. 18 May. Liverpool—a city that dared to fight

Sheffield:

Lessons of France 1968 23 May S.C.C.A.U West St 7.30 pm

Huddersfield:

1968—The Month of Revolution. Speaker—Tony Aitman 16 May. Rat and Ratchet pub, Chapel Hill 7.30 pm

MANCHESTER/LANCS

For details of meetings contact: Mike Johnson—061 273 8648.

EAST MIDLANDS

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

WEST MIDLANDS

For details of meetings contact: Bill Mullins—021 552 7624.

WALES

For details of meetings contact: 0222 736682

EASTERN

For details of meetings contact Teresa MacKay 0473 713179

St.Albans:

What *Militant* stands for 26 May, St.Albans Town Hall, 7.45 pm

SOUTH EAST

For details of meetings phone 01 533 3311

HAMPSHIRE/THAMES VALLEY

For meeting details phone 0703 786879

Southampton:

Redbridge Marxist discussion group. Every Wednesday, 7, Goodwin Close, Millbrook. 2 pm

LONDON

For details of meetings contact George Roberts—01 739 9123.

Hackney:

Abortion—a woman's right to choose 19 May Chat's Palace, Brooksby Walk 7.30 pm

Dulwich:

11 May Allbrighton Centre Dog Kennel Hill Estate East Dulwich 7.30 pm

Deptford:

Stop the poll tax! Stop the property sharks! 5 May Victoria Pub Grove St. S.E.8 7.30 pm

Militant RALLY

ALEXANDRA PALACE

19 JUNE 1988

12—6 pm

£6 in advance £7 at the door

Doors open 11.00am Cheques payable to 'Militant Rally'

Rally countdown

FROM THE Northern region alone 550 luxury coach seats have been booked to bring workers and youth to the *Militant* Rally on 19 June. A fleet of 12 coaches will be coming from Merseyside, and other coaches have been booked from as far away as Dundee

SELL Militant

LAST WEEK'S *Militant* was rushed down to Dover where 33 copies were sold on the P & O picket line and a further 40 in the town centre on Saturday lunchtime. A total of 105 were sold during the weekend!

One seller raised £22 for the fighting fund on Saturday alone! "People were queuing up to buy the paper" he said.

Reports are still coming in of successes in our door-to-door sales campaign. Sellers in the Lincoln area sold out making 56 extra sales!

In Scotland 3 supporters in Niddrie sold 22 papers in

and Penzance.

City Limits wrote of the "remarkable propaganda coup," of Trotsky's grandson. Esteban Volkov, addressing the rally. It is certainly inspiring our supporters to take the tickets to all the regular *Militant* readers, as well as to Labour Party and trade union activists.

Swansea, Essex and parts of the West Midlands have been particularly quick in their

ticket sales.

Don't forget many shift workers will need plenty of advance notice to book time off. And there will be no problems with the kids, the creche is one of the best around.

The last rally was "the most spectacular show of recent years," even according to the *Tory Daily Telegraph*. 1988 will be bigger, better and even more spectacular.

Order your ticket now.

an hour following up on last week's estate sales when they sold 10 by knocking on just 14 doors!

A Felixstowe NUS member bought six copies of *Militant* to give to other seafarers

On the Tintagel estate in Tottenham 53 papers were sold. In all 13 people said they were interested in finding out more about *Militant* and one person agreed to sell *Militant* weekly there and then.

Following on from these successes, many sellers have pledged to continue the door-to-door campaign every week to build up their regular sales. If you would like to help in *Militant*'s sales campaign phone Ruth Campbell on 01 533 3311 ext 214.

What we stand for

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

* A minimum wage of £135 a week, tied to the cost of living, for everyone including sick and disabled people.

* Reversal of all Tory cuts and a massive programme of public works on housing, education, and the health service etc.

* Opposition to the Tories' anti-trade union laws and reversal of attacks on trade unions.

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

* Workers' management of nationalised industries. These should be run on the basis of one-third of the places on the management board coming from the unions in the industry, one third from the TUC representing the working class as a whole, and one third from the government.

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

* A socialist plan of production democratically drawn up and implemented by committees involving trade unions, shop stewards, the unwaged and small business people.

* Opposition to the capitalist Common Market, the EEC. For a socialist United States of Europe as a step towards a World Socialist Federation.

Become a Militant supporter

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!





TWENTY YEARS ago this month a movement developed in France with such explosive force that it could have not only toppled the Gaullist regime and capitalism in that country, but spelt the end of capitalism and Stalinist rule anywhere on the globe.

It falls to the Marxists around *Militant* to rehabilitate the great French events of May 1968 at present being discredited and denigrated by ageing academics and tired politicians.

How close to revolution did the France of 1968 come? Could it happen again? CLARE DOYLE, author of *Month of Revolution*, looks at the biggest general strike in history.

NO EXACT historical parallels can ever be drawn. Special features existed in France 20 years ago, particularly the Parliamentary Bonapartist dictatorship of De Gaulle. Having come to power through a 'coup' in 1958 to protect capitalism at a time of social upheaval, he had tried to appear as an impartial arbiter between the classes.

He depended on military-police methods to maintain his rule, but these were no protection once the working class moved into action. In fact they had caused a massive build-up of resentment and became the spark that ignited the May conflagration.

It started in France's teeming universities, with battles against the authorities, who reacted by closing down classes and disciplining students. When the protests moved onto the streets, the notorious riot police (CRS) lashed out against not only students but bystanders.

Hundreds were injured and hundreds more arrested. In what could only be described as a police riot, groups of CRS invaded even luxury apartments in the Latin Quarter and assaulted the occupants.

The middle class of Paris was outraged and young workers began to join the students on the barricades. Widespread anger at the police brutality forced the trade union leaders to call a one-day protest strike against repression for 13 May.

The biggest demonstrations since the war were seen in all the major cities, with one million out in Paris.

Workers came from every walk of life and sensed their united strength. Joint trade union banners added to the feeling of solidarity and exhilaration. Aroused, the French workers were now in the mood for battle.

Once one or two sections of workers started striking and occupying their factories, the floodgates opened. All the frustration and resentment that had been

building up for years welled to the surface.

Workers took over their factories, offices, hospitals and depots. They hoisted red flags, set up action committees, sang the Internationale and began to discuss a future without De Gaulle and with some form of workers' management of society. This massive general strike spread like a wave from engineers to transport workers, miners, shopworkers, nuclear power workers, post office workers. Agricultural workers and small farmers occupied depots and took over big estates.



Every layer of society caught the 'infection'—film-makers, footballers, Catholic priests, broadcasters, magistrates, town-planners, doctors... In some areas nothing moved without the permission of the strike committees. A revolution was in the making.

Wars and revolutions can be sparked off by a unique, even accidental, event but they are always prepared by a period in which frustration, anger and resentment build up, changes of pace in the development of the economy and changes in the balance of forces within a country and internationally.

A feature of France's economy was the poverty and squalor amongst prosperity and plenty. GDP had increased by 63 per cent in ten years. Living standards on average had risen by five per cent a year. Purchases of cars, fridges,

FRANCE

Biggest general strike ever



Renault workers vote to strike.

televisions had increased dramatically—even second homes.

But 'rationalisation' was producing an army of unemployed half a million-strong—small by today's standards but nevertheless sufficient to unnerve the French workers about their future. Long hours were being worked in archaic conditions in industry. Cuts in social security and new VAT impositions were eating into the wages of higher and lower paid alike.

The skilled and relatively well-paid workers in the aircraft and car industries were the first to strike and occupy. But millions of French workers and their families lived below the poverty line and moved enthusiastically into action once the signal was given.

Appalling housing conditions constituted a major scourge in society. Then as now, a special crisis faced the millions of youth leaving school and either crowding into universities which were bursting at the seams or searching for non-existent jobs.

When the student revolt started, the regime reacted with violence, then with concessions. Both prompted young workers in particular to take up the cudgels.

They could see what might be in store for them in their own battles if the students were beaten by the riot police, and they already had many scores to settle. Moreover, they saw the militancy of the students getting results.

A year before in May 1967, up to 12 million workers had responded to a one-day strike call against emergency legislation being introduced. Numerous industrial battles and even regional 'uprisings' had erupted.

Some disputes were still rumbling when the students' barricades went up in Paris. The same CRS now battling with the students had been responsible for the deaths of workers in industrial disputes and on demonstrations against colonial wars. The hour for revenge had arrived. The

workers' movement, growing hourly and daily, swept all before it and drew in every layer of society. Such was the power of its revolutionary traditions, that the lowliest worker to the most exalted professor began to feel that a new dawn was breaking. A world without bosses and without bureaucrats appeared possible.

De Gaulle's 'strong state' was suspended in mid-air. Having ruled in the manner of the old Bourbon kings and Bonapartes of the past, he felt he embodied the state—'L'etat, c'est moi' ('The state is me!'). But he appeared irrelevant in the Paris of May 1968.

As the economy of France ground to a halt, with directors locked up in their offices and businessmen escaping to Switzerland with their millions, on 24 May a previously silent De Gaulle suggested a referendum. Such a Bonapartist gimmick had seemed to work before but in these conditions it was a non-starter!

The police, even the brutal CRS, were disaffected and in revolt at the role they were being asked to play and over their long-standing grievances on pay and conditions.

The army of 168,000 was predominantly conscript and their declarations showed it to be totally unreliable. It would have crumbled in De Gaulle's hands if he had tried to send it in against millions of workers.

A CGT shop steward was quoted in the *Morning Star*: "There are more workers in France than the government has forces at its disposal" (23.5.68). Yet the 'Communists' worldwide still maintained that the army was too strong!

In France, a new October—the revolution in Russia which brought the working class to power—was developing.

But here there was no Lenin, no Trotsky, no Bolshevik party—only a 'Communist' Party (PCF) totally habituated to industrial and parliamentary negotiations,

deals, compromises and inaction (and a discredited Socialist Party (SFIO) playing a minor role in the Federation of the Left).

When, in the early days of May, students' heads were cracked under the blows of the riot police, the Stalinists condemned them in the same words as the government spokesmen—'troublemakers', 'anarchists', 'foreigners' and 'hooligans'.

When millions of workers began to occupy their factories and set up action committees, these 'leaders' tried to isolate each workplace, drive a wedge between the students and the workers and call for calm.

The CGT (PCF-led trade union federation) is a 'great tranquil force' they declared! Shades of the 'power of love' of Britain's health union leaders today!

All the four conditions for a successful revolution summarised by Lenin were in existence except one—the most crucial—the subjective factor of a revolutionary leadership.



The ruling class was split and lurching from attack to compromise and back again. The middle class was not just neutral, but almost entirely in the camp of the working class.

Power was in the hands of the proletariat who had moved spontaneously and without any further official call—in fact against the wishes of their leadership—into a fight to the finish. Although only two and a half million were organised into trade unions, ten

May 1968



million were on strike and refusing to go back.

Such favourable conditions for the peaceful transfer of power from one class to another seldom occur. They can take decades to mature and, once passed, can take decades to return. The opportunity was squandered by the 'Communists'.

As in the mighty sit-in strike of 1936, they insisted the struggle was purely economic. Whenever before or since in history have three quarters of the workforce been on strike for weeks for a few percentage points' increase in wages and better social security provisions?

On 25 May, the trade union leaders went into talks with the government and the employers, who really held no sway in society. They proudly emerged with the biggest concessions ever wrung from the French ruling class.

Some workers stood to gain up to 75 per cent increases and the minimum rise would be ten per cent. Longer holidays and half a day's pay for every day on strike were also included.

But even this dazzling list of reforms, born of the revolutionary movement, was rejected out of hand in every factory and workplace. Why be content with bread when you are already nearly in charge of the bakery?

Workers waited to hear from their leaders that power was now theirs, that through their democratically elected committees, drawn together on a national scale and with a bold lead from their party, they could now proceed to construct socialism in France and spread their action internationally.

They were already receiving support from workers in Belgium, Britain, Germany and Italy. Incipient revolutions in Spain and Portugal, even Czechoslovakia, would have exploded under the impact of a successful workers' revolution in France.

On 29 May, hundreds of

thousands of workers on a demonstration organised by the CGT called for an end to Gaullism and a 'government of the people'. Mitterrand's call for a provisional government, not necessarily including the PCF, had satisfied nobody.

De Gaulle fled the country and laid plans for a government in exile. What further proof was needed of the possibility of a revolutionary situation being brought to fruition? But the moment for decisive action came and went. The workers' leaders suffered a serious attack of paralysis!

As Trotsky explained in the Russian revolution: "A revolutionary situation cannot be preserved at will. If the Bolsheviks had not seized power in October and November, in all probability they would not have seized it at all."

"Instead of firm leadership the masses would have found among the Bolsheviks that same disparity between word and deed which they were already sick of, and they would have ebbed away in the course of two or three months from this party which had deceived their hopes... the proletarian revolution would have been deferred to an indefinite future."

"It was his keen understanding of this prospect that inspired Lenin to that cry of alarm: 'The success of the Russian and world revolution depends upon two or three days' struggle'."

De Gaulle returned to Paris on 30 May with assurances of military support from General Massu, commander of the troops in Germany, in return for the release from prison of the leaders of the OAS—the terror organisation used to suppress the Algerian revolution.

A massive congregation of reactionary flotsam and jetsam on the Champs Elysees demonstrated their loyalty to De Gaulle, but he was still gambling with his and his party's future. He depended entirely on the cowardice

of the PCF and Socialist leaders and the lack of an alternative revolutionary leadership.

As he declared the Assembly dissolved and new elections to take place immediately, these leaders breathed a huge sigh of relief and advocated an orderly and peaceful return to work.



Offers even greater than those from the Rue de Grenelle talks were rejected by millions of workers still wanting to engage in a battle for power. They had moved to complete the great task started by their heroic ancestors in the revolutions of two centuries which had claimed so many lives. They would not easily be forced off the scene.

But with their generals already waving the white flag, they could not stand their ground indefinitely.

Gradually the movement subsided. The forces of the state and fascist bands moved in to finish off the job. Deaths occurred—a school student, two car workers and a PCF election worker.

In a complete misrepresentation of where the real power in society lay, present-day 'Communists' claim that their party would have been responsible for hundreds of lives being lost if they had moved to take power.

Power, according to the *Evening Standard*, was in the hands of the central committee of the PCF, "but they did not want to take it!" They handed it back to the old rulers.

FORTRESS BOOKS are proud to announce their second title, *Month of Revolution—Lessons of the General Strike, France 1968*, by Clare Doyle—to be published on 4 May.

The cover price is £2.50. But order before 15 May and you will get a copy for £1.60 post-free. Better still, why not order five or ten for your workplace, local Marxist discussion group or to sell in college.



Order now! Please send me.....copies of Month of Revolution. I enclose £.....(Please make cheques to Fortress Books) Name..... Address..... Send to Fortress Books, PO Box 141, London E2 ORL

Ted Grant—Rise of de Gaulle and the class struggle 30p Written in 1958 it gives an account of France's revolutionary traditions before the 1968 explosion. Single copies 50p including postage from: World Socialist Books, 3/13 Hepscoot Road, London E9 5HB.

In the course of the ensuing election campaign, the PCF tried to pose as a better party of law and order than the Gaullists and failed disastrously to put forward an alternative 'Socialist-Communist' programme of nationalisation and democratic workers' control and management. They advocated an "advanced democracy... opening the way to socialism" and nothing more.

The hopes and aspirations of workers were dashed and nothing was done to rally them. (A sharp increase in suicides was reported after the end of the strike).

Not even all the strikers can have voted for the left parties and De Gaulle increased his majority in Parliament. He had launched a scare campaign against civil war and Communist totalitarianism and the PCF allowed his party to appear to offer the greatest security to some frightened sections even of the working class.

De Gaulle's was a pyrrhic victory. His personal prestige could never recover from the indignities of the May/June events. He resigned as President in April 1969 and handed over to the Prime Minister he had sacked in July 1968, Georges Pompidou.

In the 1968 election and in subsequent ones, no programme capable of rallying all the workers involved in the great strike was promoted by either the 'Communist' or Socialist Parties. The SFIO collapsed completely in 1969. A newly-constituted Socialist Party was created in 1971 and filled out by workers of the CFDT (ex-catholic left trade union federation).

Victory on the electoral plane eventually came in 1981, largely as a result of worsening economic conditions. It was greeted with enormous enthusiasm for what a 'Socialist/Communist' government could now do. There was a brief period of substantial reforms in wages and hours and some important nationalisations.

But instead of mobilising to take the major sectors of the economy out of the hands of the capitalists, Mitterrand's government bowed to their wishes and began to carry out anti-working class measures and discredited the idea of socialism once again.

Only now has Mitterrand's reputation recovered and only after their experience of Chirac is the French working class preparing to force the left back into power.

Today the PCF has hit rock bottom with a derisory vote of under seven per cent (a decade ago it was 20 per cent). It has allowed Le Pen's National Front to overtake it and become the fourth force in French politics, picking up votes in former PCF strongholds.

This is the heavy price being paid for failure in '68 and for zig-zagging between opportunism and ultra-leftism ever since. Le Pen's rise represents the disappointment and disillusion of some workers and the frustration of the middle class.

It does not represent a threat of Hitler-style fascism. The social base for such a movement is lacking. The working class and its organisations are still intact and more powerful than ever. The PCF will almost certainly recover some ground in the course of new upheavals.

The idea that revolution is a thing of the past in France—the 'mother of revolutions'—is an illusion. Workers will move again and again to transform society and in the process transform their organisations.

The PCF and the major trade union federations grew in 1968. The CFDT—which stood to the left of the CGT during the events—doubled its membership. But these gains are as nothing compared with what was possible had a revolutionary lead been given at the height of the events.

The greatest general strike in history ended in defeat in terms of power, and the gains in terms of wages and hours were later whittled away. But other opportunities will arise.

As Trotsky said of the similar end to the 1936 general strike and factory occupations: "The practical successes won, however precarious they may be, cannot fail to raise the self-confidence of the masses to an extraordinary degree, particularly among the most backward and oppressed strata."

The movement of the youth and the threat of a general strike in December 1986 terrified the French ruling class with 'the spectre of '68'.

New '68s will be on the agenda in the coming years if not months—not just in France but in every country where the combustible material is accumulating.

They will be on an even greater scale and significance than 1968 and on a far higher level than October 1917. The ruling classes will tremble again at the terrible prospect!

Ethiopia's 25-year

war

THE ETHIOPIAN government recently demanded the withdrawal of all foreign aid workers from the hunger-stricken provinces of Eritrea and Tigre, where bitter nationalist insurgencies are being fought out. It announced that it would limit distribution of emergency food relief to those areas under its control.

Following an international outcry it relented a little, allowing UN aid officials to continue, but not officials of the other agencies.

Yet five million people in Ethiopia face the threat of another famine, possibly as dreadful as that of 1984-5. It is in the north, especially Eritrea and Tigre, where hunger is biting deepest. Meanwhile the Eritrean Peoples Liberation Front has been responsible for destroying at least 80 food relief trucks in the last few months.

In the war against the EPLF, which is heading the struggle of the Eritrean people for an independent homeland, the Ethiopian forces have recently suffered military setbacks, including the loss of the town of Afabet, regional military HQ for Eritrea.

The Ethiopian army still holds most Eritrean towns including the capital, Asmara. But outside the peripheries of these, the EPLF holds substantial liberated areas. In these areas the EPLF has established its own state in the making, providing education, hospitals and workshops.

In Tigre also, the Tigre Peoples Liberation Front has inflicted defeats on Ethiopian forces, taking the town of Adigrat on the main road through the province.

New offensive

The Ethiopian regime has now made peace with neighbouring Somalia and re-established diplomatic relations, severed since the war between them was concluded over ten years ago. This could allow the 30,000 Ethiopian troops on the Somali border to be moved to the northern provinces. It is likely that Ethiopian forces are being regrouped for a new offensive in Eritrea.

Ethiopia already has the largest army in black Africa. And the expenditure of 46 per cent of the budget on defence is an enormous drain on such a fragile economy.

Ethiopia is one of the poorest and least developed nations of Africa. Before 1974, native capitalism was feeble and stunted. The capitalist world economy kept Ethiopia in impoverishment. The majority of the population lived in feudal conditions or a nomad existence unchanged for centuries. 90 per cent were outside the cash economy.

The appalling suffering of the 1973-74 famine motivated sections of the officer caste in the army—one of the most educated

By Jeremy Birch

and developed parts of Ethiopian society—to move against Haile Selassie.

The student youth and the small working class enthusiastically acclaimed the overthrow of the decadent monarchy. Within a month there was a general strike in Addis Ababa.

Under pressure from below and in the face of the reactionary threat of armed revolts led by the feudal landlords, the most determined of the officers leaned on the masses to complete the revolution. In the face of bitter hostility from world imperialism, landlordism and capitalism were abolished. Land was redistributed and the banks and industries nationalised.

Those among the Dergue (officers' council) not prepared to push the revolution further were purged and executed.

The transition to genuine socialism would only have been possible on the basis of rule by the working class which, small as it was, could have led the revolution. With a Marxist programme uniting the workers with the rural masses, linked to the workers' struggle internationally, Ethiopia could have broken out of its crippling backwardness through the spread of the revolution to more developed countries.

Instead, from the very inception political control remained tightly in the grip of the Dergue. They clamped down fiercely on attempts by the intellectuals to maintain a separate political party. A regime was established fundamentally similar to that of Cuba or Russia, with a nationalised economy, but power in the hands of a bureaucratic elite.

Colonel Mengistu, head of the Dergue, after the revolution adopted the phrases and the trappings of Stalinism. He pledged himself to 'Marxism-Leninism', established a Workers' Party along the lines of the parties of the bureaucracies of Eastern Europe and was allowed sympathetic status to Comecon, the Eastern Europe 'Common Market'.

The transformation of Ethiopia led to much diplomatic shuffling concerning the struggle of the nationalities.

Prior to the Ethiopian revolution, Russia and Cuba armed and trained the EPLF. Castro described the Eritrean struggle as a "progressive revolution." The

regime of Haile Selassie was backed to the hilt by western imperialism, including his repressive policy towards the national minorities.

Britain took Eritrea, which had been an Italian colony, during the second world war. Despite demands for Eritrea's independence, it was forced into a federation with Ethiopia when Britain withdrew in 1952.

But even before the withdrawal US imperialism signed an agreement with Ethiopia guaranteeing it use of the strategically important Kagnaw communications base in Eritrea.

The then US secretary of state, John Foster Dulles, summed up the contemptuous attitude of imperialism to the rights of small nations:

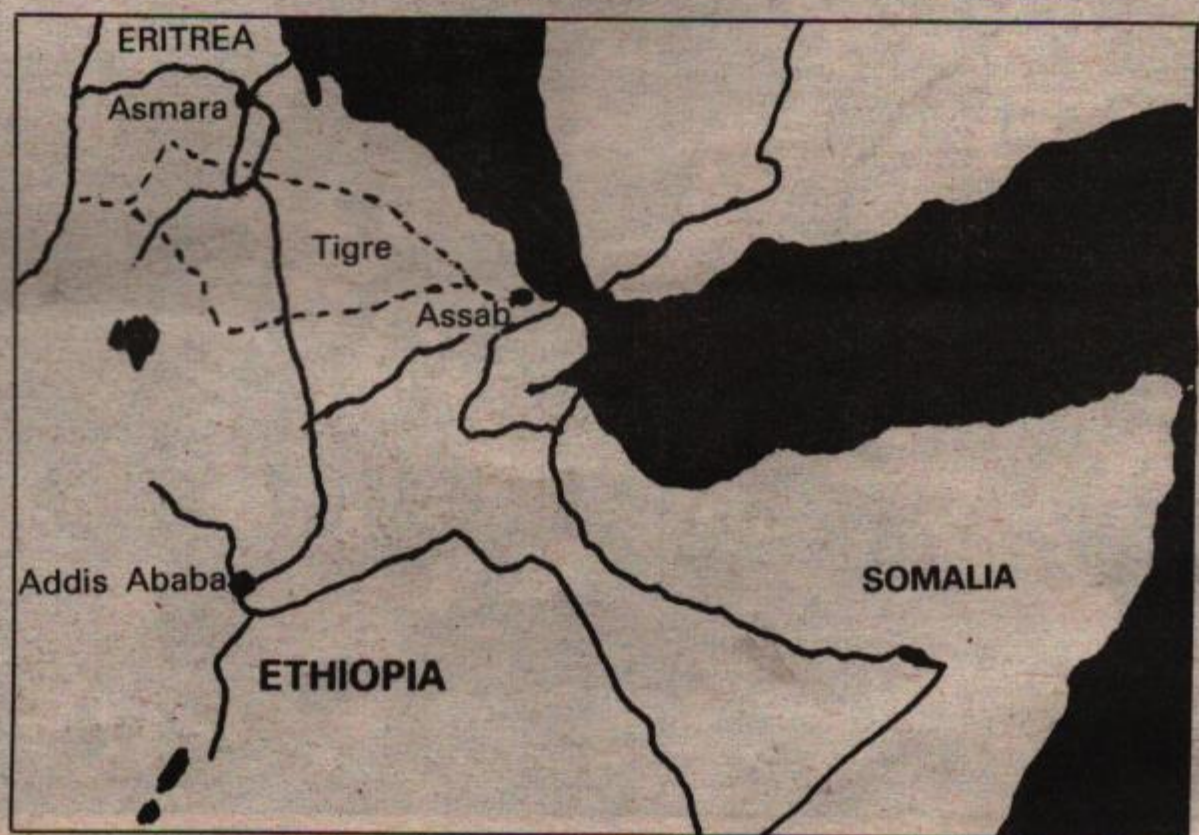
"From the point of view of justice, the opinions of the Eritrean people must receive consideration. Nevertheless the strategic interests of the United States in the Red Sea basin and the considerations of security and world peace make it necessary that the country has to be linked with our ally, Ethiopia."

Annexed

In 1962, in collusion with imperialism, Ethiopia annexed Eritrea as a province. The national struggle, now represented by the EPLF, has continued unabated since. They adopted a radical programme and looked for support from the Eastern bloc.

Any expressions of sympathy from British or US imperialism towards Eritrea today are utter hypocrisy.

But the Mengistu regime has inherited all the brutality of Stalinism in dealing with the national question. Despite the radical appearance of the EPLF, he has



refused to concede one inch to their legitimate demands for national rights. Russian and Cuban arms have been turned on the Eritrean people and no quarter has been given.

The sensitive approach of Lenin to the national question, without which the Russian revolution could not have succeeded, remains a closed book to Mengistu, as it does to the bureaucracies of Eastern Europe.

Unelected, privileged bureaucratic elites dare not tolerate any democratic rights, including the right of national minorities to self-determination.

The struggle in Eritrea has swung one way and then another. Despite recent victories, the EPLF still holds less territory than before its strategic retreat from the towns in the face of Ethiopian attacks in 1978.

But the morale of the EPLF fighters, who are struggling to end national oppression and for the idea of a better society, stands far higher than that of the Ethiopian troops who are only reluctantly in Eritrea.

The war could still continue for some time. Mengistu has said: "The Eritrean war may continue for generations." However, the improbability of an outright Eritrean victory seems to be accepted by EPLF leader, Isseyas Aferworki. He believes "the only solution is the intervention of a third party to bring pressure on the Ethiopian government to force it to the negotiating table."

But what 'third party' would genuinely respect the Eritreans' national rights? Not the superpowers, nor the UN which supervised the 1952 betrayal of Eritrean interests.

It is not clear what form the state would take if the Eritrean nation achieved an independent homeland. The EPLF gives a radical appearance. But what international aid it receives is channeled through capitalist Sudan.

A *Wall Street Journal* correspondent urges western capitalism to take the EPLF under its wing, calling it "an organisation unfairly (sic) categorised as Marxist-

Leninist because of now distant ideological roots." "This region" he continues, "has emerged as one of the principal defenders of freedom in Soviet-oppressed Ethiopia."

However, under pressure from the masses, who have experienced a quarter of a century of struggle, and from the incapacity of capitalism to develop Eritrea any more than it could develop Ethiopia as a whole, the EPLF could still be pushed to establish a regime of proletarian bonapartism.

In such an under-developed area, with a struggle not led by the working class or based on its democratic organisations, inevitably the result would be a gross bureaucratic deformation of socialism as in Ethiopia itself.

Self-determination

Of course, a healthy workers' state in Ethiopia would have offered the peoples of Tigre and Eritrea the right to self-determination and the prospect of a socialist federation of the Horn of Africa.

If the EPLF was Marxist led, it would conduct a battle for national and social liberation, appealing to the masses of Ethiopia to overthrow the bureaucratic elite for a socialist democracy. It would link up with the struggling masses of Sudan, and look towards the powerful working class of Egypt.

The distorted developments in the Horn of Africa have their fundamental origins in the delay of the world revolution, particularly in the industrialised countries and the semi-developed nations, where the working class could much more readily assume the leadership of the struggle.

Real fraternal assistance from healthy worker states in the developed world, could dramatically raise the standard of life of the poverty-stricken millions and tackle the crisis of hunger. On the basis of socialist democracies the national struggles, the legacies of imperialism, could be resolved.

Five million people in Ethiopia face the threat of another famine.



Polish workers challenge regime

"NOW THE situation is so bad that there must be an explosion of struggle sometime, maybe in only a matter of months", wrote a correspondent in *Militant* on 30 October 1987, discussing the effects of the austerity programme imposed by the Polish regime.

By George Collins

That prediction is coming dramatically to life. There were violent clashes between police and demonstrators in at least seven cities on May Day. Many workers' leaders were arrested and there was widespread action on 2 May, following a series of strikes since last week.

In Gdansk, two policemen who pursued workers into a church were disarmed and beaten up.

As we go to press, the giant Lenin shipyard in Gdansk (where the mass Solidarity trade union movement was born in 1980) was again under workers' occupation.

The strikes were sparked off, as in 1980 and previously, by price increases. Subsidies on essentials are being slashed supposedly to cut inflation—but causing a price explosion for workers ranging from 50 per cent (rent) to 200 per cent (coal).

Living standards, after declining for years, face a further downward spiral. "Hatred is now so great", said a leader of the banned trade union movement Solidarity, "that it can hardly be steeled any longer."

On 26 April bus and tram drivers in the northern city of Bydgoszcz came out on strike, led by their official trade union. Within 12 hours the authorities capitulated, granting a 63 per cent wage increase.

It is the first time a strike has been led by one of the official, state-controlled unions. The enormous pressure of the workers is beginning to open splits among the ruling bureaucracy, and will increasingly force the lower ranks into opposition against the regime.

From Bydgoszcz the struggle spread to the giant Lenin steel mill (employing 32,000 workers) at Nowa Huta in the south. In a brilliant demonstration of class instinct, the steel workers demanded not only a 50 per cent increase for themselves, but increases for other industrial workers, teachers, health workers and pensioners as well.



The Lenin shipyard, Gdansk, 1980: Lech Walesa is catapulted into the leadership of Solidarity.

A further demand, for the reinstatement of four dismissed Solidarity activists, turned the struggle into a direct political challenge to the bureaucracy.

After a day the regime's negotiator broke off talks with the nine-member strike committee (all Solidarity supporters), saying the two sides were "too far apart".

Last Friday the strike call went out at the Stalowa Wola engineering plant in the south-east, with 18,000 workers. After winning a wage increase the workers agreed to return.

The situation is explosive. The regime is in a deep dilemma. Under its 'reforms', negotiations should take place at plant level (to cut across national movements). However, it is afraid that a victory for the workers in a major workplace such as Nowa Huta could set off a country-wide wave of struggle which, in the present climate, could take on massive proportions.

The stage could well be set for a swing from policies of 'decentralisation' to 'recentralisation' as the regime struggles to keep control. But it is faced with the very real danger of provoking a revolutionary explosion by confronting the workers head-on.

Most likely the regime will play for time, manoeuvring and trying to isolate the strikers.

General Lech

A general appeal for support for the Nowa Huta strikers has been raised by Solidarity leader Lech Walesa, and a day of action was called for 2 May, without specifying what should be done.

"If you have an army", Walesa told the workers, "General Lech Walesa is at your disposal."

However, when the Lenin shipyard workers came out, Walesa told them that he was "neither for nor against the strike", but as a worker he would join it!

What this represents is an absence of leadership. No perspective has been put forward of developing the struggle and taking it to victory.

In 1980-81 the lack of a decisive lead from Solidarity, and the leaders' attempts to reach a compromise with the regime, was the key factor in the defeat of the movement. No doubt the regime is hoping that the workers' movement will again be held back by Solidarity's right-wing leaders.

But confrontation cannot be avoided indefinitely. As Walesa has been forced to recognise: "The situation is getting hotter and hotter. Anything can happen."

Because it is so thoroughly isolated and despised, a country-wide movement would leave the regime dangling in mid-air, posing the need for the working class to finish it off and establish in its place a government of workers' democracy.

Strike wave in Nigeria

THE SUDDEN increase in fuel prices in Nigeria on 10 April led to a nation-wide upsurge of struggle.

By James Long

Workers, youth and peasants opposed the increase itself—ranging from 6 per cent on petrol to 50 per cent on kerosene, used for cooking—as well as the fact that it was seen as part of an austerity plan imposed by the International Monetary Fund.

It was no accident that the increase took place following the suspension of the Nigerian Labour Congress (NLC), the trade union federation.

No lead was given by the NLC leaders either in fighting the suspension or the oil price increase. A spontaneous movement from below, sparked in many places by the students, led to demonstrations and industrial action all over the country.

On 13 April between 6 and 12 were killed in demonstrations in Jos. By 15 April nine universities closed, increasing to 20.

On 18 April trade unions started strike action in protest against killings in Plateau state. On 19 April bank workers came out in Katsina and Sokoto states, and on 22 April in Kwara state; in Kano a general movement began.

On 24 April a national ban was imposed on demonstrations. Arrests took place, especially in Kano. On 28 April the movement spread to the capital, Lagos, with banks, the airport and some factories on strike.

This movement has pushed the right-wing 'Democratic' and left 'Progressive' trade union leaders together in calling for industrial action against the military government. But while some unions like the Footwear, Leather and Rubber Products union called for a general strike to start immediately to coordinate the movement, the NLC leadership refused to set a date.

On 2 May the trade union leadership agreed to halt the strikes in return for concessions such as a wage increase, the promise of no sackings and the release of those detained.

The massive reaction against the price increase, however, shows the opportunity for building a working-class movement against the military government's attacks on trade unions and austerity policies and to pose an alternative to capitalist chaos.

New Caledonia flares up

AS THE French were voting in the first round of the presidential election, violence erupted in the Pacific island colony of New Caledonia.

9,000 French troops and riot police have been sent, the navy has shelled guerrilla strongholds and Pons, the minister for overseas territories, has said that anyone attacking the security forces "should be neutralised".

Four policemen were killed and 27 hostages taken by guerrillas of the Kanak Socialist National Liberation Front (FLNKS), who are fighting for independence.

Eleven hostages were released, but a further seven captured, including five members of the CIGN, the French equivalent of the SAS. The guerrillas have blocked most roads and cut telephone lines out of the capital, Noumea.

The FLNKS represent the 65,000

Kanaks, the indigenous Melanesian inhabitants of the island. But they are only 43 per cent of the population. A further 50,000 (36 per cent) are French settlers and the remaining 30,000 (21 per cent) are from other Pacific and Asian countries.

The islands are rich in nickel and cobalt, from which the French capitalists have profited, exploiting the Kanaks' labour, stealing their land and forcing them into reserves. They used the settlers to create racial divisions as a barrier to the movement for independence.

The settlers, nearly all living in Noumea, have consistently opposed independence and backed the right, especially since the previous Socialist government promised to grant partial independence and land reform (though this was never implemented).

This time, with the Kanaks boycot-

ting the ballot, Chirac received 75 per cent of the vote and Mitterrand only five per cent. Mitterrand has alleged that many polling stations were not open.

The Kanaks are a persecuted people with genuine grievances, especially over land. But the situation is complicated by the fact that they are only a minority.

The only way forward is for the Kanak peasants and workers to build class unity with the poor among the settlers against the big capitalists, landlords and French colonial administration, on a programme of political and land reform and the nationalisation of the mines and major industries, to end imperialist oppression.

By Pat Craven

Teachers strike in Spain

ON 27 April 700,000 workers all over Spain were on strike.

They included primary and secondary schoolteachers, university professors, miners, engineering workers and shipbuilders from Bilbao, together with students in the Basque country and farmers who demonstrated in the streets of the capital against the effects of the Common Market on their sector.

More than 250,000 teachers have been on strike for ten days in the last two months.

The teachers want to have the same conditions as other state employees, which would mean an average wage rise of about 17,000 pesetas a month, plus the reduction of working hours to 35 a week.

If no agreement is reached, they threaten an all-out strike. Attempts to play the teachers off against students and parents have completely failed so far.

From a correspondent in Madrid

Letters

Send us your views, comments or criticism.

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

Despicable lottery

Dear Comrades,

Health union leaders are being condemned as churlish for their disapproval of the idea of a national lottery funding the NHS.

I think their reaction would be better described as grave concern for the welfare of the health service, which the government itself seems to be lacking.

The fact that the money was actually available, but that Thatcher preferred to reward the rich with massive tax cuts shows where her sympathies truly lie.

The very idea of a lottery providing the essential resources for public health care is despicable! It merely highlights the perilous state of the NHS today.

The Tories are shirking

their responsibilities by refusing to provide adequate funding—after having the gall to say that the NHS would be 'safe' in their hands!

I am only glad that they are not nurses themselves, as their definition of 'safe' obviously differs from ours.

Debra Mooney, Staff nurse, Sunderland.

Killer disease

Dear Comrades,

A new report indicates that the reduced death rate from heart disease is confined to the rich. Professor Geoffrey Rose, chairman of the World Health Organisation, has called on the government to deal with "the devastating coronary epidemic" which kills one man in 11 and one woman in 40 before the age of 65.

Amongst manual workers in particular there has been no improvement. Blood cholesterol levels in the UK would be regarded as high enough to need drug treatment in the US. In parts of Scotland and N. Ireland the rates of coronary death are the worst in the world.

The report criticises the

government for failing to provide information on risk factors and preventative measures, making no progress on food labelling, cutting the budget of the Sports Council, failing to take action against cigarette advertising and downgrading health education in schools.

It calls for a 1,000 per cent increase in the 5p per person per year spent on the government's Look after your Heart campaign.

The report says that socio-economic factors are central to any attack on heart disease and while obviously stopping well short of calling for socialism, it totally vindicates the position put forward in *Militant* 892.

Andy Walker, Middlesbrough.

Iniquitous poll tax

Dear Comrades,

Labour Party members have produced a detailed survey of the effects of the poll tax in Whitley Bay. It was found that 70 per cent of the population would be worse off!

This is in a ward with 18 per cent unemployment and a large number of young people living in bed-and-breakfast.

At the same time, with the introduction of the 'unified business rate', which is expected to be around two-thirds of North



NHS workers on 14 March protest.

Capitalist jungle

Dear Comrades,

Not so long ago, Labour's Bryan Gould was assuring us that there was little prospect of a crisis in the world economy.

When my dad was made redundant over a year ago, he was advised by his firm's financial consultant to place £6,000 of his hard-earned redundancy pay into an investment bond to guarantee him a nice little nest egg.

After the stock market crash, he saw £1,000 of that capital sum wiped out at a stroke, with no prospect of it being recovered.

People like Bryan Gould may be able to afford to lose one-sixth of their savings, but for millions of working people the economics of the capitalist jungle are all too tangible in their impact.

Stuart Miller, NCU and Nuneaton Labour Party.

Harry McShane

Dear Comrades,

The obituary of Harry McShane printed in issue 893 correctly pointed to the titanic struggles—over the last 80 years—in which he participated. Undoubtedly in his best years he made a valuable contribution to the working-class movement.

His work with John Maclean, Britain's outstanding Marxist propagandist, during and after the first world war, and his key role in the unemployed workers' movement stand out as historic milestones in the history of British labour.

However, his involvement and intense loyalty to the Stalinist Communist Party line of the 1930s and 40s, as with so many genuine activists of the time, blinded him politically to many of the events that were taking place.

During this period, it has to be acknowledged that he attacked Trotsky and his supporters.

He courageously recognised his past mistakes and eventually broke with the CPGB in 1953, three years before Hungary and the exposure of Stalin's crimes.

For Harry McShane, the key revolutionary figures in this century were Lenin and Trotsky. With a new world crisis looming, his positive contribution over the years, despite mistakes, will act as a great inspiration to the present generation on whose shoulders rests the emancipation of the working class.

It is deeply to be regretted that he was unable to speak at the *Militant* rally in June, which would have been a highlight for comrades and supporters attending this key event.

Mick Rathbone, London.

A woman's choice

Dear Comrades,

Personally I do not believe in abortion, but it is the woman's right to choose.

Alton is a man and has no divine right to dictate to the opposite sex. How would a man feel if his choice for a vasectomy was ruled over by a woman?

Robin Akers, Scarborough.

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.

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East, West, home's best?

Dear Comrades,

What do Russian leader Gorbachev and Bedfordshire Chief Constable Alan Dyer have in common? They hold identical views on the role of women.

Quoted in issue 892 of *Militant*, the Chief Constable said: "The sooner some of these women realise that being a housewife is a full-time job, the sooner we may be able to get some of these lawless kids off the streets".

Gorbachev, in his book *Perestroika; New Thinking for our Country and the World*, blames delinquency on "the weakening of family ties and slack attitudes to family responsibilities". He welcomes attempts to

Tyneside's current rates, industrial ratepayers who currently pay £10 million in rates will have this reduced to £6.5-7 million.

The overall effect is therefore to increase the burden on the backs of the working people by at least £3.5 million.

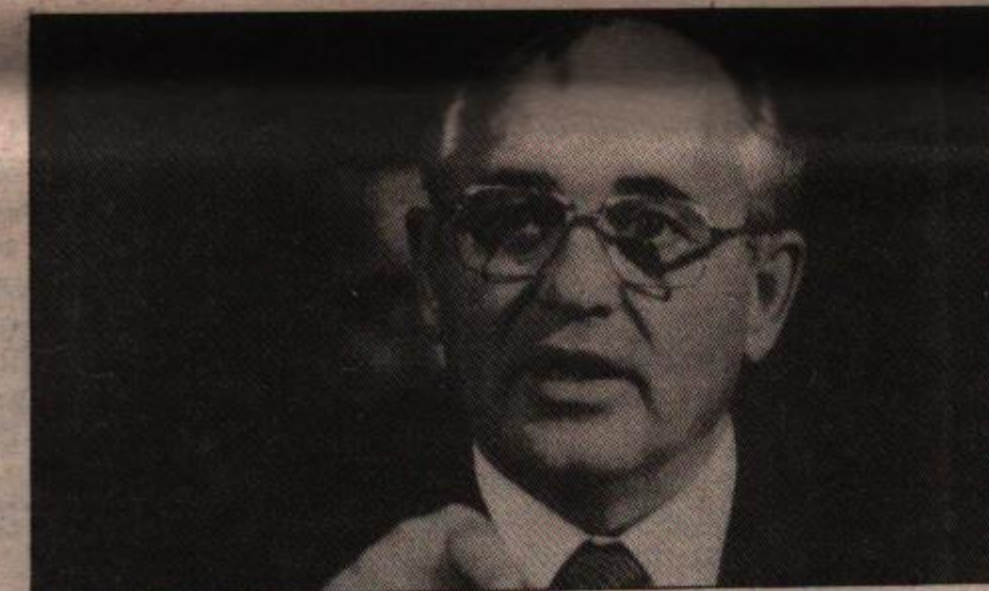
A couple of examples demonstrate the class-ridden nature of the poll tax:

Swan Hunter's shipyard, which currently pays over £500,000 in rates, will receive an extra £170,000 at a

stroke, while 200 yards away a couple living in a tiny flat who pay £125 rates will pay an extra £425 a year. Another family in Whitley Bay will pay an extra £1,600 a year.

It is disgraceful that Labour's leaders should be insisting that any campaign must stay within the law. As the Liverpool councillors said: "It's better to break the law than break the poor".

Terry McPartlan, Whitley Bay Labour Party



Gorbachev

"make it possible for women to return to their purely womanly mission".

In the East and the West, they are trying to drive women back to unpaid labour in the home. As

Marxist men and women, we must ensure that working-class women are given every opportunity to build socialism throughout the world.

Harvey Duke, Dundee.

Mobility should be a right

Dear Comrades,

A friend told me about the difficulties his girlfriend's grandma was experiencing in getting a wheelchair from the NHS.

She can barely move around her home. She was given a walking frame to help her from her house to an ambulance, to attend hospital as an outpatient once a week. But she has difficulty using it and has to

borrow a wheelchair from a friend.

She was refused a wheelchair because the walking frame was seen as adequate to fulfil her mobility needs. But even if she can use the walking frame indoors, she cannot get outside.

A wheelchair would enable her to get out and enjoy herself, especially in summer, and not be segre-

gated from society because of mobility limitations.

Access to a wheelchair, whether permanent or temporary, should be a right, not a privilege. If someone feels they require one, they should be given one. It should not be determined by the assessment of some 'specialist'.

Stuart Bracking, Lancaster.

Can't afford to buy meat

Dear Comrades,

While flyposting one evening to advertise a meeting opposing the poll tax, we came upon some young guys playing football next to some shops.

We had a word with them about the meeting and asked them which shops were busiest and most worthwhile flyposting.

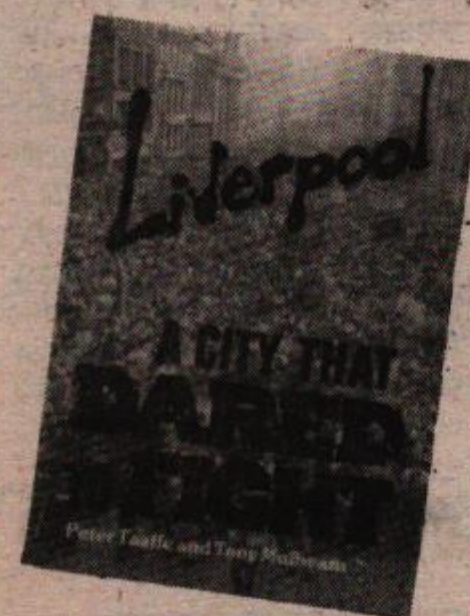
"All of them" said one "except the one at the end; that's the butcher's where nobody goes".

It turns out that nobody goes there

because in Niddrie, Greendykes and Craigmillar housing schemes nobody can afford to. These areas are ravaged by unemployment, blighted by bad housing, dilapidated and disintegrating.

But times are changing. Anger is growing. The battle to crush the poll tax will be the beginning of Niddrie/Craigmillar's working class grasping hold of their own destiny.

Joe Owens, Niddrie/Craigmillar Labour Party, Edinburgh.



NUCPS' new strength must be used

THE NATIONAL Union of Civil & Public Servants (NUCPS), created by the merger of two other civil service unions, the SCPS and the CSU, meets in conference this week.

The union is currently under the control of the 'secret left' which, over the last year particularly, has played a damaging role. It scuppered the joint 1987 pay campaign with CPSA in the hope that a settlement could be reached with the Treasury.

The resulting deal, the 'Concordat', was hailed as a great victory by the then SCPS leadership, mainly to save face. In reality it meant an increase of around one per cent in exchange for the Treasury's right to ride roughshod over previous agreements. Many members have been outraged by the imposition of direct HEO recruitment, a direct result of the 'Concordat'.

This year, the 15% claim has been rejected by the Treasury who instead offered an insulting four per cent. More recently a circular announced the massive concession of an extra half a per cent plus the possibility of a long term pay agreement.

For the Treasury this means further cuts in wages and conditions just as it did for the other unions, IPCS and IRSF. Yet the NUCPS leadership are recommending acceptance of this package at conference!

Where members have been taking the initiative, such as supporting the strike action by CPSA

By Malcolm Clark (NUCPS Broad Left national committee) and Jon Johnson, personal capacity.

colleagues, 'advice' given to our members in DHSS was to work normally. This would have meant crossing picket lines.

Given this background, it is no surprise that the government has gone on the offensive with its plans for merit and regional pay and the Ibbes report with its far reaching implications for job security.

Ian Williams was sacked for his political beliefs six months ago, yet the union has not even given him any financial support and he has now been evicted from his home.

This conference comes at a decisive time for the union: we either go down the path of acceding to the Treasury's demands or we use our new strength of numbers to mobilise a joint campaign with CPSA in opposition to the government's policies against civil servants.

Militant supporters and the Broad Left are campaigning for such a strategy. The opportunities to launch such a campaign have never been greater, the costs of inaction never so high.

What 'Concordat' has meant

IN THE middle of the 1987 pay campaign the executive council of NUCPS halted industrial action without even asking their members. The effects of this action are now being seen.

In December of last year, 30 computer programmers at Newcastle were replaced by consultants. The cost to the DHSS is between £200 and £675 per day for each consultant, more than four times the cost of employing civil servants.

At the National Girobank's computer centre in Reading, £900,000 was spent in 1987/88 on seven consultants. This is an average of £600 per day each. A recent report in *The Guardian* showed that Edwina Currie's husband and his brother both work for one of the firms getting these rich pickings from the taxpayers' purse.

Privatisation does not save money. The real purpose is to try to weaken the unions. A propos-



Last year's joint civil service pay campaign was scuppered when the then SCPS leadership pulled out - without consulting their members.

ed re-organisation means that some production of benefits is to be transferred to centres at Lytham, Swindon and Livingston. These are to be privatised.

The next groups of workers to face privatisation are cleaners, catering staff and security guards. There are rumours that cleaners will be sacked and then re-employed by private firms but with

reduced wages.

The NUCPS national leadership have failed to defend jobs. The Broad Left are campaigning for an open, democratic union committed to ensuring that the advantages of new technology are used to avoid delay in benefit payment and improving members' working conditions.

Keep Skeggs out

PLANS FOR a one-day all-London strike of CPSA members against the employment of a known fascist have been drawn up. The fascist, Skeggs, has been employed at Hither Green DHSS office where staff are already on strike.

It was agreed to widen the campaign at the forthcoming CPSA conference with a mass demonstration to coincide with the one-day strike. There are also plans to call selective strikes at South London offices.

Fascist

There is a strong rumour that DHSS management will try to move Skeggs, a high ranking member of the fascist British National Party, to another department. A manager at Hither Green told one of the strikers that Skeggs had applied for a transfer.

But this would be totally unacceptable to the union - its position remains, no hiding place for Skeggs.

By Rob Williams
CPSA branch secretary,
DHSS South East London,
personal capacity.

Aberdeen - "boom city" turns to gloom

ONE OF my earliest memories is trying to dig for oil in the back yard and my father laughing. He told me that I wouldn't find any because you found oil in the North Sea. So I never did make my fortune in what came to be known as the 'boom city' or the 'oil capital of Europe'!

Aberdeen is portrayed by Thatcher as a city where the everyday workers have been brought prosperity and happiness by oil. I would like to say what I have seen with my own eyes as a working class Aberdonian.

What did the oil industry give Aberdeen? An American school to educate the children of American workers brought in to give their expertise. The decline of the fishing industry - Peterhead is now a larger

fishing port than Aberdeen.

Certainly quite a few Aberdonians were employed as roughnecks, roustabouts and stewards, and to begin with it was 'big bucks' but as there are virtually no unions on the rigs, this did not last long.

Family life suffered

Nowadays, there is virtually no difference between unskilled labour wages on and offshore. In Aberdeen itself, the oil affected everyone, even if they didn't have oil related jobs. House prices rocketed, new housing schemes were built, new industrial estates sprang up and the cost of living rose.

When I first left school I worked for a firm that made hydraulic hoses and fittings. I took home £29.50 for a week's work in 1982.

Employment on the rigs didn't always have a good effect on family life, either. Women whose husbands or partners worked offshore, two weeks on, two weeks off, often felt lonely, isolated and missed the chance to discuss their worries and stress. Alcoholism amongst rig wives became a problem and the men who had been in the middle of the North Sea for two weeks often hit the pub as soon as they arrived in the heliport.

Then the price of oil dropped. Exploration slowed down. Lots of redundancies

were made. Aberdeen, previously cushioned from unemployment, suddenly had a fast-growing problem. People who had moved in started to move out. Houses that had been built went up for sale. In areas like the Bridge of Don and Portlethen, almost every second house was for sale.

The price of oil has picked up since then and some people who were laid off have got their jobs again after two years of unemployment. But by no means all.

What will happen if the price drops again? I dread to think. Will the boom city become a gloom city?

By an Aberdeen nurse

For the re-election of a Broad Left CPSA NEC and victories for Tony Benn and Eric Heffer in Labour leadership elections.
CPSA Land Registry section broad left.

Militant supporters in Cardiff South and Penarth CLP send May Day greetings to the labour movement.
Callaghan has gone but the witch-hunt goes on. Why not fight the Tories instead?

May Day greetings from Nottingham, Bulwell and Hucknall Militant supporters.

For a Benn/Heffer Labour leadership and a socialist Labour government.

Militant supporters on Swansea Labour womens' council say "working class women lead the fightback".

May Day greetings from UCV Militant supporters.
For one national democratic fighting communications union.

Militant supporters in AEU Piton branch Edinburgh say:
No! to an undemocratic merger. AEU members need a strong union. Say no to the EETPU!

Fight for a socialist Labour Party leadership and organise for a democratic union.
Bedford MSF 577 branch Militant supporters.

Militant supporters in Swansea East CLP.
'Stop the rot' A socialist leadership for Labour.

Liverpool Riverside Militant supporters send May Day greetings to black and white youth fighting for workers' unity and socialism nationally and internationally!

Forward to a defeat of the poll tax!
Forward to a Marxist councillor.
Corstorphine North Labour Party, Edinburgh.

Greetings to fellow socialists from Militant supporters in Arundel CLP.
For a socialist leadership.

For unity against poll tax!
We'll beat it in Scotland. Don't collect, don't pay!
Federation of Edinburgh anti-poll tax unions.

Greetings to trade unionists worldwide especially to NUS and comrades in struggle.
Realism to us spells socialism. Arun District Trades Council.

TGWU Brighton branch 1/1347 supports the seafarers.

Reject 'new' offer and strings

ON 29 APRIL right-wing general secretary, John Ellis, reported that the Treasury required the Civil and Public Services Association (CPSA) national executive committee to guarantee the following in return for an increase in the current offer from £5 to £5.40:

By Steve Dunk, national executive member, personal capacity

- ★ Agree unanimously to recommend such an offer to the members.
- ★ Commit CPSA to re-enter talks on a long-term pay system without any preconditions. In other words they want an end to union resistance to pay rises linked to annual report markings, the introduction of regional pay and the downgrading of jobs.

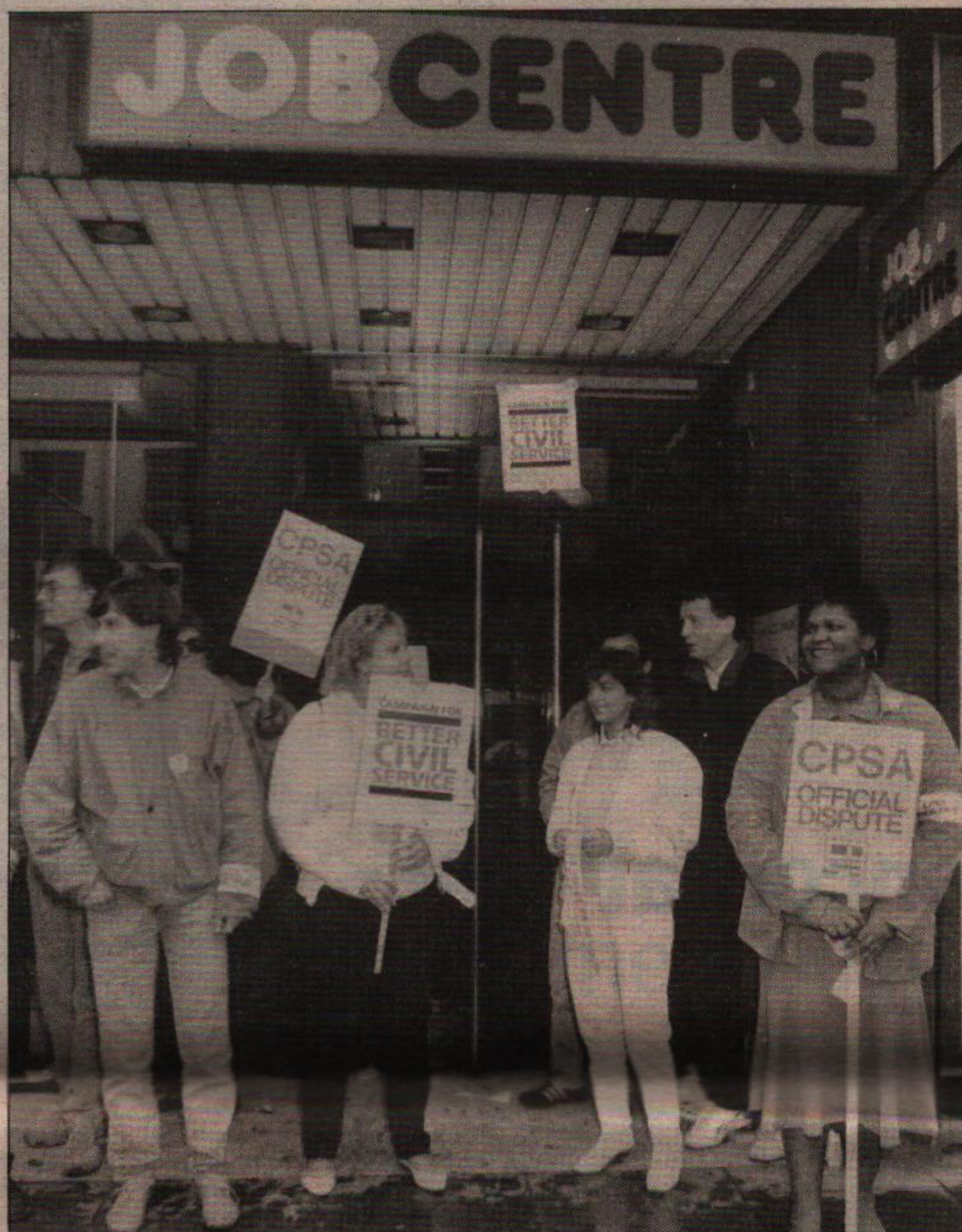
The Broad Left majority on the national executive committee rejected these demands from the Tories and tabled a motion for annual conference seeking the endorsement of the membership for this decision.

Peanuts

The 40 pence increase, after deductions, is less than the price of a packet of peanuts, yet the general secretary, together with both BL84 and other right-wing supporters, argued that we should accept the Tories' terms and recommend the deal to members.

In reality, for literally a few extra pence, they were willing to agree to performance and regional pay being imposed on members by the back door. They were also prepared to endorse a pay offer which in real terms would lead to a further cut in living standards for CPSA members.

The Broad Left national executive majority made it clear that under no cir-



Members have shown their willingness to fight, time and time again. Photo: Dave Sinclair.

cumstances would we recommend such an appalling deal to our members. Rather than solve the problems of low pay, the offer worsens them.

The emergency motion

to conference also calls for the following steps to be taken:

- ★ The union's negotiators to make a further immediate approach to the Treasury to argue for a

substantially improved offer with no strings attached.

- ★ Prompt and regular reports to members on any talks.
- ★ The production of fur-

ther agitational material explaining the need to prepare for industrial action should the offer not be improved, as agreed at the special pay conference.

★ Branches and area committees to arrange membership information meetings and rallies in towns/cities and major workplaces to be addressed by national executive members.

★ Arrangements to be made to ballot members nationally by the end of the first week of June on acceptance of the best offer achieved by then, or industrial action agreed at CPSA's pay conference.

We can win

The National Union of Civil and Public Servants (NUCPS) executive have received an almost identical offer from the Treasury for their members in executive grades. However, unlike the CPSA executive, they will be recommending to their conference, in line with the Tories' wishes, acceptance of the offer with all its strings.

NUCPS conference is taking place at the same time as the CPSA's.

NUCPS delegates must reject their executive's recommendation and join with CPSA in a fight for a decent pay rise for all our members.

Both conferences should be used to launch a determined and united campaign on pay. Substantial pay increases awarded to top civil servants, judges and the military contrast sharply with the miserable offers to CPSA and NUCPS members.

Our members are at the sharp end in providing essential services to the public and the government. Now is the time to fight. We can win. Reject the offer.

MILITANT RALLY

Speakers:
Peter Taaffe
John Macreadie
Doreen Purvis
7.30pm,
Tuesday
10 May
Lukullas Room
The Pavilion,
Bournemouth

NUCPS conference 1988

Speaker:
Tony Mulhearn.
7.30pm,
Wednesday 11
May. Hop Inn,
Blackpool

Watershed conference for CPSA

IN MANY ways, 1988 will be a watershed conference for CPSA. Indeed, the very existence of the civil service—and the union—is under threat.

By Tom Taylor

branch secretary, DE London north, personal capacity

The Ibbs proposals are the first stage in the strategy which leads to the privatisation and hiving off of areas such as DVLC, Passport Office and the Employment Service.

These plans are linked to the Mueller proposals to introduce more flexible working patterns and the Youth Training Scheme.

Private contractors will seek to maximise their profits by employing fewer staff and paying lower wages. More flexible working patterns will pave the way for increases in productivity, making fewer staff necessary.

Mueller also recommends individual wage bargaining. This would mean competing with YTS trainees, used to earning £35 per week.

Against this background it is vital that the incoming national

executive launches an extensive awareness campaign which draws together Ibbs, Mueller and YTS.

Motions 201 and 370 call for a co-ordinated campaign of opposition, including industrial action, in conjunction with other civil service trade unions against the Ibbs and Mueller proposals.

Motion 393 reiterates our opposition to the introduction of YTS until management are prepared to meet the safeguards sought by the union.

Compliant

Undoubtedly, the Tories are awaiting the outcome of the executive elections before proceeding with their plans. They and their friends in the media are hoping for a compliant right-wing leadership who either support the Tories' policies or will do nothing to stop them.

The intentions of the right wing are revealed in Motion 27 which argues that CPSA is the only civil service union not to have negotiated an 'acceptable' long-term pay system.

The 'moderates' election literature claims that other unions

have 'forged ahead', citing favourably the 19 per cent increase negotiated by the Inland Revenue Staff Federation (IRSF).

However, they 'forgot' to mention that in exchange for this 19 per cent, the IRSF leadership agreed to:

- ★ Thousands of job losses.
- ★ 3,560 downgradings.
- ★ Acceptance of casuals to replace permanent staff.
- ★ Acceptance of YTS.
- ★ Acceptance of pay rises linked to annual reports, in other words, merit pay.

Any deal on this basis would be totally unacceptable to CPSA members. National pay bargaining and the 'rate for the job' would be abolished. Regional pay would be used to reduce wages in areas of high unemployment. Merit pay would mean supervisors determining standards of living.

Such measures would shatter the unity of the union. Member would be set against member, region against region. Our ability to defend jobs and conditions and the services we provide would be severely weakened.

Therefore, we are in favour of a

settled system which maintains the national unity of the union. Conference must support motion 1 which rejects any form of regional, performance, merit or departmental pay, or local pay additions.

We must stand firm in demanding that any new system must restore the ground we have lost in recent years and tackle the outstanding problems over pay.

Threats

Important resolutions covering the health and safety of our members should be backed by the conference.

One (Motion 259) calls for "regular health screening in official time and on official premises". Another (Motion 260) wants a "campaign for on-site cancer screening". The campaigns must be linked to the fight against health cuts and for a properly funded NHS screening service.

Motion 270 calls for a pilot child day-care scheme with other civil service unions and a local authority to cater for children of all ages over two months, affordable to low-paid workers. It is clear that

the employer is not genuinely interested in the welfare of staff if basic questions such as child-care and screening are not answered.

Cutbacks, low pay and a deterioration in the service have meant that our members are facing increasing pressures at work. Assaults or threatened assaults have taken place in literally every department, especially in benefit-paying departments.

There is a call (Motion 290) for the national executive "to explore ways of eliminating actual and threatened violence, particularly as a majority of CPSA members are women". Ways have to be found to reduce violence and counselling has to be provided for victims.

But of course, it is the Tories' violence through making cutbacks in benefit, mass unemployment and penalising the poor which have pushed millions into a desperate plight. This year's CPSA conference can make a major contribution to ending that by backing policies to mobilise and fight back.

Next week we will look at some of the issues coming up in the second half of the agenda.

Action stations on the tubes

ACTION STATIONS is a glossy eight page leaflet, advertising London Underground's (LUL) pilot scheme to be imposed on a section of the Metropolitan line.

Following the King's Cross fire, management are still intent on cutting staffing levels on stations, even after being advised not to by the unions.

When the automatic ticketing system comes into effect, booking offices will disappear, meaning less staff. Management consider this a "challenge of new technology" but the new barriers, which come up to shoulder height, have been condemned by the fire brigade and by the unions on safety grounds.

Management only listens to and acts upon profit. They say that the undergr-

ound is now more profitable because of "a planned programme of reducing costs, improving and simplifying the fares structure, improving services and investment in new equipment".

Costs have been reduced through job cutting and worsened wages and conditions while the system still relies on 20 year old trains and wooden escalators.

Superhuman

The document says: "The new system would work by giving you more responsibility and ensuring that you have more time for customer service and safety". What a contradiction! The new grade of station assistant will be expected to be "messengers, perform litter cleaning, graffiti removal

covering and any minor maintenance" plus have time for customer service and safety with less staff on stations. The only way all these jobs could be done to their full is if a superhuman took the job.

On top of this, management admit that some staff will lose money. So as a sweetener, a top-up will be paid for 18 months. After that it's tough luck.

The scheme is proposed to be in operation throughout the system by 1991.

LUL claim there will be no compulsory redundancies and that the reduction in staff levels will be achieved by other means: "More than 10 per cent of station staffs leave to take up jobs elsewhere." Yes, because of low wages, worsening conditions shift working and

assaults.

Seniority is to be thrown out in favour of 'suitability'. Inevitably, trade union activists will be pushed into the worst jobs.

A whole number of staff meetings have been organised to sell this scheme, showing videos and answering questions, but the unions have been refused the chance to put their case in these meetings.

We must demand:

*Seniority the basis for promotion.

*Better wages and conditions, not worse.

*A 35 hour week.

*No job losses.

*Workers' control and management of LUL.

By Andy Viner

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

Baroness Turner's 'career step'

THE NEW Employment Bill is designed to democratise the trade unions and improve their management, according to Lord Carr, a former Tory employment minister.

However, he argued in a Lords debate that these aims were at odds with the proposal to force general secretaries to stand for regular re-election.

Baroness Turner moved an amendment to the bill exempting all the top executive posts in unions from election to office if they were selected by

'competitive interview'. She argued that these posts were advisory in function and especially in white collar unions were seen as a career step, not a political move.

Talented people in private industry "will not be forthcoming" if they need to be elected every five years, she said. Baroness Turner, of course, was the assistant general secretary of the Association of Scientific, Technical and Managerial Staffs.

By Gwyn Morris.

'Eat, drink and sleep Nissan'

"OH YES, Nissan management look after the workers with private health, pensions and the like and help you if you have trouble. But they demand a price: total company loyalty.

"You've no private life—they want to know everything. When you work for Nissan your life gets sucked into the company slip stream. Your social life slowly but surely evaporates.

"On the track you can't stop even if you're bursting for the toilet. You have to ring the emergency bell, wait for the team leader and then run to and back from the toilet.

"If you're off you can't be on the sick. They phone or visit to check you are at home and then you put in a lieu day.

"They expect you to eat, sleep and drink Nissan. Every job is signed for, so if anything is wrong you have to put it right in your own time. Often, we have to work over.

"They want people with no other loyalty. In effect, you marry Nissan. I know stacks of lads who've lost wives or girlfriends. Some of the lads can only talk about Nissan.

"They look after you if you are for the company but the price is too high.

"The engineering union has a single-union agreement but it has no kick. There are union magazines to read but you can't take them seriously. If you've a problem, often the union man is your superior. The union is just a figurehead, not to serve the members."

A Nissan worker spoke to Militant.

North East shipbuilders

Photo: Mark Pinder.



Part of the mass meeting of North East shipbuilders workers in Sunderland on 23 April. With the sale of Govan, there are now fears that the Wearside yard will be sold off or even closed.

Re-instate ILEA steward

NALGO MEMBERS in the Inner London Education Authority have responded to the sacking of a shop steward by walking out on unofficial strike, demanding his re-instatement and an enquiry into his dismissal.

The steward, who had seven years experience as a careers officer with other authorities before coming to ILEA, was sacked for "failing to reach the required standard".

The authority runs a six month probation for new staff, regardless of whether they were doing the same work beforehand. The careers service shop stewards committee has the position that any form of probationary period or programme of assessment of staff in terms of performance is

open to abuse by managers, particularly at present in light of cuts and re-deployment.

Members are advised not to take part in any form of assessment procedure.

ILEA management were effectively refusing our call for a mutually agreed code of practice in line with ILEA's equal opportunities policy.

The steward was sacked on the basis of an assessment of his work 16 weeks after joining the authority which took place without his participation as he was following union policy.

The Acas code of practice—informing the Nalگو district full-timer before disciplinary action was taken against a shop steward—was completely ignored.

Members in Tower Ham-

lets struck for one day and then other departments at County Hall did the same later in the week. Trade union and Labour Party activists are urged to rush resolutions to Neil Fletcher, leader of the ILEA, Deirdre Wood, chair of the staffing committee, and Herman Ouseley, chief executive.

These should call for the re-instatement of the sacked steward and for the setting up of negotiations in line with ILEA's equal opportunities policy on the implementation of staff probation and assessment procedures. Silvertown firefighters have already passed such a resolution.

By a Nalگو member, ILEA careers service

NUJ Conference

THE NATIONAL Union of Journalists (NUJ) muddled leadership came to the recent conference with an equally muddled 'economic package' to solve the financial crisis facing the union—higher subs, less service for members and switching to a biennial conference.

But the NUJ rank and file was having none of it. It did not see why it should pay for the financial incompetence at the top of the union.

Many delegates were furious that an increase in subs could be proposed when those NUJ members who broke the *News International* strike at Wapping had been allowed to get away with withholding their subs to the union for nearly a year.

So on every 'cost cutting' exercise, the leadership were repeatedly turned over by confer-

ence—left wing executive members upset their right wing counterparts by wearing their name tags upside down!

There were no strategies, no campaigns, no solutions forthcoming from the platform. They were unable to grasp that the financial crisis flowed from the demoralisation of ordinary members as their leadership seemed powerless to stop the advance of the media bosses.

They seem unable to understand that a campaigning union that is prepared to meet the newspaper owners head on in struggle will revitalise confidence within the union, which in turn will rebuild the organisation and thus put its financial affairs on a firmer footing.

By an NUJ conference delegate

Tyne District AEU

BROAD LEFT backed candidate, Davy Hall, has been elected Tyne district secretary of the Amalgamated Engineering Union, beating right winger, Alan Robson, by 3,190 to 3,029.

Not only is this the first time the left have held

the position for over 20 years, but Alan Robson was the delegate at the recent national committee meeting who moved that the union withdraw support for sponsored MP Ron Brown. He has also backed witch-hunts in the area.

Rolls Royce

THE DICTATORIAL management of the Barnoldswick Rolls Royce factory, where I work, have not had things all their own way recently.

Last December, one worker had booked extra holidays well in advance but was told he would have to work over Christmas.

The workforce voted unanimously to ban overtime. Despite big profits last year, the latest management wage offer was less than inflation. It

meant a wage rise for some and nothing at all for apprentices in return for completely unacceptable strings.

During the mass meeting on the offer, the convenor warned that if it was accepted, management would be back for more next year.

In a secret ballot which followed the meeting, the workforce voted 682 to 181 in favour of a ban on overtime and a withdrawal of goodwill.

Defeat Alton's Bill

Abortion — a woman's right

PARLIAMENT is about to debate the Third Reading of the Alton Bill to restrict women's right to have abortions after 18 weeks. If it is allowed to pass, or amended to 24 weeks, this reactionary measure will drive many desperate working-class women back to the back streets.

On the Commons committee discussing the Bill, Alton has been strenuously opposed by MILDRED GORDON, the Labour MP for Poplar and Bow. She spoke to *Militant* about her fight:

Mildred Gordon MP speaks to *Militant*

"THIS BILL represents an attack on the rights of women and if it is passed it will increase the oppression that women already face.

If the legal time limit is set at 24 weeks, realistically you will be talking about 22 weeks. Similarly 18 weeks in practice will be 16, because this Bill will have created an atmosphere where doctors will always be on their guard.

It is also very clear that the real intention of Alton's supporters is to make any abortion illegal, regardless of timescales.

The Bill is full of traps for women. Take the amendment by Sir Bernard Braine on the question of handicaps and disability. They are making out that this will enable there to be exemptions after 18 weeks

on the grounds of handicap or disability.

But the terms of the amendment are such that a consultant gynaecologist now has to be one of the two doctors involved. You can see how they could extend this practice to all abortions.

What happens if the woman does not agree with the consultant's diagnosis about the disability? Will she have the right to appeal? Will an ordinary woman get help to seek a second opinion, given that time is a crucial factor?

There is such hypocrisy over the question of handicap or disablement. Alton supporters are 'pro-life' until birth. They are never to the fore when it comes to fighting for more resources once the child is born.

It has been a sickening experience listening to some of the comments made by members of this

committee. You really see their naked contempt for working-class women. At one point Dame Jill Knight actually implied that some women have abortions to avoid getting stretch marks!

They talk a lot about compassion for the foetus, but they show absolutely none whatsoever for ordinary women and the difficulties they face.

Disgraceful

Some of them like to boast that they are members of charitable committees which give handouts of baby clothes, prams, etc. to single parents. When I pointed out that this was condescending to women, Edwina Currie called out: "Speak for yourself".

As for Labour MPs who are supporting Alton, I think it is disgraceful! This

is not private business. This matter will affect millions of women. There definitely should have been a three-line whip. After all it is Labour Party policy.

I can understand that some MPs who are religious are having a crisis of conscience, but they should think of the misery they will cause by voting for Alton. They will be responsible for the deaths of many women.

The Labour Party should have organised an effective campaign to ensure that this Bill was defeated.

Of course I want to see an end to late abortions—it is a very distressing experience for women. That is why Labour should now go on the offensive and table a Bill which will give women the right to an early abortion, at the same time fighting for the resources for the NHS which will make this possible."



Photo: Dave Sinclair

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Return to the Circulation Department, *Militant*, 3/13 Hepscott Road, London E9 5HB. Make cheques payable to *Militant*.

£30,078 raised

IN THE last few days of the Fighting Fund campaign we have had a deluge of donations.

Mike Smith from Manchester sent us £150 and Tina Carroll from Liverpool donated a magnificent £100! A *Militant* Fighting Fund social in Garston, Liverpool netted £200!

Support from trade unionists has also come in. £460 was donated by delegates and visitors to this year's USDAW conference. £220 was raised at the Scottish TUC conference and £90 at the Wales TUC conference. A striking seafarer from Liverpool donated £10.

Fighting Fund money continues to be raised from the sale of *Liverpool—a City that Dared to Fight*. An inspiring letter was received along with a £10 dona-

tion from Reg and Edna Stein from Cardiff:

"Having read *A City that Dared to Fight*, my sister and I felt that we should make a donation to your fund. We are in our 70s and 80s and we wish you younger ones a little more success in the year 2000 than we've had".

Militant readers have been taking our appeal for funds to the labour movement and onto the streets. £240 was raised on the anti-Clause 28 demo. Sophie Harris alone raised £33 selling stickers on the demo.

A *Militant* meeting in Brighton on defending the NHS raised £106.41 in cash. Rebecca Bank a school student collected £22 on the Newcastle May Day march. A *Militant* supporter in Liver-

Fighting Fund

Area	Received	% of target achieved	Target
1 South East	1426		1570
2 South West	1071		1270
3 London	5841		7080
4 Merseyside	3263		5000
5 East Midlands	1617		2530
6 West Scotland	1378		2520
7 Yorkshire	3165		2260
8 Eastern	1190		2020
9 Southern	1426		5950
10 Northern	1356		2890
11 Manchester/Lancs	1546		3270
12 Scotland East	867		2150
13 Wales	1248		3510
14 West Midlands	1180		3960
15 National	3905		4000
Total	30,078		50,000

pool LPYS also raised £22 in an hour selling stickers.

Many thanks to all our contributors including: Dave Corkey, Labour Councillor, Tyneside, £30; Martin Homby, Hartlepool GMB, £30; Ipswich social £25; C

Halls, Brighton NCU, £20; Southampton darts match £18; Girobank worker, Merseyside, £14.50; Garth Caddon, Newcastle Nols, £10.00; Keith Toms, Harrow LP, £5.