

woman worker

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5p



Tories attack housing and jobs ...

The massive TUC demonstration on 9 March against the Tory anti-union laws which brought over 100,000 out on the streets of London was yet another indication of the willingness of the working class to fight and defend itself against the attacks of the Thatcher government.

This followed on previous demonstrations against the cuts and the anti-abortion Corrie Bill, each of which drew new layers into the fight against the Tories. At the same time all over the country workers have taken to the streets in local demonstrations. Trade unionists have joined with housewives, parent groups and school students in united opposition to the attacks on their basic rights and living standards.

The question now is, where does the fight to defend living standards, jobs and social services go from here? How can we most effectively carry forward the fight to defend basic rights?

The TUC has been careful to issue the usual quota of protest statements (and boxfuls of glossy stickers and badges!) to the extent of calling people out to demonstrate their anger on a Sunday.

LAME SCHEME

However, they have shown no sign of calling further action. Instead they want us to get bogged down in yet another protest with their lame scheme for "taking time off" and lunchtime stoppages on May 14. In the meantime they have stepped in to squash the call for a general strike in South Wales and worked might and main to keep the steelworkers isolated and out on their own.

What is needed is not a lunchtime protest in May but mass strike action now to defend the steelworkers strike, on pay and closures and unite all such struggles against the government.

And what are our Labour leaders doing? Instead of fighting to make the bankers pay by cutting interest charges, Labour Councils in Lambeth and Lothian, having refused to implement the cuts find their 'solution' in raising the money from rates rises which in effect is just another cut. The only bit of local authority spending not being cut is the interest charges. In fact with the increases in the bank lending rate to 17% and further increases likely, these will rise drastically.

Of course all this flies in the face of reality. The Tory government is absolutely determined to extract the full cost of their economic crisis from the working class. Not content with the already massive cuts in public spending they have now moved in to slash the housing subsidies to local councils effectively putting a stop to new council house building in many areas. City Councils like Leicester—a Labour council pledged not to implement the cuts—have begun announcing an end to all council house building for the foreseeable future!

This comes at a time when rents, rates and mortgages are already soaring, driven up by the Tories' monetarist policies. Many working class and even middle class families will be forced to sell up and to seek housing in a market dominated by speculators and Rachmanite landlords.

With thousands of families already homeless and council waiting lists bulging, the net effect of Tory policies of selling off the best council housing and chopping subsidies will be to further drive up rents and intensify the problems of the homeless. And the only people to benefit will be the private building firms and the financiers who will rake in huge new profits.

We demand that Labour councils don't implement rent or rate increases and where this has already taken place tenants associations should start to organise rent and rates strikes.

For these attacks on basic rights like housing, education, health and social services all have one aim. To divide and weaken the working class and boost the profits of capitalist big business. That is the logic behind the Tories assault on the Welfare State.

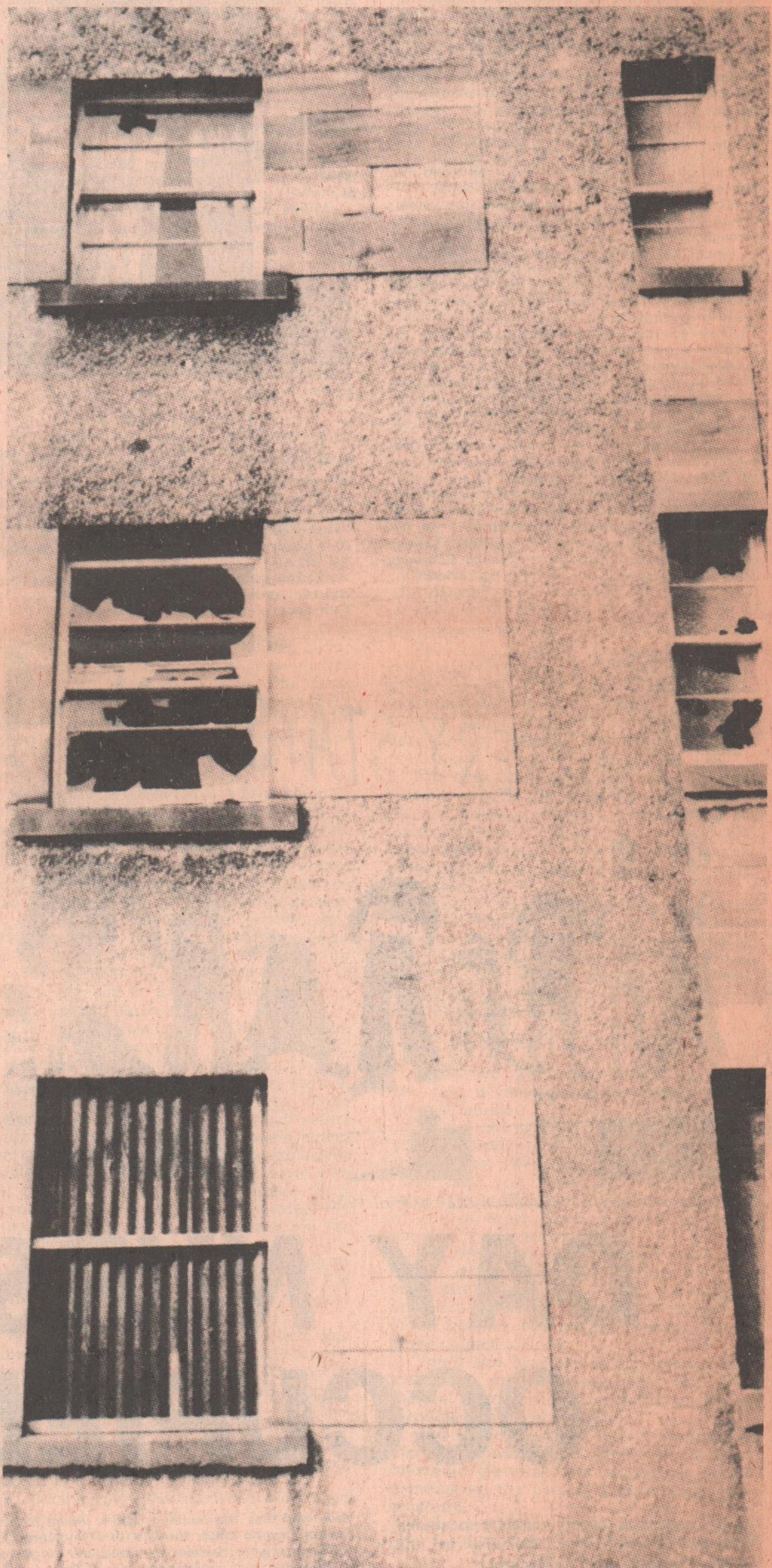
At the same time the Tories drive to restore profitability and rationalise ailing firms has deprived hundreds of thousands of workers of their right to work. Latest unemployment figures reveal the number of unemployed for more than a year as the highest since the war.

Meanwhile recorded female unemployment has increased by 62% over the last four years from 254,000 to 412,000. And these figures do not of course include the vast numbers of married women who have been driven back into the home by cuts in staffing and lack of nursery provision and who now constitute an 'invisible' army of unemployed.

But women are prepared to fight to defend their rights as reflected in the thousands who demonstrated against the Corrie Bill in October and against the Tory cuts on October 28 and March 9.

This strength must be mobilised into mass action and linked to strikes on pay, redundancies and closures through councils of action to build for a general strike to remove this government.

But we cannot return the same Labour government as before. We must fight to remove the right wing leadership who agree with the Tory cuts and former 'lefts' like Neil Kinnock who state that they can't restore the cuts in public spending. We must have a workers' government pledged to socialist policies to meet the crisis.



KICK

THEM OUT WITH

A GENERAL STRIKE!

DEFEND EALING NURSERIES

In November 1979 Ealing council decided against the recommendations of its own education committee to end the provision of education for the under fives.

No educational grounds were given and there was no consultation with parents or teachers. Over 3,000 children will be affected, the number of nursery places will be halved (at present 200 full time and 1,400 part time), teachers and ancillary workers will be made redundant and classes will be larger.

Ealing council claim they can save about £285,000 by restricting admission of children to primary school before the age of five.

Compared to the other London boroughs, Ealing is the worst hit by cuts in this direction.

At the beginning of the year, a group of parents affected by this decision formed a group called the Ealing 3-5 Education Action Group (E3-5AG).

They have recently re-organised into seven groups so that people are able to work locally throughout the borough.

Since its formation, the group has been extremely active in making people aware of what is happening in their borough. They have lobbied Ealing education committee and local MPs at the House of Commons.

They got the Ealing branch of the NUT to circulate a questionnaire to all first, middle, and nursery schools to ascertain how many children would be affected by the cuts in September and they have contacted all the schools in the borough, via the Parent Managers, asking them to raise the issue with parents in their schools.

They have asked for financial and active support from various local organisations including all Trade Union branches affiliated to the trades council. And they have written letters individually and collectively to local MPs, councillors and to the chairman of the education committee.

A letter has also been written to Mark Carlisle asking him to comment on the Ealing Borough Council's decision, in the light of his remarks in the debate on the Education Bill on February 12, to the effect that he would like to see existing

facilities in primary schools used for the under 5's.

As the group's activity has escalated, so has the support they have gained. 100 people attended a lobby of the education committee at Ealing Town Hall, on February 5.

Every Saturday on the streets of Ealing they collect names and let people in the borough know what is happening. They also go round on a door-to-door basis to inform people and get them to sign petitions.

PUBLIC MEETING

At their first public meeting on March 6 they drew an audience of over 700 to hear speakers from the Ealing 3-5 Action Group, a reception class teacher and the secretary of the Ealing branch of the NUT.

At the meeting the group urged the audience to come out with them under their own banner on Tuesday March 11, to march to Ealing Town Hall to join with the NUT in their half-day strike. Mrs Jenny Myers of the E3-5AG urged parents to keep their children at home that afternoon if the school they attended were not to be closed. She said that this was the first time that teachers and parents had united. "We must all go out onto the streets in the afternoon to persuade the council. We must make sure they are never allowed to drop this subject."

UNION POLICY

Martin Gerald, secretary of the Ealing Branch of the NUT, said the union was firmly committed to fight against the under 5's policy and that the shortage of nursery facilities within the borough would be aggravated by the council's decision. "The Ealing Council is totally out of touch. It is preserving a policy that is going to devastate the schools."

At the meeting, a resolution was passed unanimously stating opposition to the decision of Ealing council and calling for its removal.



Kollontai

Many of the (admittedly very few) women who became prominent in the Bolshevik Party at the time of the 1917 Russian Revolution came from upper-class families.

This was no accident. The oppression of women from the petty-bourgeois working class or especially the peasantry was so severe that few were able to break out of it. Alexandra Kollontai was no exception to this rule—she was born with all the privileges that an upper-class family bestowed on her. This background enabled her to go to university—an education which few Russian men, let alone women, could achieve.

However, Kollontai was, from an early age, a very untypical upper-class woman.

Unlike the British suffragettes who drove men off to fight, she saw her main task as agitation against the war, and for the workers to turn their guns on their oppressors at home, instead of their fellow workers in rival armies. As she commented later on:

"So long as the war continued, the problem of women's liberation obviously had to recede into the background since my only concern, my highest aim, was to fight against the war and call a new Workers' International into being."

Kollontai returned to Russia from a lengthy exile after the February revolution and played a valuable part in the developments that led to the seizure of power by the Bolsheviks in October 1917. Lenin complimented her on her skills in propaganda work, and she was elected onto the Central Committee in July 1917.

CLASS MOVEMENT

Even before she arrived at university at the age of 16, her sympathies were with the growing working class movement, and she reacted instinctively against the injustices and hardships she saw around her in Tsarist Russia.

She married her cousin at the age of 20. It was a love-match, opposed by her parents, but the restrictions of married life soon came into conflict with Kollontai's aspirations and desire to become actively involved in the revolutionary movement.

As she put it in her autobiography: "I still loved my husband, but the happy life of a housewife and spouse became for me a 'cage'."

This conflict between an active, independent political life and the expectations that a spouse or lover has of 'his' woman was a continual theme of Kollontai's life, and her writings on sexual morality and women's liberation.

alexandra kollontai bolshevik

It is this awareness of the 'personal' aspect of sexual oppression that has endeared Kollontai to the feminists, who have adopted her as their own. She certainly devoted a substantial part of her writing to these questions.

However, Kollontai would have been appalled if she knew that she was being identified as a feminist—she always saw herself as a communist, and was hostile to the feminist notion that men as a sex, rather than class society, are the primary oppressors of women.

She recognised the importance of her views on sexual relations and what she called 'communist morality', and battled against conservatism within the Bolshevik party in order to raise them. But she regarded the practical work of organising among women winning these women to communism, as her most important task.

She built a 'women's movement', but it was no classless 'sisterhood'. It was a movement of working class women who followed a revolutionary programme.

She joined the Bolshevik party in 1915.



Women demonstrate in Petrograd, 1917.

WHY WOMEN

Woman Worker is a revolutionary working class newspaper which takes up the struggles of women against their economic and political exploitation at work and at home, and fights for these problems to be taken up as part of the struggle to build the international revolutionary party to take the whole working class forward to a planned socialist society.

Women have a necessary role to play in the struggle against capitalism. Socialism will never come about without the involvement of 50% of the population.

The past decade has seen the limited democratic gains of the Equal Pay and the Sex Discrimination Acts threatened by cuts in jobs, hospitals, wages and the worst unemployment since the 1930s. Not only have women had to face the organised threat from the Tory government and the employers but also within their own ranks in the unions there is much work to be done in bringing questions which affect women to the fore.



PHOTO: Laurie Spearham (JFL)

South Oxford Nursery occupation, March-April 1978.

DAY NURSERY OCCUPIED!

On Friday 6 March parents occupied Nightingale Lane Day Nursery in the London Borough of Wandsworth.

A demonstration was planned for 4 p.m. and the Matron moved the children from the Nursery at lunchtime. In the rush and panic a window was left open and parents were able to gain entrance legally and start their occupation.

The decision of Wandsworth Social Services Committee to close the Day Nursery was made in November 1979. Parents were advised by letter of the 'decision', which was rubber-stamped two weeks later. The reason for closing, they were

told, was that the building that is leased by the Council, was no longer suitable for a Day Nursery.

Parents were therefore amazed and perplexed to find that two applications for the lease (which the Council has renewed for 3 years) were from individuals planning to run—would you believe—a private day nursery.

The parents occupied Nightingale Lane Nursery the night before the Social Services Meeting as a token gesture but that didn't deter them in their closure plan.

Since November the nursery, which has full facilities for 56 children and had an attendance of 44 children before the decision, has been deliberately run down to leave on the day of the closure only four children.

The parents plan to continue the occupation as long as possible and have leafleted the local area and asked parents and childminders to bring children along to the nursery to use the facilities.

The trade unions, Labour Party and Trades Council in Wandsworth have given support to the occupation but active support is needed, particularly from public sector trade unions in the form of supporting strike action if this occupation against the Tory attack on women, children, one parent families, and the necessary and vital service of day provision for the under fives is not to end like others in the past.

Send financial donations and messages of support to: Sarah Rackham, c/o Nightingale Lane Day Nursery, 56, Nightingale Lane, London SW12.

ra kollontai ik leader

The major factor in her decision to join was the determined stand that Lenin and the Bolsheviks took against the imperialist (1914-18) war. Kollontai was deeply shocked when German socialists caved in and voted to support 'their' ruling class in the war.

EMOTIONAL

Her political development after the revolution brought out the weaknesses of her politics, which was always based primarily on her emotional reaction to injustice and poverty, rather than a scientific understanding of Marxism.

In 1920, she was in the leadership of the Workers Opposition. This faction within the Bolshevik Party opposed several aspects of party policy. In particular, they criticised as "undemocratic" the use of bourgeois specialists with technical skills, and argued for immediate workers' management, ignoring the need for workers to acquire these skills first.

CRITIC

Although Kollontai was a 'left' critic of Lenin in 1920, she was unable to maintain a

consistent stand against the *real* threat to workers' democracy and the development of the revolution: the rise of Stalinism.

In 1922 she began the diplomatic career which was her main activity from then onwards. She died in 1952, after managing to escape the Stalinist purges of the 1930s—a major feat for a former Bolshevik leader. One of the factors which enabled her to survive was her refusal to join the Opposition led by Trotsky in the late 1920s. In fact, in 1927 she wrote "The Opposition and the Party Rank and File"—a 'reply' to Trotsky's opposition to the growing bureaucratisation of the party.

Kollontai was by no means a conscious Stalinist, but her inability to analyse and respond scientifically to the developments during and after the revolution made her inconsistent and wavering. Her starting point was her emotional reaction and a superficial understanding of "what the masses want" rather than objective assessments. It was this weakness that led a brilliant orator and leader of working women into the reactionary camp of Stalinism.



MAN WORKER?

The bankrupt policies of the labour and trade union bureaucrats has serious implications for women's fight against oppression. Forced to stifle the struggle for policies which will actually win disputes and begin to challenge capitalism, the bureaucracy has pushed women's rights questions into the background.

In some cases the forcing of women out of employment and back into the home has been fostered by trade union leaders as a solution to their male members own problems.

Woman Worker is published by the Workers Socialist League as part of the fight to mobilise women together with the working class in the international fight against capitalism. As Trotskyists we are fighting to reconstruct the Fourth International—the world party of socialist revolution—to lead the struggles of the working class.

Our programme, based on the Transitional Programme, is directed towards linking women's struggles for democratic rights and against economic oppression, with the need to overthrow capitalism.

*Women to take on positions of leadership within the unions in order to fight for these policies.

*Joint price committees of trade unionists and housewives to organise the fight against inflation.

*For a sliding scale of wages on top of flat rate increases: for wages to be linked to price increases as assessed by elected price committees.

*For strike action and occupations to defend the health, education and social services and threatened factories.

*For open-the-books committees to discover the real financial state of the social services, and private companies threatening closure.

*For nationalisation under workers' management without compensation of firms that declare themselves bankrupt.

*Against all anti-abortion legislation—for free abortion and contraception on demand and workers and consumers control of the health service.

*Solidarity with struggles of women internationally against oppression by international imperialism or by the Stalinist bureaucracies in the deformed workers states.

WHY PAY DEBT CHARGES ?



'YOUR HOME IS MY CASH'

If trade unionists, tenants and housewives are going to fight the cuts successfully, they will need to be crystal clear about how local authorities get their money, what they do with it and who benefits.

For a start, in order to fight cuts you need to be able to identify a cut when you see one. Anybody can recognise a boarded-up day nursery, but what happens when they start juggling the books, talking about "clawbacks" and 'notional' improvements?

And what do you do when the local paper, in the midst of all this, starts a 'self-help' campaign, aimed at convincing people to provide 'free' the services they used to get as a right from the welfare state?

This article is intended as a brief guide to council financing to enable our readers to know what to look for when they start digging for skeletons in the council books.

Basically, local government income comes from three sources: a) government grants; b) rates, which are really a local property tax; c) income from rents and services like swimming baths. The government grant is by far the largest of these, normally adding up to about 60% of the total income, which is why in the end it is the government who control council purse strings.

This government grant is based on the Treasury assessment of three elements.

Firstly there is a 'needs' element to help councils cover their obligations to provide for schoolchildren, pensioners etc. Then there is a 'resources' element, which assists councils who have low incomes and therefore could not afford to provide sufficient facilities like libraries, swimming baths etc. on their own. And finally there is a 'domestic' element, designed to protect (?) ratepayers from having to foot the bill for rising costs.

These three grants are then tacked on to the direct grants made for police and the fire service to make up the total 'Rate Support Grant' to a council.

Much of what councils provide with this money is determined by law; for example schools for all children between the ages of 5 and 16, which takes up over 5% of most county councils budgets.

But the way they do this is often not spelt out. That is why governments can improve or deteriorate many basic services without ever needing to pass new laws.

Council money goes to cover a wide range of expenses, normally: called revenue expenditure, which include staff wages, maintenance, materials, equipment, administration and interest on any loans.

A rarely published fact, however, is that these 'debt' charges on loans often amount to as much as 40% of total expenditure in District Councils, and up to a quarter of expenditure in County Councils.

BANKS

This massive back-hander to the banks is caused by the fact that councils are forced to borrow most of their major capital

projects like housebuilding, new schools, roads and major repairs. Some of this is part subsidised, but it still leaves councils with huge bills to pay which can only be covered by more loans. Thus councils find themselves permanently in hock to the bankers and speculators.

Council budgets are worked out by making an estimate of financial needs - based on expected expenditure on existing services and any new project - taking away the amount covered by the government Rate Support Grant and income from rents and services and then putting the rest down to rates, which go up (or down) according to the size of the gap. Where there is a severe shortfall, then Councils begin to cut services.

What the Tories have done is to reduce the amount of government grants in real cash terms—thereby forcing councils, who already planned for major rates rises to cover inflation, to cut back across the board on services.

They have also begun to 'clawback' sums allocated under the 'resources' element by cutting new building projects, even ones previously approved. Since such projects are not part of existing spending, they then call these 'notional' cuts!

The only way to counter this is to begin not from what money the Tories are prepared to offer, but instead from what is needed to continue and develop existing services.

ACCESS

To do this, local labour movement bodies need direct access to the accounts in order to see the actual varieties in estimates, existing spending and proposed future spending.

This access also enables us to establish the amounts milked off by private contractors on various schemes, and most importantly the extent of the bankers profiteering.

The debt charges to the bankers are the one area of spending which is *not* affected by the cuts. In fact, given the increase in the minimum lending rates, councils are budgeting to spend even *more* on interest this year, further boosting the record profits of the banks.

The only other item worth hunting out straight away is the allocation of money to pay for places at public schools. This is an increase which the Tories have specifically encouraged, which takes cash direct from other services, and particularly from state education.

Each of these, the massive payments to the banks, the rip-off contracts with private firms, and the free gifts to private education, are at the direct expense of the working class. And the rate rises, much loved by 'left' talking Labour councillors, are just as much an attack on living standards.

POOREST FAMILIES

Rates are what is called a 'regressive' tax—that is, one which hits hardest at the poorest families.

So any rise in rates always leaves working class families proportionately worse off than the wealthy dwellers in green-belt suburbia.

In fact, you might try comparing the rates of an ordinary semi in town with those of one of those gabled palaces out in the country. You'll get a shock!

But what you will also have then is a battery of armaments for fighting the Tory cuts, demanding that public spending is organised to benefit working people instead of the bankers, businessmen and their mates at the council offices.

You'll also have the evidence to demonstrate the case for *cancelling* the debt charges, fighting the rate rises and organising spending to meet actual needs.

And above all, you'll have an irrefutable case for abolishing the anarchy of capitalist economic planning and organising public spending on the basis of a planned socialist economy.

Only on that basis can society organise to cater for the actual needs of people.

CANCEL THE DEBT CHARGES—OPEN THE BOOKS—FOR A TRADE UNION ENQUIRY INTO ALL PUBLIC SPENDING—PROTECT PUBLIC EXPENDITURE THROUGH A SLIDING SCALE OF SPENDING TIED TO THE REAL RISE IN THE COST OF LIVING AS ASSESSED BY COMMITTEES OF TRADE UNIONISTS, HOUSEWIVES AND TENANTS.

woman worker

CORRIE DEFEATED! now fight for NHS abortion on demand

The Corrie Amendment Bill to restrict women's abortion rights, has now run out of time. For this session of Parliament, at least, the limited access to abortion offered by the 1967 Abortion Act is still available.

The immediate cause of the Corrie Bill's failure was the filibustering of a few Tribune MPs, and the huge number of amendments tabled, which held up voting on the Bill itself. However it was the mass mobilisations of women and men against the Bill that was crucially important.

MPs voted 242 to 98 to give the Bill its Second Reading last June, but between then and the Third Reading last month, there has been the huge demonstration against Corrie, called by the TUC, which conservative estimates put at 40,000 and massive tobbies of Parliament.

With this kind of opposition, the Tories would be unable to give Corrie extra time for his Bill, and risk being seen openly as anti-abortion.

However, it is paradoxical that at the same time as the Tories in Parliament are trying to force women back into the home through public spending cuts and unwanted child-bearing, capitalists in the drug trade are trying to foist a new contraceptive on women.

Depo-Provera, a drug which is injected and prohibits contraception for a three month period, has up till now been banned for safety reasons, but has just recently been given the 'go ahead'. This is despite the fact that Depo-Provera is known to be linked to cancer of the cervix, and other harmful side-effects. Even the manufacturers say that women who are injected with the drug over several years, or with large doses, should be examined carefully for side-effects.

In fact, though, Tory anti-abortionists and capitalists in the drug trade, have a lot in common.

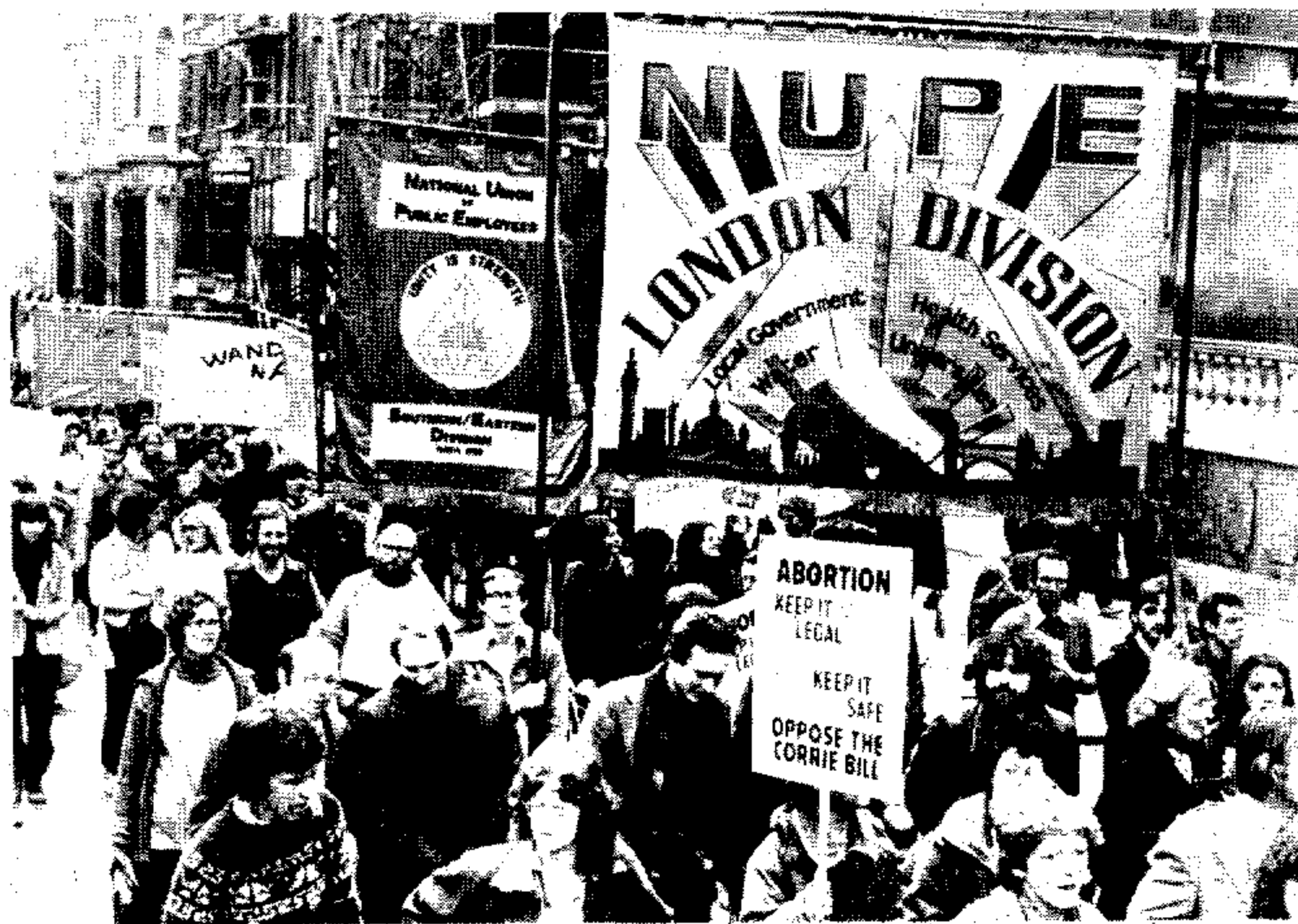
Both are unconcerned with the wishes and health of working class women, and both are anxious to make profits. The Tories in Parliament are eager for abortion restrictions, at least partly because this excludes more women from employment, and thus alleviates the present economic crisis and profits squeeze, while capitalist contraceptive manufacturers are eager to 'get rich quick' by exploiting the huge demand for contraception, regardless of the consequences for women's health. For both sets of capitalists, the prime concern is profitability not the health and freedom of working women.

It is obvious that as long as the means of controlling fertility are in the hands of the capitalist class, not controlled by the workers in drug companies and the NHS and the women who need contraception and abortion, the health of women will be at risk.

Research into new abortion techniques and into new contraceptive drugs is inadequate. New methods of controlling fertility are given the 'go-ahead' before sufficient testing has been carried out, and before harmful side-effects have been eliminated. Drug companies can make huge profits without having to discover really safe and effective preparations.

Working women must demand the nationalisation of drug companies under workers' and users' control, and also the establishment within the NHS of elected committees of workers and consumers who are accountable to the community they serve. Equally, we must not be satisfied with the mere defence of the 1967 Act. We must go on the offensive demanding adequate abortion facilities, and putting pressure on Labour Party MPs to liberalise the present abortion legislation and make choice about abortion a matter for women, not Parliament or the medical profession to decide.

PHOTO: Mark Risher (JFL)



BRITISH IMPERIALISM ATTACKS ARMAGH WOMEN

At the centre of rising struggles against British military rule in the North of Ireland has been the courageous 3-year 'blanket' protest by 360 prisoners in the notorious 'H' Blocks at the Long Kesh concentration camp.

These prisoners have been refusing to wear prison clothing or do prison work as part of their fight for the restoration of prisoner of war status—which was stripped from them by the British Labour government in 1976.

The object of the deliberate move by British imperialism was to force republican fighters to admit that they were in fact nothing other than common criminals, whose military activities were simply the actions of 'mad gunmen'.

It took place alongside an intensified press campaign designed to emphasise the 'criminality' of the republican and socialist forces fighting to force the British troops out of Ireland.

So when the prisoners resisted this attack they were immediately subjected to the most barbaric ill-treatment. Their refusal to wear prison clothing was met by them being left naked except for a single blanket in unheated cells.

NEGLECT

Their refusal to do prison work was met by a barrage of ill-treatment and neglect that left cells filthy, denied prisoners medical treatment, denied them recreation, visits and subjected them to repeated violence and intimidation.

This ill-treatment has been stepped up by the Tories in the first few months of 1980.

January saw a sapte of incidents in which several 'blanket' prisoners were subjected to a vicious campaign of beatings, humiliating 'searches' and wanton vandalism to their cells and bedding at the hands of prison screws.

But towards the end of the month this British offensive was carried over to a campaign of violence and ill-treatment of women republicans in Armagh jail.

Thirty three women are currently 'on protest' in Armagh jail, refusing to accept 'criminal status'.

Women prisoners—already confined to their cells for 23 hours each day—have been beaten, refused use of the toilet, and subjected to increasingly foul and unhygienic conditions in a renewed attempt by male and female prison officers to break their fighting spirit.

According to *Republican News*, February 7 saw a squad of 40 male screws attack prisoners on B1 wing and wreck cells.

This rampage was followed up by individual maltreatment of prisoners, all of whom are refusing to do prison work as part of their protest. Unlike their male comrades, republican women prisoners are (like all women in British jails) allowed to wear their own, rather than prison clothing.

But their defiance of the repressive measures meted out by their jailers has brought still further harassment, sexual threats and intimidation, and the women are now reported to be confined in filthy and urine-soaked cells.

Despite their specialised ill-treatment, the Tory government and their reactionary Labour henchmen still insist that such prisoners are *not* political prisoners, but common criminals.

No such illusions are peddled by Lord Lowry, Lord Chief Justice in the occupied six counties. He has called upon judges in the no-jury Diplock frame-up courts that operate in Northern Ireland to step up the length of sentences handed out to republicans declaring that:

"It almost certainly is a fact that the general run of sentences will have to become more severe, because there is no doubt the object of sentencing is a deterrent and punishment for something that is a danger to society."

Indeed the Irish liberation struggle is a "danger to society"—not only to the reactionary Orange statelet of Northern Ireland but also to the stability of imperialist exploitation and capitalist rule in the whole of Ireland, and to the security of capitalist rule in Britain itself.

The successful defeat of British imperialist repression in Ireland would be a major step forward against the vicious Tory exploiters at home.

In solidarity with the republican prisoners; in joint struggle with Irish workers north and south; and in the interests of the struggle for socialism in Britain, trade unionists and socialists in Britain must step up the struggle to force the immediate withdrawal of British troops from Ireland; the restoration of political status for Irish POWs preparatory to an amnesty; and for the right of the Irish people to determine their own future.

Back Chix Strike

Last October Mrs Brar, a worker at Chix sweet factory brought in GMWU membership forms. Over a hundred fellow workers joined the union to organise against poor work conditions and appalling wages.

The women, who were mainly Asian and couldn't speak English, were particularly exploited. They were paid 95p an hour, the men were paid £1.26.

The management refused to recognise the union despite appeals from officials and so the GMWU members (90% of the workforce) in the factory took the decision for strike action.

So far the strike has been on for over 20 weeks. Strikers receive £10.50 from the GMWU and therefore are in dire need of what contributions they can get to supplement this from other unions.

It is difficult to establish just how many scabs are working. When the arrive the hired van has its curtains down.

The van picks every scab up from her house, often with a child, who is then looked after in a factory canteen.

This is of course yet further proof that employers will only agree to workplace nurseries when they need a woman workforce and it works to their advantage.

A fair degree of blacking has been organised by the GMWU.

The dispute has attracted support from many different quarters, including the strikers' families as well as local trade unionists from Slough, Fords at Langley and local authorities in West London.

This support could be broadened even further by a campaign for a delegate conference to be called which could thrash out policies to win the strike and coordinate action to put them into practice.

Too many unionisation disputes like the Chix struggle have been lost: Grunwicks, Garners, Sandersons, to name but three.

At a time when all trade union rights are under attack from the Tories it is imperative that we fight for that most basic of rights—union membership.



Mrs Brar.

More information from, and messages of support and donations to: M. Anwar, 271 Goodman Park, Slough.

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