

Militant

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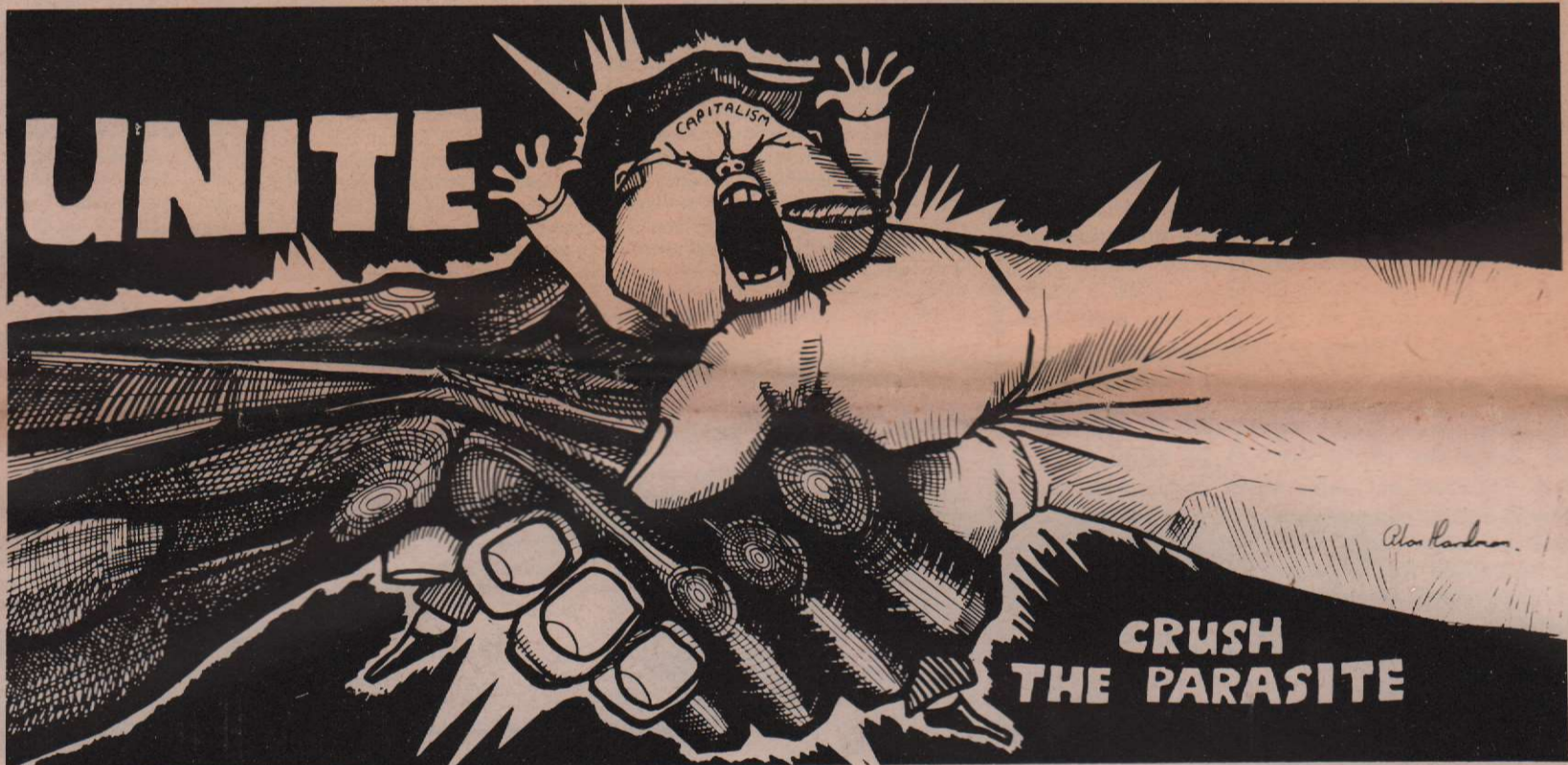
THE MARXIST PAPER FOR LABOUR AND YOUTH

19 NOVEMBER 1976
ISSUE 331

ACT AGAINST RACIALISM

THE FACTS

- ★ It is not the immigrants who are taking the jobs of the unemployed. There are only ¼ million immigrant families. There are 1.3 million unemployed. In 1930 there were no immigrants. Unemployment was 2.8 million.
- ★ In 1975 42,000 more people left the country than came in. In the last five years the exodus has been a net 294,400!
- ★ Immigrants claim less off the taxpayer than average. In 1966 the average cost of social services for immigrants was £52 per head, compared to the national average £62 per head [1961 prices].
- ★ On average immigrants pay more tax than most workers. 72% of all black immigrants work while only 62% of the total population does.



The march against racialism through London on Sunday, November 21st, is an historic step forward in the struggle for unity between black and white workers.

The General and Municipal Workers union issued a leaflet against racialism to its members. Tottenham and Kensington Labour Parties have held demonstrations. Many other sections of the labour movement have taken similar initiatives. Now all the strands of this activity are being pulled together in this joint march and rally.

Activity against racials and fascists has never been more vital. The joint vote of the fascist parties in the Walsall North by-election was 2,982! That is a warning to our movement—which we would ignore at our peril.

The labour movement is the only body with the power to destroy racialism. Our campaign to drive the ideas of the racials back into the gutters must continue.

We should fight with facts. The mass media constantly launches hysterical tirades against the black working class. And they must not go unanswered.

Trade union newspapers should

give space to articles answering the arguments of the racist. Shop stewards courses should be held and special pamphlets and leaflets should be produced. And all this must be done urgently and regularly.

Racial Lies

A programme of education is vital to arm the ranks of the labour movement against the lies and slanders of the racials.

Areas like Skelmersdale New Town have few black immigrants but male unemployment is in the region of 30%. Contrary to what the racials claim, it is not the black workers who are responsible for the 1,350,000 on the dole. Unemployment comes when capitalism can no longer provide jobs.

Capitalists are the people that the racials try to shield. They and their system have created mass unemployment. They are responsible for the housing crisis. At a time when the housing crisis has never been worse, 200,000 building workers are out of work. It is simply not profitable to build houses!

Rather than causing our prob-

lems black immigrants suffer worse than most from these problems. Thousands of immigrants are crammed into slum dwellings. Unemployment among black youth has reached astronomical proportions.

We should fight for maximum unity through the traditional organisations of the British working class, the trade unions and the Labour Party. Black or white, we are all part of the 80% of the population who collectively own only 1% of the stocks and shares.

We are all being exploited and made to suffer economic hardship by the privileged 10% who own 70% of the wealth. It is in the interests of these capitalists that we have disunity in our ranks.

Immigration

In order to win the mass of black workers to its banner, the Labour Party must repudiate its past policy of immigration controls. It is not for us to play the numbers game with racials. We must explain that if the system cannot expand, if it does not need new labour, and if it is emptying out existing labour, then we must throw out the system

not the immigrants.

We must stand together, particularly when fascists subject immigrants to physical attacks. It is the duty of the labour movement on such occasions to spring to the defence of its members. Remember Hitler went from verbal and physical violence against the Jews to mass terror against the German labour movement.

Fascists are intent on worming their way into our movement in order to wreck our unity and ultimately to destroy us. We should not give them even a toe-hold. All members of a fascist organisation should be automatically expelled from the labour movement.

Racialism will only finally be defeated when we defeat the system and political methods which have given racist ideas the possibility of breeding.

The Labour government is at present pursuing an economic strategy designed to salvage British capitalism. The election manifesto has been abandoned. The principles of Socialism have been overturned. This has brought with it mass unemployment, rising prices, cuts in vital services and a fear for the

future. In this atmosphere of uncertainty the ideas of the racials have had a certain echo.

The campaign against racialism must go forward. The Labour government must break with its present policies. It must return to the fundamental ideas of socialism on which the Labour Party was founded. That is the way to end the reign of capitalism and the cancer that it carries of racialism.

**Black and White Workers Unite
Drive Out the Racials
Forward to Socialism**

By Brian Ingham

PRICE RISE

Owing to the very high increases in the costs of raw materials and postage, we are forced to put up the price of the Militant to 10p from the next issue 332. Readers, we are sure, will appreciate the fact that we have kept the price down to 8p for almost a year, despite unprecedented rises in costs.

Over the last year, readers will have noticed a continual improvement in the quality of presentation and content in the Militant and we assure you that this will continue.

Militant

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TORIES TAX THE DOLE

This year has seen the highest level of unemployment since the Second World War. The savage cuts in public expenditure at present in the pipeline are likely to push this figure up to an even higher level. The aim is to provide extra profits for the employing class.

Yet, true to form, when a chorus of Tory voices was heard this weekend, the object of their anger was not the system which produces unemployment and its miseries, but the system's victims: the unemployed. They were supposedly enjoying a 'Welfare State bonanza'.

Firstly, one of the richest scroungers off the state in existence, Prince Phillip, launched an attack on the Welfare State for reducing "initiative". Then Tory MPs and Tory press together rounded on the Labour government for its annual increases in state benefits like unemployment pay.

With screaming headlines like the Daily Telegraph's "Tory outcry at £5,000 on the dole" and the Sun's "Slap tax on the dole, Healey urged", the press showed they were not above crude distortions in order to split employed workers from the unemployed workers.

One MP claimed that the unemployed would get an £8 a week rise, outside the social contract, and all the newspapers published the Tory shadow Social Services Minister's demand for unemployment benefit to be taxed.

The Child Poverty Action Group have shown that the basic rate for unemployment benefit is very low. After the increase it will be £12.90 for a single person and £20.90 for married couples. The working class have squeezed out some extra concessions like earnings related benefit and tax concessions. For the first six months of unemployment only, a couple can get £38.52 per week plus £4.05 for the first child and £2.55 for subsequent children. After six months out of work, this benefit, scant as it is, will be cut with the earnings related benefit.

After a year even the unemployment benefit and tax rebates go and the family falls below the poverty line. Between 1974 and 1975, the number of people solely dependent on supplementary benefits rose by 660,000 to over 2 million. Most of the increase was caused by long term unemployment, and this situation is probably even worse in 1976. In areas like Scotland, Merseyside and so on, long term unemployment has become a fact of life.

The CPAG also point out that the increase is nowhere near £8 a week, though this sum could easily be justified in terms of human need. The increase of £3.90 per week will hardly cover the increased cost of living. Patrick Jenkin was quoted that the average family man would need to earn £75 a week to get more spending power than someone on social security, and that it was unfair for the working man to shoulder all the costs of unemployment. The concern of the bosses and their Tory representatives for the ordinary worker would seem more genuine if they were fighting for better wages and lower tax thresholds for the low paid worker who starts to pay tax well below the official poverty line.

Unemployment and other benefits were traditionally based on the most basic minimum needs, just sufficient calories and proteins to keep the worker alive and re-employable if necessary. The situation has only marginally improved today.

What is £63 a week for a family with four children? The minor improvements that have been made have benefited all workers. Large scale unemployment has been used in the past as a reserve army of cheap labour relying on the desperation of the unemployed to weaken the strength of the trade unions. By removing the improved benefits the Tories want to return to the days of the thirties when fear of unemployment can be used as a whip against the working class.

Far from buckling under the Tory criticism, the Labour movement must demand not just the maintaining of present benefits but the provision of work for all—or full maintenance.

The Labour government must resist these demands from big business whose tax arrangements [legal and otherwise] lose the Exchequer far more income than any Social Security fraud. The government should take action against the real parasites, the monopolies subsidised to the tune of £11 million per day. With socialist planned production, unemployment and the need for these benefits would disappear. Cutting the dole queues is the only reduction in benefit payments which the labour movement can accept.

FIGHTING EDUCATION CUTS

YORKSHIRE

The threatened closure of the Hems-worth College of Further Education by the Wakefield Authority has already brought with it a groundswell of opposition from local trade unionists, Labour Party members and community groups. In support of what is defined as a 'community college' NATFHE, [National Association of Teachers in Further and Higher Education] members in the area are being asked to support staff at the college in attempts to achieve negotiating rights with the Local Authority.

Already the Yorkshire Executive of the NUM has stated its opposition to the proposed closure of the college. A demonstration was held in Wakefield on November 17th against the closure.

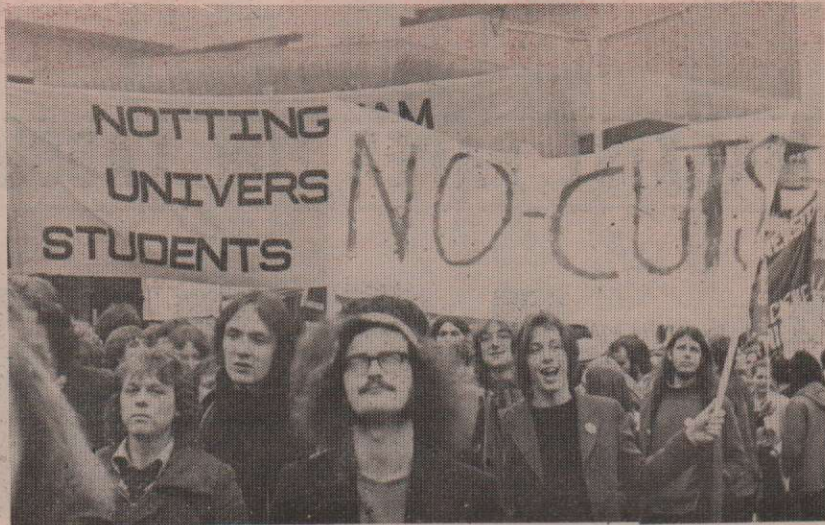
Situated in a mining area, the college, small as it is, provides vital courses in Mining and Engineering, Social Services and Commerce. Recently Link Courses have been established in Auto, Mechanical and Electrical Engineering and the Mining, Engineering and Science Department alone is responsible for 543 students.

Now it is proposed that the college facilities be taken over by the local High School and used as an annex. The closure of the Mining Department alone would force students to make a 2 hour journey to the nearest college; a journey which would be impossible to make for shift workers.

With absolutely no consultation with the unions, the Principal or the Governors, the local authority is discussing plans to start by closing the Mining Department first in order to provide accommodation for an initial 100 school students from the local High School. Why, we might ask, is this deemed "necessary"? Public Expenditure cuts make it "impossible" for the local authority to build a new High School, and so it prefers to rob Peter to pay Paul! Furthermore the Authority maintains that there will be no staff redundancies and that courses at the college will continue unaffected!

Set up by miners' subscriptions as a miners' institute, in an area which is today described as an 'educational priority', and where unemployment runs at almost 12%, the college closure is being recognised as an obvious threat to the future education and vocational training of young people in the district.

Instead of grappling with a socialist solution the Labour controlled Council, the Education Committee and the Local Authority prefer proposals to cut educational provision in a sector which is frequently referred to as the "poor relation" in the educational system.



Students in action against cuts earlier this year.

PORTSMOUTH OCCUPATION

Much to the surprise of the authorities and the students union itself, 150 students occupied the principal's office at Highbury Technical College last week.

This move came after an emergency general meeting called to discuss the cuts. Like many other further education and technical colleges Highbury has a high number of working class students—apprentices and school leavers who can't find work.

These people more than anyone else will suffer from the proposed cuts. They include raising the cost of meals in the refectory although there are large numbers of students who already can't afford to eat at midday. Discretionary grants are available but are more and more difficult to get. These conditions prompted the students to take action.

International Socialist Society members proposed an immediate occupation of the principal's office. Despite the lack of discussion about the role of the occupation and the absence of any political alternative to the cuts, the resolution was supported by 150 students.

One of the students at the meeting said: "We will occupy until our demands are met." Our demands were 'No cuts!' In the present economic crisis that could be a long time!

The IS totally failed to give any real explanation of the cuts or any political lead. An IS member who said that the money saved by the cuts would go to industry did not point out that this was money taken from the working class and given to the bosses. Their only answer was to occupy and "force Winchester" (County Hall) to reverse the cuts.

The occupation took place on Thursday and carried on over night. On Friday we went over to picket at Winchester where, we were told, "all the power lies". Not

surprisingly the education officer just said that it was out of his hands and there was nothing he could do.

A letter of support was handed out from the NALGO workers at County Hall. This was despite a student saying over the megaphone—"You in there—still on your tea break. I suppose you have one tea break all day." After comments like that it was amazing that we got any support.

The occupation finished without achieving anything concrete but it did represent a new mood of militancy amongst students. This mood was given no direction by the leaders of the occupation or the IS. There was no attempt to discuss the cuts with the local trade unions or the trades council which would have been particularly useful as Havant Trades Council had organised a big meeting against the cuts and planned to begin a campaign in the area. Instead IS posed "Student Solidarity" as the way to defeat the cuts! In general the only students who had links with the trade union movement, the apprentices and sponsored students, did not take part in the occupation.

The students' fight against the cuts is the same struggle as that of the working class as a whole. Students alone cannot stop the cuts, their fight has to be linked to the might of the labour movement and this is the role which NOLS members should play.

We have to win students to the fight for a socialist alternative, so that they learn the lessons of their struggles and realise that their future lies in the hands of the mass organisations of the working class and socialist society.

By Paschal Egan

(Portsmouth LPYS)

By Jennifer Greatrex

(NATFHE)

Labour Students Expand as Marxist Wing Strengthens

The National Committee meeting of the National Organisation of Labour Students (NOLS) held on Sat.-Sun. November 13th-14th marked another step forward in the fight to build NOLS into a powerful force among students. No fewer than 21 new NOLS clubs were accepted into affiliation at the NC meeting. This represents a huge advance for NOLS, particularly in the non-university sector because only two of these clubs were university clubs.

Just as the Marxist wing of the labour movement has a much stronger position in the Labour Party Young Socialists than in the Labour student organisation generally, it is also noticeable that their support in NOLS is drawn mainly, though by no means exclusively, from the more working class non-university sector, the Technical Colleges, Polytechnics and Colleges of Education etc.

This was reflected in the new affiliations this year—an estimated 15 or 16 of the 21 new clubs are known to be sympathetic to the Marxist minority in NOLS.

Predictably, this growth has posed problems and uncertainties for the present NOLS NC majority which is opposed to a Marxist programme and which only won a majority at last year's NOLS Conference by the slenderest of margins after the debarring of over 20 delegates from voting.

It was brought to the attention of the NOLS NC that one of the largest pro-minority clubs, Liverpool University Labour Club, owed £48 in unpaid accommodation bills for a previous Conference plus about £100 for literature. Ed Bober, NOLS Vice-Chairman, and a spokesman for the minority, made it clear that such debts should not be tolerated. He moved that unless the debt was cleared ten days before this year's NOLS Conference, Liverpool ULC be deprived of delegation rights to Conference in the same way as Labour Parties who fail to pay affiliation fees are debarred from participation in Labour Party Conference.

Mike Gapes, NOLS Chairman, however, was not satisfied with this and moved immediate disaffiliation of Liverpool ULC! This ruling was carried despite the clear contrary advice offered by Nick Bradley (NEC representative on NOLS NC), who indicated support for Ed Bober's proposal.

A cheque for the outstanding debt presented on the second day of the National Committee meeting was not accepted and no further discussion was allowed.

The most scandalous aspect of the disaffiliation of Liverpool is that the closing date for the reaffiliation of established clubs is not until November 27th. This club has been disaffiliated before it has had the chance to submit

its reaffiliation application!

Debarred from sending delegates on similar grounds were York University LC, Leicester ULC and Cardiff ULC. York and Leicester owe less than £16 each and Cardiff owes money only for two observers to last year's Conference, not even delegates. If the money is paid off by Leicester and Cardiff by November 27th, they may be allowed delegation rights. The NOLS NC's ruling on York is "final". These are four of the biggest clubs supporting the Marxist minority.

Last year, deadlines for new affiliations were applied rigidly and correctly so. This year they are to be applied "more flexibly". Some two dozen new clubs were "provisionally" accepted into affiliation subject to ratification by Labour Party Youth Officers after the closing date. Readers of 'Militant' will not be surprised to learn that most of these clubs are thought to be sympathetic to the NOLS NC majority.

The majority is clearly shaken by the big advance of the Marxist wing of NOLS in new affiliations. In our view, it is always a sign of weakness when organisational manoeuvres are used as a substitute for the clash of ideas in open debate.

By Ron Graves and Mike Sheaff

(NOLS National Committee)



YOUTH CAMPAIGN AGAINST UNEMPLOYMENT

GLC HOUSING SCANDAL

Banner headlines in the lunchtime edition of London's Evening News [10/11/76] of "Share a Flat offer by GLC—the chance of a home for single people who would never normally be considered for council property" must have pleased those of us who have experienced the problem of trying to find a decent flat at reasonable cost in London. I phoned the number given for the flats and they were all taken up literally minutes after the article appeared.

Why, one may ask, after years of pleading have the GLC acknowledged the plight of the young homeless? On further reading of the article the answer becomes clearer. There are many flats owned by the GLC which on their own admission are "hard to let" even though the council waiting list and London's homeless figures have never been larger.

However, on visiting one of these "hard to let" flats the answer becomes even more clear. They are, to quote the 'Evening News', "mainly in the walk-up blocks built before the war." They are in need of much repair and modernisation work, often leaky and dirty and placed far from buses and shops. No wonder that after years on the council waiting list many applicants prefer to wait for more decent accommodation!

However the GLC have, due to the cuts, very little money to spend on modernisation, and only recently introduced package modernisation schemes—a cheap, quick job of covering the cracks of the worst of the GLC's housing stock. But even these substandard homes have a ready market. Among London's young homeless anything is better than the street or

some run-down hostel. It is these properties which the GLC are offering London's young homeless with very little hope of money being spent on them by the GLC in the near future. As the article quite clearly states, "only one offer will be made in each case and applicants must be prepared to take the tenancies as offered." Some choice!

Tenants of long standing have consistently fought for years for decent living conditions on the estates. Many tenants' leaders in East London fear this latest move by the GLC to let the unlettable as a direct threat to future maintenance and repair standards on the estates. As one tenant leader commented, "The GLC need not maintain our flats as they know they can let anything to those who are desperate enough. It's just like the trade unions fighting for better wages as the boss employs women and school leavers below the present rate."

Up to now only a few GLC councillors have been outspoken against the cuts which are threatening the living standards of GLC tenants. Instead of bowing to the dictates of the Government and the CBI they must explain to tenants the vicious stranglehold big business has over London's housing market and explain the necessity of a socialist solution to London's housing problems. The practice of letting unlettable property can only mean the eventual demise of decent GLC accommodation for London's workers. The fight for London's young homeless must be on the basis of the highest standard possible and not the standard of the 1930s.

A NALGO Member

YCAU
NATIONAL ASSEMBLY AGAINST UNEMPLOYMENT
Saturday, January 29th 1977; 1.00 pm-5.00 pm
Seymour Hall, Seymour Place, London W.1.

All labour, trade union and Co-op Organisations are invited to send **delegates** (no limit on the number of delegates per organisation) to this important event.

Speakers will include:
Emlyn Williams [President, S Wales NUM]
Nick Bradley [Labour Party NEC]
Pat Wall [President, Bradford Trades Council]
And a leading Labour MP

SUPPORT WIDENS

HULL

The Hull Youth Campaign Against Unemployment was launched this week at a meeting organised by Central Hull LPYS. The meeting was well attended and an excellent discussion took place on the need for the campaign and how it should be organised. A collection after the meeting raised £2.63.

Each LPYS has elected its own campaign organiser and all members are now contacting shop stewards in their areas requesting them to support the campaign and offering speakers to branch and committee meetings. Two requests for speakers have already been received. Area organisers of the major unions, TGWU, GMWU etc., MPs and councillors have been approached for sponsorship and a list of local sponsors will be drawn up in time for the printing of a local campaign leaflet within the next few weeks.

The campaign is of course being taken up at Labour Party branch meetings and

already one Ward has pledged its support and given a £10 donation. Speakers at ward meetings are also being arranged.

Three factories in each constituency have been chosen for concentration and after consultation with the shop stewards, meetings and leafletting of these factories will take place. The major shopping areas of each constituency are also to be leafletted but it has been decided that a local leaflet will probably have more effect on the shoppers.

The campaign will also be discussed at the next Trades Council.

There is a lot of work to be done but if the campaign is to be a success **every comrade has to "pull his weight"** and this is why we in Hull have set ourselves **deadlines** for each of the activities above. By doing this we can ensure that the work is being done and see what sort of reaction is being received to this.

We shall be sending in regular reports of how the campaign is going in this area and hope to see reports from other areas in the 'Militant' each week.

COVENTRY

Supporters of the YCAU in Coventry are on the point of launching the second phase of the Campaign. This will include circulating all sections of the labour movement offering speakers and asking for support and donations to buy leaflets.

During the first phase a local list of sponsors was drawn up. The organisations and individuals so far to sponsor the Campaign are the TGWU District Committee, Massey Ferguson JSSC, George Hope (TASS Divisional Organiser), Rich Casey (Chairman Coventry AUEW Youth Committee), Gordon Daly (Secretary, Coventry District Labour Party), and many other local leading trade unionists.

HASTINGS

At their last meeting Hastings and District Trades Council agreed to sponsor the YCAU and support the local LPYS branch in their local campaign and public meeting at the end of November.

A collection was held for the campaign by Trades Council delegates and £3.55 was donated to the local LPYS to help with their costs.

The Trades Council is added to Hastings CLP who have already agreed to sponsor the campaign.

NOTTINGHAM YCAU "Fight Unemployment"

Speakers:
Andy Bevan
Vernon Gapper (AUEW TASS)
International Community Centre,
Mansfield Road, Nottingham.
Friday November 26th, 7.30 pm

BIRMINGHAM YCAU "Fight Unemployment!"

Saturday December 4th 1.30-5 pm
'Golden Eagle', Hill Street
(by New Street Station)
Speakers:
Nick Bradley (Labour Party NEC)
Ernie Roberts (Assistant Gen. Sec. AUEW)

ANGRY PENSIONERS FIGHT TORY CUTS



Old age pensioners hold Labour youth posters outside the Council Chamber.

Tories on Bracknell District Council had to run the gauntlet of angry pickets for the second time in recent months when they turned up to consider a

recommendation from the Environment Committee to reduce the value of Concessionary Fare Tokens given to pensioners and handicapped in the district from 45p to 40p per week. This is a particularly mean cut as since the value of the tokens was last reviewed some fares have risen by over 100% and the cut will take effect only a couple of weeks after Alder Valley's latest fare increase.

This time the Tory Councillors were faced with an additional shock. Having pushed their way through a picket composed mainly of Labour Party Young Socialists outside the offices they were confronted by the main body of the protesters within the foyer of over 30 very angry old age pensioners. Demanding justice, they prevented the Tory Councillors entering the lifts until they had answered their questions.

The answers they got, however, were far from satisfactory. Even those Tories who were opposed to this latest mean cut were not prepared to support their demands for free travel for pensioners. Council Chairman Dorothy Benwell told one pensioner, who was complaining that he was already experiencing difficulties in paying fares for trips to an estate on the other side of the town, to visit the OAP's Day Centre. "The

exercise will do you good."

As anger mounted a unanimous decision was taken to attend the Council meeting, with the result that the Council Chamber was so full that one Councillor arriving late found himself without a seat. When discussion of a Labour resolution to refer back this section of the Environment Committee Report began, speakers found themselves greeted with either cheers or jeers, and the mood of the meeting was well illustrated by the reaction to the remarks of Tory Peter Rose. When he talked of the need for a decent retirement pension there was loud applause, but when he followed this with remarks about going to the District Council with a begging bowl, and not expecting ratepayers to foot the bill, there was absolute uproar.

More significant was the tirade of abuse levelled at Labour Party members present by right wing Tory Dr Bryan Gennery. He tried to convince those present that this cut was not the fault of the Tory controlled Council, but had been forced upon them by the Labour government's mismanagement of the economy. Although this could be easily countered by pointing out that the £3,000 saving could have been less painfully made by not wasting money on things such as Silver Jubilee Celebrations, or moving car park barriers, it clearly shows that any Anti-Cuts Campaign must take up the incorrectness of the government's economic strategy and pose a clear socialist alternative.

Despite the inevitable defeat, most of the pensioners left the meeting in good heart and determined to continue to fight, which is just as well as in its next cycle the Council will be discussing a further proposal to reduce the value of Concessionary Tokens to just 20p, or a single ticket to the town centre. With more time available for preparation it is hoped to organise petitions from pensioners' organisations which can be presented to the Council, and an even larger picket. As one pensioner put it, "we might not always win, but at least the bastards will know how we feel."

By Paul Schofield

(Chairman, Wokingham Labour Cuts Committee)

DRACONIAN CUTS HIT THE WEAK

Cuts detailed by Kingston-on-Thames Council are probably a taste of what is to come all over the country. The government have asked for 4.3% cuts in real terms in council expenditure.

Kingston's Tory Council are working around the figure of 3%, having made heavy cuts in previous years. To that figure must be added an allowance for inflation as the 3% will allow for only 10% inflation. With an increasing rate of inflation over the next year, the total cut in Kingston's budget by the end of the financial year 1976-77 is likely to be getting on for 15%.

In Kingston if the cuts are as little as 2% plus inflation, two nursery schools

will shut, one old people's home will close, one children's home will shut, all telephones installed under the Chronically Sick and Disabled Act will be withdrawn, and the day centres for the mentally and physically handicapped will be forced to turn away half the number they were built for.

In education a large number of special school assistants, important for the welfare and education of the difficult and frequently incontinent kids at those schools, will be sacked. A youth centre will close, evening classes will virtually be stopped. Elsewhere cuts will include the closing of a swimming pool and the ending of

newspaper reading rooms (except for reading the Times!) in libraries.

As with Surrey NALGO who have now threatened industrial action, we can expect greater militancy amongst the normally conservative white collar workers as well as from NUPE, NUT and the other public service workers. **They must be urged to unite and fight on a socialist programme to allow resources to be used to the benefit of all and not just manipulated for the benefit of the world's bankers.**

By Richard Servian

(Kingston NALGO)



The scene at the 1975 Conference, the largest attendance since 1961.

DISTORTION

A letter from Elizabeth Gallacher.

Dear Comrade,

'Militant' frequently makes the point, and rightly so, that the Tory press can be relied upon to distort the facts in its own interests. I was dismayed therefore to read a blatant misrepresentation of the facts in October 22nd edition of 'Militant'. In the article, on the appointment of Andy Bevan as National Youth Officer, by Tony Saunois, it was said, "since the present Marxist leadership was elected the LPYS has gone from strength to strength".

Like Tony Saunois, I was present at the LPYS National Conference at Blackpool this year, when it was announced that the LPYS membership, at under 5,000, was dwindling steadily. Indeed those regions which are most strongly 'Militant' were the most seriously affected. South West region had 12 branches closed down, Wales 8, North West 7, Yorkshire 6, and the Northern region 5, all within the preceding 12 months!

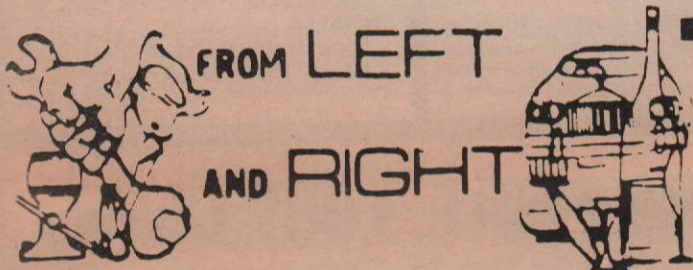
Compared to equivalent organisations

abroad, in Germany, Sweden and Italy, the LPYS is unfortunately small, weak and irrelevant. At a time when a mass socialist youth movement should be fighting against cuts—issues particularly affecting young people, the YS and its campaigns, I'm sorry to say, appears to be dying on their feet.

Whilst I have heard it argued that the 'political calibre' of the remaining YS membership is higher than before, on present trends we are going to be left with a small elite corps—hardly enough to constitute a mass movement!

Whatever the rights and wrongs of the 'Bevan situation' it ill becomes any left wing newspaper to distort facts which don't support its argument. Leave lying to the Tories. Similarly I hope and trust that this letter will not be ignored simply because it is critical of something printed in 'Militant'.

Yours fraternally
Ms Elizabeth Gallacher
(West Renfrewshire LPYS)



WHO ARE THE REAL SPLITTERS?

Two Labour MPs refused to vote for the government's Dock Bill last week. In a carefully orchestrated campaign with the press they refused to budge when appealed to by government whips. They stayed in the press bar in the Commons chatting with lobby reporters.

One of these honourable gentlemen was John Macintosh, MP for Berwick and East Lothian. This strong pro-marketeer has already flirted with the idea of joining the Scottish Nationalists. Before the last election he called for the removal of social security for strikers.

His tactic in not voting for the Bill, under tremendous attack from the Tories, was definitely premeditated. Early in October he had written a series of articles for 'The Scotsman' in which he analysed the economic and political situation.

He argued strongly for public spending cuts but felt they could only be carried out by some form of concordat with the Tories and Liberals.

If the Tories backed expenditure cuts in the Commons against the left wing, then Labour could "offer in exchange [to] shelve some of the contentious and largely irrelevant legislation now before the House of Lords."

It seems that the "moderate" Macintosh has decided that such a tactic should be implemented by himself without waiting for the opinion of Cabinet, Party or electorate.

POLICE PROVOCATION

A certain Captain Margherito, a young police officer in Naples, is on trial for sedition in a court martial in Italy.

Behind the trial are the allegations by Margherito that police flying squads are used as agent provocateurs in the many demonstrations that take place in the heated class struggle of crisis torn Italian society.

Margherito alleges that flying squad men (similar to Britain's Special Patrol Group) used catapults with steel balls and truncheons weighted with mercury to lash into crowds and whip up

When Margherito revealed this to the Communist Party paper 'L'Unita' saying he "was sick of making violence a way of life", he was arrested. The allegations have not been denied by Margherito's superiors.

The trial demonstrates the way that reactionary elements in the state try to use the police to create conditions for a more authoritarian regime.

But it also shows that much of the rank and file of the police sympathise with the aims of the working class in Italy and could be neutralised in any outright

ARE THE YOUNG SOCIALISTS DECLINING?

FROM STRENGTH TO STRENGTH

Reply from Tony Saunois,
Vice Chairman of the Labour Party Young Socialists.

Dear Comrades,

Elizabeth Gallacher is right to stress the need for facts about the Labour Party Young Socialists and the size of its membership since it was established in 1960. The lack of a thorough examination of the available facts has led, in recent months, to the most groundless attacks on the LPYS. Elizabeth probably does not have access to the information which I set out below. That does not apply to various other people who simply have not made any attempt to check their sources.

Examples include the amazing statement of Alan Lee Williams MP, in an interview on the BBC2 "Westminster" programme in October that the LPYS probably has "3-400 members". Another example is the lead article in the August edition of the "Clause 4" Bulletin which claimed that at the LPYS Conference, 1976 "the number of delegates was at an all time low with barely 250 branches represented". Both statements are entirely false.

Again, the Party leader, in his Parliamentary Report to Labour Party Conference 1976 asked, "Is this Party satisfied with a youth movement which has half the number of branches it had ten years ago and which is increasingly dominated by one brand of socialist sectarianism?" OK; these are the charges—now what are the facts?

For the sake of completeness, I set out below a table of figures. These figures are drawn from the official annual reports presented to Labour Party and LPYS Conferences since 1960.

year	No. of branches registered.	No. of delegates to LPYS Conference.
1959	262	—
1960	578	—
1961	721	381
1962	772	356
1963	769	365
1964	722	347
1965	605	243
1966	571	—
1967	576	216
1968	533	187
1969	386	150
1970	457	126
1971	503	185
1972	485	202
1973	366	181
1974	362	187
1975	389	250
1976	358	237

These figures dispense with a couple of myths straight away. First, they show that "Clause 4" was wrong in claiming that a representation of 250 delegates at LPYS Conference was "an all time low". In fact, that figure, [for the 1975 Conference] was the highest number of branches represented at Conference since 1964. Secondly, James Callaghan in comparing the years 1976 and 1966, at random, leaves out of account the fact that the years 1966-69 were the years of drastic decline for the LPYS and that the years 1970-76 have been years of recovery. In any case, if we compare, say, 1967 and 1976 in terms of Conference representation, (which in the view of the LPYS National Committee is a much more reliable guide to the number of active branches as opposed to paper branches), we see that 21 more branches were represented at the 1976 Conference than 10 years previously. The whole point is that the present NC majority first won a majority at the 1970 LPYS Conference. We inherited a youth organisation which was a rump, in disarray and which had ceased to function as a unified, national body. Since then the LPYS has gone from "strength to strength".

The disaster years for the LPYS were 1964-70. These were years of splits (1964-66) and disillusionment with the Labour government. These were also years when the present NC majority was in a very small minority and unable to steer the LPYS on a steady course. Those were years of patiently explaining our programme, testing it against the harsh experience of Labour in office—which in general bore out our warnings—and fighting to democratise the LPYS and steer it towards young workers. As soon as we won a majority, the "Charter for Young Workers" appeared and the LPYS started a series of impressive national campaigns which enabled us to rebuild a fighting

The NC, from that point onwards, also began to pare back on "paper branches". The NC feels that the figures given for the number of branches registered in 1970, 1971 and 1972 are inflated figures. If you base yourself, as we have, on the more reliable figures of attendance at LPYS Conference, then you can see both the real advances we have made and the real (as opposed to the imagined) problems of the LPYS.

We reckon that the figures from 1973 onwards are pretty reliable, although there is still some exaggeration in the number of registered branches. Notice the appreciable increase in the 1975 figures, reflecting the gains made during the General Elections of 1974. Notice also the 7% decline in 1976, reflecting again the disillusionment of many young socialists with the performance of the Labour government. Now that's something which the NC has a responsibility to face up to. And, in my view, we have.

First, as we explained at 1976 Conference, we don't accept that it's inevitable that the LPYS will decline in a period of Labour government. We can counteract that tendency if we face up to the problem squarely and fight effectively for a clear socialist alternative. The NC has not been complacent. We have fought hard to convince the NEC of the need for special financial provision to boost recruitment efforts in the three regions worst affected by the closure of branches. We have also held a National Organisation School to launch an effective national recruitment drive.

Recently, one or two people have tried to suggest that the Labour Students (NOLS) have more members than the LPYS. Well that's a matter of accounting and what you mean by members. Since being established in 1970 NOLS has done very well (with plenty of assistance from the LPYS incidentally) to forge ahead from scratch to its present position with over 80 affiliated clubs, and an affiliated membership of some 4,364. That's great—but no-one would seriously claim that NOLS has 4,364 active members. It's probably about a third of that.

On the other hand, earlier this year Labour Party Regional Organising staff compiled a report which came up with the remarkably precise total of 4,114 active members of the LPYS. The NC reckons that that figure is an underestimate—we reckon it's nearer 5,000 members—but it's a figure that represents 4,000 plus people who are doing a serious job of work in the movement. If the LPYS compiled its membership figures the way that NOLS does, it would be quite justified in claiming 12,000 members.

We all know that we've got a long way to go in building a mass socialist youth organisation. But let's not underestimate the tremendous achievements of Labour's youth so far. We have won a position of respect in the movement. Anyone who saw the impact we were able to make at Labour Party Conference over the last two years will bear that out. We have the support of the overwhelming majority of the Labour Party rank and file in our aim of building the LPYS.

Let's get on with that job. We've always been proud of the fact that different strands of opinion in the LPYS have the fullest freedom to debate and discuss their varying views. But when it comes to discussing the lessons of our own brief history, let's base ourselves on facts and serious analysis. I hope that this effort of mine

WELFARE MONARCHY

Prince Phillip, the Duke of Edinburgh, has been spouting off about how the "welfare state" is ruining the spirit of innovation in our society. But he does quite nicely out of the welfare state himself.

Just how far the taxpayer unwittingly is prepared to go in providing facilities for the monarchy was revealed by the news of the latest item of spending at the next Winter Olympic Games in 1978.

It is to be held in Edmonton, Canada. The Queen as head of the Commonwealth will open the Games. A £29,400 luo is being prepared in case the cold air catches her short.

The question is will it ruin her spirit of innovation?

WE'RE EATING LESS

The latest National Food Survey by the government shows that spending on food as a share of family income has fallen in the last five years.

The survey also shows that the energy content of food eaten at home in the larger families has fallen by one tenth.

This is hardly surprising when the cheapest loaf, a pint of milk, a pound of potatoes and a pound of the cheapest butter cost more than 80p. By the New Year the cost will reach £1.

So costly is British beef becoming that a leading wholesaler commented that by the 1980s Britain will be exporting a quarter of million tons to Europe "simply because we cannot afford to eat the product of our own agricul-



RAILMEN TO CAMPAIGN AGAINST CUTS

It is almost a year since all three railway trade unions took the unprecedented step, under a Labour government, of mounting a national "No Rail Cuts" campaign against the threat of savage cuts in public transport.

Despite government denials of such plans there can be no doubt that they existed and still exist today. They have only been shelved because of the solidarity and strength of the railway unions.

The government consultative document on transport clearly indicates the gulf between the government, the Party and the unions. The government document is quite clearly based on the capitalist mixed economy, one that is in crisis and demands greater incentives to invest, which means a cut in government spending, but within that cut a bigger share going to private manufacturing industry. The document spells out what this means for public transport.

"If additional money were miraculously to become available for public expenditure, it is hard to believe that transport could establish a stronger claim to it than house improvement, pensions or the National Health Service. So we must do the best we can with what we have and adjust our policies accordingly".

Investment

The British Railways Board reply to the document made it plain what this would mean for the railways. "The present level of railway investment, some £200 million a year, is totally inadequate to maintain any reasonably sized network at anything like present standards". Optimistically the BRB calls for a government commitment to a five year programme of investment at almost double the present level, but suggests no reason why the future should be any different from the past. With the present state of British capitalism the only difference will be that the future will be worse than the past.

At this year's Labour Party Conference the transport resolution supported by all three rail unions criticised the government for failing to develop a publicly owned, integrated transport system. It called on the Labour government as a matter of urgency to establish a National Transport Planning Authority. In moving the resolution NUR General Secretary Sidney Weighall said: "We welcome the proposals set out in chapter eight of Labour's Programme 1976 but the consultation document prepared by civil servants is 80 per cent out of line with the NEC's proposals and it is completely out of line with the manifesto upon which the

government was elected to power".

All three railway unions have come out strongly against the government's consultative document, but the fact is that on the basis of capitalism the government document is a realistic one. Sidney Weighall is correct when he says the government document has little in common with Party policy, but the railway unions' case is based on solving their problems within the transport industry in isolation to the rest of the economy.

Even if the government were to agree to the demands of the unions and the Party for an integrated transport system that would not solve the problems of the industry or provide secure jobs for transport workers. The nationalised integrated transport system would be based on a weak declining capitalist economy which has less demand for transport of goods. High unemployment is going to mean fewer passengers and higher fares. In the last 20 years private road transport, in its greed for profit, has created tremendous over-capacity.



As the NUR 'Transport Review' (15.10.76) put it: "The waste of our present chaos is incalculable. But there is no doubt that in this country we have massive excess provision of certain kinds of transport and a dire lack of adequate services in many vital spheres of the industrial complex. There is a vast conglomeration of tiny firms in road transport fighting, often unscrupulously, for business". How does one transfer traffic from road to rail under these conditions?

Priorities

Capitalism in decline would be only too happy to have one group of workers fighting another for a share of an ever decreasing cake. To some extent that is the trap that Sidney Weighall fell into at the Labour Party Conference. "When

setting out my priorities I am aware of the desirability of progressing with other items on our programme, education, housing etc, but I make my case on this simple basis. If the central thrust of our economic strategy is based on giving priority to manufacturing industry we cannot exclude the essential contribution that transport must make". It is not surprising that the TGWU is not over enthusiastic about an integrated transport system on this basis.

As for the National Transport Authority, what does 'independence' mean, who would control such an authority? Today transport is represented by a Minister in the Cabinet, Bill Rodgers, a prominent member of the right wing Manifesto group. His recent pronouncements on rail subsidies should be a lesson to the unions that they will get little change from him or any other of his associates.

The trade unions must clearly understand that our ideas for an integrated transport system will only have any meaning when clearly linked to the idea of nationalising under democratic workers' control all the major monopolies, banks and insurance companies. Under a planned, nationalised economy some form of National Transport Board would be needed. This could be constituted on the basis of one third elected from the Transport industry through the trade unions, one third from the TUC, representing the wider trade union interest in transport and one third from the government. Then transport could be planned in the interests of all working people and the best use made of resources.

Fare rises

All Labour Parties and Labour Party Young Socialist branches should now give full support to the NUR's campaign for public transport by organising public meetings on transport, fighting for their ideas and offering all practical help. With the certainty of further fares increases in the New Year all trade union branches should take up the call made by the NUR Earl's Court branch for a nationwide fares rise 'strike'.

- ★ Nationalise Road Haulage
- ★ An integrated, publicly owned transport system
- ★ Nationalise the major monopolies, banks and insurance companies under democratic workers' control and management.

Irving Nicol

(TSSA Euston No 2 branch and Fletton Labour Party)

CLAY CROSS BATTLES BACK



John Dunn

(disqualified Clay Cross Councillor and LPYS member)

It is now over four years since the Clay Cross Urban District Council began in defiance of the then Tory government Housing Finance Act. Most people are aware of the outcome of this struggle: the eleven councillors bought themselves time in which to continue their struggle by appealing through the Law Courts and after being disqualified from office were replaced in March 1974 by a further team of Labour councillors prepared to continue the struggle.

Since then, however, many things have happened, and it is most important that activists in the labour movement are aware of the outcome and implications of the struggle which at its peak shook the Labour Party to its roots.

April 1974 brought local government reorganisation and Clay Cross UDC was dissolved into a larger authority, North East Derbyshire District Council. At that time it was controlled by a right wing dominated Labour group, the majority of whom, together with the Tories and independents, immediately implemented the Housing Finance Act and started legal proceedings against any tenants who withheld their rent increases. The six Clay Cross representatives on the new authority were in almost total opposition to the majority of the Labour group on major issues and were consistently expelled from that group for opposing cutbacks, rent and rate increases etc., despite having the total support of their local and constituency parties.

"Crimes"

It was in this climate that the most dirty and foul attacks were made upon the Clay Cross councillors. The original eleven Clay Cross councillors had already been surcharged £7,000 for not implementing the Housing Finance Act, but a further report of the District Auditor found that the councillors and their colleagues who replaced them had committed other "crimes". They had paid people £25 per week to look after old folks, 24 hours per day, they had given their workmen the same wages as their counterparts in other areas. They had given unemployed men jobs in a town where male unemployment never fell below 12% and at times was as high as 21%.

The district auditor did not say that these payments were illegal, only that, in his opinion, they were "unreasonable". Further surcharges of £63,000 were imposed upon the "first eleven" councillors and of £2,229 upon the "second team" for a total of 22 days in office. It should be pointed out to anyone who may believe in the

"impartiality of the law" that the successor, N E Derbyshire Council, kept all the workmen on, continued paying them "unreasonable" wages for five weeks, continued paying the OAPs' wardens for fifteen months their equally "unreasonable" wages and yet were absolved by the District Auditor of any misconduct.

Bankruptcy

The "first eleven" were made bankrupt and the "second team", despite paying their surcharge, were disqualified and still face bankruptcy. The "first eleven" have endured many hardships as a result: four of them had their cars seized, two had furniture seized and all had their bank accounts and assets seized.

One, George Goodfellow, who had just retired after 47 years of work as a low-paid school caretaker had his car taken, (later sold back to his wife), his bank account seized and £127 of his wife's money (rebate from a holiday booked with the Court Line Company that crashed) was taken because the rebate had been paid out in his name. Recently Graham Skinner was unable to purchase new furniture for his home and family on hire-purchase because of his bankruptcy.

It is because of the urgency of the situation that North East Derbyshire CLP sent a resolution to the Labour Party Conference asking for the total surcharges on the "first eleven" to be paid by the party. In 1972 and 1973 Conference passed resolutions promising support to councils who defied the Housing Finance Act. That resolution was remitted to the NEC and we are now asking that it should be carried out.

All the surcharges levied on the councillors can be linked to the Housing Finance Act. If the councillors had not incurred the wrath of the Tories over the Housing Finance Act then there can be no doubt that the wages etc. included in the second exchange would not have been deemed unreasonable.

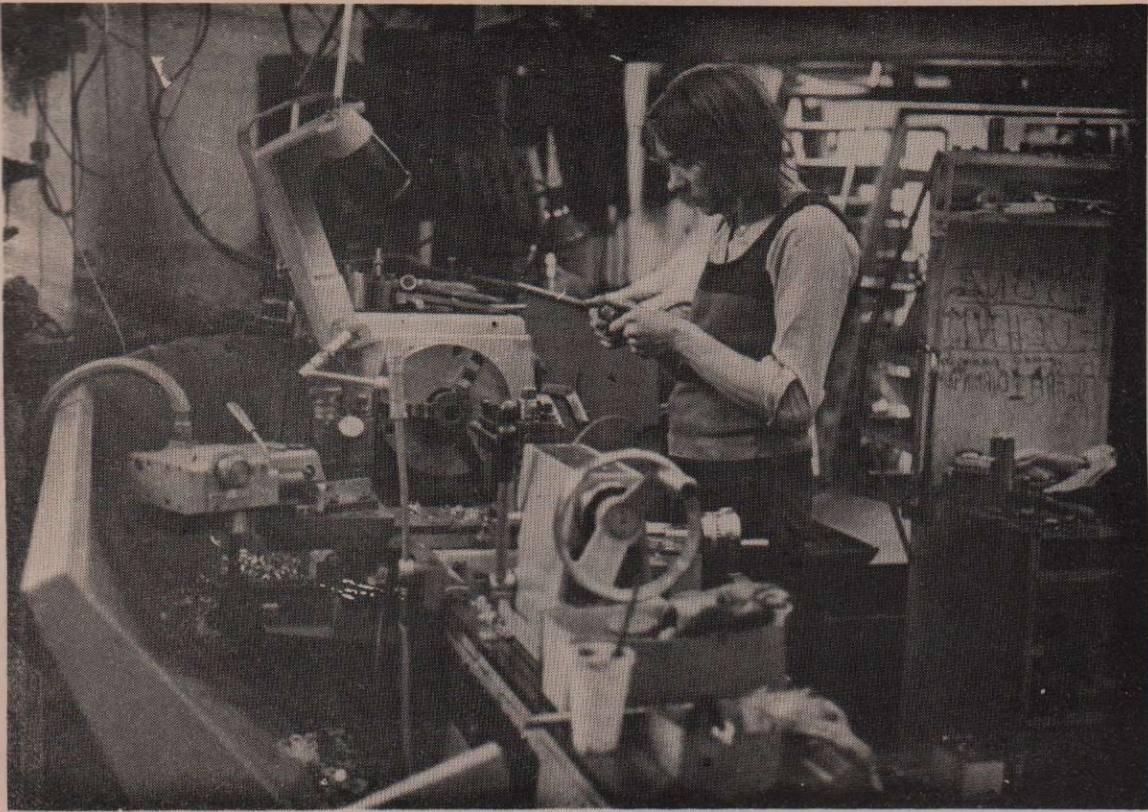
Despite their defeat and the betrayal by the Labour government the Clay Cross councillors have remained loyal to the Labour Party. In circumstances where many would have been disillusioned and left, they have remained inside the Labour Party and continued their struggle inside the movement. That party now has the chance to repay that loyalty.

Finally one further example of the determination inside Clay Cross Labour Party. In May of this year the whole of the capitalist press reported with glee that the Labour Party in Clay Cross had failed to return a single councillor in the District and Parish elections. The Tories and many leading Labour MPs rejoiced claiming that "extremism had been rejected." The truth was that, given the aftermath of defeat and the right wing policies of the Labour government Clay Cross Labour Party suffered in the same way as other Labour Parties throughout the country by abstention from the voters.

Socialist win

Since then, last month in a by-election for the County Council seat (left vacant since my disqualification) standing on a socialist policy against the Government's cutbacks the defeats of May were turned into a massive 900 vote majority with the Labour vote increasing by almost 60%. This victory was not reported by the press for fear of spreading the message: Socialist policies mean victory.

The whole of the movement has a lot to learn through the experience of the Clay Cross councillors. It is up to us all to ensure that they are not left to suffer.



Wanted: Toolmakers, able to work on own initiative, good rates of pay, Phone Box No....

This is the kind of ad usually to be found in a local paper. The first question might be put, "But why no address? Why a box no.?" A good point, this is because the place might be known by the lads in the trade to be an exceptionally hairy firm with a high labour turn round for various reasons. So the Guvnor usually likes to try, after a few well directed questions to the would be enquirer, to palm him off with a few promises, bit of soft talk, usually culminating with, "OK then Mr..., pop round then, here's the address."

If our lad, as I will call him, has been in the engineering trade for any length of time he will probably know that this will be a 'trade shop'—a fairly small engineering shop that specialises in the manufacture of, in this case, 'press tools, jigs and fixtures', which are used to greatly speed up and de-skill processes in the manufacture of anything from small electrical parts, fridges, cars to huge machine tools weighing many tons.

These shops have been set up by individuals, aspiring to be sub-contractors, using highly skilled personnel to specialise in producing two or three items at attractive rates of cost and delivery for large firms. This form of sub-contracting has caused many years of misery for thousands of men who have found their way into these little sweat shops and muck heaps throughout the land.

Stink

It's a funny thing how the working man seems to be a glutton for punishment but of course it isn't known for what desperate reasons 'our lad' decides to try his luck at just another dump. "You've seen one you've seen them all". First to find it. They are usually tucked away behind the gas works, in a railway arch or on some other typically depressing 'commercially developed' area.

He finds it! It used to be an old stable but it's got a roof on, let's go in—going in is accompanied by the usual stink of soluble oil, the throb and whine of machine tools and the familiar climb over bars of tool steel, jobs for repair, nameless bits and pieces. "Ah, there's the 'office'," more stink, stale tobacco, oil and the gunvor's after shave!

The boss! "Oh yes you're Mr.... Well we've got a fairly busy shop here. Do a lot of work for, so we're all right. Have you done an apprenticeship? Good. Who do you work for now, if at all? (A doubly loaded question this: one, he doesn't want to pinch a bloke from one of his suppliers, two, if our lad isn't working he'll try to get him cheap)—OK then, got plenty of tools? When do you want to start? Tomorrow

at the moment. The starting rate is £1.20, if you're okay after a month you get £1.35."

That will probably be quite a few bob down on what the top couple of blokes get but they won't tell you. To ask about any amenities, fringe benefits, is usually pretty futile, but fairly recently things in this area have looked up a bit for reasons I shall explain later and, of course the place is absolutely double non-union. Sometimes to mention the AUEW could result in a man not getting a start at all.

The bosses of these delightful little establishments are among the most reactionary lot to be found anywhere. They started the firm, say way back in 1971, by auntie leaving them a few quid in the old will or starting up on redundancy money from...Ltd., coupled with a bit of fiddling and, in some cases, pilfering, off they set on the short road to riches as a direct result of exploitation of their fellow workers. In all due respect to one or two of them, they started up the firm by actually working for a bit of capital and taking a chance from there, working on a shoe string and working hand to mouth most of the time.

Religion

If you talk to practically all such bosses of these shops they will tell you that they are always flat broke, spend all the profit on reinvestment, tools etc. (that's why they like employees to have such a comprehensive range of their own tools and equipment)—and that the expensive car outside is the result of their wife saving up all her Green Shield stamps!

There is a definite 'religion' down there in the average 'trade shop', that of 'get it right to the b...y drawing, even if it's wrong!' You see when the gunvor phones round for work, or someone drops round with a bit, he has almost to accept it without argument providing there are no glaring mistakes or faults on the drawing. These people are not daft engineering wise, make no mistake about it, so when the drawings are left with the boss, these then are sacrosanct to the point of near ridiculousness. He is virtually divorced from the originators of the design, he is loath to phone with a query, doesn't want to cause bother with the almighty! So that's it, if the drawing say so, do it!

That's if you're lucky to get a full set of drawings. Sometimes there is only a 'component drawing' (a drawing of the finished article or 'piece part'). Then it's the job of the poor sod on the bench to not only design the tool but to take the job through to completion. There's not many toolmakers that can do a job such as this. The ones that can might get a touch more wages wise, but these are the men who are badly exploited. You should hear the boss if the job goes wrong! But such is the snobbery and ignorance that prevails among these workers that they consider themselves the 'top of the heap'. After an hour or so in the shop you can spot these bods a mile off among the others, as 'our lad' probably will in due course.

To get out of bed at about 6.30am on a cold, dark, winter morning is bad enough but to have to prospect of being a 'new boy' on the first day in a trade shop is daunting indeed. 'A man's got to do what a man's got to do'. So off he goes. 7.30 in the morning is not usually the time to meet the gunvor, so the foreman greets you, after making sure the electric fire is on in the office and a

our lad to his bench.

This is one which nobody wants, it might be in bad light, in a cutting draught or too near a grinder which spends all day covering you and your work in grinding dust. One can imagine the quick bit of juggling around last thing Friday night or Saturday to make sure the 'lads' get the best positions and sod the new bloke!

An intelligent question at this time would be, "Got a bit of rag, mate?" To wipe the muck off the bench, you might be asking for gold dust. "No rag, bring your own." Could well be the answer, so any old Sun/Daily Mirror will be pressed into service here. The foreman will no doubt have sorted out a job for the new man by now, after all it's nearly twenty to eight, can't have him standing idle 'all day'!

So by a quarter to eight you should have sorted out your tools and bench, found where everything is, introduced yourself to your comrades, had a 'work conference' with the foreman and be more than ready to start work! Right, ignore the feeling that everyone's watching you, waiting for the first mistake and off our lad goes.

If he's lucky his first job might be fairly straight forward, to get the feel of things, so being pretty good at his trade, our lad realises that a milling machine is his first requirement. Where is it? "You can't use that one chum, Harry's set up on it, use that." That is a disgraceful heap by the door which should have been pensioned off 15 years ago, but typical.

The men in the shop watch with one eye as our lad stands in front of the machine wondering where the start button is. The obvious on/off switch has been broken and a lash up has been arranged somewhere, so follow the wiring with your eye up the wall, down—oh yes, an isolator on a wall some nine feet away looks promising. 'Clunk', the old mill rattles into life. So does a small drilling machine bolted to a dexion frame against the opposite wall! That's fairly typical of the wiring in these places. Our lad casually walks across to the drill and stabs the off button. He wonders why the hell he works in places like these but he needs the extra money to be made from overtime and its not far to travel from home. Still, come on, five to eight and nothing much done yet.

Clamps

The next problem which confronts our lad is that the job has to be very firmly fixed to the bed of the milling machine—"mill"—for many good reasons. Firstly the nature of the job will put quite a load on everything. Secondly, he wants to show that he can set up properly. Thirdly he knows through experience that the cutter he will be given, or more likely have to find himself, will be the wrong type, or blunt, or both. Fourthly, if anything goes wrong it's a long way to that off switch.

You will understand that all this will be apparent to him at a glance, it becomes part of the job, a way of life. So some heavy clamps, nuts and bolts are needed. These requirements are very rare but vital bits and pieces of the trade. It is not up to the individual to cart cwts of old iron etc. around in his tool box, although most bosses would love it if they would.

The old familiar routine then! Tramp round the place, ask the other blokes if they could lend you some clamps, which are, by the way, no more

AS I SE BRITAIN'S BACKWARD BACKST INDU

By John Huxtable

(AUEW Harlow)

inches wide, ¼ inch thick, 4 inches long, with a hole somewhere to take a ½ inch or five/eighths bolt. Not complicated pieces of equipment by any standard but to judge by their usual rarity in a trade shop, it would be understood if you thought otherwise.

The old hands in the shop have been ready for this and have hidden away the clamps etc. that might be asked for. If not actually hidden, an excuse might be given that they will be needed any second now for their own work but with persistence our lad will no doubt find, beg, borrow or steal the required bits and pieces vital to the continuation of his job.

Overtime

At this point I would like briefly to study the various reactions and feelings in such a situation. Firstly it will be apparent that although all the men are in the same boat and have experienced that which our lad is experiencing, there aren't many moves by anybody to help. This is a direct result of the fierce competition that has been nurtured by the gunvors. It is almost as though, just because a new man doesn't know where the start switch on an antiquated sometimes foreign machine is, because he doesn't know exactly where certain items of equipment lurk, or in what broken old box a certain measuring tool is to be found, then he must be an idiot and has no place in the shop at all.

The newcomer senses this, it makes him embarrassed, sometimes even fumbling in his actions. It's a feeling, an unspoken hostility. Some men know and realise all this and will, after a time, begin to soften to a newcomer. This will be largely dependant on the employment situation in the area.

Not to mislead readers I will point out that there are jobs and jobs and a man who finds himself in a 'trade shop' is usually after the money to be made in such an establishment. This is about all a trade shop has to offer a skilled man, a few quid over the odds, and the chance of usually unlimited overtime. Obviously a man prepared to put up with such conditions is in need of the extra cash and advertises the fact by being there.

The boss knows this, after all he isn't blind. He knows what good conditions are, he knows what good equipment is and the effects these things have on the average man. Therefore a bloke answering his brief adverts and who is prepared to start is, as I said either in need of the 'ready' or a masochist!

The question may be put here, "why do these men stay at such places when there are better shops etc. to work in? Are these types always in need of that much extra? Are these shops in fact as bad as you are describing?" Probably very good points to raise.

To answer my self-posed questions, it is as I said before, 'some people are gluttons for punishment'. Also it's surprising what a worker can get used to, given time and circumstances. I have worked in places, and nearly everyone I know in the trade has, which I would have gladly walked out of after the first hour but after a while you seem to harden to the situation and almost get to like it! Such is the power of auto-suggestion and so little is the rate paid in a firm with a domestic tool room or specialised shop with half way decent conditions. "You can't have it both ways", we are told.

Our lad's trying to get some work

highly skilled man he is making some headway. The machine is being made to do what the man wants it to do and our lad has a little time to look about him.

A bit of new stuff here, not new perhaps, but at least it looked a bit shiny, probably only 4 or 5 years old. This machine was regarded in the shop as 'the new one'. Most of the larger machine tools were past retiring age, the boss depending on the skill of his men to turn out an accurate job on them.

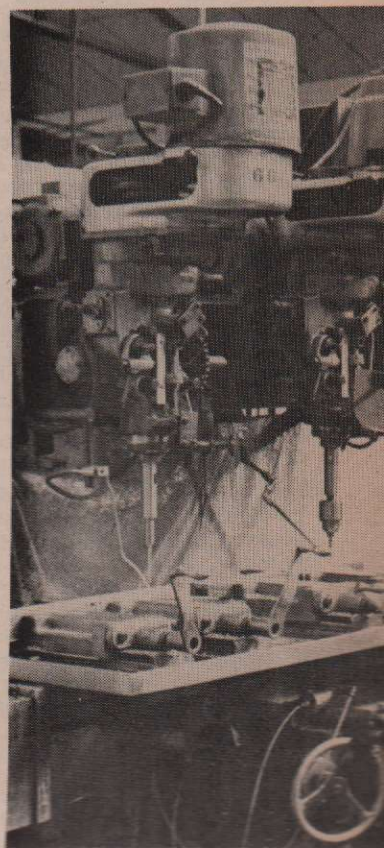
There was just about enough equipment to turn out a tool if there were half the number of blokes working there. You had to work it between you as far as the machine went. If the foreman saw you standing about for want of a tool or equipment it would be your fault for, "not planning it properly in conjunction with all the other jobs running through the shop at the time!"

"Planning Engineer—Anyone", What! At £1.20 odd an hour. This was running through our lad's head, and as the job had a bit of turning on it amongst other things, he thought of sorting himself out a lathe to do it on.

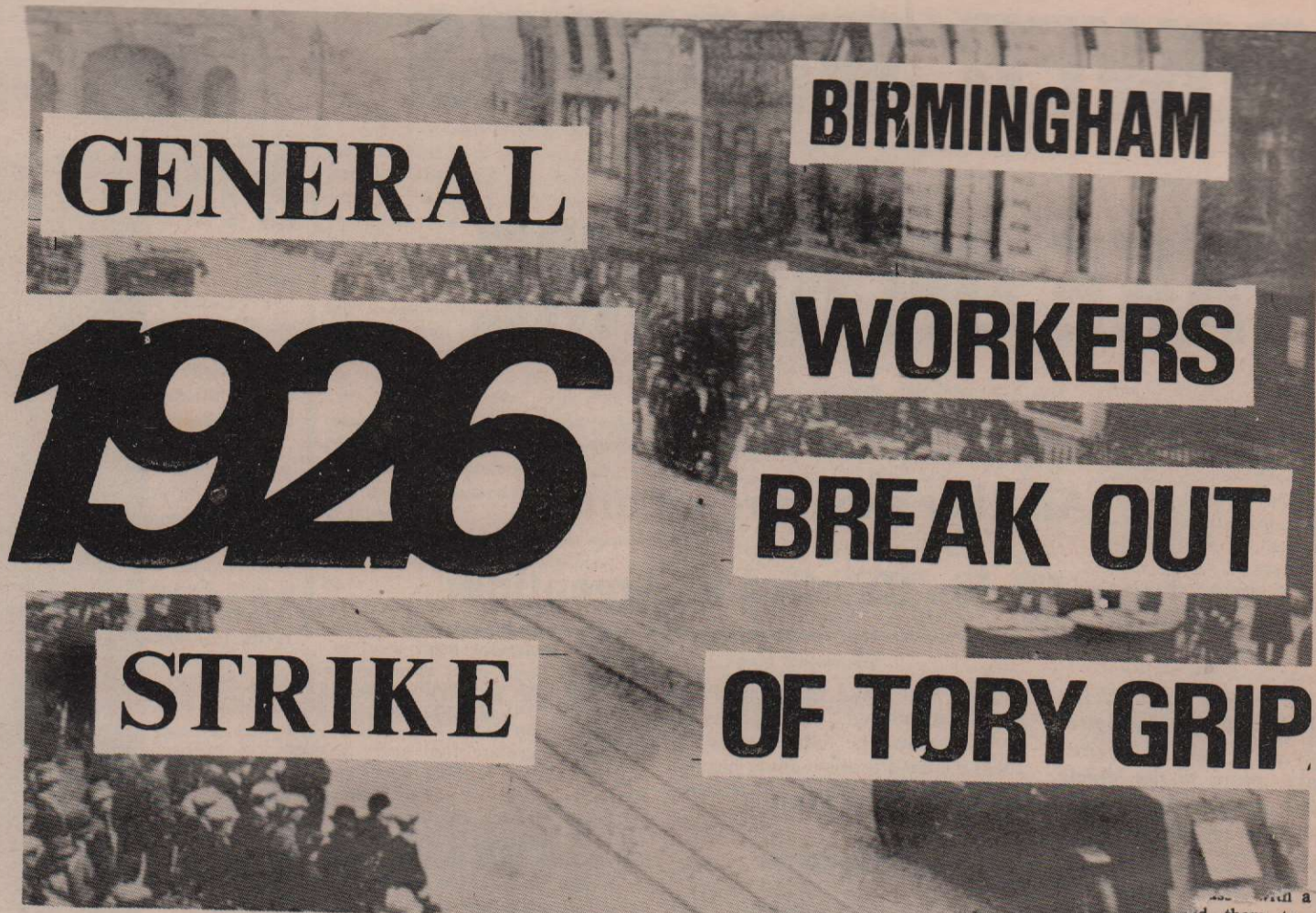
War

He managed to finish his bit of milling on the old mill and prepared himself for new adventures on the lathe! His experience told him that lathes, more so than any other machine, seemed to the gunvor to last for ever and represented the ultimate in depreciation in machine tools. He wasn't far from the truth.

The lathe stood three feet in front of the coffee machine. It was covered in swarf (metal turnings), anonymous bits of round steel, broken old tool bits and plastic coffee cups, one with a dog end it! On the gear box cover could faintly be read, 'war finish', which proved it was manufactured during the last war when a glossy coat of paint seemed unnecessary.



EDIT RD, REET ISTRY



GENERAL

1926

STRIKE

BIRMINGHAM

WORKERS

BREAK OUT

OF TORY GRIP

Oh well! Here we go then. Our lad's job didn't have to be all that accurate off the lathe but it did involve removing quite a bit of metal. Now was the time to confront the foreman or guvnor. A cutting tool for the lathe had to be supplied and it was down to the firm to supply it. This was something a bloke probably wouldn't have in his tool box. Here we go then. "Excuse me, can I have a fairly large tool for the lathe?"

Even at this fairly simple request the foreman stalled. "Can't you borrow one off Old Sid". Old Sid was the permanent turner for the firm who told our lad he wasn't the stores but seeing that he was new he could borrow 'this'. The tool he lent our lad wasn't really a lot of good for the job so our lad was forced to renew his request to the foreman who made it more than obvious he shouldn't be bothered with such trivia and insinuated that our lad should have one himself. Adding "And what's the matter with Old Sid". A clear case of the system working against the system!

Our lad finally got his tool bit and was strolling round trying to find something to grind it on, up came the foreman, "Trouble chum?". An obviously loaded question. Our lad felt like saying the only trouble he had was starting here in the first place but he didn't and was shown where the grinder was. I won't dwell on the state of the machine. Actually it was in quite good condition being the most recent acquisition in the shop but the grinding wheels were useless because last Friday someone had to grind three-eighths of an inch off some dowels and had not redressed the wheels.

So our lad struggled through the day. The only other altercation he had with the foreman was at 5 o'clock, he had had enough and was going home. The foreman asked why he wasn't working overtime!

So against such a background I will continue with the saga of our lad next week.



In early 1926 Birmingham, the "greatest industrial city of the Empire", the "city of 1,000 trades", was still a stronghold of Liberal Unionism, with a tradition of "cloth-capped Chamberlainism" amongst the trade unions. John Strachey regarded the Birmingham labour movement "at least 10 years behind the best organised areas."

But all this was changed by the 1926 General Strike which broke the Lib-Lab policies of local labour leaders and the cry of "no politics for the trade unions." Together with Brum's further industrial expansion, it transformed the area's labour movement into one of the most advanced in the country.

The changing mood of city workers away from class collaborationist policies was shown in a trade union conference organised by the Trades Council in the wake of Red Friday, 1925. This conference empowered the Trades Council to call a general strike in the city if the employers tried to impose longer hours and to set up a co-ordinating body of trade unionists to organise this.

The May Day march, 1926, on the eve of the General Strike, was the largest in the city's history with 25,000 on the march and 100,000 lining the streets. In the face of the Tory government's threats to the miners and the call for working class solidarity, the Trades Council President said that "the workers must show their strength."

Immediately after the march the Trades Council set up the Birmingham Trade Union Emergency Committee, composed of 20 leading trade unionists and Labour Party officials to organise the General Strike locally. It immediately set up sub-committees to deal with publicity, propaganda, vigilance, transport and permits, and a committee for each major trade group.

With 101 of the 120 seats on the City Council, the Unionists (Conservatives) used the council and the senior local government officials to set up its own Emergency Sub-committee to maintain transport and supplies etc. The secretly organised Organisation for the Maintenance of Supplies handed its apparatus, including lists of volunteer Special Constables and scab drivers over to the Council, as did the Birmingham Group of British Fascists.

Transport stopped

But the workers did show their strength. Transport workers were amongst the "first wave" called out. At midnight, 3rd May, 6,000 members of the TGWU, representing 90% of tram, omnibus and waterway workers, stopped work. The Trade Union Emergency Committee reported: "The extent of the stoppage is much greater than

anybody anticipated and all road, passenger and carrying traffic has been stopped....on the railways the stoppage is complete...in the factories the difficulty now is to keep the people at work. All are anxious to be out and in the fight."

The TUC authorised the transport unions to organise the distribution of food and vital supplies. While the Council refused to "enter into partnership with a rival government", the Birmingham Trade Union Emergency Committee on May 4th undertook to issue permits "to trade union labour to load and unload and distribute goods and foodstuffs."

Union consent

"Vehicles with permits carried notices to say they were moving with union consent and using union labour. The strike, the picketing, and the organisation of the transport workers was so great that many shopkeepers



"Special Constable" strike breakers being issued with armbands and batons

and employers needing to transport materials applied to the Trades Council offices and not to the City Council Emergency Committee.

AEU toolmakers and Vehicle Builders were strongly organised, and struck at many leading factories—Wolseley Motors, Austin-Morris, Joseph Lucas, BSA, Avey's, GEC. Even at Cadburys, 1,000 engineers and sundry makers struck. The lack of clear orders to the engineering workers in the "second-line" reduced the effectiveness of these strikes, preventing them from being more wide spread. Indeed, the TUC did not officially call out engineering workers until May 11th—the day before the TUC called off the strike.

The attitude of the police hardened rapidly during the strike. Transport workers, picketing the garages, bore the brunt of the police attacks and arrests. Police forcibly prevented picketing at the Dawlish Road depot from where students from Birmingham University acted as scab drivers.

Police regularly attended workers meetings, listening for statements likely

to be actionable under the Emergency Powers Act. A local labourer used by the Simmons, records of the working class notes—usually transcription to try to the meeting, giving tips of the politically arrests and into supporting the known firebrands as after Social Security rest of us."

Councillor Shurmer after addressing a peace state handouts Sunday 10th allegedly for each day to "vile insinuations" against the system. He was fined £10.

More serious was the deliberate attempt to behead the labour movement. Also on May 10th, the entire twenty man Trade Union Emergency Committee organising the strike in Birmingham was arrested under the Emergency Powers Act for misreporting in the Birmingham Strike Bulletin "a minor Parliamentary matter (something that the capitalist press does almost daily).

Acting under Home Office orders, the police raided also the Birmingham

By Nick Boulter

(Northfield Labour Party)

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The early development of football saw the game become a real community sport in that clubs were associated with local neighbourhoods and controlled by local people. Soccer then, had an early history of local participation and local control. Long associated with aggression, soccer can be seen as an expression of violence of proletarian work experience.

But football has grown into a multi-million pound industry where clubs, dominated by their drive for profits, hold their players in a form of feudal bondage and have become unaccountable to the members of the public who patronise them. This is not to say that football violence can be solved simply by ridding the game of the cliques which run the clubs for profit. The state of football today reflects more than the

legislation introduced after on football in our
strike by May 11th. But the poverty of our
far from over. The employer as spent to
Council attempted to enforce a class
ban and to victimise some militants. Profit
a few hours after returning to work, the
tram workers walked out on the
"All-out, All-in" principle. Faced with
this united determination, the employ-
ers backed down.

In engineering, the abandonment of the General Strike by the TUC, a day after calling them out, led to disillusionment amongst workers who had risked their jobs to support the miners. This, combined with a hardened employers' attitude to trade unions and the promotion of works councils ("Mondism") led to a drop in trade union membership.

But the Trades Council did continue to organise support for the miners. Draughtsmen at the GEC, Witton, plant levied themselves 2/6d a week for the miners' strike fund.

The employers took the offensive against the trade unions after the General Strike and the set-backs would have been greater if it were not for the good organisation locally. This attack by the employers helped the Brum workers to see that the Conservatives were their enemy, and not their friends. The labour movement took advantage of the 1929 elections to take 6 of the 12 seats for Labour in the city—the biggest advance in the country. They had only one previously.

This advance was broken by the creation of the National Government in 1931 and during the 30's Birmingham workers suffered from the traditions of strong, paternalistic, anti-union employers. A Birmingham Information Bureau circular in the mid-30's boasted that "Birmingham labour is good, plentiful and cheap; lower wages are paid here as compared to London... 16% lower in printing, 8% lower among engineering fitters... Labour unrest is practically unknown. Birmingham is an ideal centre for speeded up production."

But Birmingham workers have learnt that in organisation is strength, and to place no confidence in the employers or the Conservatives. Today they are the pacemakers for the whole working class. Nearly 50 years on, when the miners were again in confrontation with the Tories, it was this strength that decisively won the 1972 strike at the mass picket at the Saltley coal depot.

Troops

To add to the intimidation several thousand troops were encamped in a military tattoo in Kings Heath Park. The Commanding Officer, Colonel Danielson, claimed after the strike that the tattoo had "helped maintain a peaceful atmosphere during the strike by concentrating a large reserve of troops in the district."

The police intimidation and the transport employers' declarations that they would refuse to re-employ any worker who did not report back by May 12th helped to break the transport

POWER WORKERS

TAKE ON REGIME

Another exclusive report
from Carlos Ramirez in Argentina.

Following the heroic example of the car workers last month the power workers are now fighting against the draconian plans of the Videla dictatorship, posing the biggest challenge to the regime since the March coup.

"Rationalisation" plan applied to company Segba. This is the kind of address. The question might be put, "But why no address? Why a box no.?" A good point, this is because the place might be known by the lads in the trade to be an exceptionally hairy firm with a high labour turn round for various reasons. So the Guvnor usually likes to try, after a few well directed questions to the would be enquirer, to palm him off with a few promises, bit of soft talk, usually culminating with, 'OK then Mr..., pop round then, here's the address.'

If our lad, as I will call him, has been in the engineering trade for any length of time he will probably know that this will be a 'free shop'—a fairer holiday, free gas facture in the past. On October 5th, 7,000 workers from Segba, the Italo Electricity company

and the Water and Electricity Power Board abandoned their plants in protest against the redundancies and 1,000 marched to their union headquarters where they staged a demonstration.

Dismissed

The next day the junta threatened the strikers with dismissal and prosecution if they stayed out. They stayed out.

Water and Electricity Power non-union sacked another 40 workers. Next the military getting a s. that anybody who did not work would be arrested. Some establishments but it was no surrender—reactionary lo. changed their protest.

They started as the Argentines say, 1971, by a 'sadness'—ie. a go slow. in the old wiks stayed out and 90 redundancy by the army. Many are coupled with 'security reasons'. some cases, p the figures issued by the short road to and published in the press exploitation, be regarded as a bare all due resp. My sources of information they star that the number of strikers working to date is around 1,000, that several hundred workers have been detained nationally, and at least 3 kidnapped by right wing terrorist groups.

Since the power workers struggle has not to date spread to other sections of the working class and since truly representative workers organisations

are still only embryonic, the workers are not yet ready for a total confrontation with the military. It appears therefore that some workers are now changing their tactics by going back to work but maintaining their struggle through sabotage and bomb attacks, tactics which were employed during and even before the strike.

Power installations have been the prime target of sabotage since the coup. On September 10th, 120 city blocks were plunged into darkness by sabotage at Segba. Despite military attempts to credit all such attacks to "terrorists", the company has repeatedly appealed to its workers to cease such activities, and in many cases have pointed out that the saboteurs in question appeared to be extremely "familiar" with their targets!

On October 5th there was a big fire at the Puerto Nuevo installations which, significantly, not only firemen but also military intelligence inspected. On the same day, the national telecommunication company Entel complained that 600 Km (375 miles!) of telephone cable had gone missing since the coup. Furthermore, there have been several bomb attacks against Segba offices.

The importance of this workers' resistance can only be measured if seen against the general background of right wing terror and repression. At least 1,000 guerrillas, left wing political activists and trade union militants have been killed in the past 6 months. Many thousands more are detained without

Carlos had a very narrow escape in mailing this article to England. There are now police and intelligence agents in all the main post offices. A nasty looking piece of work behind the counter took one look at the letter the article was in, then at Carlos and asked him to hang on for a few minutes. He went into the back room. Fortunately Carlos overheard him telephoning the security police and so was able to escape—with the letter. By the time he was three blocks away, he could hear the dreaded police sirens in the distance.



General Videla speaking to his troops

even the facade of a show-trial.

Ultra-hardliner General Menéndez recently announced that the "stage of persecution" had begun. He was right. What came close to civil war proportions some months ago is now a rightwing manhunt to the death against the left. Though the Junta still denies responsibility for the white terror (Foreign Minister Guzzetti... "There is no right wing subversion in Argentina"), it is an undeniable fact that when 3 people were kidnapped on September 7th, neighbours saw 2 army jeeps parked outside the house where the crime took place.

Refugees are being persecuted more than ever before by the death squads. On average, 20 Chileans disappear each week in Buenos Aires. There are still around 10,000 here, many of them lacking even UN protection since they entered the country "illegally". The bulk of these kidnappings are carried out by the Chilean secret police which has a permanent force of 40 men operating here, based in the Central Police Headquarters.

Montoneros

It is also known that Uruguayan security agents are working here. Persecution of Uruguayans has greatly increased since the brutal murders of Ruiz and Micheli, the latest kidnap victim being Mariana Zaffaroni Islas, aged 1½ years, the daughter of refugees.

The only important guerrilla force remaining, the Montoneros organisation, is still losing ground. On September 27th more arms factories fell to the security forces, disrupting a Monto plan to manufacture 10,000 grenades. Two days later came the biggest blow since the coup.

Five guerrilla chiefs were slain and a further 4 wounded and seized when security forces raided a house in La Floresta where the political leadership of the organisation was holding a summit meeting. The 5 included national political secretary Alberto Molina Beluzzi and those responsible for trade union and student work.

As usual it was portrayed in the press as a great military triumph, no military losses were reported etc. However, sources emanating from the other side give a very different account: the army surrounded the house where the summit was being held, thinking that it was just a meeting of 3 to 4 ordinary militants. They had no idea the Monto general staff were inside.

Then the people inside the house called in reinforcements. Soon after, several large vehicles appeared, full of combatants with heavy arms. They surrounded the army troops and a fierce four-hour battle followed. At the end of it, the organization had lost 5 leaders killed and 4 detained, but the high powered Montonero mobilisation enabled 20 top men, including leader Mario Firmenich ("Comandante Pe-

pe") and former Peronist youth leader Rodolfo Galimberti, to escape. The army lost 20 men in the battle.

Though losing ground, the Montoneros have not been on the receiving end all the time. On September 12th, 11 policemen perished when a Citroen packed with explosives was detonated by remote control as a police bus passed by. Then on October 2nd a bomb exploded under the reviewing stand at the military garrison of Campo de Mayo, only minutes after President Videla left it. Several conscripts and the workmen who put the stand up have been arrested.

The event was not reported in the Argentine press for several days and no casualties were mentioned. However, Radio Colonia of Uruguay said that two high ranking officers and a sergeant lost their lives in the blast.

Since the Montoneros lack a clear political and ideological position, especially in the eyes of the working class, they remain isolated and prone to annihilation. Even if they survive, even if they grow, the danger is that unless they break decisively with Peronism and adopt a revolutionary socialist stance, the old Peronist bureaucracy will make something of a comeback in the future due to the lack of them offering any real alternative for the workers.

Chants heard at a football match at the weekend were symptomatic of this danger. Though translation is always difficult for chants and slogans, it went something like: "With the thin man (Videla) and the ear (Martínez de Moz—Economy Minister), /we go hungry/ With the whore (Isabel) and the wizard (López Rega), We lived in luxury; /let the thieves return! la la la la, la la la, la la"

Junta

The position of the Junta is weaker than at any time since the coup six months ago. Internal conflicts continue and the position of the Videla axis has been weakened (by the resignation of University rector Constantini, and of Musich, ambassador in the United States, the latter after USA pressure over "human rights"—it is election year after all!) Also the military "hawks" feel Videla has been too soft with strikers.

For these reasons, it is by no means certain that Videla will remain President in the coming months. During the past few weeks, internal military conflict has been less apparent on the surface. Due to the surprisingly strong labour resistance, the different sectors of the capitalists and their military representatives have momentarily sunk their differences and united against the common class enemy—the working class.

INTERNATIONAL NOTES

ITALIAN UNIONS



Communist union leader Luciano Lama

As 400,000 railmen, postal and tobacco workers went on a 24 hour strike for higher pay last week in Italy, the leaders of the Italian trade unions offered to limit their wage claims next year to help the Christian Democrat government overcome the economic crisis.

A top Communist union leader said the unions would not seek local wage deals on top of any national agreement, as they usually did. But they still opposed any changes in threshold agreements that the government wants.

The union leader said the offer was part of his Party's aim to establish collaboration between "all democratic forces in Parliament" in this time of crisis. The Communist Party abstained in Parliament when the Andreotti government austerity package went through.

ISRAELI STRIKE

The Israeli government issued orders under its Emergency Powers Act to order workers back to their jobs when more than 100,000 public sector workers struck or staged go-slow actions against the government's austerity policy. [see International notes last week].

Food price rises and a wage restraint policy has led to a major revolt which has taken the leaders of the Israeli trade union federation [Histadut] by surprise.

It forced Finance Minister Rabinowitz to say the economy "stands on the brink of an abyss".

SWEDISH CONFLICT

The coalition of big business parties which has formed a new government in Sweden is heading for a confrontation with the trade unions in next year's wage negotiations starting in December.

The Employers' Federation has demanded a complete wage freeze for next year. But the Trade Union Federation [LO] Chairman, Gunnar Nilsson, has put in a demand for a 15% increase in a package deal. Nilsson also refused to discuss any reduction in sickness benefits or productivity deals with the employers.

LO wants the right to decide when hours should be worked and holiday periods. They also want to reduce the duration of the traditional collective agreement to one year instead of the previous three year period, with their right to amend any agreement if the new Falldin government puts up taxes.

INDUSTRY DEPENDS ON IMPORTS

Dear Comrades,

British industry in general and the machine tool industry in particular is facing one of the gravest crisis in its history. Many reasons are given for the present crisis, some of which are valid, none more perhaps than the lack of investment with the trade.

Over the past five years companies have shed a high percentage of their skilled labour force. It is thus fair to assume that with the lack of investment in new machinery together with a smaller workforce, any possible upturn in trade could not be met.

One particular firm situated on the South coast shows a perfect example of the bankrupt policies of the present system. The company over the past five years has cut its labour force from over 2,000 to less than 1,000. Most of the machines have gone beyond their expected life span by 10-15 years.

We have all heard on numerous occasions, and in particular at the Labour Party conference, Bros Scanlon, among others, screaming for import controls. This at the best is only a short term solution, and at the worst could lead to a possible trade war. If we take the second possibility which could quite conceivably affect machine tool parts, then the results for this particular firm would be catastrophic. For many items used in the construction of the products come from abroad, 80% of the company's products are totally dependent on Japanese ballscrews. One may well ask, why not buy British? Japanese ballscrews are cheaper, there is a 6-12 month delivery time.

Bearing in mind the skills required in a highly technical industry and the conditions of factory life, the wages men and women can expect to receive are scandalous.

A few months ago one third of the firm's skilled workforce had to have their basic wage increased to bring them in line with the national minimum wage of £46. Yet only the other day one of the directors made the following statement in the company rag.

"Because the work calls for such great precision considerable importance is attached to the highly skilled workers. We've got the best workforce in the business."

Yours fraternally

Ken Tidy
[Portslade Labour Party]

FUTURE UNDER CAPITALISM

Dear Comrades,

After two years of wage restraint that has resulted in a 10% cut in working peoples standard of living, is big business satisfied with the enormous sacrifices made? Quite clearly they are not. The 'Economist' recently called for billions of pounds more to be cut off government expenditure and "possibly" a wage freeze after July 1977.

The human misery and suffering that such measures have and will cause is not even considered by big business. The 'moderate men' that the press espouse, the 'realists' whose 'solutions' are 'practical' to the crisis of British capitalism are seen as the only people who have an understanding of the tasks at hand.

With the Labour Party in opposition 1½ million people unemployed would have been considered intolerable, £4,000 millions worth of public expenditure cuts would not have been tolerated. The Tories would never even have attempted to arouse the wrath of the working class with such measures.

And yet is big business satisfied? A lecture given by a Cambridge engineering lecturer Mr AMP Brookes really gave an insight into the depth of the capitalist crisis and what the necessary measures in the future might have to be.

He says: "The vast majority of the working class in Britain have now, due to our dreadful welfare state system engineered by our ghastly Labour government, become idle, greedy, avaricious, insolent, law breaking and thoroughly distasteful.(!)"

"This country has now had it, and become a nasty, squalid, off-shore island.... Unless the whole welfare system is rapidly dismantled—which could now only be achieved by a military dictatorship there is no hope at all of our competing with other countries." Such is the projected future life for people in Britain under capitalism.

Yours fraternally
Phil Walsh
[Erdington LPYS]

TORY FILTH

Dear Comrades,

The front page headline of the 'News of the World' of October 17th read: "Parasites—The Scrounging Kinch family cost you £500 a week". This story is about a family who came to Britain from the Irish Republic and are living on Social Security in Rochdale.

Although £500 seems a lot, it is just a drop in the ocean of government expenditure each week. It is merely a device used by the capitalist press to divide the working class. It also has the added intention to try to convert the vast numbers of the politically dormant working class into supporting the rabid Tory call for tighter Social Security controls and so further drive the working class into the ground.

No mention is ever made in the national press about the massive state handouts being ploughed into big business each day to bolster up the bankrupt capitalist system.

Until the press is nationalised under workers' control and management this filth which is so gravely prejudicial to the working class will continue to be published and workers' unity endangered.

We must reject any opposition to this move as it is only playing to the capitalist's hands by damaging the workers' cause. Only a nationalised press can accurately and justly report the plight of workers and every activist in the labour movement must strive towards the achievement of this important objective.

Yours fraternally
Clive Walder
[Hove LPYS]

TRADE UNION DEFENCE FORCE

Dear Comrade,

Tony Riddington in his letter ('Militant' 1.10.76) taking up my article on the Trade Union Defence Force, argues that he belongs to the "school of thought that believes that Northern Ireland needs less guns...."

In my article I state: "What must be seen is that the North is bristling with guns already. Para-militaries on both sides, the so-called security forces etc.—enough guns exist for a full scale civil war. The problem is to change the attitudes and to transform the situation to where the initiative is held by the trade union movement, to where the lead is being given by the united and mobilised working class and to where developments are being determined by them."

In this way, if, as is likely, the Trade Union Defence Force had to arm itself, the guns would be forthcoming from the dis-armed para-militaries etc. some who would hand them over voluntarily and others who would be disarmed by the Trade Union Defence Force itself. Such a force would not just be another force it would be the dominant force and it would move to control all the arsenals in the North."

I also spell out that such a development is only possible if the working class movement is mobilised in the struggle against sectarianism, repression, intimidation and also the social problems of unemployment, poverty etc. in a campaign which puts forward clear socialist solutions.

I explain that the first step should be a One Day General Strike and Day of Action, with special emphasis on the local preparations building up to this one day mobilisation. Such action would show the Northern working class their own power and sweep the sectarian and the so-called security forces to the sidelines for a period and lay the basis

engineer or scientist works not for the benefit of his fellow men but for the profit of his employer.

The way to encourage more trained people to take jobs in industry is to offer them secure, interesting and socially useful jobs—and that is not what private enterprise offers.

The Prime Minister may reject the socialist policies put forward by your paper and the LPYS, but no matter what problem he turns to there is no way out unless he is prepared to tackle the problem of the ownership and control of industry.

H G Wells once said that you "can throw socialism out of the bedroom window, but it will be sat by the hearth when you come down stairs". We have to redouble our efforts to ensure that the leaders of our movement are more observant when they come down to the breakfast table.

Yours fraternally
Alan Manning
[Moss Side LPYS]

NO IDEALISM IN INDUSTRY

Dear Comrade,

The Prime Minister in a recent speech discussed many aspects of education. I would like to comment on just one area of his speech.

He pointed to the need to have more engineers and scientists in industry, and made some patronising remarks about young "idealists" who do Social Sciences, arguing in his blunt and "realistic" manner, that we had to have the wealth created first in order to have the social services.

An obvious point in many ways, but the argument is unfortunately simplistic. Many young people do not look for jobs in industry because of many factors. There is the rat-race atmosphere created by the big firms. There is the lack of security for young (and old) engineers and scientists, who fear that research and development projects will be the first to be axed in cost cutting exercises.

As for the idealism, there is no connection between the general welfare of the country and the interests of the big firms. An

MORE BROAD THAN LEFT

Dear Comrades,

A committee to fight racialism has just been set up in Peterborough, mainly because a National Front candidate is standing in a forthcoming council bye-election.

This committee (there were about a dozen at the inaugural meeting) is composed mainly or entirely of members of the International Socialists, the Communist Party and the Young Liberals!

A spokesman, who happens to be a Communist Party member, told a local paper with unconscious humour, that the aims and methods of the committee are not "political". By embracing the Young Liberals, the committee is guaranteeing that any propaganda it produces will be emptied of a class content and by deliberately not approaching the issue from a political standpoint, they are evading the only strategy that can tackle the problem of racialism and cut the ground from under the

—its aim is to break the solidarity of the working class by racialist means and if they succeed all the past gains of the labour movement and indeed the organisations of the labour movement themselves will be threatened.

Since racialism and fascism are products of capitalism in its decay, it is impossible to defeat the National Front unless the conditions in which their poisonous ideas breed are tackled at the same time. It is wrong to argue that the first 'stage' is to combine with any group or individuals who oppose racist ideas and then at a later stage, to go on to fight for socialism.

It's issues like unemployment, bad housing, cuts in social services and rising prices which the National Front takes up and exploits. These issues can only be tackled by all socialists fighting in the official organisations of the labour movement for socialist policies.

Yours fraternally

NAPPY ART

Dear Comrades,

I am rather disturbed that 'Militant' (22.10.76), should have fallen into the same pit as the capitalist press in criticising Mary Kelly's exhibition at the ICA, which included a display of nappies. The exhibition was meant, in my interpretation, to be an exploration of Mother/child relationships, something like all personal relationships, highly perverted by capitalist society (although that was not necessarily what Ms Kelly was trying to say).

On another level, you suggest that this is not art—without saying what is art. The feeling left is that 'Militant's' brand of 'socialism' would reject all attempts to experiment and only allow a certain standardised art.

I feel sure this is a mistaken impression. If anything, in a socialist society based on workers' democracy, conditions would prevail allowing experimentation and innovation by and to the benefit of all concerned.

In future I hope 'Militant' will resist all attempts to emulate the capitalist press (except perhaps in the technical sphere) whose aim in publishing their criticisms of such art was to hit yet again at supposedly wasteful public expenditure and provide yet more propaganda as to why such expenditure should be cut.

Yours fraternally
Richard Servian

SOCCER VIOLENCE PART OF CRISIS

Dear Comrade,

"Trouble flared at Villa Park as rampaging Ranger fans ran amok during a soccer friendly". So started an article in the local Sunday paper in Glasgow after "another weekend of soccer violence". The present coverage of this phenomenon, which blames soccer violence on "a small percentage of mindless louts", is entirely inadequate.

To put the blame for soccer violence on 'mindless minorities' is no more adequate an explanation of the 'problem' than that of scapegoating minorities in other areas of society. To understand soccer violence there has to be an altogether wider view taken encompassing the history of the game, its traditions, the role of the police, and processes taking place in society itself.

Contrary to popular opinion soccer was not handed down to the masses by the upper classes but, in fact, developed with the Industrial Revolution, growing side by side with the proletariat itself. Soccer provided the working classes with a leisure pursuit which allowed them to experience the importance of teamwork and co-operation on the sports field as they learned that trade unions were necessary for survival in the industrial field.

The early development of football saw the game become a real community sport in that clubs were associated with local neighbourhoods and controlled by local people. Soccer then, had an early history of local participation and local control. Long associated with aggression, soccer can be seen as an expression of violence of proletarian work experience.

But football has grown into a multi-million pound industry where clubs, dominated by their drive for profits, hold their players in a form of feudal bondage and have become unaccountable to the members of the public who patronise them. This is not to say that football violence can be solved simply by ridding the game of the cliques which run the clubs for profit. The state of football today reflects more than the powerlessness of the supporters clubs.

The importance placed on football in our society is a reflection of the poverty of our culture, of the inadequate resources spent to provide proper facilities for working class leisure. The proletariat fall foul of the profit motive at their leisure as much as they do at their work.

There is also the action of the authorities themselves to consider. Their reaction to soccer violence has not been to question the values of capitalism—not surprisingly—but to increase policing of football grounds. Many social researchers have shown that the police presence acts as much as a provocation on these occasions as it does a deterrent. The recent riots in Notting Hill bear witness to this.

It is hypocritical of the capitalist press to rant about soccer violence when violence is inherent in their own system. Soccer violence will disappear only when sport is seen as part of a society, run in the interests of the people as a whole.

Yours fraternally
Bob Wylie (East Kilbride LPYS)
Pete McGinley (Provan LPYS)

DRUG SCANDAL

Dear Comrades,

We all know that the multinational drug companies milk the National Health Service dry, but another side of this unacceptable face of capitalism has been shown up by the World Health Organisation (WHO).

The WHO in Geneva are discussing at present the marketing of drugs in the Third World by multinational chemical companies. They have found that these companies market new drugs in underdeveloped countries where there are no test facilities or market controls. They are literally using the third world as human guinea-pigs for the west.

They are flooding these markets with promotional techniques banned in the West and drugs that are of no use and a danger to their populations. It seems that nationalisation of these companies would not only save the NHS millions of pounds but the very lives of the peoples of the third world.

Yours fraternally
Andy Herbert
[Hammersmith North CLP]



Grunwick pickets talk to Reg Freeson MP (right).

GRUNWICK WORKERS BALLOT FOR A UNION

Next week, all the workers of Grunwick, both inside and outside of the company will be asked to vote on whether they want APEX to represent them! The eyes of the whole country are now on us all after the extraordinary events of last week, a week which saw the company finally give in and agree to a ballot and to abide by the outcome of the ballot.

Make no mistake—the decision of the company was entirely as a result of the action of the Union of Post Office Workers and we thank them for what they did in dragging our company screaming into the 20th century.

The ballot will be carried out next week under the supervision of the ACAS and you will be asked, first, if you want a Union to represent you, and second, if you want that Union to be APEX. Mr Ward [a manager] is trying to pretend to those inside that he will accept a Union but not APEX. That is impossible—the rules governing the TUC would not allow another Union to come in at this stage. Besides, our strike is supported at national level by every Union through the TUC. The only agreed exception will be the TGWU, who will organise the drivers.

If you vote yes

1. You will be voting for rights as guaranteed by the Employment Protection Act 1974.

2. You will be voting for an end to the abusive and tyrannical regime that we have suffered for so long.

3. You will be voting for better pay and conditions and for your share of the profits. In the last recorded figures for the year ending the 31st March, 1974, the company made £126,000 profit after tax.

4. You will be joining an expanding Union and a trade union movement of 11 million men and women.

5. You will be voting for your dignity and self-respect.

If you vote no

1. You will be saying "I am satisfied with my pay and conditions and the way that the management treats me."

2. You will be voting against Grunwick ever having a Union for years to come.

3. You will be supporting what the Daily Mirror last week called "the slave labour factory".

4. You will be supporting what Laurie Pavitt, MP, called in the House of Commons "a sweat shop with a management which could have been lifted straight out of the Dickens era."

5. You will be voting against everything we and APEX have done over the past 12 weeks to form a Union and you will be saying, "I don't care what happens to those outside."

NALGO YOUTH SUPPORT LABOUR

The rising mood of militancy of young white-collar workers was clearly shown at the NALGO [North West and North Waled District] Young Members' Conference, held in Blackpool over the weekend of November 5th-7th.

At present only three NALGO Districts (East Midlands, Southern and North West) have District Young Members' Committees (DYMCs), but this Youth Conference was well attended, with over 100 delegates present, plus visitors from London, Scotland and the East Midlands.

Class Approach

Any young trade union activist would immediately have felt at home at this Conference. Young NALGO members, many of them shop stewards, departmental reps. and convenors from solid working class areas like Wigan, Burnley, Merseyside and Oldham, adopted a clear class approach to the problems affecting working people. The Conference voted to press for NALGO affiliation to the Labour Party, to build the maximum possible support for the NUPE anti-cuts lobby on November 17th (passed unanimously), to ban the sale of council houses and to initiate a campaign against racialism and fascism.

Only one or two delegates still clung to outworn illusions in "non-political" trade unionism. There was widespread

interest in and support for the Campaign for NALGO affiliation to the Labour Party [CNALP], whose leaflets were circulated to most delegates by CNALP supporters at the conference.

In addition to resolutions, Conference discussed a "NALGO Young Members' Charter", drafted by the DYMC as a basis for discussion. Dealing in detail with pay, conditions, equality for women and manning agreements, the "charter" linked these to the problems of housing, leisure and social work, the need to democratise NALGO, to build active youth sections in every branch as a means of bringing young workers into activity in the trade union movement and, finally, explaining the need for NALGO to unite with other trade unions in the fight to change society.

The guest speaker at the Conference was **Andy Bevan**, National Chairman of the Labour Party Young Socialists, whose speech on "Public Spending Cuts" evoked an extremely warm and enthusiastic response from the delegates. Many expressed a keen interest in campaigning alongside of the LPYS, NUPE and the labour movement generally against the cuts.

Active Layer

This Conference represented the outlook of the active young layer of NALGO members. On that basis we can be certain that there will be

changes in this union in the coming years. Trade unionists can feel confident of another powerful union of over 700,000 members moving strongly in defence of jobs and social services as the impact of the cuts motivates more and more NALGO members into an active struggle on these issues.

By Steve Crookes

(NALGO)

CRIMINAL TRESPASS MEETING

On the weekend of the 27th-28th November, the Campaign against the Criminal Trespass Law has organised a conference at Reading University. The aim of the Conference is to provide information on the latest Conspiracy and Criminal Law Reform Bill to be presented to Parliament in the next session in November.

The Bill would make trespass a criminal offence for the first time and is a threat to trade unionists occupying or picketing (see Militant issue no. 324).

Details of the Conference can be obtained from CACTL, 6 Bowden Street, London SE11.

ASBESTOS WORKERS REJECT HORSE TRADING

The strike of the five cleaners at North East London Polytechnic remains as solid as ever and is now approaching its eighth week. An example of bureaucratic opposition the strikers are having to face came out at a meeting with Doctor Brossan the director of the Poly. He demanded that representatives of NATFHE, Newham Trades Council and a factory inspector be excluded from their meeting.

After one hour of wrangling the meeting took place with just the cleaners and a G&MWU official. The cleaners were asked (again) to put a full list of their demands down, thereupon an attempt to do a bit of horse trading was tried by Dr Brossan.

The women were told that if they would sacrifice Lorraine Webb's job (the sacked cleaner) he would attempt to remove W Sutton (the Assistant Service Officer) who is the main person the cleaners deal with for conditions etc. When this failed he told them that if the building was as dangerous as the cleaners claimed he would recommend a closure.

Children

But the women are not being intimidated. The local press have also jumped on the bandwagon to distort the issue, quoting the Head of Child Psychology Unit at Holbrook (Mr Alex Wadbridge) as saying: "It is quite vital that the strike ends. They are striking against the children," and claiming that "twelve highly qualified educational psychologists on a one-year course are in danger of losing their jobs." (Stratford and Newham Express) No doubt as Ann Nicholson said, "he would prefer the kids to breathe asbestos dust."

The cleaners were invited to a branch meeting of NATFHE and a co-ordinating body has been set up to liaise between the strikers and lecturers to keep a check on the

real issues. This is particularly important as various individuals such as the Chief Administrative Officer (Colin Milner) want to face both ways at once. He signed a circular on November 2nd concerning the factory inspector's visit stating: 1. "The Polytechnic should treat the premises as potentially hazardous for cleaning up purposes. (This has already been agreed, expert cleaners are standing by to undertake the clean up.)" And then circulated a signed poster dated November 4th stating: "Asbestos-related diseases can only be caused by breathing in asbestos fibres from the air" and that "the Holbrook Annexe has therefore had a clean bill of health since the report was received on October 6th."

It is these distortions and many more that the women are facing. As well as their own fight they participated in the November 17th Lobby of Parliament. Support is still needed in their fight, they are still in the weird position of being on an official picket but not an official strike because the GMWU says they would have to call out the other cleaners in the other annexes. No strike pay is coming in.

The demands are still:

★ The cleaning and making safe of Holbrook Centre by TU industrial cleaners. But first a G&MWU analyst should make tests.

★ A register kept of everyone who has come into contact with the building. If anyone contracts asbestosis in the future then the Poly cannot deny it.

★ No victimisation.

★ Full pay for the length of the dispute.

All messages of support and donations to be sent to: Strike Committee, c/o Holbrook Hub, Holbrook Road, E.15.

By Bob Faulkes

(Hackney Central Labour Party)

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OXFORD

HOTEL WORKERS UNIONISED

In recent weeks, workers at the Randolph Hotel—Oxford's biggest and poshest, with a four-star rating from the AA—have been flooding to join the TGWU. When I interviewed the T&G spokesman on Friday 29th October there were already 60 members out of 100 full time employees. And in his hand was a bundle of newly filled-out application forms. The workers are confident that recognition from the management (the Randolph is owned by Trust Houses Forte) is within sight. They are prepared to take militant action if it is not forthcoming—perhaps in the form of a 24 hour strike—as a show of strength.

The spark to action was the arbitrary dismissal of a housekeeper—verbally and without warning—on the grounds that guest rooms are dirty...when she was seriously understaffed with chambermaids. Management will not agree to the representation of staff by the union of their choice—which is hardly surprising considering some of the conditions described to me.

The toilets on the staff floor (many staff live in the hotel) have been consistently filthy. At one stage they were not cleaned for eight months. Rather than replace the two women staff who used to do the job, the

assistant manager has recently been seen cleaning them out! Male and female staff use the same baths and toilet—but until last week there were no catches or locks on the doors. There were no electric lights in the bathrooms, so no-one could have a bath after dark.

Staff food (which is supposed to be part of their wages) is appalling and all departments are seriously understaffed, especially chambermaids and night porters. For several months there has been only one porter on duty on certain nights. At the moment kitchen porters are working split shifts, for no extra money, to cover the work of three men who left but were not replaced.

Wages at the hotel are pitifully low. Workers living in do well to net £20 a week and those living out get little more. Overtime pay is often withheld for 3-4 weeks. As soon as the union is recognised, wages will be the first issue taken up and the staff are adamant that the rise they want will be a big one.

By Ian Walker

(Oxford LPYS)

DEADLOCK IN ISLE OF GRAIN STRIKE

The Babcock and Wilcox dispute at the Isle of Grain drags agonisingly into its 24th week. On Wednesday November 10th national talks between unions and management broke down after 7 hours.

The main point of contention is over the re-employment of the 900 plus workers sacked during the dispute. Babcocks wrote to the men individually, asking if they would like their job back. Nearly 800 men replied that they would.

But the firm say that because they have lost part of the contract they have jobs only for 580 men. The unions believe that the contractors brought in to replace Babcocks will be able to employ a large number of men, but believe that about 100 workers will be without work. They want assurances that these men will receive redundancy pay. Another demand, which Babcock's find unacceptable, is that the men should not be re-employed, but given continuity of service.

Activists in the movement must be asking themselves why should the employers want a long strike involving millions of pounds on a site already two years behind schedule? Provoked by Babcock & Wilcox, the original issue of protective clothing has faded into the background, as a protracted battle has taken place.

The employers obviously wanted to try and break the union but have found this impossible. Babcock's are having financial difficulties and would want to make the site more profitable i.e. to pay lower bonuses, to hold down rates of pay, and have greater production. Their efforts have backfired on them with the workers having to suffer.

But that's only part of the story. The CEGB are in trouble. Bad planning has dislocated their programme. Having

planned for an increase in demand for electricity they decided to build new power stations like the one at Grain. Soaring electricity charges have led to a decrease in demand, therefore these new stations are not needed as urgently as thought.

In March it is expected that the smaller stations classed as 'inefficient' will be closed, leading to redundancies in the industry. Along with the holding up of the construction of new stations, the CEGB will have the output capacity they require. It seems more than a coincidence that similar disputes have taken place at the other power station sites.

One Day Strike

The strength of the unions at Grain should have been built on, with the local officials organising support throughout the area, culminating in a one day stoppage of support, including a mass publicity campaign to explain the strikers case. On a national level there was the horrifying spectacle of Scanlon, leader of the AUEW, saying that he thought the men would lose, that they had lost their jobs!

Bob Bean (Rochester & Chatham) and John Ovenden (Gravesend) as the local Labour MPs should have been in the forefront of the fight. Not just locally, but nationally as well, where they should have been demanding action on the strikers behalf by the Labour government. After all, what is the point of having a Labour government unless it acts on behalf of the working man?

Messages of support etc. to: Bro W Thompson, 52 St Andrews Court, Gravesend, Kent.

CONVENOR SACKED BY LAINGS



• Jim Duffy

Jim Duffy, TGWU Convenor at the Isle of Grain, has been sacked by John Laings. Receiving his cards by registered post on Wednesday 10 November, he refused to accept them and sent them back.

Brother Duffy, one of 400 Laings workers laid off due to the Babcock & Wilcox dispute, is secretary of the tunnel miners in charge of 1,500 men based in London and the South, but who work in other areas of the country. Last year he received a written warning from Laings for clocking off to attend a dispute involving his members at Littlebrook. This warning was not accepted by the union.

Prior to the lay-off, on a Sunday, he spoke at a meeting of tunnel miners in Redcar, who were in dispute with Morrans, a sub-contractor to Laings. The car he had travelled in broke down and he spent the Monday on the picket line. "When I arrived back I wasn't allowed to clock in. Laings complained that I had been seen at Redcar. I said 'So what?' They then told me I was dismissed. I asked what for? They replied: 'Give us an hour to think about that.' Later I was given four weeks

notice for being on a picket line in working hours.

But as Brother Duffy explains, that Monday was a day off, agreed to by Laings the Friday before, to enable him to attend the TGWU National committee to which he is a delegate. The firm cannot refuse this. If taken to a tribunal over wrongful dismissal, Laings wouldn't have a leg to stand on. Brother Duffy commented: "I think this has been specifically set up by the contractors to keep the fires burning over the dispute....in case of a Babcock's settlement they thought, 'Sack Duffy' to provoke another dispute."

Brother Duffy believes he is deliberately being picked on to try and force him out of the area. But he is standing firm and is on the Babcock & Wilcox picket line.

"It seems to be one thing after another at Grain. Even if the Babcock dispute was over tomorrow morning the picket would still be kept up."

By Kirk West

(Rochester and Chatham LPYS)

POLY FIGHTS RACISM

On Thursday last week, 10th November, the students at Middlesex Polytechnic at Enfield held their General Meeting in the refectory. For many weeks feeling has been high about action against the raising of fees for overseas students and racial prejudice.

The overseas students' groups at this meeting called for the occupation of the Church Street Edmonton administration block. This was passed with a considerable majority, in conjunction with the NUS week of action. The landing forces made their way across North London and occupied the Church Street block with the support of the NALGO members in that block.

Overseas students are demanding with the

support of the majority of SU members at Enfield that the fees of the overseas students should be lowered from £460 to that of the home students of £280.

Action must be taken by all polytechnics, Universities and FEs on this subject and all the other discriminations against the black students coming into the country. Next year the fees are being raised from £460 to £650. This is racialism and we must fight this.

Telegrams and letters of support etc. should be sent to: The Students Union, Middlesex Polytechnic, Queensway, Enfield, EN3 4SF. Please support us.

By John Pickles

Militant

60,000 PROTEST AGAINST CUTS



Marchers assemble at Hyde Park

Photo by Tony Howard

"The message today is no more cuts. Enough is enough." Those were the words of Alan Fisher, General Secretary of the National Union of Public Employees speaking at the lobby of Parliament organised by his union against the government public spending reductions.

The lobby mobilised 60,000 workers, the biggest demonstration ever organised against government policy by the trade union movement while a Labour government was in office. The march stretched one and a half miles long from Hyde Park to Westminster. It showed the strength of feeling and determination of wide layers of organised

workers in opposing government policy.

Nearly 15,000 of the marchers came from NUPE itself, but the march was officially supported by twelve other national unions and individual districts and branches of other unions were in attendance. 1400 came down on trains from the North East alone. The Labour Party National Executive had also given official support.

Women and Blacks

The march was noticeable for the number of women and black workers in attendance, mainly from the hospitals. Many of these were

marching in action for the first time in their lives.

As Alan Fisher said, the lobby showed the enormous support for the fight against the cuts. "Public services should not be sacrificed to the demands of the international financiers," he argued.

The lobby was not the end of the fight, but part of a continuing campaign which the public sector unions would be mounting in the ensuing weeks and months ahead. Already West Midlands NUPE has called a one day strike and demonstration of its members on December 1st. This is receiving wide support from other unions in the area.

Ford Halewood

On Tuesday November 16th, fourteen men were suspended by the Ford Motor Company for three days. This was only three days after the company sent a threatening letter to all production workers demanding increased productivity by improved quality and announcing the ending of overtime because such "expense was unjustified". As if overtime was a favour to the workforce anyway!

Suspensions were meted out for an alleged breach of a company directive that workers were not allowed to leave their working area before official "knocking off" time. Workers in the body plant were exercising a well

established custom, recognised in the Ford agreement "blue book", that time is allowed for washing up. In spite of this the men were disciplined.

At a plant meeting unanimous support was given with a pledge to strike for the period of the suspension. A further meeting with night shift workers present confirmed this. This meant that 3-4,000 men were on strike with a similar number laid off. The plant has been brought to a standstill.

Ford's tactics were the culmination of a campaign to intimidate the workforce so that there could be a reduction in manning, a speed up on work practices and a reassertion of

management control of the shop floor.

The attacks coincide with the opening of the new Ford plant in Spain which will produce the latest Fiesta model. This was reported in the Ford bulletin with a picture of Juan Carlos shaking hands with Henry Ford II. It could be that the company want to use the threat of a loss of production to the Spanish plant to tame the Halewood workers.

National TGWU officials have been asked to make the three day strike official.

By a Ford worker

LEICESTER AUEW

Under pressure from a number of shop stewards, the Leicester District Committee of the AUEW has called a special meeting of the Districts Shop Stewards for Thursday November 18th. This is due to increasing concern among the members over the state of the industry and our union's position in the area, particularly further redundancies and bonus alterations in the Bentleys Group in Leicester.

The coming meeting should demand of the District Committee that it should commit itself to district-wide action against further attacks like those we have seen in the Bentley situation.

Over the past period many union activists have been hard hit. A lead from this meeting can build support in Leicester for those who are faced with attack from employers in the future.

By John Edwards
(AUEW Shop Steward)

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