

THE HEALTH union Cohse has called a day of action for the NHS on 14 March. Dave Nellist MP has raised in Parliament that this should be made into a one day general strike.

#### By a Hackney council worker

This would get a massive response. Millions of trade unionists have been just waiting for the call to take action alongside the health workers.

In Hackney, members of my union, Nalgo, came out with the nealth on 3 February We held a 1,000 strong march from the Town Hall to St Bartholomews hospital.

#### John Macreadie says:

IN MY opinion the whole labour movement should unite behind Cohse's call. Any weakness or confusion on that day would be seized upon by Lawson to justify keeping the NHS on pitifully inadequate rations. The lead must come from the top.

When he rises to make his budget speech it should be against the backcloth of an almightly show of strength the day before. I have made the call for a one day general strike in support of the NHS. I have been overwhelmed by the response this call has received from workers everywhere.

The TUC should back the day of action with a clear, unambiguous call for a one day general strike on 14 March.

poll, 79 per cent supported the nurses' strikes, including 66 per cent of Tory voters! Yet only a fortnight ago Nupe leader, Tom

February

But they must be ready to. organise the protest strike themselves if the TUC leaders



MILITANT NEEDS im-

mediately to produce tens of thousands of leaflets, posters, broadsheets and placards explaining the need for a one day general strike to defend the health service. Never before has our paper had such a role to play in spreading the central demand around which workers can organise.

We are appealing to every reader to donate straight away at least ONE DAY'S PAY. Already the nurses have lost a day's pay in defence of the health sevice. We are asking all supporters to do the same for Militant so that we can produce the material needed.

Continued on page 7.

Despite the rain, the chanting and cheering never let up.

Many manual workers left work to join the march and the Manual Joint Works committee voted to support it.

In West London bus workers came out. Frickley miners also struck. Now the NUM at Monktonhall in Scotland have written to health workers demanding their pit is picketed next time the nurses strike.

Liverpool health workers are taking action on 10 February. Council workers in GMBATU branch 5 voted to strike with them. Workers at Lucas Acrospace and at Vauxhall also voted to strike.

In London even middle class commuters snapped up leaflets from striking nurses. In a Gallup Sawyer, was saving strikes and picket lines give the "wrong image

Thatcher and her cabinet are completely isolated. On the issue of health alone, Thatcherism could be completely undermined. if the Labour and union leaders were as determined as the nurses.

### 24 hour strike

Every health worker must rally behind Cohse's call and strike, with the necessary emergency cover, on 14 March. The whole labour movement should back the health workers in action with a 24 hour general strike on that

day. Trade unionists meeting at the BLOC conference must step up pressure on the TUC to call workers out on the fourteenth and mobilise for BLOC's lobby of the TUC general council on 24

refuse. They should invite health workers to address mass meetings to prepare their workforce to come out on 14 March.

Local NHS broad lefts, local action committees of health workers and other workers, or trades councils could coordinate mass rank and file action.

A 24 hour general strike would be a warning shot to the Tories. If they leave the NHS on the critical list, even more widespread action will be taken.

A national strike against the Tories could be the start of a campaign of action to drive them from office and replace them with a socialist Labour government prepared to nationalise the commanding heights of the economy.

With the wealth of the nation in its hands, it could allocate the necessary resources to the NHS to guarantee proper health care for all.



## **One-day general** strike on 14 March

FOUR WEEKS ago, immediately after the victory of the Manchester nurses, Militant raised the de-mand for a 24 hour general strike to defend the NHS. Since then it has been taken up by the Broad Left Organising Committee (BLOC) and is receiving an enthusiastic response wherever it is put forward

Thousands are signing BLOC petitions; union branches and Labour parties are declaring their support. The BLOC conference is likely to endorse the demand. Rarely can a slogan have been better timed or more exactly suited to the developing mood of union activists. Workers were looking for national action by the whole labour movement around the time of the budget, to shame the Tories into providing extra resources for health care, rather than more tax cuts for the rich.

Now the health union Cohse is calling a 'day of protest' for 14 March, the day before the budget, and is inviting other unions to join in. It is not clear how far Cohse leaders intend their 'protest' to go but the feelings of their rank and file will be to take strike action.

All Cohse activists must press for effective action to be taken at their own place of work on the day. Other health workers must also prepare to come out on that day, and demand their national leaders call for action with Cohse.

The 24 hour strike call can now be made concrete strike with the nurses on their day of protest! The TUC must now be pressed to organise a national strike for 14 March.

The NHS has a special place in the minds of the whole working class. There is a general feeling that health workers should not have to strike, even with emergency cover, and that the rest of the trade union movement should fight for them.

But this health dispute is on the crest of a new wave of industrial unrest-Fords, seafarers and pit deputies-with other disputes bubbling to the surface. Thatcher believed she had tamed the unions. Now Tory ministers are once again complaining of the 'British disease.'

A 24 hour general strike could finally put the nail in the coffin of the Tory myth that unions had been fundamentally weakened and 'marginalised'. It would give workers themselves a sense of their real power

But it should not be a day of inaction, a mere refusal to attend work. It must be a day of mass pickets and major labour movement demonstrations on the themes; back the health workers, for an end to the Tory government and for a socialist Labour government.

In Italy in the 70s the union leaders called one 24 hour strike after another. But rather than build on workers' militancy, this dissipated it. It is clear that for the union leaders this was a means to allow the workers to let off steam.

But in Britain now, a one day general strike would mark a watershed in relations between the working class and the Thatcher government at least as they have developed since the miners' strike. Then too on a number of occasions generalised class action was implicit in the situation.

A 24 hour national stoppage is a mass protest action. It is a warning to the ruling class and their government-back down or face further action by a newly embattled, self-confident working class.

In 1972 workers were spontaneously walking out in solidarity with five London dockers jailed under the Tories' Industrial Relations Act. The TUC was compelled to threaten a one day general strike. Even that was sufficient to secure the release of the 'Pentonville Five'. Under the pressure of continuing industrial activity, with gas workers and civil servants striking, the TUC called a one day strike for May Day 1973. Now sympathy for the health workers has a triggered a flood of grievances by section after section of workers. There is a new generation of trade union activists straining at the leash to take action, and the health battle has given them the issue to rally around. If the TUC fails to launch the call for national action, they must prepare to bring their fellow workers out on 14 March.

## A book that shows how to fight

### Liverpool-A City That Dared To Fight By Peter Taaffe and Tony Mulheam

"WE DID not anticipate how relevant the lessons of the book would be today," said Peter Taaffe at the press conference to launch the book Liverpool-A City that Dared to Fight, which he has co-written with ex-Liverpool councillor Tony Mulhearn.

The book has already sold 1500 copies. The press conference attracted the interest of all the serious papers, IRN and BBC radio and TV.

It is particuarly relevant in Scotland, Peter Taaffe said, in the struggle against the poll tax: "The vast majority are opposed to this tax, but the Labour leaders have made it clear that the struggle is to be restricted to Parliament.

"But the history of this government is that they do not listen to parliamentary speeches. Only when a mass struggle is mobilised, as it was in Liverpool, can the labour movement force the iron lady to retreat. "Scottish councils have

the same choice as in Liverpool. Either they can get the odium of implementing the poll tax or, like Liverpool, say no, refuse to collect it and call a one-day general strike. Otherwise they might as well resign their positions.

"There is an explosive situation developing on the housing estates. The government has made a big error. The poll tax will involve tenants and owneroccupiers, old and young. The whole position of the government could become untenable if Labour takes a stand on this issue.

"But if the labour movement does not act, there are real dangers. The Scottish National Party, with-

their slogan of 'Can't pay, won't pay' are trying op-portunistically to regain their position.

"Elscwhere there have been big swings against Labour in council byelections where Labour councils have carried out cuts."

"The book is a rich tapestry of the labour movement in the city of Liverpool" said Tony Mulhearn: "It cuts through all the distortions, lies and calumny poured on Liverpool's council and provides a clear record of why the city council and Militant supporters went down the road they did.

"The book demonstrates that people received more information about the council's finances than from any other council in any other period. There was a City Treasurer in every pub who knew all the jargon about deficit financing.

He contrasted the Liverpool council struggle with other Labour councils today, including the present leadership in Liverpool, who are grovelling before Nicholas Ridley and being dismissed with contempt.

"Keva Coombes is now the prisoner of the rightwing majority in the Labour group. He is proceeding, as we predicted, on a route to a dead end. He claims to have attempted to negotiate 'with more intellectual ability'

"But the idea that you can get results by talking softly in secret meetings has been disproved. Such approaches will be treated with utter contempt."

By Pat Craven



AT THE same time as Fords workers were putting on their pickets' arm bands and health workers were taking militant industrial action, Labour's leaders were discussing a document that declared the class struggle and the party's socialist principles out of date. Nearly 30 years ago right wing Labour leader, Hugh Gaitskell, tried to remove the socialist Clause Four from the Party constitution. Only outraged opposition from ordinary members and trade unionists stopped him. Now the document on 'socialist values', presented on 4 February to a joint meeting of Labour's national executive and shadow cabinet by Roy Hattersely and Neil Kinnock, is exactly in the Gaitskell mould. With its concentration on individual liberty rather than collective rights and socialist democracy, it reads like a condensed ver-

sion of Hattersley's book. published last year.

Written by a leading representative of the old right, this document is merely a restatement of their traditional acceptance

the capitalist market-the four million unemployed or the 13 million in poverty -whether they think its operation is "satisfactory"

revision of socialist commitment. Robin Cook recognised that markets are "inefficient and unfair" Jack Cunningham said:

"The market does not work

Get your copy of the poster for the book, 18'X14', on gloss paper. 75p plus 25p postage, from Fortress Books, PO Box 141, London E2 ORL.

## Liverpool-A City That Dared to Fight

"I have read this book and recommend it to you as a fair and true account of what really happened in Liverpool between 1983 and 1987"-Tony Byrne, leader of Liverpool City Council 1986-87 and one of the 47 surcharged councillors.

Special Offer. Your last chance-offer closes 13 February. Softback £5+90p post, hardback £8+£1.20 post. Cheques to Fortress Books. From Fortress Books, PO Box 141, London E2 ORL.

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of the 'market'-in other words capitalism. It is to the right of any Labour election manifesto of the last three decades.

#### Market

Four months after the most dramatic collapse in stock market prices, as the capitalist world teeters on the brink of the most severe recession for 50 years, Kinnock and Hattersley have discovered that "the operation of demand and supply ... is a generally satisfactory means of determining provision and consumption."

Of course the market should be regulated here and there, but 'democratic socialists believe in market allocation". Perhaps they should ask the victims of

Any ideas of replacing, even gradually, the contradictions and persistent crises of capitalism with a planned, publicly owned economy have been scotched.

They repeat the traditional, ignorant reply of the right that the only alter-native to the 'market' is the 'command economy', that' is the allocation of goods by a self-interested bureaucracy, as in Russia. But nationalisation under democratic workers' management, with the modern, educated working class would not tolerate any burcaucratic elite, and would ensure production according to needs not according to some official decree.

At the meeting even some of the right were concerned by such open

at all," it is fixed by the private sector. Frank Dobson commented: "The poor can't do well out of markets."

But there is a sick irony about Kinnock and Hattersley's obsession with 'individual liberty', which comes a poor second to profit under capitalism, anyway. For within the Labour Party, Kinnock is trying to impose a Stalinist gag on the liberty of anyone to question him-Prescott, Warburton, Tony Benn and most of all Militant supporters.

Labour workers must organise as they did in 1959 to stop this assault on the left and on socialism within their party,

By Jeremy Birch

12 February 1988 MILITANT 3



THE NURSES' action has finally brought the crisis in the NHS out in the open. The Tories' statistics on funding have failed to quell the bitterness of health workers, facing terrible staff shortages and low pay.

30,000 nurses are leaving the NHS each year, and only 27,000 are joining. The shortage of trained nurses and lack of funds has led to ward closures and fewer beds. There has been a 13 per cent drop in the number of acute care beds in England since 1979.

It is true that the figures for total spending on the NHS have risen-from £8,000 million in 1979,

to £21,000 million now. But the increase needed to meet the demands of an ageing population is running well ahead of real spending on hospitals. NHS infla-tion is also much higher than the general rate of inflation. The cost of drugs, for instance, rose by 17 per cent in 1986, compared to 5 per cent for general inflation.

The Tories have promised an extra £700 million for 1988-89, but want to give £2,000 million in tax cuts for the rich in the budget.

#### Militant demands:

\* A massive injection of funds into the NHS. Give the £2 billion tax cuts to the NHS! This is needed immediately, just to restore the standard of service to previous

#### levels before the cuts.

\* A 20 per cent pay increase for all health workers, including nurses, but with a minimum base-line of £135 per week. Ancillary workers' basic pay is £14.62 below the lowest paid local government workers.

\* A 35 hr week for all health workers and a programme of recruitment and training to restore staffing levels in the NHS.

\* The reversal of all privatisation. and an end to private contracts. \* The abolition of all private medicine, and for the private sector to be integrated into the NHS. Consultants stopped from doing private work using NHS facilities-all NHS workers to have the same conditions of work.

\* A democratically run NHS-an end to government-appointed officials. Regional and district health authorities to be run by democratically elected committees of health workers, health trade unions and local community representatives.

\* The abolition of all prescription

\* The nationalisation of the phar-

\* The nationalisation of the 200 key monopolies and the implimentation of a socialist, planned economy to provide the necessary funding and resources for a modern, fully equipped and staffed health service.

charges, dental and optician's charges.

maceutical industry under democratic workers' control.



"PAPERS WERE snatched out of our hands". "Drivers were winding down car windows stretching out to buy a copy". Militant sellers reported a great response on the NHS demonstrations in London.

Successes included 150 sold outside London hosptial, Whitechapel, over 100 at the demo from Hackney Town Hall (see front page).

24 out of 50 pickets at Brook hospital (Woolwich) bought Militant, 26 were sold at Sussex County hospital in 45 minutes; 18 at Preston, North Shields; 18 at St. James hospital, Leeds and 23 outside Homerton hospital in visiting hours.

Total sales at Liverpool Royal reached 100 last week! £40 was raised for the fighting fund. Other sellers in Merseyside with a door-to-door petition supporting the strike got 200 sig-natures and sold 22 Militants. Shirley and Ian Trail from Tower Hamlets have sold 100 papers this week mainly at their local hospital.

Street sales are also up. 32 were sold in Rye Lane, Peckham with £15 Fighting Fund from stickers and asking for the solidarity price!

Sales at Ford's plants are off to a good start too with one third of pickets at Basildon plant buying a copy.

We ask all readers to increase sales by contacting the Circulation Dept. for an order. All sellers must make sure workers everywhere, particularly at hos-



Guy's Hospital nurses marching to Trafalgar square on 3 February. (see page 4).

Photo: Ben Eastop.

## **Pressure for action** Round the

In **St Albans**, Cohse invited shop stewards to a meeting to organise industrial support for Hill End hospital strikers.

In Stevenage, Militant supporter Steve Glennon moved a resolution at the local trades council for a 'workers' council' to prepare for the 5 March demonstration.

The proposal was passed unanimously for a meeting on 15 February of all shop stewards, convenors, union branch officers and trades council delegates. They would elect a committee to organise factory gate and public meetings. Initiatives like this will give enormous extra strength to the NHS workers.

losing 21 out of 34 beds at Northwich Infirmary.

The Tories won't have a chance of privatising the NHS if all workers support the 5 March demo and the 19 February strike and lobby.

SCOTLAND'S HEALTH workers are intensifying their action to defend the NHS, seeking support for the one day health strike called by the Scottish TUC.

Lightning strikes are breaking out every day, as health boards press ahead with privatisation plans.

All kitchen porters in Glasgow walked out on 9 February, when the Glasgow board announced plans for private contractors to come into the kitchens. Nurses are working to rule, and at mass meetings there is a new mood of anger and a unity amongst workers which was not present before.



## MILITANT MEETINGS

HACKNEY Crown and Castle. Dalston, 7.30pm 11 February. Speaker Myrna Shaw, Nupe. BATTERSEA York Library, Wye St. SW11. 7.30pm 10 February.

Speakers include Ken Spearpoint, Nupe. BRIXTON St Matthew's Meeting

Place, Brixton SW2, 7.30pm Thursday 18 February

PONTYPRIDD Rose and Crown Pub, Graig, Pontypridd. 7:30pm 11 February. Speaker from Cohse.

STEVENAGE Swimming Pool Thursday 11 Feb, 8 pm. Speaker from Lister Hospital.

PETERBOROUGH. Great Northern Hotel Tuesday 1 March 7.30pm. Speaker: Ron Craven, Nupe Nimrod Sejake (Salep).

ILKESTON, Derbyshire. Defend the NHS, one day general strike! 29 Feb. 7.30 pm. New Inn, Ilkeston.

CARMARTHEN, West Wales. NHS crisis. 24 Feb, 7.30pm, Carmarthen Library.

PECKHAM, London. Wed 10 Feb, 7.30pm. Station Pub Camberwell New Road, SE5.

LEWISHAM. Thursday 11 February 7.30pm. Riverdale Centre, Lewisham town centre.

MEETINGS PLANNED to launch Liverpool-A City that Dared to Fight will also have speakers from the health service.

NEWCASTLE Thursday 11 February. Corner house, Heaton Road, Heaton.

LEEDS Sunday 14 February 7.30 pm. the Little Londoner, city centre.

EDINBURGH Monday 15th. 7.30pm Cafe Royal, east end of Princes St, (behind Wimpy Bar) BRISTOL Monday 15th. 7.30pm Orince Rupert, Fairfax St. GLASGOW Tuesday 16th. 7.30pm. McLellan Galleries. SWANSEA Tuesday 16th 7.30pm POEU Club, St Mary St. MANCHESTER Wednesday 17th 7.30pm Southern Hotel,

Mauldeth Rd West. Withington BIRMINGHAM Thursday 18th. New Imperial Hotel, Temple St (off New St.)



pitals, can get our paper. Don't miss out on massive sales!



collection held for them

hospitals.

country

THE DAY of nurses' strike ac-

tion in London finished with a

rally called by the London Health

Emergency committee at the Camden Centre,

The galleries were packed with

protesting health workers with

their banners from the different

thunderous applause. Striking

health workers at St Alban's hos-

pital were welcomed and a special

The many speakers received

Despite shouts from the floor for a one day general strike, the TUC health committee speaker could only say "wait and see after the 5 March demonstration".

It was the last speaker, a nurse from Charing Cross, who called for "all out on Budget Day", and the meeting erupted with app-lause and cheering.

By Soraya Lawrence.

LAST WEEKEND nearly a thousand marched through the market town of Retford, protesting against the closure of the local casualty ward.

It would take people in many villages an hour and three quarters' bus journey to reach the nearest alternative casualty in Worksop-if there was a bus!

Whole families from babies to OAPs were marching; some of them affluent people in pinstripes or fur coats.

The labour movement should give direction to this groundswell of anger.

SHOP STEWARDS in Mid Cheshire have called for a local one day strike on 19 February when Crewe District Health Authority meet to announce more cuts.

The decision came from a meeting of 90 people, including 40 nurses from Weaverham's threatened Grange Hospital, or-ganised by Mid Cheshire Trades Council NHS Action Committee

Stewards from ICI invited Grange nurses to speak at a meeting of 100. All bar one voted to back the one hour regional strike on 10 February and support. nurses at local hospital gates. The action committee is now asking stewards to ballot members for all out strike on 19 February.

Nurses are angre that when Tary strage Nick Sould resigned as bealth sufferently general manager with man of line bar wears TO GO. THE SECTION OF A COMPANY reductionsy part. The calibration faces II million cans including

Health union shop stewards are visiting factories and workplaces, such as the Savings Bank, Yarrow shipyard and the pits to get sup-port for the 24 February action. By Ronnie Stevenson.

## Backing for 24hr general strike call

THE CALL for a 24 hour general strike to defend the health service has been backed by Warr's Lowdam maniffs Service Acess Committer: Bes athoni keepers branab, (ENAIS) [Livergeed] 5 and [LCW Covernor Teakerway, Usarpped Distant Librar Barry Arres inthe other to make for a one day. wegowall general versiler.

LEICESTER, Thur 11 Feb, 7.30pm. Spread Eagle Pub Charles Street, Leicester.

**Public Meeting** Greater Manchester NHS Trade Union Support Committee Mon 15 Feb, 7.30pm. Free Trade Hall Speakers: John Tocher (secretary, NW (montheast) Christone Sharto taenetiery, Withington HONORAL STOCK streamenting committeed) Chain: Ettille Funy Sager NECL



Nurses in the Trafalgar Square protest.

Photos: Dave Sinclair.

## **Taking the city**

NO VOTE for strike action had been taken at Guy's hospital, but feelings were running high. Two RCN nurses said: "If nothing happens after today strikes will take place at Guy's, especially after Thatcher's 3 per cent offer!"

They would have struck if the other unions had come out and many other RCN members felt the

BY EARLY afternoon excitement spread through Guy's as nurses, medics and ancillary workers gathered for a demonstration.

representatives Union dashed about, surprised at the turn out of about a thousand, many student nurses and young medics who bear the brunt of shortages and cuts.

As we hit the streets, nurses at the front, the tremendous public sympathy became obvious. Nurses dashed up to cars and buses to hand out leaflets. The support fed back to the marchers who became increasingly jubilant.

I cannot remember a march with such a wide impact. It seemed to take the whole city with it. Even a businessman in a big Jaguar gave a clenched fist

#### same way.

"Cohse, Nupe and the RCN should join together to form a plan of action. But the RCN is not interested in what the members say. What Trevor Clay said about Cohse and Nupe nurses not caring is rubbish. We've all trained together, there is no difference between us.'

#### salute.

Chanting echoed under the bridges and underpasses: 'Maggie, Maggie, Maggie! -out, out, out! NHS is best, no to the private sector", and "What do we want? Decent wages. When do we want it? NOW!"

Near Aldwych the march stopped. Some marchers went to Trafalgar Square, while nurses went to a patio off a side street where Margaret Creear, from **Bermondsey Labour Party** women's section got a good reception for the concrete proposal of a one day general strike!

Meanwhile, a limousine drove past in the now empty street below with Princess Anne inside, saved from embarrassing enany counter with protesting commoners!

#### the crowd. The police had greatly upset the stewards from the various hospitals. Somebody had to organise things

THE HEALTH workers' day of action startled the

who fights against Thatcher is in the pay of the

devil or the Kremlin. They had headlines like

"Red Yobbos" about the attempt to present a

petition to Downing Street. As the articles below

show, their claims are nonsense.

TRAFALGAR

Square demonstration was

organised exclusively by

London health service

workers who had already

organised local pickets and

There was a relaxed, fes-

When I arrived people

were crushed up against a

heavy line of police and vans. A nurse had been

hauled away for standing

on a police van to shout to

otherwise a lot of people

could have been injured

hospital

tive mood; this made the

police reaction even more

THE

rallies.

and

incredible.

The Tory press, as usual pretended that anyone

Tories in its size, enthusiasm and support.

demoralised.

So I pushed to the front of the crowd and demanded to speak to the officer in charge. The police insisted the march could not go through Whitehall. The sanctity of Downing St. was all they worried about.

After angry discussion small groups of marchers allowed down were Whitehall to the Commons while a small delegation could take a petition to Downing St.

The march was now very angry, so I pulled three stewards from major London hospitals to one side. We agreed to divide the march up into different groups while stewards from the hospitals explained through the amplifying system what was going on.

rses'day of

I appealed to the march to finish on a united buoyant note, explaining that a rally had been organised in the Commons where people were already waiting to speak.

When the march divided, I went with six nurses from different hospitals to hand in a petition at Downing St. A Tory MP came too, insisting that the media should not be present.

### Petition

The nurses refused to hand in the petition until the press came. Thatcher didn't even bother to come to the door, we were received by a doorman.

Back at the Commons, the police had cordoned off the march to force it back over Westminster Bridge. Anger was mounting.

Eventually I persuaded them to let small groups through to lobby MPs. They only allowed nurses in uniform; so I appealed for nurses to come through first and for others to follow

The meeting can only be described as ecstatic even though many had come to the march straight from night duty and had not slept for 24 hours. They were on their feet, demanding that the press be told of the police harassment.

Workers continuously spoke from the floor and applauded speakers who demanded further action, particularly Dave Nellist MP, who called for a one

day general strike. I closed the meeting by saying that a small group of health workers had organised hospitals throughout London-imagine what would be possible if the union leadership just raised its little fingers to organise a one day general strike. At this point the meeting erupted.

> By Mick Barwood (Bloc organiser).

cies. There were people working at the London who are still there, but working for an agency. It must cost the NHS a lot." By Tony Cross

#### Ea gware

AT EDGWARE Hospital, some though nurses were striking, emergency cover reduced the numbers. But nurses on their days off, and in their breaks ensured a lively picket. "I think all health workers should come out together" one nurse said. 'Then the unions could decide how to work the emergency cover. At present management can exploit the nurses on duty on these

## Why we are angry

A NIGHT NURSE at a Liverpool hospital writes about worsening conditions.

At 8.15 I arrive on the wards with an auxiliary nurse and a bank enrolled or staff nurse. Nurses from other hospitals are often

thopaedic patients.

The medical patients do not get the care they deserve; nurses try to cope but they haven't the right equipment like oxygen, or the right drugs. Patients may wait days to see a consultant. Meanwhile the waiting list for orthopaedic

Middlesex / UCH ON THE two days before 3 February medical students from University College (UCH) and Mid-Hospital organised dlesex meetings with nurses, COHSE and NUPE members. Medical students are often quite reactionary but

workers

there was a surprising degree of support. On the morning medical



ners and delegates from other workplaces appeared at midday.

"This takes me back to our ancillary workers' strike," a retired porter supporting the picket told me. "We tried to get something

used as a stop gap and are unfamiliar with hospital and ward procedures.

One member of day staff hands over the report on the condition of the 35 patients along with the medical staff's recommendations and any problems left over. Day staff officially finish at 8.30 and are paid until then but they often don't leave the ward until 9.00.

Ours is a 12 hour shift with two half hour breaks; the hospital does not let us use the kitchen to make a cup of tea. We have 35 acute or-

thopaedic patients in our care; this already makes the work exhausting because the patients are immobile. It is made worse by the lack of basic facilities like staff, linen and medications.

During the winter, due to lack of medical beds, we find ourselves with half medical and half oroperations gets longer.

The house officer has many wards to cover for emergencies like deterioration in a patient's condition. The night duty house officer has already worked a 24 hour duty and can work a 140 hour week. Often patients are woken in the early hours to be seen by the doctor.

When we can take a break from the mayhem, it is snatched in a back room. No food is served to night staff. A vending machine serves crisps and chocolate bars in an empty canteen.

In seven years of NHS nursing I have seen the callous rundown of services and conditions. That is why nurses, ancillaries and medical staff are so angry.

By a Cohse member

students leafletted other students to persuade them to join the action; some had already joined the picket lines. In 1982 when nurses took action, many medical students did the nurses' work and did not come out in support.

At 12.30 a rally outside UCH, where many victims of the King's Cross fire had been treated by nurses who were now striking, were joined by Camden NALGO members. The rally moved off boldly down Tottenham Court Road to the hooting of car horns. By a London medical student

## ondon Hospital

THE MASSIVE steps of London hospital in Whitechapel were packed by hundreds of hospital workers. Speakers had difficulty making themselves heard over chants, cheers and tooting car horns.

About 100 postmen from the near by sorting office came to the picket line to show solidarity. Ban-

going, but there was only us striking then. I'm glad to see them succeeding this time."

## St Clement's

**THERE ARE only 11 Nupe members** at St Clement's psychiatric hospital, Bow. But all voted to strike.

"Cohse members voted 33-29 against," their shop steward, Jack Koosenlin said. "But 12 of the night shift came out on the picket line. I wanted to strike and I think we will win."

The ludicrous claim that only 200 nurses struck was answered by Nupe steward, Franka Cadee:

'At Whitechapel 170 out of 187 voted to come out. People knew all the arguments; they just wanted to vote for the strike.

"It's great it's happened at last. In my three years in the NHS, the job's changed from looking after four patients to half a ward. It's not nursing at all.

"You get better pay in the agen-

days. "Cohse and Nupe locally work together well. We're no longer competing on the RCN's terms, about who can give the better insurance. We're part of the labour movement."

## .ewisham

AT LEWISHAM hospital, one nurse told us "Patients say they would be on the picket line with us if they could'

The trades council organised a march from the Town Hall to the hospital. Sean from Forest Hill who is unemployed was on the demo having bought a one day pass to go round the picket lines showing his support.

12 February 1988 MILITANT 5



An arrest on the NHS march in Whitehall.



WHEN MARCHERS arrived from the north of the square, a great cheer went up. The crowd turned and began pouring down Northumberland Avenue away from the police blockade.

Thousands of nurses in uniform and medics in white coats, waving placards and leaflets, ran down the street in between lines of traffic. Car and bus drivers grinned and tooted their horns, policemen were trying to keep up, one hand on their helmets as they ran.

At the bottom of the street, two policemen stood across the wide road with arms outstretched, but the crowd soon overwhelmed them and ran on trying to get into Downing Street.

Police moved in to block the street. There were scuffles and a couple of arrests, a nurse was screaming at the police. Then the demonstration reformed along the Embankment and went on to Westminster.

As marchers dispersed, hooters from two barges echoed across the river as they passed Parliament, underlining the support for the protests. By Ben Eastop.

Sheffield THERE WAS a great show of



Left and health workers will be coming to Bloc. From there the pressure must go on all our union leaders for the TUC to mobilise

## **Health workers talking**

"There will be more

unpopular-look at the

from the ancillaries.

support we are getting

today. Next time we will

try to get more support

"We took a petition

it. One woman who was about to give birth said she would come down to

the picket line after she

had had the baby!"

round the patients and only one refused to sign

strikes. It's rubbish to say

union and were inexperienced.

the strikes are

WILL TOWERS, a student nurse at King's College said that at times wards got so bad that the sister

broke down crying. "The whole system is in crisis" he said. He and other students had organised the strike by the small Cohse branch. 90 per cent had voted in favour and there was wide sympathy from RCN members.

"There was a problem organising the strike as many branch organisers had only just joined the

"THERE ARE delays in discharging patients because there are not enough facilities to send them to. One has been here for six years; there is nowhere he can be sent in the community. Other patients who need to come in have to go elsewhere".

A psychiatric nurse at St Clement's.

"IT IS not just the nurses but ancillaries, porters, admin and clerical staff, fighting for the health service.

"We have taken strike action several times. The patients do not get hurt. One 80 year-old came to outpatients for treatment and refused to cross the picket line. With support like that we will win."

Ray Hill, Branch Secretary, Tower Hamlets Health Authority Nalgo.

"EVERY DAY we need agency midwives because of lack of staff and intensive care nurses work for agencies on their days off. Students look after as many as 12 patients, some of them seriously ill.

"Women in labour are being left alone because there are not enough staff in the labour wards. Changing rooms are a rubbish dump because of the shortage of domestics.

"A midwife gets paid no more after one and a half years' extra training than a staff nurse. A lot are leaving".

Marianne Idle, staff midwife, London Hospital,



"It just needed one little spark to start the fire", said Sarah Heptonstall who had left the RCN the previous week to join Cohse in King's College.

"A year ago some nurses were saying that nursing would blow up. It was the Manchester strike which started it. When I first started I really enjoyed my work. Now I trudge to work feeling that patients don't get the care they deserve.

"Each day you get allocated eight patients, sometimes more. Three may need bed baths, two may be very ill with drips. Then there are all the pressures due to lack of staffing. Often there is only one staff nurse on the ward-it's very dangerous".



Health secretary John Moore lobbied by nurses. Inset: Derbyshire miner and ex-Clay Cross councillor John Dunn, whose wife works for the NHS, who stuck this poster on the podium when Moore was speaking.

## Leeds

NURSES, CLERICAL and tech-

load of miners from Frickley colliery turned up in support. Hundreds went to an outdoor rally at lunch time.

of Nupe nurses and health workers outside St James' hospital, Carmarthen after an 88 per vote for a 4 hour strike picket.

strength in Sheffield even though many nurses had to provide emergency cover.

Trade unionists from all over the city joined us on our picket lines while nurses from all organisations joined the picket in rotation.

'Flying pickets' kept everyone informed of progress such as the miners at Frickley colliery who refused to cross a nurses' picket at their pit. Kentucky Fried Chicken workers bought us food all day and shops bought sweets and drinks.

At the rally of over 700, mainly health workers, many nurses called for better leadership. Nine million trade unionists could turn the tide on Thatcherism.

One nurse said Kinnock didn't need to have 'Labour listens' tea parties to invited audiences, he should just spend five minutes on an NHS picket line.

I've worked in the NHS since 1979 and never seen such unity and feeling of strength. We won't back down now. In Sheffield we're building an NHS Broad

for 5 March and call a one day general strike.

We have the pit deputies, Ford workers, civil service and teachers all ready for action, what more do the TUC want? Let's reduce Thatcher to the state she's reduced the NHS to.

By Ruth Herdman Cohse shop steward, Sheffield.

## Coventry

NURSES AT Walsgrave hospital in Coventry told Kalvinder Kaur. "We're striking because of the system not just for money. It's about patients not having enough facilities like knives and forks and little nagging things like that."

A renal nurse warned: "It'll get to the stage where we have to turn patients away." There are 22 beds on that ward but only 18 can be used; there's not enough money to keep them all open.

The general medical ward is the busiest. Patients are in the cor-

nical staff all took part in the action at St James, Leeds, the largest hospital in Europe. Some electricians came out in defiance of their union leaders.

There was marvellous support with one driver stopping his car to give £20 to the pickets. A coach



THERE WERE several days of action in Wales including a strike

One woman was on a weekly contract and endangered her job by striking but felt it was worthwhile to defend the NHS. A demo is planned in Llanelli on 13 February and a day of action on 1 March.



ridors having washes and getting changed. It's getting dangerous with corridors cluttered up with patients.

Nurses are leaving because of poor pay but the nurses stressed: "We don't want to be rich; we want a decent wage not a luxury

"Saying nurses can't strike is a form of blackmail." they said and approved local MP Dave Nellist's call for a city-wide general strike. "Yes, definitely if the unions and the workers come out."

## E. Midlands

ON 4 FEBRUARY, a thousand strong demonstration marched through Nottingham on the city's liveliest protest for years. A Nacods banner was prominent on the march and many other Notts miners took the day off.

Leicester also saw its biggest demo for years with Nalgo, UCW and TGWU members supporting the NHS. Local Cohse officials opposed the strike but there was a strike and picket at one hospital. 6 MILITANT 12 February 1988



## Giving the nation motivation

DO YOU make fun of whizz kids and yupples? Do you think it un-British to be enthusiastic? Do you think it bad form, or even vulgar, to talk about profits?

Well, watch out, Natinal Motivation Week is coming and it's going to deal with people like you! The above questions are all "NMW Issues", according to a circular sent to MPs by the organisers. Like most schemes to prop up the status quo, it claims to be "strictly non-political" in its aim to stimulate people to "greater achievement" (and to admire those who have achieved fame and fortune).

it's scheduled for June and its getup-and-go sponsors include Jeffrey Archer, Sir Monty Finniston and Sir Peter Parker. Bet they're not embarrassed to talk about profits!

### Who's your friend?

WORLD IN Action has exposed infiltration of union branches and the Anti Apartheid Movement by the Economic League, a far right organisation which compiles blacklists for employers. Naive people might find it strange that neither the Tory press nor the Labour leaders have raised a hue and cry about this far right 'entryism', which has cost many people their jobs.

They might also be surprised to find that the league seems impressed with the Labour leadership. Announcing a plan to open up the organisation's membership list to the public (now that World in Action has it) a press release comments that: "The league like the Labour party is moving ahead."

#### **Deaf aid**

LABOUR PARTY members may be a bit put out by the latest appeal for funds from general secretary, Larry Whitty.

In a very distinctive prose style, he explains that the party risks being "left lagging far behind the Torles' limousine like a cash-starved charabanc".

Funds are urgently needed for the 'Labour Listens' events, Whitty says. These will cost a staggering £1,000 each!

The party leaders might try appealing to the chambers of commerce, police federations and other wellheeled groups they are inviting to these events to pay for them, especially since many party members have been kept out.



Opponents of Clause 28 lobby Parliament. A later lobby was attacked by the police. A rally will be held in Manchester on 20 February, leaving Ford Road at 1pm.

## **Tories incite bigots**

#### THE LORDS last week approved a pernicious law. Clause 28 of the Tories' Local Government Bill will become infamous.

The Bill now says that local authorities "shall not promote homosexuality or publish material for the promotion of homosexuality". Nor shall they "promote the teaching in any maintained school of the acceptability of homosexuality as a pretended family relationship by the publication of such material or otherwise".

In December 1986, in a Lord debate, previous Skelmersdale made some noteworthy remarks. "Schools," he said, "should be prepared to address the issue of homosexuality, provided they approach it in a balanced and factual manner, appropriate to the maturity of the pupils concerned. The issue cannot be ignored when it is widely discussed in society and pupils may well ask questions about it..." Any attempt to draw a distinction between "the promotion of homosexuality " and "what I have Thatcher's behalf, the prototype of Clause 28. "In the Government's view," he said, "the bill is unnecessary." A year later this 'unneces-

sary' measure has been forced through. Tory ministers are at one with the rabid backbenchers who proposed the clause.

Their arguments are intolerance and prejudice, justified by lies from the gutter press. If we were to believe the Tory backwoodsmen, for instance, all pupils in London schools are compelled to read Jenny Lives with Eric and Martin. The only fact established about this notorious publication is that it was found in the library of an Ilea teachers' centre.

### Persecution

Clause 28 is a charter for the persecution of a minority. It brands gays and lesbians as 'undesirables'. It will be seen by bigots as a licence for 'gaybashing'.

Its sweeping terms, to be interpreted by judges, will be used by town hall bureaucrats to curtail or ban things that have long been taken for granted. Not just publications, including library books, will be under threat, but plays and films on council premises, and especially counselling services for gays and lesbians. Teachers especially will feel obliged to uphold 'normality'. i.e. the Tory-capitalist order of things.

The law implied promotion of 'the family'. This is not out of concern for the real-life households of working people and their children. The Tory 'family' is a propagandist myth, promoted so the ills of society can be blamed on 'moral breakdown' rather than the conditions created by the Tories' system. The state is also conveniently relieved of responsibility for the welfare of children and caring for the elderly, handicapped and sick.

Is it just happenstance that this clause has been inserted into a Local Government Bill designed to open the door to sweeping privatisation which will devastate or destroy a wide range of vital services?

Clause 28 is not just an attack on a homosexual minority who have a democratic right to toleration. This is just one of the highly emotive issues-like abortion, sex education, 'law and order', and immigration-which the Tories are exploiting to swing a section of public opinion to the right. The party of big business rests on a minority of the electorate. Its social base is insecure. They are mortally afraid of the explosive movements which will be provoked by their crisis policies. Desperately, they are pandering to the confusion and fear, intolerance and prejudice, of the most politically backward in an effort to cement their support,

When the workers move into action on a mass scale, coming to grips with crucial class issues, the reactionary prejudices fostered by the Tories will be swept aside. Large sections of the middle class will be drawn behind the labour movement too. Such purgation would naturally be speeded up if the leadership of the labour movement boldly explained the socialist case on the issues concerned.

### Liaison

So blinkered are the Labour leaders, however, they fell for the Tory ploy. At the Committee stage, Jack Cunningham, on behalf of Labour's front bench, supported the amendment incorporated into the Bill as Clause 28.

To prove their respectability, Neil and Jack decided to live with Margaret and Edwina. They soon regretted this scandalous political liason. But the damage was done. In the Commons, Tory ministers rejected Cunningham's qualifying amendments, along with all the rest. Because Labour has endorsed the clause in Committee, MPs did not even get the chance to vote on it.

## Things go better with coke

AS IS well known, the US government intervenes in Central America for the sake of peace, democracy, Christian values etc. Indeed, they are pressurising Panamanian dictator, General Noriega, to resign and prosecuting him for trafficking in the deadly drug, cocaine.

But who do you think is accused of working with the general to fake evidence of gun-running by Nicaragua? None other than Reagan sidekick Oliver North.

And who do you think has been paying the general \$200,000 a year for the last 20 years? None other than that noble US institution, the CIA.

There's no honour among thieves, gun-runners and drug-pushers, is there? described as proper teaching about homosexuality, cannot be drawn sufficiently clearly in legislation to avoid harmful misinterpretation. That is a risk we cannot take." Lord Skelmersdale is a

Lord Skelmersdale is a Tory. He was speaking as a Minister in the Department of the Environment rejecting, on

Clause 28 is an edict of indoctrination. It aims to create a climate of fear.

By Lynn Walsh

## Assault claims a smear

AS REPORTED in *Militant*, 22 January, Manchester city councillor Steve Machin had smeared *Militant* supporters with responsibility for an attack on Liverpool council leader Keva Coombes.

Keva Coombes has now written the following letter:

"...If I knew who did it they would have been arrested by now. I cannot, therefore, say that I identified the attacker or the people hanging around, but I am sure in my own mind that it was not an assault provoked or encouraged by anybody associated, even indirectly, with the labour movement, either now or in the past.

"Specifically, I would be sure in my own mind that I was not assaulted because of any falling out I have had with people I have been associated with in the past or the future with the labour movement."

#### Inquiry a pretext

Now Withington constituency Labour party has voted overwhelmingly to condemn the council's use of police and dogs against protesters lobbying against cuts. A Marxist was elected as regional conference delegate unopposed.

Unfortunately, the party also agreed with a right wing call for an inquiry into allegations of violence by *Militant* supporters by council leader, Graham Stringer.

Militant supporters are confident that they will be able to expose these allegations as a cover for a witch-hunt, but the inquiry could be used as a pretext for expulsions, unless they face massive opposition.

By a Militant reporter

## strike date

"STRIKE ON 14 March", will be the Youth Trade Union Rights Campaign's call to all workers and youth.

YTURC had planned a youth strike on 16 March, but has changed it to 14 March in solidarity with the health workers. Not only youth but all workers should call for a 24 hour strike.

Their combined anger could be organised into a massive show of strength with rallies and demonstrations in every city and town.

YTURC supporters should immediately go to trades councils, union branches and district committees, and Labour Parties. They should raise resolutions calling for a one day strike to be sent to trade union leaders and the TUC general council.

\* Solidarity with the health workers:

- \* Defend the NHS:
- \* Stop Thatcher's at-

tacks on youth; compulsory

\* No YTS: \* Workers and

vouth-all out on 14 March!

By Davie Archibald YTURC national secretary

## "Tories want YTS serfs" -Benn

FURTHER THE Education Labour Students conference 30/31 on held January was attended by over 120 FE student activists.

Tony Benn told a

## change We've had enough! Youth strike 11 Feb In Scotland

"WHAT'S THIS about, son?"

"It's a leaflet about our Scottish youth strike against YTS conscription and for real jobs for youth. We want parents' support for their children's right to strike for a future."

## 'Against YTS? Well I'll tell you this, you've got 100 per cent backing from us!"

These were the com-ments of just one of the thousands of parents who demonstrated against against Strathclyde regional council's plan to close over 40 schools when they were approached by supporters of the Youth Trade Union Rights Campaign (YTURC).

She was with 50 parents from Easterhouse in Glasgow who all echoed her words. This shows that working class parents will support YTURC'S campaigns and strikes when they know what they are about. Hundreds of teachers,

ordinary members of the Educational Institute of Scotland (EIS) added support and their apologised for their leaders who had condemned YTURC.

"It's never been discussed at our conference, they're speaking for themselves." was a com-mon complaint.

rally before it: "Young people would be forced into slave labour with the introduction of compulsory youth training. They would be cons-cripted to work for benefit level pay and this would create a new group of serfs or slaves for emp-loyers."

A Militant readers' meeting was also or-ganised jointly with

#### By Stuart Allen Unemployed ex-trainee, Glasgow

Add this to the tremendous unanimous vote of support at the Scottish socialist teachers conference and it is easy to see that many ordinary teachers see YTS as slave labour and support young people when they take action against it.

### Support

**On 11 February YTURC** is calling a youth strike in both East and West Scotland. We mean to tap this huge layer of support among older working people. And we will organise the anger, discontent and frustrations of youth in Scotland in a half-day strike against YTS conscription and for at least £55 per week minimum and unionisation on the schemes.

All we need is a meagre £624 million from the March budget to pay trainees this minimum.

Inqaba, the journal of the Marxist Workers Tendency of the ANC, where £289 was raised.

Conference The ended with unanimous vote in favour of building for the NUS action, star-ting with the national shutdown on the 11 February as a build up to the youth strike called by YTURC in March.

Thousands of youth will march with us on 11 February. With the help of older workers and the national strike in March we are going to force Thatcher to listen to working class youth.



"WE'VE HAD enough! It's about time someone organised something like this," has been the response to leaflets calling for a students' strike throughout Kent on 11 February.

Thousands of school, further education and education higher students will be protesting against the Tories' Education Bill and attacks on young people.

The Labour Party Young Socialists (LPYS) and YTURC members helped establish a



Students' Action Committee in Canterbury. which has issued the call for a Kent education shutdown.

The response to the been call has magnificent-not just from the students-but from workers too. The Kent NUM have given it full support.

In Canterbury the mood is such that the vice-chancellor of the university has been forced to shut it down for half a day. The cleaners in GMBATU there have voted to strike for the day. Teachers' unions NUT and NAS/UWT have also given full backing. Nal-

go members will be striking on the day too.

Every school and college has been leafletted had a mass and

meeting. In Ashford when Young Socialists leafletted the technical college, students took bundles of leaflets in and went round leafletting the classes. In the Art class the lecturer promptly stopped the class and got the students designing students designing posters for the strike. All the lecturers have given their support.

**Buses have been book**ed to bring students to a rally in Canterbury on the day.

> By Marc Green Kent YTURC

Youth Trade Union Rights Campaign



For more information contact: Davie Archibald, YTURC National Secretary, c/o 29 Marlborough Avenue, London E8 4JP.



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continued from page 1

Already we have had donations from readers of well over one day's pay. T.Horn, a Leicester-shire TGWU member donated £134. W.Tierney, a GMB member from Liverpool donated £100 of his winnings from Militant's raffle. A reader in Kent donated £120 from the sale of records and in South West London readers raised £110.

So angry was J.Thompson, of Bradford North LP, over the Labour Party leadership's witch-hunt that she donated £10 to the fighting fund. Walter Ursell of West Wickham in Kent was so impressed with the book, Liverpool-A City that Dared to Fight, that he sent us £10.

Take this appeal to your workmates. Explain that Militant is a workers' paper, with no money other than that donated by workers themselves.

On London hospital picket lines on 3 February hundreds of pounds were donated to the fighting fund by nurses and other workers. Follow their example and send us a donation today!

Militant stickers were eagerly snapped up, with donations of as much as £1. One seller from Southwark raised over £23. £17.62 was raised from the sale of anti-Alton Bill stickers in West Lancashire. So always ask for the solidarity price and carry a collecting tin!

We now have new stickers with the slogan one-day general strike' which can be used.

At the Further Education Labour Students' conference, a magnificent £280 was raised. £33 was raised at the NW Labour Party womens' conference. £25 also came from a fighting fund stall in Govan.

We need to smash our target of £50,000 with just four weeks remaining. If you support the demand for a one day general strike, then send us one day's pay now to help us spread the call. With your support we can do it.

## Unions must defeat Alton

THE CARRYING of the second reading of Alton's amendment to the 1967 abortion act is a blow to all working class women. It is an attempt to frighten women into continuing with an unwanted pregnancy, with the threat of the police and courts or the dangers of backstreet abortions.

But it was only carried due to the assistance of 35 Labour MPs, openly voting against party policy. Now Neil Kinnock has signalled his intention of voting, along with Thatcher and Steel, for a 24 week limit.

He must be reminded the 1985 Labour Party conference decision was for defending and extending abortion provision, not for restricting it.

Kinnock and other Labour MPs have been taken in by arguments about the viability of the foetus. In line with 'new realism', he imagines he is fitting in with popular opinion.

But this is lending credibility to Alton and SPUC to go for further restrictions. The Labour leaders should be taking them on by campaigning to remove the conditions which cause women to go for late abortions.

This means reversing NHS cuts to provide early abortions and to fund research into safe ways of detecting handicap earlier; ending the right of doctors to prevent women from having abortions, giving women the right to chose.

### Social conditions

However, late abortions must be defended for those who capitalism fails -the very young, the poor and those with a foetus with handicap.

But the main reason women come forward for abortions is social conditions-poverty line benefits and wages, bad housing, the lack of maternity rights for over half of women workers and the lack of safe, reliable



Health workers striking on 3 February.



**THE BROAD Left Organising Committee holds its** conference on 13 February. Here in a major interview, prominent BLOC activist and TUC general council member, John Macreadie, comments on the new turn to industrial militancy and the tasks facing the left in the unions. He spoke to Militant industrial correspondent, Brian Ingham.

Militant: At present we are seeing the most widespread explosion of militancy for over ten years. Why do you think this activity is taking place? John: Working people are finding that they have no alternative but to fight to defend their jobs, their services, their wages and their industries. At the Trades Union Congress in Blackpool, in September, there was a debate on the whole question of 'new realism' versus militancy. I argued that the trade unions remained potentially the most powerful force in British society and that it would be only a matter of time before the giant of British labour arose.

At the CPSA Pay Conference in December, again I pointed out that the barrage of attacks upon the rights and conditions of working people may have led to some despair and demoralisation but this would prove to be only very temporary. I predicted that this mood would turn to anger and from anger to action. Sooner rather than later the worm would Those comments in turn. September and December of last year have been absolutely borne out by the marvellous events we are now witnessing. All the underlying pent-up anger and frustration within society is at last beginning to explode to the surface. To some extent the nurses have given a lead. The myth that militancy does not pay, that Thatcher will never give in to strikes and that there must somehow be another method of defending conditions and services, was totally shattered by the retreat of Thatcher when faced with a strike by 38 Manchester nurses and the threat of a strike by blood transfusion workers.

Workers everywhere have drawn the lesson from this and gained heart. 'Enough is enough'.

is the message of workers throughout the public sector. In the private sector, with the little upturn in the economy, workers sense that the ground has shifted in their favour. Many understand that a new recession is in the wind which may threaten their security as never before. They are coming to the conclusion that now is the time to make a stand, if they are to claw back some of what they have lost. The mood of one group of workers is feeding that of another.





Now is the time for health workers and the wider labour and trade union movement to act decisively in defence of the NHS. Militant: On the TUC general council you have raised the call for a one day general strike in support of health workers. What response has this call received?

John: I have been inundated with reports from all over the country that this demand was greeted rapturously at the health workers' rallies on 3 February. It is clear from messages and comments I have received from members of my own union and from others that if the TUC called a one day general strike in defence of the NHS, it would capture the imagination of the entire trade union movement. The TUC has now called a national rally on Saturday 5 March. I welcome this rally. There is already a great feeling of relief and excitement that at last the leadership of the movement are calling action on the question of the health service and the welfare state. Properly organised this demonstration will involve hundreds of thousands of workers and their families. It will shake the arrogance of the Tory government. The question will be posed at the rally though: 'What happens next?'. The Tories would be prepared to ride out one rally, however well organised and

whatever its composition. This is why I have called upon the general council at this rally to launch the call for a one day general strike to co-incide with the Tories' budget preparations.

Accompanied by a mass campaign of preparation in union branches, on shop stewards' committees, in mass meetings, on trades councils, at Labour Parties, Young Socialist branches and women's sections, this call for a one day general strike would have an earth-shattering efffect. It would show every worker in Britain that if they stand together and fight they are unconquerable.

The Labour Party leadership also should openly come out firmly in defence of the striking health workers and in support of a one day general strike. It is the mass movement of working people standing up to the onslaught of the Tories that will change the political complexion of Britain. If Labour was seen to be standing shoulder to shoulder with health workers and with working people generally then the respect for the Labour Party and its electoral support would soar.

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contraception.

Why is Neil Kinnock not highlighting these issues in a campaign against Alton, and explaining how a Labour government could tackle them?

The labour and trade union movement must defend its women members from this legislation. The TUC has sponsored the 19 March demonstration, but has committed no resources to the campaign.

In particular BLOC must demand a union reply to the SPUC trade union leaflet and a campaign to explain the issues to all trade unionists. Unions must use their resources to defeat Alton's bill at the third reading in March and smash his reactionary, hypocritical ideas.

By Jane Hartley

Militant: Why have the nurses come to the centre of the

#### stage?

John: This group of workers have traditionally refused to take industrial action because of their concern for patients. Their action now is a cry for help and an indication of how bad things have become in the NHS. Working people and the public generally have tremendous respect for the nurses. The vast majority of the population rely on the NHS. They do not need to be told that the nurses and health workers are fighting a battle for all of us.

The Tories are on the defensive. No matter how many million pounds of propaganda they issue, it will have little effect.

The reality is for workers waiting for operations, that despite the marvellous work of the staff, the health service is deteriorating dangerously and something must be done.



#### Militant: What are you doing in the CPSA to plan and prepare for the TUC mass demonstration?

John: Immediately the call was made the CPSA NEC set up a working group to plan our union's intervention. Leaflets from the national union will be issued explaining why it is so important that our union supports the health workers and why we should take part. Not only in this demonstration but also in other initiatives being called around the country, including the Scottish TUC's call for a day of action in defence of the NHS.

We want to bring contingents of members from every city in Britain to the rally. Our members

to talk face and the uni The bury it isolation and file would r worker a fightir movem itself. I hav by the others give a Arthur Such at ways sc resolve. leaders capitalis workers wary of The that peo confron lie. We



workers show support for the health strike.



e that the attack on the he same attack as that on al security and benefit in this country. The crisis is in the health service is e crisis we face in the nd Department of Empbenefit services. Our will see participation in h demonstration as part el of their own campaign d jobs and to safeguard vices in which they

On the general coune TUC you have called paigns on a number of nt issues facing the class. How would you these demands upon ?

is an honour to sit on the bouncil, representing my d attempting to act in the rests of the wider work-

e of the things that has in my time so far on the council has been the ous authority that it has s of working people. On number of times I have roached on the street by trade unionists who wish bout the problems they who constantly ask what ns are going to do. eneral council should pessimism and end its from the mass of rank orkers in this country. It lise then that millions of re waiting for one thing, lead from the top of the it, the general council been savagely attacked pitalist media, so have ho have attempted to ighting lead, such as cargill and Tony Benn. icks levelled at me ale to stiffen further my t is those trade union ho are applauded by the press who are the ones should be extremely

worker would, to have a quiet life, free from insecurity and strife.

However, the reality is that the Tories are not prepared to concede the reasonable demands made in a quiet civilised manner around the negotiating table by trade union negotiators.

They are determined that the working class will pay for the economic problems facing their system. Unless we are prepared to fight then we will be totally trampled upon

trampled upon. Militant: You would not have been in a position in the last few months to give a lead on the general council without the backing of the left NEC within CPSA. How did the left secure such widespread support inside CPSA?



John: We have only made a start in the CPSA. We do not underesship can match in just a few years what CPSA members have built up over 15, given the explosive situation opening up in Brtiain on the industrial front.

Militant: What in your opinion is the role of BLOC?

John: Contrary to the accusations of the right, BLOC is not trying to set up rival unions or a rival TUC. BLOC attempts to bring the activist layer of the unions together to share experiences, to learn from our defeats and victories and to try to extend practical help to workers in struggle. But also to deepen and develop the campaign for fighting socialist leadership throughout the trade unions. In the process BLOC campaigns also for the Labour Party to live up to its socialist heritage.

It is my experience and the experience of millions of trade unionists over many generations that you cannot solve the problems of working people on a lasting basis by trade union struggle alone. The day to day problems and struggles of trade unionists are inextricably linked with the need for a socialist society uder the democratic control and management of the working class. Militant: Finally, you have made clear your support for the socialist ideas of Militant. How valuable do you find Militant in your daily work? John: I read Militant every week and I support the socialist ideas it puts forward. Militant provides for me an explanation of what is happening in society and a glimpse of the problems working people are facing throughout the world. Above all, it provides theoretical guidance and a clear perspective for the way ahead in the battles against management and the Tories and for a socialist society I recommend every worker, particularly every activist in the trade union and labour movement, to read Militant regularly. It will help to sustain them in the fight to defend and improve the conditions of working people and to secure a socialist society.

BROAD LEFT ORGANISING COMMITTEE

## A fighting policy

\* For the regular election of all union officials.

\* For no trade union official to receive more than the average wage of a skilled worker.

\* Total opposition to all witch-hunts and victimisations within the Labour Party and the unions.

\* For the building of shop stewards' organisations at local, regional and national level in every industry and service.

\* For national industrial action to defeat the Tories' privatisation plans and other attacks on local government.

\* Total opposition to attacks on the working week, like flexible working. For a 35 hour week without loss of pay.

\* For a real campaign by the unions to defeat Alton's Bill on abortion.

\* Opposition to Tory anti-union legislation, and support for any group of workers whose right to strike is threatened.

\* For the election of a Labour government committed to socialist

policies. \* For a fighting socialist leadership

\* For a fighting socialist leadership of the union movement.

\* Full support for the health workers, for

a 24 hour general strike.



the wing put the view le like myself only want tion. This is an absolute would prefer, as any timate the support which we still have to win. We have achieved a position as a result of 15 years and more of hard work, sacrifice by individuals, attention to detail and by taking up the day to day problems facing our members and being the best fighters on their behalf. In this way Broad Left supporters have earned respect from the members who have then been prepared to elect us to positions of leadership and responsibility.

We feel it is our duty to repay the confidence of the rank and file, by at all times listening carefully to their problems and aspirations and by giving a clear explanation of the way forward at every stage.

We work at the top and in the workplaces to improve the lot of our members and to transform our union into a fighting democratic body that is fully equipped to defend the interests of workers.

Supporters of the Broad Left in unions with a right wing leader-

\*Brian Ingham on the future of the trade unions.

\*Bob McKee on the 1929 crash.

\*Alan Woods: the history of Bolshevism, part seven.

\*Plus: Art file Spycatcher Science report and more.

THE COMING SLUMP

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## Eye-witness report from the Philippines

Reflex

Photo:

## "Sons of the whole working class"

**REPRESSION IN the Philippines today, under a** nominally democratic government, is even worse than during the last years of the Marcos dictatorship.

Mrs Aquino has abandoned her earlier rhetoric about 'peace and reconciliation', 'human rights' and 'people's power'. These empty phrases gave the people not an extra grain of rice, but only irritated the military warlords, to whose demands she has now capitulated.

She is just a decoration on the old military juggernaut which is still in power. Hence the rise of the vigilante gangs, the return of the death squads, etc.

Many members of the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) feel that such repression would have been impossible but for the mistakes of their leaders.

Militant talks to Pete and Gary, two leading activists of the Marxist opposition in the CPP.

Gary: I have been underground for seven years, since I was 16. I led a strike in my technical college. Thousands of students came out. I was put on the police wanted list and went on the run. Finally I was caught. They gave me the full treatment in jail, electric torture and all.

On my release, I became courier of Party literature. I never knew the pleasures of youth! It is painful to visit my

parents and see their poverty. My mother asked me: "Are you still my son?" I had to tell her I am now a son of the whole working class.

In 1985 I came out Party the against leadership's line. Now all my comrades support my ideas.

Pete: I was jailed in 1970, at the age of 16. I was tortured. Ever since then I have been a full-time activist.

The Party pays me ten pesos a month (one penny per day!), which covers my toothpaste and the odd cigarette. Party sympathisers are expected to feed the fulltimers.

Some days we don't eat at all. We go everywhere on foot.

The Party was wrong to stand aside from the demonstrations and general strikes in Metro Manila from 1983 to 1986. It boycotted the elections

a one-week protest strike, later extended for a second week!-that it was suspected of deliberate 'destabilisation' and provocation to the colonels.

People thought the CPP leaders found this period so confusing that they would welcome the return of an open dictatorship, because it would seem to justify their exclusively military approach to the revolution.

As a result, the Left is hardly a factor in politics today. Three times last month the CPP tried to call the workers out on They demonstrations. couldn't mobilise even 1,000 people!

### Guerrillaism

Pete: The CPP was founded in 1969 on the basis of Maoist illusions in guerrilla struggle. It made meteoric progress. The New People's Army, led by the CPP, grew from a few dozen to about 24,000 today.

But during its military accesses it became successes practically depoliticised. That is why it could play no direct part in the mass movement that overthrew Marcos.

This loss of political feel has led to terrible setbacks even in the countryside. The central leadership has little control over the local units, NPA who scattered in their own islands. They don't have the political authority to stop the tendency towards banditry. Where the NPA get a strong base-Mindanao is a example-they good trigger-happy: become 'taxes' from extorting as well as peasants shooting landlords, suspected informers in front of their families, executing the village drunk to 'restore discipline'. So they lose support. That is how the vigilantes got a foothold in Davao and elsewhere. They even got control of the slum city Agdao, which had previously been nicknamed Nicaragdao'! In Bicol the NPA blew up the bridges and isolated island, causing the economic devastation. In



Workers march against Marcos, showing their mass power in the streets. (Below) NPA guerilla in the hills.



Pampanga they killed some American GIs from Clark Air Base, which led to the confinement to GIs' barracks and a slump in local business. These tactics weaken their mass base.

Such is the military etishism of the CPP soldiers. In that sense they even good are not Maoists!

This brings down savage repression on the heads of the workers and the poor, who suffer 'zoning' and 'saturation drives' in the search for Sparrows

against the working class. A comrade of mine was arrested by CapCom (Metro Manila paramilitary police) and summarily executed.

They suspended him from a flagpole and shot him dead with an Armalite, screaming at witnesses that "that is what happens to Sparrows". Actually he was critical of the Party's guerrilla emphasis.

Another friend, a trade-union organiser, was recently ambushed in the street in broad daylight and shot dead by a boss's hired thug, pretending to be a Sparrow.

The urban masses don't feel they owe any loyalty to the Sparrows. They blame them for the repression. So ABB comrades the themselves feel endangered by the Party's obsession with the 'armed struggle' at the expense of political work. They feel deprived of the mass base any guerrilla army needs.

Every day the ABB guerillas shoot a soldier or policeman. They have done nothing to win over the rank-andfile soldiers.

leaders' only answer to dissent. Two opposition leaders in my area, lifelong Party workers, were recently framed up as police agents and executed by the NPA.

This led to a furious revolt in the Party. One regional committee demanded a discussion with the leadership, threatening otherwise to leave the Party. An NPA squad of 100 or more was sent to disarm them.

Two more comradesworkers' leaders-were killed in the subsequent 'encounter', and several more arrested. I myself am in danger from the Party leadership, as well as from the death squads.

### Hit list

Gary: I have been warned several times that I am high on the Party hit-list. So I have to keep in hiding both from the Party and the state.

Tens of thousands of comrades are fighting heroically in the CPP/NPA to free the Philippines from the grip of imperialism. Capitalism and landlordism have nothing to offer. The masses have nowhere else to turn.

When the NPA suffer a setback in one area, they appear somewhere else. If the 'veterans' aged 20 to 30 draw critical conclusions, new teenage youth take their place. That is why, in spite of all their blunders, if the workers don't succeed in taking power first, the NPA will eventually win. But by these mistakes they risk turning the Philippines into another 'killing fields'. And finally a bureaucratic Stalinist regime would be established.

which led to the overthrow of Marcos. After Cory came to power, it could not decide what to do.

Gary: The Party has not based itself on the industrial power of the working class.

In 1986-7 there was a big strike wave, culminating in the successful general strikes in August and October 1987 against fuel price hikes and for wage rises. These were led by the KMU, the CPP-affiliated union.

They took place at the height of the coup scare. Yet no attempt was made to mobilise the workers in defence of democratic rights, as a warning to the rebel colonels.

In fact, KMU tactics during the October strike were so adventuristic -calling out its members on leaders that they see the class struggle as just an auxiliary to the guerrilla war. KMU militants are uprooted from their factories and sent to the hills to train guerrillas.

Now the NPA has set up an urban guerrilla army, the Alex Boncayao Brigade (popularly known as the Sparrows'). Ironically, Boncayao was himself a militant trade-union leader who had the support of thousands of workers. He went underground, joined the NPA and died simply a guerrilla.

Gary: The present on emphasis urban guerrillaism is a dangerous mistake. Every day the ABB shoot a soldier or policeman. The NPA have done nothing to try to win over the rank-and-file

.

slum area is besieged by a cordon of troops, and a reign of terror inflicted on the inhabitants.

Hooded informers are being used-for the first time since the Japanese occupation-to pick out suspected 'terrorists'. Armed vigilante gangs are springing up everywhere. They are a deadly threat to trade-unionists.

### **Death squads**

The death squads of the Marcos era are back. The police openly agitate for the killing of prominent CPP sympathisers. The bodies of scores of left activists have turned up, with their eyes gouged out, ears chopped off, and other horrible mutilations.

The tactics of the ABB open the way to state terror

It's a life-or-death question for them. Many of them support our criticisms. I have even been jokingly called 'the Honasan\* of the ABB'!

Pete: The mistakes of the Party leadership have led to mass splits all over the archipelago. Prominent former leaders have left the Party and defected to the Right. Others have been captured by the military, probably after tip-offs from their rivals in the leadership.

Bullets are the Party

The workers showed their power when they Marcos. overthrew Alongside the workers of South Korea and the rest of the Asian-Pacific region, we can establish workers' democracy. That is the programme of our group.

\*Rebel army colonel.



Official march in East Berlin to commemorate Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht, German revolutionary workers' leaders murdered in 1919. A hundred Protestant demonstrators, carrying slogans of Rosa Luxemburg, were arrested-but many were released after two weeks of protests.

## Eastern Europe

LAST WEEK, for the first time in Eastern Europe, demonstrations were coordinated on an international scale. This is a major precedent for the future.

In Czechoslovakia, Hungary and Poland, protests were organised simultaneously against the Romanian dictatorship of Ceausescu. In Romania itself, violent protests led by steel-workers exploded last year.

At the same time, thousands of Polish workers demonstrated under the banner of the banned trade union, Solidarity, to show their anger at massive price rises. Living standards will fall by 8 per cent, on top of 4 per cent last year, despite a 20 per cent wage increase

Meanwhile, hundreds were marching in East Berlin to protest against the jailing of another three human rights activists. Thousands had packed into protest church services the previous weekend. The authorities were forced to make concessions.

In Russia, that same weekend, police had invaded a conference of 60 'informal' intellectual groups (the second in six months). Despite Gorbachev's promises of 'glasnost' (openness), echoed more or less reluctantly by other Stalinist leaders, all the



frightened that criticism will get out of hand, and turn into

workers' struggle. Their fears are justified. The present ferment among intellectuals is a symptom of the tensions running right through society --in the last analysis, the increasing paralysis of the regimes under pressure from the workers.

The whole of Eastern Europe is a powder-keg of anger against bureaucratic repression and mismanagement of the planned economy. The next period will see the death struggles of Stalinist rule as the big battalions of the workers are pulled into struggle, with workers' democracy and socialism written on their banners.

By George Collins

All the regimes of Eastern **Europe are** afraid that the intellectuals' criticism will get out of hand and turn into workers' struggle.

Nicaragua

## **Setback for US** imperialism

PRESIDENT REAGAN'S request for \$30m (£20m) new aid to the right-wing Contra terrorists in Nicaragua was narrowly defeated in the US Congress on 3 February.

In recent years the US government has officially spent over \$1bn on funding the ex-National Guard of the former Somoza dictatorship – probably far more if private supplies are included. When the Somoza dictatorship

was overthrown in 1979, workers and youth throughout South America were enthused. US capitalism was terrified at the threat of revolution spreading through Central America, with inevitable repercussions within the States itself.

Yet all the money poured in and the 30,000 dead have had no real success. The Contras have not even able to conquer any territory

They have used the money to organise business rackets, including drug-trafficking, gun-running and prostitution. Their acts of terrorism have caused economic disruption, but cons-tituted no political challenge to the Sandinista government of Nicaragua.

The Democrats in the US Congress have voted against the latest funding proposal because they see the Contra gangsters as a liability. At the same time Sandinista leader Ortega, by participating in the 'peace plan' sponsored by the various capitalist regimes of Central America, is showing his willingness to keep the revolution in check.

The 'peace plan' is based on the illusion that capitalist democracy can be built in Central America on the basis of economic bankruptcy and mass destitution. With a new world recession looming, the real outlook is one of escalating guerilla war on the land and revolutionary explosions in the cities.

In the end, capitalism has no weapon except renewed military dictatorship to save its rule.

Only a revolutionary appeal to the workers of other countries and the completion of the revolution by the Nicaraguan working class can forestall the designs of both wings of US capitalism on the gains achieved.

By Soraya Lawrence



Contras show off military hardware provided by Reagan.

What US dollar crisis means

THE END of 1987 saw the dollar at its lowest level since the Second World War. It has slumped 50 per

import bill. To see what all this means, take

the relationship between the US

costs \$542 to produce one tonne of steel in Japan, and \$70 carriage. In the US steel sells for \$475 a tonne. This shows how the US administration is using the dollar's decline to price foreign imports out of the market. However, it is precisely the freespending US economy -inflated by Reagan's armaments programme-that has provided an export market for the rest of the world, and helped to fuel the growth of Europe and Japan in recent years. Now, with world slump already impending, that fragile 'boom' is over.

stricken central banks in Western Europe lashed out between \$3 and \$5 billion i

thousands of workers whose jobs depend on government spending off.

cent in three years, and last year alone was down 23 per cent against the Japanese yen.

The reason for the dollar's fall is the US trade deficit of \$160 billion last year. If the USA is spending that much more on imports than it is getting from exports, then there must be an equivalent flow of dollars out of America to pay for all those imports.

Currencies are 'free-floating', that is to say, their price (in terms of other currencies) is determined on foreign exchange markets by the daily transactions of foreign exchange speculators. A balance of trade deficit in the US will alert these traders to mark the dollar down, whatever governments say or central banks do.

So far the Reagan administration has been able to pay for the flood of imports by jacking up US interest rates to a level 3 per cent higher than Germany or Japan. This attracts money capital to the US, balancing the outflow of dollars which is needed to pay the

and Japan. In 1986, US imports from Japan were \$55 billion more than US exports to Japan. In the same year, \$66 billion of Japanese capital flowed into the USA, mainly to buy US government bonds.

So, in effect, the Japanese capitalists have been lending the Reagan government money to buy Japanese goods! Clearly this can't be sustained in the long run.

### Curbing its rivals

The falling dollar is a result of this imbalance-but it has also been seized on by US imperialism to try to solve its immediate problems at the expense of the rest of the world.

A weaker dollar will cheapen US products abroad, while making imports more expensive. This is meant to boost US industry, internally and internationally, while curbing its main rivals, Japan and Western Europe. The effects can already be seen.

At current exchange rates it

European Airbus says it can no longer compete with America's Boeing, which means thousands of aerospace jobs throughout Europe are at risk. Jaguar shares have slumped as a result of the threat to its lucrative US market.

The capitalists of Europe are fighting back, but there isn't much they can do against the pressure of market forces on the dollar, combined with the interests of the mighty US capitalist class.

The first weeks of this year saw a 'miracle of levitation' as panicbuying greenbacks to stop the rot. Since then the dollar has resumed its fall.

#### Dangers

But, for the US, letting the dollar slide brings dangers of its own. Every plunge in the dollar exchange rate is another step towards recession in Europe and the Far East, and causes another stock exchange tremor. This will eventually rebound back onto the heads of the US capitalists, as world trade and investment is squeezed further.

The counterpart of the US trade deficit is its budget deficit. The Reagan administration is spending \$167 billion more than it is getting in taxes, and must borrow to make up the shortfall.

In three or four years, Reagan will have clocked up net debts of \$1 trillion with the rest of the world!

If he cuts the budget deficit-and President and Congress are deadlocked on this-then hundreds of

тпе гезин would be recession.

But, if Reagan is to carry on as the last of the big spenders (on guns, not butter), then the balance-of-payments deficit will continue to escalate. The dollar will keep on falling, and the rest of the world dependent on exporting to the USA will catch recession.

Capital inflow into the US is slowing down. To attract foreign loans to pay the bills, Reagan will have to yank up interest rates. This would strengthen the dollar again, hitting US exports. At home it would choke off investment and demand (consumer credit), triggering a recession.

Either way, the outlook for the US and the world economy is grim. Recession in the USA-over one-fifth of the capitalist world market-means international recession.

By Mick Brooks

## One big plot? Public concern over because of lack of hospital

Dear Comrades,

I am very puzzled why we are expected to choose between 'tax cuts' and the NHS. Why don't the government cancel Trident and give more money to the health service? At a time when other major powers are discussing cutting down on nuclear weapons it is ridiculous for us to buy more!

The government must get their priorities right and the health service is definitely more important than Trident. I would seriously question the sanity of anyone who thinks otherwise. Especially when babies can't get operations

## Rubbish!

Dear Comrades,

I have at last found the Tories' answer to unemployment, an exciting new initiative from our compassionate and caring government.

In an article in that Tory rag, The Economist, they facilities and then we now have Aids to worry about.

It's a pity the parties who are supposed to be 'in op-position' can't speak up more about things like this. One begins to wonder if they are all in it together and it is just one massive plot to keep the people down.

I don't really support any party at the moment and I'm sure you can understand why. However, I enjoyed reading your paper anyway, so good luck and all the best.

Sandra Mullen, **Birmingham** 

spell out the possibilities that exist in rubbish! ...most disposable pack-

aging needs to be made returnable... deposits on containers provide the young and poor with an easy way of carning cash from scavenging .. '

So there we have it straight from the horse's mouth!

**Kevin Churchill Derby** 

## More accountability

Dear Comrades,

The contempt for women shown by some anti-

abortionists and voiced by Vince Crosby (Issue 881) is appalling. It is suggested that a grown woman is not better able to judge than a mindless embryo inside her what is best for both.

It is an insult to women to suggest they have no more sense than an embryo. A woman has a right to be treated as a rational human being.

It is true that about 30 Labour MPs voted for Al-



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ton, something ought to be done about this, especially as, by conference vote the party decided that the 'conscience' clause allowing Labour MPs a free vote on abortion should be withdrawn. In still allowing it the parliamentary Labour Party is overriding the democratic decision of the membership. What about accountabili-

ty? We managed to get rid of James White.

Kathleen Jones

Shropshire

SALEP 112 February benefit. Bands: The Neurotics, The Hillstormers, disco and stalls. 8 'til late. Thames Polytechnic, Cellar Bar, Wooiwich. £2.50 waged, £2 unwaged.

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Urgent: Word processing: would any comrade familiar with Word Perfect software please contact SALEP urgently as we need advice. 01 241 0434.

## **NHS cuts**

Dear Comrades,

I was recently in hospital for 12 weeks. The Tories say there is no crisis in the health service. This is total fiction. In fact because of the cutbacks they allow repairs of buildings to go undone.

In the ward where I was the rain came through the roof and trickled down the wall. The staff had reported

## this and nothing had been done for over three cuts.

The health service is in crisis and needs a massive increase in funds to save it. It is up to health service staff to take strike action and win their case for more funding.

Pat Miller Govan LP.

Dear Comrades,

Last year I watched a programme on TV, highlighting the importance of regular cervical smear tests. It insisted that prevention was better than cure and early detection of precancerous cells could save thousands of lives.

Unfortunately it's not as easy as that. I recently attended a clinic for a smear. When I went back the doctor explained that there were signs of abnormal cells which may develop into cancer. He told me about the treatment which involved an operation which was 'quite simple and

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

#### painless'.

He then went on to say that because of cuts in the NHS it wouldn't be possible and I would have to come back in three months. He could see I was shocked and added "please don't worry. the NHS pays me to worry for you." I told him I was worried - worried about what the Tories had done to the NHS.

I think the mass of sympathy and public support for the health workers is increasing because, every day ordinary people are experiencing for themselves the cuts in the NHS. A Militant reader.

Welcome

#### Dear Comrades,

I am sitting at this moment reading back issues of Militant, which were given me by a comrade and fellow nurse who is facing expulsion for selling your paper during the general election in 1987.

All I can say is what a welcome relief to read a good left-wing journal which really stands up and fights wholeheartedly for the workers!

Seems to me that it is quite sad that a so-called left-wing party can condemn people for reading Militant, yet some condone members and supporters who read Murdoch's and other right-wing trash.

More power to your pens.

**Robert Bruce** Scotland.

## Emergency treatment?

Dear Comrades,

In April 1987 I was made homeless. I had very little money and I suffer from diabetes, taking two insulin injections a day. I went to the council for emergency housing. Because of my situation being so dire; after hours of waiting in an empty, cold room I was offered bed and breakfast accommodation.

If anybody out there has ever gone to a council for emergency housing you'll know how difficult it is to even get B&B accommodation.

Anyway they gave me a room at the Thorncliffe Hotel, Heston Row. This place is notorious-the Observer carried an article last year about it. Women have been attacked in the corridors, the entire place is unsanitary. It festers ill and fear. Not the ideal place for a single female carrying 50 sterile syringes, but I plucked up the courage and was going to go to this tip because I had no choice. Then my family found out. My sister threw a fit, my mother begged me not to go while clinging to my ankles. So I didn't go. I haven't heard anything since from the council. Then one day I got a letter from them. I was so excited! Silly fool. It was a bill-a bill for £6.90. They said I was still liable for charge even though I hadn't stayed there!





Only a minority can enjoy the privileges of a public school.

50

## Dear Comrades, When I was at school I

Send us your views, comments or criticism.

was particularly interested in art but I always felt put off by the very poor quality of the materials we were given. I now find as a student teacher that the situation is very much the same.

We have nothing but rubbishy school materials and even these have to be rationed. I've had to buy basic materials out of my grant like pencils, string and wire.

Also because of the lack of time to prepare for classes and the large size of the classes, it is almost impossible to have any really exciting lessons, thus making school a boring and exhausting drudgery for both the pupils and the teachers. Despite these pressures many teachers will go to great lengths to try and offer something interesting to their classes.

These problems face teachers in every subject and result in a poor experience of school for young people and an enormous squandering of potential and talent.

A student teacher in Brighton

years. This situation is because of the Tory



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Dear Comrades,

Ratepayers in Labourcontrolled Cleveland face a massive 30p in the pound rate rise from April, the biggest rise since the county was formed. A spokesman for the council said that "the council is determined to avoid rate-capping, poll tax capping and the higher levels of grant penalty." Maybe so but the way to avoid paying penalties is not

laxing reading?

#### Dear Comrades,

Like thousands of others in Britain, I am facing a problem that may mean having to come off the elec-

hammering ordinary working people and cutting services. The council only plans to increase its spending for the coming year by 7 per cent which is one of the lowest increases among major authorities.

In a county as deprived as Cleveland this increase cannot keep pace with demand. As Militant said last week the role of Labour councils is to fight the cuts, not

toral register.

The powers-that-be have introduce decided to something which is far costlier than its predecessor, which is totally undemocratic and subjects thousands to countless hours of misery on a regular basis.

Coming off the electoral register is a drastic step but

implement them, already some workers and Labour Party members are wanting to know why the council is doing the Tories' dirty work.

The full council meets 10 February to approve the rate rise. The Labour members have a clear choice, let the Tories off the hook or stand up and fight!

#### Andy Walker Middlesbrough LP.

one which may have to be taken unless a campaign is mounted now.

Poll tax? I'm talking about Labour Party News. Maybe readers can advise me of other ways (short of expulsion) of how to come off the mailing list!

Dave Gorton, Peckham CLP.

Pritamn Kaur London

## Mersey militancy

CONTRARY TO the hopes of the Tories and predictions of Labour's 'new realists', seven short months since the political defeat of the general election workers are taking to the picket lines and streets.

The October stock exchange crash has destroyed many illusions—reinforced by the leaders of the labour movement—that perhaps Thatcherism was working. And there are fears that the employers and the Tories are preparing to make working people pay for the inevitable recession which will follow the crash.

Dennis Skinner told the Knowsley Campaign Group meeting last month that he could already hear the siren voices: "Save the pound in the national interest. Tighten your belts. Cut your wages".

But workers are demanding their share of the last few years' super-profits before the recession hits their industry. Merseyside has seen a

Merseyside has seen a decisive change in mood in the past month, despite the lack of a lead from within the official structures of the unions.

Developments are reminiscent of 1972, when docks stewards visited workplaces and pulled workers out in support of the jailed Pentonville dockers. This led to such pressure that the TUC were forced belatedly to declare a one-day general strike, forcing the Tories to retreat.

In Liverpool the hospital workers are producing their own leadership from the ranks and turning to industry for support. The initiative of Terry Fields MP in organising a meeting of Labour and trade union activists has led to agitation in several workplaces for solidarity action.

The pensioners' union promised a turn-out to the Trades Council demonstration on 10 February. After some of them read in the *Liverpool Echo* that nurses in a Liverpool hospital were on a diet of chips and hamburgers, they arrived with food parcels!

#### Students

Merseyside Area Student's Organisation have convened mass meetings in the colleges to organise walk-outs. In Birkenhead, a Youth Trade Union Rights Campaign meeting attracted 53 people. 25 school students arrived at 6pm for the 7.30 start, asking the caretaker: "Where is the strike meeting?".

Students in Kirkby Further Education College organised a successful strike against reorganisation of 16-plus education, which they believe will involve converting their college into a YTS camp. The Tories could be put

The Tories could be put under siege if the official leadership lifted their little fingers. The only obstacle to a full-scale regional oneday general strike is the role of the national and local leaders.

But the ad hoc semiofficial action committees already established will play a vital part in organising action whilst demanding a lead from the top.

By Richard Venton

## Fight to save Abemant

TWO MORE pit closures in South Wales have been announced, at Lady Windsor and Abernant. This will bring the total closed since the strike to 15.

Unfortunately miners at Lady Windsor have agreed to the closure, but those at Abernant have voted 3-2 to go through the review procedure.

The night before the closures were announced British

## 



LONDON TEACHERS marching through London in protest at spending cuts by the Inner London Education Authority (Ilea), now under threat of abolition. Their one-day strike was condemned by Ilea Labour leader Neil Fletcher, who said it was not right for children to be sent home and schools to be shut, precisely what could happen if his cuts are implemented. He was backed by Labour's education spokesman Jack Straw who said industrial action was 'inappropriate'! Photo: Dave Sinclair.

## London UBO strike talks

wrong to count chickens.

before they are hatched.

While the union is prepared

to continue negotiations, steps are also being taken to

Opportunity

Unfortunately the BL'84-

led DE section committee

have refused to take this

opportunity to generalise

the dispute into a national

staffing campaign as called

for at last year's con-

They also rejected a call

from Militant supporter

Amanda Lane to link up in

a joint campaign with the

DHSS. Despite this, plans

are in hand to bring out

more offices in the affected

build the action.

ference.

THE STRIKE in London Department of Employment (DE) offices over compulsory transfers, staff shortages and sacking of casuals is now at a critical stage.

#### By Steve Bell and Tom Taylor

Currently there are six unemployment benefit offices and eight job centres on all-out strike. A further 26 offices were involved in a day's protest action when management announced similar plans in north and west London.

There has also been magnificent support from DHSS members in linked offices

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

who have boycotted all work connected with the DE dispute. The scale of the action has forced the management

to drop their hard-line stand. The opening of talks represented a major step forward.

During these negotiations, the CPSA submitted a claim for staffing levels across the region to be increased by ten per cent and all sackings to be reversed. Although management have not come up with anything concrete as yet, there are signs that they may be willing to make an offer on staffing levels which would make compulsory transfers unnecessary.

However, it would be

## Bus strike ends

BUS WORKERS in Stevenage, Hertford, St Albans, Hatfield, Grays and Harlow have been forced back to work after nearly two weeks on strike. As in the Plymouth Citybus dispute, the London Country North East company had forced through areas on all-out strike.

Members in London DE offices will also be ballotted on taking a day's strike action on 18 February. A victory is now entirely possible. Members are demanding sufficient staff to provide a proper service to the public. They are refusing to be treated like 'clerical gypsies', shunted to and fro as management please.

A victory for the strikers will be a victory for every DE member.

Please send donations and messages of support to CPSA, c/o 7 Fowler House, South Grove, London N15 5QJ, cheques payable to CPSA Fighting Fund (London DE Dispute)

90 per cent of the company shares are owned by Leicester's Labour city council, who were planning to sell them off even before the government ordered them to

By Steve Score

**British Gas** 

Coal chief Sir Robert Haslam was addressing the Commons energy select committee. Asked later why he had not mentioned the decisions, he replied he did not think it was important!

Both pits have large reserves of coal and Lady Windsor has the highest output per man shift in Wales, but that is not good enough for British Coal. The policy is that every individual pit must run at a profit, even though only four or five of the eleven South Wales collieries regularly do so.

Some miners think that the closures may have been decided at area level, without reference to national HO, by area managers cynically hoping to pressure miners to vote for redundancy.

Lliw Valley council is supporting the fight to save Abernant. Now the union area leaders need to take this fight to other unions to mount a campaign to fight this and any other closure.

On 1 March there is to be a day of action in support of the health service workers. Given the historic links btween miners and health workers, this is the ideal opportunity for the Wales TUC to call a regional one-day general strike in defence of both pit jobs and the NHS.

Already there is a sign that militancy can have an effect. Another threatened pit, Blaenant, has been reprieved. Miners believe that the vote at Abernant not to accept the closure swayed the management, who do not want to fight on too many fronts.

By a South Wales NUM member,

Council threat

"IF YOU don't accept it, you'll be sacked!" This threat was made by Gordon Houlston, a Labour councillor, to school cleaners employed by South Glamorgan county council. He was referring to a proposal to sack 200 of them-40 per cent of the total --and dramatically attack their conditions.

At present the cleaners are expected to cover 250 square feet for £1.50 an hour. The private contractors, OCS, want 600 square feet and in response the Labour council is proposing 350 square feet an hour.

The education authority are hoping to thin down the cleaners and then introduce temporary contracts for all their workforce. Houlston remarked: "We saw the dinner ladies off-we'll do the same with this lot".

Is this the way to fight privatisation?

By Anne Bennett, Nupe shop steward, in personal capacity.

a worsening of wages and conditions without negotiation.

The workers struck from 29 January after a ballot, which complied with Tory laws. But management sent a letter saying they were in breach of contract and unless they were back at work by 10 February they would be sacked.

By a Stevenage bus worker

## Victimisation

240 LEICESTER bus drivers came out on a one-day strike against the sacking of a worker with 18 years service for 'gross misconduct' involving a trivial incident when offduty.

They now say they will reengage him on lower pay with no recognition of his service. The TGWU branch secretary said the management's aim was to provoke a confrontation and demoralise the workers in preparation for further attacks. BRITISH GAS workers throughout the West Midlands have returned to work after a two-week strike against management's plans to cut bonus payments by up to £30 a week. After negotiations led to management making concessions, the GMBATU shop stewards decided to hold a ballot of their members on whether to continue the strike: 50.7 per cent voted to stay out, but this failed to meet the union's required two-thirds majority for strike action.

## **Dowding & Mills**

THE FOUR-WEEK strike at Dowding and Mills, Hackney Wick, is over. 60 men had been on strike over the dismissal of 13 men during an overtime ban over wages.

The company has now reinstated the 13, but the original dispute over an eight per cent pay offer is still being negotiated.

By Tim White



## agenha

"OUR POCKETS are empty, theirs are full. It's time to share out some of the wealth." Dagenham worker lobbying negotiators.

"Kick out Murphy-we're the union." Banner at Dagenham.

"Even if they offer us £20 a week, we wouldn't take it with the strings." Dagenham worker.

## Basildon solid

DESPITE A vote of acceptance of the new company offer at the Basildon radiator plant, the strike was solidly supported by the hourly paid workers. At Basildon tractor plant the strike was also solid

Basildon Labour Party Young Socialist (LPYS) members joined the picket with their banner. The Labour party has made its office facilities available for a strike headquarters and Nalgo members have arranged for the Welfare Rights department to give advice to strikers on benefit entitlements.

One of the young pickets at the tractor plant and a member of the LPYS told us: "There has been a good response to the strike. The majority have voted against the three year deal. Everyone is out with no-one crossing the picket line. The company are not offering a decent pay rise when they are making millions of pounds of profit. If Ford workers get a decent pay rise, it might help other unions to fight for more as well.

"With four hours compulsory overtime, I take home £122 per week. If you are off 'without good reason', or are late, you can be fined £8. If you are married with a family you'll be claiming supplementary benefit.

"I am a line worker and start at 7am. The first part of the day is the worst as you work for three hours without a break. The work is boring and monotonous. The line is always moving. You can't stop. You are made to feel guilty if you want to go to the toilet. In the interview they told us that your body will become accustomed to the breaks. During the day you are working at a certain pace and then suddenly the line will speed up. You have to work faster. If you make a cock-up it's pointed out. There's a sheet on the wall with a list of mistakes to make you feel stupid.

"To win, the workers must stand solid, involving all the union members, and including wives and husbands. People can get demoralised by staying indoors and watching TV. They should get involved in picketing. If not, they should be visited and given a strike bulletin. We should get the rest of the labour movement involved. It's better to feel a lot of people behind you. The press will try to isolate us. We should only go back to work with ten per cent plus a one year deal, a shorter working week, better holidays and the full claim.'

John McKay spoke to a Basildon tractor plant worker.

## Leamington

"A STRIKE will cripple Ford. Nobody wants it but it's been forced on us by the company's actions.

1-10-

the a

"They say they want more flexibility. Skilled workers will be working on the line. I'm three and a half years into a four year apprenticeship-why have I bothered? The apprentices have got a no-strike agreement but I'll refuse to work while the strike is on. My message to the blokes is to stick it out and win. If not, it'll be a five year agreement, then a no-strike agreement, then a dictatorship. "Management have tried to have their cake and eat it-let's hope they choke. They've offered us a great package-with a cyanide pill in it. "The best article I've seen on Ford was

again they've come out with an overwhelming rejection of the company's offer.

**Richie Rowlands, convenor of the PTA** at Ford Halewood, spoke to Terry Harrison.

## Bridgend

ONE HUNDRED per cent support for the strike was reported from the Bridgend plant. All contractors were turned away and only one delivery got through on Monday. The pickets were keeping a close watch on 1700 engines inside the factory to make sure they didn't 'disappear'. According to convenor, Andy Richards, "Eighty per cent voted to reject. It's an out and out struggle to win." The mood was best summed up by one picket who said that he was prepared to stay out eight, nine or ten weeks if that was what it required.

#### WEDNESDAY, EIGHT o'clock-roll call. At nine we all went to the union meeting. The report back from from the convenors was received in silence.

The stewards recommended rejection of the offer. Afterwards, everyone walked to the balloting stations. There was no talking but everyone knew they had to vote against.

Thursday. An air of expectancy hung over the plant. Suddenly everyone was listening to the radio for results. As the smaller plants declared first there was a feeling of disappointment but this quickly turned to excitement. It was as if Liverpool and Everton

## **Three days at** Halewood

had won the cup at the same time!

## 'Here we go!'

Dagenham's result came through. Then our own. We knew the offer had been rejected. On the trim lines some 2000 workers started cheering "Here we go! Here we go!" Workers were hitting whatever they could find to express their enthusiasm.

Friday was a day and a half.

When we got in there were calls for section meetings. One section of 12 met-it voted to go home straight away, upped and left. Management then demanded that we man-up their jobs. This was refused. The rest of the trim then had a meeting and they decided to walk out as well. They were soon joined by workers on the high lines. By midday, the whole operation had stopped.

By a Halewood striker.



Pickets outside the Dagenham plant.

## Seventeen dead in six weeks "PEOPLE CAN only

work so hard and its's getting to a point where they can't do any more."

Jack has worked at the Jaguar car plant in Browns Lane, Coventry for 25 years. He's a shop steward and, at 61, he has seen the impact of management changes in the factory. "The climate seems to be right for them. With so many people on the dole, they think they can do what they like to us. "Before, they would have floaters on the shop floor to take over if you were sick or if you wanted to go to the toilet. Now, there's nobody spare. Everybody has a job to go to. "They've speeded up the tracks so I'm doing about twice what I did two years ago-now it pulls a car every four minutes and 45 seconds. And if they want something extra they just expect us to get it

have called us into the

much of being treated like children.

done. Years ago they'd

in the Militant."

Melanie Storer spoke to a Ford Leamington apprentice.

## Halewood

"IT'S AS we expected. Unanimous support by all the workers. No hourly workers at all reported for work on the Halewood site. The feedback is that it's the same throughout the country.

We hope it's not a long dispute, but regrettably we are prepared for it. "It's hard to say whether management

have dug their heels in. It could be that they are waiting to see if people would adjust to the last ballot decision. Don't forget, it's the second ballot, and once By Tony Wedlake.

## Southampton

THE LOCAL press have been referring to the 'reluctant strikers' at the Southampton plant, a reference to their vote to accept the last Ford offer. When asked by an interviewer whether this was true, one picket replied, "No, I'm not reluctant, only a bit cold."

In fact, the plant is out on strike solidly. "We voted in favour of the deal, but we'll abide by the majority and we'll stay out until we win," commented another.

By Gavin Marsh.

office to discuss it first,

"The high pressure of work is taking its toll in the health of the staff. In one six-week period last year no less than 17 shopfloor workers died from, illnesses, many of them stress-related, such as strokes."

## Opportunities

Jack explained: "In the past the men who were over 60 were taken off the tracks and put on other jobs. But there aren't many of those opportunities left and people are queuing up for them.

He's in no doubt about why the changes have been brought in. "It's all profit motive and they don't care how they get it. People will only take so

on night The lads walked out last week when someone was disciplined. Now they're trying to scare us with letters about redundancies at Porsche." Before Christmas, a strike ballot for one-day action against the closure of a local hospital was lost by a handful of votes. In national action to defend the NHS, there can be no doubt that the Jaguar plant would shut down.

Jack and other delegates from his union branch will be at the **BLOC** conference, hoping to meet stewards from other car plants and coordinate the battle.

> Jack spoke to Sian Rhys.

## **◄Industrial reports**►

# Ferries – national action needed

THE EMPLOYERS, using the Tory's antiunion laws, are determined to smash union organisation on the ferries. Supporting 160 ferry workers, sacked by the Isle of Man Steam Packet Company (IMSPC), members of the National Union of Seamen (NUS) and the NUR brought the ferries to a halt last week. The IMSPC workers were sacked for taking protest action against draconian attacks on conditions and plans to use non-union labour by their bosses.

#### By Tim Harris.

The big companies, P&O and Sealink, rushed to the High Court for injunctions against the NUS.

General secretary, Sam McCluskie, despite his earlier defiant statements, called off the action in the face of legal threats to sequest the union's funds.

As we go to press, however, ferry workers are still on strike at Dover and Folkestone (P&O), Holyhead and Belfast, where 50 have been sacked.

There has been both anger and confusion at McCluskie's handling of the dispute. The union is at a critical point in its history. Shipping companies have sought to cut costs and increase profits by closing down some operations and 'flagging out' others. The number of British ships flying the red ensign has declined from 1,614 to 635 since 1975. Twenty years ago the NUS had about 100,000 members:



Today, on ferries and on deep sea operations it probably has no more than 15,000.

The IMSPC dispute represents a 'Wapping' for seamen. 40 per cent Sealinkowned, a victory for the bosses here would be used throughout the industry to attack conditions. In October 1986 Sealink cut 436 jobs and a year later P&O announced the axing of 400 at Dover.

The fate of every NUS member hangs on the outcome of this dispute. The ferry owners must be stopped. Only national strike action, involving the deep sea members as well as the ferries, backed up with the support of dockers and other transport workers, can drive them back.

A national ship stewards conference must be convened to organise this national action. Undoubtedly, a ballot of NUS members would give backing to a fightback. Committees of seamen, dockers and railwayworkers should be established in every area to ensure solidarity.

## 'We're not going to be serfs!'

ON 29 December seamen employed by the Isle of Man Steam Packet Company occupied one of the company's four ships in Heysham harbour, after the introduction of a new agreement on working practices. All 160 NUS members were sacked.

One striker, Desmond Mullins, described the agreement as "a return to the dark ages". It proposed that seamen should spend two weeks on duty with one week rest, whereas normally they work one week on and one week off. The seamen's 52 days' leave a year is also to be abolished.

When the seamen are on duty they work one 12-hour shift a day but, because they only get a basic wage of £97 a week, many have to work overtime. This means they may work over 20 hours a day; it may mean they work well over 100 hours a week. The seamen felt that working two weeks

on duty would affect health and safety. The agreement also introduced a new contract of employment under Isle of Man

## Belfast-Liverpool

law, under which there is no right to redundancy payment. It laid down that "no lock-out, strikes, stoppages of work or any restrictions upon normal work practices shall take place."

The companies want to introduce nonunion labour by the early 1990s to cut the number of seamen. It believes it can manage with just 87 men.

#### Not scallywags

The new agreement is a means of attacking unionised labour, using a probationary period to get rid of the most militant seamen and cut the workforce.

"We're not going to be serfs" said Desmond Mullins, "We're not going back 50 years... we're seamen, we're not scallywags, we're ordinary working men with families."

Sealink own more than 40 per cent of the IMSPC, so the new agreement may be a test

**Dover P&O** 

case for them. If they win, such an agreement may be introduced for all ferry workers.

The seamen are in high spirits, saying they will go to jail before giving in. But financial support is urgently needed as they have not been paid for five to six weeks.

One seamen has two children in full-time education. Since his wife is dead, he has to spend £60 a week on childcare when at sea. When however he approached the DHSS to see what financial assistance he could get, he left empty-handed.

Support has been given by dockers at Heysham and collections have been organised in local workplaces by Lancaster trades council. At Lancaster University Labour Club members raised £42 in a 45 minute collection.

> By a Lancaster Labour Party member

## Luton car workers fighting back

A MASS meeting of over half the hourly-paid workers at Vauxhall's car plant in Luton has voted overwhelmingly, against advice from national union negotiators, to reject management's pay offer. Only 25 out of 2,000 workers voted in favour.

Members of the AEU, TGWU and EETPU are ballotting this week and if the deal is rejected a seven-day notice of strike action will be issued.

The offer is for a four and a half per cent wage increase this year and the same next year, coupled with a £3 consolidation of the bonus over two years. But the deal is linked to sweeping changes in sickness, absence and lateness control.

Mick Longley, AEU convenor, described the deal as "very similar to the offer accepted at the IBC plant across the road". This van plant is described as a joint venture between the Japanese manufacturer Izusu and General Motors. It was wholly owned by GM, but they sold a 60 per cent stake to Izusu, of which however 38 per cent is owned by GM!

A condition of that deal was the acceptance of sweeping changes in working conditions like those in the 'model' Nissan plant in the north east. Given the stick of a threat to close the plant and the carrot of a £500 cash award for acceptance, the deal was acccepted.

### Stick and carrot

A new Company Joint Council has been set up, with eleven representatives, five nominated by the company. At present the manual and skilled

At present the manual and skilled workers' representatives are all convenors or shop stewards. One non-union employee stood but was defeated. But the employee side also represents office staff, foremen and managers and they have to reach a common position on all issues.

The new system includes a 'core' of employees supplemented by temporary, part-time or contract staff and new working practices, based on "teamwork, flexibility and mobility" have been introduced.

Workers will be expected to "acquire knowledge to fulfill all jobs within the team" and perform "some duties previously performed by other disciplines, eg inspection, repair and minor

AT MASS meetings at the weekend, IMSPC seafarers unanimously rejected the management offer. Workers on the Belfast-Liverpool route accepted the general secretary's instruction but voted to go into local dispute.

P&O crews at Fleetwood and Liverpool rejected the general secretary's instruction and went into unofficial dispute. Holyhead Sealink workers also voted to have a local dispute.

In Belfast, seamen were evicted by the RUC. Belfast Freight Ferries are threatening to run two ferries, the Saga Moon and the Spheroid, with scab crews.

There are rumours that another company, Mezeron Ramsey, is to run a scab ship between Garston and the Isle of Man. The TGWU is organising a picket.

By Richard Knights

EDDIE WESTHEAD, an NUS member employed by P&O in Dover, spoke, in a personal capacity, to Eric Segal about the union's dispute:

THE COMPANY informed us of their intention to reduce the manning scale in early December. They gave us three months' notice that they were going to implement their new working system which would mean two crews instead of three.

That would mean working 147 days as opposed to 90 days a year at the expense of approximately 500 workers going down the road. The company can't get extra profits from generating more trade, so they see our wage packets as that extra profit.

The NUS are prepared to take action, but fellow trade unionists like Numast (the officers' union) are still sitting on the fence.

Since the Tory government came to power the merchant navy has been decimated. Nearly every company in the UK has 'flagged out' (sailed under a foreign flag) in order to employ cheap labour.

Now P&O want to reduce the manning scale and, who knows, in the future they also could flag out to cheap labour. If the company get their way their action will further infringe on safety. We've had our disaster because of the company's greed.

Sequestration is another ploy by P&O's Tory friends to gag a legitimate cause and freedoms. It is in the interests of all seamen to be solidly united to oppose these cuts because as far as Dover is concerned, this is the last battle we'll have if the bosses win.

Belfast resolution.

"We, the membership of the Belfast branch of the National Union of Seamen call on Sam McCluskie to resign as general secretary forthwith after turning his back on the membership of the Belfast branch."

This resolution was passed unanimously after the national strike was called off. maintenance".

There is an extended negotiation and arbitration machinery to "produce vehicles without disputes" and to avoid "any action which disrupts production".

Lunch breaks have been cut to 30 minutes and workers are allowed only a ten-minute tea break. These measures are in force until 1 January 1989 and any disruption will cause workers to lose their £500 cash benefit.

Proposals like this are now being used throughout the motor industry in a drive for profit. Team working will mean divide- and-rule, with teams competing against each other. Older workers especially will be pressured to work harder to reach production targets.

These proposals can be defeated, even at IBC, given the confidence and militancy of car workers.

By Gwyn Morris, No 3 ASTMS District Convenor, Div 5, in personal capacity

# Ford workers say:

"WE'VE MADE massive profits for Ford over the years. Let's see how much they make without us." This comment from worker at the a Southampton plant sums up the bitterness which exists towards the company's offer.

#### By a Ford Dagenham TGWU member.

Ford workers are now out-from Halewood to Southampton, from Swansea to Basildon. This strike is not just about money. It's about conditions on the track and the fact that management want to turn the screw several degrees tighter.

Since 1978 we have made a staggering £1,180 million for Ford UK, yet 31,000 jobs have gone in this period. The directors aren't interested in their workforce-they're interested in one thing and one thing alone-jacking up their profits.

This dispute must be run by the rank and file. It is our jobs and conditions that are at stake. We must elect strike committees at every plant to run the strike. Regular mass meetings must be organised to keep



the membership involved. Bulletins should be produced to regularly answer the attacks of the management and the Tory press. To in-volve the families and communities we should launch support groups.

national A lay negotiating committee must be elected to ensure that the true feelings of the shopfloor are being fought for

We need the support of dockers and transport workers. Dockers have already promised to black Ford imports from Europe. We welcome this solidarity. Delegations should be sent to Genk, Saarlouis, Col-

26 issues £11.00

26 issues £15.00

26 issues £18.00

ogne and Valencia to win support.

The wider trade union movement has to be approached for support to prevent management using the Tory anti-union laws in this dispute as the ferry owners have.

In the words of one Dagenham maintenance worker: "You tend to take it and take it but we've had enough. If it takes a while to win this strike, we are ready. We're prepared to stick it out to the end."

If we stand firm and win the backing of other workers, we will win.

We must organise:

\* Regular mass meetings at all plants.

\* Regular bulletins to keep strikers informed. \* An appeal to Ford workers internationally for solidarity support.

\* An appeal to dockers and transport workers to black Ford vehicles and components.

\* A conference of all Ford stewards to elect a new all lay-member negotiating team.

Stand firm to win: \* A minimum ten per cent pay increase!

\* Annual pay deals! \* A 35 hour week with no loss of pay!

\* The full claim!

## **Defend the** health service



## **Can we trust** these people?

THE NATIONAL negotiators called the three year deal a 'unique achievement'. You can say that again! The original acceptance of this shameful deal by the National Joint Negotiating Committee has posed point blank the need for a far greater degree of democratic check by Ford workers upon those who meet the company in negotiations.

The NJNC has been shown to be light years removed from the feelings of ordinary Ford workers on the shop floor. The NJNC should be urgently re-constituted. Ford workers have entered battle. We want a general staff that does not run for cover at the first sign of enemy fire.

Negotiations should be in the hands of Ford workers themselves through their elected shop stewards. Fulltime officials should be present only in an advisory capacity.

A conference should be urgently convened of all Ford stewards to elect a new NJNC made up entirely of lay members, with trade union full time officials only present on request and in an advisory role.

The strategy for running the strike should be firmly in the hands of this elected members body lay nationally supplemented in each area by democratically elected strike committees.

### Democratic

There must be no question either of the mood being eroded by constant ballots on slightly altered offers. Before any offer is again put to the workforce for acceptance it should first be ratified by a majority in a national Ford's stewards conference.

This deal has also raised the need for trade union full time officials to be subject to the democratic check of regular elections and to be brought nearer to conditions of the members they serve by receiving only the average wage of a skilled worker, together with any necessary expenses.

## fair deal?

FORD WORKERS will be interested to learn that while they have to strike to improve an offer of seven per cent this year, coupled with an array of attacks on conditions, the directors have awarded themselves a rise of 19 per cent, the chairman, already on over £4000 a week, an increase of 41 per cent and the shareholders a modest 206 per cent boost.

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and small business people

What we stand for

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

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

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

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

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