

FOR A MASS
SOCIALIST
LABOUR PARTY

Labour - fight

the poll tax



Photo: Militant.

"THE VAST majority of the people we deal with are unemployed. They are going to have to find 20 per cent of whatever the poll tax will be in their area. The highest figure quoted so far is £529. That means they will be over £2 a week worse off.

"In some people's eyes £2 a week is not an enormous amount of money. But if you're living on the breadline, then come the day before the giro if you've got nothing left in your purse to feed your kids, that money can mean a loaf of bread, a pound of butter and a bag of potatoes."

Jim Cameron, convenor, Strathclyde Regional Council social work shop stewards' committee

FACED WITH the devastating consequences of the poll tax, the Scottish Labour Party must throw its support behind a mass poll tax strike. Otherwise they will stand discredited in the eyes of hundreds of thousands of their loyal voters.

The growing revolt in working-class communities has strengthened the determination of Labour activists to go to war against Thatcher over this tax.

Among Labour voters, despite the hostility of the Tory media and the Labour leadership, 49 per cent support non-payment, while 43 per cent are opposed. 55 per cent of SNP and even 13 per cent of Tory voters support non-payment.

At the party's special conference on 17 September in Govan Town Hall, the vast majority of resolutions call for support for the principle

of non-payment.

On the other hand sections of the party and trade union hierarchy are quaking in their shoes at the prospect of having to lead a fight to the finish against Thatcher.

By coincidence Govan is also to be the scene of a crucial by-election. Already leaders of the Scottish National Party (SNP) are hoping for a repeat of their sensational by-election victory there in 1973 when Margo MacDonald overturned a seemingly unassailable Labour majority.

The SNP are praying that Neil Kinnock's policy of blind subservience to Thatcher's law will prevail at the conference. This would give the nationalists their biggest boost since the discovery of North Sea oil.

The only serious strategy for Labour to defeat the poll tax is to build a mass non-payment

campaign in the communities, combined with the mobilisation of industrial workers in the factories, shipyards, mines and offices.

Individual acts of defiance, as advocated by MPs like Robin Cook, are doomed to defeat. They say they personally will not pay the poll tax, yet bitterly oppose a mass campaign of non-payment.

In 1915 a combination of 20,000 tenants on rent strike and the economic muscle of 4,000 industrial workers on strike forced Lloyd George's government to introduce the Rent Restriction Act.

In 1989 the Thatcher government could face a movement 50 times stronger than that of 1915. That rent strike, the later events of Red Clydeside and the UCS work-in of the early 1970s will seem like playground scuffles compared to the struggle which will sweep Scotland in 1989 if the labour movement now grasps this glorious opportunity to halt the march of Thatcherism.

By Alan McCombes,
Govan Labour Party delegate

See also page 2
Lobby the party conference - 9.30, Govan Town Hall, Glasgow.

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Report from Mexico

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Labour must back mass non-payment

THERE IS growing anger among Labour supporters and party activists at the parliamentary leadership's persistent failure to mount a serious counter-offensive against the poll tax.

At the Scottish Labour Party's special conference, there is certain to be a bitter confrontation. The radicalised rank and file now overwhelmingly favour a mass campaign of non-payment. The Labour and trade union leadership will be equally determined to resist calls for 'illegal civil disobedience'.

Labour's Scottish executive argues that were non-payment to be effective "then serious financial problems are caused for local authorities. Those who would be hit first would be those most dependent on local government services, together with those employed in local government."

But council workers, who are in the front line of the battle against it, understand that failure to defeat the poll tax will lead not just to temporary disruption of services but the permanent destruction of local authority provision, with far worse effects on those most dependent on them.

That is because even if everyone paid the poll tax that would only provide 20 per cent of councils' income. All the rest will be controlled by the government, who will continue their policy of starving Labour councils of cash and forcing them to cut spending.

The executive also argues that non-payment would encourage people "to run up still further debts". But in the long term they will get much deeper into debt if they have to pay the poll tax.

John Maxton MP claims that if a non-payment campaign succeeded, the Tories would simply stand aside and allow councils to 'stew in their own juice'. But it is inconceivable that the government would do nothing while a mass movement of illegal defiance engulfed Scottish society.

They would be terrified that if they did not quickly take punitive action against poll tax strikers the movement would develop an unstoppable momentum. They would have to bring the conflict to a head within a very short period.

But to do this, the Tories, using the threat of surcharge and disqualification, would have to drag Labour councils into carrying out the arrestment of wages and warrant sales (which empower sheriff's officers to enter people's homes and auction off their personal possessions).

Disgracefully, Neil Kinnock has said: "If people are provoked into not paying the poll tax, they are being invited into paying penalties. Then we will not be able to do anything to help them!"

At the 1985 Labour Party conference Kinnock won rapturous applause from the Tory press when he berated Liverpool City Council for issuing 'redundancy notices' as a legal tactic to enable the council to continue borrowing.

Now it appears that he will not be perturbed by the 'grotesque spectacle' of Labour councils scuttling round issuing warrant sale and arrestment of wages notices to tenants who defy the poll tax.

But Labour councillors do not have to act as hangmen for the Tories. Even those who are not prepared to face the legal consequences of defying Thatcher can at least resign and make way for others who will take up the fight against the poll tax and defend those not paying.

If Labour councils do try to smash a mass poll tax strike with warrant sales and wage arrestments, it will be like trying to extinguish a forest fire by spitting at it.

Entire communities will be turned into no-go areas for the debt collectors. Sheriff's officers entering housing schemes to carry out warrant sales will need an army if they are to succeed.

Similarly the arrestment of wages on a mass scale will prove impossible. Even normally tracing a debtor's place of work is difficult. To obtain the necessary information the councils would need a regiment of private investigators.

There would also then be the threat of industrial action in the event of wage arrestments being enforced. It would create an administrative and political nightmare for the authorities.

Providing action is built on a mass scale, a campaign of non-payment to defeat the poll tax will become irresistible. The Labour Party in Scotland should be leading that campaign not finding excuses for the Labour councils who are implementing the tax.



Liverpool Militant banner on Glasgow demonstration 10 September.

Photo: Dave Sinclair

No lead from Scots TUC

THE PROMISED church bells did not ring. Nobody I saw stood still in the street. But shipyard, engineering and local government workers and further education students did support the Scottish TUC's "11th hour" protest against the poll tax by stopping work in the afternoon of Tuesday 13 September.

By Tony Cross

Over 1,000 marched on the Strathclyde Anti-Poll Tax Federation (SAPTF) demonstration in Glasgow, the biggest event of the day in the whole of Scotland, despite the STUC's refusal to support or provide speakers for the rally.

Even worse, Labour-controlled Strathclyde Regional Council, who claim to oppose the poll tax, sent a circular round further education colleges asking them to send in the names of students who did not attend classes.

City councillor Chic Stevenson told the rally: "Saturday's march was the end of the phoney war. Today is the start of the real struggle".

Witch-hunted SAPTF secretary, Tommy Sheridan, received a standing ovation after calling for working-class unity to defeat the tax.

In answer to the claim of Donald Dewar, Labour's Scottish spokesman, that non-payment would lead to debt, he pointed out that 1,030,000 Scottish families are on the breadline: "Working-class families are already in debt. It is not non-payment that will lead to further debt. It is payment of the poll tax."

"Our task now is to get to the workplaces," he said: "I spoke at the cleansing department to 50 GMB members who took a

unanimous vote for non-payment. We will need strike action in the case of intimidation or victimisation of workers who refuse to pay."

One of the few MPs to support non-payment, Jimmy Wray, also spoke, calling for a mass lobby of the special Scottish Labour Party conference on the poll tax: "All the meetings I have been at have been 100 per cent against the poll tax," he said: "Where are the delegates who want to vote for payment getting their orders from?"

The STUC's week of action against the tax had begun with demonstrations throughout Scotland on Saturday 10 September. Glasgow Trades Council held a march through the city with demonstrators singing 'we won't pay the poll tax'.

It was led by an impressive array of union banners and a fine turnout of working-class tenants and youth behind the banners of the anti-poll tax unions.

Broad base

"It was a good demo but it could have been better organised," said Eddie Docherty of Cowglen Against the Poll Tax: "If the STUC is serious about fighting the tax, why did they book a bandstand for the rally which only holds 300 people?"

Anti-poll tax union members, young socialists and Militant supporters found they could not get near the rally and overflowed on to a bridge over the river, shouting "Dump the poll tax in the Clyde" and "You can't expel us all" (to the tune of "Those were the days").

But workers looking to the speakers for a clear strategy will have been disappointed. Several were at pains to stress the 'broad-based' nature of the

campaign. This entailed having the Rev Norman Orr on the platform to "challenge the moral base of the poll tax".

Sadly the reverend gentleman's moral outrage did not result in the almighty condemning the Thatcher government into eternal damnation - or even decent weather for the day!

"To say the campaign is finished is nonsense," said the STUC general secretary, Campbell Christie. But he didn't make it clear where it would go: "Now signatures must be collected against the tax and when the bills arrive in February and March, people in Scotland will stand with us and say no."

But to those wanting to know what to do then, he said: "Let's get to April and then decide what to do."

The STUC's all-class 'broad-based' strategy completely failed. No-one but workers and young people took part in the protests. Their universal opinion was that far more was needed than the 'silly gesture', as one tenants' leader called it, of the 11-minute stoppage.

There can be no doubt that virtually every large workplace would have supported an all-Scotland one-day strike had it been called. More workers would have been confident of taking action if they had thought the STUC was serious about leading it.

But the posters, featuring Charlie Chaplin among others, were hardly calculated to give this impression. And Campbell Christie even admitted that the STUC had not organised any rallies for the 13th, only a petition.

Unions say don't pay

STRATHCLYDE NALGO branch, with 20,000 members, while still ambivalent on the question of non-payment, has thrown its weight behind the community-based anti-poll tax movement by affiliating to the Strathclyde Anti-Poll Tax Federation and has left the door open for a policy of non-payment at a later stage.

Lothian Nalgo executive has actually come out in favour of a non-payment campaign, as have Strathclyde Fire Brigades Union, Glasgow District Council cleansing workers and other local authority trade union branches. Glasgow District Council building and works depots are festooned with posters proclaiming 'No Poll Tax Here!'

at Cardonald College did the same and council workers and students held an 11am rally in the centre of Glasgow.

Govan shipyard stopped at 11.45 to join Strathclyde community councils at the yard's main gate. "I'm not paying, but who is going to lead?" asked a worker: "It's OK to say you won't pay if you've a bank book behind you."

"Nobody's giving a lead" he said. No wonder he felt this way, after Campbell Christie had just told them: "If there's a mass movement then we are prepared to lead it if that is what the people want."

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Victim of Israeli repression

THE ARREST and brutal treatment of Machmoud Masawri is an indication of the growth of state repression in Israel, parallel to that in the occupied territories (see page 11). In this case it is a blatant attempt to suppress the propagation of Marxist ideas.

This is a summary of what Machmoud has faced:-

- ★ Not allowed to see a lawyer for two weeks.
- ★ Beaten to extract a false confession related to alleged use of Molotov cocktails.
- ★ More serious charges kept secret, as is the evidence and the part of the penal code under which they are brought.
- ★ Trial to be in secret.
- ★ Machmoud's lawyer banned from representing him.
- ★ Complete court-imposed

publicity ban on all aspects of the case, even the fact of his arrest.

★ Not allowed a family visit since arrest in July.

The campaign for his release is winning growing support. In Spain the Workers' Commissions trade union have circulated their factory committees on his behalf.

New sponsors include: John Prescott, Les Huckfield, Keva Coombes (Liverpool Council leader) and miners' leaders Davy Hopper and Dave Guy (secretary and president Durham area), and Eric Clarke (Scottish area secretary).

Send resolutions to Israeli Embassy, 2 Palace Green, London W8 and to Prime Minister's Office, 3 Kaplan Street, Jerusalem, Israel 91919. Copies to Militant.

SAS shoot to kill

WHATEVER THE jury's decision in the Gibraltar inquest, few in the labour movement will not believe that a conscious decision was made to gun down the three IRA members. John Stalker was driven out of Northern Ireland for uncovering the security forces' shoot-to-kill policy. The SAS exported it to Gibraltar.

By Jeremy Birch

The pathologist described in brutal detail a "frenzied attack," of the bodies riddled with bullets. As one of the IRA members lay dead or dying on the road, an SAS member stood over the body pumping bullets into the head.

Nothing could better confirm what Marxism has always recognised that terrorism breeds repression. The methods of the IRA have created a climate of anger and revulsion which have allowed the British capitalist state to menacingly escalate its means of repression.

The reactionary Sun felt free to stoop to the headline: "Why the dogs had to die." But even it had to recognise: "Many Sun readers will feel revulsion at the way they were shot down in cold blood with no chance of surrender." However it was then able to recount the plight of some of the IRA's victims to try to reassure its readers that legalised state murder was justified after all.

In the court room the killings were put down to an unfortunate accident. A Gibraltar police vehicle, not involved in tracking the IRA members, sounded its siren inadvertently alerting them. When they turned they saw the SAS men approaching supposedly with the intention of arresting them.

Apparently the SAS had to fire, not knowing the three were unarmed and believing they may have been carrying a remote control device which at any moment could have activated a car bomb back in Gibraltar's main square.

But this was a Sunday. The army parade reported to be the IRA's likely

target was not until the Tuesday. If the car the IRA members had parked in the square was really believed to contain a remote-controlled bomb (which it did not) why was the area not evacuated until after the IRA members were killed, over three hours after the car had been parked?

Tory cabinet

Retired bomb disposal expert, Lieut-Colonel George Styles, said on TV it would have been obvious from the position of the car chassis whether it was carrying "a significant weight of explosive." And he thought it "very unlikely indeed" that any remote control device could work at the one and half mile distance that the IRA members were from the car when they were shot.

And if the state had really wanted to arrest the three, how was it that they were able to cross into Gibraltar (with a car the security forces would have us believe they thought was packed full of explosive) with no attempt made to

apprehend them? Yet they had been tailed during their stay in Spain by the Spanish security services.

If the SAS were on a murder mission, then from how high up the state apparatus did the orders come? Could the Tory cabinet have been unaware of what Stalker unearthed? With Stalker gone, the Sampson report still found RUC officers guilty of obstructing the course of justice, but Thatcher's Attorney General stepped in to ensure there would be no prosecutions, for interests of 'security.'

The labour movement has a duty to campaign against state repression, while not conceding one inch to the methods of individual terror. Riot shields and CS gas were first tried out in Northern Ireland but have since been used against protests in Britain. If the organised working class threatened to transform society they could become the targets of the methods used by the SAS in Gibraltar. IRA tactics have given some popular legitimacy to the beefing up of the capitalist state.



Labour's Scottish purge

THE LABOUR right's witch-hunt against those trying to fight poll tax continues. The Pollok constituency Labour Party has frozen 146 applications to join Pollok ward Labour Party and 28 to join Cowglen ward. The only reason given was that Joyce Gould, the national organiser, had instructed them to do so.

By Militant reporters

Most of them were recruited through the Pollok ward's work in fighting poll tax. Applications from three other wards were accepted, even though the inquiry set up by the national Labour leadership is into the whole constituency par-

ty. "We want to join the Labour Party" says a leaflet the applicants gave out at the constituency party meeting. "We are encouraged that the local Labour Party seems to be finally active in our area and we want to be part of it."

"We are not 'bedsit socialists'. We have lived in Pollok scheme for most of our lives. We are not being 'used'. Many of us have spent decades in the tenants' and trade union movement."

"Of course some of us are probably brand new to active politics. So what? This is the first time someone asked us to join!"

MEANWHILE IN Govan, Labour's national Organisation Sub-Committee has imposed a shortlist of four on the local party for the forthcoming parliamentary by-election. This is only one step away from imposing the candidate as the

right wing did on Knowsley North.

The Govan constituency had drawn up its own shortlist of six, including hard lefts Jim Sharkey and Larry Flanagan, who have now been disallowed.

Joyce Gould had actually

"If the Labour Party finds the strike-breaking EETPU acceptable, what about us who have always fought to defend workers' rights?"

Appeal

"We appeal to the members of Pollok constituency Labour Party. We have shown you loyalty over the years. Now show your faith in the working class of Pollok."

The leaflet was in the name of George Farrell, retired cabinet maker, 69, over 30 years in Pollok; Chic McPherson, GMB shop steward, Govan Shipbuilders, union activist for 30 years; Margaret

McPherson, TGWU shop steward, Rolls Royce, lived for 20 years in Pollok; John Auld, Liverside Community Council and Househilwood tenants' association committee and Eddie McNeilage.

After the meeting, one of those trying to get in, Edward Cairns, said: "This is just another thing to put Tommy Sheridan's nose out, in my personal view. They are out to get him. I'm nothing to do with Militant, just a hard-working bloke who wants to get into the Labour Party to fight the poll tax."

There were three police officers at the meeting, reportedly at the request of the MP!

lost by nine to six, with even David Blunkett voting with the left.

Labour's extreme right and their paid hatchet-wielders are prepared to ride roughshod over the rights of local parties and ordinary members.

Labour Party Conference greetings Place your ad in Militant

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Burmese elections to be called

THE DEMONSTRATORS on the streets of Burma have achieved their biggest victory yet, having forced the regime to concede an end one-party rule and general elections.

By Keith Dickinson

They came onto the streets again to celebrate, but at massive meetings demanded the resignation of the government and the appointment of an interim government to supervise the elections.

They have also demanded the dissolution of the ruling 'Burma Socialist Program-

me Party' (BSPP) and the exile of some old leaders. They have threatened to continue the present indefinite general strike and the demonstrations until these demands are met.

The government's concessions could stiffen the loyalty of many army officers and ranks, who are wavering at present. In the absence of a united opposition leadership, the army could play a decisive role.

The 'provisional government' announced by the veteran pro-capitalist politician, former leader U Nu, has collapsed for lack of

support. The first defector was General Tin Oo, a former minister, who said he had not been consulted. He declared that the opposition would not participate in the regime's elections.

Tin Oo had been sacked by Ne Win, deposed leader of the regime, and claims to have support from two-thirds of the army. Although this has not been proved, he could be one of the key opposition figures.

It was the army which ensured that the special meeting of the BSPP (brought forward from 12 September) took place last

Saturday, transporting the delegates in and throwing a huge cordon around the government buildings.

This avoided the potentially decisive confrontation set to take place on the 12th, with a massive march called by the combined opposition to prevent the BSPP and its 'parliament' from meeting.

The vast demonstrations and the general strike may continue, forcing the government to resign and come to an agreement over an interim government to prepare for elections.

Already the opposition leaders have met with the

electoral commission demanding an interim government, while there are reports of students chanting "if we don't get it we hit", in other words insurrection.

But the interests of the workers, peasants and students ultimately depend on strengthening, uniting and building the committees which they have set up to run workplaces and essential services. The economy is already overwhelmingly in state hands. With a programme of planned production and distribution, under their democratic control, the committees could win over the mass of soldiers.

Not socialist — not even radical

ONE IN three British people — 14 million adults and four million children — live on or below the poverty line. The wages of the low paid relative to average pay have fallen to the lowest level since records began in 1898. Social security rates have fallen by a seventh relative to average earnings since 1979.

By Ronnie Stevenson

That is the record of nine years of Thatcherism, graphically recorded in Labour's new policy document on economic equality.

But contrary to all the claims of the Labour leadership that they are pushing aside worn-out socialist ideas in favour of a radical new approach, the document contains all the old tired policies of the right.

Against the background of the grinding poverty for millions, the document is utterly complacent. It offers vague statements about achieving social justice, ending poverty and building pathways to independence.

There is no recognition of a future economic recession and the further lessening of opportunities. Far from being socialist it is not even radical.

They propose only to remove the worst features of the social fund. They do not offer any changes in mortgage tax relief or the housing benefit system. There is not even a commitment to restore the real level of benefits to their pre-Thatcher level.

The tired old ideas of regional development aid and tax relief for investment are brought out

again. Despite the experiences — of previous Labour governments, the authors still believe capitalism can be bribed into making unprofitable investment.

Much is made of the need to do away with barriers to unemployment — lack of training, discrimination against women and blacks. But not a word about who is going to pay for it.

Although the idea of a statutory minimum wage to end poverty wages is raised, no figure nor timetable is offered. In fact the whole document is predicated on the idea that it will not be possible to do much in the first term of a new Labour government — hardly a vote-winning formula.

The Common Market's decency threshold is £132. *Militant* has raised the demand for Labour to commit itself clearly to a minimum wage of £135.

Tax increases

The document talks of the complexities and inequalities of the social security system, housing benefit, child benefit, income tax and national insurance contributions. But there are no real proposals to simplify it and to shift the burden of payment on to the rich and big business.

Labour's performance at the last general election, especially Hattersley's suggestion that taxes generally would be increased, did enormous damage. The right wing have allowed Thatcher's tax cuts to appear radical, even though under the Tories the burden of taxation and other contributions from

ordinary workers has increased.

But now Labour merely proposes a somewhat higher income tax rate for the very richest, not even a return to the old high levels of tax they were supposed to pay under the last Labour government. The loopholes afforded to the really high earners could be closed up.

Many more workers could keep all their earned income if the threshold at which tax has to be paid were dramatically raised. National insurance contributions, which are at an insignificant level for the super-rich, could be income-related or absorbed into income tax.

Earnings from investments and inheritance could be exempted for ordinary workers, but taxed sharply at progressively higher levels for those whose wealth is nothing but a dream for the overwhelming majority. All the perks of cars and company houses should be taxed just like the wage packets of working people.

On benefits, under the present system all means-tested benefits work in favour of those most able to fight for their rights, discouraging claims by many people who are entitled to them.

So child benefit, which is non-means tested, has a very high take-up. At its current level of £800 per year, it bears no relation to the thousands of pounds it costs to raise a child. It should be greatly increased.

None of these modest reforms are mentioned in the document, let alone the guarantees of full employment and proper wages or



The document proposes nothing radical to bridge the gap between the rich (top at Henley) and poor (below in Kirkby).

an equal level of benefit for those unable to work, for the old and sick, that would be allowed with socialist ownership of the economy.

At the moment mortgage tax relief is abused by the rich. But it would not be needed at all if decent housing were affordable for the working class. Nationalisation of the building

societies, banks and finance houses could ensure cheap housing payments, whether by mortgage or rent for all working class households.

The adoption of policies of large scale exemption of ordinary workers from tax, heavy taxation of all sources of income for the very rich, the provision of cheap housing and vast increases in the level of child

benefit and of benefits for those not in work would be a serious challenge to capitalism.

This document does not fulfil in any way the objective of the policy review group to provide Labour with a programme attractive to workers. It should be rejected and a socialist economic equality policy fought for.

Victory against witch hunt

MARC VALLEE has won an important victory in his fight to stay in the Labour Party. His constituency party has voted 17 to 4 to confirm his membership of the Uxbridge Labour Party and that it does not wish his membership to be referred to the National Constitutional Committee (NCC).

He was denied membership by his ward party, Uxbridge North, after he moved there from Ruislip Northwood with a fully paid up party card. He had been a member for four years. (See *Militant* 906).

The ward party were supported by the Greater London Regional Office, who argued that when a member transfers his membership after moving, he can be expelled without any reference to the NCC,



Marc Vallee at YTURC conference, Blackpool.

thus by-passing the only body which now has the power to expel.

The constituency secretary has replied that as a disciplinary procedure has now been set up in the form of the NCC, all disputes should be referred to the NCC "rather than use the transfer clause as an

arbitrary expulsion mechanism."

The Uxbridge North branch was due to meet again on 14 September and Marc Vallee has written to them to demand his full membership rights.

By a *Militant* reporter

Left agenda

THE RESOLUTIONS on this year's Labour Party conference agenda are totally at odds with the Policy Review documents and show just how out of touch the Labour leadership is, even from its own membership.

By Davy Brown

Bow and Poplar Labour Party believe that "the policy documents represent a simplistic descriptive list of self-evident assertions without the analysis which would enable the party to put forward a comprehensive socialist alternative to the Conservatives."

On a range of issues, the majority of resolutions oppose the party leadership's attempt to shift the party to the right. There is still widespread support for socialist solutions.

Neil Kinnock's equivocation on the party's policy of unilateral nuclear disarmament has provoked a strong

reply. 49 out of 56 resolutions on the subject support a unilateralist position.

On the economy, 19 out of 38 resolutions reject the leadership's ideas about the effectiveness of the market to achieve economic growth and social justice.

As Liverpool Walton Labour Party say: "The only way to solve the crisis of the economy in the interests of working class people is through a fundamental transformation of society as outlined in Clause IV, Part 4 of the party constitution."

Non-payment

The section on the poll tax is dominated by calls for the party to lead a campaign of non-payment and non-compliance. It will be a crucial debate. Polls in Scotland show that up to 60 per cent of people would support a campaign involv-

ing non-payment.

But as Govan Labour Party says: "The weight of public opinion in itself will be insufficient to prevent the implementation of the poll tax" and calls on the labour movement to prepare for mass resistance. The party leadership nationally and in Scotland have rejected this.

There is also criticism of the proposed policy of replacing poll tax with two new taxes. This, say Wakefield Labour Party, "could easily be presented as tax increases and play into the hands of the Tories in the same way as the proposals to increase income tax in the 1987 general election."

This agenda reveals just how far the leaders are getting from the aspirations of their rank and file. It is little wonder that the national executive committee has decided to bring in proposals to stifle discussion at future conferences.

F E STUDENTS

get organised!

THIS YEAR over 3 million people will be enrolling at further education colleges. Last year 250,000 students were denied a grant. Many were forced to get part time jobs, whilst others had to drop courses and study part time whilst signing on.

Up to 30,000 16 and 17 year olds could be turned away and forced onto YTS and if Employment Training is made compulsory tens of thousands of 18-25 part time unemployed students will be driven out of the colleges. On top of this students have the threat of the Poll Tax, the introduction of student loans, and the Education Reform Bill, which will result in the handing of education over to the Tories big business friends.

To crush any resistance the Tories are attempting to smash the unions in education.

Militant asked Collette Williams (Fels representative on the national executive of the NUS) what Fe students can do to defend their education.

The first step is to unite full time and part time students, young workers, the unemployed and YTS trainees around a common programme of action.

The National Union of Students is the largest union of youth in Western Europe with 1.5 million members. It has resources of around £24 million. Over 400 FE colleges are affiliated. Just imagine what a force if it mobilised its members alongside the labour and trade union movement to defend education.

Yet many opportunities have been missed because the NUS leadership have consistently failed to adopt such a programme.

FELS was set up 4 years ago as a Broad Left in the FE sector to campaign for NUS to take up specific FE issues and to adopt a programme of building links with workers. FELS has led many campaigns in the colleges, such as in Liverpool, Manchester and Chesterfield where campaigns against cuts from the local authorities were won by students mobilising with the backing of the workers.

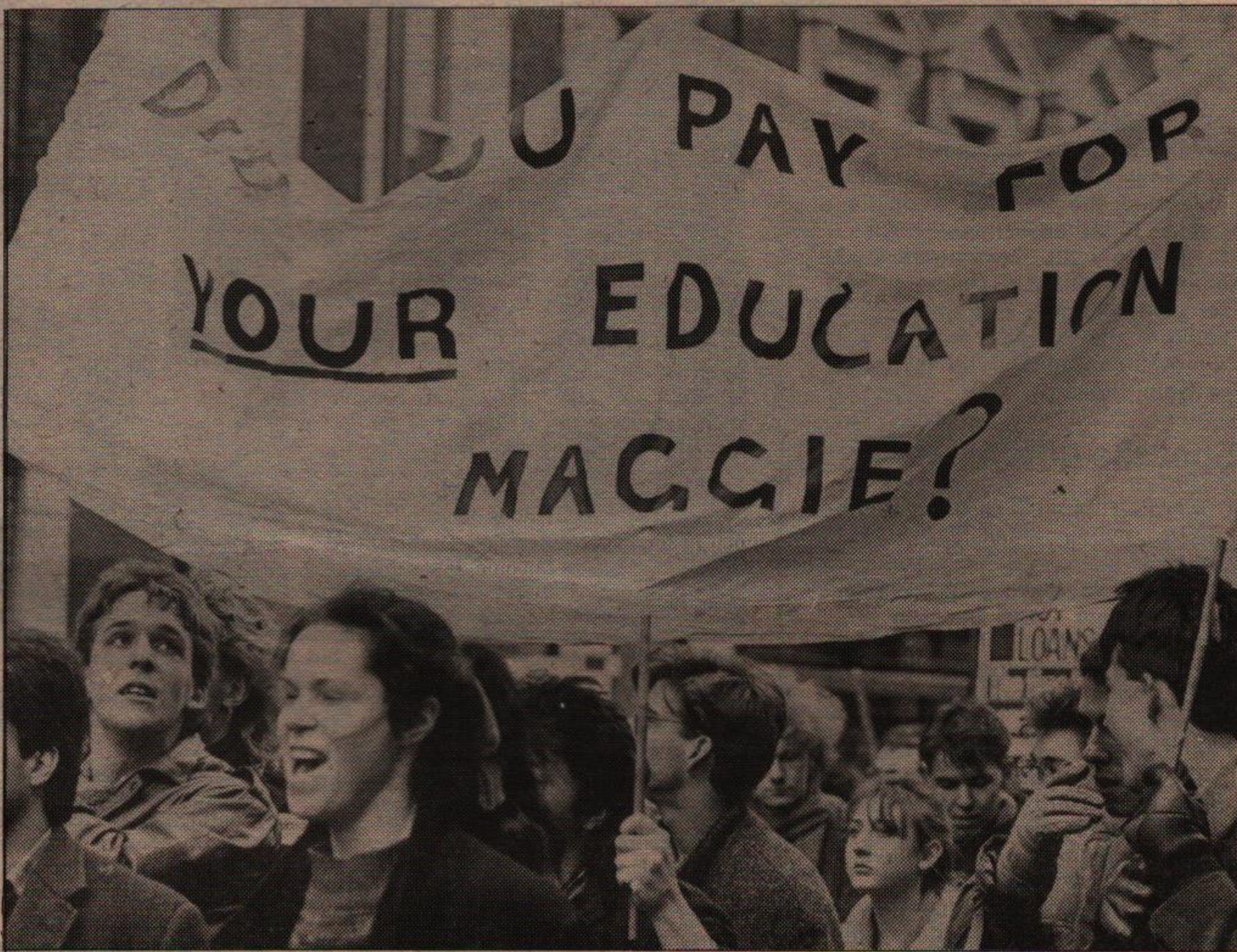
Labour students should set up Labour Clubs to campaign for this in their own college and organise meetings on vital issues. They should ensure other students are involved by petitioning for a General students union Meeting.

The Labour Club and students union must then build support for the campaign amongst both students and workers in the college, including setting up a joint union committee to fight for our common interests.

By building FELS we can exert pressure on NUS to take up the campaign nationally. This is the only way to defeat the Tories.

We should make links with the local labour and trade union movement through the local Labour Party Young

Build links with college workers



Students demonstrate against Tory education cuts. Socialist branches.

Photo: Militant

The struggle for a socialist leadership of NUS came a step closer recently when Caroline Austin, President of Erith College Students Union, FELS member, was co-opted on the Further Education National Committee, the leading body of the FE sector representing 750,000 students.

This means that most members on FENC now support the idea of links with workers. However we must ensure that this body is not strangled by the NUS leadership and is allowed to carry out the mandates passed by the FE sector conference.

Build campaigning Labour Clubs in your colleges and build FELS.

No hope with 'ecstasy'

"IT WAS the music that scared me. The deep base sound got right inside me. There was nothing I could do to stop myself dancing. I also felt very old - everyone was so young compared to me".

This was the experience of a 27 year old I spoke to who went to an 'ecstasy party'. With a street value of £25,

ecstasy is the latest craze in the disco pubs along the Old Kent Road and in the nightspots of the West End. It is a synthetic drug made up of a mixture of LSD, amphetamine and cocaine.

Thousands of working class families are still living through the nightmare of having a drug addict in the

family after the heroin craze swept through the estates of South London. Now ecstasy parties are attracting hundreds of youth every night.

The drug attacks the central nervous system causing profuse sweating and

paranoia. Continued use can cause Parkinson's disease. Although it lacks the stigma of taking heroin many youth taking ecstasy may find themselves with severe mental problems in later years.

So why do so many turn to

drugs? I spoke to one youth who had just given up. "Capitalism paints a picture of how life should be. But in reality it can never meet all those expectations. Drugs help to fill the gap. It explains why so many who give up heroin become al-

coholics - they still face the same problems."

Only socialism can offer a future for working class youth.

By Simon Donovan
Bermondsey YTURC

£27 a year to live on

THE TORIES have decided that the pittance of £26.05 I live on is still too much.

After two years unemployed I want to go to college and do a higher education course. But the Scottish Education Department have just told me that I will get grant of just £133 a year. It is to be paid in four instalments - the last instalment will be nothing at all.

On top of having to live on £133 a year the Tories ex-

pect me to find 20 per cent of a £529 poll tax, which is £106. Does Thatcher expect me to live on £27 a year?

I won't pay the poll tax because I can't afford to. One and a quarter million students must mobilise in opposition to the attacks on student grants and the poll tax.

By David Lynch,
Eastwood LPYS

Young socialist arrested

FIGHT FOR A FUTURE



FIVE MONTHS ago myself and a couple of comrades were petitioning against compulsory YTS and collecting money for YTURC. We'd been collecting for only 20 minutes and a sergeant and a PC came up to us. They said we couldn't collect money without permission, took our names and confiscated the money.

We heard no more until June when they called me in for an interview. The PC questioning me said he had only recommended a caution but the case had come back from above with instructions to investigate fur-

ther.

I was asked questions like: "How does YTURC organise? Who are the main organisers? How many members are there locally? Are you sure that you don't just pocket the money?" The PC said they had never heard of YTURC. This was strange since there had been a YTURC march through the city three months earlier which was reported on local press and radio and supervised jointly with the police.

The other comrades were interviewed in a similar way and one interview was recorded.

After five months we

were summoned to court and charged with collecting money without the council's permission. But the prosecution effectively refused to prosecute and referred the case back to the police for a caution. The prosecutor said privately that she thought the case was ridiculous.

The Stoke police should concentrate their efforts on investigating the illegal use of youngsters on YTS which have resulted in serious injuries and over 40 deaths to date.

By John Boyle
Stoke Central LPYS



Look who's backing Bush

WHO TOLD Reagan's defence secretary to "convey my greetings to President Reagan and Vice President Bush. Both of them are my old friends....I hope he will be victorious in the elections"?

It was Deng Xiaoping, Stalinist leader of the Peoples Republic of China. A bit embarrassing for Bush who calls Democratic Party challenger Michael Dukakis "soft on communism". But Chinese workers may wonder how a victory for arch-capitalist Bush is going to help them.

Spot the difference

DUKAKIS HIMSELF is doing all he can to disprove that he's got any ideas in his head, let alone socialist ones (see page 11). His running mate Lloyd Bentsen has raised \$5 million for his contest from contributors in Wall Street, heavy industry, agribusiness, military producers and other capitalists.

The *Left Business Observer* lists among his contributors such people as Rupert Murdoch. There is a chicken magnate who employs thousands of underpaid black women, the union-busting head of Continental Airlines and the big business buy-out specialist who sits on Bush's finance committee.

The only difference they expect from a Reagan administration is that Dukakis and Bentsen "would probably be more aggressive in protecting and subsidising business."

Even newer realism

NOT THAT you necessarily need big donations from big business to applaud such pro-capitalist ideas. "Labour could probably learn a lot from the recent US Democratic convention" says the pro-Kinnock Lambeth Labour Co-ordinating Committee. They describe Dukakis as "reasonable and progressive", "his heart is on the left but he has to face the right."

Short changed

IN NORTHERN Ireland, the Tories want to privatise Harland and Wolff, Shorts and Northern Ireland Electricity (NIE). They argue that nationalised industries are a liability.

Last year NIE made £11.6 million. But they gave the banks £20.5 million in interest charges. Shorts last year had an operating loss of only £100,000 after having given £24.9 million interest to the banks. Workers face the sack while the parasite banks flourish.

If the labour movement in Ireland and Britain follows the LCC/Dukakis road, workers will carry on being victims of this crazy capitalist 'logic'.

The last item was shamelessly lifted from the Irish Militant, and now price 25p. Ask your local Militant seller to get you a copy.

Handsworth three years on

Poverty and racism



Peace in the streets of Handsworth - but little sign of prosperity.

Photos: Martin Kelly.

THREE YEARS ago, Handsworth in Birmingham erupted in riots. It was an outburst of despair, mainly by young blacks, at the injustice of capitalist society and racism.

Two people died and £16 million worth of damage was caused. Whole areas of Lozells Road are still to be rebuilt. Big business isn't interested in replacing the shops and restaurants as incomes in Handsworth are much lower than in the tree-lined outer suburbs.

The government's inner city Task Force has now pulled out of Handsworth, saying "Our job is done".

Most people didn't know the Task Force, a so-called 'community project' sent in to stop Handsworth exploding again, had ever been here. With £13.50 per head a year to spend, they had as much chance

of solving the problems as the Christmas bonus has of making pensioners millionaires.

Neither the riot nor the Task Force has improved Handsworth. About 60 per cent of residents are economically inactive, either on pension or income supplement. Unemployment for the two wards stands at 36 per cent, around 50 per cent round Lozells.

Overcrowding

Ninety three per cent of Soho ward residents are among the poorest 5 per cent in Britain. 18 per cent of houses are overcrowded. 68 per cent of households have no car. 430 households still have no bath or inside toilet.

With over two thirds of the population Asian or Afro-caribbean, this is a shameful

monument to the racism workers face in capitalist Britain.

Young people in Handsworth still face endless interviews, endless rejections. The social security 'reforms' like cutting single payments mean that unemployed young people who try to escape from overcrowded family homes aren't even able to cover the floor boards.

The prisons are starting to fill with debt defaulters even before the poll tax.

But there is an identity and spirit about the people of Handsworth. The labour movement must harness that energy and organise to fight the poll tax, fight for jobs and decent housing and fight against racism. That could unite black, Asian and white, workers and unemployed, pensioners, women and youth.

By Dave McHale

Make police accountable

HANDSWORTH POLICE talk about 'community policing', and attend any resident and community group meetings who invite them.

But local people don't see them as protecting the community, merely controlling it. The atmosphere of fear was worsened by Home Secretary Hurd's statement that they expected a riot this summer.

Most crime in the area is petty and a result of social conditions and alienation from the criminal justice system which is widely distrusted. Black people in Britain are far more likely to be sent to prison, after substantially fewer convictions, than white people.

After Hurd's statement, the police profile has increased. The Alkee Tree social club

has been boarded up.

There haven't been the police raids that sparked off the 1985 riots but police cars drive up and down outside the clubs constantly. In times of tension they are co-ordinated by police helicopters who pick out the numbers written in fluorescent paint on police car rooves.

Just as young people hang round Wimpy's in other areas, Handsworth youth hang round Villa Road. The police see this as sinister but there is nothing else to do.

Police powers have increased. Houses have been searched without a warrant - legally. I know someone who's in hiding because of police harassment. After several attempts to arrest him failed, they planted a

set of scales on him. The case was thrown out because they failed to trick him into getting his finger prints on the scales.

After a fight in Druids between the police and a white gang, a black youth was arrested - nowhere near the scene - and charged with inciting a riot!

His brother went to the police station where his mother had told him to wait outside for her. A policeman asked what he was doing, didn't believe him and went to kick him in the groin.

The youth raised his knee to protect himself, and ended up in custody too, charged with assaulting a police officer. Both lads are school students who have never had trouble with the police before.

The labour movement must lead the fight for a police force which is accountable to the local community.

By Les Kuriata

Looking for a real job

"NINE YEARS after I left school, I still haven't had a proper job, just a permanent but part-time one. If I'd got the proper training and experience I would have been better off now. I'm perfectly capable of holding down a good position somewhere.

"Being long term unemployed, I thought one of the schemes would be good for me but towards the end, I got depressed knowing there was nothing after it.

"Community Programme training is not a real job: There's no incentive to pick up things quickly. There was a feeling of apathy, the project manager was never there, it just didn't prepare you for a real job.

"There was no union, so no backing to get things changed. But they would not want us to have a say in the running of the scheme.

"Job Centres were depressing; you'd

expect to spend a day there, but any jobs worth having were already taken and most times you didn't have enough experience.

"With no money, home became depressing with my mother on to me all the time. But when I moved out to Tweed Tower I lived in the kitchen because it was the only place I could afford to heat.

"The lights were never on at night. After a friend was attacked on the ground floor I didn't go out at night for months. I went back home when I couldn't stand it any longer, and stayed six months then moved to the YWCA.

"At some job interviews, an employer tells you 'the job's yours, we'll ring you tomorrow' and never does. Employers have no respect for you. Sometimes they have an image of what kind of person they want for the job. They don't have the guts to say. But their attitude shows



Bernetta.

through.

"You can't win. With the job situation, it's lack of experience. I've been turned down for many jobs where I thought I was more than qualified and more than presentable. I have to put that down mainly to the colour of my skin."

Bernetta spoke to Militant reporters.

Tories attack Liverpool stand on ET

LAST WEEK saw the Tory government once again using the courts to take political action against Liverpool city council.

By Dave Cotterill

This time it was because the council had threatened to boycott all organisations which used the so-called Employment Training scheme and to blacklist private firms.

The council refuses to be a part of the Tories' latest idea to fiddle the unemployment figures. The new ET will mean that workers on the scheme will be only £10 better off than they are on the dole, yet they'll be doing a full time job! Thatcher and Co are desperately trying to sell the scheme with the new advertising campaign they have launched on television. Despite what the ads infer benefits will be cut.

The Tories are clearly

worried about the opposition to ET and that Liverpool could act to spearhead a campaign. This can be the only explanation as to why they moved so swiftly into the courts.

Similarly, it also partly explains why the press have turned so savagely against Keva Coombes. Formerly the moderate golden boy who would encourage co-operation between the council and private enterprise, Coombes is now being attacked by the press for his alleged involvement in council land deals.

Press reports have tried to give the impression that Liverpool has backed down in face of court action. Unfortunately this is not countered by council

leadership which seems more intent on expressing its wish to stay within the law.

The council refuses to be a part of the Tories' plan to fiddle unemployment figures.

The city council has partially backed down by dropping its plan to put private firms on a blacklist if they co-operate with ET. It is still committed to withdrawing council-funding from any organisation using ET. This will affect thousands through the voluntary groups, colleges

and even church organisations.

The key issue, however, will arise in the not too distant future with the proposed contracting-out of council work. Departments that have to compete with private firms which are using cheap labour on ET schemes will have no chance of winning contracts when they go out to tender. This is a further reason why the Tories went to the courts to act on behalf of private firms.

In response to this the council should call a joint conference with Nalگو, the T&G, MSF and the fifty-odd local authorities which are boycotting ET to map out a joint national and local campaign.



Birmingham - left fights back

"EITHER STAND up and fight or resign and make way for someone who will." That was the call made by Marxist Birmingham councillor, Richard Evans, at a public meeting of 150 called by the city's broad left 'Summerfield Group'.

The meeting was called in support of the 20 city councillors suspended by the ultra-right leadership of the council Labour Group. Their crime - voting against the closure of Martineau House, a seaside home for handicapped children.

Speakers at the meeting highlighted the priorities for the ruling Labour Group: putting money into Olympic bids, a convention centre and the Birmingham Super Prix, instead of funding basic services.

The mood at the meeting clearly showed the potential amongst trade union and party activists for a campaign to oppose the cuts in Birmingham. Councillor Evans was repeatedly applauded for his calls to take on the Tories to get back the city's stolen rate support grant.

Throughout the evening

references were made to the historic struggle of Liverpool council.

Cuts

But now Birmingham has announced another £4 million worth of cuts, in education, the already overstretched social services (where there is a freeze on recruitment) and libraries. As a result the 9,000 strong City Council Nalگو branch has voted at a mass meeting for a 24 hour strike on 20 September.

For many years in Birmin-

ingham the left has been in the shadow of a right wing leadership rooted in the dinosaur-age. Now the district Labour Party has moved left, with a hard left chair elected by 150 votes to 80.

Militant supporters are playing an important role in the battle to turn the party in Birmingham back to its roots as a defender of the interests of the working class.

By a District Party delegate

WHERE TO FIND US

EAST SCOTLAND

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

WEST MIDLANDS

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

STRATHCLYDE

For details of meetings contact: 041 221 1443.

WALES

For details of meetings contact: 0222 736682

NORTHERN

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

Newport

Fight the poll tax. Thursday 22 September 7pm, Maindee Junior School, Chepstow Rd

Newcastle East

Scrogg Pub 29 September 7.30pm

EASTERN

For details of meetings contact Teresa MacKay 0473 713179

Sunderland

Polytechnic Library 27 September 7.30pm

MERSEYSIDE

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

SOUTH EAST

For details of meetings phone 01 533 3311

SOUTH WEST

For details of meetings ring 0272 631471

HAMPSHIRE/THAMES VALLEY

For meeting details phone 0703 786879

YORKSHIRE/HUMBERSIDE

For details of meetings contact: Henry Gregory - 0709 371250

LONDON

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

Huddersfield:

Fight the poll tax 18 September Birkby Community Centre, Waspnest Road Creche available

Hayes:

Fight the poll tax 22 September Cranford Park School 7.30 pm

MANCHESTER/LANCS

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

Hackney:

Fight the poll tax 22 September Chats Palace, Brooksby Walk 7.30 pm

EAST MIDLANDS

For details of meetings contact Andy Jackson - 0602 623112.

Deptford:

Fight the poll tax 22 September Albany Institute, Douglas Way SE 14 7.30 pm

Campaign underway

MILITANT SELLERS have responded with enthusiasm to our September sales campaign. Sales across the country have reflected confidence in the ideas of Marxism and shown the potential for growth which exists.

Sellers in West Midlands got the campaign off to a flying start with 160 sold in Rugby. One buyer commented that it was difficult to go anywhere without seeing a seller! This must be the aim in every town and city.

Keep selling

Militant's demand for mass non-payment of the poll tax continues to attract support from Scotland to the South East! 92 papers were sold in 90 minutes campaigning against the Poll Tax in Pollock, while 65 were sold on a demonstration in Edinburgh.

In England too, hostility is growing as it becomes clear what the tax will mean for working class people. 22 copies were sold and 100 names collected on a petition proposing non-payment in Sittingbourne High St. 32 were sold in Clapham around the same issue.

These sales must now be consolidated! Every buyer must become a regular reader and seller!

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 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.
- Fight racism. Oppose all forms of racial discrimination. Labour movement action against racist and fascist attacks. End police harassment. Oppose all immigration controls. Unite black and white workers.
- 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 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.

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!

Thatcher's economic disaster

BRITAIN'S RECORD balance of payments deficit for July of £2.15bn has been dismissed by Nigel Lawson and the Tory government.

By Bob McKee

The Chancellor appears on TV to tell us not to worry. Look, he says, the world economy is still booming. Production, profits and trade are still going ahead worldwide. And above all, a miracle has been achieved with British industry. It is now 'leaner and fitter' and so able to compete in world markets effectively.

But Lawson's pompous complacency bears no relation to the real experience of British manufacturing capitalists under the Thatcher government. After a catastrophic fall in industrial production and employment during the recession of 1979-81, in the following seven years British industry has not only failed to maintain its share of world exports but the home market has been swamped by imports.

In that period the value of sterling has fallen by up to 10 per cent, making British exports cheaper on world markets. But the UK's share of world manufacturing exports has not increased - in fact unless there is a further fall in sterling the miserable nine per cent share will decline.

But even more serious has been the overwhelming penetration of the British market by foreign goods under Thatcher. For the first time in its industrial history Britain imports more manufactures than it exports.

In 1987 the deficit on manufacturing trade reached £13bn. Up to then the government was able to hide this by relying on the surplus from North Sea oil export and the surplus produced by the City of London from invisible exports (insurance and shipping services, tourism and inflows of income from investments held overseas).

But in 1987 the oil export surplus slumped to £4bn and the invisibles surplus of £7bn was not enough to avoid a deficit of \$2bn overall on the current account. Nothing to worry about said Lawson. The government had built up plenty of reserves of currency to pay for such a small deficit and anyway foreign investors were so happy with Britain's performance that they are willing to buy bits of British industry or British government bonds to bridge the gap. Lawson predicted a larger deficit in 1988 of £4bn - again which would be manageable.

But the first seven months of 1988 produced a truly horrific increase in the deficit on manufacturing trade and a further decline in oil production and export revenue. The overall result is that the payments deficit has already reached £8bn, twice the government's forecast.

This huge balance of payments deficit reflects the movement of supply and demand in the British economy. The economy is flush with spending power. Ironically the government has contributed through its own spending. State spending, mainly on social security benefits and defence, has risen by over 12 per cent since 1979 and is now the same proportion of GNP as it was when Thatcher was first elected. But because of sharply increased tax revenues and privatisation sales, the government budget is actually in surplus.

So the main motive force for increased demand lies in the private sector. Company profits have leapt ahead - from eight per cent of total output in 1981 to 13 per cent in 1986. For many in work real incomes have also risen, particularly for managerial grades.

Borrowing

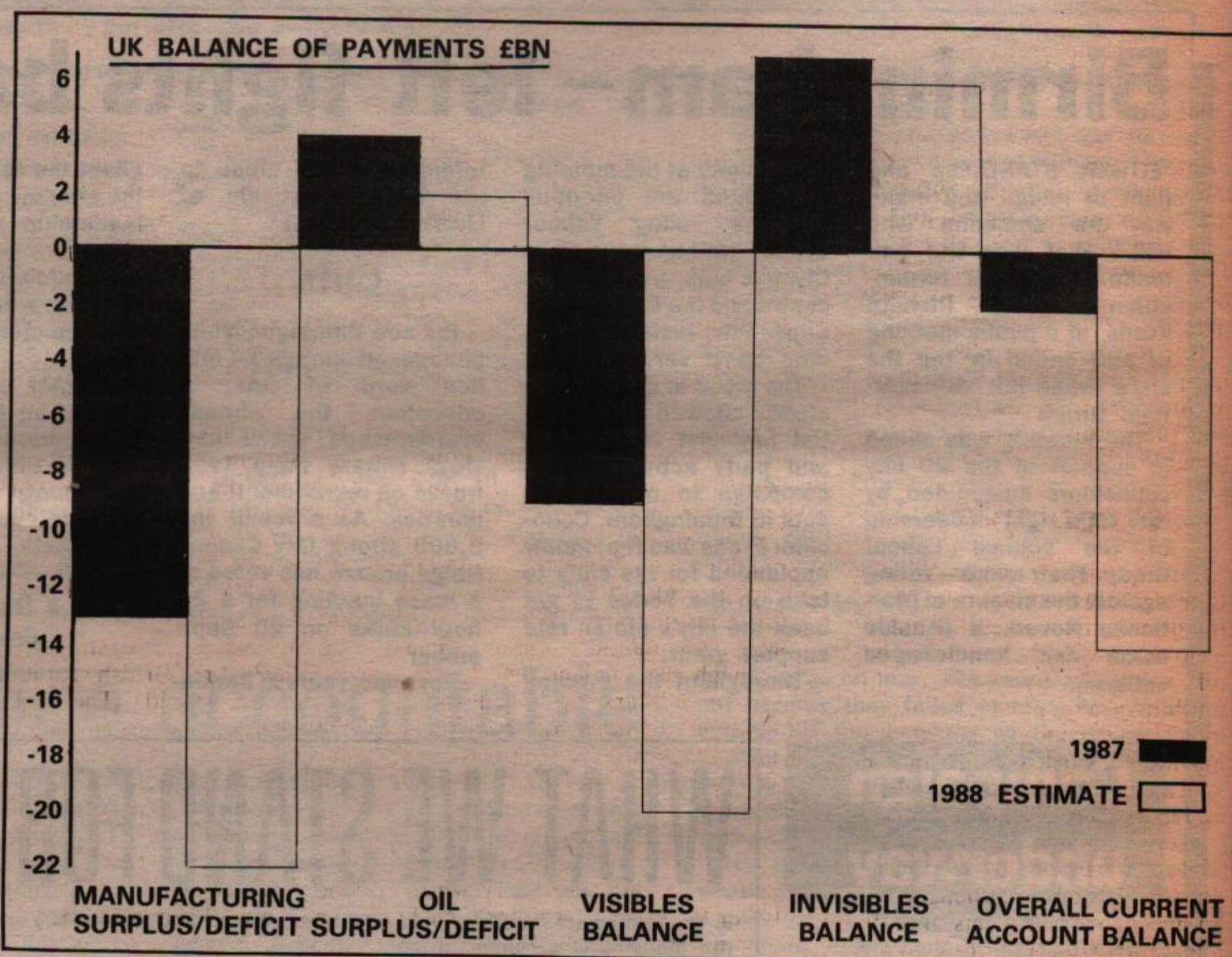
Above all the British people are borrowing huge amounts of money to pay for goods and services. The banks are overflowing with money because companies are not investing their profits into industry. Since 1979 personal debt, including house mortgages, HP arrangements and bank loans, has risen from £15bn to £53bn in 1987. Mortgage lending alone is rising by over 35 per cent a year.

Lawson gave the spending boom even further impetus earlier in the year, cutting taxes by £4bn (mainly to the rich) and lowering interest rates.

Forced to realise the growing crisis but determined to maintain his handouts to the rich he has now decided to raise interest rates and therefore the cost of borrowing to draconian heights. He is attempting to curb a credit boom produced by what one of his advisers called "the uncontrolled result of market forces".

But why cannot British industry increase production to take advantage of this extra demand? Why have foreign manufacturers been able to take a lion's share of this market and so drive up the deficit on trade? After all is not British capitalism now free from the pernicious influence of government interference and trade union power under Thatcher and therefore able to stride ahead?

The truth is that British manufacturing capitalism was



already in irreversible decline compared to its rivals by the 1970s and the so-called miracles of the Thatcher era have failed to stop that trend.

Throughout the 1960s British industry grew at a slower rate than every major rival with the exception of the USA. Manufacturing output was lower in 1979 than in 1973 and until 1987 it was lower than in 1979. Only in the last year has it finally passed the 1979 peak and moved ahead - this year by up to 6 per cent.

In other words it has taken nearly a decade to get back to the levels of the 1970s! Hardly a record to be proud of. Since 1976 Japan's manufacturing output has risen by over 60 per cent, USA's 35 per cent and West Germany's 18 per cent. As a manufacturing nation the UK has been passed by Italy and is now matched in total output by semi-developed Brazil.

In the past Thatcher has argued that British industry may have declined but it does not matter; the service sector of the economy will replace manufacturing as the motor of British capitalism. That is what Lawson argued when giving evidence to a House of Lords committee a few years ago.

But service industries cannot

replace the manufacturing sector, either as a producer of export earnings (75 per cent of export revenue is provided by manufacturing) or as a creator of jobs. And manufacturing employment is still falling in 1988.

British manufacturing was already in irreversible decline compared to its rivals by the 1970s.

To compound the problem, because of the decline of British manufacturing exports, earnings from invisibles like tourism and insurance have become more important (now nearly 50 per cent of all export earnings). But even here the UK share of the world market is declining and is back to the levels of the 1970s, despite the income from all those overseas investments.

More recently the Tories have started praising the record of the

manufacturing sector. The argument goes: productivity (output per worker) is striding ahead in manufacturing. British output is growing faster than the rest of the world. So any immediate problems of inflation and trade deficits will eventually be overcome if we 'keep our nerve'.

Now it is true that manufacturing productivity rose 30 per cent from 1979-86 and in the last eighteen months it has grown faster than in other advanced manufacturing nations. But this growth in output per head is after decades of lower productivity compared to other countries. In 1960 the UK's GDP per head was 128 per cent of the average of all the 12 countries now making up the EEC. By 1970 it was only 106 per cent. By 1980 it had fallen to 101 per cent.

Under Thatcher relative productivity recovered to 104 per cent of the European average by 1985. But this was not because British manufacturing, at least up to 1985, had dramatically improved productivity. It was that other countries, particularly in Europe, had suffered a sharp fall in productivity growth.

All the major capitalist nations have improved productivity since the 1970s, but, none has reached

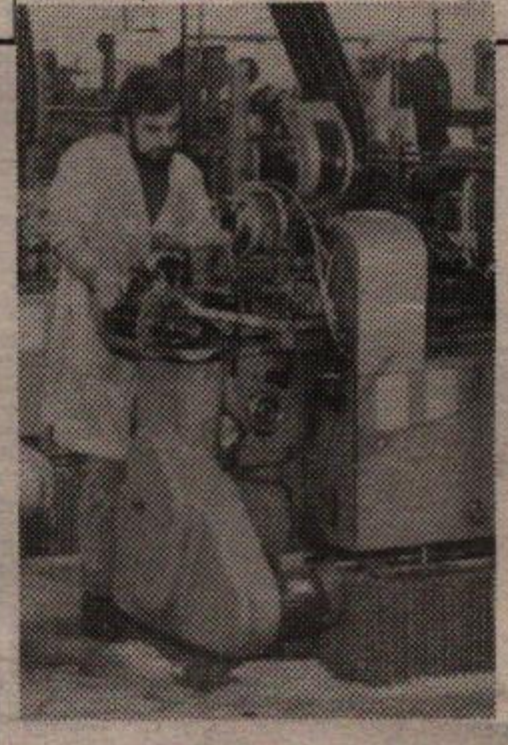
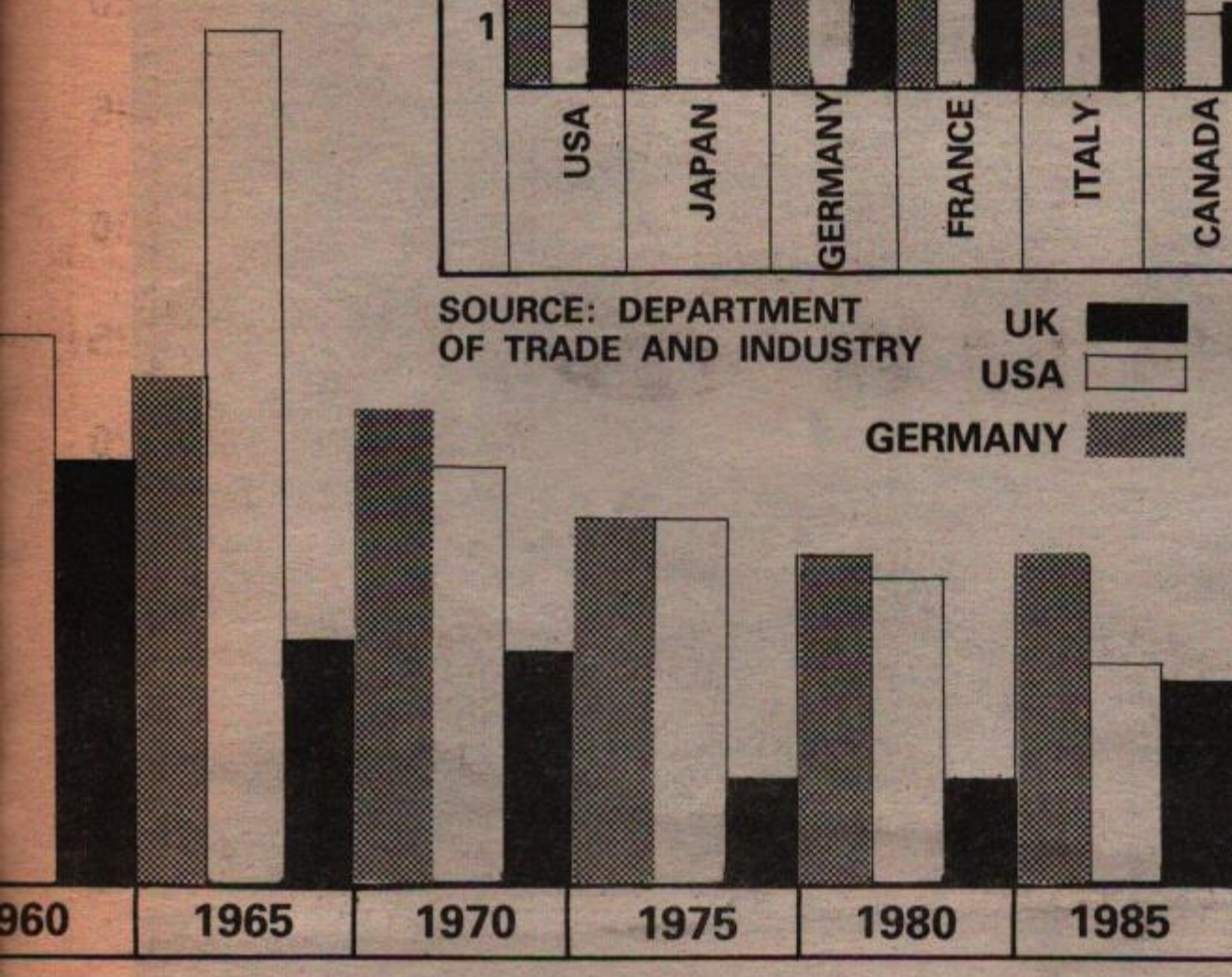
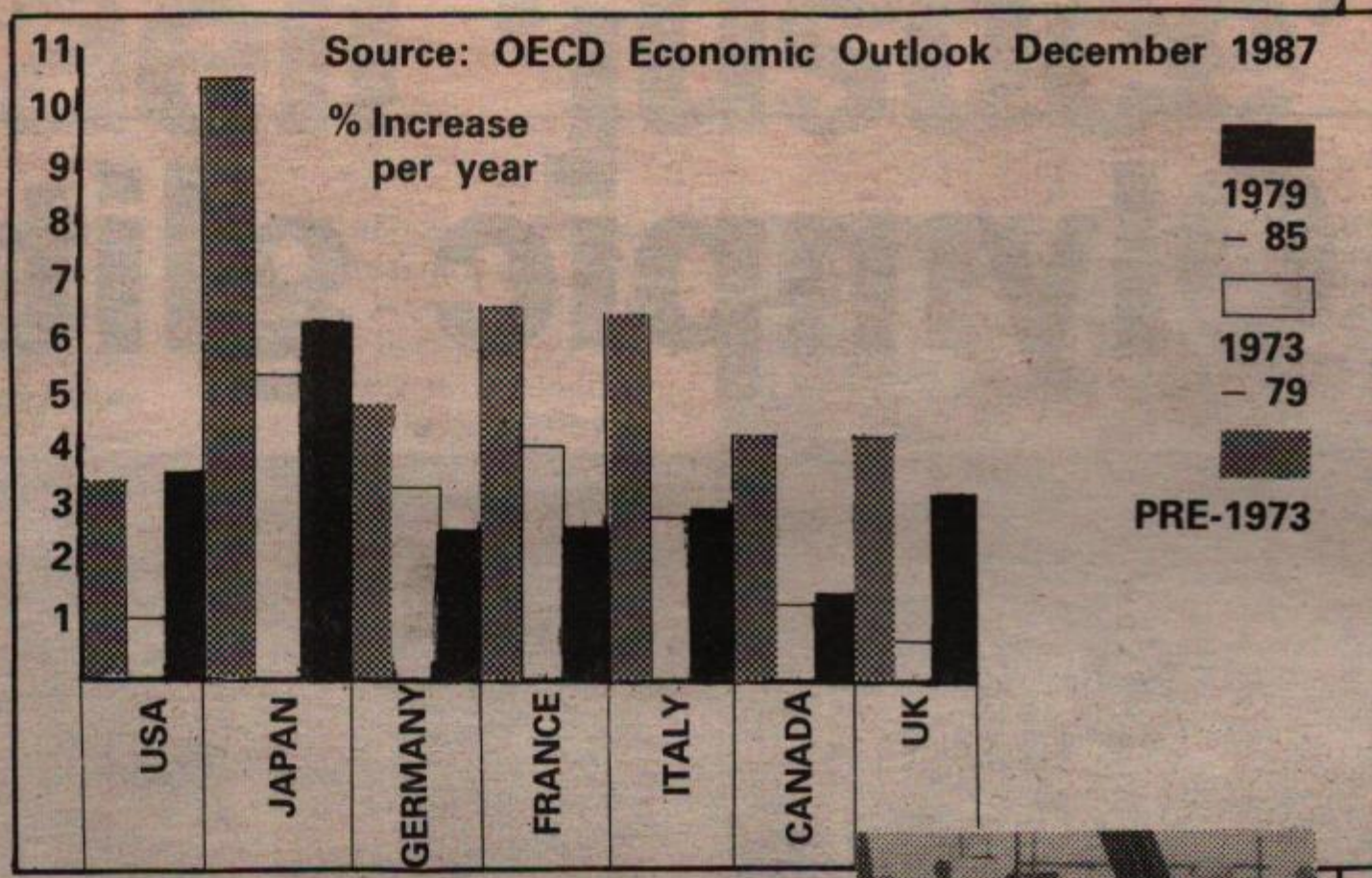
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the levels of the 1960s. The UK has improved from the awful rates of the 1970s but it is still behind the USA and Japan. And up to 1985 was still not increasing manufacturing output per head at the same rate as in the 1960s, at the height of the post-war boom. The growth rate per year up to 1987 may now have reached 4.1 per cent, equalling the pre-1973 period.

But this recent growth in output per head has not been based on investment in new technology and plant and so will be unsustainable.

Productivity

Productivity measures the relationship between total output and the number of workers. If output is doubled with the same number of workers by using new machinery and plant that would indicate an economy that is really moving forward without limit as long as investment is sustained, as in Japan. But if output remains constant or only grows slowly while the number of workers is drastically reduced, then the rise in productivity reflects that the remaining workers are physically working harder or longer.

Between 1979-87 employment in industry was cut by 25 per cent, factories were closed and companies went bankrupt. And although manufacturing output fell sharply between 1979-81 and recovered only slowly afterwards, employment in industry continued to fall even faster. The result is a mathematically certain increase in manufacturing output per head. A huge pool of unemployed has been created, what Marx called a "reserve army of labour".

What this means is that a smaller workforce has been forced to work harder and longer, dispensing with safety and losing previously hard-won rights of control over production speeds in order to boost production and profits for the bosses. Also manufacturing companies have hived off labour intensive ancillary services like catering and cleaning to outside contractors and so boosted their productivity. Wage bills and increases in basic wages have been kept low compared to profits.

British productivity improvement has been gained at the cost of the sweat of the workers' brows.

Fear of redundancy, hiving off and the breakdown of national

negotiated rates explain why many British workers, while resisting at every opportunity, have been forced to accept this brutal intensification of labour. One extra reason should not be forgotten: the labour and trade union leaders have actively worked against any successful resistance.

But this climate of fear is breaking down. A rumbling discontent with conditions at the workplace is making itself heard. Workers are refusing to accept any more 'efficiency measures' like speeding up the line (Fords workers in 1987) or casualisation (Post Office) or longer hours (Vickers). The Thatcher government is fomenting an industrial explosion in its determination to raise productivity by using the whip on labour, rather than through new technology.

But as Marx explained there are limits to an increase in production through overtime, speeding up the line or by weakening trade union rights. In the end, productivity can only be raised through investment in new techniques and machinery which lower the cost of producing each commodity.

Investment in machinery and plant to replace worn-out equipment and also to introduce new productivity-increasing techniques is the lifeblood of industrial growth. But the UK has the lowest share of national output going into fixed capital formation of all the advanced capitalist nations with the exception of poor Portugal. Investment growth has been steadily slowing: between 1955-65 it was at 4 per cent a year, between 1973-9 it was growing at 1.8 per cent a year, but from then on it rose at just 0.4 per cent a year - not enough even to replace old machinery and plant.

And key investment into research and development in new techniques is especially poor. Britain is behind the USA, Japan and West Germany in the proportion of its national output spent on research and development. The mass or total value of profits accumulated by British companies has risen sharply in the past few years - profits created from the hard work and relatively low pay of a smaller British workforce. But British capitalists have not invested these profits back into the productive sectors of the economy, manufacturing and industry.

They have ploughed these gains into the unproductive sec-

A smaller workforce has been forced to work harder and longer, dispensing with safety and hard-won rights.

tors of finance and services. Now investment in these sectors is almost 50 per cent higher than in manufacturing. Ten years ago it was 50 per cent lower! There is plenty of money to invest overseas - nearly £5bn since 1979 - and for mergers and takeovers, but little or nothing for industry.

Why? Are British capitalists just plain stupid? The lack of willingness to invest in manufacturing has not been due to a shortage of finance. A CBI report last year found that 43 per cent of its members were unwilling to plough funds into new investment because of insufficient returns and only 14 per cent cited shortage of funds.

For a great part of the 1980s, the profit rate for UK manufacturing industry was at or below the real cost of borrowing. The rate of profit is the total mass of profits produced by the workforce measured against the costs of the plant, machinery, raw materials used and the wages of the workforce - the profit on total capital invested.

UK manufacturing rate of profit had fallen to 5 per cent by 1980. So in the early 1980s there was no incentive to invest in new machinery or plant. From 1983 it gradually improved to around 9 per cent in 1985. It now is about 10-11 per cent. This recent recovery has led at long last to a spurt in manufacturing investment in the last year. But the level of investment is still well below the peak of 1974 and has only just reached the level of 1979.

This crisis of profitability highlights the basic contradiction within the capitalist system of production. The productive forces are not expanded unless the private owners of the means of production can make a sufficient profit through selling commodities on domestic and world markets.

Profit rates remain low in the UK because like other capitalist



THE INCREDIBLE NINE O DEMONSTRATES HIS BREATH TAKING BALANCE OF PAYMENTS

countries (but even more so in the UK) it has the legacy of huge stocks of older industrial capital, the costs of which must still be covered. But the market for the goods produced by this capital does not produce sufficient sales to cover all these historic costs.

As a result all the major capitalist economies have as much as 20-30 per cent of their productive capacity industry unused - plant, machinery and workforce lying idle. And this is after the extensive closures and redundancies of the early 1980s and the relative upswing in world trade up to 1988. Excess capacity and low profitability are now chronic illnesses of modern capitalism.

Inflation

Now in Britain the record input of money and credit into the economy, as well as the recent tax cuts, have driven up the demand for goods just at time when the limits to raising productivity and production through the sweating of labour rather than investment in new technology have been reached.

With inflation now heading for 6 per cent a year, and a flood of cheaper foreign imports, while investment and consequently production and productivity slow down, Britain is heading for a new bout of 'stagflation' - stagnant production and rising prices.

The government says that the credit boom and inflation will be choked off by the high interest rates it is now imposing. Also the large payments deficit can be financed by foreigners investing into the UK, attracted by high interest rates. But high interest rates will keep the value of sterling high and make imports even cheaper and UK exports more

expensive and so worsen the trade deficit.

At the same time high interest rates make the cost of borrowing for investment higher and lessen the incentive to invest in manufacturing rather than leaving any profits in the bank to earn interest. Investment and consequently production will slow and then foreign investors into the UK may decide that despite high interest rates, sterling is no longer a good bet and will withdraw their money.

As a recent OECD report put it: "International capital flows can be highly volatile and financial market sentiment can change abruptly. A faster than expected rise in the current account or renewed fears of overheating could translate into capital outflows and downward pressure on the exchange rate."

If foreigners remove their money then the government will have to bridge the gap in payments by using up its reserves of foreign currency held at the Bank of England. These are now at a record £50bn - more than enough to finance the payments deficit - but nowhere near enough to compensate for a rush of selling of sterling by the multinationals and foreign banks who hold it now.

If they start to sell, the pound will go into a nosedive, forcing the government to raise interest rates even further, or cut back on already well pruned public sector spending or introduce taxes and credit controls or all of these measures.

That means the possibility of a downturn in the British economy - and with it rising unemployment alongside rising inflation and falling growth rates - even if the world economy should continue to go forward for another year or two.

Korea

Behind the Olympic glitter

THE SEOUL Olympics are considered a sound investment by capitalists. The cost of staging the Games will be around £1,000m, but the event is expected to break even or even make a small profit.

Feature by Carl Simmons

The television rights alone are expected to fetch £200m.

The apartments purpose built for the Olympic village will be sold afterwards for between £27,000 and £46,000. An official claimed: "We accommodate the athletes, make a profit, and help to solve Seoul's housing problem."

But while the Olympics will provide South Korean yuppies with luxury flats and construction companies with big profits, it will provide no such benefits for the mass of the population.

The residents of Buchon, living in shantytown dwellings along the route which the Olympic torch was due to travel, were among the less fortunate. The government, embarrassed by this 'eyesore', ordered the demolition of 159 homes.

'Beansprouts'

With nowhere to go the residents dug a ditch, lined it with vinyl sheets and constructed a makeshift cover. Thirty-nine families lived in these conditions for six months.

One occupant commented: "When it rained we were completely flooded ... We were living pressed together like beansprouts."

In the end the government were embarrassed into capitulation, and allowed the rebuilding of their homes.

This is only one example of the government's attempts to cover

Games, but no bread

over the ugly realities of South Korean society. Demolition of slums, without rehousing the occupants, has been widespread, with over 100,000 evicted. This is presumably what bureaucrats mean by "solving Seoul's housing problem".

The government also has plans to lock up 10,000 of South Korea's estimated one million prostitutes - the problem is where to put them. Public baths have been closed to 'cut down the smog' that blights Seoul's environment.

The stalls of unlicensed street traders - the only way for some of the poorest people to eke out an existence - were closed down, provoking protest demonstrations.

Perhaps the most callous example of the government's attitude was the use of riot police to break up a demonstration by the disabled. They were protesting at the staging of the Paraplegic Olympics when the government makes no provision whatsoever for South Korea's own physically handicapped.

You can bet that the television cameras will not show much of the real Korea that lies behind the glossy facade of the Olympic Stadium and village. They've paid for the spectacle, not the squalor behind it.



(Top); Students battle against riot police during last year's movement. (Above); Slum conditions in the industrial city of Pusan.

How can Korea be united?

THE OLYMPICS have brought into sharp relief the intense rivalry between the capitalist South Korean regime and the Stalinist North. This was grotesquely shown in the 'battle of the dams', with the South building a massive dam to 'defend' the Olympics from the perceived threat of flooding from a dam the Northern regime had built!

To both regimes the staging of the Olympics has a massive propaganda and prestige value, strengthening the claim of each to be the 'legitimate' government of all Korea.

This lies behind the demand of the North to be allowed to co-host the games, which was rejected out of hand. But, not to be outdone, the Stalinist regime has squandered scarce resources in building a stadium even larger and more spectacular than the Olympic stadium.

But the demand for co-hosting gained an echo from sections of the radicalised students in the South, who see it as a step towards the reunification of the country. On a number of occasions thousands of students have attempted to march to the border and stage a 'grand reunification march' to meet delegations of North Korean students.

These attempts were brutally repressed by the government, using hundreds of thousands of police.

The demand for reunification undoubtedly has enormous support amongst Koreans, both North and South. Korea was artificially divided following the second world war when the USA decreed that the 38th parallel would be the dividing line between their own and Russia's 'spheres of influence'. Stalin and the Russian bureaucracy, not wishing to antagonise im-

perialism, agreed.

The war between the North, backed by Stalinist Russia and China, and the South, backed by the US and other capitalist forces, ended in a stalemate, reinforcing the division of the country.

In addition to the devastation caused by the war, a sixth of all families were divided by it. This is undoubtedly one of the factors behind the support for reunification. So powerful is this mood that every government, North and South, has had to pay lip-service to it.

A US diplomat commented: "reunification in Korea is like motherhood, no one is opposed to it." The question is: on what basis can Korea be unified?

Families divided

The country is divided not just by troops and barbed wire, but by the existence of two mutually antagonistic social systems: capitalism in the South, and Stalinism in the North, resting on state ownership and a planned economy. Both would only accept unification on the basis of the extension of their regimes to the whole country.

If the North were a workers' democracy it would be a beacon to the workers of the South, calling on them to overthrow capitalism and reunify the country on that basis. Instead, the bizarre personality cult around the 'great leader' Kim Il Sung-



The North-South border.

who recently declared himself mankind's 'ultimate genius' - can only repel the workers of the South.

According to Northern propaganda, he is personally responsible for each individual's ration allocation!

In recent years, due to bureaucratic clogging of the economy, growth rates in the North have been lower than those of the South.

The task of reunification lies on the shoulders of the Korean working class. In the South they have shown their potential power in the explosion of strikes and factory occupations last summer. Their victory, and the establishment of a genuine workers' democracy, would completely undermine the position of the bureaucracy in the North. It would pave the way for a political revolution there to end bureaucratic rule and prepare the reunification of Korea on the basis of workers' democracy.

THE 120,000-strong Olympic security force, backed up by 10,000 commandos, is ostensibly intended to prevent North Korean or terrorist attacks. No doubt these forces will also be used to prevent the propaganda effect of the Olympics being 'spoiled' by protest demonstrations.

The National Assembly, with the backing of the pro-capitalist opposition, has banned demonstrations in and around the Olympic stadium and tourist hotels for two months. The government is exploiting the sense of national pride felt by many Koreans at the staging of the Olympics in their country to rein in the movement of workers and students.

At the time of writing it appears that even the student radicals, in the face of repression, may limit their demonstrations to the campuses.

Even if a lull in the movement takes place for the duration of the Olympics, it will be short-lived.

The capitalists and the government claim that the Olympics mark the 'arrival' of South Korea in the ranks of the developed nations. This will prove a double-edged weapon. Many workers will demand the wages and conditions of workers in the developed countries.

This has already been the response of 4,300 train drivers, who struck and demanded amongst other things a cut in the working week from 61 to 36 hours. Two thousand were arrested. A government spokesman threatened: "The government has decided to eradicate such illegal union activities, even if it requires considerable cost."

This shows the fragile nature of government leader General Roh's latter-day conversion to democracy.

The workers have shown their strength in a series of militant

industrial struggles during and after the revolutionary upheavals last year. As yet they lack a political voice. But the feebleness of the capitalist opposition - who have a majority in the National Assembly - will increasingly be demonstrated.

Workers will ask: "Why don't they use their majority to prevent the government breaking strikes and to abolish restrictions on trade union activity?"

Amongst the mass of workers a big swing is likely towards the most radical wing of the opposition, headed by Kim Dae Jung, as the government's corruption and bankruptcy is more and more exposed. But increasingly the advanced sections of workers will draw the conclusion that they need their own political party.

Once formed, such a party could enjoy very rapid growth, and amongst the radicalised workers flooding into its ranks Marxist ideas would find an enthusiastic audience.

Sections of the military would undoubtedly like a return to the 'stability' of the Chun dictatorship. They have urged the government to clamp down on the radicals, and even to take powers away from the opposition dominated National Assembly.

This appears to be ruled out at present. The mood amongst the population is overwhelmingly against it. Any attempts at counter-revolution at this stage would backfire on the bosses.

But the Korean capitalists cannot live indefinitely with democracy and an aroused mass movement. If the Korean working class does not find the road to power, in the future the capitalists will again look towards military rule. Workers' rule and socialist transformation provide the only alternative.

Israeli 'justice' is on trial

HARASSMENT OF the Palestinian press by the Israeli state is now extensive. Since last December at least 40 journalists have been 'administratively detained', which means for up to six months without trial, with a possible extension.

By John Pickard

A blanket ban has been put on all news sources seeking to rival the official state media. The Palestine Press Service in East Jerusalem has been silenced. Telephone links between the West Bank and Gaza have been cut.

In Israeli West Jerusalem a joint Israeli-Palestinian project, the Alternative Information Centre (AIC), has also been closed and its Israeli director charged with 'providing services for forbidden organisations'.

Last week saw the start of the trial of five journalists of a small left wing paper produced in both Arabic and Hebrew, Derech HaNitzotz-Tariq al-Sharara. Some of them are charged with 'contact with a foreign agent' and membership of 'illegal organisations', with a possible 40-year sentence. As in every case of this kind, the Shin Beth security service has used beatings as well as psychological and sexual abuse to try to extract confessions.

The Israeli state is almost paranoid in its drive to stamp out political activity or publications which in any way oppose its own actions. Draconian detention powers not very diffe-

rent to those in the occupied areas are also used against Israeli citizens, Arab or Jewish.

Especially disturbing for the state is the possibility of joint political opposition by Jewish-Arab groups and it is for this reason that the AIC and Derech HaNitzotz-Tariq al-Sharara have been suppressed. But even more alarming to the state is the possibility of Jewish and Arab workers uniting around socialist ideas: hence the arrest of Machmoud Masawri, a trade union activist, a member of the Histadruth trade union federation and a Marxist.

Most alarming to the state is the prospect of Arab-Jewish workers' unity

Whereas well-known journalists' cases are often taken up by Amnesty International, there is no automatic campaign for an ordinary trade union activist like Machmoud. It is the responsibility of the labour movement to campaign for his release.

Machmoud has collaborated in the production of a leaflet in Hebrew calling for the joint struggle of Jewish and Arab workers on the basis of socialist ideas. He was prepared to propagate such ideas in Israel and was planning to visit Britain to speak at



Palestinian women confront Israeli soldiers.

labour movement meetings.

At a press conference in Westminster last week, Pat Wall MP, one of those sponsoring Machmoud's trip, expressed his outrage: "I can freely express my ideas for a socialist solution to the Israel/Palestine question, but this case virtually makes the same ideas illegal in Israel." Pat complained that the Israeli embassy had lied and been evasive on the issue.

Machmoud's treatment is a crushing answer to all those in the labour move-

ment in Britain, such as the 'Labour Friends of Israel' who, as uncritical political attorneys of Israel, act as an unofficial appendage to its embassy.

Pink tinge

In Israel it is acceptable to be a 'zionist-socialist' because to the leaderships of the Israeli Labour Party and Mapam (a left labour party) the combination simply means zionism with a pink tinge. On the other hand, as Machmoud's case demonstrates, genuine

socialism based on the Marxist tradition of internationalism is a threat to Israeli capitalism, inviting repression.

The implications of Machmoud's treatment go beyond the question of the oppression of the Palestinians, although by itself that justifies a campaign for his release. 'Israeli' Arabs are second-class citizens and subject to national oppression. They are an easy target for the state to brand as 'terrorists', 'spies' or 'subversives'.

But these repressive

measures will also be used in the future against Jewish workers who work for Jewish-Arab unity and genuine Marxist ideas. The oppression of Arabs today means a threat to Jewish democratic rights tomorrow.

Socialists and trade unionists in Britain must press urgently for the release of Machmoud Masawri, the dropping of the trumped-up charges against him and the release of all Palestinians detained without trial in Israel and the occupied territories.

US presidential election

Dukakis puts result in balance

THE REAGAN administration has been one of the most reactionary in the USA this century. Industrial jobs have been decimated. Trade unions have been under sustained attack, and real hourly wages forced down by 7 per cent since 1979.

By George Collins

While huge amounts were poured into arms spending and tax cuts for the rich, welfare programmes have been slashed. Fourteen per cent of the population and 20 per cent of children now live in poverty.

Reagan and his top officials have been implicated in the 'Iran-gate' scandal. Vice-President Bush, the Republican Party candidate in November's Presidential election, has been linked with drug traders and illegal gun-running to the right-wing Contra gangsters in Nicaragua.

A vigorous campaign to expose this and explain an alternative could produce a landslide vote against Bush. Instead, recent opinion polls put Bush ahead of the Democratic Party candidate, Michael Dukakis. Since July, when Bush was trailing by 17 per cent, there has been a 25 per cent swing away from Dukakis.

One factor, undoubtedly, has been the economic boom based on \$9.5 trillion of public and private debt run up as a result of Reagan's policies. For many workers in employment, living standards have risen since the

1979-81 recession. Opinion polls show that most Americans - at least in the higher-income brackets - believe they will be better off next year.

But the real situation is less rosy. Though rising, average living standards have only just recovered to the level of 1973. Even then, two jobs are now needed per family to buy the same as the average wage packet 15 years ago!

For tens of millions of Americans - the unemployed, the low-paid, many blacks and above all the youth - there has been no boom at all. Bush boasts of 17m new jobs created under Reagan. Most of these have been low-paid, part-time and bad.

Many voters are uncomfortably aware of the gaping US trade deficit, rising inflation and interest rates. They fear the social havoc wreaked by Reagan's policies - homelessness, drug abuse and crime. The vast majority expect the economy to deteriorate over the next year.

Economic prosperity, therefore, cannot in itself explain the swing to Bush. The decisive factor has been Dukakis's inability to present a convincing alternative.

The Republicans and the Democrats are rival parties of big business, and their policies are fundamentally the same. Dukakis opposes Reagan's Star Wars project but supports the new Trident and cruise missile programmes. He supported Reagan's bombing

raid on Libya and aid to the reactionary mujahedin in Afghanistan.

The limited reforms proposed by Dukakis cannot solve the problems faced by workers, youth and blacks. Dukakis's hidden message is loud and clear: "I'll do the same as Reagan, but more efficiently!"

Based on the same 'logic' as Neil Kinnock's disastrous election-losing strategy, Dukakis's campaign is aimed mainly at winning back middle-class Democratic voters and better-paid workers who swung behind Reagan in 1980 and 1984. Conservative prejudices are pandered to in the hope of proving that Dukakis is no 'liberal'.

This can have no attraction for the mass of workers, the youth and the poor. Previous elections on these lines have produced an abstention rate of over 50 per cent. The more the turn-out is confined to the upper layers of the electorate, the more Bush's prospects will improve.

In sharp contrast to Dukakis's performance was the campaign waged earlier this year by Jesse Jackson for the Democratic nomination. Attacking the abuses of the system and demanding sweeping reforms, his message was received with tremendous enthusiasm by workers and youth, white and black.

The demands raised by Jackson could only be implemented on a lasting basis through the abolition of capitalism and the establish-



Dukakis (left) and Bush - hard for workers to tell their policies apart.

ment of a planned economy democratically controlled by the workers. Jackson has no such perspective. Nevertheless his campaign showed conclusively the massive support there would be for a genuine alternative to Reaganism.

Yet, despite Dukakis, the outcome of the elections is by no means certain. The campaign is still in its early stages. The depths of opposition to Reaganism revealed by the Jackson campaign will affect every layer of society.

The collapse of the boom in the next year or two will deal a hard

blow to illusions among the middle class and the employed that their future is safe in the hands of their existing rulers. It will create the conditions for industrial and political upheavals.

The Democratic Party has nothing to offer workers. The next few years could see decisive steps towards the creation of a party of labour, based on the trade unions, and the struggle to commit it to socialist policies.

These are the perspectives facing the next President of the USA.

Register — or else

Dear Comrades,

Forms to register for voting have recently been distributed in Newcastle. The register is normally incomplete to say the least. If a registration form is not returned from a household, the usual procedure appeared to be to use the names on the last form completed.

However this year together with the registration forms there was a letter reminding people that

under the Representation of the People Regulations you are liable of a fine of up to £400 if the form is not filled in and returned.

Could this be a drive by Newcastle City Council to increase participation in elections? Given that it is also the year in which poll tax registers are to be compiled by the council, it would be some coincidence.

**Russell Dawson,
Newcastle upon Tyne**

Essex fights poll tax

Dear Comrades,

Trade union activity over the poll tax is growing. In Essex the County Association of Trades Councils has taken an initiative in calling a conference on 29 October to co-ordinate the growing number of anti-poll tax groups springing up throughout the county.

Further information from the secretary of Essex CATC: Terry Stevens (01-636 4030)
A Nupe member

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.

- **Militant Fighting Fund** Stickers available in rolls of 250—"Fight the Poll Tax", "Smash Apartheid—For a socialist South Africa". £2.50 per roll.
- New sticker**—"£35 a Week Grant for all school leavers"
- "Militant for Labour & Youth" enamel stud badges—£1.00 each.
- Militant Rally** Commemorative Tee-Shirts. 3 Designs: Trotsky Design, size XXXL only; "Militant Rally", size XXXL, XXL; "Militant", size, XXXL, XXL, L, M, XXXL, XXL, £6.00ea. L, M, £5.00ea.
- A3 size posters** of Marx, Engels, Lenin, Trotsky, and Luxemburg 30p each. All five for £1.00.
- Accommodation** available in Islington N1. Phone 607 1270 evenings.

Militant Fighting Fund Collecting Tins in red plastic. £1.00 each. 10 or more 75p each.

Available from Fighting Fund Dept., 3-13 Hepscoth Road, London E9 5HB. For all orders add 25% P&P. Cheques & Postal Orders payable to Militant.

□ **Have you read this Marxist bestseller yet? *Liverpool—A City That Dared to Fight*.** £6.95 plus 90p postage 5 copies for £25 post free.

France 1968—Month of Revolution. Read Clare Doyle's book on the lessons of the general strike. £2.50 5 copies for £8 post free. Order from Fortress Books, PO Box 141, London E2 ORL.

□ **South Africa's** revolution in song 'Toyi-toyi'. £3 per tape. 5 tapes or more, £2.75 each. Order from Salep.

Wanted Co-op and Green Shield stamps (old and new) in books, part or loose. All proceeds to Fighting Fund. Send to Militant Circulation, 3-13, Hepscoth Rd, London E9 5HB.

Room to let in shared house North London. Approx £150 per calendar month. Lively household! Tel 609 0913 daytime — ask for Teresa ex 123, 801 2270 evenings.

Pakistan in crisis. Meeting at Cranberry pub, Cranberry St, Oldham. 8pm Mon 19 September. Organised by Workers' Education Group with speakers from Pakistan People's Party.

NHS parasites

Dear Comrades,

Nurses are leaving the NHS at a rate of 30,000 a year because of the low pay and bad conditions. This inevitably means that waiting lists for operations get worse.

However Crewe Health Authority have come up with a novel way of solving the shortage of nurses. After closing a number of wards they are now 'encouraging' former nurses to return to nursing by charging them £25 for a 'refresher course'.

To add insult to injury, course organiser Maureen Nash explains that "they may go to other areas, to nursing agencies or to private nursing homes." In other words former nurses, desperate for a job, must pay to use NHS facilities to find employment in the private sector!

The sooner we get rid of these Tory parasites the better.

**Andy Bentley,
Stoke on Trent**

Safety cuts



Michael Dukakis.

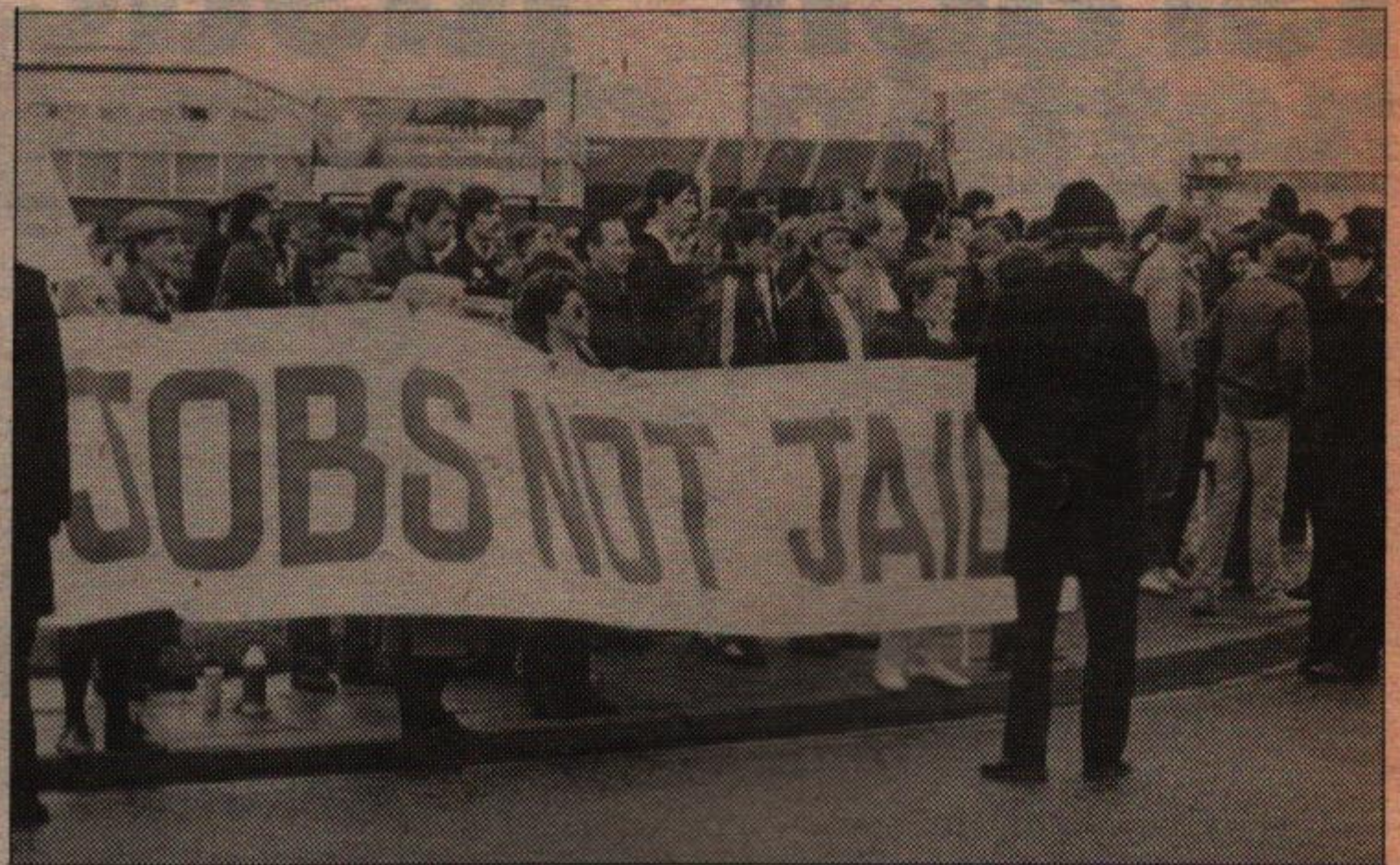
Dear Comrades,

In the USA Michael Dukakis recently took back £110,000 intended for Motor Cycle safety programmes (money collected from surcharges on riders' licence plate fees) to help balance the state of Massachusetts' books.

Michael Dukakis has no more the interests of working people at heart than George Bush. If elected this will not be the only welfare programme that will be sacrificed by the Democrats in the interests of balancing the books in favour of big business.

Chris Newby Southall

Birkenhead by-election



Cammell Laird's workers fighting for their jobs in 1984.

Dear Comrades,

Workers in Birkenhead have gained nothing from the Tories in all the years they have been in office. Cammell Laird's ship-builders, who built such ships as Ark Royal and employed generations of local people, now offer only a lucky few the chance to escape the dole queue.

Former Laird's workers who once had pride in their skills are now to be found scavenging on Bidston tip for anything sellable to supplement their social security.

In Birkenhead ward, where a by-election takes

place on 22 September, most of what was terraced housing has been a giant car park for several years. The dock area, once part of a busy port, has recently been advertised for developers to turn it into luxury housing for well-to-do yuppie families.

Militant supporters will be working hard in the by-election for the Labour candidate, Tim Kelly. However we believe that only by mobilising the working class of Birkenhead and elsewhere against the poll tax and other attacks, can we eradicate the system which has dominated our town and destroyed the

lives of countless workers.

As one Labour supporter told us on Exmouth estate: "Labour hasn't done anything for us lot!" We aim to change that and build a Labour Party that will transform the lives of ordinary people.

We need houses, jobs and a future. To achieve that we need Labour councillors and a Labour MP in Birkenhead prepared to lead such a campaign — see local Militant sellers for details.

A Birkenhead Labour Party member

Letters

Send us your views, comments or criticism.

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

Why the Kurds are being massacred

Dear Comrades,

Behind every war, either with another country or against a minority, there is an underlying economic factor. In Iraq there are four-five million Kurds out of a population of 17 million. They live in the north of the country where there are also vast reserves of Iraqi oil.

No wonder President Saddam Husein will go to any method to stop the Kurds fighting for national liberation. As Talabani, one of

the Kurdish leaders, says:

"It's the first time in history a government has used chemical weapons against its own citizens who are not on the battlefield."

The Kurdish question will only be solved when the Kurdish working class link up their struggles with the Iraqi working class to overthrow the Iraqi regime and fight for a democratic socialist society.

Muna Al-Baldaw, Staffordshire

Out of the Night special offer



JAN VALTIN'S *Out of the Night* was first published in 1941. It immediately became a best seller and eventually sold over a million copies. It is now being republished by Fortress Books, for the first time since the 1940s.

Kevin Ramage reviews the new postscript by Lynn Walsh which is based on original research in London and New York.

FROM THE outset *Out of the Night* was surrounded by controversy, especially in the USA. To some extent this was inevitable. The epic contest at the centre of Valtin's autobiography — the struggle between defeated revolution and triumphant fascism — was an inescapable issue of the early 1940s.

The Stalinists of the American Communist Party were particularly stung by the book, with its revelations of the machinations and manoeuvring of the leadership of the Communist Interna-

tional (Comintern) and the GPU secret police. Their journal, *The New Masses*, denounced the book as a "hoax" and referred to "incredibilities on every page".

Valtin himself later admitted that some of the events in the book, while true, did not happen to him. But the balance of the book was commented on at the time by the *Times Literary Supplement*:

"He sets everything down in specific terms — names, dates, places, detail of underground organisation, and methods of conspiratorial procedure."

The postscript, with over 40 references to original sources, analyses in detail the arguments that surrounded the book.

The British edition was cut, presumably because of wartime censorship, fear of libel or political caution by the publishers. Several references to the activities of the British secret service were deleted, as was a

section on the Invergordon navy mutiny of 1931.

The main cut was the bulk of chapter 22 in which Valtin describes a mission to 'sort out' the activities, and use of Comintern finances, by sections of the British Communist Party.

These cut passages have been taken from the American edition and restored as an appendix.

The original text ran to 658 pages, covering the author's life as a communist activist across the oceans and the struggle against fascism in Germany.

This, together with an introduction by Peter Taaffe, Lynn Wal-

sh's postscript, the appendix and eight pages of rare historic photographs on gloss plates, make this new edition of *Out of the Night* a beautifully produced book, an important political work and a gripping story.

All 712 pages, in hardback, are on special pre-publication offer for £7.95 plus 55p postage (until October 18). Five copies for £35 post free.

Orders are already coming in. Basildon readers have sent £35 for five copies, while Nottingham have ordered 50 copies in advance.

Please send mecopies of *Out of the Night*. I enclose £.....plus £.....postage

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OUT 18 OCTOBER
Return to Fortress Books, PO Box 141 London E2 ORL.

'Get in where it hurts'

THE EXPULSION of the EETPU from the TUC is set to cause the greatest convulsion yet seen in the trade union movement. Already, many hundreds of EETPU members have left and secured membership in other unions, whilst in London, print industry electricians look set to join Sogat.

It is however the left group Flashlight which has made the biggest headlines. Their decision to leave the union en bloc will pull out anywhere between 5,000 and 20,000 members. The formation of the Electrical and Plumbing Industries Union (EPIU) immediately following the expulsion is the consequence of a lack of perspectives coupled with utter frustration.

The leaders of Flashlight

By a contracting electrician.

believe it is now impossible to move the right wing given the restrictions of the EETPU rule book and the centralised character of the union.

Whilst *Militant* EETPU members have had many differences with Flashlight supporters we recognise that people like John Aitkin, its chief spokes-

man, have give time, effort and money in exposing the activities of the right wing. Yet, again on this vital issue, we believe they are wrong.

In recent months *Militant* has put its position in a series of articles relating to the EETPU. We say that even outside the TUC, members should stay and fight the right wing on their own ground. It is vital, at the very least, to remain a thorn in the side of Hammond and Co and further to wrest control of the union from these gangsters.

The EETPU leadership pursued 'new realism' even before the term was invented. As far back as 1968 the joint industry board for electrical contracting was formed in collaboration with the bosses to 'tame' that particular industry.

Collaboration

Today the strident arrogance of the union leadership has marched it away from trade union solidarity.

Yet EETPU members will shed few tears for the TUC. Years of ineffectiveness meant that it is not relevant in their eyes. If the TUC had once taken a fighting stand on any number of issues, things might be different today.

Even if the biggest estimate of 50,000 members leave the EETPU, that will still leave over a quarter of a million members in Hammond's grasp. Those that remain can be convinced of the

need to transform the union into a fighting democratic organisation.

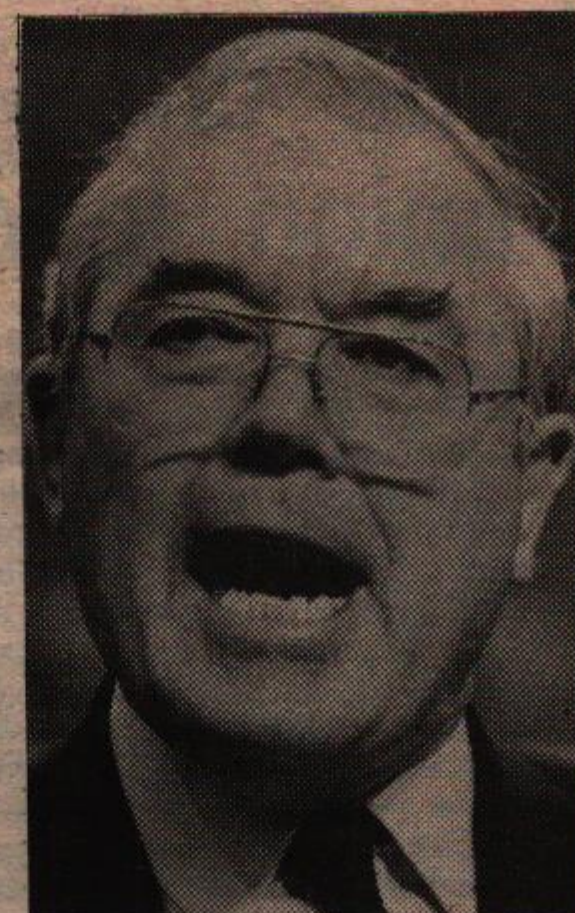
The idea of 'new realism' will eventually be crushed under the wheels of economic recession. These ideas in fact vary very little from the Gaitskillite belief that capitalism has solved its problems 'once and for all' and that unions need only 'fine tune' the status quo. The right are in for a shock!

It is therefore vital for those lefts who remain to build up a genuine opposition, built from the rank and file. Workers will only take a lead where it is given.

What attitude should be taken towards the EETPU from the outside? Firstly, there should be no co-operation with EETPU officials. They are dyed in the wool 'yes men' who are capable of stabbing the movement in the back.

At all times the leadership of the EETPU should be exposed for their treachery. On this basis the seeds of doubt can be cast in the minds of genuine, although sometimes mistaken EETPU members.

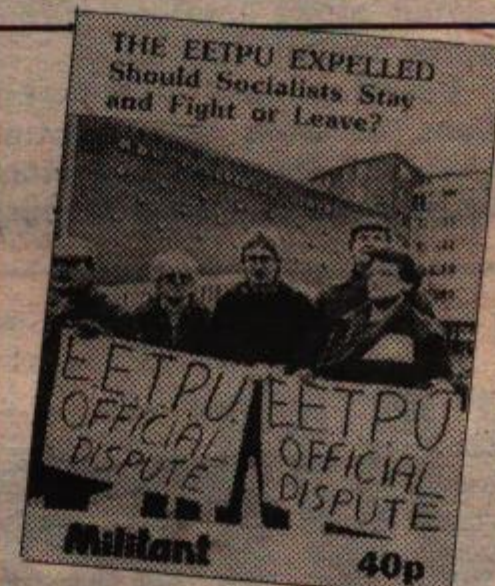
Militant EETPU members will get in where it hurts. We are convinced that the right's days are numbered. Any idea that the EETPU will form the nucleus of a new right wing centre will be short-lived. The EETPU leadership are no more than the SDP of the trade union movement.



EETPU leader Eric Hammond.

Militant demands

- ★ Socialists should stay in the EETPU and fight for a democratic union.
- ★ No amalgamation talks while EETPU is outside TUC.
- ★ No to amalgamation with the AEU on the basis of the undemocratic EETPU rule book.
- ★ For the election of all officials.
- ★ Elected officials to receive the average wage of the membership.
- ★ For a fighting socialist leadership and union.
- ★ For a 35 hour week without loss of pay.
- ★ Nationalise the top 200 monopolies under democratic workers' control and management in order to plan and control society.



The EETPU expelled - should socialists stay and fight or leave? *Militant* pamphlet on the way forward for socialists in the EETPU. Price 50p. Available from World Socialist Books, 3/13 Hepscoot Road, London E9 5HB.



Engineers marching against Wapping. There must be no amalgamation while the EETPU is outside TUC.

Engineers demand a democratic Broad Left

LAST WEEKEND'S *Engineering Gazette* rally attracted 150 left activists from the Amalgamated Engineering Union to discuss how we campaign to oppose amalgamation with the EETPU. Everyone agreed opposition but no programme, strategy or detail of a campaign was discussed in the meeting which was curtailed after an hour.

The main controversy was whether or not the *Engineering Gazette* was really a Broad Left. Against the proposition, Brother Airlie, with all the sophistication of an air-raid screamed from the chair: "We are not a Broad Left. We are the *Engineering Gazette*. We are after the centre ground and if I hear anyone else say we're a Broad Left, I'll hammer them. Get out and build your so-called Broad Left outside."

For the proposition, a number of speakers gained the applause of more than

half the meeting when they called for more democracy within the *Gazette*.

To calls for campaigning amendments to the resolution opposing amalgamation, Brother Airlie said that such a demand was out of order. Why? Because the *Gazette* executive said so.

He later stated: "The so-called Broad Left in Birmingham and Swansea couldn't get elected to the position of a bloody dogcatcher. The *Gazette* may not be perfect but I for one will not allow anyone to criticise it."

Criticisms of Airlie's conduct, his disgraceful behaviour on the Dundee Ford deal and the lack of democracy within the *Gazette* group mean that meetings are organised very infrequently. Splits in its ranks are now quite obvious.

By Colin Fox

Maudsley hospital strike

"WE'VE BEEN conned and the public have been conned", Joanne Turner, a young nurse on the picket lines at Maudsley Hospital, told us. "The public think we're getting good pay increases but funding the pay awards means cuts in services".

Kenneth Clarke has refused to make up the shortfall in the pay award. If the pay review is not fully funded, there will be greater demoralisation. Nurses will be forced to leave the NHS and there will be more cuts and closures.

London Health Emergency estimate that 6,000 beds will be cut if district health authorities in London have to finance the proposed pay rises out of existing funds.

At Maudsley, 85 per cent of the workforce are in Cohse. Seventy per cent voted for all-out strike action with emergency cover from 5

September. Joanne explained: "It took a lot to come out at the beginning of the year. Nurses don't have the tradition of striking. That's now been thrown up in our faces and we're being laughed at by the government."

Determined

"The strike needs to be made official. Nationally Cohse needs to campaign to let all NHS workers know what's happening. We're on all-out strike but we want to see more hospitals coming out, even for one day."

Maudsley Cohse members have spoken at hospital workers' meetings. So far Lewisham, Hither Green and Guys Hospital have walked out for an hour on Friday.

Joanne summed up the mood at

Maudsley: "Thatcher needs to be in an NHS hospital for one day, eating the meals, being looked after by nurses who are continually under stress and unable to give the care they want, who work in dross conditions with the furniture falling apart. Maybe then she'll see why Maudsley are determined to win."

Militant supporters call for mass meetings of NHS workers at every hospital. Fight the divisive tactics of management and the government by a joint campaign of nurses and ancillary workers.

Militant demands a one day strike of all health workers with emergency cover as the beginning of a campaign to see the pay rises fully funded and massive resources put back into the NHS.

By Militant supporters

- ★ For a mass campaigning left which takes the case against amalgamation to every shop steward in the union.
- ★ For a democratic *Engineering Gazette* Broad Left.
- ★ For all elected union officials to receive the average industrial wage of AEU members.

Editorial statement

The crisis of union leadership

THE UCW strike again highlights dramatically the crisis of leadership in the British trade unions. *Militant's* confidence in rank and file workers' ability to fight back against Thatcher and big business has been vindicated completely. But, as in Fords, the NHS, Dover and Barrow, the leadership refused to place themselves boldly at the head of their members' struggle.

As a result, unless the rank and file can now pull this action together from below, the potential for a crushing victory will have been squandered.

No union leadership could have asked for more from its rank and file. Loyal to their entire postal section supported the one-day strike against the introduction of Difficult Recruitment Areas Supplements (DRAS) despite confusion caused by the leadership's support for the idea of special bonus payments to recruits. Then, from below, in a marvellous movement against management's concerted strike-breaking offensive, an all-out national strike rapidly developed.

Postal workers' iron determination to defend conditions of work was illustrated vividly, above all in Liverpool. There, management's attempt to break morale by using casual scab labour provoked scenes reminis-

cent of the pitched battles during the miners' strike.

Once it started, this strike immediately went beyond the issue of DRAS. It became a battle to end the reign of management intimidation which had led in the past year to 219 unofficial disputes, one-sixth of all disputes in Britain.

Local management had been given a completely free rein to squeeze the workforce to the limit in preparation for privatisation. One worker has referred to the 'pressure cooker' atmosphere at the giant Mount Pleasant sorting office in London.

That atmosphere clearly exists throughout the Post Office. If this strike had continued — with absolutely resolute leadership — a famous victory would have been guaranteed.

Lamely, Tuffin has called for an independent public inquiry into Post Office industrial relations. What abject leadership!

In this strike postal workers had it within their power totally to transform industrial relations in their favour. If the union leadership had the will to win of the rank and file, an entirely new equilibrium between management and postal workers could be established.

If the UCW leaders are able to call off this strike, management will have been saved from a humiliating defeat. An agreement has been signed which leaves DRAS intact, dissolves the united action of the union, and tells local negotiators: "Return to work in days or you are on your own".

The tactic of provoking a strike to break the UCW misfired totally. More post is moved in one day in the Christmas rush than by all the independent delivery firms in a whole year. Big business was completely unprepared for the strike's impact.

The longer it continues, the more they will apply pressure for a settlement. The UCW leaders are letting them off the hook.

Postal workers will have to put maximum pressure on the leadership to withdraw all support from this deal and instead unite the membership in all-out national strike action. The Post Office must not be allowed to single out militant areas for attack.

Those areas on strike will also have no alternative but to try to build united action from below. Above all, UCW members should now begin in earnest the campaign for a new fighting socialist leadership.

Alan Tuffin is a leading defender of 'new realism'. In a recent pamphlet he spoke of achieving "a bargained consensus between organised labour and financial and industrial capital," so bosses and workers could collaborate to try to rescue British capitalism from ruin.

As with other right wing leaders of the labour movement he is blind to the irreconcilable conflict of interests between the working class and employers. That conflict becomes ever more acute the more capitalism moves into crisis and attempts to solve its problems at the expense of the working class.

These leaders try to be neutral arbiters of the class struggle, not the determined general staff the working class requires.

All the industrial battles this year have developed from below, more often than not facing the direct opposition of a reluctant leadership.

The need to re-arm the British trade union movement with a leadership worthy of the rank and file is vital, not only for UCW members. It is now the most urgent question facing workers throughout the unions.

What Tuffin's deal means

The agreement

● DRAS.

"Negotiations will commence immediately between RML and UCW to reconcile RML's intention to replace DRAS on its cessation with effective alternative remuneration arrangements for new recruits in problem areas..."

What it means for management

DRAS is in and stays in — talks can begin to consider giving the allowance another name.

What it means for UCW members

The first step towards regional and merit pay — the undermining of national pay bargaining.

● Return to work agreement.

"...committed to the early clearance of the backlog...to this end it is recognised that exceptional arrangements will be needed...there will be no reliance on or exclusion of any single staffing method."

We have the national union leadership's agreement to introduce any or all of 13 different measures to clear backlog.

The 13 measures acceptable to the union's leaders include:

- * Use of casuals and contract drivers.
- * Mail can be diverted to other offices.
- * Movement of staff as and when management see fit.

● Local negotiations.

"...urgent discussions will take place locally to try to achieve mutually acceptable arrangements to be adopted to enable a return to work at latest by 15 September..."

The UCW nationally has agreed to the PO deadline for local individual return to work agreements. Management can now pick off and isolate offices.

Effectively, we are being told by UCW leaders — "Settle or you are on your own!"

THE DEAL hatched between the UCW executive council (EC) and the Post Office will serve only to fuel the mounting discontent of rank and file members at the UCW leadership.

By Yvonne Harrison

"We've stayed out solidly but the union leadership has stitched us up, we've not achieved anything," said Mark Palfrey, branch secretary at Greenwich, summing up the feelings of many.

Hailing this disastrous agreement as a "major victory" the EC's special branch circular outlining the deal begins: "DRAS will be replaced by a negotiated alternative. Exactly as we insisted on." The EC's opposition to Difficult Recruitment Areas Supplement (DRAS) appears to be based solely on the question of the Post Office's determination to implement it "by imposition".

In fact Alan Tuffin has said: "We are not opposed to the payments, but to the way they were imposed on us." What Tuffin is suggesting is that the Post Office can have regional supplements provided they ask the EC first!

But the delegates to the UCW annual conference said clearly that DRAS was not in the "interests of the membership" and called for industrial action to defend national pay bargaining.

The EC are totally out of touch



Alan Tuffin, with the membership on the very issue which started the strike.

They attempt to make great play of the fact that there will be no pre-conditions to the negotiations on DRAS. But they have already conceded the ground to the bosses. The PO remain adamant that they want "a national flexible starting rate of pay" for new recruits and Tuffin is not opposed to the payments.

If the EC were seriously defending national pay bargaining, then they would insist that any negotiations be centred around the issue of low pay of all postal workers. The very fact that DRAS has become a reality is an acceptance that pay for new recruits does not constitute a living wage.

Many branches were forced into strike action by the Post Office introducing casual labour over and above the agreed summer staffing levels. But once



Liverpool strikers show their determination. Photo: Tommy Carroll.

again the EC have failed to budge the Post Office on this crucial issue.

The agreement says: "The return to work formulas allow for casual workers." But members around the country have recognised the real threat to full-time, permanent jobs that casual labour presents and have remained solid in their opposition.

Even worse, the EC have left the issue of casuals to be agreed at local level but allowed management to hold a gun to the heads of local union representatives by demanding that agreement be reached by Thursday 15

September or within 24 hours.

Many of these casuals have remained out in solidarity with the UCW. One postal worker from Bromley told *Militant*: "We've had no trouble with casuals, they all came out with us. No casual crossed the picket line." The demand from the rank and file of the union must be taken up — no casualisation; more full-time, permanent jobs.

The deal, if allowed, amounts to nothing more than a charter for the Post Office to demand that postal workers scab on each other. By signing it the EC have

removed the basic right of all individual trade unionists to immediately black work which has been transferred from areas involved in strike action. They are demanding that branches seek the permission of the UCW HQ before taking any local action whatsoever.

The deal potentially allows the Post Office to isolate branches and divide postal workers. There must be no agreement to the transfer of mail — any deal must be on the basis of 'All out together, all back together'.

The EC proudly state that "no member will be required to sign any 'loyalty' letter." But this is qualified later in the agreement — it applies only to postal workers who return to work on the agreed implementation date, 15 September or within 24 hours. Any areas where management choose to isolate and provoke further action are not covered by this agreement.

Whilst thanking the members for their loyalty, Tuffin then states: "The Post Office has been told that the union remains determined to negotiate and resolve our disagreements in the normal way. As the last 10 days have shown, this is not to be interpreted as a lack of determination to stand and fight when the need arises."

But postal workers know that there has never been a greater need to stand and fight. What is now necessary is to build for a fighting alternative leadership prepared to match the determination of the membership to fight and win.



Why the lid

blew off

MANAGEMENT TREAT us like kids. It's like being back at school. Everything is regimented. But the job's alright if you don't mind the boredom. And the terrible pay. And the unsocial hours.

The tedium is incredible. You may be standing in front of a frame sorting post all day. Or if you're lucky you might get one of the 'top' jobs—pushing a trolley around all shift.

You can't have a break or a chat. If you stop the PED (foreman) comes over.

Our eight and a half hour day is broken by a 30 minute meal break and two 'grace' breaks. As the name suggests, these can be taken away.

Then there are the petty rules. If you want to go to

the toilet you have to tell the PED and you're not allowed more than ten minutes.

I'm working nights at the moment. That means starting at 7pm and going through to 5.45 the next morning. You get paid more for nights – if you do Friday night, Saturday morning your pay is £142. But where's your social life? You have no evenings and you're knocked out the next day.

Because the pay is so low many workers clock up the overtime. Some I know will

double their hours with overtime – that's an 80 hour week – if they're going on holiday.

If the Post Office want to do something about attracting workers and stopping the turnover they need to increase basic pay.

Overcrowded

If you work a 43 hour week on lates, your basic, without allowance, is only £104 – £2.40 an hour.

The Post Office has claimed they are producing a more modern, streamlin-

ed service. You wouldn't believe that if you came into my office. The roof leaks, the toilets overflow and the place is so overcrowded it's a fire risk. All the departments are on the same floor, so there isn't enough space to move about.

The only new investment that's taken place here is the new offices for management. The rest is pre-war.

A young postal worker at one of London's 'big six' offices spoke to Militant.

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



Postal Workers' News in Brief

Pushed too far

"POSTMEN AREN'T extremists. We've just been pushed too far. Conditions and pay have been getting worse.

Our workload is much bigger now. Our bonuses have been cut so we're forced to do overtime.

I've got two kids and couldn't manage without overtime.

I've worked for the Post Office for 19 years and my flat rate without

allowances is just £104.25.

That's why we can't keep workers. There's a 50 per cent turnover of staff because of the pay. It gives management the excuse to bring in casuals which we know is a step towards privatisation."

A striker at Rotherhithe SDO spoke to Carol Shakespeare.

Stranded by bosses

ERIC SMITH, a UCW committee member in Paisley branch was one of two union members instructed to drive from Paisley sorting office to Glasgow. Two postman inspectors followed them in a car. When they arrived in Glasgow, the inspectors instructed them

to cross the picket line. They refused to do so. The inspectors took the keys off their van, stranding them in Glasgow where they were expected to make their own way back. At this, the rest of Paisley sorting office came out on strike.

Double standards

TORY MINISTER David Mellor appeared on TV this week justifying the government's failure to fully finance the nurses' pay rises.

He argued that the main reason for the long time taken in the negotiations was that the financing was very complicated. They didn't

want nurses doing the same job in different parts of the country getting different rates of pay!

The health unions will find it hard to believe any Tory who claims to be defending the rate for the job. UCW members will find it even more incredible.

Nottingham

THE MASS meeting in Nottingham voted to stay out for another 24 hours according to branch organiser Simon Harris. Management were refusing to talk to the UCW secretary. Simon told us: "The mood will be elect-

ric if we go back – like two ends of a broken cable waiting to touch. Attitudes will be different because of their attitude to us during the strike. They've used casuals and set us up for arrest by calling in the police."

'What can they do?'

THREE WOMEN post workers from a south London sub-office asked: "What is the point of going back now? We've lost money over it and achieved nothing. We should stay out until we get what we're after.

"We've got management – what can they do? They can't get deliveries done privately. It would cost too much.

"We work a 43 hour week and the pay is not a living wage. You can't support a family on what you get, you have to do overtime to get decent take home pay.

"We support a national minimum wage. It should be at least £150 take home by the time you pay your rent. Tuffin's going the other way, he's not doing the job for us."

'It's impossible to get the work done'

WE GET paid £119 for 43 hours. Yet over the last five years there has been a 30 per cent increase in the work. It is impossible to do all of it in our hours. But like nurses, we're dedicated to our job.

Management have used this dedication to increase their exploitation of us. Although we are supposed to start at 5am, many workers get in at 4.30 in order to get the work done.

The workload is so great now that many people use their own cars to do

the work. The petrol money comes from their own pockets. The amount of work prevents a lot from getting back in time for breakfast at 10.30. This became a big issue last winter – no breakfast in very cold weather.

Exploitation

The hours are meant to be 43 hours but many workers do over 50, with the extra being unpaid. In effect you're paying £25 for the privilege of coming

to work.

The increased use of casuals is a real danger. Before, staff were always properly trained. Now the casuals are only given minimal training. After only a week many leave, once they realise what's involved in the job.

The casuals' overtime is unlimited, unlike ours. But we rely on it because our basic pay is so low.

Andy Woods spoke to two pickets outside the Bournemouth office.



The anger of UCW pickets shows at Liverpool's Mount Pleasant.

Photo: Tommy Carroll.

Terry Fields' support

FINANCIAL, MORAL and physical support was given to the UCW strikers by a meeting of 300 trade unionists called by Liverpool trades council.

Terry Fields, MP for Broadgreen, and Billy Hayes, secretary of the Liverpool Postmen's branch of the UCW, outlined the case for solidarity action.

Speaking about the impact of the strike, Terry said: "This dispute is a shining example to the fainthearts in our movement at every level of the leadership who believe that the working class struggle is dead".

Commenting on rumours that legal action could be taken, Billy said: "If they want to take action against me they can have my stereo that doesn't work, and the video that's on the blink. The reason they haven't taken action against us is because they see we are strong. All the laws in the land will mean nothing if we stand together".

By Terry Harrison.

Battle of Copperas Hill

SIX OFFICIAL pickets stand at the gate of Copperas Hill sorting office, Liverpool. Nearby 500 workers show their anger at management provocation.

Some wear Thatcher masks, one a mask of Adolf Hitler. On the road to the gate are seven police vans; each holds 12 policemen. 12 police are on the gate but plenty are in reserve.

When the grey face of a scab appears at an upper window, everyone sings "I'd rather be a striker than a scab". The figure skulks away.

Police form into three lines with strikers whistling the Laurel and Hardy theme tune as they march. Strikers surge forward to meet the 'thick blue line.' The screech of a klaxon horn is drowned by shouts – the scabs are coming!

Along the road cleared by the police speeds a convoy of vans. Scab drivers wear ski masks, scarves, even a Mickey Mouse mask. Scabs cower in their seats, with coats or bin bags over their heads.

The push is on. Bobbies' helmets fly in the air. At one point the police line begins to break but five police vans, sirens screeching, form an immediate barricade behind the collapsing lines. A local branch officer appeals for calm. The push subsides.

Barricade

Meanwhile 'official pickets' have little success. Branch secretary Billy Hayes is pushed aside by a speeding van; the scabs don't want to talk. Pickets strain to identify strike breakers. The gates clang shut and the vans disappear with demonstrators chanting: "Dirty scabbing bastards."

It's over as quickly as it started. One striker is arrested and the police march away to derisive cheers.

A senior policeman asks for the return of a helmet, saying: "If we don't get it back, we'll wear chin straps tomorrow, and that will appear intimidatory". After what strikers saw today, a chinstrap won't worry them.

Postal workers

Rebuild strike from below

"IT'S NOT too late. We can win this strike." That is the attitude of postal workers in most big cities.

By Mick Holt,
Secretary,
Communication Workers'
Broad Left

Around the country many branches and areas are voting not to accept the leadership's deal, not to accept provocative local settlements and to continue strike action 'until we win'.

We must exert maximum pressure on the UCW leadership to withdraw from their deal with management. We cannot allow them to abdicate their responsibility to our members. They must immediately call an all-out strike of postal workers.

But members on strike have no alternative; we must re-build the strike from below.

Delegations of striking postal workers should travel to all areas to argue maximum unity in action against PO management. The fight should now be taken to a conclusion. If we fail, management will try to isolate and pick us off one by one.

Joint strike committees should be formed in all areas to spread the action. And, as rapidly as possible,

- * EC to call all-out postal strike.
- * Strike committees to be set up in all regions and areas.
- * An urgent national conference of strike committees.
- * Broad Left to campaign for a fighting UCW leadership.
- * Fight for a £135 minimum wage, a £20 a week across the board pay rise and London weighting to increase to £3000.

a national strike committee should be convened with delegates from all areas to agree the programme, strategy and tactics to secure victory.

There was no doubt amongst Glasgow postal workers, who voted unanimously to stay out. They saw management tactics of 'putting the boot in' to more militant areas, whilst adopting a 'softly, softly' approach in others, as a deliberate attempt to divide postal workers, casualise the industry and prepare it for privatisation.

Liverpool voted unanimously to remain on strike as

the PO attempted to use the national deal to force the use of unagreed casuals and contract drivers. Manchester seems certain to adopt the same stance as management adopt the same tactics.

Coventry, Hull and York have voted to continue strike action.

At this stage Leeds have returned to work but also voted unanimously for a motion of no confidence in Alan Tuffin for his role in this strike.

As in the NCU dispute many strikers returning to work are directing their anger against the union



Liverpool - they have voted to stay on strike.

Photo: Tommy Carroll

leadership. After that disastrous NCU settlement the right-wing leadership were removed at the next elections. At that year's annual conference Golding survived a call for his resignation by the skin of his teeth. One year later he

was on his way.

Throughout the country demands will come forward for the resignation of Alan Tuffin. This call should be linked to the regular election of all officials and the democratic accountability of the UCW leadership.

Never before has the left in the union had such an opportunity. The Broad Left should now launch the campaign to achieve, by the next annual conference, an effective fighting socialist UCW executive council.

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Finance our fight against poll tax

MILITANT'S FIGHTING Fund campaign just finished raised £30,218 - a record for the holiday months of July and August. So our new target of £50,000 by 5 November should be no problem!

We need £6,000 every week! So send in your donation today and help finance the fight against the poll tax.

The new campaign got a great start with a marvellous £500 from a Waltham Forest NUT member. The battle for a fighting union leadership got an £868 boost from Militant supporters at TUC conference. Another £150 was sent in by a Teesside reader.

Follow the lead of Barnsley

readers who raised over £40 during the Further Education enrolment week. They sold Militant stickers for a £35 a week minimum living grant' and asked for donations. Make sure students at FE and higher education colleges get the chance to donate to Militant.

Stickers

Our September sales drive should get extra fighting fund as well. Liverpool supporters who went to Glasgow for the anti-poll tax demo sold 55 Militant stickers and raised £47 fighting fund. In Swansea, £20 was raised with placards, a stall and 'Fight the poll tax' stickers.

This Week £1184 £50,000 by 5 November

Fighting Fund

Area	Received	% of target achieved	Target
1 Northern	154		2,350
2 South West	83		1,260
3 East Midlands	88		2,500
4 West Midlands	134		3,730
5 Southern	63		2,050
6 Scotland East	56		2,500
7 London	75		7,100
8 Manchester	19		2,900
9 Merseyside	71		5,080
10 Yorkshire	50		5,060
11 Scotland West	23		3,000
12 South East	7		1,500
13 Wales	16		3,680
14 Eastern	0		2,140
15 National	345		5,150
Total	1,184		50,000

We urge all supporters to organise public sales and fundraising activities every Saturday. Use our anti-poll tax stickers and petitions and relax in the evening with a fundraising social

event. Thanks to Mike Gibbs, Wakefield, West Derby supporters, and J Golding, Hammersmith, all £50, and a Nottingham social £20.