

SUPPORT THE STEEL MEN

"This strike is political. The Tory government have picked out the ISTC [steel union] because they think it's weak."

That was how South Yorkshire strike committee leaders Ted Thorne and Keith Jones saw the struggle of steelworkers this week.

They are right! The steelworkers stand today in the front line for jobs and a decent wage.

Through the British Steel management the Tories are out to drive down workers' living standards.

If they succeed, it will open the way to an onslaught on all workers' wages and social conditions.

"The strike committee realise that they have got to stand at the head of

the labour and trade union movement to spearhead the attack on the Tories and the defence of trade unionism," was how the S Yorkshire leaders described the fight.

The steelmen are confident of victory.

Although new to industrial action, steelworkers have organised effective pickets to the surprise of the steel

Continued on back page

By Brian Ingham



Pickets at Port Talbot

Photo: Andrew Wiard (Report)

front line battle to defend jobs and living standards

STOP ALL STEEL

With much of the private steel production centred in the Sheffield area, South Yorkshire is becoming a crucial focus of the steel strike. Already private works and steel stockholders are being systematically covered to stop any movement of steel, and flying pickets are in action.

The ISTC's No 3 division [South Yorkshire] covers Sheffield, Rotherham and Scunthorpe. The divisional strike committee, made up of delegates from the existing ISTC area committees, is geared up for a determined campaign.

Strike Committee secretary Ted Thorne [ISTC branch secretary, Templeborough] and co-ordinator Keith Jones [ISTC official] told Pete Watson of Bradford Labour Party:

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There are 5,000 steelworkers picketing in South Yorkshire, with 1,000 out at any one time. The strike committee estimate that they are covering 1,000 picket-points in the area, including stockholders and private firms, so the majority of the workers are organised in flying pickets.

With the strike totally solid, the British Steel plants are being covered with the minimum numbers necessary to ensure that no tricks are pulled—some still have steel in stock. This will release members so that picketing of non-BSC steel holders can be extended.

Momentum is growing

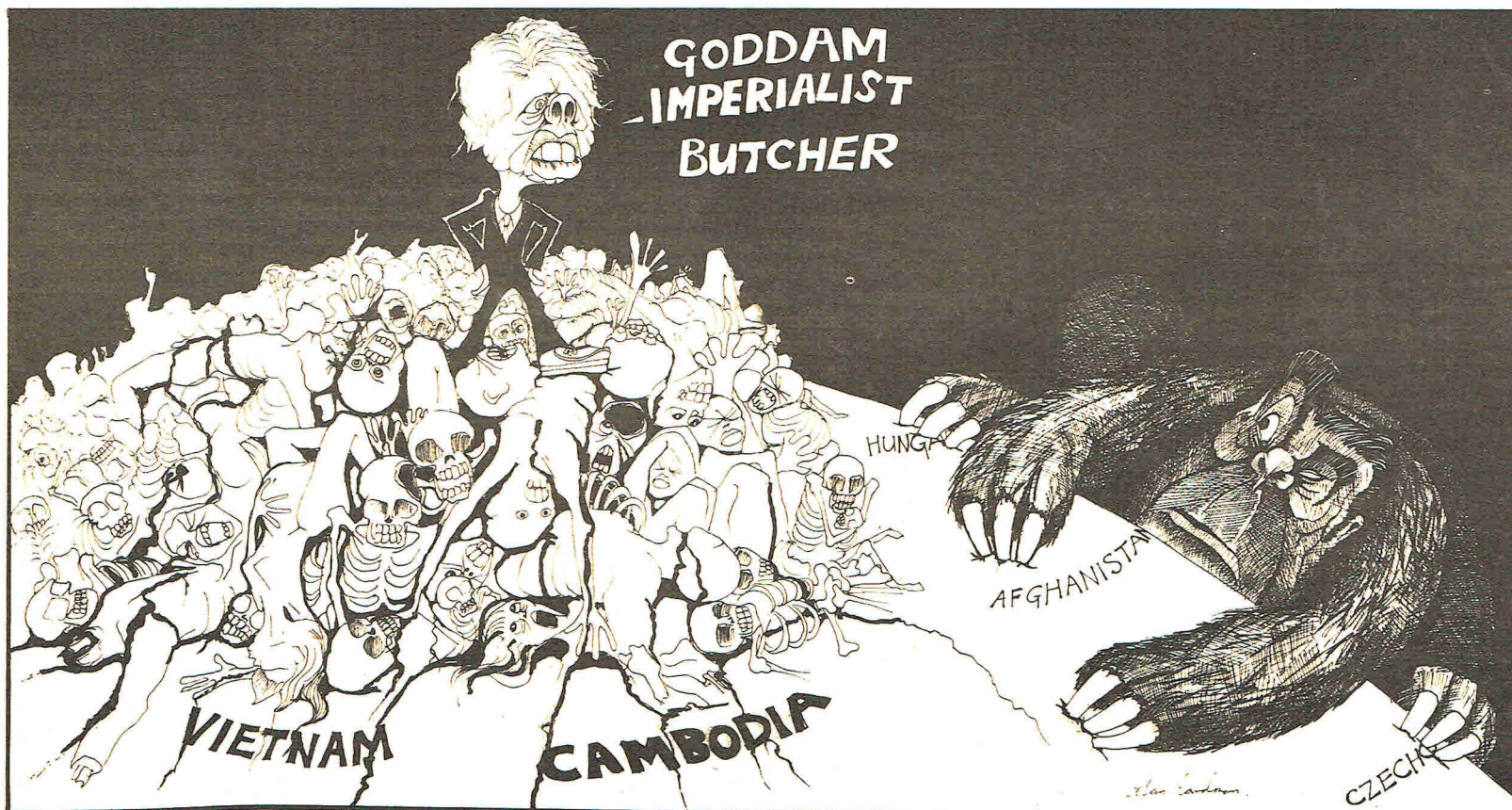
Picketing will be peaceable, but if any group tries to weaken the strike by forcing their way across our lines, the union will have to react accordingly.

The time for olive branches has passed. The battle lines are drawn. The momentum is growing too—there is no need for pickets at Hull docks: when anything comes in the docks phone us to check whether it should be released or not.

The strike committee are appealing for information on the strike, steel movements or particular problems in any area to be channelled to them, with offers of help and accommodation in other steel areas, particularly the Midlands. If you have any information, phone 0709 61541, and ask to speak to a member of the divisional strike committee.

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PEOPLE WHO LIVE IN WHITE HOUSES SHOULDN'T THROW STONES!

Militant

THE STEEL FIGHT IS OUR FIGHT

The Tory government and the British Steel Corporation bosses provoked the national steel strike.

They hope to undermine the fighting spirit of the whole working class by inflicting a crippling defeat on steel workers.

But with firm leadership from above, allied to resolute action by rank-and-file steel workers, a resounding victory can be won.

They echo the propaganda of the BSC bosses in every statement they make on the strike. The Tory government also, in effect, instructed Villiers and his cohorts to wage war against steel workers by refusing to fund the BSC losses, when BSC had £309m losses last year and is currently losing £1m a day.

BSC bosses have gladly carried out the dictates of their Tory masters. They unleashed a savage onslaught against jobs and then put forward a contemptible wage offer.

There is now a widespread belief among steel workers that the capitalists and ex-capitalists in charge of BSC are pruning down the company to its most profitable units—at the expense of the jobs and living standards of steel workers and with the money of working class tax-payers—before hiving off the remnants to 'private enterprise'. Crisis-ridden capitalism no longer wants a major steel industry.

The capitalist class has allowed the mutilation of manufacturing industry as a whole, and is now prepared to watch BSC shrink to a capacity of 15 millions tons. The capitalists are blind to the social and economic consequences of their insane policies.

The future of the steel industry is in the hands of steel workers. This strike is the beginning of the fight-back.

It must be a fight for both jobs and wages. Management will already have been shaken by the magnificent response of steel workers to the strike call and by the tremendous initiative which striking steel workers have shown in organising the picketing.

The combativity of those steel workers in threatened plants has been particularly noteworthy. They must not be abandoned at the end of the strike.

On the contrary, it must be made quite clear that now BSC and the Tories have provoked the fight, there will be no return to work until BSC come forward with an offer of a living wage and a cancellation of all the threatened closures.

Massive pressures from ordinary steel workers led to the rejection by the union leaders of BSC's various 'offers'. That pressure must be re-applied with resolutions from branches, strike committees and mass meetings, demanding that the strike action is also directed at saving the threatened

jobs.

Unity among steel workers has never been greater. If this had been achieved earlier thousands of steel workers' jobs could have been saved.

Inflation is already around 20%. Any settlement below 20% therefore means a reduction in living standards. And a wage rise tied to further increases in productivity would mean yet further steel workers being thrown onto the dole.

Miners inflicted a major defeat on the Heath government in 1972. The key factor to that dispute was the flying picketing which stopped all movement of coal.

If the British capitalists are starved of steel they will be driven to the point where they will force the Tories and the BSC bosses to capitulate. Steel workers have therefore followed the example of the miners and raised the slogan 'Stop all movements of steel'.

For this, a call for support should be made to private steel workers. The fortunes of the whole steel industry are intertwined. This strike is the beginning of the fight to reverse the downward spiral of the whole industry,

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public and private.

A clear call for an all-out strike of steel workers would get a massive response from workers in private steel mills.

Such unity among steel workers would mean that the marvellous solidarity extended by other workers would be even more readily forthcoming.

Some stockholders hoped to make fat profits during the strike, and built up stocks in anticipation, but many are already being successfully picketed.

All stockholders must be identified and pickets assigned to cover them.

For this the maximum involvement of steel workers is vital. Weekly mass meetings are essential to ensure that workers receive news on the progress of the action from the unions, not just from the millionaire press.

Strike committees already exist. These should establish links in order to ensure that the picketing is carried out as effectively as possible.

This strike raises the need to get rid of BSC management and replace it with a system of workers' control and management along the lines of the formula put forward by 'Militant' supporters in the industry: one third of the board to be elected by the workers in the industry through the unions, one third elected through the TUC, and one third appointed by the government.

Victory will boost the confidence of the whole working class in the battle against the Tory attacks.

It is up to the entire labour movement therefore to give the maximum possible support to steel workers and ensure a speedy and decisive victory.

NEW WITCH-HUNT REJECTED

The decision of the Labour Party NEC's sub-committee not to revive the Underhill Report has been greeted by howls of outrage from the Tory press.

In the period leading up to the meeting of the organisation sub-committee, the capitalist press gave widespread publicity to right-wing MP Neville Sandelson's calls for the witch-hunting Underhill report to be

By Bob Wade

[LPYS rep, Eastern Region Labour Party EC]

published, backed up by the age old sinister tales of 'reds under the bed' etc.

They whipped up this issue as part of a steady smear campaign against the Labour Party, which has intensified since the Party's right wing was defeated on major policy issues at last year's conference. They want to revitalise a

witch-hunt atmosphere against left wingers in the Labour Party.

The committee defeated this call decisively, by 6 votes to 2. As Tony Saunio, the LPYS representative on the NEC, pointed out, some of those who were calling for this under the guise of 'open government' were the very people who opposed publication of the NEC's own minutes.

The Tory press has called this decision a 'cover-up'. It is nothing of the sort. It has been considered before by the NEC and rejected. The 'Lefts' on the NEC saw it for what it was—a witch-hunt against the Marxists in the Party which, if successful would have been turned on themselves.

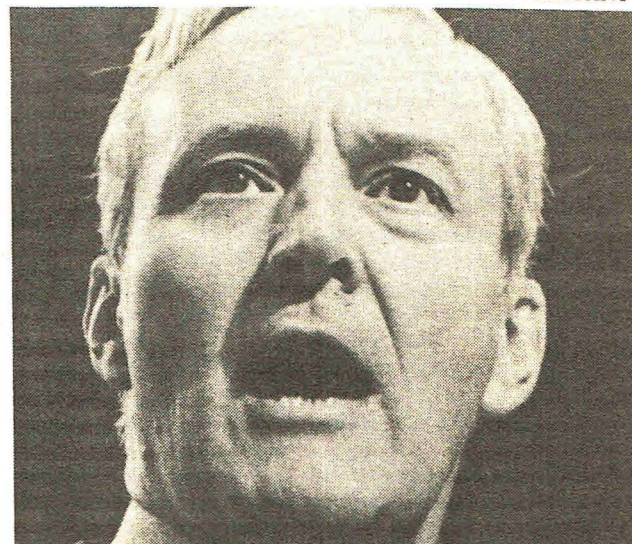
This resolve must be kept up at the next NEC meeting, when the subject will be brought up again.

Scapegoat

The right wing of the Party wanted the witch-hunt atmosphere revitalised in the wake of their defeat at conference. With their policies rejected by the labour movement, they want a convenient scapegoat

The Ruling Servants

Photo: MILITANT



Last Monday's 'World in Action' cut nearer to the bone than most television documentaries touching on the power of the state in Britain.

Drawing on Tony Benn's experience at the Department of Energy during the last Labour government, the programme clearly revealed the way in which top civil servants work to change government policy—and, when they can't change policies, to block or sabotage its measures.

Recalling an informal conversation with a member of the Central Policy Review Staff, Whitehall's so-called 'Think Tank', Tony Benn illustrated the cynical, arrogant attitude of top civil servants.

"We've got a marvellous way of working the CPRS." "So I said, 'What's that? What do you mean?' And he said, 'It's organised subversion'."

With years of experience behind them, the permanent officials set out to mould new ministers, especially Labour ministers, to their own policies.

If the minister concerned refuses to bend, the permanent secretary and his under-secretaries simply by-pass him or her through their buddies in other departments or through the CPRS, persuading or pressurising 'rival' ministers or the cabinet as a whole to adopt their favoured policy.

One case was whether nuclear power stations should be equipped with AGRs (Advance Gas-cooled Reactors) or PWRs (Pressurised Water Reactors). Benn favoured AGRs, but his civil servants (and big business) did not.

Advice and briefings on AGRs were not forthcoming. Benn's political advisors were "frozen out". Through the CPRS and other Whitehall channels, the civil servants lobbied for their own position.

In fact, the Labour government still came out for AGRs. But too late! In the end, the civil servants still have it their own way, and the

Tories have now decided to build PWRs.

With Tony Benn's first-hand evidence the programme illustrated four cases where civil servants withheld information or misled (sometimes blatantly, sometimes subtly) the Secretary of State for Energy.

They failed to report leaks at Windscale, a nuclear disaster in USSR in 1959, 200 tons of uranium 're-directed' to Israel for military use, and misled the minister over a contract for uranium ore from South African occupied Namibia.

Sabotage action

The examples given on the programme all concerned nuclear energy, a controversial issue even in ruling circles, and therefore, paradoxically, relatively a "safe" issue on which to publicise the machinations of bureaucrats.

But on the other vital economic and social issues which directly affect the lives of workers—clearer class issues—it would be equally possible, if former Labour ministers chose, to give numerous examples of top civil servants' opposition to Labour policies—and their active sabotage of their implementation.

The late Richard Crossman's publishers had to fight an expensive legal battle to establish their right to publish his 'Diaries of a Cabinet Minister' in which he provided voluminous chapter and verse of the Whitehall Mafia's tactics against Labour reforms.

Tony Benn, however, rightly rejected Crossman's notion that it was possible to convert the bureaucrats through intellectual battles with permanent secretaries.

He also pointed out that belated revelations in memoirs published long after the events concerned have only a limited value.

The crucial thing is for Labour ministers to open up a debate on the issue at that time.

In the last analysis, as Tony Benn noted, it is Labour ministers who are responsible for the decisions taken, whatever the pressure exerted by top civil servants.

The only way this can be effectively countered is through boldly exposing the civil service machinations, and by mobilising the forces of the labour movement to ensure that the movement's policies are carried out.

But top civil servants are a threat to democratic representatives not simply out of bureaucratic self-interest, though that certainly plays its part, but because they are responsible for the state machine, the administrative and repressive apparatus of the capitalist class.

Granada Television's programme raised the question of "bureaucratic encroachment on ministerial control" only in a very abstract way.

Only the example of AGRs (favoured by Benn on safety grounds) versus American PWRs (favoured by big business for reasons of profit) touched on the relations

to divert attention from their bankrupt ideas.

But why did the Tory press become so anxious to get a witch-hunt going? This was answered by George Gale, writing in the 'Daily Express' (8 January): "The Labour Party now contains hundreds of moles, undermining it and us. They are pests, infesting the Party, endangering us."

Gale tries to make out the Marxists are the 'moles', but the real infiltrators are the Tories who have made careers in the Labour Party, not those in the ranks committed to socialism—many of whom have been in the Party for decades!

When he says 'us', he means the capitalist class and their Tory supporters, the people the 'Daily Express' and the rest of the capitalist press represents.

They realise that the greatest danger to their system and their privileged positions is a labour movement armed with Marxist policies which will end capitalism once and for all, and begin the construction of a socialist society.

between big business and the state.

But this is a fundamental question.

With barely concealed contempt for the parliamentary window dressing of government, the top bureaucrats, drawn largely from the ranks of the ruling class, educated in private schools and top universities, and linked to the capitalists through a web of financial and family ties, consciously defend the interests of the ruling class.

In order to overcome the opposition of the state bureaucracy, therefore, a Labour government will not only have to counter the administrative sabotage encountered in Whitehall, but implement socialist policies which strike at the foundations of capitalist rule—and place productive wealth and political power in the hands of the working class.

NEW YEAR DRAW RESULTS

MILITANT SUPPORTERS ASSOCIATION

Promoter D Smith 73 Armond Road, Witham, Essex

Congratulations to the prize winners in our New Year Draw, which took place at our West London New Year Social on 5th January. The winners should write claiming their prizes and enclosing their tickets to MILITANT DRAW, 1 Mentmore Terrace, London E8 3PN. To all those who didn't win, our commiserations and better luck next time! You couldn't have found a worthier cause for your cash!

1st Prize Video Recorder 44086 W Ballard, Lewis Close, Headington, Oxon.

2nd Prize Cassette Recorder 39193 A Ireland, Compass Court, Coventry.

3rd Prize Camera 17589 M McGrath, The Market Sq, London E14

4th Prize Radio 37123 S Humby, Armour Hill, Tilehurst, Berks.

5th Prize 'Thermo' calendar 8046 R Thompson, Burchells Green Road, Kingswood.

6th Prize Bottle of Whiskey 45312 A Watson, Newcastle upon Tyne.

7th Prize Note-pad & Pencil 34109 MM Craig, Crosslees Drive., Thornlie-bank, Renfrewshire.

LPYS National Rally Against the Tories February 2nd

JOIN THE FIGHTBACK!

A week is a long time in politics. With this Tory government every day brings new cuts, new redundancies, and new attacks on working class living standards.

The 'Daily Mirror' reported recently that in London alone, health cuts would close ten hospitals, and 2,815 beds would be gone by March.

These savage closures, many in areas already desperately short of hospital beds, are yet more examples of the effect of the Tories' policies.

We must make sure that the Tories hear the voice of working class youth in opposition to their policies. We've got **three weeks** left to ensure that the Labour Party Young Socialists' National 'Youth Against the Tories' demonstration on February 2nd is a huge success.

In many areas LPYS branches or groups of branches are coming together to organise 'days of action', of leafletting, paper sales, and street meetings with megaphones in town centres. We'll let passers by know what we think about the cuts of £400 million in education; the

Three weeks to mobilise

By
Kevin Ramage
(National Chairman,
Labour Party Young
Socialists)

closures of youth clubs; and the scandal of 35,000 or so school leavers still without their first job since last June.

The dole queues in every town should be covered with the leaflets, which are available free from the youth department at Transport



Young Socialists on the march against the Tory menace

Photo: MILITANT

House.

The demonstration has received the backing of the National Organisation of Labour Students, and the National Union of School Students, so wherever possible, local LPYS branches could organise joint leafletting of schools and colleges, followed by public meetings—the Tories have already hit about 40,000 working class school students by their cut of £15 million pilot scheme for grants to 16-18 year olds!

Along with NOLS and the NUSS, the demonstration has

received wide support in the Labour Party and trade unions. Midlothian CLP in Scotland have donated £50 towards campaigning work in the area, and sponsored two people to go.

Time to organise

There is still time to make sure every possible Labour Party and trade union member hears about the demonstration.

One LPYS branch in East London is leaving a leaflet in every library, bus and train that its members visit or use. A bus driver in the same branch is sticking a poster up on the buses he drives!

Three weeks isn't long, but it's plenty of time, armed with a socialist programme as an alternative to Thatcherism, to get thousands of young workers, unemployed, and school students, to join the demonstration and recruit them into the LPYS!

SOUTH YORKSHIRE LPYS ORGANISE

The building of a mass Labour Party Young Socialists organisation would be a stake in the heart of the Tory leadership. And the LPYS branches in South Yorkshire don't intend to be left behind in the build-up to the march and rally.

Plans are being made to leaflet the picket lines outside the steel plants; as well as dole queues, schools and youth clubs. Days of action have been arranged for the centres of both Sheffield and Rotherham—on the November 28 Labour Party demonstration last year, many people from the area were sporting 'Socialist Republic of South Yorkshire' badges, so the LPYS are expecting a good response!

Coaches have been arranged to come down from Sheffield and Rotherham and Labour Party and trade union branches are being approached for sponsorship.

With a joint NUM/LPYS school organised for January 26; a march through Sheffield against the Tories organised by the Trades Council on February 8; as well as the Yorkshire LPYS Regional Conference, 1980 promises to be a very busy year!

By **Martin Hill**

(Sheffield Park LPYS)

NUSS

The National Union of School Students decided last weekend to give support to the 'Youth Against the Tories' demonstration.

Dale Ackroyd, a Labour Party Young Socialist on the National Committee of the Union, moved a resolution calling for backing of the march. The NUSS leadership will now circulate information, leaflets etc, around all NUSS branches.

DEFEND MILITANT AGAINST LEGAL THREAT

Despite the Christmas and New Year holiday 'lull', and the drive to reach the Fighting Fund target, Militant supporters have not forgotten the urgent need to give cash and support to the Militant Defence Fund.

The donations are still coming in, the best this week coming from Militant supporters in Liverpool.

They collected a total of £61:—£18 from SOGAT/NGA members in Duttons, £7 from supporters at Liverpool Poly, £7 from supporters on the Liverpool Corporation Housing Department, and an individual donation of £5 from NGA member Peter Lay; and donations from St

Michaels Ward Labour Party (£13), POEU Liverpool Internal Branch (£3), and Toxteth CLP (£8).

When looking at these donations it can be seen they come from the rank and file members of the labour and trade union movement—labour activists are extremely angry that John Golding, a Labour MP sponsored by a trade union should take a libel action against the Militant, a socialist paper, and haul it through the law courts.

The Liverpool supporters' efforts are a good example of what can be achieved for the Defence Fund in one area alone.

But other areas have also made very good contributions to the fund—Southend supporters sent in £23 and £22

came in from Blackpool.

Individual donations are just as acceptable! Harry Boseter and SJ Smith both sent in a quid, and a delegate to NOLS National Conference paid up a fiver promised to the fund.

As usual, the trade union branches have made excellent contributions. ASTMS East London Medical branch gave £20; Blaby 292BE AUEW branch donated £2.50; and Preston Trades Council gave £5.

The Trades Council at Preston also made a statement condemning Golding for his action, and passed a resolution to that effect which has been forwarded to the Lancashire County Association of Trades Councils.

A resolution was also passed by Chester-le-Street CLP, which condemned John Golding for using the law courts, "rarely an ally of the labour movement, rather than taking the issue through the democratic organisations of our movement."

So keep the money coming in and get your organisation to pass a resolution.

Send money or messages of support to: Militant Defence Fund, 5 Cremer House, Deptford Church Street, London SE8.

BLACKPOOL Militant Discussion Meeting. 'Transitional Programme'. Sunday January 20th 7.30 pm. Contact Kev Taylor, Blackpool 52279.

SOCIALIST SONGBOOK (New printing). Only 40p Single copies post paid 50p. Bulk orders for 30p each plus postage. From Bryan Beckingham 62 Haverstock Rd Bristol

Socialist greetings to all our comrades on the birth of our daughter, Maja Larissa, 29 December 1979—Ulrike and Joachim, Hamburg, West Germany.

ads

CLASSIFIED: 5p per word, minimum ten words

SEMI-DISPLAY: £2 per 2 column centimetres.

All advertisement copy should reach this office by SATURDAY

Brook House: Residents fight back with the LPYS

Residents in the beleaguered Brook House complex are beginning to fight back, with the help of Uxbridge LPYS.

The residents have been caught between the wrath of the reactionary Tory Hillingdon council and a Rachman-type landlord [see 'Militant' December 14]—through the chronic London housing shortage they have been forced to live in 'chalets', some with only one room, for rents ranging up to £20 a week; but on the other hand the Tories are attempting to demolish the homes leaving the residents with nothing.

The Tories' enthusiasm to demolish these meagre homes has resulted in contract demolition workers breaking up the homes with the residents still inside!

The owner of the Complex, Roy Cutler, brother of Horace the Tory GLC leader, who owns the complex which consists of one main building and several chalets, has constantly moved new residents in whenever the homes are vacated—not through compassion for London's homeless, but he hopes to use the residents to stave off the Tory demolishers.

For over a decade these chalets have been considered

**By Mike Lee
and Steve Clare**

(Uxbridge LPYS)

unfit for human habitation—and when Cutler has made attempts to improve the buildings, it has been done without planning permission.

Conditions for the residents are intolerable—for one young couple, who now have a baby, home is one room—a converted bathroom!

The residents have been caught between the devil and the deep blue sea—but now due to work by the LPYS they are organising against the Tories.

Question taken into labour movement

A residents' committee has now been set up, and the Uxbridge Labour Party Young Socialists have taken the question into the labour movement. A resolution has been passed at their GMC, and they have called on the



Photo: MILITANT

An LPYS member and a resident talk to Cutler—in the background a squalid 'chalet', in which people are forced to live because of London's housing shortage

local public authority trade unions and alerted them to the Tories' plans to reduce Brook House to rubble and to put 70 people on to the streets.

The main demand is that reasonable accommodation for the residents should be found before any demolitions take place, forcing the Tories to open up more than 1,000 council properties which are lying empty waiting to be sold off.

The LPYS has also called on the Labour Group on the council to take the question into the council chamber, forcing public statements from the Tories, and for the Labour Party to work with the already established residents' committee.

This action is beginning to show results already—Terry Hicks, the Tory Chairman of the housing committee, is virtually censoring information coming out of the council offices, including blocking questions placed before housing officers by Labour Councillor, Peter Fagan.

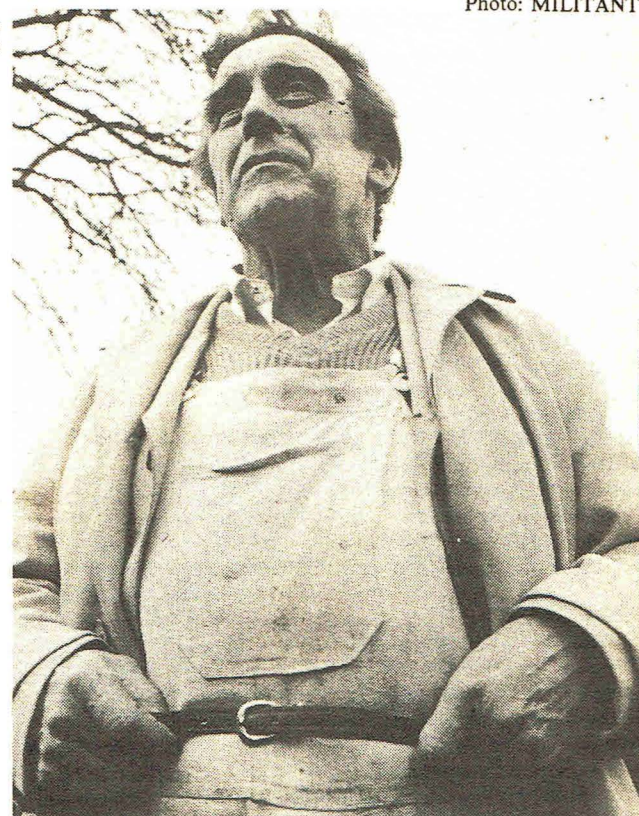
Roy Cutler, who has only

added to the misery of the Brook House residents through his aggressive and money grabbing attitude has been feeling the pressure too—at a residents' meeting called by the YS he physically intimidated a YS member.

Tories are desperate

But with the situation worsening as the Tories and Cutler become more desperate, the residents are beginning to unite in the face of this threat. The Uxbridge LPYS have it on good authority that the Tories are rushing through the demolition orders—handing matters over to the same bailiff who ordered in demolition workers whilst families were still in their homes!

The residents are increasingly fighting back. When Heseltine visited the area to present the 500th family to buy a council house with a key, he was met by an angry reception from Brook House



residents, who joined the Young Socialists and members of the labour movement for a protest meeting.

And the fight is going on. The residents' committee has

joined the Hillingdon Tenants Federation and are now making plans for a joint residents/Young Socialists protest march and public meeting.

NO PEACE FOR THE TORIES

"Tories out." "No ifs, no buts, stop the Tories, fight the cuts." In Winchester, normally a fairly quiet cathedral town, Tory members of the Tory-controlled Hampshire County Council had to run the gauntlet of 800 justifiably angry trade unionists and students to get into their council meeting.

Trade unions won't accept cuts

The protests were about the savage cutting of spending on services including education and social services. Members of the seven unions at the lobby [NUPE, NALGO, NUT, GMWU, TGWU, NATFHE and FBU] made it quite clear that they did not accept the 'logic' of cash limits, job losses, the closing of homes for the old and mentally handicapped children, drug rehabilitation and

so on.

The local council cabal of monetarists wanted to dismantle the welfare state. Trade unionists could not sit by and watch that happen.

After these points had been spelt out loud and clear to the Tory councillors, the 800 demonstrators marched through Winchester to some open ground for a rally.

Leading local trade unionists addressed the crowd and stressed that this huge lobby, held in midweek, had given them a real mandate to fight the cuts and job losses, and press for an expansion of social services and increases in wages. The local movement will get a great encouragement from this rally, with a new mood taken back to local schools, depots and offices.

By Dave Carr

(Gosport CLP)

Iranian students slam Tory hypocrites

Photo: MILITANT

Infuriated by the occupation of the American Embassy in Tehran by Iranian Students, some Tory students at Trent Polytechnic tabled a resolution to disaffiliate the Iranian and Islamic Societies from the Students Union at last week's Union Council meeting.

Imagine their surprise when the meeting was picketed by 30 Iranian and Islamic students! The Tories claimed that the Embassy occupation was part of widespread violations of human rights by the Ayatollah's regime, and therefore these societies should be disaffiliated.

Labour Club members led the defence of the Iranian and Islamic Societies. The Embassy was occupied because the students wanted the Shah back, to make him stand trial and pay up for his 37 years of crimes against the Iranians.

Tories silent over Shah

We stated our support for the workers overthrow of the Shah, a revolution in which millions had participated. But this did not mean that socialists supported the attempt by Khomeini to estab-



Young Tories—hypocritical attitude failed to get Islamic societies out of Students' Union

lish a theocratic dictatorship, nor the occupation of the Embassy and the holding of hostages.

The Iranian spokesman, Morteza Ahmadi Yazdi, asked why these Tory 'defenders of human rights' spoke now and not during the Shah's reign. People should not believe the lies of the western capitalist press about

Iran, he said.

The disaffiliation of the Iranian and Islamic Societies was overwhelmingly defeated. The condemnation of the occupation of the American Embassy was carried 18-10. Despite this, however, the Iranians regarded this meeting as "victory in the first battle."

Many copies of "Militant"

were sold and future joint activities and discussions were enthusiastically planned between the Iranian Society and Labour Club—including a joint meeting with Iranian and Labour Club speakers.

By Mike Levene

(Trent Poly Labour Club)

LEFT and RIGHT

CAPITALISM'S WAY OF LIFE

Thatcher's New Year's Honours List was described by the 'Guardian' as "honours for big business". The majority of it went to various heads of industries such as Kenneth Keith of Rolls Royce, or such notables as Junor, editor of that well known friend of the working class, the 'Sunday Express', or McWhirter, a leading light in the National Association for Freedom. Thatcher claimed the honours list was drawn up to represent the 'British way of life'. All these bloated bigots represent is British capitalism.

CURIOUSER AND CURIOUSER

Read all about it! At last the truth is out! Did you know Khomeini was a Soviet agent? Or that there is an international terrorist network called 'students'? No? Then read the centre page article in the 'Daily Telegraph' [Jan 2] to witness one of the most ridiculous pieces of drivel ever written. University Professor Ronald Hilton, editor of World Affairs Report [wonder where they get their funds from?] sets out to explain the upheavals in the Third World. Firstly the occupation of the Tehran US Embassy. Hilton explains there is convincing evidence there is 'a master plan involving student terrorists around the world' in taking over embassies, led by the IRA, Baader-Meinhof etc. Apparently their aim is to get hold of passports for terrorist activities—no more sneaking in and stealing them or bribing embassy staff to get them; just organise a few hundred students to occupy the place. After all, students are a very powerful section of society. As Hilton says, "The Paris student riots of 1968... nearly overthrew De Gaulle." The 10 million French workers who happened to be taking part in a General Strike at the time apparently had nothing to do with it.

Hilton also claims that Khomeini is a top soviet agent but admits, "Some people have questioned this story." Yes, they probably have. He concludes that Russia is winning over the Third World by converting them to Islam, at the same time explaining the recent attack on a Mosque in Mecca by a fanatical section of the Islamic faith as "carried out by agents from Moscow-orientated South Yemen," an act which if it were true would no doubt win Muslims over to Moscow in hordes!

But Hilton's grandiose theory couldn't explain the attack on the Russian embassy in Tehran, or the Russian troops pouring into Afghanistan. But then like most bourgeois academics who do not have the clear-sightedness of Marxism, Hilton tries to explain everything as mere whims of individuals, or by sticking on convenient labels, and ends up tying himself in knots.

THE OUTSIDER: AN ACCURATE PICTURE

Although it does not make any political statement, the new film 'The Outsider' [AA] gives a graphic description of the situation in Northern Ireland in the early seventies.

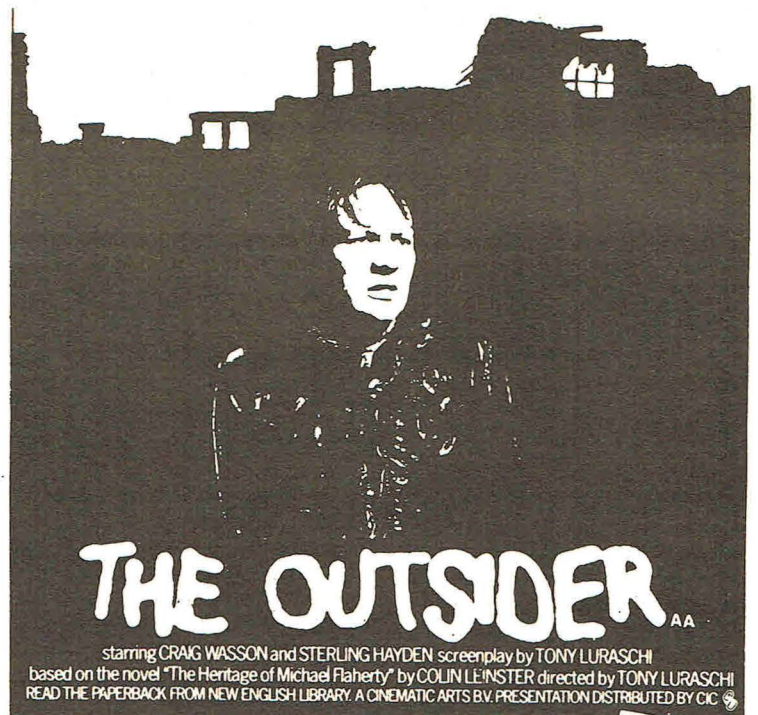
The film is basically a thriller, with American Michael Flaherty, brought up on tales of fighting the 'Black and Tans' by his Republican grandfather, joining up with the Provisionals after serving in Vietnam.

The plot is quite straightforward: the Provos want to push up funds coming in from the United States, so what better propaganda point than to have an Irish American

By Fiona
Winders
(Wanstead and Woodford
LPYS)

'volunteer' killed in action by the British Army? To achieve this Michael is moved into Belfast to serve with a unit in one of the Catholic ghettos, where, as an 'outsider', he should be easy meat for the British Army.

However, the Army intelligence realise the Provos' aims, and hope to turn the tables on them, trying to get the Belfast Provos to think he is an informer, and so executed by them. Then they in turn could approach Republican sympathisers in the US, with tales of what madmen the Provos were, and stem the flow of cash.



AN EVERYDAY HORROR STORY

"I'm literally terrified when he's out and working." A mother's heartfelt cry about her 16-year-old son, who works in a garage as an apprentice paint sprayer and body builder, writes Sue Norris [Romford LP].

"There's an enormous paraffin thing that catches fire, it caught fire when I went up there—if he doesn't ring me every day, I think the place has gone up! They store literally gallons of thinners and paints (which are all inflammable) in the open. By law it should be in a concrete box."

The story that this worried mother gave me became more horrifying by the second. She

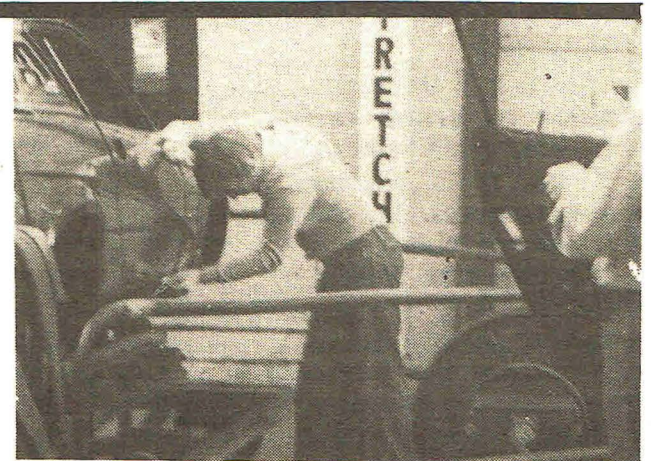
told me that her son works an average of 60 hours a week and clocked up 75 hours last week for the princely sum of £50. His basic pay is £25 for a 40-hour week.

"He was so tired last week," she told me, "that he went to bed with all his dirty clothes still on."

"He is classed as self-employed, a thing that wasn't explained when he first started work. He has no contract and he buys all his own overalls and safety shoes."

"The conditions for eating are terrible. He has to sit and eat where they are spraying or rubbing down amongst all that dust and fumes—it just turns my stomach."

What makes somebody



work under these conditions?

"I made over 40 phone calls to various companies before he left school. The careers office just told him to look through the yellow pages! When this job came up he wasn't in a position to refuse it."

This one-parent family live in Barking, in the centre of industrial East London. Em-

ployment here is better than in most places so what chance is there for young people in the very worst unemployment areas!

The capitalist press moan day in, day out about the "work-shy" but why should anybody have to work in such terrible conditions for peanuts, especially a 16 year old school leaver!

New Year Greetings

New Year greetings
to the labour
and trade union movement
from: Isle of Wight CLP
Isle of Wight LPYS
Shanklin & District LPYS
"UNITE AROUND A
SOCIALIST
PROGRAMME TO
BRING DOWN
THE TORIES"

GRAVELLY HILL BRANCH
LABOUR PARTY
express their determination to
uphold the democratic decisions
of Party Conference

SWANSEA LABOUR
PARTY YOUNG
SOCIALISTS
No to steel closures
and any redundancies
Labour must fight
the Tories with bold
socialist policies in 1980

Best wishes
for 1980 from
Walkergate Branch
Labour Party
to all socialists
and trade unionists

BRIGHTON LABOUR PARTY
offers fraternal greetings to all
readers and comrades

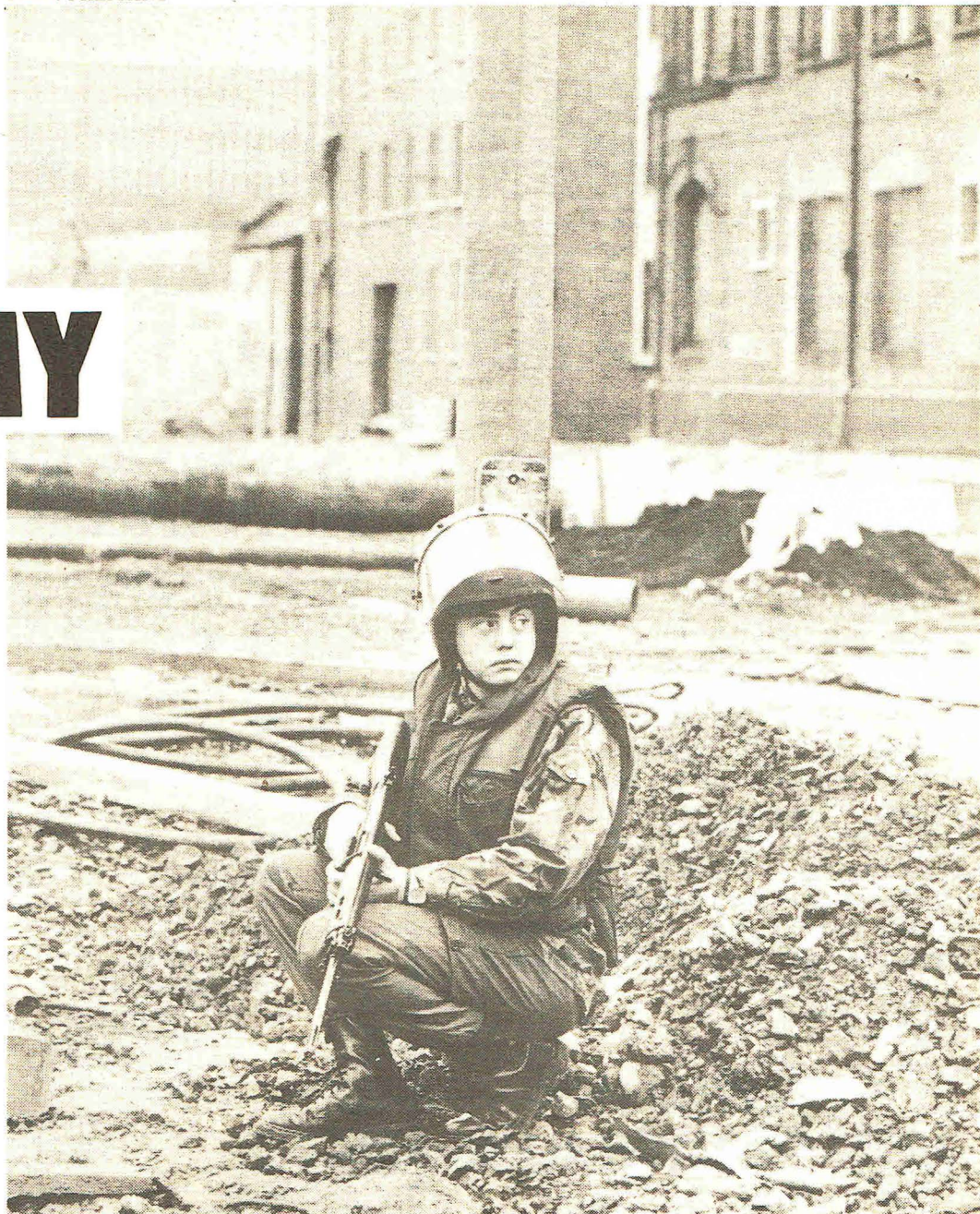
NORTHERN IRELAND

DOLE OFFICE



A HARD LIFE IN THE ARMY

Photo: MILITANT



A battle of nerves, constant danger—and no solution to the conflict in Northern Ireland

Press writings on Northern Ireland tend to ignore or distort many vital issues. It is hardly surprising therefore to find little accurate reporting on the situation faced by rank and file British troops on the streets of Northern Ireland.

The majority of soldiers can be differentiated from elite groups such as the SAS and the Paratroopers, many of whom are lumpen thugs acting as mercenaries for the ruling class. There is also a chasm between the lives of the ranks and those of the officers, predominantly recruited from and representing the ruling class itself.

In fact if the opposition to British imperialism had been on a class basis, a clear class appeal to the troops explaining how they were used against their fellow workers would have a great impact. The entire situation in Northern Ireland could have been transformed.

The majority of rank and file troops are recruited from depressed industrial areas where prospects after school are either as factory fodder or increasingly, the dole.

Against this bleak prospect the army recruiting officers, with the help of the media, offer a grand, adventurous life of variety, sunny climates and, an important factor with most working class youth, a

Report
by
Bob Wade

trade. Not surprisingly, there is a high turn-over rate of troops who have served in Northern Ireland. Having stomached the mindless routinism of army life, far from being 'rewarded' with a tour of some far-off exotic country, they find themselves dumped on the rain-soaked streets of Belfast or Derry, or in the so-called 'bandit' country of County Armagh in scenery very similar to their home towns.

Army recruiting advertisements have grudgingly begun to admit that soldiers will have to serve in Northern Ireland, but they try to portray tours as only a short stay and as being a challenge, sorting out the 'men from the boys'.

Harsh reality

Enoch Powell's cold-blooded assessment of the role of troops in Northern Ireland in the Police Federation magazine 'Police' would be far more accurate: "It [the Army] is to act as what it is, a killing machine...The army is... brought in to prevent the imminent threat, and if necessary to perform the act, of killing, albeit minimal,

controlled and selective killing."

The shock of serving in Northern Ireland—in conditions similar to home, with the ever-present threat of death or horrific injury—was well portrayed in incidents described by members of the Belfast Labour and Trade Union Group:

"An army patrol was moving along my grandmother's street when the Provos opened up on them. One young squaddie ran in to my grandmother's house and gave her his rifle and cowered in the corner."

"A new batch of troops were stationed in our road—they were guardsmen. All the kids were playing in the street around them."

"My little four-year-old sister went up to one of them and tugged him by his sleeve and said, 'You won't shoot me, will you, mister soldier?' The guardsman, who was over 6½ feet tall, just burst into tears."

Andy Corfield, a Labour Party member in Bristol and

T&G shop steward, was a soldier in the Gloucestershire Regiment from 1969-70 and was one of the first batch of troops to be sent into Derry. His experiences are typical of the thoughts which race through the minds of many soldiers:

"When we were moved into Derry we were put on 24-hour guard duty of a whisky works—we were always protecting property, not people. Our main patrols were in the William Street area—there was a fish and chip shop at the bottom of a block of flats called Duddy's. We closed it down about six times, just because people met there."

Constant battle of nerves

"Walking around the streets you can see all the poverty—you see kids leaning against the wall with nothing to do. There's just no work. But then you see the richer areas, there's no trouble

there. "Quite a few troops out there like me just didn't want to know. There were troops serving with me who had sons and daughters the same age as those who were being shot down."

"When we first went in a lot of us, especially those who had just come back from Aden, couldn't comprehend it. It wasn't guerrilla warfare like they were used to—it was a constant battle of nerves."

"After a while I was beginning to ask questions, but I never got an answer. I had passed out of training—I was 17—and that was my first posting. Put on a boat and sent to Ireland. I often questioned myself; I've been walking the streets of my own country carrying a gun."

"It was from that time on I started asking the question 'why are we here?'—and got no answer. We weren't told where we were in Northern Ireland or for what reason. From that point on it remained a constant battle to retain some sanity."

"When I came out of Ireland, I went to hospital, and they told me I was going back—I said there was no way. The first time was enough, it really opened my eyes up to what the army really was. There were thousands like myself who joined the army because there was no work and no alternative to the dole, and this is happening even more today."

An immediate task for the labour movement and for the Labour Party Young Socialists especially, is to campaign against the army being allowed to carry out recruitment drives in schools etc. and to counter their claims.

As Andy said, "The army recruitment officers paint a glossy picture of army life.

The truth should be told—the bad food and conditions, being forced to run ten miles and then being beaten up by officers when you just can't go on.

"In one riot in Derry one of my mates lost an eye—bricks and bottles were coming down and then this penny cut and sharpened into a star bounced off a wall and hit him in the face—his eye was hanging out over his cheek and we had to try and put it back in—that's the reality of army life."

The army rank and file need a union to represent them on a collective basis and to campaign for better conditions through all aspects of service. The ruling class have vehemently opposed this—a unionised army, air force or navy would mean ordinary servicemen beginning to identify themselves as members of the trade union movement.

However, as working people—the Protestant and Catholic workers of the north, and the British and southern Irish labour movements—increasingly struggle against the common enemy, the capitalist system, so the consciousness of the working class soldier will be aroused. These soldiers will see themselves as members of the working class and will direct their loyalties increasingly towards the labour movement.

Increased repression, using British troops as the battering ram, can offer no solution to the conflict in Northern Ireland. As the 'Militant' has consistently argued, the only answer lies in a class programme, uniting workers in the struggle to end unemployment, poverty and violence, replacing the troops with genuine defence organised by the workers themselves.

WORKERS NOTEBOOK

The maternity grant received by mothers on the birth of a child is worth less now in real terms than the original grant when it was introduced in 1911. The grant, of a mere £25, fails completely to cover the normal initial costs to a family when a child is born. A 'basket of goods', of absolute essentials, used to construct a maternity costs index was priced at £162.40 in June 1979.

What is more, the most vulnerable mothers do not receive any maternity grant at all. Each year, 8% of mothers [or their husbands if they are married] fail to satisfy the National Insurance contribution test. Half

of these parents are single mothers, and half of them again do not even get needs grants from their local social security office. Yet it is precisely these babies that stand the highest risk of dying at birth, or in the first months of life, or of being born handicapped.

Thatcher has claimed many times that there is a widespread 'why work?' syndrome. In other words, the unemployed are out of work on purpose because they are too well off! This nonsensical idea is a cover for planned attacks on levels

of unemployment pay, sickness and injury benefit and short term supplementary benefits.

Recent reports indicate that Thatcher's government intends to allow benefit rates to be savagely eroded by inflation. The automatic index-linking of unemployment benefit is under attack, both in order to cut costs and to "restore incentives" to those in work.

When unemployment is expected to rise sharply, workers will be more concerned with the 'what work?' syndrome than a 'why work?' syndrome. In any case, the present level of unemployment benefit for a couple with two children is

smaller as a percentage of average earnings than in the period 1971-73. Probably about 2 million families stand to lose by these savage plans.

The government's claim that such measures to cut benefits will be an incentive to those at work is rubbish. Many of the government cuts, such as in school meals, the ending of the electricity discount scheme etc. have made the position of working families worse. The Tory strategy is to worsen the conditions of all sections of the working class.

POLICE VIOLENCE EXPOSED

Since 1970, 245 people have died while in police custody in England and Wales alone—of these only 66 are known to have died from natural causes!

Figures released in Parliament after questions asked by Labour MPs show that the numbers of people dying after incidents involving the police are increasing.

By Eileen Short

Of the non-natural deaths, inquests returned verdicts of 36 suicides, 39 'accidental' deaths, 62 deaths by 'misadventure', 15 open verdicts, and 2 'manslaughter' (but not by the police of course).

In two cases inquest juries refused to return any verdict, and on a further 23 cases no inquest was held at all.

Cases such as that of Liddle Towers or Jimmy Kelly—or Kevin Gately and Blair Peach who died not in police custody but on demonstrations—have shown how the state covers up any investigation to find these people's killers. As Labour MP for Sheffield Martin Flannery said of the Director of Public Prosecutions, "In practically every case the Directorate made a statement that there was not sufficient evidence to prosecute."

These go alongside the increase of police violence; the establishment of special independent units (SPG, Task Force, etc); the increase in the use of guns, riot control equipment; the violent breaking up of picket lines and anti-fascist demonstrations; or, as in the case of Jimmy Kelly (see Militant 469), blatant attacks on workers' social gatherings.

Any criticism of the police has met with blatant denials

of brutality, or cynical remarks from the police chiefs. A prime example was Jim Jardine, speaking to members of the right-wing Tory Monday Club (reported in 'Police', magazine of the Police Federation) on allegations of torture by the RUC in Northern Ireland.

He claimed that "...the propaganda myth of prisoners or suspects being systematically tortured and beaten is blatant hogwash." Yet Amnesty International's report on brutality in Castlereagh police station was backed up by a police doctor!

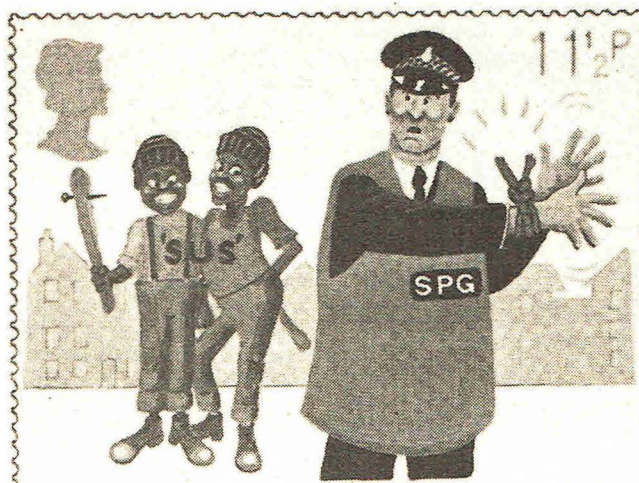
In the magazine there was a sarcastic comment on the murder of Blair Peach, (complete with racist innuendoes): "One of the most bitter complaints of the Southall Action Group is that in the identity parades held to try and identify the policeman who is alleged to have struck Blair, each consists of police officers in uniform. Apparently they all look alike."

The 'Police' described the figures of deaths published as 'not remarkable'. But it appears the main fear of the chiefs is any form of accountability—actually being held responsible for their actions.

The 'Police' said that the Labour MPs who demanded



ABOVE: Special Patrol Group in action
BELOW: Reactionary racist cartoons from Police Federation magazine 'Police'



THE LIBERATING LEGISLATION



BIRTHDAY SUITS

figures on deaths in custody were 'conducting a smear campaign' with the object 'to make the police more amenable to taking instructions from politicians.'

The police chiefs say this would hold up their work fighting crime—but were Blair Peach, Jimmy Kelly or Liddle Towers such horren-

dous criminals that they invoked the death penalty?

The capitalist state does not want any tethers on its 'law' keeping force, especially when it is entering a period of deepening crisis. More and more workers will come into conflict with the bosses, and the capitalist state machine as they struggle for decent living

conditions.

It is not a question of the labour movement 'harassing' individual policemen. Many local policemen would be horrified at the activities sanctioned by their bosses.

But the labour movement has a duty to enquire into the deaths of workers at the hands of the police. The

alarming information revealed in Parliament and the growing apparatus of repressive laws also make it vital that there should be a full trade union enquiry into all aspects of the role of the police.

INVESTMENT: Recipe for an individual industrial desert

The Tory press are all agreed. They shout out daily that strikes are the cause of the present catastrophic decline of British industry.

The 'gentlemen' of the press have practically ignored a recent report proving that the average British worker is backed up by far less investment than workers in any other major industrial country. In other words industry is being ruined by a strike—of investment.

The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development show that each industrial worker in Britain was

backed by investment of a mere £660 in 1977. This compared with well over £2,000 investment per worker in USA and Netherlands. Even the capitalist class in Ireland, one of the least developed countries in the EEC managed better than the British bosses (see table A).

Manufacturing investment is still below the level reached in 1970 (see table B). Are things going to get better now? Quite the reverse. The Department of Industry recently predicted a further 3% drop in industrial investment in 1979 and a slump of 7% for 1980!

Where are the poor millionaires going to get their crusts from? The Department of

By Roger Shrivs

Industry anticipate an 8% rise in investment in service industries to a new record high in 1980. They're more profitable, so to hell with the consequences as factories are closed—ruined by capitalism.

Interest rates are up again to record levels in the last few months, so that's one easy way to raise your fortune. What about postage stamps? They're quite useless objects which don't produce anything. Except profits.

Table A: Investment per employee in manufacturing at current prices and exchange rates 1972-1977 (£)

	1972	1973	1974	1975	1976	1977
Belgium	560	710	1,010	1,160	1,240	1,340
France*	740	910	1,010	1,290	1,670	1,840
Ireland	480	530	620	820	910	na
Italy**	370	500	640	na	na	na
Netherlands	710	920	1,160	1,370	1,680	2,210
W Germany	580	650	710	820	1,080	na
USA	1,000	1,090	1,260	1,430	1,850	2,190
UK	260	300	380	460	540	660

* includes mining, electricity, gas and water
**includes mining

From Labour Research, December 1979

The Maxwell Stamp consultancy say the price of stamps has risen 638% in the last ten years, an annual compound growth rate of 22%. Stamps were, until recently, also useful for evading exchange controls and sending money abroad by stamp smuggling.

Since October 23rd the investors haven't had to stoop to such low tricks as exchange controls are lifted. In 1976 foreign investment was already £2,000 million. How much will it reach now?

Enormous investment would be needed to bring British manufacturing indus-

try up to the productivity

levels of Britain's main rivals. In search of quick profits, British capitalism has more or less abandoned the

task.

Only a socialist plan of production can prevent Britain becoming an industrial desert.

OPEN LETTER TO POST OFFICE BOSSES

This year in order to get a reasonable holiday in line with many other industries postal workers were forced to go on strike on the 27th December.

After working 16 days non-stop to clear the mail, postal management have as usual given us two whole days off.

I wonder how long Mr Barlow and his top executives had for their break or how long they worked up to Christmas. Most of us have been working at least 12 hours a day and the thanks we got from the post office was a mass produced letter signed by

area Post Masters and two days off.

Not only did the Post Office refuse to negotiate on the 27th but they did their best to split the union membership on this issue. This we must fight at all costs, our solidarity is our strongest weapon. We must show them that we mean business.

To trade unionists everywhere I wish you peace and happiness. To Mr Barlow and friends, "thanks for nothing."

Ken Bleach
Assistant Secretary
Folkestone UPW

1979: A SPECTRE FOR THE

1979 has dramatically confirmed the fact that the world has entered a new era of social revolutions. In the three main areas of the world, that is in the 'socialist' countries, in the West and in the Third World, social contradictions have continued to pile up and threaten to explode on an unprecedented scale.

The next decade promises to be the most turbulent period in the whole of human history, with the working masses entering the arena of political and social struggle on a far mightier scale—in hundreds of millions and in billions—than ever before.

The spokesmen and representatives of the capitalists can themselves sense the all-pervading feeling of instability and insecurity that now dogs them. The International Institute for Strategic Studies is an organisation that researches into international security problems from the standpoint of the 'industrialised West', that is, from the point of view of imperialism. As far as anyone can be described as the strategists of capitalism, it is they.

Their 'Strategic Survey' published in early 1979 shows the way in which these more far-sighted representatives of the ruling class can arrive at the same conclusions as Marxists,

although from an opposing class standpoint.

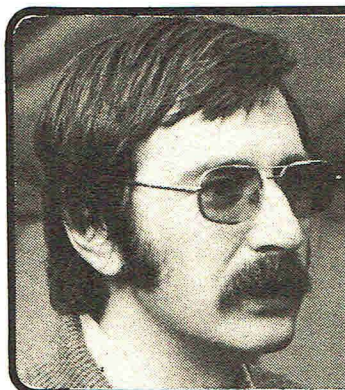
For them, the major strategic trend of the decade is "the growing pluralism and diversity of the international scene, the diffusion of power, and the inability of the two major countries to shape and control events not only in the unsettled regions of the Third World but even, to some extent, within their own alliances."

We would say that this position has been well vindicated by the events of 1979.

For imperialism, 1979 must have seemed like a nightmare: while the economies of the main capitalist powers entered a new recession, irreversible damage was being done to the economic and strategic power of imperialism, especially through the many new revolutionary explosions around the third world.

To quote the IISS again, "the most serious challenge (for the industrialised West) in the 1980s: how to assure the supply, from an unstable Third World, of the raw materials on which its economic well-being, domestic stability and political cohesion depend." Throughout the year dictatorships fell in many corners of the world, and those who did survive at least felt the ground moving beneath their feet.

Without any doubt the greatest blow to the West,



John Pickard, Gateshead Labour Party, reviews the tumultuous developments during the last year

and especially to American interests, was the revolution in Iran. After the magnificent strikes and demonstrations that began in the autumn of 1978, the opposition to the Shah quickly increased. The massive character of the opposition was shown by the sheer size of the demonstrations that numbered in the millions, but the decisive factor was undoubtedly the strength of the industrial workers. All the major industries in Iran were tied up in a general strike for the whole of the turbulent period—that is for four months!

The IISS also realised that: "it was the effectiveness of the strike weapon—particularly in the oil fields—which more than anything else rendered the country ungovernable. It was proof against persuasion by moderates and remedy by force alike." The determined strength of the workers eventually caused the armed forces to crumble. One of the world's most powerful armed forces disintegrated in a few days—and the shock of this event, its impact upon the morale and confidence of the capitalist powers, cannot be overstated.

The world's most powerful armed forces were powerless when the Iranian workers moved into serious and determined struggle.

In some respects it has been a bigger blow than even the defeat of the USA in Viet-

nam. The Shah's armed forces were built up over the years to act as the "police-men" in the Middle East, on behalf of imperialism. All the branches of the forces were equipped with the most up-to-date weaponry—better in some cases than that issued to NATO forces—and yet it all came to nothing when the workers moved into struggle in a serious and determined way.

Those faint-hearts in the labour movement who are always prepared to overestimate the power of the state apparatus and yet sneer at the potential strength of the working class should ponder for a moment on the circumstances that permitted the Shah to take his enforced 'holiday' in January!

It would be wrong, of course, to ignore the negative features of the Iranian revolution as it has unfolded—the reactionary theocratic ideas of the Khomeini leadership, their position on the national minorities, on women, and so on. These features loom large in Iran because of the lack of an alternative: had there been a workers' movement equivalent to the Bolshevik leadership in Russia in 1917 then the position of the theocratic ayatollahs would have been far weaker.

As it is, the Iranian Tudeh ('Communist') party follows miserably in the footsteps of the Imam. But even in this religious form, the social content of the revolution is obvious.

To the mullahs themselves, their revolution is for and on behalf of the "barefoot ones" i.e. the poor. The struggles of the workers in strikes and occupations have forced the regime to embark upon the path of nationalisations. Banking, insurance, and all the major industries have been nationalised—little won-

Over the last twelve months, dictators in the Caribbean have been overthrown, demonstrations and armed uprisings cannot control the ferment of unrest in many countries.

The gathering forces of revolt are facing the international capitalist advanced. The prospect before us is working masses to end the tyranny throughout the world.

der one of the (dispossessed) capitalists remarked to a journalist from 'Le Monde': "We didn't expect the mullahs would behave like common-or-garden Communists!"

But if these measures have been taken, it has not been as a result of any pre-conceived policy of the mullahs: the workers have demanded state control and have forced the state to recognise it. The enormous momentum of the revolution has had a logic and a direction of its own.

Catching the 'Iranian sickness'

With or without the consent of the Islamic committees, the workers in industry set up their own self-management committees, purged former managers, gave themselves pay rises and so on. Some managers demanded nationalisation for their own protection.

'Le Monde' reported that "The Civil Engineers Contractors Union held an extraordinary meeting on July 24th and voted 598 to 2 to ask the government to nationalise their businesses. 'We just couldn't go on,' one of the contractors said, 'All the big construction projects have been held up for months and we have to pay our workers who come to the construction sites, guns in their hands...'"

The revolution has started but it has by no means ended yet. The differences within the Moslem hierarchy are a reflection of differing social forces as well as nationalities. With unemployment increasing, as well as inflation, the concrete and bread-and-butter demands of the workers will begin to assert themselves over the more esoteric schemes of the Khomeini clique.

The workers who are still organised and armed will realise that food for their children has a higher value than veils for their women. Those who won the revolution will begin to demand—once again with arms, if necessary—the benefits of the revolution.

Despite the incomplete nature of the Iranian revolution, and no matter what the outcome now, a serious blow has been dealt to imperialism. Once again, we turn to capitalism's own strategists for their view; the IISS survey points out: "The kind of instability that engulfed Iran, exposing the limitations of outside crisis management, pointed to a new and major security threat for the industrialised West in the 1980s."

The good old days of "outside crisis management" in Guatemala, Dominica, Vietnam, Lebanon, Suez etc. etc. have gone. Imperialism has had to look on impotently as the shock-waves of the Iranian explosion reverberated around the world.

Three of the countries bordering directly on Iran have changed governments in 1979 and the social unrest in these states—Iraq, Turkey and Afghanistan—is due at least partly to events in neighbouring Iran.

Likewise in the Arab Gulf States, the little sheikhdoms and kingdoms have been falling over themselves with fright at the thought of catching the 'Iranian sickness'. The success of the strike in the Iranian oil-fields has set a precedent and a target for other workers to go by. The biggest of the oil states—Saudi Arabia—was itself rocked by the revolt in November when a group of two hundred took over the Grand Mosque in Mecca.

King Khaled has every reason to think that the ghost of revolution was coming to haunt his household: it now seems that the occupation of the Mosque had less to do with religious dissent than with a radical social movement against the royal dynasty. The regime in that country can no longer bask, as it has for years, in the sunny image of security and tranquility.

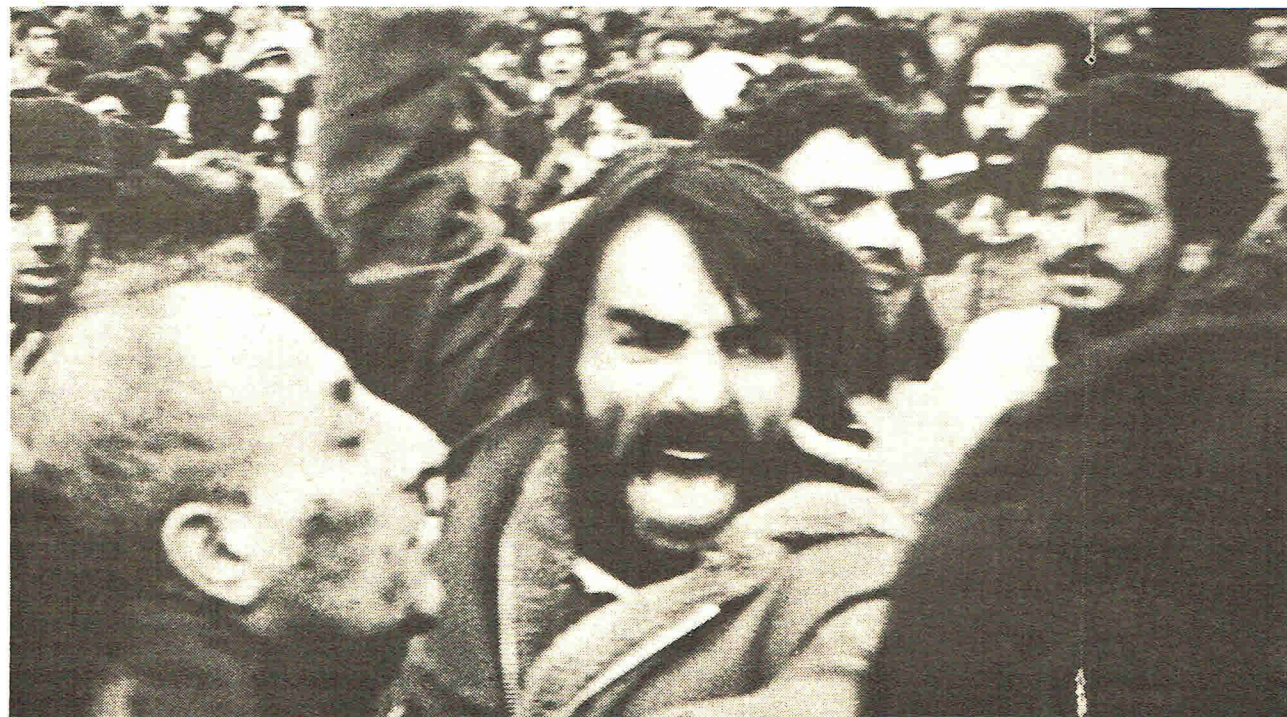
After the Middle East with its vast reserves of oil, Africa is probably the most important strategic area for imperialism. A growing proportion of European and American consumption of rare metals (uranium, titanium, vanadium) is based on the geology of Africa.

Yet here, too, throughout 1979, there has been one regime overthrown after another; one social movement after another.

In April the bloody dictatorship of Amin in Uganda finally came to an end. Amin, who came to power to the welcomes of the British government of the time, was responsible for the deaths of 200,000 of the country's 13 million people.

Then in June the military government of General Akuffo was overthrown in Ghana by a movement of junior officers, aiming to eliminate corruption. That coup, with the subsequent execution of Akuffo and the elections has opened up a Pandora's Box of social unrest and struggle in that state.

In August the Macias government in Equatorial Guinea was overthrown by a military coup. Like his counterpart in Uganda, Macias had reportedly been responsible for tens



Such was the anger of the Iranian people that one of the Shah's generals [above] was dragged from his car and killed

NEXT DECADE

**torships in Iran, Africa and the
own by general strikes, mass
ings. The mighty 'super-powers'
t, focused on the under-developed**

**ear witness to the growing crisis
economies, including the most
is of a decade of struggle by the
ny of exploitation and poverty**

of thousands of deaths.

In September the 'emperor' Bokassa was quietly ousted from his Central African Empire. Bokassa—who personally murdered children and who sanctioned the clubbing to death of opposition elements and petty criminals—had been propped up for years by the French government but eventually the stink of his regime began to foul the air in Paris. The French government quietly arranged a coup to replace its murderous friend with another less tainted in the public eye.

But governments do not change by themselves and dictators do not fall for nothing. These changes are a small glimpse of the growing social contradictions in these countries, leading inevitably to explosions as we enter the new decade.

Certainly, the white regimes in Southern Africa have recognised the great possibility of social explosions. If the Botha regime is prepared to make small concessions (largely cosmetic) to black workers at this stage, it is by no means as a result of a change of heart within the ruling regime in South Africa—but, on the contrary, out of fear of social revolution.

Strikes and occupations throughout 1979 have once again shown the enormous power and strength of the black workers, and Botha knows very well that legal restrictions will no longer suffice to hold back the struggle of the black trade unions.



Sandinista uprising in Nicaragua

1979 has seen the arrival of the much-heralded Zimbabwe agreement, although that deal will fail to hold back the tide of revolution in Zimbabwe. Despite the manoeuvring of Carrington, Muzorewa, and Smith, they must know that they are bargaining from a position of weakness, at least in the long term.

The American intellectuals agree: "there are no answers any more"—but for workers the alternative is becoming clearer

The stark choice facing the British capitalist class is either a black capitalist government or a black Zimbabwe without capitalism—either way Smith will be forced to make real concessions.

As 1979 draws to a close the Tories and Muzorewa are scrambling to legitimise a regime that will minimise any social overturn in the future. In the long run, however, they will not stop such social changes, especially from the pressure of the guerrilla movements.

In America's own backyard, in the Caribbean and in Latin America, 1979 has seen a real 'Cuban Summer'.

In March the New Jewel

Movement overthrew the autocratic regime of Sir Eric Gairy in Grenada. In St Lucia, the Labour Party, with a left programme, routed the party of the government. In Dominica the right-wing Prime Minister was forced to resign after strikes and protests.

Adding to these there were strikes and demonstrations in Guyana and the governments in St Vincent and St Kitts have seen new protest movements developing.

But of all these movements near to the US, the Nicaraguan revolution on the mainland itself gave the White House the greatest cause for concern. The Sandinista movement that overthrew Somoza waged a year-long struggle until at last, in mid-July, the dictator was forced to flee.

The viciousness of Somoza's National Guard is indicated by the fact that the war cost 200,000 people their lives in a population of only 2.5 million. Televisions around the world showed the scenes of cold-blooded murders perpetrated by the National Guardsman, including the shooting of an American newsman.

Like the movement that overthrew the Shah in Iran, the Nicaraguan revolution arose as an enormous tide of popular support which has given extra impetus to the revolutionary government to deal with the pressing social and economic problems. The new government in Nicaragua may have the outward appearance of 'moderation' (the first post-Batista government in Cuba had only a minority of Castro supporters), but the real power still lies with the 'armed bodies of men', and that means the Sandinista movement.

Not surprisingly, the new government has already embarked upon the road of nationalisations and has turned to Cuba for technical assistance. The threat of this 'new Cuba' on the mainland has induced some sabre-rattling in the Pentagon, where there have been discussions about a Caribbean anti-insurgency force. But the



Mass poverty haunts the '3rd World'. Queuing for food rations in Haiti

threat or even the hint of military intervention ("outside crisis management") has been opposed by the other Caribbean and most of the Central American states.

So once again, imperialism has had to sit back and watch the ripples. After Nicaragua, the government of General Romero in El Salvador was overthrown by a coup and that has set in train a whole chain of events in that country.

And what of the advanced capitalist countries in 1979?

In almost every case, the year has seen a slide towards recession. Whereas the strong economies of Japan and West Germany are expected to show only 2% growth next year compared to 4% this year, the weaker economies like Britain and the USA will experience an actual fall in production.

In a frantic effort to control inflation, the main capitalist powers are competing with each other to jack up their own currencies by, among other things, record interest rates, thus hastening the recession.

During the year, oil prices have risen by about 49% (that is itself closely related to the political instability in the middle east) and the average inflation in the top dozen capitalist countries was about 11% compared to 7% in the last three years.

The choice facing the capitalist economists is either a recession with inflation at 11% (i.e. stagflation) or a small recovery with world inflation pushed up to 20%. Either choice means great social convulsions since it would mean attacks upon the living standards of the workers.

Carter reflects US weakness

More than most, those capitalists involved in the gold trade and insurance tend to have a keen weather-eye for future storms. During the year the price of gold rose from around \$250 an ounce to over \$450 an ounce.

At the same time, it seems that the fastest growing sector of the insurance market is that dealing with "political risks insurance" for overseas investors, while Lloyds of London have declared the straits at the mouth

of the Persian Gulf a "war zone" for insurance purposes. These simple facts speak volumes as far as the capitalists' confidence in their own system is concerned.

In the circumstances, it is no great wonder that the 'leader of the western world', Jimmy Carter, should have been the butt of every cruel joke and has been held in such miserably low esteem even in his own country.

Carter's only foreign-policy triumph—the signing of the Israeli-Egyptian peace accords—is turning sour on the Palestinian issue; his anti-inflation policy is in tatters; the value of the dollar has fallen by almost 50 per cent against gold; Chrysler threatens to go down with hundreds of thousands of jobs, and there is more to come.

Anyone else of Carter's age would expect to get sympathy after nearly jogging themselves to death, but not Jimmy—it only made him look even more clownish to the American public eye! Before the issue of the Embassy hostages in Tehran, Carter's public opinion poll ratings were even lower than those of the crook Nixon just before he was forced to resign.

But the trials and tribulations of the American presidency have not been brought about by Carter's shallowness and ineptness. It is the Presidency itself, the US Administration, which is indecisive, vacillating and afraid.

The American ruling class cannot have a strong and outstanding political representation when it is itself ridden with self-doubt and pessimism. Trotsky's writings referred to the "death agony of capitalism in the epoch of imperialist decay", and this

last year has shown further proof of the disintegration of the economic and military power of imperialism.

It has been this decay that has been responsible for the paralysis of will over Iran, for the sagging morale and confidence of their leaders and strategists. Their position is perhaps best summed up in the title of an article published in the 'Washington Post': "The intellectuals agree: there are no answers any more."

By any standards of politics and economics, the 1980s will be a decade of instability and upheaval. As Marx wrote in 1848, "there is a spectre haunting Europe, the spectre of Communism"—except that a present-day Marxist would refer to the world and not just Europe.

With or without the small forces of Marxism this is the direction that society is taking. The major task of these small forces is the creation and development of mass parties based upon Marxism to provide the necessary cohesion, direction and leadership to the working class in the upheavals that will come.

In Europe in 1979, the absence of a fighting socialist lead caused the workers' parties to suffer reversals in several key elections, for example, in Italy, Spain and Portugal. These tragedies must not be repeated.

In the struggles of the coming decade, the forces of Marxism will inevitably grow: mass parties of Marxism must be built. The American intellectuals and professors may think that "there are no answers any more", but there will be many times in the next ten years when we will hear the worker addressing the professor, saying, "You speak for yourself!"

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US WORKERS RESIST STEEL CLOSURES

Anger is sweeping through the ranks of steelworkers in the wake of US Steel's announcement that it will eliminate 13,000 more jobs by shutting down 15 of its plants.

Steelworkers around the country are using phrases like "declaration of war" and "a rape of a community" to describe US Steel's actions.

When a man is discarded on the unemployment heap after giving 15, 20 or 25 years of his life to producing profits for a capitalist corporation his anger cannot be measured.

On 30 November the 'first' militant action of steelworkers against US Steel took place as more than 1,200 steelworkers and members of their families, chanting, "US Steel kills communities" and "people first, profits second" occupied the world headquarters of US Steel in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

Spearheaded by a delegation of several hundred steelworkers from Youngstown, Ohio, demonstrators picketed outside the world headquarters, then stormed past security guards and into the complex to occupy the first and second floors.

With women leading the way, the workers demanded to speak with US Steel chairman David Roderick, chanting, "We want jobs, we want Roderick, save our jobs."

When they were asked to leave the building, they said, "hell no, we won't go," the chant heard during the Vietnam War.

"Today will be the beginning of a tremor that will shake this continent from one end to the other," said Robert Vasquez, president of Local 1330 in Youngstown. "US Steel lays off 13,000 workers and then it asks us not to have any violence here today. But isn't it violence to lay off 13,000 and deprive them and

By Betty Traun

their families at Christmas time?"

The crowd chanted, "Merry Christmas, US Steel." Cathy Contafanti, wife of a steelworker laid off from Youngstown Sheet and Tube two years ago when the plant was shut down, came carrying her small daughter on her hip. After a plant shuts down, she said, the unemployment benefits run out.

"Then all you've got is welfare [the dole]," she said. "They need to nationalise basic steel. It should be a right, not a privilege to have a job. I'm going to go again and again to the union office until we get some support."

"The CIO (American TUC) was organised in Youngstown in the 1930s in the Little Steel strike, and we can organise again."

Lloyd McBride, president of United Steelworkers of America (USWA), collaborating with the steel companies, as have his predecessors who foisted a no-strike contract on the union (the ENA), sent no representative to the protest in Pittsburgh.

Death of an area

Ron Weissen, president of USWA Local 1397 at the Homestead Works of US Steel, said, "There's nobody from the International, and it's a damn shame. US Steel is holding 13,000 hostages here and their families. They should send Roderick and the Shah back to Iran."



Workers handing out leaflets outside the Youngstown, Ohio plant

"The unemployment situation here is already horrendous," says Bob Vasquez, president of USWA Local 1330 in the Youngstown, Ohio area. "No work is available for those who will lose their jobs—none at all."

Vasquez angrily notes that US Steel gave no advance notice of the shutdown. "I found out about it at 2.15 yesterday afternoon," he said.

"With the shutdown of the US Steel works," Vasquez says, "Youngstown will be losing a major source of taxes. We've been raped. Youngstown will no longer be a major steel producing area."

Frank Lefeganick, director of USWA District 26, whose territory includes Youngstown commented, "I'm in a state of shock. We received no indication that this was going to happen. They [US Steel] never tell us the truth."

In neighbouring Pennsylvania, US Steel works in Ambridge, Shiffler, Universal, Northampton and McRees Rocks will shut down. Andrew Sopko, president of Ambridge USWA Local 1270 also expressed his shock.

In Beaver County, Pennsylvania, where the Ambridge plant is located, workers received a double jolt this week as a mineral corporation announced it would shut its zinc smelting works in the town of Monaca, throwing 1,500 out of work.

The shutdown in Pennsylvania will add 2,000 unemployed to the large number caused by runaway plants in recent years. Pennsylvania has lost 219,000 manufacturing jobs since 1969. In Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, where US Steel's Northampton works are located, the number of jobs at this mill has shrunk from 20,000 to 9,000 over a 30-year period.

In Illinois, US Steel has announced it will shut down its plants in Wankegan and Joliet, and in addition shut down a plant in Chicago which manufactures containers. The workers in Joliet, Illinois, had been on indefin-

ite lay-off for some time. Now these lay-offs are permanent.

In South Chicago, as the city's first snow swirled in the air, steelworkers at the 89th Street gate of the South Works steel plant expressed their shock and anger to reporters on the closing of 15 plants across the country. Rumours of the closing of the South Works had been circulating for months.

An estimated 2,500 workers had already been laid off. John Jones, a crane operator for 12 years, said there was no place here to get another job.

"A man's got to feed his family and I don't know how long I'll be able to keep this up," he said. Temporarily laid off at the mill, he was not sure when he'd be called back.

He has a wife and six children. "The government should run the mill and keep us working," he declared.

James Johnson, a steelworker for 21 years here, said it was time the union acted to stop the lay-offs. "We should work shorter hours," he said.

The timing of the 15 plant closures is part of the stepped-up attack by steel companies on the entire United Steelworkers of America in recent weeks.

Profits not re-invested

On 6 and 7 December the USWA held its "Basic Steel Conference" in Pittsburgh, where the union's demands for the coming steel contract talks in 1980 were discussed.

US Steel's actions are seen by many as an attempt to place an ultimatum to steelworkers—don't put up any fight in the steel contract talks or else the Corporation will continue to close down plants.

This increased use of corporate extortion is not new. For some time US Steel has demanded that workers at

its South Chicago works and at Birmingham, Alabama, increase their "productivity"—speed-up is the word—or face a possible shutdown.

Mike Farah from Youngstown blasted US Steel's action as an all-out attack on the steel union. "They are holding a sword over every steelworkers' head," he said. "I can't eat on what I'm making now. I can't pay my bills, so there's no place to back down to."

Joseph Saunders, an official of Local 1307, rejected the company's claim that its Youngstown plant was unprofitable. "This plant has been profitable for years, this year in particular," he said, "yet they told us that as long as we're making money they'll keep us open."

Frank Petrozella, a rank and filer from Youngstown, noted that US Steel was

planning to construct a multi-billion dollar facility in Conneaut. "Why not spend it in Youngstown where the workers who made the money live?" he asked.

Ronald Jones, member of Local 1330 said, "the higher-ups at US Steel knew this problem was coming along but they would not put the money we made back into the plant. Youngstown plant was the greatest steelmaking plant in the world, and you can't run a mill without putting money back into it."

"You can't say the working man didn't produce. We did produce. We made the money, we made the profits. They took the profits and built a hotel in Miami and invested in fertiliser."

For capitalism, profits come first, and people second. But the people will turn this equation round, in time.

POLAND: 'PATIENCE' IN SHORT SUPPLY

Last week's 'Militant' [4th January] showed how Polish workers are openly organising for their rights against the regime. And reports in the last week confirm this.

In December 5,000 dockers in Gdansk held a commemorative demonstration for the victims of the 1970 protest. Not only did last month's demonstration go unhindered, but the wharf management allowed the workers the day off to hold the demonstration.

The workers' confidence and power can also be seen in that the main speaker in the demonstration was Lech Walesa, a member of the strike committee in 1970 who has since found it impossible to get work. In order to avoid arrest his colleagues smuggled him into the docks in a container.

But whilst the workers are showing their strength, the leadership of the Catholic Church is huddling closer to the Stalinist leaders. In his

Christmas message Cardinal Wyszyński - defended Prime Minister Gierek and the Party leaders.

He said that the food shortages and economic problems were not the fault of bad planning and intent on the part of the leadership but rather the inadequacies of lower organs of power.

He called on Catholics to forgive those responsible for their problems: "We hope that God will somehow forgive us and reward the nation for its extraordinary patience."

Wyszyński and Gierek may well find that workers' 'patience' is another commodity in short supply in Poland in the 1980s.

By Julian McKittrick

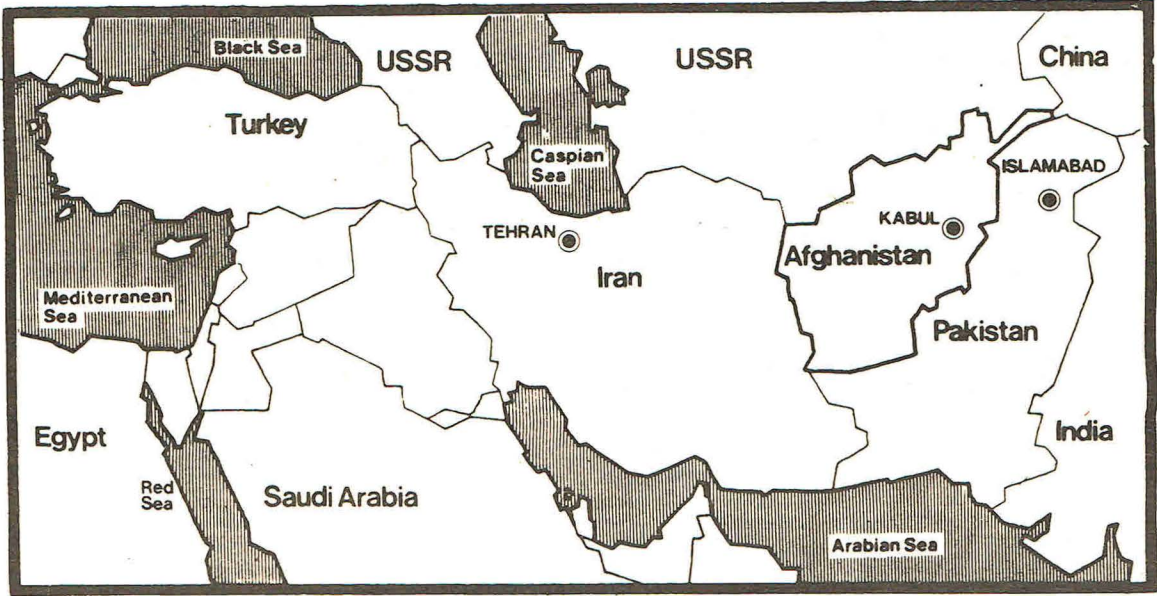
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AFGHANISTAN BRAZIL

AFGHANISTAN: WHY DID RUSSIA INVADE?



The hypocritical outpourings of Western imperialism over the 'aggression' by the Russian against the Afghan people is deafening.

American imperialism was quite prepared to create a river of blood in Vietnam and Cambodia to prop up their puppet defenders of landlordism and capitalism. They were supported in this by the other imperialist powers.

By Jim
Chrystie

In Afghanistan international capitalism shed no fears when the people suffered under a backward regime up till 1978. When 5% of landowners owned 45% of agricultural land and 85% of the population scraped for a living on 35% of the land, where was the concern of imperialism?

Did international capitalism worry that 90% of the male population and 98% of the female population were illiterate, that communications were so poor that the country had no railway?

Their new-found concern for the interests of the Afghan people only stems from their horror at the growing revolutionary unrest in central Asia and the expansion of the Russian bureaucracy's influence.

Yet the Stalinist regime in the USSR is also being totally hypocritical in their protestations that they only acted in the interests of Afghan working people. Their intervention was essentially undertaken to protect the interests of the ruling Russian clique.

Three main reasons

Firstly they were worried that the Muslim opposition to the Afghan regime together with the revolution in Iran could spill over into the Muslim areas of the USSR in Central Asia.

The repression of national and religious rights in Russia could result in discontent amongst the rural Muslims. Whilst the USSR's European population growth is low, the number of Asian Muslims is expanding fast.

The parasitic Russian bureaucracy is scared of any opposition to its rule and intervened to install a regime which could deal more effectively with opposition in Afghanistan.

The second reason for the invasion was to take advantage of the unrest in neighbouring Iran and Pakistan, and to warn American imper-

ialism not to intervene in Iran.

With an American fleet cruising off the Iranian coast, the Russian bureaucracy was giving a clear warning to imperialism that they too would intervene in Iran if America took military action.

Finally the Russian invasion and killing of Amin, the Afghan President, came about as the situation inside the country deteriorated, and the regime, dependent on aid from the Soviet Union for its survival, was threatened.

For despite all the attempts of Tass and Pravda, to denounce Amin as a 'Fascist' and 'an agent of American imperialism' it was Soviet military aid which crushed army opposition to Amin in October and kept him in power until it was convenient to the Soviet bureaucracy to ditch him last month.

Impasse before 1978

To understand the situation now in Afghanistan it is crucial to see the impasse that was facing the society before 1978.

The old ruling class could not take society forward. Feudal land relations gripped the countryside. There was no important Afghan capitalist class and international capitalism's financial stake in the country was small, so there was little industry.

Yet Afghanistan could not remain unaffected by events around it and by the need to modernise its economy.

But how could this modernisation occur? Up till 1978 all kinds of regimes came to power in Afghanistan. None succeeded in modernising society, ending feudalism on the land, unifying the nation state and building an industrial base. They all failed because of the opposition of the old feudal ruling class.

In the absence of a mass Marxist party based on the working class and peasantry, middle class groups in the army and the professions filled the gap in 1978 and began to revolutionise society. The whole history of Af-

ghanistan in the 1945-1978 period shows the impasse facing the old society.

Resistance of feudal order

1949 until 1952 saw a would-be parliamentary capitalist democracy. It collapsed as the monarchy and feudal groups became worried about the growth of 'radical' elements (50 of the 120 MPs were deemed to be 'left-orientated').

Power was handed over in a bloodless military coup in 1953 to Lt-Gen Dauod, a brother-in-law of the King. Dauod tried to balance between the feudal rulers and the Russian bureaucracy, from whom he received substantial aid. But social relations in the countryside, a prerequisite for any modernisation remained untouched.

Finally in 1963 Dauod resigned and another experiment in parliamentary rule was tried. This too collapsed as it met opposition from the king to any real reforms. It was overthrown in 1973 by another coup from Dauod, but this time he got rid of the monarchy.

Yet the 'parliamentary' period of 1963-73 had seen some 'liberalisation' and it witnessed the founding of the left-wing Khalq party (headed by Taraki and Amin) and the later split of the Parcham party (headed by Babrak

Karmal). Khalq advocated substantial land reform, and was promptly banned, but Parcham was less direct and became known as the 'Royal Communist Party'.

In fact the history of Parcham and its leader Babrak Karmal (who is the new leader of Afghanistan) is an indication of the vacillation of the middle-class and how in the absence of a Marxist party and programme opportunism can become the order of the day.

When it seemed that the king would call off the 1973 elections, and dissolve Parliament, Babrak planned this coup with Dauod. But Dauod used Parcham in the early years to establish credibility in the countryside, and then repressed it.

So in 1977 Babrak allied Parcham with the Khalq party.

1978 sees new regime

Discontent with the Dauod regime grew. In April 1978 a demonstration of 15,000 at a funeral for a murdered left-winger, prompted Dauod to arrest many radicals. But he was too late and on April 27th a new coup installed Taraki, Amin and Babrak in power.

One of their first acts was land reform. The big estates were broken up, and the economic power of the old

landowners broken. Debts owed by 11 million peasants were cancelled, holdings were limited to 14 acres and surplus distributed to poor peasants and sharecroppers.

The old order was broken. But this was not the transformation of society by the active involvement of the mass of the population. Whilst the new regime undoubtedly had the sympathy of urban working people, it did not create mass organisations to destroy the old ruling class.

Instead it relied on coercion. Taking a leaf out of its Russian Stalinist supporters it razed villages to the ground if there were objections. It also tried to suppress religious belief by order and decree. So it aroused considerable opposition.

Yet the current opposition cannot seriously hope to recreate the old order. It consists of regional, tribal, mutually antagonistic groups, which all operate under the same Muslim umbrella. Any new regime in Afghanistan would find it difficult, if not impossible to reverse the land reforms of 1978-79.

The opposition to the regime also helped fuel the divisions within the new ruling clique. And there was only room for one Napoleon.

So first Babrak Karmal was 'exiled' to be Ambassador in Czechoslovakia. Then Amin assassinated Taraki in September. But Amin's repression was stirring up too much

opposition.

The Russian bureaucracy in 1979 had been worried that Amin's hard-headed policies were proving counter-productive. They wanted to instigate a more conciliatory regime and advised Taraki to get rid of Amin. But Amin acted first.

Russian bureaucracy act

Faced with this, the Russian bureaucracy gave military aid to defeat army and tribal opposition, whilst working behind the scenes to replace him with someone who would carry out their orders. In December they acted, sent thousands of troops into the country, assassinated Amin and installed Babrak as the new leader.

They hope that his more placatory approach to Muslim leaders might stabilise the situation. And if opposition cannot be subdued there are up to 50,000 Russian troops to ensure it is overwhelmed.

But both imperialism's aims at counter-revolution and the Soviet bureaucracy's attempt to consolidate a satellite state, might well be shaken by the revolution which is now growing throughout the Middle East, the Indian sub-continent and central Asia.

BRAZIL: Workers movement drags church in tow

"Forgive those workers who did not join the strike. They steal our earnings. We strike, they attempt to silence us. We go to the streets, they murder us. We become a crowd."

The words of a trade union leader? No. They are the words of a Catholic Cardinal, Paulo Arns, addressing the funeral service for a worker shot on a picket line in Brazil. The growing opposition of church leaders to the military regime is a measure of the crisis facing the most important country in South America. After a decade and a half of vicious repression, the workers have begun to regain their confidence, forcing even the priests to express their opposition to the regime.

The funeral at which the Cardinal Arns spoke was also attended by several bishops and 200 priests. The worker was shot during a strike by 400,000 engineering workers

in Sao Paulo.

As was seen in Iran, in backward countries where the absence of a mass working class opposition leaves the oppressed with no other voice, religious leaders can become the voice of the masses against repression. In Brazil, the congregations of the vast majority of the priests are the workers and peasants which cannot but reflect the enormous suffering.

Even the bishops are moved to express the anger of the masses. Bishop Sandalo of Sao Paulo has spoken out against a situation where "5% of the population has everything while the other 95% lives in captivity, in the most shameful conditions." So moved was Archbishop Helda Carnara that in the early seventies he was warning that marxism and armed revolution were the likely outcome to the problems facing people in the slums and shanty towns.

However it is unlikely that Brazil will become another Iran with the religious leaders

being raised to power. While in Sao Paulo, the 'Church of Liberation' was able to organise 300,000 people in its 'Movement Against the Cost of Living', this has only been alongside the workers' movement based on the factory committees.

Brazil's rapid industrial growth has whittled away the social importance of the illiterate, superstitious peasantry which had traditionally been the main basis for the Church. Instead 61% of the population live in the cities and the working class is almost 40 million strong.

The communist party in Iran was compromised by its failure to oppose the Shah, but Brizola, leader of the Labour Party (PTB), having spent 15 years in exile comes back to a situation where even in 1978 a Gallup Poll showed that 38% of the population in the major cities supported the PTB.

Unfortunately Brizola has not heeded the enormous potential of which the religious movement is sympto-

matic. At the end of November he indicated that he would be prepared to accept that one third of his men in parliament would be government supporters so that the PTB could be a legal party!

The fact that 'Lula' da Silva, leader of the Sao Paulo metalworkers has gained significant support from other workers' representatives for his Workers' Party indicates that the PTB has lost the confidence of a layer of the advanced workers. But as the workers move into the PTB and the Workers Party they will struggle to transform them into fighting socialist organisations. On the basis of a marxist programme, a mass socialist party can be built which will attract all the workers, Christian and non-Christian into its ranks.

By Phil
Frampton

LETTERS

Send your views and comments on the issues that affect you to 'Militant', 1 Mentmore Terrace, London E8 3PN.

Workers' history research

Dear Comrade

I would be very obliged if any readers with knowledge of unrecorded but historically important incidents in the working class struggle in their own locality would communicate with me.

I am trying to continue writing a series of pamphlets based on such incidents, along the lines of ones already published (e.g. 'The Last Stand of the Levellers'; 'How Trade Unionism came to Pressed Steel'). All I need is a very brief description—I will do the research.

Yours fraternally
Dudley Edwards
Flat 1, 14 St Aubyns,
Hove, Sussex

Property mortgaging democracy

Dear Comrades,

When the Tories controlled Nottingham City Council, Margaret Thatcher publicly congratulated them on their policy of selling off as many council houses as possible. In fact they were so keen that many houses are now in need of repairs because they left them standing empty waiting for buyers.

At my Labour Party branch meeting, councillors reported that the amount of money owing in Council mortgage arrears exceeds that for rent arrears and a number of cases are now being taken to court, as young couples in particular are getting in difficulties keeping up payments.

So much for the property owning democracy!

Fraternally
Tony Cross
East Nottingham CLP.

CORRIE BILL—AN ATTACK ON IMPORTANT SOCIAL REFORM

Dear Comrades

I would like to reply to some of the points raised by Elizabeth Earley in her letter about my article on infant mortality (Militant 479)

It may be that some Corrie Bill supporters have been active in campaigning for the rights of pregnant women: this does not detract, however, from the misguided support which some people in the labour movement have been giving this reactionary Bill.

The Bill should be clearly seen as a political not a moral issue. It represents an attack on an important social reform granted to the working class women and, if Corrie succeeds in getting his Bill through Parliament, the first stages of a subtle whittling away of abortion rights will begin.

There is no doubt in my mind that if they can get away

HEALTH SERVICE CUTBACKS PUT WORKERS' LIVES AT RISK

Dear Comrades

A couple of weeks ago my father had a series of heart attacks. First of all he was diagnosed as having acute angina. He should have been admitted to hospital but there were no beds.

A few days later the pains became so intense he was passing out. His GP would not come out to see him; she said she had too many patients to see. My brother got a cab and got him to hospital where he was admitted to the intensive care unit.

During the course of his stay he was left crying out in pain for six hours one night because not enough agency nurses turned up to cover the ward; it really makes me mad when I think of the numbers of trainee nurses who are sacked when they qualify.

There were notices pinned up all over the place saying do not use too much of this or too much of that because Thatcher's cuts are biting already! There was not enough bed linen to go round and no toilet rolls for over two and a half weeks!

The nurses' pay was appalling, about £32 a week take home, and it was not unusual for them to come on at eight in the morning and be there until 8.30 in the evening! Some were speaking of leaving nursing because of the pay and deteriorating conditions.

A friend of my mother was told a few months ago that she needed open heart surgery but there was a ten year waiting list. At a recent check up she was told she had 10 weeks to live if the operation

was not done.

At present she is recovering from the operation - but what would the situation have been if all Thatcher's cuts had taken effect?

When you think of someone left lying in pain because of staff shortages it makes you sick in the stomach to think what will happen to workers who are ill when the present round of cuts really take effect.

That woman would have died, as my father probably would have, condemned to an early grave in the name of profit. And Thatcher and her crew have the audacity to call hospital workers taking industrial action against the cuts in services murderers!

Yours fraternally
Janice Dale

TUC international department—where does the money go?

Dear Editor,

There is growing concern within the trade union movement about the Trade Union Congress's international programme.

These involve allegations that, in some cases, funds have been used to oppose real and representative workers movements overseas. There is also concern about Foreign Office links with the TUC's international department.

So far the TUC has failed to make a detailed reply to these various charges. The main cause for concern, however, which is not in dispute, is TUC failure to make its overseas work accountable to the membership.

At present the TUC overseas bill amounts to about £600,000 a year, including an annual £180,000 from the Foreign Office. No details are provided to the membership about who receives this cash

and for what purpose. This secrecy makes impossible even the idea of workers' international solidarity. At the same time the global recession and consequent unemployment and erosion of trade union rights makes it even more imperative that workers link across frontiers.

As a result a group of concerned trade unionists are planning to hold a public meeting in London in February to launch a national labour movement campaign to make the TUC's overseas work accountable to the membership.

A number of prominent figures within the labour movement, well known for their campaigning work on international issues, have agreed to sponsor the meeting in an individual capacity. They include—Reg Williams (CPSA national executive

committee), Jack Collins (Kent NUM), Tony Ayland (TUC South Western Regional Council), Peter Heathfield (NUM national executive committee), Ernie Roberts MP, Ken Coates (Institute of Workers Control) Joan Maynard MP, Stuart MacLellan (CPSA), George Anthony (North London), Stan Newens MP, and Roland Sherritt (Secretary, Stirling Trades Council).

The meeting will take place on Sunday, February 10th in the Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London, starting at 2 p.m.

May I appeal through your paper for trade union support and participation and ask that all inquiries about the campaign be directed to me at 1 Cambridge Terrace, London NW1.

Yours fraternally
Don Thomson

Rights of working class women

Dear Comrades

I read the letter by Elizabeth Earley in issue 482 with interest.

Much of what she says is true. Not enough is being done for expectant mothers, especially those who fall into a high risk category and, yes, women should support Kevin McNamara's bill to raise the maternity support grant from £25 to £75 (it should be more, in fact).

Ms Earley, however, goes on to say that she is a supporter of John Corrie's Abortion Amendment Bill. The clauses in this new amendment bill will further restrict the availability of NHS abortions to women, especially working class women.

So it's no good supporting Corrie and at the same time campaigning for better conditions for pregnant women at a time of NHS cuts and cuts in education, social services etc.

Although Ms Earley, no doubt, is sincere in her motives, what is at stake here is really women's rights to choose what they want for themselves. Even in a socialist society where there would be plenty of aid and support for pregnant women, some women may still desire an abortion and so they should have every right to have one as quickly and easily and cheaply as possible.

Yours fraternally
Ruth Jennings
Stevenage Labour Party

Silver spoon or fruit crate

Dear Comrades

Just recently one of our former YS members was in the local maternity hospital having her first child. During the visiting period, the husband of the mother in the next bed turned up with a cradle under his arm to take their new baby back home in.

Strangely enough, it seems that in the Tories' new Britain of free choice not everyone is born with a silver spoon in his or her mouth, since the cradle was a fruit-crate, converted by a young worker who could afford nothing better for his latest kid. Isn't it peculiar the way that sacred Tory principles of 'equal opportunity for all' can be violated so early on in life?

Maybe it's all for the best, though. With this sort of start in the world, you might not be too surprised to grow up in a society of mass unemployment, slum housing inflation, without education or health service. You might be used to the anarchy of capitalism.

On the other hand you might remember the saying "You can judge a society by the way it treats its children" and fight along with the rest of the working class to end the bosses' rotten system once and for all.

Fraternally
J Goodby
Chairman,
Central Hull LPYS

Community under attack

Dear Comrade

The enclosed cheque for £5 will be my best spent money this Christmas. The comrades in Newport appreciate your relentless and informed exposure of the capitalist system and its continual attacks upon the working people.

In South Wales the attack was given a great boost by the inability of the labour movement to unite in support of the Rosedale workers. The whole community of South Wales is now endangered.

The BSC is using the cover of the festive season to force through closures and redundancies at Port Talbot and Llanwern (and there are already rumours of plans to hit the smaller steelworks in Newport). BSC and the government will gleefully push through an economic strategy that will lay-off 10,000 steelworkers and many tens of thousands in the mining, engineering, and transport industries.

The local newspaper is doing its best to induce a feeling of defeatism into the Llanwern workforce, encouraging the men to take their redundancy payments and run. But where to?

It is not a South Wales problem, and that must be emphasised. Corby and Shotton have given up the ghost—or so the media tells us!

As a bakery worker I could feel secure—but who buys cake when they can't afford the rent? The government attack is against the whole community—except for the financiers and employers who will benefit from a vast pool of unemployed labour. Why am I telling you—the message needs to be broadcast out!

Cheers and fraternal greetings for the 'festive' season
Mike Thomas

THE BEST EVER

Build **MILITANT**

Area	Received
Eastern	4,700
Hants & IOW	3,100
Humberside	2,000
London North	9,500
London South	3,900
Manchester & Dist	4,500
Merseyside	5,000
Midlands East	3,300
Midlands West	9,000
Northern	5,500
Scotland East	2,900
Scotland West	4,500
South East	4,500
South West	3,100
Wales East	2,600
Wales West	3,400
Yorkshire	6,800
Others	6,700
Total	85,000

£80,095 FOR THE YEAR

What a week!

As the labour movement came back to life after Christmas Militant supporters remembered their paper. They wanted to see more blistering attacks on the Tories, countering the lies and distortions of the bosses' media.

They wanted a clear analysis of events in Iran and Afghanistan. They wanted to see Militant's view of the attempts of the Tory splitters to form a Centre Party. They wanted to read about the steel strike from a workers' point of view.

Then they realised that a fighting Marxist paper, essential for the struggles of 1980, must have the cash to do its job properly.

Cash and promises flooded the Militant offices, and with the money from the Militant New Year Draw, a record total was reached for Militant's fighting fund. £6,618 was the most ever raised in a week and £80,095 was the most raised in any year of Militant's existence.

The target of £85,000 was not reached but this week's efforts show just the spirit and determination that will carry Militant forward to new heights in the decade opening up.

Supporters in the areas that fell short of the target in 1979 will resolve to give their paper the support it needs in 1980. Bold appeals, regular and systematic collection of donations and imaginative fund-raising will see the tremendous support that exists in the labour movement for Militant's ideas demonstrated in terms of cash.

Only in this way will Militant develop the capacity to arm the movement for victory over the bosses, their representatives in the Tory Party, the mass media and those few "relics" in the Labour Party and over the capitalist system on a world scale.

Below is an account of how much each area on Militant's fighting fund chart raised up to Sunday 6th January 1980:

£415 was added to East-ern's total last week. Various items were sold and socials held (Peterborough £18, Ipswich £26 and Harlow £57).

Donations included one of £50 from Cambridge, two 'tenners' and £13 from "A well-wisher, London Hospital." £10 was "trading stamps cashed" and £5.30 roulette! But still the target was nearly £700 away!

£287 from Hants & IOW included a £50 donation from A Hill, an anonymous £20, £5 from B Bond (Gosport), £2.20 from G Nicholls and £1 from "Miles" of Poole, aged 9, who donated "Christmas Present Money". £14.35 with "£50 to follow" was raised at a Readers' Meeting and £23.50 at a Christmas Party. All this took the second line on the chart well over the finishing line! Well done and thanks to every contributor in that area!

£197 from Humberside included over £60 from raffle proceeds, £62.13 from Militant meetings in Hull and many personal donations like the £5 from R Leggot (Louth CLP) and the £1s from K Barwood (GMWU), T Robinson, D Willet (all three Grimsby), A Brooks of Halt-emprie Labour Party and T Taylor of Hull. Double this week's total would have hit the target; better luck for 1980!

£552 was the result of last minute efforts in North London. Over £150 of it was raffle proceeds and £26.50 was paid for "car repairs" in Newham. £20 was part of the London "All Day Do" proceeds and £13 came from a social in Hillingdon. Individual contributions ranged from a £24 windfall in Ilford, 'tenners' in Hackney and Enfield to 'pennies' in Harin-gey and Islington. S Donnelly of Leyton gave £9.40, H and E Cohen £5 and their Militant will be distributed by hand, saving £4.20 of their year's subscription payment!

H and J Wobey gave £4, J and H Saunders £1.70, J Morrison (NUPE) gave £1 as did Malik in Harrow. The following Hillingdon Militant supporters all donated: B Upchurch (POEU), O Craxton (Hayes LPYS), A Blundell, Cllr P Fagan, W Kennedy and C Rogers. G Evans (EMI T&GWU) gave

£5. £6.42 was raised in "pints for Militant" in Hayes. Many thanks to every supporter and let's see the full target reached this year.

£274 was the additional amount raised in South London...the week after the target had been reached! B Allen of Tooting gave £15 and F and B Kidd of the same constituency, £3; A Darnton (USDAW) £5 and N and T Wrack £4. A New Year meal in Streatham raised £24.50.

£396 was the result of last minute pushes in the Manchester area, though nearly £1,000 short of the goal. £35 was "proceeds on jewellery sales" in Rochdale (no questions asked!) and £5 from "Salford sewing machine" boosted the more "traditional" contributions like £3.07 from a discussion group in Wigan, £10 and £18.50 from socials in Blackpool and Rochdale, a £2.50 donation from M Prenderville (Manchester), £1s from B Haslam and H Ijacks and £2 (with "much more to come") from a sponsored non-smoke.

£363 reached the Militant offices (or was 'phoned in') from Merseyside last week leaving the line over £800 short. Among the numerous individual readers' donations, however, were: £10s from a Chester LPYS member, and an Ellesmere Port T&GWU member, festive 'fivers' from Knowsley NALGO members I Buxton and R Bannister, B Costello (NGA), D Power (SOGAT) and 'Anon' (Wavertree); £3.50 from G Rud-dock (Childwall LPYS); £2.40 from D Reid (NGA); £2 from E O'Donovan and £1s from W Bolland (Wavertree Labour Party) and R Johnson (NGA). Merseyside supporters must have been "cashing in" on recent publicity for 'Militant's' ideas in the local press! Keep up the momentum, comrades!

£121 was not enough to get East Midlands' line right across the chart. But still a shining example is the £20 collected from workers at Alan Smith engineering works. £35 from a local raffle is "in the post" and we even received a Smith's (WH) gift voucher.

£737 was the excellent last minute "haul" from the West Midlands. £12.50 was collected in the Hardwick Working men's Club; £35.50 was made at a Militant party in Coven-

try; Handsworth pontoon cards raised £17; £9.45 was collected at a New Year celebration and 50p was even raised on a "festive bet on how many sides there were to a 3d bit"!

£100 from Oxford tops the list of personal donations with L Hughes (NUPE) "running up" with £50! C Mullins (also NUPE) gave £6, P Mullins £7, J Burke £5, C Blundell £5, A Ward (Barcelona, via Coventry!) £2, S Stone £4 and Y Hay and P McLaren (NUT) £1.

£248 in a week still left Northern just under £750 short! But every supporter should follow the Chester-le-Street example and raise money on every occasion! £9 was even made in the Labour Club on Boxing Day evening with a raffle. Personal donations ranged from £16 and £10s to £5 from T Bartle of USDAW, £2 from A Tweddle (POEU Newcastle) and £1 from S Hinchcliffe.

£282 from East Scotland was unfortunately not enough to see the target reached. Nearly £200 of it was from the Stirling and Falkirk area, £10 was raised by a local raffle in Edinburgh and £5 was donated by C Herriot of Monk-tonhall NUM.

£729 was the excellent total from West Scotland—much of it from the Strathclyde weekly draw and the National Raffle. £44.85 was part of the proceeds of a jumble sale in Paisley; £34 came from 'sale of Russian badges'(?); an LPYS disco in E Kilbride raised £32.75 for Militant; a Folk Night £20 and P Gallagher's 'copper jar' £10.65.

NALGO members contributing included: S Fraser £25, M King £3.50, D McQueen £5, C Murray, J Donnelly £5, A Whittaker £5, M Mearns £10, K McCoombs £10.50. CPSA donors included: A Thompson, B Young, S Shostoff, C Lyon, J Edwards, G Jardine, L McDonald, R Mitchell, D Chapman donated £2 and G Reade £1. Personal donations like these must form the back-bone of a healthy Fighting Fund.

£256 came from supporters in the South East who had already taken their line off the edge of the chart! Special thanks to "well-wishers" in Arundel CLP" for £20, three readers in Reading for £10, N Bradford (Eastbourne LPYS)

£1 and all those who contributed to the £30.46 from Christmas and New Year parties in Thanet. Keep up the pace for 1980!

£796 is nearly one quarter of the total raised in the South West this year...and it came all in one week! £300 of it was one of those rare donations to Militant of an "inheritance".

Other individual donations included: £50 from J Sharp and £10 from E Biddell (Bristol), £6 from N Prowse (Totnes LPYS), £5 from S Parkinson (Bath UPW), £2.50 from Terry and Ben (Exeter), £1.50 from L Smith (Plymouth Sutton LPYS), £1s from M Colman (TGWU, Pressed Steel Fisher), M McGregor (Swindon LPYS) and S Sharman (Taunton LPYS), the £31.50 from three Militant readers in Redruth, Cornwall and £2.27½ accumulated in ps and ½ps by Mr and Mrs Jones of Bristol. Very many thanks to all!

£74 in East Wales is, by contrast, the lowest total from any area this week! Nevertheless just over £16 was raised by local raffles in Caerphilly, £1s were donated by V Jones and B Jones of Cardiff (among others) and a Militant seller in Gwent sets an example for all to follow, collecting £6.94 in three weeks from small donations and using the special Militant Fighting Fund Collectors' Card. This will be the way to ensure getting more than three-quarters of the way across the target in 1980!

£323 shows a last minute rallying in West Wales...too late to reach the area target, but showing the boldness and initiative necessary. Much of the money came from raffles—local and national; M Edwards gave £20 and C Bennett £10 as did N Griffiths. I Hughes, A Morgan, P Davies and I Isaac (both NUM) donated Christmas 'fivers' to Militant as did a number of readers approached for donations by R Davies of Swansea, and M Browning (Llanelli) at a social which raised £49—£5.70 on her "retirement punch" and £1.70 on "Denise's kisses" at 10p a time! What next?

£448 was probably a record week for Yorkshire helped by various festive fund-raising. A social in Huddersfield raised £20, one in Leeds £9.50 and "Pat and Pauline's Party" in Shipley added £60 to the

total, featuring "Keith's Bitter", "Cllr Denis' Special Lager", "Pat's Spiced Mulled Wine" and "Pauline's celebrated Table" ("no caviar, just a touch of smoked salmon!"). A Christmas hamper raffle raised £18.20 in Shipley, too.

Among contributors in the Rotherham area were three NALGO members and P Tonsley (ASTMS) who gave 'fivers', G Cowley £2, D Bond £1 and smaller but helpful donations from AUEW, T&GWU and ISTC members. B Crawshaw of Huddersfield gave £5 and J Carby (Sheffield) £1. Donations like these on a regular basis will put Militant's fighting fund on a sound footing.

£6½ thousand in a week augurs well for Militant's fortunes. Every contributor in 1979 must be thanked and congratulated. But, now the party's over and a new and strenuous decade is upon us. Life [and fund raising] is not going to be easy!

We appeal to every reader to redouble their efforts to build the most effective fighting workers' paper for the battles of the '80s.

MILITANT MEETINGS

TYNESIDE Militant Rally
'1980s—A Decade of Social Revolution'

Speaker: Keith Dickenson (Militant Editorial Board) at Durant Hall, Ellison Place (opposite YMCA) on Friday January 25th, 7.30 pm—9.30 pm.

NEWHAM Militant Public Meeting. 'The Socialist Response to the Cuts'. Main Speaker: Bob Labi (Greater London Regional Council of the Labour Party). 8.00 pm Thursday 17th January. Labour Hall 241e High Street North, East Ham, London E12.

SOUTH WALES MILITANT INDUSTRIAL MEETINGS
'Crisis in Steel: Stop the Tory Wreckers!'

Speakers will include Brian Ingham (Militant Editorial Board), Mike Williams (Shop steward, Bryngwyn works, Gorseon).

LLANELLI—Thursday January 10th 7.30 pm, YMCA.

SWANSEA—Dyfnfevor School, Monday January 14th.

PORT TALBOT—British Rail Social Club (behind railway station), Tuesday January 15th, 7.30 pm.

THE POLL THAT BIT THE BOSSES

An opinion poll by Marplan published last month in the 'Birmingham Evening Mail' obviously shook that right-wing paper.

Its only solace was to emphasise how fast the poll had been carried out, how well they had responded to unexpected developments. What was it that shook them?

The poll concerned Derek Robinson, the sacked Leyland convenor, and was conducted

By Derek McLelland

(Birmingham, Selly Oak LP) on the Tuesday and Wednesday following the AUEW decision not to call an official strike in support of his reinstatement.

The 'Evening Mail' had been conducting a vicious

campaign against Robinson, complete with a special 'Red Robbo' insignia to accompany each story. It had highlighted the activities of the 'moderates' (although it failed to report the 'back to work' meeting at Longbridge which only attracted 150 supporters) and gave front page coverage to the report that Robinson's elder brother was still going into work at Longbridge.

They were using every weapon to build the impression of militant shop stewards forcing Leyland workers out

on strike against their will, and then of 'reasonable' workers flocking back to work.

The poll, however, did not support their carefully constructed illusion. A clear majority of Leyland workers felt that Edwardes had gone too far in sacking Robinson.

This makes the AUEW leadership's decision even more criminal, but also means that the fight is not completely lost yet. With the strength of feeling that exists it could still be possible to pick up the threads of this

dispute.

A still more significant factor was played down in the 'Evening Mail' report. Another question referred to the Edwardes' plan for BL. The answers given gave a 3 to 1 majority in favour of the plan.

This is a marked move from the 7 to 1 majority in the company ballot. And the full impact of the plan is still not apparent to many BL workers.

The attacks on working conditions, trade union rights as well as the 25,000 redundancies, are only pieces of

paper at the moment, but when they begin to turn into hard reality, the fight will really begin.

The real implications of the Edwardes Plan must be put over to all BL workers. The swing against it has already started, but the pressure must be maintained.

The fight to protect trade union rights and to reinstate Robinson, is integrally linked with opposition to the plan. The plan can be defeated, and Robinson reinstated—but only if we can present a clear alternative.

EPCO - trade unions will smash the lockout

Interview by Jon Ingham with Jack Lipkin, shop steward, and Paul Stevenson, AUEW deputy convenor at EPCO.

On Monday morning management were pictured climbing through factory windows to avoid 100 engineering workers picketing at EPCO, Leeds.

A dozen AUEW members, including works convenor John Hawley, were able to gain entry to the factory to push their demand for talks with management. Rather than talk, management threatened forcible eviction, and were soon on hand to carry it out.

On 13 December workers at EPCO took official strike action over their annual pay award. They were offered £70 basic pay, £3 short of the national minimum time rate achieved by last year's engineering strike.

Even to get £70 basic,

however, an average of £5 was to be taken off the productivity bonus, and discipline was to be tightened. Management further demanded total flexibility: you could be a fitter in the morning, a painter after dinner and finish the day packing machines for delivery.

The workers responded to this provocation by going through recognised procedures and only as a last resort taking official strike action.

On 28 December every hourly-paid worker received a letter at home, claiming that their action constituted a breach of contract and that they were to be dismissed from 31st. Ninety office-workers and staff also received a letter giving them thirty days' redundancy notice.

The reaction of the workforce has been swift. Together with the Leeds AUEW district committee they have launched a 24-hour picket to stop any movement of goods or machinery. They are calling for blacking of all EPCO products and for financial support.

EPCO is a subsidiary of Booker McConnell, a parent firm which has acted on a national level to close this factory. Shop stewards are calling for the union to respond at a national level.

This dispute highlights the need for a functioning national shop stewards' movement in the engineering industry. EPCO stewards call for the building and extending of a shop stewards' body to other trades, so that support could be given quickly, securing victory in such disputes.

A speaker from the shop stewards' committee is this week addressing Harehills Labour Party and calls on all Labour Parties and trade unions to rally in their support.

Giving the bosses some of their own!

'Show us your manager's identity' was the attitude of us pickets on the first day of the steel strike. As we got into the mood, we really enjoyed telling the managers that they had to prove who they were before we let them past.

When a refusal to produce an identity card occurred it was answered with 'I don't believe you, you're a toilet cleaner!' On the next day, after seeing on television a tail back of cars a mile long at another steel works, we decided that with the help of the reluctant managers we'd have queues of Volvos, Ford Granadas and Rovers stretching as far back as possible, to the annoyance of a very senior officer of the law who also was asked to produce an identity card.

BSC employ very honest people; when asked if he worked for BSC a driver replied 'No I am a manager here'.

It is the first time many steelworkers have been on strike but the lessons of other workers have not

This official ISTC poster sums up the steel workers' attitude to the original offer



been ignored. Flying pickets at the docks and the stockholders have started with amusing results.

Some steel coils from the docks escaped before we got there, but the stockholders were picketed and the coils returned to the docks where the pickets wouldn't let it through for a long time until we found the truth.

Most pickets are keen on picketing well. At one gate one of the pickets only

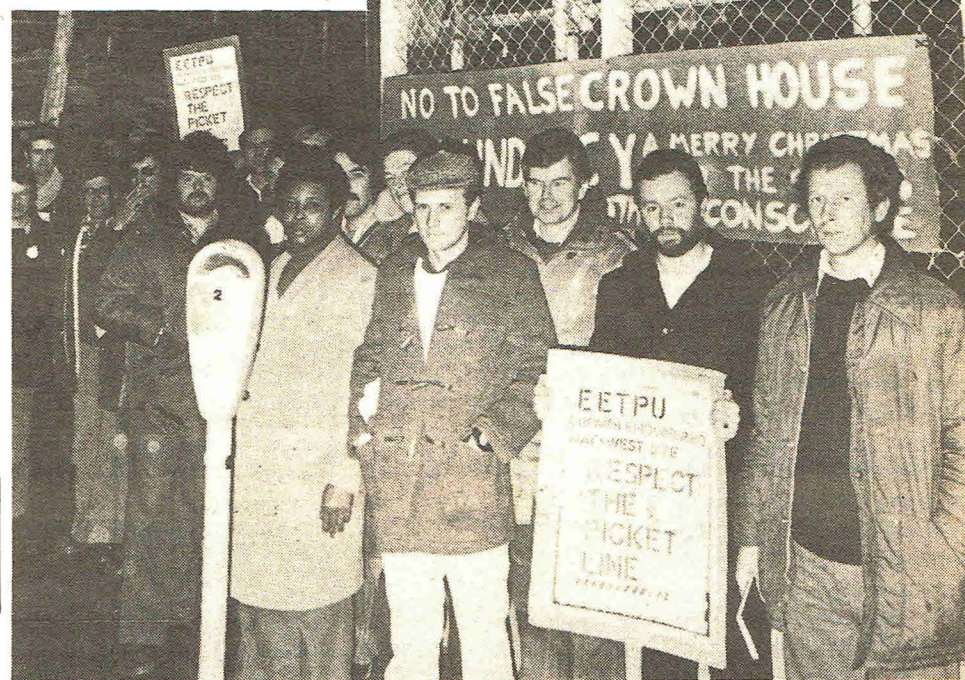
joined ISTC in the last month. When the phone rings at Divisional Office 'Help needed at Hebburn', a car sets off straight away. When we get there help has also come from Consett. Saturday shopping with the family is delayed to make sure the picketing is going well.

By Andy Fenwick

(ISTC Lackenby, Cleveland)

Crown House workers go back after -

'A fight on two fronts'



EETPU pickets at the Crown House site during their ten-week strike

Photo: MILITANT

After a struggle lasting some ten weeks and a three-day work-in, the Crown House sparks have voted to end their strike.

But there will be no compensation and management insist that they will only negotiate with the full-time area official, not with shop stewards.

While some gains have been made, this is a far from satisfactory conclusion to what has been a magnificent struggle. Ken Burroughs, one of the leading shop stewards who voted against ending the strike said "In my opinion we didn't win anything; we have no guarantee about the redundancy issue. But if we could have had official union backing we could have had a real victory a lot earlier."

This was the crucial issue. The refusal to make the strike official meant a fight on two fronts. All attempts by the men and pressure from branches was ignored. Even a lobby of the EETPU headquarters to see the union's NEC was met with a complete

rebuff, and denials that NEC members were on the premises.

Here lies the major lesson of this struggle. Until real union democracy is achieved battles such as this will be repeated over and over again, ending in uneasy compromises rather than decisive victory. Unless all the pressure of the trade unions is brought to bear on the employers, many EETPU members will find themselves fighting with one arm tied behind their backs.

The campaign for the transformation of the EETPU must be stepped up:

—For election of all officials, no more appointed officials.
—For immediate right of recall over all full-time officials by the members they represent.

—No full-time official to be paid more than a skilled wage plus vetted expenses.

—For regular annual conferences.

—A rule book that assists, not hinders the members in their struggles.

—For the ending of bans and

proscriptions on union members holding positions.

—For committees made up of rank and file members to judge disciplinary or expulsion cases.

—No more closures of branches or lodges unless fully agreed by the membership.

With a really democratic EETPU, the employers would think twice or even more before provoking our members into taking action in defending their living standards.

In conclusion, the Crown House strike committee would like to thank all those sections of the movement who gave them such tremendous support, financially, morally and with help on the picket line.

By Bob Faulkes

(EETPU and Hackney Central LP, in personal capacity)

STEEL FIGHT IS A FIGHT FOR JOBS -

Says Port Talbot convenor Wyn Bevan

We used to be third in the wages league. Now we are down to sixteenth and the 2% offer, with all the strings that are attached to it, will put us down to about thirty-second.

The offer will put us in the region of pay for farmworkers, shopworkers, etc.

If we accepted this we would be so far behind that we'd never catch up again.

As Bill Sirs knows, what the British Steel Company is spouting, about how the Japanese and Germans can produce more than the British worker is rubbish. They sub-contract all their services out, and the only labour that they state is contributable to a ton of steel is direct labour. So it is an absolutely different basis.

Bill Sirs has got to win this time, not just for his own members' sake but for the general movement. There's a need now, especially in South Wales, to mobilise everybody against the Tory Party because their policies are bound to be a disaster in 1980 and the early 80s.

I sat with 35 of my colleagues listening to the director unfolding his plan for Port Talbot and really it's too terrible to contemplate. We're talking, in Port Talbot for example, of between 5 and 6,000 jobs going, even if they shut Llanwern—and they still expect us to produce more than we're producing now.

You cannot just damp down a blastfurnace and leave it go cold. You can't shut off the coke ovens and let them

Rob Sewell spoke to Wyn Bevan

(Convenor, EETPU
BSC Port Talbot)

go cold because they'll crumble away.

They are essential services that have to be kept going and the longer they are kept idle the more dangerous and difficult they are to start up again.

So if you start cutting back for six months or twelve months, or until there is an upturn, well its ridiculous. It shows the stupidity of the BSC.

In the discussions we have had with the National Union of Mineworkers, it could be just as catastrophic for them as for steel.

If we are talking about the Orgwr Valley, the NUM executive has told us that between 15 and 20 pits would inevitably have to close. And that would mean 18,000 men, and all the people that supply them with services, transport, rail...it's too terrible to contemplate! There will never be jobs for those people in Wales again.

On top of that, we've now heard that the strategy of the Tory Party is to shut skill centres—they are shutting four in South Wales. I was saying to a colleague the other day that we'll all have our crooks and be shepherds on the bloody mountain!

I think that Bill Sirs really

ought to make the wages' issue a closures' issue as well.

He should call for the dismissal of the present management, put the whole of the BSC under a caretaker management, get the Tory Party to do the same as the French, Germans and Italians are doing—subsidise us. Let's have a two year moratorium anyway, so we can look to see where we can prune and in the not too distant future become successful.

But to talk about 10,000 jobs—it's not on!

Sabotage

15 million tons per year was going to be the final drastic cut in steel production. There are people on the BSC board at the moment who are already talking about 9 million. And if you can give any credence to that rumour, Llanwern, Port Talbot and one other major plant up north is going to go.

Once we start depending on steel coming in from the continent for hot roll coil, they'll be in a position to say 'we can't supply you with hot roll coil; we'll supply you with the finished product'—which will be tinplate. We won't have any steel works left in this country. In the end we'll be producing no tinplate and no steel.

Just look at the situation at the moment. We are supplying Shotton with hot roll coil. Under one of the BSC's proposals, we're talking about shipping slabs from Port Talbot to Llanwern, changing the slabs into hot roll coils in Llanwern and sending all the hot roll coils back down to Velindre and Trostre to make it into tinplate.

The costs are astronomical. I've never seen a more inept management. It's sabotage.



SCUNTHORPE

Photo: MILITANT

At BSC Scunthorpe, 3,000 G&MWU members have now joined the strike.

Many steel workers are now expressing concern for jobs, as well as pay. 100

pickets made their feelings clear at a demonstration outside the ISTC HQ in Rotherham.

CONSETT

We have the whole hearted support of our members. A feature on the BBC seemed to imply that the men at Consett were being forced to strike against their wishes but that is not the case.

We had a double mass meeting before the strike where some well-founded fears were expressed—those present were fairly forthcoming with their views—but the members' questions were answered and their fears were allayed. The 2,500 ISTC members and 300 blastfurnacemen are out 100 per cent.

The offers made to date by the management have been complex for the public and

even our own members, but there is no mistaking the fact that they have been miserably low. The original '2%' was not even that—it was only 1.6% (less for some) and not even new money—it was old money being consolidated.

The productivity deal would have been impossible. The Value Added bonus scheme would have had conditions over which we would have had no control whatsoever—so that any 'productivity' money we earned ourselves could have been taken away by other factors completely outside our control, like the cost of raw materials and so on.

The total offer so far has been an insult! The BSC seems to want to reduce the industry to plant bargaining and that is something we do not want.

We would like to stress that many of the craftsmen who are going in to work at the moment (something the press is playing up) are in fact very sympathetic to us. We have talked to many of them at the gate and they are going in reluctantly.

When their own negotiating committee meets the board on 7 January, they may well take the decision to come out themselves.

John Lee [Secretary Joint ISTC Branches] & Ken Sessford [ISTC National Committee] spoke to John Pickard

Many men see that if this strike were lost BSC would rub their noses in the dirt, throwing further redundancies at a weakened trade union movement. Young pickets told us "I want my job. The area is being destroyed—it's dead."

The national leadership must build on this mood and turn this into a fight for jobs as well as the full claim.

Messages and requests for speakers to: Hawarden Bridge joint committee, Shotton Works, Deeside.

By Richard Venton

(Birkenhead Labour Party)

SHOTTON

"If BSC think Shotton will be the first to crumble, they're in for a shock."

That's the attitude of the pickets. Even through their feet almost stick to the ground with frost, workers have turned out in masses to cover every gate.

At the shift charges, many of the cars turn back after hearing the pickets' appeals. Buses arrived the first days—now Crosville busmen have refused to cross the picket.

An ISTC branch leader told us "I'm amazed by the support. I thought that with some departments closing,

there might be a feeling not to support the strike. I was wrong about that.

"The quicker we get this over, the better. So we need unity and maximum support from all trade unionists. With 6,500 jobs going already, if BSC offered some deal involving extra closures we could face a terrible position. We don't want that to happen."

The picketing is a credit to these trade unionists, considering that many will be jobless within weeks. Men have done a shift on the picket, and then had to go in to receive details about their redundancy.

Certainly not Sir Charles Villiers. His wage is around £40,000 a year or £800 a week.

This is not just a strike about wages, as the ISTC leaders would have us all believe, but about the whole future of BSC, how it runs, by whom and why. The men of Jarrow know that, and they are out to win.

Already plans are being drawn up to picket steel stockholders in the area,

increasing the effectiveness of the strike. This may be the first steel strike since 1926 but there is no lack of determination.

John McConville summed it up: 'We have had a conservative union for too long; things are going to change'.

By Jeff Price

ROTHERHAM

Hoyle Street

BSC's Hoyle Street laboratory in Rotherham is the workplace of recently-sacked union activist Joe Herberson.

At Hoyle Street there are 100 ASTMS, 25 SIMA and 20 ISTC members. ISTC are on strike but a sour note was the resignation of five ISTC members on 31 December—they didn't want to strike. The other 15, all middle managers, should be congratulated for their militant

stand in totally supporting the strike and making themselves available for flying picket duty.

ASTMS Sheffield Steel, with 1,000 members in BSC, voted on 2nd January not to cross picket lines and this has since been adhered to. This vote is the reaction to a directive sent from ASTMS HQ which stated that members should cross but only do their own work.

After the vote an emergency telex was sent to ASTMS HQ in London, informing them of the vote result and requesting that the action be made official, as ASTMS will undoubtedly receive the same pay offer as ISTC. If the strike is made official a thousand ASTMS members will be available for flying picket duty.

**By a
steelworker**

won after bitter struggle, a sense of tenacity and solidarity reminiscent of the recent engineering strike is developing fast.

**By Leon Kaplan
[Rother Valley LPYS]**

JARROW

The sub-zero temperatures have done nothing to dampen the spirits of pickets at BSC's Jarrow on Tyne plant. The town that gave rise to the famous Jarrow Marchers is set for another important struggle.

Pickets told me that the offer was an insult: about £1 a week average increase, while

inflation is running at 20%.

John McConville, one of the pickets, said that the wage for a flat week was £47.50 with bonus running at about £10 a week extra. As 'Steelworkers' Banner', the ISTC strike bulletin puts it: "Who in their right mind would work in a dangerous, dirty, and health destroying job for £50 a week!

Templeborough

Within hours of the start of the strike, production at BSC Rotherham was at a standstill. As 2,000 workers are reported to have volunteered for picket duty a week before the strike, on the second day attention turned to a private steel plant and stockholder in the area.

The ISTC divisional officer explained "we know full well that before the Christmas holidays BSC transported substantial tonnages of steel elsewhere—to stockholders and marshalling yards and sidings in the region."

At the central engineering

workshops on Sheffield Road, a branch committee member of the ISTC emphasised the importance of a block on private steel and stockholders to prevent attempts at strike-breaking.

Five-hour picket rotas have been organised by branch committees, linked to a dispensation committee and the nine-member divisional strike committee.

On the day after the Yorkshire NUM declared its support, morale was high; angry at the insulting pay offer and attempts to remove the guaranteed working week,

MECCANO-ACTION STEPPED UP

The angry feelings of the Meccano workforce against the 'closure' of their livelihoods was brought right to the doorstep of Airfix's top management when the workers' occupation of their threatened factory in Liverpool moved hundreds of miles to the plush Airfix headquarters in Kensington, London.

This protest to highlight their struggle marks a stepping up of the campaign to save the factory from closure and safeguard the jobs of over 900 people.

The thick carpet and luxurious decor was in stark contrast to the factory in Liverpool. Very nice! And paid for by the past profits from the factories like Meccano.

Frank Bloor, Senior Shop Steward GMWU, explained the present position. "Management have engaged the services of an industrial relations consultant called Nick Cowans, otherwise known as the '7 day wonder'. A meeting has been arranged with our people and the Airfix management for Thursday at their HQ.



By Wayne Jones

We welcome discussion but are determined to save our jobs. The morale is high. Throughout the Xmas holiday, including Xmas day and Boxing day over 200 workers were involved in the occupation. The unity has been terrific.



Meccano factory under occupation by workers

Photo: MILITANT

We will now be 'hitting' all the Airfix factories and will be asking for support from other trade unionists. With labour and trade union support we will win our battle.

We are appealing for blacking of all Airfix products at the docks and by the print and transport workers.

The backing from the Labour Party has been 100%.

We are now trying to organise a mass demonstration in Liverpool to protest against unemployment with the Meccano closure as the focal point. It is not only us that has been slammed but the people of Merseyside.

It is clearly a government backed attack. If Airfix get away with this, totally ignoring the 90 days notice as laid

down in the Employment Protection Act, then a precedent will be set, to be used against other workers.

Merseyside is being de-industrialised. Five of my seven drinking mates have been made redundant in the last twelve weeks! Unemployment goes on and on. We must fight and not be bought off by redundancy payments.

This means jobs are sold and lost forever.

The problem is with management, not the workers. They know nothing about production. There was no proper planning. It was chaotic. For example a job was set up in assembly and within two hours we had to stop because there were no parts available. It went on for months like this—from hand to mouth.

We believe Airfix used Meccano as a testing ground for new management—as we are the best organised plant in the whole of the group.

The nature of the management is shown by the fact that at the time of the announcement of the closure, the canteen was being painted. The painter, brush in hand, was taken off the job to be told he was being made redundant!"

Mr Cowan declined to make any comment when I asked him about his 'task' and Frank's comments. Instead he went to contact the police to evict the Meccano workers.

Frank went on to stress the need for financial assistance so that the provision of meals and the payment of bus fares can be continued and the struggle extended. The van hired to bring the workers to London cost £120, with £24 in petrol alone for this one trip.

No money is being received from the unions as the GMWU, AUEW and EETPU have not made the strike official after five weeks.

Send messages of support and financial assistance to; Meccano Fund, c/o Mike Egan (Areas Official), GMWU Offices, 99 Edge Lane, Liverpool.

SUPPORT STEELMEN

CONTINUED FROM PAGE ONE

bosses and their Tory paymasters.

The response from other workers has been magnificent. Dockers, miners, railmen, lorry drivers and Post Office workers have blacked steel plants and the movement of steel.

The strike has been 100% effective.

And learning from other workers' past struggles, steelworkers are taking local initiatives.

Recalling how Yorkshire miners and Birmingham industrial workers closed the Saltley coal depot in 1972, Ted Thorne and Keith Jones have promised: "We'll make flying picketing a Yorkshire 'double'—the first half was Saltley, the second half will be this job."

The Tory hypocrites, Villiers, head of British

Steel, and their press have bleated about "putting jobs at stake."

But workers at Shotton, threatened by closure, gave their answer this week: "Was it us that chopped 6,500 jobs or Villiers?"

Only workers can secure a decent future for British industry. The steelworkers are in the front line. And standing with them are workers like those in Meccano, who have taken over their factory to ensure it stays open. [See above]

Public meeting and march in support of the steel workers
Monday 21 January, Sheffield
Assemble 11.00 am at the Wicker
March to the City Hall
Invited speakers include Bill Sirs
[ISTC general secretary]
James Callaghan MP and Arthur Scargill

The bosses, in blind greed for short-term profits and fat returns have starved industry of vital investment. They refused

to put back wealth into new factories, modernisation, research and development.

Now they turn round to us and say we have to pay for their profiteering and short-sightedness with our jobs, our wages and our social services.

Why should we suffer, to bail out a system that offers us nothing but cuts, cuts and more cuts—with more to come, if Thatcher has her way?

In South Yorkshire, workers have decided "enough is enough".

The Association of Trades Councils have called for a one-day area general strike on 18 February.

This is in protest against the vicious cuts in hospital, schools and public services. These cuts will cost lives—and trade unionists do not intend to see the services dismantled before their eyes.

Already, the strike call has the backing of powerful industrial unions, the engineers, transport workers and railwaymen together with the public sector workers themselves.

With the steelworkers

they are leading the way for the rest of British workers.

Trade union organisation and combined power can show that we will not be sacrificed on the altar of their great god profit—we will not pay the price for bailing out their rich business backers.

As part of a campaign to bring down the Tories, the Labour Party Young Socialists have organised a demonstration in London for 2 February [for details, see page 3].

The LPYS has called for a fight to return a Labour government to implement a £70 minimum wage, a 35-hour week and socialist policies to give us control of industry.

Only a socialist planned economy can provide resources for ending poverty, unemployment and for building the social services we need for the old, the young and the sick.

Only by linking the present struggles of workers to the programme of socialism can a secure future be built for British industry and its workers.



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