

Militant

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Health cuts



This is murder

CAMILLA CREVILLO is a second year student nurse. She works at Edgware General Hospital; which is in the same borough as Thatcher's constituency Finchley.

She told *Militant*: "Every now and again the papers start saying that nurses are all 'angels' and deserve more money. But we don't need compliments, we need action."

"We also have to fight for more resources to improve conditions in the NHS, otherwise a pay rise by itself would just be a form of danger money."

"A large proportion of nursing staff are students: at nights you can get one charge nurse and maybe two students on a 24 bed ward."

"If the charge nurse has a lot of work on, the students are dealing with all the problems. We work a 36 hour week with very unsocial hours for very low pay."

"There are two general hospitals for this borough, the small district hospitals have been closed. There's a new day unit at Edgware, but to make up for it a surgical ward has shut down at weekends. So, even if there are any complications after an operation, the patient has to move to

another ward.

"One woman recently gave birth to twins born prematurely; the babies needed a lot of care, and the mother had complications. But there was only one bed here, so the mother and one baby came into this hospital while the father took the other baby to a hospital in central London."

Difficult

"Sadly, the baby here died. Difficult situations are being made worse by cuts and shortages."

"Some doctors have talked about just paying more for specialised nursing staff. If you train to be a midwife or for intensive care, you even have to go back to student pay while you're training!"

"But we need decent wages and conditions for all staff. Most nurses have to do agency work to get by. When poll tax comes in we will all have to pay that. Bad pay and cutbacks for ancillary workers cause

- Fight the health cuts!
- For a massive injection of funds into the NHS!
- End private medicine.
- Nationalise the pharmaceutical industry.

problems in the wards if, for instance, there's only one overworked domestic."

Camilla Crevillo is an active member of the health union COHSE. Most nurses belong to the Royal College of Nursing, which has a 'no-strike' clause in its constitution. Now there's a lot of pressure to drop this clause. All health service workers need to fight the cuts and get the backing of other trade unionists.

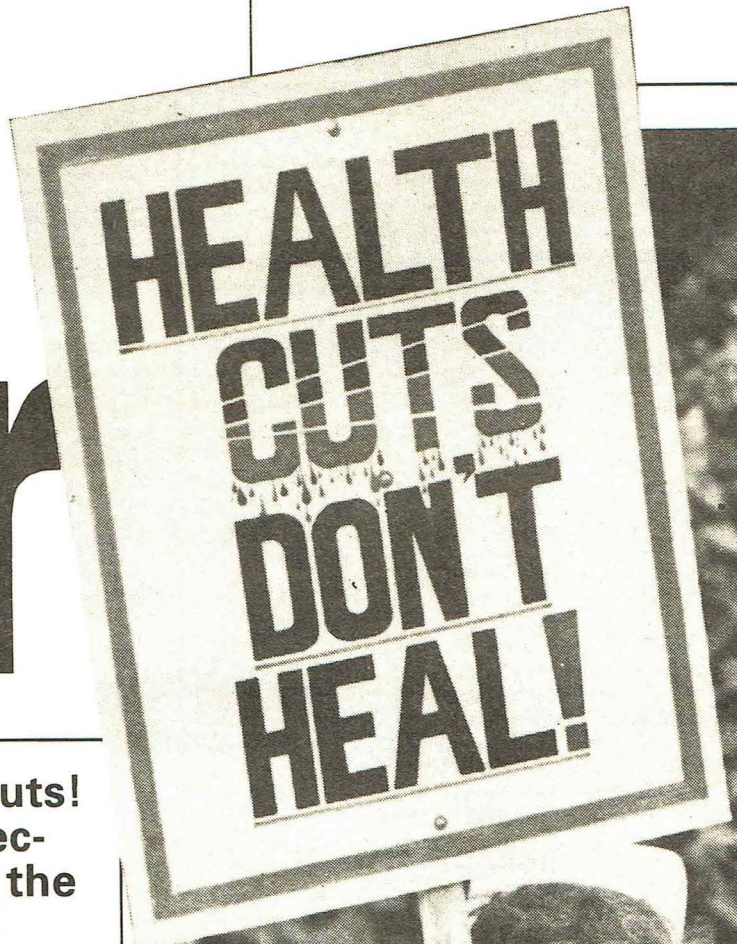
Nobody believes the NHS is safe in Tory hands; Thatcher would be happy to replace the NHS with a private system for those who can afford it.

The conservative Royal College of Physicians, Obstetricians and

Gynaecologists all report the Health Service is at breaking point. In rural Shropshire, the Whitchurch Ladies' Friendly Club, the Lions and Round Table have gone beyond fundraising activities and organised a demonstration against local hospital closures.

The Labour Party and the unions must actively campaign now for a massive injection of funds into the health service, to pay a decent wage to all health workers, and to reverse the cutbacks.

Labour MP Dave Nellist said last week that any deaths due to NHS cuts would be murder. Don't let the Tories destroy our health service. Fight the cuts!



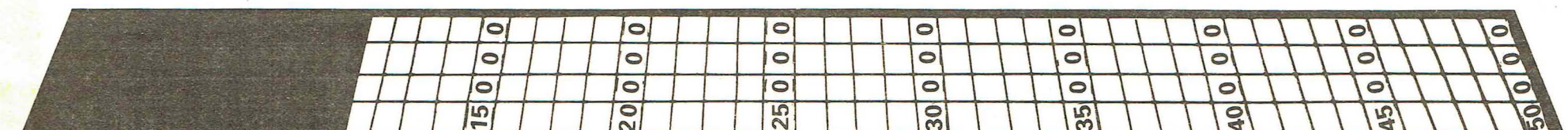
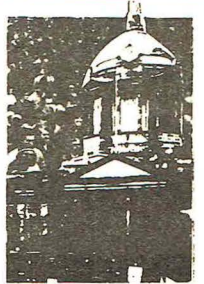
Protesting at the proposed closure of Whitley Hospital, Coventry. Photo: Dave Sinclair

Inside

Local services threatened—

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Bermondsey Labour Party—guilty of socialism—page 4



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Militant

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Summit will not bring world peace

THE PRESS briefings from the White House and the Kremlin, faithfully reproduced in the media—from the Tory tabloids to the *Morning Star*—have hailed the Washington summit as an historic breakthrough to world peace.

But nothing fundamental has changed. The treaty on Intermediate Nuclear Forces (INF) removes only four per cent of the world's 60,000 nuclear weapons, those with a range of between 315 and 3,125 miles. They comprise 332 American and 1,435 Russian missiles.

The deal leaves out all the long-range strategic missiles, many short-range 'battlefield' nuclear weapons and all the deadly conventional, chemical and biological weapons.

The strategic arms reduction talks, which continued at the summit, aim to reduce the number of long-range missiles by half. But even if that were ever agreed, while it would mean a bigger reduction than the INF deal, it would still leave enough weapons to destroy all life on earth several times over.

As with the INF deal, these talks concern weapons which are either obsolete or of secondary importance. Both sides are now concentrating on more mobile sea-based systems, like Britain's Trident. Some of the warheads on the missiles to be scrapped will be used on new missiles which are not covered by the treaty.

On the American side, the biggest item in the defence budget is now the Strategic Defence Initiative (Star Wars). If it is ever put into operation, it will render much of the present weaponry obsolete. Gorbachev has now conceded that they too are now developing a version of SDI.

The arms race will continue, though this does not mean a nuclear war is likely. The Russian bureaucracy has no interest in waging a war against the west, and the capitalists, who only wage war for profit, know that a nuclear war would destroy the workers, factories and materials from which they make their profits and so would be suicidal. Only under an uncontrolled military dictatorship in a capitalist nuclear power could nuclear war become a possibility.

Nevertheless American imperialism and the Russian bureaucracy still represent two antagonistic economic systems. Nothing agreed in Washington will resolve the underlying conflict of interest between monopoly capitalism and an economic system in which industry remains nationalised and planned, despite its bureaucratic degeneration.

The INF agreement and the talks on further disarmament have come about because economic and political pressures have forced the leaders of each side to try to curb the soaring cost of arms, but without undermining their strategic position in relation to the other.

Reagan is faced with the \$180 billion budget deficit, a factor behind the Wall Street crash. Now there is the prospect of a recession, as the capitalist countries try to solve their problems at the expense of each other. Despite the opposition from the arms industry and some of the Republican right wing, he has to cut back government spending on arms which are no longer crucial.

Gorbachev presides over an economy stagnating under the stifling weight of the parasitic bureaucracy. He has to try to regenerate industrial growth and cutting the arms bill is an essential part of his strategy, though it is doomed to failure anyway, so long as there is no democratic check by the workers.

It is therefore in both their interests to scrap non-essential weapons, while maintaining huge nuclear arsenals to keep the 'balance of terror' of the past 42 years.

Instead of applauding the super-powers for their statesmanship, the leaders of the international labour movement, should be campaigning against the criminal waste of the earth's resources on weapons of mass destruction.

Rather than bolstering illusions in Reagan and Gorbachev as 'men of peace', they should be exposing their cynical diplomatic deals, pointing out the vast number of arms which remain and demanding the scrapping of all nuclear warheads.

Only when the workers in the west have socialist governments which end the economic domination of the capitalist monopolies and those in the east have broken the power of the bureaucratic elite, can the underlying causes of war and the arms race will be eliminated and genuine peace be achieved.

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Labour must campaign

THE CRISIS in the health service should be Labour's great opportunity. What better target could they have than a Tory government letting babies die because they have starved the hospitals of cash to pay nurses?

Yet the latest poll shows Labour 12 points behind the Tories. The party leaders have totally failed to

grasp the opportunity. Instead of a campaign of public meetings and demonstrations, they have turned the party in on itself.

They talk about reaching out to the voters and broadening the party's support, rather than a 'navel-contemplating' discussion of policy, but in practice they are doing nothing to campaign publicly. 'Labour listens' and the

policy review camouflage a bid to move party policy to the right behind the members' backs.

The membership are denied a serious debate about policy, yet neither is there a campaign against the Tories, which is the only effective way in which the party can build up its support.



The Youth Trade Union Rights Campaign on 19 November showing what the Labour Party should be doing—taking to the streets Photo Dave Sinclair.

Listen to the ranks

THE 'LABOUR Listens' campaign has begun in Wales with a conference of around 80 party members on 'Socialism in the 90s'.

The platform of journalists Martin Linton and John Lloyd and national executive member Diana Jeuda all attempted in different ways to abandon Labour's traditional class policies.

'New realism' was enthusiastically advocated by Martin Linton, with Swedish social democracy the new model for Britain. He also wanted to end affiliation to the party, particularly by the trade unions, with individual membership only.

Diana Jeuda, opening a speech on the trade unions, complained of her unhappiness about this year's Labour women's conference, even though she admitted she had not been there.

John Lloyd remarked on the popularity of European socialist parties in comparison to Britain.

It was only in the afternoon workshops that issues were really thrashed out by the audience. In each of them the ideas of new realism were annihilated by Labour Party members.

The workshop on 'popular socialism' was particularly controversial, leaving Martin Linton looking extremely gloomy when he reported back.

If the Welsh conference is anything to go by, Labour's right wing had better get ready for a lot of listening to discontented party members.

By Alec Thraves

Keep out

AT the Labour Women's Committee the national women's officer, Ann Wilkinson, announced that there will be separate 'Labour listens to women' events, but that no party members will be allowed in! After much protest, she said that this was because "we don't want the meetings to become another navel inspection"!

Forward to the past

THE SPEECHES by leading Labour right wingers at the Fabian *Beating the Blues* conference showed how out of touch they are with working people and how little has been learnt from the election defeat or the stock market collapse.

In the session on 'Socialism in the 1990s', Bryan Gould stated: "If you insist on the positions you had 20 to 30 years ago, if you insist nothing has changed, then you are dead."

Unfortunately 20 or 30 years ago the right wing also had a crushing control over Labour's policy, and the dominant ideas at this Fabian conference, of Labour successfully managing a mixed economy, dominated within the party then.

They completely failed in practice under successive Labour governments, yet Gould is convinced his programme is new!

The conference was obsessed with winning "the newly prosperous who have benefitted under Thatcher". There was no time to discuss winning the support of most working-class peo-

ple, for whom Fabian policies certainly have little to offer.

They even reshaped the famous Labour election broadcast starring the Kinnocks. When party communications director, Peter Mandelson, described it as "the most effective piece of political communication in recent political history," someone from the audience interjected with a bit of reality, reminding him that it had not worked—Labour had lost.

The session on 'building a mass party' at least talked of the need to recruit working-class people. But both Gordon Brown for *Tribune* and party general secretary, Larry Whitty, saw this being achieved not by making policies attractive to workers, but by offering cheaper membership to trade unionists.

As the conference was overwhelmingly middle-class in character, few workers will have been put off joining the party. Any who had accidentally stumbled in would have wondered which planet they were living on.

By Gerry Lerner

Defend Labour women

THE LAST meeting of the National Committee of Labour Women (NLWC) voted unanimously to oppose the closure of the Labour Party Young Socialists conference, an important decision in the light of other discussions at the meeting.

Unfortunately the meeting began with complaints of 'unsisterly conduct' at this year's 'terrible' Labour women's conference.

Most of the complaints boiled down to disgruntlement at the support for Marxist ideas. Members

were invited to write in with their complaints. It would be scandalous if these were used to impose restrictions on next year's conference.

The new consultation paper, on which replies have to be in by the end of February, raises for the first time the future of the Labour women's councils and the regional structures. It is vital that these are defended and built up.

But perhaps most disturbing is the 'Women's Strategy Paper' for the next four years, which comments that it would be "inapprop-

riate to make any recommendations concerning greater involvement (of the Labour women's organisation) in this strategy".

In exile

It therefore is not allocated a role at all. Instead the paper suggests a Ministry for Women in Exile', with regional meetings of constituency party women's officers' once every six months.

Like the LPYS, if not quite so consistently, the LWO has been to the left of the leadership and has op-

posed their drift to the right. So the writing is on the wall.

The David Alton bill, social security cuts, the Poll Tax and many other issues present a golden opportunity to build a mass campaigning LWO. Unfortunately part of its time will have to be spent, with the support of other sections of the labour movement, fighting off these right-wing moves to elbow it on one side and possibly close it down altogether.

By a Militant reporter

BBC—a right clamp-down

This article has been prepared under Thatcher's reporting restrictions!

THE THATCHER government is so determined to cover-up the anti-democratic methods and treachery of MI5, it has imposed an unprecedented blanket ban on the BBC giving any information or mentioning any names connected with the security services

Because of a previous ruling by the Court of Appeal that an injunction against any single newspaper or broadcasting company can be applied to *all the media*, this latest ban effectively prevents any mention of intelligence matters, or the names of any officers, in the press or on TV and radio.

It was aimed specifically at a Radio 4 programme, *My Country, Right or Wrong*, in which eight former intelligence officers and one serving officer were interviewed.

Before broadcasting the programme, the BBC had

By Ben Eastop

gone through the normal procedure of notifying the D-Notice committee, which has been the established way of controlling discussion on matters which supposedly may harm the 'security of the state'. But the Attorney General, Sir Patrick Mayhew, on behalf of the government, still sought the injunction preventing the programme from being broadcast.

At each stage in the *Spycatcher* case the government has taken another step towards tighter censor-

ship, which eventually would lead to the effective scrapping of section 2 of the Official Secrets Act—which prohibits giving out information 'harmful to security'. This would be replaced by the all-embracing 'duty of confidentiality' rule, aimed at eliminating all public discussion of intelligence policy.

Harold Wilson revealed in 1977 how sections of MI5 had plotted against his Labour government. This was confirmed by *Spycatcher*. Its author actually complained that attention had been switched from Russian spies, to dealing with the left and the labour movement at home.

The Tories have gone to enormous, and in the event farcical lengths, to try to block the book. They are absolutely determined that others will not follow in the

author's footsteps and reveal even more of the menacing activities of the security services.

The security services are an arm of the capitalist state. Not loyal to democratically elected governments, but to the defence of the profit system. The threat to the Wilson government gives just a glimpse of the lengths to which they would go. The Tories are fighting to prevent any democratic accountability of MI5 or even public discussion of it.

But the Labour leaders are letting the opportunity to expose the real nature of the security services and Thatcher's motives, slip from their hands. With an effective campaign of explanation the government's actions would be greeted with mass opposition.



Spycatcher—the book at the centre of the BBC controversy. Its author—an expatriate Tasmanian stud farmer with a liking for silly hats.

Liverpool Labour Party

'Mainstream' majority—but not for long

AFTER A two-year suspension, the Liverpool District Labour Party (DLP) has been reformed. Supporters of *Militant*, who have campaigned the hardest for the party to be reformed, find themselves temporarily in a minority.

By Martin Lee

The press and Labour's right wing, in their haste to hail the AGM as a "trouncing for militants" and another victory in "the long march of the moderates", failed to give any details of the votes for DLP officers on the night.

For president, Eddie Loyden, a former councillor and staunch defender of the 47 surcharged and disqualified councillors, lost to Eddie Sabino, the 'mainstream' candidate, by 134 votes to 107—hardly a trouncing.

In the second ballot for vice-president, Paul Astbury, one of the 47, was defeated by right-winger Roy Gladden by 129 votes to 109—a majority of just 20. The left lost other positions by a similar margin.

Had the left-wing Fire Brigades Union and GMB Branch Five been allowed or given sufficient time to elect delegates, the vote would have been even closer.

After an orchestrated campaign to remove leading *Militant* supporters and a drive to use trade union bureaucrats to defeat the left, the vote for the left candidates is little short of remarkable.

It shows that while in the short term, organisational manoeuvres can secure a temporary victory for the right, the stand of the 47 and the past DLP policy will not be cast aside without a fight.

On the night itself only 128 trade union delegates, out of a possible 170 were present. The TGWU had 56, nearly an outright majority of trade union delegates present. Had the ex-lefts in the TGWU not supported the right-wing slate, the DLP would have remained in the hands of the left.

However, the TGWU officials will not have it all their own way. In the delegation meeting a stormy argument took place over the slate and the delegation split 19-13 in favour of the right.

The press are claiming a personal victory for 'trouble-shooter' Peter Kilfoyle, the party's appointed full-time official. If he is so confident of a majority for the right's ideas, why are the councillors not allowed to attend the DLP as in the past? Could it be that he does not want delegates to hear the Broad Left councillors constantly defend the policies of the 47, for fear of losing the vote?

In their scramble to cobble together an anti-*Militant* alliance, an ideological prison camp regime has been instituted by Kilfoyle. The DLP can now only discuss local government matters. So a resolution on abortion has been rejected. Yet a similar motion has already been put to the council and



On the march in support of the old Liverpool council. Will the new DLP be prepared to fight?

passed, with the Labour Group agreeing to sponsor the anti-Alton demo.

Fighting council

The DLP in the past was accused of discussing international issues like Ireland, Nicaragua and South Africa. If this will no longer be the case, why was a candidate for the panel of council candidates being interviewed by the right-wing Temporary Co-ordinating Committee, grilled on her views on Northern Ireland and rejected on political

grounds?

But Kilfoyle and his union acolytes cannot manoeuvre away from the policies and stand of the 47 between 1983 and 1987. Events will determine the composition of the DLP.

Whether the people of Liverpool will respect this new DLP will not depend on its 'mainstream' image, but whether it refuses to put up rents, whether it continues the Urban Regeneration Strategy and whether or not it fights privatisation.

Capitalist Europe cannot unite

THE COPENHAGEN Common Market summit collapsed. Now unless some new deal can be cobbled together in Brussels in February, the Community will be bankrupt by the middle of 1988.

The dream of a frontier-free Europe is coming up against the vested interests of national capitalists who cannot even agree

on a budget to keep the Community afloat. How utopian is the idea of abolishing national frontiers within the European Community in 1992, when it is planned that people and goods will be free to move from country to country, without customs and passport controls.

Agriculture is the main stumbling block. While millions face death

from starvation in Africa, Europe's capitalist leaders are all agreed that food production has to be cut! The argument is between W. Germany and France who want farmers still to be paid not to produce and Britain and others who want limits on production to be accompanied by price cuts.

After the stock market crash,

many capitalist politicians and right wing Labour Party leaders spoke of the need for international co-operation to regulate the world economy. Yet even within a 'community', the capitalists of different states cannot agree on the price of cereals!

By Pat Craven

Marxist victory at NUS.

THIS YEAR'S National Union of Students Blackpool conference saw major steps forward in the influence of *Militant* in NUS. Meeting against the background of the implementation of some of the most vicious attacks on education by the Tories, the mood of most delegates was sober, looking for an alternative to the present leadership's inability to launch a fight-back.

In the FE sector conference, Further Education Labour Students (FELS) were the major political force. Two FELS members, Cheryl Varley and Rod Alexander, were elected onto the NUS FE National Committee. Resolutions put forward by FELS members on student union rights, racism, education, and YTS were carried. The NUS leadership were also forced to take up a campaign to get a student reinstated at a Northern Ireland FE college after he was expelled for setting up a union.

24 hour strike

In the Poly sector conference, for the first time ever resolutions were put forward by *Militant* supporters and all were passed. One included the call for a 24 hour shutdown of education involving workers and students. Some resolutions were passed by 200 votes.

For the first time ever a resolution initiated by *Militant* supporters was passed at the full conference, calling for non-implementation of the poll tax and joint action with all local authority trade unions which refuse to implement the poll tax.

The *Militant* Readers Meeting was the biggest fringe meeting with 75 in attendance. £782 was collected for the fighting fund.

Fuller report next week.

By Simon Kaplan

GUILTY of Socialism

BERMONDSEY LABOUR Party faces the threat of suspension and the expulsion of 40 of its most active members. This is the biggest attack ever on a local Labour Party.

The general secretary of the Greater London Labour Party, Terry Ashton, has prepared a secret report on Bermondsey CLP to be discussed at the Labour Party NEC on 16 December.

Although the report has been leaked to the press the officers of the local party have been refused a copy of the report and have

been given no opportunity to answer any of the allegations in the report.

Jim Mortimer, Labour's former general secretary and a member of Bermondsey Labour Party general committee, has condemned the report as 'a travesty of justice'.

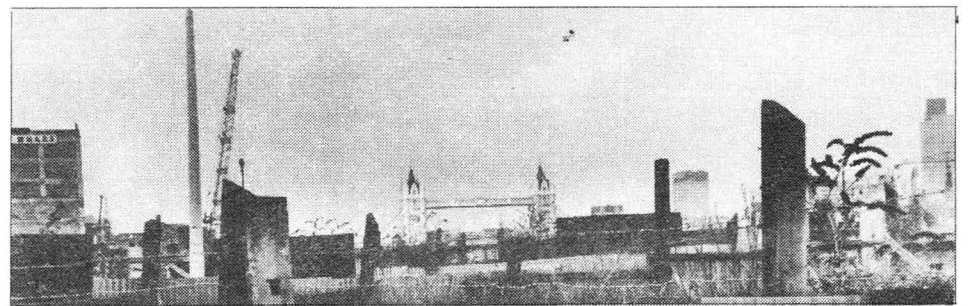
What are the terrible crimes of Bermondsey Labour Party to have brought down the wrath of the NEC upon it?

They have consistently fought against cuts and defended the services for which the Labour Party was originally established. This has meant opposing Labour-

controlled Southwark council, which is loyally implementing the Labour leaders' policy of passing on Tory cuts to the workers.

They have committed the crime of fighting the best election campaign in London. The Labour vote increased by 23 per cent with a 3.6 per cent swing in their favour. This was in contrast to the rest of London where Labour saw an overall swing to the Tories. Fulham had been presented as a model campaign but the moderate right-wing candidate managed to turn a 3,500 Labour majority to a 6,000 Tory majority.

Bermondsey Labour Party



Photos: Dave Sinclair.

In Bermondsey the campaign was carried out in the best traditions of the Labour Party. Canvassers went to every household and street, estate and public meetings were organised. The seat is now a key marginal and the prospects are for a socialist Labour MP to be elected next time.

The penalty for fighting for Labour's traditional aims is to be threatened with expulsion. If the NEC goes ahead with the suspension of the party and the expulsions it will hand Bermondsey back to the Liberals on a plate.

Bermondsey Labour Party will fight this undemocratic attack. They have launched a mass campaign calling on the NEC to reject the report. Enormous support is being gained from other Labour Parties and local authority unions across London. But the best response has been from the estates. Local people are enraged at both the policies of Southwark council and the attack on Bermondsey Labour Party.

There must be no witch-hunt! Messages of support and donations to Bermondsey Labour Party Defence Fund, c/o 91 Mina Rd, SE17 2QS.



Bermondsey Labour Party members petition against attacks on the constituency.

Council's Tory policies

"Buy a hammock" was the only advice Anne Matthews, leader of Southwark Council could give to a family awaiting transfer. They are amongst 12,000 people living in overcrowded and often substandard accommodation.

Southwark has 63,000 dwellings, of which 20 per cent are in substandard condition. 4,000 are vacant but there is a waiting list of 12,000! It would take £500 million just to renovate the existing dwellings.

Instead of fighting for more resources the Labour council has completely capitulated to the Tory government. Rents have gone up by £3.50 so far this year in order to balance the budget. £15 million—money allocated for housing renovation—will be used to balance a budget. There are extremely high

budget gap is expected which would mean an £11 rent increase or about 3,000 redundancies.

This will be disastrous for the majority of people living in Southwark. We need a Labour council committed to fighting in our interests, fighting for local services, protecting jobs and living standards, fighting the Tory attacks.

Broad Left

If the council refuses to do this pressure must come from the unions, tenants' associations (TAs) and Labour Party organisations. A Southwark Broad Left has already been established and is drawing support from both local authority

and public sector unions and TAs.

Bermondsey Women's section launched a brilliant childcare campaign which took up the threat of proposed nursery closures. It organised mass lobbies of nursery workers and parents and forced the council to retreat.

Bermondsey Labour Party has consistently shown it will fight for the interests of the tenants and workforce. It must be allowed to continue this fight. Now more than ever we should be campaigning for a Labour council accountable to the electorate. We need councillors committed to fighting for socialist policies not to doing the dirty work of the Tories!

Articles by Bermondsey Militant supporters

vacancies in staffing, particularly in housing offices. This has 23 per cent of posts vacant, one of the hidden cuts being implemented. This means that the remaining staff are overworked to cope with the increasing housing crisis. Many are becoming demoralised and leaving to find jobs outside the local authority sector.

Next year will be even worse. A £32 million

My baby's future

AMANDA MCDONALD, a young mother with two children and a Labour Party member spoke on the attacks:

"I joined Bermondsey Labour Party in 1985 when I became pregnant. I wanted to do my bit to help make my baby's world a bit easier than mine had been. It wasn't the first time that I'd been involved in the Labour Party as I am from a family of Labour supporters but I had been disillusioned.

"The leaders of the Labour Party seemed totally distant from the reality of poverty, cushioned from the decline in living standards of the people they were supposed to represent. When socialism is a hobby, a debating point to talk about in the pub, these well-meaning Labour supporters are all on our side, but when it comes to the crunch they know which side their bread is buttered and wouldn't stick their necks out for anyone.

"I now have two children and things have just got worse. This Labour council has voted to implement massive cuts in expenditure which will affect everyone. I've got no chance of getting either of my children into a nursery before they're two and a half. The cuts will mean it will be even harder for single parents like me to earn a living wage.

"This comes at the same time as changes in the social security laws. Thousands of people in this borough can't cope as it is, so attacks by the government and the council are going to make the situation much more serious.

"Because Labour Party members in Bermondsey are fighting the council to try and stop them enforcing the cuts, they are up for expulsion. This is unbelievable. Members whose roots go back in the party probably further than many of the so-called leaders are under attack from the same party that they have fought for and worked so hard to keep alive."

Unbearable cuts

INCENSED BY the attacks on Bermondsey Labour Party the Rockingham Mother and Toddler group has set up a petition to defend the party. They realise that the council cuts are bound to affect them and see it is essential to fight.

The cuts have already affected them. At their own community centre plans for a baby room were scrapped through lack of funds; the minimum age limit at the nursery has gone up from two years to two and a half and funding is only guaranteed for two years.

One of the women said: "The Mother and Toddler Group is the only break I get, most of the time I'm trapped in four walls—it's not good for either the children or the parents. Good childcare provision should be a right. The cuts will make our lives unbearable."

The women realise that isolated struggles are not enough, we have to organise together to change the whole inadequate system.

Bermondsey Labour Party Public Meeting

Tuesday 15 December, 7.30pm. Geoffrey Chaucer School. speakers: Tony Benn and Dennis Skinner MPs.

All Welcome

Labour's socialist candidate speaks out



John Bryan in his council flat.

Militant asked John Bryan, 1987 parliamentary candidate for Bermondsey, for his views on the attacks on Bermondsey Labour Party.

"My first reaction was shock and disgust at the disgraceful and undemocratic nature of the attack. I find it very sad and a surprise that the leadership should even contemplate attacking a constituency

party in London that gained a substantial swing to Labour at the last election.

"They should be looking at the parties which lost support for Labour. We've rebuilt the Labour Party in Bermondsey from the days of neglect of the long-time Labour MP, Bob Mellish.

"I've been in the Labour Party for nine years and I

joined to fight the Tories not the Labour Party. We must continue to fight for our socialist policies and we will take our case to every person in Bermondsey.

"They will never stop us fighting. They might try and expel me from Bermondsey Labour Party but they will never expel me from Bermondsey."

Anger after attacks on Labour's youth

PARTY members have been horrified to hear of the National Executive's (NEC) decision to close the Labour Party Young Socialists (LPYS) national conference.

The leading body of the Labour women's organisation unanimously condemned the move. They called on the NEC to "give more assistance to the LPYS instead of spending its time putting obstacles in their path."

Fears that the women's organisation may suffer the same fate as the LPYS were expressed.

Ribble Valley Labour Party in Lan-

cashire are angry that while they are trying to set up a YS branch, the LPYS is coming under renewed attack. But they are more determined than ever to see a branch established.

Other Labour Parties that have passed resolutions include Brent East, Tynebridge, Leeds North East, Leeds North West, Edinburgh East and Edinburgh West.

Many individuals have also sent letters to the NEC. The LPYS National Committee are confident that the majority of the Party will be against the NEC's decision.

The NEC meets on 16 December. Send your letters of protest at the attacks on the conference and the youth officer's post to Larry Whitty, 150 Walworth Road, London SE17 1JT.



Labour Party Young Socialists

LPYS Black Youth Rally

THE BANNER of Lambeth council workers' Joint Trade Unions was on display in the borough's town hall last Saturday to welcome the Labour Party Young Socialists' third national black youth rally.

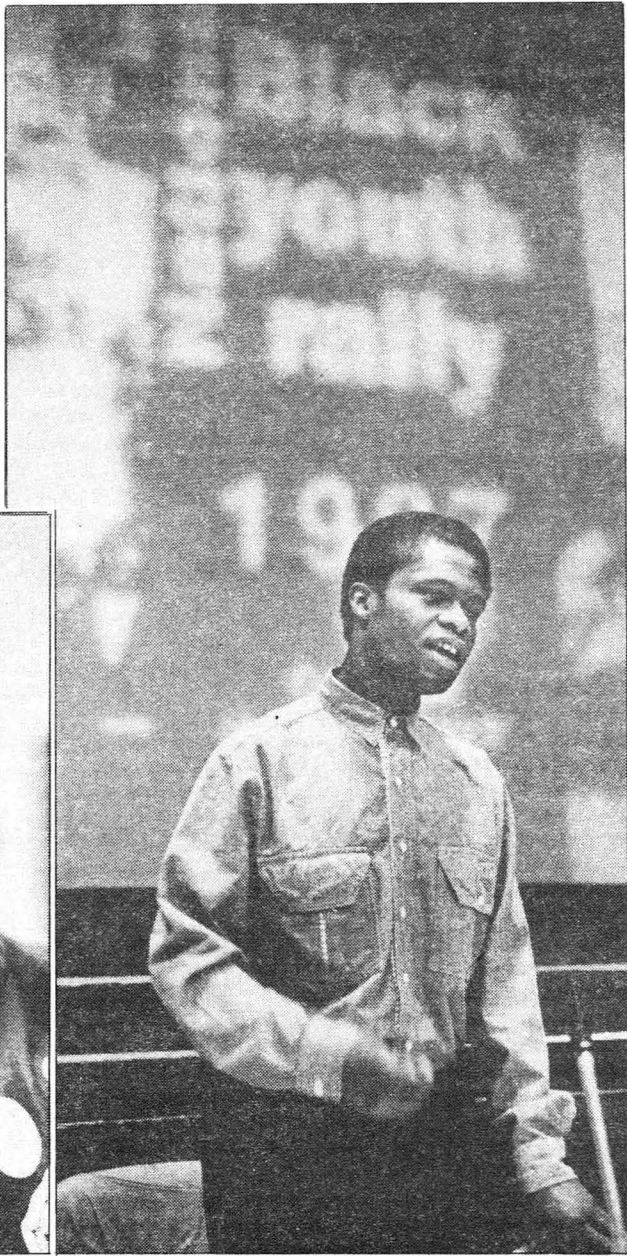
NADEEM AFZAL, (below) from Birmingham, got involved with the LPYS because of its anti-racist work.

"One and a half years ago I was jumped by some racist white kids. They swore at my mother in our language, even though they don't really know what the words mean. One hit a bottle on me."

Nadeem was shocked to hear one opponent of the LPYS majority say there should be no whites at the rally. "That's as bad as the white racists," he said.



Reports by Tony Cross



Derek Richards speaking at the rally.



NASIMA PATEL (left) came to the conference from Bradford.

"The conditions Asians face meant they took to the idea of changing society when they were put over during Pat Wall's election campaign.

"Since being elected, the issue he's done most work on has been immigration. The LPYS in Bradford has started a campaign against racism, which Pat has sponsored. We'll be spearheading the fight against the Immigration Bill.

"All our opponents bringing up is the question of black sections. But this is a non-issue in the black and Asian community. What we need is a clear programme and policy on the issues that count."

people attending.

LPYS member, Derek Richards, and Pat Wall MP attacked the Tories' new Immigration Bill. "Already people live in prison conditions simply for daring to want to set foot on British soil," said Derek.

"The Tories talk about people overstaying," said Pat, "but black people know a lot about overstaying. They know British imperialism overstayed 200 years in their countries."

Since the last rally, four black MPs have been elected. One of them, Keith Vaz, addressed the rally. The LPYS's contribution to his election campaign was a significant factor in its success, he said.

"Four black MPs was a step forward," said Derek Richards, "but to represent black people you have to live like them, and that means on a worker's wage."

Police thugs

REMINDERS OF police harassment of black people were brought to the conference by John Kofe and Annette Monerville.

Manchester police chief, James Anderton, is bent on confrontation with the black community, said John Kofe. "A young black sister was beaten and battered and the police have used the situation to come into the community and do whatever they want; smashing in doors, taking people away, taking away women and children."

There will be two demonstrations against this harassment in December.

Annette Monerville spoke of the bitter experiences of her family since her nephew, Trevor, was arrested by Stoke Newington police. They want to know why Trevor has twice sustained injuries while in police custody, but "we have no faith in the police investigating themselves, and then just carrying on trying to discredit our family."

Her eyes had been opened to all the wrongs in society today during the campaign, she said. "No victory has been won without a struggle, but we're not strong enough to win on our own. We must take up every community's struggle and deal with it."

The campaign are organising a torch-light procession on 8 January.

Miners and printers protest

WORKERS WHO have been in the thick of the class struggle in the '80s are leading the protests at the closure of LPYS conference.

The London Press branch of the EPTU overwhelmingly supported a resolution calling the move a massive step backwards. They also condemned the witch-hunt against Bermondsey Labour Party.

And miners' union general secretary, Peter Heathfield, has written to the Labour Party to pay tribute to the work of national youth organiser, Andy Bevan, and his help

in setting up the union's own youth committee.

The Youth Committee expressed their total confidence in him and would consider any attempt to redeploy him as a snub to themselves, he said.

"We urge that no action be taken against Mr Bevan under the guise of re-organisation which, if the press are to be believed, relate more to political differences than to his performance," the letter says.

Other union bodies that have objected include Preston 6/53 branch of the TGWU and Astms No.5 Divisional Council.

18yr-old beats witch hunters

YOUNG SOCIALIST, Lois Austen, has scored a big victory against the witch-hunters.

Right-wingers in Bexleyheath Labour Party have been trying to get her expelled for the last two years. Lois was only 16 when they started!

But when her case came up at the National Constitutional Committee (NCC), even that star chamber found the charges against her were not proven. This was after she had walked out on her lawyer's advice because the NCC's own guidelines had been blatantly flouted.

While the right-wingers have been trying to expel her, there has been "a serious decline in the Party's activities and support in the area," Lois's statement to the NCC says.

"Since joining the Party at 15, I've been shocked and flabbergasted by the obstructions, hindrance, verbal abuse and outright sexism thrown at me by older Party members," it continues.

"The Party's press officer even handed a story to the local press resulting in a front page headline 'We expose the red infiltrators.'" The paper published her name and address at a time when the YS branch was leading a campaign against local National Front activity.

The decision is a humiliating defeat for the right-wing clique who run Bexleyheath Labour Party and a setback for the witch-hunt nationally.

By Militant reporters

Young Socialist held for 36 hours

AN LPYS member was held by police for 36 hours after being arrested on Saturday night.

Mandie Martin and another member of Southampton LPYS were arrested for alleged criminal damage and obstructing a police officer. The police would not allow her bail and refused her right to a phone call on the grounds that it was early in the morning! At 8 a.m. on

Sunday they told her she would have to stay in until she was due in court.

There they spitefully demanded Mandie be remanded over Christmas on the grounds that she was "of a nomadic character", though they had no proof to back this up. This was rejected.

The local LPYS branch are campaigning for her defence throughout the labour movement.

No stars for strangeways

IF YOU ever get locked up in a police cell overnight—think yourself lucky that you are not on the streets or even in a dingy bed and breakfast hotel. For, according to the authorities, it will be costing them £200 a night to keep you in gaol.

By a Strangeways ex-prisoner

And you could face the much less salubrious accommodation in one of HM Prisons, which costs them just £35 a night. When I tell you about Strangeways you may think again about ever spending less than £35 on your overnight stays.

If you get booked into B1 landing, you can only get one shower a week. That wouldn't be too bad but you are locked up in your room with no access at all to the toilets.

In fact you get a 'port-a-loo', a bucket to share between you in the corner of the cell. You do get a chance to go to the proper toilet at meal times but be nippy because the queues are long.

I'm well informed that the kitchens are rat infested. The

chefs produce imaginative variations on left over stew but choice is limited to 'take it or leave it'.

Night service is terrible. In an emergency it can take up to 30 minutes to get a cell door open. So when somebody decides to slash his wrists, not a rare event, the delay can be fatal. Due to understaffing, often only half a dozen prison officers are on duty at night.

Home Office guidelines informed me that "prisoners are sent to prison as a punishment not to be punished." But conditions make a mockery of that principle. There are 9,000 more prisoners than the 41,000 the prisons were built to hold. It means a life of hell for gaolers and gaoled.

Crammed in

Thatcher has been forced to recognise that her policy of stuffing Britain's prisons fuller than even the brutal regime in Turkey and twice as cramped as the rest of Europe, is a catastrophe. They have been forced to give increased remission to short stay prisoners to try to alleviate the crisis.

The squalor of British prisons



At least prisoners in juvenile detention centres are allowed out for exercise.

Strangeways is one of the biggest local prisons in the country. It is an 'allocation' prison where convicted prisoners are sent from court for assessment and allocation to other prisons.

Life is a little more bearable if you know you are going to be moving to prisons hopefully with better conditions like Whyatt or Kirkham. But if you are a cate-

gory B prisoner often waiting for closed prisons like Preston or Lancaster, you may face spells of up to two years before you are saved from Strangeways.

The disturbances a short while ago at Barlinnie and Peterhead could happen at Strangeways. Police dogs were sent in against rioters last Easter. A spark could set off the tension. Being locked

up all day without real exercise builds up anger and frustration. The Governor promised us more 'association time' and better bathing facilities but without extra prison officers, no real improvements will be possible.

Tories breed crime

The labour movement should approach the prison officers with a clear exposure of how the party of law and order has bred crime and anarchy through its economic and social policies.

The prisons hold the refuse of capitalism. Prison officers are no more valuable to capitalists than any other workers and Tory policies are turning their lives to misery. Last year there were over 1200 assaults on prison officers. Tory brutality sets worker against worker while the employers make off with the loot. Capitalism is the crime and socialism is the remedy.

Running into a brick wall



Photo: Jez Coulson (IFL)

Thousands were motivated to "Run the World" for charity last year—but how much does the government encourage people to keep fit without facilities?

ENVIRONMENT SECRETARY Nicholas Ridley recently proposed that all council recreation facilities be included with other local authority services which are to be put out to private tender, whereby the firm which offers to do the job most cheaply wins the contract.

By Anne Lewin
Newham NE Labour Party Young Socialists.

This plan was 'justified' last week by Sports Minister Colin Moynihan on a radio 4 Today programme, that as 'there is competition in sport, there should be competition between sports facilities'.

Since the average income from leisure facilities is only 22 per cent of expenditure, the tendering out of these services will undoubtedly mean huge price rises and a decline in facilities, opening hours, staff and training.

The proposals encompass everything from swimming pools to golf courses, leisure centres, bowling greens, tennis courts, team pitches, athletics tracks, artificial ski slopes, beach facilities, you name it.

For local authority swimming pools the proposals mean tendering out everything from management to supervisors and life guards and brings into question the right of councils to set admission charges and opening hours.

If these proposals are allowed to go through it will have a disastrous effect not only on the jobs of council employees, but on the sport and recreation facilities which ordinary people could afford to use.

Britain's notoriously poor record of providing training facilities, coaching and sponsorship to sportsmen and women will be heading for an all time low.

This attack on sports

facilities comes at a time when there is a growing mood of dissatisfaction among local amateur clubs towards the Amateur Athletics Association which has failed to develop facilities or to promote sports in the community.

Whilst a tiny handful of top British athletes rake in the money, local clubs face lack of indoor and all-weather facilities, proper training and funding.

The British Amateur Athletics Board, by deciding which athletes are most popular deems that one athlete can make over ten times that of others for competing in the same event.

'Real' races or competition between top athletes seldom takes place at all since if they are beaten it could result in a loss of their 'marketable value'.

Facilities

Amateur Athletics Associations rake in thousands of pounds through the registration fees of local clubs, yet facilities are still allowed to fall into disrepair.

Sports facilities which rely on the private profit of business will inevitably result in cuts, closures and the further decline of Britain as a promoter of sport both in local communities and for top competition.

Leisure facilities cannot rely on the ability of firms to make a profit from them, they are essential for the health and well-being of everybody. Unless they are run by and for the public they are meant to serve under a socialist Labour government, they will remain an expensive luxury to be cut back when the money runs out.

If these proposals go through, the Sports Council's slogan of 'Sport for all' may come to mean sport for a few—those who can afford to pay through the nose or use private facilities.

Sell Militant

Sales on the up in Goole

SELLERS IN the Humberside area report that: "Saturday 28 November was the coldest day so far this winter—frost on the ground, fog in the air! It was also the day that Militant paper sellers came out of the closet and into the cold in Goole."

"Five new supporters braved the elements and their nerves, to hold their first public sale in Goole. And what a success! 24 papers were sold in just over two hours when the sale ended with visibility reduced to 10 yards! The next day, nine papers were sold door-to-door in just three streets, including one for £1!"

"Three months ago, not one paper was being sold in Goole." Sellers told us: "Now we already have twenty regular buyers and with the success of last weekend's public sales, we have increased our order to 50 a week!"

The report concludes that they are confident of getting new sellers not only in the Goole area but also in nearby Selby (heart of the new coalfield) in the near future.

If you've had a sales breakthrough in your area why not write and tell us about it and we will feature your area in this column.

By Ruth Campbell

Left and Right

Surely some mistake?

The Tories made a lot of noise about their plans to 'reform the trade unions' by having regular elections for union executive committee members. However, in an astonishing U-turn they have now said that some specified unions are exempt, as regular elections would be 'inappropriate'.

Which unions could it be? The NUM? The CPSA? Surprise, surprise, no. Instead such militant organisations as the British Medical Association, the Headmaster's Conference and the Institute of Journalists have been exempted. But someone should have told them that

they've included the Educational Institute of Scotland, a TUC affiliate....presumably by mistake!

Tory double-think

REMEMBER DURING the election campaign how Thatcher said we must retain our "Independent nuclear deterrent"? Now that the major powers have, for their own reasons, begun to curtail nuclear weapons spending, Thatcher is quoted as saying that Britain cannot include its weapons because they are so insignificant that they make no difference to the balance of terror. So now we know.

Local services threatened

Tenants' bill of no rights

THE TORIES' new Housing Bill makes profit the only guiding principle of housing.

By Roger Shriver

Rent controls are to disappear in the private sector, while public sector housing for need is to be made almost illegal.

The government see local councils as an obstacle to their plans, so they are introducing new Housing Action Trusts (HATs) in certain areas. Two likely districts are Deptford/Greenwich in south London and Hulme in Manchester.

The HATs are supposed to bring private money into 'problem' communities. They will take an area out of the hands of elected and accountable local authorities and then make local houses and land available for sale to private developers.

The HATs are based on the London Docklands Development Corporation (LDDC), which created a windfall for investors and developers, but no jobs or houses for working-class local people.

After a few superficial improvements, council blocks can be sold for exorbitant prices or rented out at a cost way above the means of most tenants. Rents would move towards the 'market level'. In London this would probably be well over £100 a week. That's a 'nice little earner' for a property company, with a ready-built collection of saleable properties for good measure.

The Tory bill claims to give all tenants the 'right to choose' a landlord.

But the Bill does not point out the snags. One alternative the government are pushing to council control is to opt for a



The crescents in Hulme, Manchester.

Photo: Viv Seal

A SECRET paper sent to local councils on how tenants can 'opt out' reveals major changes in favour of landlords and developers compared to the original White Paper proposals.

For example. Before: "Tenants will be able to set the process in hand at a time of their own choosing".

Now: "The tenants and the new landlord will get together. Sometimes one party will take the initiative, sometimes the other".

But most amazingly of all: "In some

Housing Association (HA). But the Housing Bill ensures that HAs have to get most of their money from private banks, which exist only to make profits.

Many associations already have big loans; the repayments are designed to get bigger every year. HA rents will do the

same.

Tenants can 'choose' to have their estate run by a co-operative. The Tories don't point out that each co-operative would assume full legal responsibility for all problems; that councils will have little or no money to support them; that they will face great

difficulty collecting rent and paying for caretakers. Many councils see HAs and co-operatives as a way out. But there is no control over the policies they implement. Councils have no automatic right to nominate local homeless people to tenancies owned by a new landlord, private

speculator, HA or co-operative. The Tories say this would inhibit getting a good return.

New tenancies could either be governed by the thickness of your wallet or controlled by small cliques; they could exclude, for example, black and Asian families, single parents or anybody they consider 'uncreditworthy'.

Labour councils should be fighting to keep their properties and campaigning for more resources so housing can be improved. Tenants should be fighting for more democratic control over housing policy, while safeguarding minority rights.

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Vultures over Hulme's homes

PROPERTY DEVELOPERS and private speculators are hovering over Manchester's council estates. 98,000 council dwellings housing just under half the population; that spells quick profit.

By Mike Lee

Manchester has 29,000 on the waiting list, 500 homeless families and an estimated £1 million repairs backlog. 12,000 inter-war properties remain unmodernised and extra cash is needed to make 4,000 empty council properties habitable.

These problems could be eliminated, the city's director of housing believes, with investment of £180 million a year for ten years. When Manchester applied for £188 million from the government Housing Investment Programme (HIP) they were told they could borrow £27 million.

That offer has not been increased, and in order to qualify for HIP councils have

to show they intend to sell off estates and unused land, and co-operate with private developers. Housing subsidy from the government is now nil, even before the Tories make subsidy from the rates illegal.

£222 million has been stolen from Manchester housing since 1979, taking inflation into account. With the money stolen from HIP, the council could have built 23,000 new houses or modernised 9,000 inter-war homes or repaired 46,000 traditional houses and refurbished 118 tower blocks.

The Tories are to blame for the city's housing crisis. The council could mount a tremendous campaign alongside the 4,000 direct works employees and the numerous tenants' groups to get more resources.

But the council has increased council rents twice since May, cut back on certain repairs, halved the modernisation programme and ordered no more homes to be built for next year. This raises mistrust between the council and

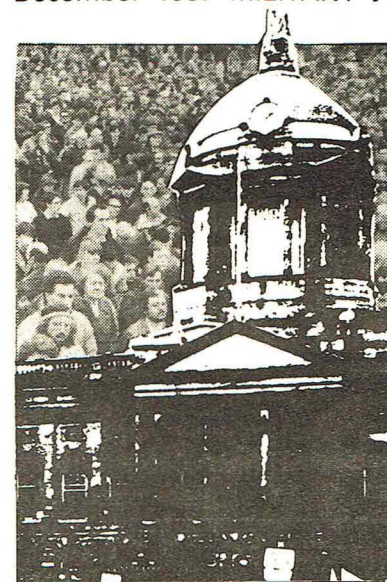
both tenants and unions.

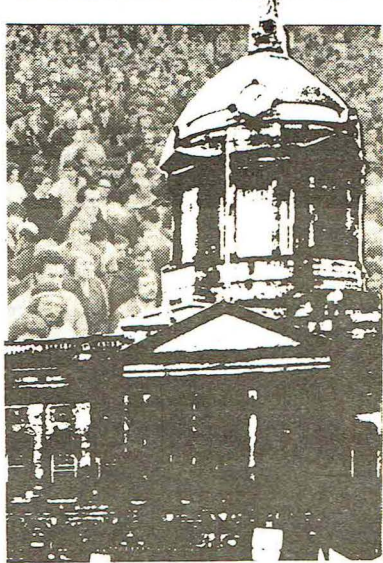
They also want land to be sold to Housing Associations to build houses with tenants having 100 per cent nomination rights. This is playing into the Tories' hands; it has already given the green light to greedy property companies.

Wren Properties has just put in a bid for the 'troublesome' overspill Colshaw Farm estate in Wilmslow, right opposite a block of expensive Barrett homes. Wren would most likely do them up into luxury flats in a desirable area, then sell them.

"Uneconomic"

In 1985 Wren took over a block of unpopular maisonettes in Stoke. Run-down and hard to heat, they decided proper heating would be uneconomic and just did up the outside. Their internal prospectus says they do not want unemployed people and families with over two children; these 'disadvan-





Local services threatened

Fighting the cuts

When profits come first

A CABINET 'insider' has likened Tory housing plans to an attempt to recreate the traditional English village in urban areas. It would, he said, be complete with "squire, parson, schoolmaster, labourer and a couple of down and outs".

Tory policies are certainly creating a new generation of 'down and outs'.

East Sussex county council have considered a proposal to close 17 old people's homes, as the social services department "should not be in the business of meeting the accommodation needs of the elderly". Mental hospital patients throughout the country are being discharged into an almost non-existent 'community care'.

More and more people are at the mercy of the private sector. If you really can't survive, you may get a short stay in bed and breakfast, supplied by the DHSS.

Cramped

A recent report to Southampton council says that 32 per cent of people in bed and breakfast in that city are young single mothers. 38 per cent of people in B&B shared a single room with more than two others.

The government promises private landlords "an adequate return on their investment" in other words, higher rents and shorter term tenancies. But what do private tenants get for their money?

Southampton's survey of all multi-occupied housing showed that private tenants were literally living dangerously. 55 per cent had no fire escapes, extinguishers, fire doors or buckets. Many reported faulty wiring or unsafe gas appliances.

They were also cramped, six per cent shared a toilet and washing facilities with over 15 others!

The Housing Bill will abolish rent controls; landlords will be able to charge the market rent. With a few skin-deep improvements, rents can go up four or five times. This will be a charter for the Rachman type of landlord many people thought was extinct.

Manchester

MASSIVE CUTBACKS are being planned by Manchester city council: this follows a decision in July to cut spending by £110 million by axing 4,000 jobs and reducing 'running costs'.

Education now faces a £20 million cut which would remove nursery nurses from infant classes, worsen pupil-teacher ratios in secondary schools, cut further education support services, cut the school meals and cleaning budget by a quarter, and possibly close schools and colleges.

These measures fly in the face of the manifesto commitment on

which the councillors were elected in May that: "we need to extend and improve services in Manchester, not cut everything back as this Tory government wants us to do".

Now all the gains of this administration, and previous ones are under threat.

The cuts have made workers and youth who have supported the council, very angry. *Militant* supporters are campaigning for strike action by council workers and Further Education and school students on 16 December, when the council votes on the cuts package. They are also building support for a mass lobby of the council meeting.

The council has also attacked working conditions. They have

attempted to restructure departments with minimal consultation, and have pressed for compulsory redeployment of staff.

Union opposition has forced the council leaders to 'concede' that workers will now be given a choice of two jobs—but they will be sacked if they refuse to move.

Unfortunately, council workers are paying the price for their leaders' eagerness to make 'limited' cuts, rather than organise a serious campaign for the return of the £500 million stolen from Manchester by the Tories.

At a recent annual general meeting of Nalگو, the branch leadership manoeuvred off the agenda an amendment calling for a fight against the cuts, rather

than discuss the issues.

A joint shop stewards committee is needed to organise effective resistance.

By John Hunt

Greenwich

WHEN GREENWICH council met on 2 December, tenants and local authority workers were lobbying outside.

The Labour-controlled council voted for increases of up to £3 from January. Ten Labour councillors, supporters of the Greenwich Broad Left, voted against the rent rise.

Docklands show Tory priorities

SOME PEOPLE have done well out of London's docklands since the government-imposed LDDC took over. The cost of an acre of land has gone up from £70,000 in 1981 to at least £3 million now.

But as Steve Amor, chair of Westferry tenants' association on the Isle of Dogs, told *Militant*, local people are being squeezed out.

"The LDDC claimed it would bring jobs for local people and community services like schools and clinics, but we haven't seen any of these yet. Only about 250 people have found jobs round here. Unemployment has gone up to 26 per cent in Blackwall ward, and 22 per cent in Millwall.

"Most jobs round here in the past were in the docks, transport or warehouse jobs, so the bosses claim local people aren't skilled enough. Employment in this area is just transferred in from other places and it will be just the same when the millionaires' offices at Canary Wharf get going.

"The population of the Isle has been going down since the docks shut. Now the LDDC seem to want 30,000 or 40,000 people living here, but there's no provision for sons and

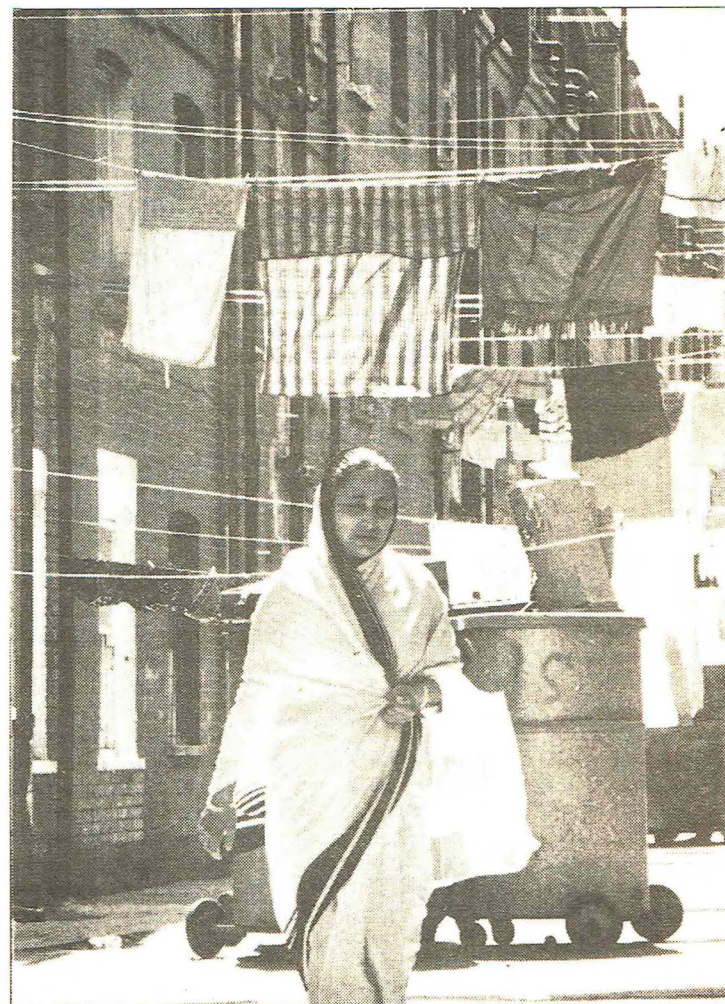
daughters of the present residents to live here. It's nearly all been private housing development.

"One project, Masthouse Terrace, had 150 homes for rent, but a former LDDC leader reportedly ordered the top floor of ten flats knocked off the plans because it interfered with the view of a 'superpub' they were building.

Tenants ignored

"Tourism is Thatcher's replacement for the industry that's gone. In this climate! They want to develop the Leamouth area for waterways and marinas. Tenants recently asked property developers why their models didn't show the council blocks which at present house about 2000 people. The developers didn't seem to know the flats existed!

"The local Liberal council just implement Tory policies. Tenants have got to fight, and we've got to use the strength of the unions, particularly in local government, to back us up. And we've got to start now in docklands and in the other areas threatened."



Old housing in Whitechapel, East London.

Don't privatise — modernise

THE TORIES say their policies are 'logical'. But what is rational about a system which has hundreds of thousands of building workers on the dole but huge housing waiting lists, and bad housing in both private and public sectors.

Many council dwellings are in an appalling state. It would cost £5 billion just to bring existing stock up to a decent standard, let alone to build anything new.

Since 1979, the government has systematically cut its finance for local authorities. Now they are making it illegal to subsidise council rents through the rates.

The Housing Bill wants Labour councillors to do the Tories' dirty work by raising council rents nearer to the market level so as to blunt opposition to sell-offs. Labour councillors should refuse to implement rent or rate rises.

What the Tories wish to destroy, they first make unpopular. They want to destroy council housing. The whole movement must resist the Tory plans. *Militant* supporters in Scotland, opposing the privatisation of Scottish Special Housing Association homes are calling

for joint action between tenants and unions, leading up to a month long rent strike with the unions representing housing workers agreeing that their members will not harass tenants. They are also demanding 'modernisation not privatisation'.

Militant calls for:

★ Mass meetings to explain the implication for every tenant and every worker.

★ Joint action by unions and tenants, including demonstrations and industrial action, to stop sell-offs.

★ Fight for local government resources to bring council housing up to a decent level, and to build new homes.

★ Housing for public need not private greed.



New house built by Liverpool City

Cuts

Some tenants could face four increases in the first half of 1988. After the January rise, cuts in housing benefit will force many people to pay up to £12 a week more.

The council is likely to impose a supplementary increase, as there is still a 'gap' of £19 million in the 1988/89 budget. Tenants who have had major improvements done face an additional rent rise.

Council officers are looking at plans for budget cuts of 10 per cent. Some proposals, to be discussed later this month, include charges for home helps, doubling the price of pensioners' holidays, putting a Direct Labour depot, packing toilet cleaners and reducing the Women's Committee budget by 15 per cent.



Manchester Council workers in 'Democracy Day' demonstration against cuts in 1985.

Photo: John Smith (IFL) II

How to beat the Poll Tax

THE POLL Tax, to be implemented in Scotland on 1 April 1989 and a year later in England and Wales, will mean a massive increase in local taxation on working-class people and a decrease for the better-off in bigger homes.

Scottish Secretary of State Malcolm Rifkind, who now pays £1,100 rates on his Edinburgh house, will pay £578 in Poll Tax. Tory MP and junior minister Michael Forsyth will be saving £1,229.

Contrast that with the plight of the Dunlop family, highlighted by the Scottish Campaign against the Poll Tax. Tom Dunlop is a shipwright; his wife Mary is a health service laundry assistant; his daughter Mary is a shop worker and the three boys, Lewis, George and Alex, work on a Community Programme project. They are paying £450 in rates, but they will have to pay £1,764 in Poll Tax, £294 each.

They are lucky not to be living in the London Borough of Camden, where their Poll Tax bill would come to £4,692, £15 a week!

People in inner cities, including many black and Asian families, will be badly hit, since on average there is a lower household income and a higher number of adults per household.

There will be no 100 per cent rebates, so even the lowest paid, single parents, students, the unemployed and the disabled will pay at least 20 per cent of their Poll Tax. In Camden that would mean £3 a week.

Inevitably many will be forced to try and avoid being registered, sneaking in and out of their own home to avoid detection. A huge apparatus will have to be set up to check up on people and collect the tax.

In Scotland the message is getting through and there is now massive opposition to the tax. In a recent poll, 73 per cent expressed outright opposition and 48 per cent were prepared to break the law. In England and Wales 60 per cent are against it.

The Labour Party must use this mass opposition to force the Tories to abandon the tax.

Relying on a backbench revolt by Tories is wishful thinking. There was no real opposition at

Tory Party conference. Indeed they forced the government to drop the idea of introducing the tax in stages.

They know that the alternative would be to introduce rates revaluation in England and Wales similar to the one two years ago in Scotland. That would provoke a similar storm of protest.

The Poll Tax is an essential part of the Tory strategy to drive down local authority spending. It follows nearly 20 other laws which have hamstringed elected councils and stripped them of any independent power. Rate-capping is succeeded by the government's power to limit the level of Poll Tax. There is too much at stake for the Tories to back down.

Yet the opposition is overwhelming. Labour has to transform this into a massive campaign to force the Tories to back down.

A campaign of meetings to explain the issues and how to defeat the Tories is needed. Workers realise that this government will not be persuaded by logic or petitions. Only mass action by the working class will be effective.

It is a scandal that Labour spokesman Bryan Gould replied to a question on the potential of an anti-Poll-Tax campaign that he "did not think that we ought to be telling people that we can win".

Labour councils must refuse to implement the tax and mobilise the unions, shop stewards' committees, tenants' organisations, the unemployed workers' groups and other community organisations behind them in action.

The councils in Poplar in the 20s, Clay Cross in the 70s and most recently Liverpool drew thousands of families behind their stand against the Tories.

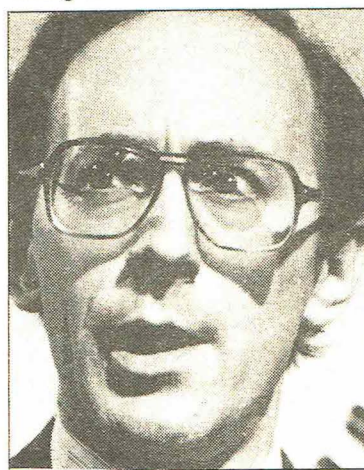
The party leadership argue that defiance is illegal and therefore unacceptable. At the recent Labour Party special conference, Shadow Scottish Secretary, Donald Dewar, argued that "illegality has never been an attraction for a party committed to parliamentary politics".

But when a law like the Poll Tax is opposed by the overwhelming majority of the people, workers do not view defiance as lawbreaking, but as a

legitimate act to prevent a bad law being implemented.

It did not matter to the thousands who supported the UCS work-in or the Caterpillar occupation that these workers' act of defiance was illegal.

In Scotland up to now, however, the councils are complying with the implementation of the Poll Tax. The Labour leaders have not sought to harness the anger at the tax or discuss a strategy to defeat it. Already the nationalists are exploiting Labour's failure to be seen to be taking a stand.



Scottish Secretary of State Malcolm Rifkind will save £522 a year.

But it is not too late for Labour to reassert its position as the voice of the Scottish electorate and lead the campaign of defiance of the Poll Tax.

Labour councils in England and Wales too should begin preparations for such a campaign and throw their weight behind the resistance in Scotland.

The idea has been raised of non-registration and non-payment, as an alternative to a fight led by the councils. Non-registration is not feasible. The compilation of the register does not depend on whether individuals choose to register. The officials will decide who should be on it.

But non-payment, if properly organised and not left to individuals, would, if councils impose the tax, provide an opportunity to build a mass movement and could force the Tories to retreat.

Maria Fyfe, Labour MP for

Glasgow Maryhill, has said that she personally would refuse to pay the Poll Tax and pay her old rates, but that Labour councils cannot be expected to refuse to implement the Poll Tax, as councillors would be individually surcharged: "You cannot expect the fight to be fought by a tiny minority who could be left with an enormous bill to pay".

"We have to insist" she said "that councils get the money to run the services". She misses the point. Her strategy of paying the old rates would still leave the councils short of money, as it would yield less than Poll Tax, so the councillors could be surcharged anyway. Labour councillors would still have to fight. The very fact that she talks of surcharges suggests she believes that fight cannot be won.

The battle is not to find 'clever' ways round the Poll Tax. Collective action, rather than appeals to individual non-payment, will be necessary.

Local Labour Party branches, women's sections and LPYS branches, with tenants associations and other community groups, should set up local Poll Tax strike committees. These should collect and bank what was previously paid as rates.

This will mean a financial crisis for the councils, so it will be vital to involve council workers and to seek industrial support from other workers. A national one-day strike may be necessary to demonstrate the readiness to struggle.

There is a rich history of rent strikes from which lessons can be learned. Women in the West of Scotland during the first world war, with the support of the industrial workers, forced the government to cut rents. Mass non-payment of Poll Tax could have similar results.

This is one of the worst attacks the Tories have launched on the working class. If Labour plays a leading role in defying it, then thousands of those who will bear the brunt of the tax will be drawn to Labour and into a force which the Tories will be unable to resist. Through mass action, the Poll Tax can be stopped.

By Ronnie Stevenson

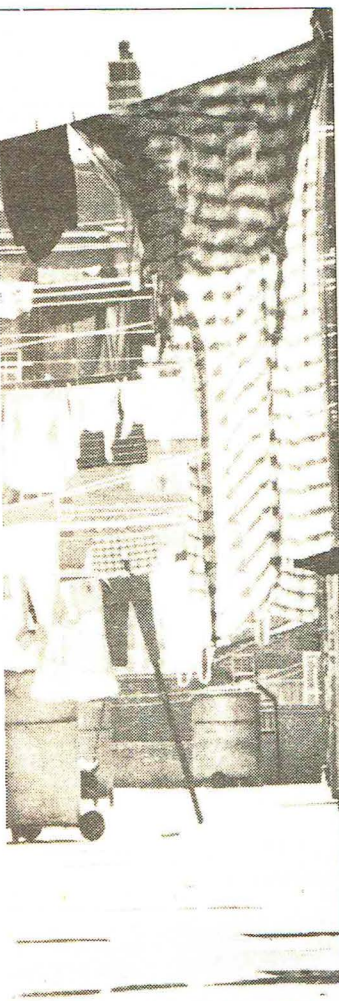
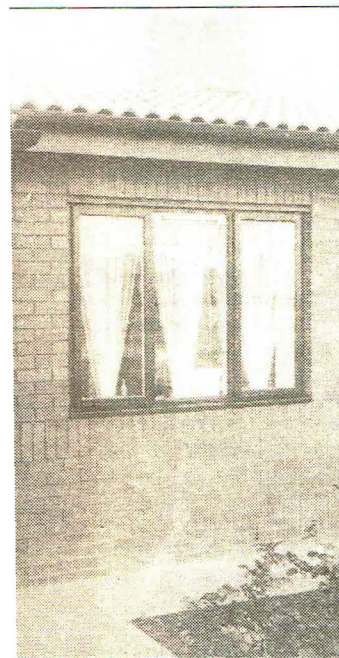


Photo: Dave Sinclair



Council.

Italy

The tide turns

MORE THAN 13 million workers, out of a total workforce of 18 million, took part in the four-hour general strike on 25 November.

The strike was against the 1988 budget, threatening new austerity measures, and in support of the demand for jobs. It was called, under big pressure from the rank and file, by the leaders of all three trade union confederations—the CGIL (Communist-Socialist), the CSIL (Catholic and others) and the UIL (Socialist, Republican, Social-Democrat).

The strike was not well-prepared, yet it was successful beyond all the leaders' expectations. After the lull during 1985–1986, the years with the lowest strike figures since the war, it is proof that Italian workers are moving back into struggle.

This general strike, the first in four years, was called to answer the continuous provocations of the Christian-Democratic government. But we need a lot more to stop the bosses. At least a national 24 hour strike, well-prepared to bring the whole country to a halt, is necessary to give the workers their confidence back

By Luigi Bozzi

and begin to build up real pressure to force the government out.

Many workers on the demonstration expressed their doubts in the unions' leadership. At the same time these workers wanted to show their readiness to fight.

The COBAS (see article below), which have spearheaded the movement of the rank-and-file, are not homogeneous. For example, most of the school-teachers belonging to the COBAS did not strike. The union bureaucrats were just waiting for this. They wanted to use the strike against the COBAS. Any opposition from below was referred to as COBAS.

But the slogan heard at the demonstration in Milan, the biggest in the country with 60,000 people, made it clear that the movement has already spread

beyond the COBAS:

"We are workers, we are shop stewards, we aren't from the COBAS, we're angry."

Fortunately the vast majority of workers who have opposed the union bureaucrats in the past few months reject the methods of sectarian splitting, and are correctly channelling their energies in a powerful movement for change within the mass organisations.

The most important feature to emphasise is the role played by the airport workers at Fiumicino airport in Rome. They have been fighting for months over their contract and they have struck several times. Their elected shop stewards have not let themselves be influenced by the union bureaucracy.

The day of the strike the reformed Gorla government looked at the situation in a half-empty parliamentary chamber. Italy is in a paradoxical situation. The ruling class are not able to form a serious government. The reformed Gorla government is even weaker than the first.

The recent referendum oppos-



Alfa Romeo workers came out solidly on the 25 November strike.

ing nuclear power have increased the divisions between the bosses. Now this strike, combined with the strikes at Alfa Romeo and on the railways, show that the years of low conflict are at an end.

Communist Party

The government is remaining afloat only because there is no real opposition from the PCI (Communist party), the mass party of the Italian working class. The leaders are divided between those who will accept any compromise to get into government as quickly as possible, and those who want to take more time.

For some weeks now the reformist right wing of the PCI has organised openly. The leadership of Natta and Occhetto is paralysed. In the absence of any initiative from the leadership, the party has lost 100,000 members this year.

The conditions are there for great social explosions in the near future. This time, unlike the 'Hot Autumn' of 1969, the authority of the union bureaucracy and PCI and PSI (Socialist Party) leaders are seriously undermined at the outset. The ranks, through the COBAS, have already begun to struggle for a fighting alternative.

Workers' committees lead rail strike

THIS YEAR there have been five 24-hour strikes of the Italian train drivers, most recently on 27 November. More than 90 per cent of the workforce has taken part.

By Gianfranco Mignanelli

The official unions have opposed these strikes. The 'autonomous unions' (claimed in the British press to have organised the campaign) are also against the strikes. Yet the 7,000 train drivers in their union have also been striking.

Workers are beginning to understand that it isn't a question of building other unions, but of rank and file control of the existing ones.

The organisers of the strikes are the *Comitati di Base* (rank and file committees), which have developed as a result of years of discontent among the rank and file.

On 1 August the union leaders reached an agreement with the railway authorities which the workers considered unacceptable. No ballot was held, no mass assemblies. So 20,000 train drivers decided to take things into their own hands.

In each depot a new shop stewards' committee was elected. In Florence, for example, 75 per cent of the workers voted in elections for the committee. The CGIL refused to recognise this and held its own elections. Only 17 per cent of the workforce took part.

From each area committee delegates were elected to a national committee.

The railway workers are demanding considerable improvements in both wages and conditions and in particular the hiring of 3,500 new train drivers. These demands challenge the cuts proposed in the new budget.

The government aims to remove 9,000 workers from the railways through early retirement. In Italy trains are driven by two workers. In that respect Italian trains are amongst the safest in Europe. Now the government wants to introduce one-man locomotives.

After years of compromise the train drivers are refusing to budge. The COBAS have spread



Rome 1984, the year of the last general strike. Now the mass of workers are returning to struggle.

to the ticket collectors and the guards. Similar committees have developed among school teachers, firemen, post-office workers, several banks and airport workers.

The government and the railway authorities refuse to meet the COBAS because too much is at stake. Parliament is discussing a no-strike law.

Voluntary clause

In the past the union leaders had included a voluntary no-strike clause in contracts: no strikes could be organised in holiday periods and a certain notice had to be given. Now the leader of the UIL is actually in favour of the new law!

The CGIL are more careful.

They merely maintain that the voluntary clauses should be respected. They have good reason to be careful: of the 20,000 train drivers 7,000 are members of the CGIL, and a large number of these are also members of the PCI.

The PCI leaders have had an ambiguous approach to this struggle. *L'Unita* (the official paper) has condemned the train drivers as 'extremist', while publishing articles on the working conditions of the train drivers.

The CGIL and PCI leaders are hoping the movement will die down. Yet the fighting spirit of the train drivers was shown at a meeting held in Florence.

A wheeltapper explained: "I've been a member of the CGIL since I was a lad. I would feel naked not

to have a union card in my pocket." But he went on to attack the CGIL leaders:

"Your fault"

"You say we are privileged. We get maybe £10 or £20 a week more than other workers. You call that a privilege? You say we should think of worse off workers.. It's not our fault if they are doing badly. It's your fault. You..have done nothing for those workers. If we call off our struggle we would be doing a disservice to the labour movement. The best thing we can do for the working class is go forward and win."

Another worker said: "For too long the class struggle has been a unilateral struggle with only one class fighting, the bosses. I want to

see the class struggle with both classes fighting."

How the struggle will develop depends on the COBAS leadership. The government is planning cuts in the health and postal service. If the union leaders don't give a lead, rank and file committees will develop here also.

There have been strikes at the Milan Alfa-Romeo factory and in the steel industry. Whatever the leaders do, they will not be able to stop the movement developing.

Ever since the defeat of the FIAT workers in 1980 (when they occupied the factories for 35 days), there has been a decline in strike figures and a certain fall in union membership. The tide is about to turn.

Bangladesh on the brink

WITH THE dissolution of parliament by President Ershad it is clear that Bangladesh is plunged into a revolutionary crisis.

The state of emergency declared on 27 November has failed to end the rising tide of opposition to the regime. Another nineteen people were shot dead by security forces in the first four days of the emergency as demonstrations continued.

The government admits that the strikes of past weeks have been

costing £26 million a day. According to the Information Minister, the economy "is about to collapse".

Opposition

Ershad has arrested the main opposition leaders and 2,000 activists. He has tried to ban strikes and demonstrations. He has offered to negotiate (on his own terms). None of these moves has stabilised the situation.

The opposition is engulfing the whole of society. Ershad has been forced to rely more and more on the armed forces and the police.

But even here his support is dwindling. A police inspector has been reported as saying: "We police don't like it. We want someone else too". There have also been reports of troops expressing support for the opposition movement.

The facade of democratic rule

has been shattered. With the regime under siege and facing splits, free elections are the least likely perspective in the period ahead.

Bangladesh is in a period of revolution and counter-revolution. The overthrow of the regime and the system of capitalism and landlordism which it defends is on the agenda.

But, in the absence of a conscious leadership to complete the task which the mass movement

has begun, exhaustion will eventually set in among the workers and youth, opening the danger of counter-revolution, rule by decree under Ershad, or a new right-wing coup.

The eyes of activists throughout the Indian subcontinent and internationally will be on the struggle in Bangladesh in the weeks ahead.

By Matt Wrack

Eastern Europe

"This time they won't stop us"

Poland

FOLLOWING ITS humiliation in the referendum of 29 November, Poland's bureaucratic regime has retreated at least from its plan to double basic food prices in the new year. Food subsidies will now be "wound down" over four years instead of two or three.

By George Collins

Adding a note of farce, the regime now claims a new 'reason' for their defeat: the lay-out of the ballot paper was too complicated!

As a result, says a government spokesman, "about 10 per cent" of people voted 'no' to savage price rises and unspecified political 'reform' by mistake!

The referendum marks a shattering blow to the regime's hopes of persuading workers to accept the brutal cuts which, they say, are necessary to restore economic growth.

The workers have made it clear that they understand only too well who is responsible for the country's economic crisis. It is the bureaucracy, headed by General Jaruzelski, who have controlled, mismanaged and plundered the state-owned economy for 40 years.

They have run up a foreign debt of \$36 billion in their efforts to modernise the economy. Now they are reduced to carrying out the dictates of the International Monetary Fund in the hope of getting more credits. Cuts in workers' living standards is one of the conditions insisted on by the IMF.

This collision between the parasitic bureaucracy and the working people has set the stage for an explosion of mass anger even greater than the revolutionary upheavals of 1980-81. A Solidarity leader, Bogdan Lis in Gdansk, sums up the workers' mood:

"Hatred is now so great that it can hardly be steered any longer. If it goes on for any length of time it could involve the whole country."

However, Solidarity's leadership still hope for democratic reform within the limits of the bureaucratic system. In 1980-81 this proved to be a fatal brake on

the mass movement, and led directly to the defeat of Solidarity itself.

Now they have missed a major opportunity to galvanise the workers' anger into a decisive movement against the regime. Lech Walesa's advice to workers on the referendum was to "go fishing"!

But for the regime there is no way out. They insist that it is necessary to go ahead with "rationalising" energy, which will result in gas, coal and electricity price rises of 140 per cent.

Significantly, Western bankers and capitalists are entirely behind Jaruzelski in his attacks on the Polish working class. As the *Financial Times* puts it: "There can be little doubt that the reforms proposed are both right and necessary... For it must be carried out..."

The referendum marks a shattering blow to the regime's hopes of persuading workers to accept the brutal cuts

This answers the capitalists' favourite notion that the movement against the bureaucracy will mean a clamoring of the masses for capitalism. The 'liberal' *Guardian* goes further:

"If the devastated Polish economy is ever to recover, the crippling burden of subsidies on essentials will have to be dismantled... But there is no cash to fund the increase in real incomes that alone would make such cuts tolerable."

Attempting to enforce intolerable cuts on an angry and militant working class, in the present climate of unrest throughout Eastern Europe, is a recipe for a revolutionary mass movement of workers and youth. They will seek the programme of political revolution, to overthrow the bureaucracy and place the mass of working people in control of the economy and the state.



Staged demonstration in support of Rumanian leader, Ceausescu. Now riots and genuine demonstrations of anger aimed at Rumania's bureaucracy have broken out.

Romania

DESPITE WIDESPREAD arrests after recent riots in the Romanian industrial city of Brasov, new demonstrations have broken out—and spread to other towns.

Armaments from one of the factories are reported to be in the workers' hands. The town's police headquarters has been sealed off.

The regime of Stalinist dictator Ceausescu has been forced on the defensive. The day after the demonstrations against food and power shortages, milk suddenly reappeared in the shops, while in the plant at the centre of the struggle the whole of senior management was demoted for

"grave shortcomings".

In a dramatic split at the top, leading bureaucrat Silviu Brucan declared that "the Brasov eruption signals that the cup of privation is now full, and the working class no longer accepts to be treated like an obedient servant."

Past stability, Brucan said, was not based on repression alone but on rising living standards, which are now collapsing. The regime's reply to this analysis was to detain Brucan for 24 hours. In a new move of desperation, the government's Finance Committee proposes suspending all debt repayments to the west.

Meanwhile, in Sibiu 700 workers were forcibly transferred to work in the coal mines. When they got there they refused to go down the pits. Such was their mood when they got back to Sibiu

that they threw a local Party boss off the train.

However, improvements were introduced after Ceausescu's son was appointed to head the Party in the region. A worker expresses his contempt for this transparent trick: "His daddy obviously wants him to be successful."

Unrest has also been reported in the shipyards of Braile.

All the signs are there of a gathering revolutionary storm—against bureaucratic dictatorship, for workers' democracy. The coming winter, with its inevitable power cuts and electricity shortages, will inflict untold miseries on workers, and will add enormously to their anger.

A young schoolteacher declares:

"This time they won't stop us. We've been pushed to the edge of the abyss."

by Brezhnev and its leaders imprisoned. Its re-emergence at this point is a symptom of the combativity building up among Russian workers as they face the costs of Gorbachev's 'reforms'.

Many prices have doubled and trebled over the past ten years. Now food price rises are threatened. The official unions, the appeal says, show "cynical contempt for the working class".

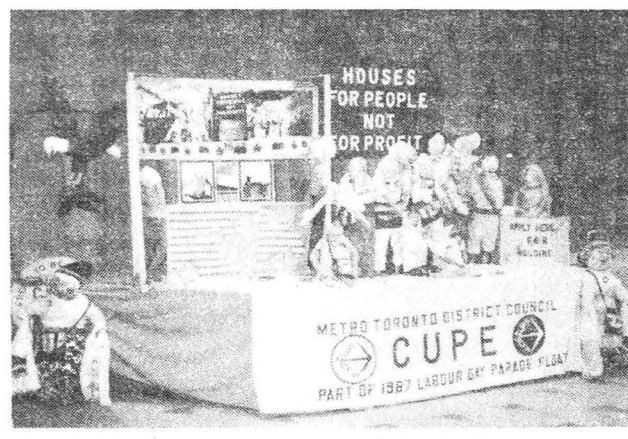
Significantly, the appeal has been attacked by 'dissident intellectuals' as "demagogic" and a "counter-productive provocation"—in other words, it oversteps the limits of *perestroika* and 'reform' acceptable to the bureaucracy.

USSR

"THE POLISH workers went into the streets, and the government was defeated. So be ready to go into the streets if they raise prices... Be ready to go on strike against price rises. We will only preserve our rights in a common struggle..."

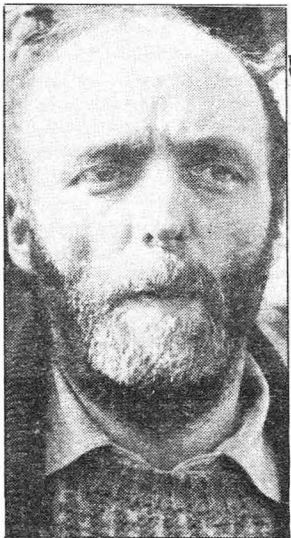
This appeal by the unofficial trade union grouping SMOT in the USSR was timed to coincide with the Polish referendum result. The group was suppressed

Toronto in line with Militant



Display set up at Canadian Union of Public Employees' National Union Convention held in Quebec City—October, 1987. Joe Chiasson of Toronto, Canada wrote to *Militant* asking for a regular subscription having been sold a copy whilst holidaying in Sussex. He remarks: "We found very enlightening information regarding the Labour movement in your country. I was especially interested in it as our problems are so similar to yours. Money is spent to make money not to fulfil the needs of the people. One of your headlines caught my eye 'Houses for People Not For Profit'. Joe informs us that the Toronto Labour Council hosting the Labour Day Parade had exactly the same motto for the event!"

Expelled from non-membership



Tony Byrne.

Photo: Dave Sinclair.

Dear Comrades,
"Those whom the gods wish to destroy, they first make mad". In which case, the Labour Party leadership's days are numbered!

Tony Byrne, former Liverpool City Council leader, faces expulsion by the National Constitutional committee. By way of clarification, a national Labour Party official gave readers of the *Daily Post* (3/11/87) the following ingenious explanation:

"Officials are not convinced he is a member of the Labour Party. He has had a letter saying he is liable to face charges that

he is not a member."

Yes, these 'leaders' have (falsely) decided Tony is not a Party member...so they intend to expel him from membership!

Perhaps they'll go one better and follow the model of the officer in the anti-war novel 'Catch-22', when it comes to the NCC 'hearing'. He used to get his secretary to explain that he was only available for interviews when he wasn't in! After all, Derek Hatton was given a hearing at the NEC when he wasn't available...and then expelled him in his absence.

Richard Venton, Liverpool.

A minimum wage

Dear Comrades,

I have often wondered about the value of a minimum wage in a socialist society. It poses some questions which I (and I'm sure many other comrades) would like answered more fully.

If the minimum wage is to be £120 or its relative worth in the future, what will be the maximum wage and how are we to differentiate between one worker and another?

In other words would we as socialists be

prepared to use a sliding scale with wages tied to ability?

If that is the case, then aren't those in receipt of the minimum wage likely to feel that for them, at least in the short term, nothing much has changed for the better and therefore could carry counter-revolutionary ideas?

If future editions of the paper were less vague on this issue, it would be of enormous help to all comrades.

Tam Hickey, Springburn, Glasgow.

Making excuses?

Dear Comrades,

I refer to your letters page in issue 874. It was a letter by Maggie McGinley, Barking, London. She asks "What do judges with their privileged background know about being stuck in a tower block with two kids?"

I do not for one minute think they know much at all

but I cannot for the life of me understand how she or anybody else can use that as an argument against 'murder'.

She goes on to say that "Thatcher and her system are responsible for the murder of that child". What utter rubbish. I do not suppose five years inside will do much for her

but how much can 'life' do for her daughter?

I suppose Thatcher and her system are partly to blame but what if every parent 'stuck in a tower block' pushed their children out of the windows and murdered them?

D Connaughton, Oldham, Lancashire.

Classified ads

20p per word, minimum 10 words. Semi-display £3 per column centimetre. Three weeks for the price of two. Militant meeting ads free. All advertisement copy should reach this office by first post on Friday, the week before publication.

Workers for socialism new year rally. Monday 11 January 7.30pm, Hall Rd WMC, Armley. An evening of politics and entertainment, speakers and cabaret. Pat Wall MP, John Tocher (AEU personal capacity), Neil Taggard (Leeds city councillor) and Jon Ingham (Armley LP and AEU). Cabaret from 9.15pm. Central London Christmas Disco. Saturday 19 December 8-12pm. Calthorpe Arms, Gray's Inn Rd, King's Cross. £2 waged £1 unwaged.

SALEP Greeting cards to be sent to South African workers' movement. 75p each including postage, £6 for 10. For large orders and any further information, contact SALEP, Box 77 London E8 4TB.

Notting Hill Militant supporters present a London Xmas Quiz. Thurs 17 Dec, 8pm. Prizes! Proceeds to the FF. £3 entry per team of 3. Tel 289 1536/602 6095 for details.

Wanted co-op and green shield stamps. Loose, part or full books. All proceeds to the fighting fund. Send c/o Militant circulation, 3/13 Hepscott Rd, London E9 5HB.

Inqaba T-shirts for sale £5.25 each inc postage. Logo black clenched fist "smash apartheid and capitalism". Available in white or lemon large or XL. All surplus to Campaign for a Socialist South Africa. Cheques/cash with orders to W. Blackstock, Flat 23, 425 Sauchiehall St, Glasgow.

London LPYS Christmas Social. 11 December 10pm to 3am. St Matthew's Meeting Place under St Matthew's Church, Brixton Hill. Near Brixton tube.

Letters

Send us your views, comments or criticism.



Photo: Dave Sinclair.

Driver-only operation—a dangerous cost-cutting measure.

Transport safety

Dear Comrades,

After the King's Cross fire, it'd be nice to feel that at least the buses are safe. When most buses had conductors, they controlled stopping and starting, ensuring the safety of those getting on or off. An unnecessary precaution according to transport bosses who are phasing conductors out. But going home from work on Monday, I saw a grim demonstration of the risks of one-man operation.

As the bus I was on drew away from a stop (fortunately slowly) a muffled banging started near the door. Then a passenger

standing nearby screamed and the bus jerked to a halt.

I turned in time to see an arm hanging down inside the doors, then they opened and this old woman who had been dragged for about 15 yards outside the bus, her arm suddenly released, fell into the gutter.

The poor driver, having made sure the woman wasn't injured, and having calmed her down, then had to drive on, though obviously shaken. No-one to calm his nerves—no conductor.

Martin White, Hornsey, London.

A rare sight

Dear Comrades,

Recently on TV there has been a series of programmes about the decline and near-extinction of species of animals. In India the Bengal tiger is now only a few thousand strong, and is concentrated in special parks. This is hardly surprising when one Indian prince lamented that he had failed as a hunter because he had only shot 1,000 tigers.

In America the grizzly bear is found in only one state, where previously it had roamed most of the country. The clearest example of the wholesale butchery of a species was in Zimbabwe. Here the black rhino is now very rare due to poaching for its horn. A handful of brave people try to capture the remaining rhinos so that they can be transported to safe places. But this team is underfunded, with a battered old truck, tranquilliser darts which only work half the time and so on. The poachers have modern weapons like AK47 rifles, plus an unlimited supply of those desperate enough for money to risk their lives poaching.

What is so maddening is that with a planned economy the incentive to hunt species to extinction would be removed, and workers all over the world would have the chance to see these creatures in their natural environment.

Pete McNally, Coventry.

Tory murders

Dear Comrades,

Recently on TV we have seen several adverts about the dangers of freezing to death in the winter. This is an attempt by the government to divert attention away from the real reasons for the deaths—they haven't got enough money to live on! On average 200 people freeze to death every day in winter. Jack Jones of the Pensioners Union has stated that more than 52,000 people died during the winter of 85/86. Last year it was even worse! About 22,000 were pensioners. This proves that it isn't just people who

are old or frail dying, but thousands of people who are able-bodied and comparatively fit.

The government adverts try to say that it is our fault that people freeze because of their own ignorance. But people die as a direct consequence of the government's cuts in benefits, rebates, pensions and the NHS.

The Tory gangsters have killed these people willfully. They regard us as an expendable, exploitable commodity.

Andrew Shepherd, Cleveland.

Sick profits in hospitals

Dear Comrades,

Further evidence of the gross underfunding of the health service is revealed by the latest actions of the South Tees Area Health Authority. They have just appointed a marketing and sales manager to raise cash for the health service in the region.

His job is to consider revenue-raising schemes such as selling advertising space in health premises, selling goods at health centres and wait for it...hiring out equipment owned by the

authority.

This from the authority which has just closed down the Carter Bequest hospital in Middlesbrough and slashed nearly £1.5 million from the health budget of the district.

Obviously the Tories don't want the health service to be a service but rather run it on business lines to make a profit. Safe in their hands? That's the sickest joke ever.

Andy Walker, Middlesbrough LPYS.

London Militant Christmas party

Tuesday 22 December. Christchurch Industrial Mission.

Colombo St/Blackfriars Rd, near Waterloo and Blackfriars tube stations.

Childrens party and disco 3-7pm. Disco 7-11pm. Waged £3, unwaged £1.50.



Buy a Christmas present now!

Liverpool—A City That Dared to Fight

By Peter Taaffe and Tony Mulhearn.

Send £6 paperback, £9.80 hardback by 15 December and we will send a Christmas card now telling someone that their present from you will be arriving in mid-January.

I enclose £6/£9.80 (cheques to Fortress Books). Please send a copy from.....(your name).

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Return to Fortress Books, PO Box 141 London E2 ORL.

Organise the fightback



Miners and Bloc supporters lobby the TUC in 1984.

Photo: Militant

MILITANT SPOKE to George Williamson, Bloc organising secretary, about the coming national conference:—

Militant:
What is the Broad Left Organising Committee?

George: Bloc was formed in 1981 when a group of left activists got together to discuss issues which cut across individual trade union lines. They recognised that the right wing in the movement get together to discuss their strategy, so why not have an umbrella body for the trade union left? It started meeting regularly, although with only about five or six Broad Lefts involved, but slowly built up support in other unions. One by one other Broad Lefts became involved.

At the 1983 conference just over one hundred activists attended. It was the second defeat of Labour and the birth of 'new realism' which spurred us into planning a bigger event. Support for Bloc grew as a result of the Warrington printers' dispute in November 1983, and the GCHQ dispute in the following January. More and more workers saw the scale of the Tories' and the bosses' onslaught and the inability of the official leadership to organise a fightback. But it was the outbreak of the coal dispute which really raised the mood inside the movement. The 1984 conference, held only a fortnight after the start of the strike, was attended by some three thousand activists. Double this number



George Williamson.

Photo: Militant

joined a lobby of the TUC, later in the year, in an attempt to get them to organise action for the miners.

We have held a number of national events since then and the name of the Bloc continues to break new ground in the movement amongst the rank and file.

M: The theme of the next conference has been billed as 'Organise the Fightback'. What can Bloc organise that hasn't been tried already?

George: This theme was chosen because there are thousands of trade union activists who are looking for some kind of lead against the onslaught of political and economic attacks on the working class by the Tories. Many have taken the view that since a lead isn't forthcoming from the tops of the movement, they should attempt to build up

pressure on the leadership to adopt a different strategy to that of the 'new realists'.

Inside the individual unions, Broad Lefts can organise to either force the leaders to wage a fight, or to get new leaders who will. The whole thrust of such a campaign of course is within the trade union bodies themselves, through the official structures. Anything else, quite frankly, would be playing games.

The aim of the conference is twofold; to build the trade union Broad Lefts into mass groupings within each union, in effect turning them inside out and creating fighting, democratic organisations at all levels; and in the short term to hammer the ideas of 'new realism' amongst the members and articulate the strategy to defeat the various Tory attacks on our class, especially the next round of anti-union laws.

M: Are you confident that the conference will be a success?

Confident but not complacent. The individual Broad Lefts are being asked to give their full support to the event, and of course it is their efforts which will determine how successful the conference actually is. This event will be the single most important event for trade unionists keen to fight in 1988. It will be an opportunity to plan out the way ahead. The need for the trade union movement to unite and fight has never been more urgent. I would appeal to all left wing trade union activists to come to the conference and make this a reality.

Build the Broad Left

THE TRADE union conference being organised by the Broad Left Organising Committee in Sheffield on 13 February is already generating considerable interest. This is true not least amongst members of the national Broad Lefts who will be meeting over the coming weeks to discuss what their input into the conference will be and what motions they will be submitting for debate.

There is no shortage of issues or problems needing to be discussed by trade union activists. The Tories are presently preparing a whole array of assaults on trade unions and their members. They plan more unwarranted interference into their internal affairs; they are pushing that scabs be allowed to strikebreak even if a ballot for industrial action has been held and a majority have voted for action. So much for their commitment to democracy!

In addition, plans to sell

off council housing estates to private developers; to destroy the comprehensive education system; to introduce the poll tax in 1990; and to privatise more services and industries are all of grave concern to the trade union movement.

Responsibility

In the light of these attacks it amounts to nothing less than an abdication of responsibility that the trade union movement is not preparing an all-out campaign of resistance to them. The so-called 'new realists' would have us believe that the trade unions do not have the strength to fight against the measures.

The opposite is the case. If the mighty trade union movement was mobilised in total opposition, utilising industrial action where necessary, these attacks and others could be easily defeated, indeed the Tories' days in power would be numbered.



BROAD LEFT ORGANISING COMMITTEE


Conference '88

Sheffield City Hall

Sat 13 February

Speakers include **Tony Benn**

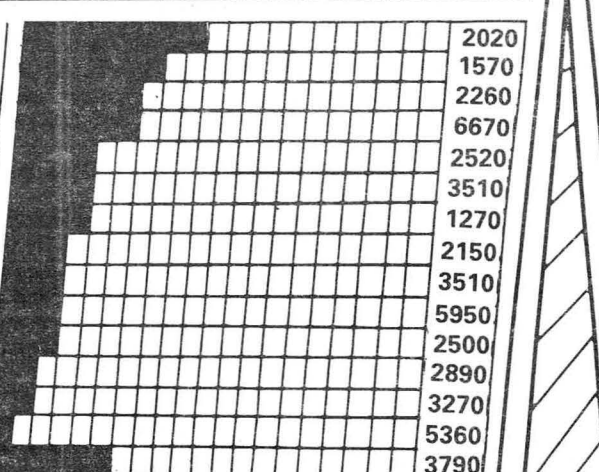
All trade union bodies (branches, workplaces, district committees, divisional councils etc.) can send up to five delegates. The fee per delegate is £3. For an application form and details of local transport to the conference, write to Broad Left Organising Committee, PO box 464, London E5 8PT.



special appeal
Raise the roof

This week
£1888

Area	Received	% of target achieved	Target
1 Southern	892		2020
2 South East	568		1570
3 Eastern	710		2260
4 London	2032		6670
5 Scot West	556		2520
6 West Mids	786		3510
7 South West	240		1270
8 Scot East	372		2150
9 Wales	608		3510
10 Yorks	934		5950
11 East Mids	382		2500
12 Man/Lancs	333		2890
13 Northern	389		3270
14 Merseyside	352		5360
15 National	1150		3790
Total	10301		50000



50,000 BY THE 5TH JANUARY

Solve our housing crisis

NO EXPENSE has been spared in reconstructing a Georgian-style mansion for Tory Health Secretary, John Moore. His new office comes complete with private bathroom and chandeller! The price? A snip at £36 million. Yet over 100,000 families will be accepted as homeless by local authorities this year. Since 1979, spending on public housing has been cut by a staggering 70 per cent.

But now Militant needs your help to avert our own housing crisis. We're not asking our readers for £36 million or chandellers but to repair our storm-damaged roof, and to keep us going we need £50,000 by the end of the year.

Last week, Tim Halpin from Lea Valley donated £165 and Dave Murray &

Eleanor Donne £100. A reader from Sussex gave £50 as did Mairie Miller who redeemed her £50 pledge made at the Militant Rally in Glasgow.

Collections at meetings have also been raising the roof. £93 was raised in East London and £90 in North Kent. Supporters from Newcastle sent us the beer money from their rally, amounting to £108.

Marxmas

Make sure the appeal sheets and Raise the Roof draw tickets are taken round the workplaces and at LP and TU meetings. Stephen Andrew, a Nalgo member from Glasgow, donated £30. £5 was raised from BAC workers at

Preston and £9.52 was collected at a LP social in Leicester. By now, every area should have organised an end of year social. Some of the areas have got off to an early start! An Edinburgh social raised £50, a Marxmas dinner in North Kent, £20.50 and an alternative bonfire party in Skipton, £12.40. Special thanks to this week's contributors, including:

£5 from Daniel McKay, school student, from Ipswich. Lynn Spence, £20; B.Beckingham, £10; Chris Hargreaves, £10, all from South east Lancashire. Two readers from Ogmere, £25. Gavin Brown, GMB Edinburgh £10. Jo Muller, Plaistow, £10. Rob Crawford, Lea Valley, £10. B.Edwards, London, £5.

Industrial reports

UCW: reject this offer

POSTAL WORKERS in the Union of Communications Workers (UCW) must reject the Post Office offer. After waiting 22 years and negotiating for 13, is this the best that the executive council can achieve? Alan Tuffin and the executive have been out-maneuvred by Nicholson. The deal hatched between the union leaders and the Post Office represents a setback for postal workers.

By a London postal worker

We have been offered a maximum of 90 minutes off the working week for some workers, which will not come into effect until September and November next year, at the earliest. In return, we will be expected to work harder for even less money. The agreement, if accepted, is a green light for management to introduce further draconian attacks on our pay and working conditions.

This offer should never even have been considered by the executive. The action should have been stepped up.

Incredibly, with no alternative before us, the executive is asking us to agree to the scrapping of the IWM bonus scheme. For some members it will mean a cash buy-out but for smaller offices where the bonus payments are minimal the workers will get nothing. For many this is a cut in wages.

Can we expect Post Office management to come up with a bonus scheme that really benefits us? Undoubtedly, they will want to introduce a new bonus scheme with a maximum weekly payment, considerably less than at present. The executive should be demanding that all our members get a decent living wage.

The offer means:

☆90 minutes reduction for postmen and postwomen, PHG's and cleaners,



Alan Tuffin Photo: Militant.

from September and November 1988.

☆One hour reduction for catering grades from September and November 1988.

☆No reduction for counter and clerical grades.

It has been already conceded to management that the enhanced overtime payments will not be given until November 1989.

This offer is divisive and unacceptable. The battle must not rest for another 22 years. We have to demand the full 3 hour and no strings—NOW!

Management's demand for further co-operation on flexible working patterns will inevitably herald the introduction of additional casual and associate grades.

The deal also gives a commitment to the Post Office to discuss other issues detrimental to our members. These include cashless pay—forcing postal workers into bank accounts; a change in summer staffing arrangements—which will inevitably lead to the introduction of more casuals; and discussions on overtime payments.

It is unbelievable that this is the best the right-wing executive could

achieve. They were given a clear mandate to fight. The anger and determination was growing and the time was right with the run up to Christmas.

The leadership of the union has been shown to be completely inadequate in these negotiations. The management have always had the upper hand.

The executive council were instructed by annual conference to negotiate a three hour reduction, and to ballot for action by the end of September if talks failed. They abandoned this course of action in favour of allowing the new Chairman of the Post Office more time to put his position. All workers know that even if the face of a boss changes the policies never do.

When the leadership finally balloted the membership in November, after pressure from the rank and file, two months had elapsed, leaving the union vulnerable to prolonged negotiations. The time-scale is now such that to win the full three hours with no strings we need a change of tactics.

The initiative must be regained. The executive have decided to put this offer to a ballot of the membership. Unfortunately, the ballot will not be soon enough to get the necessary all-out strike before Christmas. Any action following the Christmas period will inevitably be weakened. If the ballot is delayed and if no action commences before Christmas, then a special delegate conference should be called immediately following the holiday to re-examine the strategy and thoroughly prepare for new action.

Leadership is important in any dispute. Tuffin and the right-wing executive have proved themselves incapable of leading this battle. Needed now is a fighting militant leadership.

☆Reject the offer!
☆For the full claim!
☆Call a special delegate conference.

A postman's lot is not a happy one

NO DOUBT most of you will be looking forward to Christmas, and a chance for a well-deserved rest. Some may also be sending greetings through the post. Well, just remember that for Post Office workers, Christmas is not much of a rest. They face compulsory overtime, meaning full night shifts, followed by the normal mail round.

by an Edinburgh postie's daughter.

Even the casual help taken on does not stop such graft taking its toll. For my father, Christmas day is mostly spent sleeping thanks to the strain of the previous weeks' work. Obviously, the overtime money is much needed at this time of year, but I wonder whether he would do it if it wasn't compulsory. Unlike many post workers, my father never has done overtime, preferring to maintain his health and sanity, even at the expense of a better standard of living.

Others, however, do enormous amounts of overtime all year round: not

through greed, but because of the poverty wages paid by the Post Office. For younger workers especially, trying to raise a family or pay a mortgage, there simply isn't a choice. What a disgrace, when so many are unemployed, that potential jobs are eaten up in overtime by workers desperate to keep their heads above water.

Pittance

These workers are out in all weathers and many fulfil the role of a social worker-cum-community worker for their elderly and lonely customers. Even this is being destroyed as the time needed for those much appreciated chats is becoming more and more scarce. Post Office management has already tightened up, forcing workers to cover many more streets than before in the same time and for no extra money. All this for a pittance of a wage.

Oh, and if any tax collectors are reading this, my dad gets nothing like £50 in tips at Christmas—more like a few cans, and if he's lucky, the occasional bottle of whiskey, or a few cigs.

Knowsley council treats cleaners just like dirt

CLEANERS IN Knowsley schools have all received letters explaining why their Labour council and local trade unions are trying to do the Tories' dirty work.

In one school they are getting rid of 13 cleaners on temporary contracts. Half the original workforce will be left to do all the work.

I asked two of the cleaners for their reaction. Liz Barker, a temp for the last ten months, who will be finished off by Christmas, said, "It's non-stop from the moment you take your coat off till you put it on again to go home. Each night I've left here with my body aching. And despite that", she added, "We still can't do the job!"

Jean Warren said, "It's impossible. They want slaves, not people. If we were to make the new system work we would have to cut back on the work we do and cut down on standards elsewhere. How the unions accepted such a deal is ridiculous. They've sold us down the river. And this council's getting away with

murder."

She's right. In order to get away with these cuts they have totally misled the workforce. In the letter they state that, "Negotiations have been concluded with the unions...it is not possible to provide details, as if these were to fall into the hands of a future competitor it would destroy the whole of the negotiations and put everybody's job at risk."

This quote reveals fully the total dishonesty of these arch witch-hunters.

The new Act intends to leave no loopholes. Despite this, the Labour council, with the complicity of the local unions, have used the Tory act as an excuse to make cuts on the weakest section of the workforce.

Incredibly, in surrendering their low paid workers to the full impact of government legislation—18 months early—they paid for the services of the Tory firm, Cooper and Librand, currently employed by Kenneth Baker to work out the best way of making the Education Act work.

Back ANLG journalists

CONFRONTATION: John Murphy, Advertiser North London Group deputy managing director, wags his finger at a sacked member of the National Union of Journalists (NUJ) after calling police to clear demonstrators off the company's forecourt in Finchley.

The demonstration and picket followed the redundancy of six ANLG journalists early in November, closely followed by the sacking of eight of their colleagues who took strike action in defence of their jobs.

Redundancy

The company's seven titles, the Enfield, Haringey, Barnet, Finchley, Hendon, Edgware and Hampstead Advertisers are currently being produced by scab non-union journalists. The NUJ chapel, who voted unanimously to fight the sackings, are calling for your help in their strike by:

☆Inviting a speaker to your workplace or union meeting.

☆Joining them on the picket at ANLG HQ at 281 Ballards Lane, Finchley, N12 (near Tally Ho cor-



ner) 8am onwards. Large demos every Tuesday.

☆Holding collections or making a donation to the strike fund (cheques payable to the Advertiser NUJ, c/o Disputes Room,

Acorn House, 314-320 Gray's Inn Road, London WC1 8DP).

☆Refusing to have any dealings with the Advertiser series.

☆Joining the 'Keep the

Advertiser Local' march on Sat 12 Dec. Assemble 11am, Woodside Park tube station. Leave at 12 noon. Rally at Victoria Park, Finchley at 2pm.

Industrial reports

Scargill campaign is gaining ground

ALL THE indications are that Arthur Scargill's campaign for re-election as President of the National Union of Mine-workers is gaining ground.

By Tim Harris

In Yorkshire, he has won the nomination, with 52 out of a possible 54 branch nominations. Support is also coming in from areas which the Tory press was only a few days ago boasting would go behind right-winger John Walsh.

An opinion poll commissioned by the *Daily Mail*, no friend of the trade unions or working people, shows two thirds backing Scargill, with an enormous five to one majority in his favour in Yorkshire.

Latest pits to nominate him include Bilston Glen and Monktonhall in Scotland, despite the Area leadership, and in Lancashire, Bickershaw, Parkside, Golborne and Sutton Manor.

Without a doubt, in the run up to the ballot every available column inch in the Tory press will be devoted to the need to remove Scargill. Just remember back to the strike of 1984-85, when the press sunk to their lowest-ever levels, in denouncing our struggle. "Scum of the earth" and "Scargill's war on democracy" were two from that period, but the real feelings of their Tory paymasters were probably best summed up by the *Sunday Times*: "Educational selection has left a residue of D and E stream secondary modern and comprehensive school pupils for pit work....it is only the diluted human residue that remain." We can expect the next few weeks to see the smears and filth spewing from the press and media again, because they understand that Scargill is one of a very small band of national trade union leaders prepared to fight. This means that his election campaign must be taken to every pit and to every community to guarantee a landslide victory.



Photo: Militant

Arthur Scargill—standing for re-election.

The Tories and British Coal management understand that they want him out of the way in order to press ahead with their plans for pit closures and privatisation, all the more quickly. A renewed mandate for Arthur Scargill from our members should be used to step up the offensive against the disciplinary code and against the threat of six day working.

Defend Fife's Seafield pit

640 JOBS at Seafield colliery in Fife are now in jeopardy due to British Coal's announcement on 25 November that production targets must be reached by 11 January or the pit may close.

By John Shaw
Scebta delegate, Seafield colliery (personal capacity)

British Coal have said the overtime ban has affected Seafield colliery more than any other in Scotland. Seafield has vast coal reserves, 110 million tonnes lying under the River Forth. Our coal is some of the best quality in Europe, having a very low sulphur content, which combats the acid rain problem. In fact the Danes, who are building more coal-fired power stations, and are acid rain conscious, are now showing interest. This market of two million tonnes per year would not only safeguard our jobs, but create jobs in the local docks where the coal would

have to be exported from.

Industrial relations at the pit are almost non-existent. In fact 12 shifts have been lost in the last 13 weeks. I think this sums it up.

The campaign has already started to secure our future in Seafield. Arthur Scargill will be speaking at a meeting organised by Seafield Scebta on Saturday 12 December. A committee has also been set up, and we will be taking our case to the public and local community.

Plans are also being drawn up to contact other pits under threat of closure, for example Redbrook and Woolley, who want to unify together a fight against British Coal on their pit closure programme.

That's why it is important for the miners to build up an active and campaigning Broad Left. We must start with the re-election of Arthur Scargill as President. The miners at Seafield Scebta have given their nomination unanimously for Scargill to be re-elected.

CPSA backs clear pay claim

DELEGATES TO last week's Civil and Public Services Association (CPSA) pay conference by 86,077 votes to 43,623 demanded:

- ☆ A £25 per week flat rate increase.
- ☆ A minimum wage of £134 per week.
- ☆ A 35 hour week.
- ☆ Defence of national pay bargaining.

These demands reflect the value by which civil servants' wages have fallen since the Tories abolished pay comparability. They are to be incorporated into the forthcoming pay claim.

Delegate after delegate explained in graphic terms the problems facing CPSA members. Many are heavily in debt. Others rely on benefits and part-time work to make ends meet. The average take-home pay of a CPSA member is £83 per week.

Yet incredibly, Broad Left '84 (BL '84) and the so-called 'moderates' opposed this motion. Conference decisively rejected their argument that members wouldn't support a 'shopping basket' claim.

Delegates pointed to the enthusiastic support given by members to the 1987 claim. The 1988 claim doesn't, as BL '84 and the 'moderates' argue, 'rehash the same old slogans'. It seeks to build on the mood created in 1987 and to solve the same old problems.

There was more debate on how we can solve these problems. BL '84 argued that the major reason why members did not achieve success in the 1987 pay campaign was the call by CPSA for an all-out strike, which they say led to the break up of the joint campaign with the Society of Civil and Public Servants (SCPS) and ended the possibility of victory through further rounds of selective action.

The BL '84 motion made unity with the civil service trade unions the 'prime concern', arguing that



CPSA members demonstrate against low-pay.

Photo: Mick Carroll.

the national executive should discuss a joint strategy with no preconditions. But, in reality, BL '84 were calling for the discredited strategy of the SCPS leadership, of long-term selective action. Such a strategy, by its very nature, is drawn-out, involving different sections of the membership at different times. It does not bring the full force of the union to bear and has within it all the dangers of division.

This programme was decisively rejected by 70,377 to 56,341. It was clear that most delegates wanted unity. But it was also clear that a majority saw a continued programme of selective action and a lack of preparation by the outgoing right-wing executive, and the decision of the SCPS leadership to abandon all action, as the major reasons why members had voted against an all-out strike.

There was some confusion at the conference on strategy and

the way forward this year due to the effects of the long drawn-out battle last year. Different layers of the union were coming to different conclusions. Certain wide layers now understand that action has to be all-out to have any serious chance of forcing the Government to concede our demands.

Polarised

Others, despite their experiences and dreadful low pay, hope there is an easier way out. The right wing and BL '84 leant on these layers and played on their fears. It was clear though that the basic hard support for the left is growing, step by step, under the hammer blows of events.

This conference was more sharply politically polarised than any CPSA conference to date. The differences between BL '84 and the right wing melted away as

they combined to rubbish the central ideas put forward by the Broad Left NEC, despite any repercussions this may have for the cohesion and unity among the rank and file, or any ammunition they would give to the anti-trade union press.

Many were simply motivated by hostility to *Militant* supporters and the Broad Left. Marion Chambers at one point called in Mike Duggan, a BL '84 leader, when she wanted the 'voice of reason'. Duggan then proceeded to harangue the delegates with lurid ideas of a 'Trot' executive, and almost re-iterated Harold Wilson's infamous charges against the National Union of Seamen in 1966, by claiming that the union was being run by politically motivated activists, organised by the *Militant*.

Having rubbished the idea of all-out strike action and been defeated, some of the BL '84 leaders then came forward as

defenders of all-out strikes and against the idea of emergency payments in an indefinite, all-out strike, to protect the most vulnerable, and to keep the support of the wider working class.

Having opportunistically joined with the right wing against an all-out strike, they then swung to the opposite extreme, resting on the inexperience of sections of the union to oppose emergency provisions.

For those who cannot imagine themselves ever being involved in leading an all-out, indefinite strike it is easy to ridicule the concern of those who are in the leadership and who are preparing for the future seriously. On a show of hands, the provision for emergency payments was defeated, but it was clear that those supporting emergency provisions were far more numerous than when the issue was last debated.

The national executive will now approach the SCPS with a view to formulating a joint claim and submitting it at an early stage to the Government. Hopefully, the forceful stand taken by delegates at conference will persuade the Government to enter into serious negotiations. However, the experience of the last seven years of Tory government suggests otherwise.

Therefore, while the NEC should be prepared to talk, we must also prepare to fight. We must build the mood for action through a full-scale campaign. This must explain to members how we can survive the hardships of all-out action and build confidence in the strength of the union to achieve our claim. If we can do this, we can be successful in 1988.

By Tom Taylor

branch secretary, CPSA DE, London North, personal capacity

Militant

Inside
Tories gag BBC
 see page 4
Lessons of postal dispute
 see page 14

Scots say NO to poll tax

WE'LL ALL be poleaxed by the Tory poll tax. No-one over 18 will escape. In Scotland the Tories want to introduce it on 1 April next year.

By Andy Clachers

Then 350,000 unemployed Scots and 750,000 who don't pay rates at the moment will have to find the money for the new 'community charge'.

But thousands of Scottish workers don't intend to be the Tories' April fools. They will be demonstrating against the tax this Saturday (12 December).

"We are being penalised for being working class," a single parent told the *Leith Leader* community newspaper. "I will certainly consider not paying it."

"How could I pay the tax?" said a pensioner. "if I didn't get a rates rebate, I couldn't have a house."

There is a mood for a fightback. Public meetings have been packed and tenants' groups have revived all over Scotland. Pressure is building up for a campaign in the housing schemes to organise non-payment and to force Labour councils not to col-

lect. 1,000 residents of the Haymarket/Tollcross ward of Edinburgh have signed a petition calling on the Regional Council not to collect the tax. "If we put ourselves on the line by breaking the law, then the councillors should too, to give a collective lead in the struggle," said one local woman.

Organise

Many local Labour Party and Labour Party Young Socialists branches are organising local people to fight the tax, often at the suggestion of *Militant* supporters. Anti-poll tax unions are being set up in their areas.

In Edinburgh, a Broad Left conference will be held after Saturday's march at Kirkgate Community Centre in Leith. It will discuss the fight against the poll tax and ensure that those willing to fight the Tory tax turn out in force at Edinburgh Trades Council's conference in January.

As an Edinburgh student told the *Leith Leader*: "I'm against the tax. It should be fought in Parliament and on the streets."

How to beat the Poll Tax—see page 9

Manchester—lobby to stop the cuts

AT A UNION meeting in Shena Simon college, Manchester, 200 students voted for a strike on 16 December to lobby the Labour city council.

By Brian Smith (NUS executive Shena Simon college)

They had just learnt that their college was due to be closed. The city council have announced a 20 per cent cut in education which will mean school and college closures and mergers. They will cut up to a thousand teachers' jobs and 25 per cent of school meal and cleaning staff.

Cuts in school meals and in non profit-making further education courses are also in the package. Students from Shena Simon call on all other schools and colleges in Manchester to support the strike

★ Lobby of the Labour group: Tuesday 15 December, 6.30pm, Manchester Town Hall.

★ Lobby of Manchester city council: Wednesday 16 December. Rally at 9am at Albert Square. Speakers include John Byrne (the only councillor to vote against the cuts) and Andrea Enisouh (president of Fielden Park College SU).

and boycott lessons, and for all council workers to join the lobby on 16 December, starting at Albert Square, Manchester.

Manchester cuts—centre pages Manchester housing—page 7

Militant Readers' Meeting

Tuesday 15 December, 7.30, Manchester Town Hall. Speakers include: Felicit Dowling (surcharged and expelled Liverpool councillor, and former chair of education on Liverpool council) and Manchester city councillor John Byrne.



School students' strike this year. Photo: Militant

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What we stand for

- The immediate introduction of a 35-hour week without loss in pay as a step towards the elimination of unemployment.
- Reversal of all Tory cuts and a massive programme of public works on housing, education, the health service, etc.
- A minimum wage of £120 a week tied to the cost of living for all, including sick and disabled people.
- A socialist plan of production democratically drawn up and implemented by committees involving the trade unions, shop stewards, the unwaged and small business people.
- Opposition to the capitalist Common Market, the EEC. For a socialist United States of Europe as a step towards a World Socialist Federation.
- Workers' management of the nationalised industries. These should be run on the basis of one-third of the places on the management board coming from the unions in the industry, one-third from the TUC representing the working class as a whole, and one-third from the government.
- Opposition to the Tory government's anti-union laws and reversal of attacks on the trade unions.
- Massive cuts in arms spending. Support for unilateral nuclear disarmament, but with the recognition that only a socialist change of society in Britain and internationally can eliminate the danger of a nuclear holocaust.
- Nationalisation of the top 200 monopolies, including the banks and insurance companies which control 80 per cent to 85 per cent of the economy. This should be through an Enabling Bill in Parliament with minimum compensation on the basis of proven need.