Militant

The Marxist Paper for Labour and Youth

ISSUE 744
12 April 1985

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Thatcher's message of hate



Photo: Militant

Prime Minister, Margaret Thatcher.

'The Prime Minister and her cabinet are in open warfare with the unions'—Ron Todd, TGWU

TAKING TIME off from lavish banquets on her tour of sweatshop Asia, Thatcher has launched a tirade of abuse against British workers.

She gloated at what she sees as the demise of militant trade unionism in Britain, and preened over the result of the miners' strike.

Her comments were made in appropriate places. Thatcher is known to admire Singapore as a model of free enterprise 'success'.

Singapore's prime minister Lee Kuan Yew, was quick to support her, saying that the miners' strike was 'organised hooliganism'.

Thatcher's message of hate for British workers and their organisations was delivered in countries where workers have few if any rights.

Unions controlled

In Singapore trade unions are government controlled; the press is owned by a government run monopoly; the regime has powers of arbitrary arrest, detention and banishment; and an army of informers and spies keep tabs on workers and dissidents. The rich grab the lion's share of any 'prosperity'. Even so opposition is growing.

Asia's low wage "anything goes" economies are examples Britain's Tories would love to copy. But Thatcher, for all her bravado, and all the anti-working class legislation on the statute books, is nowhere near the sweatshop economy the capitalists want.

Thatcher and the Tories hate trade unions and long for the return of the Victorian 'upstairs, downstairs' society. But Britain's working class and labour movement remains one of the most powerful and highly organised in the world.

Millions of workers, particularly the young, the unemployed and the low paid know only too well what the Tories intend for all of us.

What limited success the Tories have had is courtesy of those spineless 'moderate' trade union leaders so lavishly praised by Thatcher.

With a fighting leadership the working class could dump the Tories and their system with ease.

Join with *Militant* in building and strengthening that new leadership.



Big cash boost from Young Socialists

THE LABOUR Party Young Socialists Conference at Easter weekend was a great success. But you would never have guessed that from the Tory press coverage—or lack of it.

A lively conference of socialist youth is too evil and dangerous to mention! That's why delegates and visitors gave well over £7,000 to the *Militant* Fighting Fund to build up the resources of a workers' paper.

Bill Ross from Maltby near Rotherham, pledged £100 with the message "To the YS and *Militant* in recognition of their fantastic support throughout the miners' strike." Other pledges from miners included Alan Bateman, Bates NUM £50; Joe Owens, Bilston Glen NUM £70 and Chris Brown ex-striking miner, Littleton £50. Some of the best examples of sacrifices once again come from one of the most hard up sections, the unemployed, and included a donation of £100 from Peter Barry from Glasgow.

LPYS Conference reports pages 8 and 9

Militant

Thatcher: language of class war

In Malaysia last week, Thatcher was gloating how she had "seen off" the miners. "We resisted that year-long strike and one outstanding achievement was that, among trade unions in Britain, not one gave support, because they were learning the facts of life."

"We are now getting new leadership from moderate trade unionists," she claimed, "and that augurs well for the future."

Her openly contemptuous attitude towards the magnificent struggle of the miners and all those thousands of workers who *did* support them has angered trade unionists. She has revealed her true nature. This is the language of class war and it will only harden the resolve of workers to prove just how wrong she is if she thinks she has brought the trade unions under her thumb.

The miners' strike opened up rifts within the Tory Party and the ruling class. It brought about an eight per cent swing from Tory to Labour in the opinion polls. It has resulted in a deep loathing of Thatcher amongst previously non-political workers. If she regards that as a complete victory, what would a defeat for the Tories have implied?

Workers will answer Thatcher in the mighty struggles of the coming months. Already teachers are in the midst of an unprecedented struggle, civil servants are balloting on industrial action. In manufacturing industry, where Thatcher believes that unions have learned the lesson of "moderation", average earnings have, according to the CBI, grown by 8.5% a year, more than double the rate in the USA, Japan and West Germany.

Not only is the movement not cowed; it is being hardened in the heat of battle. Without conceding the industrial struggle, workers are also turning to the political arena, to force Thatcher out of office at the general election.

At least Thatcher's remarks were entirely typical. Less expected is that a similar view on the decline of union militancy is taken by Eric Hobsbawm of the Communist Party in another chapter of gloom and doom about the state of the labour movement in the pages of *Marxism Today*.

He ridicules those who claim that "the movement hasn't had serious setbacks, mainly because the unions are in excellent shape." "This is baloney" he says, "anybody who belives this in April 1985—anybody who believed it at the peak of the miners' strike—is living in a time warp."

"It is an insult to the intelligence as well as to the devotion, loyalty and heroism of British union militants to pretend that they haven't taken a good few beatings over the past six years," he adds.

On the contrary, it is Hobsbawm himself who is insulting the union militants with remarks like this. Of course he is right that there have been defeats since Thatcher came to power; no Marxists have denied that. The role of Marxism, however, is not to deplore the workers' failure to win their battles, but to explain the reasons for those defeats and point the way forward to victory.

He however sees no hope of victory. His article is steeped in pessimism and defeatism. Yet he concedes that we are at a time "when the contradictions of capitalism are more visible and potentially catastrophic than ever before in Britain and the World." He cannot disagree with the genuine Marxists that the objective conditions for establishing socialism are present. Yet nowhere does he examine the subjective problems, in the leadership of the movement which have led to defeats.

The "intelligence, devotion, loyalty and heroism" of the workers is not in doubt. The leadership of the trade unions and Labour Party has however been inadequate.

Hobsbawm not only fails to recognise this crucial factor, but his ideas fortify this leadership. If you know that you are going to lose anyway, why bother to fight on to victory? Hobsbawm is not merely an observer with a wrong analysis; his pessimism positively helps to bring about the very defeats he bemoans.

Mass unemployment has reduced the total number of trade unionists, but as the teachers and civil servants are showing, militant trade unionism is spreading to new layers of society. The setbacks of the last few years may have discouraged a small number of trade unionists, but far more, like the young miners, have learned important lessons, have become more politically aware, as a result of the class warfare being waged by Thatcher.

David Basnett, a right-wing union leader, has understood better than Hobsbawm the processes at work, when he talks of the prospect of "insurrectionary trade unions."

New, young trade union leaders will sweep away the old. Marxist ideas will be brought back on to the agenda and will come to dominate the thinking of the trade union and labour movement.

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Militant, 3 – 13 Hepscott Road London E9 5HB.
Phone: 01-533 3311.

Registered as a newspaper at the Post Office. Publishea by Militant; printed by Cambridge Heath Press (TU) Ltd., 3/13 Hepscott Road, London E9 5HB. ISSN 0144-9275

Head must be sacked

PREDICTABLY, the Tory press and with it the *Daily Mirror* have lept to the defence of Ray Honeyford, the headmaster currently suspended in Bradford.



Ray Honeyford.

"The bullyboys of the race relations industry have claimed their first martyr" screamed the *Daily Express*. "A disgraceful episode" brought through by a "bunch of local ayatollahs who have made common cause with left wing yobs" shouted the *Yorkshire Post*.

He is portrayed as a liberal trying to do the best for his pupils. But what are the facts?

Honeyford is a headmaster of Drummond Middle School in Manningham, a badly off working class area of Bradford. 90% of his school students are Asian. Yet he is a contributor to the *Salisbury Review*, a journal of the extreme right-wing of the Tory Party. The storm which led to his suspension springs from articles he wrote in this rag. Attacking the "multi-racial zealots" of the education system, he blames black and Asian children for educational problems of white children. He gave derogatory stereotypes of black, Asian and white working class families; a local community leader was described as a "half-educated and volatile Sikh"; while social workers were "professional providers of excuses who dispense alibis to the lazy, the loutish and the confused".

His racist and pompous comments exploded onto the Bradford political scene. What right has Honeyford got to be a headmaster peddling these views, people rightly asked? A Parents Action Group was formed and 238 letters sent in by parents calling for his dismissal. The school students came out for a day's strike in June last year and more recently the PAG organised an "alternative" school for a week in protest about delays in Honeyford's dismissal.

A class divide has immediately opened up. The NUT, Bradford Trades Council, and the Community Relations Council call for his dismissal. Max Madden MP and Labour Councillors put the pressure on. On the other side Honeyford recieves backing from local Tory MP Marcus Fox MP and the National Association of Head Teachers. Even the local vicar lends his support.

In October of last year a Labour vote of no confidence was defeated and instead Honeyford was given six months to "restore the confidence of the parents". Considering he called the PAG "rent-a-mob" this was just a gesture by the Tories. Honeyford is now suspended.

Honeyford must be sacked. He blames black families for educational problems.

The real culprit is the Tories and their cuts in the educational system. Three quarters of all textbooks in Bradford schools are over 15 years old and spending on school building next year will be £2 million below the minimum level needed.

The fight against education cuts is a fight for all workers, black and white, for a proper future for their children. We need a socialist education programme. A properly funded comprehensive education system can cater for the full richness and variety of black and white students together. Honeyford can play no part in this.

By Pete Watson
(Bradford South Labour Party)



Parents call for the sacking of Honeyford. Photo: John Harris (IFL)

Labours ranks will reject witch hunt

THERE IS increasing anger amongst the ranks of the labour movement that they are having to fight a continuous rearguard action against the right wing, who seem more intent on attacking *Militant* supporters than in joining the battle against the Tories.

The right wing know there would be no support for a purge of the Marxists in the Labour party, so they disguise their political attacks through organisational measures.

A right wing resolution at the coming conference of the Transport and General Workers Union, camouflaged as a call for a 'yes' vote in the ballot on political funds, says *Militant* supporters should not hold office in the union.

This has angered Audrey White, member of the 6/612 branch and the National Womens Committee. She told *Militant* she would move an amendment at her next branch meeting, which would call for maximum unity in the movement, to direct its energies towards fighting the Tories, and to reaffirm opposition to bans and proscriptions in the union, which damaged the TGWU during the 1950s.

Co-op

At the conference of the Co-operative Party over Easter, the right wing continued its assault on *Militant*. A resolution which called on the Co-op Party to be 'no less vigilant than the Labour Party' against *Militant* supporters was passed—it is notable though that most of the speakers in the debate were against the resolution, while a resolution calling for bans and proscriptions was withdrawn.

The most blatant political attacks are being carried out in constituency Labour Parties where the right wing maintain control. Dugald McKinnon was expelled on April 5 by Newcastle-under-Lyme CLP, the seat of John Golding MP.

Dugald had transferred his membership to the area from Ayr CLP after he moved down for work following three years on the dole. The right wing of Newcastle-under-Lyme CLP said he could not continue his membership because he had been seen 'selling *Militant*'

Ayr CLP have unanimously backed Dugald's transfer, writing to the National Executive and Newcastle-under-Lyme condemning the expulsion.

Militant supporters in the area have begun to mount protests in defence of Dugald (protests to the secretary of the CLP, Eddie Boden, Waterloo Buildings, Dunkirk, Newcastle-under-Lyme; copies to Dugald McKinnon, 7 Lincoln Avenue, Newcastle-under-Lyme).

It is a disgrace that the ranks of the movement are having to fight off these attacks when the real fight of socialists is to take on this Tory government.

NF sneaks into Newham

THE NATIONAL Front skulked into Newham last weekend. They held an "internal" meeting in an East Ham school. So frightened were they of being "found out" by the local labour movement that they booked the hall under a private name as a "birthday party".

The first that local people knew about it was when gangs of fascists ran through the streets shouting racist and nazi slogans.

Newham's Labour council must ensure this does not happen again.

There has been an increase in racial attacks in the borough, with one black lad being killed. The Newham 7 defence campaign has called a national demonstration against racism and racial attacks on 27 April.

Assemble at Plashet Park, Plashet Grove, London, E6 at 1.00pm. The campaign can be contacted for speakers at PO Box 273, Forest Gate, London E7 or through East Ham LPYS. Tel 552 3204.

Liverpool By-election

AN IMPORTANT by-election is underway in Dingle/St Michaels ward of Liverpool, to be held on April 18.

Already the Liberals are basing their campaign on smears against the council deputy leader, Derek Hatton. No wonder they want to keep off politics—when the council was under control of the Liberals in alliance with the Tories, between 1979 and 1983, in the inner city areas 22,000 were on the housing waiting list.

Compare this to Labour's record since they took over in 1983 with 2,000 housing starts. It is important that the Labour candidate, Alan Deane, wins an increased majority to show the Tories in the current campaign that the City Council has the backing of Liverpool workers.



Amnesty now!

ARRESTED—fighting for his job

CHRIS HERRIOT, of Monktonhall NUM, was arrested on June 20 at a mass picket at Bilston Glen. He was charged with breach of the peace, assaulting a police officier, and resisting arrest. After being held in jail overnight, he was released on 'standard bail conditions'.

The following Monday he returned to the picket line at Bilston Glen. However, police arrested five members of the NUM's Central Strike Committee for the area. As Chris was the only remaining strike committee member on the picket, he had no choice but to take over organising the picket. As soon as he did however, he was picked out by police and arrested.

Again held overnight, this time he received more stringent bail conditions—he could not go near a picket line or pit until his case came to court.

He appeared in court in September. His second offences were taken first, the more serious charges being left until January. He was found guilty—and thus his coming court appearance had already been pre-judged.

Despite this being his first ever offence, he was fined £400. He was sacked from his job by the NCB on October 7.

At his January appearance two new charges were introduced, including one of 'intimidation'—apparently, the court was told, Chris called a working miner in Newtongrange post office a 'scabby bastard'.

Chris pleaded guilty—he knew if he didn't, he would face being remanded in custody. He had seen what had happened to fellow striker Davy Hamilton, who was remanded in custody for two and a half months.

Chris was sentenced to a total of 140 hours community service.

Since then Chris has been fighting for reinstatement, along with the 103 other miners sacked in the Lothian district, organised in the Lothian Victimised Miners Association.

• Sacked miners—publicise your case in the pages of *Militant*. Write to Victimised Miners, 3-13 Hepscott Road, London E9.

Campaign launched

THE MINER'S Amnesty Campaign will be launched in Merseyside at a meeting on 20 April in the Municipal Annexe, Dale Street, Liverpool. As part of their contribution to the campaign, Merseyside LPYS branches have "adopted" four miners from Hem Heath colliery in Staffordshire who are in Walton Prison. They are arranging for Terry Fields MP to visit them.

Teachers to step up action

THE MOOD of NUT conference this year is overshadowed by the industrial action presently taking place. More and more teachers are seeing the pay dispute as a political struggle, as shown by the standing ovation to the address of the president, who outlined the stark economic facts of life of being a teacher.

The brave words of the president, however, were not matched by the action of the leadership. Whilst agreeing in principle with some escalation of action, they effectively blocked the action necessary for a rapid victory which had been moved by local associations closely involved in the action.

Conference expects strong leadership to win the campaign. Traditionally moderate Birmingham reflected the frustration felt by many of the classroom teachers by supporting action over exams. Delegates were clearly disappointed that the issues of a levy and flat-rate sustentation (strike pay) were not discussed.

In spite of these setbacks, teachers will be taking increased action. By linking the issues of pay and cuts and by winning the support of other trade unionists and parents, both at national and local level, we can achieve a victory over this Tory government.

At a packed *Militant* readers' meeting which heard Terry Fields MP and Felicity Dowling, Liverpool District Labour Party secretary, £109 was raised for the *Militant* fighting fund.

By Richard Thorpe
(Llanelli NUT, personal capacity)

Disabled must join Labour says MP

ANGER AND hatred of this Tory government is spreading to every part of society. Terry Fields MP recently spoke in a debate with a Tory before a conference of 150 disabled children in Manchester on 30 March.

His main message wàs that they had to join in the general struggle of the labour and trade union movement. This was met with tremendous applause and cheering. The Tory speaker met with a very cool reception.

Terry said: "We would support any legislation which would help the disabled, but legislation by itself is not enough. We already have the Chronically Sick and Disabled Act but it is being ignored by many of the local authorities because of the cutbacks".

Photo: John Harris (IFL)



Police charged CND demonstration

At Easter weekend we stood at the end of a muddy bridle path at Molesworth and the build up of marchers meant we couldn't move onto the areas where tents had been arranged for protestors.

Many marchers were ringing bells round the bases' perimeter fence, not a very violent activity, others were talking with friends, families were eating and drinking. Suddenly the Met boys charged us so hard we couldnt keep on our feet, they were pushing us back but there was no room to move because of the fences. A policeman punched a marcher straight in the face for no reason at all. We couldn't see his number; we were trying to keep our balance in the mud. Why was the charge made? To get a police van through. Of course it would be a waste of time *asking* these murderous pacifists to move, wouldn't it?

Thatcher barked obediently when Her Master's Voice growled this weekend. Reagan dismissed Gorbachov's proposal of a nuclear missile freeze so Thatcher followed suit. Even such mild attempts to reduce the huge arsenal of mass slaughter stockpiled by capitalism and Stalinism are being shot down.

We need governments throughout the world who operate for the real interests of the people. We won't get lasting peace until we get socialism. CND members should think about the lessons of the weekend and make sure your campaigning against war becomes a political fight. Reports by Anne Sylvester and other correspondents.

Slapped wrists for ultra right Tory students

ONLY DAYS after Thatcher piously condemned soccer violence, her young party members left a trail of destruction at Loughborough University, venue of the Federation of Conservative Students conference last week.

The incident at Loughborough will be used to clamp down on the FCS right-wing who have worried the Tory leadership by making gains in the party.

Last month they took over the influential Greater London Young Conservatives while at the FCS conference itself, the right wing, based around the Scottish delegation, made a clean sweep in the elections.

The FCS right-wing call themselves 'libertarians', yet are ultra reactionary, bordering on the bizarre. They adopt provocative slogans, eg. "Hang Nelson Mandela". To them, mainstream Thatcherites are now the 'wets' and any state intervention in capitalism equals 'social democracy'. They want to privatise everything, from the pits to the police—even the dole should be scrapped and the unemployed given bank loans!

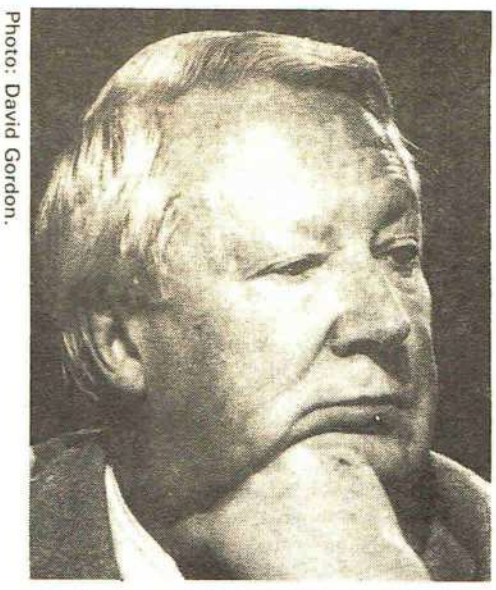
But they should not be dismissed as harmless ultra-right headbangers. Many are not actually students but work part of full time for Tory MPs and established right wing pressure groups.

More seriously, they have built organisational links with reactionary forces throughout the world, including the South African and Chilean governments and right wing terror groups. To them the Contras in Nicaragua are 'freedom fighters'. Much of their ideology comes from extreme Republican 'think tank' groups in the USA.

Even so the FCS right-wing will not be purged. The Tory leadership will not allow them positions of influence at present—they would only provoke and enrage the labour movement and damage the Tories' plummeting credibility even further.

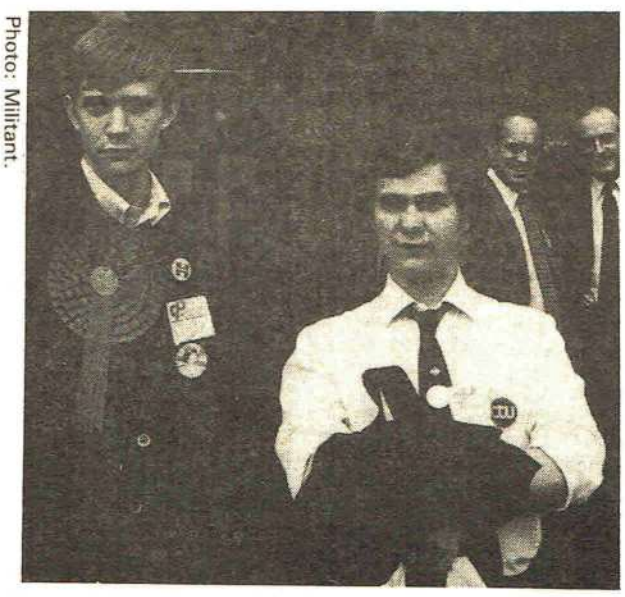
But as *Militant* has often warned, the capitalist class will not be so adverse to using dictatorial methods themselves in the future, as they become more desperate to defend their system as it spirals deeper into crisis. The Tories may pull in the right wing's reins for the moment—but only to keep them under wraps, ready for 'better' days.

Photo: David Gordon.



Heath—the man who epitomises everything the ultra right students hate.

Photo: Militant.



Young Tories at Conservative Party conference. The ultra right wing student faction has made notable gains amongst Young Tories.

Maggies Fleet St tendency

THE TORY press in covering the FCS debacle, were quick to turn the argument around into an attack on *Militant* supporters in the Labour Party. They repeatedly describe the far right as 'Maggie's *Militant* Tendency', equating the ultra right and their conspiratorial tactics with Marxism.

This is a disgrace. *Militant* supporters stand for the defence of democratic rights and socialist policies that can emancipate the mass of working people. To compare us with supporters of dictators, apologists for apartheid and assorted right wing bigots is outrageous.

The Tory propaganda goes like this. Support for capitalism—with its four million unemployed, slum housing, and deprivation—is 'normal'. Those who support it are 'moderates'.

Left linked to right

This is the centre of the political spectrum and any deviation from it is 'extreme'. According to them, the 'far left' and the 'far right' are therefore both sides of the same coin.

This of course is nonsense. It is not a question of 'left and right' but forwards and backwards. The reactionaries want to push society back into a new dark era, grimmer than the '30s, in their frenzied defence of the profit system. Marxists want to take society forward to a new, higher level of existence.

Unlike the reactionaries who have crept into the Tory Party in recent times, Marxism has been a constant thread in Labour's history. The Marxist thread has been taken up by *Militant* (first produced over twenty years ago by Labour Party members). *Militant* is gaining support not through conspiracies—but because more and more workers are turning to Marxism as a solution to the increasing problems they face.

By Bob Wade



Gordon Bennet writes—

EVERY TIME Reagan opens his auto-cue fed gob you can be pretty sure that Mrs Thatcher will promptly echo whatever pearl of wisdom Captain America has deigned to give us.

This week they both rejected the Russian proposal to freeze the deployment of intermediate nuclear weapons on the grounds that it would merely freeze an Eastern Bloc superiority in Europe. And that wouldn't be fair would it chaps?

Regardless of the fact, with or without any freeze, that both sides have the capability to reduce the entire planet to a couple of shoe boxes full of nuclear dust, it seems that Mrs T is only interested in arms reduction if it means Russian arms reductions.

Her rejection of the Russian offer came amid the nauseating spectacle of mutual backslapping with the Despot of Singapore (the Tories have always had a soft sport for the 'miracle economies' of Hong Kong, Singapore, Taiwan and South Korea).

While the boss was swanning around the sweatshops of Asia, mad Mike of the flowing locks and stagnant brain was running the shop.

He showed uncharacteristic restraint over the weekend as thousands of demonstrators gathered at Molesworth to object to being blown to Kingdo .i come. Not once did he strap a flame thrower over his flak jacket and turn on the protestors.

This only proves that when school bully (Margaret Hilda) is out of town, Michael is actually quite a sensitive soul.

His compassion and concern now even extends to CND and he gave them this advice: "Protest groups should ask themselves whether freedom of expression at the expense of gross inconvenience to others is an indulgence which brings the cause itself into disrepute."

The Assistant Chief Constable for Cambridgeshire also chipped in and pointed out that the Molesworth area "is completely unsuitable for major demonstrations of this nature."'

I think that members of CND should be deeply moved that two former opponents now so openly express concern about the effectiveness of CND demonstrations.

Could this be the start of something big? Defence Ministers against the Bomb, Senior Police Officers for Peace?

On the other hand a very cynical friend of mine suggested that their idea of a 'suitable' place for CND demos would be an uninhabited island off the coast of Scotland, followed closely by another look at the proposals for Scottish nuclear tests.

Miners' strike—results and prospects

The effects of the miners strike will reverberate throughout the whole of the labour movement, especially within the NUM itself. In some areas the official NUM leadership was less than willing to organise the strike and new rank and file activists were forced to take on this role themselves. In the second part of his article, **KEVIN MILES** looks at how this was done in the Northumberland area, in a campaign where *Militant* supporters were prominent.

Rank and file pickets took charge

RANK AND file striking miners took matters into their own hands when morale in Northumberland had dropped to a low point.

The press had singled out the area as one most likely to crack. The NCB were conducting a meticulous propaganda campaign aimed at the miners in isolated areas.

John Cunningham Senior, the Ellington Lodge Secretary went back to work. Resolutions were sent to the area from a number of branches calling for an area ballot on a return to work.

Picket's meeting

At the instigation of *Militant* supporters, an area pickets' meeting was organised with 300 pickets present.

Dennis Murphy, the Area President was invited to speak. After he had spoken, John Cunningham Junior proposed from the floor that a rank and file picket coordinating committee be established with two representatives from each pit, with the resources to organise the picketing.

Under pressure from the meeting, and lacking any alternative proposals, Murphy agreed. The committee was immediately unanimously elected, made up of the best activists in the eyes of the pickets. *Militant* supporters were prominent. The Committee immediately launched its campaign.

During the next six days, a surge of activity was seen, including lobbies of all lodge meetings, two bulletins, leafletting of all the social clubs in Ashington, fly-posting and a dramatic increase in picketing activity. The outcome was an overwhelming vote in favour of continuing the strike, and rejecting the idea of an area ballot.

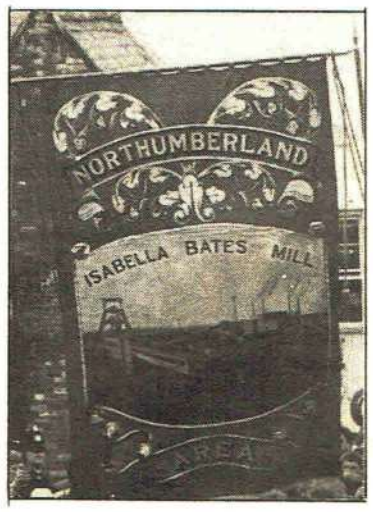
There was a real feeling amongst pickets that they had organised something themselves and had achieved positive results.

The rank and file committee and the *Militant* supporters in particular had won the respect and authority in the eyes of the activists. They were keen to continue its work.

The following week, the picket committee was summoned to the weekly meeting of the area strike committee, ostensibly to discuss the further financing of the picketing. In fact, the strike committee (composed exclusively of area executive members and lodge officials) had other ideas.

To their amazement, the picket committee were told that they had overstepped their powers. In future, they were not allowed to produce any more bulletins or lobby lodge meetings: there was to be no more "attempts to influence or manipulate our members". There were to be no more meetings organised with speakers from outside the area—"even Arthur Scargill has to ask permission".

From then on it was demanded that the organisation of the picketing would be returned to the officials; no picket money would be paid. The demonstration in Blyth organised jointly with the LPYS would go ahead, but it was to be the last.



And then Dennis Murphy, the Area President, spelt it out: "I will not tolerate any involvement of the *Militant* Tendency in the strike in this Area

When the events of this meeting were reported to the pickets they were met with astonishment and anger. "It's as if", said one picket, "they were happy to let us rescue the strike, but now they know it's still on, they want complete control again".

The decision to emasculate the picket committee did, for a time have a demoralising effect. The fact that at many pits the pickets received no picketing money meant a reduction in activity as the men spent more of their time collecting wood or sea-coal.

Accountability

But for the longer term, hundreds of miners saw what they themselves could organise.

They saw clearly the need for accountability and for a fighting leadership. Most importantly they realise now the need to remain active, and to concentrate their efforts in the process of building a new leadership for the Northumberland NUM at lodge and area level.

The programme and strategy put forward by supporters of *Militant* gained a resounding echo during the strike and will have a major influence in the struggle to rebuild a fighting union in the future.

By Kevin Miles

Miners support Militant

The strike has opened the eyes politically of thousands of miners. The sheer ruthlessness of the Tories in trying to smash the NUM, and the contrasting indifference of the TUC and Labour Party leaderships has driven many miners to draw far reaching conclusions about the nature of society and how to change it. *Militant* spoke to some miners about why they became interested in the ideas of the *Militant* newspaper.



Photo: Mick Carroll.

Philip Jones, South Kirby NUM.

Philip Jones, South Kirby NUM, Barnsley Area.

I had never heard of *Militant* before the strike. I wasn't involved in politics. I came across the paper through a mate of mine, now working at the Rover factory in Solihull. He asked me to write him a letter about what happened at Orgreave—I'd been injured there. He sent the letter to *Militant* and sent me a copy of the paper with it in.

I was amazed at the coverage of the strike. I'd never seen reports like it before. Seeing how it printed what I felt, the truth, how things were really going off in our strike, made me relate to it.

A lot of the articles were written by miners. You know they're in the same situation as you. In Fleet Street papers the articles are written by people on £20,000 a year. In *Militant* they are written by people like yourself.

The paper has opened my eyes to what's going on in other countries - in Chile and Brazil, for example. There've been bits on miners from other countries, from South Africa, the USA and Australia. I can understand what they're going through. We do the same work. We have a common interest, a common bond. That interest is the fight for socialism.

Neil Kinnock's role has been bloody appalling. He's supposed to be a leader of a party which supports workers. He should have been in the forefront of our struggle. But he's more bothered about "public opinion" than getting on the picket lines and supporting the people who vote for him.

Militant is the best paper for explaining the ideas behind socialism, and it's been solidly behind us all the way. There's quite a few of us now in the Barnsley Area and the paper reaches a fair number in our branch. We're going well.

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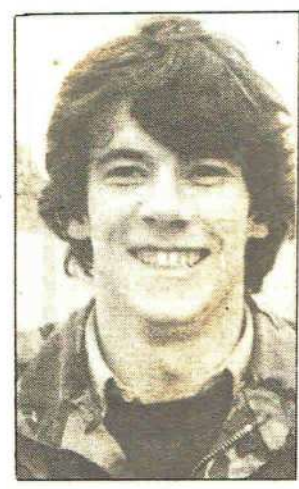


Photo: Mick Carroll.

Davy Donis, Killoch NUM.

DAVY DONIS (22) Killoch colliery, Ayrshire

I came across *Militant* during the strike while I was collecting money in Glasgow, I turned it down; I didn't want to know. Then an LPYS member who was driving for us asked me to come to a meeting and its ideas were explained to me. I agreed with 99% of what they said.

There is a lot I don't understand, but I am going to start to read.

We started a YS in Cumnock and have 28 members. The local Labour Party are hostile and are trying to stop us. We are still not recognised officially as a YS branch. The expulsions from the party are ridiculous. At a time like this they shouldn't be witch-hunting anybody.

●

KEVIN GALLACHER, Councillor and Wearmouth NUM spoke to Bob Harker: The labour movement can only change for the better, and I can't see it going any other way because of the amount of lads from our union who have joined the party. Take Wearmouth Lodge for example. About 150 lads have joined the Labour Party and they know which road to take to achieve a change and that's the road that leads firmly to the left.



Photo: Dave Sinclair.

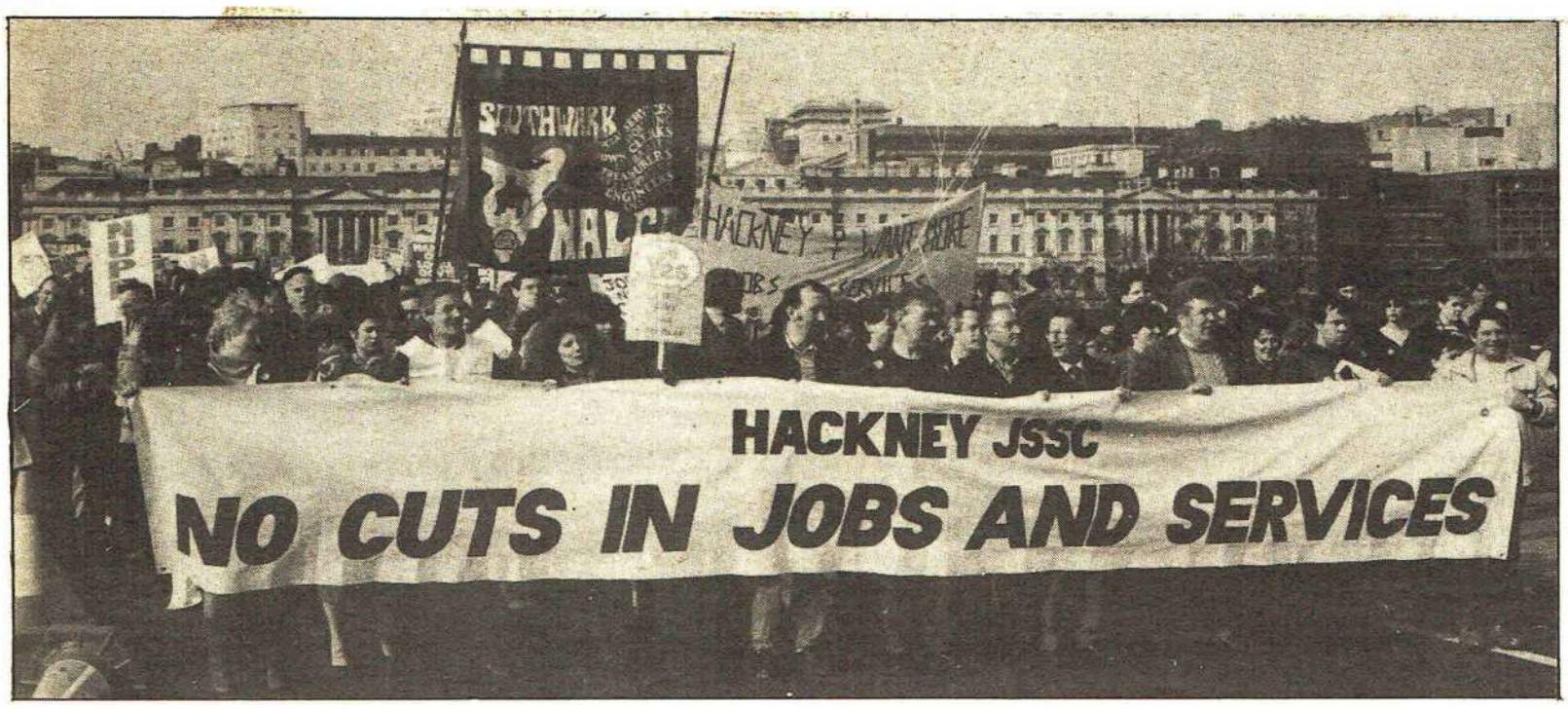
Delegates selling *Militant* outside TUC conference 1984.

Get involved

If they wanted to run and hide and shout from the sidelines they would have joined the SDP, CP, the SWP and what-have-you, but these lads want to fight and get involved—they know the best way to do this is through the labour movement.

The Labour Party must change for the better now because its the active people who are joining, those who want to see progress on a national level and who want genuine socialist policies.

All I can see the right wing doing is pushing for a mass expulsions from the party because they don't like activists in the movement. All they are interested in is us going around the doors in May or every five years for a vote or perhaps pushing a leaflet through the doors, but that's not what the movement is for. We demand better conditions for all workers and real socialist policies.



Hackney council workers have pledged to back the councillors with whatever action is necessary to save jobs and services. Many of them turned out on this demonstration against cuts.

Hackney unions pledge backing

LAST WEEK the High Court ordered Hackney Council to fix a rate by 16 April or give an "acceptable date" when it would do so.

Failing this the judge would set a deadline. If the council still refused, individual councillors could be charged with contempt of court.

This Thursday the Labour Group is meeting to decide its position and a full meeting of the council is expected the following week. So far the Labour council has said that the government's demands that the council cut its spending by £26 million is unacceptable.

On the 7 March the council adopted a budget of £118 million, which kept services as last year. It has called for the return of £70 million taken in penalties and rate support grant since 1979. This would enable the council to maintain jobs and services and cut rates by 20%.

The local Labour Parties and the council workforce are calling upon the councillors to stand firm. Unfortunately some councillors, perhaps a majority, are wavering.

At the last council meeting on 27 March half the Labour Group voted with the Tories and Liberals to water down a motion of defiance hopi g it would curry favour in the courts. It did nothing of the sort of course, but it showed the direction that some councillors were heading.

They want to set a legal rate, even if it means cuts. They are putting their own personal careers above the interests of the people of Hackney. Their ambitions were given recent hope when the council's director of finance produced a paper detailing possible cuts. Its advocates claim it could cut £26 million without any compulsory redundancies, a view totally rejected by the Joint Shop Stewards Committee (JSSC).

The JSSC has urged the Councillors to stand firm: "We will fight all the way and expect you to be with us". We have told councillors in open letters that "there are no acceptable cuts" and that if councillors are legally penalised "any industrial action necessary" will be taken to defend them.

The JSSC has called upon its nine member unions to hold meetings to win support for strike action in defence of jobs and services.

A NALGO branch meeting, attended by two-thirds of its membership had already voted in favour of strike action when required.

Cuts all round

A legal budget would mean cuts all round. The workforce could be halved in two or three years. Many services would disappear, hitting particularly the poorest sections of the community in what is already described officially as "Britain's poorest borough".

We need to widen our campaign beyond Hackney to solidarity strike action throughout London and involving council workers in other threatened authorities. A Tory MP has claimed that plans against ratecapping developed by London Bridge, the organisation which links council workers in London, are "close to criminal conspiracy".

We can win this fight but it just shows—you've got to be careful these days that you don't become a criminal when discussing methods of how to save your job.

By Nigel Bloch
(Treasurer Hackney Joint Shop Stewards Committeee, personal capacity)

Leeds council raps teachers

A STORMY meeting of Leeds District Labour Party followed the refusal of Education Chairman, right-wing councillor Geoff Driver, to withdraw a disciplinary circular to teachers.

The circular had been sent by the director of Education to Leeds school heads demanding names of teachers participating in industrial action.

Although withdrawal of voluntary duties—such as meal supervision—is not a breach of teachers' employment contracts, the circular threatened that such action would result in docking of pay.

Driver claimed that the circular was necessary to protect councillors from legal action by parents; but neighbouring Tory-controlled Bradford Council has withdrawn a similar circular. A *Militant* supporter further pointed out that Leeds is already breaking the 1944 Education Act by cutting spending on secondary school textbooks.

The council cirular is seen by NUT activists as a form of blacklisting, and Driver's refusal to withdraw it reflects the growing isolation of the right-wing Leeds City council leadership.

The council leader, George Mudie, has ducked the fight against ratecapping by explaining that if Leeds is ratecapped he will simply resign!

By Gordon Nardell
(Leeds DLP Delegate)

Town hall occupied

LEWISHAM has had a Labour Council since 1971. Now it has a Tory rate, following two council meetings on 3 and 4 April.

The first meeting was cancelled after hundreds of trade unionists, tenants and Labour Party members lobbied outside and then occupied the council chamber.

At the second meeting the police were everywhere, scores of them. It took over an hour of trying to argue with councillors before we were allowed in.

Again some trade unionists occupied the chamber. So the Labour group held yet another meeting to clarify what rate to set. Labour Party members were allowed in as observers.

Only a few councillors, said they would vote against the Tory and Labour rates.

Steve Smith a NUPE steward and gardener who spoke got the best response. He told councillors he had backed them all the way, because they'd promised no redundancies, no cuts, no rent rises, no rate rises. Now councillors were complying with Tory laws. "What am I supposed to say to my mates at work next Tuesday?" he asked.

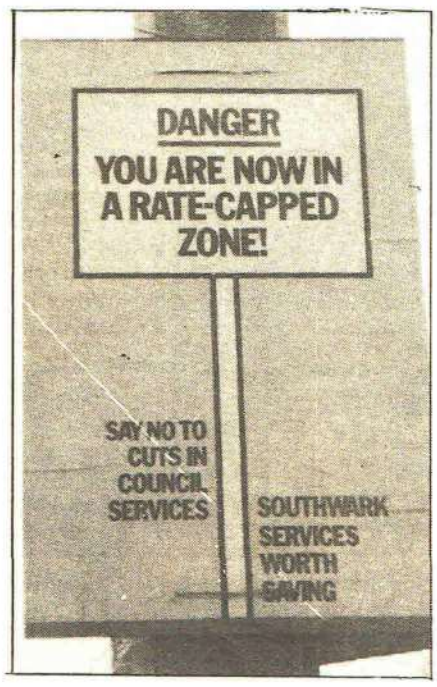
While Labour councillors were backing away, the Tories were in the council chamber, voting through their rate which was within government guidelines. Many Labour councillors seemed almost pleased, thinking it had got them off the hook.

Labour's disarray

But then the discussion turned to farce. Were the law-abiding Tories legally right to set a rate? Had the mace been on the table?

While the councillors dither, the unions and tenants are fighting back with mass meetings of stewards and workplace meetings. The Lewisham Federation of Tenants (FELTRA) are discussing a rent strike. The comments of trade unionists and the chanting of "deselection for you" show that the local Labour Parties should be getting some welcome new blood to ensure no repeats of this long running farce.

By Roger Shrives



Manchester sets rate

RIGHT WING Labour councillors in Manchester voted for a Tory motion to set a rate, on 31 March. Together with the Tories and Liberals they defeated Labour policy by 51 votes to 45.

The right wing held back their decision until the last minute, so that the City Labour Party and the Labour Group could not discuss the issues.

The majority Labour Group had been fighting for a budget that contained an additional £30 million, to be demanded from the government out of the £250 million taken off the rate support grant to Manchester since 1979. This budget would have included topping up YTS pay, 300 extra nursery places and 110 extra teachers. £3.5 million was also set aside to raise wages of the low paid.

It was on polices such as these that gave Labour a resounding victory in the May elections last year, winning 28 out of the 33 seats up for election.

Given the situation the majority Labour Group decided to regain control and set the rate, rather than let the Tories, with the backing of the right wing, set a lower rate that would have meant cuts.

A new budget will now be put before the council in May—this will include no rent increases, a limited expansion of services and a rate increase in line with inflation, of 5.5%. This may look good on paper, but it is only storing up problems for next year when Jenkin's plans will mean up to 5,000 redundancies.

By John Byrne
(Manchester City Councillor)

Tories to make homeless move on

AN ESTIMATED 14,000 housholds in Britain live in bed and breakfast permanently. Private landlords are making a tidy profit out of homelessness by charging extortionate rents.

This vicious Tory government are at last making a stand against the bed and breakfast scandal. What are they doing? They are changing DHSS regulations so that from 29 April, anybody under twenty-six will only be able to stay in bed and breakfast accomodation for a average of four weeks in any one area—then, they will have to move on.

A phone survey carried out on 25 March in the Bristol Area estimated that this means that 2,000 young people in Bristol alone will be thrown out of their bed and breakfast on 29 May.

So where will they go? My job involves finding accomodation for homeless people, and experience has taught me that people only ever resort to bed and breakfasts as the very last resort—many young people prefer to squat than going to bed and breakfasts.

The irony of the story is Thatcher's comment to the twenty-five young unemployed people from Liverpool. Just one week after the change in DHSS regulations were sneaked through the Commons, she said that the young people should look around for lodging as she did when she was young! (Did she have to move on every four weeks I wonder?)

By Yasmin Barry
(Bristol)

Housing benefit

110,000 TENANTS in both the public and private sector, will be hit by cuts in housing benefit of up to £5.47 a week. These latest cuts come after cuts of £190 million last year, which hit the 7,270,000 people who have to claim housing benefit.

These are people who can least afford the cuts. Some of those affected in the latest cuts will be elderly and handicapped people living in sheltered housing.

In addition to their cuts in housing benefits 17 councils (including Liverpool) are losing subsidies to tenants. And just to pile on the misery the government has warned councils that if they don't fix a legal rate in April they might withdraw housing benefit payments to cover rates.

By Anne McKay
(Basildon LPYS)

Coventry - from showpiece to ruin

PARLIAMENT ON 15 March debated the West Midlands. In a major speech, DAVE NELLIST, Labour MP for Coventry South East, spoke of the desperate problems facing working people in Coventry. He began by putting these in the context of the decline of British capitalist economy:

The Times in November carried the following words beneath the appropriate pictures:

"After the war Great Britain was the third largest steel producer. Now we are 10th.

In 1900 Great Britain made 60 per cent of the world's shipping. Today we make 3 per cent.

Britain once exported motor bikes to over 100 countries. Now we import nearly every machine we buy.

After the war almost every car on the road was British. Now over half are foriegn.

Britain pioneered the world machine tool industry. Now our share is 3.1 per cent.

Britain discovered the wireless. We now import 96 per cent of all personal and portable radios.

Britain made the first practical computer. Now we have 5 per cent of the information technology market.

We once made all the textile machinery in the world. We now make 8 per cent."

That is an incredible advertisement. Since the Spanish empire collapsed 300 or 400 hundred years ago no economy in history has declined faster than Britain's in the last 30 years.

Britain used to be known as the workshop of the world. The west midlands might have been called the fitting shop. Britain is now the warehouse of the world. Companies have had the opportunity to reinvest and improve productivity by investing in new machinery, but they have refused to do so. They have lost not only world markets, but some major home markets....

....Reference has been made to the 16.5 per cent unemployment in the region as a whole, with 250,000 people unemployed. But those statistics do not take into account the kids on YTS, the unemployed men over 60 and the tens of thousands of unemployed women workers. In reality, almost 500,000 people in the west midlands are now unemployed.

About 40 per cent of the unemployed in Britain have been on the dole for over a year. In the west midlands, the figure is over 50 per cent. The Coventry unemployed rate is extremely high. In Hillfields, in the city centre of Coventry, the rate is 32 per cent.

In my area, 54 per cent of people under the age of 19 have been out of work for over a year, and 61 per cent of the over 45's have been unemployed for that length of time...

...Older workers are telling me that they are now part of the last in, first out, generation; that every time they get a job it lasts for six months to a year and that they are the first to be sacked.

Much has been said about apprenticeships. The Coventry *Evening Telegraph* carried a story yesterday saying that 12 trainee jobs announced by Talbot's a fortnight ago resulted in applications from 350 youngsters and that 15 applications a day were still coming in. Naturally, most of those youngsters will be disappointed. That is true of other major factories in Coventry. Overall there are a couple of hundred apprenticeships to be shared among a school-leaving population of 5,000.

Poverty Line

In my area, there are people under 25 who have not worked since the present Prime Minister walked into 10 Downing Street in May 1979. In other words, statistics supplied by the Department show that there are people in Coventry who have not been employed for six years. The chances of getting a job in the region are reduced by the fact that, whereas in Britain as a whole, 21 people are chasing every vacancy, in the west midlands the figure is 31, and in Coventry it is even higher.....

...One in three households in the west midlands lives on or below the poverty line. Among those in work, wage rates are declining rapidly. There are one or two who say that everything will be alright in the future. It was reported in the Coventry *Evening Telegraph*—that wonderful newspaper that gives workers good news—that Sir Michael Edwardes was promising 3,500 Dunlop workers that their future would be safe following the amalgamation with BTR. He said:

"Vote Tory. Retire at 16". That is how the youth of Coventry see the future under Tory rule.

"I shall seek to obtain assurances that there will be no immediate intention to change existing employment arrangements".

This is a bloke who will get a golden handshake of about half a million pounds for being at Dunlop for a few months. He received a golden handshake of about a third of a million pounds when he left ICI. He presided over British Leyland at a time when 85,000 jobs were lost. He is on £3,000 a week at Dunlop and he has the gall to tell Coventry workers that their jobs are safe. As an individual and in carrying out Government policy, he has done more to destroy car workers' jobs in Coventry than anyone else.

Coventry was a showpiece for British capitalism for about 80 or 90 years. It was the fastest growing and richest working class town in Britain. It enjoyed that prosperity until the late 1960s. Wage rates started to decline in September 1971 when the toolroom agreement in the engineering sector was lost. Coventry had some of the best wage rates in the country because 75 per cent. of its workers were trade union members and because shop floor organisation in the major factories was extremely tight.

Industrial employment in the city was dominated by firms such as British Leyland, and especially by multinational companies. We have seen them remove investment from the region and take it abroad. Investment has been taken to countries where wage rates are poorer and where trade unions are largely illegal. Examples are Argentina, Korea, Brazil and South Africa. About £40 billion of investement has gone to those countries over the past six years....

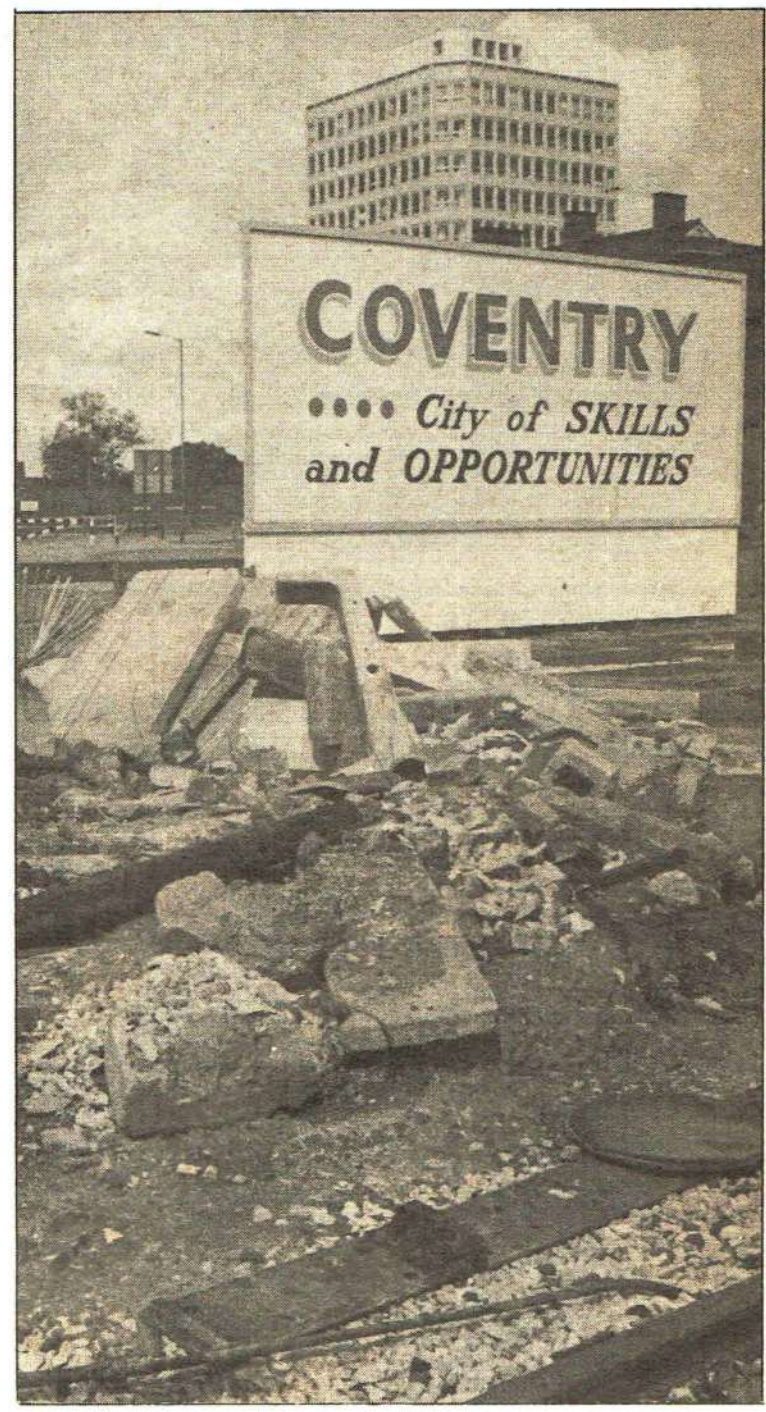


Photo: Darrell Cozens



Photo: Mick Carroll

Dave Nellist speaking at the YTURC meeting at last weekend's LPYS conference, seated is Bill Connor.

Statistics cannot describe the human misery of being on the dole. The rate of divorce is higher because of unemployment. Suicide is the second most common cause of death among young people. There has been an increase in drug addiction, including heroin and other hard drugs. These are the social consequences of youngsters and older workers being presented with the blind alley of unemployment and told that there is no real future for them.

...In 1966, the profits after tax of the major car companies fell from £65 million in 1965 to £30 million in 1966. However, the same firms distributed £33 million in dividends to the shareholders and declared a net loss of £3 million. That money should have gone into investment. The lack of investment in the car industry in Coventry since Canley was opened in the mid-1960s as the most modern car assembly plant in Europe sealed the fate of the workers. That has had social effects....

Unfit houses

...According to the Department of the Enviroment, there are in Coventry 1,000 unfit houses and 6,000 that lack basic amenities, such as an inside toilet or hot and cold running water. Imagine that happening in 1985. About 14,000 houses require repairs costing more than £3,000. About one in five houses in Coventry need some repair work. Last year the council estimated that, given the money then available, it would take 40 years to do the job. Since then, the money has been cut.

I worked out what the Government have stolen from the Coventry city council. They have stolen 28 per cent of the rate support grant, 38 per cent of the capital allocation and 56 per cent of the money that we would have had for housing if rates had been maintained at their 1980-81 levels. To put that in the language of bricks and mortar, more than £80 million has been taken from Coventry city council during the past five years alone. There are 8,000 people on the housing waiting and transfer lists. Four years ago, the city council built four council houses. This year and next the council will not be able to afford to build a single council house, because £80 million has been stolen from our city. We shall demand that that money is returned to our local authority...

....Young people and workers over 45 in Coventry have no future with respect to jobs. Solutions to our problems as a city and a region do not lie even with the suggestions put forward by Labour members during this debate. Those ameliorations will be welcomed, but we cannot have an island of socialism in a sea of Tory capitalism. To get jobs into Coventry in particular and the west midlands as a whole we need, first the resignation of the Tory government, and, secondly, a plan for industry, finance and the economy that can guarantee jobs for school leavers, reduce working hours and provide workers with early retirement and longer holidays. If every worker had holidays as long as Members of Parliament, half the dole queue would be immediately wiped away because new workers would be absorbed into the system. Plenty of reforms could be carried out to create jobs.

New schools

We shall be asked, "From where will the money come?" I believe that the money can be found in many places. If the government had not spent £6 billion during the past 12 months trying to break the NUM they could have built 60 new hospitals, 360 new schools and more than 60,000 new three-bedroomed houses—that would have gone a long way towards alleviating the working conditions of people in the west midlands. Instead, the government chose to try and break the trade union. That lesson will not be lost on working people in the west midlands. We want the money that has been stolen from us and we need jobs. To achieve that, we need to get rid of the Tory government.

BUPA member takes over NHS

AS HEALTH workers await this year's pay award, spare a thought for Victor Paige; he has just been appointed by Norman Fowler as chairman of the NHS managment board at a cost of £70,000 a year.

By Paul Reilly
(Nursing Shop Steward NUPE S. Edin. Hospitals branch personal capacity)

Paige used to work as a deputy chair of the National Freight Corporation becoming a major shareholder when it was sold off. Paige's last job was chairman of the London Port Authority and his main contact with the health service is through his membership of BUPA private health insurance.

His appointment will come as an insult then, to health workers who work long, unsocial hours for peanuts. One-third of nurses earn less than the national average wage, yet more demands on them are being made each year.

Nursing auxilliaries (with no formal nursing qualifications) are often left on wards with no trained staff yet their pay is around three-quarters of the pitiful wages of staff nurses.

Last year's pay review for nurses even talked of scrapping duty payments (for unsocial hours, shift allowance etc.) and special payments for nurses in psychiatry and care of the elderly—areas notoriously understaffed.

Ancilliary staff too, whilst being amongst the lowest paid workers in the country, are also under attack from privatisation. The privatisation of cleaning and catering services has both slashed the wages and conditions of the workers and produced a nightmare in the hospitals where these firms operate.



Photo: Stefano Cagnoni (IFL) II

Despite a two-year battle to keep the South London Women's Hospital open, government cuts forced its closure.

In Cambridge, the District Health Authority's decision to accept the tender of cowboy firm OCS, has been a disaster at Addenbrooke's hospital.

The *Guardian* reported litter lying around the hospital, and "stacks of plastic sacks and a pile of blood bottles smelling sickly sweet in the warmth." A grey dustbin marked 'hepatitis risk' was left next to a door marked 'septic theatre staff entrance'.

Appalling wages and workloads have meant that OCS found it impossible to keep staff. They offered up to 75% cuts in pay and hours, with no holiday or sick pay. Professor John Davies, top paediatrician at Addenbrookes has resigned, disgusted at the political decision leading to the privatisation, and the resultant lowering of standards.

Children suffer

In the Lothians the proposed closure of Bruntsfield has provoked the anger of health workers and the local community. Bruntsfield, whilst having paediatric and geriatric beds, specialises in gynaecological problems and performed over 1600 such operations in 1983 (one quarter of all in the South Lothians). This is a loss which will not be absorbed by other hospitals in Edinburgh without leading to 'red alerts' where all but emergencies are turned away.

Surgeons at the Royal Hospital for Sick Children in Edinburgh say the loss of Bruntsfield's paediatric beds will result in 400 children being added to a waiting list of 150-200, with children waiting up to 3 years for some operations. With increasing demands being placed on the NHS, any cut will have a savage effect.

The over-75 age group will be the fastest growing over the next 20 or 30 years, so massive cash injections are needed, just to keep still. The introduction of General Managers and further drives to privatise will need the full opposition of the labour movement. Otherwise it will mean the complete decimation of the NHS.

Leaders token fight on privatisation

IT IS a scandal that privatisation has been allowed to procede so far with hardly a murmur from the trade union and labour leadership. Even the Tories themselves must be surprised at the total failure of the NHS trade unions to even attempt a national fightback against the devastation of the NHS.

By Peter Haworth
(Secretary Group '81 COHSE Broad Left)

The trade union leadership has limited its campaign to trying to win in-house tenders by cutting members' wages and appealing to the better judgement of 'enlightened' health authorities. Local fightbacks such as at Barking, and Hammersmith hospitals have received only token support from union leaders.

Buoyed up by their success the Tories will always come back for more. The government are now exploring possibilities of total privatisation of the health service. They are talking of introducing a system where people will be given a certain number of vouchers to 'spend' on seeing their GP or going into hospital.

Private hospitals will compete for the cheapest (and therefore worst) treatment of patients who can't afford to pay. This will be the next step towards the American system where people are allowed to bleed to death in the street because they can't afford to pay for treatment.

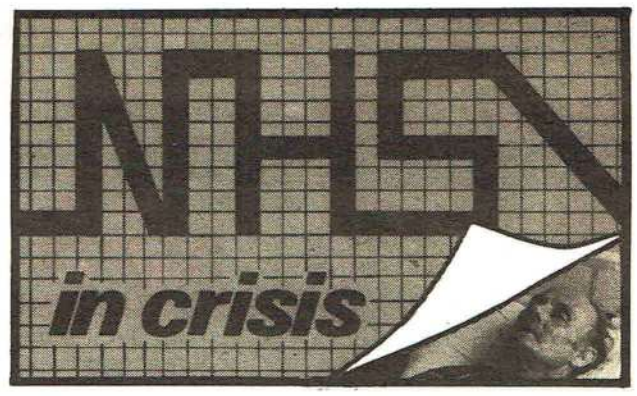


Lobby of Liverpool Health Authority. Photo: D Sinclair

None of this is inevitable. If health service workers had the leadership they deserved not one hospital would have been privatised. With a national campaign leading up to industrial action throughout the health service and with support from other trade unions, the Tories could be forced to retreat, or resign.

The right-wing trade union leaders are terrified of the strength and determination of workers to defend the NHS. This was shown in 1982 on 22 September when hundreds of thousands of workers throughout the country went on strike in support of health service workers pay. Given one ounce of leadership from the trade unions, just think what would be the response of workers to a call to defend the very existence of the health service.

As the crisis worsens health workers will be putting more and more pressure on their leaders to take action. If they refuse they will be brushed aside and replaced with a socialist leadership prepared to fight for the future of our health service.



Local managers toe Tory line

ANYONE WHO wonders how a deprived inner city Borough like Tower Hamlets can manage to set a 2% rate in 1984/85 and not expect to be rate-capped in 85/86, while similar Boroughs are screaming blue murder, should take a look at the Social Services Department where the so-called "vacancy" rate is approximately 19%.

By Myrna Shaw
(Assistant Secretary, Tower Hamlets Health District NUPE)

Directly in line to suffer the consequences of this deliberate policy of passing on Tory cuts are the 400 or so mentally handicapped, severely incapable old people living in the Borough's sheltered accommodation. Unable to care for them properly with such severe staffing shortages, the local health authority "reluctantly" decided at its last meeting to reduce their number by 10%—to avoid spending money on people who the Borough thinks should be in hospitals anyway.

Wards closed

So they ought and we have five closed wards in the hospital I work in for starters, but this wasn't a solution considered by the local Health Authority. They were too busy grappling with the problems they already had of hospitals bursting at the seams, sick people being sent home at 9.00pm to free beds for fresh emergencies, and patients waiting till gone 7.00pm for ambulances to take them home from their day-time Out-Patient appointments!

This Authority is having enough trouble trying to implement Tory decisions to send patients into the community let alone cope with those making the return journey back into full hospitals.

In fact, no one bothered to even exactly enquire how a 10% reduction was to be made. Were they going to wait for people to die and not replace them? Or were they going to wrap them up well, put them on a doorstep, ring the bell and then run away? Illegitimate babies, Tory 85 style.

The Health Authority was able to exercise an option not available to the elderly and sick—they moved on to next business. However it was still cuts, cuts and more cuts all the way for the next three hours.

Not elected

Health authorities are not elected—they're appointed and their main task is to carry out government orders. They are made up of people selected not only for their expertise but also their ability to toe the line.

Drugged to keep quiet

CHANNEL FOUR'S programme *Cause for Concern*, 22 March was very aptly named. It was about the widespread use of 'major tranquilisers' in the country's hospitals for people who are mentally ill. These drugs are given to people over long periods (ie. 10 – 20 years) and quite often these patients have very little wrong with them that counselling and support would not put right, as two doctors on the programme stated.

After long exposure to these drugs a condition called Tardive Dyskanesia develops. This results in uncontrolled shaking and twitching of the arms and legs and other parts of the body. In its advanced state the patient is unable to control their tongue and often unable to speak.

'Tranquilisers'

It is reckoned that some 150 million people worldwide are taking these drugs often against their will and some five million people suffer from Tardive Dyskanesia. Patients are invariably reduced to nothing more than a vegetable. The programme suggested that rude and difficult patients are often given these drugs to shut them up.

Understaffed

Wards in mental hospitals containing 20 or more patients are offten staffed by just two nurses for hours on end and some young nurses must end up cynical and frustrated, even hating the more difficult patients.

As capitalism falls deeper into crisis and cuts in basic services become more of an issue for working people, it is easy for us to simply equate cuts in the NHS with closing wards and hospitals but we must not forget that the treatement in those that remain is often second-rate because of shortages in staff and facilities.

By John Gibbs

LPYS Conference '85

Photos: Mick Carroll.

Join the Torybusters

"I've got a message for every person of this conference" said Welsh National Commitee member Tony Wedlake, replying to a debate on the economy, "become a grave digger for capitalism" The 1985 national conference of the Labour Party Young Socialists in Blackpool over the Easter weekend, attended by two and a half thousand predominantly working class youth, showed the YS to be an organisation poised for take-off and firmly committed to *Militant's* Marxist ideas.

The voices of young miners, battle-hardened after a year's unceasing struggle, of YTSers bitter against pitiful wages and pointless 'training', young workers from every area and industry of the country, the unemployed, and the youngest—the school students, mingled in a furious condemnation of the Tories and their system.

Last year's conference was rightly dominated by the young miners. They were back again this year, not down or defeated, but coldly angry, weathered by a lifetime's political experience packed into the past year. Prominent in debates not just on their strike but a gamut of other political issues, they are living proof that the Tories' victory will turn into its opposite. They are the vanguard of a youth and working class explosion being prepared in Britain.

The most visible portent of that explosion came from the school students present. In their fringe meeting and intervention into the debate on education they gave a warning that they will not be ignored—by the the Tories or the labour movement. A battle has already been started in the schools by striking and organising students. They will be ignored by the labour movement at its peril.

The YS conference, guided by the ideas of Marxism, displays a breadth and depth of political vision beyond any other section of the labour movement. Those ideas, that seriousness and enthusiasm must be harnessed to the mass movement of youth against the Tories which has begun in the last twelve months. For the benefit of readers who couldn't get to Blackpool, *Militant* reports from Labour's youth conference.

Young miners' fight goes on

THE FIRST debate of conference, on the miners' strike, showed the work the YS had done during the strike. Resolutions drawing the lessons of the strike and the need for a campaign to obtain full amnesty for the sacked miners, moved by *Militant* supporters were adopted almost unaminously.

Andrew Jones of Pontypridd LPYS and Cwym NUM, moved the main composite, repudiating



Andrew Jones.

the ideas of those Labour leaders who during the strike failed to give total support to the NUM. It outlined a programme for the NUM of a minimum wage, 35-hour week with no loss of pay, retirement at 55 with full wages, opposition to closures except on grounds of exhaustion.

He emphasised the important new features of the strike; the role of women and youth. It was essential, he argued, that the women's support groups be consolidated and continued and that the role of the youth be established by setting up an NUM youth section for miners under 25.

Young miners from most of the main coal fields, and YS members active in support groups took part in the debate supporting *Militant's* demands.

Richard Morgan from Bridgend LPYS and a founder member of the St Johns support group announced himself a representative of the militant miners republic of Maesteg. He explained how the YS had worked shoulder to shoulder with the NUM in all its struggles, helping to raise £120,000. But that battle continued, he warned, as the NCB was already discussing further attacks on St Johns.

Gary Ironmonger, of Cortonwood NUM and a newly elected YS NC member, explained how he joined the LPYS during the strike because he was looking for political answers. You start to ask, he explained, why you are standing on the picket line day in day out, the reasons for the NUM's struggle and the way forward after the strike.

Richard Eaton of Attercliffe YS and High Moor NUM, pointed to the disgusting role of the leadership of the labour movement. The lessons young workers have to draw, he said, is to go and get stuck into the labour movement to get real left leadership.

Chris Weldon, replying for the NC, contrasted the unflinching determination of Arthur Scargill with Neil Kinnock's total failure of leadership. Nevertheless the greatest lesson of the strike, he explained was the will of the working class to fight the Tories and their system. The mining communities had stood firm against everything the Tories threw at them and seeing victory slip from their grasp had returned in good order.



Gary Ironmonger.

The proudest day of his life, he told the conference, was marching down the pit lanes with members of his family who were returning to work at Maltby.

He explained, "This is not 1926. 1984 is only the beginning. Our class will be forced to fight many Orgreave's. Our task is to forge a clear class leadership for the labour movement in those future struggles".



THE INTERNATIONALIST message of the YS came over loud and clear both in the conference and in the major international rally.

About 1,700 people attended the rally and donated £4,000 to aid the the struggle of workers in South Africa. Staffordshire miner Roy Jones told the rally of his experiences on a visit to the South African National Union of Mineworkers to win support for the British strike.

He explained how the South African NUM was built by heroic self sacrifice of members and officials. The democracy of the union, the non racialism and internationalism of the workers despite their suffering under apartheid, he recommended as inspiring examples to workers the world over.

Mark Newman, a black member of the LPYS and exile from South Africa explained why he and other YS members had set up a new campaign, Socialist Links with South African Youth, as a result of the decision of the Labour Party NEC to force through the banning of the South African Labour Education Project. He appealed for support from YS members in establishing rank and file links between trade unionists and youth in South Africa and Britain.

The last speaker, Tyrone Simpson of the Zimbabwean Trade Union Defence Campaign, gave a brilliant analysis of the developing revolutionary situation in South Africa. He emphasised the importance of Marxism and internationalism in carrying through the South African revolution, using recent developments to show that black South African workers were increasingly recognising the struggle against apartheid to be a struggle against capitalism.

Billy Bragg at YTURC



Billy Bragg.

THE WEEKEND got off to a flying start when Billy Bragg played to a packed hall at Friday night's YTURC rally after Dave Nellist MP, Bill Connor the Broad Left candidate for general secretary of USDAW, and Tony Cox YTURC secretary had spoken. (See photo p6.)

Many of the songs were about issues the YS is fighting on. As Billy said when he came out to play his encore in a 'YS says fight the Tories' T-shirt—"The fight is just beginning."

Defeat right's attack on Young Socialists

FRANCES CURRAN, YS representative on the Labour Party National Executive, in her report to the conference spelt out the tensions and problems which have been seen during the year on the NEC.

Because the right wing NEC majority lack confidence in the ability of workers to understand and respond to a clear socialist lead, she told the conference, they have concentrated on trying to win some illusory middle ground instead of using the polarisation of society to build a mass popular movement on a class basis. That mistake has led them to waste time on divisive attacks on the YS, including the expulsion of two young socialists, and to attack campaigns on South Africa, Chile and amongst students which the YS is involved in.

Tom Sawyer, chair of the Labour Party NEC youth sub-committee, in his fraternal greetings to conference emphasised the attacks of Thatcher upon the working class on every front. He congratulated the YS on its "sensible and sound approach to political events" and contrasted the conference to the hooliganism of the Conservative students.



Frances Curran.

Frances thanked him for his work over the past year and appealed for his continuing support against attacks the right wing are likely to wage in the coming year. She also warned those who claim to stand on the left and to oppose witch-hunts but had provided ammunition for the right, that organisational manoeuvres would never win them the political respect of the YS or wider layers of working class youth to Labour.

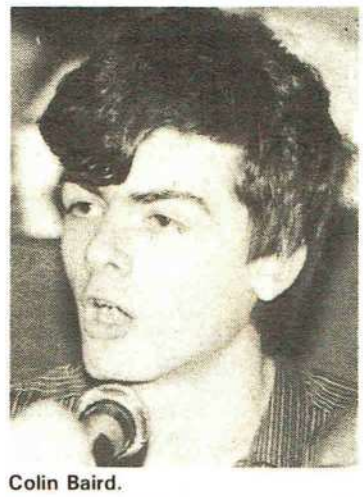
Support for Frances' Marxist ideas was shown in the election result. She received 161 votes, whilst fellow *Militant* supporter Fred Gent, new N East NC member, standing as a back-up candidate, was runner-up with 34 votes. None of the opposition candidates recieved more than 20 votes.



School students call for strike

THE EDUCATION debate was the most outstanding of conference. A stream of school students, with a sprinkling of students in further and higher education expressed the growing fury in the schools and colleges around the country and echoed calls for a national school strike on 25 April.

Philip Scott, Livingston South LPYS, moving the education composite, attacked Lord "UB40" Young's propaganda on 14 - 18 training. It was just another disguise for government attacks on youth, he told conference, at a time when Britain already has the best educated dole queue in the world.



Colin Baird.



Jackie Galbraith, chair of the Scottish regional YS, nicknamed the Pied Piper by the Scottish press.

A MAJOR new development of conference came with a meeting of school students called by individual members of the YS. 200 gathered to hear COLIN BAIRD explain the events in Glasgow when 25,000 school students came out on strike and NANCY TAAFFE, who set the turmoil in the the schools against the background of the miners' strike, Tory attacks on youth and past school strikes. A Schools Student Action Committee was formed, a steering committee elected and the decision to call a national half-day school strike (except Scotland because of earlier exams) on 25 April.

Colin Baird from Glasgow Pollok, seconding the motion, hit it home that conditions in schools and for teachers affect all of us. The attack on education is an attack on our class—we are being pushed back to Victorian times—the Tories would even like to see workers paying for education.

It's the accumulation of those pressures, he continued, combined with the threat of industrial conscription to force school leavers onto YTS which produced the Glasgow school strikes. It would erupt anyway, he stressed, and it was therefore the duty of the YS to channel the anger expressed in that spontaneous revolt into constructive political action.

The demands of the main motion for a minimum £30 a week grant for all school, further and higher education students over 16, reversal of cuts, abolition of means testing for student grants and private education, for the unemployed to take courses without losing money, were supplemented in an emergency resolution from Havant LPYS calling on the LPYS NC to "provide the initiative for the setting up of a National School Students' Union to link the movement of school students to the labour movement." It outlined a programme of demands for such a union: no victimisation of union members; representation on all school bodies; freedom of dress; no corporal punishment; unity with other unions against cuts; opposition to YTS; £30 grant for FE students; a guaranteed job for every school leaver on trade union rates of pay.

Rachel Harrison, Riverside LPYS in Liverpool, spoke as a representatives of the School Students' Action Committee set up at a fringe meeting of 200 school students at the conference. She outlined the plans which had been laid as a result of the meeting. The committee was organising a half-day school students' strike on 25 April. She called on LPYS members to join the campaign to make this the most successful school strike ever seen in Britain.

Militant supporters should recognise the importance of this development. The old NUSS, set up in the early 1970s is now effectively defunct, yet school students are looking for a lead. A new generation of class fighters can be won to Marxism in the coming months if a mass campaign is properly organised immediately.



Nancy Taaffe.



Rachel Harrison.

Real youth training

THE YTS debate gave even more evidence of the time-wasting and exploitation which these schemes mean for many young workers.

ANGIE CUSSIK from Dundee West YS had just been elected shop steward on her scheme. The conditions, including sexual harassment and a trip to a pig farm when they were supposed to be trained to look after old people had convinced them to organise. "We're not going to stand for this crap", she told conference. "We're going to fight."

Conference passed a composite supporting the Youth Trade Union Rights Campaign and demanding union rights and rates of pay for all YTS trainees; trade union control and monitoring of training on YTS; a 35-hr week and five weeks paid holiday.

YS NC member and Ford worker, COLIN ADAMS, rejected criticisms of the YTURC, pointing to its record of unionising trainees, organising lobbies of parliament, demonstrations and petitions. He also made clear the NC's total opposition to YTS and demand for Labour to replace YTS with real jobs on a massive scheme of useful public works supervised by the trade unions.

Black youth debate



Linda Douglas.

MARXIST DELEGATES in the debate on racism conentrated on the social and economic conditions faced by blacks in Britain, particularly black youth, arguing for workers' unity on the basis of socialist policies. Unfortunately a section of conference was more interested in pushing ideas of positive discrimination and black sections as a short cut to involving black youth in the labour movement.

LINDA DOUGLAS, new NC member for South London was forced to reply. The irony is, she pointed out, the opposition represented a white middle class section suffering from guilty conscience, unprepared to take on the hard job of tackling the roots of racism argued for by black Marxist delegates.

Militant

The *Militant* Readers' Meeting continued its tradition as the biggest fringe meeting of conference with 2,000 in attendance and nearly £7,000 collected for the fighting fund. Ted Grant, political editor of *Militant*, leading YS members Linda Douglas from London, Jackie Galbraith from Scotland and Derek Hatton deputy leader of Liverpool City Council received a tremendous reception. They hammered home the lessons of the past year—and drew together the different strands of conference—only a Marxist programme and perspective can unite the national and international struggles of the working class to end the nighmare of capitalism.



Ted Grant.

Fringe meeting round-up

MILITANT SUPPORTERS were active in the organisation of a wide range of fringe meetings at conference.

A meeting to discuss the problems facing **women** drew about a hundred women at lunchtime, Saturday, to hear Margaret Creear, a member of the Labour Women's national committee and Christine Hunter a striker from the Atomic Energy plant at Risley, where 120 women cleaners are on strike after their employers, Exclusive Cleaners tried to cut their wages and paid holidays.

About 200 hundred delegates and visitors attended a lively **black youth** rally to hear Beverley Woodburn, NC member elect for the South West talk about the conditions facing black youth and Linda Douglas, the new NC member for South London.

The **Irish** Labour and Trade Union Group meeting attracted also about 200 to hear Aiden Campbell from the executive of the LTUG Young Socialists and Mick Barry, Chair of Irish Labour Youth on 'The coming revolution in Ireland'. Over £200 was raised in an appeal for funds to stand socialist non-sectarian candidates in the coming local authority elections.

80 people, mainly **further education students** attended the Further Education Labour Students meeting to hear Louise James, FELS organising secretary and Lesleigh Woodburn, a member of the Further Education Committee of the National Union of Students.

The sharp debate going on in the **student movement** was most clearly expressed in a YS NC sponsored debate on the National Organisation of Labour Students between Frances Curran the YS representative on Labour's NEC and Sarah Boisack the new chair of NOLS attended by about 120 students at the conference.

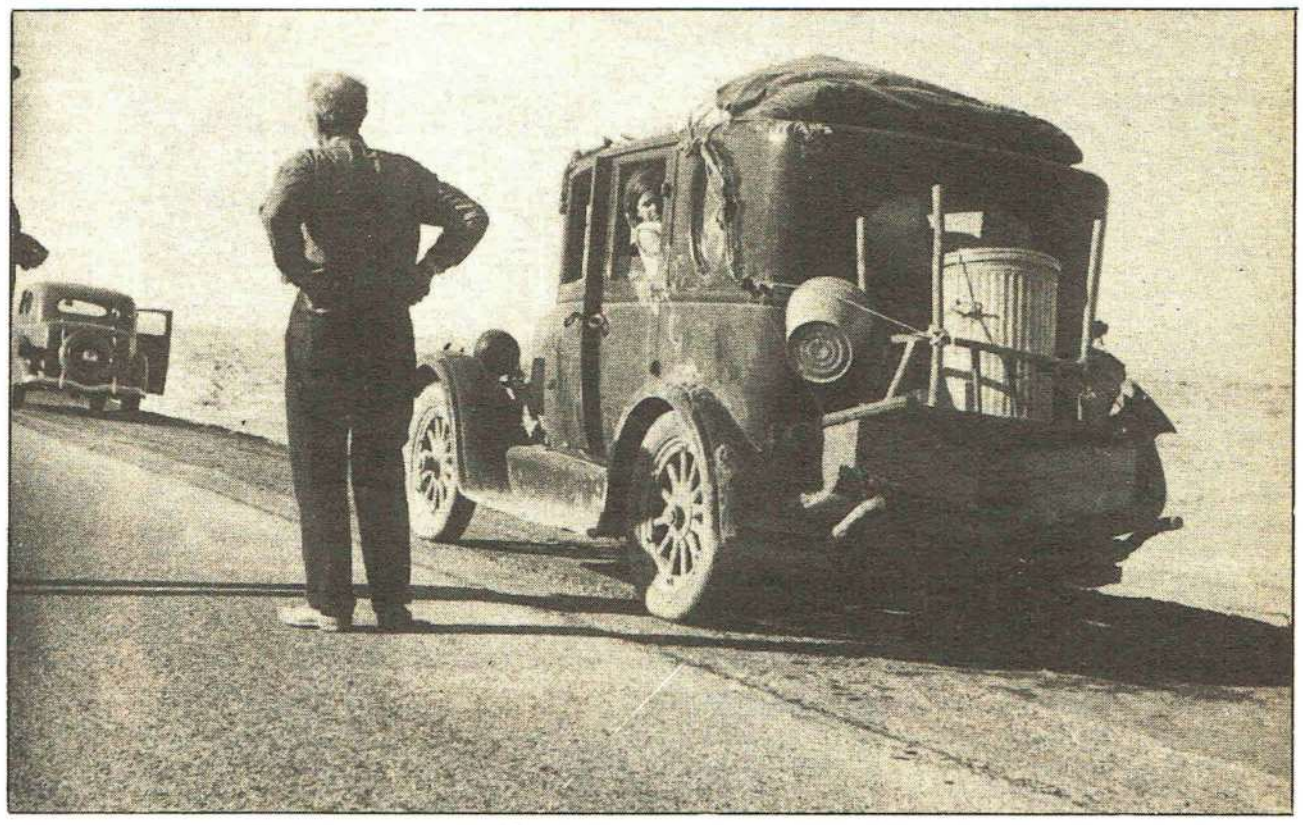
The YS NC also organised a number of meetings to bring together young workers in the **unions** . The T&G meeting had an attendance of fifty, the NUM thirty young miners, CPSA thirty five and twenty young car workers gathered to discuss the problems of their industry and the role of the YS.

LPYS Conference'85

USA

Farms on the auction block

THIS WINTER thousands of American farmers marched and rallied throughout the Midwest farmbelt in protest at their desperate conditions. In sub-zero temperatures, ten thousand crowded the streets of St Paul, Minnesota, while hundreds more marched on the Chicago Board of Trade.



Destitute farming family off to Oklahoma in the '30s. Small farms are disappearing at "depression era rate"

By Marcy Barnett
(UAW, District 65, AFL-CIO, personal capacity)

American farmers are on the critical list. Their homes, land, tools and machinery are on the auctioneer's block daily. The entire agricultural system, along with the industries and communities it supports is sacrificed to the profit vultures.

In the last four years small and medium sized farms have been vanishing at what the government calls a "depression-era rate". Between 20% – 40% of farmers are on the edge of bankruptcy. The total agricultural debt nationwide stands at a staggering $214.6 billion.

"Free market"

In Iowa, where farmers are reeling under massive debts, 14 – 16% interest rates and the results of the 1983 drought and 1984 floods the mood is desperate. As one politician says: "Compared to Iowa, Detroit is a happy place". Ten thousand farms in Iowa have been forced to liquidate. Government policy is wiping out entire sections of the economy.

Reagan and his big business friends blame the farmers for their plight. David Stockman, Reagan's Budget Director stated: "For the life of me, I can't figure out why the taxpayers of this country have the responsibility to go in and refinance bad debts willingly incurred by consenting adults."

Farmers have always been heavy borrowers. The difference now is the tremendous federal deficit of $200 billion, high interest rates and a strong dollar, all of which put the farmer deeper in debt and unable to sell on a world market where American goods are too expensive. The Reagan administration offers the solution of a 'free market' approach to agriculture, in hopes that they can slash all subsidies to farmers and lower the federal deficit.

In the process they will destroy the 97% of family-owned farms and create a corporate farm system. The *Wall Street Journal* explains: "Big farms are getting bigger and changing the very nature of farming. This is the era of the professional farm managers, the travelling farm-computer salesman, and soon, perhaps, the remote-controlled tractor.

"This isn't the era of the old-style farmer, whose virtues have been part American myth and part American backbone, but whose hard work can't compensate for some hard economics." Yet the farmers know what follows the 'free market' approach. As one Lucas County farmer says, "Iowa has 113,000 farm units. We'll lose 40% of those in five to ten years. We're headed toward a corporate deal in agriculture. It'll be like the situation in El Salvador, all the land in a few hands."

Many farmers are beginning to fight back. A farm wife calls the Iowa State Extension Service, frantic because her husband has just driven off with a high-powered rifle telling her, "I'm a good shot. I'll only get the banker". In Nebraska after a farmer was forced to sell off all his machinery, livestock, and grain he refused to pay the bank holding his $300,000 mortgage. A sheriff arrived with a foreclosure notice and a gun battle followed. When the shoot-out ended the farmer lay dead.

Ripple effect

Farmers' hardship has a rippling effect. Agriculture debts threaten hundreds of rural banks. The Federal Deposit Insurance Corps has listed 231 farm banks at risk of collapse (double the amount from last year).

Entire mid-west communities and towns are doomed as factories producing agricultural supplies shut leaving hundreds of thousands unemployed. Last November Harvester announced it will close its Farmall Tractor plant in Rock Island, Illinois. Five years ago it employed 3,600. In East Moline, Harvester waits for a takeover of its combine-manufacturing plant. Meanwhile the plant remains on temporary shutdown and 3,500 jobs are lost. At the Caterpillar plant in Davenport, Ill. 1,300 workers have been laid off.



Stock exchange in Chicago. Americans are learning the hard way the tragedy of the profit system.

None of these are isolated cases. The *Boston Globe* reports: "Workers who once made $13 an hour now have few prospects beyond minimum wage or part-time jobs. Most continue to visit their union locals, hoping for news of job recalls. But for many a bleak vision has emerged. The good life no longer seems obtainable."

Unemployment in these areas has reached 14.8%. But the statistics are deceptive since those out of work for long periods are not counted while part-time workes are considered fully employed. Of those laid off, only 31% collect unemployment benefits.

Workers defend farmers

A union official explains: "We're at the point where we've got four times as many people laid off as working—and right now (during temporary shutdown) 20 times." The economy is so bad that all the agencies are running out of funds too. And you just get to the point where, unfortunately, there's just not a heck of a lot we can do."

The rank and file don't agree, however. There is no doubt despair and isolation has taken its toll on many workers. But groups of workers are uniting in struggle with farmers and demanding their voice be heard. Members of the UAW and other unions travel from town to town joined by farmers to confront bankers and stop the auction of land and equipment.

Through sheer numbers and militancy they are able to stop sales. After one successful demonstration a union member shouted to the crowd: "We made a major step forward. We came here today to give Iowa and the nation a message. We're not going to take it anymore". "I've never seen anything like it in my lifetime, the desperate militancy-type of thing that's building", said the governor of Iowa.

But farm foreclosures and massive factory layoffs cannot be stopped by militant action alone. The mutual plight of farmer and worker needs political solutions. Both Republicans and Democrats looking for re-election next year speak a fancy rhetoric to their constituency and promise emergency loans. But even the few politicians with the best intentions cannot end a disaster that has been forthcoming for decades.

Most politicians reveal their contempt for both workers and farmers. During Carter's Democratic administration, when a Soviet grain embargo was declared, the government press secretary was asked what would this mean for corn and soybean crops and responded, "How the hell do I know? Until I was 16 years old I thought the stuff came in cans". In earlier years Republican President Nixon declared: "I don't even know what a soybean is".

Neither party is capable of offering a viable solution under a capitalist system to which they are both wedded. All that is offered is more despair. Americans are under siege. The days of affluent family farms are gone, as are the days of job and wage security for the working class. Together they are discovering the absurdity of a system whose only concern is for profit.

Parasites of capitalism

"The whole thing is a mess", says one Nebraskan farmer, "It don't make no sense, but American farmers are going broke producing too much food in a world of hungry people". Together they are fighting their common enemy and beginning to draw political conclusions. The unity being forged can be taken forward through the development of a Labor Party campaigning for sound socialist policies in agriculture and industry alike.

In an economic crisis threatening to be the worst in history the choice is clear. The farmers, workers and youth will either be destroyed by the parasites of capitalism or gain prosperity and hope through socialism.

No meat but plenty of corn

THE LOOMING catastrophe in American agriculture has led to a number of movies. Two are at present on general release; "Places in the Heart" starring Sally Fields and "Country" starring Jessica Lange.

Both deal with a family farm in debt to the banks and about to be taken over for non-payment. In both it is the woman who leads the fight back. They sound interesting films, dealing with the issues facing thousands of farmers. But they are extremely disappointing.

In "Places in the Heart" the widowed farm owner Sally Fields saves her farm...but how? An unemployed black worker comes to her door begging. He knows everything about growing cotton, so she hires him. The crops bloom, then a prize of 100 dollars is offered for the first crop picked. She wins and the farm is saved. In between time she prays a lot, sings hymns and is helped by her family and friends; pure Reaganomics.

Nauseating

However, most nauseating is the treatment of the black field hands. In the rush to win the prize, family and friends led by the courageous Sally join in the picking. The camera zooms in on poor Sally's cut fingers. Such heroism. The majority of cotton pickers are black workers who do it day after day. Not a word about them.

And to add insult to injury when the black worker who made it all possible is driven off by the Ku Klux Klan she never lifts a hand to help him. This pathetic rubbish is not saved by the various subplots of a blind lodger and assorted adultery.

"Country" is better, at least a tiny glimpse is seen of banking as a system. It is made clear that a number of farmers were involved, they even for a brief second take he...nt collective action. Maybe now we will see a struggle? Not a bit of it!

The local bank manager gets a guilty conscience and quits, then he advises the farmers on how to appeal against eviction and then the great Federal Government puts a halt on all foreclosures. What a pathetic cowardly end.

In Iowa today the United Auto Workers union has come together with the farmers and picketed all sales on farms seized by the banks. Worker and farmer unity is being forged and militant action taken. You would not think so by watching these films.

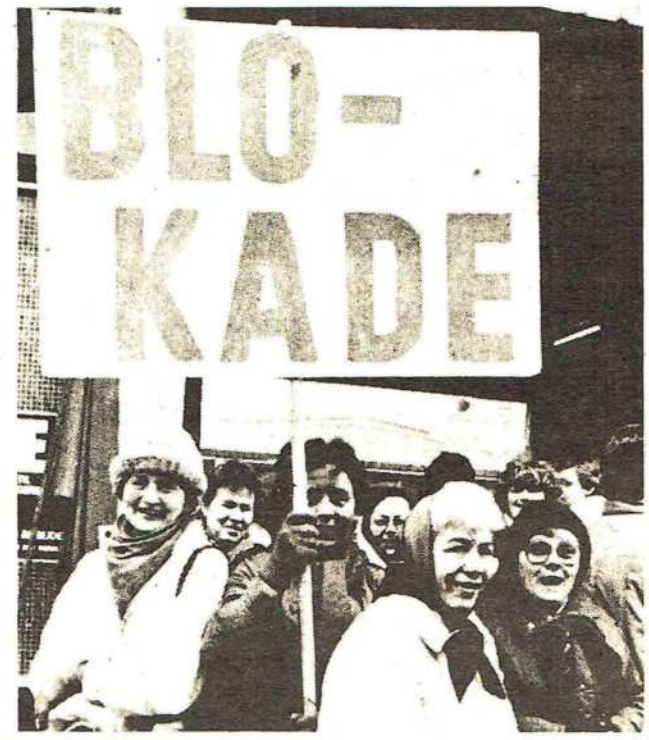
Avoiding reality

These films are determined to avoid the realities of the US farming communities' crisis. Save your money for something better.

By John Throne

Denmark, Sudan

Biggest movement for 40 years



Workers demonstrate in Copenhagen on 31 March.

THE STRIKE in both public and private sectors in Denmark is no ordinary dispute. Every layer of society has been affected. As in France in 1968 the ruling class has been left suspended in mid-air.

Parliament was delayed in bringing in new laws to stop the strikes because its legal advisors and the legal department of the university were on strike themselves!

It is a new social movement. Like the miners' strike in Britain it marks the entry of the working class on to the political scene in Northern Europe. Even if the strike develops no further it has begun to change the political map in Denmark.

The mood of the strike has even infected the police. 1,500 security guards are on strike. The capitalists are panic-stricken; and they have every reason to be. A policeman told pickets during the strike: "The law is against us as well, if some blackleg tries to drive through, call me, here is my phone number." If the strike had a clear lead the police ranks could be won over.

Denmark's population is little over five million, well below the population of Greater London. Yet over a quarter of a million were on demonstrations on 1 April, 125,000 of them in Copenhagen. In some industrial towns practically every able-bodied adult was protesting at the government's anti-working class actions.

THE FIRST demand was for a wage rise (the government offer is 2%) and for a 35-hour week, but the struggle is now more political, workers now want a general strike against the capitalist government that has introduced laws which make the strike illegal.

By a Copenhagen correspondent



The ideas of Socialisten, the Danish Marxist paper, are gaining support during the strike

Dustmen, postmen, teachers, nursery school teachers, workers on the state radio, and in the big hospitals struck. So did many office and transport workers.

During the weekend (March 30/31) the government made the strike illegal, but the bosses made a mistake if they thought this law would make us go back to work. Despite the refusal of the LO (the TUC) to take any lead, the strike continued on Monday 1 April and even got bigger. In Copenhagen, all the buses were at a standstill on Tuesday and hospital strikes were getting stronger while the private sector stayed out.

Blockades

On the Copenhagen demonstration the demand was that LO should not accept the anti-union law and that they should build the strike and force the government to resign. It was the same in other cities in Denmark. In Aalborg for instance 50,000 workers took part in the demonstration on Monday, that was 300% more than on Friday. This in a city with under 150,000 inhabitants. In Aarhus, the turn out of 60,000 was double that on Friday. At the meeting afterwards there was a call for an all-out general strike in Aarhus. In this city workers laid down on the tracks to stop the trains.

When the union leaders in the private sector called an official strike the Thatcherite government of Poul Schlüter and the employers' federation thought that they would win an easy victory. The bourgeois propaganda was that there was no mood to strike and that the government would just ban the action. The capitalists felt strong because they have been able to carry through a lot of attacks on the working class in the last year.

But the only reason for the bosses success has been that the leaders of the unions and the Social Democratic Party refuse to develop the local strikes and mass demonstrations that have taken place during the past year. This time the pressure on them was far greater.

Workers were prepared to fight despite the leadership's hesitations. Already at the first strike meeting on 25 March there was a spontaneous demand for a general strike amongst the workers we spoke to, which has been growing every day, in hundreds of mass meetings and thousands of workplace meetings.

Because of the enormous pressure of the rank and file the Trades Councils around Denmark called a mass demonstration on 28 and 29 March. When the government passed this anti-union law we saw a complete explosion. Last Thursday 2,000 workers blockaded the bridge into parliament and despite the massive police force, they were not able to break the blockade.

Because of the provocation of the anti-strike laws now you saw action not only from the traditional strongholds of the working class, but also big strikes in the public sector among white-collar workers. In the mass demonstrations you also see many unemployed, school students and housewives. The demonstration was dominated by young workers and very many women workers were active in the public sector strike. Even some apprentices have been out despite the fact that they legally have no right to strike.

At the shipyard in Aalborg metal workers' apprentices together with the union had a blockade so 300 apprentices could strike. This struggle is developing to a higher level all the time. This is clearly a political strike with workers preparing for a general strike to force the government out. In opinion polls, the Social Democrats and the other left parties now have a majority.

There have been hundreds of picket lines and blockades, and many confrontations with the police. Police tried to ride into one picket line with a police horse, and when workers blockaded Parliament one police car was turned over.

Workers bitterly resent the police trying to break the strike. But on demonstrations last Friday, there was a banner from the police as well. The police force now have problems in their work because they have very little petrol for their cars.

General strike

The LO leadership has so far refused to take the lead, preferring to hide until, they hope, the mass movement ebbs, but as the Marxists around the paper *Socialisten* said in advance the spontaneous pressure has pushed the mass of workers towards a general strike. If the LO and Social Democrats were prepared to take the lead, the government would fall. The Marxists call for a general strike, demanding that the strike funds must be opened, to fight for a new election and a Social Democratic government on a socialist programme; for a 35-hour week, a minimum wage of 60 crowns, and for the government to reverse **all** Schlüter's cuts and attacks on the unions.

But the leaders are scared now, if the strike continues and develops to a general strike the question of who has the power in Denmark, the working class or the capitalist class, will grow. And if a Social Democratic government takes office, the LO and the Social Democrats will be under enormous pressure to carry through the party programme.

There were mass meetings of shop stewards the Tuesday after Easter and plans are on for a national "day of action", so even if the LO continue to play dead, the strike could develop.

The years of the boom gave the Danish working class enormous power. The decisive end of the boom will show workers the need to use that strength.


Jaafar Numeiri


Refugees into Sudan put extra stress on the crisis ridden economy.

Sudan coup topples Numeiri

AFTER FOOD riots and massive demonstrations, a leader with little or no support, one of US imperialism's main allies in North Africa, President Jaafar Numeiri of Sudan, has been overthrown by a military coup.

Numeiri had been president for 16 years. When he took power, the Sudanese Communist Party, the second biggest in Africa, welcomed him as a "progressive" military ruler. Within a few years the Communist Party had been crushed and Numieri had started his real career as a defender of capitalism.

Like all the other countries in that area, Sudan is wracked by years of drought and famine; its problems added to by the plight of refugees from even harder hit Ethiopia. Many fear that 7 million out of the 22 million population could starve this year.

Capitalism wants stability in Sudan; Numeiri was a useful ally against the Stalinist Ethiopian government and the capricious Gaddafi in Libya. But at the same time the banks and the IMF want their pound of flesh off the starving bodies of the Sudanese people, and are demanding more austerity. They got some reward when food and petrol prices went up last month but also got a warning when two days of food riots followed. This brought to the surface all Numeiri's weaknesses.

Eight people at least were killed by the police. The week after, doctors struck in the capital Khartoum and a big demonstration mainly by doctors, engineers, etc protested at police brutality, including the use of electric prods to "keep order". Their demonstration was considerably bigger than the hastily assembled "pro-government rally" the day before, so its leaders were arrested.

But capitalist opinion was still worried by fears of a coup when Numeiri left the country on a visit to America for health care and a visit to Reagan. Enormous poverty and corruption have eroded support for the regime which has alienated the black and mainly Christian south. A guerilla movement has gained support there which gave the overthrow of Numeiri as its main objective.

His introduction of "Islamic laws" including floggings and amputations has not stopped many Muslims in the Arab north opposing his rule.

World capitalism is holding its breath to see what the future holds without Numeiri. The new military leaders immediately ordered a stop to the strikes which brought down the president. The new leader General Swareddahab had been a Numeiri supporter, and the ex-president even wished the General well after the coup. But the Sudanese people may not yet have spoken their last word.

LETTERS

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

Low pay and exploitation in shops

Poison profits

Dear Comrades,

I work in the Staveley branch of a supermarket chain. Just recently I was told by the food hall manager to stock the shelves with "out of date" stock. The date code on these expired months ago and so I refused to do this as it would have resulted in someone getting ill. I told the food hall manager my views but he still insisted I stack these products. Adamant I refused again and he walked away.

Later on the general manager came down to my section to check for "out of date" stock, purely out of coincidence. Seizing my opportunity to ask what to do under these circumstances he replied: "You should do exactly what a manager says, within reason". I persisted about the morality and illegality of it all, and asked him why he still wanted to sell this stock. Then came the crunch, his answer was: "We have to keep our profits up"! "Even if it puts someone's life at risk for a few pence"? I replied. He just said 'yes' and carried on checking the stock.

I think this is a classic example of the way the bosses don't give a damn about the workers, and all they think about is money, money, money.

Yours fraternally
Lesley Mallen
USDAW
(personal capacity)
Chesterfield
Derbyshire



Photo: Militant

The difference at MacDonalds—low wages, anti union, youth exploitation.

Dear Comrades,

I work part-time for a major high street store and recently one of the assistants had a couple of days off sick, on her return to work she was told that because she had taken more than eight days off sick in the year every further absence would have to be covered by a medical certificate, when she explained that the doctor would not issue one for less than a week's absence she was told: "Tough, if you want to keep your job you'll have to pay for a private one then won't you?"

Also management have recently put up a notice in the canteen with a graph of everybody's sick leave, the only person whose sick leave is not included is the manager who recently had a lengthy period of absence due to an injury obtained while playing squash.

All shop workers are low paid and under threat of losing their jobs to be replaced by YTS trainees. The government's plans to axe the Wages Councils will take away any form of protection over wages allowing the bosses to undercut the meagre minimum wage rates that now exist.

Everybody who works in a shop should join USDAW and elect Bill Connor the Broad Left candidate as General Secretary, who will lead the opposition to all attacks taking place on the living standards and working conditions of USDAW members.

Yours fraternally
Debbie Cusack
Portsmouth

Fighting the cuts

Dear Comrades,

At present there is a concerted attack taking place against the National Health workers in the form of privatisation. The struggle at Barking hospital should be an inspiration to all of us, yet in Liverpool I find that the right-wing leadership of our unions are sitting back waiting for the axe to fall. Instead of informing the rank and file with meetings and literature, they deem that sending out a badge with the slogan "I love the NHS" is all they need to do. Personally I consider this an affront to my intelligence and is paramount to treating the rank and file like children.

It is about time they learned the lessons from the Liverpool City Council and came down to grass roots level where the rank and file are queueing up to fight a battle on such a scale that the right wing leadership have never dreamed of.

Yours fraternally
BD Robbit
GMBATU, ROF
192 Branch
Runcorn
(personal capacity)

Support for Irish Marxists

Dear Comrades,

The effects of the miners' strike have been very far-reaching. Terry Fields visited the Irish Labour Youth conference last weekend and was told of a small incident which shows how people's ideas can be changed when there are upheavals in society.

Some members of Labour Youth were out canvassing in Dublin and knocked on the door of a 40 year old housewife. When they explained that they were from the Irish Labour Party she nearly chased them off because the Irish Labour Party does not have a very good name. However, the young comrades stood their ground and explained their ideas. The woman came round and even decided to go to the youth conference! She is now also a supporter of the *Militant Irish Monthly*.

This shows that when there are movements in the labour and trade union movement like the miners' strike, people can easily be won over to the ideas of Marxism.

Yours fraternally
W Jennings
Liverpool

Mystery van.

Dear Comrades,

Have you seen this missing van. Last seen at the anti-Thatcher demonstration in Newcastle on Saturday 23 March.

Early in the day I saw a dirty blue transit van with funny looking suitcases on top, but thought no more about it. Only after I kept seeing it all day I began to wonder...maybe the suitcases were part of the PA equipment for an anti-Tory band. Then, I noticed the suitcases were moving, slowly rotating back and forward in a semi-circle.

I chased it. Imagine my surprise. Inside was a driver, his passenger, and a third person in the back watching telly. Except the pictures were of the demo.

I asked if they were journalists, the passenger said yes. But the van had no markings. They refused to say who they worked for, or their union. I was asked to go away and at the same time the passenger made funny eyebrow movements at nearby policemen.

So if you see a blue van XYN 472T ask them for their union card.

Fraternally
Bill Hopwood
Newcastle

Conditions in NHS

Dear Comrades,

My recent stay in hospital in Ryde brought home to me how the staff are treated and the conditions under which they work.

Ryde hospital is an old and antequated building, the ward I was on had windows which let in the cold, so the nurses placed blankets in front of them. They told me they had to keep on telling management about it but everything took so long to get done. Out of eight windows, only three were double-glazed. This shows what the Tories think of working class hospitals, patients and staff.

One nurse told me that in the near future patients would be charged for meals! The nurses and I talked about wages, I told them how many workers supported them in 1982 by taking half-day strike action, and they said they would soon be putting in another wage claim.

So let's give them all the support we can comrades, like we did for the miners, but fight for a government that knows about the needs of working people.

Yours fraternally
Ernie White
TGWU
Ryde Branch LP
Isle of Wight



Technology —its effects on women

KIM WADDINGTON reviews "Smothered by Invention" edited by Erik Arnold and Wendy Faulkner (£7.95, Pluto).

"Smothered by Invention" is an insight into how technology has affected womens' lives. It deals with technology in medicine, at work, at home and raises the question of whether advances in science have really been an advance for women.

The section dealing with technology in the medical field explores how women provided the first medicines. It explains why women were the first medical practitioners, particularly in relation to midwifery which was almost an all female pursuit,and how women in the course of the last three hundred years have lost their original place in this profession by moving health care away from the home and into hospitals.



Nurses working in operating theatres face possible hazardous side effects from anaesthetics.

Suprisingly advanced technology has helped to maintain the number of hours spent doing household chores. The studies carried out in the book show that the time spent doing housework has actually increased since the beginning of the century.

Housework, is a recent invention provided by the capitalists to force women into the home. Originally spring cleaning meant exactly that-cleaning your house once a year! Before the industrial revolution there was no distinction between home and work as most work was done at home.

Technology at work, the book says has the effect of initially de-skilling women and making them cheaper to employ, by moving manufacture from the home to the factory during the industrial revolution. The book shows that there are now very few women in skilled professions and even less—just 6%—taking apprenticeships for skilled work.

The introduction of computers and word processors had a dramatic effect on womens' employment, especially clerical work. One city council for example reduced typing staff by half while producing 19% more work. In one factory the production of 40,000 pies per hour requires only one worker, a woman who feeds the foil dispenser.

The book is interesting and informative. It adequately shows that technology offers only limited benefits under capitalism and is just a further control that can be exercised over workers in one form or another. But the book did not draw out that conclusion itself, and this is where it could lose some credibility because it blames the demise of women on ...men!

If you can read the feminist viewpoint objectively then the book is still worthwhile reading even though it does not mention the sort of benefits technology could mean for women under socialism and even though it offers no overall or lasting solution to the problems imposed on women by technology and capitalism.

LEFT and RIGHT

Just fancy that!

The Tories made 'picket line violence' an issue during the 1972 miners' strike. But one MP came to the miners' defence during a parliamentary debate on February 14 of that year. He told the Tories: "What would be the instinct of any red-blooded man in this House, having put his family to all that inconvenience and near-misery (after five weeks on strike), if he saw someone riding roughshod over his picket line? I know what my attitude would be. In fact I should be worried if it were not the case." Yes, it was Neil Kinnock. And given his performance in the recent strike, he should start worrying.

Double standards in Fleet Street

Remember when Arthur Scargill visited Moscow last month? The Tory press were outraged. They frothed at the mouth over Arthur Scargill being a "VIP guest in Russia" (*Daily Mail*). This week the Tory press were again outraged—this time because three Notts NUM officials, who scabbed on the strike, have had an invitation to visit Russian miners withdrawn. "Soviet miners snub rebel heroes..." screamed the *Daily Express*. You just can't win.

Young workers finance Militant

THE *MILITANT* Readers Meeting at this years Labour Party Young Socialist Conference was a magnificent success and a further indication of the tremendous support *Militant* has from the youth.

The appeal raised over £6941 (plus £500 on a fighting fund stall) including IOU's. This will take the overall total raised so far up to £23,489.

The Readers Meeting Appeal was very well recieved, with many LPYS branches making donations. Some LPYS branches held special fund raising events before the conference just so they would be able to donate.

Youth are at the forefront of many struggles—fighting to improve YTS; fighting for better training and fighting for a job and are also often the most victimised, the most hard up. They showed at the Conference that they are going to win the future. The donations in Blackpool will helpl us all play a crucial role in building for that future. The sacrifices will all be worthwhile.

By Kim Waddington

Your chance to donate

Is your YS prepared to organise a special event to help raise money? Is your YS going to join the campaign? Get involved. And start by making a donation. Can any of our readers match the sacrifices made so far? This is your chance to join in the fight.

Finally to those areas still lagging behind on our chart—you have got only 3 weeks to catch up and reach your target, and help us reach ours.

This Week £4,920

Area	Received	% of target achieved	Target
Eastern	1338		2900
East Midlands	1156		2800
Humberside	824		1850
London East	1117		3250
London West	587		2150
London South East	1054		2000
London South West	659		1600
Lancashire	451		1100
Manchester	825		2750
Merseyside	1488		6000
Northern	916		4900
Scotland East	722		3000
Scotland West	1088		3800
Southern	1418		5000
South West	934		2000
Wales East	217		2450
Wales West	307		2150
West Midlands	1377		4400
Yorkshire	1681		5900
Others	5330		10000
Total received	23,489		70000

Thanks to Northern Region supporters £291; Newton Abbot *Militant* supporters pledged to raise £200; two pledges from London both for £100 including one from an unemployed supporter; Wakefield area LPYS Branches collected £160; Black Country area YS branches collected £86; Bradford and Aire Valley YS *Militant* supporters £52; Chapel Green, Barnsley and Wombwell YS's £50; Terry Fields and Dave Nellist MP £50; £50 from Dutch *Offensiev* supporters; Macclesfield Central YS £40; Dunfermline YS £50; Labour Club Rumney Technical College Cardiff £20; the marxist section of the Welsh Labour Students pledged £20; £20 from the Reading branch of the Gordon Bennet Fan Club. Other YS's to make donations included Oxford East; East Edinburgh; Tooting; Pontypridd; Andover; Cambridge; Hackney North; Scunthorpe; Riverside and Aberystwyth.

It's up to you

GET Militant

SOME PEOPLE might think it strange for a newspaper to ask its readers to become sellers. But *Militant* is a workers' paper. We depend on workers in the labour movement for all our support.

Our demands—like a genuine job for every school leaver or decent housing for all—are a direct challenge to the rich and their system. So its not surprising that the two big firms that control 80% of the newspaper wholesale business refuse to distribute *Militant* to local newsagents.

However, a number of newsagents take *Militant* locally and as part of our sales campaign we've just produced a letter to introduce the paper to those who don't yet stock it.

But we still need your help. There is no substitute for personal contact when you can urge your buyer to become active in the union branch or join the local LPYS and, of course, give that little extra for the fighting fund.

By Andy Beadle

Double sales

From small beginnings *Militant* has become practically a household name. We can thank the Tories for pushing many workers towards Marxism. Yet the pioneering spirit of devoted sellers—drawn from the enthusiasm for our ideas—has always been vital. Mike Pullen from Leicester shows that it still is:

"Every week we have a paper sale at the British Rail station on Friday evenings. It didn't start very well and I sometimes had to do it alone but it steadily built up until last Friday, which was our best day for the station sale. We had four comrades down there and we sold 15 papers in about one hour. We also collected £1.70 fighting fund by asking every sale for a bit extra towards a daily paper".

If you sell *Militant* let us know of your successes and plans to double sales for the first two issues in May. If you are a new reader and still not convinced you should read and sell *Militant*, then you can't have read the rest of the paper yet. Read on and you will find an order form conveniently placed at the bottom of the last page.

Marxist Daily Building Fund 1985

Received since January 1:	£		£
Eastern	2125	Scotland West	2084
East Midlands	2513	Southern	2389
Humberside	1535	South West	611
London East	2679	Wales East	1420
London West	3563	Wales West	1352
London South East	1708	West Midlands	1491
London South West	1535	Yorkshire	1008
Lancashire	307	National	1292
Manchester	1239		
Merseyside	2953	This week:	1033
Northern	2110		
Scotland East	1935	Total	35849

GREAT EVENTS are forming a new generation of class fighters. If you are under 21, you won't remember when, on leaving school, you started work straight away.

You also won't remember when a policeman was someone you asked the time or when a strike could be won in a couple of days because the economy was rich enough to make concessions.

Working people are forced to either accept cuts in their living standards or to fight, often bitter struggles, to maintain what their parents and grandparents have won for them. Now, even the school students are striking in protest at what the future holds.

We need to produce a more regular paper as part of the arsenal of the working class in its fight against capitalism. We are well on the way to clearing the debts we incurred in moving to the new building having raised £35,849 so far in the Weeks Income campaign. But we still have some way to go before we can start buying the new machinery to produce a more regular paper.

A small price

Have you given your week's income yet? If the TUC were to call you out on strike tomorrow, you would find some means of getting by for a while. We are asking our readers for a week's income for a paper that understands what is happening, and is prepared to fight to change society. A sacrifice of a weeks income now is a small price to pay to avoid the hardship that we will face in the future if we fail.

Donations this week include £70 from Mary Jennings, Liverpool West Derby LPYS. Kath Walters from Macclesfield sent her giro cheque for £26 and Michael Lee, LPYS National Committee for Manchester has sent his weeks wages. Whether you have been enthused by the LPYS Conference or were unable to attend, we still have a responsibility to ensure that we have a socialist future. So make sure you rush your donations in now.

General amnesty NOW



Birkenhead: Monday, 15 April. Speaker: John Pickard. TGWU Offices, Transport House, Berner Street (off Cleveland Street), 7.30 pm.
Wrexham: Tuesday, 16 April. Speaker: John Pickard. The Library Arts Centre, Rhosddu Road, Wrexham. 7.30 pm.
Bootle: Wednesday 17 April. Speaker: John Pickard.
St Helens: Thursday 18 April. Bold Miners' Institute, Fleet Lane, Parr, 7.30 pm. Speakers: John Pickard, Terry Fields MP, Chris Herriot (Victimised miner).
Newham: Tuesday 16 April. Speaker: Lynn Walsh. The Lister Room, East Ham Town Hall, Barking Road, London E6. 7.45 pm.
Greenwich: Tuesday 16 April. Speaker: Brian Ingham. Boyle House, Woolwich Road, Charlton. 7.45 pm.
Acton: Wednesday 17 April. Speaker: Clare Doyle. Acton Town Hall, 7.30pm.
Ashington: , Northumberland: Speakers Brian Ingham, Malcolm McKenna (Sacked Miner, Bates Colliery). Wednesday 17 April, Leisure Centre, Ashington.
Islington: Wednesday 17 April. Speaker: Peter Taaffe. Islington Central Library, Fieldway Crescent, Holloway Road. 7.30 pm.
Durham: Speaker: Brian Ingham. Thursday 18 April. Venue and NUM speaker to be announced.
South London: Thursday 18 April. Speaker: Rob Sewell. Penrose Hall, Penrose Street (off Walworth Road). 7.45 pm.
Bristol: Tuesday 23 April. Speaker: Keith Dickinson. Shepherds Hall, Old Market, Bristol.
Plymouth: Wednesday 24 April. Speaker: Keith Dickinson.
Fife: Tuesday 30 April. Speaker: Bob Wylie.
Dalkeith: Wednesday 1 May. Speakers: Bob Wylie and Tam Durie (sacked SCEBTA member, Monktonhall). Woodburn Community Centre, Dalkeith. 7.30 pm.
Liverpool: Wednesday 1 May. Speaker: John Pickard. AUEW Buildings, Mount Pleasant. 7.30 pm.
Wakefield: Friday 10 May. 7.30 pm. Speaker: Peter Taaffe.
Welsh Labour Party Conference: Friday 17 May, Llandudno.

ads

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

Connie & Cyril Thorpe are pleased to announce the birth of John William Joseph to their daughter Jean, & John Fahey, at Nottingham.

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.

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.

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Militant Meetings

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

PENRHIWCEIBER: Marxist Discussion Group meets every Monday 7.30pm at the Osborne Hotel, Penrhiwceiber. 15 April—"History of the South Wales Miners Federation". For more details call at 25 Railway Terrace, Penrhiwceiber, or phone Ed Gullyford on Pontypridd 492915.

Industrial Reports

Cuts, not strikes, harming schools

MARGARET THATCHER, whose policies Kill the old and the sick and impoverish the young and rob them of their future, dares to criticise teachers in special schools for taking a few days' strike action.

By Pauline Gorman

It is with reluctance that these teachers take action. They are among the most dedicated and caring workers—not that she or her fellow Tories have ever paid tribute to this. But these teachers have come to realise that the struggles aginst rate-capping and to maintain salaries are part of the general fight to protect the whole of the state system from the onslaught of Tory cuts.

Impoverished

If the battle is lost on either count, then the state system will be impoverished—it will either lack adequate resources or properly paid staff with decent working conditions.

Some special schools and units have already been closed and most others regard themselves as under threat. When the closures finally come, the press and the Tories are very silent—not a word of protest then. Also—not a word of protest when old boilers break down and schools are closed because the heating systems are so antiquated and patched that they finally give up.

Many schools in West London last year lost more days schooling through heating breakdowns than than they ever did through strike action. As further economies are made by the LEAs, more breakdowns can be expected. Capitation cuts have also drastically hit provision—again hardly given any publicity.

The children in special schools draw on exactly those areas which have been cut over the past years—social services and the NHS. Many are in desperate need of better housing and better paid parents. Some live in homes where electricity has been cut off. These, not strikes, are the "despicable" and "disgraceful" situations in their lives—which have occurred as a result of Tory cuts, and which make life miserable for these children. Their teachers know that if no-one moves to defend state education and its provision for its espcially needy sections then the result will be disastrous.

Home closed

Down the road from my school, the Tory local authority closed a well-resourced children's home in one week flat to meet a budget deadline. Children who are supposed to go on a six-week programme before fostering or adoption were whisked into private homes and the last child didn't know 'till the final morning where he was going.

When the money for suitcases ran out, the children's belongings were sent with them in the authority's black plastic rubbish sacks. That's how the Tories see 'special needs' in the context of cuts.

Teachers in special schools see that they are forced to defend their provision and their salaries in the only effective way—by strike action in solidarity with all the other teachers taking action. To show weakness is to invite attack

Thatcher has shown that she does not care at all for the weaker sections of society and indeed regards them as easier targets. Some schooling will be lost now through strike action but the struggle is to defend the system, and its provision, against closure and massive cuts which have already proved more harmful than strike action.

Steel jobs fight

OVER 1,000 steelworkers from BSC Tinsley Park voted unamimouaIy to fight plans to shut the plant.

By Alan Anderton

The turnout for the meeting at Sheffield City Hall—over 90 percent of the workforce—took everyone by surprise. BSC management thought they'd have an easy ride closing the plant. They've offered redundancy pay of up to £12,000, and transfers to other plants for up to 300 workers. But, the young steelworkers were not attracted to a life on the dole.

The closure is part of an overall strategy to reduce capacity in special steels.

The reason given for the Tinsley Park closure is that only 70 percent of capacity is being used and a declining market for the alloy steel produced.

The Phoenix 2 proposals are to create a new firm—British Engineering Steels—with BSC, GKN and Lonrho merging special steel plants, with private firms retaining a controlling interest. Their plan is to reduce capacity by 1.5 million tonnes and the workforce by 4,000.

The ISTC leadership has done little to stop the destruction of the steel industry. Union documents show that industry's workforce fell by 73,000 between 1973 and 1983.

In special steels, employment had dropped from 19,000 to 8,000 between 1978 and 1983.

The meeting received messages of support from Rotherham, Stockbridge, Scunthorpe and GKN's Brymbo plant in North Wales, also scheduled for closure under the Pheonix 2 proposals.

The meeting supported calls to workers in the special steel plants to black Tinsley Park work and the introduction of extra shifts.

Sheffield City Council and South Yorkshire County Council have pledged support. Appeals to other unions must also be made, particularly to railway workers at Tinsley Marshalling Yard, whose own jobs will be threatened by the closure.

★200 steelworkers are already on strike at the newly created Tinsley Bridge Company, owned by BSC. They refused to accept a 5.5 percent wage cut and increased work loads. At Sheffield Forgemasters (another Phoenix privatisation deal) redundancies are being demanded. All these struggles must be linked in national strike action to prevent any further closures and redundancies, and the further dismantling of Britain's steel industry.

Yarrow Shipbuilders suspensions withdrawn

THE SIT-IN at Yarrow Shipbuilders ended in victory last week, when management announced a withdrawal, unconditional and without prejudice, of the suspension notices which had been issued to five senior stewards. The initial demand, that our negotiators be allowed to meet and discuss wages and condtions with the prospective new owner's, GEC, had already been met. The lifting of the suspension paved the way for a return to work and for negotiations to resume.

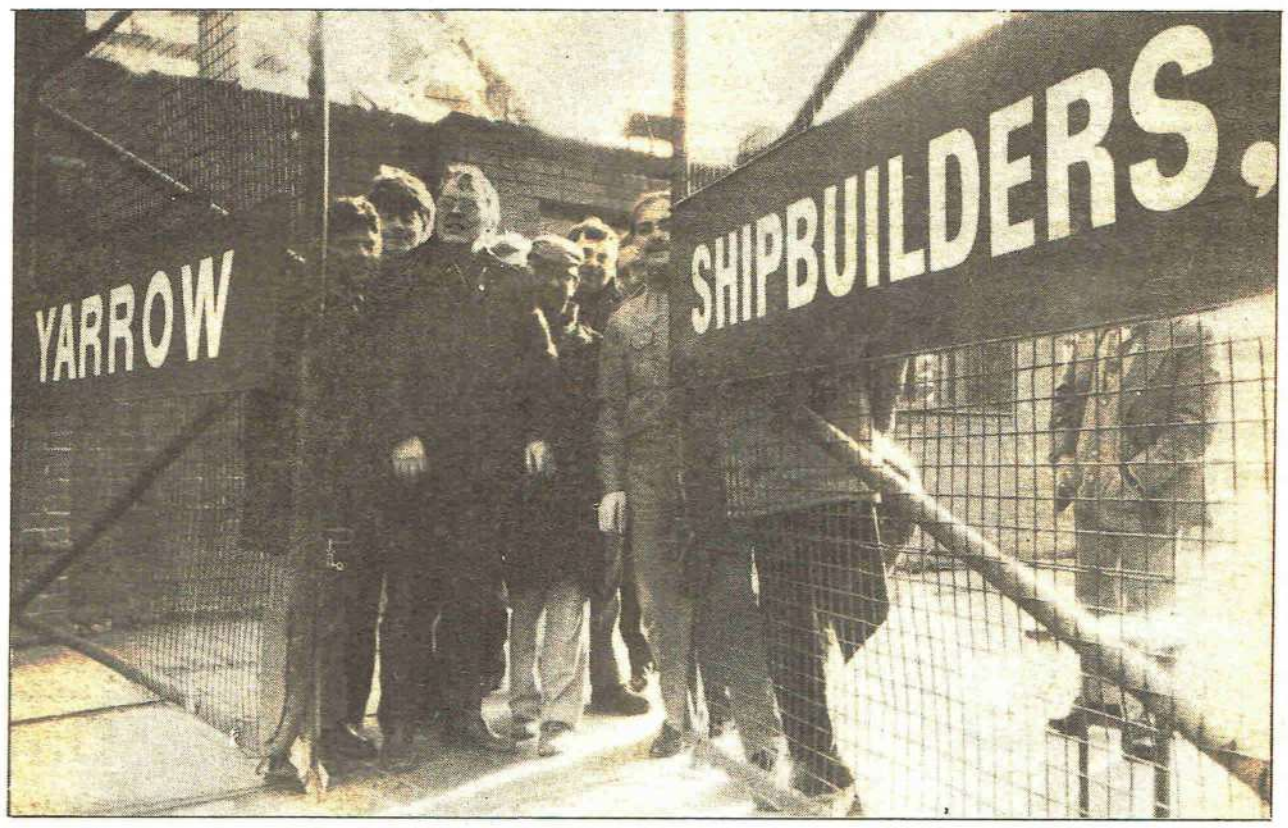
While the occupation must be seen as a victory for the workforce, it should be remembered that this is only the first round in what could be a long drawn out battle. Already there have been local press reports which have not been denied, that any take-over would be subject to British Shipbuilders declaring between 400 and 500 workers redundant and that if the workforce were to demand too high a wage increase then GEC would pull out of the deal.

The workforce here will not be taken in by these stories. We have always argued that no new employer would inherit the same wages and conditions endured under British Shipbuilders and will maintain our opposition to the compulsory redundancies.

The success of the occupation here throws a warning shot across the bows of any would-be employer, that the workforce here are determined to improve wages and conditions and are prepared to struggle to do so.

By Hugh Watson

(Yarrow Shop Steward in a personal capacity)



Yarrow shipyard workers manning the gates during the sit-in.

Photo: Rick Mathews (IFL)

Insurance jobs threatened

FOLLOWING THE "merger" of the Phoenix Assurance Group by the Sun Alliance a few months ago, the 13,000 strong workforce of the new group now faces 2-3,000 redundancies.

The vast majority of the staff from the old Phoenix Group are BIFU members. The new terms and conditions which are to be imposed on them if they are lucky enough to keep their jobs are vastly inferior to those they work under now.

Integration is to be carried through department by department starting this week, thus hiding the overall disastrous reality until the end result is completed, and redundancies pushed through. The redundancies are to be on an individual "previous work record" basis, which leaves the door wide open for management to get rid of anybody it doesn't like. The new management has also refused to recognise the union as a representative body until after integration is completed when it will ballot the staff on whom they want to represent them.

Ballot now!

Despite the unaminous passing of a resolution by local reps in Bristol back in February calling on our Divisional Committee to discuss and organise ballotting the membership on acceptance/rejection, the committee has instead attempted to reason with management. Although minor concessions have been made, there has been been no meaningful negotiation. Staff face the dole at worst and at best less wages, less holidays and losses in every condition of employment, plus no union representation.

The union must campaign amongst its membership in Phoenix for rejection in a ballot now and prepare itself to lead industrial action to achieve: no job losses, the best terms and conditions within the group for all the group and full union recognition.

By Mandy Beckingham
(BIFU South and West Area Council, Personal Capacity)

GEC workers' victory

WORKERS IN GEC Switchgear, Trafford Park, Manchester, have won a dispute over redundancies, after a sit-in which began on 28 March. The action was taken after management wanted selected redundancies, based on who they regarded as being "late for work", having "bad work standards" or "bad attitudes" etc. The union wants the redundancies to be on a "last in, first out" basis.

The redundancies, called for by management because there is "insufficient" work to be done", affect 370 people and will start from 31 April.

This is only one part of the action taken by GEC workers over the past months. GEC Traction came out on strike over redundancies and low wages last November and at the moment there is an overtime ban, again over redundancies.

Unity must be maintained and built upon to secure jobs. Overcome GEC's attempts to divide the workforce! Unity is strength!

David Kaplan was talking to senior shop steward, Kevin Valentine.

BR pay setback

THE RECENT British Rail pay settlement of 4%-5% can only be described as laughable when compared to the joint NUR/ASLEF claim.

By Bob Russell
Branch Sec.
Willesden No.1. NUR
Personal capacity

Both unions claimed a substantial wage increase, with an objective of a £100 mimimum wage, a 35 hour week and annual leave to be extended to five weeks.

This claim was fully justified—a railman was on a basic rate of £76.25 per week, and train drivers, with all the responsibilities involved, on £123 pw.

Many workers in the industry have their pay topped up with M.E.L. (Minimum Earnings Level) a recognition even by the Board that the levels of pay are completely inadequate.

Every year the Board trundles out some excuse for refusing to give decent wage levels. This year is no exception. They have come out with the sob story of how they have lost £5 million a week through the solidarity action by railworkers in refusing to move coal stocks during the strike.

This should be swiftly answered with the fact that the Tories wasted £4-£6 billion on trying to defeat the miners and our claim would not have cost a tenth of that.

To rub salt into the wounds the B.R.B. have recently announced that they are ready to spend £7.5 million of refurbishing the royal train fleet. No doubt this will gladden the hearts of most commuters who travel in overcrowded, decrepit stock every day.

Since the mid '70s railworkers pay, in real terms, has been dramatically cut and failed to keep up with the cost of living. Compared to other industries railworkers have fallen behind other workers. For example, since 1975 our wages have increased by 125% compared with the electricity industry (210%) and gas (208%). Undoubtedly we have a genuine case with thousands forced to work massive amounts of overtime in order to get a reasonable wage packet.

Some members have expressed the view that the pay rise, paltry as it is, at least has no productivity strings attached, in the way of job losses or changed working practices as has been the case throughout the eighties. There are indications that this was reflected amongst the present NEC members who were prepared to accept the rise on this basis. Nevertheless, not only was the rise inadequate and far short of the unions' claim, but also the settlement ignored the shorter working week and extended annual leave elements of our claim.

There is no doubt that the Board are still determined to proceed with their productivity proposals on one man operation of trains.

The axe is still poised over the workshops, in particular Glasgow (Springburn Works) where BREL has made clear the intention of cutting jobs and the complete closure of the works within the next couple of years.

Despite the setback on pay, there is still a need for an urgent campaign on these issues at district branch and workplace level.



March through Springburn last June to save the Caley workshops. Photo: Rick Matthews (IFL)II

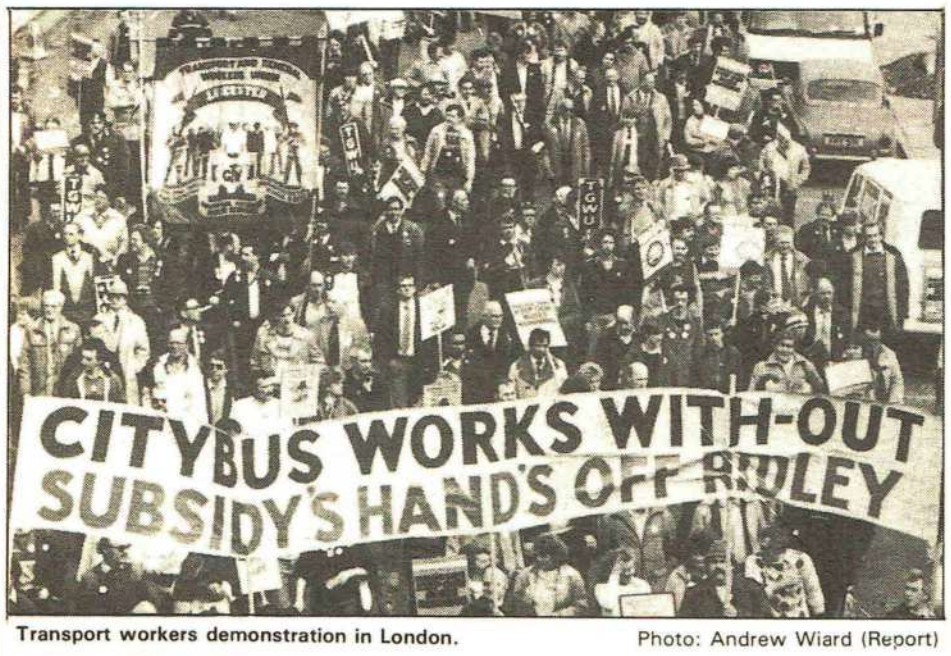
Scottish rail strike

GLASGOW AND West of Scotland divisional council of the NUR have called all their members out on strike on 17 April, in protest at the threat to 1,200 out of 1,700 jobs at the BR Engineering works, the Caley, in Springburn.

All regional and main workshops have indicated they will come out and the prospects are for an all-Scottish stoppage. It is rumoured that the NEC of the NUR will make the strike official only retrospectively. Members from all the Scottish workshops held a meeting on Saturday, seething with anger at the lack of leadership and committment from the NEC.

By John Herron
(Glasgow No5 branch NUR, in personal capacity)

Busmen on the march



Transport workers demonstration in London. Photo: Andrew Wiard (Report)

Manchester

ON 2 April 600 transport workers from all over Greater Manchester, representing TGWU, AUEW, EETPU and NALGO travelled down to London on a specially chartered train, many workers being turned away at Piccadilly station.

On our arrival at Euston, banners were put up, and to shouts of "Maggie Maggie Out Out", and, echoing the miners, "Here we go", we marched to the assembly point. Many TU officials spoke from the platform and were nearly all met with shouts of, "What are you going to do"? Unfortunately the answer was not forthcoming.

The loudest cheer of the day went to a bus driver from Scotland who said, "We drove part of the way down the motorway in convoy and blocked it as a protest; now we must go back to our areas and stop the buses".

Over the past years more than 6,000 jobs have been lost on Greater Manchester Transport (GMT). Cuts in bus services, low wage settlements and redundancies have been inflicted on the workers of GMT with little oppostion and no liasion between the trade unions.

Organising and campaigning amongst bus workers and passengers for a one day national strike should be the next step in the protest, exposing the dangers of the Tories' Transport Bill, and abolition of the Metropolitan Counties.

By Alex Pandolfo

West London

ON 14 February, the day that London Regional Transport bus garage closures were announced, Hanwell busmen came out in solidarity with the one-day strike at nearby Southall, which is on the list to be axed. They are now fighting substantial losses of duties which are coming into force in their own garage on 27 April.

The busmen realise that the cuts have nothing to do with cuts in public demand. They are part and parcel of making the busiest routes even more profitable and attractive for privatisation. This would mean fewer jobs, a poorer public service and cuts in maintenance and investment.

The TGWU has launched a pilot campaign in the Cardinal district to involve the public in the fight against privatisation and cuts. This must immediately be put into top gear, with local trade unionists and Labour Parties taking the lead, linked to a London-wide and national campaign.

By Martin Craxton
(Ealing North Labour Party, personal capacity)

Workers occupy council chamber

THE DISPUTE in Sheffield City Council Works Department reached a crucial stage last Thursday. The workforce walked out in support of workers who had been taken off the payroll for not working normally and 200 occupied the council chamber until David Blunkett, leader of the council, gave assurances that negotiations would resume.

Alan Anderton spoke to ERIC ROUSE, a member of UCATT about the dispute over the council's proposal to limit the replacement of a productivity bonus scheme with an all-in wage to only 20% of the workforce.

"Ignoring procedures, the Personnel Officer went over the heads of union representatives and sent a letter to all Works Department staff stating that if we didn't work normally we'd be taken off the pay-roll. On Thursday morning, management came in and instructed men to work normally, or not be paid. Burley depot voted 160 to 10 to strike.

"We went to Manor Lane and were joined by about 100 others. We spoke to the convenor, Ray Glaves, and suggested a demonstration outside the Town Hall, which he agreed to. We peacefully occupied the council chamber. The policeman on duty just stood and watched when we assured him of a peaceful demo.

Frank discussion

"Two stewards and a rank and file worker went to see David Blunkett, Clive Betts (Chairman of the Housing Committee) and an official. We explained that we didn't expect such tactics from a socialist council and asked Blunkett to meet those occupying the chamber. We then had a frank and fraternal discussion. Blunkett said that if we went back to work normally on Wednesday, Thursday and Friday of this week, he would see that negotiations would be reinstituted, withdraw the letter and see that we were paid for the holiday period. (The letter was timed, just like private industry tactics, to have its effect the day before the holiday so we wouldn't get paid for that period.)

"We left it at that and went back to picketing for the rest of the day. The stewards went to see Ray Glaves and asked them what the depots should do. They are likely to accept Blunkett's offer. On Wednesday we are calling everyone together to put the proposals and have a full stewards' meeting, which will see Blunkett, Betts and Howard Knight (Chairman of the Works Committee). Depending on the result the Joint Shop Stewards' Committee will decide on any further action."

NALGO official victimised

WORKERS AT NALGO headquarters in London walked out last week after the sacking of a member of the press office staff, Jimmy Roberts, a member of the National Union of Journalists.

The strike arose after a dispute in Liverpool between the city council and NALGO. During negotiations with NALGO officials, deputy leader Derek Hatton produced a NALGO document which had come into his possession.

Back in London Jimmy Roberts was summarily dismissed, accused of 'leaking' the document to Liverpool City Council—Jimmy Roberts has vigorously denied this. The NALGO leadership have produced nothing but circumstantial evidence. They said Jimmy Roberts was the only person with a "motive"—he was active in the Labour Party, a *Militant* supporter and originally came from the area (Ellesmere Port!).

Signed letter

The NUJ chapel at NALGO press office walked out and the following day APEX members voted overwhelmingly to join the strike. Derek Hatton visited NALGO headquarters and gave the leadership a signed letter saying he did not receive the document from Jimmy Roberts. The NUJ chapel have pointed out that the document in question was lying on a desk for three hours and could have been seen by anyone.

Members of ACTTS were to vote on strike action, but the strike was suspended after negotiations between NUJ officials and NALGO. The strike has been suspended with Jimmy Roberts put on special paid leave pending the outcome of a hearing expected next week.

Messages of support to: Mary Maguire, MoC, NALGO headquarters, 1, Mabledon Place, London WC1 9HA.

By a NALGO member

Militant

After the miners' strike
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Fighting council cuts
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Miners sacked and imprisoned

Fight for total amnesty

"ALL OF a sudden it's come to a halt. Everything seems so slow now. We don't know what to do with ourselves." Sharon Reed, treasurer of Ashfield Women's Support Group, summed up what many miners' wives feel after their long year's struggle.

Many of the women are determined to keep their groups going, and keep up their activity within the labour movement, but there can inevitably develop a feeling of confusion, with no clear sense of direction after the strike.

The role of the support groups was one of the biggest gains from the miners strike, drawing women who had never before been involved, into political activity, using unsuspected as well as proven talents in organising the various different functions.

Build support

There is still plenty of vital work for the support groups to do. Money is still urgently needed. Some areas, such as Northumberland, report that they are still raising as much now as during the strike itself, but many other areas have found their resources virtually drying up. Yet now many miners families are in even worse financial straits than before.

Now the men are back at work, the bills are beginning to pour in, debt collectors are arriving on the doorstep, and though some branches of banks and building societies are taking a sympathetic line and continuing special arrangements, this is not always the case. Regular collections and donations need to kept up. It will be a long time before the miners recover financially from the strike.

Many people in the pit communities are bitter at the lack of campaign by the NUM on the levy, which has been seen as a retreat, undermining pressure on the NCB to reinstate the sacked miners. The amnesty campaign is an issue which many support groups have taken up as as focus of activity. Many sacked miners live in areas with no chance of an alternative job.

The Miners' Amnesty Campaign, organised on a national basis, is helping to provide a sense of direction to what could otherwise be a piecemeal campaign, with no apparent national co-ordination. To gain any concessions, there must be a massive, co-ordinated campaign by the labour and trade union movement.

It is here, above all, that the womens support groups could offer important help, using the links set up in the strike to organise mass support in the factories and trade union branches. They will be prepared to go to the whole movement to take up the case, to support all demonstrations and meetings on the issue, to maintain cash and put pressure on union sponsored MPs to fight victimisations.

There is urgent need for a national conference of Women against Pit Closures, with the involvement of all the groups to give them a sense of direction as a genuine national organisation, not as isolated, individual sections.

Vital role

The most precious resource any movement can have is an enthusiastic fighting spirit, well organised and confident. During the strike, even the Tory press commented on the energy and enthusiasm all those involved in the strike. Positive steps should now be taken to ensure that the women in the pit communities and in support groups outside, remain an active part of a fighting labour movement.

By Lynne Faulkes



Photo: Stefano Cagnoni (IFL)II

Women's support groups on the big London demonstration last August. The links they built during the strike are vital to a successful amnesty campaign.

Support Miners Amnesty Campaign

THE FIGHT for an amnesty for all sacked miners must be taken to every section of the labour movement. In hardline Scotland the NCB has sacked nine out of ten of its victims for trivial offences; their main crime has been to be union militants.

Trade unionists must insist though on *all* miners being reinstated, they have already been harshly dealt with by the courts. There must be no divisions. Already in East Lothian a right wing branch chairman went to a meeting of Tory councillors to plead the case for 17 men, he left out the eighteenth because he claimed the Tories wouldn't be willing to take up that particular case (which was for breach of the peace). That one miner is a supporter of *Militant*.

Labour movement

The labour movement still has the power to change the NCB's mind. The main emphasis must be on a campaign directed at our fellow workers. We should not concentrate on trying to get support from the churches, they are just the icing on the cake, and certainly not fritter it away on the Tories.

Get your labour movement organisation to back the Miners' Amnesty Campaign. Donations, resolutions and sponsorship to Philip White, 10 Herman Road, Caerau, Maesteg, Mid Glamorgan.

Danish strikes still growing

AS WE go to press, the strike movement in Denmark is intensifying.

In contrast to all reports in the press, of workers going back, there was a 24 hour general strike on Wednesday, which showed all the signs of being more solid and more militant than even the strikes before Easter.

The mood and consciousness of the workers has gone on to a higher plane as a result of their experiences of a few days on strike. Wage concessions have been offered to them by sections of the terrified capitalist class who are desperate to try and calm the movement down.

But wide sections of the workers are not prepared to accept just a couple of per cent increase. Now they have begun to feel their collective strength, the rank and file workers are putting pressure on the union leaders to organise an all out general strike to bring down the conservative government.



Strikers face police in Copenhagen.

Bosses shaken

This opens up the possibility, **if** the trade union and labour leaders were prepared to live up to the militancy and determination of the mass of workers, of a workers' government coming to power.

Denmark's capitalist class have been shaken. These inspiring events are a tremendous lesson to the British labour movement, and to workers all over the world. They show that there is a way out of the impasse and that the tables can be turned against reactionary union bashing governments.

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