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Tory court menaces Labour councils



LABOUR COUNCILLORS from Lambeth and Liverpool will be at the High Court next Tuesday (14 January) to defend themselves against the threat of surcharge and a five-year ban from public office.

By Lynn Walsh

But the only 'crime' they have committed is to carry out the policies on which they were elected. Every section of the labour movement must rally support for these courageous public representatives who have defied the Tories and put their own jobs and livelihoods on the line to defend vital services, housing programmes, and jobs against drastic cuts.

The High Court case is an *appeal*. The District Auditors of Lambeth and Liverpool—unelected bureaucrats—have already found the councillors guilty and sentenced them to bankruptcy and five years' political exile.

The onus is on the councillors, whose stand has been endorsed time and again by the electorate, to prove their innocence.

The District Auditors are trying to penalise the councillors for alleged losses arising in delay in setting the rate. But both Liverpool and Lambeth held back while they continued the campaign for more cash from the government to cover the minimum level of spending required to cover essential services.

These "losses", just over £100,000 in each case, are piddling in comparison to the millions filched in the City of London every week.

Labour councillors are being pilloried. But who has been brought to book for the multi-million losses of JMB, or the monumental frauds at Lloyds and the Stock Exchange? Where are the public auditors to expose the real criminals of the Millionaires' Tendency?

No! The financiers have been politely asked to put their own house in order.

The relatively trivial 'losses' of Lambeth and Liverpool, arose from the decisions of Tory ministers to withhold housing benefit payments and Crown Property payments in lieu of rates—which were paid the previous year despite a delay in setting the rate.

(Continued on page 3)

Liverpool councillors

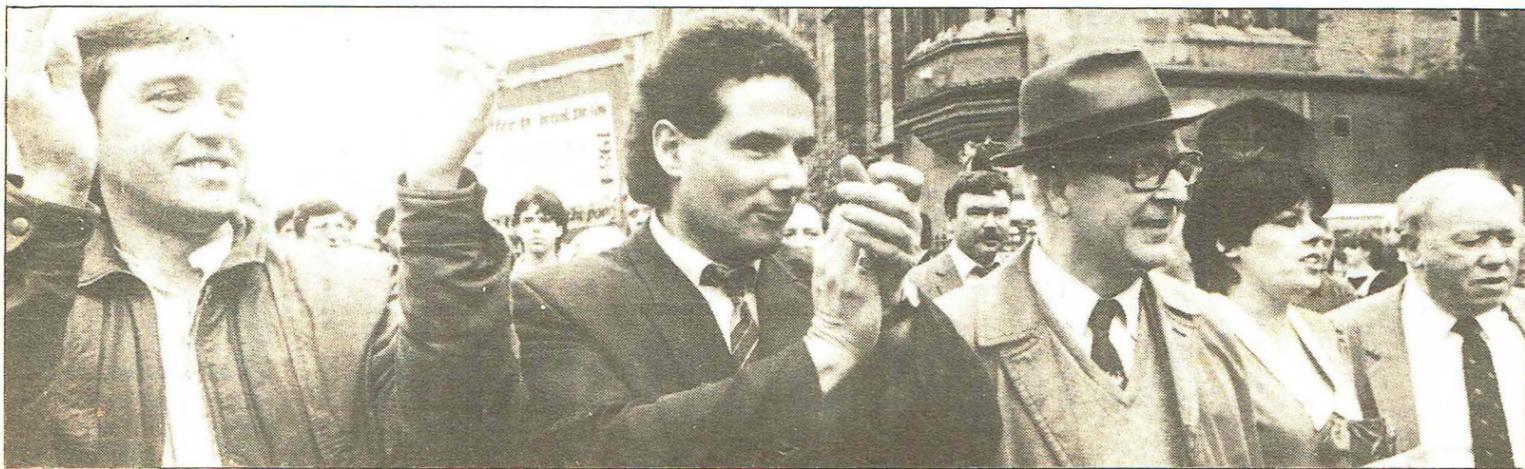


Photo: John Harris (IFL)

TGWU to back councils' appeal

RON TODD and the left on the National Executive of the Transport and General Workers' Union are to be congratulated for their decision to become a major guarantor of the councillors' High Court appeal. This stand, despite the hostility in many quarters to Liverpool, has ensured that the councillors can put their excellent team of lawyers into court, with the very strong legal case that they have prepared.

Donations are coming in at over £1,000 a day. Locally and nationally trade unions have pledged support. As we go to press cash and firm pledges have reached over £70,000.

Individual donations have come from all over the country. One woman, a 90-year old pensioner, wrote out her cheque for £10 on Christmas day.

Nationalise Westland

TORY MINISTERS have been locked in a bitter public row over the future of Westland Helicopters. Never before has a government been so openly split, as accusations fly across Whitehall between Heseltine and Brittan.

By Pat Craven

Thatcher is using her supporters to discredit her Defence Secretary and the European big business interests he speaks for; she backs her Trade and Industry Secretary and the American multinational consortium favoured by the Westland Board.

The last thing any of these people think about is the workers of Yeovil, whose future livelihood hangs in

the balance. Neither the company nor the government have paid any heed to Ron Todd's demand for the workers to vote on the future of the company whose wealth they have produced.

For the Tories and the shareholders, profit is the key factor. The public row reflects the underlying conflict between the giant

monopolies of Europe and America. The US capitalists, enthusiastically backed by Thatcher, want to spread their tentacles further into the European market. Their British and European counterparts, whom Heseltine speaks for, want to defend their share of the cake.

For the Labour Party and the trade unions, the Tory splits are the opportunity to go on the attack and expose the 'private enterprise' system for the jungle that it is. Big monopolies are devoured by bigger monopolies as they seek to maximise their profits and



Michael Heseltine.

do down their rivals. Thatcher, Brittan and Heseltine are acting, not like their Tory predecessors as far-sighted strategists of the whole capitalist class, but as

lobbyists for different groups of companies. It illustrates the decline of British capitalism into a third rate power, ready to sell off its industry to the highest bidder.

For Labour this is the ideal moment to call for the public ownership of the aero-space industry, under workers' control and management, so that workers' futures can be taken out of the market place and, on the basis of a democratic plan of production, their jobs can be ensured and their skills used to produce goods that society needs.

Press diverts focus from blacks' struggle

FOR THE last 15 months, black working people in South Africa have fought unprecedented battles against apartheid.

But now the British press, taking their cue from the Pretoria government are writing about "inter tribal" conflict with the implication that black majority rule would bring chaotic warfare between irreconcilable tribal groups. They reported fighting over Christmas between Zulu and Mpondo in which 53 died, in terms of 'deep traditional rivalry'.

In fact, the last war between Zulu and Mpondo was in 1836! Since then many Mpondo have worked as migrants in Zulu-speaking Natal without incident.

The *Observer* explained clashes in the Moutse district of Transvaal

as due to conflicts between Sotho and the Ndebele who "invaded the Transvaal in the 19th century". But the Ndebele involved have been living side by side with Sotho speakers in the area for hundreds of years.

The clashes in Natal result from the movement of Mpondo, because of the rural impoverishment and 45 per cent unemployment, into the nearest semi-urban areas where they could find work.

The clashes in the Transvaal stem from government attempts to forcibly resettle black South Africans in another area of high unemployment into the KwaNdebele bantustan (due to become 'independent' in 1986), thus depriving them of SA citizenship.

The industrial development of South Africa has destroyed 'tribal

economy' and created a huge black working class with colossal struggles over the last 12 years. 'Tribalism' has become an historic excrement. The past 'tribes' work, live, marry and bring up children together.

But this unity is dangerous for the ruling class. This would not be the first time they have incited one section of working people against another, playing on resentments created by the poverty they have imposed, to reawaken buried fears.

In 1976, the police instigated Zulu migrant workers against the movement of the black working class in Soweto. But, even in 1976, these divisions were healed. And in 1984, Zulu and other migrants were full participants in the two-day Transvaal general strike.

But last August there were

clashes between Zulus and Indians in Natal. The neo-tribal Inkatha movement, with its armed gangs, was used by its pro-capitalist Bantustan leader, Gatsha Buthelezi to divert a movement of working class anger in Natal townships.

Attacks

Now the allies of the ruling class are taking advantage of a temporary ebb in the mass movement. The reactionary politics of Inkatha has undoubtedly played its part in recent attacks on the Mpondo, just as in the Transvaal armed gangs of the Kwa Ndebele bantustan leader, Simon Skosana, initiated violence against the Sotho.

The struggle is not 'tribal' but one between forces defending apartheid and capitalism, and forces

fighting for liberation.

The black unions and youth organisations have fought resolutely to unite the movement on class lines. It is more than ever vital to destroy the political influence of collaborationist leaders who play the card of tribalism, and to establish the *political* leadership of the working-class in the struggle against Botha's regime.

Through bold campaigns of action by COSATU, the new union federation, and a determined drive for a nationwide mass ANC on a socialist programme, the members of Inkatha can be split away from their reactionary leadership, and the ruling class deprived of a dangerous weapon.

By Richard Monroe

Loyalist threat of more conflict

THE ANGLO-IRISH agreement, signed in November, is still creating sectarian conflict in Northern Ireland. The Protestant majority are being thrown into the hands of bigots like Paisley who have been given a new lease of life.

The strength of loyalist feeling has not diminished from the time of the 100,000-200,000 strong demonstration in Belfast a week after the agreement was signed.

At the end of a 'Young Unionist' march from Derry to Belfast, masked members of the paramilitary Ulster Defence Association and the Ulster Volunteer Force rioted, attacking the police and hurling abuse. The agreement will do nothing to end such violence. The Protestant population have arms and some of the paramilitaries would not shrink from a civil war.

Loyalist leaders are considering a further escalation of sectarian conflict around the by-elections on 23 January. So concerned are they to turn these elections into a referendum which will

polarise the community that they are considering putting up stooge 'opposition' candidates to ensure that a huge vote is counted in every constituency.

The Protestant workers, already in a poverty-stricken society and under attack from job losses, are offered nothing by this agreement. The Catholic minority have gained nothing either. They are still trapped by poverty and repression. Their distrust of the British authorities after a decade and a half of harassment and violence has not been eroded by a sop to the Southern Irish ruling class.

Northern Ireland has been pushed into a period of sectarian conflict which threaten to cut across for a while the growing class unity of workers in the North.

The real interests of all workers lie in kicking out the Tories and bigots, orange and green, North and South, and fighting for a socialist future free of capitalist hardship, repression and sectarianism.

By Roger Shrivess



Libyan Army parade of tanks and missiles.

Photo: Stefano Cagnoni (Report)

US declare sanctions against Libya

TENSION HAS been rising in the Mediterranean as US warships began steaming towards Libyan waters and the Libyan Army has been put on full alert. Reagan has been chewing over the options for a military response to the claims, and then counter claims that Libya was responsible for the airport attacks in Rome and Vienna. Now the US has announced stringent economic sanctions against Libya and Reagan has called on all Americans to leave the country. Any who don't could face criminal charges with the threat of long prison sentences.

Such cold blooded acts of terrorism as the airport attacks are to be condemned by socialists. They only serve

to strengthen the hand of imperialism in the suppression of the struggle by workers in all countries—in particular against the interests of the Palestinian people. Reagan will be quite prepared to commit 'official' terrorism by attacking locations said to be used by Arab terrorists. In October last year the US backed the Israeli bombing of Tunis in which 70 people were killed.

Gadaffi's unpredictable dictatorship has irritated US imperialism and its aims in maintaining its sphere of influence in the Middle East. The US could use any excuse to deal a blow to Libya.

Pat Wall selected to fight Bradford N

IN THE Bradford North Labour Party reselection contest, Pat Wall was backed overwhelmingly in the first round.

In an uncontroversial meeting he received 37 votes, well ahead of the rival candidates: Dr Barry Seal MEP received 12 votes, Hilary Benn eight, and Patricia Mudryman seven.

Pat Wall has said that he is 100 per cent behind the views of *Militant*.

The press are trying to whip up controversy where it doesn't exist, saying it is a 'major blow' to the Labour leadership. Wall's nomination has yet to be endorsed by the Labour Party National Executive, but as far as local party members are concerned there should be no problem.

An inquiry has already been held by the NEC into the Bradford North selection procedure after allegations of misconduct were raised last year in November. The NEC found no grounds for complaint. The two who raised objections have since resigned from positions held in the party.

Labour now looks set to regain Bradford North. It was lost in 1983 after the Tory candidate slipped through when the deselected Labour MP, Ben Ford, stood as an independent against Pat Wall, the official Labour candidate. Ford was aided in splitting the Labour vote by a hysterical press campaign against Pat Wall.



Pat Wall.

Ford has since joined the SDP and says he will not stand again. Labour meanwhile scored a victory last year when Marxist Ken Little, standing in the three weakest Labour wards in Bradford North, was elected onto the county council.

Nuclear leak in USA

LAST WEEKEND one person was killed and 90 injured when a tank containing uranium leaked a cloud of radioactive and toxic chemicals at a plant in Gore, Oklahoma.

It is said to be the worst accident since that at Three Mile Island.

Ten years ago another accident occurred at a plant owned by the same company, Kerr McGee, which killed a union activist, Karen Silkwood.

Silkwood had built up a catalogue of cases where safety standards had lapsed. (This incident later provided the background to a film with Meryl Streep.)

Trade unionists in the nuclear and related industries both in the US and in other countries will want an inquiry into this incident and safety standards in general. But the incident highlights still further the dangers of radioactive materials to workers both within and outside the industry.

By Ben Eastop.

Back campaign for Chile

THE LABOUR movement is now responding with increasing anger at the decision of the NEC to disassociate itself from the Chile Socialist Defence Campaign.

Resolutions protesting against the decision have come in from all around the country, the majority of which have provided donations to help our work go forward. The letter below received at the end of last year from ASTMS branch 763, Edinburgh:

"Dear Brothers; As a union branch with links with many constituency parties, we find the decision of the Labour Party deplorable.

We know of the history of the CSDC and to think that anybody would want to break the links of international solidarity which have taken years to build up, is deplorable. When the Pinochet regime and the attacks taken upon the Chilean workers seem to take a back seat to internal Labour Party

ty squabbling, it must be protested at.

We write also to the Labour Party NEC and hope that you can keep me informed of future developments especially if ASTMS in Edinburgh are required for any more assistance.

Enclosed is a donation of £25 and could you please send me the receipt.

Yours fraternally
Bryden Pottinger"

We urgently appeal to all workers in the labour and trade union movement to pass similar resolutions in support of the LPYS campaign to encourage direct aid to the Chilean working class movement.

Send all letters of protest and donations to: CSDC, PO Box 488, Emma Street, London E2; and copies of letters to: The Labour Party General Secretary Larry Whitty, 150 Walworth Road, London SE17 1JT.

Editorial Board speaking tour

Defend Militant

IN RESPONSE to the unprecedented attacks made against *Militant* over the past few weeks, a speaking tour by members of the Editorial Board and other leading speakers to all areas of the country has been arranged during January and February. Full details will appear in future issues of *Militant*.

Already many *Militant* Readers' Meetings have been held by local supporters to answer the attacks.

In **Cardiff** over 100 people attended and gave their support to the three *Militant* supporters expelled from Cardiff South and Penarth Labour Party. £260 was collected for the Fighting Fund.

In **Walsall** 50 people packed into the meeting to hear speaker Dave Wibberley answer the attacks on Liverpool. Nearly £70 was raised for the fighting fund.

In **Sunderland**, where *Militant* has been banned from being sold in the Civic Centre by the right wing

Labour council, 100 people crowded into Sunderland North Labour Club to hear Terry Fields MP. At the meeting the secretary of Wearmouth NUM thanked *Militant* for the support it gave in the miners' strike, and went on to criticise the council for planning massive rate rises for the town.

In **Leicester**, despite competition from the well publicised *World in Action* diatribe against Derek Hatton, 30 people attended to hear Keith Dickenson of the *Militant* Editorial Board, who was expelled from the Labour Party in 1983. Over £60 was collected for the fighting fund.

OPPOSITION TO the witch-hunt is growing. Thousands of Labour Party members and trade unionists are adding their names to the petition which defends the right to sell and support *Militant*.

Amongst the latest are the leader of Bradford's Labour council along with 16 engineering union shop stewards from the Edinburgh and Lothian areas. Meanwhile more and more Constituency

more Constituency Labour Parties and trade unions are passing resolutions against the Labour leadership's attacks, condemning either the expulsion of *Militant* supporters, the inquiry into Liverpool District Labour Party or the organisational measures against the Young Socialists.

In Liverpool, NUPE caretakers have registered their opposition to the inquiry.

Registering their opposition so far:

Constituency Labour Parties

Garston, Mossley Hill, Withington, Blackley, Stockport, Rochdale, Sheffield Hillsborough, Sheffield Heeley, Littleborough and Saddleworth, Hemsworth, Harlow, Glasgow Shettleston, Leith, Edinburgh East, Edinburgh West, Pentlands, Ladywood, Perry Barr, Coventry North West, Coventry South East, Eastbourne, Hertford and Stortford, Bedford, Luton North, Hertsmere, Bethnal Green and Stepney, Hammersmith, Hampstead, Brent East, Deptford, Feltham and Heston, Hackney North and Stoke Newington, Hackney South and Shoreditch.

District Labour Parties

Besides the obvious opposition of Liverpool DLP, also Manchester City, Basildon, Brighton, Thamesdown, Bristol.

Trade Union organisations

Bakers' Union national executive, Bold NUM, Sutton Manor NUM, Wearmouth NUM, Darfield Main NUM, Houghton Main NUM, Seafeld SCEBTA, TGWU branches 6/612, 6/631, 6/51, 6/552, 1/1347, 1/874, 6/171, TGWU Tilbury Docks and Riverside and TGWU Blackburn busses, Wirral District Health NUPE, Gateshead NUPE, Guys Hospital NUPE shop stewards' committee, Paddington and Kensington NUPE, Tower Hamlets NUPE, NUPE Liverpool Caretakers, Brighton local government NUPE, Dudley NUPE, Edinburgh Southern hospitals NUPE, East Ham NUR, Willesden No 1 NUR, Bedford and Luton NUR, GMBATU branches No 5, No 24, No 40 and Glasgow Cleansing Works, Bakers' Union North West Region, Liverpool NALGO, Liverpool Shipping ASTMS, Royal Insurance ASTMS, AUEW-TASS No 11, CPSA Longbenton, CPSA South West Regional Committee, Executive of NCU London Centre GMO, East of Scotland USDAW, Liverpool City Council Joint Shop Stewards' Committee, Rolls Royce Joint Staffs' Trade Union Committee, AUEW No 9 Cardiff, Harlow TUC.



Labour councillors canvassing in Old Swan by-election with Labour candidate Ann Hollinshead (centre). Photo: Dave Sinclair

Skinner speaks in Old Swan

OVER 150 people attended a public meeting in Old Swan, Liverpool, in the run-up to the council by-election to hear Ann Hollinshead, the Labour candidate, Terry Fields MP, Dennis Skinner MP and John Hamilton the leader of Liverpool City Council.

Dennis Skinner MP gave an electrifying speech attacking the media and Michael Crick, author of the book on *Militant* who was at the meeting, and castigated him for attacking the Labour movement.

He said that the NEC investigating team, instead of delving into the affairs of Liverpool District Labour Party, should be

out canvassing for Ann Hollinshead on January 9 and put a proposition to the meeting to that effect which was carried unanimously.

He pointed out that Liverpool District Labour Party in their defiance of the Tory government were only carrying out Labour Party policy. On rounding off his speech he said that there was plenty of money for the rich to live it up and for Margaret Thatcher to entertain at 10 Downing Street, but we were being told that there was no money for services in Liverpool.

An analysis of the election result will appear in the next issue.

Walsall Labour Party faces suspension

By Nigel Wheatley

WALSALL LABOUR Party members have been shocked at the suspension of two of their leading councillors and a council candidate by Labour's head office.

National Agent David Hughes has told Cllr Brian Powell (former council leader), Cllr David Church (former Housing chairman) and council candidate Stephen Johnson that they have been suspended from local party activity.

The three are chairman, vice chair and secretary of Walsall Borough Labour Party. The BLP—with delegates from local constituencies, wards and trade unions—is also under threat of suspension, and may be replaced by a less effective Local Government Commit-

tee. Hughes claims he is acting on behalf of Labour's National Executive, but the NEC has not discussed the issue nor ordered the suspensions.

Dispute

The suspensions follow a long running dispute over the policies followed by the council's Labour group, alongside the borough party's battle against local right wing councillors. The right wing have supported the current Tory council who have dismantled the former Labour administration's programme of decentralising local government.

With nine left wing councillors now in the Labour group, the right wing have been losing ground but have been rescued from political

defeat by the regional officer and David Hughes.

Coming in the wake of the inquiry into Liverpool District Council it is clear the Labour leadership are oblivious to the damage they are doing to Labour's local achievements, just so long as they defeat the left. Having lost the political arguments they are using organisational methods to try and beat Labour's ranks into docile subservience. Like Liverpool DLP, Walsall's crime was to fight for Labour's policies and extend local participation in the Party's decision making.

As *Militant* warned, the witchhunt will not stop at the Marxists but is being used to attack the democratic rights of all Labour Party members.

Birmingham city's housing record attacked

GERRY KENNEDY, a spokesman for the housing campaign Shelter, has attacked Birmingham's Labour council for presiding over the worst record for housing and homelessness in the country.

Figures produced by Shelter show that there are 2,513 homeless people in Birmingham, which is the highest number in England for any single authority.

Kennedy called on the council to invest in a crash housing programme in the city. He said in the Birmingham *Daily News* that the

council "haven't built a new family home since 1980 because they claim they haven't got the money. But they manage to find the money for the road race or the Olympics. They should follow the example of Liverpool who have built more than 4,000 houses despite their lack of finances"

Quality

"...The quality of housing offered is absolutely diabolical. Woe betide anyone who is offered a house between now and Christmas" he said.

While Shelter is drawing

attention to the city's housing needs the ratepayers are warned by Dick Knowles, the Labour leader of the council that they face a 60 per cent rate increase next year unless the government comes up with more money for new services inherited from the county council.

Workers in Birmingham will be horrified at such a prospect especially after reeling from the 43 per cent rate increase this year.

By Les Kuriata

(Harborne Ward Labour Party, personal capacity)

Court menaces councils

(Continued from page 1)

Even on the issues seized on by the District Auditors, it was therefore the Tories who caused the 'losses'.

Who can doubt that the District Auditors' complaints are only the legal pretext for drastic action against the councillors? The real reason, the real 'crime' of the councillors, is their defiant refusal to bow down to the Tories' measures to cut working-class living standards.

The Tories and their backers have especially been shaken by the magnificent mass campaign in Liverpool. This was a nightmare for our capitalist rulers.

Almost at the 12th hour—fearing an explosive movement of Liverpool workers—Baker privately approved bank loans which he had previously blocked so that Liverpool's books could be balanced.

But the hatred of the capitalists for any section of workers who stand up to their ruthless plans is shown by the torrent of vile propaganda against Liverpool council and its leaders, especially in the millionaires' gutter press.

This is particularly demonstrated by the revival of lying, slanderous propaganda on the eve of the Liverpool council by-election in Old Swan.

When the government, the courts, the TV, the gutter press, not to mention the Tories, the Liberals, and the SDP have all been mobilised for an all-out onslaught against Liverpool, it is a scandal that the Labour leaders should have joined the political vendetta.

The right-wing have suspended the DLP, probably the most democratic in the country. They intend to revive their 'investigation' on the first day of the councillors' High Court appeal. Right-wing Labour Party and trade union leaders have continually threatened the expulsion of some of those councillors facing severe penalties for their stand in the courts. If they were deliberately trying to sabotage the struggle and provide ammunition for the Tories, they could hardly be doing a better job!

Every labour movement organisation, and individual activists should register their opposition to the witch-hunt in Liverpool by sending resolutions and letters of protest to the National Executive of the Labour Party and individual Labour leaders.

Political and financial support must be continued to ensure that Liverpool and Lambeth councillors can continue to wage the struggle in defence of workers' interests.

Neither the Tory government, nor the courts, nor the capitalist media, nor right-wing Labour leaders will be allowed to stand in the way of the struggle to defend past gains and build a movement for socialist change.

A march and lobby of the High Court has been organised by the Lambeth and Liverpool councils Joint Trade Unions, leaving Jubilee Gardens, County Hall at 9am on Tuesday 14 January.

Tories brawl over Westland

THE CABINET has been rocked by a public battle, with an exchange of accusations and insults which has no precedent. It reflects the underlying tensions within the British ruling class. Those who once ruled a mighty empire and planned in decades are now squabbling over the fate of a minor company, the failing Westland Helicopters Ltd. Ministers of the Crown resemble down-at-heel travelling salesmen scrambling for their commission from multinational big business.

Thatcher and Brittan, the Trade and Industry Secretary, are backing the bid of the American Sikorsky/Fiat consortium whilst Heseltine has gone out on a limb to block it in favour of a European consortium including British Aerospace and GEC.

A major factor in the wrangle is a bid by Heseltine to assert his claims for the succession when Thatcher goes. He is using nationalist arguments about controlling British defence contracts and jobs, whilst Thatcher/Brittan play free-market Pontius Pilate with arguments about letting the shareholders decide.

The truth is that neither cares about the future of Westland and its workers. In other circumstances they

could easily swap sides in the debate. But the arguments they have adopted and the fact that there are two sides competing for Westland show that there is also a material and political basis for the conflict.

The American consortium wish to use Westland to break into the European market by producing their new Black Hawk helicopter at the Yeovil plant. The European companies equally wish to protect their hold on their own market.

The struggle also reflects the conflict between the strategic interests of the European and American capitalists. The European ruling classes, to a greater or lesser degree, have tried to maintain their limited independence from American military and economic domination.

This is seen in European reluctance to participate in Reagan's Star Wars adventure. Thatcher is the only European leader to fully back it. The American consortium has tried to use this to their advantage. In support of their bid, Bill Paul, vice president of Sikorsky's parent company, has claimed that Star Wars work is involved in his company's bid. The European Commissioner for industry has retaliated with a threat that Westland would be frozen out of EEC moves to support the helicopter industry.

The dispute may be decided at the shareholders' meeting on 14 January. The Board will be recommending the American bid, as they have done consistently. They have refused even to put the European offer to the meeting. This will be challenged, but whatever

happens profit will be the decisive consideration.

The outcome will be important for Michael Heseltine's political future. This publishing millionaire has fought a bitter battle on a secondary issue in order to prove his political clout. Though Thatcher has so far refused to sack him, her lieutenants have tried hard to undermine him. A fellow minister has publicly accused him of dishonesty. Thatcher is fully behind them. If Heseltine loses, his future in this government is in jeopardy.

This episode illustrates how workers are used as pawns by international big business. For Westland workers, both options mean job losses. When their skills are required, it is in the productions of weapons of destruction. Helicopters in particular are used by governments against their own workers or national liberation struggles. When the market no longer requires them, they are discarded by shareholders whose only concern is cash.

The Labour leadership should be denouncing this entire charade. The Tories' disarray is their opportunity to expose the bankruptcy of the capitalist system. Instead of weakly siding with European capitalists, they should be demanding public ownership of Westland. It should be incorporated into British Aerospace under workers' control and management. Under a plan for the industry, democratically drawn up by workers within the industry and the wider labour movement, the Westland workers' could be guaranteed a permanent job using their skills for the benefit of society.

Support from miners

THE EXECUTIVE of the Kent Area National Union of Mineworkers have opposed the inquiry into Liverpool.

The executive backed a letter which criticised the NUM's representative on Labour's National Executive Committee, Eric Clarke, who supported the inquiry.

Already six NUM branches have condemned the Labour leadership's action. Last week at Houghton Main NUM, a resolution was passed unanimously calling on Kinnoch to "stop witch-hunting socialists and start witch-hunting the Tories".

The miners remember the role played by this socialist council and the District Labour Party during the miners' strike.

During the 12-month strike it:

- ★ Provided two vans and drivers to collect food and money from the city's workforce, and issued permits which allowed an estimated £1 million to be collected.
- ★ Effectively froze rents and rates for miners living in Liverpool, gave out up to 200 food parcels a week and provided free school meals for miners' children.
- ★ Held a Christmas party, and spent £10,000 on



Lancashire miners collect donations on the rally in support of Liverpool City Council in March 1984. Photo: P Traynor.

holidays for miners' children.

★ Sent two lorry-loads of food to South Wales.

Nor will the miners forget the efforts of the council's GMBATU members—also

under threat of 'reorganisation' through the inquiry—who collected between £3-£5,000 every week which paid for weekly deliveries of food to the striking Notts miners.

Expulsion threat to Exeter Briefing group

THE WITCH-HUNT will not stop at *Militant*, but will be used by the right wing to attack the rest of the left. Already in Exeter the right wing are casting the net further.

Five supporters of *Devon Labour Briefing* may be expelled later this month. The right wing clearly want to stifle opposition to their policies on Devon County Council.

Devon Labour Briefing has been produced for three years. Besides taking up different aspects of Labour policy, it has criticised local Labour councillors who effectively control Devon County Council through a

pact with the Liberal/SDP Alliance. The *Briefing* group have called on the councillors to take an independent position.

In December one *Briefing* supporter, the LPYS representative, was expelled from the Exeter party's executive committee. Then the general committee voted for an investigation into *Briefing*, the right-wing saying it was part of a "national organised tendency". Five party members, including the YS rep, have now been called before the next executive meeting, clearly under the threat of expulsion.

Swansea—debate stifled

THE DECEMBER meeting of Swansea Labour Association ended in uproar when the right-wing ruled that the issue of Liverpool could not be discussed.

This was despite seven resolutions being submitted condemning the suspension of Liverpool District Labour Party and the Liverpool inquiry. Two delegates were ordered to leave after they strongly protested about the right-wing's actions.

After 20 minutes with threats of the police being called, calls for expulsion and ultimatums that the meeting would be abandoned, the two reluctantly left, followed by several other disgusted delegates.

The issue will be raised again at the January meeting, especially after a right-wing county councillor ran to the Tory press screaming for the expulsion of Alec Thraves, one of the two main protestors.

But while the right may curtail free speech at the Labour Association, Swansea Trades Council passed a resolution condemning the intervention of union general secretaries into Liverpool's affairs, and made a donation to the Liverpool financial appeal.

'Liverpool Left' defeat

SECRETARY OF the misnamed Liverpool Labour Left, Ian Williams, has been removed as delegate to the Liverpool District Labour Party by his union branch, Liverpool No 5 NUR.

At the previous branch meeting, a resolution by Williams attacking Liverpool City Council was heavily defeated. Following on at the branch annual general meeting, Williams was not present and therefore ineligible

to stand. In the past in similar cases, such elections are left until the sitting member can attend to face any challenge. Such was the mood of the branch Williams was replaced, along with one of his supporters who was also deselected as DLP delegate. Williams was also removed as delegate to the NUR Merseyside and North Wales District Council.

NUS conference

THE RECENT conference of the National Union of Students in Blackpool displayed a growing politicisation and move to the left by student activists.

In the ballot to choose guest speakers to the conference, Liverpool Deputy Leader, Derek Hatton topped the poll. His speech was well received, with half the conference giving him a standing ovation.

There was increasing criticism of the members of the National Organisation of Labour Students who are in the leadership of NUS. They were defeated when they attempted to reorganise NUS areas to tighten their control over the union.

During the important debate on South Africa, a resolution which recognised the leading role of the black working class and the need to build direct links with South African trade unions received the support of 44 per cent of the conference. This was despite the opposition of the NUS leadership who said they spoke with the authority of the African National Congress.

On the last day of conference it emerged that 18,000 polytechnic places are now under threat through Tory cutbacks. Yet earlier in the debate on education cuts, all the NOLS members on the NUS executive incredibly voted against a motion which urged the union to give a clear 'vote Labour' call in the local elections.

The conference displayed to many delegates the need to build a new leadership through NOLS, which is able to link students to the labour movement, essential to secure a successful fightback.

Stoke—right will not succeed

LABOUR PARTY members in Stoke North have been angered by the National Executive's decision in December to rule their deselection of sitting MP John Forrester out of order.

Forrester has been MP for Stoke North since 1966, yet was unable to convince the party's general committee last year that he should remain as Labour candidate. They instead chose Lambeth councillor Joan Whalley. The local press—egged on by ex-Stoke Central MP Bob Cant—screamed about the imposition of a "Socialist Soviet State of Stoke-on-Trent".

But all the name calling cannot disguise the fact that the party is now more active, with a larger, younger membership than it has had for many years. The overriding reason why Forrester lost the nomination was that the party felt he had not done enough to represent the interests of the people of Stoke. Despite being a former member of the Communist Party, he is now considered to be on the extreme right of the Labour Party.

The NEC ruled out the selection decision, saying that there was one person at the party's executive committee shortlisting meeting

who should not have been there. This one person's vote though could not have affected the final selection.

However, the decision to re-run the procedure will not change the result. It has been suggested that some of the defeated candidates will withdraw to give Joan Whalley a 'clear run'. All the indicators are that Forrester will get a smaller vote than last time. Organisational measures by the Labour leadership will not prevent Labour Party members from exercising their democratic rights.

Giant monopolies devour each other in drive for profits

Bigger and fewer

Feature
by
Bob McKee

**How 200
companies
dominate
the economy**

THE LAST few months of 1985 witnessed an unprecedented outburst of mergers, takeovers and acquisitions of British companies by larger competitors.

Presently household names like Habitat and British Home Stores are merging, while industrial giants like the electrical and telecommunication companies, GEC and Plessey are planning to join together. Less well-known companies are also engaged in sometimes bitter battles to take over important business operations, eg Imperial Group's bid for United Biscuits and Argyll's bid for the Distillers Company (who make whisky etc).

This takeover fever is not confined to Britain. In the USA, the Wall Street stock exchange has been gripped in an endless round of mergers, amid rumours of bid and counterbid. The latest battle is the threatened takeover of Union Carbide, the ill-fated giant chemical company that is responsible for the pollution leak in Bhopal, India that led to thousands of deaths.

Same story

In West Germany it is the same story. During 1985 the size and scale of mergers broke all previous records, with famous firms like Daimler Benz, Grundig and Phillips being involved.

Britain's merger boom saw over £5.5 billion of takeovers as early as 1984. But 1985 has easily surpassed that record figure with £8 billion of proposals agreed or in the pipeline—and £4 billion in the last few weeks of December 1985.

This upsurge in the buying and selling of giant companies is a product of both the world slump of 1979-81 and the subsequent slow recovery of 1982-85. The slump forced many smaller industrial and commercial companies either to the point of bankruptcy or over, and it led to many medium to larger companies finding the going very tough both in home and overseas markets, particularly manufacturing firms in the United States and Britain unable to com-



Merger mania means redundancies and cutbacks. Left and right, trade unionists fight to defend pay, conditions and jobs at GEC and Plessey.

pete with Japanese, West German and South-East Asian rivals.

Growing international competition when the markets are shrinking requires even larger resources to fall back on, to survive until times improve. And so many companies have become ripe for the picking by more successful and larger competitors. Profit rates fell sharply during the world recession, and the bigger companies have attempted to shore up their profit levels by buying up smaller but more profitable rivals.

Company profits have improved over the last three years of world recovery through massive cutbacks in the workforce, lower wage increases and cheaper raw materials from the Third World. As a result the big monopolies have been able to build up financial reserves that can be used to make the right purchase.

Profits first

For example GEC built up over £4,000m in cash reserves which it did not reinvest into industry, preferring the return from the banks in interest. But

when the chance of buying up Plessey appeared, it was all ready with the money.

Lending

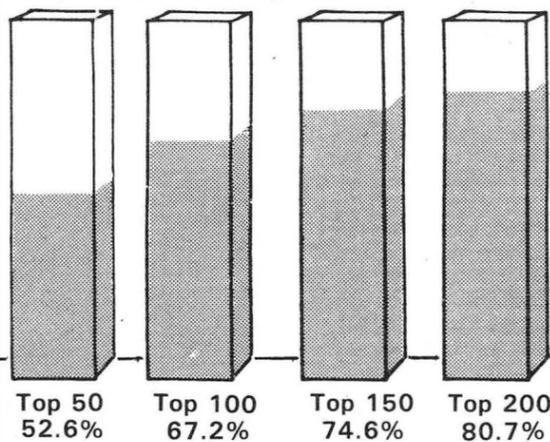
Even if companies did not have the cash in their own reserves, banks have been eager to lend for takeovers, a much less risky undertaking than lending to Third World countries because you know the directors and you can get your money back by selling off the company if things go wrong. You cannot do that with a country!

This merger and takeover boom is a familiar aspect of the process of capitalism which Marx forecast in his monumental work on the economy *Capital*. The very expansion of capitalist accumulation and competition leads to its opposite; greater concentration of capital in the hands of fewer and fewer giant monopolies, leading to a slowing of competitive pressure for innovation and for price and profit reductions.

The merger boom will also mean more 'rationalisation', the code word for redundancies and closures, as the newly formed corporations carry out cost cutting exercises to



Concentration of capital assets in the top 1,000 industrial and commercial companies in the UK, as at July 1984.



From the *The Times 1,000 Companies Book 1984-5*.

make their new acquisitions pay. Already the current merger bids have led to unions in the food and drink industry to call for an urgent meeting with the National Economic Development Office to examine the employment consequences for workers in an industry where mergers are rife.

Big business

But trade unionists should not expect any help from government bodies or existing anti-monopoly legislation. It is clear that our Tory big business government, far from believing in 'small business', as it often claims, has no intention of blocking any of these major mergers. Big business profits and market survival are more important than any bogus talk of a property-owning democracy.

Similarly in the USA and West Germany, companies have sneaked round existing anti-trust legislation through the issue of 'junk bonds' to pay for purchases (USA) or by buying less than 25 per cent and working with 'friendly' shareholders to gain control (West Germany). The merger mania is another graphic illustration of the argument of the Marxists that capitalism is not some democratic system of small businesses competing on equal terms on a market to create low prices and high efficiency.

World and British capitalism is dominated by giant companies that exert overwhelming control over market prices, levels of production, investment and jobs—and together dominate the policies of any elected government that tries to work with them.

Assets

The latest survey of the top 1,000 companies, based on the position as at July 1984, shows that the top 200 companies still own more than 80 per cent of the total capital assets of the 1,000. Even more significant is that now the top 50 firms have more than 50 per cent of total company assets.

Most of the recent takeovers appear to be between companies within the top 200 eg. GEC (9th) and Plessey (65th) or BHS (156th) and Habitat (190th). So the massive takeover boom has probably increased significantly the concentration of assets in the hands of the top fifty companies, rather than the top 200, but clearly if the rate of mergers continues at the 1985 rate during the coming year, 80% of capital assets may well be under the control of just 150-170 companies by the beginning of 1987.

Unity or purge: you can't have both

By Bob Wade

WITCH-HUNTS in the Labour Party only aid the Tories and their class. Thatcher and other Tory cabinet ministers all called for Kinnock to 'take action' against *Militant* from the rostrum of last year's Tory Party conference. The demand for *Militant* supporters to be expelled was first raised over 10 years ago, not by any section of the labour movement, but in the prestigious editorial columns of the *Times*. They want Labour to be split and factionalised through an internal witch-hunt as the next general election approaches. They are fearful of the growing influence of Marxism and of a labour movement united around socialist policies.

The attacks against *Militant* and the wrangling over the Bermondsey

by-election helped Labour's defeat in 1983. Following the Labour leadership's current attacks on Liverpool, Kinnock's standing in the opinion polls has now fallen behind Thatcher's.

While this is common knowledge to ordinary Labour Party members, it appears to be filtering through to the soft left, and even some of the right wing.

Sheffield City Council leader and NEC member David Blunkett along with the rest of the 'soft left' backed the inquiry into Liverpool District Labour Party. But he has now urged the 'soft left' to pull back from supporting an all-out witch-hunt in the Party. In an article in *Tribune* (3 January) titled 'Labour must resist purge mentality' he states: "Let's pray that all

those who have so quickly forgotten what happened to the Labour Party in the run-up to the 1983 general election can rapidly be reminded."

Election preparation

Likewise the editorial of the *New Statesman* (3 January) tells Kinnock that the "*Militant* and Liverpool issue" must "...not (be) allowed to drag into 1986, taking up scarce political resources away from the development of policy... the leadership must... now (be) getting on with the business of readying Labour for the next election".

What will have concentrated the minds of the likes of Blunkett and

others is the furore from the ranks of the movement over the leadership's action. Blunkett along with others on the soft left voted against the expulsion of Sheffield councillor Paul Green (whose expulsion went through by only one vote). Green has the support of the Sheffield City Council Labour Group and the city party leadership.

But the right-wing have been able to progress so far with their attacks precisely because the soft left opened the door for them, through their uncritical support for the right-wing shift of Kinnock and for organisational measures against the left such as the Liverpool inquiry.

Yet unlike the *New Statesman* which belatedly appears to have realised the damage that has been done, Blunkett does not. No doubt

to justify his support for the Liverpool inquiry and then his opposition to Paul Green's expulsion, he writes that there is a "difference" between organisational measures and outright expulsions. This is nonsense. It is outrageous that party members should be attacked in whatever form purely because of the socialist policies they support.

Militant supporters are being attacked because its opponents cannot answer them politically. If it is unjust to expel someone, it is equally unjust to tie them up in organisational knots.

As *Militant* has warned, you cannot have half a witch-hunt. You either have attacks and internal division, or unity around the movement's democratically decided policies. Labour Party members want the latter. They will judge those on the soft left who helped the right wing witch-hunters set the ball rolling accordingly.

FIGHTING FUND

This week: £2,528

Quarter ends 31 January

Area	Received	% of target achieved	Target
1 London South West	1075		1200
2 London West	1358		2750
3 Scotland West	1700		3800
4 London South East	904		2200
5 Humberside	850		2150
6 London East	1192		3350
7 Southern	1986		5450
8 Eastern	1175		3450
9 Manchester/Lancs	1292		4200
10 East Midlands	927		3050
11 West Midlands	1078		4500
12 Northern	993		4650
13 South West	443		2150
14 Wales West	606		2950
15 Yorkshire	1184		5650
16 Scotland East	533		3100
17 Merseyside	962		6850
18 Wales East	324		3050
Others	6573		5500
Total received	25154		70000

MILITANT SUPPORTERS were kept busy over the holiday, and the money raised during the Christmas break continues to arrive at our offices.

Without doubt, the most successful social event of the holiday was the disco organised in Glasgow. Attended by over 300 people, it raised £543 with a further £50 from a raffle. The organisers would like to thank all those who helped to sell the tickets and who came along on the night and say "see you at the next one"

With just three weeks left to the end of the Quarter we need to put all our fund raising activities into top gear. Many individuals are sending us cash to show their opposition to the witch-hunt of *Militant*, including two marvellous donations made anonymously; £100 from a student in Lancashire and £50 from a member of Battersea CLP.

In many areas the petitions against the attacks are raising donations from sympathetic Labour Party and trade union members. Readers meetings up and down the country will provide us with big collections like the £300 collected at a Manchester meeting. And don't forget to organise parties and socials for the end of the Quarter.

This month should be a record month for the Fighting Fund. With all the attacks on *Militant* and on Liverpool City Labour Party, particularly the court case this month, we will be able to collect thousands of pounds, if we ask!

And as this is the season of goodwill we have just given away £1,000 worth of prizes in our winter draw. The winners are listed below.

Start the New Year off with goodwill towards *Militant*. Give us our best ever Fighting Fund Total by the end of January.

Donations

M Abrahams Clapton £20; J & W Trevitt Grimsby £10; P Binney Mansfield £2; S Snowden Scunthorpe £3.20; J Cramsit Blackburn £5; E Jones Pontypridd £7.25; B Williams Bromsgrove TGWU £10; C Monaghan Sussex £20; M Dodds Austin & Pickersgill Shop Stewards Fees £10; C Langhurst Tunbridge Wells CPSA £5; Blackburn Readers' Meeting £47.50; Bradford Readers' Meeting £68; Y Harrison NCU expenses £10; Benton LPYS £6; Barhead video night £11.26.

Over the Christmas period: £932

Marxist Daily Building Fund

ONLY ONE prediction about the political situation in Britain can be made with any confidence in 1986. Support for *Militant* will continue to grow.

Already the agenda for 1986 has begun to be set. The court case against Liverpool City Council, the enquiry into Liverpool District Labour Party, and the expulsion of *Militant* supporters from the Labour Party up and down the country are all due by the end of January and there will be eleven more months after that!

Telling the truth

The only way we can counteract all these attacks is

to tell the workers the truth. We need more leaflets, pamphlets, articles for sale, more meetings, conferences, demonstrations, posters to explain our case. We are confident that the more they attack us, the more we will grow.

But we need the cash to do this. Many readers have donated a week's wages to the Marxist Daily Building Fund or a tenner to help our campaign in support of Liverpool over the past year. Many have given two or three times.

Don't forget the Marxist Daily Building Fund in 1986. Give a tenner or more now so we can start the New Year with a healthy bank balance and fight and defeat the attacks on us.

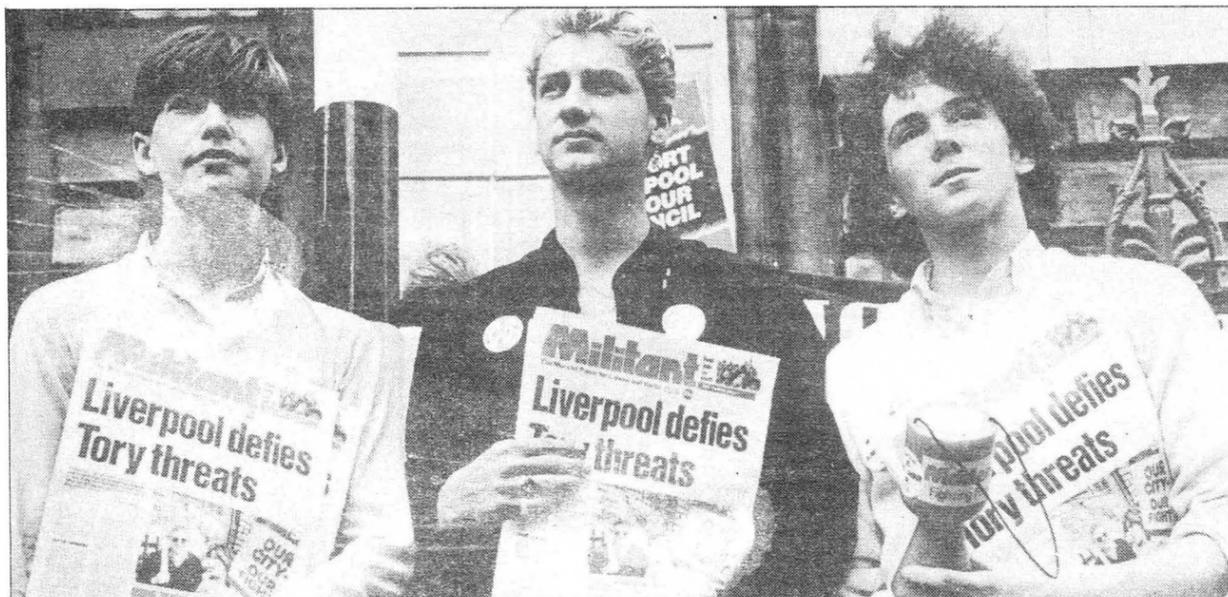


Photo: Philip Gordon (Reflex)

Make 1986 the year of paper sales and finance. Above sellers in Liverpool and *Militant* supporters at the 1985 rally.

The year of the paper

MAKE 1986 the year of the paper, that has to be the New Year resolution for every *Militant* seller. Interest in *Militant* and the opportunity to dramatically increase its circulation has never been better.

Tory press attacks on the paper and the attempted witch-hunt by some Labour leaders have led to thousands

of ordinary workers and young people wanting to support the paper and defend it. So in Birmingham *Militant* sellers have gone on the offensive.

They have started an extra weekly street sale in Ladypool Road, in the heart of Roy Hattersley's Sparkbrook constituency. They aim to tap the sympathy of the local people, who by no means support their MP's attacks on *Militant* and on

Liverpool council. The Defend *Militant* petition along with the paper is being taken around to every Labour Party branch meeting in Birmingham in January.

Estate sales

In Bradford North, *Militant* sellers are planning additional sales, especially around the estates, to take advantage of the recent publicity about the paper.

Sellers in other areas could follow these examples, to get backing for *Militant* against the witch-hunt, and to win new readers and new sellers.

In St Helens, 15 *Militant* were sold at an anti-witch-hunt meeting addressed by Eric Heffer. But seller of the week is Mick Fallon from Halifax who personally sold 50 of the two-week Christmas issue.

By Jeremy Birch

ads CLASSIFIED

15p per word, minimum 10 words.

SEMI-DISPLAY £2 per column centimetre. Three weeks for the price of two. *Militant* meeting ads free.

All advertisement copy should reach this office by Saturday.

1986 DIARIES 60p, address books 60p, bookmarks 40p, plastic paper sleeves 20p, sew on badges 40p. Cheques to *Militant*, 10 Rodney Ct. An^{SO} Drive, Sholing Southampton SO2

OUT NOW Banned LPYS pamphlet 'The ideals of October'. Every YS branch should order in bulk. Price 50p, 20p for individual postage. Bulk postage free. Cheques payable to *Militant*, send to L Waker, 3-13 Hepscoth Rd, London E9 5HB.

HUDDERSFIELD *Militant* Readers Meeting: "Fight the witch hunt" Speakers: Councillor Paul Green and Jane Hartley (AUEW TASS) both expelled from Sheffield Attercliffe Labour Party, (personal capacity) and a Liverpool councillor. Wednesday 15 January. 7.30pm. Zetland Hotel, Queensgate, Huddersfield.

1986 MARKS the fiftieth anniversary of the Spanish civil war. The Spanish revolution was one of the most heroic struggles of the century. To mark the occasion we have brought together some existing material covering the momentous events of 1936 and the lessons of the disastrous policies of Popular Frontism pursued by Stalin. A ideal introduction for all socialists. Contains: The Spanish Revolution 1931-37 by Peter Taaffe and Ted Grant. The Lessons of Spain by Leon Trotsky. Marxist Study Guide. Popular Frontism. Articles covering French Popular Front 1936, The Spanish Revolution and Chile—Lessons of the Coup. Plus the Spanish Revolution by Alan Woods—C 90 tape. Available from World Socialist Books, 3/13 Hepscoth Road, London E9 5HB.

SWINDON *Militant* Marxist Discussion Group meetings held monthly. Phone Martin on 24796 for details.

CO-OP stamps wanted. Full or part books and loose stamps required. All proceeds to F/F. Send to *Militant*, Circulation Dept, 3/13 Hepscoth Rd, London E9 5HB.

ENAMEL *Militant* badges: now available. Cost £1. Bulk orders (10 or more). Cost 75p each + 25p post and package. Contact: Fighting Fund Department, 3-13 Hepscoth Road, London E9 5HB.

ANDY and Kathy Wales are pleased to announce the birth of their daughter Joanne on 16 December 1985.

FOR SALE Cooker Tricity Viscount 18 months old. £50. Servis Supertwin 110 washing machine 18 months old. £30. Selling with donation to fighting fund. Ring (01) 740-0166.

BOW AND Poplar CLP meeting: "Liverpool, what went wrong?" Friday 10 January 7.30pm. Museum of Labour History, Commercial Road, Limehouse, E 14. Speakers include Paul Thompson (Chair Liverpool LCC) and Richard Venton (Liverpool Labour Party) and a Liverpool MP. Labour Party members only. Admission 50p on presentation of membership card.

NEW PAMPHLET: "A socialist Programme for Brighton". Written by members of Brighton Labour Party. Which way forward for Labour councils after next May? Price 70p including postage from Geoff Jones 70 Hartington Road, Brighton, BN2 3PB.

Militant Winter Draw Winners

First Prize: Video equipment worth £500: Debbie Kusack, Portsmouth. Ticket number 094806
 Second prize: Stacking hi-fi worth £300: Mrs Black, Peterlee. Ticket 026141
 Third Prize: Portable TV worth £150: R Purdy West Jesmond 051345
 Fourth Prize: £20 worth of socialist books: P Anastasi Brixton 080273
 Sue Caldwell Leeds 088079
 E Stephens Penlan Social Club 031476
 Daphne Short 007252
 Roy Thompson Dereham Norfolk 003496

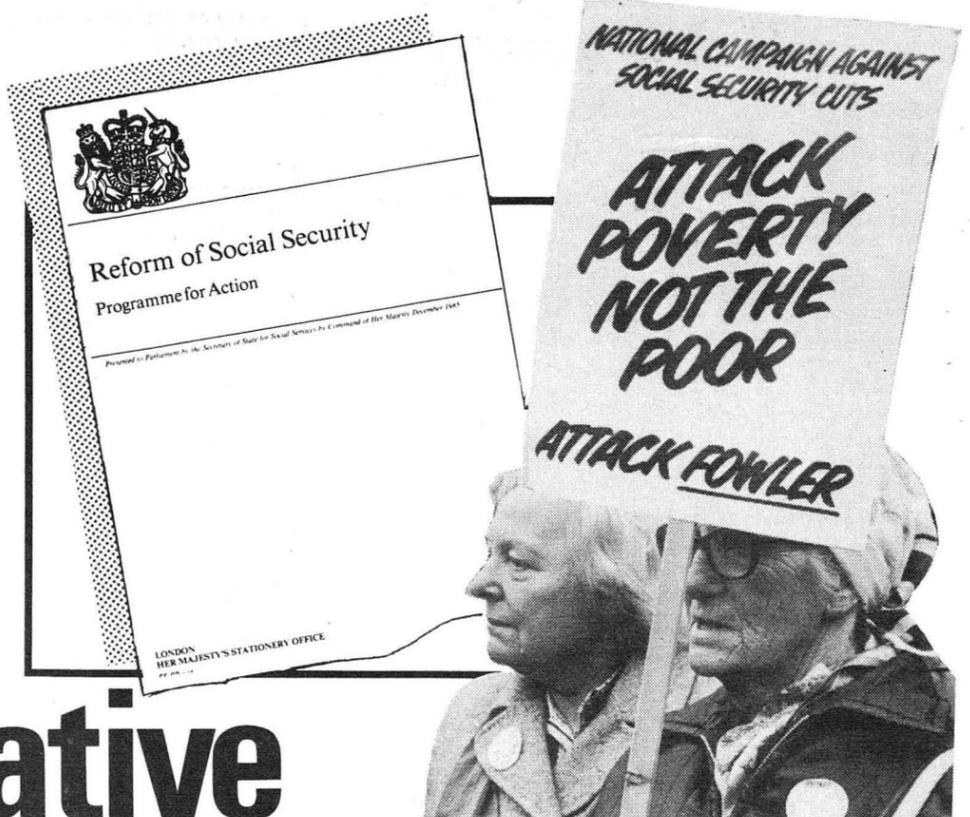
Social Security White Paper

THREE DAYS before the Parliamentary recess, the government produced its White Paper on *The Reform of Social Security*. It is not, as suggested in some quarters a climb-down from Fowler's original proposals, but an offensive against the poorest sections of the community—the pensioners, unemployed, women and young.

It will mean cuts in the real value of Child Benefit paid to seven million families. All the 20 million contributing to pensions, whether in the State Earnings Related Pensions Scheme (SERPS) or occupational schemes, will face lower pensions and higher contributions. £450 million a year is to be cut from Housing Benefit, with even the poorest forced to pay 20 per cent of their rates. The number of families in the 'poverty trap' is estimated to rise by 250,000.

More means-testing will be introduced. The maternity and death grants will cease to be a right, but will be provided or loaned from a Social Fund which will be subject to a cash limit. Payments from this fund will be made by the local DHSS office with no right of appeal to an outside body.

Where earlier proposals have been modified, it has mainly been the result of intense lobbying by pro-Tory groups. They did not want SERPS to be abolished, but undermined. The new proposals—to cut SERPS and encourage private pensions—suit the insurance companies much better because they can scavenge the best pickings from the public sector, while leaving the provision of pensions to the low-paid and the unemployed to the state.



Socialist alternative to Fowler nightmare

For the labour movement, this White Paper is one of the biggest challenges they face in 1986. In Parliament, Fowler taunted Neil Kinnock that Labour has no alternative to his proposals. It is up to the ranks of the labour and trade union movement to reply with a massive campaign to force the Tories to back down and commit the leadership to an alternative programme to eliminate poverty.

If Labour campaigned properly on the question, the Tories could be decimated at the next election, so blatantly anti-working class are these proposals. But so far Labour has failed to take up the challenge and produce a credible socialist alternative.

Beveridge

Some Labour and trade union leaders are trying to challenge Fowler by harking back to the 'Beveridge principles' on which the current system is based. Simply to defend the existing ramshackle and discredited system will rightly earn the contempt of workers and claimants who are its victims.

"Action for Benefits"—an umbrella organisation of welfare rights groups, charities and trade unions including DHSS trade unions, influenced by the Society of Civil and Public Servants (SCPS), have also fought a mainly defensive campaign around the slogan: 'It's our benefit—we pay for it. Fight to keep it and improve it.'

The National Insurance fund which receives workers' contributions is in surplus to the tune of £5.5 billion. But this surplus is not reinvested into the benefits system, but is merely another source of government income to be used wherever the government sees fit. (Nuclear weapons for instance.)

David Metcalf writing in *New Society* in 1980 commented that about the only effective role of the National Insurance Fund "...is that of Treasury lapdog, making its revenue-raising function so much easier...the ministerial team at the DHSS is no longer running an insurance system but has opened a bucket shop for the Treasury."



"A TINY SNIP HERE" "AND A LITTLE CUT THERE" Alan Handman.

This con-trick means that workers are not only paying over the odds for benefits but are subsidising the Tories in their attacks on the working class! So Fowler's daylight robbery of benefits has been preceded by a gigantic swindle using the National Insurance contributions paid for the last four decades by workers. The idea that the country 'cannot afford' decent benefits is exposed as another Tory lie.

False distinction

Thus to campaign for the principle of contributions based benefits, as *Action for Benefits* does, only serves to reinforce the myth that workers get out what they pay in. Moreover, such a campaign maintains the false distinction between National Insurance benefits (like unemployment and sickness benefits) which are 'okay' because workers have paid for them, and means-tested benefits (like supplementary benefit) which are portrayed



Norman Fowler

as charity, (even though workers have paid for them through taxes).

Michael Meacher in his alternative proposals goes some way towards dealing with the problems of poverty, but fails to argue convincingly how his scheme can be financed. Even his modest proposal to lift eight million claimants off means-tested benefits, however, have been savaged by the press and disowned by the Labour

leadership.

Meacher is motivated by a sense of moral outrage at the Tories' misdeeds against the poor. His 'New Income Protection Plan' would raise National Insurance benefits to 'long-term rate' supplementary benefit levels. Child Benefit would be substantially increased as would housing benefits for people in and out of work. However, the idea that young people (16-17 year olds) should receive lower rates of benefit is preserved.

Meacher calls for benefits to be set at a 'participation' standard i.e. to allow recipients to fully participate in social and leisure activities as well as adequately feeding, clothing and housing themselves. This is certainly a policy which socialists can support, but without adequate funding, the plan could easily become empty rhetoric. Meacher is already talking of the need to have a 'minimum participation standard' before an 'ideal participation standard' is

achievable.

Proposals to pay for these reforms include abolishing the married man's tax allowance, removal of National Insurance contributions, higher earnings ceilings and a wealth tax, with the remainder to be financed by 'an expansionary economic policy in accordance with Labour's Jobs and industry campaign.'

Little sense

This essentially naive approach to re-distributing wealth under capitalism will be seen by workers for what it is: a great idea which has never been able to work. Comments Meacher: "It makes little sense to fix higher wages for the low paid unless we insist on lower wages for the highly paid". Quite so, but since when was capitalism sensible?

This approach also seriously underestimates the depth of the economic crisis which has prompted

By Harriet Stevens
(CPSA DHSS Section
Executive in personal
capacity)

Fowler's attacks in the first place, and also the resistance which Meacher's plans to re-distribute wealth will meet with from the ruling class. More importantly though, it is not simply a question of re-distributing the personal wealth of the rich, but of removing from their ownership and control the wealth-creating areas of society, i.e. manufacturing industry. And Labour's Jobs and Industry campaign is certainly not calling for widespread nationalisation of the top companies which would release the necessary sources for a decent benefits system.

Trade unionists must support and fight for every improvement in benefit levels, but we do not sow illusions that all is needed is a Labour government willing to tinker with the system.

Socialist vision

So, what should we be arguing for?

★ An end to the humiliation of means-tested benefits. If workers are unemployed, the system is to blame. If workers are caring for dependents or are disabled they should not be penalised but given adequate benefits.

★ Work or full maintenance. This slogan from the 1930s is equally appropriate today.

★ A national minimum wage which benefits will be linked to.

★ The DHSS to be democratically run with the involvement of trade unions both in and outside the department and claimants' representatives.

★ Benefits should be paid not by taxing the workers but from the wealth of society as a whole. While under capitalism we can occasionally win temporary improvements, a genuine social security system will require a healthy socialist economy.

We can defeat Fowler and the Tories on this issue, but only if a credible alternative is given to workers. The debate should begin now around the question of what a socialist benefits system will look like. The Tories have given us a nightmare vision of the future—we need to offer a socialist vision which we can deliver.

How big business entangles Labour leaders



**Make r
-worke**

MILITANT HAS an outstanding record in the fight for the democratisation of the labour movement. However, the tentacles of big business—through corruption, bribery, patronage and freemasonry—extend into the Labour Party and trade unions in a conscious attempt to make them safe for capitalism. Such influences and links with the business world must be exposed in order to protect our movement from such alien pressures.

Our leaders, in particular, are subjected to such offers. They are encouraged to court 'respectability' and 'tradition' in the systematic drive to win them over to the established order of things.

Given the privileged position that can be built by those in leading positions, the menace of careerism has become a plague in the labour movement. Office-seekers and social climbers have used and attempted to use the workers' organisations for their own personal benefit. Unfortunately, Labour Prime Ministers are no exception.

The Rt Hon Leonard James Callaghan, past Chancellor of the Exchequer, Prime Minister and First Lord of the Treasury, has done rather well for himself out of his political career. Member of Parliament for Cardiff South East

By Rob Sewell

and now for Cardiff South and Penarth, he has been dubbed affectionately as 'Sunny Jim' by the media. And he certainly has a lot to shine about.

Co-owner of an extensive 200 acre dairy and arable farm called Upper Clayhill Farm, in Sussex, together with a modern flat in Kennington, he was a director (as was the ex-speaker of the Commons, George Thomas) of Julian Hodge's Commercial Bank of Wales in the early 1970s.

Callaghan became a close personal associate of the controversial banker. "Sir Julian Hodge was, and is, my friend" he remarked in April 1976.

A rare glimpse of this association

was revealed in a book about Callaghan by Kellner and Hitchens called "Callaghan: The Road to Number Ten":

"Hodge had, indeed, been a lifelong supporter and donor to the Labour Party. But questions about his relationship with Callaghan were raised (though, it must be stressed there is no evidence of impropriety on either side) when it was recalled: that in his 1967 budget Callaghan relaxed the hire-purchase restrictions on three-wheeled cars, one of the chief manufacturers of which was Reliant Motors, a Hodge subsidiary; that Hodge took Callaghan to meetings of the International Monetary Fund as a guest after he had ceased to be Chancellor;... and that in 1971 Callaghan had proposed to the Labour Party conference a fund-raising idea involving a motor insurance scheme, which might well have enriched the party but would also have enriched the Hodge Group, whose insurance was the brand under offer.

Pyramid selling

"Julian Hodge's business ethic was not to everybody's taste, though there was nothing illegal about it. Granada Television devoted an entire programme to his links with a 'pyramid selling' operation known as 'Holiday Magic'.

(By the end of 1973, however, pyramid selling was made illegal-RS)

"It was a combination of hard sell and easy lend, originating with an American company, but fuelled by money lent by the Hodge Group. The formula can be set down in a few words.

"First, a door-to-door representative would call at selective households, offering the chance to break out of the trivial round and the common tasks, into big money.

"If the 'prospect' seemed to be agreeable to the idea, an independent finance agent or broker would follow up the 'prospect' to arrange the necessary loan (in the region of one thousand pounds) so that the lucky householder could pay the 'Holiday Magic' starting price.

"In the majority of cases, the

loan would be supplied by Julian Hodge's bank in Cardiff, and the security would take the form of a second mortgage on the applicant's own home. This was watertight enough from the Hodge point of view, in that default payment by the borrower would mean that the bank could sell his home.

"The interest rates charged to borrowers were by no means paltry, but then neither was the original financial inducement. Many hundreds of families fell for it." (Pages 128-29).

Before Hodge established his Commercial Bank of Wales in 1971, he had developed a reputation as a banker to ethnic minorities. This attracted, apart from many others, the infamous John Stonehouse MP in search of backers for his British Bangladesh Trust.

Stonehouse, Minister of Posts and Telecommunications in the 1964-70 Labour government and Privy Councillor, was later jailed for seven years for fraud, theft, forgery and conspiracy. In the bankruptcy proceedings against him it was said he was £316,000 in debt. He did attempt to fake his death by disappearing to Australia, but to no avail!

However, before this in May 1972 he arranged to see Hodge in Cardiff. Also in attendance at this lunch in Hodge Building were none other than George Thomas and Jim Callaghan (his ex-ministerial associate). Stonehouse's intention was to get financial backing for British Bangladesh Trust. As Tim O'Sullivan in *A Bank for Wales* explained: "Julian could see the point of a bank to serve the Bengali Community, a thrifty and industrious lot estimated to number about 70,000 income-earners with annual savings of perhaps £12 million..." But Hodge declined when he saw Stonehouse's amateurish draft papers.

As was mentioned by Kellner and Hitchens, the idea was concocted in January 1971 to involve Labour Party members in selling Hodge car insurance to Labour supporters to increase Labour's funds. In effect the scheme turned Party members into agents for the merchant banker, Hodge.

At a meeting in Cardiff with certain NEC members and Hodge





Representatives accountable MPs on workers' wages

representatives on 15 January 1971. A plan was devised to introduce the sale of insurance as a pioneer scheme in the Glasgow, Manchester and South Wales areas. The report of the meeting revealed the attitude of Hodge's representatives: "South Wales, which we have taken as Glamorganshire, Monmouthshire and Carmarthenshire, we have a voting strength of 50,000 giving a premium income of £195,000." Labour's funds were expected to make £91,000 per year. However the Hodge Company was expected to get £107,000 a year.

On 23 June 1971, the NEC's Special Committee on Party Finance backed the proposals. The official report to the 1971 Party conference stated:

"The Special Committee on Party Finance has examined a new fund raising ideal in connection with motor insurance and this has been improved by the National Executive Committee. Detailed preparations are being made and it is planned that the scheme will commence after the Party Conference".

It is interesting to note that while

made list of potential clients whom they could approach with insurance proposals much more lucrative than motor insurance—like life, or accident insurance."

In relation to the Commercial Bank of Wales, Hodge was much more successful. Each Welsh MP received a prospectus offering the shares before they went on public sale. A dozen Welsh Labour MPs and former MPs rushed to buy shares in the bank.

No less than six senior Ministers from the 1964-70 Labour Government—Attorney General Elwyn Jones (who became Baron Elwyn Jones in 1974), deputy party leader Edward Short (who received his baronetcy in 1977 and became Lord Glenamara), agricultural Minister Cledwyn Hughes (Baronetcy in 1979 and thereafter known as Cledwyn of Penrhos), and Minister of Labour Ray Gunter (who only became a Rt. Hon as a Privy Councillor as well of director of Securicor Ltd and Industrial Communications Ltd) as well as Callaghan and George Thomas (who entered Parliament the same time as

donated £175,200 to Tory party funds.

A few years earlier, in 1969, the Labour Party established *Labour Party Properties Limited* to develop sites owned by the party. In May 1971, the *Daily Mail* reported that the Labour Party, "had agreed to put up £50,000 so that Labour Party Properties Ltd can go into partnership with private enterprise firms to develop sites owned by local parties." The paper added that the party would charge 5% interest on its loan while "Callaghan, Labour's Treasurer, must approve any spending by the company over £5,000."

Apart from Callaghan, the other directors included again Andrew Cunningham, jailed for corruption in the Poulson Trials. His son, John Cunningham MP and Opposition Spokesman on Environment, was for many years Callaghan's Parliamentary Private Secretary. Another director was ex NUM President, Joe Gormley (now Lord Gormley and director of United Racecourses)

When Callaghan was the director of Labour Party Properties, it obtained a loan of £100,000 from none other than the Italian International Bank.

The loan was repaid, together with £50,000 in interest. By the end of 1978, according to the official Labour Party Report, Labour Party Properties Limited had accumulated a debt of nearly £110,000.

We would not suggest, of course, that there has been any illegality, but Party members do have the right to know the business links and interests leading Labour MPs have now and in the past.

It is ironic that the unfounded allegations of "corruption" and "nepotism" in Liverpool were used as the basis for the establishment of an inquiry by Labour's NEC, while similar charges against Callaghan were never investigated.

In May 1977, for instance, Callaghan appointed his son-in-law, Peter Jay the ex-economics editor of the Times—as Britain's new Ambassador to the USA. He said that it was on the recommendation of Dr. David Owen—the then Labour Foreign Secretary. Callaghan simply agreed! The appointment created a storm with the

Councillor John Smith,
128 Corporation Road
CARDIFF

7 February, 1974

Dear Councillor Smith,

I was pleased to have the opportunity of a chat with you on Wednesday evening, and I would suggest that you might be good enough to ask Mr Russell Davis, of Caerphilly, to get into direct touch with Mr James of Gwent Car Hire, Godfrey's, North Road, in the matter of a mini-bus, should he require one.

Mr Russell Davis should also contact Mr Dunstan of the St Donat's Holiday Estates, Carlyle House, Newport Road, in the matter of the caravan.

It would seem advisable for him

Sir Julian Hodge FACCA FTII
31 Windsor Place
Cardiff, CF1 3UR
Telephone 42577

to stake a claim quickly, as there is going to be a big demand for such facilities if an election is called.

Mr Davis should mention my name on each occasion.

I confirm that I will let you have a cheque for £500 towards your expenses. But as I think it advisable for this to be made payable to Bearer, I will either have it delivered or arrange for you to call and collect it some time, if you don't mind.

Yours sincerely,
Julian Hodge

matter raised in the commons.

An early-day motion was drawn up and circulated by Willie Hamilton (Fife) on 11 May 1977:

"That this house deplores the growing use of patronage by Government Ministers; condemns the appointment by the Prime Minister of his son-in-law as Her Majesty's Ambassador in Washington and calls upon the entire labour movement to censure the Prime Minister for this indefensible action".

There were calls for a debate on the issue as Dennis Skinner pointed to "massive worry and consternation throughout the PLP..." But a debate was refused.

The Labour Party's policy has always been to abolish the House of Lords. At the 1977 Conference the card vote was 6,248,000 to 91,000. However its inclusion in the 1979 election manifesto was vetoed by the leader, Callaghan. Is it any surprise, therefore, that he dished out titles to trade union officials at twice the rate of Wilson or Thatcher?

Another figure connected with Callaghan over the years was his friend and Parliamentary agent (1966, 1970, 1979, 1983) Jack Brooks. He was also employed by Hodge's companies from time to time.

Life peer

Brooks, a plasterer by trade, rose up the ladder quite quickly and by 1973 became the leader of South Glamorgan County Council. Despite being fined twice—December 1972 and May 1975—for non payment of National Insurance, he was made a life peer by Callaghan in 1979 and became known as the Rt Hon the Lord Brooks of Termorfa (Baron).

As a member of Cardiff South Labour Party, he, together with

Callaghan recently voted for the expulsion of three *Militant* supporters. It was about this time that further evidence came to light of substantial patronage during the 1974 general election from Sir Julian Hodge (see letter). Labour Party members will want to know exactly what role finance from this source has played in the constituency when Hodge has long been involved with international banking and big business.

It is clear from the published facts that a genuine labour movement inquiry into Labour representatives' links with business interests is an urgent matter. Instead of the NEC carrying out an investigation—as a prelude to a purge—into fake allegations made by Labour's enemies about the Liverpool DLP, they should be exposing the real patronage and corruption that exists in the hierarchy of the movement.

The Labour Party must not continue to be a vehicle for self-advancement and careerism, but be turned into a genuine instrument for socialist change. That is why *Militant* adds its voice to an enquiry into deals with big business and continues to fight for all Labour representatives to be on the same wages as those they represent, plus legitimate expenses vetted by the movement, that they are subject to regular elections, with the right of recall, and that all income derived from journalism, TV appearances etc be donated back to the movement.

Only in this way will we guarantee real fighters as Labour and trade union leaders, who will put the interests of their members first, and not look to their career prospects in these, at present, privileged positions. Only then will we get the best fighters for our class and the struggle for socialism itself.

"Countless thousands of people have been deservedly decorated. But others have bought their way into ermine or towards lesser titles. Of that there is no doubt. Only the libel laws and the difficulty of proof prevent private scandals becoming public ones..." Joe Haines, Wilson's former press secretary, quoted in *The Queen has been pleased* by John Walker.

James Callaghan was the Party Treasurer (becoming also a member of the Board of Directors at Hodge's Bank in May 1972), another well-known individual, Andrew Cunningham who was jailed in the Poulson corruption case, (a quite separate scandal dealt with in *Militant*) was chairman of the Finance and General Purposes Committee of Labour's NEC!

Despite Callaghan's backing, the car insurance scheme was opposed by USDAW and the Federation of Insurance Trade Unions who got the Brighton Conference to refer back the issue by 4.3 million to 1.6 million votes.

The General Secretary of the FITU George Lowe, explained his objection to the project by saying: "There was nothing in the scheme to stop the Hodge group using the scheme to gain access to a ready

Callaghan, became speaker, and then picked up a *hereditary* viscounty in 1983 as Lord Tonypan-dy—all became shareholders in Hodge's Bank.

As for Hodge himself, he was given a knighthood by Harold Wilson in the Birthday Honours list of June 1970 "for his services to Wales".

Added to his other extensive functions, between 1972-74 Callaghan served as director of the *Italian International Bank*, formed by four Italian Commercial banks to exploit the international money markets. His co-directors included Lord Cobbold and the former Sir Charles Forte (of Trusthouse Forte). The latter was to subscribe £5,000 to Hodge's Bank of Wales. By January 1982 he was to receive a peerage from Thatcher after his company had

South Africa

The workers movement and the South African revolution

30 NOVEMBER 1985 saw the birth of the largest trade union federation in the history of South Africa. The Congress of South African Trade Unions with 36 affiliated unions and 530,000 members will be a mighty force of opposition to the Pretoria regime.

It comes at the end of a momentous year for the black working class, a year of continuous struggle, in townships, factories and schools. Last November 800,000 workers, youth and community activists took part in a two day political general strike in the Transvaal and a rent strike in that area has now reached its 15th month.

A thousand workers at a British Tyre and Rubber (BTR) factory have been sacked for striking for union recognition. Despite enormous hardships, the strikers have not weakened.

Many thousands of youth have been involved in school boycotts some now in their second year. In October in the most militant townships only 10 per cent of school students eligible wrote matriculation exams (final exams).

In many areas boycotts of white businesses are cutting into the profits of their owners.

Over the year the revolutionary ferment has spread throughout the country, from the big cities to tiny towns, bursting out in new areas as it ebbed elsewhere.

In the Eastern Cape in particular, black collaborators and informers have been rooted out of the

By Norma Craven

townships and semi-insurrectionary conditions have existed for many months. Whole townships are organised with committees for every street and area. The effectiveness of this organisation is demonstrated by the fact that 20,000 people can be mobilised to attend a meeting in one hour simply by word of mouth.

This enormous movement has, however, been confined to the arena of the black townships. Over and over again the activists have come up against the brick wall of the state, a formidable obstacle, based on the five million whites and their fear of losing their privileges. It has become a brutal repressive machine without equal in the rest of the world.

Since the state of emergency was imposed in July the regime has been able to detain, maim and murder with impunity. The official death toll in 1985 stands at 650, although undoubtedly many people listed as missing are dead. 300 of these deaths have happened since the state of emergency. In the same period 5,800 activists have been detained, 1,500 are still held. Reports of

beatings and torture of detainees are rife.

One prison doctor, Dr Wendy Orr, who reported injuries to detainees was moved by the government to another job.

Explosions continue, and no serious defeats have been suffered. But, because the movement cannot break beyond the confines of the townships by the existing methods of struggle alone, a temporary ebb is inevitable. Already the mood of the mass is cooling slightly, and a certain frustration is setting in among youth activists.

Burden of apartheid

In this situation the organised working class has big responsibilities for rallying the movement, providing a lead to the youth, and a defence against the forces of reaction.

Hence the importance of the formation of COSATU, and the bold political stand taken at the launching conference by leaders such as the President, mineworker Elijah Barayi. (See *Militant* 6 December)

The black working class carries the burden of the apartheid system, and of the mounting crisis of the South African economy—with job losses, attacks on wages, growing inflation and cuts in living standards.

This system of cheap black labour has enabled South Africa to develop industrially to its pre-eminent position within Africa. In-

deed, this is the essence of apartheid. The need to enforce and police the system has led to the development of such a brutal regime.

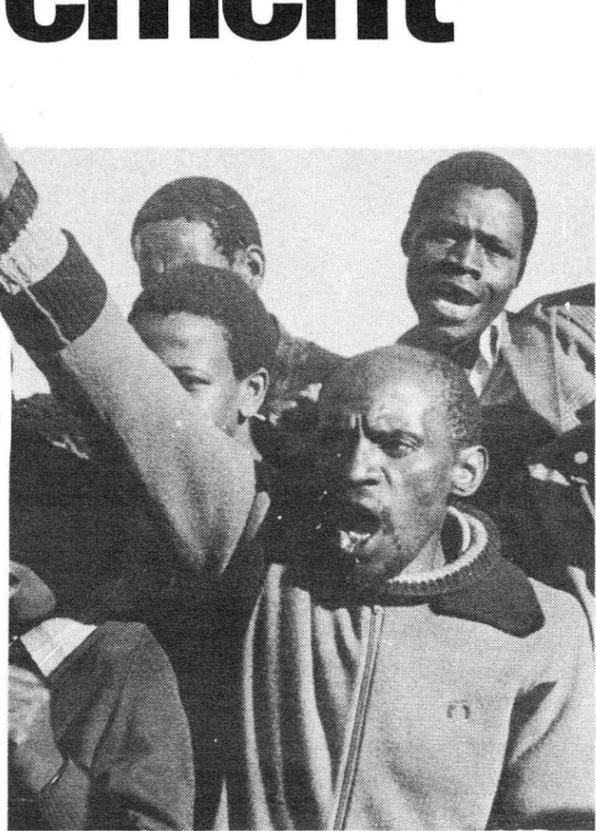
Even the 'liberal' bosses are showing their true colours. Zac de Beer, an ex-MP of the Progressive Federal Party (PFP) and a director of the Anglo-American Corporation, who in the past called for higher wages, said in the *Rand Daily Mail* of 28 February, 1985: "Today I am pleading for people to be allowed to work for any wages, no matter how low, that they are prepared to accept".

Even during the economic 'recovery' of late 1983 there was a worsening of the economic and social conditions of the black working class. Now the country is in the depths of another slump.

The severity of the crisis can be seen in the figure for manufacturing industry on which real wealth depends. In the first three months of 1985, the level of production was 5.2 per cent lower than in the first six months of 1984. Current manufacturing output is now equal to the 1979 figure.

Unemployment continues to rise bringing further hardship to millions of families. The overwhelming majority of the unemployed never receive any assistance from the state. One in four of the African majority are without work, while in some areas unemployment reaches 80 per cent amongst black youth.

Job losses continue to rise:



At the funeral of a shop steward.

20,000 jobs in the motor industry disappeared in only three months in 1984, with 10,000 more gone in the first six months of 1985. 2,400 textile jobs have disappeared in 1985. This pattern has been repeated throughout manufacturing industry. In a poll, about 30 per cent of blacks said a family member had been hit by retrenchment.

Growing poverty

Inflation, 10 per cent at the beginning of 1984, now stands at 16.8 per cent and is rising. Warnings of a descent into the spiral of hyperinflation now appear often in the South African press. The figure for basic foodstuffs is higher—30 per cent on maize and 25 per cent on bread. Added to this is a recent announcement of an increase on 3,000 basic food items before Christmas.

These figures mean misery for millions of black workers and their families. At least

half the black population live below the poverty line. Maize consumption (the staple diet), has fallen by 20 per cent with no increase in the consumption of other foods. In rural areas over a million people depend on charitable relief for food.

Because of the pressures from below, the Botha regime has recently adopted a policy of modest stimulation of the economy, but this will have limited effects, and spur inflation. Even gold can no longer cushion the economy effectively: the fluctuation in the price has introduced a new instability into the economy.

White workers have also been hit. An increase in interest rates on mortgages and in personal taxation has hit their pockets. They now face being retrenched and even the middle class has been affected. Small farmers face increasing costs and loss of subsidies and attempts at monopolisation by large farmers. Many white schools have had to introduce



Children defy police anti-riot vehicles in Tsakane township, Johannesburg, after the funeral of a black shop steward who died in police custody.

Photo: Morris Zwi (Reflex)

Photo: Morris Zwi (Reflex)

Netherlands, Australia, New Zealand, Fiji

Photo: Morris Zwi (Reflex)



Police riot unit in a Johannesburg street where the United Democratic Front and a number of trade unions and opposition groups have offices.

feeding programmes for hungry children. There have even been reports of white children begging from black children in the streets of Johannesburg.

The real problems of the economy lie in the system itself—75 per cent of the shares listed on the Johannesburg stock exchange are controlled by three big monopolies.

As the economic decline continues and the mass movement grows explosively, many of the so-called 'liberal' capitalists have been looking for ways to involve black leaders in attempts to contain and hold back the demands of the masses.

Recently some businessmen, including Gavin Rally, chairman of the Anglo-American Corporation have met the exiled leadership of the African National Congress (ANC). The 'liberal' Progressive Federal Party (PFP) made a

Only a mass ANC built on a socialist programme under the control of the working class can achieve national liberation and democracy.

The PFP have made a pact with Gatsha Buthelezi, Chief Minister of KwaZulu and leader of Inkatha, a black political organisation claiming a million members. Despite being groomed by the bourgeois as a black leader, Buthelezi has little support outside Natal. While he takes a pro-capitalist position, even 75 per cent of Inkatha's own members, according to a recent poll, demand socialism!

Buthelezi and the PFP are calling for a conference of "leaders of all groups" to draw up a new constitution for South Africa.

Big business would like to entice the leaders of the African National Conference into deals of this kind, drawn up over the heads of the masses, and against their demands.

But these efforts are all doomed to failure. No section of the ruling class is willing to consider the very basic demand of one person one vote in an undivided South Africa, because their system can't afford the economic concessions that majority rule would demand, on wages, education, housing

and other fields.

They are looking for a 'federal' solution—a new form of divide-and-rule—which was explicitly rejected by, for example, the recent COSATU conference.

Neither are the bosses prepared to give up the protective shield of their state in the white-dominated armed forces. It is precisely the strength of this white state which protects their interests and their profits. A black government on a capitalist basis—evoking the spectre of one-party dictatorships in Africa—would drive the whites in the state to rebellion, and the capitalists know this full well.

On the other hand how can the ANC leaders accept less than one-person-one-vote in an undivided South Africa?

The capitalists know that the ANC is the most popular organisation in SA, and would like to use the ANC leaders to control the workers' movement on their behalf. But the ruling class can only offer a sell-out agreement, which the ANC leaders would find it impossible to enter into without destroying their credibility among the masses.

It is a paradox that it is the strength of the mass movement which compels the 'liberal' bosses into talking with the ANC, but equally it is the same strength which prevents any agreement being reached.

It is for basic demands such as a vote, a decent wage, a decent house, a decent education that black workers struggle for national liberation and democracy. It is also the complete inability of capitalism to provide any of these democratic demands which means the struggle for national liberation and democracy is inseparable from the struggle for workers' power and socialism.

In this struggle, the organised workers in COSATU will play a leading role. But COSATU, as a trade union organisation, cannot play the role of a workers' party in the political struggle. The more the workers' movement rises, the more the workers and youth will see the need to build a mass ANC on a socialist programme, allied with COSATU, to carry the struggle to victory.

The ANC is seen as the traditional political organisation of working people. This is despite the fact that the

policies of the ANC leadership do not clearly show the way forward to workers' rule and socialism. Indeed the ANC leadership has recently moved publicly away from support for the bold demand of the ANC Freedom Charter for nationalisation of the banks, mines, and monopoly industry.

But black workers and youth in the country will increasingly seek to build the ANC as their own organisation, rather than seeing it as something outside the country belonging to the exiled leaders.

While the ANC leaders hold friendly talks with big business leaders, they at the same time engage in futile attempts to take on the state through a guerrilla war.

To defeat the monstrous apartheid state, armed struggle is necessary in South Africa. But it will succeed only as part of the industrial and political struggle of the working class, developed through the armed defence of the mass movement.

Mass mobilisation

Isolated bombings and shootings separate some of the finest young class fighters from the main arena of struggle—the mass mobilisation of working people. At the same time, these methods harden the whites in their racist support for the capitalist state.

Only a mass ANC built on a socialist programme under the control of the working class can achieve national liberation and democracy—through dismantling the existing state and replacing it with a democratic workers' state, and nationalising the commanding heights of the economy under workers' control and management.

To unite the movement the COSATU President's call for a campaign to smash the pass laws by mass mobilisation of the youth and workers should be put in action over the next six months.

By taking up a socialist programme, the movement of the black majority can split the whites along class lines—which will be essential in order to defeat the state, and also to ward off the nightmare of an all-out racial civil war, the perspective of which would open up if the workers' movement is not victorious.

Victory for Dutch dockers

ROTTERDAM dockers have squeezed a significant concession out of their employers. After weeks of action at the ore terminal EECV, management agreed to reduce working hours by 6.6 per cent, on top of a wage rise of 0.2 per cent (inflation, which is less than 2 per cent at the moment, is compensated separately).

Now negotiations are taking place over the new jobs to be created as a result of the shorter working hours.

The workers skilfully took advantage of the increased demand for ore in West Germany, which is shipped through Rotterdam. Ore transport was repeatedly stopped by industrial action during the weeks before the agreement.

But the workers' victory

was only made possible by the turnover in the transport union's local leadership after the big dock strike in 1979. Right-wing leaders, who betrayed that struggle, were kicked out and replaced with more militant activists, who responded to rank-and-file pressure in the present struggle.

"The agreement was forced down our throat", the employers' spokesman angrily retorted. "We accepted it only because Rotterdam's position as a port for bulk goods was being endangered".

The employers are afraid of strike action spreading to other parts of the docks. Already there has been an occupation, followed by a strike, at the oil shipping company Caleb Brett.

In future struggles, when conditions are more in their

favour, the bosses will try to claw back what they have lost. To put themselves in a stronger position, dockers will need to fight for reinstatement of the principle of a single wage agreement to cover the entire workforce in the docks, instead of the present system of sectional and company agreements which enables employers to play off one group against another. In some companies, for example, employers have enforced wage cuts in return for shorter working hours.

With firm leadership, the victory at EECV could now become a rallying point for workers throughout the docks, and an example for dockworkers internationally.

By a Dutch correspondent

News from Australasia

Queensland's Victorian values

THE AUSTRALIAN state of Queensland has made it effectively illegal to go on strike. As if that wasn't bad enough, Queensland's new law stretches the definition of 'strike' to virtually any action by workers that the bosses may not like, "go slows", discussing work conditions, etc.

When an employer has made such a charge it is up to the worker to prove his or her innocence. You are guilty until proved otherwise.

This state of affairs arose originally from a dispute with a group of power workers (previously reported in *Militant* 17 May 1985). It has been engineered by Queensland premier Sir Joh Bjelke-Petersen, recently knighted by the Queen.

Many of the modern brand of trade union officials (who often go from university to union research assistant to union leaders

without ever working in the relevant industry) think that Joh is a real country bumpkin. But this "bumpkin" has given the union leaders the hiding of their lives, and in the bargain taken Queensland industrial relations back into the 19th century.

The tragedy is that victory was there for the taking on two clear occasions. The willingness of the rank and file to struggle has never been at question; the great majority of power workers are still sticking together solidly after 10 months. The blame for the present situation lies at the door of the leadership and of them alone.

Events in this one state are only a forerunner of what the bosses have in mind for the whole of Australia. Business journals are gleefully saying "look what is happening in Queensland".

The Liberals (the bosses' party) recently replaced their namby-pamby leader Andrew Peacock with the hard-line John Howard. Their decision must be seen in the context of the bosses' plans for the future. Bjelke-Petersen has shown them the way forward on a state basis. Now for Australia as a whole.

The pages of the nation's press talk of impending "battle" and "war" on the industrial front. The National Farmers' Federation and big business have set up a multi million dollar "fighting fund" which they openly admit is to be used to take on the trade union movement, regardless of the Labour government nationally.

No matter how deeply the union leaders bury their heads in the sand, the bosses' war plans will not go away. As Steve Black of the Building Labourers' Federation said: "Either we lie down like dogs or we stand up and fight".

By Craig Bowen
(In Sydney)

New Zealand

IN NEW Zealand salary increases of up to 28 per cent have been granted to cabinet ministers including David Lange, Labour Prime Minister who has recently become a golden boy of the liberal left over the *Rainbow Warrior* sinking.

The huge cabinet rises were justified on the grounds that top management in the private sector had had a 54 per cent salary rise over the past four years.

In that same period there has been a wage freeze in operation restricting workers to a few per cent increase.

The Executive Director of the Employers' Federation says wage restraint is "vital" and Mr Douglas, Labour's Finance Minister agrees with him, in order, of course, "to overcome the country's economic problems". Some people have a nerve!

Fiji

ARISING FROM dissatisfaction with a wage freeze unilaterally slapped on by the governing Alliance Party of Fiji, the Fiji Trade Union Congress decided in 1985 to form a Labour Party.

Although the party's objectives remain vague, and the jostling for positions by careerist leaders began immediately, it is still a welcome move.

A division among communal lines has been seen among Fijian workers before, but the new Labour party is intended to appeal across that divide to Fijian

and Indian workers, urban and rural, in other words, across class lines rather than racial. Labour last month won eight seats on the 20 member Suva City Council, more than any other party contesting.

Reports by Craig Bowen



David Lange.

Photo: Stefano Cagnoni (Report)

Letters

Send us your views, comments or criticism. Write to *Militant*, 3/13 Hepscoot Road, London E9 5HB

Acceptable frauds

Dear Comrades,
I read in your pages that the Attorney General has condemned the "quite unacceptable" level of fraud in the City of London.
I would like to ask the At-

torney General, through your pages, what, precisely, is the *acceptable* level of fraud in the City of London?
P Mason
Leicester

Hospital conditions hit by Tory cuts

Dear Comrades,
A recent stay in Leighton Hospital with my baby son drove home to me the meaning of staff cuts.
I was fortunate in being able to stay with my four month old son, unlike most other mothers who had other children at home.
Due to a full ward of babies and extreme shortage of staff, babies suffering

from meningitis, bronchitis, to name just a few, were left screaming for hours.
When nurses strike against these conditions, there's an outcry for nurses to look after the sick. Yet it is the government which is preventing this more and more with each cut.
Yours fraternally
Rebecca Hunt
Eddisbury LPYS

Life in downtown Seattle

Dear Comrades,
I found a copy of your October issue (*Militant* 771) on sale at Left Bank Books in Seattle. I was really touched by the letters from readers like Jasmin Barry and Lloyd Marden. Their descriptions made the bleak situation of England's workers more plain to me than it has ever been. American mass media usually report the story from British cities as an outbreak of senseless violence. The contest between ordinary people and a privileged ruling class is not made clear, even though it reflects on society here.

If you substituted "downtown Seattle" for places like "Handsworth", Jasmin Barry could've been speaking for me when she said, "I feel violent when I walk around Handsworth and see the poverty and the despair on people's faces. I feel hatred when I see our so-called 'leaders' on TV..."

Thanks for showing me the workers' side of the battle.
Yours fraternally
Don Maccinich
Seattle, USA



Police guard a coke convoy on its way to Scunthorpe steelworks during the miners' strike.

Still paying the costs

Dear Comrades,
Anyone who thinks that the bill for the miners' strike has now been paid is mistaken. The Chairman of Nottinghamshire County Council's environment committee has revealed that the extra traffic from coal lorries has caused the equivalent of 30 years wear on some Nottinghamshire roads. The CEGB has agreed to pay the council £550,000 towards

repairs.
This also puts the lie to the claims that solidarity shown by railwaymen was ineffectual or likely to cost British Rail the Coal Board's custom.
Yours fraternally
Alan Horne
Loughborough

ALONG WITH 5,000 others, I went to see the Style Council at Wembley. OK, so the £8 admission fee is steep but in this writer's opinion the band have consistently produced some of Britain's best music over the last few years. *Long Hot Summer*, *You're the best thing* and the recent hit, *Lodgers* are just a small selection of the singles the band have produced.

Paul Weller's and the Style Council's political commitments are no secret. This year they have played a big part in the YTURC campaign against YTS conscription as well as taking part in the Red Wedge and CND events.

But the great secret of the Style Council is that they play great dance music with a subtle political message. They don't ram politics down the throat of their fans but let them make their own minds up by listening to the lyrics. To assist this process the band have paid for a 'Youth Information Service' leaflet to be produced with the addresses of Youth CND, Anti Apartheid, YTURC, the LPYS, Campaign for Homosexual Equality and Red Wedge.

A quick look around the audience shows the fans Style Council attract and the great success of their approach. Liverpool Council, CND, NUM, Anti Apartheid, YTURC and even *Militant* badges are proudly worn by many of the bands' smartly dressed, predominately young, working

Style Council at Wembley Arena

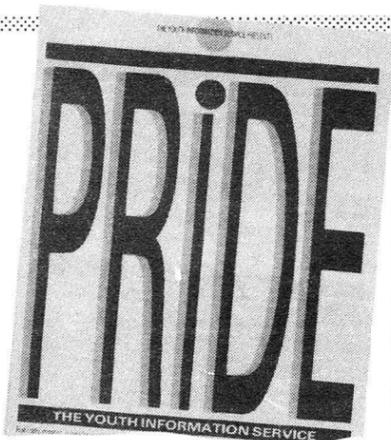
class fans.
Half way through the show, ace young drummer Steve White beats out an excellent drum solo backed by slides of Thatcher and Reagan together with a speech of Thatcher's. Loud boos and shouts of derision ring out.

Wembley Arena is a vast spacious hall totally unsuitable for good sound quality but despite this people are soon out of their seats dancing. By the time they play *Walls come tumbling down*, just about the whole crowd is up, (including this self-conscious writer). During this song the bands' anger comes out:

"Government's crack and systems fall... But unity is powerful" the Councillors joined by 5,000 other voices shout out.

With everything to lose, (specially written for the YTURC lobby of parliament), is announced by Steve White with the words:

"This is about mine and the bands attitude to YTS—We heard today that the 15th person died on YTS".
Homebreakers about the Tories'



'On your bike' mentality contains the immortal lines:

"Mother's in the bedroom looking at pictures of her boys. One's in London looking for a job. The other's in Whitehall looking for those responsible".

The night ends with a rousing chorus of *Internationalists*. 5,000 people leave happy, excited and inspired. YTURC leaflets are eagerly grabbed. There's not a hint of trouble. Any band that can make you dance, think and really believe that "Unity is powerful", must be worth something.

If the Style Council play your town, be there! You'll have a good time and build your LPYS at the same time.

Reviewed by Martin Smith

The days of the good soldiers

R Kisch

£7.50 including post
World Socialist Books

THE COLD War blanket of censorship is gradually being lifted from the political no-go areas of the mid-'40s. The bland pictures of Churchill's 'war for democracy' are gradually being broken down. Not, of course, to the rehabilitation of the Nazis, but to the exposure of the cynical exploitation of popular anti-Nazi feeling by the strategists of Western Capitalism. The gradual revelation of the extent of the revolutionary wave that swept Europe in the aftermath of the Nazi collapse, and the complicity of the Communist Party in the suppression of revolutionary aspirations.

In this context this little book is a valuable contribution, opening up a picture of the ferment of political ideas inside the British armed forces in the years 1942-47. The determination of soldiers to fight, not just for the elimination of fascism in Europe, but also for the destruction of the power of the Conservative establishment at home too; never again to return to the conditions of the 1930's. There are graphic pictures of the efforts of upper class officers to stifle debate and harass activists when it became clear that political debate began and continued far to the left, rejecting the Conservative establishment entirely. The opening up of the realities of these debates more than justifies the book's production.

Whilst the picture of the debates is an inspiring one for socialists, however, the author's own political stance deserves pity if not scorn. Kisch, a Communist from

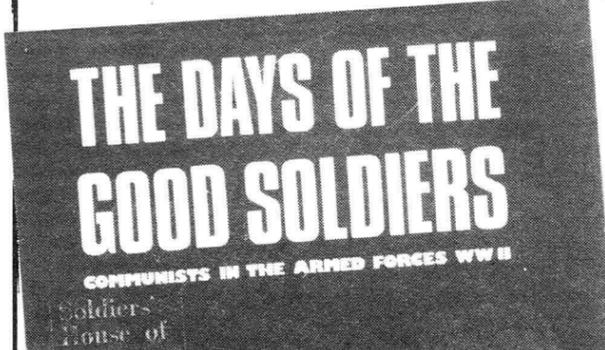


the 30's and a former *Daily Worker* correspondent, tries desperately to continue rationalising the '100 per cent plus for the Popular War against Fascism' policy of his Party of those years. He is quite unable to cope with those who were criticising the Communist Party from the left. And when he meets insuperable difficulties he adopts the pathetic stance of bemoaning the dastardly Conservatives breaking of their promises to fight a democratic war! The real question, which he never dares to ask, should have been how could a 'Communist' Party have lent its authority to conning workers into believing that Churchill and the Tories were fighting for 'democracy' in the first place?

Despite Kisch's blindness to this question his own words reveal how the establishment used the naive adherence of ordinary Communists to their Party's disastrous class-collaborationist policy to run a Red Flag at the front of Tory imperialism and counter-revolution; only to ditch and frame those same poor dupes at the end of the war when they were no longer any use, and when pretexts were needed for the prosecution of the Cold war.

Yet despite the reactionary role of the Communist Party, which even Kisch cannot hide, there is inspiration here for socialists. In the capacity of ordinary workers and soldiers for struggle, and the instinctive search for a real revolutionary leadership which shines through despite all.

Reviewed by Ian Hunter
(Sacriston Labour Party)



Thatcher's top of the pops

THE NUMBER one record in France at present is a likeable ditty lampooning Mrs Thatcher. The French rock star who made the record was inspired by a survey in France to find the world's most unpopular person. Mrs Thatcher came second only to Colonel Gaddafi.

And so are the riot cops

IN THE New Years honours list, it wasn't only those who finance the Tory Party that were rewarded by Thatcher. Those at the sharp end of implementing government policy also found a little something in their Christmas stocking. Area Police Commander Mike Richards who policed the Broadwater Farm riot received an OBE. His local chief superintendant, Colin Couch, meanwhile looks in line for promotion as he goes off on a senior command course.

If you read it in the papers...

Newspaper cuttings displayed to the right of this article show how papers from the *Financial Times* and *Observer* through to the *Daily Express* and *Evening Standard* launched a campaign of varying degrees of subtlety to stop Tony Benn winning Labour's deputy leadership in 1981. Those methods have become standard in the campaigns against the miners and Arthur Scargill and Liverpool council and Derek Hatton and *Militant*. But press bias operates constantly. **ANDY BEADLE** takes a closer look.

THE PRESS would have us believe it merely 'reflects' public opinion. The facts show whose opinion they do reflect.

In 11 out of 12 post-war General Elections, Labour's share of press support was less than its actual vote. And the slant at election times is getting worse.

Despite the declining proportion of votes cast in general elections, the Tories' backing from the press has grown. In 1983 they got 44% of the votes but papers supporting them accounted for 74% of national daily circulation.

On questions affecting the vital interests of capitalism, national papers of all persuasions speak out in unison.

Not one called for withdrawal from the Common Market in the 1975

referendum. Not one, in 1981, supported Tony Benn, the left candidate in Labour's deputy leadership election.

During the miners' strike Fleet Street closed ranks in total opposition.

The entire ensemble of unelected media moguls unleashed nothing but hatred and abuse against democratically elected Liverpool Council.

Tony Benn, Arthur Scargill and Derek Hatton have been subjected to disgusting and sustained campaigns of character assassination.

Press power, concentrated in the clutches of a few capitalist conglomerates, ensures that right-wing views predominate. Differing views in society at large, especially on class issues, are not reflected in the pages of the press.



Tony Benn, Arthur Scargill and Derek Hatton, targets of character assassination by press campaigns



For 'expert' opinions they ring the universities.

Newspapers get their news from these established sources because they are the cheapest, easiest and most 'reliable'. They also happen to be the 'tops' of society, so we always get the views of officialdom.

Workers can only get the papers attention collectively through the trade unions and labour movement (short of some spectacular ritual suicide).

Put yourself in the journalist's position. Why waste time and effort taking down unconfirmed and possibly libellous "allegations" from an inexperienced trade unionist which needs checking out and writing up into the newspaper's style?

The neat press release from the publicity department of some multinational will fill up the same space almost without editing.

BIAS IS inherent in the journalists themselves. The cosy comfortable lifestyle of top national writers could hard-

ly fail to give them a conservative outlook on life.

But the more humble journalist is still a cog in the machine. Years of experience of what is acceptable and what will be rejected as 'unhelpful' trains them in the art of self-censorship.

This is not to alienate good NUJ members or to suggest there are no conscientious, honest journalists. Far from it. The foot soldier is not responsible for the crimes of his generals—but is necessary to the furtherance of the war.

ADVERTISERS pull the purse strings of the press, it's not just down to proprietors. Half the tabloids' and around two-thirds of the 'serious' papers' income comes from advertising rather than cover price.

This means a paper has to sell itself more to its advertisers than its readers. The *Daily Mail* for example, a few years ago took a conscious turn 'towards women' in order to corner a chunk of the advertising market. The *Guardian's* Media Page precedes three pages of 'creative and media' vacancies.

When the *Observer's* editor Donald Treflow wrote an article on Zimbabwe, Tiny Rowlands, boss of the parent company Lonrho, thought it might upset his friends.

Lonrho have extensive interests in Zimbabwe and southern Africa. They also have the British distribution of Volkswagen cars, which had a million pounds worth of advertising annually in the *Observer*. Rowlands made moves to withdraw this advertising to influence editorial policy.

In this case the advertiser was the same as the owner.

It is probably true that advertisers do not frequently seek to alter editorial policy—they don't need to! The real influence of advertisers is to decide which publications exist and which go out of business through lack of support.

In this way the press, owned by a few big monopolies, is made financially dependent and accountable to big business as a whole.

PRESENTATION (or non-presentation) of news gives the press enormous room for manoeuvre. Together with the TV and radio—which are run by the same type of people and often the same individuals—they have a virtual monopoly over the news. They take advantage of this situation to the full.

Rife distortion goes side by side with subtle insinuation. Arthur Scargill "claims" and "alleges" while Ian MacGregor clearly "says" or "states".

Socialists are depicted not as anti-capitalist but anti-democratic, anti-Parliament, anti-free speech. Anti, in fact, all the things the labour movement fought for centuries to win!

Unions, apparently, do nothing but force workers to come out on strike all the time, particularly according to the 'popular' press.

The three most frequent themes of strikes are loss of production, loss of work by people not directly involved and inconvenience or danger to the general public.

By concentrating on the effects of the dispute,

strikers are presented as being in conflict with the wider community, rather than with their employers.

And when the causes of the strike are not explained the workers appear to be disruptive for no good reason.

All these methods, and more, were employed with especial venom in the miners' strike and more particularly in relation to Liverpool Council.

The least corrupt councillors are portrayed as the most corrupt. The most democratic Labour Party is shown as the least democratic. The most popular Council is depicted as a vote loser. The most self-sacrificing socialists are presented as spivs and wide boys.

Continued next week.

Communists make inroads into Labour
Communist presence in unions affiliated to the Labour Party

BENN'S OCTOBER REVOLUTION
ADAM RAPHAEL, our Political Correspondent, says the disintegration of the Party's former power structure can only lead to further strife.

What price democracy?
In today's Labour Party, 40p a vote

LABOUR POLICY
Unilateral nuclear disarmament
Withdrawal from the European Community
Abolition of the House of Lords
Unlimited spending to expand the economy
A 35-hour week
Price freezes
Import controls
Massive nationalisation
Gradual withdrawal of troops from Northern Ireland

COMMUNIST POLICY

Gale's Guide to the Crazy Gang of Four
THIS FIGHT TO DRIVE LABOUR'S RATTLE
By GEORGE GALE

BENN IS BROUGHT TO HEEL!
Man with the easy answers
SIMON NOGGART describes Tony Benn's unrelenting campaign in the Labour Party

Too late to put a stop to the March of Militants

Kinnock says Loony Left are just entertainers

LABOUR'S CRAZY GANG

Kinnock lashes his loony Labour Left
'Hands off' warning to party militants

Kinnock tells his loonies to clear off

Attention

More recent examples of how the press uses and is used by politicians playing to anti-left stereotypes in order to bolster their personal careers

INDUSTRIAL REPORTS

Sheffield steel strike spreads...

Workers at the BSC River Don plant are now supporting the Sheffield Forgemasters strike. 95% refused to pass Forgemaster pickets. This strike has enormous significance for the steel industry where workers have been in retreat since 1981 and more closures are planned.

THE GOVERNMENT'S privatisation plans for British Steel are coming unstuck. This should be the headline everywhere there is a company that is involved in one of the proposed Phoenix schemes.

The first of the Phoenix schemes involved BSC River Don, River Don Stampings, and my own company, Firth Brown (Atlas). After the merger the original workforce was 6,000. Now three years later it is less than 3,000.

As I write 700 workers from the Atlas site have just been sacked and 1,500 from the River Don site are about to come out on strike. Welsh steel workers take note.

As the Forgemasters strike enters its 11th week, we have no illusions on what we have to do to win. We are not in a sprint but forced into a marathon.

If it was just a case of out-witting the Managing Director, (Phillip Wright) I feel that this dispute would have been over by week seven. This was not the case.

We find that not only do we have to fight the management and the propaganda of lies they churn out, but we also have interfering national officials to deal with.

National advice

On Friday 22 November, the ISTC National office ordered all 200 of their members involved in the strike to return to work.

If the members had taken any notice, this is what they would have conceded:

ON PAY. They would get no across the board pay rise.
ON CONDITIONS. They would have had to accept what the management agrees are worse conditions. They would have had to work two and a half hours extra per week for no extra pay. This is because they would switch from steel to engineering conditions.

The Joint Health and Safety Committee would remain abolished. This despite the company having one of the worst health and safety records in Britain.

Seven deaths and nine very serious accidents in under two years is the record so far. Not counted are the number of people who have lost fingers etc.
ON UNION RIGHTS. They would have had to accept an end to the long established practice of having a centralised shop stewards body negotiating on behalf of the whole plant.

On top of all this the national officials would have the right to organise separate shop stewards committees, each one being autonomous from the others. The national officials would have the power of veto over local shop stewards.

Because of the above paragraph the ISTC wanted to accept the proposal put forward by management.

By Arthur Millward
(Shop Steward, Sheffield Forgemasters (ATLAS) personal capacity)

At a mass meeting on Monday 25 November all 700 strikers from the plant including the ISTC membership rejected this, saying the decision by the union was a sell-out.

All 200 ISTC members made it clear to their officials that they were preparing to pull out of the union "not the strike". Less than 24 hours later the ISTC did a U-turn.

I have come to the conclusion that the officials are paid to make decisions from their little offices in London as if they were competing in the final of Mastermind. I only wish they would say 'pass' now and again. We will tell them the answer.

Throughout this dispute the JSSC have been prepared to meet the managing director anytime/anywhere in an effort to seek agreement.

Up to press, Mr Wright has refused to talk with local shop stewards. Meetings have been set up that have been nothing but a charade.

For example at a meeting in Sheffield, the shop stewards were kept in one room, the local full time officials in another, and the management were in another. The management then sent documents that were supposed to be a basis for settlement into each group.

No talking, just reading, and after five hours or more, no settlement. A complete farce.

Strikers sacked

Then on Thursday 19 December all 700 strikers were sacked. This came as no surprise to the members at all. The management had been continuously threatening to do this.

We have had four mass meetings in the past ten weeks and on each occasion the members came into the meeting with a fresh threat of the sack. On each occasion the members voted to continue the fight for basic trade union rights.

The workers have become hardened. As I write, Christmas is only two days away yet we are preparing our next move.

At a mass meeting workers at our sister company, BSC River Don, pledged that if one worker from the Atlas site got the sack they would join us in our fight.

The management then made this threat—if any worker came out on strike the week before Christmas, they would not get any holiday pay until they returned to work.

The Atlas site JSSC decided to put another one over on management. We asked the River Don site to carry on working until they got

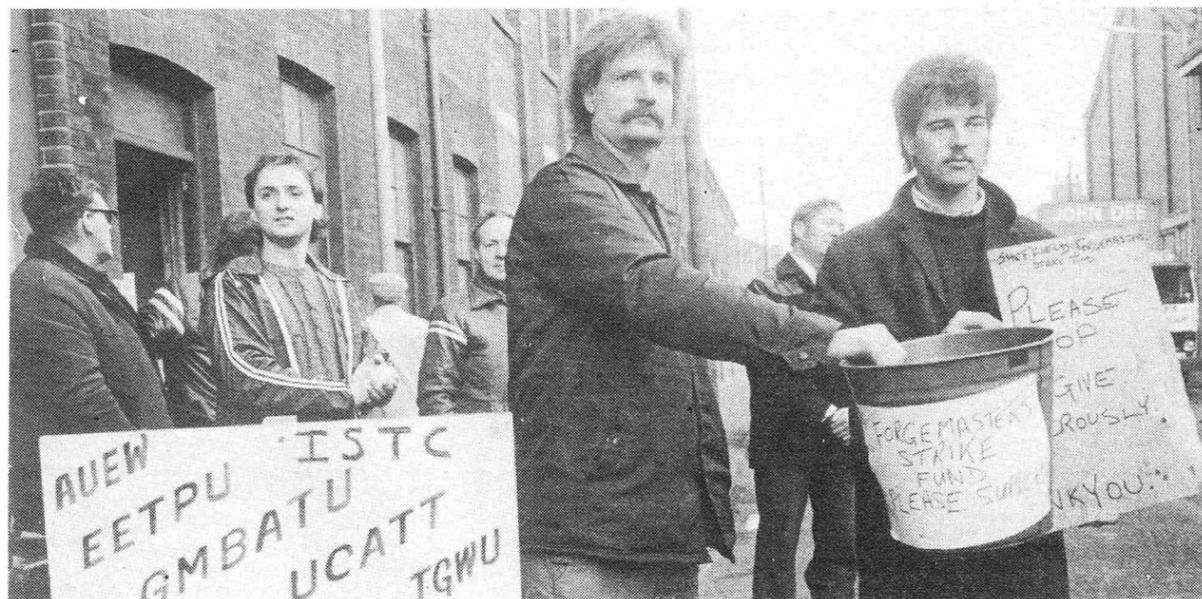


Photo: John Harris (IFL)

Scottish steelmen march



Photo: Steve McTaggart (IFL)

A 450 mile march to London from the gate of Gartcosh steel mill near Motherwell in Scotland began last Friday 3 January. It is a last public gesture in the campaign to prevent closure. A member of leading Scottish trade unionists and politicians are taking part. The *Morning Star* describes it as a means of winning a meeting with Thatcher in order to win a "personal change of heart" as the only way now to stop closure on March 31. The problem is that the non-political, all party strategy has allowed the Tories to bury this campaign with its failure to win the support of the Scottish Affairs Select Committee. It has caused divisions within the Tories and damaged them in Scotland. But to save Gartcosh and many other steel plants, especially Ravenscraig, a mass campaign by the unions possibly leading to industrial action will be necessary.

their holiday pay. Out of the money each worker would pay a levy into our dispute fund.

Over the past few weeks, workers at River Don have been paying over £2,000 per week into the levy, and for the week before Christmas they payed double.

The management would have to pay over £750,000 in wages for little or no production.

Strike spreads

We then asked the River Don site to join our strike on 2 January. This would bring the total out on strike to 2,200. This was accepted by both sets of workers.

If management think that by sacking people the dispute would end, they have another think coming.

As I said at the beginning of this article, this is a marathon, not a sprint, but I am sure we will be the winners.

We feel that the only way we could lose this fight is by starvation. I have every confidence that the rank and file of Labour and trade union movement will not let that happen.

Donations/information/speakers: Dispute Centre c/o AUEW House, Furnival Gate, Sheffield 1

Closure blow to Welsh community

THE CLOSURE of Garw Colliery in South Wales on the Friday before Christmas was a bitter blow for the men and women who have given their lives to the pit.

Opened over 100 years ago, Garw is the last of 40 pits to close in the No2 area alone over the past 20 years.

The effects of 640 redundancies on the tiny Welsh community will be devastating, with only 20 opting for transfers to other mines. TONY TRIGG a former face-worker at the Garw pit, spoke to Chas Berry:

When were you first told that Garw was to close? We first found out on 6 December. The Coal Board didn't put up any economic argument for closure, they just didn't want the coal.

There's over 30 years of coal still down there, even by NCB estimates, but they said

they'd prefer to import coal than invest here. It makes a mockery of any so called Colliery Review Procedure.

Ultimatum

They just issued an ultimatum and said "we want it closed". When you consider that they were prepared to leave over £500 million worth of equipment behind it makes me wonder. Why have so few men taken transfers to other collieries? Out of 640 only 20 have actually taken it. Out of these most are either coming up for retirement or are young enough to stand getting up at 4.30 for the day shift and not getting home till 4 in the afternoon, with all the travelling involved. So few have taken transfer

because they just don't trust the NCB when it says that Garw will be the last closure.

Some men had transferred two or three times before coming here, so why should they trust the NCB to safeguard their jobs any longer?

They'd lose all their redundancy money and maybe only work another six months.

What effect do you think the closure will have on the community.

Life in the valley will be decimated. We'll be lucky if 50 find work. There is no other industry around here and I can't see 600 small businesses starting up, can you?

The ultimate aim of the Coal Board is to have just four collieries mining just coking coal in the whole of South Wales so I can't see things stopping as they are.

Building the left in '86

STICK THIS date in your diary—the 1986 National Conference of the Broad Left Organising Committee will be held on 19 April in Sheffield City Hall.

For the left in the trade union movement this is the event of the year. But what does 1986 hold in store for the growth of the Broad Lefts in the unions?

Militant talked to Mick Barwood, BLOC treasurer and editor of its newspaper *Unity* about the conference and the issues to be discussed.

What will happen at the conference?

The conference will be split into two sessions. The morning will be on "Building the left in the trade unions." In the afternoon we will debate a strategy for combatting privatisation. This will then form the basis for a campaign in all trade unions through their official Broad Lefts with the support of BLOC. National Broad Lefts will be asked to submit resolutions on privatisation as the basis of debate.

Why privatisation?

After a long discussion at the national committee of the BLOC it was unanimously agreed that one issue that affects the whole of the movement and can serve to unite the broad lefts in one single campaign is the fight against privatisation.



In the coming 12 months major national trade unions will face privatisation head on. At that time choices will have to be made. Will they organise a concerted fight back, using all weapons at their disposal to defeat the Tories? Or will their opposition be left to idle threats and words? We intend to ensure our unions lead a fight back.

What is your reaction to Neil Kinnock's statement of the Labour Party's intention to keep renationalisation low on their list of priorities? I am amazed quite frankly. It seems that instead of campaigning on what the Labour Party will do if they come in-

to power, Kinnock is trying to emphasise exactly what they won't or can't do.

The trade unions are a major part of the Labour Party. They represent ten million members. We will not be deflected by statements from fainthearted leaders.

If anything it will force those already active in their trade union broad lefts to work harder to ensure their unions push for a Labour policy committed to renationalisation which is run and controlled by the people who understand their industry best—the workers and their organisations.

I guess the difference bet-



Mick Barwood (centre and insert) on miners' demonstration.

ween us and Neil Kinnock and many trade union leaders is that we are not frightened of socialism and we certainly do not believe socialism is unpopular when explained in a mass campaign.

How do you see 1986 for the left in the trade unions?

The defeat of the miners strike was a major setback for the working class. The left undoubtedly feels that

pressure. All the old crap about 'New Realism' and workers not being willing or able to fight Thatcher, which the miners shattered, is resurfacing.

At national level the union leaders will be trying to sit on struggles in the hope of a Labour victory in a year or two. But the depth of the crisis facing workers means they cannot wait.

Conflicts will break out

despite the leaderships. In those circumstances the left has a vital role to play in organising and mobilising support and generalising from local struggles.

I am confident that we will see a growth in both membership and the formation of new broad lefts, particularly in the industrial trade unions where great things are expected.

Union democracy key says victimised steward

IN THE last issue of 1985, *Militant* reported a strike at Nottingham's biggest employer, Pork Farms. On the advice of the TGWU full-time official, the workers went back on management's terms.

Since then several workers have been victimised. PHIL SPENCER, a sacked shop steward from the Queen's Drive plant spoke to BILL ESMOND about the victimisation and the strike.

WHEN WE went back we found the picketing had been so effective we had no work on Monday. So much for the strike being the waste of time the official told us! When we did start 16 members were suspended for alleged offences, and since then five have been sacked, though one of these has since been reinstated.

The workers were charged with anything the management could make up—things like throwing an egg, shaking a car—even though they had witnesses to prove they weren't involved.

Really they just picked out people who'd been seen on the picket line, to try and weaken the union.

We brought out a leaflet before Christmas, and we'll be doing more now. In the factories everybody's down because they had a week on strike and went back with nothing, so there are problems getting them to fight for our reinstatement.

We want factory meetings to explain the case for protest strikes, but the District Officer isn't available—again—and some of the senior stewards are less than keen on having them.

We don't intend going away, we've talked about ideas like picketing the company's shops in town.

The biggest problem is that a lot of people are asking themselves if the strike was worth it, they've no confidence in their officials and don't want to go on strike for nothing again. **Would you agree with that?**

After losing your job in the strike, what are your personal feelings?

I'd do it all over again. But we went into battle to win, not to be sold out. I don't feel let down by the members but by the officials. Everything would have been different if some of our so-called leaders had acted up to their responsibilities.

But I'm glad some people have learnt to look at their stewards and union officials with a more critical eye. What we need is officials who see it as a privilege to serve the members.

Officials' pay

Why should the full-time officials or the branch secretary be on more money than us—are they doing the job for the money? Stewards like me don't do the job for any extra reward—we're just fighting for our own members because we face the same conditions as them and earn the same money as them.

If the officials were on the same money as us then they'd have more interest in winning battles like our strike. If their wages are twice as high as ours what does a strike against low-pay mean to them? A lot of time and trouble—no wonder they just want it over and done with!

If we'd had the right kind of leadership we'd have gone back to a decent wage rise instead of victimisation, we'd have a membership full of confidence. But you can bet



the stewards' elections in January lead to some changes.

And its rule-change year for the union. You can also bet there will be resolutions going to the branch—and its the biggest T&G branch in the East Midlands—calling

for district officers to be elected in the area instead of appointed from above, and for them to live on the wages of their members.

These are the kind of changes we need to make to be sure we win next time.

Coventry council threat

COUNCIL WORKERS in Coventry due to be made redundant at the beginning of December were given a reprieve until January.

The Transport Union had threatened industrial action if any of its 4,000 members were sacked.

The Labour controlled

council claimed that the workers were not covered by the no compulsory redundancies agreement because "they were on special contracts."

At the same time NUPE representatives refused to sit with TGWU negotiators in a meeting with the council.

Privatisation brings savage cuts for Swansea Telecom

AT THE end of November the Swansea NCU (Clerical) were notified of the transfer of 20 jobs to Cardiff.

We were told that the transfer was a purely cost cutting exercise to save on heating, lighting etc... The

staff involved were given no say.

The unions proved beyond all doubt that there was no justification for the transfer. But management insisted that the transfer was not negotiable.

Sheffield steward sacked

CRAVEN TASKERS who make freight containers and flat trailers in Sheffield have provoked a similar strike to that at Forgemasters over trade union organisation.

Again management are trying to break the shop stewards with the compulsory redundancy tactic,

including two shop stewards and a convenor of 21 years employment with the company. The strike began on 16 December with about 90 men, mainly AUEW members, and is solid.

Following the suspension of two men on the press for seeking improved piece work



AFTER SEVEN months out the Silentnight strikers started the New Year more determined than ever. Pressure is telling on the company, two managers resigned in December and some scab production workers are talking about leaving. A national leafletting campaign of shops selling Silentnight goods is planned.

Photo: Phil McHugh

NUPE accused the T&G of poaching members.

Militant supporters in the council workforce are demanding:

- ★ An end to poaching
- ★ Joint union campaign to

fight all redundancies

★ The setting up of a JSSC representing the whole workforce, and electing representatives to negotiate on behalf of all the unions, in talks with the council.

A half day strike was taken by clerical workers in Swansea at the beginning of December.

Management still refused to talk and persisted with the view that the jobs should go. The dispute is now a national issue which will need the support of other areas who are likely to experience the same problem.

This must be a warning to

those unions and workers under threat of privatisation. Pressure must be put on the next Labour government to include in its manifesto provisions for the renationalisation of BT and other industries.

By Clive Lloyd
(NCU (Clerical)
Swansea branch)

time working." Management have completely ignored past custom and practice of "Last in, first out".

Messages of support and donations no matter how small will be greatly appreciated and should be sent to: Pete Jones, 45A Wisewood Rd, Sheffield 6. Cheques payable to Craven Taskers Strike Fund.

By Alan Hartley

Militant

Inside . . .

Press bias—p13
Social security cuts—p7

Unity against press bosses

THE TRADE union movement must stand firm against press boss Rupert Murdoch's plans to smash the print unions.

Two of Murdoch's plants, in Wapping, East London and in Glasgow are surrounded by trenches and protected by barbed wire. They are both being prepared for new work. At the Wapping site, workers on short term contracts are ferried in daily to prepare for producing a new evening paper the *London Post*.

Murdoch wants this journal to be produced under a legally binding contract which practically smashes the power and independence of the unions.

As we reported in *Militant* (6 December) he has demanded an agreement which would do away with the closed shop, abolish the print chapels (branches), restrict who can become shop stewards, ban strikes and give management virtually a free hand in hiring, firing and discipline. Murdoch presumably hopes to force union leaders into negotiating a "compromise" which would emasculate the unions.

Any such deal would not only affect the *Post*. The Wapping plant can print

more than just one title. The print union SOGAT believes that with an expansion of the Glasgow site, all Murdoch's titles *The Sun*, *News of the World*, *Times* and *Sunday Times* could be printed published and distributed by non union or non-print union staff at Wapping by 1990—if he is allowed to get away with it. Other employers like the *Mirror*, *Telegraph* and *Mail* groups and the *Guardian* all plan similar moves out of Fleet Street.

Provocative plans

Just one union leadership, the EETPU are falling in with Murdoch's plans. The EETPU are already manning the new plant and negotiating a single union no-strike deal similar to the one they agreed with anti-union print boss Eddie Shah for his new national daily.

The EETPU leaders seem determined to try to split the labour movement with their provocative plans. After leading the way in taking cash from the Tory government for ballots, they are now angering trade union activists by making overtures to breakaway and scab unions like the small Federation of Professional Railway Workers.

They have been discussing

with the misnamed Union of Democratic Miners (UDM) formed in the wake of the miners heroic strike from ex-NUM members who scabbed or opposed the strike. The EETPU, the UDM and various employers like the CEEGB and the Coal Board are meeting shortly to work out an "integrated energy policy". You can bet your life it won't be a policy with workers' interests at heart.

There are even hints of EETPU amalgamation with the UDM. Hammond, the EETPU leader says: "we have a great deal in common with them". While Ken Toon UDM president has claimed: "we already have a relationship with the electricians and friends in the engineers and other union leaders."

But even the engineering union who have been stringing along with the EETPU's strike breaking lead, are holding back over the Murdoch plan. The TUC too have issued a call for a united stand against Murdoch. The TUC must pull out all stops to reach the rank and file members of the EETPU and explain the catastrophic implications of the deal.

The EETPU rank and file, through the new Broad Left should step up the campaign to stop their leaders from

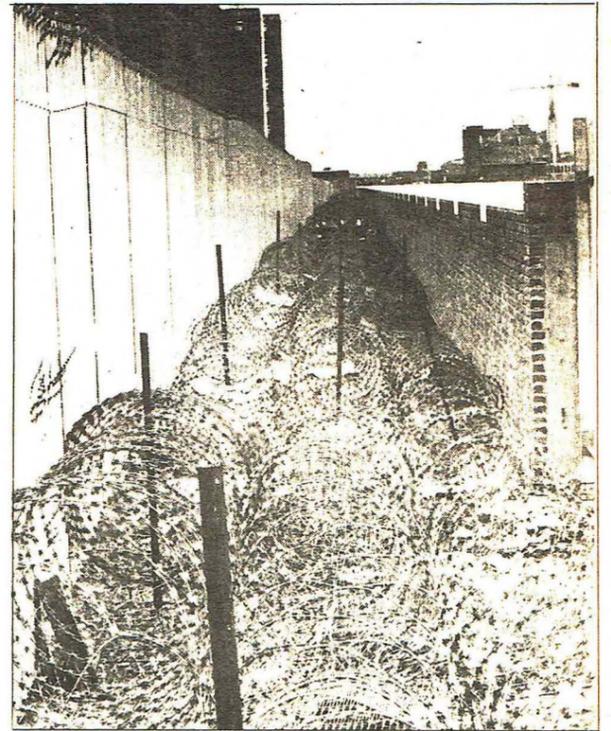
taking this course. If the EETPU go ahead with their plans, however, the TUC must take urgent action to expel the electricians' union and mount a campaign to picket out the Wapping plant and boycott all Murdoch's concerns.

How can the labour movement's leaders waste time and energy conducting a witch-hunt against *Militant* supporters who are loyal trade unionists while taking no action against a union leadership who are defying the TUC and consciously indulging in strike-breaking activity.

Now is the time for maximum unity against Murdoch. He represents the bosses' plans for a future where workers are 'represented' by tame company unions. If they succeed in the print they will feel confident to make the same moves anywhere.

A united campaign must start straight away to stop Murdoch in his tracks. The campaign must not be restricted just to Fleet Street or just to the print industry. We need the backing of all trade unionists. Our fight today is your fight tomorrow.

By Mick Carroll (London Region NGA, personal capacity)



Trenches and barbed wire at Murdoch's Wapping plant.

Motor Panels—union rights defended

OVER 380 workers at the Motor Panels plant in Coventry have been on strike for over a month now after management attempted to dictate how many stewards they were allowed.

Management at the plant—which makes lorry cabs for British Leyland, Fords and Seddon-Atkinson—wanted the stewards cut from 14 to 10 with only one steward to represent the painting and trimming plants—which is two separate buildings.

Shop stewards

They wanted only one steward in the press shop—instead of the normal two representing AUEW and TGWU members with totally different jobs and problems. They also wanted to cut the assembly plant stewards from two to one—leaving the one steward covering three assembly lines and 100 men. They said this would improve industrial relations! Management said they would no longer pay the four 'unwanted' stewards.

The workers would not tolerate this interference in their representation, and at a mass meeting narrowly voted to walk out. Management threatened legal action, so the vote had to be taken again, this time by secret ballot. Management's action had the desired effect—this time the men voted 204 to 68 to strike!

Last week the bosses declared that if the men had not returned by Friday they were all sacked. The result was the biggest mass picket the dispute has so far seen. The one man who did cross the line quickly changed his mind and returned to rejoin the picket.

The strike follows nearly 14 months of management trying to provoke 'storm in a teacup' disputes, clearly wanting to take the unions on. But their war of attrition has failed to break the determination of the workers to defend their union rights.

Help and donations are much needed. Send to: Jim Walsh, Works Convenor, 73 Crosbie Road, Coventry.

By Tim Lewis



Rupert Murdoch is one of the most powerful newspaper owners in the world—seen here with two of his titles, the *Sun* and the *Times*. Murdoch's plan must be fought.



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