

Militant

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**YTURC CONFERENCE
MILITANT MEETING**

**Saturday 2 April
Youth fight for socialism**

Main Hall, The Winter Gardens, Blackpool, 7.00pm
Speakers: Ted Grant
National Union of Seamen members, a health worker

TORY WAR ON POOR



Easter gift to BAe bosses

JUST BEFORE the government inflicts its savage new benefit rules, it has handed out an Easter gift worth £650m to its big business friends in British Aerospace (BAe), who are buying the Rover car company.

Rover is worth £334m, with profits last year of £27m. Its £800m debts were paid off in advance by the taxpayer, but the price to BAe is only £150m. And they will keep £500m through a tax concession agreed by the government.

6 million will suffer

JUST WEEKS after the budget gave millionaire businessman Ralph Halpern an extra £5000 a week, the unemployed, the sick, disabled, single parents and the old will get hit by the most savage attacks yet on the poor.

By Roger Shriver

The Tory Social Security Act comes into operation on 11 April.

Thatcher's government aim to make life on social security, which Tory policies have forced on so many, intolerably 'insecure'. They hope that the fear of poverty will force workers to beg for any job, at any pay or any conditions.

What will it mean?

About four million claimants will get lower benefits than if the present system was increased in line with inflation.

★ A new housing benefit scheme means that one million tenants

will lose *all* help with rents and rates. Anyone with more than £6000 savings, including pensioners who may have voted Tory, will be ineligible for help. Everyone will have to pay at least one fifth of their rates.

★ Young people between 16 and 18 will get *no* benefit. Thousands of part time students at FE colleges will suffer most.

★ Supplementary benefit, renamed Income Support, will be cut for 18-24 year olds by £4.35 a week to £26.05 if you live in your own home. Under-25s will also lose out on rent and rate rebates.

★ Parents will be £10.75 a week poorer in lost rent and rate rebates if their grown up children are living at home and working.

★ All special additional payments for heating etc. will disappear.

★ Grants for 'special needs' like

cookers and bedding will be almost a thing of the past. Instead DHSS offices will get a Social Fund, payable at the discretion of managers, mainly as repayable loans.

And in some of the most deprived areas, the fund will be hopelessly short of what is needed. The Social Fund for the DHSS office in Provan; Glasgow for loans and grants will be only 22 per cent of its 1986/87 allocation which was all for straightforward grants. Bathgate gets 34 per cent and Liverpool 59 per cent overall.

The new Act affects all workers. The labour movement must not leave its victims undefended. The unions must organise the unemployed. They should follow the lead of the Youth Trade Union Rights Campaign and fight for the young workers on poverty wage schemes such as YTS.

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Militant

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Vote for socialism

THE DECISION by Tony Benn and Eric Heffer to stand for the Labour Party leadership will be welcomed by all those looking for an effective socialist challenge to the Thatcher government.

At stake is the future of socialism. A left defeat would reinforce for a period the present rightward drift of the leadership. A victory will revitalise the party and pave the way for the election of a Labour government.

Labour's big business enemies have already begun to campaign for a Kinnock/Hattersley victory, using their press to abuse and slander the left and distort their policies. They are also orchestrating the leadership's bid to ditch policies which pose any threat to the millionaires who control the economy.

They want to see the Labour Party emasculated. The *Financial Times* has welcomed Kinnock's success in turning the party away from "uncompromising socialism", expressed satisfaction that "they recognise a role for the market economy" and anticipated the abandonment of unilateralism and opposition to the European Community.

But to complete its transformation into a party fit for capitalism, the FT vainly insists that the leadership break the party from the unions: "The credibility he (Kinnock) may gain from modernising his party is dissipated when ordinary voters see that his own position is to so large an extent dependent on old-style trade unions like the Transport and General Workers."

Labour's leaders are being cynically used by the capitalist media to help big business attack the unions' involvement in the party they founded. They have refused to back workers in struggle and backed the TUC's grovelling policy of accepting serfdom for British workers in face of Ford's blackmail.

The right-wing programme, emerging furtively from the 'policy review', will never be accepted by the majority of activists nor will it inspire voters. If a Labour government is elected, it will be despite rather than because of these policies.

Kinnock is adopting the 1974-79 government's catastrophic policies which led to Thatcher's victory. They are the policies of 'socialist' governments in Spain, Greece, Australia and New Zealand, which have cut workers' living standards and handed tax cuts to the richest, as Lawson was able to point out with glee in the budget.

With the rightward drift in policy has been the attempt to purge the party of those fighting for socialism. A Kinnock victory would mean a new round of show trials and expulsions, by a leadership which cannot argue politically. Echoing the press, Kinnock employs abuse rather than argument, dismissing any opposition as 'daft', 'self-indulgent' or 'a distraction'.

The leadership election is the chance to reverse all these retreats. It is a vital battle for the future of the Labour Party.

But the left will only succeed if it takes its message to every corner of the movement. A 'low-key' campaign, conducted among a few union general secretaries, would be futile. No chance to put the candidates' case must be missed to counter the inevitable avalanche of media hostility.

The left must learn the lessons of Liverpool City Council. In *Liverpool—A City that Dared to Fight*, Peter Taaffe and Tony Mulhearn tell how that struggle exposed the role of the capitalist media: "but it also demonstrated the ability of the labour movement, under Marxist influence, to counter it."

"Nowhere in Britain has the media gone deeper into the sewers in its attempts to malign the Labour Party and its leadership. Yet it is astonishing to see what little effect it had in shaping the outlook of the working class of Liverpool."

As in that campaign, so now, there must be debates at every union conference, meetings in every union branch, shop stewards' committee and workplace, street activity, and constituency and city-wide public rallies.

These will provide the platform to explain concretely how the programme of the left will benefit workers, the young, blacks and Asians, the 17 million living in poverty and all those suffering from the Tory spending cuts.

Inspired by such a campaign, the new generation of young union members will put pressure on their leaders, and new members will join the party, to fight for an historic left victory, which would pave the way for a new Labour government and a party on the road to socialism.

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The fight for the Labour leadership

Back Benn and Heffer

THE LABOUR Party leadership contest, as Eric Heffer told *Militant*, is "a crusade for socialism and a campaign to stop the drift to the right in the party."

It provides a perfect opportunity to campaign for a victory for Tony

Benn and Eric Heffer and for socialist policies.

Resolutions of support should be moved in every ward and constituency Labour Party, union branch, shop stewards' committee and trades council, setting out a plan of action to take the

campaign to every workplace and community.

Aggregate Labour Party meetings should be organised to involve the whole membership. Then there should be public rallies for the candidates, workplace meetings and street ac-

tivity.

If conducted vigorously, this campaign can draw new layers actively into the struggle for socialism and start the fightback to build a fighting socialist Labour Party.

Midlands fightback

DELEGATES TO the East Midlands Labour Party Conference had the right wing's vision of Labour's future spelled out from the platform.

Roy Hattersley was heard in polite silence by most delegates, with jeers when he compared those who called for industrial action over the NHS to first-world-war generals: "After the miners have lost they propose to send even more men over the top".

His reception was in contrast to that for Tony Benn at an overflowing fringe meeting. "Labour's right want not only to ditch socialism and common ownership" he said, "but even trade unionism, which has won most of the gains for working people in the past and is the key to the future of the party".

In the conference, in the debate on the health service the loudest applause went to those who called for a one-day general strike. One resolution was carried against the advice of the executive.

The right's victories were only achieved by crushing dissent amongst the trade union delegates. Nupe and Cohse members who voted at their delegation meetings to support a resolution defending the LPYS were told by their full-time officials that they could not take such decisions. Apparently they are only there to make the numbers up.

"I've learned one thing this weekend" said a Nupe delegate, "Our full-time officials really are as bad as I've been told."

But in spite of all the manoeuvres at this conference, there was a new mood among rank-and-file delegates not to take the right's attacks lying down but to fight, both in the leadership election and for a fighting leadership with socialist policies.

Record numbers of

Militants were sold, nearly £200 was collected for the Fighting Fund and 12 copies of *Liverpool—a City that Dared to Fight* were sold.

By Bill Esmond

IN ITS debate on the National Health Service, the West Midlands Labour Party conference rejected an amendment from Coventry SE Labour Party which called for a one-day general strike.

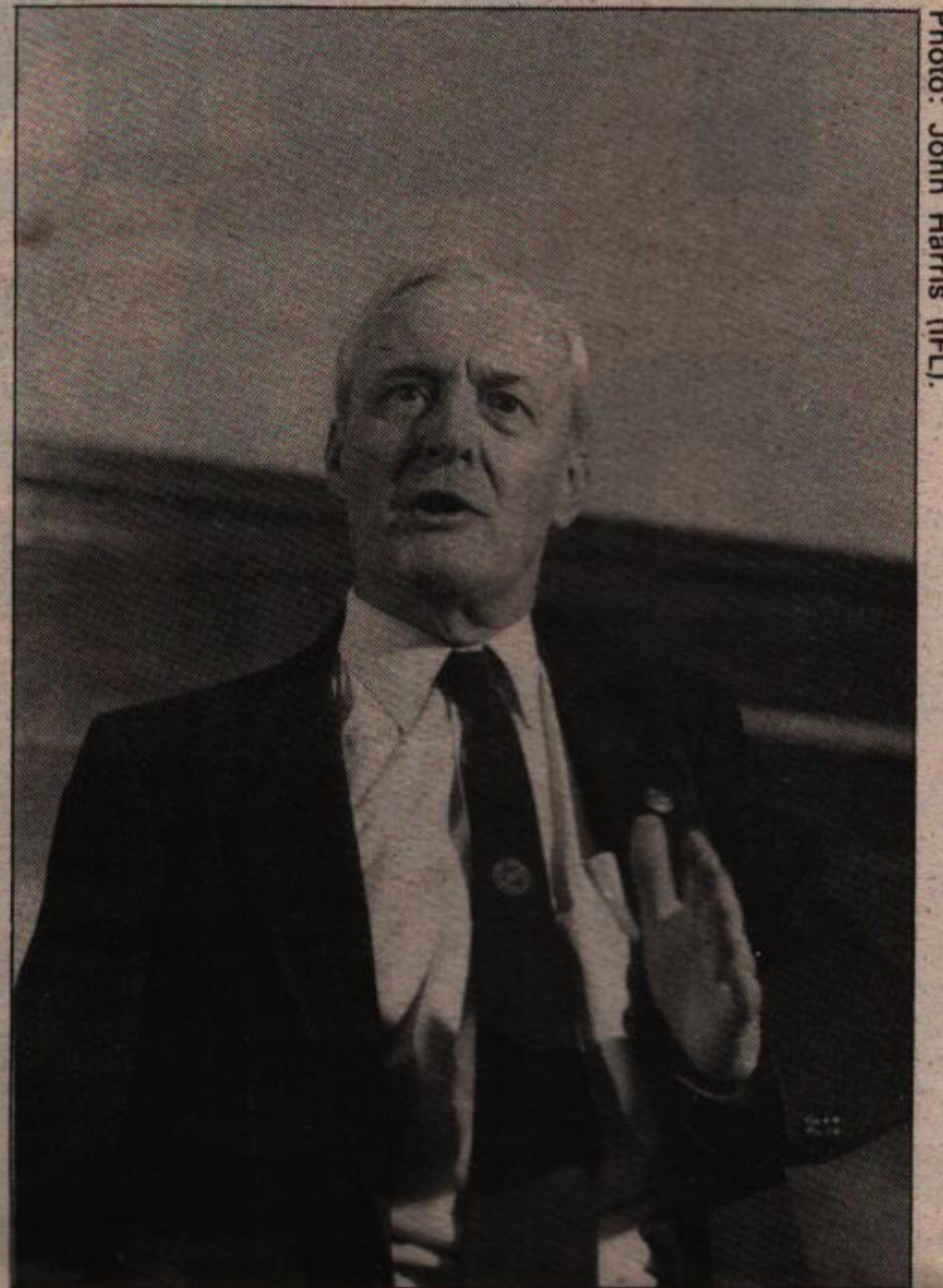
Dave Nellist MP said that Coventry had tried everything—lobbies, petitions and visits to ministers, but only two days earlier it was confirmed that Whitley Hospital was to be sold to the private sector. Industrial action was the only weapon left.

Local Nupe official, John Dempsey, sneered that "You could get the supporters of a one-day general strike in one telephone box". Yet in his own delegation was a Nupe nurse from Stafford who struck on 14 March and won the support of Littleton miners.

"There must be some pretty big telephone boxes in Coventry" replied Dave Nellist, "to fit in all the union branches who have voted for a one-day general strike!"

Young Socialists appealed to Labour councils to have nothing to do with JTS or NUTS, the new training schemes. The regional executive called for the resolution to be remitted, but after Hanna Sell described the future she faced of going from scheme to scheme, conference supported the resolution overwhelmingly.

The regional executive is now committed to a campaign against working for benefit and compulsory YTS. A trade union delegate told Hanna Sell that hers was the only speech that moved him all



Tony Benn speaking to Chesterfield Labour Party.

weekend.

Coventry SE's emergency resolution on S Africa was passed despite a request for remission. Paul Smith condemned the Apartheid regime's repression of trade unions, exposed the role of Inkatha and called for workers' sanctions against S Africa and the setting up of workers' and youth self-defence units.

Alan Douglas, of Birmingham Trades Council complained that he had heard the worst kind of sectarianism from some delegates who said: "Don't vote for this resolution because it is from Coventry SE."

After a very flat conference, following a very poor general election showing, the state of the party in the W Midlands was best summed up by the new regional organiser:

"At 21,000 we have the lowest average membership per constituency in any region. Provisional returns show that this is likely to drop by five per cent for 1987-88. We are very much in the fourth division in terms of party organisation."

By Nigel Wheatley

Stirring meeting

TORIES IN Basildon, Essex, asked the Town Manager to assess whether the speech made there by Peter Taaffe on Tuesday 29 March was legal.

According to an article in the *Evening Echo*, headlined *Militant words spell trouble—Tory*, and *Don't listen to this man, new-towners warned*. Tony Archer, the Tory council leader warned that this meeting "could cause chaos among contented people by stirring up a hornet's nest of left-wing propaganda."

At the meeting of 100 people, Peter Taaffe denounced the Tory attack: "Militant supporters are very moral and law-abiding people. We defend the interests of working-class people, but if that conflicts with the laws of capitalism, then so be it."

The council doubled the price of the room, on the grounds that books were being sold. When a Labour councillor heard of this, she promised to pay the extra cost of the room. And 21 copies of *Liverpool—a City that Dared to Fight* were bought.

The Tory/Alliance council in Basildon intends to make £11 million worth of cuts, there are thousands on housing waiting lists and 7,000 people are unemployed. If chaos arises in Basildon, it will be because of Tory policies.

By John MacKay

Strong-arm tactics in Bermondsey

LONDON LABOUR Party official Terry Ashton used bolt cutters to break into Bermondsey Labour Party rooms to conduct a canvass for a forthcoming council byelection.

No party officials were approached. Ashton is riding roughshod over members' rights, having already imposed an extreme right wing candidate, who has stood against the party as an

independent.

Party officials have made it clear that they will support the Labour candidate, despite the denial of democratic procedures, to defeat the Liberal and Tory enemy.

They will take up the behaviour of London officials with general secretary Larry Whitty.

Unions framed by Ford and Tories

THE UNIONS have been framed by Ford and the Tories.

By Tony Cross

The giant car company launched an avalanche of anti-union propaganda when they scrapped plans to build an electronics plant in Dundee. They claimed this was because of opposition to their single-union deal with the right-wing leaders of the AEU.

But other unions say their real reasons were a review of investment plans and sterling's strength against the dollar. And TGWU leader Ron Todd has shown that the 'generous' offer of 450 jobs would be at the expense of 1,400 existing jobs at electronics plants in Treforest, Enfield and Belfast, where workers are paid national rates.

Ford would have pulled out anyway, but they have connived with the Tories to make the unions take the rap.

Conditions

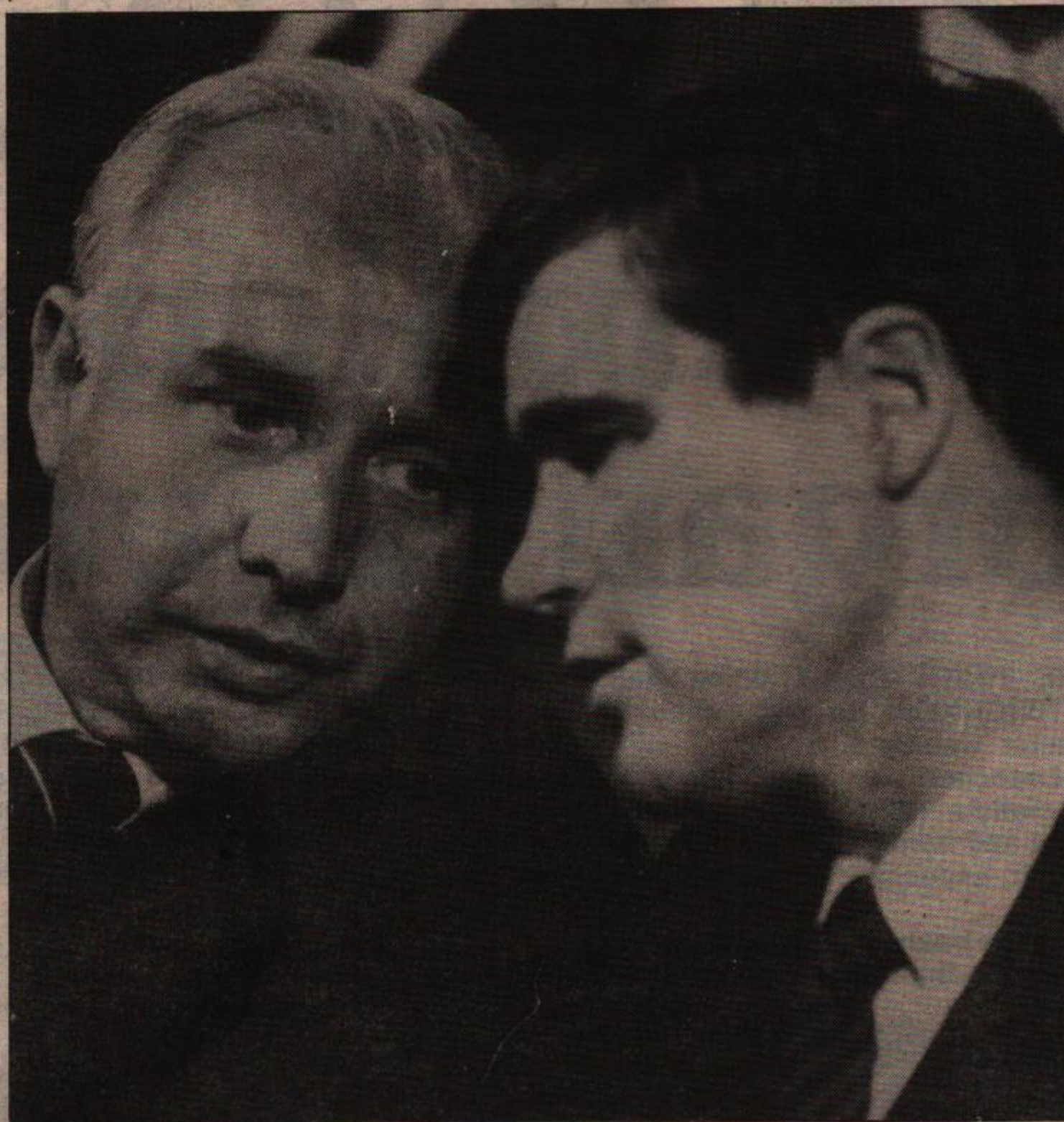
"If the deal went through, it would undermine conditions we've had to struggle for 30 to 40 years for," a Ford worker told *Militant*.

"It would mean pay rates 50 per cent less, no shop stewards as we know them and working conditions outside our national agreement, the Blue Book. They just want a Nissan-style plant."

But Norman Willis and the TUC leaders have humiliated themselves by flying to Detroit to grovel in front of the Ford bosses instead of exposing Ford's intentions.

They were met with the arrogant demand that they should not only endorse the deal, but do it unanimously.

'Sold to the lowest bidder', is the offer from the TUC leaders to any mul-



AEU leaders Gavin Laird and Bill Jordan humiliated by Ford bosses.

tinational company good enough to consider exploiting workers in Britain. The Tories' hypocrisy over this incident has been breathtaking.

"The Ford motor company and the government are weeping crocodile tears over lost jobs," the Ford worker comments. "Ford have halved jobs in Britain in the last ten years and Thatcher's record speaks for itself! We were out on strike not so much for the money as over the strings attached to the company's offer, which would have meant more job losses."

Jobs will not be saved by union leaders offering

labour at bargain rates. A militant campaigning trade union movement can fend off the capitalists' destruction of manufacturing industry.

Nationalisation

If 'employers' can't guarantee employment, what's their excuse for being in business? The labour movement should demand the nationalisation of companies threatening redundancies under workers' control and management and campaign for a Labour government committed to socialist policies which will mean jobs for all.

Hammond in league

ANOTHER ARCHITECT of single union deals, Eric Hammond of the EEUPTU, has a record of touting his kind of trade unionism round the labour movement's enemies.

A couple of years ago he spoke at the conference of the bosses' organisation, the CBI.

Now Hammond has gone one step further down the road of treachery. He was the main speaker at a recent lunch organised by the vicious anti-union spy network, the Economic League.

Alton ignores rape victims over 18

THE IGNORANCE and insensitivity towards women shown by the supporters of Alton's abortion bill has become clear with their latest proposals on rape.

By Margaret Creear

Alton's backers are putting an amendment to the bill, now in its committee stage, which will allow exemptions from the 18-week limit for pregnancies resulting from rape—but only for girls under 18.

It implies that only under the age of 18 can the law be convinced that the woman didn't agree to be raped. The sufferers and feeling of women who are victims of such an act of violence apparently count for nothing to the legalistic minds of Alton and his crew.

In addition to being raped by the use of physical force, women over the age of 18 would in addition suffer from state violence by being forced to carry on with an unwanted pregnancy. It could delay their recovery from the trauma of being raped. If, in desperation, they then seek an abortion, they would face criminal proceedings.

In a macabre lottery with women's rights Alton also intends to allow separate votes on 18, 20, 22 and 24

week limits. Since they have no real confidence in getting the 18-week limit accepted they are prepared to accept any reduction with the intention of coming back for more later on.

This exposes the Alton camp's arguments that a lower limit is necessary because of the viability of the foetus—any limit would do as long as it reduces the number of abortions.

Disguised aims

By using these salami tactics they hope to achieve what they never could by open campaigning on their real beliefs—to end abortion rights altogether.

Alton has been touring Ireland to whip up support for his bill to spread the hardships and difficulties of women there to Britain, cutting off an escape route for women in Ireland. There is already a constitutional ban on abortion in Ireland and it is now illegal to even tell women how they could get an abortion, even if it is only passing on a phone number.

The third reading of Alton's Bill will be on 6 or 13 May. No concession must be made in this battle. The next month to six weeks allows the labour movement time to mobilise its forces in defence of working class women and youth.



Demonstrator on anti-Alton bill march in Liverpool.

Cancer screening chaos threatens women's lives

TORY HEALTH cuts have reduced the government's national cervical cancer screening system to a shambles, sentencing thousands of women to death whose lives could have been saved.

By Jean Smith

A computerised screening system for women aged between 20 and 65 was due to be completed by the end of March. Only just over half the health districts have the money and facilities to call up all women for their first smear before the end of the year.

Over a quarter of authorities, (52 out of 190) will not have called all the women in by the end of 1991. Nearly one in five will not have completed the process by the end of 1993.

Tory health minister Edwina Currie, who is responsible for the system showed her real attitude in 1986. "Universal screening is neither

desirable nor necessary. We spend a fortune screening all those millions of women. But are we actually saving lives?"

In fact an effective screening system would save thousands of lives.

Cervical cancer affects around 2000 women every year and the number who die of the disease could spiral up in the next decade if present trends continue. These deaths are preventable; cervical cancer is completely curable if diagnosed and treated early enough in its development.

Yearly checks

Yearly checks could practically eradicate the disease, even the new, more virulent, faster-developing strain. But the Tories want health cuts not improvements.

The situation demands a vast increase in the number and staffing levels of testing laboratories. At present these have a continual backlog. Even

when tests are done, one in four districts take at least a month to process results. Three districts, Hastings, Southend and East Berkshire take more than three months!

And testing is not done often enough; cuts mean there can be five-year gaps between tests. Labour should fight for yearly testing with mobile screening units on estates and at workplaces; for well-women clinics throughout the country and for research into the environmental causes of such cancers.

Tory cuts are putting women's lives at risk. Labour's front bench must do more than just produce facts and figures, however damning they may be. Labour Party members and trade unionists should insist that the labour movement takes action.

Force the Tories to make the choice—pay up for a decent health service or get out.

Scottish students poll tax rebellion

SCOTTISH NATIONAL Union of Students has agreed to support a campaign against poll tax including non-implementation and non-payment.

Demands for Labour councillors and MPs to make a stand on poll tax or resign were also passed.

A claim by the Kinnochite Scottish NUS executive that "there is a limit to what NUS and students can do because ultimately the secretary of state is all

powerful" was thrown out.

The misnamed Democratic Left leadership also received a serious challenge to its control of the union from an independent left, Jane Gray, standing for president. Two Marxists Martin Barr and Joe McIntyre were elected to the executive reflecting the move to the left amongst Scottish students.

By Simon Kaplan

YTURC national conference

Campaign will organise youth

THE YOUTH Trades Union Rights Campaign (YTURC) holds its first national conference at Easter weekend.

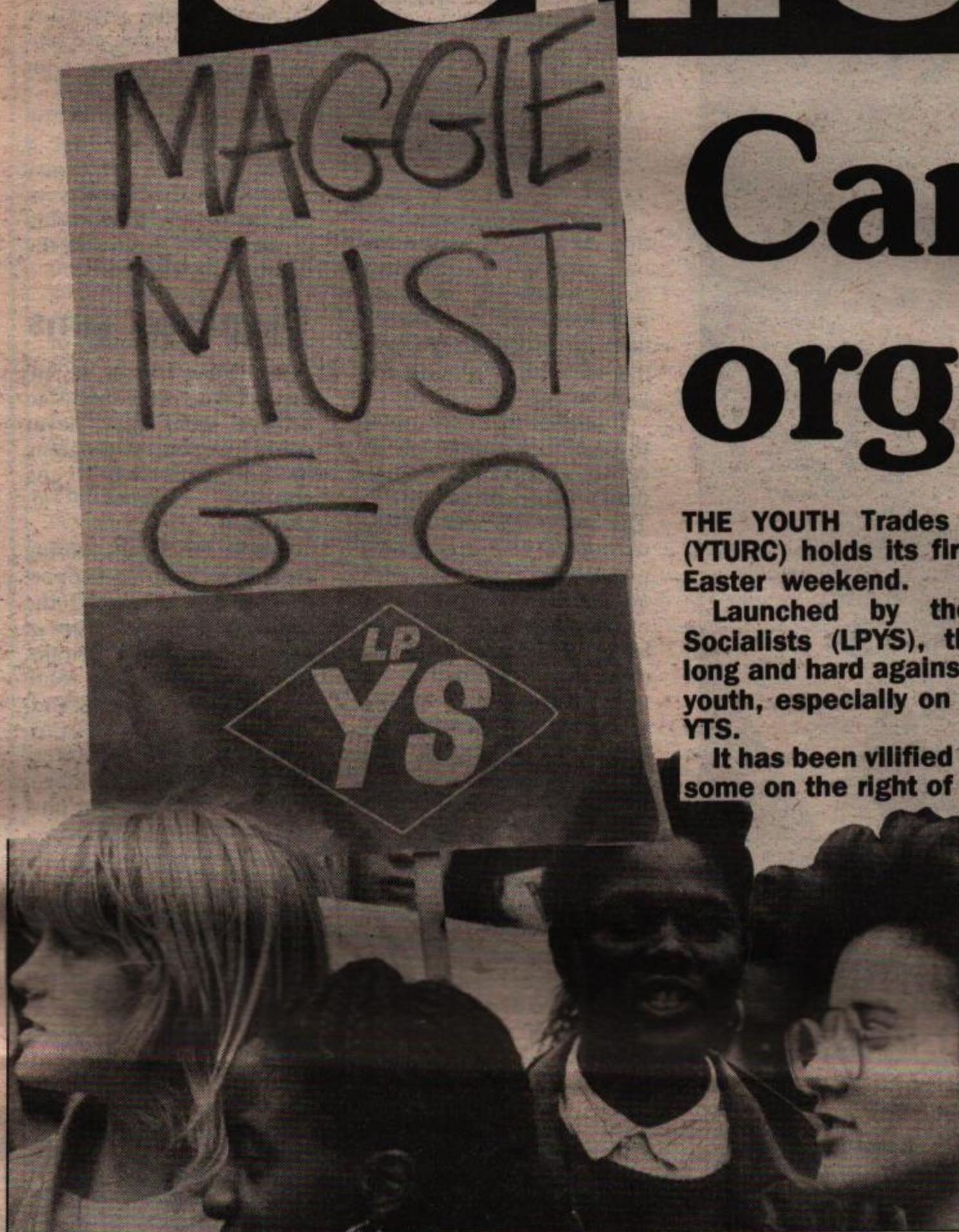
Launched by the Labour Party Young Socialists (LPYS), the campaign has fought long and hard against the super-exploitation of youth, especially on government schemes like YTS.

It has been vilified by the Tory press and even some on the right of the labour movement. But

it has also won widespread support.

The left-wing Campaign Group of MPs collected £136 at a recent meeting to help young people get to YTURC conference. Many union and Labour Party branches have helped YTURC's campaigns to organise youth.

Below leading members of YTURC write about some of the issues the conference will discuss.



School students demonstrating last year.

Photo: Dave Sinclair.

Stop attacks on Labour's youth

"THE LABOUR leadership are stupid to attack the Labour Party Young Socialists (LPYS) who are the only section of the party capable of winning millions of disaffected youth to socialist ideas."

So said Tony Benn at the LPYS's press conference in December 1987. It had been called to answer the attacks from the Labour Party hierarchy on the LPYS. Many young people think of Labour as their party and hope it will defend their rights. Unfortunately the party leadership have betrayed this trust by attacking the party's youth section.

They shut down our regional and national conferences and our regional structures and lowered our age limit to 23. And they claimed that the party would offer more to young people once they'd finished!

But where are Labour's campaigns to defend young people? The youth supplement to Labour Party News, first discuss-

ed in October, has yet to appear. The regional 'youth campaign committees' haven't been set up. And the national youth campaign committee hasn't even produced a leaflet!

LABOUR'S NATIONAL executive has deferred a threat to abolish its LPYS representative.

The last meeting agreed to a recommendation from national organiser Joyce Gould to elect the representative by a ballot of LPYS branches. All branch secretaries should notify Walworth Road of their addresses.

Groups like the leadership of the National Organisation of Labour Students (Nols) and the Labour Co-ordinating Committee (LCC) collaborated with the leadership's attacks. They were inspired by hatred of *Militant* and its supporters' influence in the LPYS.

Now even they are forced to openly question the leadership's motives. Party activists are "rapidly coming to the conclusion that the

Labour Party has no serious intention to build a thriving youth movement after all," writes Nols chair, Neil Usher, in *Tribune*. He complains that "next to nothing" has been done about the leadership's promises to campaign among youth.

What a surprise! We in the LPYS warned that the only reason for the 'restructuring' was to attack us.

We are fighting back. On Friday 1 April at Blackpool's Winter Gardens we will have a 'Defend the LPYS' rally. This will be the public launch of the campaign to build the LPYS and step up its excellent campaigning work.

Our demands are:
 ★ Bring the age limit back to 26
 ★ Keep the LPYS rep on Labour's NEC
 ★ Bring back the LPYS regional committees
 ★ Restore the LPYS budget to its 1981 level (£25,000)
 ★ Reinstate our conferences
 ★ Relaunch Socialist Youth.

By an LPYS National Committee member

Stand up for your rights

AFTER A successful youth strike, YTURC is carrying on its campaign to organise young people. Press officer Mark Meredith explains why:

On 12 September school leavers will enter the job market. They will have no choice. If you can't find a real job or are unable to go to college, slave labour YTS will be the only option.

YTURC's campaigns have been instrumental in stopping wage decreases and industrial conscription. In April '85 YTURC scored a victory and forced the Tories to temporarily withdraw their plans for YTS conscription.

Now they have come back for revenge. They are attempting to introduce conscription by the backdoor. Benefits for 16 and 17 year olds are to be abolished.

YTURC issued a direct challenge to the government: "Back down, or face the organised wrath of youth!"

On 19 November 1987, we took 3,000 to our lobby of Parliament. This time however, the Tories were

determined to implement their policies. The tremendous strike of 14 March was our response. There was enormously increased repression in the schools: police on the gates, special assemblies, threats of suspension and threats to send accounts of strike action to future employers.

But despite these obstacles, thousands marched through every city and major town alongside the health workers. We are demanding real jobs and decent education and training. YTURC's campaign against YTS exploitation will continue.

Schools

The strike was tremendously successful in explaining the issues. Now we must find a way to the millions of youth who will be hit in September, through meetings and debates in every school and college, local rallies, street meetings and estate meetings.

School students get organised! A campaign to de-

fer any students victimised for striking should have begun. Groups of student activists need to meet in each school every week.

The right to form school students' unions could be the first battle. Local education authorities should be approached to support the School Students Union. Labour councillors, governors and MPs should be asked to support the union.

YTS trainees get organised! By September, half a million youth will be on slave labour schemes. A campaign to recruit YTS trainees into unions will be crucial. The fight to improve pay and conditions will develop. Shop stewards could be elected and joint campaigns with other sections of the labour movement developed.

The Tories are determined to escalate the attacks on young people. Youth have shown they will fight for a decent future time and again. Between now and September the chance to build and develop the campaign must be seized.

Our aim is to organise and unite YTS trainees, school students and FE students to fight these attacks.

Sell Militant Marxist paper for Labour and Youth

Get your LPYS branch to order copies now!

Militant circulation, 3/13 Hepscoot Road, London E9 5HB. Tel: 01 533 3311.



Young workers top of hit list

TOP OF the Tories' hit list of attacks on young people is compulsory YTS—work for slave wages or lose your benefit.

It's not training the Tories are interested in but driving down wages of young workers.

The Tories have tried to use YTS to get rid of the apprenticeship system—there would have to be a 600 per cent increase today to reach the number of apprenticeships there were in 1967.

In every industry the bosses have attempted to push down youth wages to the level of the YTS allowance. Then in 1986 the Tories gave them a helping hand by abolishing the wages councils for under-21s saying "young people must price themselves into jobs".

Now a typical school leaver's wage in hairdressing is just £33 a week! As a further incentive to exploit young workers the Tories give employers £15 a week for every 18 or 19 year old they take on under the New Workers Scheme—if they pay less than £55 a week.

So where are all the jobs that the government say are being created? They're nearly all in low paid, unorganised service industries and in part-time work. The number of young part-timers has risen 250 per cent. They work for firms like MacDonalds, 75 per cent of whose 19,000 workforce are under 21.

But young workers have been in the front line of the recent industrial battles. It's been young nurses and health workers outside the hospitals on the picket lines and mostly young workers active in the Fords, bus drivers' and post office disputes.

Recognition

Unorganised young workers at Moat House hotel in Liverpool have been involved in disputes for trade union recognition. And in the civil service union, CPSA, young activists are leading strikes

against plans to introduce YTS into the civil service.

Unfortunately the sacrifice and determination of young workers has not been matched by the trade union leaders. They have been given no voice in the trade union movement—the only youth conference was abolished by the TUC last year.

The need for young workers to get organised has never been greater. The YTURC conference will be a focal point for those who want to fight back against the Tory attacks and organise trade union youth.

Why I back YTURC

A HUMAN fire detector—that was how one YTS trainee was employed by an exhaust fitting centre. He had to sit in the cars as the exhaust was being fitted and watch for burning inside the car.

The inside of one did catch fire. He tried to put the flames out with his hands. His hands were badly burnt. After 19 days off work due to his injuries, he was sacked. This is the sort of contempt the bosses have for their trainees!

His boss got £32 a week from the government for every trainee he took on. But his trainees were only paid £28.50 a week for this

potentially fatal task! As a councillor and a parent I felt it was my duty to support YTURC's strike and speak at their rally in Newcastle on 14 March.

I care for my children. I care for their future. When it comes to their time to leave school, I want them to have a better start to their working lives than YTS.

Why can't they have the same opportunities as their parents? I can't expect my children to fight for their future if I'm not prepared to fight myself. That's why I supported YTURC's rally.

By North Tyneside Councillor Dave McGarr



—AH! THE EASTER STORY!
THE VERY ESSENCE OF ONE'S BELIEF

Save the Sharpeville Six

THE FURTHER Education National Committee which represents 750,000 students, has voted in favour of the TUC calling a national one-day general strike in support of the National Health Service.

It also agreed to support the call for the National Union of Students to af-

filiate to the TUC.

But the meeting refused to organise a demonstration and all-night vigil outside the South African Embassy to support the Sharpeville Six, which was moved by Further Education Labour Students member, Rod Alexander.

World-wide struggle

EVERY NIGHT TV news pictures show young Palestinians receiving terrible beatings from the Israeli army and black South African youth throwing themselves at the guns of Botha's brutal regime. Youth in Chile take on the military's torturers.

But none of this can break the will and determination of our generation to fight for a better society.

Our struggles are born of necessity—in slums and shanty towns, in crowded schools and cheap labour jobs, and from hunger and starvation.

Famine

YTURC conference will be discussing the obscenity of famine. 50 million people will die of starvation in 1988. There is plenty of food available. But capitalism stores surplus grain in vast hangars and piles it up in food mountains. Profit for the multinational food companies is this system's only consideration.

Capitalism breeds poverty, starvation and disease. The socialist transformation of the world is the only way to provide for the needs of

humanity.

Young people and workers involved in struggle to change society will instinctively adopt socialist ideas. But this in itself will not guarantee the overthrow of capitalism. This will only be possible by building a mass, international, socialist youth movement and adopting Marxist ideas.

In Spain, Marxists led the school student strike to a great victory and won the principle of free education for all from the right wing social

Regime rocked

OPPOSITION TO Chile's military regime came from an unusual source recently.

The annual international music festival at Vina del Mar is, since the coup, an event made up of hand-picked supporters of the regime.

But this year a Peruvian group was banned because their song contained the word 'no' 32 times—apparently a call to vote 'no' in the forthcoming plebiscite. Despite a storm of protest from other artists the regime refused to back down.

democratic government.

A central part of this successful campaign was the linking of the school students' movement to the organised working class for support. This must be the message to all youth—to transform the working class organisations into fighting, socialist bodies.

Once the working class and youth of the world are convinced of the need for socialism then nothing will stop them.

By Paul Ursell

Then, after doing its first song at the festival, the lead singer of the US rock group Mister Mister read out a declaration. It supported all Chilean artists who have been attacked by the state for supporting the struggle against the regime.

The audience divided in two, with one half taking up the opposition chant against the dictatorship: "It's going to fall".

The TV network throughout the country developed a 'technical fault' and was blacked out. But they forgot about the radio. Mister Mister were then escorted out of the country by the secret police.

Plymouth college victory for students

FOUR HUNDRED students occupied their principal's office at Plymouth FE college on Wednesday 23 March to protest against the expulsion of a Further Education Labour Students (Fels) member.

For many years students here have tried to break the principal's stranglehold over their union. Every time they have faced victimisation, helped by the leadership of the stooge 'Students Association'. Fels members have taken up the campaign for union democracy and for affiliation to the NUS.

Several General Meetings were called but sabotaged by the association leadership. They tried to pack out the last one with students from the Ministry of Defence section. Two hundred turned up, but the students voted overwhelmingly for affiliation to NUS by 120 votes to 50!

After the meeting a leading member of the Students Rights Committee (SRC), a body set up to run the campaign, was brought before the principal. She was expelled on the spot for missing two days of college! The students recognised that the principal was testing the strength of the union.

A canteen meeting of the SRC called the occupation. The switchboard at the college was jammed with calls of protest. During the occupation the students found a letter written by the principal to every local councillor claiming the expelled student was a 'member' of a group at the college.

The SRC must now widen out the campaign to the labour and trade union movement on a national and local level. No witch-hunting tactics will frighten the students into retreat.



Heartbreak hotels

THE PLIGHT of homeless families in bed-and-breakfast accommodation was brought home to a teacher at a Kensington school where 40 per cent of the children are in hotels. Before Christmas two of them closed and dozens of children disappeared from the registers.

These children are frequently late because of queues for the bathroom or the time the proprietor serves breakfast. Their tea has to be cold or take-away as there are no cooking facilities.

If they are ill, they cannot stay in the hotels as the heating is turned off between ten and four; some lock the families out all day.

Spoils of Nazism

SINCE 1986 many 'respectable' German companies have been celebrating their Jubilee, congratulating themselves on '50 years of business'.

1936 was the year Hitler introduced his Aryanisation Programme, under which Jewish businessmen were arrested and murdered in death camps and 'true German' capitalists moved in and stole their companies, plant, machinery and profits.

Horten AG has been celebrating its formation in 1938 with the reproduction of an advert from the time. But the ad has been re-touched—references to it being 'a German business' have been removed and 'under Aryan ownership' changed to 'under another ownership'.

The original owner Adolf Abraham was hounded out of the country by Nazi gangs and the 'Aryan' Helmuth Horten took over. The company is now part of the multi-national giant, BAT.

Spiralling northwards

LONDON HOUSE prices are starting to spread north. According to a new survey, everywhere south of a line between Chester and Grimsby is experiencing a price explosion. But this has less to do with a revival of the economy in these areas than the possibility of long-distance commuting to London offices.

Even London prices seem reasonable, however, compared to those in Japan. In parts of Tokyo now, you need the equivalent of £150,000 just to buy a square metre of building land! Rents for ordinary flats range between £2,000 and £4,000 a month.

British Home Slaves

A HOME worker in Hackney is running up clothes all hours of the day and night. These are not for market stalls but the High Street giant BHS. She gets 70p for skirts which are sold for £35.

Beer money

IN THE latest attempt to harness pop music to big business, the Japanese brewers, Suntory, are sponsoring Mick Jagger to do concerts to promote their latest beer. He is being paid \$5 million! "Mr Jagger's character matches that of our new beer" say Suntory: "His appearance in Japan is epoch-making, so this should accelerate the sales of our beer."

Our thanks to Louise Birch.

Exclusive eyewitness account

Ferry on fire!

MILITANT READERS will have seen TV news reports of the fire on board the P+O *Nordic Ferry* and how the prepared rescue plan was put into operation.

What was not reported was that the whole incident need never have occurred.

The *Nordic Ferry* was late loading and an hour and a half leaving Zeebrugge after being delayed for 'technical reasons' while engineers made repairs. Before departure, passengers noticed flickering lights, power surges and noises consistent with generator problems.

The captain assured us over the PA that they were dealing with minor mechanical problems and that we would arrive at Felixstowe on time.

At 6.30 am, some five miles off the Orwell estuary, just as passengers were being woken up, fire broke out in the generator room. All engines stopped and electrical power was reduced to auxiliary circuits only. The captain made another announcement about a 'minor mechanical problem'.

Then there was a series of 'gongs' on the PA system. Passengers waited for an announcement to follow and grew worried when it didn't. It seemed as if the PA system had also failed. But, on reflection, it's likely that the 'gongs' were a coded message to the crew that there were problems below.

Commercial drivers were evacuated from their cabins. They said that they could smell smoke and feel heat from the floor. As dawn broke and the mists cleared we could see a fire-fighting tug bobbing up and down outside the window in a force eight gale.

It was rapidly joined by three others and all four put lines on board. Helicopters circled overhead and other ships bound for Felixstowe and Harwich stacked up astern

By two concerned passengers

in case of evacuation. Two lifeboats appeared together with two small tugs, a pilot launch and a police boat.

The captain made another announcement about rectifying a minor technical fault and said they were receiving technical assistance from onshore. This turned out to be the fire brigade being put on board.

It took half an hour for the fire to burn out after the generator room was sealed and purged with inert gas. But it was another two hours before the temperature had dropped enough for the crew to re-enter the area. They were unable to restart the engines then.

The passengers were only told what had actually happened after the fire had been extinguished. The lifeboats were sent away as they were thought to be distressing the passengers. I personally found them rather reassuring.

We were then taken under tow by the four larger tugs. We docked at Felixstowe seven hours late, demolishing part of the pier in the process.

All credit should go to the rescue crews for a well organised and co-ordinated operation. But questions must be asked as to why it was necessary. And why, given the technical problems before departure, did the 18,000 tonne ferry put to sea at all?

The safety of 287 passengers, 61 crew and the rescue services was jeopardised. Given the recent safety record of P+O/Townsend



Striking P+O seafarers commemorate the first anniversary of the Zeebrugge disaster. Now fire has broken out on another P+O ferry. Profit comes before safety for the ferry companies.

Thoresen, I would have expected greater caution.

Why was the usual evacuation briefing not given on departure? God knows what would have happened if the fire had broken out two hours earlier, while we were in mid-channel in darkness and rough weather.

Diversion

P+O should pay more attention to running a safe and efficient ferry service and less on cutting corners, penny pinching and union bashing. If their operations department was half as busy as their legal department, it could offer the staff and public a better service.

The announcement on Thursday afternoon of the suspension of all P+O

passenger services over Easter was no more than a smoke screen to divert attention from the *Nordic* fire and to direct attention to the seafarers' union.

With Dover strikebound and one of the Felixstowe ferries now out of commission because of the fire damage, they could not provide any service beyond their freight contracts anyway. The *Nordic* will be out of service until at least 6 April.

A workers' enquiry should be held. It should establish if the lives of passengers, crew and rescue services were put at risk and establish the circumstances of the technical failure and fire. It should determine whether it was not grossly remiss of P+O to allow the *Nordic Ferry* to sail.

Arm South African workers, says council

LIVERPOOL COUNCIL will give financial and practical support to the struggle of black workers in South Africa, its equal opportunities committee has decided.

It passed a resolution moved by broad left members Rob Owen and Lesley Mahmood, condemning apartheid and calling for the practical measures, including twinning Liverpool with the black township of Ashdown.

The resolution supported self-defence units for black workers and recognised that arms were needed to defend the movement and in the struggle to overthrow the capitalist apartheid regime. This is an historic step.

The Liberal opposition had the audacity to accuse the Labour group of being colonialist! "You are saying to the blacks in South Africa:

'you need arms and socialism'. You don't meet violence with violence. If they were armed, it would lead to the blacks being massacred."

The rabid *Liverpool Echo* repeated the Liberals' slander and accused *Militant* of conspiring to send arms to South Africa.

Liberals

The Liberals spout pious words against apartheid, but advocate pacifism on the part of the victims of the daily violence meted out by vigilantes and the state.

Massacres are going on at the present time! The Labour group explained that arms are essential to defeat apartheid.

By Mohammed Patel



"You can't fight violence with violence" say Liverpool Liberals.

Labour Leaders accept capitalism

IS THE Labour Party becoming a police state? At its 23 March meeting the Party's national executive (NEC) was presented with a dossier on Keith Narey from Bradford North, which included photos of him selling *Militant*, and photocopies of room booking forms he had apparently signed for meetings in 1983.

Which Labour Party officials have been engaged in snooping on fellow Party members, like some seedy private detective? Why were they not spending their time organising to back the health dispute or campaigning to win new members?

NEC members did not even know this was to be discussed. The dossier was placed in front of them just seconds before it was to be considered, and then there was no debate allowed on it.

That is the witch-hunting at-

mosphere the right wing majority and Neil Kinnock have created.

By 22 votes to 4, Keith Narey was referred to the National Constitutional Committee for expulsion. But he has been selected as a local council candidate, and the NCC will be unable to get round to his case before the closure of nominations for the May elections. So the NEC removed him as a candidate too.

They are prejudging the case. He has been found guilty already, before the NCC supposedly impartially weighs up the evidence.

THE NEC also endorsed the Kinnock/Hattersley statement, Democratic Socialist Aims and Objectives. It will now be circulated to local parties and unions for comment and then voted on at the Party conference.

It had been redrafted after the controversy at the joint NEC/

shadow cabinet meeting, where even right wingers criticised it. But the really offending formulas are still there in black and white.

Labour is "a party committed in practice to the mixed economy": that means permanently committed to managing capitalism.

"The market is a generally satisfactory means of determining provision and consumption." The only difference with the previous draft is that the statement now mentions a little more the need to regulate and direct the market. But "democratic socialists believe in market allocation." And that means the capitalist market, production of most goods for private profit.

The fundamentals of socialism, to replace the built-in unfairness of the market with planned production for need, were just thrown out of the window.

A move to include the nationalisation of the commanding heights of the economy attracted only four votes.

Although the right had to agree to append the full wording of the socialist clause in Labour's constitution, Clause Four, to the statement.

Later on Tony Benn moved quite a modest resolution condemning Ford for "attempting to compel Scottish workers to comply with their dictats over the form unionism should take". It did not explicitly condemn single-union deals or the AEU. But it was still unacceptable to the right wing, who amended out all the substance.

Kinnock refused to allow a resolution from Ken Livingstone criticising Camden council to be discussed. Camden threatened to sack all 4,000 of its white collar workers, but they had won a court

case suspending the redundancies. Camden had not backed down and the full court hearing was pending.

"We should not be commenting on what particular councils are doing," said the Party leader. So Kinnock believes only Liverpool council, which dared to fight Thatcher, should be attacked, Labour councils doing her dirty work should not even be commented on.

DURING THE debate on the Kinnock/Hattersley statement, Ken Livingstone wanted to add a commitment to non-interference in other countries. Neil Kinnock opposed this, correctly reminding the NEC: "We would support sending arms to South Africa for example."

The black workers in South Africa will now await a Kinnock government with interest.

MILITANT has public meetings and discussion groups in most towns throughout the country. Below is a listing of meetings or contacts for further information. If you want to know the nearest one to you telephone the 'MEETING LINE' (01) 533 3311 ext 227.

EAST SCOTLAND

For details of meetings contact: Andrea Charles-031 659 6187.

STRATHCLYDE

For details of meetings contact: 041 221 1443.

NORTHERN

For details of meetings contact: Bill Hopwood-091 276 1736.

MERSEYSIDE

For details of meetings contact: Richard Venton-051 260 3111.

Liverpool:

Marxist discussion group 10 April 2 Lower Breck Rd. 7.00pm. 7.00 pm.

YORKSHIRE

For details of meetings contact: Henry Gregory-0709 371250.

Scarborough:

5 April NUT conference meeting The Cask, Cambridge Terrace, South Cliff. 7.00 pm.

MANCHESTER/LANCS

For details of meetings contact: Mike Johnson-061 273 8648.

EAST MIDLANDS

For details of meetings contact: Andy Jackson-0602 623112.

WEST MIDLANDS

For details of meetings contact: Bill Mullins-021 552 7624.

Birmingham:

5 April The car industry The Australian Bar pub, Hirst St, City centre. 7.30 pm.

WALES

For details of meetings contact: 0222 736682

EASTERN

For details of meetings contact: Teresa MacKay 0473 713179.

Bedford:

6 April The crisis on the West Bank Speaker-Pat Craven, Fleur de Lys, Mill Street. 8.00 pm.

Harlow:

7 April The Labour leadership contest Harlow Unemployed Centre, Witchelm. 8.00 pm.

SOUTH EAST

For details of meetings phone 01 533 3311.

Dover:

7 April Speakers-Tony Mulhearn, Belgian ship worker. Dewdrop Inn. 7.30pm.

SOUTH WEST

For details of meetings ring 0272 631471.

HAMPSHIRE/THAMES VALLEY

For details phone 0703 786879.

Southampton:

Redbridge Marxist discussion group Every Wednesday 7, Goodwin Close Millbrook. 2 pm 6 April: The development of class society.

LONDON

For details of meetings contact: George Roberts-01 739 9123.

Hackney:

21 April What Militant Stands For Chats Palace Brooksby Walk Homerton. 7.30 pm.

Where to find us

What we stand for

* The immediate introduction of a 35 hour week without loss of pay as a step towards the elimination of unemployment.

* A minimum wage of £135 a week, tied to the cost of living, for everyone including sick and disabled people.

* Reversal of all Tory cuts and a massive programme of public works on housing, education, and the health service etc.

* Opposition to the Tories' anti-trade union laws and reversal of attacks on trade unions.

* Massive cuts in arms spending. Support for unilateral nuclear disarmament, but with the recognition that only a socialist change of society in Britain and internationally can eliminate the danger of a nuclear holocaust.

* Workers' management of nationalised industries. These should be run on the basis of one-third of the places on the management board coming from the unions in the industry, one third from the TUC representing the working class as a whole, and one third from the government.

* Nationalisation of the top 200 monopolies, including the banks and insurance companies which control 80 per cent to 85 per cent of the economy. This should be through an Enabling Bill in Parliament with minimum compensation on the basis of proven need.

* A socialist plan of production democratically drawn up and implemented by committees involving trade unions, shop stewards, the unwaged and small business people.

* Opposition to the capitalist Common Market, the EEC. For a socialist United States of Europe as a step towards a World Socialist Federation.

MAY DAY Greetings

MAY DAY! To all union and labour movement organisations and other readers.

Place May Day greetings to the labour movement in *Militant*.

Rates are: Semi-display; three column centimetres, £8, six column centimetres, £15. Display; one-sixteenth page, £25, one-eighth page, £40, one quarter page, £75.

Cheques/postal orders payable to Militant publications. Send to Circulation Department, Militant, 3/13 Hepscoth Road, London E9 5HB.

Become a Militant supporter

YOUR NEXT STEP... OUR FIGHT IS YOUR FIGHT...JOIN IT!

I wish to become a Militant supporter:

Name.....

Address.....

Tel:

or telephone 01-533 3311 NOW!



Militant

EVEN SIX thousand miles away in South Africa, the bosses note with fear the growing support for *Militant*.

The *Cape Times* reported on the 5 March TUC demonstration: "The depth of feeling among the usually moderate nurses... was evident by the number selling the *Militant* newspaper."

Thousands of copies have been sold on demonstrations, pickets and on the streets. Workers can increasingly see that our paper is the one that tells the truth about their struggles and offers a way forward.

To consolidate this growth in sales, we are calling for a national week of action on door-to-door sales. For the issue dated 22 April, we are asking for two evenings and one day at the weekend to be put aside for selling house-to-house.

Industrial unrest and heightened political interest because of the Labour leadership election virtually guarantee that any well-organised sales will be successful.

No seller should doubt the potential of *Militant's* ideas. A subscriber in Israel recently took some old copies of the paper to a 'Peace Now' demonstration in Tel Aviv. In half an hour, he sold all nine, one of them five months old, for an average of 70p a copy.

By Dave Fryatt

WHAT THEY SAID ABOUT OUR 1985 & 1986 RALLIES:

'SOME SIDE SHOW' Daily Mail 4/11/85.

'LENIN AND LASERS' *Militant* is a perplexing beast. Despite everything it seems to be thriving. 7 Days 21/11/86.

'This spectacular five thousand-strong Militant Tendency rally in London's Albert Hall on Sunday was an

RALLY'88

ALEXANDRA PALACE
19TH JUNE 1988

12-6pm £6.

Impressive show of strength'. Frank Chapple in the 'Daily Mail' 20/11/86.

WHAT THEY ARE SAYING NOW:

"The size of this rally clearly shows that *Militant* is thriving despite Neil Kinnock's claims to have moderated the Labour Party". From a Tory Councillor in the 'Hampstead and Highgate Express' 19/2/88.

TICKET APPLICATION FORM

Please send me.....Tickets. I enclose £.....

Please send me details of transport:.....

Please send me a creche booking form:.....

Name.....

Address.....

.....

Return to MILITANT RALLY: 3/13 HEPSCOTT ROAD LONDON E9 5HB.

The poverty ge

Social insecurity

FEW PEOPLE noticed when the Social Security Act went through parliament on 26 July 1986. Every television camera focussed on one unemployed young person, Prince Andrew, getting married.

Less than two years after the Royal Wedding, Andrew has a job of sorts and the couple are whooping it up with the Dynasty/Dallas set. But millions of unemployed youth will shortly be wondering how they can survive without benefits, or on reduced benefits.

The 1986 Act starts operating on 11 April.

Sixteen million people in the UK have to rely on some form of benefit which is means-tested, where you have to prove yourself to be poor to get any help.

The Tories are using the camouflage of simplifying (and computerising) the unpopular and deliberately run-down DHSS system, without any extra cost. The truth is they are attacking the rights of under-25s to exist as independent adult citizens.

Unemployed youth will be the victims of the first actual reductions in basic benefit rates since the 1930s. Previous Tory cuts have been caused by failing to increase benefit rates in line with inflation, so they have declined relative to prices and wages.

The DHSS's own statistics show that 3.65 million claimants will be worse off under the new benefit system. Of these, 350,000 'losers' will be single people under 25. And that is before the 20 per cent minimum rates contribution is taken into account.

The numbers don't tell the whole story. Under-25s account for ten per cent of total losers but they will tend to lose greater amounts. 180,000 under-25s lose £3 or £4 a week, while another 120,000 lose £5 a week. Young adults' overall 'contribution' to benefit cuts will be much greater than numbers alone suggest.

For those who couldn't make sense of Radio One Helpline's rather bland generalisations a few weeks ago here's how it affects youth in Britain.

Too young to benefit

YVONNE, AGED 23, lives in a council flat in Walsall. She gave up work and her own home to nurse her terminally ill mother who died two years ago.

Yvonne's unemployment benefit was £30.45 a week (now exhausted after 12 months) but she now relies on the basic supplementary benefit rate for an adult householder. Now any new recipient in Yvonne's position will be £4.35 per week worse off as an under-25 and will have to find an extra £2.75 from this to cover for lost housing benefit.

That is £7.10 a week less after 11 April. Unless you find a job you will have to manage on this reduced benefit until you are 25, when you will get £33.40 a week. After the increase in housing costs you will then be 25p better

DURING APRIL, the Tories will take another step in trying to create a poverty wage generation.

The Youth Trade Union Rights Campaign have been fighting against the YTS and other slave labour schemes. The new Social Security act tries to force young people on to these schemes or

very low paid jobs by making life on social security unbearable.

NIGEL WHEATLEY, Aldridge-Brownhills Labour Party youth officer, writing in a personal capacity, looks at how the act will work, particularly for working class young people.



Young people sleeping rough on a tube station in the heart of the City of London. The Social Security Act and the threatened Housing Bill will create many thousands more homeless.

A charter for ignorance...

BENEFIT IS being withdrawn entirely from 16-18 year olds. This will be a disaster for thousands of part-timers at FE and Tech colleges. Already permitted hours of study have gone down from 21 to 15 per week.

The only alternatives will be: a) A YTS scheme. b) Get a job - if only it were that simple! c) If your parents are already on supplementary benefit - register as full-time student at local tech college. Then your parents will continue to get Income Support for dependants aged 16 and 17 at £19.40 a week. OR... d) Fight for a socialist Labour government committed to introducing immediately a non means-tested £35 per week grant for all over-16s in full time education.

...and homelessness

SINGLE PEOPLE under 25 will find it very difficult to 'hang on' to their own accommodation unless they have a very well paid job because....

★ From April 1988 the flat rate of supplementary benefit (to be renamed Income Support) will be reduced for 18 to 24 year olds living in their own place, from £30.40 a week to £26.05.

★ Help with mortgage interest has already been cut by 50 per cent for the first 14 weeks of your claim.

★ Every householder will have to pay the first 20 per cent of rates bills themselves. Every £1 a week increase in general rates will mean 20p out of the unemployed and pensioners' pockets!

★ Rent and rate rebates for under-25s will also be based on the reduced income support scales. Any single person under

25 with income over £26.05 will lose around 70p in rebate for every £1 of income over that. ★ All current additional payments to those on supplementary benefit will be abolished - this especially includes heating costs where youth live in....

a) severely exposed high rise flats (a loss of up to £5.55 a week).

b) flats with no suitable washing or drying facilities. (You can at present claim weekly cost of launderette wash and dry).

c) estates where the heating system is recognised as expensive to run. (Worth up to £8.80 a week).

If young people return home to live, their parents will lose £10.75 a week from rent and rates rebates if their grown-up sons and daughters are working. In effect a poll tax will already exist on the poorest families.

off than Yvonne is now. How much will prices have risen in that time?

Yvonne herself has been given a small concession from the DHSS.

'Transitional payments' guarantee that people who are already on benefits will have their present rate protected if it is higher than the new scheme would pay.

BUT...anyone who breaks their claim by taking a Community Programme or other temporary work will only get the lower Income Support rates if they claim again when the scheme or job finishes.

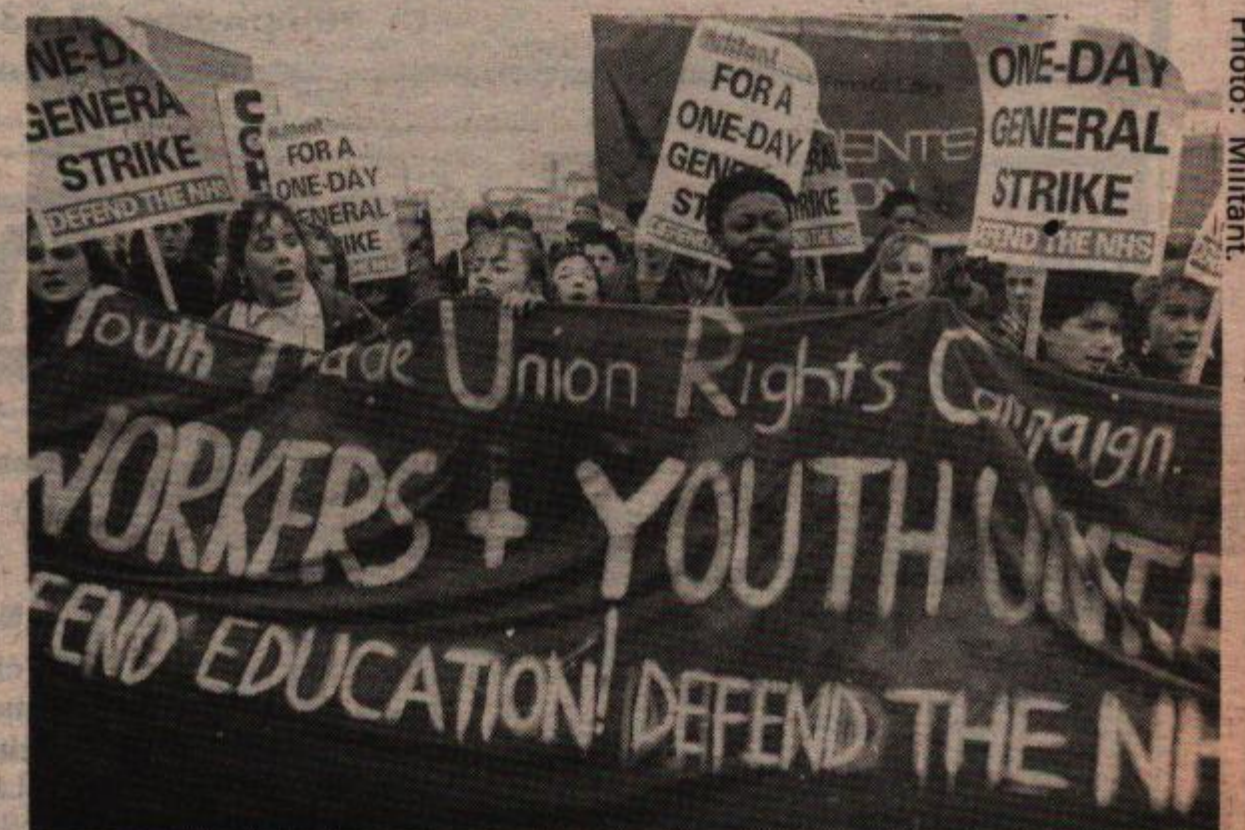
Job prospects locally are based on the Community Programme schemes which pay on average £67 per week and last for 12

months. So if Yvonne takes one of these schemes, she will lose her 'transitional' protection.

On the face of it, you should stay on Supplementary Benefit and not take a temporary job. But the first snag is that this protected benefit rate will be frozen. There will be no increase in line with inflation until the lower Income Support rate catches up. It could take ten years for this to happen with some people!

The second snag is that the rate is fixed at November 1986 levels, so that millions could be stuck on 1986 rates well into the 1990s.

Ironically, while the Tories say Yvonne is too young for full benefit, she has just been expelled from her local LPYS by Neil Kinnock's diktat, for being too old at 23!

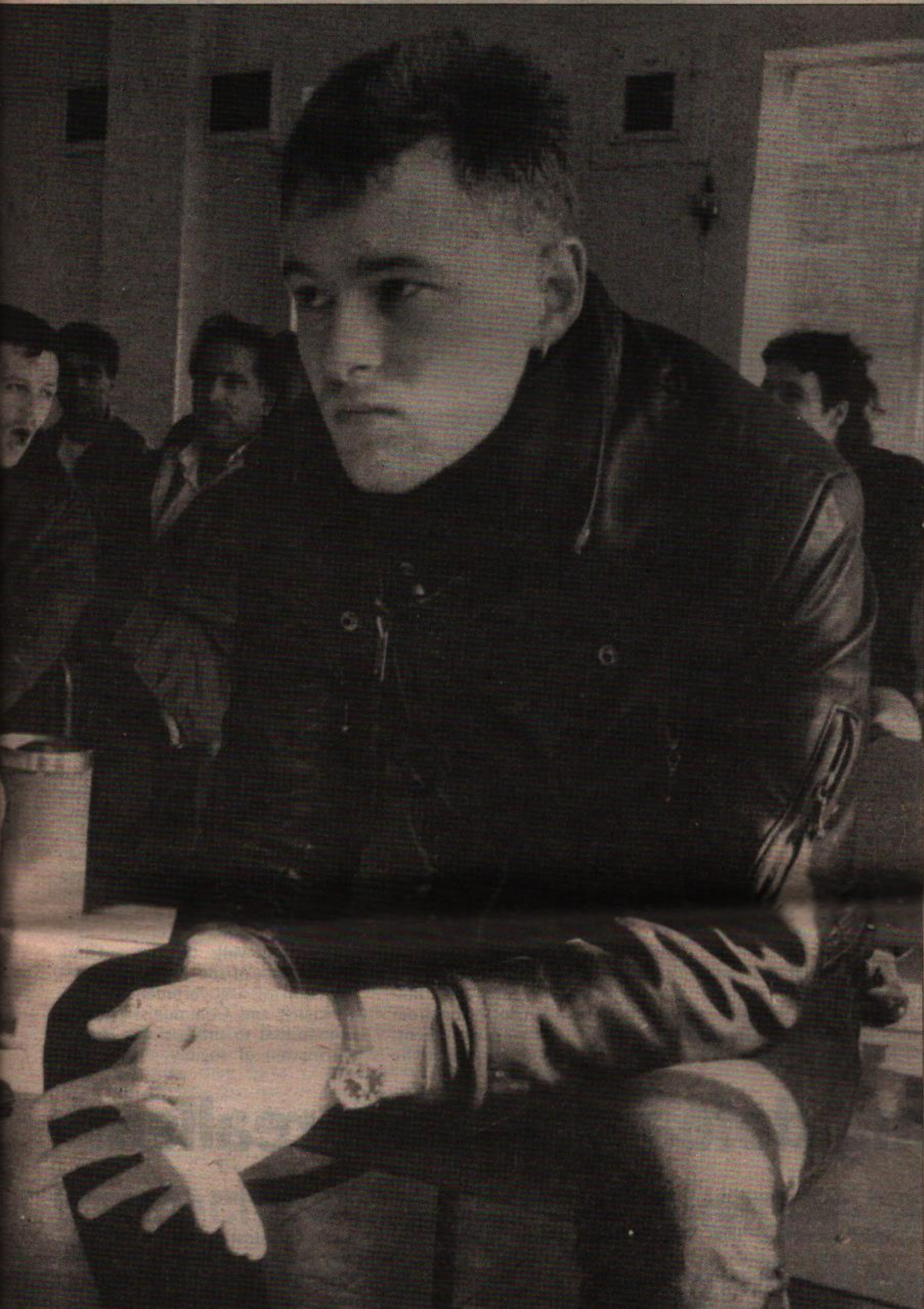


YTURC have fought YTS and attacks on education. Now there are new attacks on working class youth.

Photo: Dave Sinclair.

Photo: Militant.

neration



in a Birmingham DHSS office. The under 25s will be the hardest hit. Photo: John Harris (IFL).

Into the arms of loan sharks

AS I WORK in the DHSS, it is my odious duty to tell people of these changes. They have been puzzled and frightened and in some cases, defiant.

"I won't pay this increase in rents and rates. I'll go to jail first!" I've heard this from the middle aged, pensioners and the sick as well as the young. Year after year, they have seen their living standards eroded. Now Thatcher wants their blood.

Single payments, one-off payments for essential items, for people on supplementary benefits, mainly the aged and chronically sick, will be replaced by the Social Fund.

Many people in need will no longer claim because these payments will have to be repaid. They are 'budgeting loans' to be deducted from benefits at an agreed weekly sum.

"Crisis loans" from the Social Fund to people hit by flood or

disaster or lost money will also be recoverable from weekly benefit.

'Community Care grants', helping people coming out of institutional care to stay in the community, will not be recoverable. This unexpected charity is only to help the government close down long-term institutions.

Everyone on welfare benefits today will be deprived of even the most essential items. The Social Fund will ration help on the basis of what DHSS managers see as priorities, on who looks likely to repay, and also on how much of the budget is left in your local office.

This will drive the poor into the arms of the 'loan sharks' with their interest rates of hundreds or even thousands per cent a year.

By a CPSA member

A "reasonable" income

LIVING ON Social Security is bad enough under the old rules, as Vanessa Loraine of Stockton South Labour Party reveals.

A GOVERNMENT spokesman, John Gordon, on the radio explaining the changes in supplementary benefit, claimed that they try to pay people a "reasonable level of income". We are obviously not living on the same planet.

From 1981 to 1986 my husband, myself and my daughter existed on supplementary benefit. After we paid our bills, including a mortgage, out of our 'reasonable' income of £60 a week, we were left with £10 for food and anything else we needed.

We had no money for clothes or essentials for the house and no social life whatsoever. We had no heating upstairs at all and my daughter, sleeping in a damp bedroom, got bronchitis four times. DHSS wouldn't help us.

She needed a pair of shoes every three months and we couldn't afford them. The DHSS refused help, saying it wouldn't be detrimental to her health not to have shoes and that we weren't managing our money properly as they allow us for clothing. In the end

my family bought them.

In 1986 I separated from my husband. As a single-parent, I now get £58 a week with all the same bills to pay, except that they have all increased far more than my benefit has.

Tory ignorance

I wondered, listening to Mr Gordon, how much he earns a week. What the hell does he know about working-class misery?

But worst of all he made me think of the Labour leaders. Why don't they understand people's needs? When election time comes round, why doesn't Neil Kinnock talk about helping people like me instead of increasing workers' taxes and spending money on weapons?

Perhaps his £20,000 plus a year affects his eyes and ears, so he can't hear or see the misery and poverty around him.

My daughter asks me why she can't have things. I tell her why and that under socialism she will get them. But she asks me when will that be. Perhaps Neil Kinnock will come and explain that one to her!

Police assault protesters

ON 18 MARCH Michael Denzil Xavier Portillo, the Tory under-secretary for Health and Social Security, visited my local DHSS office in Toxteth.

I joined a protest demonstration along with many other claimants, trade unionists and pensioners' group members.

Toxteth DHSS covers the most deprived part of Riverside constituency, which in turn has the worst levels of unemployment, class-related illnesses etc in Britain. After April the one-off single payments are replaced by the Social Fund, where you have to apply for a repayable loan. Some grants will be given but these are purely discretionary.

In 1986/87 the single payment spending at the Toxteth office was £1,974,073. The grants budget for 1988/89 under the Social Fund is a pathetic £346,814. Altogether the grants and loans budget will be only 59 per cent of what it was in 1986/87.

Anyone refused a loan or grant will no longer be able to appeal, a right which existed for over 50

years!

Together with three Labour MPs, we tried to get a delegation inside to speak to Portillo. No luck. After his visit, his car came out of a side street together with two van loads of police.

Without warning, they charged the few remaining demonstrators, who could not have been any danger to the well-protected MP, with batons. A pensioner was knocked to the ground. Although the reporters present were angry at the violence used, the TV pictures that evening only showed Portillo's car making off at high speed.

I just hope that these policemen who have unemployed sons or daughters or elderly parents never have to make a plea to the Social Fund.

Don't leave benefit claimants on their own. The labour movement must wake up to what is happening and lead the fight back.

By Cathy Wilson,
Secretary Liverpool Labour
Womens Council

Single parents hit

THE TORIES try to justify their cuts in youth benefits by arguing that the money saved will be used for better 'targetting' to help single parents, the disabled and pensioners.

Janet is a single parent, aged 23. Her three year old son suffers from sickle-cell disease, a blood disorder which means you need extra heating to stop painful cramps.

Janet lives in a high rise council flat in the same area as Yvonne (See article page 8). But she doesn't seem to be getting any of the money that Yvonne could stand to lose.

Even though her child addition goes up 35p, and she gets a £9.85 lone parent's premium, she loses £5.25 on Income Support and £6.65 through the abolition of heating and laundry allowances.

So Janet will lose £1.65 a week directly. She loses another £2.68

from cuts in housing benefit. At present, her rent is £17.05, rates £7.10 and water rates £1.26 making £25.41 in all.

Up until April she got a 100 per cent rebate on rent and rates while her water rates were paid by the DHSS. After Fowler, she will only get an 80 per cent rates rebate, meaning an extra £1.42 a week costs.

The tenant also has to pay water rates, meaning an extra £1.26. All in all, Janet will be £4.33 a week worse off.

Janet already finds it hard to meet her quarterly electricity bills, which in the exposed tower block can be over £200. "In the miners' strike, they kept going with collections that fed the women and children.

"I think those of us bringing up children on social security are going to need the same kind of collections soon."

YOUNG MOTHERS on DHSS will lose out through:

a) The abolition of single payments. These payments, worth on average £1.60 per claimant, will be abolished and replaced by loans from a social fund. As a taste of what is to come, the DHSS single payment for new baby clothes, etc. of £220 was replaced by a social fund payment of £80.

b) The ending of all DHSS heating additions, including the £2.20 per week payment where there are children under five in the household.

Statutory maternity pay (from the employer!) has already replaced state maternity benefit.

Now for a workers' government

French Presidential elections



Mitterrand (right) and Chirac.

THE FRENCH Presidential election campaign is now in full swing following Socialist President Mitterrand's announcement that he intends to stand for a second term.

From a correspondent in Paris

Over the next six weeks thousands of workers, especially the youth, will turn out to campaign for Mitterrand and for the Communist Party candidate, Andre Lajoie, as the first step towards a new government of the workers' parties.

The pent-up anger against the present right wing government has been demonstrated in two years of mass protests by students, youth and workers in defence of jobs, housing, education and basic welfare provisions.

Now, after bitter struggles in which they have successfully beaten off some of the most vicious attacks from the right, French workers have had enough.

This hatred of the right lies behind Mitterrand's massive leap in the opinion polls, suggesting that Mitterrand is likely to beat either of the two main right wing candidates, Jacques Chirac and Raymond Barre.

Not surprisingly, Mitterrand's support is particularly strong among the layers of youth who did not directly experience the bitter disappointments of the last Socialist government.

Under Chirac, youth have seen a sharp rise in unemployment, and students have had to fight



Students on the streets in December 1986—now looking to Mitterrand for change.

cutbacks in education. In the last few weeks the government has announced plans for a compulsory TUC (YTS) scheme.

On the night Mitterrand announced his candidacy, thousands of party activists and young socialists poured onto the Champs Elysees to celebrate.

Yet, despite the tremendous enthusiasm for a left victory, the Socialist Party leaders have decided to conduct a very low key campaign, concentrating on Mitterrand's personality.

Instead of putting forward clear socialist policies as an alternative to the failed policies of the right,

the Socialist leadership are campaigning with slogans such as 'national unity', under the extremely vague theme of the 'Mitterrand Generation'.

Father figure

The campaign seeks to elevate Mitterrand into a kind of father figure with his newly cultivated nickname: 'Tonton' (uncle) Mitterrand.

Behind this approach lies the fear of the Socialist leaders that a new government of the workers' parties would be confronted by a radicalised working class with its

expectations massively aroused.

This is why Mitterrand, despite enormous pressure from the party rank and file, has shown reluctance to calling fresh parliamentary elections once he is re-elected. Instead, Socialist leaders have hinted at the possibility of cobbling together a coalition with elements from the 'centre' capitalist parties.

But pressure from below might well force Mitterrand to dissolve parliament.

The Socialist leaders have failed to learn a single lesson from their last period of government. Then, their failure to break the

grip of big business opened the way to economic sabotage by the capitalist class, which eventually forced the government to embark on a vicious programme of counter reforms.

This had the effect of temporarily demoralising many of the workers and youth, paving the way for the return of the right in 1986.

Collision course

Without a programme of socialist policies—which could never be carried out by a coalition government with capitalist parties—the present support for the Socialist Party would rapidly be undermined. Such a government would again find itself on a collision course with the working class.

The Communist leaders' criticism of the Socialist Party, unfortunately, is based not on a socialist alternative but on sectarian competition. The main effect is to widen divisions in the workers' movement.

Activists must step up the battle to force the leadership of the workers' parties to fight the election on a programme of workers' unity, with thorough-going socialist policies.

This could guarantee victory in the presidential elections and then, following the immediate dissolution of the Assembly, the election of a government of the Socialist and Communist parties committed to the socialist transformation of society.

Australia

Crushing defeat for 'new realism'

THE AUSTRALIAN Labor Party's defeat in the New South Wales elections represents a crushing rejection of the right wing pro-big business policies of Bob Hawke's federal Labor government.

By Len Anderson

The elections, two weeks ago, saw a swing of 10 per cent against Labor. Six ministers lost their seats in this bastion of Labor's right wing, and a Liberal state government was elected for the first time in 12 years.

Labor's share of the vote fell to 40 per cent, one of the worst results in the party's history. It has shaken the strategists of the right wing, and unleashed a chorus of criticism of their policies.

Only nine months ago Bob Hawke was hailed as the first Labor prime minister to win a third successive electoral term. His jubilant supporters argued that his victory confirmed the need for 'pragmatic' (capitalist) policies.

In Britain, the architects of Labour's push to the right have pointed to Hawke's apparent success as a justification for ditching socialist policies. Even Tory Chancellor Lawson tried to justify his tax cuts for the rich by pointing out that top rates in Hawke's Australia are under 50 per cent. Precisely where this road leads is now evident in Australia.

Hawke and his Treasurer

(finance minister), Keating, have drawn fire from virtually every quarter of the labour movement for their attempts to introduce privatisation. Even the executive of the right-wing 'Labor Unity' faction inside the ALP have voted unanimously to oppose the policy.

The faction's spokesman declared:

"We are telling (Hawke and Keating) they have to stop flogging a dead horse. Privatisation is dead.

"It's about time to say to our own people: 'You haven't got any support in the union movement, you haven't got any support in the party branches and most importantly, you haven't got any support amongst the public.'"

Labor Unity's most prominent member is Bob Hawke himself!

Hawke's problems have been compounded by a series of embarrassing ministerial resignations. These have included the right-wing ALP President and Minister for Immigration Mick Young, who was forced to quit after failing to disclose a \$4,000 donation from a paper company to party funds.

This incident has thrown light on the close, sometimes personal links between the party tops and big business. Hawke himself boasts a close friendship with business moguls like Kerry Packer.

Donations have poured in from sections of big business, showing

their approval of the government's work. A former Labor minister, Clyde Cameron, has spoken out against Labor "becoming the creature of rich businessmen".

The Mick Young affair resurfaced during the NSW election campaign when Hawke admitted helping his former colleague land a \$3,000-a-week 'part time' job with the airline Qantas.

Young has since resigned as party President to avoid, among other things, the embarrassment of chairing the party conference where the privatisation of Qantas will be discussed!

Hobnobbing

The perception of Labor's leaders in the pocket of the millionaire class was a factor in the NSW election disaster. The defeated Labor state premier, right-winger Barry Unsworth, openly blamed the result on "leaders with black ties and big cigars hobnobbing with representatives of capitalism".

Asked by the press if he meant Bob Hawke, he replied: "Work it out for yourself!"

It is becoming clear to wider sections of the Australian labour movement that the present leadership is heading for disaster. Even the bureaucratically-run party conference in June could mark a big swing to the left.

Hawke is likely to be defeated overwhelmingly on privatisation.

On another contentious issue, the sale of uranium to France, he has announced a ban until the conference, in an attempt to placate opposition.

But it is from the unions that Hawke faces his biggest challenge. The unions, with their leaders' acceptance of an incomes policy, have for long been the mainstay of the government. Now strikes have reached their highest level in the five years of Labor government.

Train drivers, miners, dockers and public sector workers have struck. Nurses in West Australia (see box) have just won an important pay battle, despite threats of fines and 'deregistration' of their union by the state Labor government.

Striking oil tanker drivers have

been threatened with imprisonment.

The greatest upsurge in industrial action has been in NSW. This makes clear that Labor's defeat does not signify a swing to the right, as Australian 'Hobsbawmites' suggest.

The new Liberal administration will find this to its cost. Their plans to outlaw the closed shop has been met with the threat of 'industrial chaos' from the state's trade union council.

Australia's labour movement is at a crossroads. Labor's conference in June could mark a watershed—the end of the era of right-wing domination and the beginning of a movement by the rank and file to fight for clear socialist policies.

THE THREE-WEEK dispute of the West Australian nurses has been hailed as "the biggest win in the union's history" by Royal Australian Nursing Federation president Marea Vidovich.

The struggle had overwhelming support from the public as well as the members. The new deal puts WA nurses on comparable scales with eastern states.

At a jubilant meeting of over 3,000 nurses Marea Vidovich declared:

"Nurses throughout Australia will be asking for a 15 per cent increase in pay to bring them in line with other Health Services."

Earlier the official industrial relations commission had called on nurses to go back and for a vote of no confidence in the RANF leadership after they refused to negotiate unless the government came up with a new deal. The members' response was a unanimous vote of confidence!

From Ian Harling in Perth, Western Australia

Nicaragua

Contras halted but dangers remain

LESS THAN a week after inflicting a crushing military defeat on the right-wing Contra rebels, the Nicaraguan government have agreed to a 60-day ceasefire.

Despite Reagan's dispatch of 3,200 troops to Honduras as a show of support for the Contras, these mercenary remnants of the former dictator Somoza have had their lifeline cut off by the US Congress. They have had to concede defeat on the military front.

For the Reagan administration as well, already defeated in Congress over military aid, this is a serious blow.

Throughout their war against the Sandinista government, the 12,000-16,000 Contras have failed to win control of any significant areas of the country. They have lost support within Nicaragua and have become riven with internal feuds.

Even if Congress had resumed aid, it could have taken two years to recover from the drubbing they received last week. The majority of their leaders have therefore been prepared to abandon the armed struggle for the time being to pursue their aims by political means.

But, though the government has the upper hand in military terms, the Sandinistas themselves were becoming desperate for a ceasefire because of the severe economic problems.

There have been shortages of food, water and electricity and inflation of 1,500 per cent. Building trade unionists have been on strike for more pay. Many of the reforms in health and welfare are being undermined.

As a result they have been prepared to give major concessions to the Contra leaders.

By Pat Craven

Under the ceasefire agreement, the Contra forces are to move into ceasefire zones, from which they will be allowed to send delegates to the 'National Dialogue', in which the ruling Sandinistas negotiate with opposition parties.

They will be able to participate in municipal elections and the regime will also release a number of political prisoners.

Although the economic problems have been exacerbated by the war, they are caused primarily by the failure of the Sandinista government which came to power in 1979, after a revolutionary insurrection against the Somoza dictatorship, to carry through the socialist transformation of society.

Wealth

Sixty per cent of industry and 70 per cent of agriculture have remained in private hands. While workers suffer shortages and hardship, the rich continue to flaunt their wealth.

The capitalists and landlords have sabotaged the reform programme by refusing to invest, salting their capital away in Florida and elsewhere.

Contrary to Reagan's propaganda, economic aid has not been poured in by the Russian bureaucracy. Gorbachev has made clear in his book that he will not "exploit anti-US attitudes, let alone fuel them, nor do we intend to erode the traditional links between Latin America and the



Sandinista leader Daniel Ortega (left). The workers and peasants will be demanding solutions to their problems.

United States".

The workers who overthrew the old regime have not been actively involved in the administration of society. The Sandinista Defence Committees, which the Contras now want abolished, became transmission belts for the small elite leadership of the Sandinistas.

Bureaucratic

Thus, though Nicaragua's economy remains capitalist, the country has a bureaucratic state apparatus similar to that of Cuba, where capitalism has been overthrown. This situation cannot continue indefinitely.

The danger now is that the ceasefire will enable the

capitalist class to regain politically what they have failed to win militarily.

This, after all, was the lesson of Portugal after the 1974 revolution: either the revolution goes forward to complete the overthrow of capitalism (which, in the absence of a Marxist leadership would inevitably be on bureaucratic lines); or the capitalists will reassert control over the state apparatus, bringing it into line with the private ownership of the economy.

The Sandinista regime is already riven with divisions over how far to go in concessions to capitalism and reaction. Capitalist politicians, who are presently fragmented among 14 opposition parties and the different factions of the Con-

tras, will be manoeuvring to link up with rightward-moving sections of the Sandinista leadership on establishing an openly pro-capitalist government.

With the Contras' military offensive in disarray, the decisive sections of US imperialism will now be hoping to strangle the Nicaraguan revolution by this means.

Faced with the nightmare threat of a victory by the Contra thugs, who would have terrorised workers and peasants, the population has been united behind the Sandinista government. But now they will be demanding a solution to the economic crisis.

This could only be achieved on a programme to nationalise the basic in-

dustries and redistribute land to the peasants, so that the economy can be planned—a programme that could only be implemented through a movement of the workers and peasants from below, linked to an international appeal to the masses of all the Americas.

The revolution in Nicaragua could only be sustained if it is spread throughout Central America and beyond. Given the unprecedented turmoil in the whole region, it is entirely possible, if a lead is given by the Nicaraguan workers, to inspire and support successful workers' uprisings against the region's reactionary dictatorships.

Gorbachev clamps down on Armenia

THE CRISIS in Armenia continues to hang like a sword over the heads of the ruling bureaucracy in Russia.

The regime has responded to the unprecedented mass movement in Armenia (see last week's *Militant*) with economic and cultural concessions. But the main demand—return of the Armenian enclave of Nagorny Karabakh from the neighbouring region of Azerbaijan—has been rejected.

Pravda, in the language of unreconstructed Stalinism, has slandered the Armenian protesters as "anti-socialists" who are serving the interests of "foreign enemies". In reality, the right of nations to self-determination is one of the foundation-stones of the programme of socialism.

The one-month period of 'grace' given by the demonstrators' leadership to Gorbachev to meet their demands expired last weekend. Yerevan and Stepanakert, capital of Nagorny Karabakh, were

saturated with security forces to prevent a renewed movement.

The 'Karabakh Committee' of Armenian intellectuals who have organised the protests, fearing a head-on confrontation with the regime, cancelled plans for action and called on people to stay at home in protest. Over the weekend Yerevan was turned into a ghost city.

Strike

In Stepanakert, industry and rail traffic were paralysed by a strike which, as we go to press, was set to continue.

Gorbachev's refusal of the Armenians' national demands and his resort to strong-arm methods, despite limited concessions, will help to destroy illusions in his promises of reform.

Like working people throughout the USSR, they will find that the only way to solve their problems is through struggle to end the stranglehold of the bureaucracy and re-establish workers' democracy.

Palestinian uprising undefeated

LAND DAY, 30 March, has been observed as a day of Palestinian protest against Israeli occupation since 1976.

By George Collins

It began when the Israeli cabinet approved plans on 29 February 1976 to expropriate 5,000 acres of land in Galilee, including 2,000 acres of Arab land.

Most of Israel's 450,000 Arab people live in Galilee. Coming on top of decades of systematic dispossession of the Arab peasantry, this gave rise to a massive opposition movement.

A "Committee for the defence of Arab land" was set up and called a general strike for 30 March. Amidst militant demonstrations on that day, six Palestinians were shot dead by security forces, 80 injured (including 50 police) and 300 arrested.

Since 1976 the focus of struggle has shifted to the occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip, where a policy of Israeli colonisation has been stepped up over the past decade. In 1979 an estimated 35 per cent of the West Bank was in Israeli hands; by 1985 this had increased to over half.

Low-key demonstrations on Land Day in recent years have shown the degree of repression the Israeli security forces have been able to impose. In

1986, for example, demonstrations mainly by students were held on 31 March in order to catch the soldiers off guard.

The massive uprising since 9 December, spearheaded by the youth and workers, has transformed the situation. While the Israeli army can keep the unarmed Palestinians in check, it has been incapable of defeating the movement.

The unprecedented Israeli clampdown in the run-up to Land Day, following the bloodiest weekend since the uprising began, reflects the explosive tensions in the situation.

The youth are seeking a revolutionary way forward. But the PLO leadership, embroiled in wheeling and dealing with the Arab governments and western imperialism, pursue the futile hope of an international 'peace conference' to pressurise Israel into making concessions on the demand for a Palestinian homeland.

Armed with the ideas of Marxism, the workers and youth will find the way to victory—developing a programme of working-class struggle to end the rule of capitalism and landlordism in the Arab states as well as Israel, to lay the basis for a socialist federation of the Middle East where every national group could exercise its right to self-determination.

Stop Press Nigerian Marxists released

KUNLE BAKARE and Femi Aborisade, Nigerian Marxists arrested following the military regime's clampdown on the Nigerian Labour Council (reported in *Militant* last week), were conditionally released last Friday.

No charges were laid against them. They have been ordered to report to the police every two days.

The NLC remains suspended, and the High Court has ruled that dissolution of the NLC is legally valid. Pressure from the labour movement internationally needs to be kept up to end repression against trade unionists and socialists.

Protests to: Nigerian High Commission, 9 Northumberland Avenue, London WC2N 5BX. Copies to: Footwear, Leather and Rubber Products' Union of Nigeria, National Secretariat, 71 Palm Avenue, Olorunsogo-Mushin, PO Box 3730, Surulere, Lagos, Nigeria.

Having a go.....

Dear Comrades,
After Lawson's budget, I overheard the following amongst a group of Black Country pensioners at the barbers.
"There wasn't much in the budget for us but plenty for the Royal Family. Did you hear the Labour blokes shouting, especially that

Birmingham one-Nellist I think his name is—he was really having a go. Isn't he the one who gives his money back?" "Yeah that's the one. What does he do that for, he must be barmy. Mind you he puts his money where his mouth is."

Bill Mullins, Birmingham.

Militant in prison

Dear Comrade,
I understand that you have been writing to another prisoner since he has been here. As you may know he has been moved to another prison and no copies of your newspaper have been circulating at this prison.

to be sent on a weekly basis to me in the future. I, as many other people, have enjoyed reading your articles and feel it would be a shame if they could not continue to be sent in.

I hope that you will be able to accommodate this request.

All the best,
A prisoner

Are you, or have you ever been a member of Militant tendency?

Dear Comrades,
How far has the witch hunt spread?

In the last couple of weeks I've heard of two incidents which took place some time ago. Neither of them involved Militant supporters.

In the first a TGWU shop steward had his application to join a branch of Bassetlaw constituency Labour Party rejected, because he was "associated with Militant". His crime? He'd bought a raffle ticket (and won a prize) in a Militant draw.

More sinister was the second case. The boy-friend of a Militant supporter

worked at a local supermarket. He applied for the post of assistant shift manager. At the interview he was asked what his connections with Militant were, and about his political views. How did they know he had any connections? Perhaps the firm subscribes to the Economic League.

By victimising good socialists themselves the Labour leaders are encouraging the bosses to victimise workers, knowing there will be no protest from the labour and trade union leaders.

John Dale, Balslover Labour Party.

Classified ads

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

Wanted co-op and green shield stamps. Loose, part or full books. All proceeds to the fighting fund. Send c/o

WINTER 1988 issue.
★ Future of the trade unions.
★ 1929 crash.

90p+20p post from World Socialist Books, 3/13 Hepscoct Road,

Militant circulation, 3/13 Hepscoct Rd, London E9 5HB.

□ New sticker available in rolls of 250. 'One day general strike—Defend the health service'. Other stickers: 'Kick out the Tories', 'No to slave labour on YTS', 'For a socialist South Africa', £2.50 per roll. 'Militant for labour and youth' enamel stud badges £1 each. A3 size posters of Marx, Engels, Lenin, Trotsky, Luxemburg 50p each collecting tins £1 each, 10 or more 75p each.

Available from Fighting Fund Dept, 3-13 Hepscoct Rd, London E9 5HB. For all orders add 25 per cent P&P. Cheques payable to Militant.



Workers' Education Group Summer Camp '88. Saturday 6—13 August

Bracelands Campsite, Gloucestershire.
Cost: £40 approx for the week.
Book your holidays now!

Cost: £40 14 years and over
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Children under five free

Bring a deposit to the Workers' Education Group stall at YTURC conference

For further details write to WEG, PO Box 332, London E15 3BY.

Blessed be thou, Alton

Dear Comrades,

The David Alton bandwagon arrived at Bristol to preach the sermon of attacking women's rights and driving working class women to back street abortionists.

Alton and his supporters were met by a demonstration of well over 100 angry people. Inside the local church the meeting was offered propaganda from Alton, singing, prayers and blessing from the local vicar, who is noted for his support for Botha's regime in

South Africa.

The only item not on the agenda was any debate. Calls from young socialist members and others for a debate on the issue were ignored and eventually stewards were called to remove the "troublemakers".

Alton talked a lot about the right to choose life. But he never addressed the more serious question of what sort of life a handicapped child would have when finance for child-care facilities have repeatedly been cut under this

Conservative government.

Alton has found willing allies in the gutter press who spread their horror stories of aborted babies without addressing the real issues.

This bill can only be defeated if it is taken up by the whole labour and trade union movement and those who fail to oppose this bill must be held to account by their members.

Kevin Dale, Bristol West LPYS.

Letters

Send us your views, comments or criticism.

Militant, 3-13 Hepscoct Road, London E9 5HB

Squatting for a place to live

Dear Comrades,

A friend of mine has a fancy looking declaration on his wall. It is the anti-apartheid declaration by Hackney council.

It looks very nice, but it would seem from the article in Militant 888 that this council aren't so ready to practice on their own doorstep what they commit to paper.

The use of riot police to evict squatters is disgraceful. The scene in Hackney sounded very similar to the police raids on South African squatter camps.

In 1985 Norman Fowler brought in the Tory board and lodging regulations that force young homeless people staying in bed and breakfast to move round the country every two to eight weeks in order to claim benefit to pay the rent. Much of my job in Coventry, at an advice centre for the single homeless, is writing letters to the DHSS asking to get youth exempted from these rules until better accommodation can be found.

In London, bed and breakfast accommodation is squalid and there are few hostel places. So, many youth sleep on friends' floors or squat. Others sleep rough on sites like the Embankment or the Festival Hall. They may face police harassment or violence. A youth was kill-



Evicted squatters in Hackney.

Photo: Dave Sinclair.

ed recently for refusing to cough up protection money to a gang of thugs controlling a number of squats.

People don't break into houses because they want to, they do it because there is not enough housing to go round. A very common question asked at the advisory service for squatters (ASS) is: "My daughter is getting married next month, I wonder if you can tell me about squatting". If the

Tory Housing Bill becomes law the housing charity Shelter reckon that there will be 200,000 homeless by 1992.

The squatters who held back the riot police show that they are willing to fight for better housing and they should be drawn into the labour movement, not alienated by it.

Robert Windsor
Coventry

Salute to Liverpool's fight

Dear Comrades,

You are always encouraging readers to write something for the paper and after buying the book *Liverpool—A City that Dared to Fight*, I decided to have a go.

I have always been a socialist but the parties of the left of centre on the continent are full of social democrats and as a result people with Marxist ideas are kept out whenever possible.

Until 1985 all I knew about Militant came from the media. As you can imagine the impression I had of Militant and its supporters was totally wrong.

My eyes were opened when I was in Liverpool in September 1985 and I could not believe all the activity

on the streets and in the local pubs. It seemed as if the whole city was interested in politics, something unheard of on the continent.

I went to the big demonstration outside the town hall on 25 September and I heard Derek Hatton speak for the first time. I also bought a copy of the paper for the first time and I discovered that the views in the Militant were very similar to my own.

In Liverpool I saw socialism in action and it proved to me, and I hope to many others, that the working class can overcome all the opposition and every attack with the right leadership.

I am convinced that the socialists who were expelled from the Labour Party for

building houses and improving services are the future leaders of the labour movement.

I have now been a Militant reader for several years and I salute the sur-

charged Liverpool councillors for pointing me in the right direction and proving that socialism has a future throughout the world.

Jack Harper, Amersfoort, Netherlands.

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National Union of Teachers Conference

Baker's counter-revolution must be stopped

THIS YEAR'S National Union of Teachers (NUT) conference in Scarborough offers the chance for the union rank and file to call a halt to the disastrous policies of the past year.

By Bob Sulatycki
delegate, West London NUT

The 'new realist' approach, if allowed to continue unchecked over the next crucial year, would allow Baker to effect his education counter-revolution unhindered.

The ability of the union to act as an effective national force would be seriously impaired if local and even school-based pay and conditions were introduced. Baker's Education Reform Bill fundamentally threatens the state education service.

This year's conference must make up for lost time and hammer out a strategy to resist and defeat the looming attack. The leadership's record over the past year has been truly pathetic.

Unity

The 'realistic' policy of the executive on pay and conditions, which was narrowly passed on the grounds of preserving unity with the other main teaching union, the National Association of Schoolmasters/Union of Women Teachers (NAS/UWT), at least contained some commitment to action.

Within two months even this was summarily renounced by Doug McAvoy who argued in the *Guardian* "...unity and partner-

ship will be more effective if at the same time there is no disruption in schools".

Effective? Within weeks, Baker's new plans were on the table and the union was in disarray. The NUT officers, however, doubtless in the interests of "unity and partnership", continued with the very expensive, and ultimately unsuccessful, efforts to secure the expulsion of Inner London Teachers' Association members.

Unity with NAS/UWT is as far away now as ever, especially after the abject surrender by our executive over assessment. This occurred despite the determination of our members in the areas concerned.

The lesson is clear: unity between the NUT and NAS/UWT can only be achieved by a rank and file led programme of action, not through paper policies.

In the place of a strategy based on action, which Doug McAvoy has seen fit to rule out in advance as an inappropriate response to Baker's plans, we have a new logo.

The withered hand logo, a bargain at a mere £23,000, is apparently a much less strident image—and hence more desirable—than the burning torch. Yet the ranks of the union have not reacted with the same enthusiasm for the new image as have our leaders.

Maybe this is because while the officers are wasting vast sums of money on stupid gimmicks and at the same time claiming vast salary increases, we are told that there is a financial crisis which has necessitated a massive shedding of staff

at the Hamilton House head office. A financial crisis, moreover, which is being used as a pretext for an attempt at conference to change fundamentally the nature of the union.

The executive priority motion with its various proposals designed to centralise power and control, reduce local association autonomy and move to a less frequent conference, must be thrown out lock, stock and barrel. The financial crisis of the union will be as nothing to the crisis that would follow if such proposals were carried through.

Strategy

In its place we need a strategy based on extending democracy throughout the union and of active recruitment through positive campaigns which seriously address the concrete issues and concerns facing members.

Specifically, the conference should support motion 19, moved by Bradford, calling for effective defence against Baker, as well as the West London amendment pressing for a special conference on the Baker Bill once it has become law. Other strengthening amendments on this should also be supported.

Motion 21, from Hackney, on the conditions of service section, must also be supported, as should motions 27 (from East London) and 28 (Durham).

The amendment to motion 29 on opting out, moved by West London, provides a strategy for active resistance and should therefore be supported.

The other crucial motions will occur in the finance and general



On the ILTA protest march, February 1988. Photo: Dave Sinclair.

MILITANT TEACHER MEETING

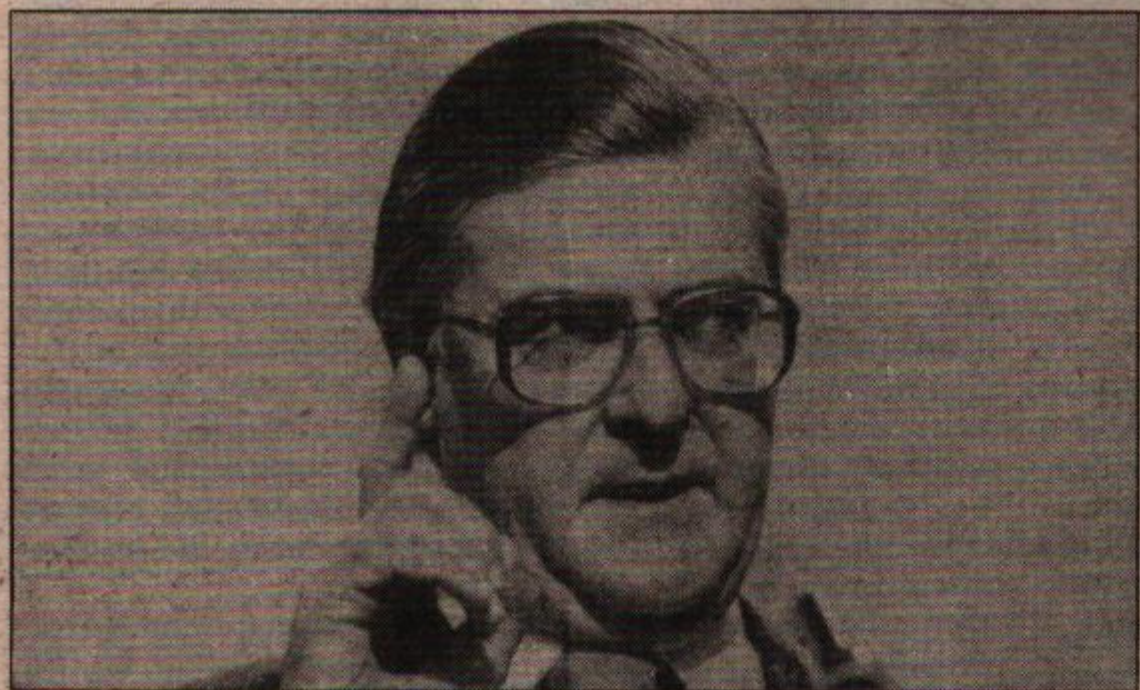
The Cask, Cambridge Terrace, near Valley Bridge, South Cliff, Scarborough. 7pm, Tuesday 5 April.

purposes section. All six on the agenda defend and extend democracy in the union. Of particular note is motion 45 (West London) calling for the election of officials. It is important that this motion is reached.

Despite the gloom and doom peddled by union leaders, and echoed by some on the left, this

year's conference provides the opportunity for the launching of a massive campaign to mobilise NUT members. We can draw other teachers in with us and turn the tide on Baker and the assortment of attacks which the Tories are raining down on us and education as a whole.

ERB—what Tory 'reform' means



Education secretary Baker.

Photo: Dave Sinclair.

THE TORIES' Education Reform Bill (ERB) involves testing at seven, 11, 14 and 16; the national core curriculum and the right of school governors to 'opt-out' of the democratic control of education authorities.

Many readers will have happy memories of the eleven plus exam and will be delighted their own children will have to start sweating at the age of seven. It's just a pity that the teachers will be too busy testing and preparing for tests to get round to much teaching. Local papers will be able to publish league tables showing 'good' and 'bad' schools and 'good' and 'bad' teachers.

ERB's core curriculum is sup-

posed to ensure that pupils take a range of subjects and cannot opt out of essential learning. In practice, the 'core' is all that will be left of the apple when ERB has finished munching away at it.

'Opting-out' is intended to remove the control of schools from elected councils, make it easier for teachers to be sacked and harder for those sacked to be redeployed.

In short, ERB is intended to create a second class education system for the majority while the rich can still buy a better chance for their kids.

By Derek McMillan

Reject business control

THE CITY Technology Colleges (CTCs) proposed by the Tories are a blatant attempt to put education directly into the hands of big business.

The Tories wanted an experiment in schools directly funded by the Department of Education which would break up the comprehensive model and set up 100 technical schools.

A pilot scheme of 20 CTCs has been set up. The colleges will get the same government funding that a local education authority would lay out (about £1300 per pupil per year) but the Tories hope private companies will give substantial extra contributions.

The CTCs will not be tied to the national curriculum; they can experiment with technological ideas. The colleges will cater for 11 to 18 year olds and will be 'selective and all-ability' (whatever that means).

If the colleges are oversubscribed, they would ask primary schools to assess the 'motivation' of 11 year olds. They would also use aptitude tests.

CTCs will be run by educational trusts. Their sweeping powers mean they can force local authorities to sell vacant properties for college sites.

The Tories say the present system does not turn out model potential employees who are 'flexible', qualified and already have basic vocational training. That, they claim, is the reason for youth unemployment.

But the real reason for so many young people on the dole has been Tory policies and British capitalism's destruction of industry. How many companies would donate to the CTCs? There's no quick profit in it.

Even though the CTCs give big business more direct control over education content, Britain's bosses have always been reluctant to pay for training.

Previous governments had to set up industrial training boards. These boards forced levies on employers, then gave government money back to companies which came up to their standards.

Many boards have now been abolished and their money diverted to the Manpower Services Commission (MSC), the body responsible for Youth Training Schemes (YTS) and adult training. The YTS was originally launched to give free trainees to employers.

Apprenticeships have become almost a thing of the past. Many employers became short of the skilled workers they need. When the bosses needed skilled labour particularly in the recent

economic upturn, they didn't train their own staff. They tried to 'soup up' the YTS.

The MSC in the London area started marketing YTS as "employed status training" where the trainee gets a wage while undergoing a two-year training course, and also time off to study for recognised qualifications.

This is almost luxury by YTS standards. The reason was that after apprenticeships disappeared, employers found a particularly low take up for the ordinary YTS schemes in London. Bosses eager to meet orders in the upturn have been desperate to get skilled trained staff.

But the point is that they have shown little willingness to pay to train school leavers or retrain workers (or help with astronomical housing costs in the South East) despite injections of cash from the MSC.

When upturn turns to recession, any grandiose ideas of capitalists flocking to subsidise technological education could end up looking very sick.

By an ILEA Nalgo member

NUT elections: left gains

TO DATE we have received information that the left has at least doubled its representation on the national executive. In Outer London three left candidates were elected; in Inner London two; and in Manchester two. Left candidates were re-elected in Bradford and Leicester.

**D of E
fight will
continue**

THE LONDON civil servants' campaign to defend jobs and services to the public has suffered a major setback. CPSA members voted against taking all-out strike action by 1,040 votes to 694.

The dispute started in December when management sacked 18 job centre casuals. They tried to compulsorily transfer unemployment benefit office (UBO) staff to replace them. This in turn threatened UBO staffing levels.

CPSA members at Camden A UBO immediately walked out. Subsequently the dispute spread to 25 Department of Employment (DE) and seven DHSS offices. Although some steps forward were achieved in negotiations on the transfers issue, this level of action was not enough to force management to make concessions on staffing levels. Therefore the ballot on all-out London-wide action went ahead.

Everything possible was done to put the union in the best position to win the vote. 'Warm-up' meetings involving strikers and NEC members were held in almost every office to be balloted. This was backed up by extensive literature which explained the issues at stake.

This campaign succeeded in convincing many members of the importance of the issues. However, in the final analysis, too few members had direct experience of the problems. Others were not convinced they could survive the hardship of all-out action or that the union could win.

No alternative

Despite this setback it would be a mistake to argue the sacrifices made by the strikers were in vain.

Members throughout London have been alerted to management's plans. We are now in a better position to fight future battles, either over staffing cuts or the privatisation of the employment service.

The fight to defend jobs and services will continue. We have no alternative. Our task is to build the campaign in order to convince those members who voted against taking action. The campaign must be linked to the forthcoming UBO Work Measurement Exercise and review of job centre staffing levels.

We must apply sufficient pressure to ensure account is taken of high turnover and inexperience. We are confident that if either of these exercises recommends further cuts in staffing levels there will be an explosion of anger amongst the membership resulting in a positive vote in any future ballot.

Tony Jones,
DHSS Inner London
and Steve Bell,
DE North West London
MSC.

Jaguar workers strike vote forces

Management climbdown

FACED WITH the threat of strike action, Jaguar management have backed down. They have withdrawn their ultimatum to speed up the production lines at the Browns Lane plant in Coventry to produce an extra 92 cars a week after Easter while talks with the unions take place.

The Jaguar workers had voted by 2,410 to 1,312 to strike—picking up the baton of militancy in the car industry. They have won a victory but vigilance is needed to ensure the proposals are not introduced at a later date or in a different form.

Last year production rose by 16 per cent but the

management are not satisfied. They want an extra 25 per cent production in 1989. All this with no increase in the workforce, of course.

Management point to Mercedes Benz which they claim produce six cars per worker annually compared to Jaguar's four. The company has announced a fall

in profits due largely to the fall in the dollar. The United States is its biggest market. However, pre-tax profits for last year were still £97 million.

According to one worker who spoke to *Militant*, "The reaction of the men was to stick together. The last plant audit showed that there were tight areas on

the tracks. 28 men in these areas have since been removed and these areas are going to be a lot tighter. If the track is speeded up you can treble the death rate."

This is at a plant where in one-six week period last year 17 workers died, many of them from stress-related diseases such as strokes.

New fighters forged in strike



LAND ROVER workers have voted by a 79 per cent majority to return to work after five bitter weeks. Despite feeling disappointed about not gaining more concessions from management, workers view the result as a partial victory. The strike has put the unions back on the map at the Solihull plant.

By Les Kuriata

Even as the return-to-work result seemed probable, pickets were far from despondent. One said: "This dispute has thrown up new fighters who have got to become the next shop stewards". Plans were being drawn up to oust shop stewards who hadn't played much part in the strike.

The fact that Land Rover workers have won concessions against such a hard line management, obviously under instruction from Thatcher not to buckle, is significant. It's easier for management to be tough when they have millions of pounds worth of tax payers' money behind them rather than private shareholders and private profit as at Ford.

For this reason, particularly with the Ford strike in mind, many labour movement commentators, not directly involved in the strike, feared that Land Rover workers were on a hiding to nothing. They were wrong. On the contrary, Land Rover workers are now more confident than they have been for many years. Although the concessions won amount to consolidation of bonuses rather than fresh money, as one worker put it, "Let's face it, this dispute has never really been about money but about the way we have been treated".

Even before the strike started the bosses employed opinion pollsters MORI to ring workers, asking whether they supported the strike or not. This backfired. Workers were outraged, staging a



After the Ford and Land Rover strikes, Jaguar workers voted for action.

Photo: Dave Sinclair.

walkout three days before the strike was scheduled.

The picket line on the first Monday morning was more akin to a football crowd, such were the numbers. The company directed a camera to film every move on one of the two main picket sites. A van containing filming equipment was used on another.

Talks were organised but glum Acas officials privately told union negotiators: "They want to starve you back to work". Scandalously, Johnnie Allen the chief AEU negotiator on the joint negotiating committee (JNC) went on record as saying that the company were not going to budge.

Throughout, the company remorselessly rang striker after striker in an effort to break the dispute. Management, obviously believing their own propaganda that there was no support for the strike, instigated a back-to-work meeting. This was a complete flop.

After three weeks on strike a small number of scabs did return—in reality

about ten or twenty, creeping up to about sixty towards the end of the strike. This represented one per cent of the workforce.

Privatisation

Land Rover management grossly exaggerated the number of scabs, claiming 50, 100 and later 170. Many pickets were critical of Sam Robinson, the leading TGWU negotiator on the JNC, who despite numerous opportunities in the media and on the TV, never once exposed or ridiculed the company's claims and therefore gave the impression they were true.

On the picket line, Coventry MP, Dave Nellist was seen as the main supporter of the strikers in parliament and in the local media. Pickets commented that local Labour MPs with the bulk of Land Rover workers in their constituencies were not very prominent.

As the strike neared its fourth week it became clear that management were beginning to back down.

They were under pressure from local component and dependant industries. In light of British Aerospace interest in buying the Austin Rover group of which Land Rover is the most lucrative part, some bosses and ministers may have been anxious to settle the dispute. With no significant weakening of the strike, another attempt at talks was organised.

Some concessions were offered and first the JNC, then the shop stewards, despite some opposition, voted to recommend the offer. Union officials on the JNC were confident of a return to work.

At the meeting, despite confusion at the lack of a working PA system, when a vote was taken about half of those present voted to reject. Managers must have been sickened by the sight of thousands of workers collecting their cars and driving home. Many JNC members openly admitted that they had misjudged the mood.

In view of this, as *Militant Car Worker* bulletin 5 put it, "After the mass meeting the JNC

should have called the shop stewards together to discuss changing the JNC's recommendation from 'accept' to 'reject'. This would have been more in line with the wishes of the workforce.

A postal ballot was then organised and with another JNC recommendation to accept the offer, the result was no surprise. Land Rover management will draw little encouragement from the final ballot results, however.

The strike at Land Rover is another episode in the recent history of car workers—an episode which shows that car workers have been pushed to the limit and are being left with no alternative but to fight. No-one at Land Rover is now expecting a quiet time in the near future. Victimisation of leading activists is more than possible. Privatisation into the British Aerospace group is now a looming threat.

The tremendous five-week strike has put Birmingham car workers firmly on the map again. Several 'old hands' were often heard to say: "It's just like the good old days".

Tories send Commission in to threaten rights

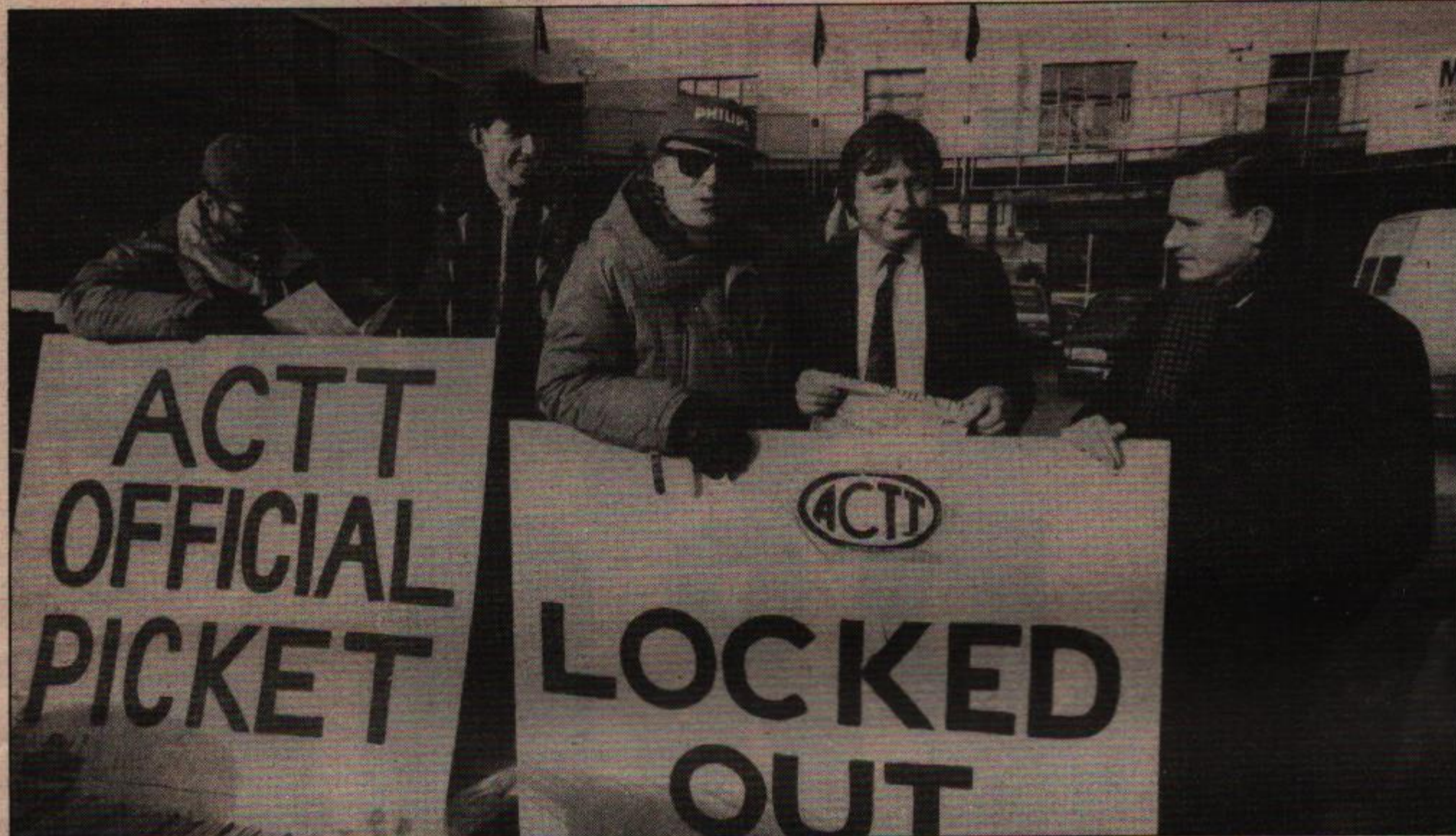


Photo: Dave Sinclair.

News in Brief

What's happening in your workplace? Phone in your reports to the Industrial Editor on 01-533 3311 before 5pm on Monday.

Manchester Poly

HUNDREDS OF cleaning and catering staff at Manchester Polytechnic locked management out of their offices for two hours last week and then lobbied the board of governors.

The lowest paid workers at Manchester Poly are threatened with wage cuts of £30 to £40 per week as part of the £1 million cuts in the poly's budget. £500,000 is being cut in catering and cleaning. Management have proposed cutting the bonus which at present brings the basic wage of £98 per week up to £130. At the same time they propose increasing the workload.

Jimmy Jennings, the Nupe branch secretary said, "The workers are angry that their boss, on

£58,000 a year, will have more in tax cuts than their bonus. The lowest paid are bearing the brunt of Manchester council's cuts." According to Anne Ashcroft, another steward, an administrator told her: "If you can afford to smoke you don't need a bonus. In fact if I had my way, you wouldn't get a bonus anyway."

These Nupe members are prepared to fight the poly management and the council on this and have been offered support by the other trade unions. This will give confidence to other workers in the council to withstand the cuts.

By Margaret Manning

Unions a monopoly?

IN A new and unprecedented attack on trade union rights, the government has announced an inquiry into 'restrictive practices' in the TV and film industry by the Monopolies Commission.

The danger this poses to organised labour was highlighted by the comments of Employment Secretary Norman Fowler who said he was keen for other industrial agreements to be investigated in the same way. He also threatened more anti-union legislation.

The clear aim is to outlaw the closed shop and to prevent workers from defending or improving conditions at work. Commissioners will be asked to inquire into the extent to which work is restricted to trade union members. If 'restrictive practices' are found, they will be outlawed. For example, minimum crewing levels are almost certain to fall into this category.

The implications for jobs, safety and conditions are clear. The move follows on from the sacking of 229

members of the Association of Cinematograph, Television and Allied Technicians (ACTT) involved in the TV-am dispute, the announcement by London Weekend Television of 239 job cuts over the next year, and the government's plans to force TV companies to use independent producers for 25 per cent of air time. For the BBC this will mean privatisation by the back door.

Whilst ACTT and the Broadcasting and Entertainment Trades Alliance are at the sharp end of this

attack, the fundamental right of trade unionists to fight for and defend minimum conditions at work is now under threat.

TUC general secretary, Norman Willis was quoted as wanting to "examine the full implications" of the development. These should be obvious. It is up to the trade union movement to resist with all its strength.

By Tim Harris

BR plan to gag workforce

"BRITISH RAIL intend to gag rail workers by introducing a new dictatorial rule in June. It means effectively that any employee who dares to make any public statement without management's approval will be disciplined, possibly sacked." This statement in the Transport Review of 11 March spotlights what Jimmy Knapp, general secretary of the National Union of Railwaymen, has called "a very sinister development".

It means that even criticism of the service by a BR employee will result in that worker being hauled up before the boss and told to belt up or be sacked.

The new ruthlessness of British Rail management was demonstrated by the sacking of King's Cross Aslef activist, Steve Forey. His branch decided to support the health service workers with a 24 hour solidarity strike.

Management then obtained a court injunction declaring the strike illegal and suspending six branch officials. At the same time all Aslef members received letters telling them that they could be liable for loss of business and sacked.

The national union leadership immediately distanced itself from the branch and put pressure on to call off the action which they in fact did.

After Steve's sacking, the branch decided to ballot for strike action to get him re-instated. Again, threatening letters were sent out by the management. The Aslef national leadership condemned the ballot despite the promise of solidarity action from other depots around the country and in the face of this pressure, by a very small margin the ballot went against striking.

In the face of ruthless BR bosses, the

national rail unions should have put their whole weight behind the branch. This incident showed to many activists their unwillingness to do so. It also shows that a socialist leadership has to be fought for.

A clear lesson for activists is the need to campaign for members to participate in the branch meetings. Even when this is achieved, any call for industrial action must be vigorously campaigned for. Support cannot be taken for granted. Pandering to the right wing means watering down your proposals.

The victimisation of union activists has to be answered with industrial action locally, followed by the call for national solidarity action if that proves necessary, until the member is re-instated in the same grade.

By Andy Viner

MSF rule book

THE MANUFACTURING Science and Finance Union, formerly Astms and Tass, has published its new draft joint rule book. This document gives rank and file members a month, effectively one meeting, to consider changes, deletions or additions.

Apart from conference and the NEC it will mean a continuation of the structures present in the two unions.

The most controversial aspects—the NEC, conference, branch and area

funding and delegations to affiliated organisations—are to be discussed at the 1989 conference.

However, there are points which will concern all MSF activists. The socialist clause in the old Tass rule book has been omitted. The NEC want the conference to continue at least until next year as at present with 400 delegates from each union. Motions will be limited to two per branch and prioritisation will occur as previously. Amendments will be

limited. Previously, Astms branches could amend as many resolutions as they wanted and in Tass, amendments could be made from the floor of conference.

The NEC are also proposing a new regional structure with 14 common boundaries. Many on the left in the union will be arguing for a larger executive and more regions, each directly electing an NEC member.

Only the NEC will have the authority to call a special conference. It also entrusts itself with the administration of the rules and the formation of policy before the first policy-making

conference in 1989. Activists must campaign for:

- ★ Full merger at all levels.
- ★ One union—not a federation.
- ★ NEC members to be elected by and accountable to the regions.
- ★ Direct representation from every branch at conference.
- ★ A union committed to the nationalisation of the commanding heights of the economy under democratic workers' control.

By Gwyn Morris
chair, Bedford General
577 Astms, personal
capacity

Hackney parents

A MEETING of over 300 erupted with support when the call was made for a 24-hour general strike to defend education, the health service and the transport system.

The meeting was one of those organised in defence of the Inner London Education Authority, at present under threat from the Tories.

Jean Webb from Hackney Labour Women's Council described how "One in two families in Hackney are single parent and rely heavily on

after-school services like play centres and holiday schemes that are now threatened as well as using adult education themselves. Cuts being made now by the Labour leaders of Ilea will assist the Tories in their onslaught against working class women to force us back into the home as unpaid social services for the young, elderly and infirm."

By Joanne Martin,
parent from Save Hackney Education Services

Nupe, South West region

AT THE Southern region Labour Party conference, a resolution from Brighton Kempton Labour Party calling on Labour councils to refuse to co-operate with competitive tendering for council services and to mobilise a united campaign in defiance of the Tories was amended by Nupe South West region.

Nupe called instead for Labour councils and council unions merely to minimise its impact, stick to party policy and liaise with the regional executive. It even deleted the call for all privatised council services to be returned to council control by the next Labour

government.

During the debate, Stan Natrass of Arundel Labour Party produced a copy of a resolution similar to Brighton's passed by the 1987 Nupe conference. But, opposing the resolution and supporting the amendment on behalf of the regional executive, Nupe full-time official Shaun Hilliard denied that it was passed, though later admitted privately that it was carried with reservations.

The amendment was decisively passed on a card vote.

By a delegate

Tonbridge health march

THIRTY ONE delegates from the trade union and labour movement have agreed to organise the first march in living memory in Tonbridge on 9 April.

The march, in defence of the health service and

particularly against the threatened closure of a local hospital starts from the Pinnacles pub, Shipbourne Road, Tonbridge, assembling at 10.30am.

By Nigel Sheahan

Militant

Support the Seafarers' strike
Militant meeting
 7 April 7.30pm
 Dewdrop Inn, Dover
 Speakers: Tony Mulhearn
 and Belgian ship worker

National strike to fight P&O

THE 2,300 P&O seafarers on strike at Dover are fighting not just for their own jobs and conditions of service but for the future of all ferry workers. They expected the full backing of the National Union of Seamen (NUS) leadership.

By Yvonne Harrison

A ballot was called for national action and early indications were that it was likely to be a decisive 2-1 majority for action.

In panic the ferry owners scurried to the courts to stop the strike. The Tories hypocritically claimed that their laws gave trade unions back to the membership through the introduction of ballots—the reality is that this legislation is being used to prevent P&O workers exercising their democratic rights.

The blatant class nature of the Tory courts has been starkly revealed. According to the judge, this dispute only affects P&O Dover workers. Yet, Sealink have announced plans to follow suit and cut staffing levels if P&O European Ferries achieve significant reductions. James Sherwood of Sealink said: "If P&O gets

manning reductions, then we would obviously have to do the same."

But Dover workers are adamant that P&O's legal devices must not succeed. They understand that the only way to defeat the ferry owners—and secure the future of their industry is by united, solidarity action.

Therefore the decision of the NUS leadership to call off the ballot mid-way through the procedure was an abdication of leadership.

Previous weakness and compromise by the NUS have only invited further aggression. They promised defiance during the Isle of Man ferry dispute. But when faced with the threat of the law being used against the union they retreated. Ferry owners then sacked the Isle of Man crews.

Defiance

NUS general secretary Sam McCluskie says that the union must stay within the law, but the rights of workers, including the right to organise would never have been won but for the generations of working people defying class laws.

Ferry workers in Felixstowe and Harwich have pledged their support. They recognise that the



P&O strikers lobbying their union executive's meeting

strike has implications for the whole industry. Sealink workers on the *St Anselm* have already struck. If they all came out, cross-channel traffic would grind to a halt.

The future of the NUS is in the balance. The membership has been savagely cut by more than 50 per cent since the 1966 seamen's dispute. The fight to save P&O jobs is the

fight for the union and the industry. The NUS has nothing to lose in backing national action and everything to gain.

The resources of the union are of course important. They have been built up by generations of sacrifice by NUS members. But more important are the members' jobs and conditions. The union is not the headquarters or the filing

cabinets but the rank and file members who are under attack.

No Tory laws could withstand the impact of a bold, united struggle by the NUS, backed up by the fullest support and solidarity action by the wider trade union and labour movement.

National strike action must be prepared. If any attempt is made to seize the

NUS's funds the TUC must organise industrial action to support it.

★ Send delegations of P&O strikers to every port, the docks and railway depots.

★ Organise delegations to continental ports to win backing like that already shown in Dunkerque.

★ For a national strike of all NUS members.

Photo: Dave Sinclair.

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Support the paper that fights for youth

THE HIGHLIGHT of last year's LPYS Conference was the *Militant* readers' meeting where over £6,700 was collected. We appeal to all delegates and visitors to this year's Youth Trade Union Rights Campaign conference to donate to our Fighting Fund to help us beat last year's total. *Militant* is the only paper which consistently covers youth struggles and shows the socialist way forward. Help fund our fight.

Our appeal to all readers to donate at least a day's pay has brought in £50 from S Jones of London. M Gibbs of Wakefield, sent £40; Colin O'Callaghan, NCU, £35; Helen Walsh, Cohse £10.00; Stella Dennis, CPSA,

£20; Bill Fleming, Ucatt, £15; Niall Mulholland, West Lincs £10 and Terry Parker, TGWU, £10. If you haven't donated yet, follow these examples.

Supporters in Swansea selling the paper with their rattling tins and stickers raised £69.83. Supporters in Liverpool Broadgreen raised £44.25. Our present campaign ends on May Day, so why not organise a public meeting or a social then.

Supporters in Glasgow raised £35.50 at a Jumble sale. Try organising one in your area.

Special thanks to Mr and Mrs Arnold, OAP's from E Midlands for £5.10, Jill Jones of Southampton, £10.40; F Armstrong of Southend £3.00 and

Target May 1 £50,000 Raised this week £2,328

Fighting Fund

Week 3

Area	Received	% of target achieved	Target
1 South East	599		1570
2 East Midlands	624		2530
3 Manchester/Lancs	716		2890
4 South West	321		1270
5 London	1723		7080
6 Northern	727		3270
7 Yorkshire	953		5950
8 Southern	285		2020
9 Merseyside	668		5000
10 Scotland East	336		2520
11 Eastern	272		2260
12 Wales	423		3510
13 West Midlands	400		3960
14 Scotland East	138		2150
15 National	161		4000
Total	6018		50,000

Sabrina and Rory Worthington, aged 7 and 6, from Wythen-

shawe, who raised £3.00 selling Alton Bill stickers.