

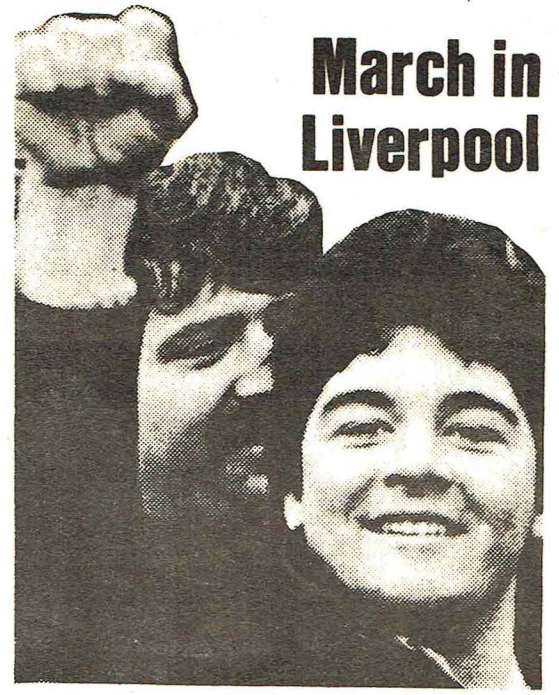
Militant

THE MARXIST PAPER FOR LABOUR & YOUTH

ISSUE 529
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15p

March in
Liverpool



FIGHT MASS

UNEMPLOYMENT

Consett area faces 50% unemployment if bosses get their way

We were given ten minutes notice of our factory's closure. If this is allowed to go through, 1,250 jobs will be wiped out.

Unemployment in this area—already devastated by the Consett steel closure—would rise to an incredible 50% if Ransome, Hoffman & Pollard go ahead with their plans to close this bearing factory at Stanley, Co. Durham.

News of closure came as a complete surprise to the workforce. Even senior management didn't know the directors' plans.

The owners of industry treat people as though they are matchbox people living in matchbox communities. When they are finished with them, they simply crumple them up and throw them away.

Many of the workers broke down in tears when they heard the news. No wonder, when you con-

**Malcolm
Aspinall**

(AUEW Convenor,
RH&P in
personal capacity)

sider many of their own families have already lost jobs through the Consett closure. What a wonderful Christmas box!

Despite the initial shock, however, the attitude of the workers is adamant: we are not going to accept the closure.

At a mass meeting, only six hands went up to accept redundancies. No amount of redundancy payment will compensate for the loss of these jobs.

We are prepared for a bitter, no-holds barred fight.

The bosses obviously are of the opinion
CONTINUED ON
BACK PAGE

BACK THE FIREMEN

Editorial
statement

Firemen are angry and ready for action.

Cynically discarding an agreement under which firemen should get an 18.8% increase, the Tories are trying to impose a 6% limit.

Firemen have no alternative but to fight back.

This is just the thin end of the wedge. If the Tories get away with this, further attacks will follow. London weighting will be in danger and working conditions generally.

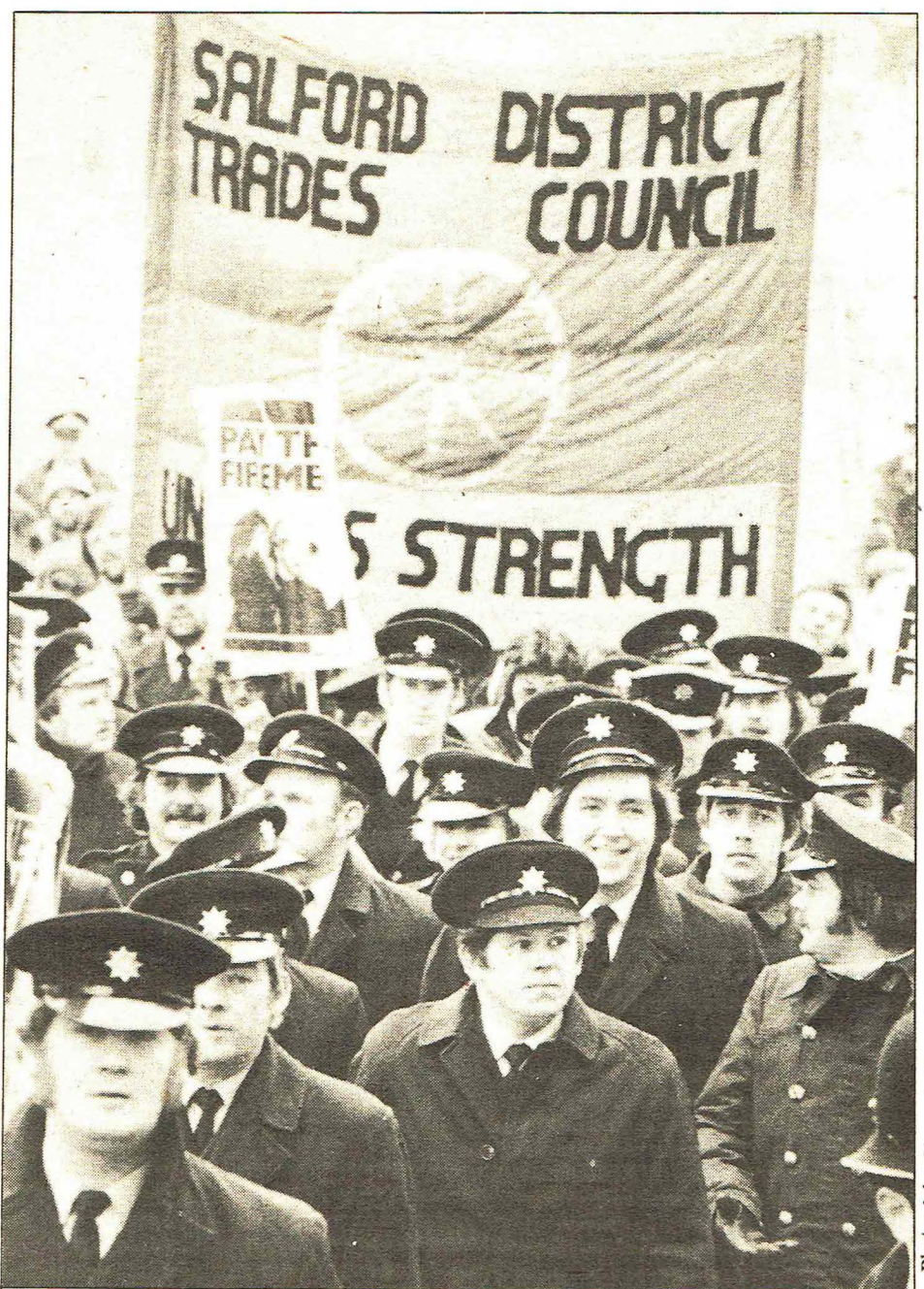
Hovering in the background is a government "Green Paper," which points to a serious reduction in manning levels.

The FBU executive's call for a series of one-day strikes will certainly receive strong support from delegates at the Fire Brigade Union's special conference in Blackpool on Friday 21 November. But many firemen already feel that more resolute action should be organised.

While the series of one day strikes proposed by the FBU executive will have a certain effect, it is unlikely [as 'Militant' stressed last week] that this action will be sufficient to force the government to retreat.

Firemen will initially want to explore the executive's tactic. But firemen's energies must not be frittered away in action that is on one day and off the next.

Delegates should call for a clear commitment from the executive that if this form of action has



The firemen gained enormous support in their 1977 strike. The TUC must organise a campaign of action by all public sector workers against these Tory attacks

not achieved a definite result within a short period then the conference will be reconvened, in order to launch an all-out strike.

The hypocrisy of the Tories is clear! They

bleat long and loud about trade unionists honouring agreements. But when an agreement is unpalatable to them, they contemptuously tear it up.

The 1978 agreement

on firemen's pay clearly states that "the government would be prepared to contribute through the rate support grant its share of the cost of a settlement."

CONTINUED ON
PAGE TWO

March Nov. 29th

Photo: John Sturrock (Report) II



Blacks and Asians:

A COMMON STRUGGLE

BRISTOL INQUIRY

How to tap the enormous reservoir among blacks for Labour?

This was supposed to be the theme of a 'private' meeting organised by the Afro-Asian Caribbean Alliance for Labour last weekend.

By Bob Lee
(People's National Party, Youth Secretary)

As a result of their constant involvement in the struggle, a higher percentage of blacks now vote Labour than the population as a whole. In the last general election, at least four Labour seats would have gone to the Tories had it not been for the solid black vote. In the constituency of South-all, there was actually a big swing to Labour, contrary to the national trend.

The long established alliance between blacks and labour is also reflected in the trade unions. Today, 60% of blacks are organised in trade unions, compared with 50%

of white workers. Their link with the Labour Party is further reinforced by the fact that the overwhelming majority of blacks belong to those unions which are affiliated to the Labour Party.

The meeting was a good initiative. But it was composed of mainly middle class and largely self-appointed 'leaders' of the black people. One of them, a Bangladeshi, began by saying that 'so far, we (the blacks?) have opened a dialogue with only one of the political parties,' as if to say there was some other political party with

whom blacks would have a dialogue. Unless, of course, he had in mind the Tories or the Liberals. Another 'leader' had the audacity to 'warn' Tony Benn who addressed the meeting that he could not 'guarantee' the black vote.

A black Labour councillor and former member of the Communist Party threatened to lead a movement of blacks for a system of proportional representation! However, some of those present, such as Mr Sibghat Kadri, a Pakistani, condemned the abysmal record of the Labour leaders and explained that "the Labour Party was our natural ally."

The solution, he said, was not to have some "token" black MPs, but MPs who were committed, "whatever their colour." He said the greatest tragedy was that many leaders were only too quick to sacrifice their "socialist principles."

Another speaker, from the Indian Workers Association, said that "we believe in working class unity" and that an alliance between blacks

and the Labour Party "will strengthen the labour movement as a whole." These positive points came from those who represent viable and sizeable black and Asian organisations while the more bizarre proposals emanated from individuals who represent nobody but themselves.

The main theme of Benn's contribution was the need for blacks to work through the labour movement. He indicated that Labour's National Executive Committee was looking at the possibility of blacks affiliating to the Labour Party through their organisations, in the same way as the trade unions. This is an idea that many black organisations have already taken up, and, in one or two instances, local Labour parties have 'bent the rules' to allow groups such as the PNP to affiliate with bona fide delegates to the General Management Committee.

The prospect of genuine black workers' organisations being able to affiliate to the Labour Party at national level would be a step forward, and

would undoubtedly strengthen the position of the party among blacks by bringing thousands of them into formal membership.

But these organisations must be seen as a means of involving black workers in the labour movement and not as an instrument to further the careers of a few middle class blacks who aspire to be MPs etc.

In the final analysis, what will hasten the move of black workers into the Labour Party is not formal affiliation through their organisations, but the programme and policies of the Labour Party itself. As the 'Militant' supporters who were present at the meeting (as rank and filers—not leaders) explained: if the Labour leadership were to adopt a bold socialist programme and thus guarantee a decent life for all, then overnight the Labour Party would not only have the mass of blacks into its ranks, but the overwhelming majority of organised workers.

Resist new nationality Act article page 6

By John Graham
(St Paul's Ward Labour Party)

The first session of the Labour and Trade Union-sponsored enquiry into the St Pauls events of last April took place on 2 November. The enquiry team, led by Ian Mikardo MP, included Bill Keys, General Secretary of the print union SOGAT, and representatives of ethnic minority groups in St Pauls and the Bristol TUC.

In the week prior to the enquiry 5,000 leaflets were distributed in the area and announcements were made in the press and on the television. The media were present throughout the proceedings and carried reports on the days' events.

Throughout the day the enquiry listened to evidence from unemployed youth, local residents and representatives of various educational and youth organisations. This was despite reports that a confidential memo to heads of schools in the area had been circulated to try to intimidate people from taking part in the enquiry.

BACK THE FIRE-MEN CONT'D FROM PAGE 1

Now, say the Tories, local authorities can go ahead and pay the 18½%—so, long as overall they keep within the 6% cash limit! Clearly, they are inviting councils to play worker off against worker.

The firemen, however, have rightly rejected the idea that they are a "special case," who should get their pay increase at the expense of other public service workers.

Millionaire landowner and Tory Home Secretary, William Whitelaw, supported the 1978 agreement. There was, he said, "widespread agreement with the objective of settling in a more orderly way the pay for a group which have a key role in the

protection of our society."

Now Whitelaw is to the fore of the Tory assault against the firemen. They hope defeat for firemen will be the prelude to a general attack on all public sector workers.

Just by "coincidence," so we are told, the "green goddesses" have recently undergone a massive £1.7 million re-fit.

While Thatcher & Co are preparing for battle, however, the Tory local authorities are clearly reluctant to engage in combat. They budgeted for increases in firemen's pay of between 10% and 20%.

The Tory local authorities dread the prospect of a defeat at the hands of firemen. This would rebound on the Tories, raising the sights of all public service workers. Tory county council chairmen, including those from Essex, Devon, Nottinghamshire and Lincolnshire, have all expressed their disgust at the imposition of the 6% limits. They are desperately searching for a way to stave off the confron-

tation.

Is this an argument for the firemen to pull their punches? On the contrary, the FBU should take the advantage and hit hard to win a quick result.

The employers are in disarray. The firemen's ranks are solid. The FBU has been promised massive support from the trade union movement, especially from other public service unions.

Flesh must now be put on these promises. The FBU should organise rallies with other public service unions in all areas so that common problems and possible wider supporting action can be discussed.

In every area of the country, concrete steps should be taken to organise a regular flow of money to help sustain a firemen's strike.

Joint action at national level is even more crucial. During the 1977/78 firemen's strike the TUC scandalously refused to give the FBU full support. This time, Len

Murray has promised: "if we come to it, we would be seeking to involve all our unions in the kind of support which the FBU felt would help to achieve their purposes of getting this agreement honoured."

That commitment must be translated into action. The firemen will show the way,

but they must not be left isolated.

This special one-day conference should call upon the TUC to organise a broad campaign of action across all public service workers. The campaign should be launched with a properly prepared one-day strike of all public service workers.

March against Tories, Nov 29
See reports, pages 3, 8, 9

ADVERT

Valley/Netherley Branches, Garston and Wavertree Labour Parties.

We congratulate the Labour Party's National Executive on calling the national rally against unemployment and warmly welcome all trade unionists coming to Merseyside on 29 November. Those wanting accommodation on 29/30th contact Cllr. Les Evans 061-487 9820

Support the demo and save jobs!
Down with Thatcher!
Labour to power on a socialist programme!

After attending the first day, I spoke to Ron Thomas, secretary of Bristol TUC and acting secretary to the enquiry team. He stated that the active co-operation and participation of the St Pauls community groups had been a vital factor in setting up the enquiry.

Trade union branches and shop stewards had immediately responded in providing funds to meet the costs of the enquiry. Ron also praised the efforts of local YS and Ward Branches for their support.

He explained that the next session was scheduled to take place over the 22nd and 23rd November and one of the issues to be discussed was the question of police harassment. The police had declined to take part in the enquiry.

This week further leaflets are being distributed in the area. In addition a leaflet specially aimed at youth has been prepared by the St Pauls Labour and Trade Union Defence Campaign in conjunction with the YS.

Labour Party Unemployment March November 29th

COME TO LIVERPOOL NEXT WEEK



"Get the Tories out! I saw the 1930s and I don't want to go back to those days again!"

These were the words of an old woman applauding a Youth Campaign Against Unemployment Day of Action (YCAU) in Batley, Yorkshire.

They sum up the mood of anger in an area where unemployment has almost doubled in the last year.

Batley YCAU, formed by members of the Labour Party Young Socialists, trade unionists and unemployed, was set up recently to help the unemployed to get organised.

Already, they have secured 1,000 signatures on a petition to the local Labour Council demanding action. The petition demands free bus passes for the unemployed, council

By
Kevin Ramage
(Chairman, LPYS
National Committee)

leisure facilities to be free for the unemployed, and the expansion of Council public works schemes.

At an open air meeting, councillor Laurence Conlon accepted the petition and attacked the Tory government. Tim Durrant, the local YCAU secretary, reports that because of this work at least one coach should be going to Liverpool on 29 November for the National March Against Unemployment.

The whole of Yorkshire is responding to the call to support the march. In addition to the coaches reported last week, Sheffield Labour

Part of the recent march by Bristol youth campaign against unemployment.

Party now say they will send a minimum of 10 coaches. Huddersfield, York, Doncaster, Beverley and even the ward Labour Party in Headingly are sending coaches; so are two more student unions, Bradford and Leeds universities.

The 29th march is now getting an enormous response. The London Labour Party train is full. So too are both the Glasgow Trades Council trains. The POEU in North Central London have increased their contingent from 150 to 200.

Local sections of NUPE, T&GWU, AUEW, TASS,

NUM, NALGO, G&MWU, POEU, ASTMS, UCATT, SOGAT, and the Bakers Union are already sending coaches.

Now the Iron and Steel Trades Confederation in Rotherham have booked coaches, as have USDAW shopworkers in Blackpool. Hosiery workers in Leicester, the Ceramics Union in Stoke, and Firemen in Bristol.

One thing is definite; Thatcher is not going to be too pleased at the sight of civil servants' union banners on the march, but that will be the case. These so-called "non-political" trade unionists have, in the case of

NALGO, given their full support. As for the CPSA, Newcastle members are sending a coach.

The LPYS can claim a proud role in being to the forefront in pushing this march and explaining its importance to the movement. Twenty LPYS branches have taken on the task of ensuring people get to Liverpool by booking coaches. Ashington, Basildon, Grantham are the latest, and East Kilbride have booked a bus jointly with the T&GWU.

It is the LPYS who have ensured that the labour movement is sponsoring the unemployed who wish to

attend. In Birmingham, Rover Solihull T&GWU have paid for twenty places for the unemployed, the National Graphical Association three places, Gravelly Hill Labour Party two places and the Metal Mechanics Union secretary, one.

Hull T&GWU have given £60 and NALGO £25. The National Union of Railwaymen in Tinsley and Sheffield Labour Party have each paid for at least twenty extra places. Nottingham YCAU raised £140 from students attending a Tony Benn meeting at the university. Keep up the campaigning work!

Photo: Militant

THEY'VE LEFT US A GRAVEYARD

We have just seen for ourselves the brutal realities of life in Tory Britain.

In preparation for 29 November, members of our Labour Party Young Socialists branch in West Stirling-shire decided to visit local factories to distribute leaflets and letters and speak to the shop stewards about bookings for our coach.

We first visited Denny, a small iron and paper town. After drawing a blank at one factory—now closed down—we visited an Iron foundry and spoke to workers and shop stewards. The factory was on a three-day week. We got a good response, with a commitment given for places on the coach.

Next was a paper mill. The shop steward was "not available" and we were met by a manager, very suspicious and a little worried by our visit. He revealed that the shop stewards were meeting at a local hotel—and later they told us every day workers were facing redundancy. Management had planned 70, but had reduced it to 50 because of union pressure. When we discussed the demo, we got a good response, with a promise of money and bookings from the union.

The next factory was a modern paper mill. It looked lifeless, until a security officer appeared but our questions were met with a dour reply "Closed."

We decided later to go to Falkirk, a bigger industrial town—or so we thought.

The first factory was an aluminium works. We approached the gatehouse and were met with a by now familiar reply: "Closed".

The next factory however, was open. The stewards agreed that something had to be done and took our material for distribution.

We moved on, this time to a book factory employing mainly women. We were told that the factory would soon be closing, throwing all its 240 workers out of a job.

Unemployment has turned Denny into an industrial ghost town—unemployment has increased by 83.7% over the past year. In Falkirk it has gone up by 44.5%.

What was annoying for us, apart from seeing this industrial grave yard, was that many of the stewards did not know about the demonstration. It was only through the Young Socialists that they had heard. We are the only representatives of the labour movement in our area who are organising and taking people down to the demo.

If other sections of the movement took this issue up as seriously as the YS, then we would begin to see concrete alternatives to this terrible situation.

By **Willie Griffin**
(LPYS
National Committee)

LOCAL ACTION NEEDED

"Today over 800,000 people under the age of 25 have no work, 40% of these being under the age of 19. It is predicted that youth unemployment will soon be twice as high as in the worst years of the 1930s.

"This means that 1 in 2 school leavers will have no work to go to. Already there are twice as many girls unemployed as boys and this doesn't include thousands of others who don't even

register.

"Locally in East Lancashire more than 2,600 young people are out of work but for these youngsters only 34 jobs are available. In other words more than 40 young people are scrambling for every vacancy.

"This is the worst situation ever, since unemployment records were started. It is a scandal that thousands of millions of pounds are being squandered on

missiles and armaments when spending on the youth opportunities programme has been cut."

So a leaflet by the Blackburn LPYS outlines the situation facing those on the dole today. With the backing of their local Labour Party, the YS has begun a campaign to win day centres for the unemployed. Using this leaflet they have picketed council meetings urging the council to take

By **P. Harris**
(Blackburn LPYS)

up this demand, which also calls for free bus passes for the unemployed and pensioners, and free access to council-owned leisure facilities for the unemployed.

Their campaign, which has received local radio and press coverage, has won the support of many local unemployed youth and they hope to take 30 people to the march on the 29th.

£20 needed from each LPYS branch by end of November.

The urgency of the Labour Party Young Socialists' demand for a £50,000 budget has been graphically shown. National officers of the YS have had to give a commitment to raise £4,000 by the end of November.

This money is to pay for the LPYS publicity material for the Labour Party's national protest against unemployment. Over a million leaflets and 10,000 pos-

ters were produced in addition to special letters.

The success of this work will be shown in the biggest ever march against unemployment in Britain. But the LPYS must now appeal to the trade union and labour movement for financial support.

LPYS branches have been raising money to meet the appeal, with socials, discos and collect-

ions have responded to the appeal, as for example in Liverpool where the Tobacco Workers Union gave £200.

LPYS branches who go to the trade unions and put the case for building a fighting organisation for working class youth will get a good response and can easily reach the £20 per branch which has been requested by the National Committee.

Unemployed Workers Centre

Three T&GWU members from Kings Lynn in Norfolk are walking from Kings Lynn to London to gain support for the town's unemployed workers centre.

They are leaving on Friday 21 November and spending the first night in Cambridge.

On Saturday they travel on to the Ware/Hoddesden area and on Sunday pass through Enfield about midday and through Kingsland High Road in Hackney early afternoon to arrive hopefully at the new Labour Party Headquarters in Walworth Road.

Details of the route from Doug Grieve of the Tobacco Workers Union [Work phone 989-1107 or at home Lea Valley 763749 on Sunday morning].

REPORTS REPORTS REPORTS

brighton LABOUR WIN ROUTS NF

Labour has just won a crushing victory in a district council by-election in the St Paul's ward of Brighton.

In this once safe Tory ward, Labour received more votes than the Tory and Liberal candidates put together.

The National Front candidate was also thrashed at the polls. Despite shaving his head and equipping himself with a pair of leather boots, he suffered a humiliating defeat—with a derisory fifteen votes.

Since the election, moreover, the NF candidate has appeared in court—and was convicted of stealing a pair of black leather gloves from a Brighton store!

The NF's defeat was another success for the Brighton and Hove Committee Against Fascism, which carried out a thorough leaflet and poster campaign exposing the fascists and racialists. The committee also managed to prevent the fascists from holding a meeting in a school hall.

The NF then tried to hold an open-air meeting on Brighton's Level two days before polling. We had anticipated this, and were there to prevent them. They were reduced to riding around in a land-rover shouting obscenities at us.

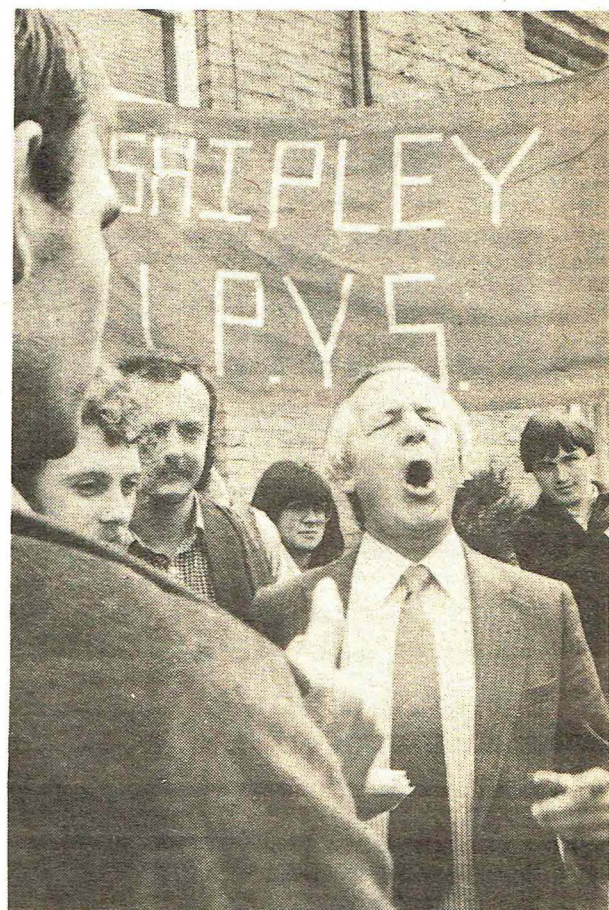
We ended the week with a march through Brighton's shopping areas handing out thousands of leaflets exposing the aims and activities of these fascist gangs.

The reception we received (and their fifteen votes) shows

they have no real support. This is obviously the reason for the NF's increasing desperation—and their recruitment of thugs to carry out individual attacks and acts of intimidation.

Here in Brighton, these attacks will not go unanswered.

By a
Militant reporter



A fulminating Marcus Fox, Tory MP for Shipley, Yorkshire, confronted by members of the Labour Party Young Socialists during their street campaign against unemployment and Tory cuts.

enfield Young Socialists arrested on anti-fascist protest

Members of the Labour Party Young Socialists took to the streets of Edmonton, North London, on Remembrance Sunday, when the New National Front, a breakaway group from the original NF, attempted to march through the area.

The New NF, led by John Tyndall, was formed when support for the Front crumbled and its leaders began bitter feuding. The New NF is

supposedly acquiring 'respectability', but this was not evident on Sunday when they hurled threats and racist abuse at LPYS and Anti-Nazi League members and local working people protesting at the presence of racists on their streets.

Blind to the real causes of social crisis, and fantasising about a return to the Empire and British 'superiority', Front supporters claimed to be paying tribute to those "British, Commonwealth,

Rhodesian and South African troops" who died to defend "the honour of our nation and our race."

In the confrontation, four members of the YS were arrested. Despite firm police denials that the four were in custody, they later emerged from Edmonton police station charged with offences ranging from 'action likely to cause a breach of the peace' to

'obstruction'. They will appear at Tottenham Magistrates' Court on December.

Enfield North LPYS are appealing for support and especially funds to cover legal costs.

c/o Kevin Ramage, LPYS National Committee, London Labour Party Headquarters, 195 Walworth Road, London SE17.

sri lanka Strike leader tours NE

A highly successful tour of the North East by trade union leaders from Sri Lanka ended on Thursday, after the recent general strike.

Gunaseena Mahanama, General Secretary of the Government Clerical Service Union, and Siritunge Jayasuriya, Organising Secretary of the Nava Sama Samaja Party, have spoken to many different organisations of the labour movement.

Maha spoke to meetings of the Civil and Public Services Association at the Washington Child Benefit Office and at the Longbenton DHSS office, describing in graphic detail the conditions of those still locked-out from their jobs after the recent general strike. He thanked those who had sent messages of support

and donations to the strikers.

Maha explained how the governments of both Sri Lanka and Britain were attempting to drive down the living standards of workers in order to prop up rotten capitalist systems.

There were also meetings in Sunderland and Newcastle for Labour Party activists, and a meeting at the university Labour Club, where the audience included students from Turkey and Zimbabwe.

Altogether, the tour raised well over £200 with promises of more to come. All who met the Sri Lankan comrades were impressed and gained a valuable insight into the problems and potential of the island's working class.



Siritunge Jayasuriya speaking to one of the meetings of the tour

SOUTHAMPTON

On November 29th, as part of the South East Regional TUC month of action in November, Southampton is to hold a march and demonstration through the town centre to protest against the growing numbers of unemployed.

Every Saturday leading up to the demonstration members of Southampton Trades Council, Labour Party and the Youth Campaign Against Unemployment will be leafleting and asking people to sign a petition at various shopping centres around the city.

There has been a good response to the Saturdays of action with people promising to come on the march and hundreds of

people signing the YCAU petition.

Other initiatives taken during the month have included a meeting of shop stewards at which over 150 attended and the meeting of unemployed people also took place from which the so-called Transport and General Workers office agreed to place at their disposal a room at which a committee of the unemployed could meet each week.

The intention is to try and help the unemployed organise. It is vital that those in work should aid unemployed workers' struggles so that the jobless don't become antagonistic towards the labour and trade union movement.

CLV SKULDUGGERY - so this is 'democracy'?

By John
Bulaitis

Supporters of the mis-named Campaign for Labour Victory pose as the brave defenders of democracy.

Infuriated, however, by the great steps taken at the Blackpool conference to democratise the party, this extreme right-wing grouping is now pushing for a so-called "one-man, one vote" system of electing the leader which would in reality undermine conference's support for an electoral college giving due weight to affiliated unions and the constituency parties.

The CLV claims this would mean more "involvement of the membership," but their recent activities in Beckenham Constituency Labour Party in South London, show what this ultra-right group really means by 'democracy.'

Beckenham CLP backed the moves to democratise the party, and sent a left-winger to conference. However, at the last General Management Committee some left-wingers were missing—and the right had clearly mobilised.

There were five delegates from the EETPU, who are disputed by the GMC because the union claims seven delegates, all full-time officials, but refuses to give any details of how many members

it has living in the constituency paying the political levy.

Regardless of the fact that a full discussion on the constitutional changes for the leadership were due to be discussed at the next meeting, and summarily disregarding standing orders, right-wing delegates moved and supported a resolution from the floor, a constitutional amendment that the party leader should be elected by "one man one vote."

Without any debate, the right voted the proposal through. They then proceeded to replace the party's conference delegate who was also to go to the special conference and replaced him with a right winger.

After angry protests at the right's manoeuvres, nearly half the meeting walked out, including the secretary and assistant secretary.

This is a warning of the lengths to which the right will go in coming weeks to try to undermine the annual conference's decisions on democracy—and an indication of the ruthless, undemocratic methods these "champions of democracy" would use if they ever regained control of the party.

kingston

The Royal Borough of Kingston is not known as an area of anti-Tory militancy. But nearly 1,000 people crammed into Surbiton Assembly rooms (4 November) for a rally organised by Kingston Trades Council and the local anti-cuts campaign, reports Dave Shields, Secretary of Kingston Poly Labour Club. Some people arriving late actually had to be turned away. Kingston people, too, are angry at services being pared to the bone. Local trade unionists and Labour Party members clearly highlighted the problems facing working people in the Borough. The Broadside Theatre

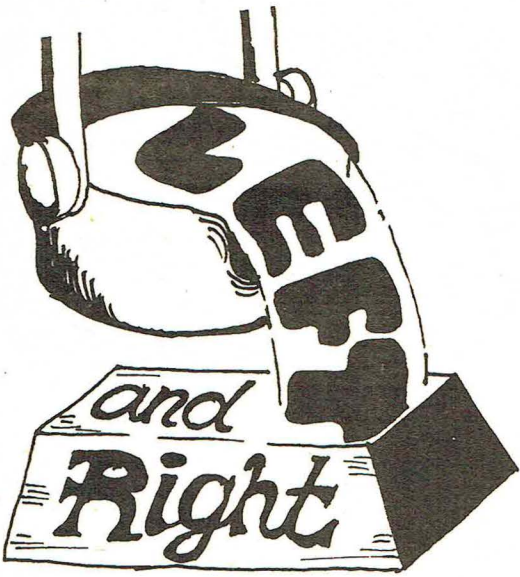
Group entertained the rally with their very humorous satire "The Cut-Price Welfare Show". This was followed by a speech from Tony Benn, who, to enormous applause and enthusiasm, spelt out the need for the next Labour government to implement Clause IV part 4 of the Labour Party constitution.

The rally was extremely encouraging for LPYS members who signed up several new members and sold over 50 copies of 'Militant' and 'Socialist Youth'. This boost must be used to build the LPYS and the Labour Party committed to fighting for socialist policies.

isle of wight

In the Isle of Wight, reports Cathy Wilson, the Constituency Labour Party and a number of trade union branches (Plessey AUEW-TASS, Ryde branch AUEW, and also the IoW Co-op Party) have recently registered their support for the election of party leader at conference

through an electoral college distributing the votes 40% to the unions, and 30% each to the Labour MPs and the CLPs. A similar resolution was also discussed at the Newport EETPU branch. Although not passed, their was a good deal of support and discussion.



David Owen, leading light of the "gang of three" recently went back to Plymouth where he represents Devonport constituency in parliament. He delighted the 50 people in the audience by saying that he was just as opposed to the "Lunacy of the left as to the lunacy of the right"; just as much against Tony Benn as against Margaret Thatcher who both have the ability to sell a simple solution."

He spoke in favour of proportional representation which he thought was "probably going to be necessary in British politics," against the "yo-yo between the Tories' doctrinaire privatisation and the doctrinaire nationalisation of the Labour Party." He admitted that his views were similar in many respects to those of Liberal leader David Steel though the Liberals lacked a certain reality because they had little experience in government.

Was he speaking to an enthusiastic meeting of his constituency party? Well, not exactly. Devonport Labour Party backed Michael Foot in the leadership elections. His admirers were managers, bankers and accountants at a meeting organised by the local branch of the British Institute of Management. This is presumably what Labour's parliamentary right wing mean by saying that MPs have to represent all their constituents—not just Labour Party members.

We live in a democracy—at least that's what the media is telling us all the time. But sometimes the mask slips. In the recent series on the life of the late Lord Mountbatten, the former Chief of Staff explained what happened when the Tory government of Eden invaded Egypt to seize the Suez canal in 1956. Despite opposition from Mountbatten and others Eden went ahead with the invasion. Mountbatten commented in the script for the programme dealing with Suez: "It was astonishing to me to see what one really persistent man could do if he was Prime Minister. He never let Parliament know what was going on. He never really let the Cabinet know. He formed this thing called the Egypt Committee which consisted of only two or three handpicked Ministers and the Chiefs of Staff....the result was that Anthony Eden was able to go through one of the most disastrous operations on his own. And we think that we have a secure democracy that can prevent that from happening." You didn't see Mountbatten making this statement on TV? Well that's because the government banned the programme in the interests of 'national security'.

Remember the days of love and peace ten years ago, when pop stars were telling us that materialism was unimportant. They made a lot of money that way. And John Lennon sang:

"Imagine no possessions, I wonder if you can,
No need for greed and hunger, a brotherhood
of man."

It seems that Lennon didn't exactly follow his own advice. Fellow pop millionaire, Elton John, discovered that when he visited Lennon and Yoko Ono's apartment in New York that "they had one special refrigerated room just for Yoko's fur coats and rooms full of clothes racks like they have in Marks and Spencers." And she had some advice for Elton John, to stay at her favourite hotel when he visited Japan. "It's a bit expensive" she explained, "about \$1,500 a night"! But they had managed it for four months.

Elton John commented that "their image is so different from what they're really into now. Money." Or perhaps that's what they were really into all along? Anyway Elton John has done a re-write of the old Lennon song:

"Imagine six apartments, that's not hard to do,
One is full of fur coats, the other's full of shoes."

Investigate the wire-tappers

Earlier this year there were a number of allegations about the widespread use of telephone tapping.

These revelations caused great concern and led to widespread demands for an investigation into the practice of tapping with a view to ensuring future public accountability.

Instead the government, in an attempt to defuse the situation produced a White Paper.

The Post Office Engineering Union, in response, has produced a pamphlet 'Tapping the Telephone.' As the pamphlet points out, POEU members are directly concerned with tapping. The pamphlet is a careful analysis which always leans in a cautious direction when there are no precise figures. The POEU also accepts the need for tapping in some circumstances.

However, it is a very alarming report and points out that "the potential for abuse is so great that the present safeguards are fundamentally inadequate." Much of the information in the pamphlet raises grave doubts about the present situation. The Union "rejects the Home Secretary's White Paper."

Interestingly, they show the dubious legal basis for the interception of communication, both post and telephone. The last inquiry in 1957 revealed a tortuous set of arguments "none of which is wholly satisfactory" to give authority to intercept. There is no change today.

The official figures for tapping with a Home Secretary's warrant in Britain in 1979 were 467, which is nearly a three-fold increase since the 1957 inquiry. These figures

exclude Northern Ireland and a number of other areas, and are well below many estimates for tapping such as the 'Sunday Times' (3 February, 1980) which put them at 2,000 to 3,000.

The official figures only cover certain categories of tapping, sometimes one warrant is issued for a group rather than an individual, and some tapping is without a warrant.

Some warrants only last two months, but the majority of taps are for 'security' which lasts six months. Among the areas not covered by the official figures are the Government Communications Headquarters, in Cheltenham, the Foreign Office and Ministry of Defence. In some cases the police do not go to the Home Secretary; they can apply to the Post Office at a senior level or even at a local level in "urgent cases."

The POEU states: "We are convinced that the practice of official telephone tapping extends beyond those categories set out in the government's White paper and includes political organisations and individuals as well as trade unions and trade unionists." They point out that they have no way of finding the actual figures and whether the taps are authorised.

In the case of political tapping they "think more likely warrants are not involved," which shows the inadequacies of the system. One official but alarming example is that "fifteen Labour MPs were investigated by MI5 at the request of Hugh Gaitskill, George Brown, and Patrick Gordon Walker."

By Bill Hopwood

reviews the POEU pamphlet, 'Tapping the Telephone'.



A serious point for the POEU is that some of their own members are involved in doing the tapping and are unknown to their fellow workers. The pamphlet shows how easy it is to tap and there is little prospect of discovery by the rest of the workforce.

New technology has opened up a wider range of tapping and bugging. Some methods include picking up a conversation in a room by reflecting a laser beam off a vibrating window pane; a device so that the telephone acts as a microphone even when the handset is on the receiver; and a variety of microphones.

The use of bugs by the state requires no warrant. The laws on private use are few and weak. The new post office switchgear, 'System X', will enormously increase the potential use, scope and efficiency of tapping.

The POEU calls for a full

enquiry into tapping with strict controls on tapping and bugging. While this should be supported it is unlikely to stop surveillance by the state of the labour movement.

The state exists to defend the ruling class, and they won't just democratically give up one of their methods of defending private property.

But the labour movement should certainly instigate its own, independent enquiry to expose the extent of secret surveillance and bring home to workers the arbitrary, undemocratic methods employed behind the facade of the "democratic" state.

No trade unionists should be employed in installing or using or facilitating the use of surveillance equipment, and the labour movement must campaign to ensure that trade unions will not co-operate with anyone known to be involved in such activity.

Who's to blame for spoiling our game

By Derek Hilling

(Leicester West LPYS)

Since the beginning of the season there has been a barrage of abuse and vitriol from the bosses' press and media about football hooligans.

Someone who isn't slow to stick his "chin" into the discussion is the BBC's "expert" (on what?) Jimmy Hill. On "Match of the Day" Sunday (9 November) he produced a list of five incidents of football hooliganism from the day before. He finished his comments by asking what would those who died in the two world wars have thought about all this hooliganism.

One might ask what they would have said about today's football.

One of the incidents mentioned was the stabbing of an Arsenal fan on a train to Leeds. As it happens, I was on that train going to the Leeds v Arsenal match. The first we knew about it was when a guard came up to a plain-clothes detective, saying someone had been stabbed.

Immediately, the doors of the train were locked. So much for passenger safety. Yet more importantly, activists should note how the police use hooliganism as an excuse for increasing the "surveillance" of the population.

When we arrived in Leeds we were kept on the train for about 20 minutes. Reservists from the army were guarding the doors as back-up to the police. The youth who the police led away could have been no more than 14 or 15. But is it any wonder, when school-kids looking into the future see only misery and frustration on the dole?

Yet who is to blame for the intense rivalry that exists between the fans? The bosses consciously whip up local and regional antagonisms so as to divide the workers, and make them less effective. Yet just like

religious sectarianism in Northern Ireland they have created a monster they are incapable of controlling. Their only solution is police repression.

When we got to the Leeds ground, for instance, the "virtues" of Leeds United were extolled in magazines, scarves, pens etc.—all at rip-off prices. Over the PA system the Leeds United song (the one recorded when they were a good team) was played a couple of times before the match, and to build the side up as some kind of "super-being".

Leeds then proceeded to get hammered 5-0. Is it any wonder that their fans resorted to "cockney-bashing" songs and threats? The only outlet for the fans' frustration at their team's poor performance was the opposing supporters. If their disappointment could be expressed within the club surely such incidents would be few and

far between?

One of the demands that arose during the great general strike in France in May-June 1968 was "football to the footballers". The leisure industry should be taken out of the control of the bosses who are only interested in making a profit out of the game, and put under the control of the working class.

Grounds could be opened up for use by the local community, instead of only being open when a profit can be made. If the fans saw the ground and club as truly theirs, the need for "crowd control" (including the use of steel bars and pens) would wither away.

When capitalism treats fans as so much fodder for the profiteers, it is predictable that frustrated sections of the youth will attempt to take revenge on the nearest thing at hand. If you herd animals into pens you can't complain when they act like animals.

Taking away our rights

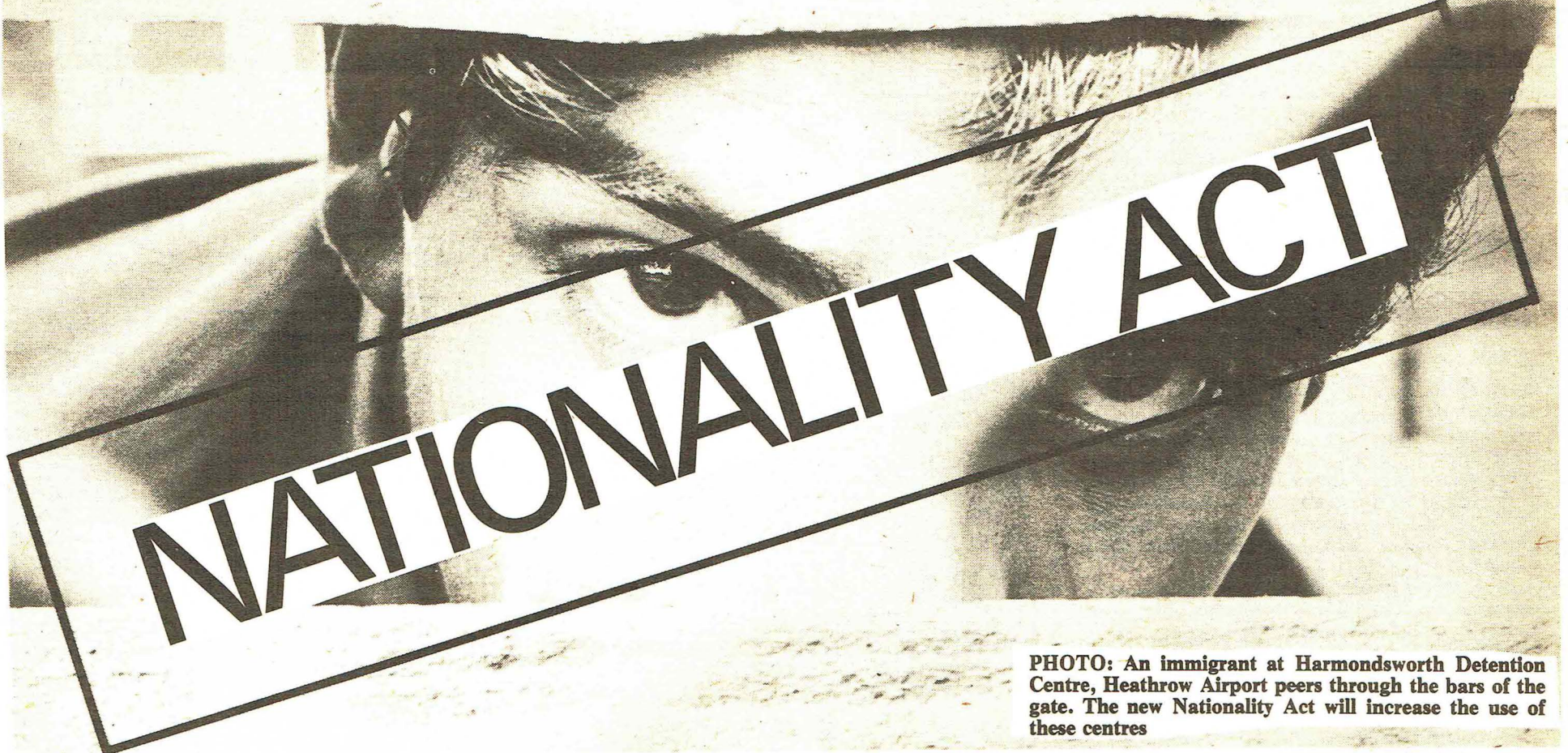


PHOTO: An immigrant at Harmondsworth Detention Centre, Heathrow Airport peers through the bars of the gate. The new Nationality Act will increase the use of these centres

The present capitalist crisis has made the position of the immigrant community in Britain particularly unbearable.

For years, black and Asian workers have suffered the worst conditions in housing and jobs. Now immigrant workers are feeling the brunt of Tory and big business attacks.

Racist and fascist groups have tried to use black workers as a scapegoat for the ills of capitalism—but the attacks have not only come from them. Who can forget Thatcher's comments about 'swamping'—the hypocritical attempts by the job-cutting Tories to blame a section of

By Kanwal Sophal

the working class for unemployment?

Facts—such as the dramatic decline in immigration over the last few years—are forgotten. Britain is now a net exporter of people [5,500 more left Britain than entered in 1978]. Also ignored is the fact that immigrant workers have been for many years more vulnerable to redundancy than other workers.

Attempts to divide and rule are too important to bother about facts—and the attacks have legal sanction. The past

few months have witnessed a number of police raids seeking alleged illegal immigrants.

In the raids on Bestways, Main Gas and the Hilton Hotel a general warrant was used to round up people not named specifically in the warrant. Out of 37 people detained at Bestways, only 9 were charged.

On top of this comes the Tories proposal for a new 'Nationality Act'.

The labour and trade union movement must be alerted to the danger that this act poses to black workers here and abroad. Like the 'Employment' Act it is an attempt to restrict and take away hard-won rights.

Consider the ministerial rules already in operation since 1st March 1980. The 'fiancé rule' is aimed at the Asian community, because their culture involves arranged marriages; seen by the Tories as a primary means of immigration.

Openly racist Act aims to divide working class

The 'Financial Times', 4 December 1979, commented that there had been "356 marriages of convenience [the majority of which were not even coloured]. 11,159 people were allowed to settle, representing a 3% abuse rate for which the rights of all women are taken away." [4 December 1979].

Under this rule Asian women will not be allowed to bring their husbands here unless she or one of her parents was born here. It allows in European women and husbands of British women born here, but excludes the husbands of British women who were not born here.

The 1948 Nationality Act stated that all commonwealth citizens would remain 'British subjects.' The 1971 Immi-

gration Act replaced 'citizen' with the work 'patrial'.

The complicated list of requirements to obtain 'patriality' took away existing rights of entry from 'non-patrials' holding British passports such as East African Asians.

The wives of patrials have a right of entry and have no problems in obtaining patriality but husbands cannot obtain patriality when married to a 'patrial' wife. As Whitelaw said "What we are worried about is extra male immigration."

The new rules expand the circumstances in which entry clearance will be refused to male fiancés and husbands. In effect, men settled abroad will find it far more difficult to enter than women, and fewer women than men will be able to have their partners join them here.

This contravenes the Sex Discrimination Act 1975 and the Race Relations Act 1976 because it singles out the Asian tradition of arranged marriages. So much for the Tory rantings on sex equality and 'harmonious race relations'!

The worst is yet to come if the proposed Nationality Act comes into force in 1982. Far more directly than previous Immigration Acts, it is openly racial.

We see the ruling class cultivating the seeds of nationalism in an attempt to isolate the black section of the working class from the labour movement. The 1905 Aliens Bill tried a similar trick, singling out the Jews, who, declared a Tory candidate, were "criminals, suffering from loathsome diseases." 'Rights' of British nationality will not be determined by residence. Britain moved through successive Acts from a single nationality towards a ranking of superior and inferior classes.

Previously nationality had been based on allegiance to the crown, but as the colonial empire disappeared, successive Immigration Acts began the process of relinquishing ties and responsibilities. The NA attempts to bring this process to its conclusion.

The White Paper on nationality creates five different

nationality status groups.

Three of these groups will disappear eventually. They are a) British subjects without citizenship, b) British protected persons and c) British overseas citizens. These groups respectively are immigrant workers who became citizens of commonwealth countries at the time of independence or came from ex-British protectorates or have not been in residence in Britain for five years when the Act becomes law. They have very limited rights.

Labour movement must lead the fight

Another category introduced is 'Citizenship of British Dependent Territories [CBDT].' People born, registered, adopted or naturalised in a British Dependent Territory will not get the new British citizenship, they will be in this category.

The exceptions are where either, one parent was born, registered or naturalised in the UK; or a person has lived here for five years during which the colony in which they were born has not become independent.

These people will have no right of entry into the UK, only entry to a Dependent territory.

"British Citizenship," is the largest group and the only one carrying the right of entry into and out of UK. Anyone born in the UK becomes a 'patrial' and has [on paper, at least] full rights under the law.

At present those who have registered or naturalised have the same rights as British-born citizens, but there is now a proposal to limit the right of British parents born abroad

to transmit their status to their children born abroad.

This means that only 1-2% of the total non-white population born here will be able to transmit their citizenship to children born abroad.

Registered or naturalised citizens have rights under existing law to stand for office in election and to vote. This will continue but now "The Bill by establishing British citizenship, will make available a ready definition by which these duties or entitlements may be redefined in the future" [paragraph 110 of White Paper]. This is a clear warning of things to come.

Those who settled here before 1973 are entitled to citizenship but the White Paper proposes that this be ended two years after the Act comes into force.

We can see the formal stripping away of rights hitherto held by the immigrant population, who have often become sceptical about Labour leaders who have presided over racist immigration laws. Marxists should point out that right wingers like Merlyn Rees have nothing in common with the interests of the working class, black and white.

The labour movement cannot ignore what seem to be petty, if complicated changes in the immigration laws. Like previous Acts they are designed to control immigration more ruthlessly, to harass more and more immigrant workers in Britain in the hope of cowering us and the rest of our class into submission.

The labour movement must fight these proposals. The inability of capitalism to provide jobs and a decent living standard has nothing to do with the mobility of workers around the world.

The system as a whole is rotten. Workers must stand solidly against racist measures and the capitalist system that encourages them.

'The Act is an attempt to harass immigrant workers and cow us and the rest of our class into submission'

UNIONS MUST FIGHT RACIST LAWS

By Ian Pollock
(NUPE, St Marys Hospital, Paddington)

Many women workers came to Britain from the Philippines in the early 1970s for vital jobs as hospital domestics. Some had children under 16 years of age.

If their children had been declared to the Department of Employment they would not have got work permits. Their employment agencies deliberately told them not to declare any children under 16—some even filled in forms for the women omitting this information.

Before 1979, many were given permanent residence status or were allowed to bring their children with them after their arrival. In 1979, the Tory government took a test case to court challenging the Filipino women's entry. They won.

Now these women are judged to have deliberately deceived the authorities and can be removed from the country without appeal, even where they are permanent residents or were allowed to bring over their children.

Over 40 have been removed so far, 240 are being investigated and 800 are probably at risk. Spanish, Moroccan and Colombian workers are also threatened.

My NUPE branch recently took up the issue through a public meeting with leaflets for all the workers. We aim to defend all our workers regardless of colour or nationality. The cynical Tory attempt to blame immigration for their failings must be defeated.

Our union has given legal representation, sent protests to the Home Office and is informing workers of their rights [or lack of them] but my branch feels more must be done.

We have called for a campaign involving a one day protest strike in London and a picket of the Department of Employment. The strength of our union must be thrown behind these workers who have plainly been super-exploited from beginning to end.

WEST MIDLANDS



Photo: MILITANT

Workers at Rover Solihull queue for wages. The bosses have reduced manufacturing industry to a shadow of its former self in the West Midlands. Only socialist measures can ensure a secure future with jobs and decent wages

Where did the wealth go...

“Birmingham labour is good, plentiful and cheap: lower wages are paid here as compared to London...”

“16% lower in printing, 8% lower amongst engineering fitters...labour unrest is practically unknown. Birmingham is an ideal centre for speeded-up production.”

So said a Birmingham information circular in the 1930s. Such was the arrogant boast of the bosses in a period when workers in Birmingham and nationally were suffering from mass unemployment and poverty.

Now, in the 1980s, the bosses hope to return to this ‘paradise’ of workers cowed by the threat of mass unemployment. It has had at least a temporary effect. Reginald Parkes, regional CBI Chairman, recently gloated that....“job security is now taking priority over wage increases.”

West Midlands used to be the most prosperous region of the country. Unemployed workers from elsewhere could find work in the car and other manufacturing industries in the area. Now, however, the crisis of British capitalism is beginning to hit the West Midlands with even more force than in many other areas.

A third of manufacturing exports are from this area. 43% of its workforce is employed in manufacturing industry, compared to 33% nationally; and 18% of Britain’s engineering workers are based here.

Vehicle and metal manufacture along with mechanical and electrical engineering provide 70% of the region’s engineering jobs. These same industries account for 68% of the region’s output, half as much again as the national average.

By
Alan Evans
(Birmingham
Sparkbrook LPYS)

The West Midlands will therefore be hard hit by the process of de-industrialisation which the short sighted Tory lunatics have encouraged nationwide.

Nearly one in ten unemployed

A short while back, the press was full of praise for workers at Lucas Girling who accepted a 10% pay increase, extolling their “good sense” in doing what the government thinks is good for the country. Not long after, Girling announced the sacking of 2,000 of these sensible people! As the ‘Daily Mirror’ commented....“The only conveyor belt working to capacity is the one that throws men and women out of work.”

Many people have been taking voluntary redundancy, tempted by redundancy payments and mistakenly thinking that they could get another job. This just isn’t the case, as is illustrated by a recently advertised electricity meter-reader’s job.

Two years ago this brought just 10 applications; this time there were more than 250, many of them ex-car workers who know that their industry is threatened with extinction.

The unemployment figures for the region are of disastrous proportions. The October total shows 221,900 on the dole in the West Midlands (9.5%). In Telford, a new town with supposedly new opportunities, unemployment

is one and a half times the national average!

Youth are always especially vulnerable, and while young people are finding it more and more difficult to get jobs, with many thousands of school leavers on the dole, vacancies have dropped by 70%.

The future looks even bleaker with an estimated 250,000 young people joining the job market in the next ten years. The Tories will continue to throw people on the scrap heap and waste the wealth of talent and intelligence which they possess, as long as we allow them to continue in government.

In recent years there has been a widespread destocking and cutbacks in major investment. Manufacturing investment rose 60% from 1971 to 1975 in the UK as a whole in absolute terms but in the West Midlands the increase was just 40%. This represents only replacement investment, with little possibility of an increase in capacity.

Workers throughout Britain have less capital behind them than workers in most other industrialised countries. For those in the West Midlands the situation is the worst in Britain. There is £75 of capital for each worker here; this is £60 lower than the figures for Scotland, Wales, the North, the North-West, Yorkshire, and Humberside!

Official receiver Michael Jordan recognised this when he said....“You can’t find better engineers in the world, but many firms use old equipment, worn out and out of date.”

Firms are working nowhere near to capacity. The aluminium and carpet industries, for example, work at only 50% of their present potential. Also, there is a widespread decrease in production targets. 7 years ago, 1.9 million cars rolled off the production lines; in 1978 only 1.22 million; in 1979 just 1.1 million. What will the numbers be in the 1980s?

The Mini-Metro is widely hailed as the possible saviour

of British Leyland, but the BL suppliers are asking... “Will the Metro provide enough work, and after the Metro, what then?” With 1 in 4 jobs in the Midlands dependent on BL this is far from an academic question.

Who is to blame for the situation that has resulted in the region’s share of Britain’s GDP dropping from 9.8% to 9.1%? Who is to blame for two million on the dole in Britain? Is it, as the Tories continually tell us, the fault of the greedy workers who grab too high a pay rise?

Apparently not, as the workers at Lucas Girling found out to their cost. Disposable income is now 3.4% below the national average. The highest wage increase notified to the local CBI is 14%, but many are down to single figures.

Where are all these ‘unreasonable’ pay rises? Surely Mrs Thatcher wouldn’t lie to us, surely she wouldn’t make things up that weren’t true!

Poverty on the increase

It seems she does! Living standards are being unmercifully driven lower and lower. In five years, the number of poor families in the West Midlands has increased by 40%! The region has Britain’s highest proportion of working mothers; more than half the households have two breadwinners.

Until recently, this would have ensured that the family would be slightly better off, but today it requires two breadwinners to ensure the same standard of living that one could provide in the ‘50s.

Just as has happened many times in the last hundred years, workers are forced to pay for the failure of the profit system—pay with their jobs, health, even with their lives—while the bosses themselves suck industry dry with no thought for the future, while they continue enjoying their expensive life styles.

and will it return?

By
Lynn Walsh

Tory minister Heseltine, trying to justify his government’s policies said last week, “Sacrifice is not an option. Someone is going to have to make it.”

“It is a question” he said “of who—and to what extent.” There is little doubt which class the Tories have picked on for their attacks—the working class—first through unemployment and cutbacks, now through pay restraint. Why the Tories need to act so savagely was brought home by the recent report of the CBI (see Militant 14 November) which highlights the terrible problems which British capitalism has created.

This has been reinforced by another report from Cambridge Econometrics (a commercial forecasting organisation sponsored by Cambridge University).

Even on the assumption that the Tories allow public spending to rise 5% above their target, Cambridge Econometrics predicts unemployment of 2.5 million next year and 3.1 million in 1983, with a total number of jobless remaining above that level for the rest of the 1980s.

But if the Tories were to cut public spending according to their original plans, they foresee unemployment at a catastrophic 4 million by 1985.

The report sees this winter as the bottom of the recession. But workers can find little consolation as they expect an extremely slow and sluggish ‘recovery.’

Economic activity will not start to pick up until 1983, and will not regain its 1979 level until 1986. Manufacturing industry will regain its 1975 level only by 1990! The Cambridge group expect inflation to fall slowly but this is largely the effect of the prolonged recession.

In a morbid comment on the Tories’ policies, the director-general of the CBI, Sir Terence Beckett, said: “If you turn the wick down much more, the lamp will go out.” But he also drew attention to the fact that industry is only getting a 3% return on capital—and for big business only higher profits or the prospects of a higher level of profitability generally, would provide the fuel for an upturn in investment and increased production. Under conditions of worldwide capitalist recession, such a recovery in profitability could be achieved only at the cost of driving workers’ living standards down even further.

It is vital, therefore, to link the struggle over pay and the loss of jobs with a struggle to bring down the Tory government and return a Labour government committed to socialist policies which could provide real solutions to the organic crisis of British society.



**Assemble: 11-12 midday at
Sefton Park. Mass march
to Liverpool Pier Head.**

TORIES

Nowhere is the critical situation facing young people more apparent than in Liverpool, the venue of the Labour Party National March against Unemployment on November 29th.

**Reports
by
Bob Wade**

According to the City Planning Department, 22% of the workers are on the dole.

But even this staggering figure hides the localised unemployment figures, such as the Woodchurch area where it is now as high as 30%. In Kirkby, the chance of a youth getting a job is a thousand to one!

Added to this, firm after firm is closing down, and the cutbacks are hitting facilities, not to mention public sector jobs.

The march will go through Liverpool 8 and show the youth of the area that there is an alternative—the socialist struggle. Liverpool 8 is an inner-city area of enormous poverty, slum housing and wasteland which only receives special attention from the police. Even the local secondary school is to be closed by the council.

Following a meeting of 300 school students in the city, the LPYS schools student leaflet will help form the basis of material to be circulated in the schools to establish a Merseyside School Students Union. Already groups are being formed in many schools as school students react to the Tory-Liberal attack on school standards in the area.

The Labour Party march will give a tremendous impetus to the struggles of the workers and youth in the city. But it must also be a national focus for the fight against unemployment.

33% of all 20 year olds have been unemployed at some time or other according to the National Childrens' Bureau. And for those who are younger the figure may well be up to 50%. In 1968, Harold Wilson described the youth unemployment figure of 10,000 as a national scandal.

Now there are one million under 26 years old out of work. If these figures are not enough to condemn big business, the National Childrens bureau also reveals that the average wage for 20 year olds is less than £50 gross i.e. below the poverty line for bringing up a family.

But this miserable situation is not being accepted by the local population—there promises to be a mass turnout by

the local labour movement for the Labour Party march on November 29.

This was indicated by the report of the Merseyside shop stewards meeting on preparations for the 29th, in 'Militant' issue 527. Over 500 shop stewards attended the meeting, representing almost every section of the local labour movement from the docks to the white collar unions.

Sections of the movement are seeing the need for a mass turnout on the 29th as an integral part in their own struggle against the Tories.

Liverpool docks is such a case. The workforce at the docks has been cut drastically. From the 14,000 that were employed there in 1968, now there is just over 5,000. This is not only due to the recession in world trade, but also the introduction of automated container traffic and the re-direction of shipping by the bosses to other ports.

As a full-time official at the docks explained, for the youth of Liverpool, the docks has finished as an avenue of employment. "This year we must have only taken on half a dozen apprentices. Jobs for youngsters have just gone, full stop."

But the battle to protect jobs is still on.

Although they recently scored a major victory against the Tories with their swift action, over management's attempt to turn back the clock on employment conditions, management have now come back with a document, sanctioned by the Tories, which proposes drastic cuts in the docks.

Deputy chairman of the dock's shop stewards committee explained what this would mean: "If implemented these proposals would have disastrous consequences for us. It would mean a 30% reduction in the workforce through the closing of the majority of the docks here, and 'flexibility' in work."

"We are opposing this and we are putting forward a six point plan as an answer. We want a national ports policy of re-directing shipping and trade—one dock mustn't be played off against another."

"There must be a triumvirate discussion between the government, employers and trade unions on the future of this industry."

And they will not accept compulsory redundancies: "These will be opposed and early retirement will be on a

voluntary basis only. And our final demand is for additional holidays and a shorter working week to protect jobs."

For the 29th the shop stewards are holding mass meetings in every section of the dock. "We won't just be telling our members to come, but to get them to bring their wives and kids as well. The Tories must be shown there is mass opposition to their policies."

The local Transport and General branches are also preparing for the 29th, and are organising an important campaign to recruit unemployed youth into the union.

Len McClusky, a full-time official for the white collar section of the T&G in the docks explained: "Judging by the response at the shop stewards' meeting to prepare for the 29th, support for the march should be tremendous! We have written to all our branches urging them to attend and will be producing a leaflet."

"Our region is particularly concerned over youth unemployment and are going to act upon union policy, and actively recruit the unemployed into the T&G. There is a grave danger at present of the labour movement ignoring the unemployed. This could result in the unemployed youth especially feeling rejected by the movement, and so make fodder for reactionary groups such as the fascists. We are going to bring them into our ranks, not just as a separate group, but to take an active part in the constitution of the union."

"We are also planning to get into schools to put the trade union's case and combat some of the nonsense that is taught about unions at the moment."

Workers in the public sector will be making a particular effort to turn out on the 29th. When asked by a visiting 'Militant' reporter, women occupying Liverpool's Walton hospital canteen positively growled at the mention of Mrs Thatcher's name, and assured the reporter they would be on the march.

Similarly, the Merseyside firemen, at the forefront of the battle against the Tories' present attempt at wage cuts, will be out in force on the march.

This local support, combined with the growing support nationally for the demonstration, will ensure that there is a massive turnout on the 29th, and will show the Tories they will not be tolerated.

SHOUT!

Unemployed and 'lucky'

In the Dog and Pheasant, a High Street pub in Bromsgrove, a group of eight confused and angry unemployed young men and women decided it was time to do something. But what?

They weren't on either side of the political fence. They just knew that they didn't agree with what was happening to them and well over two million other people in Britain.

In the town, over 6% of the working class population are unemployed. Almost 1,100 are jobless, and this week there are 27 jobs advertised in the local press—(over half of which are for part-time employment only).

Just across the road from the pub is the local Conservative Association Office with three full-time employees. The unemployed group decided to arrange a meeting with local Tory MP, Hal Miller.

The local branch of the Labour Party Young Socialists read their announcement in the local press, and decided

By Michael Higgins
(Bromsgrove LPYS)

to approach them to see if they needed any help. They enthusiastically informed us that as many of us as were able to attend the meeting were welcome.

So, despite hostility from the Tory Party Agent, six Young Socialists and eight 'Pioneers' (the name the local press had tagged onto the unemployed group) were allowed into the meeting, along with the press.

Miller told us, almost rubbing his palms together, that the situation was almost bound to get a good deal worse.

No offer of any new local jobs, funded by the government, was made. Instead he patronisingly told the unemployed that, "we are lucky in Bromsgrove." "There's no point in any of us moving then, like Mrs Thatcher advises," we replied—to which he laughed, and didn't even attempt to make an answer.

Neither did he accept the demands put to him on a joint basis by the Young Socialists and the 'Pioneers' for—free

bus passes for all local unemployed; free entry passes into local leisure facilities run by the two district councils for Bromsgrove and Redditch, for all local unemployed, and for both local councils to consider opening day-centres for the unemployed.

In the end he stormed out of the meeting. Both groups issued a challenge for Miller and the Tories to face the public and the press, to defend their disastrous policies. They just blankly refused!

Later that evening, across the road in the pub we in the LPYS discussed the outcome of the meeting with the 'Pioneers'. In one or two cases, they were obstinate in their resolution to stay 'unpolitical'. However, five agreed to join the YS and all of them are taking part in regular street demonstrations and the November demonstration against unemployment in Liverpool.

A parliamentary seat that swung from being marginal to a seemingly safe Tory seat during the '79 election, is being re-awakened in anger at the spectre of unemployment.

Dole or Army?

While in Leicester for the textile demonstration, I thought I would take a trip to the local job centre to see what the town had to offer for young workers.

Outside, members of Leicester LPYS were protesting about youth unemployment—their protests were justified: of the five comrades there, three were unemployed and one was on a one-day week.

Their leaflets outlining the YS policies, copies of 'Militant' and 'Stop Thatcher' stickers went down well with people on their way into the job centre. When I entered the building, I found out why.

The display boards looked full enough; perhaps the situation wasn't so bad here. Radio Leicester, as part of the radio station's attempt to help youth find work, came over the tannoy system: "Ding dong—yes, finding a job can be as easy as listening to the radio" said the DJ in cool tones. The agitated glances at the tannoy by the 'customers' told me this wasn't so.

The 'textile industry' boards were quite full—but most of the cards were repeated, and every one of them wanted experienced workers. On the 'engineering' boards, not one of them had more than four cards—again experience was 'essential.'

But how does a school leaver get experience? With 11,000 redundancies in the town since the beginning of this year alone, very few firms, if any, are taking on apprentices.

Perhaps you get some training in one of these government training schemes? Not much chance of that. The board advertising these courses explained that most of them had a five to ten month waiting list, many had had 'recruitment suspended', or were crossed out with the words 'no course,' no doubt victims of the Tory cutbacks.

So I took a wander over to the '16-18' year old's board. There were only six cards on it. A couple again wanted 'experienced workers' (how

the hell is a 16 year-old meant to have job experience!). One offered the grand sum of £35 a week for a job as a porter, and another had 'wages: to be arranged'—a sure sign of poverty level wages.

The other card informed me 'vacancy: soldier.' Yes there was a job waiting for me in Her Majesty's forces, where I could be trained in many skills useful to society such as a tank driver or gunner. However, hours were 'to be arranged.'

The remaining card was for the Medical Corps, where you could earn good money patching up the poor suckers who fell for the previous card.

But then I saw the board I was looking for—vacancies for jobs with 'No experience required.' It even had some cards on it too!

There were six cards on it—two for prison officers, one for prison officer (female) and the remaining three again informing me of the wonderful world that awaits me in the British Army.

'Buy British' no answer

Nearly 6,000 people, mainly women, took to the streets of Leicester last week to demonstrate against the crisis facing the textile industry in the area.

The march, organised by the National Union of Hosiery and Knitwear Workers [NUHKW] called the demonstration because, as their leaflet pointed out, "over 5,000 jobs have been lost in hosiery and knitwear during the last 12 months."

But while the NUHKW leadership must be applauded in calling for this action, which is a major step forward for this traditionally quiet trade union, its demands offered no solution. The theme of the march was 'Buy British'; it also declared the march was 'non-political' and the local Tory MP John Farr was invited to address the rally. The fact that many textile bosses gave its workers time off to join the march—some even laid on buses—must set the alarm bells ringing for this union. These tactics, as well as the demand for import controls can only lead the textile workers up a blind alley. As Leicester West Young Socialist Nick Taylor, who is a textile worker

now on short time, pointed out, "Action against imports would not help in the long run. Other capitalist countries would retaliate and this country couldn't cope with reprisals."

"Workers would be hit in the pocket as they would have to buy British goods which are generally dearer, and would end up losing their jobs as companies collapse in the face of reprisals."

To back up Nick's point, only recently the British capitalists got their fingers burnt when they tried to stop £10 m's worth of clothing imports from Indonesia coming into the country. The response of the Indonesians was to "block potential orders from British companies worth up to £500 million; £160 million of these were at an advanced stage of negotiation." ["Observer," November 2].

Forming an alliance with the traditional enemies of the working class—the bosses and the Tories—can only blur the real issues facing this industry.

Rather, the bosses are to blame for the collapse of the industry. Their failure to reinvest the profits back into

new machinery is the real reason for the crisis in the textile trade. Nick explained how he has to work with machines built before the last war!

Had the union leadership put class policies to the fore they would have received enormous support, not only from their own members but the local labour movement as well. This was shown by the workers from the Sunray Dye company who, rather than deck themselves out in red, white and blue, made up placards using front pages of the 'Militant'. The local YS joined them and soon a whole section of the march was chanting 'Tories out' and 'sack the bosses, not the workers', rather than the union leadership's chauvinistic demand of 'Buy British'.

While the decision of the union to mobilise its members in defence of jobs must be applauded, lining up alongside the bosses and the likes of Tory MP John Farr [who owns tracts of land in South Africa] will provide no solutions for the textile workers. The union's fire should be aimed at those whose crazy profit system is to blame for the crisis.



The Sunray Dye workers on the march at Leicester. Their anger was directed at those who are responsible for the crisis; the bosses and their representatives, the Tories.

IRAN - IRAQ WAR

Which future for Middle East revolution?

The Iran-Iraq war exploded onto the world almost without warning, like a thunderbolt from a clear blue sky. Such is the underlying instability and uncertainty of our time.

Only in August the Economist Intelligence Unit concluded that, "For the short term, Iraq has far too many international difficulties and weaknesses to contemplate an outright confrontation even with a crumbling Iranian regime and its demoralised army."

Weeks ago the capitalists were crowing over the weakening of OPEC in the face of a world glut of oil. The West had, we were informed, anything from 100 to 120 day's supply of oil. Now the alarm bells, if not actually ringing, are being brought to readiness.

Not only has the war cut off Iran's modest exports (about 700,000 barrels a day) but more importantly Iranian bombing has stopped Iraq's exports of nearly 3 million barrels a day. By the end of the war the oil production and refining capacities of the two countries will have been damaged enough to be unserviceable for many months. Suddenly the 'surplus' seems dangerously little!

The capitalist states are even more afraid of the possibility, still not ruled out, that the war may spread to the southern end of the Gulf, to the Hormuz Straits, despite the assurances of the belligerents. Sixty per cent of the West's oil flows through these narrow straits.

The Gulf war not only reveals the inherent instability of the Middle East, but underlines the relative weakening of the super-powers, US imperialism and the Russian bureaucracy. No longer can they resolve things rapidly through pressure on client regimes or by pulling the strings of puppet states. As a 'Times' editorial remarked, "the days are long gone when 'crisis management' by Moscow and Washington was thought to be a remedy universally applicable to the world's trouble spots."

Despite having built up the Shah's regime as the West's "policeman" in the Gulf (Iran

was the biggest purchaser in the Third world, spending half its oil revenues on arms sometimes more sophisticated than those available to NATO), the imperialist powers are now virtually paralysed.

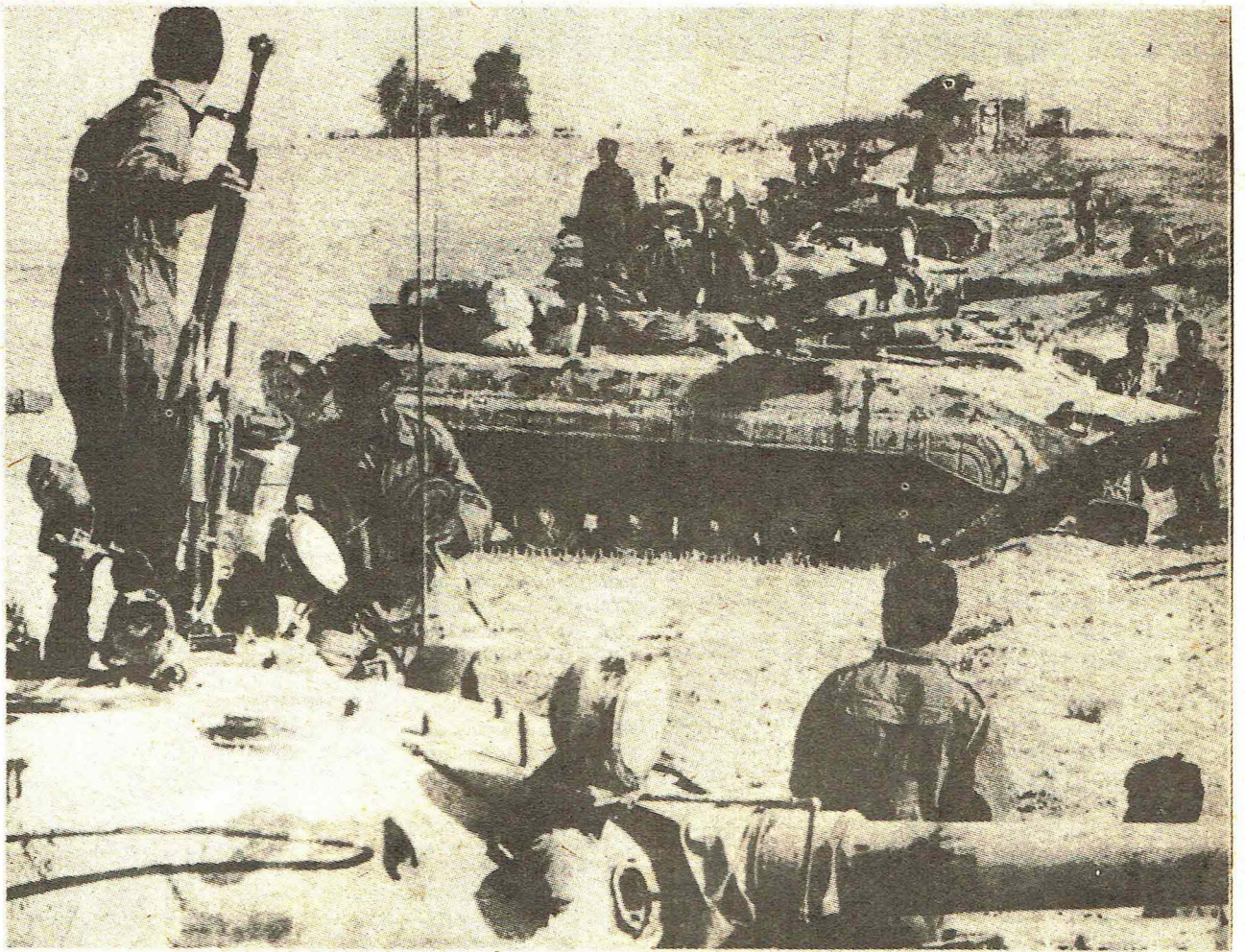
It has been said that the USA and the other NATO states would be forced to intervene if the Straits of Hormuz were completely blocked. But on the other hand, as 'The Times' solemnly warned, a direct intervention would open a Pandora's box of "unpredictable consequences".

Gulf sheikdoms rattled

The reactionary Arab sheikdoms around the Gulf have already been badly shaken by the effects of the revolutionary movement in Iran, and in supporting Iraq. They are hoping to rid themselves of the threat of revolt from their own workers and peasants. But the spectre of revolution will not go away so quickly or easily. Like the Iranian revolution and the uprising in Mecca last year, these latest events will ensure that things will never be the same again for these rotten regimes. They can see no end to the nightmares of burning oil wells and refineries.

Iraq's declared war-aims are the establishment of Iraqi sovereignty in the Shatt-el-Arab waterway and Arab control of three small islands in the Gulf near Hormuz. Iraq is completely landlocked except for the Shatt-al-Arab, and for the whole of the lower 40 miles the Iranians control the east bank. Given the revolutionary developments in Iran and the coming to power

By
John Pickard



Worried about the influence of the Iranian revolution and wanting to take advantage of the lack of central power there, the Iraqi clique invaded Iran.

of the Khomeini regime—with its influence on Iraqi Shiites—the Iraqis may well have felt a threat to their strategic position.

The Iraqi Ba'ath regime describes itself as "socialist", but in reality it is not an economy of complete state ownership. Despite limited land reform and the domination of the economy by the publicly owned oil industry, landlordism and capitalism have remained in Iraq. The regime of Saddam Hussein (he was in effect the 'strong man' behind the President) has only consolidated himself on the basis of the most ruthless totalitarianism.

Amnesty International has ample dossiers on the murderous methods of the Ba'ath. That regime has become a by-word in the Middle East for torture, repression and the complete denial of democratic freedoms.

Despite attempts by Hussein to build up his own popularity by trying to raise living standards and by stage managing Assembly "elections" this year, the corruption within the regime and the political repression have continued to create an underground opposition. The Iranian revolution has only added to the pressures on Hussein.

The Ba'ath government is overwhelmingly dominated by Sunni Moslems, but the biggest single religious group in Iraq are the Shia, co-religionists of Khomeini. In the last two years, discontent, as in Iran, has channelled itself through the medium of the Shia clergy. Earlier this year the government arrested and executed leading Iraqi Shia Ayatollahs. In a further attempt to stem the tide of opposition, thousands of Shia were forcibly expelled from Iraq on the flimsiest pretexts, over technicalities of citizenship, for example.

All of these factors will have loomed large in the final decision to go to war with Iran. Hussein may hold

himself up as the champion of the ethnic Arabs in Iran (Khuzestan or Arabistan) but there is not the slightest indication that they would be any better off under the Ba'ath than under the Khomeini regime.

In reality, the war which began in earnest in September is an escalation of a border war which has been going on for months. Wars do not arise upon the whim of leaders but from the social and national antagonisms. The new war in the area is not simply a product of 'Iraqi aggression', it is the result of these contradictions which were created and fostered by imperialism in the past.

As in other areas of the ex-colonial world, the retreat of imperialism from direct colonial control bequeathed "states" that are a patchwork of nationalities. The borders of the modern "Third World" states have more to do with

the contending interests of the old colonial powers than with any 'natural' divisions on national or ethnic lines.

Decaying capitalism and landlordism have kept these states in a position of poverty and backwardness and this in turn has enormously exacerbated the national tensions.

Imperialism's legacy

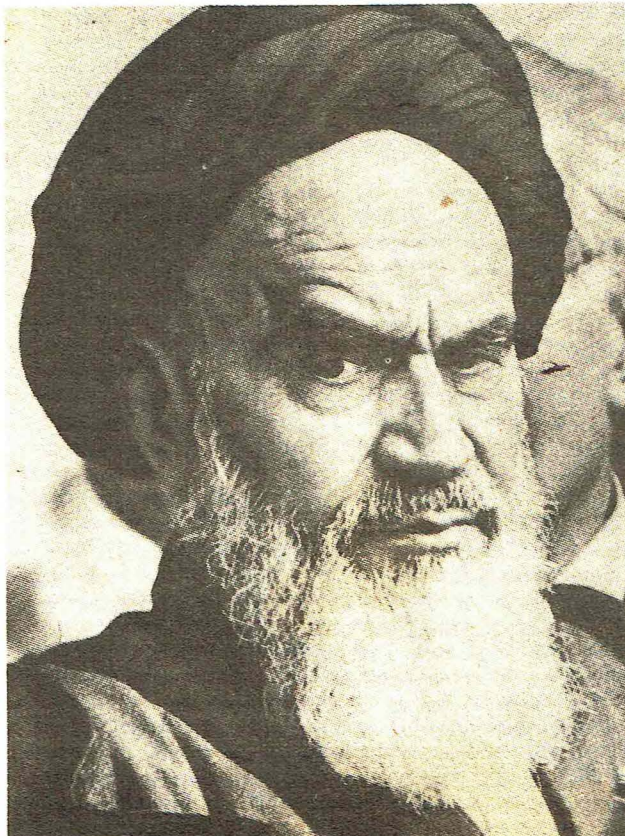
Marxism cannot hold as sacrosanct the artificial states and boundaries left behind by capitalism. Despite the revolution in Iran, the theocratic government of Khomeini offers no better policy on the question of the nationalities than does Hussein and from that point of view, socialists cannot support either side in the war.

But the question does not end there. More is at stake

than simply territorial or national issues. The development and direction of the revolution in Iran needs also to be considered. As 'Militant' has explained in earlier articles, the special conditions in Iran led the revolutionary movement to adopt a religious character. Revolutions are processes that often encompass many years, and even now, two years after the movement began, Iranian society has yet to settle key social and political questions once and for all.

The strikes of the workers forced the revolutionary government to nationalise most big industries and the banks and insurance companies. But the question remains as to whether or not the Khomeini regime is capable of pulling together the strands of production into a planned, state-owned economy, even on a bureaucratic basis. The issue of political control has

Neither the Iranian regime of Khomeini [left] nor Hussein's in Iraq [right] offers any way forward for the working people of the area. Both viciously repress the different nationalities within their borders.



SWEDEN-FORWARD INTO '1976'

Travelling through Sweden today is like watching a re-run of an old film, first shown in Britain four years ago.

I arrived in Stockholm to witness on television a demonstration of a large body of workers who had just chartered a special train to protest outside the Swedish Parliament against the closing down of the steel plant in their home town.

Switching over to the Parliamentary debates, which are televised in Sweden, I listened to Prime Minister Felin, the leader of the Conservative-Liberal-Centre coalition announcing drastic cuts in the public and social welfare services.

These attacks on the famous social or welfare services of Sweden are to be more severe than the original public expenditure cuts made by the Callaghan Labour government when Denis Healey was forced to seek financial assistance from the International Monetary Fund. The coalition government, which has a parliamentary majority of one, proposes to cut public expenditure by 7½ billion Kronen [i.e. £800m].

The mass general strike and lock-out in Sweden last May was on the whole a victory for the 90% organised Swedish trade union movement. The bosses—who at first arrogantly declared that there would be no wage increase this year were forced to pay out a national 6% increase.

However, although this demonstrated the enormous strength of the Swedish trade union movement and re-awakened a spirit of militancy, it did not prevent an actual fall in the real wages of the workers. Since May the rate of inflation has been running at 14%-15½%.

The government has also increased VAT on all goods to 23% and this has meant a steep rise in the prices of all food and household goods. Further VAT increases are now proposed.

Though official unemployment is still only a little under 3%, factories are now closing down almost daily, especially in the steel industry. Also redundancy is being achieved by the system of not replacing—'natural wastage' of labour—a technique with which we are familiar in Britain. This means that especially among young people unemployment is rising fast.

All the grim symptoms of capitalist decay are therefore beginning to show themselves in this land of advanced techniques and broad culture, which in the past the right wing leaders of our labour and trade union movement have pointed to, as the great reformist example for the British workers to follow.

As yet it is probably only the more politically advanced sections of the Swedish labour movement that have grasped the fact that the apparently strong capitalist economy of Sweden is now irrevocably

caught up in the world economic crisis of capitalism and that the period of reformist affluence has come to an end as it did in Britain at the beginning of the seventies.

All the old panaceas and nostrums are being produced by the spokesmen of Swedish capitalism, as well as by the right wing Social Democratic party officials who thought that the so-called 'mixed economy' had removed the terrible contradictions of the capitalist system.

On a television discussion on the crisis the LO [Swedish TUC] speaker thought the situation was "not so disastrous after all".

All that was needed was some 'clever' adjustments and the continuation of the huge government subsidies to the great corporations that would otherwise close down because of the decline in their profitability.

If tax concessions were made to the workers, then the trade union bureaucracy would be able to persuade them to accept lower wage increases, when the next national wage negotiations began!

The banker replied this was no good at all! The government was now running a budget deficit of nearly sixty five thousand million Kronen. "This could not go on".

Sweden was not as credit-worthy as it had been. It was now becoming a debtor nation on an international level, where it had previously been a creditor.

The Liberal as usual tried to square the circle, and called for 'equality of sacrifice.'

The Communist was asked how the workers could have higher wages, when Sweden was 50% dependent on exports. His answer was the extraordinary statement that Sweden [capitalist Sweden] must become less dependent on exports! He did not say how this could be done when those in control of the surplus capital were—as in Britain—refusing to invest in the home industry because of the existing low rate of profit on capital investment.

No-one suggested that the answer is to break out of the framework of this rickety capitalist system and re-organise the whole of the economic and social life of society by means of a socialist plan of production aimed at meeting the needs of all the working people, 'by hand and by brain' instead of for the profit requirements of a minority of big businessmen.

Though most of the present leaders of the Swedish labour movement do not have a glimmer of this idea, my own experience speaking and listening at working-class gatherings all over Sweden showed that this idea is beginning to dawn in the minds of a growing number of workers, and sooner than some may expect, they will take the road to socialism.

By
Dudley Edwards

also finally to be settled.

Recently, oil production was only about one third of the pre-revolutionary levels and exports one sixth; industry limps along at about 50% of its previous capacity; inflation and unemployment are growing problems. In February the 'Communist' Tudeh Party's newspaper complained that the state had only confiscated "270 property owners" while the vast majority of the 2,000 "big capitalists involved with the former regime" had come out unscathed.

Even a radical Moslem paper ('Azadegan') asked, "For what reason are the capitalists authorised to continue fleeing the mostazafin (the underprivileged)? By what miracles are the feudal lords raising their heads in our country?" These statements and questions may exaggerate the real position, but they must reflect a degree of uncertainty over the social gains of the revolution and the direction of the government and the economy.

The main political force in Iran is still the Moslem militia, the Pasdaran, which has been used by the Khomeini clique to suppress the independent workers' organisations. The left papers, parties and militias were driven underground earlier this year. In the power struggle between President Bani-Sadr, it is clear that the Moslem clergy control the real levers of state power. The war will have an effect on these questions.

The Iraqi Ba'ath clearly expected that the revolutionary changes in Iran would have weakened the latter's armed forces. It is true that most high-ranking officers were purged last year and dozens were executed. Many units elected their own commanders and refused to recognise the authority of appointed officers. The armed forces were a microcosm of society at large.

'Le Monde' reported, "Protest, as in the factories and universities, is rife among the enlisted men, the NCOs and the younger officers...regiment after regiment, unit after unit, ignores orders to go off into the troubled areas of Kurdistan or Khuzistan."

These revolutionary changes, coupled with some shortages of parts have curtailed the use of advanced military hardware in the war.

Nevertheless, among the revolutionary soldiers, among the Moslem militiamen and within the masses as a whole, the war will be seen as a revolutionary war. At least for the moment, the Khomeini regime will be strengthened. The Iranian masses are well aware of the fact that former generals of the Shah have been in and out of Baghdad over recent months and that they, along with the former Prime Minister Bakhtiar, have called for the overthrow of the Khomeini regime.



Iraqi and Iranian workers and students will be justifiably horrified by the war. But the worst possible reaction would be an uncritical support of their "own" government rather than judging the issue from a class standpoint.

But it is one thing for the workers to oppose Khomeini from the standpoint of workers' democracy—opposing the obscurantism and bureaucracy of the Muslim clerics—and it is something quite different for these reactionaries in exile to call for his

overthrow.

The generals who have been courting the Baghdad government would be willing to see all the gains of the revolution drowned in the blood of the workers, with the re-establishment of the old Savak (military-police) regime. Even under normal circumstances the war could have been expected to produce a rallying around the government.

The Iraqi threat temporarily at least consolidates the national consciousness. That would be even greater where the masses see the war as one against the former Shah's henchmen.

The rapid development of the war has led to attempts to re-establish the Iranian army on more regular lines. It is possible that such a re-establishment, even without the Shah's generals, could present an alternative power base opposed to the Muslim clergy and militia. But at least for the moment, the bulk of the fighting on the ground, on the Iranian side, has been conducted by the militias, backed up by thousands of civilian volunteers.

It has been the ferocious resistance of these elements which has surprised the Iraqi army strategists. Noting the tenacity of the defence of Korramshar and Abadan, 'The Times' commented: "Never invade a revolution." At the time of the abortive American raid to free the hostages, Khomeini threatened to defend Iran with a militia of "twenty million" and under pressure, the government may well order a general mobilisation on the basis of the militias that are already there.

The authorities in Abadan appealed to the population to dig trenches and to fight street by street. It is one thing to lob shells into a city from several miles away, but the Iraqi forces have found that it is entirely different occupying it. The capture of Korramshar has been painfully slow and it seems that the Iraqi generals are reluctant to commit ground troops to the battle, probably for fear of their reliability.

Whatever the future fortunes of the war, they will inevitably affect the social

developments in Iran. In the aftermath, the social gains of the revolution may come under threat: more likely the social and economic gains would be consolidated, but the democratic rights of the workers would be challenged one way or another—either by the clerical bureaucracy or by a new military bureaucracy.

But it would be wrong fatalistically to accept that the gains of the revolution could only be consolidated on these lines. The workers' movement itself could play the decisive role in the future. The Tudeh Party claims to organise 700,000 workers in trade unions. If the party based its programme and policy on the outlook of the Bolsheviks then it would be possible to accelerate the revolutionary changes, but that would be on the basis of a democratic workers' state that would end the war.

Bolshevik workers party needed

A workers' party would have to set itself the task of breaking the masses away from the reactionary clergy, inscribing on its banner Bolshevik demands: for the extension and development of workers', peasants' and soldiers' committees; workers' control of industry; land to the peasants; the organisation of a popular militia based on the trade unions and peasant unions; the granting of the right of all nations to self-determination; and an international appeal to the Iraqi troops.

The regime of the Ayatollah's can never solve the national and international questions facing the Iranian masses. Only a workers' government can really guarantee the social advances and end the war. For what forces of Marxism do exist in Iran, the war is an opportunity to point out the need for a fraternal federation of democratic socialist Middle East states.

Likewise, for the Ba'ath government in Iraq, the war will usher in unexpected results. Hussein calculated that a swift victory would enhance his own prestige at home and abroad. But after weeks of war, the Iraqis have gained a few square miles of desert and have a tenuous hold on Korramshar—achieved at enormous expense in lives and economic dislocation. Ironically, the Iraqi economy is more dependent on its oil revenues than Iran's and may have suffered similar long-term damage. Hussein's own position may come under threat more than ever before after this debacle, not least from opposition elements within the Iraqi army itself.

Iraqi and Iranian workers and students in Britain will be justifiably horrified by the war. But the worst possible reaction would be an uncritical support of their "own" government, rather than judging the issue from a class standpoint. The only policy that will genuinely benefit the working masses of the whole region is a policy of revolutionary struggle at home and internationalism in the wider context.





Letters

**VIEWS? COMMENTS? EXPERIENCES?
CRITICISM? WRITE ABOUT THEM TO:**

MILITANT, 1 Mentmore Terrace, London E8 3PN

Wreckers— latest plot

Dear Comrades,

Before you read about it in the 'Mail and 'Express', I thought you might be interested in the newest 'plot' to unseat a right-wing MP.

Young members of the Party (obviously bed-sitters) have stated they will not vote for him when he stands for re-selection. The reason is that he has acted "contrary to the recognised behaviour expected from our MP."

The Tory press and television will be giving you the 'truth', interviewing the loyal MP (who has now been in parliament for nearly thirty years) and exposing the party wreckers (young extremists).

The only problem for them is the argument is between the local Tory MP and the Young Tories!

I wonder why I've had second thoughts on seeing Thanet West Young Tories getting the same abuse (I mean, where do they get their money?) as Newham's Young Socialists in the Tory press.

For the record, MP Mr Rees-Davies was suspended for six months from the legal bar for "professional misconduct" (reportedly for telling a lie to a judge, claiming his client didn't mind him taking the afternoon off—when he did!).

This follows years of bad publicity which has seen him in court, not just as a lawyer but as a defendant.

The Young Tories' views of Thanet's MP are shared by most people in Margate.

Yours fraternally,
Barry Lewis
Thanet.

Lessons of Northern Ireland

Dear Comrades

Until recently I had always been a bit confused by articles on Northern Ireland which when talking about prison conditions stated that army and government measures would be used later against workers in Britain.

These comments seemed unclear until I read that the British army has just brought from the big engineering firm GKN Sankey a number of armoured personnel carriers. These machines are designed to replace the presently used Humber 'pigs.'

The difference between the vehicles used now and those just bought is that there is a 'Police Task Force' version which has the option of coming with or without machine gun. Up to 12 soldiers or policemen in full riot gear can be carried inside.

GKN has turnover of over £1,750 million—a big section of British industry with big links with the state, particularly in Northern Ireland. It also shows that the proposed use of these vehicles is not only for Northern Ireland but for future use in this country.

Yours fraternally
David Churchley
Glasgow Cathcart Labour Party

Diet for the starving?

Dear Comrades

After reading the article on the real cause of famine in the third world I came across a statement by the chief of refugee operations for the United Nations in Pakistan.

It appears that the government has just received 16,000 tins of a weight reduction diet powder! This was donated by an American firm along with hundreds of disposable nappies and sanitary pads.

It is costing the Pakistan government thousands of rupees a month to store these entirely inappropriate goods while nearly one million refugees need food and shelter in the area.

The diet compound is of course useless, and incidentally can only be used under a doctor's advice and can not be used by babies, young children, pregnant women or the elderly.

But some real food lies in warehouses—unnamed European governments have sent several plane-loads of luxury foods, including Danish Blue Cheese and truffles!

Examples like these are undoubtedly repeated time after time, and compounded by corruption among officials. It shows the inability of capitalism to give even a crust to the starving, only with planning of the world economy and market under socialism will the hungry be fed.

Fraternally
Ken Aiken
Secretary, Ballymena
Labour and Trade Union
Group, N Ireland

Marx, Engels, Lenin, Trotsky, Wyatt?

Dear Comrades

'Militant' readers may have missed the brilliant and incisive analysis of the nature of class conflict which appeared in the 'Sunday Mirror' (26.10.80), so I write to enlighten them.

Not the way to stop baby deaths

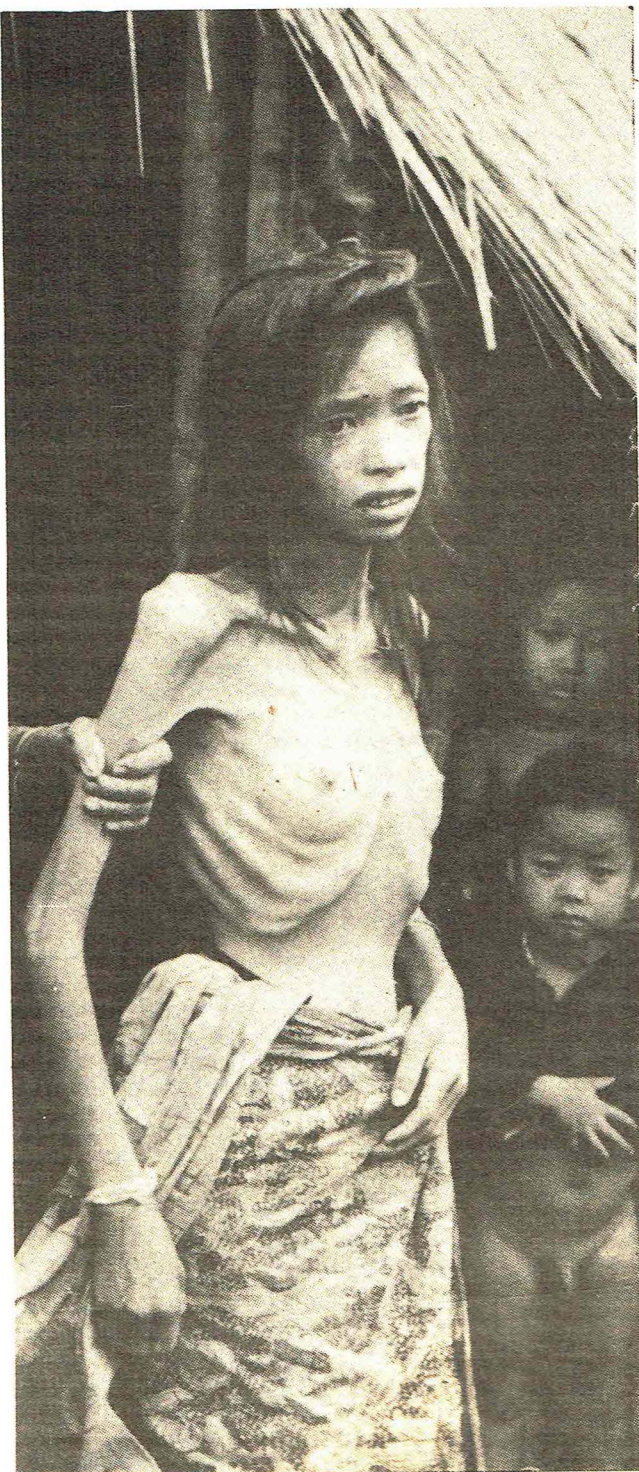
Dear Comrade

Many women are concerned at recent suggestions supposedly aimed at improving women's health.

There have been proposals that some financial incentives should be paid to women to go to ante-natal clinics. Some Tories even suggest that only mothers who attend ante-natal clinics should receive maternity benefit.

It is obviously important to encourage these clinics because of the high perinatal death rates, but these proposals approach the problem from the wrong end.

Friends who have had to suffer the experience of ante-natal clinics tell me that the reason people don't attend is not lack of willingness but because many clinics are like cattle



The Tory columnist Woodrow Wyatt reveals that class conflict does not arise because of the profound injustices and inequalities inevitably generated by the capitalist system, but because some workers receive salaries paid directly into a bank account and others receive a weekly wage packet. Eureka!

So it seems that jewels of

Marxist terminology such as 'class consciousness' will be cast away as the intelligentsia en masse rally behind the ideas of this great scholar who has once again dispelled the myth that Tory social theory is sterile and decadent.

Yours fraternally
Ian Pitchford
Ashfield CLP

Endless problems

Dear Comrade

The Tory cuts have far reaching effects on everyday life. In the last few days I've been told these two examples.

A friend, a NUPE branch secretary, went into hospital for a check-up. The decline in the food he found terrible. For breakfast there was choice, a poached egg or toast but not both. One evening meal was one fish finger, nine chips and a few peas. This was at 5pm and had to last until 8 the next morning.

In the past even if the food wasn't much, at least there was bread and tea to fill up on. No more. There was only one slice of bread at a meal and there was no bread or biscuits with a cup of tea.

To add to it the hospital's supply of sugar was restrict-

Setting us free

Dear Comrade

The following job advertisement appeared in the 'Glasgow Evening Times' recently:

"We require a smart person to make tea, etc, who also has a pleasant telephone manner, and is willing to act as a relief telephonist on occasion and carry out other general office duties. Five day week."

As capitalism falters and stumbles its way into economic bankruptcy, savagely attacking the living standards of workers and demanding more sweat and toil for less reward, can we expect to see similar advertisements appearing in the press? One for the National Coal Board might run as follows:

Very cunning

Dear Comrades

In the recent battle for the Labour Party leadership, a startling new revelation took place.

All the mass capitalist media had been singing the praises and virtues of Denis Healey as the best man for the job. Even top Tories joined in. Lord Thorneycroft on Robin Day's TV panel show, was reeling off his virtuous devotion to "monetarism," "mixed economy," "defence," etc as well as his willingness to defy party conference policies etc.

Yet apparently all this is a ploy! The blinding revelation came from the 'Daily

"We require a smart young person, with pleasant manner, to make tea in the canteen. Must be willing to help out at the coal face and clean showers after each shift."

Unfortunately the reality is no joke. Despite the conditions set out in the first advertisement, this Glasgow firm will receive hundreds of replies from young people desperately looking for a job, and prepared to take anything.

Is this what Thatcher and Joseph mean when they say that they are engaged in setting free the creative genius of the British people—to allow these parasites to more and more exploit and live off the backs of the young and inexperienced?

You had better believe it!
Yours fraternally
Jim Halfpenny
Govan CLP

Mirror' (Nov.3)... "There is no doubt whom the Tories fear most: Mr Healey. That's why they praise him so loudly—they want to ruin his chances."

Well, and here's me thinking all the time that all the praise and support for Denis Healey was for the best representative big business could get to hopefully lead the party away from the dangerous course of socialism.

Maybe by the same criteria all the attacks and abuse levelled at Tony Benn and the Marxist wing of the Labour Party by the mass media is because secretly they want us in control of the Party. Oh how confused I am!

Yours comradely
Bob Faulkes
Hackney Central LP

Jack London— not the best?

Dear Comrades,

I was interested by the review of the play "Jack London: the man from Edens Grove" (Militant 24 October).

For attention to be focused on the early American socialist writers must be a good thing, if only to dispel

the commonly held belief that the USA has no tradition of socialist thought and action.

Jack London is, however, perhaps not the best example. Several of his works contain ideas which border on racialism, a strange contradiction in a man with such commitment to the cause of the working-class.

The review also contained a rather badly worded passage on this point. To say that London "explains how the savages of Alaska were better looked after than the working class of modern society" is not something I would expect to read in 'Militant'.

To refer to the original inhabitants of Alaska as "savages" is the kind of thing you might read in an imperialist history book, not a Marxist newspaper! Also the passage seems to suggest that the industrial working class deserves better treatment than the ethnic population.

I am quite sure this was not the intention of the article, but I do think it could have been expressed more clearly.

Yours fraternally,
Kevin Broxton
Chairman, Chorley CLP.

ed and there were several days without any—the hospital had run out.

Fortunately his wife brought in sugar, bread and cheese to keep him going. Many of the nurses were ashamed by the lack of food but he got several to join NUPE.

The other example is in housing. Another family have decided to improve their house including tap course and plumbing. They were told they would get an improvement grant. Eventually they got a quote, four days after Heseltine put a stop to all spending on housing.

These are two of the almost endless list of the problems caused by the Tory government. No wonder anger is mounting.

Yours fraternally
Bill Hopwood
Thornaby Labour Party

ads

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SEMI-DISPLAY: £2 per 2 column centimetres.
All advertisement copy should reach this office by SATURDAY

SALFORD Marxist Discussion Group Ireland: Divide and Rule 7.30 pm, Thursday 4 December Phone 061-793 5808 for details

BRIGHTON Militant Readers Meeting. The fight Against Unemployment, its causes and its cure. Hear: Peter Taaffe, Editor, Militant; Jim McEwan, Littlehampton LPYS. Tuesday November 25th. 8pm. Wagner Hall, Regency Road off West Street, Brighton.

MANCHESTER Militant Trade Union Discussion Group Lessons of the AUEW Elections Tuesday November 25. For details ring 061-681 4858.

OLDHAM/ROCHDALE Local Raffle. 1st prize—No. 102 Kathryn England. 2nd prize—No. 147 Reg Sidebottom. 3rd prize—No. 42 Mrs B. Pourder.

PUBLIC MEETING—Which way forward for Labour? Speakers: Andy Bevan and Joan Maynard MP. 2 December 1980, time 8.45 pm, at Cedar Halls, Ruskin House, 23 Coombe Road, Croydon.

NAMIBIA in our backyard. Public Meeting and Benefit. Saturday November 22 5-11pm. Co-op Hall, Seven Sisters Rd, N7. Public Meeting and film show from 5pm to 7.30pm. Speakers: from SWAPO; Bruce Page, Editor of the New Statesman; Dr. Ralph Gonsalves: United Peoples Movement of St Vincent and the Grenadines. Benefit: Radical cabaret: Tony Allen and Combo Passe; Pete Zero; Melody Airs Disco. Admission £1 before 7pm, £1.75 afterwards. Organised by Namibia Support Committee, Tel. (01) 388 5539.

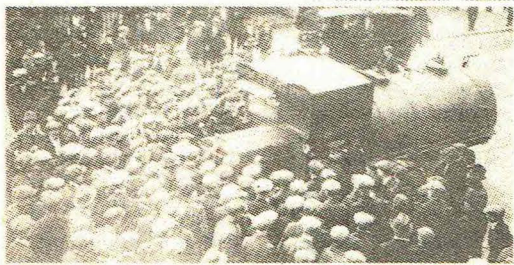
MIKE LEVENE'S 1980 flat-warming. Saturday 22 November, 10.00 pm till late. 9 Dinant Avenue, Canvey Island (tel. 60187). Bring bottles. Meet 8 pm at the "Silver Jubilee", Link Road.

CHORLEY counter demonstration against the fascist New National Front, organised by Chorley Labour Party. Sunday 23 November, 12 noon, Town Centre car park behind Chorley bus station. March and rally addressed by Labour Party and trade union speakers.

NEW YEAR'S GREETINGS IN 'MILITANT'

Send greetings to the labour movement in the New Year's edition of 'Militant'.

Rates:
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6 column cms...£6 (up to 25 words).
Display: one-sixteenth page...£10; one-eighth page...£20;
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Cash with copy please, to arrive by Saturday 20 December. Cheques/POs payable to 'Militant'. Send to Circulation Dept., 1 Mentmore Terrace, London E8 3PN.



Militant Calendar 1981

New 'Militant' calendar for 1981 out now. The calendar, complete with coil binding and hook, portrays with photographs events from the history of the British labour movement. Limited edition. Send £1 [plus 20p p&p] with order [5 or more post free] to Calendar Offer, 1 Mentmore Terrace, London E8 3PN



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Build Militant

Area	Received	% of target achieved	Target for year
Eastern	3696		5,000
East Midlands	3381		3,800
Hants & IOW	4048		4,600
Humberside	1578		2,500
London East	5212		6,200
London West	2913		4,700
London South	4568		4,700
Manchester & Lancs	2818		5,100
Merseyside	3819		6,000
Northern	4381		7,300
Scotland East	2164		3,200
Scotland West	3956		5,000
Southern	4281		5,900
South West	2181		3,200
Wales East	1554		2,800
Wales West	2903		3,100
West Midlands	6465		9,000
Yorkshire	4284		7,300
Others	10235		10,600
Total received	74437		100,000

TARGET FOR YEAR-£100,000

WANTED MORE MUSCLE

The prospect for council tenants of paying at least an extra £2.50 a week for rent is horrifying.

It is made worse by the realisation that, of the 'saving' of £650 to £850 million, about £600 million has been earmarked for greater allowances for manufacturing industry on corporation tax.

Of course as usual, the bosses won't invest their windfall in industry when there is no prospect of a market, but even the Tories are good enough at arithmetic to see that if expansion is planned, this can only come from more income than expenditure. This brings us to the 'Militant' fighting fund. This week's figure of £1,089.97 means that we still need just over £25,000 in the next two months, or about £3,200 every week until 10 January! We've had only a trickle of money so far from the thousands of raffle tickets that have been distributed to 'Militant' sellers, so get your stubs and cash in straight away!

We'll be adding this on the end-of-year figure, but we must get well within striking distance of £100,000 before then in order to reach our target. We need more muscle for our fighting fund.

This means three times the effort of the past week! It's something we couldn't perhaps ask our readers to keep up for the whole year, but for the season of

By Steve Cawley

goodwill, presents, and traditional support of good causes (to say nothing of parties etc.) it's quite possible.

Apart from £91.51 before expenses at a Readers' Meeting in Mansfield, most of this week's total came from collecting cards, rattling tins, donations from regular readers of the paper when they get it delivered, and bonfire parties (two of which in Birmingham raised over £70). Readers J Bell (Nottingham) and M Holmes (Basildon) gave us £15, and tenners included those from G Byron (Glasgow), S O'Neil (AUEW, Birmingham), and H McIlroy (London).

Two East Kilbride supporters, A Dewar and P Murray forwarded to us a total of £35 collected from Scottish students! How about other students? Over £100 from TU expenses, honoraria etc. from readers in London, Manchester and Shipley indicates that unlike some councillors and MPs, supporters of a Marxist paper are keen to see they do not benefit personally from representing their fellows.

Thanks also to D Moss (Torbay, £6) and for fivers to D Marshall (Pontefract), D Evans (AUEW, Bristol),

THIS WEEK £1,089



Badges on sale at Bristol YS demo—a great fund raiser.

and F and B Kidd and M Hanbury (London) amongst others. As usual we can't mention all donations, but how about donating to our fighting fund the change from a note?

Three Derbyshire NUM officials, T Maxfield (President), and A Fairest and G Dolman (High Moor) obviously appreciate our need to rely on readers. How many other regular readers would be prepared to do this? With our current

circulation, this would easily pass our £100,000 target by itself—if every reader gave us the change from a £1 note for their 'Militant' for just two weeks between now and the end of the year!

All the socials, badges, jumble sales, penny jars, posters, tea money, Sunday lunches, breakfasts (!), lifts, gardening, spot-the-ball, sale of chutney, and many other excellent ideas would put us well on the way to £110,000.

MILITANT WINTER HOLIDAY DRAW

Win a winter holiday abroad for two worth £500—can be taken any time mid-January to mid-April!

Second prize: a weekend for two in Paris! Eight other prizes include record tokens and a portable TV.

Tickets only 10p from your 'Militant' seller. All proceeds to the 'Militant' fighting fund.

SUPPORT GARDNERS' OCCUPATION

"The first great act of defiance," is how a cartoon by a Gardner's worker describes their fight against redundancies.

Factory occupation is an issue which is certainly being discussed by other workers too. At the factory of ICL [International Computers Limited] in Winsford workers staged a sit-in

for 24 hours last week in protest at threats to close the plant.

It is vital that all sections of the labour movement take steps to give the maximum possible support to the Gardner's workers, whose fight is an inspiration to all workers

faced with redundancies or closure.

Morale at Gardner's is still high. Many workers enjoyed a play and social at the local Labour Club on Thursday.

The workers remain determined to win. If the redundancies go through, many of the workers might well never get a job again.

Support is still coming in. There was one letter—plus £100—from a London man whose father had just died. His father, said the letter, would certainly have prefer-

red the money to be spent to help the working class struggle, rather than on masses of flowers.

Workers at Manchester's Housing Department, who have just gone on strike themselves, still managed to donate £10. This shows the importance of the Gardner's struggle in the local area.

Halford AUEW-TASS and Dorley branch Labour Party are trying to fill a two-ton truck with food to deliver on 29 November on their way to the Liverpool demonstration.

Many of the Gardner's workers will themselves be going to Liverpool.

Gardner's workers are now hoping to receive about £2,500 for two weeks, following a ballot in favour of a levy by the AUEW district.

Other AUEW districts should now be taking up the question.

All Militant readers should make sure the support is raised in Labour Parties, Young Socialist branches, trades councils and trade unions.

SUSANNAH KENT: A 'FREE' PRESS?

At ten minutes' notice, workers at Susannah Kent, Jarrow, were told the factory was to close. In an effort to save their jobs, the workers occupied.

They also tried to get their case publicised in the local papers. To no avail. The bosses' local press (owned by the multi-million Thomson group) was not interested in the workers' side of the story.

The occupation committee staged a protest at Thomson House, and wrote to the editor.

"We always believed there was freedom of the press," the workers' letter concludes, "but what has happened to us in our factory and what we have come up against has opened our eyes and ears, and has made us aware of what is happening to not only us but to the most important people, the workers, who are having to suffer."

"But we will be heard, and we will be noticed and we will have the backing of the workers till our campaign is won."

In an appeal to the labour movement bodies, the occupation committee explain what happened:

Up to recently Susannah Kent was a thriving concern, with management talking about orders for the next two years.

On the 22 September, the 86 workers were given ten minutes' notice of the firm's "voluntary liquidation". We have not had the pay owing to us, no holiday pay, and we have discovered that savings deducted from our wages have not been paid over. The same applies to our national insurance contributions and our union fees.

After the announcement of closure we immediately occupied the factory. Unfortunately, that occupation is now at an end. But we are fighting on to secure the money owed and demanding a full investigation into this company and its parent company.

For success we need the support of the labour and trade union movement.

Donations should be sent, cheques payable to "Susannah Kent Occupation Committee", to: Mrs Joan Hughson, 10 Richmond Court, Jarrow, and receipts will be sent.

BNF GAINS

Workers at the state-owned company, British Nuclear Fuels Ltd., have just received a pay rise and reduction in hours, reports J Moore from Birkenhead. The pay rise is 15% and the working week is down to 37 hours. "The BNF workers deserve these improvements, and so do other workers as well, like the firemen, mineworkers, carworkers, and the others."

No to "flags of exploitation"

Photo: Andrew Wiard (Report)



The mass meeting at Dover on 3 November voted to strike over 'pirate' ships

By Peter Groarhe and Sarah Cooper

The boats are the life-blood of the coastal towns of Folkestone and Dover. Without them, most of the trading and catering business would dry up. As it is, four crews are lost for every new ship—two old ships being replaced by one new type.

P&O, Sealink and Townsend ships didn't even leave harbour on 3 November because the men voted unanimously to strike over the pirate ships sailing under "flags of convenience".

Taking such "flags"

means registration in states like Panama, Liberia, the Bahamas etc., which (for a fat fee) reduce their insurance and health and safety regulations to a minimum, and cheerfully tolerate galley-slave wages and conditions for seamen.

The issue was thought over carefully by the men before the decision was made—the workers are concerned about losing their jobs.

However, approximately 6,000 men came out, even though the situation was not clearly explained to the crews and there was little local enthusiasm from the National Union of Seamen. The boat workers were influenced mainly by their brothers in Liverpool, who they look to for a lead.

American, Israeli and Scandinavian dockers are supporting the strike action. The "flags of convenience" would affect them as much, if not more, than British crews if used against them.

VAUXHALLS: PAYING FOR THE BOSSES' FAILURES

Thousands of Luton Vauxhall workers who have been on a shorter working week for four months have now had their hopes dashed of returning to normal working after Christmas.

On 5 November the company announced an April-September operating loss of £84,000. With interest charges, the net loss became £7,639,000.

Earlier this year the company applied for government aid in a bid to prevent shop-floor redundancies, which made up 75% of the wages for the days employees were not working.

This scheme (six months maximum) finishes in January, after which Vauxhalls must either pay the wages themselves, or find alternative ways of cutting costs. The company will have to re-apply for aid at the end of this month, trying to prove to the government that they are still in a viable trading

By Tracy and James Paterson

(Luton West Labour Party)

position.

When announcing its loss, the company blamed the 12-week Ellesmere Port dispute, the steel strike, high interest rates, and reduced demands for vehicles due to increased competition from imports!

A company statement described Vauxhalls' vehicle range as "undoubtedly the finest in the company's history." This is quite amazing when you consider the conditions in which those vehicles are being built. The last major investment in plant and machinery at Luton was in the mid-'50s.

The main cause of the present crisis with Vauxhalls—and the British motor industry in general—is the inadequate investment over the past twenty years. Considering that German workers have three times as much machinery behind them, and Japanese workers

four times as much, it is not surprising that British cars are not so competitive, either abroad or at home.

Unemployment in Luton is high enough. Thousands of Vauxhall workers joining the jobless would mean devastation for the town.

So far, there have been several misguided calls from the Luton Vauxhall workers for selective import controls. But because Vauxhalls is part of the multi-national General Motors, import controls would halt the supply of components from abroad, and ultimately force more redundancies within the company.

The only guaranteed future for workers within Vauxhalls would be to nationalise the company under democratic workers' control and management.

The way forward lies through fighting for:

- ★ £100 minimum time rate tied to the cost of living;
- ★ A 35-hour week;
- ★ No redundancies;
- ★ Work-sharing with no loss of pay;
- ★ For a democratic socialist plan of production.

ICI CATCHES COLD

ICI Doncaster stewards spoke to Rob Jones

ICI Doncaster is one of the ICI fibre plants now threatened with large scale redundancy. Joe Blackham (branch secretary T&GWU) and other stewards at the plant, spoke to Rob Jones, for 'Militant'.

According to Joe, some 220 of the 1,200 workforce at the Doncaster plant are threatened with redundancy: They include 150 weekly-paid staff, but every section of the workforce, including management, are threatened.

The company has issued a statement requiring a 30% improvement in productivity to allow this redundancy to take place! They say they cannot afford these sackings unless the remaining workers increase output. If this performance is not achieved

they are threatening total plant closure.

Nationally, ICI have agreed with the unions that there would be no compulsory redundancy. How can this be achieved when whole plants are threatened with closure?

The stewards at Doncaster have adopted an initial position of no enforced redundancies, while calling for a meeting with national officials and unions, allowing all sections to send delegations, to obtain proper national guidance.

Unfortunately, there is no meaningful joint shop stewards' organisation in ICI nationally, except in a formal sense, despite pushing from Doncaster. Such a committee, building real unity, seems a necessity if a concerted fightback is to be made against this threat to ICI workers.

Without a national lead, individual plants can be picked off one by one.

Firemen preparing for battle

Bath

"Last time we went into strike action in a medieval, chivalrous way. We gave advance notice to the employers and watched troops take over our jobs. But attitudes are entirely different now."

With these fighting words, Paddy Creton, shop steward at Bath fire station and Brigade Committee delegate pointed out that the whole station supported the work-to-rule. For the first time ever, they had the support of the Fire Officers' Association.

A shift operational fireman for 20 years, Paddy exposed the hypocrisy of this Tory government: "White-law gave his support to the

formula in 1977, and now when the formula becomes operational for the first time, the employers renege and betray. Those firemen who voted Tory in 1979 as a reaction to the Labour government's handling of our previous action will never do so again."

Accepting that the firemen are once again facing a battle, Paddy called for the support of the whole TUC: "Firemen have been trodden on by everybody, and now the Tories are attempting to turn one section of the public sector against another. There was bitter disappointment at the lack of support we got from trade union leaders in 1977. This time, the whole public sector must unite together in an all-out fight for victory."

Merseyside

In an attempt to co-ordinate opposition against Thatcher's 6% limit on the rate support grant and specifically to highlight the Fire Brigade Union's fight, the firemen on Merseyside have sponsored a public meeting of all the groups of workers concerned.

The meeting will take place in the concert-room, St George's Hall, Liverpool City Centre, at 7.30pm on 1 December and all are welcome. Speakers will include Colin Barnett TUC, Terry Harrison [Liverpool District Labour Party], Terry Fields [FBU] and Ian Lowes [G&MWU].

Firemen call on all public sector workers to unite in this struggle. If firemen are defeated, and their apparently secure pay agreement dishonoured, what chance other workers?

Mike Lawson, Secretary, John Allington, Chairman, Merseyside FBU

Support needed!

Ken Cameron, general-secretary designate of the FBU, has welcomed the Labour Party Young Socialists' offer to organise meetings in every area to build support for the firemen. This is in recognition of the tremendous support the LPYS gave during the nine-week firemen's strike in 1977.

The aim is to reactivate the mass public sympathy and support seen in 1977. The firemen have been deliberately singled out by the Tories: a defeat now would deal an enormous blow to the other public sector unions.

Meetings should be organised, with speakers from the FBU and other public sector unions, to express the need for unity in the fight against the 6% limit. LPYS members should contact Brigade or regional secretaries of the FBU to arrange speakers.

Ken Cameron spoke to Mike Cotter [Erdington LPYS].

Basildon

Two weeks ago there was no talk of industrial action, but there was a total change-around with the outright rejection of the 18%, Terry Segas of the FBU Executive and Gordon Cook an FBU delegate told Mike Waddington and John McKay (Basildon LPYS).

The one-day strike idea is very popular, although what the men wanted was a general strike of all public-sector employees.

Firemen feel they are much better prepared for industrial action this time. Certain senior officers have left the National Association of Fire Officers to join the FBU to take part in the action.

Senior officers are unwilling to collaborate with the army in strike-breaking. Part-time firemen in Essex are also in favour of industrial action.

WANDSWORTH - KICKING UP THE DUST

"Are you going to kiss it or kick it?" asked one of the stewards, referring of course to a certain part of the management's anatomy.

"Kick it!" was the answer from 250 dustmen at a mass meeting in Tory-controlled Wandsworth last week.

Wandsworth's Tories, Thatcher's eager puppets, are trying to get the 'Dust' to accept one of the council's three new bonus proposals. These range from 39 jobs lost and 30% increase in work-load, to 51 jobs lost and 41% increase in work-load, with saving of about £300,000 a year.

Management originally claimed that the work-load had dropped since the bonus scheme was introduced in 1968. This was proved to be wrong, however, when the dust stewards cornered the council into carrying out a "bin count".

In an effort to jolly things along, the Tories decided to give one month's formal

notice of withdrawal, from 1 December, of the section's £21 a week bonus scheme—which has been in operation for 14 years.

At the first mass meeting the "Dust" decided that we would not negotiate under duress. When told of the men's decision, the council, after quickly consulting their leader, Chopper Chope, still said they would cut out the bonus scheme.

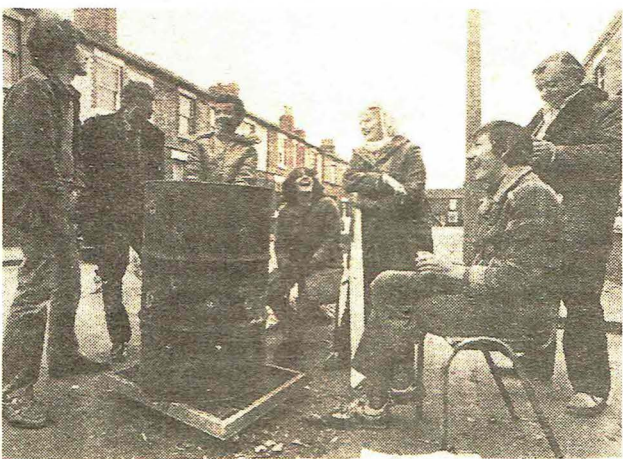
At the most recent mass meeting, one man asked "surely they don't want a dust strike and a fireman's strike at the same time?"

It was agreed to stay within the disputes machinery. But if the bonus is withdrawn the dust crews will revert to their old non-productivity based work methods, i.e. completing only 75% of their present work.

Dennis English

(GMWU Wandsworth)

King Henry pies



On the picket line at King Henry Pies

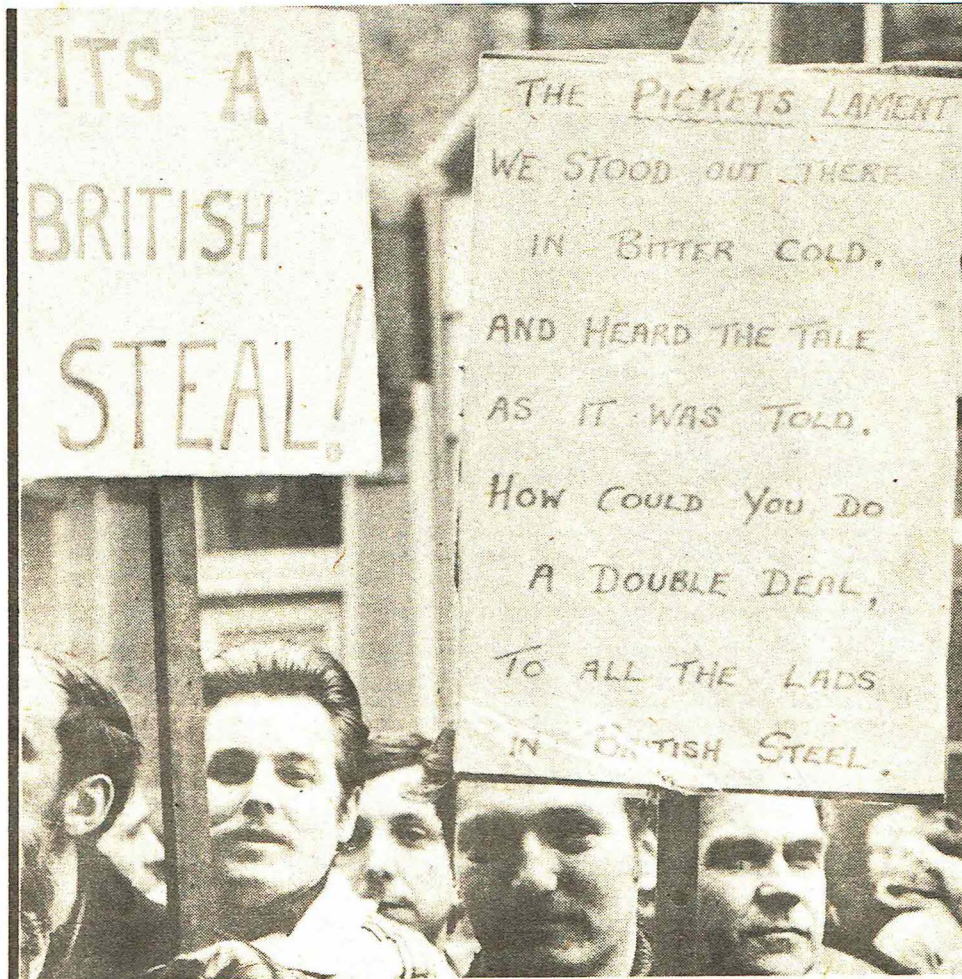
The prolonged and eventful strike at King Henry Pies in Manchester ended last Friday, when management conceded formal recognition of the union.

The Bakers' Union won an agreement to send an official to the factory once a week. A ballot is due to be held in a year's time to see if

the union can attain full recognition. The union's district secretary, Bill Harrison, told 'Militant': "This has been the longest strike this union has ever fought. Under the circumstances, we came out quite well."

By John Hunt

ISTC special conference DEFEND EVERY JOB



The lessons of this year's strike are fresh in the memory of ISTC members

Photo: Militant

The special conference of the Iron and Steel Trades Confederation is being held at the end of the most tumultuous year in the union's history.

By Brian Ingham

Never before has the steel industry faced such a massive programme of closures. Never before have steel workers fought with such a prolonged, bitter and extensive battle as this year's 13-week steel strike.

This conference should draw up a balance sheet of the union's experience over the last year, examining thoroughly the lessons of the strike and recent closures. It must then outline a bold plan of action to thwart any further destruction of the British steel industry.

There is, however, considerable disquiet and anger throughout the ISTC that conference is limited to one day only, with no resolutions from branches. It seems that conference will merely discuss a report of the union's activity. At this critical moment, it appears there will be no recommendations for action from the union executive.

The conference must therefore assert itself, demanding a guarantee from the union's leadership of decisive action to bind the union together against more redundancies and to stop any further erosion of steel workers' living standards.

The strike showed the considerable strength of the ISTC, and its capacity to fight. BSC management were forced to concede far more than their original insulting 2% offer. But with more resolute leadership,

far more could have been achieved.

Delegates should point out the fundamental mistakes made during the strike. Jobs were always the key question for steel workers, yet while spelling out the dangers to jobs, the strike was limited to the issue of wages. After the battle, BSC wasted no time in pushing forward new closure plans.

Delegates must also draw attention to the leadership's vacillations and hesitations throughout the strike.

When private-sector steel workers were eventually called out, this was only after considerable rank-and-file pressure. The call, moreover, went out in a half-hearted manner.

Steel workers received tremendous backing from other workers, but there were exceptions, where even some union members were handling steel. The inability of the ISTC executive to mobilise all steel workers undoubtedly affected the broader support from the labour movement.

Finally, delegates should ask why, in their zeal to call off the strike just as wider support was growing [eg. from the Liverpool dockers], the executive by-passed the democracy of the elected lay central negotiating committee.

But it is above all, to the

future that the conference must look. BSC's new plan is due next month. 'Militant' already has reliable information that Normanby Park in Scunthorpe is to close. Rumours are also rife that either Port Talbot or Llanwern, or both, may be closed. There is also a question over River Don special steel-making works in Sheffield.

Conference must demand BSC's immediate and unconditional withdrawal of all closure threats. Contingency plans should be prepared in case these threats are not withdrawn.

The strike committees should be re-formed to lead action at local level. Mass meetings should be held in all areas, with a recommendation of united action to stop the closures. Threatened plants must not be isolated. ISTC should also call for maximum unity across all unions, with a conference of shop stewards from unions in all plants to agree a common strategy.

If there is a bold lead, steel workers will respond, as the strike conclusively proved. Sweet reason with the BSC management and the Tories will not save a single steel job. Action is the only way.

Every job must be defended. The books must be opened to trade union inspection so workers can see the mismanagement of BSC. The ISTC's 'New Deal for Steel' estimates that for every ton of steel lost through 'market forces,' another has been frittered away by management ineptitude.

The Llanwern Action Committee will be taking an important initiative, with a meeting calling for a national steel workers' action committee. By drawing together left-wing activists from all steel works, this would be a vital step towards turning the ISTC into a fighting body, and the meeting deserves fullest support.

STEELMEN. MINERS. PUBLIC SECTOR WORKERS DEMAND:

UNITED FIGHT AGAINST JOB LOSSES

With urgent demands for action, workers picketed the TUC's committee on nationalised industries meeting with the Wales TUC in Cardiff last Monday.

Called by the Llanwern Action Group, the lobby had the support of the South Wales Miners' Executive. Well over 100 public sector workers from all the major sections were there.

They were there to try to meet the Nationalised Industries Committee to emphasise to them the dire need for a united, trade union fight-back against closures and massive job losses.

Wyndham Conniff, one of the leaders of the Llanwern Action Group, told 'Militant':

"What we need to do is to kick Scholey out and to introduce workers' control in the steel industry. The steel strike which ended on 1 April 1980 has brought home to many of us the

By Terry Burns

See also article on ISTC conference page 15

failings within our own industry.

"For many years we have gone along with BSC's policy of isolation, which is intended to produce 'healthy competition' to ensure the correct levels of productivity and profitability. This has meant that we have lived in fear, breathing a sigh of relief when an announcement of plant closure didn't include our jobs or our plants. We believed that through such closures, our own future would be secure.

"Although state-owned, our industry has been run by capitalist rules of profit which have failed miserably.

Complete nationalisation, with workers' control, is required—so the industry serves the community.

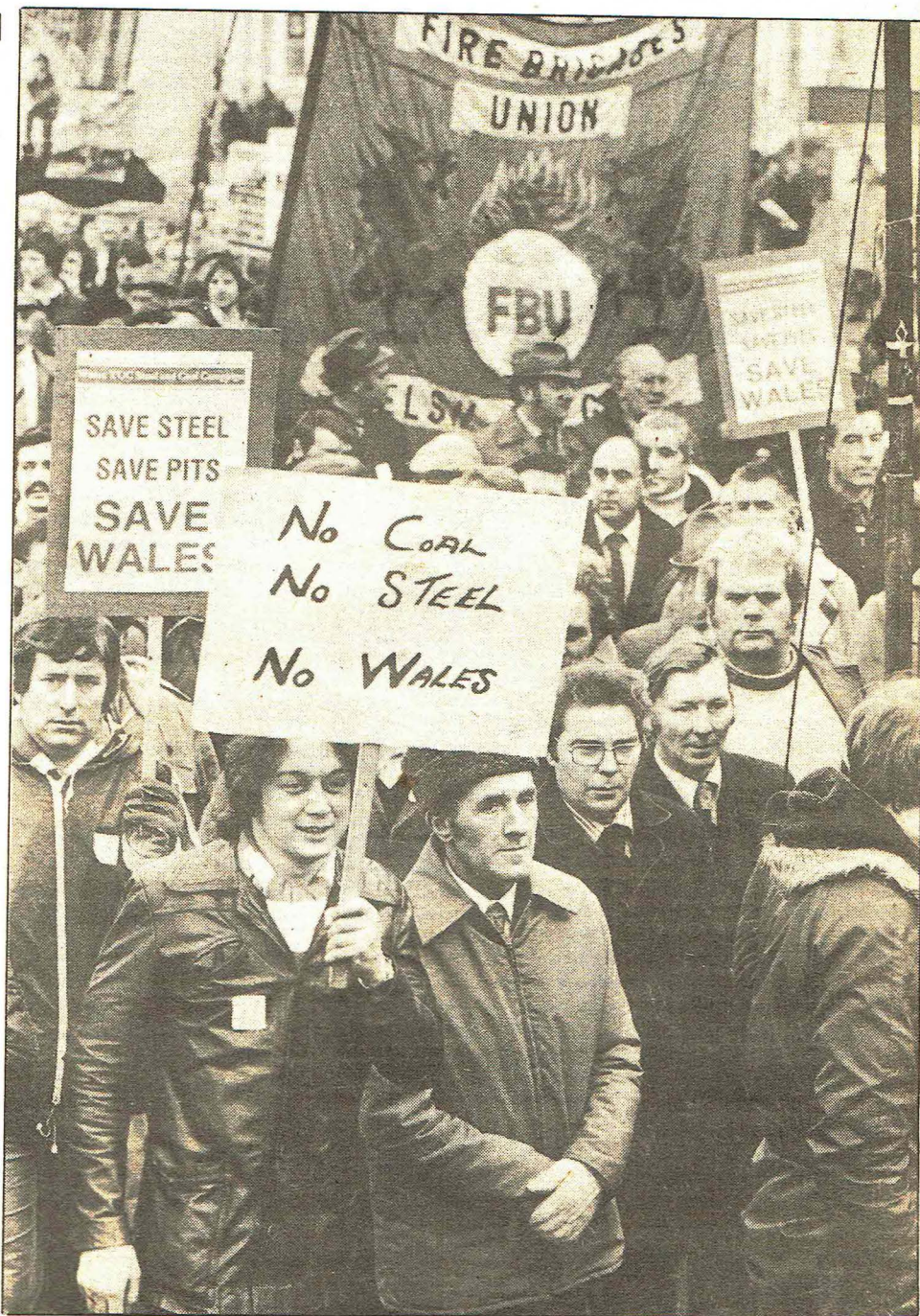
"Unity and democracy in our trade union movement is what is needed. Involvement of 17 trade unions has proved detrimental, with unaccountable trade union leaders playing the power game at our expense. One industrial trade union would be the ideal solution.

"Would Duffy or Chapple relinquish their hold on our industry? However, much can be done by example and the need for reform within the ISTC is clear.

"Annual conference should be decision-making; regional executive members should be regional, rather than trade-based, as in the present complex structure; full-time officials should be elected for a fixed term of office, with real re-selection provisions.

"These three reforms alone would do much to strengthen our union in order to identify ourselves primarily as steel workers.

"We need action now. We must stand united as an industry, calling upon this conference and the Executive Council to resist any further redundancies or closures by taking whatever steps are necessary. If



"We feel the need for a National Action Committee within ISTC for a real struggle against closures." Joint action by trade unionists as on the Welsh demonstration against job losses this January will be vital

necessary they should call a national strike in defence of jobs and to secure the industry's future.

"No more Consetts, must be our demand. We feel the need to set up a National Action Committee to fight

within the union to secure a real union struggle against closures. At our 'fringe' meeting at the ISTC delegates' conference (1 pm on Saturday, YMCA, Great Russell Street] we will be attempting to set up such a

committee. "We must blazon across our banner: No redundancies! No plant closures! No overtime until full-time working is restored!"

CONSETT JOBS

CONTINUED FROM PAGE ONE

that we are a 'soft touch' in the North East. Not content with murdering Consett, they now want to finish off the whole of the neighbouring community.

No worker can feel secure in their jobs. Neighbouring factories like Ever Ready Batteries are already on short-time working, with 214 redundancies coming—and the management have raised this spectre of closure.

Ransome, Hoffman and Pollard supply 40% of all bearings to British Leyland. The Stanley factory produces bearings for the new Metro model. The other factories in the group at Chelmsford, Newark and Ferrybridge

should refuse to handle any work which is transferred.

Similarly, at the British Leyland factories they should block the supply of any bearings transferred from Stanley. The shop stewards will immediately begin visiting the other committees in the combine and the factories we supply.

Capitalism's crazy logic is driven home by this threatened closure. The Stanley plant is the most productive in the group. The workforce has cooperated over the years, particularly in relation to the slimming down of the workforce through allowed 'natural wastage'. Once there were over 2,000 workers at this plant.

The machinery is up-to-date, at least in comparison to most of Britain's engineering industry. Local management believe that the plant is viable, even the Department of Employment is prepared to give a temporary employment subsidy on the basis of the terms of performance.

All this means nothing to the directors, who are concerned only about profits.

In the Consett-Stanley area, redundancies are currently running at 150 a month. If this closure goes ahead, then unemployment will be 50%. There is currently one job vacancy in Stanley.

Workers nationally must realise—it's our turn today, it will be your turn tomorrow!

EDITORIAL COMMENT

The workers at Ransome, Hoffman & Pollard urgently need national backing, including immediate practical support, in their fight against closure.

This area of the North East epitomises the struggles nationally against an avalanche of redundancies. Like Upper Clyde Shipbuilders in 1971, a bold struggle in Stanley could become the focal-point for organising the whole movement ar-

ound. Even in the immediate area there is an example of success. A small engineering factory at Leadgate successfully overturned the threat of closure.

Stanley workers also have Consett behind them. 'Militant's' recent article on Consett [by John Pickard and Arthur Clarke, 7 November] has been put up in the factory and discussed by the shop stewards.

An immediate response is needed from the whole of the labour movement, and especially by BL plants supplied by RH&P. Messages of support and suggestions of practical help should be sent so that the Stanley workers are shown that the whole movement is backing them.

This week, stewards will be discussing support for the 29 November Labour Party rally against unemployment, and it is likely workers from Stanley will be going to Liverpool for the demonstration.

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