

Y T U R C CALLS FOR
**MASS
MARCH**
against the
POLL TAX

Demonstrate
with
Strathclyde
Anti-Poll Tax
Federation

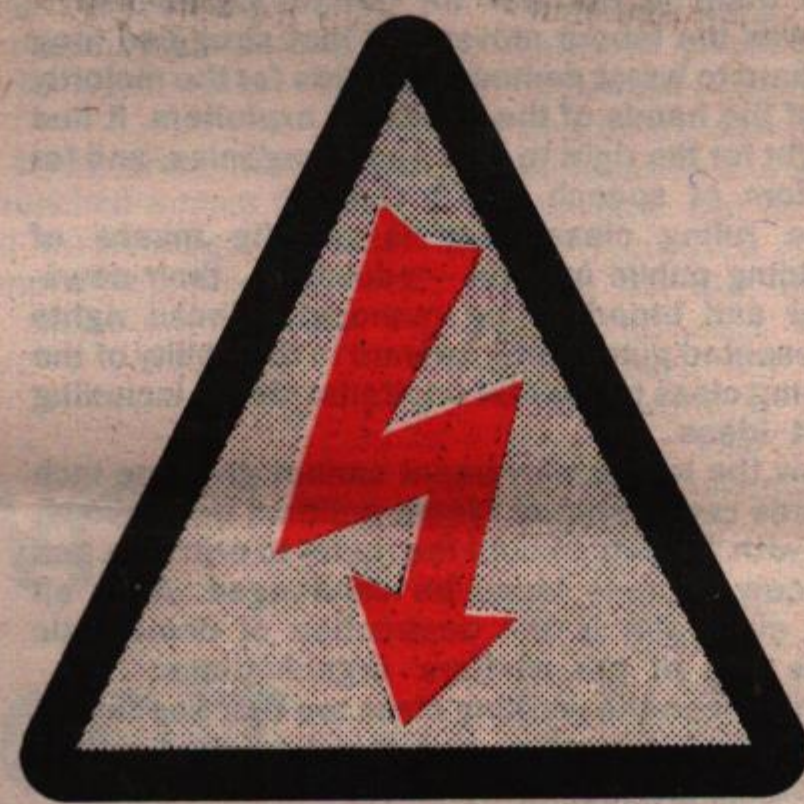
**GLASGOW
18 MARCH**



Danger:

Electricity

rip-off



WE'LL ALL have to pay for the Tories' electricity sell-off.

By a North-west electricity worker

Privatising electricity will cost £76 million. Now it's emerged that this will be added to our bills. And even though fuel costs have gone down seven per cent and trading profits have doubled, electricity prices are set to rise another six per cent to make sure there's plenty of loot for the speculators.

The industry's new boss has already let slip what his priorities will be. "Our task will not be to keep the lights on whatever the cost," he said in the leaked draft of a speech. He made clear that "national responsibilities" must come second to profit because competition means "cutting costs, then cutting costs and, finally cutting costs again".

What will they care if pen-

sioners are left to die in the cold and dark? What will it matter to them if vital services break down when they pull the plug? All that will matter will be that the profits keep rolling in.

Privatisation is grim news for electricity workers too. The bosses want to axe 3,000 jobs in the run-up to privatisation. It has already meant victimisation of shop stewards who have been campaigning against it. One foreman was paid overtime to take out disciplinary notices in the dead of night. This was money well spent, a manager told union reps.

The workers concerned responded by occupying a depot in defence of their jobs.

Energy minister Cecil Parkinson boasts that the price to the privateers won't be "excessive". You can count on that! The Tories are helping their profit-hungry friends to another slice of the state's

assets at a give-away price. They're even knocking down the price because of design faults in power stations, including nuclear ones.

These include cracks in welding that must mean danger to the people living near the power stations. You'd think they'd be the ones who would be compensated, not the vultures who want to feed off the industry!

Privatisation will mean job losses for workers, cold and darkness for the old and poor and ever-growing bills for everyone but big business.

Even now domestic consumers pay a higher rate for their electricity than business. We will be subsidising the bosses even more under privatisation.

The power unions should launch a campaign to save our industry now. All working class people will support us if we explain what privatisation means to them.

We don't want mealy-mouthed excuses from the Labour Party leaders but a whole-hearted defence of nationalised industries. If they think that nationalisation hasn't been perfect in the

past, let them demand workers' control and management so that nationalised industries are democratically run.

Labour should commit itself to:

★ **A freeze on power prices for the consumer;**

★ **Renationalisation of denationalised industries with compensation only in cases of proven need;**

★ **A national plan for an integrated, nationalised energy industry.**

A socialist Labour government would make sure heat and light were everyone's right.

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Militant

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Labour must defend democratic rights

THE DEATH threat against Salman Rushdie and the continuing campaign in Britain for the banning of *Satanic Verses*, have raised potentially serious dangers for the working class movement. Labour must intervene with its own distinct programme and approach, starting from the inviolable principles of the preservation of democratic rights and of workers' unity.

There is the danger that the murder threat against Salman Rushdie and the campaign to restrict the right to publish will generate a backlash among sections of the white community. And the Muslim population would be the victims. Already a Mosque has been attacked in Bradford.

Already the gutter press is using this issue to whip up racial discord. With disgusting hypocrisy they are posing as defenders of fundamental freedoms to try to drive a wedge between Asian and white workers.

Militant unequivocally stands for freedom of expression and is utterly opposed to the banning of this book. Once the censoring of ideas is allowed, what socialist publication would then be challenged? We defend the right to hold religious beliefs and the freedom of worship, and demand labour movement action on behalf of minorities and against racism.

Unfortunately, however, even Labour MPs, like Max Madden have suggested a right of reply be placed in the book. Would this mean Tories or employers could claim the right to reply within labour movement pamphlets they found offensive?

He also advocated the extension of the blasphemy laws to cover religions other than Christianity. *Militant* is opposed to any special rights being accorded to any one religion. We are for the disestablishment of the Church of England.

And we stand for the abolition of all blasphemy laws. Extreme reactionary Mary Whitehouse has used them in her war for stricter censorship.

It was the labour movement that struggled long and hard to wrest democratic rights for the majority out of the hands of the capitalist exploiters. It had to fight for the right to vote and to organise, and for freedom of speech and press.

The ruling class controls all the means of moulding public opinion — education, their newspaper and broadcasting monopoly. These rights represented giant steps forward in the ability of the working class to counter capitalist ideas, including racist ideas.

Now the labour movement cannot give one inch towards censorship of ideas, political or religious. Only with fascists should the rights to organise and to freely express ideas be challenged. After all their clear aim is the destruction of democratic rights and of the workers' organisations.

It has been the working class too that has fought for religious toleration and that has championed the cause of oppressed minorities.

Many ordinary Asian workers have come to feel their community as being under siege — poverty, discrimination, racial assaults, police harassment. What is then reported to them as a serious affront to their religion in the book may be considered as the latest attack.

In despair of finding any relief from unceasing social deprivation and indignities, many, including among the Asian youth, have sought again the old certainties — the Mosque, the Koran; Muslim religion and culture. Hence the vehemence of the protests and the influence retained by the religious leaders in Britain.

But responsibility for any turning inward by the Muslim community lies with the leaders of the labour and trade union movement. They have not demonstrated that they will campaign determinedly on all the problems bearing down on Asian workers.

Labour has long dropped its commitment to the repeal of immigration legislation, a constant humiliation for Asian families. It has done nothing practical about racial attacks or the lack of interest of the police. Labour councils, despite the fine words of many of them concerning ethnic minorities, have carried through Tory cuts worsening services for all workers.

Labour must stand firm on censorship, but it must also bring forward socialist policies that can unite in action all workers against big business and the Tories.

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Satanic Verses

Protests reflect a community in fear

THE AYATOLLAH Khomeini has issued a 'death sentence' on novelist Salman Rushdie. In Britain Rushdie's book has been publicly burnt at a demonstration of 1500 in Bradford. 10,000 marched in London, 3000 in Birmingham.

IQBAL KHAN looks at the feelings generated in the Muslim community by the book.

BEHIND THE protests lie the genuine fears and insecurities of Britain's Muslims.

Under Thatcher there has been an unprecedented strengthening of immigration legislation, effectively separating thousands of families. Passport raids on homes and workplaces have been stepped up. Doctors, social security officers and police are increasingly demanding to see Asian's passports before offering any help.

Blacks and Asians have borne the brunt of Thatcher's attacks, but amongst them, Bangladeshi and Pakistani workers have been amongst the most deprived. 29 per cent are registered as unemployed.

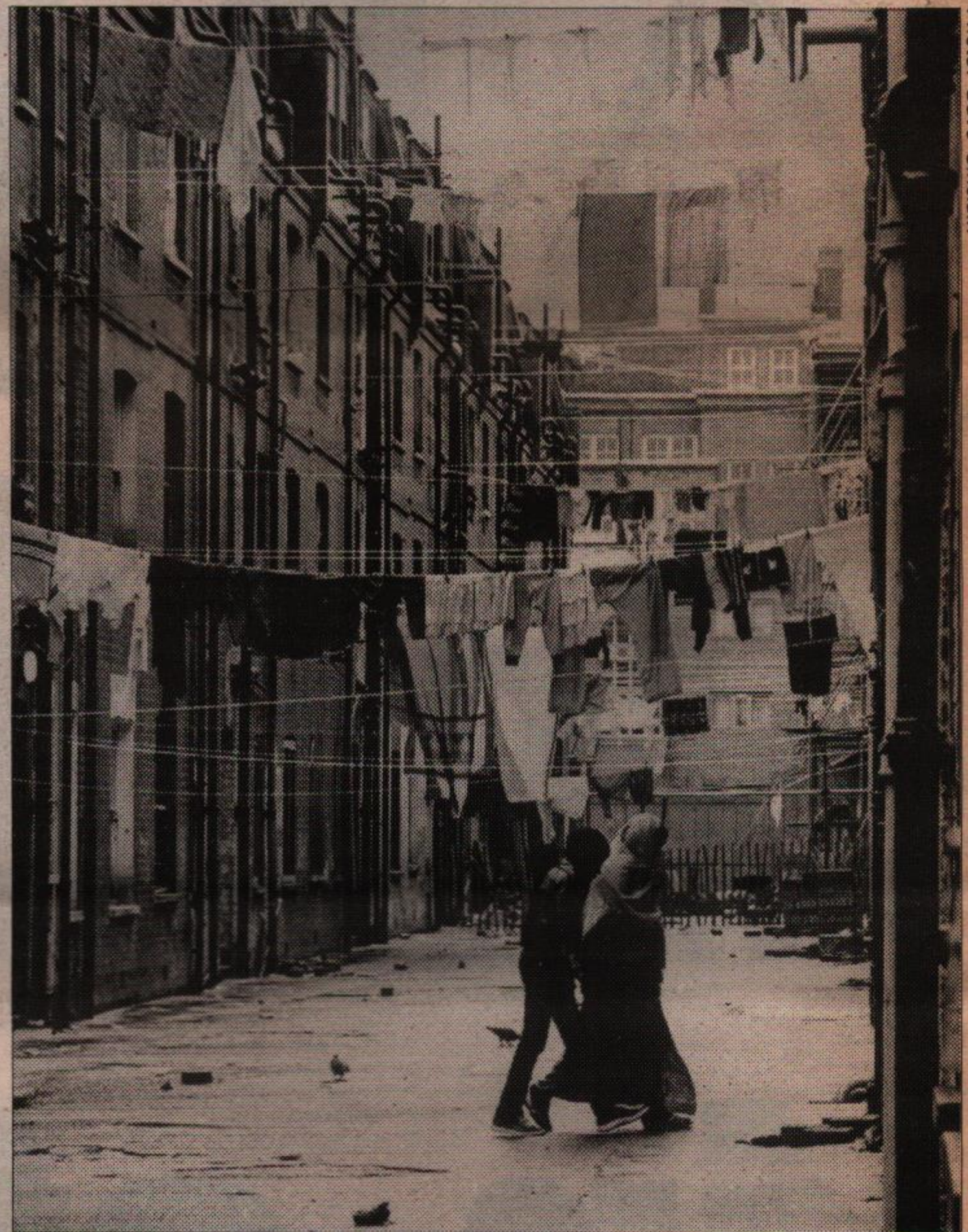
The majority of Bradford's Muslims live in old, damp, terraced houses. City council reports show that in the wards in which Asians are crowded, the highest levels of tuberculosis are found.

The Tories have provided no solution to the problems of the inner-cities. So the tensions have not abated but been aggravated. As a result there has been an alarming rise in racial attacks.

The police have an extremely low success rate in searching out the perpetrators, and most often provide more harassment than help.

It is a feeling of being under siege in a hostile environment which has led to the Asian community acting on the defensive. But this has not just been in terms of defending our families and homes from attack, but also of defending the culture, language and religion. It is in this context that the Muslim leaders' call for action against the book has gained support.

Indeed part of that defensive process has been to reinforce adherence to the old traditions. Religion seemed to provide, for some, comfort and securi-



Asian workers face some of the worst conditions in Britain.

THE ACTIONS and words of Muslim leaders in Britain have been exploited by the Tory press and by reactionaries to inflame racist hostility.

The chairman of Bradford South Conservative Club distributed 500 leaflets calling for an end to immigration, in response to the burning of the book. He said: 'I don't

think you could impose sterilisation, but we must educate them. The indigenous population see the takeover as a recipe for disaster.'

It is against statements like this, inflaming racism and threatening working class unity, that we ought to be channelling our energies.

ty, an escape in a cold and precarious climate. The alienating effects of racism have resulted in a turn towards Muslim separatism. The campaign for halal meat and the support for separate schools for Muslim girls highlighted this. Now the campaign against Rushdie's book has taken on the character of defending the Muslim religion.

A return to religion and separatism, especially in education, will in no way solve the problems of Asian workers. The labour movement must stand for secular education and no divisions amongst the youth.

But this tendency has gained ground because the

relentless attacks of the Tories, many of them racist, have gone largely unchallenged by the Labour and trade union leadership.

They initiated no mass campaign against the implementation of the visa requirement for visitors from India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Ghana and Nigeria. Nor have they mobilised opposition against the 1988 Immigration Act or the 30-40,000 racial attacks that took place last year.

Labour has an urgent responsibility to take up the fight against racism, and to draw increasing numbers of Asian workers and youth into activity behind its banner.

★ Repeal all racist laws. Scrap the nationality and immigration acts.

★ Full support of black people who face racial violence. Defence of black communities to be organised by the labour movement, black organisations, local groups.

★ Mass mobilisation of workers and youth against racist attackers. No platform for fascists.

★ An end to arbitrary police powers.

★ Guaranteed jobs for all workers and youth, black and white. An end to discrimination in employment, training and promotion.

Pat Wall speaks out

LABOUR MP Pat Wall has written a stinging letter to the *Guardian* after it published an article suggesting that, as a Bradford MP, he was sitting on the fence regarding censorship and the banning of the book.

'I have explicitly condemned the book burning and the threats against Salman Rushdie's life. Muslims may be offended by the language in the book and entitled to an opinion but I made it clear in a letter to the Islamic Defence Council that the burn-

ing of books has a deeply disturbing significance for the labour movement.

'Moreover the campaign of physical threats against Salman Rushdie increases the possibility of a racial backlash against Muslim workers.

'I have a proud record of defending the interests of Asian workers in Bradford and I will continue to defend the rights of Muslims and other communities to practice their religion in dignity and self-respect.'

Ten years of the Iranian revolution

See centre pages

The reality of the Khomeini regime



Northern Ireland sectarian killings

State under suspicion

NORTHERN IRELAND could face a serious escalation of sectarian tit-for-tat killings after last week's violence which left three dead and many more injured.

By a Belfast Militant reporter

Pat Finucane, a prominent Catholic solicitor, was gunned down at his north Belfast home on Sunday 12 February by the Ulster Defence Association.

Two days later a Sinn Fein councillor, John Davey, was shot dead at the wheel of his car outside his home near Maghera, County Derry. His killing was claimed by the Ulster Volunteer Force. On Thursday 15 February members of the Irish People's Liberation Organisation opened fire indiscriminately on customers drinking in a club on

the Protestant Shankill Road in Belfast, killing one man and wounding four.

The killing of Finucane in particular has raised many questions about the role of the government and the state. A junior Home Office minister, Douglas Hogg, said last month that some Northern Ireland solicitors were "unduly sympathetic to the cause of the IRA".

Two weeks ago a member of the House of Lords said he intended sheltering behind parliamentary privilege to name Pat Finucane and two other Belfast solicitors as IRA sympathisers.

The impression is being given that anyone defending legal rights - Paddy McGrory, the solicitor at the Gibraltar inquest, Finucane, or even John Stalker - are seen as obstacles by the Tories.

The circumstances surrounding

the shooting of John Davey has led to speculation about the possible involvement of the state - possibly the Ulster Defence Regiment. His wife said: "His car was stopped. The lights were off and the hand-brake was on. John would have only done that for a checkpoint. If he had seen masked men he would have driven straight on."

Even an RUC spokesman said: "We cannot comment at this stage on the position or the state of the car".

Loyalists

These killings underline the seriousness of the growing sectarian violence. Ten people have now died this year, all of them in the past five weeks. Loyalist paramilitaries have killed five people already this year compared to only two in the whole of 1985, the year

before the Anglo-Irish agreement was signed.

Since then, Loyalist activity has been steadily increasing. The recent killings and attacks by republican groups can only inflame this situation further and a serious escalation could follow.

The labour movement must condemn all sectarian attacks. Instead it must build the unity of Catholic and Protestant workers. Strikes and mass demonstrations have been organised against privatisation of the NHS, Shorts, and the Harland and Wolff shipyard. Belfast city council is threatening to make up to 1,000 workers redundant.

If the trade union and labour leaders launched a mass campaign to defend workers against sectarianism, oppose repression and end poverty, sectarianism could be defeated.

Tories' inflation con

FOR TEN years the Tories have excused the misery they have inflicted on the unemployed and poor as the price to be paid for the fight against inflation.

By Pat Craven

But their suffering has been for nothing. Inflation is taking off again. Prices in January were 7.5 per cent higher than a year before and the rate of increase is still rising. Prices have doubled since Thatcher came to power in 1979.

Lawson complains the figures are distorted by big increases in mortgage interest rates. But he put them up! And even if they had been left out, the rate of price increases would still have been 5.5 per cent, compared to 3.7 per cent a year ago. That is the highest rate of any major industrial country.

Meanwhile the Tories boast about unemployment going below two million. But they have changed the way they are calculated 20 times to exclude at least a million who have no job but cannot claim benefit. The Unemployment Unit estimate that on the old basis of calculation, which still excluded many unemployed, the figure would be 2.7 million.

And the bulk of those who have found work have been forced into low-paid, part-time or casual jobs with no long-term prospects. Thatcher's 'boom' is an illusion for all but a minority of stock exchange speculators and big business tycoons.

The Labour leaders must now be pushed from below into discarding 'new realism', campaigning for the Tories to go and adopting a socialist programme to transform a capitalist society that offers only hardship for the majority of working people.

Child benefit seized for poll tax fine

A SINGLE parent with five children has had her benefits stopped to pay a fine for non-registration of the poll tax. But even worse, she wasn't avoiding registration - Labour controlled Central Regional council twice lost her registration forms.

By a Militant reporter

Morag McGowan's bank account was only opened three weeks ago to receive her monthly child benefit payments. On the council's orders sheriff's officers have frozen the account to obtain £66.01 - a £50 fine and £16.01 for the sheriff's officers' fees.

Only five days after filling a second registration form she was informed of the £50 fine - by a note being slipped through her door one night without the messenger even knocking.

Earlier this year the council sent letters threatening warrant sales to all those who refused to register or pay their fines.

Sheriff's officers have now arrested wages of 130 people for not registering or non-payment of £50 fines.

The Labour group is not, however, planning to reverse the actions of the sheriff's officers. Plans are now being worked out to use the fines to fund voluntary groups working for the 'disadvantaged'. Labour has developed the absurd policy of robbing the poor to pay the poor!

Can we now expect Neil Kinnock to condemn the grotesque chaos of Labour councils scurrying around Scotland issuing arrestment notices? This is the position forced on Labour councils by their refusal to fight the Tories' legislation.

It is still not too late to fight. The choice for councillors remains - fight the poll tax or resign to make way for someone who will. Otherwise what has happened in Central Region will be just the start of a round of victimisations of Scottish families by the Labour councillors they voted for.

Sacked for own S African boycott

FIFTEEN YEAR-old school student Claire Morgan was recently sacked from her part-time job at Wm Low in Jesmond, Newcastle because she refused to handle South African goods.

By a YTURC member

She told members of Newcastle East Youth Trade Union Rights Campaign (YTURC) what happened.

"At first they had South African oranges but I didn't have to weigh and price them, so I didn't bother about it. But later more South African goods such as apples arrived and I started to get worried."

"I heard the YTURC were organising a meeting on South Africa, with Nimrod Sejake speaking. So I went along and asked Nimrod what to do. He told me what the campaign by the girls at Dunnes stores in Dublin had achieved."

"But when I asked other girls to weigh and price the goods they refused and they told the boss, Mr Wilson. I was taken to his office and told that the

policy of Wm Low is that the customer comes first - they really mean profit comes before workers.

"I was told it was the customers' choice but when I asked about the choice of the millions of South Africans living under apartheid he said: 'Politics doesn't come in to it around here. Just go out and serve the customers'."

"I got really upset and threatened to hand in my notice."

Claire was persuaded to wait until the end of the week and that there might be another job on the shop floor. But she was told there was no other job - she had been tricked into working the week out.

Tricked

When the boss asked Claire if she still wanted to hand in her notice she asked: "What if I stop on and don't handle South African goods?" She was told that her employment would be terminated. When she asked if it meant the sack he said: "You can call it whatever you like".

"Later the boss claimed that I was a troublemaker and that I had changed my mind about working at Wm Low", said Claire. "But people asked the floor manager why I was sacked and he claimed that I was sacked for bad timekeeping and other things."

"I then contacted Anti-apartheid to launch a Boycott '89 campaign. They have organised three pickets outside the shop and produced a leaflet about the campaign", Claire explained.

The leaflet asks people to write to the Manager, Mr Wilson, Wm Low, Acorn Rd, Jesmond, Newcastle. It demands Claire's reinstatement, demands that all workers be able to act upon their own conscience on South African goods and that a boycott of Wm Low will be organised until they stop handling these goods.

Labour Party Young Socialist and YTURC branches should send messages to Claire Morgan, c/o Newcastle East YTURC, 63 Warton Terrace, Heaton, Newcastle.

Sandwell campaign against HAT.

Alternative cabaret night with Attila the Stockbroker. Tuesday 28 Feb, 8.30 pm. The Vine, Titford Lane, Whitehead, Oldbury.



Annabel's hard times

ANNABEL CROFT, the tennis player who is the new star of the TV programme *Treasure Hunt* is the daughter of a millionaire. Her 24-year old stockbroker brother looks after her share portfolio.

An interviewer asked her what she felt about less fortunate young people like the young homeless who sleep rough in London in cardboard boxes.

Ms Croft was unimpressed. "Actually I've slept in some pretty weird places myself. When I was on the tennis circuit I had to sleep in some uncomfortable surroundings. A hut in someone's back garden in Florida. And in tatty spare rooms. I've had the luck to travel just about everywhere in the world but my life certainly hasn't been all luxury hotels."

A tale of two rallies

LABOUR PARTY News (LPN) this month tries to interpret favourite sayings from left, right and centre in Labour Party meetings.

They translate the phrase 'mass rally' as an "event (usually Trotskyist-organised) attended by at least five people."

Nobody enjoys crackling satire like that more than us but we should point out that *Militant's* rally last June attracted 7,500 people to Alexandra Palace.

Two weeks later, at the same venue, Labour's right wing organised a non-political rally on the popular subject of defending the NHS. It attracted about a third of that number and managed to lose money! The same sort of safe politics governs LPN and makes it so indispensable if you like recycling waste paper.

Pioneer piracy

WHEN A local paper announced a "pioneering step" by Huntingdon Health Authority, readers might have thought they'd reversed ward closures or solved the regrading crisis.

No, they've just pre-empted some of the ideas of the Tories' new health white paper. They have set up a private company offering speech therapy and chiropody services for private patients using NHS clinics in the evenings and at weekends. They hope to raise £10,000 for the NHS in this way.

The new Tory laws allow far wider privatisation. Then if you can't pay for it, you suffer without it. We should stop this insidious private takeover of our health service.

Thrift drift

MRS THATCHER has overspent the government allowance on 10 Downing Street by £1.2 million, taking total spending to £12 million a year on one house. This is to pay for redecoration and replacing the garden wall.

You could probably repaint the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel for £1 million. Is this the same Thatcher who lectures us all about good housekeeping when she wants councils to sack the workers who decorate council homes?

Thanks to P Groom.

Commanding heights... and sweatshop depths



Nationalisation of the top monopolies must go hand in hand with action to get decent pay and conditions for workers in smaller firms.

AN EAST London reader, Sharon Clarke, has written to ask if we can clear up a confusion after reading *What are the 200 monopolies?* in *Militant* (13 January):

"Privatisation" she says, "is obviously a con trick by the Tories to help their City friends line their pockets. And of course every socialist wants to see the millionaires deprived of their dividends and profit.

"But I can't really understand what you are getting at when you say: 'So there is no need to take over every company in order to allow proper planning of resources'.

"I work for a small firm based in the East End. It's a sweatshop. None of the

girls are unionised and it's not easy to organise because the boss sacks people at the slightest excuse. Everyone's afraid to get on the wrong side of him. We have to put up with all kinds of sexist remarks - some of the girls even get harassed by the foreman.

"I think it's quite right that Fords, the banks and all the rest should be nationalised. But why stop at only 200 companies? I can't see what difference this will make in workplaces like mine.

"You say nationalisation of the 200 biggest would lay the basis for the 'democratic majority control of society'. But I think in sweatshops like mine the boss won't be affected at all and nothing will change if it's

just big companies.

"The only hope I can see is a new wave of struggles like in the 1970s when women went on strike for unions and for equal pay - that's what would give me a chance to begin to control our workplace...

"...Surely the only hope is for workers to take over the whole lot - big, small, medium, banks, factories, shops - in one go and run them through workers' councils like they did in Russia before Stalin?

"Surely that's a form of nationalisation that will work - and it doesn't rely on a Labour government. Perhaps you could explain further how your plan would work and how people like me would fit in."

Thanks, Sharon Clarke

The editor replies:

THE ARTICLE on monopolies was only short. It aimed to show how just a small number of top companies control the British economy and how nothing can really be done until ownership and control is wrested from the small cliques that run them.

But that is not to deny that working people should fight now for better conditions in the workplace. Sharon Clarke is right that only a "new wave of struggles" leading to unionisation, better pay and conditions can give workers like her in thousands of sweatshops and small businesses around the country a "chance to begin to control our workplaces".

A Labour government that was really implementing socialist policies would not only take over the top companies and banks under democratic workers'

control and management. It would also, in conjunction with the unions, set minimum levels of wages and working conditions for all businesses.

It would support workers' control of every workplace through committees of staff who would direct and run the day-to-day activities of every business, whether publicly or privately owned.

Workers' control

Public ownership of the big monopolies would allow control of the prices that small businesses could charge and the prices of raw materials they bought. In other words their profits would be controlled by the state sector while their working conditions would be subject to their own workers' control, backed up by state laws.

Any small businessman unable to survive or unwilling to continue could

be taken over by the state or offered integration into a co-operative sector, to help with overheads like training and investment.

This programme is similar to the one the Bolsheviks introduced in Russia in 1917. They did not take over all industry, only the larger firms. And they allowed small peasant farmers to take over the land.

Of course the whole operation was directed through the workers' and peasants' councils or soviets. The first steps to socialism require the end of capitalist production for profit in at least the commanding heights of the economy.

This has to be coupled with workers' control of industry and agriculture, so that a socialist plan of production can be worked out and implemented by the workers, together with small business people and farmers.

review

For Queen and slumland

REUBEN, THE film's hero, has just 'hung up his guns', but this is no cowboy story. He was in the British army in Northern Ireland in 1979 where he was nearly killed in an ambush. He served in the Falklands 'campaign' where he saw his best mate get his leg blown off.

And now he's had enough; now he's home....But is this what he was 'defending'? Home is a council estate which is amongst the worst in inner-city Britain.

For *Queen and Country* is the story of a black ex-soldier who tries to get by but finds it an increasingly uphill struggle.

Ironically in social conditions his estate could almost be Belfast. It's wall-to-wall concrete jungle. School kids run riot on the estate because they've nowhere else to go; they take crack because they've nothing else to do and thieve from their neighbours because that's the easiest way to feed their habit.

Unfit for heroes

It's not exactly a home fit for heroes. Reuben joined the army to escape from all this and now he's right back where he

started. Fitting into civilian life isn't as easy as he thought; the credentials of an ex-paratrooper don't seem good enough to get him a job.

The film gives a fair picture of life under the Tories for many working class areas.

Like most films it doesn't try to pose a solution in the fight for survival in these 1980s slums. But that's what *Militant* is here for. The film is worth watching, take your Young Socialists branch to see it.

By Dave Kaplan





Anti-poll tax unions are organising the real mass campaign.

Photo: Militant.

Council unions join up

NORMALLY THERE are only about 12 at Hamilton council's Nupe branch meeting, but this time 35 were there - 29 of them women, mostly school cleaners. A fortnight before, the Nupe full-time official told them it was unconstitutional to affiliate to the Strathclyde federation because the union's policy was against non-payment.

Tommy Sheridan, secretary of Strathclyde Anti-Poll Tax Federation, was invited to speak at the meeting.

"When I'd finished speaking one member asked: 'What is our union's policy?' The chair replied: 'Well, you've just to pay it', Tommy later reported to the federation.

"These women looked at each other after that and said: 'I don't know if I agree with that.' One then moved affiliation and it was unanimously agreed.

"I also spoke to the convenors of Glasgow council's building and works department, representing 4,500 workers. Some said it won't succeed and we have to stick by the 'Stop-it' campaign.

"I pointed out we would support that campaign but we weren't prepared to have a campaign of inaction, we had to have a campaign that meant something to our people. They voted seven-six to affiliate."

SNP hypocrisy exposed

THE SCOTTISH National Party (SNP) scored a spectacular victory in the Govan by-election by campaigning for mass non-payment of the poll tax.

But as *Militant* warned at the time, this was sheer expedient opportunism. Now SNP councillors in Grampian and Tayside regional councils are backing implementation of the poll tax with the same enthusiasm as the Tories.

In Grampian the SNP voted with the Tories and Liberals to directly deduct the poll tax payments from DSS claimants' benefits. So claimants won't even have the chance to decide whether or not to pay.

Councillor Munn, SNP chair of finance, said: "We can make a bad law work efficiently or inefficiently. We intend to make it work efficiently." The SNP also voted for extra money and staff to administer the poll tax

and buy computer equipment.

In Tayside SNP councillors moved a scheme giving a five per cent discount for people who paid their bill in a lump sum. This would merely reduce the tax for the rich, already better off with the poll tax replacing a high rates bill. When Labour councillors opposed the move SNP councillor George Allan heckled that the SNP were here to represent the rich as well!

In brief

THE NEW electoral register in Liverpool shows a dramatic fall in those registering to vote - up to 20 per cent in some wards.

The worst hit wards are in Labour areas, while those in Tory or Liberal areas only lost one or two per cent.

To most Labour party members this is obviously due to working class families who can't afford to pay the poll tax trying to avoid it by staying off the register.

But Labour's official witch hunter, Peter Kilfoyle says the low registration is because of anti-poll tax unions (APTUs) which have been set up by *Militant*. This is a disgraceful slur. APTU members are careful to stress that the Tory and Liberal enemy can be defeated at elections.

By Les Tudor, chair, Norris Green APTU.

"THERE ARE five of us in our house - that means we will be paying a poll

tax bill of £1,200," said a man at a Splott APTU meeting in Cardiff. "We should go to the council meetings and tell them - don't wait for them to come to us", said another. "My son says there is no way he is going to pay. They will have to throw him in jail."

28 people listened to Nupe activist Ann Bennett who argued for a mass campaign of non-payment. The meeting voted unanimously to support the 18 March demo in Glasgow and called on the trades council to organise a local demo and for Labour councillors not to implement the tax.

By Robert Owen, Cardiff Nalgo, personal capacity.

OLDHAM LABOUR councillor Mr Fitzwarren told tenants at an anti-poll tax meeting on the Halt estate that he was quite prepared to do the Tories' dirty work and "if need be send local people to jail".

He told the 45 people at the meet-

ing to wait until the next general election to voice their objections to the poll tax. One unemployed person said that he couldn't wait that long, to which the councillor replied "tough luck".

He said if voters weren't happy with him he was prepared to meet a re-election challenge. This will be taken up by local residents to get a councillor who will fight the Tories.

By Bob Marshall, Oldham.

FIFE BRANCH executive of the Department of Employment CPSA unanimously voted to recommend affiliation to the Fife Federation of Anti-Poll Tax Groups.

The executive agreed to "oppose by whatever means available any attempt to deduct poll tax debts at source from benefits." This solidarity with the unemployed is in return for the solidarity shown by claimants when civil servants have taken industrial action in the past.

A £1,000 levy

"CAN YOU afford £639 a year?" a poster asked the audience of a Tower Hamlets Youth Against the Poll Tax meeting on the Berner estate in East London.

By Tony Cross
Chair, Bow ward Labour Party

Most of the estate's tenants are Bangladeshi and many have suffered racial harassment and attacks. Their housing conditions are appalling and they have been threatened with a Housing Action Trust. Now the government estimates their borough's poll tax - £639 in three years - will be the second highest in England and Wales.

But Matt Wrack, the chair of Bow and Poplar Labour Party, told the meeting that it could reach

a massive £1,000 because the abolition of Ilea will mean the borough will face extra costs for education.

Forty attended the meeting and heard Nancy Taafe from Leyton Labour Party Young Socialists and Terry Sullivan, the deputy leader of the council's Labour group, speak.

Council workers' unions have told the council they are not prepared to risk their members canvassing for the register, Terry told the meeting. The ruling Liberals' response has been to set up a special unit of canvassers.

"Some local authorities have tried to oppose the tax in a stuntish way," he said. "That's a waste of time. I for one will be prepared to break the law to fight the poll tax."

Invest in socialism

BRITAIN IS booming, according to the Tories. For banks and finance companies soaring interest rates have led to record profits.

Last November, consumer borrowing stood at £35.5 billion. Yet a million people had been taken to courts because of debts.

At least one area of growth is in the number of bailiffs. Some bailiffs could earn £750 for one day's work. Their job description reads "levying distress".

With the social security changes, for claimants to replace anything taken by bailiffs means applying for another loan. But some families are so poor that they don't even qualify for a loan.

Militant fights to protect the interests of all workers. We demand the nationalisation of the parasitic banks and finance houses to end the cycle of debt and poverty. If you donate money to *Militant* we'll invest it in a campaign for a socialist society. What better rate of interest could you ask for?

In Southampton at the weekend *Militant* supporters raised £70 selling anti-poll tax stickers and from paper 'extras'. A further £400 was raised at a *Militant* readers' meeting.

In Harlow £37.75 was raised in collecting tins on a street sale. Swansea raised £31.86, Littleton NUM sellers raised £4.50 and Pitsea/Canvey raised

£27.98 from a petition against the poll tax.

Supporters in Edinburgh West raised £30 from a pop quiz. Why not try organising one in your area? £20 was raised at Thames Poly by two students selling our Stop Student Loans stickers, in the run up to this weekend's student demonstration. Make sure you order enough stickers for your area.

Thanks this week to: Mike Petron, a Nalgo low-paid worker from Manchester, £50; £40 from a reader in Bristol; £25 from M Caprioli, a student from Southampton and Bryan Holt, an unemployed reader from Manchester.

By Diane Mitchell

FIGHTING IFUNDI

TARGET £40,000 BY 4 MARCH WEEK 6

This week £1,043

Area	Received	% of target achieved	Target
1 South West	470		1070
2 Wales	941		2650
3 East Midlands	773		2200
4 South East	434		1250
5 Scotland East	486		1700
6 Eastern	459		1700
7 London	1332		6200
8 Scotland West	638		3100
9 Yorkshire	718		3950
10 Manchester/Lancs	485		2700
11 Southern	284		1830
12 Northern	300		2300
13 West Midlands	401		3350
14 Merseyside	532		5000
15 National	730		1000
Total	8,983		40,000

Southampton shows how

THEY STOOD in the shop doorways, waved from offices and flats, cheered and shouted and donated money. Many joined the 400 mainly young marchers on Southampton's anti-poll tax demonstration held by the Southampton Labour Movement Campaign Against the Poll Tax last Saturday.

Three young lads came "for the crack", but ended up carrying the LPYS banner and dealing out hundreds of leaflets.

A woman councillor from Lambeth who was attending Labour's local government conference said: "This is a brilliant demonstration - well done! We should do something like this in Lambeth."

Three women health workers had made their own banner from a sheet which read: "This is the straw that broke the camel's back, Maggie - ex-Conservative voters."

Eight youths turned up from a small Tory-dominated market town nearby. One had done 80 copies of a leaflet he'd received about the demo to give round his college. They eagerly took the banner at

the front of the demo - and sung their own songs against the poll tax. They now want to set up a Labour Party Young Socialist (LPYS) branch in their town.

The response of the local trade union movement has been tremendous. Dockers promised a donation after Tony Coyle, from the Strathclyde Anti-Poll Tax Federation, spoke to their union meeting. Many other workers in the city, including stewards at Vosper's shipbuilders, now want speakers from the anti-poll tax campaign.

One hundred and fifty copies of *Militant* were sold - nearly one for every two people on the demo. Over £700 was raised for the local campaign, the *Militant* fighting fund and to send people on the coach to



Southampton youth marching against the poll tax.

Glasgow. Seventy-eight people signed to go to Glasgow on 18 March.

The demonstration and

the campaign around it has lifted the lid off the anger felt towards the Tories.

"There's no way you can

call this the soft south now! We've shown what can be done and this is just the start," said Peter Metcalf,

secretary of the Southampton Labour Movement Campaign Against the Poll Tax.

YOUTH TRADE UNION RIGHTS CAMPAIGN

YOUTH FIGHT the POLL TAX MEETINGS

YORKSHIRE

Cleethorpes, 23 Feb, 7.30pm, Anti-Poll Tax Union (APTU) Central Library.

Bamsley LPYS, 1 Mar, 7.30pm, Kendray Working Men's Club.

Sheffield, 2 March, 7.30pm, YTURC/Parkwood college NUS, Parkwood college students union, Shirecliffe Rd.

Scunthorpe YTURC, 2 Mar, 7.30pm, Westcliffe community centre, Scunthorpe.

Hull APTF, 6 Mar, 7.30pm, Preston Road community centre, Preston Road.

Hull, 7 Mar, 7.30pm, St Andrews APTU, Constable Street school.

Sheffield, 8 Mar, 7.30pm, Manor APTU, Stop the Poll Tax, Strand House school, Manor estate.

LONDON

Hackney, 28 Feb, 7.30pm, Youth against the Poll Tax, Chat's Palace, Chatsworth Road, Homerton.

Lambeth LPYS, 1 Mar, 7.30pm, Lambeth Town Hall. Speakers: Ron Brown MP, Stuart Holland MP.

Bermondsey, 1 Mar, 7.30pm, YTURC debate with Young Tories, Beormund Centre, Abbey Street, SE1.

Kensington, 2 Mar, 7.30pm, The Clubhouse, Portobello Court, Portobello Road, London W11.

Uxbridge/Hayes, YTURC against the poll tax, 6 Mar, 7.30pm, Labour Hall, Pump Lane.

Dulwich YTURC, 6 Mar, 7.30pm, Albrighton Centre, Dog Kennel Hill.

Acton, 8 Mar, 7.30pm, Acton TU club, Uxbridge Rd, W3

Deptford Against the Poll Tax, 8 Mar, 7.30pm, Trinity tenants hall, Trinity estate, Grove St, SE8

Penge, 11 Mar, 2pm - 5pm, Women against the Poll Tax, Rally for International Womens day,

Beckenham & Penge women's section, Penge East community centre.

Stratford, 15 Mar, 7.30pm, Bryant Street centre, Stratford.

MANCHESTER

Crumpsall against the Poll Tax, 28 Feb, 7.30pm, North Manchester General Hospital social club, Delaunays Road, Crumpsall.

LIVERPOOL

Birkenhead APTU, 15 March, 7.30pm, Birkenhead Town Hall.

WEST MIDLANDS

Oldbury, 24 Feb, 7.30pm, Vote No to HATs, St James' Church Hall, Lions Farm estate.

Oldbury, 7 April, 7.00pm, Lions Farm APTU, 'Burn the registration forms!' St James' Church Hall.

EAST MIDLANDS

Derby, 23 Feb, 7.30pm, main lecture theatre, Kedleston college.

Nottingham, Bulwell and District APTU, 23 Feb, 7.30pm, Alderman Derbyshire school, Bulwell.

Leicester South LPYS debate v Tories, 28 Feb, 7.30pm, Highfields community

centre, Melbourne Road.

Mansfield, 4 Mar, LPYS/Oak Tree Lane Tenants Association, Estate demo.

Nottingham South LPYS, 7 Mar, 7.30pm, Queenswalk Community Centre, The Meadows, Nottingham.

SCOTLAND WEST

Cowglen APTU, 23 Feb, 7.30pm, Househill community centre, Cowglen.

Drumchapel APTU, 23 Feb, 7.30pm, Drumchapel community centre.

Glasgow University APTU, 24 Feb, 12.00am, Glasgow University.

Darnley APTU, 28 Feb, 7.30pm, Darnley community centre.

Anderston APTU, 28 Feb, 7.30pm, Woodside secondary school, Anderson.

Anderston APTU, 1 Mar, 7.30pm, Nairn St school, Anderson.

Belshill APTU, 2 Mar, 7.30pm, Orbiston Community Centre, Belshill.

All Scottish Anti-Poll Tax Unity Conference, 4 Mar, 11.00am, City Halls, Glasgow.

SCOTLAND EAST

Fintree APTU, 27 Feb, 7.30pm, Fintree primary school, Dundee.

Niddrie APTU, 27 Feb, 7.30pm, Greendykes primary school.

Methil APTU, 27 Feb, 7.30pm, Methil community centre, Fife. Speaker: P. Luke (Fife Federation).

Dundee, 11 Mar, 1.00pm, Youth against the Poll Tax, Lesser Caird Hall, City square, Dundee.

Dalkeith APTU, 20 Mar, 7.00pm, Arts Centre, Dalkeith. Speaker: Clr Keith Simpson.

WALES

Swansea, 28 Feb, Castle APTU, Vincent St school, Swansea.

Swansea, 7 Mar, 7.30 pm, All Wales Anti-poll tax meeting, POEU club, Swansea.

NORTHERN

Newcastle College Labour club, 24 Feb, 12.00, Room 342, Parsons Building. Debate Collette Williams v chair Gateshead Conservative Party.

Gateshead, 27 Feb, 7.30pm, Bluebell pub, Felling Square.

Wallsend APTU/Northumbria YTURC, 27 Feb, 7.30pm, Wallsend Town Hall.

Newcastle East YTURC, 1 Mar, 7.30pm, Lightfoot Sports Centre.

South Shields, South Tyneside Against the Poll Tax, 2 Mar, 7.30pm Smugglers Arms, South Shields.

Blyth, 6 Mar, 7.30pm, Fight the Poll Tax, Fight the Housing Bill. YMCA, Waterloo Road.

Gateshead YTURC/LPYS, Mar 7, Wrekenton community centre, Gateshead.

Wallsend APTU/Northumbria YTURC, 8 Mar, 7.30pm, debate v Tories, Wallsend Town Hall.

EASTERN

Watford LPYS, 1 Mar, 7.45pm, Fight The Poll Tax, Co-op Hall, St Albans Road.

Harlow Anti Poll Tax Campaign estate meetings: 1 Mar, Little Parndon estate; 15 Mar, Passmores estate.

SOUTH WEST

Plymouth YTURC, 8 Mar, 7.30pm, Devonport Guildhall, Plymouth.

Exeter Anti-Poll Tax Campaign, 1 Mar, 7.30pm, Speaker: Pat Wall. Music Room, Exeter library.

Bristol, Mar 8, 7.30pm, Debate with Tories, Bishopston APTU, Friends Meeting House, Gloucester Road, Horfield.

WHERE TO FIND US

For details of *Militant* meetings contact: areas

SOUTH WEST 0272 631471

LEEDS 19 Feb, 7.30pm, 'Boomtown Leeds?', Rising Sun pub, Leeds.

MANCHESTER/LANCS Mike Johnson - 061 273 8648

WALES 0222 736682

MERSEYSIDE Richard Venton - 051 260 3111

HAMPSHIRE/THAMES VALLEY 0703 4222841

SOUTHAMPTON 18 Feb, 7.00pm. Speaker Rob Sewell, Main Hall, Southampton Art College.

EAST MIDLANDS Andy Jackson - 0602 423001

NORTHERN Bill Hopwood - 091 276 1736

HULL 31 Mar, 7.30pm. Speaker: Peter Taaffe (Editor *Militant*), Callis Waudby Dance Hall, Ferensway, (Next to YEB), Hull.

DOVER 20 Feb, 7.30pm. Cherry Tree pub.

WEST MIDLANDS Bill Mullins - 021 552 7624

LONDON George Roberts - 01 739 9123

ISLINGTON 9 Mar, 7.30pm, Red Rose Club, near Finsbury Park tube.

STRATHCLYDE 041 221 1443

EDINBURGH 031 661 4078

EASTERN Theresa MacKay - 0473 713179

SELL *Militant*

RECORD SALES of *Militant's* special youth issue were made on days of action last weekend - part of the build up for the 18 March anti-poll tax demonstration in Glasgow.

Sellers at Newcastle's Monument sold 120 copies, breaking their previous record. They also raised £53 fighting fund. After signing the petition against the poll tax, three young women came back to the stall and asked if they could help with the campaign. They started collecting signatures

straightaway.

In Hackney, east London, 97 copies were sold on the streets in just one day. Some sellers went to knock up the flats to explain the campaign. Some of the black youth on the estate recognised one of our sellers for his part in producing the video *Living on the Welfare Estate* (reviewed in *Militant*) which was based on life in Clapton Park.

One woman, a single parent with two children thought the poll tax was the final straw. "It's about time I joined something to help people like myself fight this. I'll definitely be coming to your meeting!"

Sellers in Liverpool converged on the city centre, selling 92 papers and signing up dozens of people for the Labour Party Young

Socialists.

In Glasgow, sellers sold 50 papers in Castlemilk and at Easterhouse shops supporters sold out after selling 32 *Militants* in 45 minutes. Forty were sold in Pollok shopping centre on Friday night. Sellers there report they sell 30-40 every week in The Cart pub!

Sixty-nine copies were sold across Edinburgh - 48 on a housing scheme in Pilton and 40 on a student demonstration.

Our youth feature on the poll tax has been so popular that we've run extra copies. Sellers are going to wrap it round current issues in the sales drive in the colleges and for anti-poll tax activity. Order your extra copies from the circulation department.

BECOME A *Militant* SUPPORTER

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

I wish to become a *Militant* supporter:

Name

Address

Tel

Send to: *Militant*, 3/13 Hepscoot Road, E9 5HB or telephone 01 533 3311 NOW!

Youth

YOUTH TRADE UNION RIGHTS CAMPAIGN
YOUTH FIGHT
the
POLL TAX
DEMONSTRATION: GLASGOW, MARCH 18th
campaign
COUNTDOWN

DAYS
TO
23
GO!

LPYS DEBATE WITH THE YOUNG TORIES

BEINGS FROM ANOTHER PLANET

IT WAS a very unequal match when the Labour Party Young Socialists (LPYS) debated with the Young Tories in Liverpool on 6 February. There was laughter when someone heckled the Tory speaker, councillor Steve Fitzsimmons.

"Do you really come from Liverpool?" he shouted. The Tory might as well have been on another planet for all he knew of local people.

Over 100 people, many of them new to our meetings, came and showed their opposition to the Tory poll tax. They laughed when Fitzsimmons told them that the Tories would win control of Liverpool council and that he would be leader. But, to be fair, so did he.

When this golden (or blue?) dawn came his party would reduce the city's poll tax by half, he claimed. "Oh yeah, what about our services?" someone shouted.

People were asking questions about his sanity as he admitted that his family would pay double their present rates under the new system.

Fitzsimmons admitted before the start that "we are not as well organised amongst the youth as you".

This is true. When chair Mike Morris asked for anyone from the floor to speak for the poll tax, not one volunteer came forward. At the end, only one person voted for the poll tax. That was the Tory councillor!

A collection raised £23 and ten people signed up for the LPYS. We will hold a debate every month in Liverpool from now on. The LPYS in other areas should try and coax the Tories into the real world to face them



Photo: Andrew Moore/Reflex

Above: Young Tories at their 1988 conference. This year's in Southport was a relatively restrained affair with only two recorded instances of physical violence. Socialism is "a filthy, disgusting perversion," one delegate told the conference, adding that he and his friends are "the pure".

Rumour has it they steal Rik Mayall scripts for their speeches. So why not get the little B'stards along to debate with your LPYS branch?

in debate. 110 people in Melrose, Walton, got a shock from a right-wing Labour councillor at a meeting jointly organised by their anti-poll

tax union and the LPYS. "I'm not going to tell you not to pay the poll tax," councillor Gary Booth told them. There was a stunned silence for several min-

utes. Then someone shouted "We didn't bloody well elect you to do their dirty work!" and there was uproar. In the end 33 Militants

were sold and eight people said they wanted to go to the 18 March demo. By a Liverpool Young Socialist.

Rother Revolution

"IF WE all refuse to buy ID cards there will be uproar! There will be a revolution! Let's have a revolution!"

This wasn't a speech at a Militant meeting but the last contribution from the floor at a meeting called by Rotherham United supporters' club. Sixty people were there to discuss football ID cards. And the local Youth Trades Union Rights Campaign was invited to meet a supporters' club official to discuss campaigning afterwards.

Speakers included club officials, a Tory councillor and Labour MP Kevin Barron.

The club officials were aware that ID would have dire consequences for a small club like Rotherham. But they were very sceptical that the scheme can be stopped.

The Tory came out with the usual rubbish that crowd violence is rising and ID cards are the only remedy.

Kevin Barron pointed out that there were 1,700 arrests at horse racing last year, 600 in Ascot week alone. Although Luton Town, where cards have been introduced, only had one arrest in the ground last year, arrests for violence in the town centre rose by more than in any other Bedfordshire town or village.

He said that if the computer didn't work he would support someone illegally pressing a button to allow fans entry. But when we asked him if he would support illegal action against the poll tax, he remained silent.

By a Rotherham YTURC member

FELS CONFERENCE REPORT

FE voice for NUS exec

THE FURTHER Education Labour Students (Fels) conference on 11-12 February agreed to support Cheryl Varley and Andrea Enisuoh as candidates for the NUS executive.

This was the organisation's fifth annual conference and was attended by students from over 30 colleges. It ended in enthusiasm as student activists agreed a target of 100 Fels members to attend NUS Conference as delegates.

The conference was one of the most serious yet. Every student there knew that a battle had to be

waged against the Tories' attacks and that the future of education hinged on it.

During the discussion on student loans, guest speaker Terry Fields MP and Colette Williams, a Fels member on the NUS executive, called on students to build links with workers during the campaign.

It is not enough to organise student action alone, Colette said. "NUS has over 1.5 million members, it is the biggest union of youth in Europe and the second biggest union in Britain. The TUC organise over 10 million workers.

Joined together this force would stop the Tories in their tracks."

Colette explained how she had been arguing for a 24-hour education strike of all education trade unions to show the government that students had the workers' support.

"I have five children," said Cath Rafferty from Manchester. "Loans would mean that I would have to pick and choose which one of my children could go into education. I have five good reasons why loans must not be introduced." The conference overwhelmingly

gave support for the demonstration against the poll tax in Glasgow on 18 March.

"The campaign against the poll tax must start now!" said Andrea Enisuoh. "Students in Manchester will have to pay at least £60 if it is introduced. 18 March must be seen as the beginning of the campaign in England and Wales."

At the Militant readers' meeting over £150 was raised after £160 had already been raised for Fels's funds.

By a conference delegate

Iran 1979 - 1989

THE ABORTED REVOLUTION

FAHRA FARHANG Rusta was arrested at 12 and executed at 19. Ayatollah Khomeini's orders to end the prison murders, even if implemented, will make no difference to him nor to the estimated 12,000 others butchered in Iran's prisons since July. It is now ten years since the revolution which toppled the Shah, ending one of the most repressive regimes in the world. Yet similar atrocities are being perpetrated by those who came to power following the revolution. The victims are often the same socialists and radicals who opposed the Shah. Why?

Revolution

THE MOVEMENT against the Shah marked the re-entry into history of the Iranian working class. In particular, the strike of the oil workers in September 1978 gave numerous other sections of workers the confidence to come out. The movement became, in effect, a massive general strike that lasted several weeks.

Emboldened by the movement of the industrial workers, other downtrodden layers of society, the peasants, the students and even the middle class, poured onto the streets. Demonstrations of millions split the armed forces and left the Shah defenceless.

Only the working class can carry through a healthy socialist transformation of society through the establishment of a regime of workers' democracy. To succeed in this task, however, conscious Marxist leadership is necessary.

In Iran in 1979 power was within reach of the working class. But it did not have the means to consolidate this power because it lacked a genuine Marxist party.

The Tudeh (Communist Party) had long been committed to the 'two-stage' theory of Stalinism: 'first' the struggle must be for 'democracy' on a capitalist basis, and only then can the struggle against capitalism be on the agenda. This false approach had actually led them to support the Shah as a 'progressive' up until just before his overthrow on the pretext that he was bringing modern capitalism to Iran!

The mujaheddin and the fedayin, basing themselves on the experience of guerrilla struggle in other Third-World countries, built a movement based on the peasantry. They lost out because the working class played the dominant role in the Iranian revolution.

Thus, in the absence of a revolutionary party of the workers, it was the mullahs (Islamic clergy) who stepped into the political vacuum at the head of the revolution. This was reinforced when the Tudeh opportunistically switched to support for Khomeini as his popularity increased.

The mullahs were bitterly hostile to the Shah's regime because they saw it as an agent of Western influences that would undermine Islam. In the absence of an effective socialist alternative, ironically, this conservative standpoint found an echo among the anti-imperialist mood of the masses. The clergy, in a society of mass illiteracy, increasingly became spokesmen against the Shah and turned the mosques into focal points for political opposition.

In spite of its leadership the revolution placed the tasks of socialist transformation on the order of the day. Most of the capitalists close to the Shah fled with him into exile. The working class took over the factories which the capitalists had abandoned. Under these conditions the mullahs were forced to take nearly all of modern manufactur-

ing into state control.

Had the revolution continued sections of the mullahs could have come under overwhelming pressure to make deeper inroads into capitalism and landlordism, possibly even to the extent of overthrowing it and establishing a workers' state in a hideously distorted form.

Revolution however, a thousand times more than a strike, is an enormous devourer of human energy. After months of struggle, without clear leadership and disoriented by the religious reactionaries at the head of the movement, the masses began to tire.

To understand the developments that followed it is necessary to be clear as to the nature of the regime created by the mullahs and social forces it depended on.

The 'bazaar capitalists' (the merchants and the smaller businessmen and manufacturers) had not fled at the time of the Shah's overthrow. They were less associated with foreign capital and the world economy, even though the 'bazaar' accounts for two thirds of wholesale trade in Iran and even more of retail. Socially and politically the bazaar capitalists were closer to the traditional middle class.

It is these layers in society, together with the peasantry, who have provided the mullahs with their main support. It is their interests and outlook, in conflict with the 'modernising' influence of big business, which have been translated into the peculiar mixture of extreme conservatism and xenophobic religious fanaticism of the Iranian regime.

While clashing with imperialism in many respects, the bazaar capitalists in no way stood for the overthrow of capitalism. Their aim was, if anything, to develop the capitalist economy under their own control. This made them, and those mullahs under their influence, hostile to the demands and struggle of the workers.

Thus, as the revolution ebbed, the regime began a gradual process of counter-revolution depriving the workers of their newly-won gains.

Under pressure from below, the regime's underlying policies were disguised with anti-imperialist and religious demagoguery. The seizure of the US embassy in Tehran in November 1979 by close associates of the regime was skillfully used to whip up anti-imperialist feelings and deflect the attention of the masses from the erosion of their rights and living standards.

However, the net effect of Khomeini's policies was to smash independent working-class organisation and rebuild an environment for capitalist growth. This in turn led to increasing pressure for re-opening the economy to the world market.

A regime of this nature, ruling by military police methods while balancing between the different classes in society, Marxists characterise as 'bonapartist'.

War

THE IRAQI invasion in September 1980 was also exploited by the regime to bolster its image as defender of the revolution.

War, in the famous words of the Prussian general Clausewitz, is the continuation of politics by other means. Iraq's dictatorial regime launched the invasion because they feared the contagious effect of Khomeini's fundamentalist propaganda among the Shi'ite Muslim majority in Iraq, who form the more exploited layers of the population.

Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein miscalculated that Iran would be militarily weak because of the upheaval in the armed forces as a result of the revolution. A quick victory, he hoped, would enable him to grab the Shatt al-Arab waterway (in dispute since the last century) and win the regime at least some temporary prestige.

For its part, US imperialism was undoubtedly sympathetic to war against Iran. The Iranian revolution formed the most serious threat to its interests in the region at this stage - most immediately, to the pro-US rulers of the Gulf states controlling much of the world's oil supplies.

But Hussein had failed to understand that the Iranian masses would rally to defend the revolution against imperialist aggression. Initially they were prepared to make tremendous sacrifices, eagerly volunteering for the front in their thousands. Thus the speedy victory Hussein bargained for became a deadly stalemate.

But, as the war progressed, the mood in Iran was turned into its opposite. Prolonged war can under certain conditions put the existing social order under acute strain. It hardens the masses, stirring up the consciousness of even the least developed sections.

It makes enormous demands on the economy, while whole towns and industries are devastated. The longer it continues, the more the old order is threatened with disintegration.

In Iran, out of a population of 51 million, a million were killed and 630,000 permanently disabled. Each year the equivalent of ten years' oil income was destroyed. The masses were reduced to starvation levels.

As in many countries during the world wars, weariness set in and resistance to the war began to develop. Sections of the working class started taking industrial action against being press-ganged to the front.

Even in the villages a mood of defiance developed. Peasants hid their sons and fought with conscription officials to prevent them being drafted.

There were strikes and demonstrations in the closing stages of the war. In Moghan last April the whole town came out to protest against the removal of

By Phil Hutchinson

essential equipment from their clinic. When the leaders were arrested and troops sent in, unarmed workers disarmed the soldiers, forced the release of their leaders and arrested the town's officials.

Women in Tehran demonstrated furiously against the disruption of water supplies and when the local mayor turned up to placate them they threw him off the platform!

Splits

BY EARLY 1987 it was clear that the Iraqi regime, beset with its own difficulties, was incapable of completely defeating Iran. This was one reason why the imperialist powers sent their navies to the Gulf.

However, with Iranian morale deteriorating it became apparent to certain army commanders, to sections of the capitalist class and even to the more perceptive mullahs that they, too, could not win the war.

A split developed within the regime over the question of whether and how to extricate themselves from the war. Fanatical exhortations to further butchery fell on deaf ears. No 'final offensive' could be mustered. The troops were becoming hostile to further orders for battle.

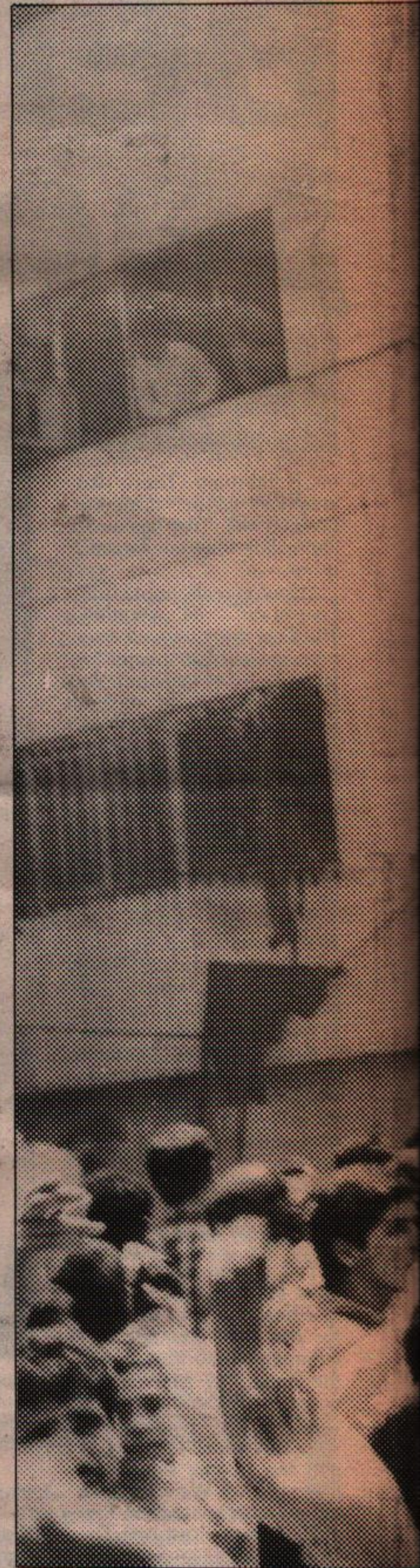
Soldiers returning from the front in the last few weeks of the war reported fraternisation between Iranian and Iraqi soldiers, with exchanges of drinks and gifts in 'no man's land'. It was not the pacifists' appeals nor the diplomats' 'initiatives' but the growing opposition of ordinary working people in and out of uniform to continue the slaughter which ended it.

The aftermath of the war

THE END of the war brought bedlam to Iranian markets. Businessmen were imprisoned for bad debts and put in intensive care for heart attacks on hearing of the cease-fire. "Thousands who had staked everything on the continuation of the war have still not recovered from the shock of peace", a Tehran businessman explained.

At the same time bankers and foreign capitalists began sweeping in to pick up contracts for repairing the war damage, estimated at \$400m. Thatcher and the Tory government, greedy for this lucrative market, are quite prepared to overlook the Ayatollah's mass murders despite their much-vaunted 'concern' for human rights in Nicaragua and Afghanistan.

US imperialism raked in profits throughout the war by selling



One of the hundreds of demonstrations

arms to both sides, whilst of course denying this publicly. Despite its hostility towards the Iranian regime, the US had no wish to see Iraq strengthened by victory as this would have increased the pressure on Israel, the US's most important ally in the region.

Even during the war the US was attempting to bolster the 'moderate' (i.e. more openly capitalist) section of the Iranian regime. The Irangate scandal revealed that from 1985 onwards they were in contact with senior Iranian leaders, trading arms for hostages.

With the end of the war the US shifted more openly towards improving relations with Iran while moving further away from Iraq.

The Iranian regime has been wracked with splits by the conflict.

EVOLUTION



on the streets of Tehran.

Photo: Moradabadi/Reflex.



Iran's notorious 'human wave' tactic: throwing thousands of youth with little training and few weapons against the Iraqi lines to act as human minesweepers and try to overwhelm the enemy by sheer numbers.

Workers' anger

INEVITABLY THE split in the regime is deepening the ferment among the masses and emboldening the workers. Despite the government's attempt to strangle opposition, it is being forced by mass pressure to legalise opposition parties.

Eighteen parties have applied to register under these new proposals. In addition there is the Freedom Movement under the leadership of Bazargan who had opposed the Shah and is associated in the minds of the masses with the first period of the revolution when democratic freedoms still existed.

The Mujaheddin, whose membership ran into hundreds of thousands in 1979, have lost their mass base since their leadership fled to Iraq and fought on the Iraqi side in the last stages of the war.

The mullahs are terrified of growing mass discontent as a result of the brutality and hardship of the war. Workers are demanding compensation for eight years of sacrifice. There have been wage strikes in industry and in the brickyards, where demand is up because of reconstruction, and demonstrations in Tehran against bus fare increases.

The reign of terror in the

prisons was a consequence of the panic within the regime. It struck out pre-emptively at any possible focus of opposition — especially political prisoners for whose release it fears a campaign may develop.

Mujaheddin leaders have been executed as well as religious and military leaders who have criticised the war or the regime. Kurdish groups, religious dissenters and thousands of youth identified with socialist or other opposition ideas have been butchered.

Despite the Tudeh's support for Khomeini's dictatorship, even after the banning of its newspaper, virtually its entire leadership has now been wiped out. Prisoners who were released after recanting their views have been re-arrested and murdered.

Up to 80,000 have been murdered since 1981. Of the bodies which have been found many show the marks of severe torture. Teenage girls have been raped by prison guards to get round an Islamic law prohibiting the execution of virgins.

Khomeini's apparent halting of the killings, far from being a humane gesture, reflects the fact that vast numbers of the regime's known opponents are now dead. But some reports suggest the killings still continue.

New Period

THE SHIFT within the regime has helped the capitalist class to largely recover from the onslaught of the revolution. Enriched by the war, it is now preparing to create a better climate for trade.

The hypocritical publicity around the ending of the prison murders is part of an attempt to 'clean up' its image. Concomitantly the regime needs to be purged of its anti-capitalist and anti-imperialist demagogues.

Inevitably such changes will entail political upheaval. It could result in the downfall of the regime at a certain stage and its replacement by a regime including lay politicians such as Bazargan or even sections of the military.

However, on a capitalist basis any new regime, despite cosmetic trimmings of democracy, would lean heavily on military-police methods to repress the workers' organisations.

Ten years after the revolution none of the problems of Iranian society have been tackled. Industry is operating at 30 per cent capacity while capitalists speculate rather than invest.

There have been massive redundancies in manufacturing due to lack of funds for machinery and materials. Two million workers were sacked in

1987 alone. Unemployment is estimated at 5-6 million, though official figures put it much lower. Another two million in war-linked jobs will soon be added to the unemployed.

Iran has the youngest population in the world, with 45 per cent of the population under 15 — an explosive ingredient for the future. Yet in 1986 and 1987 together only 110,000 new jobs were created. Inflation stood at 30 per cent in 1988. Workers queue for food and towns are blacked out.

The working class has come through the horrors of counter-revolution. But with the onset of peace a new prospect opens up.

The workers' fighting capacity has not been crushed despite the repression of the last decade. As the economy is rebuilt even partially the workers will have the opportunity to go onto the offensive again.

From illusions in religion and nationalism the youth are prepared to look for new ideas. Within the generation of workers and youth that will come to the fore, the forces can be developed for a leadership based on the ideas of Marxism that will carry Iran's revolution towards the accomplishment of its tasks.

ting class pressures upon it. Rafsanjani, speaker of the majlis (parliament), has emerged as a skilful manoeuvrer, blending radical demagoguery with encouraging the capitalist class.

US agents have worked through those around Rafsanjani, whose prestige they sought to boost since they saw him as a possible lever with which to begin to bring the regime towards a more pro-western position. In his inaugural speech US President Bush strongly hinted that he was prepared to do a deal with the Iranian regime in return for hostages.

Khomeini, a grotesque Bonaparte, has distanced himself from the immediate conflicts in the regime whilst giving Rafsanjani his blessing. Khomeini and Rafsanjani have attempted to bolster their position by con-

solidating more and more power in the hands of the presidency.

Argument has been raging since the end of the war about whether to increase state ownership or whether to bolster capitalism by further privatisation and a partial re-opening of the country to imperialism.

Prime Minister Mousavi has been demagogically playing on the mood amongst workers for the continuation of the revolution through more sweeping measures of state control. He has been denounced by Khomeini and Rafsanjani.

Even Ayatollah Montazeri, who has been very close to Khomeini in the past, has fiercely criticised the prison murders. This shows how each would-be successor to the dying Khomeini is prepared to pay lip service to

the hopes of the masses.

On the other flank are the extreme conservative section of the mullahs reflecting the most backward strata of society. They have attempted to block land reform and other revolutionary steps while also opposing all western influences. They have become increasingly isolated, particularly with the ignominious end to the war which they clung to.

Despite the blatant lack of political freedom these issues will come to the surface in next September's presidential elections. Every intelligent representative of the ruling class is searching for a way of rebuilding the economy as further austerity will guarantee social upheavals. But no permanent solution to the problems is possible on a capitalist basis.

Why the UNP won

Election results

United National Party (UNP, ruling capitalist party): 125 seats (50.7 per cent of the vote)

Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP, opposition capitalist party): 67 seats

United Socialist Alliance (USA, made up of four left parties - Sri Lanka Mahajana Party (SLMP), Communist Party of Sri Lanka (CPSL), Lanka Sama Samaja Party (LSSP) and Nava Sama Samaja Party (NSSP)): three seats (2.9 per cent of the vote, compared with 4.6 per cent in the December 1988 presidential election and 5.5 per cent for the left in the 1977 general election)

Turnout: 64 per cent (86 per cent in 1977)

WHY WAS Sri Lanka's reactionary UNP government returned to power in the elections of 15 February?

There were a number of reasons. In the first place its promise of a 2,500 rupee (£40) monthly 'poverty alleviation allowance' (double the manual wage) made a big impact among the 1.4m families (half the population) entitled to it.

By Mukesh Moorthy

In addition the UNP's alliance with the tea estate workers' union, the Ceylon Workers' Congress, won it at least 500,000 votes. Premadasa demagogically appealed to the poor on the basis of his low-caste humble origins (though he and his ministers live like millionaires).

Last but not least, Premadasa hypocritically called for the withdrawal of the Indian Peace-Keeping Force (IPKF) which was brought into the country by his own UNP government to implement the Accord signed between India and Sri Lanka in July 1987.

Moreover the UNP possessed all the advantages of state power and patronage to intimidate and bribe itself back to power.

As in December the election boycott by the Sinhala nationalist Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP) and Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), enforced through terror, prevented significant numbers from voting in anti-UNP areas. With the JVP and LTTE, the Indian and Sri Lankan armies and various militias engaged in terror and counter-terror, the UNP itself used the opportunity to terrorise its opponents.

The utter bankruptcy of the opposition SLFP leadership was revealed as they switched their position half a dozen times in the course of the last year. In last year's provincial council election campaign they supported the terrorist boycott of the JVP against the left parties and the UNP. But in the elections they saw their supporters being killed and victory denied by their erstwhile 'patriotic' partner.

In the presidential elections the SLFP supported the idea of a Tamil homeland to win Tamil votes. Two months later it dropped this from its programme.

Following the Presidential election victory for the UNP's Premadasa the SLFP alliance has splintered into pieces. As a result, at least 20 different parties in various alliances contested the elections.

THE PARLIAMENTARY representation of the 'left' has gone up from one to three seats because of the low cut-off point of 5 per cent needed to win a seat under the proportional representation system.

Because of his record as a class fighter NSSP leader Vasudeva Nanayakkara was elected.

However, in last week's election the combined national vote of the four left parties collapsed to an all-time low of 160,000 (2.9 per cent). Compare this with over 600,000 votes and 25 seats won by the LSSP and the CPSL alone in 1970!

Why has support for the left parties sunk to such an abysmal level following 11 years of the most repressive government in Sri Lankan history?

The main factor was the left leaders' support for the Indo-Lanka Accord and lack of opposition to the UNP. The purpose of the Accord was to defeat the Tamil liberation struggle, defend the UNP government and further establish Indian might in the region.

The biggest mistake of the left leaders was their support for the reactionary Indo-Lanka Accord

The Indian army came in the guise of a 'liberating army' to implement this reactionary accord. The left leaders bravely opposed the chauvinism of the Sinhalese nationalists in the JVP and SLFP, but fell victim to the illusion that the Accord could bring peace and solve the national question.

In fact the Indian army's 'implementation' of the Accord amounted to flattening all Tamil resistance. Only a few weeks ago unarmed Tamil students demonstrating against the Indian occupation were fired upon and four killed.

The IPKF is viewed as a foreign army of occupation. That is why even Premadasa hypocritically campaigned for their return. Ironically, only the left leaders were seen to support their presence!

In 1987-88, when UNP unions and party branches were visibly crumbling, the USA could have generated big support inside and



(Top) After the election setback Sri Lankan workers face hard battles on the industrial front. (Above) Indian troops with weapons captured from Tamil guerrillas.

outside parliament if it had organised a class-based, anti-racist opposition to the UNP's policies and the role of the IPKF.

Unfortunately this was not done.

The price for supporting the Accord has been paid in the virtual annihilation of the left in the elections. In the industrialised Colombo district the left got 31,000 out of over one million votes - less than a small Sinhala nationalist party (MEP) which had opposed the Accord and won 76,000 votes.

The SLMP, mistakenly characterised by some of the left leaders as the 'major workers' party', failed to win a single seat. These results completely refute those left leaders who had argued that a 'post-February situation' (revolutionary situation similar to that in Russia after February 1917) existed in the country.

In fact, only because of the failure of the left leaders did support for the JVP and its virulent nationalist opposition to the Indo-Lanka Accord begin to mushroom.

The Marxists should have argued for a change in the position of the USA, to break their indirect alliance with the UNP regime, end the support for the reactionary Accord and campaign for consistent agitation and struggle against Premadasa's regime. Had they done so they would have attracted the workers and peasants as well as youth and students who have turned to the JVP.

tionary Liberation Front (EPR-LF) won 10 seats while the more anti-Indian 'independent' list of candidates (which included some Tamil Tiger supporters) won 13. The Muslim Congress, also opposing the Accord, won a further three seats - in all, a clear rebuff for India's attempt at regional domination.

This situation shows the futility of placing false hopes in the capitalist Accord to solve the national question. Only a socialist programme guaranteeing full democratic rights could unify the oppressed masses of all communities.

THE CAPITALIST state cannot for long tolerate JVP guerrillaism. The JVP will portray the UNP as a puppet regime of India and capitalise on the national antagonisms in the East while raising social demands in the South.

At present the JVP's terrorist methods are very unpopular. However, failure by the left to wage serious opposition to the UNP could lead to a future revival in JVP support.

If the JVP refuse to surrender the government will try to destroy them. That is why, despite his anti-Indian rhetoric, Premadasa will not be able to remove the 40,000 Indian troops from the island. He will need them to control the North while dealing with the JVP in the South.

The lessons of a decade of UNP rule are clear. The UNP has remained in power by exploiting the national question and keeping the opposition divided along national lines. At the same time it has given concessions and leaned for support on either the working-class parties or sections of the Tamils.

On this basis it has instituted a constitutional dictatorship and aimed brutal repression at the isolated outbreaks of class and nationalist opposition that have taken place.

The United Socialist Alliance leaders must end their support, direct or indirect, for the policies of the capitalist Sri Lankan and Indian governments on the national question. The SLFP has fundamentally the same policies as the UNP. There can be no return to the failed policy of alliances with this party.

If the USA continues with its mistaken policies it will break up at a certain stage. The NSSP should fight for a united front of the working class on Marxist policies without giving any concessions to foreign or native capital.

The effect of the election defeat on the masses will soon wear off. In the volatile political climate of Sri Lanka big opposition will develop against Premadasa on the economic and national issues.

Following their electoral defeat workers will move into struggle on the trade union front. The Marxists should campaign for full and immediate implementation of the 2,500 rupee pledge, abolition of the water tax and of peasants' debts. They should fight for trade union unity, defence against the government's attacks on democratic rights, autonomous rights and self-determination for the national minorities. On this basis it will be possible to rebuild a mass workers' and peasants' movement against capitalism and landlordism.

POVERTY, PUNDERDEVELOPMENT, imperialist exploitation and the national question - none of these problems can be solved by the incoming government.

The poor will be eagerly anticipating the 2,500 rupee allowance they have been promised. In the election campaign Premadasa cunningly argued that he needed a two-thirds majority to implement this reform. Having failed to achieve this the UNP may try and wriggle out of it.

According to the *Economist* magazine, full implementation of this reform would consume between 50-100 per cent of the government's entire revenue! Therefore Premadasa will, at best, only partially and temporarily implement it; and even then it would only be possible at the expense of other sections of working people.

Eventually Premadasa may resort to printing money to pay for his reforms. This would fuel inflation and wipe out the real value of the allowance.

The biggest headache for Premadasa remains the national question, which is completely insoluble under capitalism. In the Tamil and Muslim north and east the capitalist Sinhala-based parties failed to win a single seat.

The contest in the Tamil areas was between the pro- and anti-IPKF Tamil groupings. The pro-Indian alliance of the Tamil United Liberation Front (TULF) and the Eelam Peoples Revolu-

Police harass black families

THE MULBERRY housing co-op in Waterloo was to be a 'new start' for the families who moved there last year – from run-down, overcrowded conditions to brand new, spacious houses with gardens and a play area. But four black families have had no hope of enjoying their new homes. They have been subjected to systematic harassment by the police. Sandra Johnson told *Militant* what happened:



Photo: Militant.

ON THE very night we moved into the house my son Kelvin was sitting outside by the dustbin chute when three police officers came along in a car. One asked what he was doing. When he replied 'nothing' he was told not to get lippy. Then they started to shout abuse at him.

I came out and told the officers that we'd just moved in. One snapped back: "I didn't know any blacks lived around here. I thought he might be breaking in".

One evening a neighbour knocked at the door to tell me that three black youths had just been arrested. She thought one of them was my son.

I rushed out and saw a police van. Some officers were showing Kelvin and his friend Patrick into the back. I shouted out that one of them was my son. They acknowledged that they had heard me but just got into the van and drove off.

Apparently someone had broken into a car and the boys were picked up for being on the other side of the road. My son told me later he was arrested as he left the shop with a portion of chips. He'd pleaded with them to verify his story with his mother – he still wasn't 18.

Then about six weeks ago, Kelvin went with Patrick and two other friends, Carl and Julian, to McDonalds in East Street. Two hours later I heard Kelvin banging on the door and shouting: "They're after me!"

As I let him in, I saw five policemen coming towards me. There were four cars and two vans, with more police parked outside the house.

One said they wanted to speak to the boy who'd walked in. I told the officer that he was not 18 so they'd have to speak to me as I was his mother.

"You might not be. You could be his girlfriend, his lover or his sister," was his reply.

They insisted on taking Kelvin for questioning. My husband was not in so I locked my kids in the house and walked round to get a neighbour. The officers stayed outside my front door.

Police vans

Before I could get far I saw Carl's father coming towards the house. He was coming to use the phone because they were also after his son. We noticed a further two police vans parked outside Julian's house.

The police told us that somebody had been mugged. They had the lady at the station and were waiting for a description of her assailant. After standing around about 40 minutes I heard the description coming through on the walkie-talkie. They wanted to arrest my son on the basis that the assailants were supposed to have had "short curly hair". Half the black population could fit that description.

We hadn't had time to forget about this incident when there was another when Kelvin and Carl went out to do some shopping. As they left the shop two police cars drove up with three policemen in each. Fifteen year-old Carl was handcuffed and thrown in one car and Kelvin roughed up and put in the other. Whilst in custody the police took

the boys' photocards from their bus passes and said they'd have to go on an identity parade. We have never heard anything about this since, nor had the photos back.

Now we just don't know when they're going to turn up. It is four families that they have picked on – the only black families on the co-op with teenage boys.

People think that just because we've had the police on our doorstep my son must be a criminal. This has had a terrible effect on our family. My little ones know so much about the police. Some other parents tell their kids not to play with them. When their own kids get older they'll soon realise what it's like.

My son just won't go out late any more. He told me: "I can't take the hassle." They've resorted to going to a club in Peckham now that ends at 7pm. Most of the time they stay in and watch videos.

Recently they wanted to bring in Neighbourhood Watch round here but we managed to stop it. I've experienced it before on an estate in Stockwell. The yuppies who moved into the Georgian houses nearby brought it in.

What it meant for us was that my son couldn't go down our street without being stopped four times. That was one of the reasons I wanted to move here.

My daughter's leaving us to go and live with her aunt in Brixton. She hates it here now. She's always got top marks in her exams but she did very badly in her mocks recently. If I needed help I would never turn to the police. 9

Palestinian socialist on trial

Free



Mahmoud Masarwa

THE TRIAL of Mahmoud Masarwa is due to begin on 26 February. He is a Palestinian socialist trade unionist from Israel, who has fought against the oppression of the Palestinian people. But he opposes individual terrorism and advocates the unity of Arab and Jewish workers.

In May 1988 he played a leading role in a strike of mainly Jewish drivers at a Tel Aviv cement works. Workers threatened another strike when management tried to sack him. He was arrested on 18 July 1988, two days before he was due to visit Britain as a guest of Labour MPs.

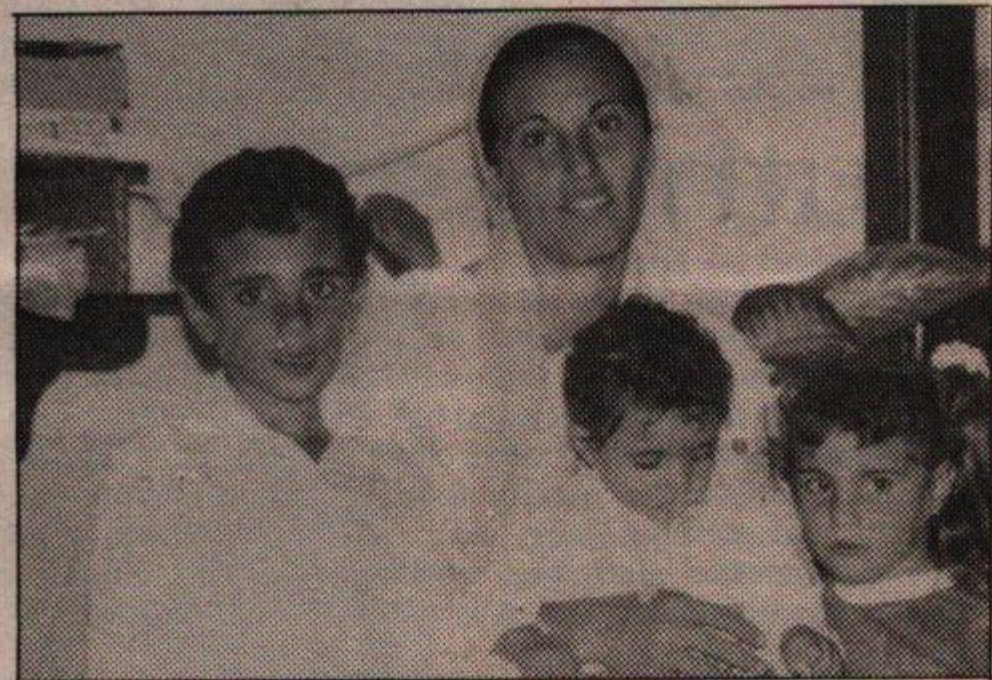
Mahmoud has endured a 10-day period of beatings and interrogation by the police and Shin Beth (security service), threats of rape and robbery charges, 12 days in solitary confinement – only ended after a week-long hunger strike – and two months without family visits.

His wife and three children have suffered systematic harassment, with constant searches of their home. Family pictures, books and personal possessions have been taken.

Until October no charges against Mahmoud were made public. Even reports of his arrest were banned. The Israeli press still cannot report more than his arrest and the charges. No evidence against him has been published and appeals for a public trial have been turned down.

A concerted attempt was made to sabotage Mahmoud's legal defence. Defence Secretary Rabin prevented his first lawyer from representing him on grounds of "insufficient security clearance". His second was replaced when told he would suffer the same fate.

Contrary to claims that he is receiving full medical attention, an eye infection that he has contracted in prison remains untreated.



Mahmoud's family - harassed by police

WHAT THE Israeli authorities call "a well orchestrated and organised international campaign" to free Mahmoud has achieved unprecedented support.

The European parliament has passed a Socialist resolution for his release. Labour movement representatives in ten parliaments have taken up his case. In Britain Labour MP Dave Nellist secured a parliamentary debate on Israel and the intifada, also taking up Mahmoud's arrest.

The Greek public and private sector TUCs and the Brazilian CUT have backed the campaign. In Britain Norman Willis has called for a "fair, open and prompt trial". The Australian Miners' Federation and other unions have protested.

At rank-and-file level the campaign has received even more support, with backing and finance from hundreds of union branches. Nearly £800 was raised in collections from Danish dockworkers and a similar amount from US union activists.

In October the campaign sent a delegation of British Labour MPs Terry Fields and Dave Nellist and Danish dockers' leader Karsten Anderson to Israel. This breached a press blackout on the case, with front page coverage in a number of Israeli dailies. As a result charges against Mahmoud were made public and the press ban was partially lifted.

A campaign of lies and disinformation has been waged by Israeli embassies to undermine this international solidarity campaign.

Initially they claimed that Mahmoud had admitted to "starting fires deliberately at the same time as learning how to use Molotov cocktails". They also claimed he had "admitted to contacts with the PLO in the West Bank and planning terrorist activities in various cities and places in Israel".

When the authorities were forced to publish the charges in October they were "possession of a firearm without a licence", allegedly a Molotov cocktail (can you get a licence for one in Israel?) and "espionage".

Yet official letters continue to allege the planning of terrorist attacks and "ties with the Fatah organisation in the (occupied) territories". But the same letters declare that there is no connection between the "arrest of Mr Masarwa and events in the territories".

As for the charge of espionage, what secrets would a night watchman at a cement works be able to pass on?

Donations to: Labour Movement Campaign for the Release of Mahmoud Masarwa, PO Box 524, London E2. Cheques payable to Mahmoud Masarwa Defence Campaign.

Great, isn't it? Afghanistan

Dear Militant,

I have a three-year-old daughter with an allergy, which causes great distress to the child, and stress to myself and her father. After many visits to the doctor he prescribed an inhaler and capsules. To have any effect the drug needs to be taken into the lungs. Being only three Molly finds it difficult to breathe in sharply enough to do this.

Last week saw her development test with the health visitor. At last, I thought, something could be done. The health visitor suggested that I insist on seeing a specialist and ask my doctor for a nebuliser - the same sort of thing as an inhaler but easier to use.

On seeing the doctor I explained the problem and asked for one. We could have one, at a price of £70-£80.

Molly's case was not severe enough, so she is not entitled to the free use of one of the two that are available. The health of your children is OK if you have the money to pay for it.

Molly's eye test was not satisfactory but to have a more thorough test at the hospital I have to join a waiting list of a minimum of three months. Thatcher's health service is great, isn't it?
Dyane Blake, Portsmouth.

Dear Militant,

Your double-page editorial on Afghanistan is very welcome, being informative and reasonable. But it is unfair to describe the Soviet intervention as an 'invasion'. It was condemned, unfortunately, even by the British Communist Party, already in smithereens. Tony Benn was more generous. Martin Wool-

cott of the *Guardian* was correct, I think, in writing that the Soviet Union ought to have intervened earlier, before the situation had turned into a bloody conflict.

I hope you will continue with articles on international politics.

Kathleen Jones, Shropshire.



Nurses on the picket line: defending the NHS

Photo: D. Sinclair.

Ruthless Tory managers

Dear comrades,

The catering department at our hospital is cutting back intensely to keep it in the health service and out of private tenders. Patients' menu choice has been cut, lower quality food is bought and staffing levels cut.

The domestic staff are working under private tender (an Australian

multinational company). They have said there is no union recognition, wages have been cut dramatically to just £60 for a 40-hour week. There is no sick pay, no weekend enhancements and the management are a ruthless Thatcherite type.

The porters have recently heard that they will be privatised. Ancillary

health workers don't want to work under these conditions. They want a union leadership like that of Nick Bradley of Nupe who is challenging for deputy general secretary, and a Labour leadership who will fight for workers.

Militant supporter, Preston.

Divided world

Dear comrades,

I am studying GCSE sociology. At present we are studying divisions in society, e.g. the caste system and the feudal system. In both these systems the majority of the population, serfs or untouchables, had to work in absolute poverty to ensure the comfortable lifestyles of the elite.

The divisions were so strict in India that if an untouchable's shadow fell on the food of a Brahmin

(the highest caste) it became polluted and uneatable. Basically in both systems 95 per cent of the population supported five per cent with their labour.

After the teacher had explained this I said: "Not much changes, does it?" The teacher agreed and when the class finished she bought a copy of *Militant*.

A Militant supporter, Watford.

IDs must go

Dear comrades,

The Tory attacks on civil liberties have been stepped up. Among the most dangerous measures is the plan to force football supporters to carry ID cards. I believe these are being used to prepare the way for ID cards for everyone.

The days when an ID card was a piece of paper with your photograph, name and address are long gone. The cards which football fans will have to carry are like a small transmitter with an aerial built into them.

Every time you go through the turnstiles you will be registered not only

in the Football League computer but also in the police computer.

It would be very easy to use such a system against political activists if everyone is forced to carry such a card. In West Germany where cards have been compulsory since before the war, the police wrote down the card number of everyone travelling to an anti-nuclear protest.

Imagine what the police could have done with such a system during the miners' strike.

Jack Harper, Amersfoort, Netherlands.

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by Rob Sewell

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LETTERS

To Militant, 3 - 13 Hepscoot Road, London E9 5HB.

Angry at Thatcher

Dear comrades,

When I see Thatcher on TV I get so angry that I want to throw the nearest thing handy at her. Just to give one example of how the Tories' policies have hit some of my friends:

Lisa (not her real name) was kicked out of home not long after her 17th birthday. She stayed at a friend's house, relying on her for food because she couldn't get a job. Neither could she claim any benefit because they're a thing of the past for 16-18 year olds.

Rather than go on another YTS she went looking for a job. She walked around eight miles in one day. Everywhere she was told the same: "Sorry, we've no vacancies," "Not enough qualifications," or "We'll get in touch with you".

This is in the so-called 'soft South', where there are supposedly loads of jobs going. Incidentally, she won't be paying poll tax. Not out of choice, she just can't afford to.

A Brighton YS member.

"Doublespeak"

Dear comrades,

The January/February issue of *Labour Party News* contains a 'Guide to Political Doublespeak'. It translates the statement "We need a bold socialist programme" as meaning "Can I sell you a copy of *Mili-*

tant'!

Apparently even Walworth Road recognises that only *Militant* stands for a socialist programme to tackle the fundamental problems facing this country. Keep it up.

Ian Curtis, London.

Bosses not appeased

Dear comrades,

The Sussex branch of the right-wing Institute of Directors has let the cat out of the bag about the bosses' attitude to the 'new realism' of the TUC leadership.

In a circular to members they hint darkly that "no voluntary human organisation has an automatic right to existence ... If collective bargaining fades away like yesterday's production line, as it is already

starting to do, then trade unions will have to rethink their role and purpose even more radically than the EETPU and AEU have already done."

Thus the 'new realist' policies of Hammond and co., far from appeasing the bosses, have only increased their appetite for eroding the democratic rights of their employees.

Derek McMillan, East Grinstead.

It makes me sick

Dear comrades,

When I got in from work tonight there was a letter from Thames Water Authority. They are going to cut my water off if I don't pay them £30.27 immediately, because the payment is five days late.

I am a single parent and I work hard just to pay bills, it seems, because all I do every month is look at which bills must be paid first. I took out a loan for Christmas and now, like almost everyone I know, I am skint.

It makes me think how obscene this system is. There are pipes that deliver water to my house. There is enough water. The capitalists make enough profit out of me to provide me with water. And they are actually going to turn this supply off because I am five days late in paying £30.27.

To me that is sick. Water is a basic necessity. What are my kids and I supposed to do - die? Forward to socialism where clean water will be a fundamental right for all people.

A working mother, Bermondsey.

'Teams swinging like monkeys...'

'Shambles' as Scots expelled

"I HAVE seen some rough justice in my time, but this beats it all," said Gordon Wilson, a welfare rights officer who has been at hundreds of tribunals to represent claimants getting rough justice from the DHSS or employers.

By a Militant reporter

He was the 'silent witness' when Graham Muir, Eric Stevenson and Martin Welsh, from Cumbernauld, were expelled from the Labour Party on 18 February in Glasgow.

After observing 11 hours of interrogation, he said: "I have never seen anything like it in my life. This was an affront to Labour Party democracy. Vital defence evidence was not taken, people were not convicted as charged and they were all found guilty although the prosecution case was contradictory and confused."

A fourth accused, Kevin McVey, expects the same fate. His hearing was supposed to be on Saturday at 4pm. But as Martin Welsh's hearing did not finish until 11.30pm his case was not heard.

His witnesses waited most of the day, but could not attend on Sunday, so he asked for a postponement. He was told to attend at 8.30am on Sunday morning. He then again appealed for a postponement but was ordered to appear without his witnesses. He protested and left. "You get more justice in the Tory courts than this," he said.

The three were expelled for membership of the Militant tendency, yet the evidence contained no reference to this. It was totally concerned with the sale of Militant and "conduct prejudicial to the Labour Party". "It is like going to court for a speeding offence and being found guilty of manslaughter," said Eric Stevenson.

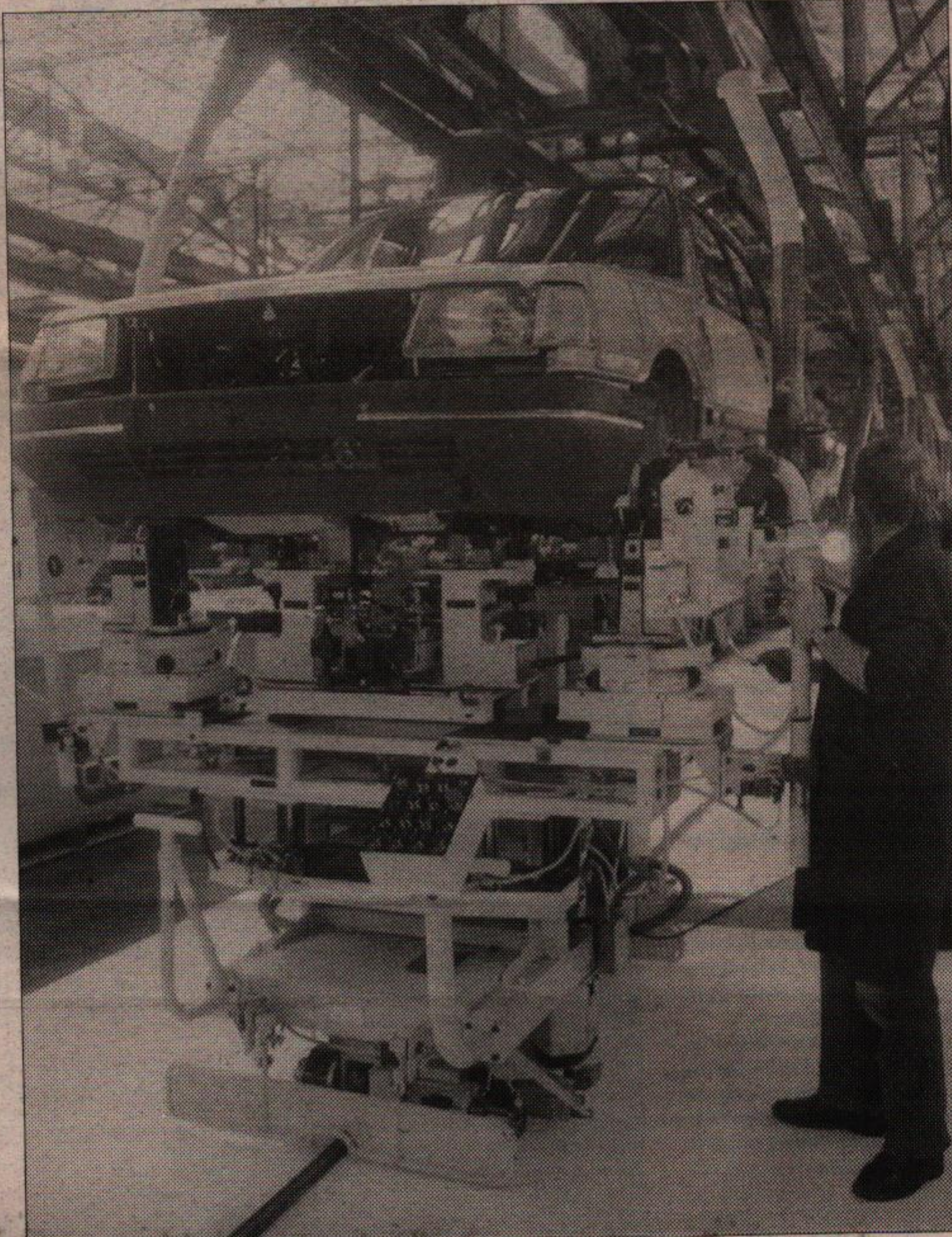
Membership

They have more than 25 years of membership between them. Martin Welsh is the West of Scotland branch secretary of the Inland Revenue Staffs Federation. But these facts mean nothing to the grey mediocrities relentlessly expelling all political opposition.

Martin Welsh said: "It was a stitch-up from start to finish. The evidence against me was a shambles. Even the chair of the panel said he was gravely concerned with the procedures."

"These people represent nothing. Imagine it, the great Labour Party brought to the level of arguing whether I wore a Militant badge on my jacket on a Saturday afternoon, nearly two years ago!"

Eric Stevenson had the last word: "Our commitment to the struggle of working-class people has not been affected by this. Our ideas will be present in the labour movement long after the expellers have gone."



Many workers literally don't have time to think on the line.

THE 'NISSAN way' of manufacturing has been acclaimed by the Tory press. Below we feature an eyewitness account of a visit to the Washington, Tyne and Wear, plant which is seen by some as a trail-blazer for the car industry.

"WORKING ON the line is hard work and anyone over 40 will find it tough" - Peter Wickens, Nissan UK personnel director.

To obtain a job, each of the 1,900 employees - average age 27 - faced a scrupulous programme of tests and interviews.

"People must have the right aptitude and attitude", boasts the personnel department.

"We take butchers, bakers and candlestick-makers and train them on the job. No previous experience is necessary."

Working conditions are different to any factory or shipyard I've ever seen and I've been to quite a few. The first impression is that the place is warm and clean. Space is utilised to the full. There are no high roofs or leaky windows. This is the image that the press and media have concentrated on.

But there is another side to the story.

Despite the decentralisation of power (one supervisor and two teamleaders to every 20 workers), immediately upon entering the bodyshop an intense, strained atmosphere can be felt.

With only 30 per cent automation on the 'liger line' many workers literally haven't got time to think. Lifting panels from one area to another, but standing in the same spot, workers twist and turn their bodies without a question. This is a sweatshop.

On the assembly lines, young production athletes in teams of three swing in and out of car frames like monkeys dressed in T-shirts, trousers and train-

ers, and with protection pads on elbows, knees and backside. Everything is geared towards achieving the targets. No time to stop and talk.

In the engine assembly shop, workers fit parts to engine blocks exactly the same way.

No variation between workers or shifts. The same monotony each time.

Next to the workers on the line the supervisor's office is adorned with charts. Have we met our target? Has the quality in our area improved? And to remind those who have time to look up, a large electronic scoreboard display hangs suspended from the roof.

Competitive

This informs the line manufacturing staff how many units produced so far and the target for that particular time of the shift. Again the personnel staff take great pleasure in describing these conditions as the 'Nissan way'.

According to our guide it is unusual for people to be walking along the gangway. Forklift trucks zoom round carrying parts from one area to another often at speeds of 15-20 mph.

What about the single-union agreement?

The idea is to develop an understanding, not between the company and the union, but between people, says Wickens, the former industrial relations manager at Ford's Dagenham body plant.

The manufacturing staff (workers), the teamleaders (chargehands) and supervisors (foremen), all have their teabreaks together. This is to avoid a 'them and us' situation. It contributes

towards a competitive team spirit between different teams throughout the plant. The union has no structure and no authority. Any complaints or queries go through the teamleaders and supervisors. Complete flexibility is described by Wickens as "expanding the role of the individual".

Last year AEU leaders Gavin Laird and Bill Jordan attempted to expand the union membership. After they addressed a

staff meeting only three joined!

Between 30 and 40 people start work each week. The turnover is terrific. Union membership is now around 13 per cent. When asked for his comments on this, Wickens replies, "We've brought the company to water, we can't make it drink."

Nissan are looking forward to 1992. The present workforce of 1,900 produce 55,000 cars per year. In

three years time the target is 200,000 with a workforce of 3,500. How long will workers tolerate such conditions? A recent report confessed that on nightshift a worker was struck by a teamleader.

This according to Thatcher and co. and the 'new realist' leaders of the TUC, is the future of manufacturing industry in Britain. The 'Nissan way' according to most workers, means finding a way out.

POST OFFICE

...and paid peanuts.

LAST YEAR one-sixth of all industrial action in Britain took place in my industry - the Post Office.

By a young Liverpool postal worker.

Over the past few years we have been forced into industrial struggle because of a hardening of attitudes by management who want to smash the largest postal union - the Union of Communications Workers (UCW) - as a first step towards privatisation.

A 40-hour week has been the norm for workers since

the early 1970s. Postal workers until recently worked a 43-hour week. This was reduced in December 1987 to 41.5 hours although in many areas this agreement is still to be implemented.

Homes

Young workers usually start their career on the delivery side which means working a six-day week starting at 5.30am, Monday to Saturday. For this the pay is little more than £100 per week.

The levels of home

ownership amongst young postal workers is very low with many remaining at home with parents or moving to bedsit flats. Even if you can find a house or flat for £20,000, ruled out in many parts of Britain, mortgage repayments and life insurance will consume more than one-third of your income.

Increasing pressure is being placed on delivery staff to take more mail out in the same time. Posting has increased by 25 per cent in the last five years.

In the run up to privatisation the Post Office are

attempting to flood the industry with part-time and casual labour in a bid to weaken the strength of the national union and keep wage levels of full-time staff low.

The Post Office YTS is to be re-launched nationally and we must campaign to ensure that trainees are paid the full rate and a job is guaranteed at the end of the scheme.

Poll tax

As young workers in the Post Office, we will be the hardest hit by the poll tax.

As well as having to pay our own, we will be expected to enter the local estates and deliver everybody else's bills.

We must press the union to carry out its conference policy of supporting mass campaigns of non-payment and also refuse to deliver and collect the poll tax.

Given the economic pressures such as the poll tax, high interest and mortgage rates, and increasing prices - we will be forced into a massive wage struggle later this year in a bid to maintain our standards of living.

Jag workers vote for action

JAGUAR WORKERS have voted for industrial action to force management to concede a better pay award. In a bid to avert any disruption of the lucrative luxury car market, Jaguar bosses have hinted at further talks with unions.

Management at Jaguar continually bemoan the fact that the strength of the pound against the dollar decides whether their profits go up or down. What they conveniently forget is that for us the exchange rate is equally as important: what we can exchange our pounds for in the shops.

The official rate of inflation is now 7.5 per cent. The miserly increase on offer from our boss Egan is worth four per cent in each of the next two years. It is estimated that inflation will pro-

bably rise to at least eight per cent this year. We will be taking a pay cut!

Nissan have given 16.5 per cent over two years and Peugeot-Talbot 14 per cent over the same period. British car makers have experienced an unprecedented boom over the past few years and Jaguar are no exception.

Sacrifice

The time has come for management to give something in return for the hard work and sacrifice made by every worker at Jaguar. Jobs have gone and the track speed-ups have added to the pressures on us.

The massive rejection of the offer by 70 per cent last month in the previous ballot makes our

message quite clear to management: we want more and we are prepared to fight for it. The company are worried. That is why they are looking for further talks.

Our negotiators can do battle with the knowledge that the troops are behind them. The proposed one-day strikes are just a start. They should be used to give Jaguar workers more confidence and force management to increase the offer.

We demand increases in line with Nissan and Talbot. If Jaguar are not prepared to move we have to rapidly escalate the action to a total stoppage.

By a Coventry Jaguar worker.

"JAGUAR MANAGEMENT are threatening workers who are shareholders that they'll lose out if there's a strike. But what they seem to have forgotten is that only 0.2 per cent of workers have got shares." This was the comment from a Jaguar worker at a packed meeting of Coventry MP Dave Nellist's industrial surgery.

Postal workers and members of the transport union, the National Communications Union, Manufacturing, Science and Finance, and the local government workers' union, Nalگو were amongst 57 present. There were also reps from a home for the multiple and severely handicapped. This home is now threatened with closure by the Labour council.

One postal worker said: "If the bosses take on Jaguar workers they'll be taking on the whole of

Coventry. We will give our support."

Dave Nellist introduced the discussion on the Employment Bill which he described as the sixth piece of anti-working class legislation this parliament. Its aim, he said, was to remove barriers against exploitation, to destroy gains won by the unions in the past. "The Tories won't be satisfied until youth can work 24 hours a day," said Dave.

Disgust

One postal worker described how he'd tried to get a better paid job. "I went for an interview at a local engineering factory. When I was told the pay was £84 a week I just looked in horror. The boss told me not to worry - after six months it went up to £88!"

Sizewell strike

CONSTRUCTION WORK at the £1.7 billion Sizewell nuclear power station resumed normally this week after one of the most serious strikes in any building site in Britain in recent years.

There have been a whole series of disputes at Sizewell ever since the job started (see *Militant* 896). Just before Christmas the clocking-on points for 120 shuttering carpenters were moved closer to a section of the job known as the 'nuclear island'.

According to one of the carpenter shop stewards: "The boys felt it was unsafe to walk into work where there were tower cranes overhead".

Laing's, the main contractor, failed to concede this so an overtime and shift working ban was introduced by the shuttering

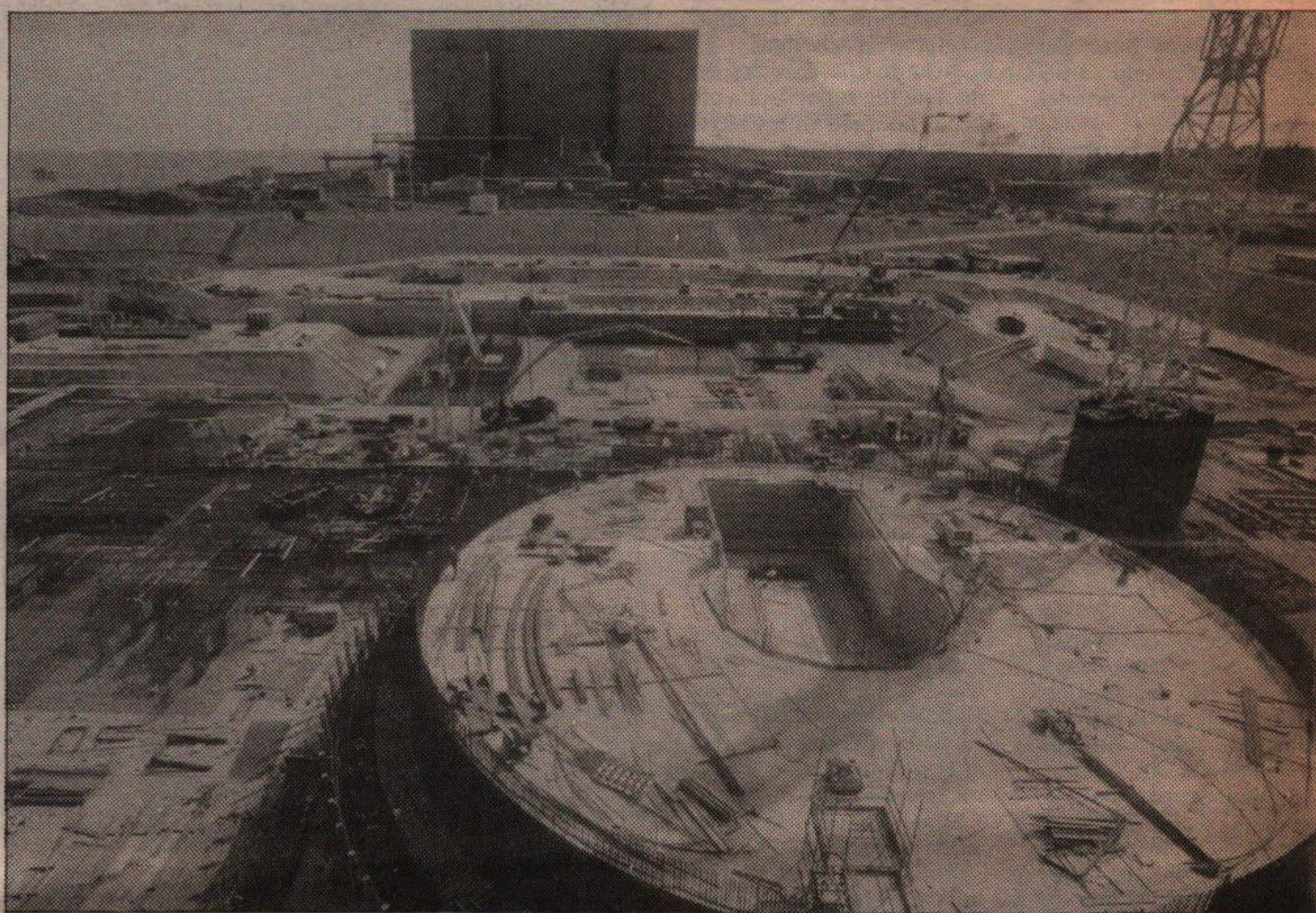
carpenters. They were also in pursuit of a site-wide bonus claim. They were then laid-off by the company without pay.

This prompted the stewards to call a mass meeting where over 600 construction workers walked out in support of reinstatement for the carpenters.

Despite Laing's threat to sack any builder who refused to work on the following Monday, no-one crossed the picket. The carpenters were reinstated.

This job is scheduled to finish by 1994. Unless firms like Laing's are prepared to give decent wages and decent conditions last week's strike definitely won't be the last.

By Paul Murphy, Stevenage branch, Eastern region Ucat.



The massive Sizewell site has just been hit by a strike.

Beechcroft hospital

NURSING ASSISTANTS at Beechcroft hospital near Rotherham are now on all-out strike following three months of working to grade.

According to one, Margaret: "The whole thing stinks. It's just another way of cheating nurses. They told us we'd get 15 to 20 per cent. I've got 4.8 per cent. What we want is fair pay for everyone: there are two people on this picket line who do the same job as me but get £1,200 more for doing it."

Nearby Badsley Moor Lane hospital are now joining the action. All the strikers are eagerly taking part in picketing. Activities on the line include roasting potatoes, singing songs and doing the hokey-cokey around the brazier.

Local businesses have supported the strikers with firewood and pizzas. In two days over £300 was collected from local people in bucket collections. One striker commented: "We ought to stop out - we get more money in donations than we do in wages!"

According to Margaret: "We'll stay out as long as the miners if necessary. We've come too far to turn back now."

Beechcroft strikers spoke to *Militant*.



ALAN HARDMAN'S cartoon on coal privatisation (*Militant* 918) has been reproduced by Bolsover National Union of Mineworkers in their newsletter and distributed to all their members, John Dale writes to inform us.

DSS strike victory

STAFF AT West Derby DSS office in Liverpool have won a three-day strike despite management intransigence.

P Morgan, CPSA rep spoke to *Militant*.

The dispute was over four staff members who were sent on a compulsory basis to help clear workloads from three other offices, Edgehill, Huyton and Kirkby.

Regional management say that there were surplus staff floating around who have to be shifted to other offices. We totally disagreed with this - any sort of reduction at our office would be catastrophic.

Even local management admitted that if we were to be reduced from 51 to 35, the figure regional management say we need, we couldn't possibly function as an office. These measures were a farce because even the areas we were to be sent to help were over complement according to regional management.

Everybody was absolutely solid in opposition. We realised that it was not just a local issue but that it was a test case for detached duty merging into compulsory transfer. In the ballot CPSA workers voted 33-2 in favour of strike action and NUCPS (a lower management union) voted 10-9. Two members of management

harassed cleaning workers complaining that 'mere' cleaners had been allowed to vote.

The mood on the picket line was absolutely great. CPSA and NUCPS were united picketing together. Support came from LPYS and also from Huyton Unemployed Centre. Apart from management there were only a couple of scabs from NUCPS.

On the first day of picketing we arrived to find a sign ten feet above the main entrance saying: "Scabs Only". It was not prepared by our members but probably by some members of the community who got wind of the dispute.

We won the dispute when management was forced to back down and an agreement was made after two days of strike action. We won because the workers were united and other offices like Huyton stood behind us. Fundraising went well and messages of support came in. Management was afraid of the possibility of the dispute dragging on for a long time.

However, there will be more battles in future. Detached duty and compulsory transfer are linked to the question of technology. Management are pledged to 20,000 job cuts over ten years to pay for new technology and they are not just going to let the issue pass.

Industrial reports

CPSA pay: Vote no!

MARY CURRAN and Teresa Hall are two CPSA members. Mary works at the Department of National Savings in Glasgow and Teresa at Withington UBO in Manchester.

Mary: "In my office members received two circulars, one from management and one from CPSA general secretary John Ellis, both advocating the virtues of the offer."

"However John Ellis's circular was so over the top it was ridiculed by many members. He argued for example that there was no introduction of performance related pay in the agreement - whereas the management circular had a paragraph headed: 'Performance pay'."

Teresa: "Many members in my office see the deal as a sell-out! When you examine the deal closely members find their increase is below the rate of inflation and it concedes the introduction of merit and regional pay."

Mary: "CPSA has a long-standing policy for a flat-rate increase of £20 per week and the introduction of a £134 per week minimum wage. This agreement goes no way to meeting these demands."



CPSA members at last year's conference.

Teresa: "The idea of a long-term deal lasting more than 12 months that isn't inflation-linked is ridiculous. Inflation, according to the government, is 7.5 per cent. But mortgages, electricity, rents and rail fares have all gone up by more."

"Everybody thinks it's going to get much higher. No union negotiator should recommend such a deal at this point in time."

Mary: "I clear about

£466 a month and about half of my wage goes on the mortgage before I ever get a chance to even think about paying the bills. This pay rise will effectively mean I'll be worse off. It doesn't cover the recent increases in my mortgage, let alone all the other things that have gone up."

Teresa: "Some people may be confused about the 'levels exercise' which is meant to be a comparabili-

ty exercise. IPCS members were subject to one last year and thousands of their members got just 3.5 per cent. I think we could really lose out if inflation is running high which seems likely."

Mary: "Members need the money now. Our pay rise is due on 1 April. We need £20 a week just to stand still. I'll be voting 'no' until we get it. This deal is rubbish and a con."

What's in it for us?

More money?

Not necessarily. The government have stated that the deal will increase their wages bill by less than six per cent! The actual pay offer for 1989 is only four per cent.

The additional money for moving to a new pay spine will be paid from October 1989, the last six months of the pay year. This increase will vary between 1.5 per cent and five per cent, averaging just under two per cent for the full year.

Incentives for those on the max?

The introduction of a new pay range effectively increases the incremental scales and directly links them to performance. It will mean many members having to wait an additional ten years before reaching the new maximum.

During this period they have to receive consecutive 'box three markings (or better)'. The intended sweetener of two half-point awards for those administrative assistants and administrative officers who have been on the maximum of their scale for 12 months or more is deliberately misleading.

The second half point, not due until June 1990, will be deducted from any pay award in April 1990.

Catching-up exercise?

The 'levels exercise' is not a catching-up exercise. There is no guarantee that everyone will get a rise or that we will recover lost ground. There are people in the inter-quartile range worse off than we are. Filing clerks, for example, are not in a high-paid profession and there is nothing to be gained from comparing low paid with low paid.

Better deal for London?

Is it really? London weighting has always been flat rate and paid to all civil servants irrespective of their grade. An administrative assistant received the same as a principal.

In order to keep up with the current levels outside the civil service London weighting would need to be increased to over £3,000 a year.

The one-point move on the pay spine is not flat rate and is nowhere near the equivalent of a £3,000 annual London weighting rate. For many members it will not even be a full point rise.

A fair pay system?

Not at all. No system that links pay to reporting can ever be fair. The new reporting system with its emphasis on targets will be even worse.

What's in it for the government?

An end to national pay rates

The increase is less than the rate of inflation and the current average pay increases outside the civil service. It provides for future pay awards to reflect market forces.

Groups or even individuals will be located on the pay spine according to their 'market worth'. There is no provision whatsoever for inflation-proofing.

Performance related pay

The proposed agreement states: "Eligibility for increments in the ranges will depend on performance as assessed in the annual report". The agreement also accepts that staff transferred to executive agencies can have even worse performance-related pay clauses introduced.

It should be remembered that government has stated its intention to transfer some 85 per cent of civil service jobs into agencies.

Institutionalises low pay

The 'levels exercise' last year carried out for government scientists, accountants and other professional civil servants meant the government were able to restrict the pay rises for 75 per cent of IPCS members to just 3.5 per cent.

The government must be even more confident of holding back clerical and secretarial grades' wages with 'levels exercises' deciding our future pay awards.

Phasing out London weighting

The union leaders' agreement to this allows the government to effectively phase out London weighting. The government can now target resources at a small number they wish to reward or motivate.

By linking it to the pay spine lower grades will get far less than higher grades. It will no longer be flat rate and across-the-board. The door has now been opened to regional pay.

Flexible and merit pay

Taken with the new reporting system, this agreement effectively introduces financial penalties (withholding of increments) for failure to reach targets. Local managers can use spine pay points for almost any purpose they wish.

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

News in Brief

Central Scottish

BUS WORKERS at Central Scottish last week voted to continue their strike into its eighth week. The unanimous decision taken by the 700-strong mass meeting has forced management to retreat and offer talks on working hours for all 860 employees.

The new improved deal which is to be put to the workforce this week secures many of the demands which the strikers have been fighting for over the past two months. Andy Baird, the TGWU strike leader, told Militant: "Whilst the deal

we have won is not perfect, it is nonetheless nowhere near what management tried to steamroller through eight weeks ago."

Another striker, Andy Smith, said: "The bosses have been losing up to £3 million from this strike. We have taught them a lesson."

Under the terms of the deal all the 65 sacked busworkers have been re-instated. This is a definite victory for the strikers.

By Steve Smellie.

BAe closures

THIS YEAR British Aerospace (BAe) have made massive profits from our hard work - £213 million, in fact.

Now as a reward they have announced the closure of their factories at Hatfield and Bracknell. Employees are being forced to move to areas such as Plymouth and Stevenage to work with the insistence that 1,200 engineering workers move to the Stevenage site.

This hides the fact that 600 manufacturing workers at Stevenage are to lose their jobs or be sent to Lostock.

These plans have been drawn up without any consultation with a shocked workforce.

The union response seems only to be how much redundancy it can get for its members, not how to fight the closures.

This must change. They now have to show a lead with a campaign of mass meetings of the workforce and public meetings in the communities to explain the threat posed. The bosses can be beaten!

By a Stevenage BAe worker.

Stothert and Pitt

STOTHERT AND Pitt, a major engineering employer in Bath, is to close with debts of over £50 million. 303 jobs have already gone and another 586 are threatened.

Even before many workers had received their redundancy notices news has been announced that the land has been sold to Robert Maxwell's Pergamon group for £16.4 million. The parent

company of Stothert and Pitt is also owned by Maxwell!

As one worker pointed out: "In a place like Bath what's the future for skilled and semi-skilled workers?"

Once again working class people are having to pay the price of asset-stripping as the bosses pass their mistakes on to the workers' backs.

By a Bath Militant supporter.

PNL strike

STAFF at the Polytechnic of North London (PNL) who are members of Nalگو have overwhelmingly voted to strike for 24 hours on Friday 24 February in protest at the treatment of two of our members. One has been suspended and the other is facing a stage three disciplinary hearing.

In the first case the worker was a victim of

harassment and in the second established procedure has been totally ignored.

We are demanding that the disciplinary action is rescinded. Further, if either member is sacked, we will ballot for strike action until reinstatement.

By a PNL Nalگو member.

**NUS Demonstration
Militant Public Meeting
Saturday 25 February 3.00pm
'The Roebuck', corner Kennington
Lane, Chester Way**

Workers and students

Strike against loans

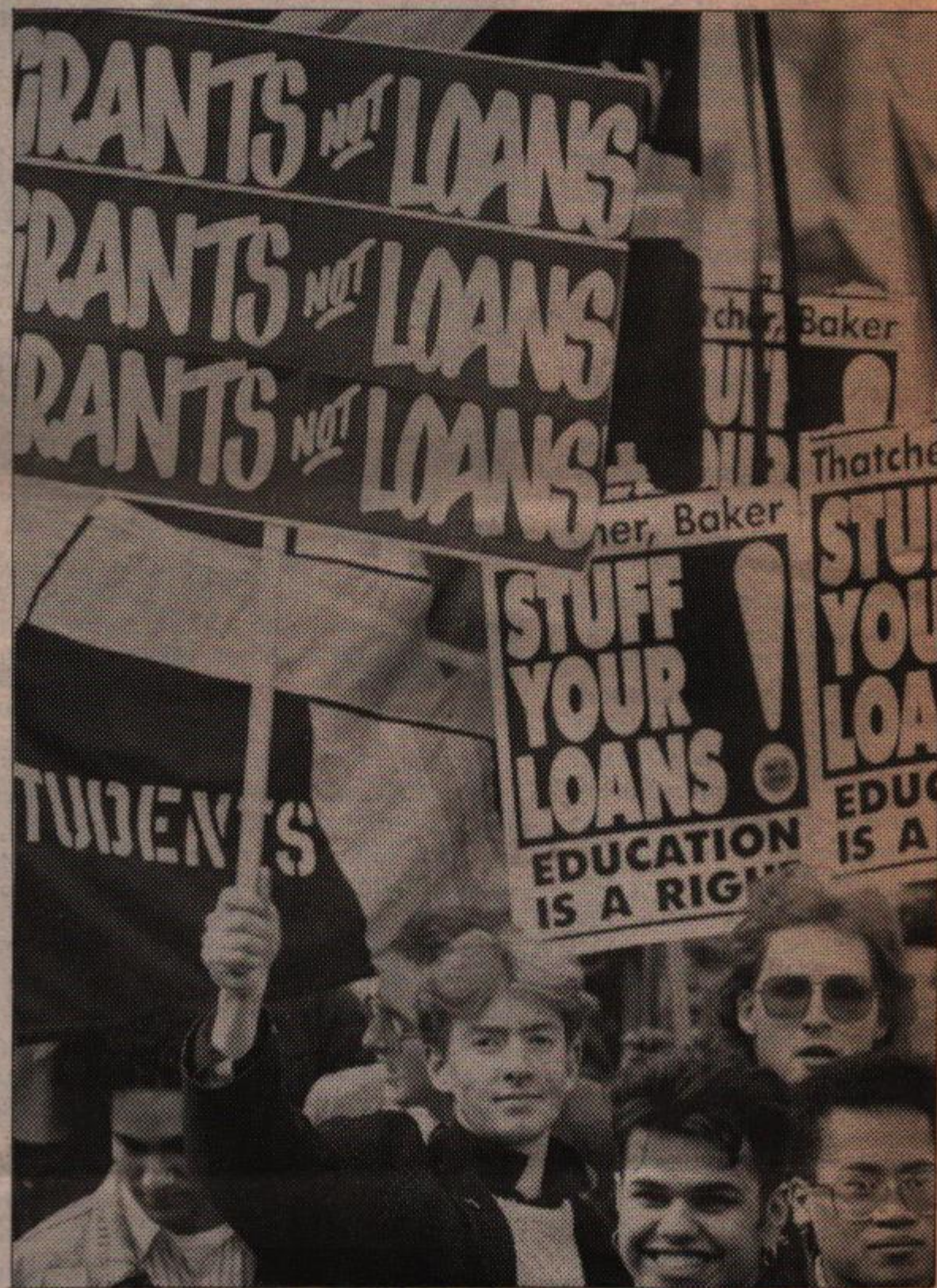


Photo: Militant

THE BIGGEST event on the NUS's day of action, in the Glasgow area, met unprecedented police harassment. The police charged newly-elected Marxist NUS area convenor Dougie Blackstock under the 1936 Public Order Act after students were involved in spontaneous sitdowns. This legislation has never been used for such a trivial incident before.

THE DEMONSTRATION against student loans on 25 February could be the biggest student protest for decades. Loans would put higher education out of most people's reach - particularly working class people.

By Paul Heron, Newcastle Poly Labour club

On 16 February, students all over the country took action against loans. The best organised events showed that Thatcher's butchery of education can be stopped.

West of Scotland NUS organised a demonstration of over 3,000 in Glasgow and the most effective education shutdown ever held in the region. College workers in the

unions AUT, EIS and MSF joined the demo.

In London 1,000 students lobbied the Department of Education. "We need a movement that will defeat loans and expand the existing system," Matthew Pledger, president of Kingsway further education (FE) college students union, told them. "Students at my college need at least a £35 a week grant, free paper, books and creche facilities."

Lobbyists called on the NUS to organise a weekday demonstration because as Kingsway student Hajira Elahi said: "Ninety per cent of FE students don't get a grant as it is and have to work weekends. We can't take part in

action on Saturdays."

There was 80 per cent support for the shutdown at Manchester community college. Only day-release students came in. Over 70 students attended a rally addressed by Andrea Enisuooh, who is standing for the NUS executive, and college workers.

Union backing

After South Trafford students union president Ally Gardiner spoke to the college Natfhe branch, they voted to support the students' action and call for education unions to join together to stop the loans.

In Bolton Further Education Labour Students national com-

mittee member Sarah Hill spoke to a 200-strong crowd, emphasising the need to get workers involved. In the Liverpool area, there will be a one-day strike involving the unions on 23 February.

After Saturday's national demonstration, we must escalate the action. In Newcastle Polytechnic, we aim to build a one-day strike of education, with a rally of students and workers, to defend education. We will also appeal to local school and sixth form students to join in.

If the NUS nationally called a one-day strike of education and appealed to all workers to join in, we would be well on our way to stopping Thatcher's plans.

But we won't stop there. We will link this fight to the struggle against poll tax and build a movement to kick the Tories out, taking their loans with them.

★ For a one-day education strike against loans.

★ For a minimum £35 a week grant for all 16-year olds entering education.

★ Reinstate the grant to pre-Tory 1979 levels - a 23 per cent increase now!

★ For a socialist NUS affiliated to the TUC.

MILITANT SELLERS should assemble at 10am on 25 February at Cleopatra's Needle, near Embankment tube station.

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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.
- 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 a nuclear holocaust.

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

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

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

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