Militant

The Marxist Paper for Labour and Youth

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Tories war on council workers— Pages 7,8,9

Miners on strike for a year. Council workers—start second front!

The fight goes on



THE TORIES are in for a shock; a genuine second front is opening up against them. Thatcher has always taken it for granted that local authorities and council workers would be a soft touch.

Rate-capping key Labour authorities is only one prong of their attack. There are also cutbacks in housing and a wholesale attack on jobs; and a massive privatisation of council services. No council worker, no community is safe.

But the response to the Tories' rate-capping proposals has been an unprecedented campaign by council workers and local authorities. All over the country, workers have decided to take action on 6 March. In the rate-capped and financially-threatened authorities, workers will hold a mass lobby of their councils on budget fixing day, 7 March.

Already, mass meetings have started to organise local campaigns; the mood is one of workers determined to fight. They are not prepared to see their jobs destroyed. Just like the miners, they will fight to save their communities.

National combine

And the Tory attack has now prompted a national response. Last Saturday, 23 February, council worker delegates from 17 local authorities took the first steps towards creating a national local authority shop stewards' combine. Almost all the rate-capped London authorities were present plus Liverpool, Glasgow, Sheffield, Wandsworth, West Yorkshire, South Yorkshire and Leicester.

The conference had a majority of manual workers and the mood was brilliant. Everyone agreed it was time to stop talking and start taking action. A steering committee was elected with the power to take action if jobs are threatened in any authority. The aim now is to get a national conference towards the end of March open to council workers throughout the country.

The Tories could find that one of the first results of their attack on council workers is to forge a greater nationwide unity and strength than every before. The message is clear. Council workers will not be victims of Thatcherism. We will fight to defend our jobs and services and we can win.

By Jim Hollinshead
(GMBATU, Liverpool No 5 Branch, personal capacity)

Miners still defiant

A YEAR of struggle, and still the miners fight on! More than three quarters of those who have been on strike remain loyal to their union and as determined as ever to win an honourable and dignified settlement and the re-instatement of all those sacked.

In Yorkshire, 86% are still solid. At Cortonwood, where the strike started a year ago, the strike has been breached but it is still an insignificant number who have returned to work. The union estimate is around 40, which is 5% of the workforce. Most men returning are from outside the Cortonwood area, transferees from other pits who will soon be retiring and looking towards redundancy payments.

By Pat Craven

The miners' year of struggle has been an inspiration to every worker. Those who have played a part in this historic battle will remember it with pride for the rest of their lives.

Nevertheless, miners are indignant at the role played by the TUC leaders. "I'm chuffed to bits that the EC turned down the TUC deal" said Paul Hotham of Armthorpe NUM on the steps of the TUC offices. "I believe that the TUC were going to sell us down the river and hoped to take the glory for solving the miners' strike".

No secret deals

They were acting as arbiters, not leaders, trying to patch up a deal behind the miners' backs. They negotiated a deal even worse than the one offered to NACODS "When Willis came out of that meeting saying that Thatcher had told him he'd done a good job, then I couldn't believe it", observed a Kent miner.

In any future negotiations, it must be guaranteed that the NUM leaders are included, and they must be conducted in full view of the membership. Secret deals are being used by the government as a ploy to build up miners' hopes that a settlement is in sight, so that they can then be dashed.

Sunday's march in London gave a glimpse of what is possible, even now, if the NUM leaders were to take a bold initiative and appeal to their thousands of supporters in the unions.

"Willis is frightened to call a general strike," said the Derbyshire miner at the TUC, "because he knows it will take off. Even 25% out would cripple the country."

But, he warned, "The top brass won't do anything; it's up to the shopfloor to walk out, the same as we did."

"I believe the TUC should mobilise the action," said Mitch Pugh from the Kent NUM: "I'd like to see them organise a 24-hour general strike." "NACODS", he added, "should think again and look at the deal they

Continued on back page

Build for BLOC now

See article on page 14 and Editorial on page 2

Militant

BLOC conference—a lever for union change

THE SECOND conference of the Broad Left Organising Committee could not be taking place at a more critical moment for the British trade union movement. It has a vital role to play in building a fighting new leadership equal to the challenges now facing workers.

As the miners begin the second year of their historic struggle, council workers are joining them in a fight to protect their jobs and the services they provide. Printers, teachers, seamen and car workers have already fallen foul of the Tory employment laws. The TGWU has just launched a campaign to fight low pay, at a time when wage cuts are the bosses' central strategy.

Not for decades has the struggle between the classes been so intense. A new bitterness has been injected into industrial relations by Thatcher and MacGregor. A sharper political polarisation is taking place as well; a poll on *Union World* revealed that support for Labour among trade unionists has risen from 39% in June 1983 to 54%. Support for the Tories has slumped from 33% in 1979 and 31% in 1983 to only 22%.

Yet that same poll showed that only 55% are satisfied with their own union leaders and only 36% with the TUC. There is a deep feeling that those who lead the movement have failed to face up to the crisis facing the rank and file.

The right wing TUC leaders' role in the miners' strike has been abysmal. Armed with an overwhelming mandate from Congress to mobilise the power of the movement behind the miners, they have stood aside with arms folded, blaming their members for their own unwillingness to act. Yet they eagerly seized the chance to visit 10 Downing Street to find a means of ending the strike and act as messengers for the NCB and the government. The offer they brought back from the board was unanimously condemned by the miners as even worse than what had already been offered.

Even Ned Smith, retired industrial relations director of the NCB, has said that the government's position on the strike "changed dramatically after the trade union movement failed to deliver 'total support' for the miners".

These leaders are from a different age, when concessions could be negotiated round a table with employers and the government, fearful of damaging strikes in a time of expanding trade and labour shortages. Though always dependent on the power of the movement for their positions, these leaders became a privileged layer. They were handsomely paid and could look forward to a knighthood or peerage on retirement.

Today the only job for which they are so rewarded is holding back their members and keeping wages down. There are no more concessions on offer. There is no middle ground, but a battlefield where you are on one side or the other. To lead the workers into battle, a new breed of trade unionist is needed, typified by the young militant miners whom the strike has thrust into the front line.

The Broad Lefts within individual unions and the BLOC are the means by which this new generation of activists can be forged into a new leadership. This will not happen in an automatic way. The issues need to be taken to the membership and thoroughly explained. The members have to be actively involved in the campaigns. They have to be convinced that Broad Left candidates are not just younger versions of the old leaders, but self-sacrificing class fighters, answerable to their members.

To achieve this they have to fight for trade union representatives to be subject to the recall as well as to election by their members and to be paid no more than the average wage of those they represent.

Activists should now be urgently campaigning to get the maximum number of workers to the conference, to make it even bigger than last year's success. It needs to be raised at union branches, shop stewards' committees and on the shop floor. A good attendence is crucial as a demonstration to the rank and file that they now have an alternative—a fighting leadership in which they can have confidence, which will lead them to victory.

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S.Wales miners will fight on

THROUGHOUT THE South Wales Coalfield there is still a remarkable degree of solidarity and cohesion after 12 months of the strike, with less than five percent having returned to work.

The Special Delegate Conference of South Wales NUM on 22 February reaffirmed the area's committment to fully support the strike and supported the previous day's Special National Delegate Conference decision to continue the strike.

Before the conference there was much speculation in the local media that there was to be a revolt by some lodges against the decision of the South Wales NUM executive to continue the strike. This revolt never materialised and ultimately only one lodge out of 28 called for the executive to end the strike on an area basis without any settlement.

Despite the misinformed press speculation, there was a resolute mood at the conference to continue the strike until an honourable settlement was achieved, including the reinstatement of all miners who had been sacked during the course of the strike, and for the institution of proper guarantees from the NCB over the future of the so-called 'uneconomic pits'.

Speaker after speaker at the conference stated their committment to continue the strike until a settlement was achieved on a national basis. Speakers from the South Wales NUM executive pointed out that if the deal offered by the NCB in the previous few days had been accepted by the union, it would have meant the immediate closure of six pits in South Wales and would lead to the virtual destruction of the South Wales coalfield as a whole.

Many delegates criticised the lack of support and initiative from the leaders of the TUC and Labour Party, calling for concrete steps to be taken, for industrial action to be organised in support of the NUM in the face of a continuing instransigence of the NCB and the government.

The mood of delegates to the conference was a sober realism that there was no point in abandoning the strike after 12 months to have gained nothing. Many delegates stressed that the miners have in no way been defeated as the speculation has been in the press. But there was a mood of impatience amongst many delegates that initiatives had to be taken in the strike, particularly with other unions.

In the weekend following the conference, two decisive votes to continue the strike were taken at collieries where the press had claimed in advance that there would be massive votes and returns to work. At South Celynen colliery in Gwent a general meeting of the lodge voted to continue the strike by 130 votes to 80. At Cynheidre colliery another general meeting of the lodge voted also to continue the strike.

On Monday (25 February, 1985) when a massive return to work was once again predicted by the local media and the South Wales Area of the NCB, their propaganda efforts failed. There was only a significant return to work in three collieries in South Wales, which made up over 300 of the claimed 500 returning to work in South Wales. At the majority of South Wales pits only a fraction of a pecentage of the workforce has returned to work.

By Ken Smith

Photo: Paul Traynor



A striking Notts miner addressed the London Region LPYS conference over the weekend of 23/24 February thanking the London YS for all the money and help they have given during the strike. Two Marxists, supporters of *Militant*, were elected to the LPYS National Committee. They were John Hird for North London and Linda Douglas for South London.
The livliest debates of the weekend were on rate-capping and the miners' strike. The conference ended early on Sunday and the 200 delegates went on to join the demonstration in support of the miners in Trafalgar Square (above).

Sri Lankan leader arrested

SRI LANKAN union and NSSP (New Socialist Party) leader, Vasudeva Nanayakkara is still held in police custody (see last week's *Militant*). After ten days he has not been charged with any crime, though it is implied that he incited student riots.

Recently the Jayawardene regime passed laws to privatise state education. So only the very rich will be able to get university education. The growing student unrest throughout the island's universities is only the tip of the iceberg of opposition amongst the minority Tamils, the working class and peasantry.

The government has tried to dampen student opposition by playing on fears of Tamil guerrilla attacks in the south and an Indian invasion and by whipping up Sinhala chauvinism. This has so far failed. There have been no major anti-Tamil attacks in the south since the July 1983 pogroms.

Mass opposition

What the government fears most is a mass working class opposition movement in the south linking up with the struggle of the northern Tamil speaking minority. That is why a prominent working class leader like Vasudeva was arrested and why the government may attempt to re-impose the ban on the NSSP.

International working class solidarity can force the Sri Lankan government to release Vasudeva. In 1984 the United Federation of Labour (UFL) organised a successful speaking tour for a striking British miner. His struggle was seen by Sri Lankan workers as part of their experience and suffering under the Jayawardene regime.

Labour Parties, LPYS branches, trade unions and student organisations should rush messages of protest demanding brother Vasudeva's release to: President Jayawardene, Presidential Palace, Colombo 2, Sri Lanka with a copy to UFL, 6 Ockenden Road, London N1 3NP.

By British Representative, UFL

French pit disaster—strike call

THE DANGERS of the coal mining industry were abruptly brought home to miners in France with the tragic death of 22 miners in an explosion at Simon pit, near Forbach in the Moselle region.

Another 103 miners are still in hospital suffering from fractures and gas intoxication after the explosion which took place at 7.21 on 25 February. Altogether 923 miners were working in the pit at the time.

The union has since called a one day general strike in the mines on the day of the funeral in protest at management's mad rush for productivity which the union says contributed to the causes of the explosion.

The union claims that safety equipment which tests for gas levels hasn't been properly installed and checked.

By our Paris correspondent

Youth tension in Kent village

WITH A massive police presence in the village of Aylesham, Kent in the last month or so the sheer frustration of many of the teenagers has broken into agression, mainly aimed at the police. Young boys and girls, mainly 14-18 year olds, have been congregating on the streets, shouting, singing and fighting. Some are already on police curfew.

Last week, the police let the dogs off the leash, one boy was bitten six times ending up in hospital having stitches in his leg.

One 15 year old girl, walking home at about 10 one evening was picked up by police for questioning about a broken window. Though she protested she knew nothing about it, they did not release her till 1.30am, to go home on her own to her parents frantic with worry. When her parents went to complain the next day they were curtly told that she was suspected because she was walking along that road—no apologies or anything.

In an attempt to reduce the tension in the village, the NUM and miners' support group have agreed to set up their own patrols at night. Initially, they seem to have been successful, as last weekend was quiet for the first time for weeks.

BLOC Meetings

Swansea
Wednesday 6 March
Transport Hall, Swansea. Speakers: Jeff Price—Left candidate for USDAW Presidency, Ian Isaac—South Wales Executive NUM.

Llanelli
Monday 11 March
7.30pm, YMCA, Stepney Street Llanelli. Speakers: Alec Thraves—AUEW Broad Left, Phil Lloyd, Swansea POEU, Keith Edwards, President Llanelli Trades Council.

Hull
Monday 11 March
7. 30pm. Hull Trades and Labour Club, Beverley Road, Hull. Speakers: Derek Hatton, Deputy Leader Liverpool City Council, Bill Connor, USDAW.

Miners' dispute

Thousands march in determination and anger

"THE PRESS keep talking as if we're finished. Let some of them lying bastards come down here and say that today" a Scottish miner told Militant as he started the long march out of Hyde Park in London on 24 February.

He was one of 50,000 who turned out for the miners' demonstration organised by the Liason Committee for the Defence of Trade Unions. "Why couldn't the TUC have called something like this?" asked a miner's wife from Durham. "They're too busy trying to sell us out" her friend replied.

The enthusiasm of the march grew as the marchers became aware of how big it was with miners from Scotland the North East and Yorkshire well represented.

There was plenty of anger on the demonstration, at the government, the Coal Board and the police's massed ranks. "Why don't they close down some uneconomic police stations?" shouted Scottish engineering workers as they saw hundreds of police along Park Lane.

The anger though was tinged with humour. As the march passed Buckingham Palace, a miner put on his BBC voice and announced "A hundred new faces turned out at Buck House coalfield today".

Miners booed as they passed by NCB headquarters at Hobart House, guarded by rows of police. "What's in there? MacGregor's brain", and by Downing Street where another mimic announced in a Thatcher voice "I am not responsible for this strike, I was on holiday at the time" as a chorus of jeers rang out along Whitehall.

Platform speakers before and after the march showed the solidarity which still exists. The whole march showed the truth of Betty Heathfield's remarks on how much has been changed by the strike. Miners and their communities and many other workers have seen the nature of capitalist Britain well exemplified by the behaviour of the police at the end of the march.



Photo: Dick Calvert

AT ABOUT 2.30 pm police attempted to divide the march at Whitehall. Some 'anarchists' (they had black flags!) started throwing sticks and placards at cops. Police chased and arrested two Notts miners. Police went generally berserk, climbing over cars, kicking and trampling on people.

Then the whole march stopped, 5,000 people trailing back to Downing Street. Miners were in this section from Notts, Yorks and Leicester as well as support groups. At about 4.30 pm the police decided to move demonstrators who were demanding the release of two people arrested. One was released. They tried to 'herd' people with horses and made over 50 arrests. Barriers were thrown down onto the road to stop police. Police were arbitrarily arresting and attacking people. One miner was dropped on his head onto the pavement and refused first aid. A 14 year old girl was forced screaming against a car by police.

Police provocation

THE POLICE were definitely provoking the demonstrators at the end of the march, though whether it was deliberate or they just panicked was not clear. There were a few thousand police patrolling Whitehall. After two Notts miners were arrested marchers refused to move on.

The police encircled the demonstrators so nobody could get out anyway. The police never seemed to try to get the march moving again peacefully or even give anywhere for people to go to. Individuals could get out but if a group of marchers wanted to get out they would be attacked.

When the horses came in, people were forced down side streets between Whitehall and the Embankment where a number of demonstrators were attacked by the police. The TV reports gave a false image of some incidents. A protestor was shown throwing railings, and from the angle they showed on TV, it looked like he was throwing them at the police. In fact he was throwing them down to other protestors to form a barricade to stop demonstrators getting hurt by police horses. It didn't work unfortunately. One women was hurt when a horse galloped into her.

By *Militant* reporters

Punched

PETE WATSON spoke to Roz Russell from Clowne Women's Action Group:

A CORDON was suddenly thrown across the demonstration and about 200 of us were surrounded. A lad was beaten up in front of us to incite us and then the police charged—and this was with young children in the demo! Most people ran. I nearly fell and a policeman grabbed me in the face and started belting me. About 30 of us ended up surrounded by horses. One woman, was punched in the stomach and more than once people nearly fell under the hooves.

I've heard about Orgreave but I didn't think it would happen on a demo in the middle of London. The whole thing was orchestrated by the police to kick hell out of us. But I was proud of our women—we stood our ground and if everyone had stood their ground it might have been different.

YS arrests

TYSON BUNBY an active member of Uxbridge LPYS, found himself outside the Embankment Tube station which had been closed and was being guarded by police.

A large crowd had gathered outside the station waiting to be let in to go home. A senior officer then addressed the crowd and told them that they could use the tube providing they didn't use the other exit. The gates were then opened, the police came out and went into the crowd.

Tyson Bunby was approached by an officer who started using foul language and then put his foot out and pushed Tyson over it.

After trying to get the officer's number Tyson was harassed further and then arrested by officers who used excessive force. At the police station Tyson's arresting officer (who did not actually arrest him) told the sergeant that he has seen Tyson kicking a WPC who was keeping the gates closed. After five hours in a police cell Tyson was charged with 'threatening behaviour'.

●

GAVIN MARSH from Southampton, recently elected to the LPYS national committee, was one of those arrested. A snatch squad came in to the march and arrested him. Another couple of policemen joined them and dragged him up a cul-de-sac, punched him in the face and told him to lie on the ground.

A policeman stood on one arm twisted the other around his neck and took him to Bow Street where he was charged with "assaulting a police officer". In the court, there were no marks on the policeman's legs. Gavin was not allowed to make a phone call, he was given nothing to eat or drink and had his photo and fingerprints taken. They were obviously prepared for mass arrests in the police station with tables set out like a production line for charging demonstrators.

Scots miner killed

LATE ON Saturday 16 February Robert Innes, a 50 year old striking miner from Cumnock in Ayrshire was killed. A lorry driver who has been driving blacked coal in and out of Hunterston and Ravenscraig has been arrested by the police for the killing. The driver works for a firm which has built up its business on the backs of the miners in Ayrshire over the years—now they scab.

Striking miners were shocked to hear the news and there was a deep sense of loss at the death.

Anger at the killing was heightened by the lack of interest shown by the media. As one miner put it: "If it had been the other way round you wouldn't be able to move for TV cameras and fearful relatives would have been on telly every night of the week. MacGregor would probably have visited. These bastards make me sick. Their attitude to this incident is the same as all the lies and hate they have told about us during the strike."

This treatment by the media has only reinforced the bitterness of striking miners towards the bosses and the media itself.

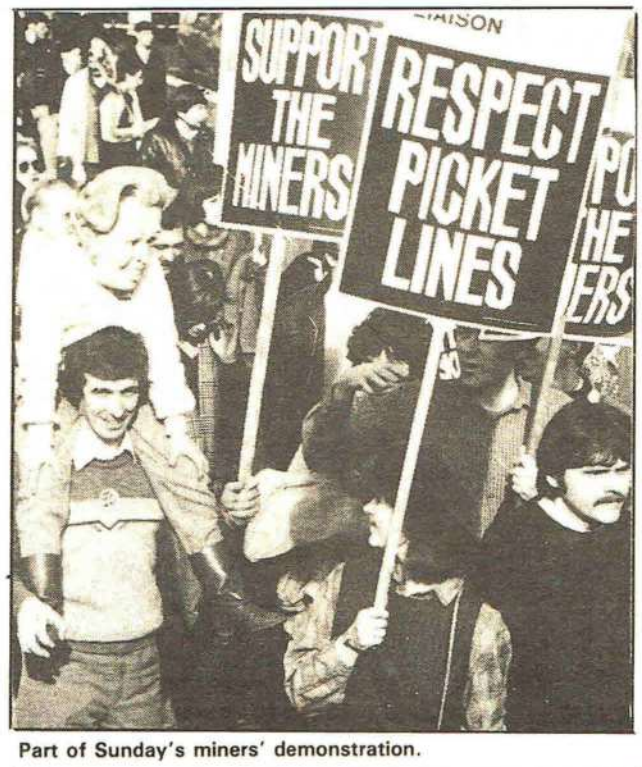
By Ronnie Stevenson

Benefits can be claimed

SINGLE STRIKING miners living with their parents can still claim rebates for housing benefits due to them from last year. Although the Tories changed the regulations in December last year stopping any further claims, they didn't take away the right to back-dated payments to cover the period up to 19 December 1984.

Local councils can give back-dated payments for benefits for up to 12 months prior to the date of the claim, in exceptional circumstances such as those "where the claimant could not reasonably have expected to make an earlier claim."

Although many councils, including Labour councils, have refused to pay these benfits pressure must be put on them by local NUM strike committees and support groups to get benefit rebates paid.



Stephano Cagnoni (Report)

Part of Sunday's miners' demonstration.

Support from Omagh

OMAGH IN Northern Ireland is a country town 70 miles west of Belfast and over 30 miles south of Derry. Working-class people there have given magnificently to help the miners. A door-to-door collection is held every week in some part of the town. Most houses contribute; many give £1 and more. As well as this, health service unions and the trades councils have contributed over £1,000.

By Anton McCabe
(Derry Labour and Trade Union Party)

Music for miners

A new LP "Shoulder to shoulder" is on sale to raise funds for the miner's strike. It features the contemporary group Test Department and the South Wales Striking Miners' Choir.

Test Department recently had a national tour organised by the Deptford and Lewisham Miners' Support Group. Members of Test Department and the choir spoke to **Richard Finnegan:**

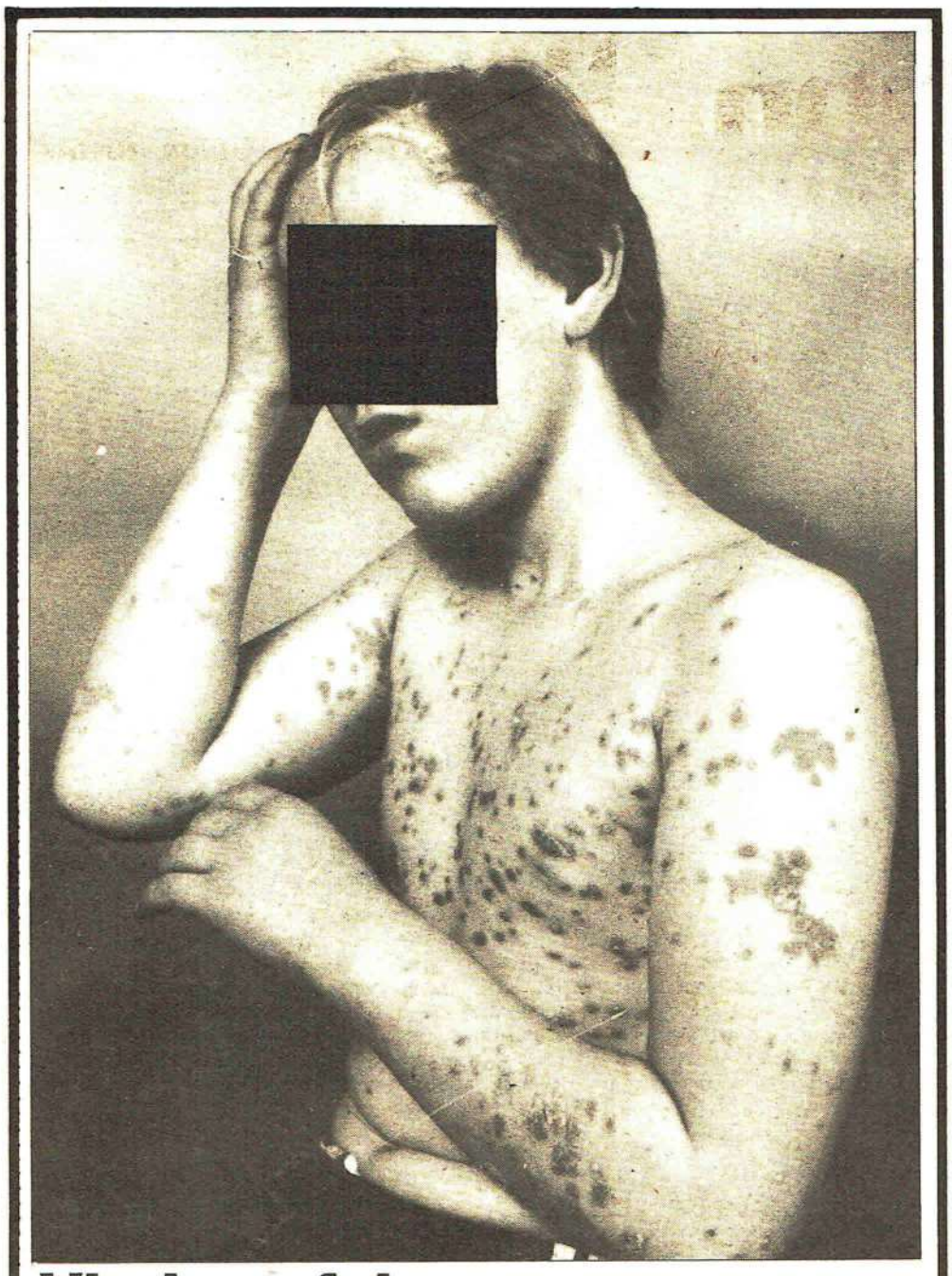
Test Dept. This wasn't just a fund raising tour. We went into the mining communities and played the music coming from them. In Liverpool we had a Yorkshire brass band, in Scotland a colliery bagpipe band and so on.

Young people who might have rejected this music as old- fashioned understood why this music came about in the first place. We wanted to break down the idea that I'm to old, or too young, to listen to this.

Most contemporary music is totally escapist, about singers' love lives, their clothes or some rubbish, it's just a product pushed by advertising. The issues raised by the miners' strike are far bigger than any egos. We want all the unemployed and other people dissaffected from politics to organise and make an effective opposition."

A member of the choir described the success of the tour: "It was a full house at every venue with £20,000 plus coming in. In Deptford there were 2,500 young people spellbound by our choir. The tour showed how much we had in common. There's a working class revolution going on out there. The strike is educating young miners how to speak, to get involved. The community is producing new poems and new songs and the tour and the record are showing people what this government and the society are about."

"Shoulder to Shoulder" By South Wales Striking Miners' Choir and Test Dept. on Some Bisarre Records MOP1. All profits to miners' fight for jobs.



Victim of harassment

YOUTH HAVE always been on the receiving end of police harassment. The young miners in particular have suffered during their momentous struggle, with indiscriminate arrests, beatings, prison and stringent bail conditions.

The free rein given to the police by the Tory government during the strike is spilling over into everyday policing. The above picture shows the result of one such action—the 12 year old boy is suffering from psoriasis, a nervous disorder, following his arrest for a petty offence and the subsequent harassment of his family.

Bought items

In March last year the boy and his six year old brother (the children of two *Militant* readers in Leicester) went to a store in the town centre. They bought many small items, but ended up with two plastic rulers unpaid for in their bag. The children both deny theft—they have never been in trouble before.

They were done for shoplifting. They were taken to the manager's office and body searched by him, and the police were called. No less than three policemen came to arrest these two dangerous criminals. They were taken to Charles Street police station and the older lad was repeatedly questioned. He says he was made to sign a paper he did not read. They also began questioning him about his father.

When the parents found out they were understandably furious, and the father phoned the store manager to complain.

Three days later, the parents say, three policemen appeared at their door, saying the father fitted the description of a man who supposedly assaulted the store manager (which according to the police happened at an indeterminate time, in one of the town's busiest streets just three minutes from the police station).

The parents say the police kicked the door which hit the wife, and the husband was arrested and held at the station for six hours. He was not allowed a solicitor, and repeatedly questioned and told if he confessed he would be charged with the lesser offence of ABH rather than GBH. He was released on bail. The parents immediately made an official complaint to the police.

Charges dropped

Then followed eight months of petty police harassment (questioned on the street, minor motoring offences, etc). It took the police three months to tell them the charges against the father had been dropped. Four months later the Director of Public Prosecutions said the complaint against the police had been dropped because of 'insufficient evidence'.

The effects of this ordeal remain however. The 12 year old, besides the nervous complaint, suffered from insomnia, believing his father's arrest was his fault. The smaller boy now sleepwalks and says no matter how desperate his situation, he will never, ever ask a policeman for help. And all for two plastic rulers.

Fight Tory

WHEN THE Tories first introduced the Youth Training Schemes, they thought the horror of mass unemployment alone would be enough to frighten young people onto YTS. Yet thousands of youth turned these schemes down, seeing them for what they were—cheap labour schemes for the bosses to exploit. So the Tories will now force youth onto the schemes.

They know their policies have no support amongst youth, so they want to batter them into line. Young people face the super-exploitation of YTS and low pay; increasing harassment as police powers grow; and the destruction of social services, especially in the education sector.

But youth are fighting back. Young workers will follow the example of the young miners and take on the Tories. Join in that fightback—support the Youth Trade Union Rights Campaign, get active with the Labour Party Young Socialists, and join with *Militant* in the fight for a socialist leadership of the labour movement.

Labour MP launches 'Youth Charter' bill on February 28



Photo: Militant

Dave Nellist MP about to address the YTURC demonstration in Liverpool in 1983.

YTS SCHEMES since their inception have been portrayed by the Tories as "imaginative", "providing good quality training", as a "bridge from school to work".

But, of course, YTS was introduced to drive down the wages of young workers, and to fiddle the dole figures.

That intention was made clear in the memorandum prepared for Thatcher by Sir John Hoskyns (now head of the Institute of Directors) which spoke of the need "to increase the differential between youth and adult wages". Since 1981, Thatcher has remorselessly continued that path.

Youth wages, relative to adult wages, have fallen by 8% for males, and 12% for females, YTS allowances are 66% of their 1979 value—robbing trainees of £13.75 a week.

Yet despite these savage cuts, youth unemployment has trebled!

On Thursday, 28 February, as part of the national lobby of Parliament, I will present a private member's bill—a YTURC charter.

It covers all aspects of trainees rights. It also says youth must not be refused benefits if they refuse to begin or complete a YTS course.

The only way such improvements could be won, and more importantly maintained, is when youth get organised—through YTURC into the Labour Party Youth Socialists—and we get rid of a system that depends on the exploitation of youth, to give profits to the rich.

By Dave Nellist MP

What the Tories will do

THE TORIES' plans will force youth onto YTS schemes working anything up to 40 hours or more for a paltry £26.25 a week. If 16-17 year olds refuse to go on these cheap labour schemes, their supplementary benefit will be cut off.

The Tories have been embarrassed that their YTS 'solution' to unemployment has been a total flop. The government's much publicised scheme to put YTS trainees in the army has been scrapped—only 1,500 places were taken up out of 5,000!

Meanwhile, the bosses are rubbing their hands with glee at the Tories making YTS compulsory. Sainsburys is a blatant example. Previously 450 YTS placements at their stores went empty—with the new legislation they have applied for 1,000 YTS placements knowing this time youth have no choice.

Part-time FE students will also be hit—over 90% of FE students receive no grant and many can only study part time by exisiting on supplementary benefit.

The YTS conscription will force them off their course. The Tories want this—they want to clear part time students out of the FE colleges to make way for their plans to take 25% of colleges out of the control of local authorities and place them under the MSC for YTS courses.

YTS sets norm for young workers' pay

THE TORIES knew the low level of YTS pay would set the 'norm' for young workers in industry. A young worker for Tyne and Wear County Council told Ed Waugh about his low wages and declining working conditions:

I started work five years ago as a labourer for the council at the Tyne Tunnel, Wallsend. Even then wages were poor, but there was a better atmosphere. But today things have changed.

We now are amongst the lowest paid workers in Tyne and Wear, and with abolition of the metropolitan counties hanging over our heads we don't know what is going on. We are all angry.

Conditions are terrible. For example, management wanted us to clean the tunnel. Its a mile long and remember the wind makes it freezing at times. We were issued with *hand* drills with buffing pads to clean it! What a waste of money. It just didn't work. After two years we 'cleaned' one side of the tunnel but it wasn't clean. It was just like painting the Forth Bridge.

I lift £68.54 on a flat week (39 hours). I must work overtime to pay the bills. In November last year the tunnel was closed for a week to be resurfaced. On top of my flat week I worked *37* hours overtime. It was hard graft. Any social life was ruled out. I didn't mind that too much but when I came came out with £114.43 I felt sickened.

I'm disgusted at the way this country is being run. What has this government done for me? I've always voted Labour but I've now taken the step of joining the Labour Party, with a few other lads from work.

MSC cover-up industrial accident rate

THE MANPOWER Services Commission has come up with a solution to the appalling record of industrial accidents on YTS—cover it up.

The South East Regional TUC has discovered an internal MSC document which instructs its employees not to disclose information on health and safety to the scheme's watchdog, the Area Manpower Boards.

The document says reports on YTS accidents should not be disclosed; even with fatalities the AMB should only be informed if the case is known to the public (ie.—the MSC can't get away with it!); statistical breakdowns of accidents should not be given; and even that the AMB should be told that comparative figures on accidents are not available—which is untrue.

The high accident rate is because these schemes have inadequate health and safety cover. Eleven youth died on the YOP schemes (the predecessor to YTS). On YTS since April 1983 there have been eight more deaths, 243 serious accidents and 2,123 minor injuries.

This latest MSC cover-up is in response to the outcry over these deaths and the campaign—spearheaded by YTURC—for adequate health and safety regulations. This campaign will continue—the Tories will not be allowed to sweep YTS deaths under the carpet.

YTS conscription



Photo: Stephano Cagnoni (Report)II

Brian Hibbitt of the Flying Pickets signs the YTURC petition outside Parliament, along with Paul Weller and Style Council and Labour MPs Dave Nellist and Michael Meacher.

THE YTURC campaign has been given an enormous boost with the backing of such people as the Flying Pickets, Smiley Culture, Madness and in particular Paul Weller of Style Council.

As a result the music press has publicised the 28 February event, with write-ups in *Melody Maker, Record Mirror, No 1* and *NME*.

In an article in *Melody Maker*, Paul Weller, president of International Youth Year, urged people to join the lobby. He also lambasted the 'complacency of the pop elite', saying more bands should back issues such as YTURC, CND and the miners:

"Imagine how much could have been raised for the miners if we had had a Band Aid done for them. The money for arms and aid for the Chilean people fighting tyranny. The media exposure for CND...

"We need the big names, the crowd pullers. And they need to do this for the sake of all the people who raised their funds in the first place...

"Money cannot bring you the eternal future. It cannot bring you a real place in history like revolution can. But money can help bring that revolution nearer."

YTURC demands—

THE YOUTH Trade Union Rights Campaign demands—

- ★ **No to industrial conscription**
- ★ **The right of 16-17 year olds to claim supplementary benefit**
- ★ **Full trade union rights and rates of pay for YTS trainees**
- ★ **A grant of £30 a week for all 16-17 year olds at school or college**
- ★ **A guaranteed job for trainees, school and college leavers**
- ★ **Full health and safety cover**
- ★ **A 35 hour week**
- ★ **No YTS places in non-union sweatshops**
- ★ **No YTS places to replace apprenticeships or real jobs**
- ★ **Victory to the miners—no pit closures and redundancies**

Join YTURC: write to 150 Walworth Road, London SE17 1JT

Tilbury youth join protest

WHOLE GROUPS of young workers have joined in YTURC's campaign and will be supporting the lobby on 28 February.

One such group is from Tilbury, Essex. Gary, Martin, Shaun and Graham work on a Community Programme and have already taken strike action in support of the miners on 11 February. They will be there on 28 February. They will be joined by their friends Jamie and Danny, who have jobs, Leon and Andy who are on the dole, and Kerry and Carmel who are at school.

They spoke to Barry Stearne and Chris Smith of Thurrock LPYS:

How did the YTS petition go in Tilbury?

Leon: It was quite good. I raised £4.50 although some of the doors I knocked at were Tories and the door was shut in my fact. But £4.50's pretty good for one road.

Gary: My response wasn't too good, I only got 60p but that was off pensioners. But I got a lot of names on the petition.

What do you think of Thatcher's Britain?

Graham: It's totally diabolical. We might as well all live in Argentina under the junta. All we have got to do now is burn the Reichstag or something!

Jamie: I'm a lucky person because I've got a job. But the industry I'm in, skilled engineering, is being starved of investment. Thatcher invests everywhere else but here. The country is being drained of resources. There's no real skills being produced. The country's being completely run into the ground. There's only going to be a few rich left, and it'll be like the 18th or 19th century again.

Do you support the miners?

Jamie: Yes. If they shut the pits down its going to destroy communities, it'll be a terrible state for everybody, young and old. Thatcher's spent £5.5 billion trying to break the miners' union all for her own ego trip. She could have spent that revitalising the pits, building up the communities again, but she won't. She's too stubborn.

Graham: I support the miners because they are the strongest union. Thatcher's out to smash them totally and then she's going to move onto the next union and so on, like a big chain reaction.

Why will you be joining the YTURC lobby on Thursday?

Julie and **Carmel:** We haven't got any choice. We are leaving school in three months so we have got to stand up for our rights.

Do you think the lobby will change Thatcher's mind?

Julie: It might not change straight away but you've got to get a lot of back-up and eventually you change the whole system. If you've got the power of the people behind you.



Youth from a Tilbury Community Programme with friends—they will be there at the YTURC lobby. (See interview—left)

Sixth suicide at 'short, sharp, shock' camp

THE DEATH toll in the Tories' short sharp shock experiment is mounting. Yet another coffin was brought out of the Glenochil 'SSS' camp in Scotland last week after 17 year old Angus Boyd became the sixth suicide at the detention centre since 1981.

Far from realising something is seriously wrong with this 'deterrent' the Tories are extending the 'YOIs' (Young Offenders Institutes) to England on 6 March.

When the Tories came to power they boasted that their 'SSS' treatment, based on the regime at Glenochil established in 1966, would cure 'delinquency'. In reality they knew their policies of mass youth unemployment would lead to an inevitable increase in crime and violence—YOPs and then YTS were designed to regiment youth into a pool of cheap labour for the bosses; YOIs would be ready to greet youth who stepped out of line.

In issue 488, *Militant* interviewed Mike, a *Militant* supporter who was sentenced to Glenochil in the late 1960s when it was first established. He described his harrowing experience:

"I saw lots of violence there, with the screws attacking the inmates who were powerless to stop them.

"But the worse thing I saw was when they drove a bloke mad." Mike described how the boy was bullied and beaten on only his second day. He also saw him in a cell: "They (the wardens) were laughing—the boy was crying and shouting. He was taken away to a hospital for the criminally insane. He just cracked up completely.

"A lot of blokes tried to make themselves ill to get out...swallowing metal polish was quite common. On guy swallowed a needle...he was charged with theft and lost his remission!

"Time after time we would say how when we got out we would really make them pay. We would plan it all—where we would go first and have a good drink and then cause some real trouble. And this is often what happened too."

Wales YTS

"JUST THREE years ago our pit was providing 30-40 school leavers with apprenticeships. Last year it declined to three. Our training centre at Tondu has been converted into one of these small business enterprises".

In backing the YTURC campaign, Ian Isaac of the South Wales NUM executive described the destruction of jobs for youth in the Welsh valleys.



Photo: Militant

Ian Isaac, South Wales NUM.

He added: "The labour movement has a duty to respond to the Tories' industrial conscription. It must come out against this reintroduction of cheap labour through the back door."

This is typical of the support we have received for our campaign in the mining villages. We have collected hundreds of names for our petition from miners, their wives, unemployed and pensioners, who have all helped finance our campaign.

Part-time FE students, who will be forced off their courses if the Tories' plans go through have also given their support. One of them, Rachel Hart from the mining village of Glyncorrwg told us: "I get £22.50 weekly supplementary allowance. Even with a concessionary bus pass, I still pay £6 fares each week, text books cost £7.10 and I pay lodge to my parents. At least I'm improving my qualifications, but if the Tories get their way even this option won't be open."

By Richard Morgan
(Chair, Wales LPYS)



Gordon Bennet writes—

YOU'VE JUST got up to go to work, and while you're trying to wash, dress and eat your breakfast at the same time, you switch on the TV to find out the latest on the miners' strike. That was your first mistake.

***Simpering Female Presenter* (SFP): Well this morning we've got the Secretary General of the United Nations Organisation and we'll be talking with him in just a moment about the great issues of the day. But first we'll take a break.**

Adverts

***SFP:* Mr Secretary, you've got a jolly interesting job stopping wars and helping all the poor starving children, and we'll be talking about that as soon as we've had our recipe for the day.**

***Male idiot with chef's hat and extremely cultivated voice:* At this time of year when we're all on the lookout for a bargain, it's always a good idea to pop out onto the estate and bag a deer. I find that not only is venison a delicious meal but you can have the leftovers in sandwiches later that day—but make sure that you tell cook to bake the bread that afternoon. It really is gorgeous.**

***SFP:* Absolutely. Mmm that looked super, didn't it Mr Secretary? Do you eat much venison? I feel so sorry for all the poor little Bambis.**

***SG:* If I could mention the famine in Ehiopia . . .**

***SFP:* That's in Africa isn't it?**

***SG:* You see the problems are immense even in relation to the most basic medicines and vaccines . . .**

***SFP:* If I could just interupt you there Mr Secretary. We'll take a break now and afterwards we'll be meeting a Harley Street doctor who knows a thing or two about vaccinations. He'll be telling Nick what precautions you need to take if you're flying off to Africa or Asia for your holidays. Back soon.**

Adverts

***SFP:* Welcome back, and if you've just joined us, in the studio we've got the Secretary General of the United Nations. He's been telling us some really fascinating things about all the starving children in India.**

***SG:* Ethiopia.**

***SFP:* Absolutely.**

***SG:* If I could move on to the question of the continued illegal occupation of Namibia . . .**

***SFP:* That's in Africa as well isn't it? Anyway we'll take a break there. Coming up we got Roland Rat, Wincy with the weather, the Green Godess, an interview with Sir Bob Geldoff, a new competition about dogs soiling the pavement—more about that later, and the Secretary General of the United Nations . . .**

AIDS - the facts behind the hysteria

THE "GAY plague" sensation headlines about death from AIDS has been in stark contrast to the media's near silence over deaths from the cold weather. Probably thousands of old people have died from cold for every AIDS death this winter.

By Dr John Dale
(Bolsover CLP)

AIDS (Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome) is a virus disease in which the body loses its defence against infection. Many bacteria and other micro-organisms normally live on the skin, mouth, throat, gut etc.

The body's normal defence prevents them from becoming a threat and growing out of control. In AIDS the defence system fails and these normally harmless organisms cause serious and often fatal infections.

How transmitted

AIDS was first identified in 1981 and the HTLV III virus was first identified as the cause in 1983. Recent research suggests that infection by the virus does not always cause AIDS. What causes the infection to produce AIDS is still unknown.

There had been 7,886 cases of AIDS in the USA by the end of last month. In Britain there had been 36 cases by February 1984 and 118 cases by the end of January 1985.

The virus appears to be transmitted in three ways—sexually, in blood, and during pregnancy from mother to baby. At present the most common method is sexual transmission amongst male homosexuals. They account for nearly 90% of sufferers.

Those most at risk (as for any sexually transmitted disease) are those who have many partners. Female partners of bi-sexual males who have AIDS are at risk. It is probable that male partners of female carriers will in time also be at risk of catching AIDS.

Drug users who inject, can catch the virus if they share a needle with someone who is infected.Until this week there was no evidence that health workers, accidently pricked with a needle from an AIDS patient were at risk. Now it has been reported that a nurse at a naval hospital got AIDS-like symptoms but subsequently recovered. It seems that normal barrier methods of nursing and laboratory precautions are adequate, although pregnant health workers should avoid working with AIDS.

The Fire Brigades Union and the National Register of Firstaiders, which represents first-aiders at work have advised their members not to give mouth-to-mouth recussitation to homosexuals. There in no evidence that AIDS has been transmitted in this way, but the virus has been found in saliva.

If the first-aider had broken skin around or in the mouth the virus could get into the body. Workers who are expected to give first aid eg. firemen, ambulance men, policemen and first-aiders at work, should demand plastic airways from their employers.

Scare stories

The scare stories of catching AIDS from beer glasses used at gay pub nights are just that—scare stories. The virus cannot live long outside the host body and there is not enough of it in what is left on beer glasses for it to be any threat.

Some of the media, notoriously the *Sun*, have whipped up an anti-homosexual hysteria and called for punitive action against the gay community. This is both wrong in principle and practice.

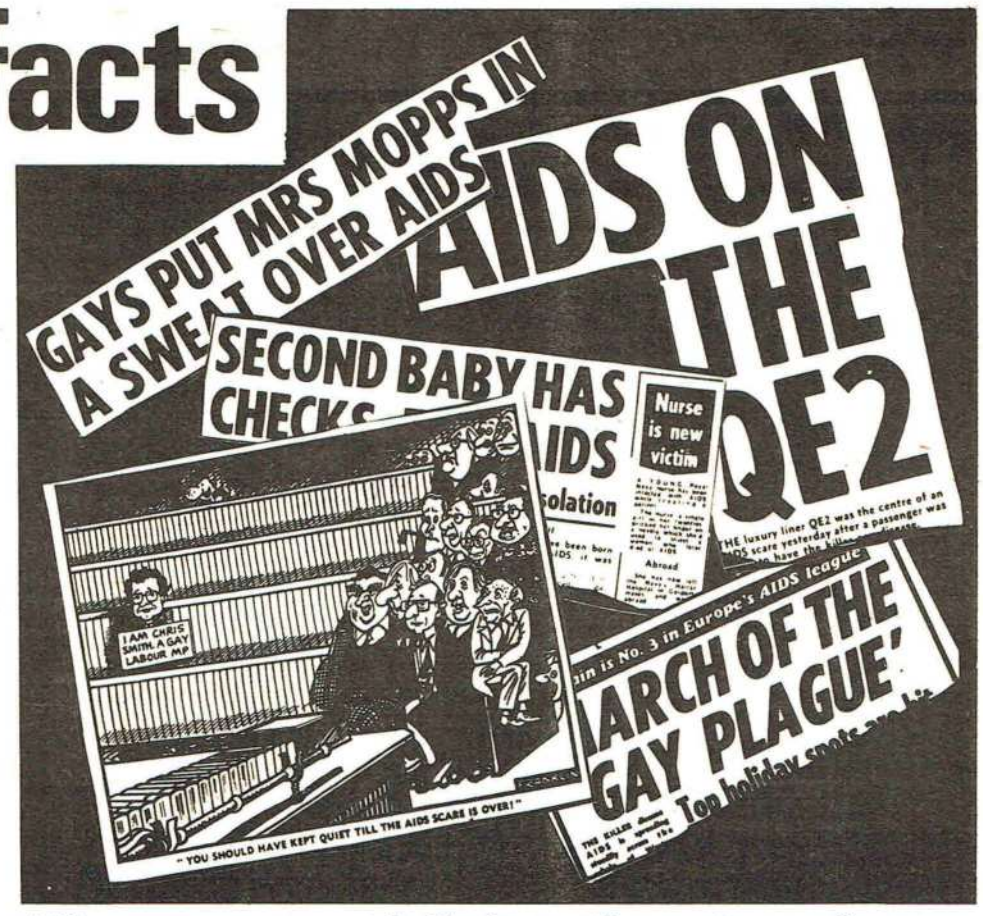
AIDS in not a judgement of God, unless all diseases are. Punitive action would only drive the gay community and the disease underground where it would not receive treatment.

What is required is a centrally funded counselling service which could give substantial help to all those who feel in danger from AIDS. Much is still not known about the disease and wild rumours can easily spread.

It has been estimated that such a councelling servece, which would give check-up and advice would cost just £15m. The government so far has refused to give a committment to spend this money. They even have the nerve to suggest that funding such a service would be at the expense of kidney dialysis machines.

Funding needed

That is some cheek from a government which has cut back the health service and consigned hundreds of kidney sufferers to premature deaths. AIDS is not a new 'black death' about to sweep the country, but it does require an adequate response from the health service and so far the government is not giving the funds necessary to meet the threat.



We've tapped you-hoo

WHAT HAVE the following in common—the housing charity Shelter, the Operation Countryman enquiry into police corruption, the Woodcraft Folk (alternative to Cubs and Brownies) and Arthur Scargill? The answer is that all of them have had their phones tapped or been kept under surveillance by the security forces.

In the furore which has followed the banning of Channel 4's programme on MI5 the government has tried to claim that intelligence gathering is limited and controlled. Utter nonsense. It is widespread and follows the prejudices of the security officers.

At MI5's headquarters in Mayfair there are personal files on 500,000 people—folders containing photographs, political briefs and activities, family, friends, jobs held, homes lived in, etc. Stored on computer R2 they give a systematic record for the security forces. In addition to them there are two million names on the Metropolitan Police C Deptartment computer at Putney, 30.5 million names on the Police National Car Computer at Hendon and the numerous Special Branch files held all over the country.

"Out of control"

Yet the government would have us believe that last year the Home Secretary asked for just 352 telephone tappings and 39 letter intercepts.

Five years ago Duncan Campbell and Nick Anning, *New Statesman*, 1 February 1980, exposed the vast resources of the government's phone tapping and mail opening operation. The national phone tapping centre was then situated at 93 Ebury Bridge Road and employed 123 people. It has moved on twice since then and expanded—one of the few growth areas of public spending under the Tories.

According to Cathy Massiter, whose revelations in the banned TV programme *20/20 Vision* led to the recent publicity: "We were violating our own rules. It seemed to be getting out of control." Massiter, who worked for MI5 for 14 years and headed the MI5 section monitoring CND, and another intelligence clerk told of how:

★ Arthur Scargill, Mick McGahey, Harriet Harman and Patricia Hewitt all had their phones tapped.

★ MI5 agents broke into the home of trade union and Communist Party member Ken Gill.

★ Trade union, peace movement and civil liberties organisations were all subject to routine infiltration and surveillance.

★ Heseltine used the material gained for party political advantage in debates with CND.

Since these latest revelations came out the government has run for cover. The programme was banned by the IBA and referred to the Director of Public Prosecutions. Thatcher of course was on holiday at the time in the USA and nothing can be said as it was all a matter of national security.

But just in case anyone thinks that it's all a matter only concerning a few left-wing activists, recall the case of Madeleine Haigh in Sutton Coldfield. In 1981 she suddenly found herself getting a succession of police visitors claiming that they were chasing up phoney mail orders. The company concerned told her it was nothing to do with them.

In the end after a long series of police lies and cover-ups the police finally admitted that it had been a Special Branch investigation. Mrs Haigh was not a member of any political party or CND. But her 'crime', which had warranted so much police time, was that she had once, 24 July 1981, written a letter to the local *Sutton Coldfield News*, opposing Cruise missles.

When the local Police Committee took up the case, when they heard about it two years and many police lies later, the Chief Constable said there was nothing that could be done as "following customary practice the relevant Special Branch files had been destroyed after six months". About as believable as all the other statements from government on the security forces this week.

By Colin Barber



(Top) Joint MI5 and intelligence and surveillance offices at 140 Gower St, WC1. (Below) MI5 HQ at Curzon House, Curzon St, W1.



Marxist pamphlet

The state—a warning to the labour movement

Articles on the police, role of the state and coup plot against Labour government. Price 90p (incl p + p) from World Socialist Books, 3/13 Hepscott Rd, London E9 5HB.

Defend jobs and services

Southwark workers organise

THE SCALE of the Tory rate-capping threat to Southwark in South London, has brought all the council unions together for the first time in a Trade Union Joint Co-ordinating Committee.

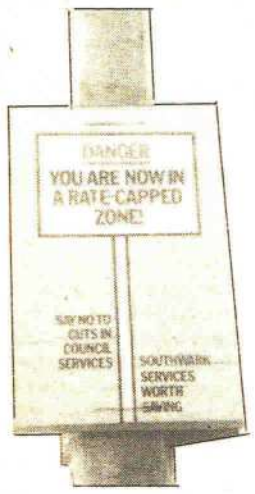
Like many other Councils there have been differences between the unions in the past, but now activists and shop stewards are co-operating to campaign and explain the issues at the workplace. The TUJCC is unequivocally pledged to fight the implementation of any cuts.



Manual workers will be out in force at the Town Hall on 7 March, Budget Day.

Dozens of meetings with council workers, tenants associations, community groups and the general public have taken place. On Tuesday 26 February a mass meeting of thousands of council workers at Lucas Gardens backed the councils stand with only one or two against.

All the council unions back the 'no rate' stand taken by the Labour Group. The Group has a majority of 44 on the Council and on 6-7 March local unions will be taking action to show their support for a policy of defying the government.



The campaign has highlighted the strengths of the local movement: the growing determination and unity of the council trade unions; the active involvement of many councillors and Labour Party members; and the developing role of the council trade unions in Labour Party affairs.

It has also shown up some weaknesses. Whilst many Labour Party members and branches have been active in the campaign from the start,

By Paul Traynor
(Peckham CLP, personal capacity)

there has been a patchy and slow response from some branches. The party menbership in the borough as a whole has not been motivated and involved as it should.

Another is that not all Labour councillors have actively campaigned for party policy. Some have made it clear that they will not "go illegal". These are a small minority, but a mass turnout of council workers, tenants and the whole community on 7 March is vital to start the campaign to support councillors prepared to defend jobs and services, and put maximum pressure on any wavering individuals.

Already many trade unionists and working class party members are impatient with what they see as the disproportionate influence within the party of a layer of members more interested in pet issues than the massive social problems of an inner city borough. Despite their undoubted sincerity they are out of touch with the concerns of the overwhelmingly working class population.

The borough should be a Labour stronghold. But although the council is overwhelmingly Labour, only one of the three constituencies has a Labour MP.

The campaign to defeat Tory ratecapping is also a golden opportunity to take the party back to where it belongs: on the estates, in the workplaces, and rooted in the local community. The active involvement of council workers in the fight against ratecapping should be the beginning of this process. NUPE, the largest council manual union, already has a growing number of active party members.

A campaign to increase the involvement of trade unionists in the party is being undertaken by the recently formed Southwark Labour Party Trade Union Committee, composed of CLP delegates from affiliated unions within the borough. This committee has quickly grown to over 50 members. It is already conducting campaigns against the drug epidemic on Southwark's estates, and against Tory attacks on the links between the trade unions and the Labour Party.

The establishment of workplace Labour Party branches is also a priority, and an encouraging start has been made.

The success of the campaign to defend council jobs and services depends on gaining support in action of council workers and the wider public.

The future success of the Labour Party depends on involving those workers in the political struggle to remove the Tory threat once and for all. There is every indication that the political will to guide the party back to its roots is a growing force in Southwark.

THE CAMPAIGN went to the football terraces last Saturday when Southwark and Lewisham Councils sponsored Millwall's game with division leaders Bradford. Anti-ratecapping hoardings were up, and leaflets were distributed before the match, won by Millwall 4-0. Councillor and impartial observer John Bryan said: "The match was a success. We are now considering sponsoring the FA cup final when Millwall play. We're heading for a double. Millwall will win the cup, and we'll beat the Tories".

Less successful the same afternoon were local club Fisher, knocked out of the FA Trophy by pit village team, Frickley. Banners and leaflets were there and the local labour movement chipped in to help Frickley with cash. A substantial donation was made to the miners by local trade unionists.


Councillor Brian Kelly, Secretary of the newly formed Southwark Labour Party Trade Union Committee—campaigning to increase trade union involvement in the Labour Party.

Jenkin threatens Liverpool takeover

ACCORDING TO the *Times*, 16 February, "in the Liverpool regional office of the Department of the Environment the adrenalin is running high at the prospect of direct rule of the city".

They may well find that their adrelain levels will have to go on a lot higher if they move in Commissioners. A meeting of 150 activists recently, representing thousands of workers on Merseyside in both public and private industry, passed an unanimous motion calling for immediate industrial action if commissioners are sent in.

The Tories may be out for revenge for last year's defeat, but as Derek Hatton told the recent meeting, Liverpool's position is stronger this year. Last year Liverpool had fought alone and had even been criticised for doing so, but this year with the involvement of the rate-capped authorities, there was a great possibility for an united campaign against the government.

By Josie Aitman

Terry Fields MP explained that because of Liverpool's victory last year many workers nationally saw it as the front line in the battle. He gave his full support to the Council and criticised those who called for Labour Councils to make "humane cuts".

Caroline Benn told the meeting that she was in Liverpool to open a Council nursery and one very important reason for defending Liverpool Council was that it was the only local authority in the country which was actually opening nurseries.

The meeting called for a massive demonstration on 7 March. On that day both Liverpool Council and Merseyside County Council will be making their budgets and both have pledged to defy the government. So far at meetings of over 4,500 local authority workers only 11 people have voted against strike action on the 7th. Tony Benn will be speaking at the Rally outside the Town Hall.

In an interview with *The Times*, 19 February, Enviroment Secretary Jenkin, says he has "the firm backing of the Cabinet to take direct action if local administration in Liverpool appeared later this year to be breaking down. There was no question of bailing out councillors". He was made to eat his words last year, and if there is a firm united struggle he can find it becomes an annual diet.

Blackburn attacks workers

ONE LABOUR council which will definitely *not* be in the vanguard of the national fight against the Tory government will be Blackburn in Lancashire.

Firstly, they have carried through a rates increase of 30%. Council leader Rod Martin admitted in the budget debate that spending would only rise by seven percent. The remaining 23% of the rate rise was the result of government cutbacks. They have been fully supported in this abject capitulation to the Tories by local Labour MP Jack Straw, who is also a national spokesman for the party on local government!

Secondly, the council has told its manual workers in the building department to accept a cut of 10% in bonus payments—or take 60 redundancies.

This Labour council is meekly doing the Tory government's dirty work for them. Forcing low-paid building workers to choose between a pay cut and selling their jobs and slapping a massive 30% on the rates is not going to win back the votes that Labour lost in Blackburn.

By John Haworth

Disciplined for backing party policy

NEWCASTLE CITY Council Labour Group voted to start serious disciplinary proceedings against Councillor David Archibald as it was alleged that he had broken Labour group's standing orders.

The heinous crime he had committed was to speak at an LPYS public meeting in favour of national and district Labour Party policy. He spoke in favour of a strategy of non compliance in refusing to increase rents and rates to compensate for government cuts in grants and setting a deficit budget to demand back the money stolen by this Tory government.

However, when asked, they were unable to state which standing order had been broken and since when has it been an offence to speak at a meeting of the labour movement in favour of Labour Party policy?

The real reason for this attack is political. This year Newcastle just escaped ratecapping, but will almost certainly be rate-capped next year and will face cuts of at least £15 million leading to the destruction of services and the loss of thousands of jobs.

The proposed disciplinary action against Dave Archibald must be seen as part of a process of weeding out any potential opposition to rate-capping and of preparing the ground to make those cuts.

By Alan Docherty
(Newcastle Central CLP)





Photo: Militant

Labour must defend jobs and s

Tories wage war on coun

LOCAL AUTHORITIES are facing a devastating crisis. They are being called upon by the Thatcher Government to preside over the wholesale destruction of services established over two generations.

By Rob Sewell

The full implementation of the Tory cuts in council spending will mean an estimated 75,000 redundancies nationally with a knock-on effect of as many as 125,000 in addition! Council workers have no alternatives but to fight.

All the gains of the past—wages, conditions, jobs and services—are being systematically whittled away. The burden of the decline of British capitalism is being placed squarely on the shoulders of working people.

But the council workers are fighting back. Their response has been to forge powerful new instruments of struggle, the Joint Shop Stewards' Committees. On 7 March, when the threatened councils meet on "Budget Day", council workers will be involved in an unprecedented campaign of leafletting, rallies and demonstrations. They are not prepared to see the Tories massacre their jobs and the vital services they provide.

Grants slashed

Part and parcel of this attack by the Thatcher Government is the slashing of public expenditure and the destruction of "wasteful" local services. The government, through its Environment Secretary, Jenkin, has slashed the grants to local authorities.

The main Rate Support Grant has been reduced from 65 pence in every pound a council spends (1975) to just over 48 pence in the pound today.

They are being prevented from taking the "easy" option of jacking up rates to compensate for the reduction in Rate Support Grant by "rate capping" laws and government financial penalties.

They are being pushed to raise rents and slash services when councils have to provide more, not less, to the growing needs of the community.

Over the last 5 years alone, the government has taken £9,000 million from local authorities. Jenkin has stated that rate-capping would "save" £400 million. The Tories are planning to cut in half the capital spending on housing in England in 1985/86, at a time of chronic housing shortages. Whereas there were 148,000 new houses built in 1975, less than 30,000 are planned this year!

But together with the cuts in Rate Support Grant have come, since 1981, harsh government spending targets and a penalty system. The Tories now estimate the needs and standard of service for each local authority—the Grant Related Expenditure Assessment. If councils spend above this target they are subject to increasing financial penalties.

Roughly, for every 1% a council spends over its target, the government will claw back nine pence in every pound the council receives in grant! (ie if you spend 10% over your target, 90 pence in every pound you receive will be taken back). In July 1984 additional harsher penalties for overspending were announced. These penalties have slashed a council's revenue and crippled its spending plans.

Liverpool City Council, although not rate-capped, faces a financial crisis due to impossible targets and Jenkin's reneging on the deal made last July. Liverpool is being told to reduce its budget by over 16% or £43 millions! Such a cut would mean a rate rise of over 200% and 6,000 redundancies.

Although only 18 councils have been officially 'rate-capped', all other authorities are in the same boat—they are in effect self rate-capped by government penalties. What authority could raise its rates by 100% or 200% to save its services? It is caught between the devil and the deep blue sea!

Services destroyed

THE TORY GOVERNMENT, using the excuse of protecting the rate-payer and reducing 'overspending' by councils, pushed the Rates Act through Parliament last June. This gave the Tories the power to set centrally expenditure targets for any council spending more than £10 million a year, and fix a legal limit on rates that can be raised to pay for spending.

As a result, 'rate-capped' authorities are being directed to slash their budgets dramatically. (18 councils were picked out for rate-capping—16 of them are Labour). Originally Hackney was asked to cut their spending by 30.2%, Brent by 19.5%, Leicester by 18.7% and Merseyside by 17.8%. Such cuts would destroy effective services in these areas completely.

Lewisham, for example, has produced facts to show the effects of rate-capping. They would have to cut £7.37 million on social services which would mean: the closure of all four day centres for the elderly, the closure of half its 40 luncheon clubs, two holiday and training centres for the disabled. Home-help hours would be cut by half!

In Southwark, the council needs to spend £131 million to keep services at their present overstretched and inadequate level. Southwark is the tenth most deprived area in the country, and yet the government estimated that it needs only £108 million—an effective cut of over £20 million just to stand still.

Since 1979 Southwark has had £100 million taken off them by the Tories—that's nearly £500 for every man, women, and child in the borough. The Tory motto is to hit hardest those Labour authorities that have the most deprived areas.



Children join the fight to save vital services.

Photo: Militant

Tory opposition

RATE-CAPPING has nevertheless not had the unanimous backing of the ruling class. Opposition from within the Tory Party has been centred around the ex-Prime Minister Heath.

These "wets" recognise the dangers of abolishing local authority autonomy: a future left Labour government could use these powers to drive Tory councils into line, and all opposition to cuts would be focused on the national government, without the odium being placed on local authorities.

The issue will be posed in sharp terms—to the Tories' disadvantage. These "wets" are not interested in saving jobs or services, but in how to best carry through the cuts in their long term interests.

Conference defied

UNLIKE THATCHER, Jenkin, and the rest of the Tory leaders who have ruthlessly defended their class interests, the leaders of our movement have run for cover.

Completely rejecting the decisions of Labour Party Conference, instead of placing themselves at the head of struggle with the Tories, they have sought "respectability" in capitulating to the Tory laws.

Neil Kinnock, Jack Cunningham and the rest of the Front Bench are repeating the false arguments of last year. The Labour leaders' advice has been for councillors to remain in office at all cost, try to minimise with "a dented shield" the Tory cuts, and remain within the law.

It is a re-run of the lack of leadership last year when Cunningham's advice was that "we should not become obsessed with Liverpool(!)...Trying to bring about confrontation is not way forward(!)...I don't think the party should advise councils up and down the country to break the law. I don't think mass defiance of the law is the route to electoral success..." He then greeted, along with the Tories and Liberals, the six Labour renegades who intended to vote against the Liverpool Labour budget as "brave and sensible" people!

At the first wiff of defiance of Tory laws, our leaders take cover—or rather criticise those who are prepared to give a lead. Incidentally, it was not the Liverpool City council that sought "confrontation", but the Tory government, who had already stolen £120 million from the City. The crisis was not created by the Labour Group, but by the imposition of staggering financial penalties by the government.

How could Liverpool have produced a "legal" budget last year—or this year for that matter? Only by breaking all their election promises and carrying out massive cuts (6,000 redundancies), slashing local services or a 220% rate rise. In other words, abject capitulation to Jenkin and the Tory government.

Our leaders have unfortunately failed to learn the rich lessons of the Liverpool struggle—that the Tories can be defeated when faced with a grass-roots movement and a firm leadership prepared to go all the way in defence of working people.

Of course, the Tories have used the choice words of our leaders with relish. A Conservative press release (15/11/84), states: "Any councillor surcharged will not be indemnified. As Labour's front bench spokesman (Cunningham) has said, "I do not think any such guarantee can be provided by the Party" "

The trade unions created the Labour Party to represent the real interests of working people, not as a vehicle for a posh parliamentary career.

Our leaders owe their positions to people who defied unjust class laws (like George Lansbury who went to jail) and sacrificed everything to build the movement.

Far from frightening away support, Liverpool City Council's defence of working people built a mass movement, culminating in the day of action on March 29 of 50,000 workers. Despite accusations of being an electoral albatross, last May, Labour won a sweeping victory in Liverpool with a further seven gains, to the eleven gains the previous May. Sixteen of these were at the Liberals' expense.

The Labour vote in Liverpool



Photo: J Smith (IFL)

ervices



Massive demonstration in defence of councils in London last January. Photo: Mark Pinder

cils

From the resolution passed at the 1984 Labour Party conference...

Conference believes that the duty of Labour councils, and the centre of their fightback, should be defence of jobs and services and of local democracy. Conference salutes the stand taken by Liverpool City Council and calls on other councils, as well as the national leadership, to take an equally unequivocal stand in defence of the working class. Conference supports any councils which are forced to break the law as a result of the Tory government's policies.

has risen from 54,000 in 1982 to 77,000 in 1983 and to over 90,000 in 1984. The turn-outs of 35%, 44% and last year a remarkable 51% reflect the heightened political consciousness of the workers of Liverpool. This is better than the national leadership's achievements in June 1983!

After all the "advice" to play it cool, Cunningham had the cheek to say after the victory in July: "The settlement is far closer to what Neil Kinnock has wanted, from day one, than anything the Militant Tendency has ever said"!!

And what do we hear today? "Labour in Parliment cannot hint at, incline toward or acquiesce in illegallity as a policy in local Government"—John Cunningham 15/11/84.

But following the national leadership's advice will in any event lead councils into illegality by failing to provide the services for people they are legally obliged to care for. In the Government's view, 28 of London's 33 borough councils are *already* overspending on social services. Government imposed cuts will put them foul of the law in terms of their mandatory duties to the disabled and other disadvantaged groups. It is a catch-22 situation.

National action

WITH THE lack of fight from the labour and trade union leaders, much attention has been focussed on the resistance of local authorities—particularly those with left leaders—in their struggle against government cuts.

The Tory onslaught on local councils, with impossible financial targets and draconian penalties, has been crowned by the new rate-capping laws. Every loop-hole that was seen as a possible escape by councils has been completely sealed up. The stark choice before Labour authorities is either an all-out fight with the government along the lines of Liverpool or abject capitulation to Tory demands for mass redundancies and savage cuts. There is no middle road.

In the past, certain left councils adopted the 'easy' option to cuts in services by forcing up the rates to compensate for Tory cuts in the Rate Support Grant. This was no defence. The working class was being asked to pay in another form for the Tory attacks. However, penalties and rate-capping have blocked that course of action completely.

Various forms of struggle have been raised on the left to answer the Tory attack: from mass resignation of councillors to the creation of a Royal Commission! But each strategy is seen as a "device" to get around the problem. Each fails to recognise the central point—that the Tory government fears only one thing, mass protest and mass industrial action.

The united front of 26 authorities either facing rate-capping or severe financial crisis has adopted the policy of refusing to set a rate on 7 March. Liverpool Council has correctly participated in this joint approach, but still again correctly, advocates last year's successful position of no rate rise to compensate for Tory cuts and mobilising the people of Liverpool in its defence.

While the "no rate" tactic has served to bring together local authorities up until budget day, it fails to answer the problem of what must be done **after** 7 March.

A group of left council leaders have stated that: "The refusal to levy a rate will unite each council in the same action, at the same time... The Tory government will have to evict every Labour councillor from town and county halls..." But the latter part is clearly not the case.

Firstly, there are rumblings that many of those authorities due to refuse to set a rate will in fact capitulate. Their struggle is seen as no more than a gesture.

Secondly, the government will attempt to split up those councils that stick to their position. Even now Jenkin is busy dangling concessions to four rate-capped authorities, offering to raise their rate limit, while at the same time giving the Liverpool City Council two weeks to drastically slash its housing programme.

He has threatened to veto contracts unless the council agrees to cut capital spending and keep within government guidelines.

The only reason why Liverpool lasted until July of last year without setting a rate was the continued payment of the Rate Support Grant throughout that period. Jenkin was prepared to do it out of fear of an unprecedented situation, involving possible bankruptcy, and the mass protests that were taking place throughout the city. the city.

The government has learned from last year's defeat and has made plans to let council run out of money and then put commissioners into Liverpool using the District Auditor to surcharge and disqualify councillors for "wilful misconduct". The government believes if it can break Liverpool it will break the resistance of all authorities.

The *Financial Times*, 4 January, explained that Eric Sorensen from the Department of the Environment was to co-ordinate Liverpool City with a team of commissioners. But this will not be plain sailing! Even Jenkin's own advisors can clearly see the problems. Who is to operate the council? Who is to staff its workings? Who is to carry out its dictates?

The only successful fight against the government is national co-ordinated industrial action and protest involving the whole labour movement. Whatever certain councillors do—and they must be pressurised to fight—there is no escape for the 75,000 council workers who face redundancy. In Liverpool, they played a key role in mobilising support in private industry in the council's defence.

It was this mass campaign of action that led the Tories to grant concessions. That is why after 7 March, councils in the firing line must taken the "Liverpool Road" and link up nationally to ensure the defeat of the Tory attacks.

The greatest lesson, however from the Liverpool experience is that it was the crisis of capitalism that was the root of the crisis in local government. Without the end of this rotten system, then councils will be faced with a repeat of the attacks every year. The case for socialism has never been greater.

Liverpool's example

LAST YEAR Liverpool was facing a devastating crisis, due to 10 years of disastrous Tory/Liberal rule. This true blue Tory/Liberal alliance enthusiastically carried out the cuts demanded by the government. When Labour took control in 1983 the city was nearly bankrupt.

During that period 4,500 council jobs had been destroyed, the house-building programme had been wrecked and services slashed to the bone. The Rate Support Grant was used not to improve services but to keep rates down, while services were seriously cut back.

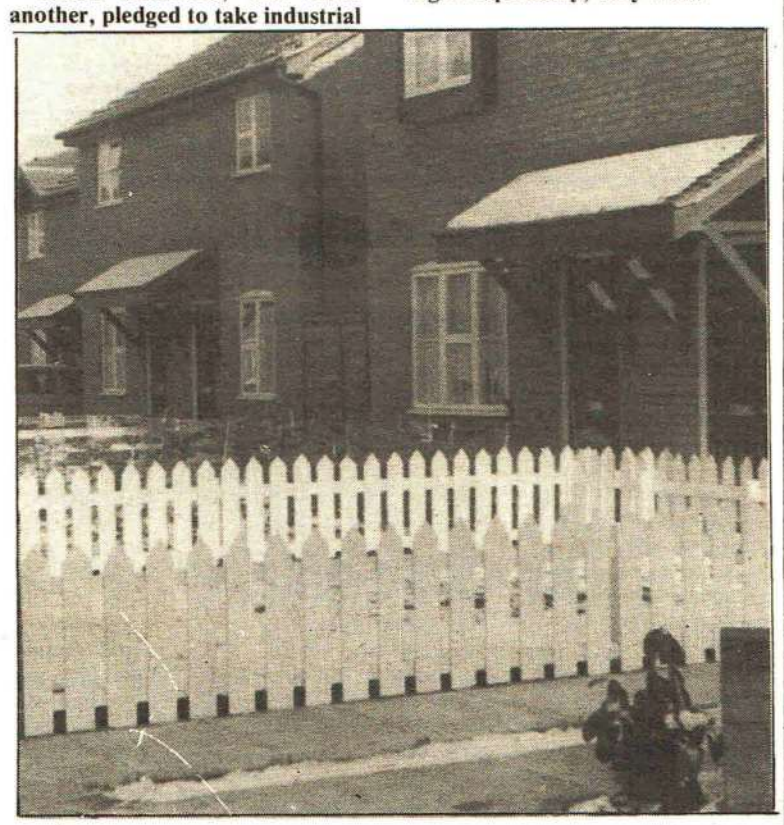
A mass campaign was undertaken by the District Labour Party and Labour Council to explain the issues to the people and galvanise active support. Hundreds of meetings were held at factory gates and on the estates to campaign for a day of action on 19 November, 1983 which resuted in 35,000 workers taking action.

In February last year, the campaign was widened and a mass rally of 1,700 trade union representatives was held at the St George's Hall.

Union branches, one after another, pledged to take industrial action on 24 March—budget day—in support of the "illegal budget". This culminated in one of the largest city-wide strikes in British history, with 50,000 at the march and rally. The mood generated was absolutely electric. "Leadership at last" was the feeling of the majority!

Despite all the threats from the Tory government of putting in commissioners, and lack of support from the Labour leaders, the mass campaign in Liverpool pushed Jenkin into granting huge concessions, enabling the council to implement its policies to defend and improve its services with a small rate rise.

As Tony Benn explained: "I must pay tribute to Liverpool who were denounced by some as being 'way out of step'. The city council fought a magnificent fight, extended their support in Liverpool, accepted a notable gain which they would not have got without such a fight and now will be joined by other councils in the firing line, with rate-capping coming into effect. In Liverpool, where the 'Militants' were accused of behaving irresponsibly, they won."



Some of the 2,268 new council homes built or started by Liverpool City Council since Labour took over. Photo: Dave Sinclair

USA, Bolivia, New Zealand, Australia, Poland.

A year after Greyhound

From John Reimann in San Francisco.

IT IS almost a year and a half since Greyhound bus workers were forced out on a nation-wide strike. Although the strike did not win, due to the failures of the leadership, the battles continue and lessons have most definitely been learned.

The level of class consciousness and hatred of the Greyhound bosses is enormous. One Greyhound driver tells the following stories.

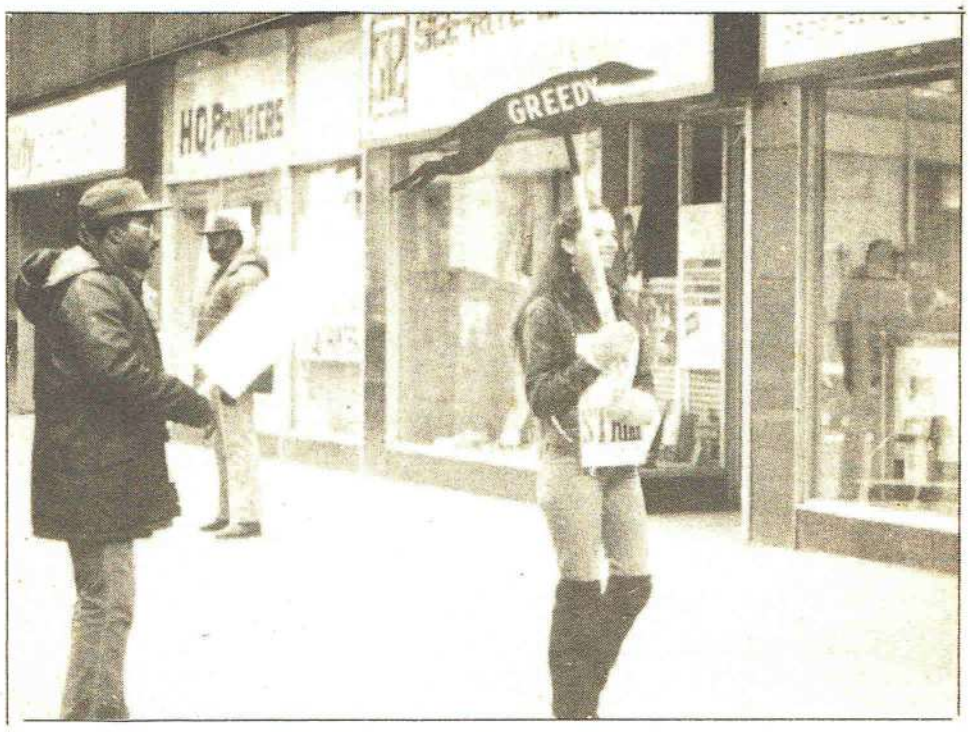
One driver, finding a former scab trying to ride his bus back to his original depot, refused to start the bus. He went back to where the scab was sitting and told him to get off. The scab refused, saying he had a right to ride the bus. The driver told him that according to company regulations he had a right to put off the bus anybody who upset him or made him too nervous to drive.



Police attack Greyhound pickets in Boston 1983.

Still the scab refused to move. The driver went back to his driver's seat, took up the bus's microphone, and explained to the passengers that there was a scab from his former strike on the bus and he was too upset to drive with him aboard.

A sixty-five year-old lady sitting next to the scab told him to get off and called him a dirty scab. Another man in the back called out: "I'm from New York and I've been through the same thing. If you want I'll put the motherf...er off." Eventually, the scab had to leave with his head hanging low.



Demonstrations and protests took place throughout the USA.

Another driver, so disgusted with the harassment of management, made plans to quit. He took a bus, headed for Fresno, hundreds of miles from San Francisco. With friends following him in a car, he pulled the bus off the road in the middle of nowhere and announced to the passengers, "that's it; this is as far as this bus goes. I'm quitting," walked off the bus and rode off.

Another scab left his documents and clean clothes which he needed for an overnight trip by the drivers' room while he went into management's office. When he came out an hour later, somebody had taken his brief case into the bathroom and brought it back out with a rather smelly "deposit" inside it!

Another scab was cursed out in the drivers' room, walked out of the room and fell down with a heart attack. Not one driver would move to help, except one who knelt beside him and whispered in his ear: "I wouldn't lift a finger to help you, you dirty scab."

These are just a few examples of the hatred and rage which is being built up in the bowels of the American working class, a rage which in the future will burst out in the most fantastic explosion American history has ever seen.

Bolivia's third biggest import—money.

A COURIER stumbles into *Banco Boliviano Americano* in La Paz bearing a huge bag of money on his back. He announces that the sack contains 32 million pesos and a teller slaps a note on to that effect.

"We don't bother counting the money any more" explains a loan officer, "we take the client's word for what's in the bag". The reason for this unusual behaviour (which you wouldn't find in your local Nat West) is Bolivia's enormous inflation.

By Keith Whitehead

Prices rose by 80% in January alone. The *Wall Street Journal*, looking on the gloomy side said that if they carried on like that, it would mean an annual inflation of 116,000%. Most likely it won't get that bad but it's bad enough already. Planeloads of printed currency are flown in from West Germany and Britain twice a week, it is the country's third biggest import.

Price changes are notified hourly by word of mouth. The common 1,000 peso bill cost more to print than it buys, it will get you a tea bag. Barter is becoming common and currency exchange is done by money vendors on the streets. It will get no better after the government's anti-inflation plan which devalues the peso and puts prices of basic foods up by as much as 400%.

Commodities

The crisis is largely due to collapse of commodity prices, particularly that of tin, during the worldwide capitalist recession, made worse when the oil reserves the country's leaders thought they had, didn't materialise.

Despite large wage rises in money terms, hyperinflation means workers have lost out. Prices are not being hiked up by wages; wages are trying desperately to keep up with prices.

Trade unions are calling for a general strike. In one recent week, workers in 34 factories took 180 business executives hostage in wage disputes. There were 35 days of general strikes in 1984.

There is no shortage of fight and militancy from one of the bravest working classes in the world. They face acute poverty and frequent vicious military coups with great determination. What is needed now is action to change the system which is making life impossible in Bolivia.



A demonstration by Bolivian miners in the '70s one of the most militant sections of workers in the world.

Lange worries Reagan

IT'S NOT often New Zealand gets into the world news. The recent decision by the Labor government of David Lange to refuse port facilities to ships carrying nuclear weapons or powered by nuclear reactors, has been lambasted by the press from Auckland to Washington.

The ban, aimed mainly at the US Navy, will affect ANZUS (the military alliance of USA, Australia and New Zealand) manouevres later this year. The US administration fears New Zealand's action may encourage some Western European countries to oppose deployment of American nuclear missiles in Europe.

US diplomatic pressure on New Zealand to end the ban has led to the cancellation of two military exercises and stopped top level intelligence-sharing between the two states. More ominously, Reagan has hinted at sanctions against New Zealand's exports to the US.

The New Zealand economy is based on the export of agricultural commodities. With the price of grain and wool plummeting due to 'an over-supplied world market', the loss of the huge US market would spell disaster. Already foreign debt is US$1.4bn or US$3,800 for every man, woman and child, $252 higher than last year. Inflation has doubled in six months and the social contract with the unions is ripping apart.

With Lange carrying out a monetarist policy of counter-reform, the nuclear ban is widely seen as a sop to the lefts in his Labor Party. Significantly, Lange has refused pressure to leave ANZUS. "Don't get sucked in by my decision; we are committed to western values and to the US", he said recently.

The USA's problems in the region worsened this month when Australia refused to cooperate with MX tests in the Tasman Sea. Labor Prime Minister Bob Hawke, who originally supported the tests, was forced to do a complete U-turn due to angry reaction from rank and file Labor Party members.

The USA is anxious about any blows to its power and influence in the Pacific region. The area is becoming increasingly important to world capitalism. More trade takes place across the Pacific now than across the Atlantic. Four wide bodied jets cross the Pacific to every three that cross the Atlantic. In the year 2000, one third of all 'super cities' will be on the Pacific Rim.

US imperialism has been pushed out of Vietnam, Laos and Kampuchea—Reagan wants to ensure there are no more defeats in this crucial area.

By Stephen Murphy

"Fewer tears, more determination"

THE MURDER of Popieluszko has become a focal point for the anger of the Polish working masses against the bureaucracy. Far from being a deterrent to oppositionists it has spurred them on.

There is a new mood now, much better than in the last two years. At the shrines for Popieluszko there are big streamers from *Solidarnosc* groups in different factories. At his grave in Warsaw there are usually queues of people, several hundred metres long, with lots of trade union banners. There has even been a report of a banner from Hungary.

Warsaw University is decked with opposition posters. The bureaucracy have been forced to allow and exhibition of Mleczko, a caricaturist who throws dirt at the bureaucracy. The police have their tails between their legs. Amongst the mass of working people there is plenty of courage and will to fight. The balance of forces is changing. There are fewer tears and more determination.

The low mark is behind, and the anger is growing. There are a lot more goods in the shops now, but prices go higher and higher. Of course large sections of workers are still tired of fighting and demoralised. Strikes in 1985 are possible, but still mainly as isolated actions and without the same effect as in summer 1980. Sections of advanced workers who are still willing to fight are first looking for a clear perspective for their fight. They don't want to repeat the past.

Of course, another factor in a new development of the movement could be big mistakes by the bureaucracy, this is entirely possible as revealed by the murder of Popieluszko, which in itself shows big splits inside the ruling caste.

Unfortunately the more or less organised opposition is mainly controlled by academics or workers who have come under strong pressure from intellectuals. The working class is secretly active on the factory floor, and this is what gives the bureaucrats sleepless nights, but in the political discussion circles away from the factory the confuused and even stupid ideas of the acaademics predominate. This is a barrier to reawakening the working class struggle.

The advanced workers of Poland will have to thrash out a new programme for the movement, born of their own experience of struggle and embracing their revolutionary traditions of 1956, 1970 and 1980, implicit in which were all the demands for political revolution to overthrow the bureaucracy and spread the revolution throughout the Eastern Bloc

By Ela Waldorff

Jails and bullets won't stop opposition growing

IF SOUTH Africa's vicious racist regime mobilised all its conscripts, the country would have one soldier for every 50 of the black population.

With its high technology armaments imported regardless of the UN embargo, it has sent armed bandits into Angola and Mozambique to try to undermine the government there, despite the Nkomati agreement, which the apartheid regime said heralded a new era of "good neighbourly relations".

But South Africa's rulers will be increasingly alarmed at the mood of its own population. The heroic struggles particularly of the black working class have already shown a revolutionary mood which is now better organised and more politically aware than for decades.

The first answer of the Pretoria government to its internal problems has been repression. Last week 13 members of the leadership of the opposition United Democratic Front (UDF) were arrested; six are to face charges of high treason which could carry the death penalty.

In a sickening display of hypocrisy, the government had just made a propaganda "offer" to release Nelson Mandela, in jail for over 20 years, if he "renounced violence". The whole apartheid regime is of course based on extreme violence as the whole world could see in their attacks on last year's miners' strike and on the boycott organisers in the fake elections for Indian and "coloureds" which the UDF had been involved in.

On 15 February, about 100 black miners were injured when the police tried to stop picketing in a strike of 12,000 miners at East Driefontein gold mine. They were protesting at atrocious living conditions (see *Militant* 11 January and 18 January) and assaults by white supervisors. Another mine was brought to a standstill by a dispute the same week.

The regime also faced opposition in Crossroads shanty town near Cape Town. Five blacks were killed after police opened fire on protests against the threat of forced removal to the new township of Khayalitsha.

The government hope to behead the opposition movement. But the massive involvement of the youth and community organisations, and the strength of the independent non-racial unions have given the opposition far deeper roots than before. If the powerful working class take the leadership of the mass movement, all Pretoria's weapons will not save apartheid, or capitalism in South Africa.

Protests at Khomeini's rule



BITING WINDS, sleet and snow could not deter around a thousand Iranians, mainly students in Britain, from demonstrating their hatred for Khomeini's brutal regime in London on 8 February. Significantly, a contingent of Northumberland NUM members on the march showed workers' willingness to support international issues.

The demonstration was one of many in major European and American cities to commemorate two resistance leaders killed by Khomeini's guards and draw attention to the horrific treatment of workers opposed to his rule. So far over 40,000 people have been murdered and another 120,000 thrown into medieval prisons and subject to the most barbaric torture.

LETTERS

Militant welcomes letters from readers. Send your views, comments or criticism. Write to *Militant* 3/13 Hepscott Road, London. E9 5HB

Tipping the scales of Justice

Dear Comrades,

It was interesting to learn that the working miner that had been attacked by strikers with paint stripper in Co. Durham last year, had actually rigged the whole thing up himself. His excuse was that he wanted to spark off a return to work by making a martyr of himself.

What disgusted me was the fine he received; for lying and wasting 66 hours of police time, he was fined £150 and £20 costs.

Compare this against my so-called 'crime'. I was arrested on the morning that John Cunningham Snr. led a return to work at Ellington Colliery. I had committed the terrible crime of standing with the miners in defence of their jobs and communities and was deliberately picked out as being a Young Socialist. I say I was picked out because a miner's wife asked a policeman who had been arrested and his reply was "the Young Socialists lad."

I was charged with 'breach of the peace' and wasted what must have been one hour of police time and for that I was fined £150 and £40 costs. Being unemployed I am finding it very difficult to pay the fine, but that didn't make any difference to HM courts. It obviously costs more to be loyal to your class than to be loyal to the ruling class, but that won't stop me from standing with my class no matter what the penalty is.

Yours fraternally
Steve Brown
Ashington
Northumberland

Return to the 'bad old days'

Dear Comrades,

A story from the 1930's: A miner went for his tallies to start work. He was told by the time-keeper that he couldn't start and he had to wait until the manager arrived. Hours later the manager turned up "Why can't I start work?" asked the miner. What was the reason? Because the manager had seen him walking down the street on Sunday without a tie! As a punishment the miner wasn't allowed to work that day.

That was told by a retired miner from Cresswell pit. If we let the Coal Board and the Tories have their way we'll return to those days of the coal owners pushing us around.

Yours fraternally
Ian Whyles
Whitwell NUM, North Derbyshire

Making life difficult

Dear Comrades,

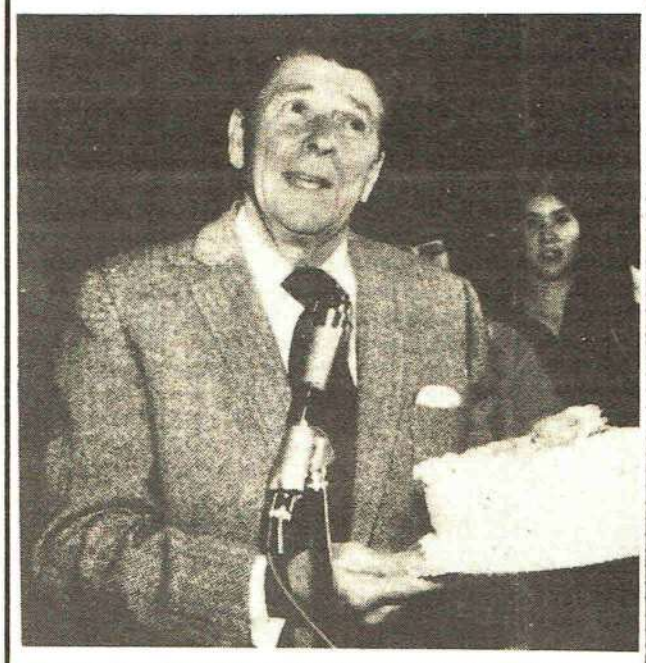
The management in the Health Service are cracking down over everything. Recently a driver with 25 years unblemished service was given a verbal warning for tooting his horn before 7am.

He was trying to pick up a nurse to take her to work and wanted to attract her attention, rather than go without her and then having to do an 18 mile round trip later to get her.

As far as I can see the management did it because they want to cut down ancilliary staff and are using any methods they like to make life difficult.

Yours fraternally
J Talbot
NUPE shop steward
(personal capacity)

Reagan cuts the cake



Ronnie cuts the cake to give more to arms spending.

Dear Comrades,

Surprisingly enough, after spending millions of dollars on his recent election circus the Great Ronaldo is having difficulty balancing his budget.

With a deficit of a mere $222 billion he has decided to increase his spending on arms by $29 billion. And how does he propose to compensate for such expenditure? By cutting the already pitiful amounts he spends on domestic services even further.

These include cuts in health and education (which includes school meals, student loans and Medicare, the health programme for the elderly); cuts in pensions, and grants to the environment, and in Foreign aid (when more are starving than at any other time). And a 5% wage cut for those in federal employment.

Mr Reagan feels he has his priorities right. More spending on arms at the expense of the underprivileged. His election slogan was 'You ain't seen nothin' yet', the poor of the USA and the Third World have seen nothin' but nothin' for too long.

Yours fraternally
Gary Quinn
Broadgreen
Liverpool

Chauvinist interview

Dear Comrades,

After being made redundant after only 6 months, I thought I may as well go on a YTS clerical skills course, It's the only way I'm ever going to learn anything useful.

Imagine my dismay when I went for interview. The manager after asking about my experience as a typist (practically nil) decided his status as a boss qualified him to ask about "other" experiences – nudge, nudge, wink, wink, that sort of thing.

I was absolutely appalled. I'm no women's libber, but that kind of mentality really stinks.

When I mentioned union codes of practise against sexual harassment he said: 'Thats OK, the shop steward is a bloke here, anyway.'

What is an unemployed woman supposed to do, stay on the dole or put up with chauvinist creeps?

Yours fraternally
Susannah Blant
Leicester

Not so free society

Dear *Militant*,

In aid of a collection at a recent miners' rally I had a brainstorm and decided to ask the coppers for a donation.

Not surprisingly they refused, but a discussion followed, and eventually the subject moved to scabs.

"They've got a right to work" they claimed.

"But not to sell the jobs of others." I replied.

"They're entitled to their own opinion."

"Sure, but not to stab their fellow workers in the back." I answered.

"Well, it's a free society." One of them proudly announced.

At this point a police inspector walked over and ordered the coppers: "This discussion will go no further, stop it."

Gary Hollands
Southampton LPYS

TUC Youth conference

Dear *Militant*,

I was horrified with TUC youth conference for two reasons. Firstly, they tried to refuse us in because we were selling *Militant* outside their doors at Congress House. Secondly, they refused us a vote on the documents concerned. If you call this a conference, well, I wouldn't call it a conference at all.

Our comrades called for a vote of 'no confidence' in the acting committee.

I have a confession to make, I used to be a member of the Young Tories. Now I'm a member of the Mid-Kent LPYS and member of USDAW.

With the right in power the young have no future but with a left-wing in power the future of the young can only show an improvement.

Yours hopefully
Michael Jackson
Maidstone, Kent

Land of 'hope' and 'Glory'?

Dear Comrades,

During the England-France rugby international, the high class catering company I work for had the honour of serving 300 guests of big-business companies. Whilst the striking miners were eating in soup kitchens a sweep-stake took place to see who would win £100 by amongst other things 'swilling' half a bottle of brandy first.

As these respectable businessmen became the 'worse for wear' I and the rest of the porters (dish-clearers) were treated to a rousing rendition of 'Land of Hope and Glory'. (Maybe for them it is.)

Yours fraternally
Paul Davis
Brentford and Isleworth LPYS

National Organisation of Labour Students annual conference

NOLS and the Student Union:

The tasks ahead

THE PRESENT battles of the student movement have exposed the weakness of the National Union of Students' Labour leadership.

The national leadership has failed to capitalise on the opportunities provided by the miners strike to orientate students towards the labour movement.

By Lesley Smirke
(President, Liverpool Central College Labour Club)

The union's NOLS leadership has refused to campaign for NUS affiliation to the TUC. NUS President Phil Woolas has argued that NUS is not a trade union but an educational pressure group. This approach has meant that despite enthusiastic mass protest action, NUS concentrated on lobbying back-bench Tory MPs, in an attempt to create a "new climate of opinion in Westminster". The leadership has even produced a "handy pull-out guide for lobbying your MP" which gives the advice "first buy your MP a meal"!

Following the November 30 demonstration the Tories were forced to do a U-turn on proposals to introduce means tested tuition fees, as a first step towards the introduction of "funding other than the state" (Keith Joseph) for education.

While the mass protests aided in making the Tories back down, the main factor for the Tories' U-turn was the miners strike, as they concentrated in their main struggle against the miners. The Tory leadership did not want a major split in their ranks (the proposals would have hit mainly middle class families and Tory MPs protested to Joseph, fearing a backlash amongst Tory voters).

The Tory climbdown led to £11 million's worth of reforms. But rather than stepping up the action to pursue the rest of the NUS 'New Deal' package of reforms, the leadership diffused the action. The emphasis was switched to local demonstrations and a proposed rent strike was abandoned.

Recently Phil Woolas told Liverpool Central College students "I do not believe that the New Deal is likely to be entirely won under this government". This lack of confidence reflects the lack of strategy of the present leadership.

Militant supporters have long argued that reforms can be won if students build effective links with rank and file trade unionists, particularly those in the public sector.

Such an alliance, drawing together millions of workers and fighting on a programme of opposition to all public sector cuts, would have enormous power.

Already public sector unions see the need for unity. Local authority manual workers (numbering 900,000) and 500,000 teachers have considered joint action over pay. In the fight against rate capping, the Liverpool council Joint Shop Stewards Committee and the London Bridge organisation have seen the need for joint action. NUS, representing 1.2 million students must play a role in initiating this development.

However, the NUS leaders must learn the lessons of the 'Education Alliance' of the late 1970's, set up under the influence of the Communist Party. This was an alliance at the top, between trade union leaders and the NUS leadership. A public sector alliance needs to be based around rank and file trade unionists.



In its report to conference the NOLS leaders have described the South African Labour Education Project as a "white, middle class organisation". This claim is bizarre when you consider the class background of members of SALEP, such as Nimrod Sejake, pictured above. In the 1950's Nimrod was an organiser and strike leader for the Steel and Metal Workers Union, as well as secretary of the Jabavu branch of the African National Congress. He has played a leading role in fighting the apartheid regime and was among the 156 Congress members arrested in the treason trials of 1956. He now lives in exile. If the NOLS leadership has such an aversion towards the 'white middle class' they should look in the mirror before they start criticising battle hardened South African class fighters of Nimrod Sejake's calibre.

Students can be linked to the labour movement at a local level by the formation of Joint Campus Trade Union Committees, similar to the one at Portsmouth Poly.

In particular the Broad Lefts within the unions have shown themselves as the best fighters to democratise the trade unions and transform the TUC into an organisation which can best represent the interests of the working class. The NUS must use its resources to link up with the Broad Lefts in the colleges.

If the NUS with a Labour leadership were to adopt such a programme then the 'New Deal' could be achievable, and the Tory government's attacks on education fought off. However, in order to carry this programme through, NOLS must have a Marxist leadership that supports this programme—the task of this conference must be to elect such a leadership.

Students move in to action

THIS YEAR'S annual conference of the National Organisation of Labour Students marks the anniversary of the miners' strike.

The past year of momentous struggle has shown the pessimists and cynics in the movement that the organised working class remains the most powerful force in society.

By Simon Kaplan
(Brunel University Labour Club)

The strike has also shown the potential for winning students to the side of the labour movement. Throughout the country students have demonstrated enormous goodwill towards the miners, through the college Labour Clubs and Miners Support Groups. For example 800 recently heard Peter Heathfield, general secretary of the NUM, speak at Liverpool University.

But the strike has also raised their consciousness, and confidence, witnessed by the biggest movement of students into political action since the early 1970's. It is estimated that over 150,000 students joined demonstrations, occupations and protests around the country on the grants issue on November 21. The protests continued on November 28 when 30,000 took to the streets, many battling with police in London and Glasgow.

Throughout the country, students have shown determination to defend education against Tory cutbacks. The campaign at Portsmouth Polytechnic has been a marvellous example.

Nor has this action been limited to economic issues. North London Poly students have waged a 10 month campaign to drive out the National Front student organiser, Patrick Harrington.

This fightback will continue. Education is facing a massive onslaught by the Tory government. In particular the Further Education sector, already the poorest section of education, will suffer through rate capping and the Tories' YTS plans (see page 4).

Neither has higher education escaped the Tory axe. In a letter to University Vice Chancellors, Keith Joseph asked what the effect of a 2% cut in university spending over the next five years would be. They explained it would mean the closure of four or five universities. Just maintaining current funding levels would lead to the closure of two universities.

Grants have taken a hammering. In real terms grants have lost 51% of their real value since 1963. The average HE student has just £9 disposable income. Recently the minimum award of £205 was abolished, with 50,000 students losing out.

Students have over the past year shown their willingness to take on the Tories. They must now fight for a clear sighted leadership capable of taking the student movement forward in the coming struggles.



One of the 180 arrests on the NUS demonstration against grant cuts on November 28. Photo: Andrew Wiard (Report)

Portsmouth Poly—labour movement links can win

STUDENTS AT Portsmouth Polytechnic are set to force £64,000's worth of reforms from the governors after a three month battle.

The Poly Student Union fought threats of a rent rise and extra charges on equipment essential for courses, with an occupation, a rent strike and a national demonstration.

On March 7 a governors' working party will recommend to a full meeting of the governors that many of the proposed extra charges should be dropped and next year's Hall fee increase will be limited to a 3% rise (instead of the 9.2% proposed).

The battle is not over however, and the threat of a £16,000 fine still hangs over the union.

Campus unions

Throughout the campaign the Labour Club and *Militant* supporters played a major role in making sure campus workers were involved through the Joint Campus Trade Union Committee. This liaison with the organised labour movement, along with the participation of hundreds of students, ensured the campaign's success. There was mass support for the demonstrations, and emergency meetings of staff unions, the largest since the 1960s, gave total support to the students' occupation, and non-compliance with the governors' attempts to close down the college.

The growing support for the call for a 24 hour strike by all college unions also pressurised the governors into backing down. Clearly they fear this development of joint action between students and campus workers, as it seriously hinders their future plans to run down the poly with course closure and job losses.

Fine threat

However, the fine threat is still to be fought. If the fine goes ahead it will encourage other college authorities to use this as a legitimate means of disciplining militant student unions.

This dispute has shown the need for a strong national union, linked to the labour movement, witn a fighting leadership. With the Tories plans to privatise education, and reduce spending through rate-capping, then victories won at a local level will be overturned if not consolidated nationally.

Unfortunately the NUS leadership doesn't meet this criteria. Discontent with the leadership was displayed at the national demonstration in Portsmouth on January 23, when Phil Woolas was booed because of the failure of the NUS to build support for the demonstration.

Students at Portsmouth will continue to call for national support to overturn to fine. The Labour leadership of NUS must respond.

By Heiko Khoo
(Portsmouth Poly Labour Club)

Liverpool University rent strike

LIVERPOOL UNIVERSITY students are at present involved in a rent strike as part of a campaign to regain a £50,000 cut from the Student Union budget.

The £50,000 was lost due to cutbacks in 1981—one of the Halls of Residence has been forced to close and jobs at the university lost.

Last year, four Labour Club members were elected to the Student Union on a 'no cuts' programme. As a result of a mass lobby of the university's finance committee, £28,000 was returned to the union. At the lobby a petition signed by all the campus trade union shop stewards was handed to the authorities. Throughout the campaign links have been developed with the campus unions.

With further threats to catering jobs and a proposed reduction of security staff in the Hall of Residence, there is a growing recognition that unity of campus workers and students is essential to resist cutbacks.

The campaign is continuing with myself and fellow *Militant* supporter Tony McMahan standing for election to the Students Union on a no cuts programme.

By Jackie Bates
(Liverpool University Labour Club)

SALEP Publications

New broadsheet—'Build direct links with SA mineworkers': Full report of striking miner Roy Jones' visit to South African NUM. Price 20p (+15p p&p) from SALEP, 28 Martello Road, London E8 3PE.

FIGHTING FUND

This week £2,524

Area	Received	% of target achieved	Target
Eastern	386		2900
East Midlands	370		2800
Humberside	291		1850
London East	224		3250
London West	167		2150
London South East	263		2000
London South West	118		1600
Lancashire	156		1100
Manchester	368		2750
Merseyside	508		6000
Northern	265		4900
Scotland East	184		3000
Scotland West	242		3800
Southern	316		5000
South West	386		2000
Wales East	26		2450
Wales West	10		2150
West Midlands	528		4400
Yorkshire	483		5900
Others	422		10000
Total received	5712		70000

A REPORT in *The Observer* shows how willing workers are to make sacrifices to help others. The DHSS has said that despite enduring temperatures of as low as −7°C, this does not warrant them paying exceptional heating allowances.

By Nick Wrack

On reading of the suffering of one 78 year old woman in Belfast many donations were sent in. An 18 year old student offered all her part time earnings untill the weather improved.

While such sacrifices help to alleviate the problems of one or two people they cannot eradicate the cause. The only way to do that is by changing society completely. We need your financial support in the fight for a socialist society where poverty, unemployment, bad housing and all the other many ills of capitalism will just be horrible memories.

The role of Militant in building the LPYS into a fighting socialist youth organisation is reflected in the money raised at recent Regional Conferences:£157 from Northern, £1001 from North West, £161 from London despite not being able to hold a readers meeting.

This years LPYS National Conference in Blackpool will celebrate 15 years of Marxist leadership. We hope to mark the occasion with a record collection so start the preperation now. Further support for *Militant* from young workers came at TUC Youth conference where £109 was raised.

Ask your friends

Once again *Militant* supporters in Hull show everyone how easy it is to raise cash from workmates. This week we have had money from two regular places: £4.20 from AUEW No 12 and £5.91 from workers at the Easington site. A new source of Fighting Fund, however, is from the workers at Stelrad Ltd. A comrade there did a sponsored walk and raised £21 from GMBATU members. Many thanks. What about all the other workers reading this article? Why not try your workmates?

We are asking all areas to make March 2/3 a special Fighting Fund weekend. Has your area organised a party or jumble sale? In Edinburgh and Fife jumble sales raised £30 and £26 respectively. Make a special attempt to ask for a donation when selling the paper. Those readers who are trying to raise £50 could use this weekend to visit all their potential contributors.

Remember, there are many thousands of workers just waiting to get one over on the Tories. We can give them the opportunity. Go and ask them for a Fighting Fund donation.

CONTRIBUTORS include: Tranent LP £30; Striking Ayrshire miners £15; N Avon LPYS £3; Joe Pell retired miner aged 85 Chapelgreen LP £1; Joe North, Kent NUM £1; D Moscrop Bristol £10; Manchester Poly *Militant* Supporters Society £30; Kath Boxer, Chorlton £2; P Stamp, Leicester CPSA £10; Jon Saksena, Preston Councillor £10; Sue Mullineux, Worsley LPYS £8.50; Mary Thomas, secretary Harlow Pensioners Society £6; 3 AUEW members at Brush, Loughborough £3.

Marxist Daily Building Fund 1985

Total received since 1 January: £9430

	£		£
Eastern	746	Northern	707
East Mids	394	Scotland West	192
Humberside	572	Scotland East	147
London NE	994	Southern	1306
London NW	720	South West	400
London SE	224	Wales East	714
London SW	668	Wales West	115
Lancs	224	West Midlands	73
Manchester	96	Yorkshire	985
Merseyside	132		

"ON A recent visit to my home town of Pudsey in West Yorkshire I came across letters written in 1932 by the management of a textile company saying that due to 'circumstances beyond their control' they were having to reduce wages by 11.7%.

"In effect this meant the workers losing a week's wage once every 9 weeks. With the present strength of the Labour movement it is difficult for modern day management to be so blatant. However as the capitalist system crumbles the ruling class will be compelled to attack wages to protect their own privileges in the same way that they are attacking services.

"Even now here in Cardiff, National Express bus drivers are on strike as management are trying to enforce substantial wage cuts of up to £25 a week through alterations to the bonus system. The writing is on the wall. The ruling class intend to hammer the rest of us into the ground to pay for their folly.

"Give a week's income to build a Marxist Daily now before the bosses start taking a week's income from you once every nine weeks or even more frequently."

By Chris Peace
(Cardiff North CLP)

AS THE letter above shows, the future for workers under capitalism is bleak. Already several groups of workers have had to accept wage cuts rather than redundancies.

Not surprisingly in times like this the campaign for a week's income to build a Marxist Daily Paper is picking up momentum. Last year we raised huge sums to get a building. Now the vital installations, repair and building work have to be paid for!

This week, £3,783 has been raised, making a total of £9,430 so far this year. One unemployed comrade from Sunderland, Bob Young has sent £30 and two school students from Bristol, Ben Mitchell and Scott Reeves have sent £5 a piece. Two miners from Nottingham have sent their rent rebates and a single mother of three from Manchester has donated £19.

Week's wages

Better paid workers are also contributing. One, from Leicester is donating a **month's** pay, £350 to help establish a Marxist Daily. In response to our appeal, Dave Nellist, MP. who already sets an example to many other MP's by living on the average worker's wage will be going without his pay for a week as his contribution to a worker's Daily. Hopefully, this donation will encourage other MPs to donate their salaries.

From reports we have received the campaign has just scratched the surface so far of the vast potential support with promises being made by supporters up and down the country. Six comrades in Stoke on Trent have promised £300 between them and have agreed to ask every other *Militant* supporter and reader in the area to match their donations.

Make sure you get **your** donation in quickly. Society is moving towards new and tougher battles. We need a paper and a leadership that is capable of winning. It is our future. We only have ourselves to blame if it is not a socialist one.

ads

CLASSIFIED: 10p per word, minimum 10 words.
SEMI-DISPLAY: £2 per 2 column centimetres.
All advertisement copy should reach this office by SATURDAY.

MILITANT TEACHER is to be published in time for the NUT conference at Easter. If you are: a teacher/student/interested in education, then *write* for *Militant Teacher*. Articles to: Helen Mullineux, 50 Wellington Gardens, Charlton, London SE7 7PH by 8 March please. If you require copies to buy/sell, write to same address or phone 01-858 7074.

"DIRTY 30" Leicestershire Striking Miners. New posters, T-shirts, materials, badges, etc now available. From: 346 Municipal Buildings, Charles Street, Leicester. Tel: (0533) 532201.

THANET SUPPORT group Saturday March 9th Miners march and rally Speakers: J. Corbyn MP, J Collins Kent NUM. 10.30 Boundary Park Ramsgate. Sunday March 10th "A year and a day" concert for the miners. 6 acts—£2.00 per ticket proceeds to NUM Thanet support group Granville Theatre Ramsgate.

LESLEY HOLT and LIGAT MAHMOOD's wedding party on Friday 8 March, 8pm. Woolton Labour Club, Belle Vale. All comrades welcome.

FOR SALE 'V' registered red Fiat Strada 65L taxed and tested June 1985—49,00 miles—recent new front tyres, stereo radio (acquisition of another car is the reason for sale) £1,050 o.n.o—further information/ enquiries telephone Rotherham (0709)540539 5.30 pm to 7.00pm Mon—Thurs.

NORTHERN IRELAND—a Marxist analysis. A 32 page analysis published by Militant Irish Monthly. 75p (plus 15p postage) 5 or more post free. Order from World Socialist Books, 3/13 Hepscott Rd, London E9.

CO-OP stamps wanted for F/F. Send to Circulation Dept, 3—13 Hepscott Rd, London E9 5HB.

Your voice against the Tories!

THOUSANDS OF youth are massing against the Tories, protesting that they are not prepared to put up with Tory conscription plans.

Millions of voices are raised against Thatcher and her cronies but we also need newspapers that fight Maggie's mouthpieces in Fleet Street who support this exploitation system. *Militant* is the only weekly paper (or daily come to that) that backs the YTURC and the LPYS campaign against YTS and all the other phony schemes.

We want you to build *Militant*, so we have a bigger, more frequent paper to answer the Tory rags and mobilise to get rid of them. What can you do? Well, why not sell *Militant* to your mates, and get your mates to do the same.

How do you start? Just fill in the slip below, approach any *Militant* seller or ring 01-533 3311. Special subsription offer: four issues for a £1.

I would like to sell *Militant*.
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Militant Meetings

UPPER RHONDDA Marxist Discussion Group. Meeting every Sunday at 7.00 pm in the Red Cow, High Street, Treorchy. Phone Steve Brown on Treorchy 773455 for more details.

SOUTHAMPTON: Marxist Discussion Group meets every Friday 7.45, 206 Honeysuckle Road, Bassett, Southampton. Tel: 551420 for details of subjects or any further information.

STOCKPORT *Militant* Readers Meeting, Friday 1 March, 7.30 pm, Stockport College. Speakers: T Fields MP, B Connor (USDAW), C Sullivan (Sutton Manor Miners' Wives Support Group), all in personal capacity.

MUSSELBURGH MILITANT public meeting 'A socialist strategy to defeat the Tories' Thursday 28 February, Brunton Hall, Musselburgh, E. Lothian. Speakers: P Taaffe (Editor 'Militant') T. Mulhearn (President, Liverpool Labour Party) Joe Owens (Polkemmet NUM)

UCW Militant Readers Meeting. Monday 4 March, 8pm. Speaker Peter Taaffe. Venue Wessex Hotel. Westcliff Road, Bournemouth "No witch-hunt, fight the Tories not the Socialists".

BRISTOL Militant Public meeting "Fight back" Thursday 14 March. Shephards Hall, Bristol. 7.30 pm. Speakers: Ian Isaac S.Wales NUM EC. Brian Kelly (POEU), John Bleakon GMBATU, Bev Woodburn, LPYS Nat Committee Elect. All speakers in a personal capacity.

World Socialist Books booklist available free from: World Socialist Books, 3-13 Hepscott Road, London E9 5HB

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May Day greetings

SHOW YOUR solidarity with a socialist newspaper. Get your trade union, Labour Party, LPYS, Women's Council, Shop Stewards' Committee or Trades Council organisation to send greetings to *Militant* on the traditional workers' day, May Day.

All copy to reach: Circulation Department, *Militant*, 3—13 Hepscott Road, London E9 5HB by Wednesday 24 April.

Rates: 3 col cms £6; 6 col cms £10; 1/16 page £15; 1/8 page £25; 1/4 page £50.

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I would like to donate £ . p each week /month to the fighting fund.

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I would like to sell ____ papers per week (minimum 5) on a sale or return basis.

Industrial feature

Organise for BLOC

THE SECOND national Broad Left Organising Conference (BLOC) comes at a crucial time for the labour movement. This event offers a unique chance for union activists to share experiences, draw the lessons of the past year and pull together the links between rank and file trade unionists which have been forged around the miners' strike.

BLOC represents national Broad Lefts in over twenty unions. It does not seek to impose external discipline or some so-called 'alien ideology' as the right wing and media claim but provides a broad umbrella for activists in different unions to discuss and develop strategy on matters of mutual concern. This opportunity to establish an organised challenge from within the trade unions to the TUC and those leaderships which have abjectly failed the test of great events must be used to the full.

Urgent—follow Scottish example

MID NOVEMBER last year, BLOC supporters in Lothian felt that the NUM dispute would be entering a critical period immediately after the christmas and new year holidays, and felt that it was necessary to hold an event to bring Broad Left supporters together, from as many unions, at workplace and branch level as possible.

We contacted BLOC supporters in other parts of Scotland and decided to make the conference an all Scotland event, formally launching BLOC in Scotland, and reinforcing the magnificent support already given to the miners in term of finance etc but more importantly encouraging solidarity wherever possible. Despite not having a long time to organise such an event especially with the trade union movement 'closing down' for 2 weeks at christmas and new year, we set a date in the third week of January.

We immediately set about arranging national speakers and a venue, so as to enable us to produce a leaflet which would be used on factory visits in the run up to Christmas.

It is very important to circulate TU branches, using the local trades council mailing list for example, but from experience we knew there is no substitute for getting down to the offices and factories and actually explaining to the reps and stewards what the event is.

Visits to workplaces

Even if there is no response initially, it undoubtedly builds bridges for future contact.

This was underlined to us by the tremendous support given to us by the local Labour Party Young Socialists, who supplied us with comprehensive lists of workplaces and shop stewards compiled over the last year after many visits to raise support for the miners.

In Lothian alone, a small group of comrades, mainly unemployed, flexi-time workers, shift workers and miners visited over 150 workplaces and 20 strike centres.

I recieved a few letters for credentials before the holiday, but as the movement started to move again this became a steady stream, with requests from Seamen in Aberdeen to Miners in Ayrshire in the west and T&G in the Scottish borders.

By Gordon McKinley
(Works Convenor, SAI Leith Docks and GMBATU Scottish Council)

Women lead the way

THE UNION branch at Longbenton DHSS in Newcastle is sending a contingent to the BLOC conference on 23 March having learnt the need for an uncompromising and determined Broad Left leadership the hard way.

They saw the largest strike in the history of their union last year and into 1985. Computer shift workers were out for 10 months. They had to fight civil service management under orders from the Tories to smash the strong union organisation at Longbenton as a prelude to wider attacks on the civil service. But they also had to contend with their national leaderships's attempts to undermine the strike.

Newcastle data processor Helen Smith and Doreen Purvis, secretary of the 5,000-strong branch spoke to Harriet Stevens about the some of the problems they faced in the strike.

Doreen: My family was on a war footing. I simply could not have done my job without the support of my husband and the children. My husband had to run the household, do cooking, cleaning and shopping. He understood the reasons for the strike and why I had to be involved. I worked out that in one week I was only at home for 45 minutes and that was at the weekend. Also the children received some of the abusive phone calls we had.

Many's the time at strike meetings that tributes were paid to the partners of strikers for keeping the strike going.

Harriet: Did other strikers' families have similar problems?

Doreen: Yes definitely—people put their hearts and souls into this strike—and even their marriages on the line.

Harriet: There was a 24-hour picket did women go picketting?

Doreen: Yes—by agreement women did the day shift and men the night. Some had never done picketting before. An unforgetable sight one morning as I approached the line was 2 pickets busily knitting, suddenly jumping up to accost a scab. Once a group of women strikers were pushed about and intimidated by three transit vans of police.

Harriet: How has the strike changed your members?

Doreen: It's as if a lifetime of experience has been telescoped into a short period. Some strikers who'd voted Tory said they would never do so again. Also attitudes to the police have changed.



Doreen Purvis.

Harriet: Was there any conflict between men women on strike?

Doreen: Right at the beginning the women earned respect as the toughest fighters and often on the speaking tours to raise money. The men mainly went further afield. In future I think we should try to organise it so that women could have the children looked after while they went on tour.

Harriet: And the children?

Doreen: Children were always a part of the scene. Strikers brought their children into the strike centre and to meetings. We organised a grand Christmas party which was a great success. It also involved some women who were a bit timid about getting directly involved.

Harriet: Now that the strike is over, does life turn to normal?

Doreen: I don't think anything can be the same again. Management have created a very militant group of workers who are in no way demoralised. We haven't lost a single member and areas which previously had no union rep, have since elected their own representatives.

Harriet: Helen, you are now a room rep. Were you active before?

Helen: No—I did not know anyone in the union really and I didn't feel I could do anything.

Harriet: Did you find yourself doing things in the strike that you never thought you would?

Helen: I had to speak at meetings which is something I'd never done before. And I was on the hardship committee.

Harriet: Alistair Graham (CPSA General Secretary) has accused Militant *supporters like Doreen Purvis of manipulating the strike and giving the shift workers false hopes. What would you say?*

Helen: Those people don't know what they are talking about. It's the *Militant* people who have stuck by us in this strike.

Broad Left Organising Committee

2nd national BLOC Conference

23 March Manchester Free Trade Hall

Speakers: Ken Livingstone (Leader GLC); Derek Hatton (Deputy Leader, Liverpool City Council); Leading NUM speaker; John Tocher (AUEW Broad Left presidential candidate); Bill Connor (USDAW Broad Left General Secretary candidate).

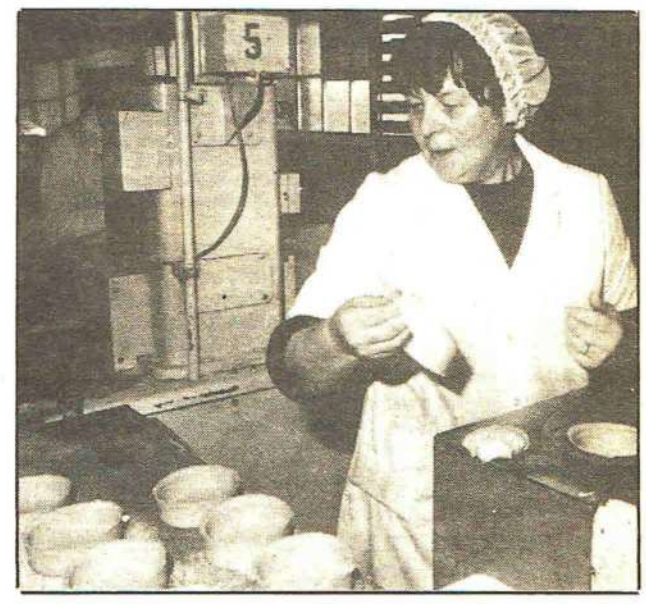
The conference will focus on two main issues:—trade union legislation in the wake of the miners' strike and the fight against local authority cuts. Miners delegations are invited free.

Apply for delegates credentials—each National Broad Left/Trade Union organisation can send up to four delegates (please include names and addresses of delegates on separate pieces of paper).

£3 per delegates—cheques made payable to: BLOC, c/o George Williamson, 11 Sutton Place, London E9 6E8.

Train bookings for BLOC Conference, 23 March. Train seats from London Euston. £16 return (£2 cheaper than inter city) This is a limited booking on two trains. Book now, though. First leaves London 6.50am. Manchester 18.15. 2nd leaves 8.15am London, Manchester 19.15. Cheques payable to Broad Left Organising Committee. Send to G.Robertson, c/o 33, Langdon House, Ida Street, London E14

Bakers' steward



SHARON DEVANNEY, a Bakers' Union shop steward from Nottingham explains that she is going to the BLOC conference as the result of recent changes in her life.

I have only been a shop steward for the women at my bakery for about four months. The union seemed pretty weak and there has never been much to motivate a fight here against cuts in hours, redundancies and so on.

Over the last six months *Militant* has educated me politically. It's become clear in my mind that even though I'm inexperienced as a shop steward I am more able to explain to my members why there is such an urgent need to build our union. There's loads of benefits to be won, and we can stop management walking over us as they have done in previous years.

I have increased women membership to 99% since elected and we've all gained confidence. Most of those women did not want to join at first. They didn't see the point in paying 75p a week for nothing, they saw it as a waste of money and time.

We've made small gains so far. For example, heating has been improved and washing conditions, which were very poor, brought nearer our work position. For the time being at least management have stopped enforcing unsociable hours on the day-shift women.

Though these are only minor gains it's made me think of the gains we can make. We need to strengthen the union and give our members more confidence.

INDUSTRIAL REPORTS

Teachers' selective strikes

THE TEACHERS' dispute entered a new stage this week with the NUT holding 3-day strikes in selected areas and the NAS/UWT holding half-day strikes.

By Tom Jenkins
(Secretary, Neath NUT)

The dispute has been complicated by Solihull Council's successful application for an injunction against their teachers' decision to withdraw from voluntary activities without holding a ballot. Local teachers have given a clear reply with an estimated 80% vote for non-cooperation in voluntary duties. Four schools in Solihull were hit by the national action. That should be escalated as soon as possible to give a clear answer to this reactionary Tory employer.

This year's claim for a flat rate increase of £1,200 across the board can be used to win enthusiastic and active support from the mass of teachers. For too long percentage rises have benefitted the better-paid higher scale teachers. Thousands of classroom teachers are taking home under £100 a week.

NUT rules state that a ballot must be taken before industrial action is held. But it's just not good enough to send out ballot papers. School reps need to attend meetings with local officiers and be given help in calling school meetings prior to balloting as a group. In West Glamorgan last year on the day of the strike we held a meeting of over 800 members. In this way it is possible to involve the widest possible layers of teachers. In the Neath area, ballot returns showed over 80% in favour of strike action. Some schools were even demanding to be called out and thought the action taken by the executive too moderate.

Widen action

Union rules also state that members on strike must receive full pay from the union (the sustentation fund). This is just the excuse some of our national executive need to keep strike involvement low. They argue we just don't have the money to undertake widespread or all-out action. This rule must be changed and in the meantime a national levy organised to finance escalation of the action.

We must make it clear to the executive that we do not want them running to arbitration, which severely burnt their figures last year. Neither do we want any linking of pay with the employers' plans for altering conditions of services. Already Sir Keith Joseph has made it clear, in parliament on 9 February, that there is no extra 7% for teachers accepting new conditions of service. Such a change would mean a permanent deterioration in working conditions, including voluntary duties being made contractual and voluntary annual assessment by Heads. That proposal should make any trade unionist shiver. It would be a permanent threat to every teacher.

The left in the union has had a resurgence over the past five years but it is not offering a clear and co-ordinated alternative to the present leadership. We need to build a Broad Left with policies and determination to match the growing anger of members against constant attacks on education by government and local authorities.

The immediate problem is that the majority of teachers are being isolated from involvement in industrial action. A campaign must be launched now to force a one day national strike.

Job threat in Post Office

THE DECISIONS taken at the Union of Comunication Workers conference in Bournemouth this weekend will have a lot of impact on the future job prospects of UCW members.

Unfortunately the executive council does not seem to have any positive response to the attacks upon our members by the government and Post Office management. Their lack of fight is seen in the recommendations to re-assess conference policy over the past decade. That means, sell off any claim to a shorter working week, longer holidays, abandon the right not to sell jobs.

Tory plan

An important issue which exemplifies this process is the Business Efficiency Report on quality of service. The union's argument must be that management's intransigent stand on the draft New Technology agreement, shorter working week, improved holidays and five day week, their insistence on higher productivity, cuts in pay and reduction in the workforce are the real causes of the crisis in the Post Office. We do not accept responsibility or any part of the bill.



This new mechanical letter office means that operators can code up to 1,200 letters an hour.

The increasing number of local battles in defence of working conditions show that the rank and file have a very different attitude to the leadership. Those initiatives must be given full support nationally and linked together as part of a campaign to turn back the Post Office offensive.

It's shameful that at a time when our members face harassment and victimisation by management the union nationally should be involved in the damaging diversion of witch-hunting young people in the Labour Party. Our Deputy General Secretary and Labour Party NEC member, Tony Clarke, actually moved a motion to expel Labour Party members of the Further Education Labour Students organisation, which was set up by working class students in the tech colleges to win youth to the Labour Party and trade unions.

The need for unity must also be emphasised in relation to the newly formed National Communication Union (formerly POEU). A discussion will take place on amalgation at the annual conference in May but links must be formed now, With a single union for communication workers we can change the face of industrial relations in the industry.

By Eddie Thorpe
(UCW Oldham Indoor branch)

New technology

ON 4-5 March UCW members will be asked to acquiesce in their executive backing down once more in face of management's intransigence over New Technology (NT).

Union members have been demanding action since the resolution on NT was passed in 1979. The executive has most recently been negotiating over the minimum demand for a three hour reduction in hours, a five day week (it is six days at the moment) and no compulsory redundancies.

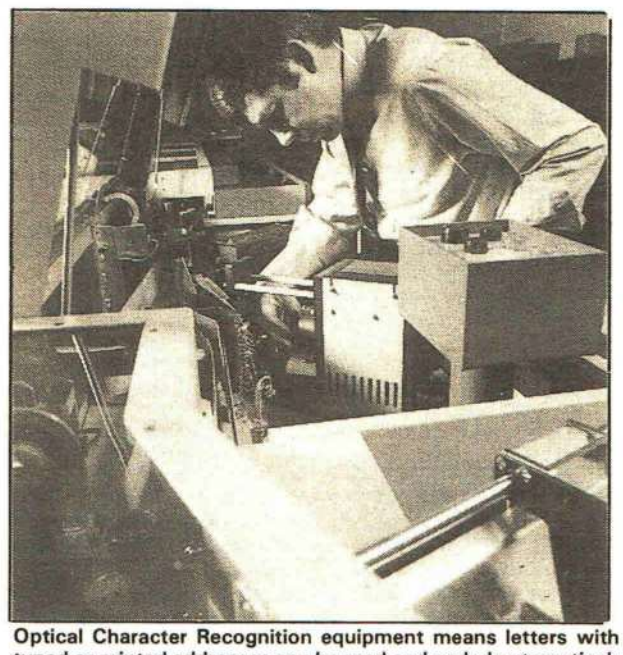
Management have rejected even this. They are prepared to offer a variety of minor improvements but will not budge over hours. In fact they have announced the introduction of new technology with or without the union's agreement, and have withdrawn all earlier proposed concessions.

At the conference the executive will propose again: "The best possible advantage to the membership"—whatever that may mean. After six years the membership are unlikely to accept such a meaningless deal. Delegates will be expressing feelings of extreme frustration over continual erosion of conditions, provocative local management and the long drawn-out attempt to get an NT agreement—with one demand after another dropped by the executive.

30-hour week

UCW members may have a basic week no lower than the average, but low wages force overtime onto most members, hours are unsociable an a six day week compulsory.

The 'SPRU' report on New Technology revealed that management were privately working on the assumption that a 30 hour week would be worked by 1990, but did not want to state this publicly in case the union wanted it at once. Despite attempts to discredit the report, it was never denied. Indeed, most of the points that were criticised have been borne out by events.



Optical Character Recognition equipment means letters with typed or printed addresses can be read and coded automatically.

Civil Service pay strategy

THE RECENT Civil Service pay rallies held around the country showed the failure of the union leaderships so far to raise the temperature of the 1985 pay campaign.



By Kevin Roddy
(CPSA NEC, personal capacity, Broad Left Presidential Candidate 1985)

We must not allow a repeat of the 1984 pay fiasco when no real action was organised and the Tories were allowed to impose a settlement five months after the operative date for a new wage contract.

United action by the Civil Service unions must be launched now. A full programme of action must be issued to members, spelling out each step, the tasks and objectives. The unions must campaign for the programme in every Civil Service workplace. Special meetings of the individual union Executives must be convened (like the CPSA special NEC on Sunday 3 March) to endorse the programme and a special meeting of the Council of Civil Service Unions (or a combination of those unions like the CPSA, IRSF and SCPS) to co-ordinate and implement the programme.

Civil servants must be involved in the campaign immediately and in the process made aware that the fight on pay has begun. The introduction of a policy of non-cooperation and withdrawal of good will can help achieve this.

Overtime ban

A national overtime ban must also be launched immediately. A ban, if properly explained and determinedly fought for, would have a very disruptive effect in the departments, where about 30,000 jobs are tied up in overtime.

All unions must support the IRSF's decision for a one day national strike on the 1 April. This would demonstrate the strength of feeling and act as a warning to the government.

The unions are committed to consulting their members before strike action is called. They must have no truck with the Tory laws. The unions must use their traditional democratic processes to consult and secure a yes vote for action.

There must be a nationwide drive with meetings, rallies, agitational propaganda including national press advertising, to make members aware of what is proposed.

From the 2 April, selective strikes in departments and Town/City strikes should take place—in order to keep pressure on the Tories. Every effort must be made nationally with the TUC and locally with Shop Stewards Committees and Trades Councils, to secure public service union rallies and common action.

If no settlement has been reached by the 19 April, consultative exercises should be held in the week beginning 22 April for an all-out strike starting 1 May—labour day.

This programme of action is being placed before members of the CPSA by *Militant* supporters at the NEC on 3 March. It will show that the unions have a strategy.

The warning signals that the likes of Alistair Graham are unwilling to lead a fight are already there. In a recent circular to CPSA members he began the build up for acceptance of a 4% offer or slightly more as a basis for settlement.

The abolition of low pay: a 15% increase—a £100 minimum wage—are our objectives. They will not be secured by negotiation alone. Activists and the rank and file must urgently demand the leadership lead and that the above programme of action is adopted by all of the unions—and introduced now.

Militant

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Defend your rights

No to YTS call-up



PHOTO: Stefano Cagnoni (Report)

YTURC picket of Brixton Job Centre with Gerry Dammers of 'Special AKA' to promote the 28 February lobby. Frankie goes to Hollywood have also announced their support for YTURC.

IF WE get organised and fight with the same determination that young miners have shown over the past year we can beat the Tories' plans to conscript youth onto YTS.

Young people will be outraged at the Tories' plan to withdraw supplementary benefit to 16-17 year olds if they refuse to go onto the Youth Training Schemes, with its long hours and appalling weekly pay of £25.26.

Thousands will join us today (28 February) when the Youth Trade Union Rights Campaign (YTURC) lobbies Parliament. We are demanding an end to this 'call-up' and want trade union rights and rates of pay for YTS trainees.

Follow young miners' lead

The Tories can be beaten. Three years ago, Norman Tebbit, then Employment Minister, threatened to cut trainees pay to a mere £15. He backed down when he saw the anger of trainees, displayed in a 3,000 strong lobby organised by YTURC in 1982.

Of course, that was some time ago now. Since then the Tories have been emboldened by another election victory, and more importantly, the weakness of the labour movement leadership in fighting back. As we have seen in our strike, the stakes are much higher today.

But we can win. The hallmark of the miners' dispute has been the tenacity of the young miners who despite all the intimidation by the police, the courts, the media, the Tories and Coal Board, have been in the front line of the fight to save their pits and communities. The trainees and their supporters must follow this example.

We'll get the support of the rank and file of the labour movement too. In my area of Barnsley the response of striking miners and their friends and families to YTURC has been fantastic. We have publicised our campaign with a picket of a YTS exhibition at Barnsley Civic Centre. Our street collections for YTURC have already raised £180—and this in a hard-hit mining community.

With support like this and a preparedness to struggle like the miners, we can and will win.

By Andy Fleming
(Houghton Main NUM
& Wombwell LPYS)

Don't stand on the sidelines while Thatcher and her friends go on the attack.

Fight back! Become a *Militant* supporter. Subscribe to *Militant*. See form and special offer. Page 13.

FELS—Expulsions referred back

IN A victory for Labour's rank and file, the National Executive Committee has 'referred back' a move which would have led to the expulsion of hundreds of young party members.

A resolution before the NEC on 27 February from the party's Youth Sub-Committee said members of Further Education Labour Students(FELS)—an organisation set up last year to attract FE students to Labour—was "not compatible with Labour Party membership".

At the NEC, left wingers such as Tony Benn, Dennis Skinner and Audrey Wise opposed the motion, expressing concern over such facts as the constitution of the NOLS, the Labour Party Student section not allowing part time FE students to join. Jim Mortimer, general secretary, warned that to pass the resolution would in effect reintroduce the 'proscribed list'.

Protest lobby

The motion will now go back to the Youth Sub-Committee. When the motion was first raised there on 14 February, many left wing members of the committee were absent.

The NEC also decided to notify all delegates at next week's NOLS conference that NOLS was the only official Labour Party student organisation. However, from its inception FELS has explained that it was not set up in competition to NOLS but to attract FE students to the Labour Party and—where the constitution allows—to NOLS.

Outside the NEC, nearly a hundred FE students, Young Socialists and Labour Party members held a protest lobby against the expulsion threat. The decision not to pursue what could have been a wide purge of the young FELS members will be applauded throughout the movement.

MINERS
From page one

made... It's time McNestry got off his backside and looked after his members instead of trying to be nice to the Coal Board."

"We want no less than we came out for," demanded Chris Stamp, from Betteshanger NUM, Kent: "it was right then and it's still right." Most of the activists realise that an honourable settlement could still be won.

To do this we need an escalation of the action, in the form of our leadership calling a 24-hour general strike, prepared for with a military-style campaign of leafletting, factory gate meetings and shop stewards' conferences in every area.

National industrial action in solidarity with the miners would spur on the whole movement and be a springboard to force the Tories to back down and guarantee that the miners are not defeated.



BECOME A Militant SUPPORTER!

Send to 3/13, Hepscott Road, London E9 5HB.

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