Militant

The Marxist Paper for Labour and Youth

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Sacked miners—Labour and TUC must...

Demand amnesty

HISTORY HAS been made by those who returned to work this week. The miners' strike of 1984 – 85 will never be forgotten, certainly not by those who took part, nor by future generations.

The struggle by miners and their families has revived the best traditions from the past and ushered in a new future for the British trade union movement. New ground and new records have been broken in this longest and most intense national industrial battle in British history.

Society will never be the same again. The miners have brought class politics back on the agenda. Theirs will be the standard by which all struggles are measured.

The miners will be fighting on. They have not surrendered. They have not been humiliated. But vital lessons will have been learned. Above all, this strike has demonstrated the necessity to unite workers together in action if any one section, however strong, is to overcome the combined power of the management, government, press and police, which was unleashed on the miners.



The failure of the TUC leaders to live up to the responsibility placed on their shoulders to rally the movement behind the miners, will have convinced tens of thousands of activists of the need to build a new fighting leadership. The young miners who played such a heroic role throughout the strike are the material from which that leadership will be built.

The immediate and urgent task now before the movement is to mount a massive campaign to win back the jobs of all those striking miners victimised by the NCB for their part in the strike, many of them the most dedicated and inspiring leaders.

Editorial statement

Inspiration to all workers

This fight demands the support of all sections of the labour and trade union movement, including the Parliamentary leadership. If an amnesty is not granted by the Board or the government, every trade union branch, district and executive committee and every Labour Party must support the NUM physically and financially to regain its members' jobs and make sure that they and their families suffer no hardship.

It is crucial too that the Party leadership are committed to a pledge that whatever happens in the short term, the next Labour government will grant former jobs and recompense them for the loss of earnings they will have suffered.

The miners have inspired millions. Their fighting spirit and self-sacrifice can lay the basis for a campaign to drive the Tories from office. Thatcher and her class have shown their hatred towards the miners and their leaders. That feeling is now reciprocated. Even opinion polls now prove what has been obvious to those in the poorest areas of the country, that Thatcher and the Tories are detested by millions of workers.

The miners have shown how that hatred can be turned into action; even if not successful this time they have shown that workers can fight back. That fight now goes on, first to create a bold new leadership in the labour movement, and then to renew battle with the Tories—and win.

Photo: John Harris (IFL)



Cortonwood, 5 March. Miners return to work united, to be turned away by Kent pickets demanding an amnesty. In work or out, the fight against victimisation must be stepped up.

Campaign launched

MINERS ARE launching an amnesty campaign within the labour movement. The campaign calls for: amnesty for all sacked miners, solidarity with miners in prison, a trade union and Labour Party levy to support sacked miners, the dropping of all outstanding charges in connection with the dispute, and for the next Labour government to reinstate, with full compensation, all sacked miners.

All sections of the labour and trade union movement are urged to pass resolutions along these lines.

The campaign has been initiated by Benny Toomer and Mark Thornton (Askern NUM), Chris Herriot (sacked miner, Monktonhall NUM), John Cunningham Jnr (Ellington NUM), Tyrone O'Sullivan (Secretary, Tower NUM), Ian Isaac (Secretary, St Johns NUM) and Stan Pearce (Delegate, Monkwearmouth NUM).

Dave Nellist MP has taken up the campaign and has so far gained the support of Labour MPs: Terry Fields, Dennis Skinner, Eddie Loyden, Bob Parry, Tony Banks, Bill Michie, Dennis Canavan, Jerry Bermingham, Derek Fatchett, Roland Boyes, Bob Wareing, Brien Sedgemore and MEP Richard Caborn.

Miners go to BLOC

MINERS HAVE suffered a lot in the last twelve months, but we have learned a hell of a lot more. We are not going to sit back and let the Tories walk all over us.

We have seen with our own eyes the almost military way the Tories have moved to try and smash our strike and our union. Nicholas Ridley drew up a plan years ago to try to defeat the unions. That was during the 1974 – 79 Labour government.

Our union did not kowtow to these plans. We have not been smashed, we kept going through all the difficulties thanks to the determination of the miners, their families and communities and the support of the trade union rank and file throughout the country and even internationally. If the right-wing TUC and Labour Party leaders had shown a fraction of that support, the Tory government would be on its last legs today.

This strike has developed a whole new generation of leaders in the coalfields, people who are prepared to fight for their members and their communities.

We must now prepare for the future as well as the Tories have done. That is why four delegates are going from our lodge to the Broad Left Organising Committee (BLOC) conference in Manchester on 23 March (see page two).

Too many workers have been let down by the right-wing union leaders and TUC tops. I would appeal to all miners who have fought so bravely over the last twelve months, and to all the workers who have backed us, to send delegates from their lodges and branches to the BLOC conference and build a leadership worthy of our class.

By Stan Pearce
(Monkwearmouth NUM, Durham, personal capacity)

Miners defiant—analysis of strike Pages 7–10

Bureaucratic grip at NOLS conference

THE ANNUAL conference of the National Organisation of Labour Students held at the weekend represented a further development in the witch-hunt against socialist youth in the labour movement.

By Simon Kaplan
(Ordinary NOLS NC member-elect)

Last year's NOLS conference was unconstitutionally abandoned by the then Labour Party Student Organiser, John Dennis, in the face of serious allegations about the abuse of the NOLS constitution and irregularities in the ballot for the NOLS National Committee.

This year the 'Democratic Left' leadership of NOLS, supporters of the 'soft left' policies of Neil Kinnock ensured that the conference was fixed in advanced. *Militant* (issue 737) has outlined how the NOLS leadership used organisational methods to limit the number of opposition delegates, while waiving the constitution when it benefitted them. This continued right up to conference itself, when an additional 11 delegates were 'ruled out' from Stirling University and two Liverpool FE colleges.

Secret minutes

A secret set of minutes of the 'Democratic Left' Steering Committee meeting of 7 February showed clearly how the NOLS officers had the support of the Labour Party apparatus in their manoeuvres. The minutes recorded that 'Democratic Left' "Regional co-ordinators were asked to ring into the NOLS office...to clarify the position" of delegates' political affiliation. In a report on their limited support in the North West the minutes state: "However, this position may change as up to 20 delegates have been ruled out, mainly from the Liverpool area".

These measures have produced the necessary result for the 'Democratic Left'—while their vote rose by 10 – 20 and the 'Democratic Left' were re-elected to the leadership, the size of the conference fell from 254 delegates claimed last year to 229.

The conference itself at Hammersmith Town Hall—which has a policy to ban *Militant* Readers' Meetings—cost NOLS £1,700 for the two-day conference. A large part of this expense must have been on the unprecedented security with Town Hall security guards and 20-30 conference "staff" who were supporters of the 'Democratic Left'.

Visitors stopped

Visitor status was deliberately witheld from those who opposed the policies of the NOLS leaders. Consequently Cheryl Varley, an FE sabbatical officer in Liverpool was barred, as were a number of black South African exiles; they wanted to lobby delegates in defence of the Southern African Labour Education Project (SALEP) which had been described by the NOLS leaders as, incredibly, a "white middle class organisation". Similarly Shareen Blackhall, a member of the LPYS NC, who is eight months pregnant, was left standing outside in the rain for three hours!

At one stage the police were called by the town hall management to remove these students and others who had been refused visitor status. It was Labour Party Student Organiser Sally Morgan and the party's Chief Youth Officer Jean Corston, who were responsible for refusing the students and others entry. The labour movement must protest strongly at this action.

But despite all these measures *Militant* supporters successfully defended socialist ideas. A National Committee motion on the Patrick Harrington issue which condemned students at North London Poly for providing "the best platform the National Front has had for years", was defeated by 116 to 90. A motion committing the NOLS leaders to defend student unions taken to court for giving money to the NUM was passed by 109 to 86, against the NOLS leaders' advice. A motion to withdraw credentials from vice-chairperson-elect, Peter Carr for striking a female student was only defeated after a count.

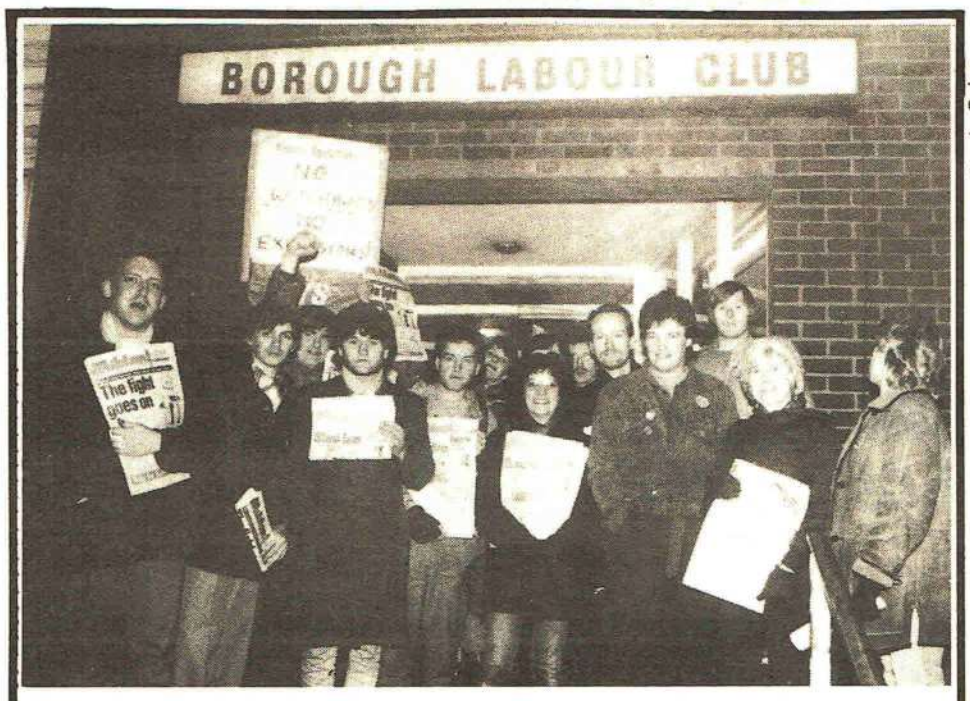


Photo: Barrie Spice

Mansfield militants face witch-hunt

Striking Notts miners join Labour Party members outside the meeting of the Mansfield Constituency Labour Party General Committee on 28 February, to protest at the right-wing's witch-hunt plans. However, the meeting went ahead to recommend the expulsion of *Militant* supporter Paul Shawcroft but dropped the threat of expulsion against striking miner Graham Naylor, although recommended that he be suspended from any office in the party for the next 12 months. The campaign against this witch-hunt will continue.

'New faces' at Provan CLP

CHARLES SAEZ, member of Provan Labour Party in Glasgow, and not a very regular attender, has been christened as a 'saviour of democracy' by the press after *Militant* supporters were voted out of office at the constituency's recent AGM.

Saez told the *Glasgow Herald:* "People can call it a coup or what they will but we have broken the power of *Militant* in Provan. Now there will be a return to democracy and everyone's viewpoint will be taken into account."

However this 'coup' was achieved by the support of many delegates who were attending their first meeting—13 from the GMBATU and 12 TGWU.

Hugh Brown the local MP told the press it was "a tremendous victory for common sense". Neil Stobbo, a local councillor declared that: "I hope all constituencies, like the sleeping giant, wake up and wipe out the menace of *Militant*." This touching appeal to the Gullivers of the Labour Party was countered by a successful *Militant* public meeting attended by 80 people in Easterhouse on Thursday 28 Febuary. £115 was collected for the fighting fund and the NUM.

Local councillor Charlie Stevenson explained how he 'infiltrated' the Labour Party of Harold Wilson in 1959. He said: "Wilson's white heat of technological revolution left me unsinged and Callaghan's fundamental and irreversable shift left me poorer. That's why I'm a militant. We welcome the fact that new delegates whose only link with the Labour Party was often through the licensed social club, have decided to participate fully in the party. We are confident that when the debates are heard fully we will win the arguments and votes."

Militant supporters Bob Wylie and Charlie Stevenson have challenged the dynamic duo of Mr Brown and Mr Stobbo to debate the future of the Labour Party to members, 'anytime and anyplace'.

Expulsion threat in Newcastle

NEWCASTLE EAST Constituency Labour Party executive decided at a special meeting to recommend the expulsion of Bill Hopwood.

The excuse for this witch-hunt was a leaflet for a rally in October with Bill's name on it. The speakers at the rally were Peter Taaffe, Terry Fields MP, Ronnie Campbell, the chairman of Bates NUM, and Ib Lund, a Danish dockers leader.

The executive claimed that the leaflet was 'campaigning actively to the detriment of the Labour Party'. Bill explained his record of over 10 years in the Labour Party. He pointed to his work in four General Elections, he was a founding member of the LPYS branch, a member of the General Management Committee, Executive Committee and District Labour Party committee, and a member of the Northern Region Labour Party executive. He was also an AUEW shop steward and convenor.

Record

The last year he campaigned for the miners and the civil service strikers at Longbenton, as well as encouraging them to join the Labour Party. The executive dismissed his record and the many letters of thanks and support.

The executive also accused him of being a 'member of *Militant*' and ignored his constant explanations that he was just a supporter. When Bill mentioned the threat of expulsions and a witch-hunt, the chairman stopped him and ruled him out of order, claiming neither was the case. However, the executive went ahead with their recommendation for expulsion!

The right-wing are attempting to railroad the issue through in only two weeks, between the executive and the General Committee. This is an attempt to prevent the branches discussing this issue.

The last witch-hunt in Newcastle East happened when Mike Thomas, now defected to the SDP, was the MP, and many members of the local Labour Party fear that this is the beginning of the same again.

Already letters, petitions and resolutions of protest are coming in to Newcastle East Constituency.

Letters to: Carol West, Secretary Newcastle East CLP, 15 Simonside Terrace, Newcastle-Upon-Tyne NE6 5JY, copies to Bill Hopwood, 55 Slodden Street, Newcastle NE6 3QL.

Militant and NUM meet

THE DETERMINATION of the Scottish miners was demonstrated at a *Militant* public meeting in Musselburgh, East Lothian, last Thursday. Over 240 people attended and NUM banners were on display.

Joe Owens from Polkemmet NUM received tremendous applause for his analysis and perspectives of the dispute: "They have thrown everything at us except tanks and planes and yet still have not defeated us after one year of all-out attack. That is a victory".

Tony Mulhearn, speaking on the campaign in Liverpool City Council showed that victories can be won against the Tories. The comments were echoed by Peter Taaffe, editor of the *Militant* who also spoke on the lessons of the dispute and in particular the need for Marxist leadership within the trade union movement.

Support for the ideas was shown by the £310 collected for the fighting fund.

Right-wing trample on constitution

ON THE 19 February, East Lothian Labour Party refused to accept the nomination of *Militant* supporter George Thomson as a prospective candidate for Lothian Regional Council.

At the meeting the right-wing openly abandoned the constitutional pretext for witch-hunts and instead stated quite clearly that George Thomson was politically unsuitable to be a Labour candidate because of his support for the *Militant* newspaper.

However, Tranent Labour Party, who nominated Comrade Thomson because of his record of hard work, will not allow the right-wing to witch-hunt good socialists or allow the democratic right of branches to be trampled on.

Come to LPYS national conference over Easter (5-8 April). Leaflets (below) and posters are now available from: ANDY BEVAN, 150 WALWORTH ROAD, LONDON SE17 1JT.



Sri Lankan picket

SRI LANKAN trade union leader, Vasudeva Nanayakkara has been held for over two weeks by the Sri Lankan government without any charges placed against him. In order to draw attention to this violation of democratic rights and pressurise the Sri Lankan regime to release him, British Labour MPs and socialists have organised a picket of the Sri Lankan High Commission (13 Hyde Park Gardens, W2—nearest tube: Lancaster Gate) on Wednesday 13 March, from 11 am.

Make your protest heard

LPYS members and *Militant* supporters are urged to support the picket and rush messages of protest to President Jayawardene, President's House, Colombo, Sri Lanka.

BLOC
BROAD LEFT ORGANISING COMMITTEE

1985 BLOC Conference
23 March
Manchester Free Trade Hall

The conference will discuss primarily two issues, the strategies needed to defeat all the Tory anti-union laws and the building of a national campaign to defend local government jobs, services and democracy.

Applications for delegates' credentials—each National Broad Left/Trade Union organisation can send up to four delegates on separate pieces of paper).

£3 per delegate—cheques made payable to 'BLOC'. All cheques and forms to be sent to: BLOC, c/o George Williamson, 11 Sutton Place, London E9 6E8.

MANY TRADE union branches and organisations are sending delegates to the BLOC conference. These include so far:
Golborne NUM in Lancashire who are sending 10 delegates; Kwick Save USDAW Liverpool; *Guardian* SOGAT'82 Clerical Chapel; TGWU delegations from Grimsby Heavy Chemicals, ACTSS 1/122, 6/133 branch (Walls Meat Co), 5/47 (Dudley), 6/776 branch (Preston) and 7/74 (Glasgow); NUPE branches from Scunthorpe, Penrith, Middlewood Hospital, COHSE branches from Airdale, and Macclesfield; Bristol NUR Clerical and Tinsley NUR; Waterloo ASLEF, London Transport Building Department; two UCATT shop stewards' committees; POEU Nottingham External and NCU (POEU) London North Central Internal; Courtaulds JSSC; Burnley and Maryhill Miners' Support Groups and four NUT branches.

Bitter but defiant - fight goes on

Midlands pride

THE NEWS, half-expected, still came as a shock. Midlands men have been in a minority for many months and felt at first that previously solid areas were panicking.

At Littleton, when it was proposed that they vote to return, no one was prepared to vote. It had to be proposed as: "Do we support our union?" Many felt deep down that without the solid areas giving the strike its strength there would have to be a return.

Both the Littleton and Lea Hall meetings were emotional, with anger, disappointment and defiance. Miners wanted to see the fight through and the thought of leaving men behind really stuck in their throats. Many expressed the feeling that the return was rushed. But the clear message was that the fight goes on. It was on before the strike, during it, and now its a different form of battle for a while.

Sat in the Littleton meeting, I looked through the door, opened to let the thick fag smoke out, and I could see the fields behind the strike centre. Fields hard and white with frost, that covered you after 30 minutes picketing when we started 12 months ago. Fields that became brown, then green, then baked dry in the summer, then white for week upon week through winter. Now they were turning green again in the spring sun. But spring 1985 has seen a much changed NUM, though with the same resolution to face the new problems.

Then at six o'clock Tuesday morning the men gathered then marched off to the pit. A few scab lorry drivers copped it as we marched down the road. We reached the pit singing, and chanting support for Arthur Scargill, the scabs were waiting to watch these proud men march in. With many supporters, wives and mothers clapping, cheering and wiping eyes. But on Monday and Tuesday there were no tears of defeat in this area, only tears of pride in our class and of our determination to win.

Support groups sang: "Cannock miners, we'll support you ever more." As the men queued, committee man Dave Preece arrived late: "I had to be the last one in.", but not quite. Because along behind him stood Johnnie McGann - a sacked miner - who had to stand at the gate as his mates went in. A symbol of what has to be won, and what strikers in this area intend to see is done.

By Dave Griffiths

Scotland stays out

THE EVENTS of the last two or three days have seen much sadness and tears in mining communities in Scotland. After Sunday's decision to return to work in an organised fashion, there were report-backs in every area. But Scotland and Kent decided to stay out on strike. In Scotland two different decisions were taken.

The NUM voted 7-6 to stay out on strike until a general amnesty is achieved. SCEBTA the tradesmen union, voted 10-4 to return to work and continue the fight for the amnesty within the collieries.

If there ever was a case for amalgamation of the two unions this clearly shows it. Branch meetings were called throughout Scotland to decide what further action should be taken in view of the seperate decisions.

Monktonhall NUM voted to stay out on strike but immediately called for a re-call conference. SCEBTA members voted to return to work but respect NUM picket lines. SCEBTA members gathered at Monktonhall this morning, Tuesday, and as there was an NUM picket, refused to go into work and returned home.

It is likely that there will be a re-call conference for the NUM delegates by the end of the week which will vote to return on Monday. Killoch and Barony pits in Ayrshire have already voted to return despite the decision, on Monday. SCEBTA members will continue to respect the NUM picket line until we all return together.

In my opinion, Sunday's national decision was wrong, we should not have returned until all the men were reinstated, but in respect of the national decision, Scotland had no choice but to return. The sacked men agree with us and this was shown by none of them attending the picket line this morning.

The men at Monktonhall and in fact all the miners in the country are going back with their heads held high, the overtime ban will continue and the campaign will be mounted in order to get the men reinstated. The fight is just beginning.

By Alex Shanks
(Monktonhall SCEBTA)

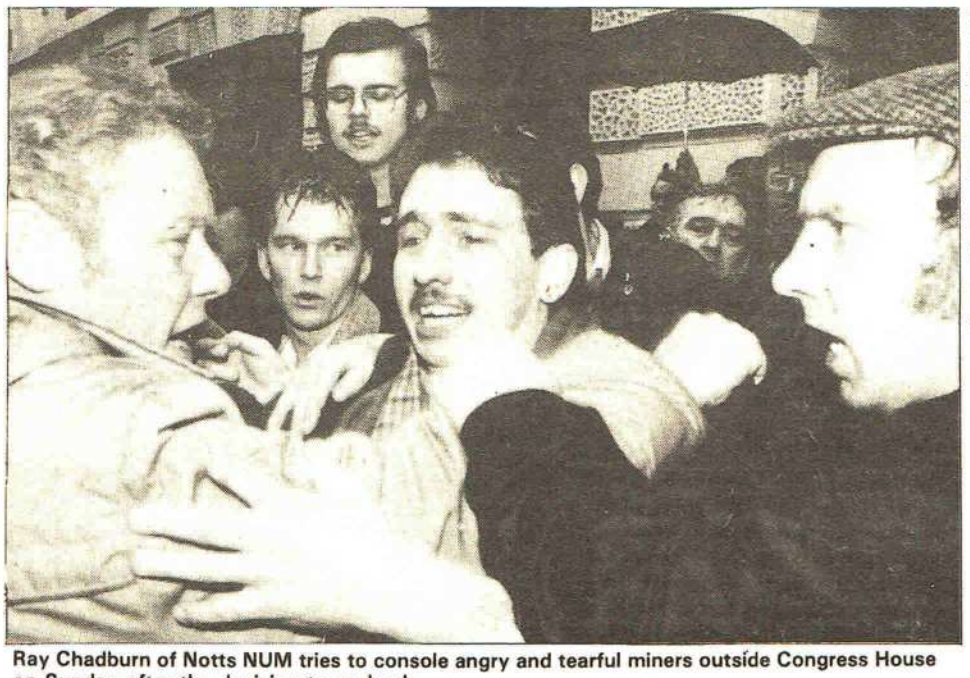


Photo: Stefano Cagnoni (Report)

Ray Chadburn of Notts NUM tries to console angry and tearful miners outside Congress House on Sunday after the decision to go back.

Kent

"IF WE go back without the sacked men it would be the betrayal of the year", said one miner at the mass meeting of the Kent NUM in Ramsgate. This statement captured the mood, and out of the 1,000 miners present only seven voted against the decision to stay out.

The Kent NUM has seen 800 arrests and 40 sackings over the past year. Our villages have been occupied by police and curfews imposed. There have been so many police in East Kent that it looks more like Derry or Belfast than the so-called 'Garden of England'.

We have learnt tough and painful lessons over the past year—about the police, taught to us with trucheons and the boot.The hardest lesson has been the need for a leadership worthy of the title of the TUC and Labour Party.

But the most valuble lesson is in union solidarity, which shone through at the Ramsgate mass meeting. No way will Kent miners abandon those sacked—that is why Kent is still out on this basic union principle. We all came out together, we'll go back together—reinstate the sacked men.

By Joe North
(Tilmanstone, Kent NUM)

Penallta

OVER 300 miners marched back to work at Penallta in South Wales behind the banners of the NUM lodge and the Women's Support Group. Kent miners who came to put a picket on the colliery—after discussions with lodge officials—instead joined the march. Throughout the strike Penallta has had only three scabs. The miners marched through the gate where during the dispute hundreds of police had massed to ensure the scabs got in. On this day not a policeman was in sight.

Militant at Cortonwood

JOHN WHITE, a stage loader at Cortonwood colliery, South Yorkshire, has worked in the pits for seven years. Married with two children, life has been very difficult on £13 supplementary benefit plus £13 family allowance. His electricity was cut off for a week. But John thinks the struggle is well worth the hardship. Things have changed in the twelve months Cortonwood have been out.

"Before the strike, I'd never met *Militant* but I saw a local *Militant* supporter selling the paper with headlines about the miners' strike. The coverage in *Militant* has been the best throughout. Lots of miners have got the basics of Marxism in their minds but nobody has been around to tell them. I think a lot more miners will get involved.

"There's no respect around here for the *Sun* and *Mirror*. We sell quite a few *Militants* now regularly with people discussing what's in the paper. What I like is that *Militant* puts an alternative. Some left papers are just a catalogue of what's wrong. It's also good to see people involved in what's going on, writing, it's not just somebody down in London, you say, I know him, I know her."

Maerdy banners fly

WITH THE band playing and the banners flying, the miners from Maerdy in South Wales—which has not seen one scab throughout the 12 month dispute—marched back to work.

Local people turned out in support, with banners from local support groups, trade unions and CND joining the march. At the entrance the miners stopped and applauded their supporters, who returned the cheers. A rally was held in the pit yard. Many marchers commented that now that the miners were returning to work, not one policeman was in sight, after their mass turnouts throughout the strike.

Houghton families march

THE MARCH back at Houghton Main, near Barnsley involved the whole community—miners, their wives and kids all joined in. Striking miners John Chapman and Andy Flemming, Houghton Main NUM , told *Militant* how they felt:

John: There were two sections of the march—those who were most involved in the strike who marched with lumps in their throats—it was very emotional, and those who were less involved—they were just relieved it was over. There were about 2,000 on the march with the union banners When we passed Foulston School all the kids ran out and joined the march!

Andy: It was an emotional thing. A lot of the active people were nearly in tears. It was clear that management were going to be awkward from the start. They had the scabs there ready to hand us our workwear—but we threw it down. Many scabs were inside looking out of the windows. We won't work with them or talk to them. They let us down.

We will keep up the overtime ban and work to rule until those who were sacked are reinstated. As our branch secretary said: "We came out as one and we are going back as one—this will go down in history."

Coventry

DESPITE THE decision to end the strike, Warwickshire miners' morale was still unbroken at a mass meeting on Monday. The 11 victimised men at Coventry colliery had met before the weekend and recommended a united return to work so their comrades could fight for their cases inside.

"I've never been so proud of you and ashamed of the TUC leaders who let you down," said wives committee member Kath Chaplin at the meeting. "We've got a right-wing tendency in our unions so get back you militant lot and fight to get them out."

On Tuesday the miners regrouped to march into work. They refused to march past the line of police outside the pit, forcing the police to withdraw. Only then did they march in, to the applause of their wives and supporters.

By Tony Cross

Notts case not heard

ON FRIDAY night miners at Cotgrave, Notts, sat down in the Welfare under the glare of the TV lights. They were to appear on ITV's "The Miners strike." However, only a selective few were allowed to have their say.

Before going on the air the producer explained they wanted the views of working miners, while the transmission from Cortonwood would put the strikers' case. He told striking Notts miners: "So I want you to let them have their say and I hope you won't start pelting them with rocks, old shoes or things." He added that if there was too much barracking they would pull the plug out on the programme.

As it was two of the three 'spokesmen' for the working miners that appeared on the programme were branch officials dragged in from another pit, Bentinck! They wouldn't let one of the Cotgrave working miners who support the NUM leadership get in.

During the programme the strikers were very restrained considering the clap-trap about 'democracy' and 'violence' that was being spouted at the front.

By Chris Ridge

Wearmouth

FOR WHAT is hoped will be the last time in the miners' dispute, Northumbria police disagraced themselves once more when Wearmouth's strikers marched behind their banner and their band, accompanied by wives, children and others to the pit gates on Tuesday to return to work.

As the procession marched confidently towards the pit, twelve or so policemen were suddenly joined by van loads of their colleagues dressed for action. Driving fast with headlights blazing as if in an emergency, police took up positions which blocked the gates from the marchers and attempted to divert the procession away. Supported by Bob Clay MP, and their supporters, the strikers forced their way through the police lines and into the pit yard after scenes which apart from being unnecessary were fierce and brutal. Bob Clay and six marchers were arrested.

Onlooking scabs already working in the pit viewed the events with expressions of trepidation. The pit managers then claimed they were able only to 'process' 100 names each day. The men decided to march back to the Labour Club for a meeting to review their situation pending the report back of a delegation sent to see the management.

By Bob Stothard



Gordon Bennet writes—

IT'S A sign of the political times when even MI5 is developing as many leaks as a collander. The gutless patriarchs of the IBA (independent television!) did us all a favour when they banned the 20/20 programme dealing with the 'over enthusiasm' of the security services, because more people are now aware of the contents of the programme than would otherwise be the case.

It was also pretty good timing, coming as it did just before the second reading of the phone tappers' charter—the Interception of Communications Bill—in the Commons this week.

At the time of going to press the results of the inquiry into phone tapping irregularities under Lord Bridge had not been published. I am 100 per cent confident that the James Bond brigade will be found to be as white as the driven snow, mainly because Mrs Thatcher has rigged the terms of an inquiry so that it cannot investigate allegations that the security services have carried out widespread unauthorised tapping. In the extremely unlikely event that the inquiry will come anywhere near to revealing what really goes on, then I'm sure that Mrs T will solemnly announce that she was in fact on holiday at the time.

Anyone who still believes that the main job of the British secret police is to track down ruthless KGB agents has got the political nous of a chipmunk. Apart from anything else MI5 seem to spend a great deal of their time happily recruiting Russian agents.

There is precious little that either MI5 or the KGB manage to keep secret from each other—the real secrets are kept from the British and Russian people. The so-called security services were set up in this country to keep an eye on people like you (you are at this moment glancing at what these political remedials no doubt believe to be a 'subversive' publication).

However, it's not just the Tories who've made use of the 'talents' of this sinister group of anonymous self-appointed crusaders. It is truly stomach-turning to hear people like Merlyn Rees yelping about accountability and freedom after the record of previous Labour governments. And it's no good the Labour front bench wittering about reforming these organisations when their very existence represents a threat to what little 'democracy' we have. It is high time that the smiles were wiped off the faces of Smiley's people.

Miners—12 Months on strike . . .

AS THE longest national strike in the history of industrial Britain comes to an end, the effects of the strike both within the NUM and in the broader labour movement will be far reaching. Gerry Lerner (bottom of page) looks at the course of the strike in the Lancashire area where the driving force has been the rank and file. Gwen Macleod, a shop steward with the Hosiery and Textile Workers' Union and chairwoman of the Ashfield Woman's support group speaks about her experiences.

Strike women change their union

THE FAILURE of the Notts miners to back the strike has been the biggest handicap throughout. But what about those who did come out? What has it been like for them, with no official backing and much less support from the community than in areas like Yorkshire, Wales etc? Gwen Macleod explained.

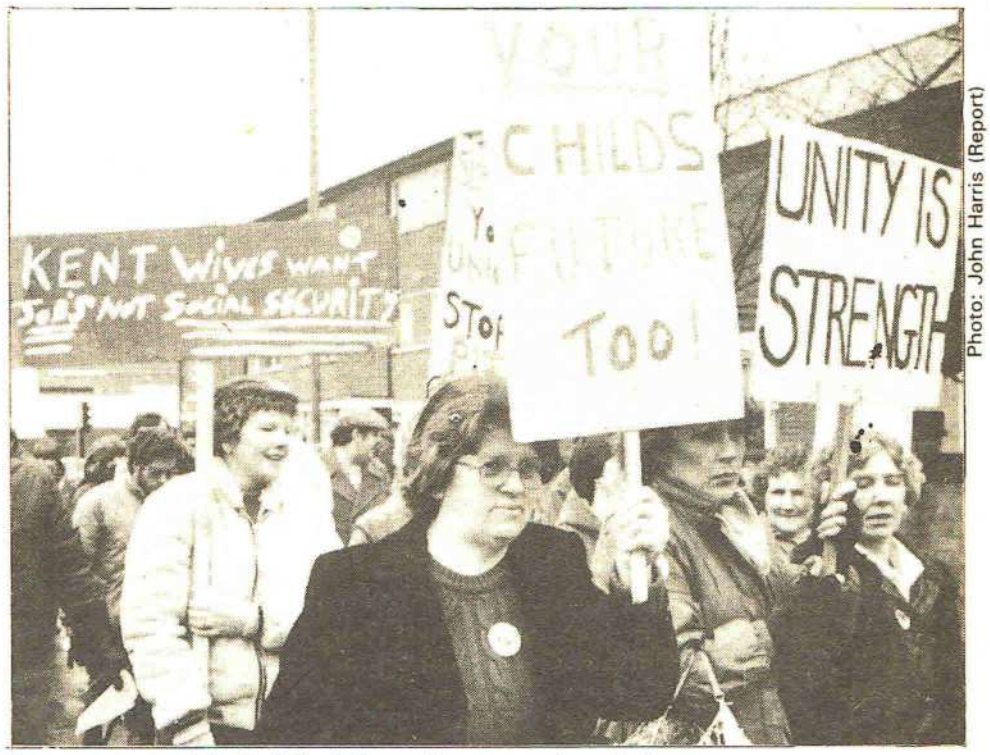


Photo: John Harris (Report)

Kent women march in Coalville, Leicester last year against pit closures.

'WE HAVE never had the luxury of being solid, but the feeling of those on strike is no less than in other areas. Our men came out in support of the view that they had no right to vote about another man's future. It was a conscious decision not to cross the picket line.

Right from the beginning, the strikers had no leadership. The "union men" went to work. They had to organise and rebuild their own infrastructure, find their own strike centre. NUM officials had nothing to do with the strike.

The women as well had no organisation behind us, to offer contacts and facilities. We had to push the men to get organised. The strike has brought us closer together. We help each other over the ups and downs, looking after the children etc.

Unlike in many areas, women would sit on the strike committee. We've been involved in making decisions, like where to picket, where to loggers (for fuel) etc. Our voice on the committee has been valued and respected.

What has to be realised is that these support groups didn't just pop up like mushrooms out of nowhere. Many of us were already working, active in the unions and so on. The best part of it is, we enjoy being involved. After the strike is over, I don't believe these women will disappear. I think they'll diversify and enter the various appropriate fields, get more involved in the unions, the Labour Party, the peace movement or other women's groups.

There's no need for a new women's movement to channel our energies, there's already plenty for us to do. We won't stop being active, we like it. We don't want to be a non-voice anymore. We have realised there's more to life than being a miner's wife.

What we've done in this strike, we can do in our own unions. Women in my area are saying, there's no reason why they should work for under £2 per hour any more. Over the years we have already had a campaign in my union to get women involved and revitalise the leadership. Women now dominate, not for the sake of it, but to ensure we have someone we can trust, who know what they're talking about, with the same purpose as us, and are not afraid to stick their necks out if neccessary.

There's no point changing men for women or one man for another if they are not going to carry out the task. If you're going to have leadership, it must be good leadership. What we want to do when the strike is over is help others in the same way as they've helped us. What we're aiming for is socialism.'

Rank and file campaign in Lancashire

THE OUTLOOK of Lancashire miners has been transformed irreversibly after 12 months of strike action. Lancashire was classified amongst the more moderate of NUM areas. Joe (Lord) Gormley was a typical product of the old-style leadership that ran this area.

In the preparation for the fight against pit closures before the overtime ban, not a single public meeting was called by the Lancashire executive. No literature was produced—no campaign mounted.

Even after the Yorkshire area declared for strike action, Cronton colliery near Liverpool was allowed to close without any fight. The EC even gave a dispensation for salvage work to be carried out by NUM members when the majority of Lancashire miners had joined the national strike. By this action they missed a tremendous opportunity to save the pit and to unify all the Lancashire miners in common struggle.

Rank and file members received no clear instructions from the beginning of the battle. Policy therefore varied from pit to pit. Some officials led their men across the picket lines—others argued that it was a matter of conscience for the individual.

In the first two weeks only two pits, Bold, and Sutton Manor declared for strike action. Yet by early May the overwhelming majority of Lancashire miners were on strike. This change was brought about by the determined attitude of rank and file mineworkers.

Flying pickets were organised by the striking pits. Assistance was given by miners from the North East and the majority were picketed out.

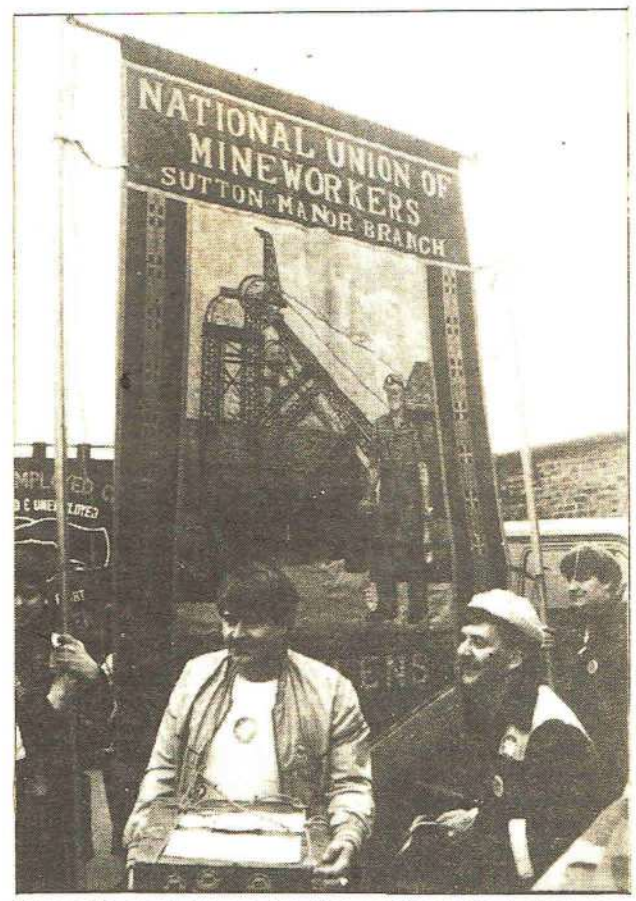
There was none of the violence against working miners that was broadcast by the media. On the contrary, it was the force of argument by the pickets that won the day.

Dialogue

The role of the police was to deliberately stop this dialogue from developing. In a number of pits the miners did not want to break the strike but were waiting for a lead from their branch and area officials. These miners welcomed the picket lines as it gave them a justification not to break the strike while they argued in their branches for support.

The area EC declared the strike official in May after the headquarters had been occupied by strikers demanding support from their leaders. Had the policy been declared from the beginning the right-wing officials in a number of branches, especially at Agecroft colliery, would not have succeeded in dividing the ranks.

Having declared the strike official the conduct of the strike was still left to the ranks to carry out. The organisation of the strike funds, food centres, support groups, was taken up pit by pit with no strategy from above. Nonetheless the determination to carry the fight to a conclusion led to a greater co-operation between the branches involved in the battle.



Sutton Manor strikers on the Liverpool Council rally last year collecting money. Only Sutton Manor and Bold collieries voted to come out in the first two weeks of the strike but by early May a majority of Lancs miners were on strike due to the rank and file campaign.

The NCB in the Lancashire Area (part of the Western Area) were in no doubt as to their strategy. Week after week letters were sent to the homes of strikers. Managers organised phone-rounds to undermine the battle. In response, the area leadership of the NUM have sent out two letters in 12 months to their members.

The NCB skillfully used the media to give lie after lie about the numbers returning to work, yet all the rallies and demonstrations to boost the morale of the strikers had to be called on local initiatives. This monumental task has created an army of new leaders.

Workers who prior to the strike may never have attended union meetings have become experienced advocates of trade unionism and socialism. Workers who may only have organised darts matches in the past have now learned to organise mass struggle.

All the officials elected in the past have been put to the test of battle. Some have passed that test; for those that have not there are now hundreds ready to take their place. Even those that returned to work because they did not have the strength to follow the battle through to its conclusion now know who they can rely on and this will have its effect in the changes that will follow on from the strike.

In the long run Thatcher and the NCB cannot win in Lancashire, as they have created out of adversity a potentially powerful, militant workforce who will never again accept that the union is for "union men" but is their organisation, rebuilt through struggle.

By Gerry Lerner

Rally defends youth rights

YTURC

THEY CAME from all over the country—a trainload of 400 from Liverpool, 300 from Wales, coachloads from the Midlands; one girl even hitch hiked down from Carlisle.

By *Militant* reporters

YTS trainees, young workers, school and college students, joined the Youth Trade Union Rights Campaign, top musicians Paul Weller and Billy Bragg, and Labour MPs and Young Socialists to protest at the Tories' plan to in effect make YTS compulsory, through withdrawing supplementary benefit for youth who reject the schemes.

Throughout the day, up to 5,000 youth came to the rally in London's Jubilee Gardens or joined the lobby of Parliament. Their anger was summed up by one of the speakers, **Gary Ironmonger**, a Cortonwood miner and LPYS National Committee member: "They think low pay, long hours and bad working conditions will demoralise us. Well, they're about to be hit by a bombshell!"

Throughout the day the hard hitting lyrics of Paul Weller and Billy Bragg were cheered, and all the speeches were well received. "YTS is supposed to be a bridgehead between school and work" **Dave Nellist MP** said, "yet 600,000 unemployed teenagers are chasing 9,700 jobs—61 teenagers for every vacancy! That's why Thatcher wants industrial conscription to fiddle the dole figures."

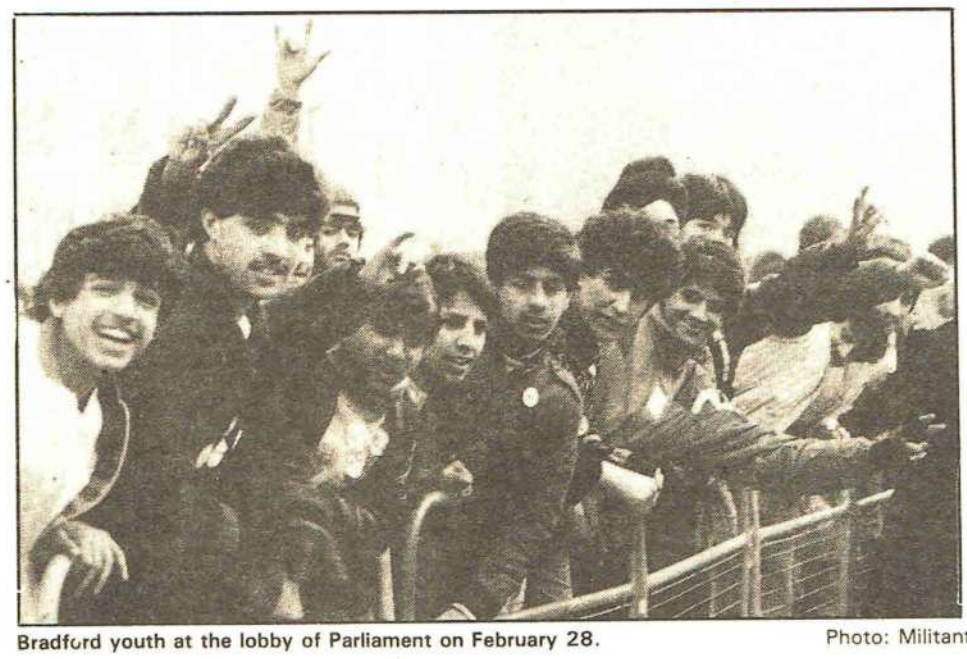
Dennis Skinner MP pledged his support to "get rid of Thatcher's Yosser-land. When millions of houses need to be built and thousands of brickies and plumbers are needing work, let's give them jobs. £20,000 million a year is being used to finance the heap of human misery on the dole queues."

GLC leader **Ken Livingstone** assured the rally that the council had no intention of using any youth labour scheme which is used to cut wages.

YTS pay

The GLC has increased its staff by 10%. They had wanted to pay YTS trainees £60 a week, but Normal Tebbit personally decided that the government would not co-operate.

Labour's youth representative on the NEC, **Frances Curran** said: "We are sick to death of poverty, of slums, of being told we're not prepared to work and that we're pricing ourselves out of work...We must build a movement a million strong to bring every young person, black or white, male or female, into the struggle for socialism."

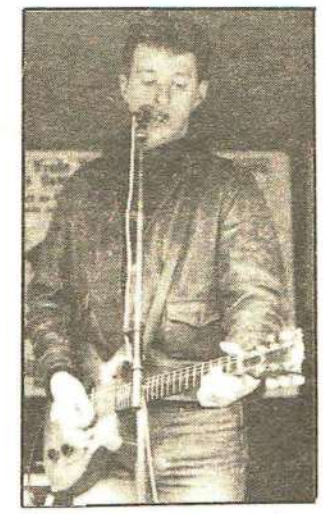


Bradford youth at the lobby of Parliament on February 28. Photo: Militant

ONE OF the highlights of the beginning of the lobby was the arrival of the bus from Bradford. The large contingent kept themselves amused on the way down by breakdancing on the top deck. Many of the Bradford lobbyists were students at Carlton Bolling school.

Last Friday, they walked out after teachers had refused to supervise school dinners as part of their campaign. The school had provided very poor quality food, seemingly in an attempt to split teachers and pupils, but a meeting had been held a few days before to explain the teachers case to school students.

Billy Bragg



Billy Bragg Photo: Militant

BILLY BRAGG, who played at the YTURC rally and is backing the campaign, told *Militant* "I'm really encouraged by today. I've been disappointed with the Labour Party in the past. Youth support can be taken for granted. We've got to build a bridge between youth and the Labour Party which is why I'm doing my tour."

Its a rip-off



Photo: Militant

Richard Thomas

RICHARD THOMAS from Wimbledon said:

"Although I'm working now I was on a Youth Opportunities Programme for a year.I was working in a TV shop. I got £35 a week—£10 more than usual YOP pay—but it was still cheap labour. I had to work many Saturdays, and somtimes up to 10pm delivering televisions. I even had to work on Sunday as well once. There was no training—I was making coffee and cleaning.

"Making these schemes compulsory is wrong. I read about the YTURC campaign in the *NME*. I wrote off and got petitions and leaflets. I leafletted my estate and took the petition to work, and my brother took one into school. I got my shop steward to put a poster up at work, and some of them from work will be here today."

DARREN GOLDING, 19, from Basildon Community Programme said: "The lobby was inspirational. It gave a feeling of unity. It is good to see people from other parts of the country that feel the same way, and are not prepared to stand for what the Tories are doing."

Threat to training



Laura and Jackie Photo:Militant

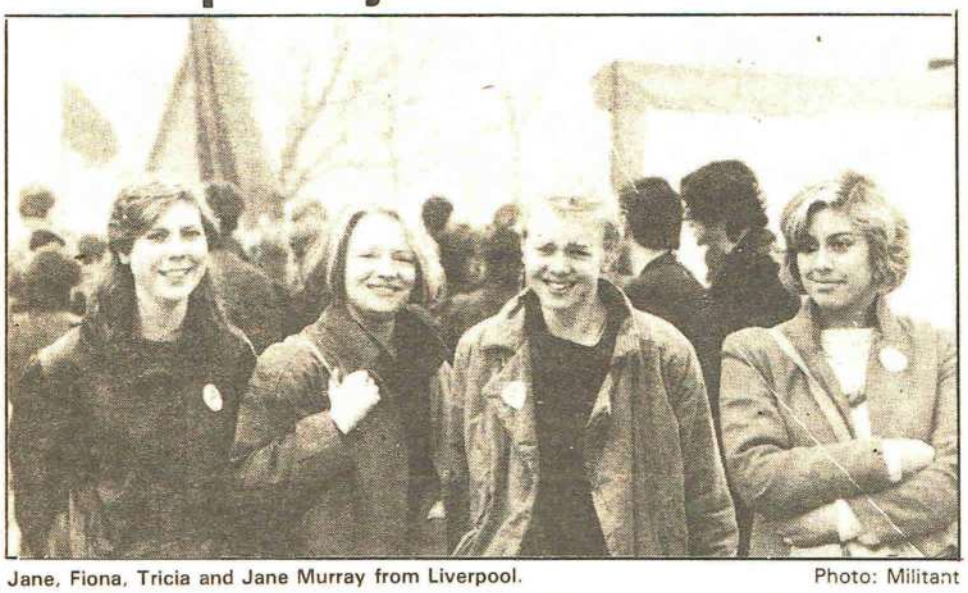
LAURA from Bromley and JACKIE from Wembley, both 17, joined the lobby as the Tories plans could hit their training as florists:

"We're at Tottenham Tech on a three year course. Next year, our third year, you are just meant to attend one day a week. In theory you get a job at a florists for the rest of the week, but the way things are that might not happen. Then if your supplementary benefit was cut off or you were forced onto a scheme, well thats two years training wasted."

Jackie: "As it is we don't get a grant or anything at present. I wrote off for a grant, an intermediate award, but they said I couldn't have one because my parents earnt too much. But they're both on social security!"

Laura: "At the moment we do four days at college and one day "work experience" at a florists. But we don't get paid for that one day's work. We do the same work as junior shop assistants, who are on about £35 a week, especially on busy days such as Valentine's day, but we don't get paid."

Liverpool—jobs non-existent



Jane, Fiona, Tricia and Jane Murray from Liverpool. Photo: Militant

THE TORIES already penalise youth who reject YTS programmes. Jane Murray from Liverpool said: "I left my scheme because it was just a waste of time. But all I got for the next eight weeks was £10, instead of £17 supplementary. They said it was a penalty for leaving the scheme." Jane's friends—Jane Carter, Fiona Slater and Tricia Nixon—added: "But £17 a week is pathetic. How are you meant to live on that? As for the chance of a job, they're non-existent. It's getting worse in Liverpool, not better."

Tories just help rich



The lads from Cardiff Photo: Militant

A CARLOAD of lads made their own way down from Cardiff's dockland. Brian Ahmed who took a day off work said; "There's nothing for young people. All the Conservatives think of is the rich people. That is what this rally is about. We've got to get up and do something about it." S. Driscoll said: "Thatcher's out to break the unions. The miners' strike shows that. She reckons if she can beat the miners, then the weaker unions will be easy meat."

CLARE from Tilbury said: "I went on a YTS scheme. Out of 15 of us, only two were told they'd definitely get a job, five others who went to Mobil were told there was no job for them while all the others were told nothing, just left hanging on hoping they'd get something."

There's already compulsion to go on YTS. Dave said: "I was forced onto it. I was told if I didn't I'd only get £7.50 a week supplementary benefit. My mum obviously wants some rent and told me to go on it, but now she doesn't agree with it.

"I do skivvying at the back of a DIY shop. I was told that going to college as part of the scheme would be nothing like school. But it is, it's all 'good morning' and 'sit down' etc. We learn about running our own business!"

You've got to get organised

JANE ASHCROFT from Bury said: "I work at Wimpey. There's no union and we're treated like shit. I'd never really thought there was much we could do. But on the coach coming down a bloke explained everything. I realised we could do something.

"I once worked for Eddie Shah on a YTS scheme. It was terrible. In the end I left. I'm definitely going to get involved. It's better than sitting around doing nothing."



Jane, Elaine and friend from Bury. Photo: Militant

ELAINE FLETCHER, also from Bury told *Militant*: "I used to work Saturdays as a waitress. I started at 9am and finished at 6pm. There was no break at all for dinner or tea. I got £6 a day. The boss even used to rob our tips.

"He lives in a big house with a posh car. It's been pretty good today—effective. We'll join up on Saturday in Bury precinct. We're being completely ripped off by the Tories. There's going to be no future for us at all if we don't get organised."

FIGHTING FUND

This week £2782

Area	Received	% of target achieved	Target
Eastern	604		2900
East Midlands	512		2800
Humberside	311		1850
London East	583		3250
London West	333		2150
London South East	552		2000
London South West	210		1600
Lancashire	238		1100
Manchester	462		2750
Merseyside	548		6000
Northern	446		4900
Scotland East	184		3000
Scotland West	346		3800
Southern	471		5000
South West	550		2000
Wales East	26		2450
Wales West	94		2150
West Midlands	762		4400
Yorkshire	758		5900
Others	504		10000
Total received	8494		70000

THIS WEEK, £2,782 came in to the Fighting Fund—almost double what was received in the first two weeks! The weekly total is going up, which is good, but we still need a push to reach the £5,000 a week to hit the National target.

A third of the way through the quarter, we have raised £8,494, but this is still short of the £20,000 we should have raised by now. We must keep on target. Help us by ensuring your area steps up its fund raising activities NOW!

Organise a mid-quarter social or Bazaar. Get sponsored events underway. Plan a local raffle or limited draw. But more importantly, get every reader making a donation. Already supporters have raised £20 from approaching Labour Party members in Whitehawk Brighton, £13 from Blackley supporters taking Appeal Sheets round to sympathisers, over £10 from a workplace raffle organised by a Stafford comrade, £7.50 from organising a collection amongst supporters at Littlehampton LPYS, and £2.50 from a Pub collection in South East London.

These are the examples to be followed. All our supporters and all our readers appreciate the necessity of donating their hard earned cash to our Fighting Fund if *Militant* is to continue being on the front line to defend their living standards and to fight for a better future for all workers.

Militant supporters were out in force at the YTURC rally with their rattling tins raising at least £350 for the FF. Over £38 was collected in one rattling tin just from collecting donations from sympathisers many of whom were prepared to donate 50p for a sticker, some even a £1!

Supporters were just filling the tins with all their change in exchange for a sticker. The fact that most of the people at the rally wanted one showed the widespread support *Militant* has amongst YTS trainees and LPYS supporters who were proud to wear it. Stick up your friends for *Militant*!

The small change donated to our funds, whether for a sticker or "extra's" collected on top of the price of a paper, will help us to make big changes in the future. The pennies as well as the £'s will help us buy the resources we need to make that more frequent *Militant* a reality. Bring that day nearer by continuing **your** much needed financial support.

An American supporter $36 (£32); a Readers Meeting in Burnley, after expenses, raised £30; collection from BIFU NEC members £21; workers British Gas, Easington £10; Jerry Woodley, Vauxhalls Ellesmere Port AUEW £10; A Horne Loughborough £5; Cynthia Cook Wallsend £5; Mr and Mrs Arnold OAP's Nottingham North CLP £4; J Murdoch Nottingham TSSA £4; Dust Depot Walthamstow £4; W Strachan Newcastle £3; Henrico Lavells Leyton LP £3; Helen Watson Bedford FE student £2; Andy Hodgkinson, Steve Bould and John White three striking miners from Wombwell each gave £1.50; collection Nottingham AUEW District Ctte £1.30; Peter Cocklin Chingford LPYS £1; Bob Batripp Show Steward Camberwell NUPE £1; S Pimblett Bath Student £1.30, Denise Myerson Liverpool City Council worker donates £1 every week and Mrs Allen Stevenage 75p.

By Kim Waddington

Marxist Daily Building Fund 1985

Total received since 1 January:

	£		
Eastern	1332	Scotland East	758
East Midlands	1620	Scotland West	297
Humberside	636	Southern	1416
London East	1500	South West	419
London West	1190	Wales East	776
London SE	1221	Wales West	935
London SW	260	West Midlands	706
Lancashire	381	Yorkshire	99
Manchester	166	National	985
Merseyside	777		
Northern	1543	Total	17018

THATCHER AND the Tories set out last year to break the NUM after years of planning and preparation. They have failed. But as the strike ends many workers will be drawing the conclusion that the working class also has to plan and prepare.

The year long strike of the miners must not be in vain. The need to arm the working class with the correct programme and strategy has never been clearer. If we want to defeat the Tories and achieve a socialist society the labour movement's fight has to be well prepared.

An essential part of our weaponry has to be a Daily Marxist paper putting forward the arguments for socialism, putting the workers' side to counter the lies of the Tory press. Just imagine the impact that could have had on support from other workers during the miners' strike.

But, as the bosses themselves know, a newspaper does not fall out of the skies. The bosses are prepared to subsidise loss making papers to put their propaganda across. A Marxist paper can not rely on such lavish subsidies. It can only depend on its supporters in the labour and trade union movement.

In response to our appeal for readers to donate a week's income to the Marxist Daily Building Fund we have recieved £7588 this week taking us to a total of £17,018. The miners have sacrificed a full year's pay to defend their jobs and communities. We are asking readers to sacrifice just one week's pay or dole or pocket money to help give the labour movement what will be an indispensable weapon.

This week supporters in Merseyside sent £334 including £100 from Mr and Mrs Curly. Readers in West Wales have sent a further £100 and from the West Midlands came £492.

Readers in the East Midlands are currently leading the way but other areas have promised lots of money on the way. Not a bad start but we are now expecting **every** area to flood us with money as this campaign reaches **every** reader.

We have laid the basis for a Daily with the move last November to new premises. We need to finish the preparation with a huge amount collected for the Marxist Daily Building Fund in 1985. We can't bribe readers with lavish prizes in Bingo competitions or the Portfolio game in the Rich Man's Sun. But send us a week's income now and you can be that much nearer to a real prize—a daily workers paper.

By Dave Campbell

ads

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

CASSETTE TAPES with two issues of *Militant* (one each side). Available fortnightly. £3.50 per quarter, £13 for year.

Now available on cassette: all centre page articles from issue 693–721. Send either seven blank C-90 cassettes or £6.30 payable to *Militant* Tapes, 18 Blandford Grove, Woodhouse, Leeds 2. Phone: (0532) 455936.

BADGES—1" button badges with 20th anniversary slogan 20p each (10p each for orders over 20)—1" button badge—'Militant' on coloured background (white/yellow/green/blue) 20p each. Enamel stud badges—"Militant for Labour and Youth" 75p each. All orders for badges must be accompanied with minimum 25p for p&p.

Cash with order. Cheques made payable to 'Militant' send to 3-13 Hepscott Road, London, E9 5HB.

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.



MAKE some Fighting Fund for your Area! Militant "No Slave Labour On YTS" stickers now available. Price: £1.50 for 100—but they must be sold for a donation! Send order to *Militant*, 3-13 Hepscott Rd, London E9. Cheques/Po's made payable to *Militant*.

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

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

New *Militant International Review*
Out now
Price 90p (inc p+p) from World Socialist Books, 3–13 Hepscott Road, London E9 5HB.

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

Militant Meetings

COLCHESTER Marxist Discussion Group. Theresa Mackay (Ipswich Labour Party; Chair, Ipswich Miners' Support Group) will open the discussion on: Which Way Forward for Labour? Sunday 10 March, 7.30pm. Upstairs room, Labour Club, Chapel Street North, Colchester. Further details; Tel. Mark Gallant, Colchester 45726.

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

SOUTHWARK *Militant* readers' meeting. "After the council lobby—how to defeat the Tories". Speakers John Bryan, councillors and UCATT, Liverpol council workers, and a *Militant* speaker. Tuesday 12 March, 7.30 pm. North Peckham Civic Centre, Old Kent Road SE15. All welcome.

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.

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.

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.

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

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

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

Portsmouth BLOC meeting on rate-capping. Room B, Central Library, Guildhall Square, Portsmouth. Tuesday 12 March 7.30 pm. Speakers: Henry Smith—Liverpool city Councillor, John Bloom—Councillor London Borough Hackney

Build sales of Militant

THE MINERS are going back to work, but their heads are held high. Thatcher has failed in her main aim—the NUM has not been broken, and with teachers and council workers beginning to take action, other groups have not been frightened off.

Militant too can be proud of its role in the strike. The best coverage from the mining areas, and at each stage well thought out suggestions on the best tactics to take the strike forward, were to be found in its pages.

Now is the opportunity to build on the good will and respect *Militant* has gained during the strike. NUM lodges should be urged to take bulk orders. Every miner and miners wife must be given the chance to read *Militant*. Better still ask them to sell it.

Redouble efforts

Militant sellers must redouble their efforts. Miners and other workers will be eager to read *Militant*'s clear analysis of the lessons of the strike. Every pit and Lodge meeting must be covered this week with the paper and the four page special supplement, which can also be sold separately over the next weeks. Sales can be organised from door to door around the miners villages and estates even during the day-time.

This last week as usual has seen many examples of how well the paper goes down. 500 copies were sold at the YTS Lobby of Parliament, not including those sold on the coaches on the way down. 50 were sold at the NOLS Conference. Good sales were also reported from the Labour Party Regional Conferences 35 at Yorkshire Conference, and 50 at London Conference.

Send in details of sales successes in your area, and keep on selling.

By Jeremy Birch

SUBSCRIBE!

BRITAIN & IRELAND	EUROPE (by air)	REST OF WORLD (by air)
13 issues . . . £5.00		
26 issues . . £10.00	26 issues . . £11.00	26 issues . . £16.00
52 issues . . £20.00	52 issues . . £22.00	52 issues . . £32.00

Name . . . . . .

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

Donate

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

Sell

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

Militant Miner

Four-page special on the lessons of the miners' strike by BRIAN INGHAM, *Militant* Industrial Editor. Price 5p if sold separately.

Miners defiant

THE MINERS' strike has drawn to a close. This has been one of the greatest events in the history of the labour movement.

The miners, their wives and families and the mining communities will always remember this struggle with pride. It will live on as an inspiration to workers everywhere. It will remain forever an example of the finest traditions of national and international class solidarity.

During this strike seamen have been sacked and rail workers victimised for their solidarity action. Workers all over the world have steadfastly supported the British miners. Unfortunately the labour movement in Britain did not possess a leadership with a class confidence, strategy and perspective to match the rank and file or the needs of this historic struggle.

This strike has been like a revolution. Mining communities have moved boldly to take hold of their own destinies. All the talent, initiative and flair within the working class has been unleashed. And like a revolution also, this strike has placed an indelible imprint on all classes in society. Nothing, politically, socially, economically, can ever again be the same.

Thatcher intended to deal a crushing blow to the miners that would demoralise trade unionists and take any serious struggle off the agenda for a generation. Cynics and faint-hearts within the labour movement will believe that this strategy has succeeded. Nothing could be further from the truth. She wanted an industrial Falklands, a short sharp victory. She got a strike that lasted a year, cost £7,000m and will have a lasting effect on class relationships.

The miners have suffered a defeat but they are not broken. After a year of hardship and sacrifice miners have decided to march back to work. They will regroup and replenish their energies. The fight for a general amnesty for sacked miners will continue. So will the fight to save pits. Those managers within the NCB who imagine that the miners will bow down before arbitrary and dictatorial rule will learn a salutory lesson.

But above all miners will now begin to turn to political action. It has been estimated that individual miners have lost up to £9,000 during the strike. In return a priceless political awakening has been gained.

In this strike the state threw off its liberal mask. The police were mobilised as a strike-breaking force. Thousands of miners were arrested on trumped up charges. Tory magistrates and judges imposed vindictive bail conditions, fines and jail sentences. Mining communities have had it burned into their consciousness that the state is not independent, it is a *class* instrument in the hands of big business.



In the mining areas this strike has rekindled the finest traditions of working class solidarity and has born a new generation of class fighters firmly and irrevocably committed to the ideas of class struggle and socialism. There is a burning hatred for Toryism and a grim determination among miners, at some stage in the future, to settle accounts with the Tories.

The whole of society has been fundamentally affected by this conflict. It has acted as a catalyst, deepening and intensifying the unbridgeable polarisation between the classes. The abyss between the 'north and south' has widened. The 'north' is shifting 'south'.

Struggles to come

Moods of hopelessness and despair have been transformed into hatred for the Tories. Workers who voted for Thatcher are now adamant they will never again vote for a Tory government.

On the industrial front, even before the strike had concluded, teachers were moving into action. Local authority workers are preparing to move, particularly on the issue of ratecapping and government cuts. Civil Servants are in the first stages of their pay campaign. Even if, in the aftermath of the miners' strike, workers in the wider trade union movement draw back from struggle, such a mood will only be temporary.

Thatcher may attempt to lure the TUC leaders into discussions and further class collaboration following their disgraceful role in this dispute. 'New Realism' is already being regurgitated. The trade union leaders would undoubtedly leap at the chance to re-enter the corridors of power.

Any such cosy relationships will be blown apart. Where the miners have travelled in the course of the past year, miners again, and millions of other workers will be forced to follow in the years that lie ahead.

This is not 1926 when the miners suffered a crushing defeat. That was the *end* of two decades of struggle. Today the miners and the trade union movement retain enormous strength and the strike marks a decisive milestone—the *beginning* of a whole new era of intensified class struggle.

This attack upon the miners was dictated above all by the parlous state of British capitalism. Big business intends to heap its crisis on to the backs of the working class. The problems of British capitalism are intensifying.

The temporary international boomlet is drawing to a close. The next recession once again will have savage consequences for British industry. On the basis of capitalism there is no way out.

The irreversible decline of British capitalism is producing a crisis inside all the main political parties. Thatcher, the supposed victor of this dispute, will rapidly face new hostilities, this time from within the ranks of her own party.

Thatcher undermined

That wing of the Tory party supporting Thatcher believe it is necessary to continue with the same unyielding policies which put four million workers on the dole. There are others for whom the ex-Tory Prime Minister Lord Stockton spoke recently in the first televised House of Lords debate. This wing is fearful of the political earthquake which is being prepared at present, especially among the youth.

According to the latest polls a huge majority of people think that social divisions have been increased, that youth will move in the direction of "revolutionary violence". This strike has galvanised such a bitterness and unrelenting resentment against the Tories that Thatcher's victory is pyrrhic.

Individual Tory MPs fear losing their seats. Labour is already ahead in the polls. Despite the role in this strike of Neil Kinnock and other right wing Labour leaders, with the abyss opening up between the classes in Britain, it is now becoming more and more likely that Labour will win the next election. The political programme and witch-hunting activities of the Labour right wing are the only obstacles to that victory.

Miners, youth and workers everywhere should turn as never before towards the Labour Party in order to ensure the earliest possible victory of a Labour government pledged to end the anarchy of capitalism and introduce a thorough-going socialist programme to meet the needs of the mass of ordinary working people.

Militant has been proud to fight shoulder to shoulder with miners and their families in the course of this struggle. Support for our Marxist ideas is now widespread throughout the mining communities. Hundreds of miners have become committed supporters. We appeal to all miners: join with *Militant*; fight for socialism.

MILITANT 8 March 1985

Historic struggle -

THE MINERS have long been looked upon as the Brigade of Guards of the British Working Class. Thatcher's intention was to break the back of the NUM, take the struggle in the pits off the agenda for a generation and in doing so shatter the fighting spirits of the wider labour and trade union movement.

The inability of the union leaders to mount an effective campaign in support of ASLEF, the NGA and the GCHQ civil servants, gave the Tories the confidence to attack. As Thatcher is fond of repeating: weakness invites aggression.

This battle was planned carefully, over years by the Tories. The Ridley Report, written while the Tories were in opposition, laid down the blue-print for battle with the miners.

Coalstocks were built up. Contingencies were made for the mass importation of coal. Potential scab haulage firms were lined up. An estimated £10bn was spent on switching power stations to dual coal and oil firing and on developing nuclear power. Social security payments to strikers were attacked and the police were deployed as a national strike-breaking force. The Tories prepared for war. Thatcher had defeated General Galtieri. This time she hoped to inflict a rapid, humiliating defeat upon the miners.

The Tories had learnt from the bruising experiences of '72 and '74. The attitude of miners and their families and of workers throughout the whole of the labour movement will now be: 'We will study carefully all the lessons of this strike'. This will be the very best possible preparation for all future battles that will be forced upon us by the Tories and the parasitic class that they represent.

There is one vivid, central lesson from this dispute which activists within the labour and trade union movement will ignore at their peril, that is the need to thoroughly rearm the working class with a fighting, socialist leadership.

The crisis of the leadership within the labour movement has never been placed in sharper focus. As the general staff of an army of millions of organised workers, the leaders of the trade unions possess unrivalled potential authority. However, once again, they either refused or were simply incapable of using that authority to assist the miners.

The lame excuse from right and left was "we cannot deliver" but the support of the rank and file could not be questioned. All that was lacking was the lead.

Millions of pounds were collected for the miners. Support groups mushroomed everywhere. Even in the last days of the strike, a poll revealed that over 40 per cent of trade unionists supported the miners—despite the lack of leadership and the poison of the press.

In the first months of the strike the Tories moved gingerly, fearing that one wrong move, one provocation could provoke all-out struggle by the trade unions in support of the miners.

At any stage in the dispute even a hesitant call from the trade union leaders would have evoked an earth-shattering response. But the right-wing leaders stood aloof, they preferred to act as neutral arbiters rather than as the class leaders that this decisive struggle and their positions within the labour movement demanded.

As every device to defeat the struggle failed, so the Tories increasingly turned for support to the trade union and labour leadership.

The right-wing journal *The Economist* commented in the run up to the September TUC that: "The TUC may be an ironic weapon for Mrs Thatcher to wave in the face of the union militants, but at present it is the best she has".





But the mass pressure of the rank and file turned this situation totally around. It was Hammond, Sirs and the right-wing strike-breakers who were isolated. Other right and centre unions came to the rostrum to pledge support to the miners. Gavin Laird, of the AUEW, said that there was a "new situation" now that the miners had "finally come to the TUC". Had the miners come to the TUC earlier, undoubtedly they would have faced the same fate as the civil servants of GCHQ or the train drivers of ASLEF.

Ned Smith, the now ex-director of labour relations at the NCB commented that the failure of the Trades Union Congress to deliver "total support" for the miners was the turning point in the attitude of the government.

What of the left-wing leaders of the trade unions? Without the pressure of the rank and file, the right-wing leaders of the TUC would have attempted to organise a surrender to the Tories months ago. The left genuinely wished to help the cause of the miners.

They simply lacked the most elementary strategy, tactics and methods to do so, and the necessary confidence and faith in their own rank and file. This strike demonstrates sharply the importance of theory and of an understanding of perspectives for those who have leading positions in the labour movement. The infection of "new realism" had even spread through most of the left leaders. Despite the example of the miners and their families and all the magnificent support, they still simply did not believe their own members would respond if called upon to fight.

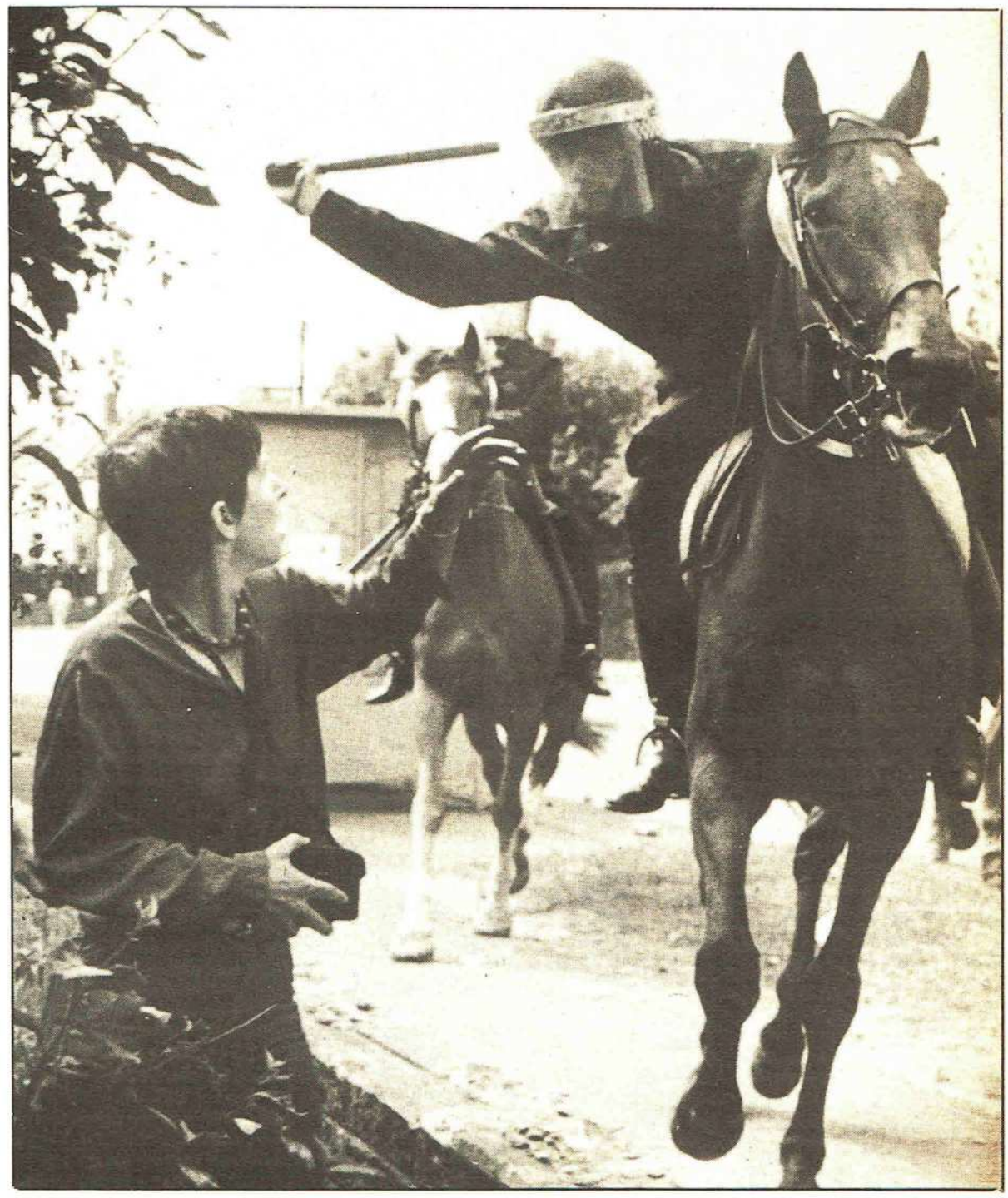


Photo: John Harris (IFL)

This famous picture from the battle at Orgreave coke works catches two major elements of the strike: the new violence of the police throughout the strike and a turning point for the mass picketting campaign

The leaders of the left-wing trade unions, as a minimum, should have stood together and organised alongside the miners for a one-day general strike.

This strike demonstrates sharply the importance of theory and of an understanding of perspectives for those who have leading positions in the labour movement.

The rank and file, even of the right-wing unions would have joined in enthusiastically, and the whole future course of this strike would have completely changed. They should have fought this policy through the TUC. The miners had already battled for months. Nevertheless the left and the TUC as a whole merely gave a general call for the blacking of coal and coal substitutes. Then little in practice was done to implement this call. Bureaucratically, even in the left unions, the campaign amounted to a series of circulars, which were often sat upon or ignored by unsympathetic local officials.

There were honourable exceptions. Seamen blacked coal throughout. Railway workers in the NUR and ASLEF stood firm despite victimisations of their own members. Even in these two industries, however, little was done by the leaders to link up in action with the miners.

Seamen face a range of acute problems. In the course of this strike, the privatisation of Sealink went through. A campaign by the leadership for all-out strike action alongside the miners could have saved not only Sealink but would have massively enhanced the struggle of the miners.

Rail workers face the closure of workshops, attacks on their pay and cuts in services. Sixty per cent of all freight carried on the trains is coal, everywhere on the railways there is a deep understanding that the interests of miners and railworkers are indissolubly interconnected.

Thatcher personally intervened in negotiations over railway pay to ensure that the offer from the railways board was sufficient to attract the railway union leaders and avoid a strike of railway workers together with miners.

With a clear lead from the top, railway workers would have moved as a body alongside their brothers in the mining industry. The rail unions and the NUM were the two left wing arms of the Triple Alliance. A united movement of rail and coal workers would have altered completely the attitudes in the steel industry, leading at least to a strengthening of solidarity action and possibly united action across three industries.

The Transport and General Workers Union, the largest left union of all, has the capacity in a whole number of industries to cripple the economic life of British capitalism.

Shamefully, the powerful machine of the Transport and General Workers Union was never decisively turned towards the miners' strike.

Dockers refused to handle coal. As a result two disputes flared up. The Tories stumbled into the first. The second was cynically and carefully provoked.

When the dockers came out, the worst fear of the capitalist class had been realised; another strong group of workers was fighting side by side with the miners. Frenzied talk of a 'State of Emergency' flared. The Tories were reeling.

-hard lessons



Photo: John Harris (IFL)

But instead of openly and boldly fighting to link the dockers and the miners' strike together, the leaders of the TGWU presented the dockers' dispute as an entirely separate affair. They denied that the strikes were political when clearly, as with the miners strike, they were cynically provoked by the Tory government.

This was played upon by the media. Many dockers were led to believe they were somehow being dragooned into all-out strike action without an honest explanation of what was at stake.

Docks and BL

The demand should have come forward for an extention of the Dock Labour Scheme to all docks. Joint strike committees of dockers and miners should have been formed to campaign for wider solidarity.

Other moments occured where, with a clear lead from the top, the mass of the Transport and General Workers Union could have been together in action.

One moment stands out from all the rest. In November, following the strike at BL, the TGWU was fined £200,000 under the Tories' anti-trade union legislation. The TGWU executive's reaction was opposition, with but folded-arms.

A special delegate conference should have been convened and the call should have gone out for a systematic campaign to organise all-out strike action throughout the T&G in defence of the union and with the miners.

The leadership refused to pay the money, refused to go to court, then they simply sat back passively while the sequestrator plundered TGWU funds.

The lesson is: left-wing leaders are generally closer and far more subject to the pressure of the rank and file. But in fighting to elect left-wing leaders in all the unions, activists should ensure that these leaders are selected on their proven record and on a clear socialist programme which meets the needs of the rank and file. The left must demonstrate a clear willingness to campaign and mobilise the ranks of the union to fight on such decisive issues.

We must ensure that all trade union officials are subject to thorough democratic checks and that in all unions democratic Broad Left campaigning groups are built involving the widest cross section possible. Broad Lefts must organise and channel pressure from below. The Broad Left Organising Committee (BLOC) which already covers over twenty unions also now assumes enormous importance.

Despite the failure of the leaders of the labour movement to organise mass solidarity action the sheer will to win, the determination, the courage, initiative and loyalty to the union of the mass of miners nationally, carried this strike forward.

The miners were also armed with leaders, especially in the person of Arthur Scargill, the union's president, which proved—despite the most filthy personal abuse and character assassination, to be unbreakable. No doubt these leaders were buoyed up and inspired by the fierce loyalty of the rank and file. But the rank and file were also inspired, day after day, by the unbending leader they saw at the centre of their fight.

This strike shows also, however, that by itself, an unbending will is insufficient. Clear strategy and tactics and timing are also decisive and these were not always shown even by the best NUM leaders.

The campaign to turn the authority of the NUM within the wider working class into concrete solidarity action was, in the main conducted by discussions and debates with other union leaders, rather than by than clear and precise calls for action, backed up by carefully organised campaigns for support involving the whole of the NUM.

Week after week, *Militant* argued the need for a one-day general strike. The TUC refused to live up to their historic responsibilities. The left trade union leaders were consoling each other that their members wouldn't struggle.

24-hour general strike

The NUM should have named the day for a 24-hour general strike, if necessary over the heads of the TUC leaders. They should have demanded open support from all other left unions. Conferences and rallies should have been organised in every area of shop stewards and union activists.

Miners should have gone into factories and workplaces to speak to mass meetings. Factory gate meetings should have been organised. Such a campaign would have brought about the biggest united day of action seen in Britain for generations.

In the run-up to the TUC, *Militant* argued for the NUM to name a date two or three weeks after the TUC. Such a call for general strike action would have set in train an unstoppable process. Activists throughout industry would have begun immediately to organise support.

Pressure from below would have forced the left trade union leaders to line up with the NUM. The TUC itself would have been forced to add its authority to this action.

Instead, the NUM complied with the idea of more general calls for support. A resolution from the furniture trades union call for a day of solidarity action was withdrawn from the agenda.

Militant continued week after week to argue the case for the NUM to boldly seize the initiative by naming the date for a one day general strike.

After the Christmas period, in the last weeks of the strike we believe that the tide of events could have turned dramatically if this call had been made, along with the neccessary campaign for support.

NACODS and Notts

When the lessons of this strike are analysed, the attention of NUM members will centre also on the Nottinghamshire NUM and NACODS. It is to the eternal shame of the leaders of these organisations that in the gravest moment in the history of their industry they stood aside from the fight.

The rank and file should not be blamed. With different leadership they would have joined this battle.

81% of NACODS members for strike action. The NACODS leaders, with the Tories in dread of a total mining stoppage—negotiated their own separate deal.

The government conceded an independent review body as a further stage in the colliery review procedure. The NACODS leaders then left the scene of struggle. Ironically, the subsequent refusal of the NCB to grant this deal to the NUM completely discredits the whole basis of the agreement won by NACODS, whose members must work alongside NUM members.

In the wake of this strike miners must step up the battle for one union within the industry. Joint discussion committees should be initiated from below to fight for one union on democratic lines.

In preparation for the battles of the future, miners nationally will also have to turn their attention to the issue that is now of critical importance: the campaign to win the ordinary Nottingham miners away from their treacherous scab leaders begin. *(Continued on page 10)*

A programme for the NUM

- Amnesty for all sacked miners.
- Build a mass, democratic and open Broad Left.
- Establish youth committees at lodge, area and national levels.
- Maintain and link up the women's support groups.
- Regular election of all officials—to be paid the average wage of face workers.
- Open NCB books to trade union inspection.
- Cancellation of NCB debts.
- Immediate programme of full and adequate investment in all pits and workships as identified by the NUM.
- Maintain every mining job. No redundancies. No selling jobs. No manning losses.
- Share out the work round the pits. A four-day week for all miners with no loss of pay.
- NUM veto on all pit closures—no closure of so-called 'uneconomic' pits.
- A living basic wage for all miners with automatic increases to compensate for all increases in the cost of living.
- Workers' control and management of the NCB. The board should consist of one-third elected by the workers in the industry through the unions, one-third elected through the TUC to represent the working class at large, and one-third to be appointed by the government.
- Nationalisation under workers' control and management of the mining industry suppliers and distributors.
- Integrated fuel policy under workers' control and management.
- An integrated plan for all nationalised industries.
- Drive out the Tories.
- Bring to power at the earliest possible moment a Labour government committed to socialism.
- Nationalisation under democratic workers' control of the top 200 monopolies with compensation based upon proven need.



BLOC
BROAD LEFT ORGANISING COMMITTEE

Appeal to Miners

COME TO OUR CONFERENCE

2nd NATIONAL CONFERENCE
SATURDAY 23 MARCH 1985, 11am
Manchester Free Trade Hall,
Peter Street, Manchester 1

Free to miners

The conference will discuss the fight against trade union legislation in the wake of the miners' strike and the campaign against rate-capping. Help to build a fighting leadership for the trade unions.

Notify delegates from union bodies to: G. Williamson, 11 Sutton Place, London E9.

Militant Miners special

Continued from page nine

In our opinion this fight is best conducted within the framework of one united organisation.

There is every reason for confidence that this fight will be won. Yorkshire was at one time a right-wing area of the union. By a systematic campaign and drawing on the experience of struggle the left in Yorkshire won a majority.

There is no fundamental difference between Nottingham and Yorkshire. Nottingham miners have even in the recent past elected left-wing leaders. But those left-wing leaders never worked in a systematic fashion to organise with the best activists among the rank and file once and for all to break the grip of the right-wing in Nottinghamshire.

One-third of the miners in Nottingham came out at the height of this strike. With different leadership the mass of the Nottingham miners would have stood shoulder to shoulder with miners nationally. The fight must now begin for that leadership.

A small Broad left has existed within the National Union of Mineworkers for many years, the Miners Forum. It is this body that helped to get Arthur Scargill elected as President of the NUM. Yet the mass of young miners in Nottingham and other coalfields have never heard of its existence. Membership has always been strictly limited. It has been made up of left-wing coalfield leaders with a few handpicked left leaders of different lodges and branches.

A mass national campaigning broad left within the NUM involving the widest possible layers of those who have fought in this struggle is now essential. It is needed above all in Nottingham. No praise is too high for those in Notts and other right wing areas who stayed loyal to the strike. They must now be mobilised in an NUM Broad Left.

Re-win Notts

We believe that if such a body had existed in Nottingham over the last few years, then at area level and in every pit, the fight would have been taken to the right wing. Their whole position would have been undermined. Left leaders from other coalfields should have gone into Nottinghamshire to add their experience and support to those leading the campaign to break the right. The left leaders, instead, were over sensitive to criticism that they were infringing the territorial rights of the local branches. Generally speaking, therefore, they stayed outside Nottinghamshire.

If this attitude had changed in the months leading up to the strike, if the right wing leaders had been put on the spot in mass meetings as part of a mass national campaign, Nottingham miners could have been prepared for action in this battle.

Once the strike had started the winning of support of Notts became vital. The length of the battle and the support from other workers depended upon the outcome. It is widely agreed now that lack of a clear lead led to certain tactical mistakes.

The younger miners of Yorkshire were determined to win the support of their fellow mineworkers in Nottingham. They simply assumed that the longstanding tradition of the miners and the wider labour movement of not crossing picket lines would be adhered to.

In Nottingham, however, and in other right-wing coalfields, the leaders found one way and then another to cloud the issues, once advising miners to cross picket lines, then calling for strike. This confusion added to doubt, uncertainty, frustration and anger.

A wall of bitterness grew between striking miners and those, particularly in Nottingham, still at work.

We believe that most of these problems could have been avoided if the leadership, particularly in the Yorkshire area, had sent out picketing teams in an orderly manner, discussing carefully with each group of pickets the need to go—armed with leaflets—to discuss in a fraternal and comradely fashion with their fellow workers, to speak with confidence to mass meetings and canteen meetings, to convince the Nottingham miners that their fight was that of the national union.

The early picketing failed to win solid support in Nottinghamshire. We then argued for a mass drive into Nottinghamshire by the national union.

The debate then began to rage: should there be a ballot? Traditionally, miners have always had ballots for national industrial action.

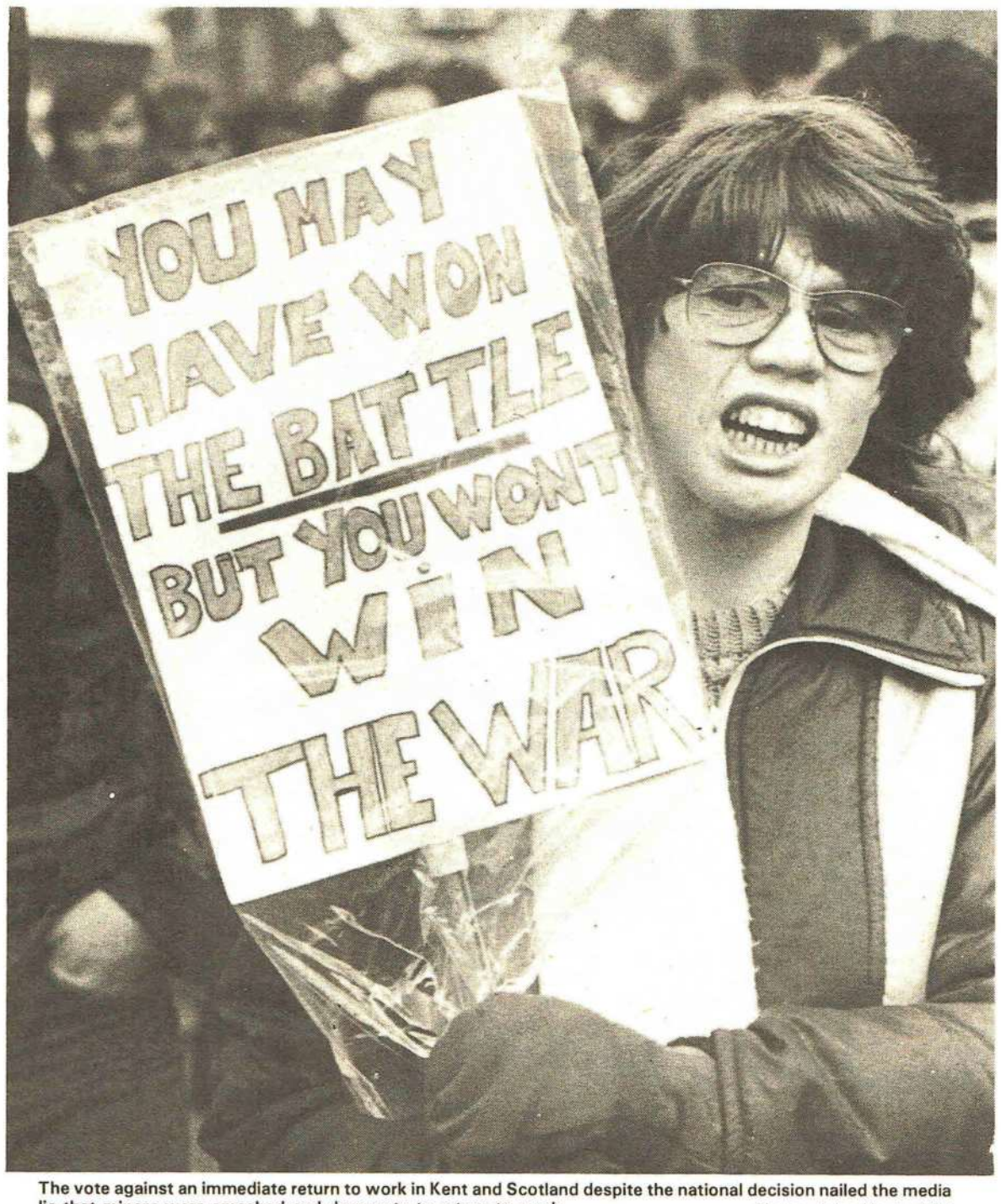
Ballot

The right-wing, who had broken and ignored ballots over the incentive bonus scheme, now became super-democrats.

Our attitude to these questions is: what tactics secure the greatest unity?

In the last months of 1983 and in January or February of last year a *national* campaign for a *national* strike would have won a majority in a ballot. The NUM lefts—wrongly we believe—lacked the confidence of a ballot victory because of previous setbacks and so decided upon an area-by-area "rolling strike" strategy.

The Monktonhall dispute, the spontaneous strike against disciplinary action in Yorkshire, the Staffordshire strike against the scab winding men and the solid support for the overtime ban were all symptoms of the mood that was significantly hardening nationally. With a proper, thorough campaign, a ballot before the action could have been successful.



The vote against an immediate return to work in Kent and Scotland despite the national decision nailed the media lie that miners were smashed and desperate to return to work. Photo: John Harris (IFL)

Once the fight became entrenched, we argued for trying to build a majority in action. The mass of miners had already voted with their feet. The need was then to try and build and strengthen that unity in action, as rapidly and as energetically as possible, and then turn out swiftly to other workers.

But, once these methods had failed to win the majority of Notts miners for action, then in our opinion, a ballot should have been called. A national conference was held. A majority for a ballot was altered from 55% to 50%.

There was an air of expectation that a ballot was to take place. Had a ballot been organised then, as the later NACODS vote indicated—a massive majority would have been in favour. Notts miners—even if a majority in Notts had been against—at that stage undoubtedly would have joined the strike. The ballot was not called. Miners turned their attention to winning the strike, knowing their efforts would continually be undermined by the working Notts miners.

This strike has seen the radicalisation of whole communities. Within the NUM, the young lions—as they were dubbed—burst into this strike with incredible courage and energy. They and the youth around them in the pit villages are the vanguard of a social explosion of which the Tories are terrified. They have rekindled the very finest traditions of struggle and solidarity.

As long ago as June, *The Times* was to comment that ironically: "the dispute that some politicians hoped would break of the power of the NUM has actually created new cadres for the future". In the course of the next few years the youth, the vanguard of this strike, will move to the head of the union in the lodges/branches, the areas, and at national level. This battle, its lessons and bitter disappointments will have prepared the way for a new leadership and for more struggles, and victories.

Of equal importance and significance has been the activity of miners' wives and women generally in support of this strike. Their role has not been limited to the kitchen, important though this activity was to the life of the strike. Women's support groups have been active on the picket lines, speaking at meetings, public collections and every other aspect of the strike.

The isolation of women in the home has traditionally laid them open to the pressures of the media and manufactured 'public opinion'. They have also suffered the unrelieved pressure which any strike brings. When the rent can't be paid, the kids' pocket money dwindles, the money problems mount up and hardship bites. It generally tends to hit hardest and most constantly the women, whose day to day lives are most tied to those responsibilities.

The women of the mining communities have fought alongside their husbands, brothers, fathers and boyfriends, seeing the strike from a shared class viewpoint. They have become fighters and leaders. The NUM and the wider labour movement must ensure that they continue to play a full and active part within its ranks.

Miners and their families now have a deep political awareness forged in the heat of bitter struggle. Many thousands will turn to political activity and to the Labour Party.

They will work to recreate this party as an instrument to free the working class from the inhumane anarchy of capitalism. The NUM has been one of the foundation stones upon which the Labour Party rested.

Miners will never forget how this deep, abiding loyalty was repaid during this dispute by Neil Kinnock and the other Labour leaders.

Only once did Neil Kinnock find the time to visit a picket line. Rallies were organised to lift the spirits of the miners and prepare for the next stage of struggle. After negotiations had been broken off by the Coal Board, Neil Kinnock was too busy to attend. When the full weight of the law was being thrown against individual miners, he advised meek compliance with the capitalist courts and the decisions of Tory judges.

If the pioneers of the trade unions and the labour movement had taken that attitude, there would be no trade union movement or Labour Party! In Moscow, Kinnock even poured scorn on the idea of suffering among miners and their families. And, in the run-up to the TUC, he lined up with those working to block wide generalised industrial action in support of the miners.

Finally, at the end of this dispute, with an amnesty for sacked miners becoming such a burning issue, Kinnock and other Labour leaders lined up with the Tories against a general amnesty, giving credence to the idea that miners were violent criminals who deserved to be sacked and face a lifetime on the dole.

The role of these Labour leaders will never be forgotten or forgiven by miners. The rule book of the NUM contains the commitment: "To join with other organisations for the purpose of, and with a view to the complete abolition of capitalism". After the bitter experiences of the last twelve months miners will increasingly turn to the Labour Party to fight for a leadership that will carry the struggle for socialism through to a victorious conclusion.

BECOME A Militant SUPPORTER!

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

Name .....

Address .....

International Women's Day

Women's role in pit strike

ALL OVER the world, women have been involved in the struggle to defend and improve their own and their families' lives. From nearly every continent there are reports of strikes, marches and demonstrations.

Lynne Faulkes

In Britain, the crucial role of women in the miners' strike has been acknowledged everywhere.

This has not been just supportive in defence of mens jobs, as some cynics have claimed. The miners' wives have proved that far from their place being in the home, they have been a central part of the strike itself.

As well as being in the forefront of picketing, speaking at meetings and raising finance, they have also kept the strike going through kitchens and welfare centres; in many cases their determination alone has kept the miners out.

Improvement

For the first time, many wives have seen beyond their own four walls, and have proved the necessity of involving women as an intergral part of the labour movement. This must be kept up when the strike is over, to help them cope with the adjustments needed in getting back to "normal" life, and also to use the energies and tenacity shown during the strike, to help revitalise the unions and the Labour Party.

This is even more so when unemployment is high and services have been cut, pressure to stay at home, becoming totally involved in caring for the family-(the sick, handicapped and elderly as well as children)-with no apparent time or energy for activities in the labour movement.

But at the same time, the impossibility of coping with all the problems at home-jobs, housing, education, health, transport, leisure facilities and places for under-5s, low pay and so on, mean that many women and men are forced to take action to defend and improve living conditions. This inspite of the backward, restraining influence of the family, played on by the Tories and the media.

But women in particular have not always been restricted to the home. In wartime, women were positively encouraged to work and creches and nurseries were set up to help them.

Today's key institutions, the family, private property and the state, were once non-existent. They developed at a certain period of history as a result of specific social and economic conditions, and will survive only so long as those conditions continue to exist.

Need not profit

In an economy based on satisfying need not profit, the family would not be a burden to the working class, and relations with children and each other would be a pleasure. There is nothing more guaranteed to breed frustration and isolation, lack of confidence and apathy today, if men and women are allowed to retreat into the home, with its never-ending problems and endless housework.

For most people, the main problem in getting active in the labour movement is the responsibility of the family. Demands for equal opportunities are meaningless without a parallel provision of good childcare and adequate maternity and paternity rights. To ease the problems of illness, we need to guarantee good social health care and help for the disabled and elderly.

We also need first class community restaurants and laundries. We have seen excellent examples of this during the miners' strike, with the soup kitchens—just imagine what would be possible with first class facilities and food! So we can concentrate on the development of ourselves and society, instead of being diverted by pressing social problems, we also need decent housing, education and transport.

These demands are realisable in a socialist society, when the resources, talents and abilities of men and women can be used to benefit all. With the tremendous advancement of productive forces, with all the advantages of technology and industry, men and women would be able to fully develop personally, free from economic burdens.

The labour and trade union movement is the only force in society capable of radically improving the position of working class men and women. It is crucial that the labour movement responds to these needs. Taking up the struggle for economic and social emancipation is a vital aspect of transfoming the Labour Party and the trade unions into fighting organisations capable of carrying through the socialist change of society, both here and throughout the world.

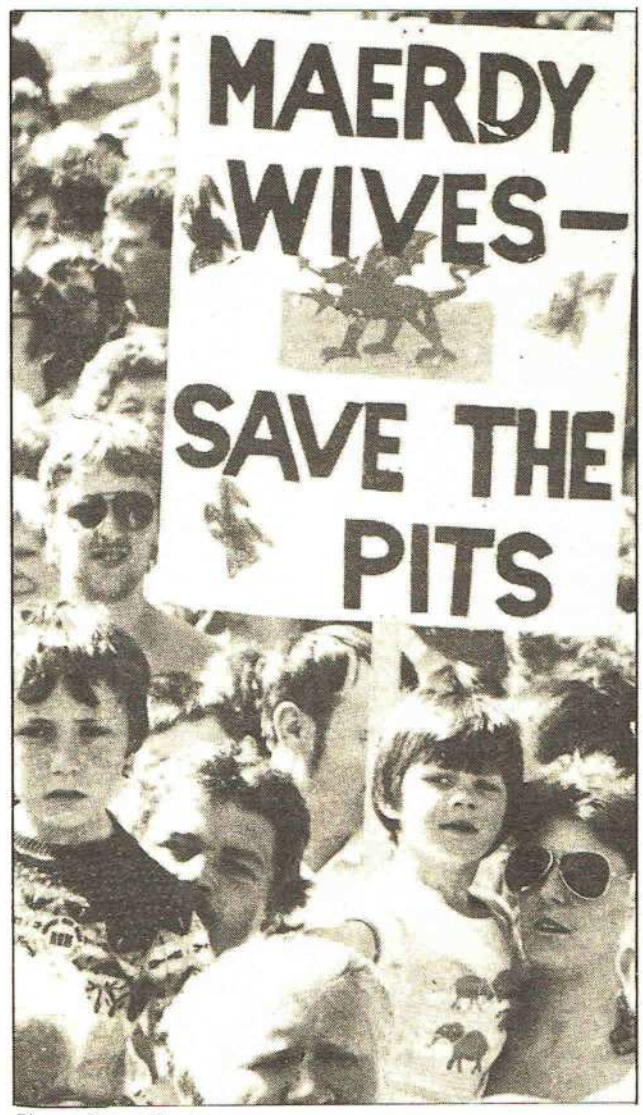
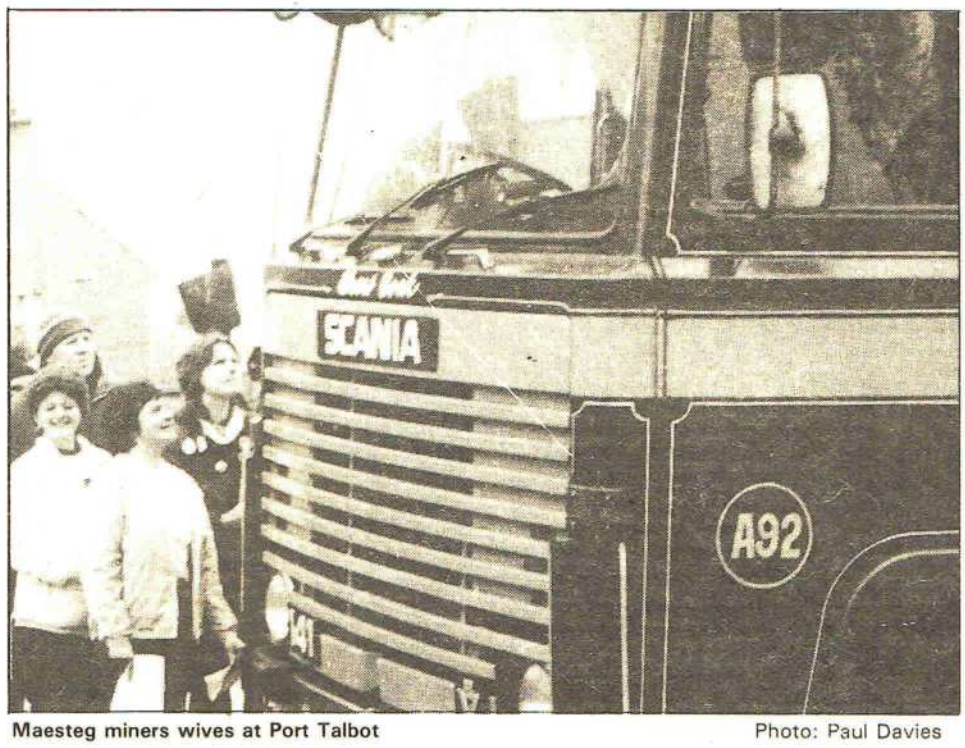


Photo: Dave Sinclair

World wide battles

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S Day, 8 March, would be best remembered not through UNESCO's "Decade for Women" but by the heroic and courageous battles being waged by women worldwide. In fact UNESCO's Decade for Women, which has just ended, has not even begun to tackle the problem of women's oppression.

By Kim Waddington



Maesteg miners wives at Port Talbot Photo: Paul Davies

Despite having a woman Prime Minister, equality appears to have taken a backward step in Britain. Only 4% of MPs and 20% of Councillors are women. Out of ten million women on the job market, only 12% earn more than £170 compared with 43.8% of men. Nearly a quarter earn below £50 a week.

Now 20,000 married women are going to lose the opportunity to apply for government schemes for the unemployed. Thatcher is determined to force women back into the home.

In the United States and Japan, women earn less than half the wages of men while in the underdeveloped countries the situation is even worse. In India, the death rate among women has actually increased due to overwork and exhaustion. In Africa, 8 out of 10 women are illiterate. Females are one-half of the world's population, do two-thirds of the working hours, receive one tenth of the income and own one-hundredth of the property.

Throughout the world women suffer higher unemployment and receive lower wages than men; are held back from positions of authority; have less access to education and are expected to look after the home and children while still contributing to the family income.

However UNESCO makes no mention of the more notable heroic struggles of women throughout the world. Britain's women showed the way in 1984 with the DHSS strike in Newcastle, the Ford's women and the miners' wives who have been a major contributing factor to the strength of the strike.

Their heroic stand on the picket lines, providing food from kitchens, raising money for their communities will encourage other women not to underestimate the role they can play in the movement. A Derbyshire miner's wife said "Women in this country are a sleeping giant. They have stepped into a dispute for the first time. When it's all over, we're not stopping at home. We've decided to help other strikes, as others have helped us."

Sri Lanka

There have been disputes involving women in the United States, India, Peru, El Salvador and South Africa. In Sri Lanka, where all strikes were banned in 1980, there was the courageous struggle of the tea planation workers, a large proportion women. In 1984 they won equal pay for women, a six day week, a minimum daily wage of 70p and citzenship rights.

Women everywhere, the miners' wives and the women in the underdeveloped countries understand the true *class* nature of their struggle. Class, racial and sexual oppression are different arms of capitalism.

It is for these women that we must remember International Women's Day. These women understand that their emancipation will only come about once the working class as a whole has been freed from the shackles of capitalism—that's why their fight is linked to the fight for a new society free from all poverty and oppression.

'The past we inherit the future we take'

CLOWNE WOMENS Action Group in North Derbyshire were active from the start of the miners' strike. Right through the dispute pickets breakfasted at Clowne Strike Centre and this without running hot water, gas or electricity!

Up to 700 pickets on any one morning fed using Calor gas stoves and lighting. The WAG has been active in Picketing and on demonstrations. Here Sue Alberry, Pauline Proffitt and Roz Russell from Clowne WAG describe how the strike changes women's lives and their role in the struggle to change society.

Pauline: "I've changed during the strike. I don't just sit there and take it like I used to. I stand up for myself more. I'll admit I've lost some friends. But I've found a new set of friends and I trust them a lot more".

Roz: "Before the strike I used to think, well there's not a lot I can do about it. The strike has shown what we can do and how we can change things in the future."

Sue: "Yes, women have found a place in society that's been lacking for years. They used to be tied to the kitchen sink but now they're playing an active part.

After the strike women may find things difficult. After all they've always been the underdog. But I'm sure they'll stand up and be counted. Men's attitudes to us have changed because we've proved ourselves on the picket lines and in all the struggles."

"At our strike centre we have political discussions and give the pickets a morale boost. We see our job to feed their minds as well as their bellies."

Roz: "We need to change the Labour Party, to bring more working class people into it. It's controlled by the middle classes and some of them are out for what they can get out of it. I say the more 'Militant' people there are in the Labour Party the better."

Sue: We've had an education in this strike but we won't be alone. It'll hit other people in the future and then they'll see through what's going on. Same as I always say "the past we inherit, the future we take." And by God we're going to take it."

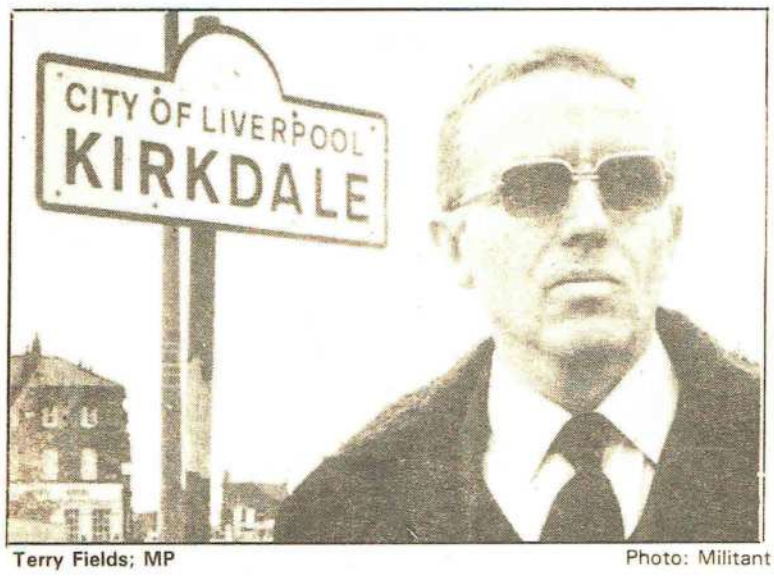
International Women's Day
***Militant* Readers Meeting**
"Women and the struggle for socialism"

Hear: Jane Hartley, Yorkshire Labour Women's Committee (personal capacity)
Bev Simpson South African Labour Education Project
Roz Russell Clowne Womens Action Group
On: 1.30pm Saturday March 9
At: Leisure Threatre, Chesterfield Public Library

Liverpool's crisis - MP speaks out

Liverpool City Council's stand against the Tory government has been an example to every Labour-controlled local authority. They were elected to create jobs and build houses, to defend and expand services; that is what they have done.

On Thursday 7 March their fight enters a new stage, when the council meets to agree its budget. Their insistence on standing for the interests of the workers who elected them will mean bitter struggle with the Tory government.



Terry Fields; MP Photo: Militant

Supporting the council to the hilt have been the city's Labour MPs. On 21 February, Terry Fields, MP for Broadgreen spoke in Parliament in an adjournment debate on Liverpool.

He described the state of the council in 1983 when Labour took control after ten years of Liberal and Tory administration...

The 10 years of decline in Liverpool under the Tories and the Liberals resulted in the axing of 1,000 local authority jobs, with vacancies in the council's establishment being left unfilled, the abolition of the direct labour organisation and the privatisation of certain services which resulted in job losses. This happened at a time when more, not less, jobs were needed in Liverpool. The rates increases since 1979 were used to compensate for Tory cuts in grants. None of that money was used for improvements in Liverpool. Liverpool City Council could provide no cushion.

No mean feat

We have come a long way during the 20 months that the Labour Party have been in power in Liverpool. We are proud of our achievements. At a time when unemployment is rising nationally, this is no mean feat. The 1983 general election which brought so many Conservative members to this house has to be set against the Labour victory in Liverpool. It was the Labour Party's first victory in Liverpool for 10 or 15 years. That landslide victory was continued in the local authority elections in 1984. Five out of the six members of Parliament for Liverpool represent the Labour Party. For the first time in 120 years there is not one Tory member of Parliament for Liverpool. It indicates the trust of the people of Liverpool in the Labour Party, both nationally and locally. It is proof that a socialist programme is not a liability at either national or local elections, as our opponents would have us believe.

What is even more important is that it has highlighted the political awareness of the people of Liverpool as a result of the experience of having the city run by Liberals and Tories, of having a Tory government in power and the defections to the Social Democratic Party. The turnround in the fortunes of the Labour Party has been an inspiration to the city council and to workers in the labour movement, both nationally and internationally. An opinion poll commissioned by Liverpool University showed that 73 per cent of Labour voters, 62 per cent of Liberal voters and even 48% of Conservative voters felt that the government were largely to blame for Liverpool's problems.

During the last 20 months Liverpool City council has created 1,000 jobs. It has also prevented 1,000 job losses which had been inherited. It has also boosted employment in the private sector. By 1988. 17,000 jobs will have been created by the council's house-building programme and by its provision of sports facilities. There are 136 apprentices, and 100 sixteen-year-olds are on YTS schemes. Their wages have been topped up to £52 a week and they are guaranteed a job at the end of their training. We are introducing a minimum wage of £100 for local authority workers and 35-hour week. During the last year 1,057 new houses have been built, and a further 1,211 are to built in 1984-85. We have provided additional nursery accommodation and reorganised education in order to ensure that every child in Liverpool is provided with the best education that is available.

What is surprising is that with only 30,000 council houses estimated to be built in England and Wales in 1985, over 2,000 of these will be built in Liverpool—that is, one in 15. It is a testimony to the work that the Liverpool City Council is doing and will continue to do, despite the opposition of the government.

We are in a crisis in Liverpool at the moment; we face a financial crisis that is worse than last year's crisis. To balance the books we would require 6,000 redundancies or 220 per cent rate rises. That is because of the 10 years of Tory and Liberal rule. The government target of spending is totally unrealistic. The government impose penalties for spending on essential services, and there is a totally inadequate rate support grant. The government have reneged on their agreements of last July, when the Secretary of State, having toured the city's black spots, said:

"I have never seen housing conditions the like of those I have seen today."

Yet our resources for housing have been cut by 34 per cent.

Impossible gap

This year the Tories have set us an arbitrary spending target of £220 million, yet we need to spend £270 million just to defend existing jobs and services. There will have to be a 220 per cent rate rise or 6,000 jobs will go. Last year the Secretary of State said that it would be impossible to run the city with less than £245 million. With inflation that would give us this year £255 million. But to maintain that we would have to put up the rates and every time the rates go up money goes off the rate support grant, creating an impossible gap for us to fill.

Since 1979 the Government have withdrawn £320 million from the city in rate support, housing improvement programme allocation, housing subsidy, and educaton grant. What we are saying in Liverpool is that we want that money back; it is as simple as that....

...In the Liverpool city centre, 170 of the 680 stores have already shut, more "Closed" signs are going up and, with the rate increases forcast by the Government, more jobs will go in the Liverpool area. In addition to that, we are being threatened by the Government.

The Secretary of State visited Liverpool in 1984. He gave pledges. In a letter to the leader of the Liverpool city council he said:

"I can give you an assurance that I will do my very best to ensure your allocations in Liverpool next year under the housing investment programme and the urban programme. Taken together, they will enable the council to make positive progress in dealing with the city's severe needs."

He said that in Liverpool. He came down to London, reneged on his commitment and denied that he had ever made those statements....

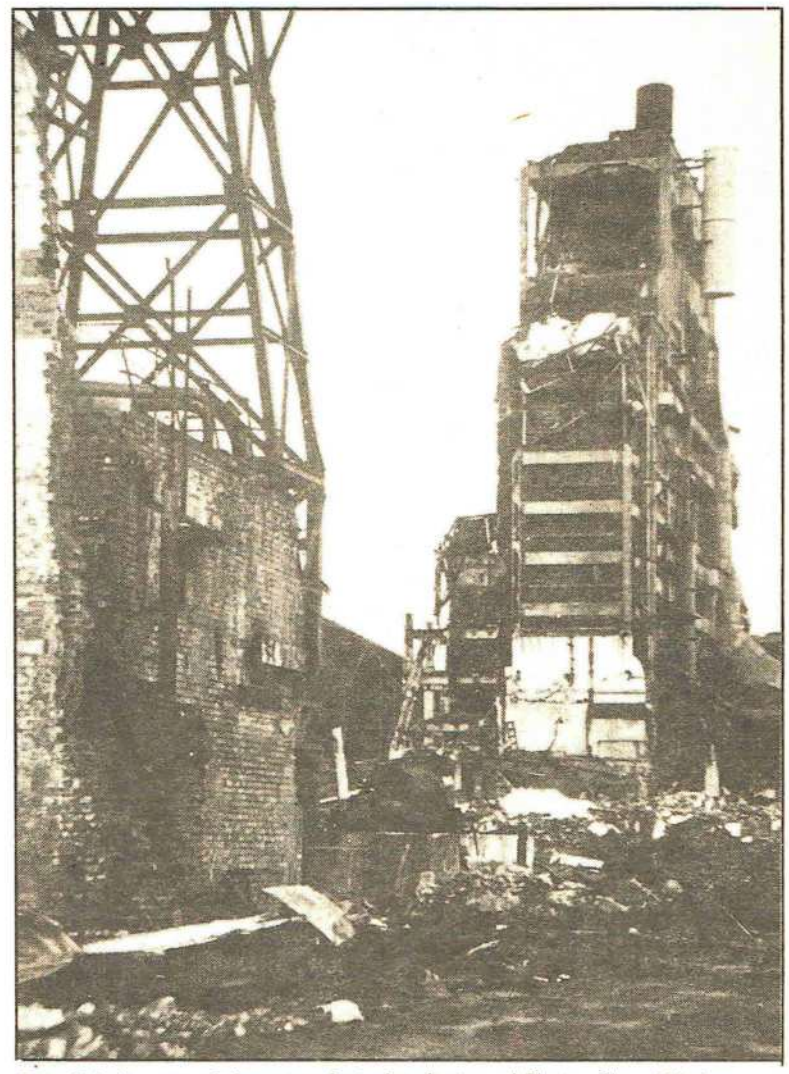
...The Secretary of State's latest pronouncement, reported in *The Times* of 19 Febuary, is an indication that he has firm backing from the Cabinet to take direct action if the Liverpool administration is breaking down. We are well used to threats from the Minister, but this is the second time that the Cabinet have discussed the situation in Liverpool. The first time was in 1981, after the Toxteth riots, when the then Secretary of State, (Heseltine), said that it took a riot to make the Cabinet take the problems of Liverpool seriously. Given the background and history that we have gone through in Liverpool, is that the only language that the Government understand when talking about the problems of places such as Liverpool?

We are ready

Perhaps the Secretary of State is envisaging a Molesworth type raid in Liverpool. Perhaps he envisages dressing up in his predecessor's combat jacket. If he comes in the still of the night we shall be ready for him, whenever he comes. Why is he making attacks on us? Why has he launched the so-called investigation into town hall corruption and listed Liverpool as one of the places to be investigated?

Why was that announcement made? Why is he using the Local Government, Planning and Land Act, with threats of commissioners against us? We believe that this is a pre-emptive strike against the Liverpool city council and the Liverpool people.

We have the support of the people of Liverpool, the trade unions and the people on the estates. We have seen the hypocrisy of this government in this respect. But Liverpool exemplifies, perhaps in advance of other parts of the country, the processes which are taking place in this country today. The elected representatives of Liverpool will not let the people down. They have been let down too often in the past and they deserve better. We are not going to dirty our hands doing the Tories' butchery of jobs and services in an already ravaged Liverpool. As far as the government's threats are concerned, it will not be dented shields they will have to deal with, because our shields were forged in preparation for the heat of struggle last year and those preparations are going ahead. The government thought that we would go into battle then. To quote Mrs Thatcher's soul mate, "You ain't seen nothing yet". Liverpool's people will not be crushed by this or any other government.



Tate & Lyle—one of the many factories destroyed Photo: Cheryl Varley

My heritage

I WAS born in a dock area before the war. My father was a docker, so I feel qualified to speak on some of the matters on which I hope to enlarge. I remember, as a young person, seeing around the Pier Head, Goree Piazza and the Strand, shackled to the wall, bolts where slaves were tied up in the lucrative trade in human misery. The docks epitomise what is wrong in Liverpool—lack of investment of the profits created by Liverpool people. It is all very well for the Secretary of State for the Environment to talk about us whingeing and whining about our lot, but we are hard working people.

During the war and the national dock labour scheme from 1947 to 1964, my father used to stand in the pen with other dockers like a choice animal, waiting to be picked out for work. My father was proud, and characteristic of the spirit of people in Liverpool. We had dignity and got through decades of struggle. I have never known anything other than bad housing, high unemployment and lack of opportunity for Liverpool people. However, we have learned lessons. One is that the ravages of the system to which we belong bleeds working people. Indeed, it is responsible for their death.

Catalogue of crimes

In 1965, the docks employed 13,589 people. That industry today employs 2,086—a reduction of more than 80 per cent. There have been corresponding job losses in associated industries and services. There has been no let-up in the de-industrialisation of Liverpool. Between 1971 and 1981 the city lost 90,000 or one-quarter, of its jobs. Manufacturing jobs have declined by nearly 40 per cent, and blue collar jobs by 30 per cent. Between 1979 and July 1983, 33,220 redundancies were notified by firms in Liverpool. The catalogue of job losses is endless.

Since 1979, the city has lost one-third of its manufacturing jobs and half of the jobs in the city's largest industries—food, drink and tobacco. Between 1975 and 1982, the city council shed 4,400 jobs through natural wastage. The council is now the largest employer on Merseyside, providing socially useful jobs for 31,000 people. It employs one-third of all public sector workers in the city. I have a list of 23 industries in which jobs have been lost. They include vehicles, metal goods, coal and petroleum, chemicals, electrical goods, leather goods, clothing and timber.

The latest figure of unemployment, on Merseyside—100,000—is an obscenity when it represents decent people who are eager to work. When they are provided with jobs by the council, they show that they can work.

Housing in Liverpool is believed to be among the worst and yet the most expensive in Europe. There are 22,000 people on the council's waiting list for houses. Urgent repairs are needed to 20,000 council houses. Liverpool has the highest percentage of old, privately rented houses in the country, with the exception of London. Its housing investment allocation has declined, in real terms, from £47 million in 1980 to £26 million in 1984-84. But the real decline in its housing investment allocation is highlighted by the fact that the city's allocation in 1980 was half that which it received in 1974. Since 1980 Liverpool has lost £63 million in housing subsidy. In 1980 the government contributed £20 million to the city's housing services. In 1984 it fell to £5.5 million. The catalogue of crimes against the people of Liverpool goes on and on.

Liverpool Council Joint Shop Stewards Committee

Fighting for workers' unity

Divisions within the Liverpool Council Joint Shop Stewards Committee have recently been highlighted by some very biased reporting in the *Morning Star*. Last year's vice-chair and newly elected chair of the JSSC, Ian Lowes, has been a full time GMBATU convenor since 1978 and helped found the Joint Shop Stewards Committee. In this article he answers some of the smears which have been spread and appeals for unity in the campaign to defend council jobs and services. We also reprint below, an article by Ian explaining how the JSSC was set up.

AT THE AGM of Liverpool Joint Shop Stewards Committee (JSSC) I was elected as Chairman by 130 votes to 92. This seems to be cause for concern among some elements of the JSSC particularly Communist Party (CP) members.

It has been alleged, that Derek Hatton arranged for GMBATU stewards to be given paid time off to attend a meeting with him but which they used to attend the Joint Shop Stewards Committee AGM instead.

In fact application had been made the previous week for time off for a number of G&M stewards who were rostered to work on that day to attend the Joint Shop Stewards meeting. Unfortunately a council officer had mistakenly minuted it as a meeting with Derek Hatton.



Ian Lowes.



Liverpool trade unionists march on TUC Day of Action. Photo: Tommy Carroll

Time off

This has since been amended at the Personnel Committee to time off with pay to attend a Joint Shop Stewards Committee. It is not unusual for trade unionists to be granted time off with pay to attend these meetings. At a previous meeting a number of NALGO and MATSA stewards were given time off with pay by the council to attend a meeting on the Sam Bond issue (a council appointment against which the CP has made common cause with the Liberals in order to attack Labour). People who clearly intended to vote against the council policy were still given time off with pay in order to attend.

Two constitutional amendments were carried at the AGM. One, from the executive committee, was carried unaminously by the meeting. The JSSC will now be constituted on a delegate basis on the numbers represented.

The other amendement, which caused some debate was on the composition of the executive committee itself. The decision taken means the executive committee will now consist of two delegates representing the craft unions, two delegates representing the staff trade unions, two from the teaching trade unions and five from the manual trade unions. We believe this to be more representative.

Under the old constitution one seat was given to each trade union on the local authority. That meant the G&M with 9,000 members had one seat and a trade union with 25 members and one with 50 members also held seats—totally unrepresentative.

Since the AGM, TGWU and UCATT within the Housing Department of Liverpool City council, unions dominated by Communist Party members, have taken a decision to disaffiliate from the JSSC. The decision wasn't taken by the rank and file members but by the senior shop stewards—about 15 people, of which 10 or more are CP members.

Overturned

An amendment was moved that the decision to withdraw be put to a mass meeting of all members of the T&G and UCATT within housing. This however, was overturned by the senior stewards themselves.

We have heard that NUPE, which represents 1,500 council workers and whose leadership failed to support last year's council campaign have also decided to disaffiliate. The NUT, another trade union whose leadership is dominated by the CP are reported to be considering withdrawing.

Some remarks have also been made by the *Morning Star* and by some of the individuals concerned that credentials were given out at the door to G&M stewards. Nobody was allowed into the meeting without a shop steward's credential. Some stewards who turned up without them were verified by their own branch secretaries before a new credential was issued.

The people responsibile for these attempted smears didn't seem to be concerned at a previous meeting where the Sam Bond issue was discussed, when NALGO, NATFHE and the NUT were actually giving out blank credentials—handing these to their people outside the meeting. But on that occasion they won the vote.

Considering the attacks that local authority workers are now facing it is a disastrous course of action to disaffiliate from the JSSC. These people are threatening the unity of local authority workers at a crucial time, just as some of them tried to sabotage the campaign last year. But they will fail again. We will be conducting a campaign amongst the rank and file of the trade unions involved urging them to reaffiliate to the JSSC. If you have differences with comrades in the labour movement you should stay in and fight for your point of view. That is what the G&M stewards have had to do for the past five years.

The JSSC has a crucial role to play in the council campaign. Without the support of the workforce the council's campaign won't be successful. If the council's campaign isn't successful then many thousands of council workers will find themselves out of a job. If that happens the responsibility will lie with those who have attempted to split the JSSC.

Better support

The response from local authority workers to the campaign has been even better than last year. Even in those trade unions which failed to support the council last year the membership are indicating that they see no other alternative this time but to give their support.

All the mass meetings which have been held up to now have overwhelmingly supported coming out on strike on 7 March and have given unequivocal support to the council's campaign to defend jobs and services.

Building the Stewards Committee

THE JOINT Shop Stewards' Committee was set up in late 1979 after the Tory government was elected.

Recognising their policies were to cut public services and public spending we felt it was necessary to set up some organisation to defend the interests of council workers.

We'd been able to organise the manual unions during the 'winter of discontent' but we didn't have any contact with staff unions, teaching unions or craft unions. We had my own union organised, the GMBATU, the largest, with 8,000 members, but we didn't have contact beyond our own spheres.

A group of conveners and senior stewards who knew each other personally decided to try and organise a JSSC. We called a meeting one evening. About a dozen people turned up. We elected a steering committee to organise another meeting and sent out invitations to all trade union reps that we knew within the council. The second meeting got about thirty or forty in attendance. That was the take-off point.

All-out strike

The first real test came within a few months. We had a Liberal/Tory council and 2,000 redundancies were announced. The JSSC calld a mass meeting which thousands attended. From that we threatend an all-out strike in the event of any redundancies. This was in 1980.

We called an all-out strike on the date the council was meeting to put through the redundancies and demonstrated outside the Town Hall. The response was about 15,000 out on strike and 10,000 lobbying the council meeting. We obtained a no-redundancy agreement with the council of the time.

The biggest and most successful battle we have fought was over privatisation. In November 1982 the Liberal administration announced the privatisation of the cleansing services. They sought tenders from private firms. The General and Municipal convenors committee organised opposition. We took the arguments into the JSSC and managed to convince it to take on the fight.

In the build-up to a strike in April we held meetings in every workplace. We produced leaflets, campaigned on the housing estates, leading to an all-out strike on the day the Liberals considered the tenders.

They had arranged the meeting day before the elections in May. If at that time the tenders had been accepted it would have been very difficult to reverse, even if Labour had got a majority the following week, because of legal problems. So we knew that everything was at stake and we had to make sure the resolution to privatise wasn't passed.

We called the all-out strike and said that if the motion was passed we would stay out indefinitely until the plans were withdrawn. On that day 20,000 came out on strike and we had a mass lobby of the meeting. The Liberals didn't support the Tories and as a consequence the resolution fell. That was a major victory.

Vote Labour!

We realised the only way to guarantee that privatisation wasn't raised in the future was to make sure Labour won the May election. It had to be a political solution. So we put out a call for as many council workers as possible to turn out and campaign for Labour. We also put out a call for all council employees, their relatives and friends, to turn out and vote Labour.

When the JSSC was originally formed it was made up entirely of manual and craft unions.

There was an argument that raged within the JSSC that NALGO should not be involved because of its role—a lot of manual workers felt bitter about things which had happened in the past.

Some of us argued that to be successful we had to involve every trade union and every section. We also pointed out that NALGO possesses more potential power than even the manual unions. We won the argument and NALGO affiliated.

It was unfortunate that the first strike that the JSSC ever called (over redundancies in 1980) was not supported by NALGO as the ballot held for joint action was lost. That almost caused a split in the JSSC. People who had argued in the first place that NALGO shouldn't have been allowed to affiliate wanted them expelled.

NALGO support

We replied that the leadership of NALGO had fought a campaign amongst their own membershp and the ballot was only lost by a narrow majority; if we built on the work that had been done we would secure their support in the future.

That was borne out. When we had the strike over privatisation a few years later NALGO supported the stoppage and for the first time ever their members took strike action.

Stop rate-capping-

Militant

THE STAGE is now set for another titanic struggle between the Thatcher government and organised labour. Thatcher may think that she has won a victory over the miners but it will prove to be very short-lived "pyrrhic" victory. The miners' struggle has inspired every other section of the trade union movement. Now Labour Councillors, council workers and the millions who benefit from their services will take up the struggle. They have no alternative but to stand and fight to stop the catastrophic damage which the Tories are threatening to inflict.

On 7 March up to 16 Labour-controlled authorities will be refusing to set a rate. They are not prepared to throw thousands of workers on the dole or savagely cut back on vital services.

They have been put in an impossible position. If they make the cuts the government is demanding they will be unable to provide services which they have a legal duty to perform. Yet if they refuse to budget for cuts, they will be open to legal action by the District Auditor.

The government has the power to prosecute the councillors, deprive them of the right to stand for public office, surcharge them individually and even force them to sell their houses to pay the surcharges. It can then suspend the councils and appoint commissioners to take over the administration.

There is no longer any easy middle road by which councillors can stay within the law without betraying every promise they made when they were elected to promote the welfare of the workers they represent. Reserves of money have been exhausted. Rate increases to claw back the Rate Support Grant taken away by the government was never an acceptable alternative, since it puts the burden on the backs of working-class people. Now for 18 councils picked by the government it would be illegal, under the new rate-capping laws.

Labour leaders in Parliament are doing immense harm by suggesting that there is a means by which councils can stay within the law and defend jobs and services "with a dented shield." If the Tory demands are not met, there will be no defence at all for the 75,000 workers facing redundancy and the millions dependent on council services.

Labour councillors have to take a stand, but they cannot defeat the Tories on their own. With the power of the state behind them, the government will not hesitate to use the law to crush their resistance.

But no laws will be able to crush a mighty mass movement of council workers, tenants, parents and the whole trade union movement. Faced with just such a movement in Liverpool last year, Jenkin was forced to make a tactical retreat. This year he is out for revenge. He will only be stopped if he is faced with dozens of 'Liverpools' up and down the country.

To build such a movement requires more than personal courage on the part of councillors, important though that is.It requires more than verbal pledges to fight to the last. It requires a campaign to reach every worker, every voter and explain in detail what the councils are fighting for.

Liverpool has shown the way, with the close involvement of the Joint Shop Stewards' Committee of council workers, the workplace and estate meetings, the door-to-door canvassing, the leafletting and publicity campaigns. The huge demonstrations in November 1983 and March 1984 were both the result of the hard work done by the activists and a means of spreading an understanding of the importance of the council's fight to a wider audience.

Many other Labour councils, like Southwark and Hackney in London, have been applying the lessons of Liverpool. Joint Shop Steward's Committees are attracting large numbers to public meetings. Workers are being given time off on 7 March to distribute leaflets and rallies are being organised at all the budget meetings of the threatened councils.

Events could now move very rapidly. Within hours of the budget meetings, councillors could be facing legal action. Jenkin will try to split open the movement by looking for points of weakness, hoping to frighten some councillors into a last-minute climb-down. That is where the wider campaign is crucial.

There must be national co-ordinated industrial action by all council workers the moment any Labour councillor is surcharged, or any Labour council suspended.

If commissioners are put in there must be a total refusal by the trade unions to co-operate in any way. Pressure must be mounted to force the Labour Party NEC and the TUC to give a national lead and mobilise the full weight of the labour movement.

Only when faced with this scale of resistance will Jenkin be forced to back down. That is what must happen—the council workers can spearhead the biggest counter-attack against the Tories so far and prepare the way for their total defeat and the replacement with a Labour government which must restore all the services cut by the Tories and provide jobs to build homes and schools and provide services for those in need.

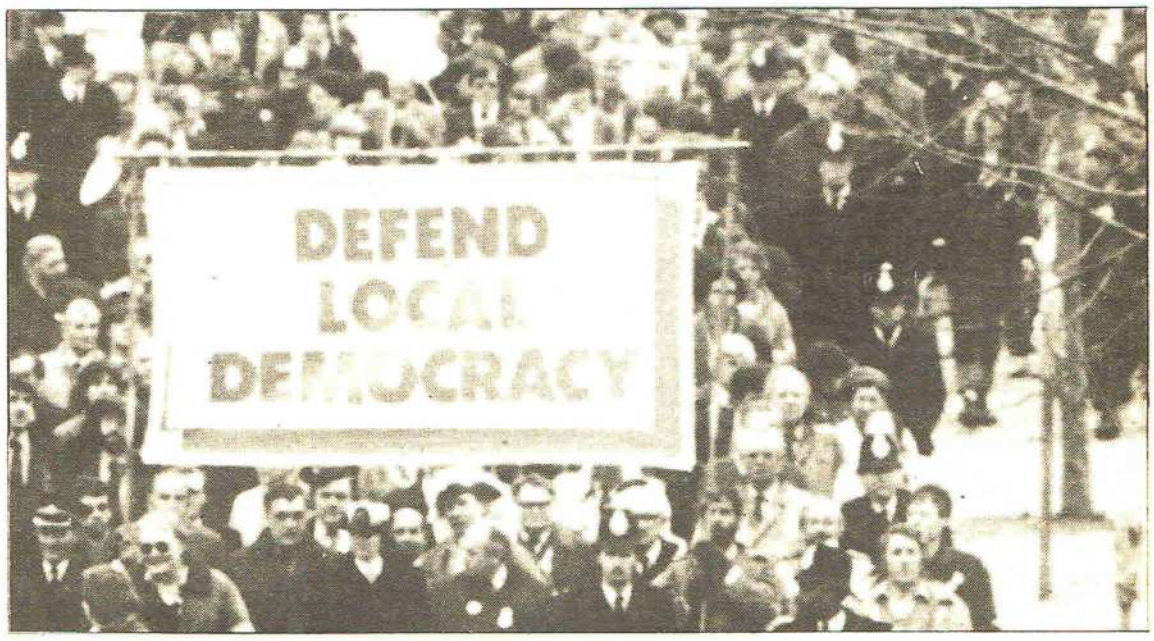


Photo: Andrew Wiard (Report)

Hackney

THE TORIES want Hackney to slash its budget by a third—the greatest cut in London. However, the Labour Group (50 out of the 60 Hackney councillors) took the decision on Monday 25 February to defy the government by not setting a rate at the council meeting on 7 March, until the Rate Support Grant stolen since 1979 is returned.

An angry lobby of the Labour Group meeting by at least 300 council workers helped stiffen the resolve of the councillors. The lobby was attended particularly by building workers, because one of the items under discussion was the scandalous ultimatum of the chair of the DLO sub-committee that their wages be cut by up to a third, and various conditions of service like holidays be cut, or he would have to close the whole DLO capital works section due to its lack of profitability.

These proposals, when the council's position on rate-capping is no cuts in jobs and services, were seen by the council trade unions as deliberate provocation and sabotage. The JSSC has called for the resignation of the chair of the DLO sub-committee and the withdrawal of the Labour whip.

Coach loads of council workers from Lambeth and Lewisham joined the lobby with banners. The London Bridge banner was displayed for the first time in an example of how London council workers will come to each others assistance when any section is attacked, whether by a Labour council or the Tories.

Massive lobby

A delegation from the JSSC persuaded the Labour Group to take the discussion on the DLO as its first item, and within an hour it was announced that no changes in working conditions and practices would be made without trade union agreement. The councillors whose attitude is that the council should make cuts because otherwise the government would do so for it, found themselves in a minority.

To ensure that this viewpoint does not tempt other councillors the council unions plan a massive lobby of the council meeting to set the budget on 7 March. The stewards will try to get every council worker to attend.

The only entrance into the Town Hall will be through a gauntlet of stewards. The arrival of every councillor will be announced over loudspeakers and they will be invited to state their voting intentions to all present.

Each councillor will be presented with a rosette with a cork in it. The cork should assist astute councillors who feel their bottle going and their insides turning weak.

Trade union and public activity against the cuts is gaining broad support in Hackney. A cavalcade of dozens of floats on Saturday 2 March made a big impact around the borough, with thousands of leaflets being handed out to the public.

The lobby of the town hall on budget day should be massive. It will show the Tories and the councillors that the council unions and public in Hackney are determined not to accept any cuts.

By Nigel Bloch
(Treasurer, Hackney Council JSSC, personal capacity)

Southwark

IT'S CLEAR the people of Southwark have no choice but to fight the Tory rate-capping laws. We have our jobs, services, and livehoods to fight for. Rate-capping means job-scrapping.

In Southwark it will mean 1,500 jobs in the first year. That's 1,500 jobs out of an elderly depleted and overworked workforce. In my section the housing department, these cuts spell disaster.

Housing repairs will be non-existent. Three year waiting lists for homes will increase, the Housing Benefit system will inevitably collapse due to lack of staff, facilities and an increasing number of claimants. Emergency services will be decimated. But Southwark won't let this happen.

The trade unions have shown that through organising together, they can put up an effective fight against the Tories. On Wednesday 6, the TUC day of action, every trade union in Southwark is on strike, except for emergencies, there will be little or no services. Joint union pickets are being set up from 7.30am, joint union publicity is being handed to the people of the borough explaining our case.

We are demonstrating in the centre of London in an unprecented act of solidarity against vicious and killing cuts. We are prepared to fight for the borough, for the elderly, for the young and the unemployed.

It may not be much but it's all we have got. Thatcher won't take any more away from us, the unions and the council will see to that.

By Hazel Flynn
(Southwark NALGO shop steward)

Lambeth

UNDER THE leadership of the Joint Trade Unions Committee, Lambeth council workers are playing a key role in the fight to save jobs and services, both locally and in the 'London Bridge' campaign.

Two meetings have been held in every workplace, addressed by Labour councillors and senior stewards. Committee work has been stopped to enable the councillors to attend. Support for the council is solid and the majority are prepared to take strike action, all-out action if necessary.

The Labour Party has organised leafletting and some door-to-door cavassing and there have been public meetings. The council have produced an excellent leaflet. At one meeting of my local tenants association, the mood was very good; everyone there signed a petition in support of the council's stand. Virtually every lamp-post in the borough has a poster on it.

All council workers are striking on 6 march. On the 7th, there is to be a "fraternal occupation" of the Town Hall. During the day there will be exhibitions and speeches, with food laid on—a day for the whole community to come along. In the evening there will then be a lobby of the council's budget meeting.

By Steve Nally
(Lambeth Vauxhall CLP)

Lewisham

IN LEWISHAM, the local authority unions are determined that whatever happens in the council chamber, there must be a fight. A large delegation is planned to lobby the council's vital meeting on 7 March. A public meeting against rate-capping in Catford on 28 February addressed by Tony Benn attracted 500 people.

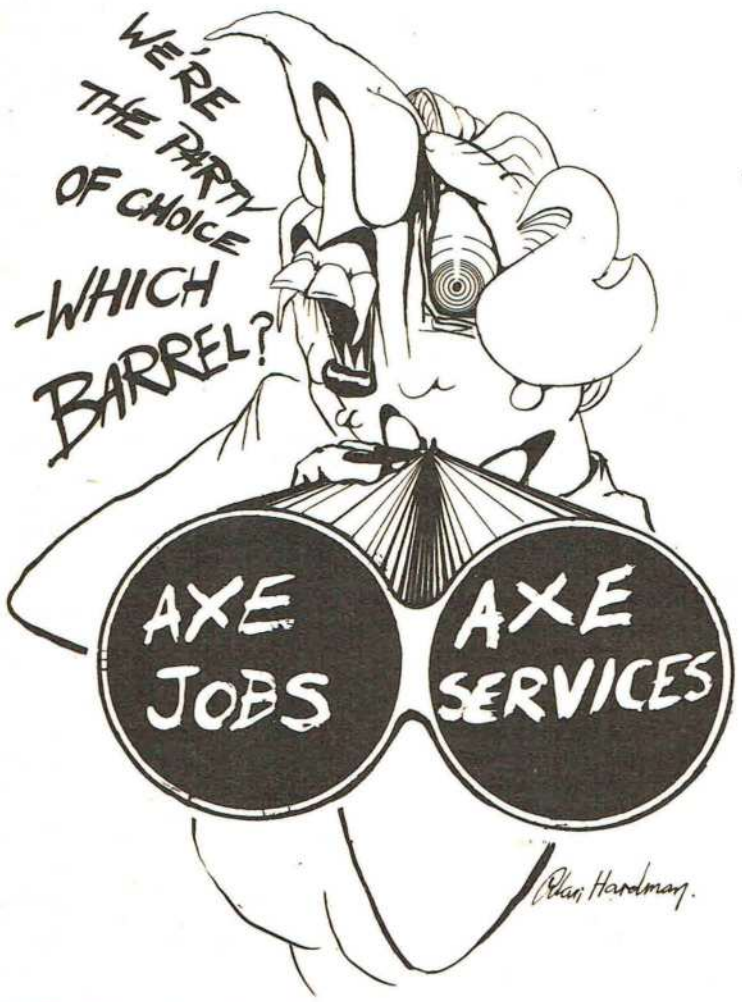
Leicester

AT A Militant Readers' meeting in Leicester on Monday 25 February, Eddie Hasman, Secretary of the Leicester Joint Unions Consultative Committee, spoke on the need for threatend Labour councils to fight ratecapping together. If one council shows weakness the government will single them out for further attacks.

Although the government have made slight concessions to Leicester City Council, the current proposals would still mean massive cuts in services, ad approximately 1,000 redundancies. A lobby of the Town Hall has been organised for 7 March by the Leicester JUCC. This is the first time that such a committee has existed in Leicester. Also speaking were Andy Pink, of Liverpool City Council Campaign unit and Ian Lowes of Liverpool Joint Shop Stewards Committee.

By John Pullen
(Leicester South CLP)

defend jobs and services



Privatisation

IF THE Tories win their battle with the Labour Councils, one inevitable consequence will be a further extension of privatisation. From the evidence of those councils which have already contracted out parts of their services, the effect will be disastrous, for both jobs and services.

When Ealing Borough Council gave a contract for street cleaning to Exclusive Cleansing Services Ltd, in the first four months they cleaned only 69% of the streets and only 38% of residential streets They blamed falling leaves!

Gloucester City Council handed over its cleaning to Initial Cleansing Services in 1982. A year later the enviromental health officer threatened to close down the city's market on health grounds. Initial lost that contract; it was then handed to Amalgamated Cleansing Services who demanded a 60% increase in their prices. The council went back to direct labour.

School cleaning has caused special problems. Dudley Borough Council employed three different firms. After floods of complaints from teachers, one of the contractors, Office Cleaning Services Ltd, pulled out of their contract and actually advised the council "that it might be sensible to take the school cleaning back from contractors to direct labour."

In Birmingham in 1983, ISS Servissystem took over the cleaning of 50 schools, sacked 686 cleaners and slashed wages from £2.24 an hour to £1.71 per hour. After repeated complaints and fines for failing to meet the council's expectations, they lost the contract when Labour won control of the city council last year.

In housing it is the same story. The Housing Committee of Merton Borough Council have been told that random checks of private building contractors' bills reveal that 15.4% were claims for work either not done or overcharged. The Federation of Merton Council Tenants estimate the loss to the council could be as much as £360,750 a year. The Federation's chairman, Slim Flegg said; "We want to know what's happened to the cheap and efficient services we were promised with privatisation and who is going to be held accountable for the loss of money, or will they try once again to let it fall on the backs of the tenants?"

The Tories must not be allowed to get away with any more privatisation. It spells death to thousands of jobs, starvation wages and tenth-rate services.

By Pat Craven

BLOC links struggles

UP TO 75,000 local authority jobs stand to go if Tory measures of rate-capping and cuts are allowed to go through. Local authority workers have no choice—we either fight or go to the wall.

This year's BLOC conference will form an essential part of the preparations in organising the fightback. The conference will discuss the strategy needed to build a national campaign to defend local government jobs and services. It will also debate the vital lessons that have to be drawn from the major struggles over the past year, particularly those from the miners' strike.

The miners' strike has demonstrated that if a movement is to be built to defend jobs and services then we cannot rely on the present leadership of the trade unions and the TUC. If effective action is to be organised against government-imposed cuts then it will have to be co-ordinated at rank and file level through stewards' committees. The BLOC conference, which will be attended by delegates from trade union bodies and shop stewards' committees throughout industry, will provide the ideal forum for building links with workers outside local government in preparation for the solidarity action necessary to ensure the success of this campaign. We therefore urge your local authority trade union branch/shop stewards' committee to help in the success of the BLOC conference by sending a full delegation.

BLOC was set up to co-ordinate the activity of a number of trade union Broad Lefts, including those from NALGO, GMBATU, AUEW and NUPE.

We intend to work to build a fighting, socialist leadership in every union and in the TUC itself. The 1984 BLOC conference in Sheffield was a tremendous success with over 2,500 delegates and visitors in attendance. We hope you will join us on 23 March in Manchester. Speakers include Derek Hatton and Ken Livingstone but time will be available for speakers from the floor to participate fully in hammering out a strategy against Tory cuts. Rush your delegations in *NOW*.

See advert on page two

NLACC

THE NEXT few months are crucial for council workers. They cannot allow themselves to be picked off one by one. A united struggle is required. That is why Joint Shop Stewards' Committees from 17 local authorities are calling a national conference for all council workers.

It will be held on Saturday 30 March at Paddington Comprehensive School, Liverpool. The 17 authorities involved met last month and set up a National Local Authorities Co-ordinating Committee (NLACC). The chair of NLACC is Jim O'Brien, chair of London Bridge and the Organising Secretary is Ian Lowes, chair of Liverpool JSSC.

The 30 March conference is a delegate conference with two delegates for the first 1,000 represented, and one per each of the next 1,000. Delegations should be from Joint Shop Stewards' committees unless there is no JSSC, in which case it can come from individual union branches. One of the main discussions at the conference will be on forming a JSSC.

The aim of the conference is to draw shop stewards together on a national basis for the first time to co-ordinate action if there are any sackings or disciplinary action taken against council workers for defying rate-capping, abolition, privatisation or cuts. The resolution before the conference, which will be circulated to all interested council workers, calls for national supportive action for workers in struggle.

Send delegation fees to Ian Lowes, Organising Secretary NLACC, Grove Mount, Penny Lane, Liverpool 8. Cheques should be made payable to: "National Local Authorities Co-ordinating Committee".

By Jim Hollinshead
(Treasurer NLACC)

School cuts

MY DAUGHTER'S primary school is typical of many in Inner London—an old, large building with high ceilings, difficult to heat and maintain. The children speak 27 different tongues (there are 147 throughout ILEA) and much time in the infants is spent teaching English and basic skills. Nurseries could do this job, but there are only about 3,000 places (including playgroups, childminders, etc) for over 14,000 under-fives in the borough. After an eight year campaign, the school has finallly been promised a nursery class for next year, but of course with rate-capping this can no longer be guaranteed.

Nearly one-third of the children are from single parents, over a third have parents who are unemployed, and over a quarter are from large families. As a result, well over half the children are eligible for free school dinners.

The head reckons that a £70m cut in ILEA's budget would mean the loss of 1 full-time teacher and an increase in class size from 27½ to 31½, unless special needs teachers were diverted. For non-teaching staff, it would mean either the loss of two days of primary helper or 1½ dinner ladies (out of 4). Cuts in equipment, books, etc would be equal to half the present English and all the maths allowance.

By Lynne Faulkes
(Hackney South Labour Party)

Manchester

MANCHESTER, LIKE other local authorities, has suffered tremendous cuts under the Tories, £1m a week for the past five years totalling £250 million and the loss of 7,000 jobs. But for nearly a year now the majority of Labour councillors in Manchester have been committed to Labour Party policy and the fight against Tory cuts.

One major area where progress has been made is in the Direct Works Department. Last May 500 of the 3,200 workforce were on short-term contracts; these have now been made permanent, and a further 200 jobs have been created with 250 more in the pipeline.

This year for the first time in five years the Labour Party and a majority of Labour councillors are in accord and are pursuing a budget which will be an expansion of £30m. The main areas to benefit are firstly education, housing, social services and topping up YTS pay.

Under its new leadership the council has mounted a campaign with the workforce and the people of Manchester, in many ways similar to the campaign in Liverpool last year. There have been meetings with the shop stewards at authority and departmental level as well as several mass meetings at dozens of workplaces; they have all taken up the campaign enthusiastically.

Yet, despite this and a massive Labour majority in the council where Labour have 79 seats, the Tories 14 and the Liberals six, the Labour budget is threatened. 26 right-wing Labour councillors have openly indicated their opposition to any fight against Tory cuts via a vicious anti-gay campaign.

For the first campaign in five years the Labour council in Manchester is in a position to take its place in a fight against Tory cuts alongside Liverpool and other penalised councils. The labour and trade union movement in Manchester must ensure that every Labour councillor stands by Labour Party policy.



By Councillor John Byrne
(Labour councillor, Longsight Ward)

Militant

Liverpool's crisis
Pages 12 – 13
Stop rate-capping
Pages 14 – 15

No to local government cuts

Join the fightback

THE BATTLE to save council services and jobs is now on. Following the mass walk-outs and the demonstrations in London on Wednesday, Labour councils are meeting this Thursday, 7 March, to throw down the gauntlet to Jenkin and Thatcher.

The stakes are high. If the Tories get away with their plan to force through the cuts, as many as 75,000 council jobs and 125,000 others will be lost. Hundreds of thousands of those in the greatest need will be deprived of services on which they depend.

The old will lose their meals on wheels, the young will lose their chance of nursery education, the handicapped will lose their day centres. House-building will be slashed and rents raised.

This must not be allowed to happen. The fightback is underway. A united, national campaign, spearheaded by the Labour councils and their workers in the front line, can roll back the Tory advance, and inflict a humiliating defeat on the Thatcher government.



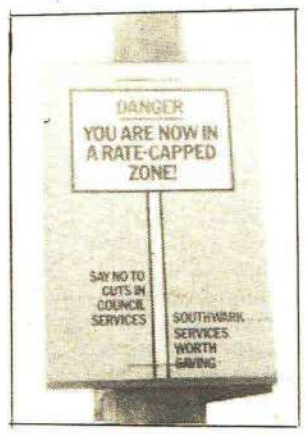
Photo: Stefano Cagnoni (Report)

Protest in London on 4 March against rate-capping by local councillors and trade union leaders.

Southwark

EVERYBODY WILL be out. Some other boroughs are having trouble getting their workers out. We are having trouble keeping them in! The women especially, the home-helps and meals-on-wheels staff, are dying to get out and show their anger.

The unions have been holding meetings of 400 – 500, with only one or two votes against resolutions of support for the council. At one mass meeting there were 4,000 and only one vote against. If any worker is sacked, or any councillor debarred or surcharged, there will be all-out strike action.



On Thursday, 7 March, there will be a massive demonstration and march to the town hall. The trade union convenors will be on the floor of the chamber with the councillors, the gallery will be packed and the proceedings will be relayed by close-circuit TV to other rooms and by loudspeaker to the street outside.

Tenants associations are also showing support, even some who have been the most critical of the council. There is tremendous anger and overwhelming support for the councillors' stand.

By Cllr John Bryan

Liverpool

THE CAMPAIGN to defend Liverpool council has already seen overwhelming support from the council workers and the community. Meetings have taken place to involve all the 30,000 local authority workers to explain the council's position and ask for support for the 7 March budget day.

Their response has been tremendous. There have also been 10 public meetings held in areas throughout Liverpool where over 1,000 people have heard councillors and NUM members on joint platforms.

Jenkin is out for revenge on Liverpool. He has warned that if we refuse to make a budget, staff will go unpaid, and jobs will be lost. He blames the situation on "a few fanatics of the far left." But one thing stands in his way, and that is the people of Liverpool itself.

It was the magnificent campaign last year which mobilised the people of Liverpool, led by the Liverpool District Labour Party and the trade union movement which defeated the Tories last year. We won that fight and we are confident that we can do so again this year!

By Cllr Tony Mulhearn

ILEA

AT A meeting called by Inner London Education Authority (ILEA) and ILEA unions on 4 March, the unions reasserted their position that the authority should stand by its budget made last November and not fix a rate on 7 March

Frances Morrell, leader of the Labour group, briefly explained that they had just received legal advice which repeated that ILEA had a legal duty to precept a rate.

Frances Morrell then said this made no difference and invited Steve Bundred (ILEA councillor) to give a financial report which included the officers' paper reminding councillors of their budget decision of November 1984.

The gap between that budget and the government's proposals on ILEA's spending was £66 million. Frances Morrell reported that the Tory opposition had proposed using ILEA's £35 million balances and making £31 million of cuts and would move a rate on 7 March.

On being asked what the majority Labour group proposed to do on 7 March it seemed that there were a number of options.

1. To stand by the position of not setting a rate, and therefore become illegal, knowing that authorities like Hammersmith were well prepared to take legal action against ILEA.

2. To employ 'creative accountancy' and use up balances and reserves while standing by their November budget. This included a £4 million package of cuts. It was obvious from the meeting that despite the 'no rate' position of the Labour leaders of GLC and ILEA, other alternatives were being considered by the other members.

The union stressed that if we are to have a united campaign on fighting rate-capping, then Frances Morrell must strongly convey to the Labour group our position. We are prepared to fight alongside them, but ILEA must fight with us this year, and not put off the battle for services and jobs until next year.

By Claire Bradley
(NALGO ILEA, personal capacity)

"Women Against Pit Closures" celebrates

International Women's Day Rally

Saturday 9 March, 1985

Saltergate Football Stadium, Chesterfield, Derbyshire
—exhibitions, discussions, videos, at Lecture Theatre and Market Hall
—rally at the football ground: national and international speakers
1pm – 4pm—street entertainments and speakers in town centre

Women in the pit strike—page 11 and page 4



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Zimbabwe socialists arrested

SINCE 1 March, the Zimbabwe security police have detained a number of trade unionists, in Harare and KweKwe, under 'emergency powers' taken over from the white minority Rhodesian regime of Ian Smith.

All those detained have been active in campaigning for democratic trade unions under workers' control, and in organising socialist workers' education.

★ Detained: Rabi Down, activist in the Workers' Campaign for a Democratic GEMWU (General Engineering and Metal Workers' Union).

★ Missing, believed detained: S. Nyamhunga, President of GEMWU, Chairman of the workers' committee at the engineering firm L.H. Marthinusen, and a leader of the Workers' Campaign for a Democratic GEMWU. He has been threatened with detention for union activities before.

★ Detained: Nicholas Mlauzi, member of the Harare Municipal Workers' Union.

★ Also detained were—David Hemson, a teacher, a former trade unionist in South Africa banned by the apartheid regime, a founder of the Southern African Labour Education Project (SALEP), and a member of the British Labour Party.

Protests

★ Darcy Du Toit, a teacher, a refugee from South Africa, co-worker in SALEP, and a member of the Dutch and British Labour Parties; and his wife—

★ Anneke Poppe, a Dutch citizen, also a teacher, co-worker in SALEP, and a member of the British and Dutch Labour Parties. Anneke and Darcy's two children, have been placed in custody of a children's home by the security police.

These arrests are the first concerted government attack on trade unionists since independence. The sole activity of those detained has been to assist in the organisation of workers in Zimbabwe and to promote socialist ideas.

SALEP have asked for your trade union branch, Labour Party, etc, to make immediate representations to the: Zimbabwean High Commission, Zimbabwe House, 429 Strand, London WC2 0SA.

They ask for your financial support, legal and other costs of this campaign. They also welcome other offers of support. Cheques payable to Zimbabwe Trade Unionists Defence Fund, c/o SALEP, 28, Martello Street, London E8.