

A Socialist ACTION

**What
you
should
do**

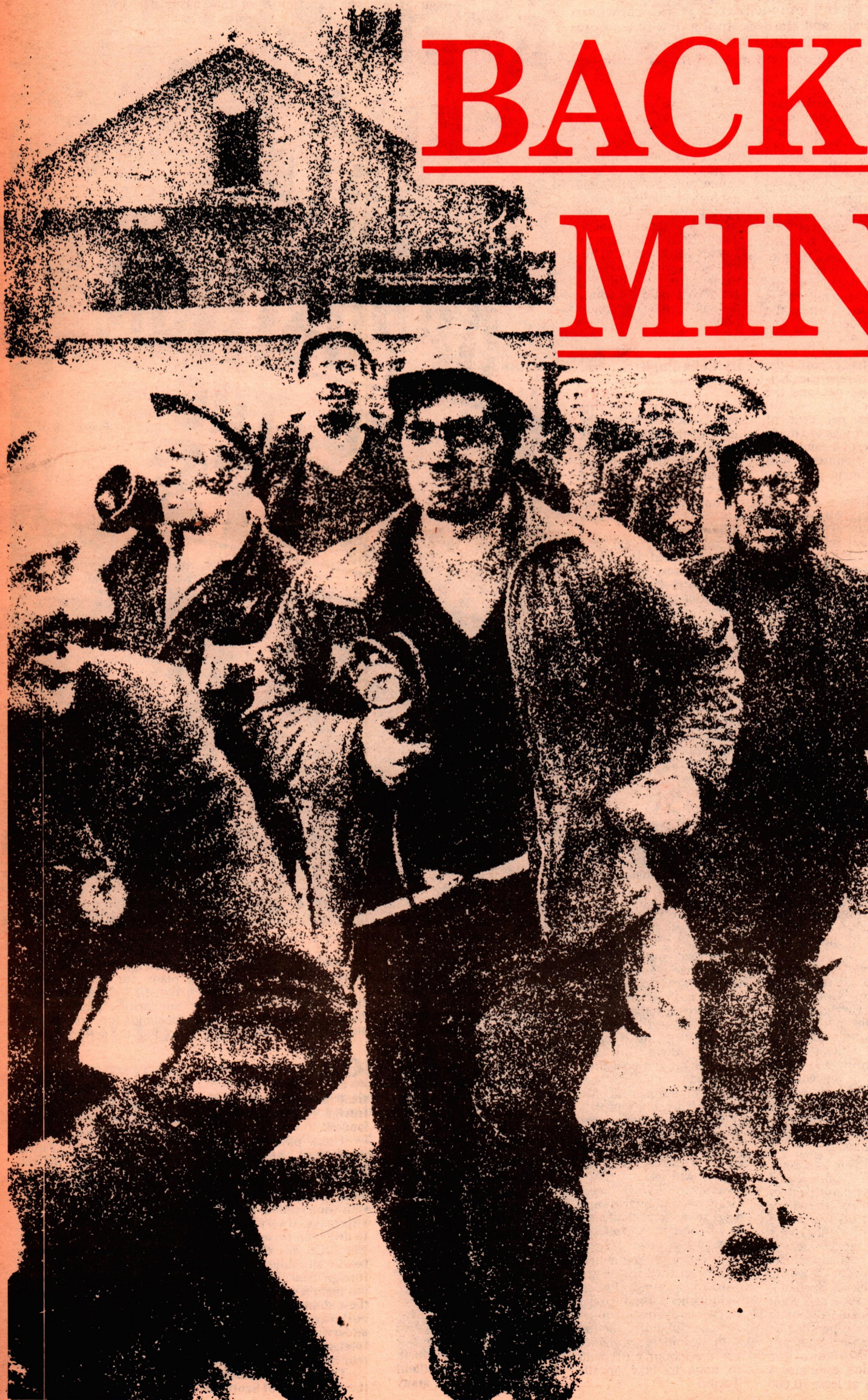
The miner's strike is a decisive clash with Thatcher. Every sinew of the working class movement should be strained in solidarity with their struggle. You can start now by doing the following things. Get emergency resolutions through your Labour Party, trade union branch, Trades Council or shop stewards committee in support of the miners.

The Labour Party should organise a rally of support for the miners in every town.

Send messages of support to the NUM headquarters in Sheffield and to local pits. Get delegations from labour movement bodies to visit picket lines to show their support — and go there yourself.

Try to organise for miners to speak at local meetings, and to tour round local factories winning support. At every event supporting the miners collect money for their cause. And if flying pickets are in your area make sure accomodation and support is organised.

BACK THE MINERS!



THE DECISIVE action by the miners in Yorkshire, Scotland and South Wales has turned the tables on the NCB and the government.

Despite efforts by MacGregor and the media to split the miners, the first few days have been a major victory in round one of the fight against pit closures.

With one or two exceptions, miners everywhere have respected the pickets. The presence of Yorkshire miners in Nottingham will be of major importance for the strike ballots there. The pickets carry the message that pit closures can be fought, and overcome the efforts of the NCB to divide the miners.

This is democracy in action. From the areas most threatened, rank and file miners are carrying the demand for a united fight to their colleagues in 'safer' areas. Yorkshire NUM has now officially sanctioned flying pickets.

The determination of the rank and file is the strongest card the NUM has. At Kellingley in Yorkshire 1000 miners have volunteered for picket duty anywhere in the country.

In Doncaster another 1000 have volunteered. In Scotland miners are already heading South to help the Yorkshire pickets.

The militant action which has been so successful in the coalfields must be used to win the support of the rest of the working class, and to spread the struggle. The NCB and the Govern-

ment hope to sit out the strike because of high stocks of coal — particularly at the power stations.

The lessons of 1972 and 1974 are clear. Movement of coal must be stopped, and the power stations picketed.

In 1972 and 1974, it was not simply coal that was stopped at the power stations but all supplies. The rest of the movement has clear duty. **FULL SUPPORT FOR THE MINERS.** This will mean support for the pickets, rallies in all areas, workplaces and colleges, tours, collections, accomodation for the flying pickets must be laid on.

This is a fight the Tories must not win. They can be defeated. This is not like the Stockport Messenger or the GCHQ disputes.

This time there are 180,000 miners in dispute and their solidarity and militancy will make a big difference. The NUM leadership is not going to sell the strike down the river.

The Tories are more unpopular now than any time since the Falklands War. With effective solidarity from the rest of the movement a decisive defeat can be inflicted on the Tories.

Building that support and solidarity is the most important task facing activists in the movement.

This is everyone's fight. The watchwords for all activists in the movement now must be 'All out to support the miners'.

Socialist ACTION

Crawling back to Thatcher

IF ANYONE HAD any illusion that the day of action on GCHQ represented a turn to the left by Len Murray, Terry Duffy, Alastair Graham and Frank Chapple, they soon learnt otherwise.

Only one week after the TUC formally withdrew from the National Economic Development Council they are returning to talks with the Tories.

On Monday, the TUC Employment Policy and Organisation Committee voted unanimously to continue to participate in the Manpower Services Commission, ACAS, the Central Arbitration Committee, the Territorial Army Advisory Committee and a whole range of other joint bodies with the government. The decisions on ACAS and the MSC are particularly disgraceful as it is John Lambert, ACAS deputy chief conciliation officer, who is setting up the union-busting 'staff association' at GCHQ, and the MSC runs the wage-cutting Youth Training Scheme.

The *Times* understood what was taking place perfectly when it headed its report on the subject on Monday 'TUC begins its retreat from boycott'. This was the same issue which carried as its main headline, 'Militant picketing spreads coal strike to 100 pits'.

In reality there was never any chance of the TUC breaking off its talks with the Tories. The entire 'new realism' strategy of Murray is based on talking with Thatcher, the SDP or anyone else who wants to listen. The Day of Action on GCHQ was just to try to get the General Council into a better position for the talks. These preoccupations are a hundred times more important for the General Council today than mobilising support for the NUM.

Yet these talks become more and more disgraceful. Thatcher has not budged one inch. Nor is she going to.

Since the 'new realism' began the tinpot union-buster Eddie Shah defeated the NGA — thanks to TUC sabotage. Unions have been banned at GCHQ despite all TUC grovelling for a 'no strike' agreement. The mines are now about to be butchered. A real balance sheet of 'realism'.

There should be one simple decision taking thirty seconds on the next General Council agenda: No more talks with Thatcher.

Then the TUC can pass on to what is really important for it to discuss. How to win the miners strike.



Editor: ALAN FREEMAN

Published weekly except two weeks in August and the last week of December.

Signed articles by contributors do not necessarily represent Socialist Action's views. These are expressed in editorials.

Send all correspondence regarding subscriptions, sales and receipts to Socialist Action Distribution, 328 Upper Street London N1 2XP. (Tel: 01-359 8180)

Send all material for publication (including advertising) to Socialist Action Editorial at the same address.

We regret that due to the high cost of postage we cannot return or acknowledge unsolicited copy or photographs unless accompanied by a stamped addressed envelope.

Miners take on the Tories

MINERS HAVE had enough of the Coal Board's bullying and are attempting to spread the strikes to save jobs and defend their union.

The area strikes are the culmination of local clashes over productivity, work practices, redundancies and closures. In the first five months of 1983, one in five miners took strike action — accounting for 30 per cent of recorded strikes in that period.

The Yorkshire area strike, which sparked the national action also began when local pits struck against changed work practices, production targets and shift times.

Despite setbacks in previous national strike ballots, militant miners are preparing themselves for a fight-back — this time exploring ways to deal with divisions in their ranks sown over decades by the Coal Board and misleaders like Lord Joe Gormley the past president of the miners' union.

The four month overtime ban has exposed the massive discrepancies between miners pay and the low basic rate — on average 18 per cent of miners' earnings are made up by overtime and productivity bonuses, with high investment pits reaping far above the average.

This divisive incentive scheme was opposed by the majority of miners in national ballots in 1974 and 1977 but was introduced over their heads by Gormley.

Sharp divisions exist in the union with right wing officials like in Nottingham playing on a false sense of security in more productive, higher bonus pits.

Thatcher's blatant attempt to buy off miners with a radically new redundancy deal is also designed to break the back of the strike by dividing miner against miner.

But striking miners are determined to counter this with strong pickets at every colliery. Their message as they try to 'picket out' miners in a nationwide strike is that no pit or job is safe. Selling jobs for golden handshakes means selling the future of coalfields and communities.

In 1982, leaked documents from the Monopolies Commission revealed Tory plans to decimate the industry. The 'butchery won't just affect individual pits. Whole coalfields will go as reduced output is concentrated in a limited number of 'super-pits', where new computerised systems squeeze more profits out of fewer miners.

A super pit like Selby in North Yorkshire could produce the equivalent of 70 per cent of the entire production of Wales and Scotland, with only 10 per cent of the workforce.

This means almost total closure for the pits in South Wales, Scotland, the North East and Kent and the picking off of as many pits as possible in Lancashire, the Midlands and South Yorkshire. The miners union estimates a job loss of at least 70,000

in the next ten years.

To drive this through, the NCB has changed the ground rules for determining whether a pit stays open. Previously this was decided on grounds of coal exhaustion or impossible geological conditions. It is now profit and loss that signs the fate of miners. The NCB deliberately starves certain pits of investment which prevents them from producing good coal or overcoming difficult geological conditions.

By Celia Pugh

The NCB is also trying new tactics to break the unity of the union. Pit by pit it has changed manning and productivity without consultation and has used provocation to challenge the hard-won miners' control over pit conditions and procedures.

In the last year this policy has led to 20,000 redundancies, the closure of 23 pits and an explosion of bitter local disputes over productivity and work practices. Until now, local strikes against closure, like at Kinneil in Scotland, have been left on the road to isolated defeat. Miners can now act with greater strength and unity with the national NUM executive backing the spread of area strikes to a national stoppage.

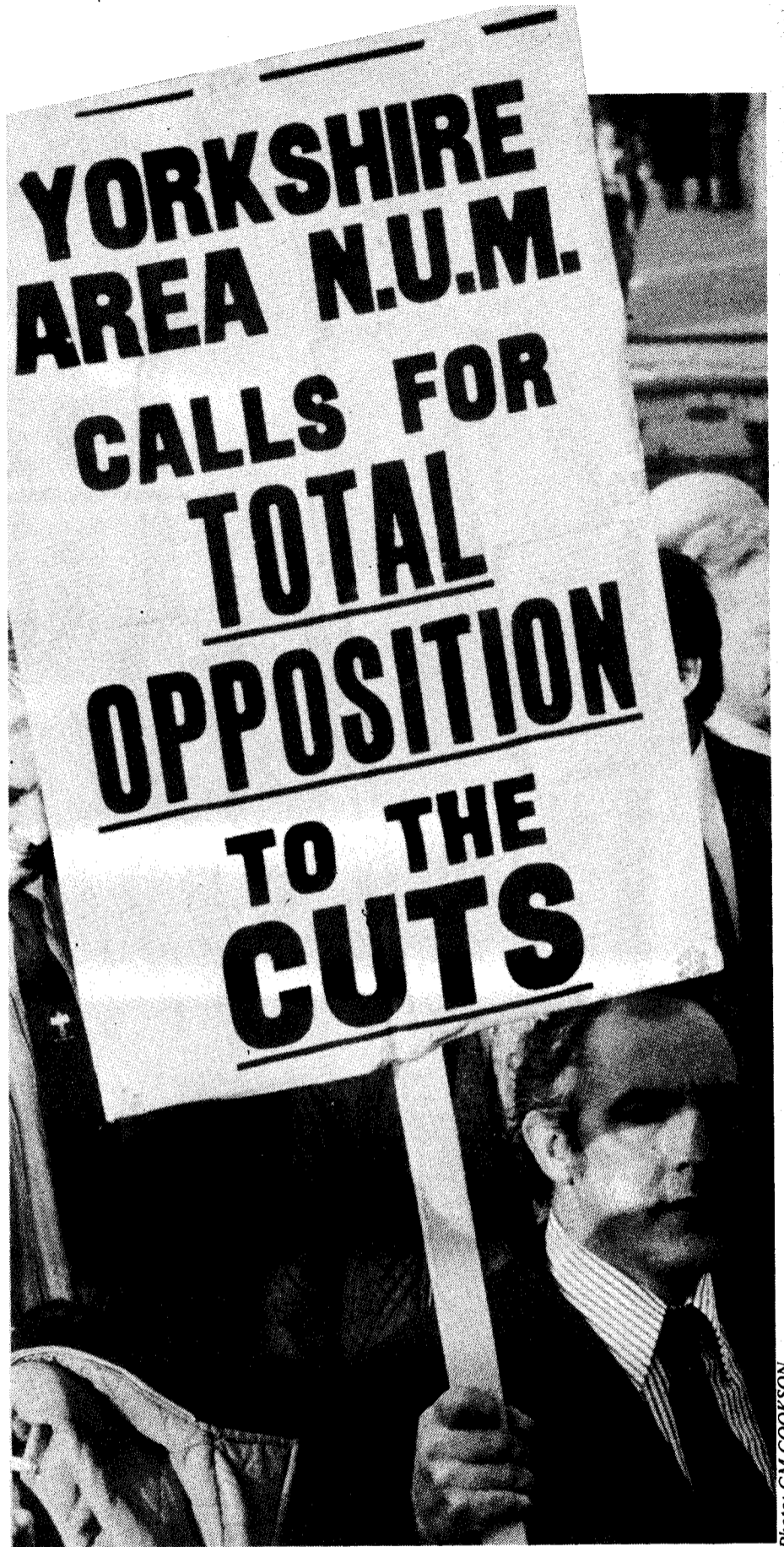
Harder

The striking miners are rejecting Tory press cries about 'suicide strikes' and the arguments that through harder work, higher productivity and social peace they can save their jobs. They've stomached this for too many years and they reply with demands for more investment, shorter working hours, more recruitment and early retirement.

They reject the ploy that pits must close because there are no markets for the coal they dig. They point to new ways of using coal for social need and not profit, and to replace the madness of nuclear power.

Militant miners know that this means a head-on clash with the Tory government. Their mass pickets and solidarity appeals are a direct challenge to Tebbit's anti-union laws.

Victory for the miners will be victory for all the workers fighting closure, redundancy, productivity screws and attacks union rights. Solidarity action with the miners is a chance for the labour movement to unite to take on the Tories.



Miners joined action against health cuts. Now they call for support.

The Triple Alliance unions are particularly vital. Rail and transport unions will need to boycott all coal movement. Pickets and solidarity action will

be needed at power stations and docks.

'Solidarity with the miners' should be top of the agenda of every trade union and Labour Party

meeting, with emergency plans for rallies, collections, demonstrations, solidarity pickets and demands for a recall TUC to plan the action.

Stop the coal

HARRY BYGATE, branch secretary of the National Union of Seamen in Aberdeen told Socialist Action about their solidarity action.

National leaders of the NUS and the NUM got together to see how we could help the miners in what was then an overtime ban.

I went down to Edinburgh to meet the executive of the Scottish area NUM. They needed our knowledge of the North East coast of Scotland where there are many

small ports and we knew foreign coal is being off-loaded.

These ports are very small and non union. There is also no railway line to them, so the coal is being transported by lorry with non union drivers. This makes it very difficult to deal with these imports. The NUS has decided to block all ships carrying foreign coal. That means our members will not crew these ships. Where we find out that ships already underway are carrying foreign coal, we will stop that coal being offloaded.

The coal that comes to the North East of Scotland

is mainly Polish. The actions of the NUS will help but the NUM has also had talks with the Polish government and official unions to ensure that the Tories don't use foreign coal to fill the gap left by the miners strike.

We are waiting for the arrival of a British ship carrying coal from South Africa to Ravenscraig steelworks. It is expected either next weekend or the weekend after.

We will stop this coal being offloaded, if necessary by taking control of the ship.

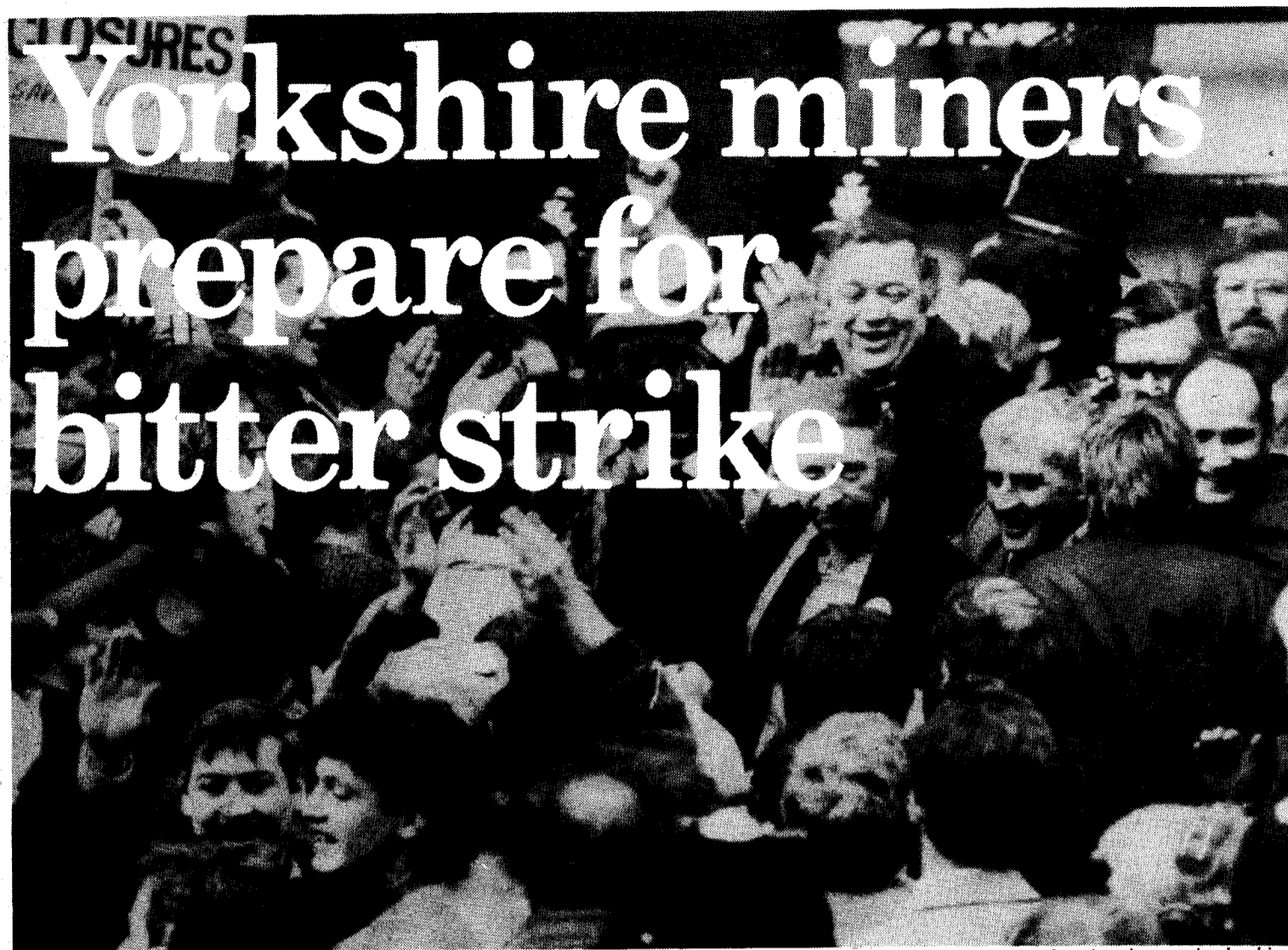


Photo: NEWSLINE

Yorkshire miners applaud national executive backing

Yorkshire miners prepare for bitter strike

MINERS STOOD for three hours in the biting cold outside NUM headquarters in Sheffield on Thursday 8 March. They were determined that the executive meeting inside would make the strike action in Yorkshire and Scotland official and open the way for action in other areas.

A group of miners from Yorkshire Main colliery explained to Socialist Action how the NCB had been provoking a confrontation by trying to reintroduce practices long gone from the pits — such as chalking on the face the areas to be cleared.

When miners responded with strike action the management promised to take the chalk marks off — but when back at work miners found that they were being asked to work in unsafe conditions.

Management's threat, that their action would result in the closure of Yorkshire Main, was the last straw. With Cortonwood and Bullcliffe pits already on the closure list, the miners want national strike action against pit closures.

'In Yorkshire it's only the Sun talking about a ballot' they said 'and

they don't work down the pit.

'Ten thousand pounds redundancy money for selling your job sounds good, but when you retire at 26 it's got to last a hell of a long time. We want MacGregor's head on a plate.'

By Rich Palser

The mood was determined and with no illusions. Miners explained that the NCB was hoping the militant areas would be isolated and that a national strike would be long and bitter.

'The problem is that we've got the wrong people in the TUC' they said 'but we're counting on the support of railworkers, dockers and all workers concerned about unemployment'.

'You can't always choose when to fight'

DAVE CROWTHER, a member of the Derbyshire Area Committee of the NUM explained their position to Socialist Action.

The Yorkshire area have agreed not to send flying pickets until after our area committee meeting on Monday 12 March. Whether Derbyshire follows Nottinghamshire at this meeting in going for ballots remains to be seen. I think they might.

Derbyshire has been consistently solid for the overtime ban, which shows commitment for the

union's fight. It's a good way to keep us getting our shifts in, while putting the NCB in a position where it has to respond to us.

I personally would have liked us to have put off the inevitable strike until later, when the coal stocks are lower after the summer perhaps. But you can't always choose when to fight.

I think the Yorkshire miners are great, but a lot of Derbyshire miners resent the fact that they are asked to support them rather than strike for their own interests. This would be seen better if there was a clear call or all-out national strike.



Photo: NEWSLINE

Pickets at Cadeby colliery in South Yorkshire

No to pit closures!

Interview with Ken Capstick, delegate to Yorkshire area council from Stillingsleet colliery.

Why has it been necessary to call a strike in Yorkshire?

Two weeks ago the Coal Board announced the closure of Cortonwood colliery in South Yorkshire out of the blue, without going through normal consultation procedures. This pit is producing coking coal from three faces, which gives it a life into the 1990s. The Board claims however that it cannot sell the coal.

A mass meeting at the pit took a decision to strike following which the NUM Yorkshire area council has decided to implement their policy of opposing pit closures, except on grounds of proven exhaustion.

The only way to fight pit closures is by a strike action. We are now asking other areas, and other trade unions for support.

Will there be a ballot?

There will not be a ballot in Yorkshire because the Yorkshire Area Council is implementing the results of our ballot in 1981 in which we won an 86 per cent majority. At our pit a majority accepted that they must now fight even though their jobs are safe.

How can the strike be won?

In the same way we prepared in 1981 — strike action and support from other trade unions. This is the only language that the government and the NCB understand. We are looking for the same kind of support which we got in '72 and '74. The rail unions, dockers and the NUS have already pledged support. If we can stop coal being moved it might as well be at the coal face.

What about the stocks at the coal face?

We will have to look to see how much support we can get from power station workers. Already perhaps 15-20 per cent of the coal there will have deteriorated beyond the point of use. And I think there will be serious trouble in 8-10 weeks.

What can other workers do?

At this stage they can give the support asked for by the NUM, send delegations to pickets, attend our demonstrations and invite speakers from the NUM. Eventually it may be that other workers can support us with strike action.

'There's no alternative, we've got to fight'

DAI DAVIES, chair of the Penrhawceiber lodge and member of the South Wales NUM executive spoke in personal capacity to Socialist Action.

The recommendation of the South Wales area is for a strike from 6 am on Monday 12 March. At my pit the meeting was solid for the strike.

But some lodges turned it down at meetings. Some of the boys said they were bitter that when they were on strike last year other areas didn't come out for them.

After the strike over Lewis Merthyr last year we lost five pits. We'll lose more if we don't fight and we have no alternative.

In nine years we reckon there'll be six pits left in South Wales. Five or six years ago there were nearer 40.

We've explained that the new redundancy payment is a one off severance payment and that they will soon be on the breadline but there are a few who want the money. I suppose as pits have been shut down the men are losing their confidence.

But at least at meetings where the vote went against striking they've said they won't cross picket lines. And there's no doubt there will be pickets. This year we're not tied down with a ballot

round our neck. I'm confident we'll get the boys out.

I know they're having trouble in Scotland. The leadership went over Kinneil and they've never recovered the situation. Monktonhall were out nine weeks by themselves. It should have been one out all out. They shouldn't have been left out on their own. The same has happened over Polmaise.

We've got to stop the movement of coal. I agree with Arthur Scargill about the coals stocks. The press are claiming these are too high but this isn't true. At Penrhawceiber there are two million tons of coal which has been stockpiled for between 12 and 20 years.

It hasn't been shifted because it's useless. There's been talk of grassing it over. Now they've started to shift it because the Aberthaw power station is desperate. They're down to six weeks supply and danger level.

We've already been contacted by local branches of ASLEF, NUR, and the Seamen's Union and we've built up good relations. They say they'll help stop the movement of coal.

TUC Women's conference:

'Debates? Forget it!'

BOURNEMOUTH, MID-MARCH 1982. There I was, with nearly 300 other women, being entertained in the pavilion for the evening, when the all-male band struck up with an ear-splitting 'Don't ever change — I love you just the way you are'. The occasion? The evening after day one of the TUC Women's conference.

A year later, in Scarborough, I was telling that story to some first-time delegates, when another middle-aged, middle-of-the-road male group got up on stage and opened its set with — yes, the same tune. They couldn't have chosen a more apt keynote for the event.

Unless that conference does change, it will keep squandering the energy and experience of the biggest annual gathering of women trade unionists in the country. Debates? Forget it. Discussions with other unions? Maybe, in corridors and cafeteria queues, if you're lucky.

This isn't an argument to scrap the conference or withdraw from it. NALGO was wrong to decide in 1976 that the TUC Women's conference was an 'anachronism' and 'divisive', given the state of current legislation affecting equality.

Because it quit, NALGO women, leaders in the campaign against sexual harassment, had to rely on other unions to promote one of the Women's Advisory Committee's most important

actions last year — the publication of an excellent, widely-read pamphlet on the issue. Withdrawal's not an answer, as NALGO's next conference will hear.

By Eva Kaluzynska

Inequalities in society are widening under Thatcher, and the sex discrimination and equal pay legislation have failed to make a significant impact. We need a conference as a forum for women trade unionists to exchange experience, views and tactics, the better to influence the entire labour movement. We need a better conference. The ritual and consensus of the present version almost make it a parody of the CBI's.

This year, as every year, chair-for-life Marie Patterson, CBE, has an agenda of about 50 motions, of which less than a handful are likely to be lost. The Women's Advisory Committee, which she chairs, has seen a succession of conference at which the only real controversial (lost) motions and sharp debate concern the format and purpose of the event.

Some justify the process as a 'training ground' for women. But does it work, and what are we supposed to be rehearsing for? If it's educational role-play workshops the TUC wants to give us, that's all right. But why doesn't it say so, and give us a separate, serious, well-organised annual conference too?

For the best part of two days, delegates endure the painful spectacle of one individual after another facing them from behind a microphone in the grand conference hall, nervously reading out scripts on eminently worthy matters of concern to women workers. It's impossible to disagree with most of what's said except in minor detail, and most votes are overwhelmingly in favour.



USDAW delegates at Women's TUC

It's very boring, as few delegates are confident speakers, and there's seldom the thought-provoking contrast of debate. Why stick so rigidly to such an intimidating, inappropriate format? An advisory conference to an advisory committee needn't be so constrained by formality throughout.

Some unions have been trying to get the clamps loosened. The NUJ and others have proposed, for instance, rotating the chair and setting aside time for workshop discussions on key topics. Lost. The same goes (so far) for the idea of sending five motions from the conference for inclusion on the TUC annual

congress agenda. At the moment, there's no such link between the two events.

The most daring proposal to date has been to elect an annual ad-hoc committee to take responsibility for conference arrangements instead of the Women's Advisory Committee. So far the main success of this movement has been to ensure last year that delegates at the 54th and subsequent con-

ferences would benefit from a bookstall that wasn't monopolised by TUC publications.

Why didn't the previous 53 benefit from such press freedom? Well, said the 1982 Women's Advisory Committee, where would we get the books? Who would organise it? What if we didn't like what was in the books? In 1983, they yielded. That's progress!

The women's move-

ment has had a big impact on the range and content of issues raised at TUC Women's conference, and who goes. The guardians of its present structure plainly fear there are elements out to capture it. They're wrong. There's no point in winning it, we want to change it.

• Eva Kaluzynska is a journalist and former member of the NUJ's Equality Working Party.

Women protest in Pakistan

ON 6 AUGUST, women's organisations in Lahore held an emergency meeting to protest against the court award of 15 lashes to a blind girl Safia who had been raped by her employers.

Safia, a young blind girl, worked as a domestic servant for a week. Then she returned home and told her mother she had been raped by Maqsood, her employer's son. Some days later when Safia's mother was not at home, Maqsood's mother came and again took her to the house where she was raped by Maqsood's father.

As a result of the rape, Safia became pregnant but she hid the matter from her father, who came to know of it only a few months later. He then solicited the help of village officials and police to register a case of rape (*zina bil jabr*) but these people refused to help him. Only after the child was born and died, did Safia's father manage to register a case of rape.

The court acquitted the accused men for 'lack of evidence' because the current law in Pakistan requires four adult male eyewitnesses to prove rape. However, since Safia, an unmarried girl, had borne a child, this was treated as evidence of her having committed adultery by consent (*zina bil raza*). She did not get the benefit of doubt which the men had got, because the fact of her having borne a child was used against her. Thus the court converted the case of rape to a case of adultery by consent, found Safia guilty of adultery and sentenced her to 15 lashes.



organisations, including the Women's Action Forum, Punjab Women Lawyers' Association, Tehriki Khwateen, Pakistan Muslim League Women's Wing, All Pakistan Trade Union Federation Women's Wing, Tehriki Istiqlal Women's Wing, and also by many individual women.

(from Karachi Daily News)

MALE ORDER

A joke's a joke

HAVE YOU heard the one about Margaret Thatcher...? At the same time as the publication of the official Margaret Thatcher joke book, a columnist in the *Daily Torygraph*, Mary Kenny, gives us the real Thatcher.

'Mrs Thatcher's utterances would not be out of place in *Spare Rib*. Her intellectual credentials as a feminist are impeccable.

'Feminism is much better suited to a Tory philosophy than to a Socialist one. Feminism is greatly concerned with property rights, and always has been: greatly exercised by the question of individual choice and inquiry focused on the need for people to take responsi-

sibility for their own lives. All this is very Tory.

'...Feminists need have no heart-searching about recognising their natural leader, who stands before them as a modern Joan of Arc or Mrs Pankhurst: unmistakably Mrs T.'

Wow! Quite takes your breath away doesn't it? But before you all throw your Labour Party cards in the rubbish bin and rush off to join your local Tories remember that most women the press brand as 'feminists' are usually just the opposite. Meanwhile, although the MT joke book is probably bursting with sexist comments (I haven't seen it yet), the *Daily Mirror* gave us this gem from it:

What are the four critical periods of unemployment under Margaret Thatcher?

Spring, summer, autumn and winter.

Greeting card showing a drawing by a political prisoner from Argentina, 50p. Available from Committee for Human Rights in Argentina, 29 Islington Park St., London N1. Proceeds go to Argentinian prisoners and their relatives.



Women get tennis elbow

THE PRIZE money for Wimbledon this year has just been announced — a massive 49 per cent increase which takes the total up to £1½ million pounds.

But as usual there is a big differential in prizes between the men's and women's championships. For example, the winner of the men's singles receives £90,000.

women's singles champion receives £90,000.

Personally, I find women's professional tennis much more interesting to watch than men's. It really is pathetic that the All-England Club, who decide the prizes, have to give women the elbow financially just to prolong the myth that the men's game is better. More interesting to watch than the men's game is better. More interesting to watch than the men's game is better.

Women of the Nicaraguan Revolution

MAGDA ENRIQUEZ is a founder member of the National Women's Organisation (AMNLAE) and their representative on the Nicaraguan Council of State. This is an extract of a speech she made while on a recent London visit. She described the birth of AMNLAE, the participation of women in the armed struggle to overthrow the Somoza dictatorship and the central role of women in the Sandinista revolution.

THE revolutionary experience and political will of the Nicaraguan people led to the victory of 19 July 1979. It was a major victory, and it was also a beginning. It opened up the possibility of real changes; the chance to transform society, to educate, to implement the political will which made revolution possible. Integral to this is implementing the emancipation of women.

To explain how we are doing this we must understand the background. 19 July brought a complete power vacuum. Who took over on this day? A bunch of young guerrillas — men and women. We had to organise a power structure in a bankrupt country — we had an external debt equal to our GNP of three consecutive years. We depended on raw materials from the United States. Somoza had taken money out of the National Bank and left us with the equivalent of just £3 million.

It was a society which had been severely injured. There had been 50,000 deaths (1.5 per cent of the population, equivalent to 1¼ million deaths in Britain); we had 40,000 orphans, 100,000 wounded and handicapped. Families had been destroyed and were without housing and jobs.

We also had to organise to defend ourselves — to defend something which we had not even begun to build, from the threat of invasion. We faced economic, political and military attacks.

In spite of all this we have institutionalised the government, economy, legislature and judiciary. The basis of the revolution is political pluralism, mixed economy and non-alignment.

Class

What is our view of women within our struggle? Women are not a class in themselves. They are part of the development of society as a whole. We have a wonderful political and ideological forum in the Council of State. The changing rights of women, enshrined in the Bill of Rights, started opening doors for other changes. One of our first decrees was the banning of the sexist use of women in advertising. We carried through laws giving equal rights to children regardless of birth, removing the concept of illegitimacy. We made adoption laws so that couples, married or not, and single people could adopt children.

We abolished the patriarchal laws — instead we introduced equal rights for all members of the family. The draft of this followed the normal process — we discussed it with the grassroots — it went from the Council down through the delegates, to the community and back again. This way the people themselves become legislators.

The law is not an end in itself, it is an instrument of justice. All our laws are being made and learned by our people. That is democracy. There has been much debate on the Law of Nurture, in which we say that child care is not just a question of economic support but also of love and caring to be shown by both parents. We said that housework was socially necessary and should be recognised as economic support to the family. Over 225,000 people discussed this idea. It has now



been approved.

We now have equal wages for equal jobs. In farming, we now have everyone over 14 on the payroll; before the revolution women and children were unpaid — only men as heads of families received a wage on the farms. We now have collective kitchens in the fields with men and women as cooks.

As well as participating in the state institutions, AMNLAE organises from the grassroots everywhere. Women are organised as an integral part of whatever sector they are part of, not as a separate body. As an example, a working committee (basic unit) of AMNLAE would be set up in a factory to encourage women to be more militant, learning about labour law, unions and so on.

Men and women leaders will represent the interests of all women. It is not for AMNLAE to decide whether to open up a child centre in any particular factory. Child care is the labour union's problem. But we will get the women in the union to raise this demand. We work with co-operatives, Sandinista Youth, farmers, students, each sector of society. Women's questions are specific to each sector. The interests of peasant women are not the same as a woman city worker, farm worker or a student. Each sector takes up its own issues.

What we have done is to change the fundamental status of women by the changes in the family laws, the participation of women in formal

education, the integration of women in the workforce. What is important for us is this: how are all these things linked to the interests of revolution, of the nation as a whole? We have found out that there are no such things as 'womens issues'. Take land reform. This is important for the Sandinista revolution. Economic survival will come out of land reform. The link for us is that we have said that there will be no land titles to men only — we want family land titles.

We want women to participate in co-operatives. Now women have become part of the management of these. Incredible progress has been made since 1979, making the leap from mass illiteracy, to planning and running co-ops.

The priority for us is defence of

the revolution — the guarantee for further change. Let's take increasing productivity. We found that most absentees and late workers were women. This was because they had to take the children to school, stay at home and look after sick children, take them to the doctor etc.

It became an issue, and we discussed it with the unions. Now this child care has to be shared with men. For every time a wife takes the child to the doctor, so must her husband. There is a constant linkage between these problems and the national interest.

AMNLAE also works as a pressure group. We had to do this with the Patriotic Military Service Law. We were at first excluded from active military service, so we called on the councils at all levels and the issue went right to the National Assembly of AMNLAE. We demanded a scientific explanation of the omission. There wasn't one.

Then a new article was brought in: women's military service should be on a voluntary basis. We voted against, the only people to do so, although we recognised it was an advance.

It's true that we have made mistakes and that we have not solved every problem. But we have the courage and honesty to admit our mistakes openly to the people. The Sandinista revolution is the only opportunity we have to build a new society where we are all free and equal. This means constant vigilance against the threat of US invasion.

Women form 48 per cent of the people's militias. We are making a special effort to get into the army and airforce. We have four women airforce pilots — we had five but one was killed last week. We are 45 per cent of the police. We are in the regular army and the reserves.

During the armed struggle we proved ourselves capable of leading in battle and on the front. The Western front, one of the most important, was led by a woman, Dora Maria Tellez, one of the three women commandantes. Women's participation at the front changed the image of Nicaraguan women and projected a new image of society as a whole.

We call on women to work in solidarity with us, by drawing the connection between your government's military budget and aid budget, between domestic and foreign policy. We look forward to the day when international solidarity will no longer be an act of charity, but one of mutual responsibility.

● FORTY BRITISH supporters of the Nicaraguan revolution have just returned from a two week tour of the country. The trip was organised by the Nicaragua Solidarity Campaign and included many trade unionists and Labour Party members.

Two AUEW-TASS members presented technical equipment donated officially by their union. The party saw direct results of British solidarity when they visited a new housing area, built after floods with solidarity donations from around the world.

They talked with leading members of the main union federation, the CST and the agricultural workers association, the ATC, who explained the role of unions in the Nicaraguan mixed economy.

A large number of the group were women, who had many meetings with the women's organisation, AMNLAE.

Highpoints of the trip were the mass rallies commemorating the 50th anniversary of Sandino's death and the death of Lopez, who fought with Sandino and helped found the FSLN in 1961.

At the first of these rallies around 100,000 people heard the plans for elections and that the voting age was to be set at 16.

After this rally members of the trip met leaders of the revolution including Borge, Ortega and Wheelock. Members of the trip, including Socialist Action supporters, have slides and are prepared to speak at forums and labour movement meetings. For speakers contact the Nicaragua Solidarity Campaign, 20 Compton Terrace, London N1 or Socialist Action, 328 Upper Street, London N1.

BLOC THE

The Broad Left Organising Committee conference in Sheffield on 24 March will be the most important meeting of the left in the trade unions for some time. Fifteen hundred delegates are expected. JOHN ROSS looks at the issues confronting the conference.

The next eighteen months are going to see the biggest challenge to the British unions in more than half a century. The Tory attacks go beyond the struggles in support of the NUM and defence of Liverpool City Council.

But because the shifts involved are so enormous, their nature is still often not grasped by the left. It is worth going beyond the Tories detailed proposals to examine their overall strategy.

The present round of Tebbit/King laws — with another installment promised for 1985/86 — are centred on two key proposals. Both aim to change the character of the trade union movement.

The first step is to outlaw the closed shop unless 80 per cent of workers vote for it. The second one is to abolish political funds for unions unless there is a majority ballot in favour of them. A third proposal, already leaked for next year, is to restrict or eliminate the right to strike in essential services. Taken together they add up to a coherent strategy.

The first measure, already taken in the last round to the Tebbit laws, was to stop solidarity action by unions.

This first round of laws has now been used against the NGA, against SOGAT over the BPCC dispute, and against the NUJ. It has been the first successful limitation of trade union rights since the 1927 Trades Disputes Act.

While the previous round of Tebbit laws still cannot be used against the miners or the Ford workers — or against the day of action on GCHQ — Tebbit has stopped smaller or weaker sections of workers successfully challenging these laws.

Whilst the first installment of Tebbit laws weakened union solidarity it did not alter the character of existing union organisation. The next round of Tory attacks aims to break up the structure of the labour movement itself.

The attack on the closed shop has dramatic implications for union membership. In 1978 over five million workers were in closed shops. The government wants to halve that number.

The Bill isn't just an attack on the union links with the Labour Party, it's an attack on collective bargaining itself. The government are trying to force trade unions into the narrowest possible collective bargaining activity. The two attacks are part and parcel of the same thing: taking the politics out of trade unionism.

This bill says unions have nothing to do with politics — but more, that employment or economics have nothing to do with politics either. There is a push to break any links between socialism and trade unionism. The Bill intends to neuter the unions.

The government has created a double-edged sword for itself. They've taken the opportunity to attack Labour Party funds, but they've also given us the opportunity — created the need — to argue the case that trade unionism is inevitably, necessarily political.

The Labour Party and the unions must run a vigorous campaign to explain the historical links between the unions and the party, and the modern application of those links.

In my view trade unionism hasn't been political enough. This is the chance to explain why socialism and trade unionism are intrinsic. We must go out and explain to union members why they must vote 'yes' to a political fund.



Derek Fatchett

decision.

The Bill isn't just an attack on the union links with the Labour Party, it's an attack on collective bargaining itself. The government are trying to force trade unions into the narrowest possible collective bargaining activity. The two attacks are part and parcel of the same thing: taking the politics out of trade unionism.

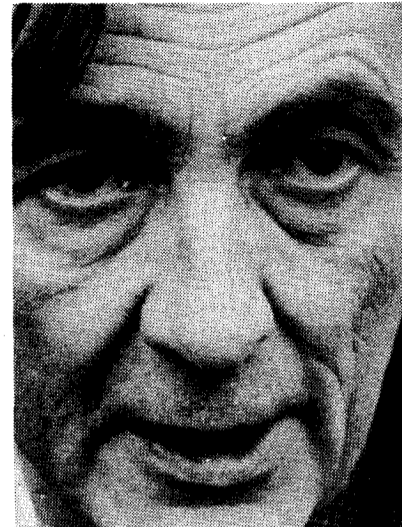
This bill says unions have nothing to do with politics — but more, that employment or economics have nothing to do with politics either. There is a push to break any links between socialism and trade unionism. The Bill intends to neuter the unions.

The government has created a double-edged sword for itself. They've taken the opportunity to attack Labour Party funds, but they've also given us the opportunity — created the need — to argue the case that trade unionism is inevitably, necessarily political.

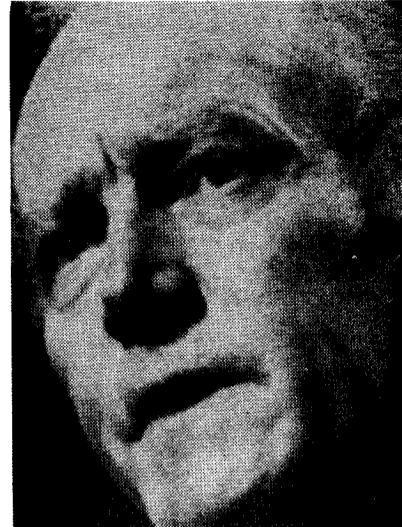
The Labour Party and the unions must run a vigorous campaign to explain the historical links between the unions and the party, and the modern application of those links.

In my view trade unionism hasn't been political enough. This is the chance to explain why socialism and trade unionism are intrinsic. We must go out and explain to union members why they must vote 'yes' to a political fund.

• Derek Fatchett is a member of the Standing Committee on the Trade Union Bill.



Murray, Basnett, Duffy and Chapple. The TUC's 'new realists'



By attacks on the closed shop, and other measures, the goal is to take two to three million members out of the trade unions over a five year period.

The fall in trade union membership since 1979 is still limited. The decline is from 12.5 million to slightly under 10 million — although this is a twenty per cent fall. It is the first decline in trade union membership since the 1930s.

But a further decline to around seven million would mean a cut back of forty per cent since its peak five years ago. That would really weaken the unions on an altogether different scale.

The new laws are a direct threat to the effective existence of a number of public sector and white collar unions. NUPE and COHSE have been targeted for particular government attacks.

The proposal on political funds is the second step for breaking up the labour movement. By 1983 one third of the membership of the TUC was in unions not affiliated to the Labour Party.

Split

With 70 per cent of ASTMS contracting out of paying the political levy, and over fifty per cent contracting out in unions like the NGA and SOGAT, Thatcher is now very confident she will win some of the political fund ballots.

The aim of this is not just to undermine the finances of the Labour Party. It is to change the character of the unions. With maybe half the TUC ultimately in non-affiliated unions, and therefore with the permanent threat of a split of the trade union movement on political lines, it would be the right wing, often non-affiliated, unions that

would dictate the character of the TUC.

The structural changes in the method of election of the General Council made at the 1983 Congress, and the policy changes that followed it, show the pattern clearly. The authors of the 'new realism' — Murray, Chapple, Graham, Duffy — are prepared to weaken the present scope of relations between the TUC and the Labour Party.

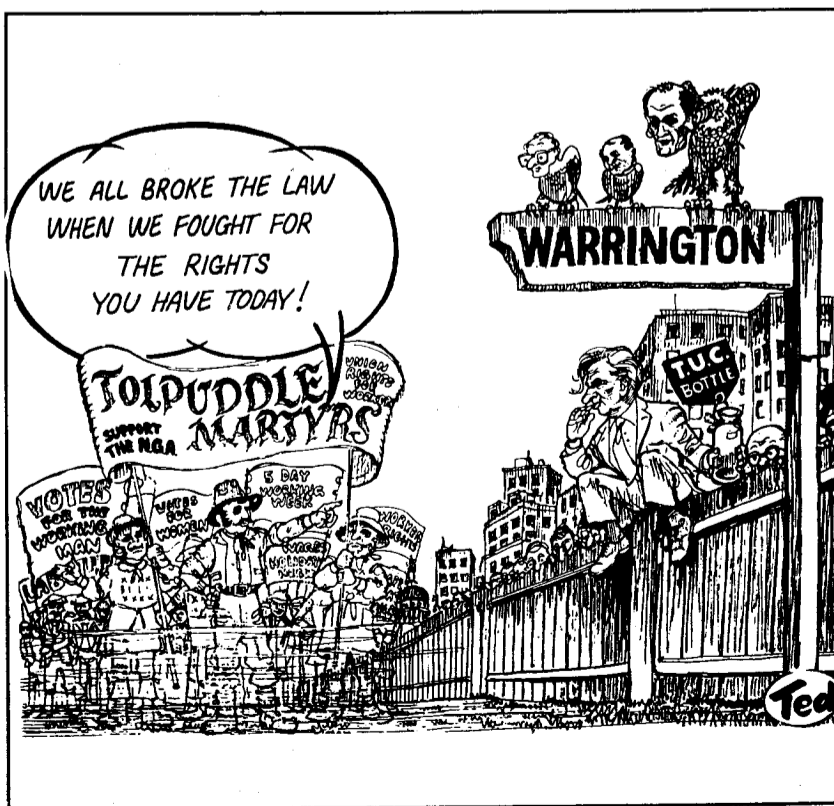
Irony

The AUEW has pulled out of Trade Unions for a Labour Victory. Murray won the right to talk to the Thatcher government. This entire strategy is summed up in the TUC sabotage of the NGA and its document *Strategy for the Future*. Shirley Williams went out of her way to praise the decisions of the last TUC Congress and the SDP then proposed formal talks to the unions — talks which incidentally go on informally constantly.

One of the reasons David Owen does not want a fusion with the Liberals is because he wants firmer links between the SDP and sections of the trade union bureaucracy. The SDP now boasts it has members on the executives of more than ten major unions in the white collar and public sectors.

The Tories are not able to get stable links with the unions in the way that the SDP can. Nevertheless they can form an effective united front with the Alliance to fight for 'non-political' — that is non-Labour — trade unions.

In a real sense, and by a curious irony, trade union militants are going



Civil servants demonstrating against the GCHQ

Putting politics back into trade unionism

By Derek Fatchett (MP for Leeds Central)

THE TRADE UNION Bill deals with three things. First, the internal constitution of the unions. It introduces a procedure whereby members of a national executive have to be directly elected — not indirectly as with some unions like the TGWU.

Labour MPs on the standing committee of the Bill have been arguing that union members should decide their own constitution. There's no evidence they are unhappy with their present ones. But the government obviously feels that direct elections would reduce the number of militant trade union leaders, and give greater control to the moderates and the right.

The second part of the Bill deals with strike ballots. If a union doesn't hold a ballot before a strike, it would be abusing the immunities granted in the 1906 legislation. The peculiar thing is that it could lose a ballot and still call a strike, without breaking the law. The government see this as a means of breaking down solidarity.

The third part of the Bill — which will attract the most public attention — is the one which deals with union's political funds. Under the 1913 legislation, a union has to have a ballot of its members before establishing such a fund. Then the question of whether or not to affiliate to the Labour Party is up to the union conference.

The government is proposing to enforce an affirmative ballot every 10 years. Clearly, this is a device to cut down the amount of money going to the Labour Party.

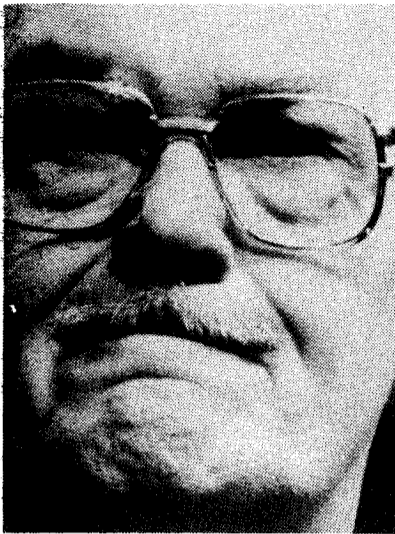
One point of detail is indicative of the government's thinking. Clause 14 re-defines political activity. What was not previously considered political — as far as the law is concerned — will now be deemed so. This is a crucial clause which is not generally publicised.

NALGO's campaign to protect public services last year is an example. NALGO don't have a political fund. The campaign was paid for from the general fund, which is used for activity in furtherance of members' jobs and conditions of work.

The minister said in committee that such activity would no longer be possible. In other words, the meaning of political objects is broadened.

The civil service unions, who tend not to have political funds, would not be able to participate in the sort of activities they have been doing — financing the campaign against the GCHQ

RIGHT

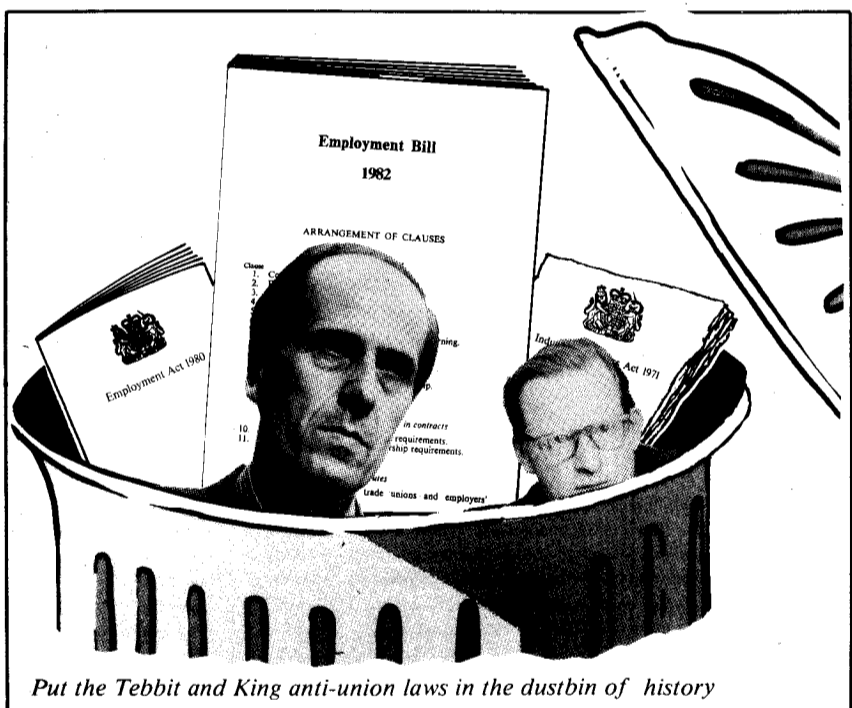


to have to fight once again the same battles that were fought when the Labour Representation Committee was formed in 1900. Then the struggle was to win the trade unions to an understanding that they could only defend themselves by political as well as industrial action.

That fight is going to have to be gone through again — although starting at a higher level than 1900. Unions such as the NUM or TGWU are not going to be broken from the Labour Par-

ty. But there is going to have to be an enormous fight to win whole sections of the trade union movement both to a militant fight to defend their own interests and politically to support for the Labour Party.

Both issues will dominate the trade unions in the coming years. The trade union movement is either going to become political or it will suffer a crushing defeat. No strategy for the unions which does not appreciate the full scope of the Tory attack is going to be successful.



ban on unions at GCHQ



Demonstration to free imprisoned dockers in 1972. LCDTU played a crucial role

Organising the left

THERE HAVE BEEN two attempts in the past 15 years to organise the left on a cross-union basis. The first, and by far the most important was the Liaison Committee for the Defence of Trade Unions, which was launched by the Communist Party.

The LCDTU reached the peak of its influence in the struggle against the Labour government's bill, *In Place of Strife*, and the Heath government's Industrial Relations Act — both of which aimed to restrict the rights of the unions.

On 1 May 1969, 250,000 workers responded to the LCDTU's call for a political strike against *In Place of Strife*. Fleet Street was closed down and strikers staged demonstrations in London, Liverpool, Manchester, Glasgow, Hull, Sheffield, Birmingham and London. On 8 December 1970 in a strike initiated by the LCDTU and given support by national unions 750,000 workers downed tools in protest at the Heath government's Industrial Relations Act.

This stoppage represented the peak of the LCDTU's influence — the conference which prepared the 8 December strike was attended by almost 2000 delegates. After 1970 the LCDTU went into decline as the Communist Party tagged behind the left leaders of the TGWU and the AUEW, Jack Jones and Hughie Scanlon. Actions against the Industrial Relations Act continued to multiply. The AUEW called an official strike against the Act on 1 March 1971 and in 1972 the threat of a 24-hour general strike forced the government to release five dockers who had been jailed for defying the Act.

This threat which was made by the TUC came about as a spate of unofficial strikes erupted — mainly in workplaces influenced by supporters of the LCDTU. But the CP kept the LCDTU itself on the back burner. The *Morning Star* was busy

justifying the line of Jones and Scanlon and the CP did not want to organise any actions that would lead to a collision with these left union leaders.

The policy culminated in the debacle of 1975 when the Labour government introduced an incomes policy which Jones piloted through the TUC. Scanlon eventually collected his ermine and departed to the House of Lords.

After 1975 as the CP went into a steady decline other attempts were made to organise the left in the unions. The earlier one around the Institute for Workers Control again failed because its organisers would not challenge Jones and Scanlon. Another called the Rank and File Organising Committee was led by the Socialist Workers Party.

At the beginning the RFOC had some strong support. Its first conference in March 1974 was attended by 500 delegates representing 270 trade union bodies. A second conference in the November of that year attracted a slightly larger number of organisations — including 49 shop stewards committees. The associated Rank and File papers in the different unions had a print run of 69,000 and were sold in 16 major unions.

Even as late as November 1977 its conference was attended by 522 delegates from 251 unions and the Defend Our Unions conference held in June 1979 and sponsored by Rank and File attracted 1100 trade union delegates. But the direction set for the RFOC proved its undoing. The SWP did not try to build a broad-based left inside the unions but set out to construct a 'united front from below' — which is an organisation based on the politics of the SWP and therefore could not include the rest of the left with its organisations and leaders.

Thus Rank and File was little more than a front for the SWP and eventually collapsed because of

this. By the beginning of 1980 the RFOC no longer existed. The success of *Militant* in its approach and strategy for the Broad Left flows from its base in the Labour Party and its correct emphasis of working in the official union structures. This why by 1984 BLOC had emerged as the left organisation on a cross union basis.

Whether it will remain so and realise its potential depends on it being built as a united campaigning organisation embracing wide forces. If it becomes a front for one organisation then it too will meet the fate of its predecessors and that would deliver a serious blow to the fight against the Tory government.

Broad Left Organising Committee National Delegate Conference

Saturday 24 March
Octagon Centre,
Western Bank
Sheffield 10

Any bona-fide trade union organisation is welcome to send up to five delegates. For credentials and further information contact George Williamson, Organising Secretary, 11 Sutton Place, London, E9 6EH.

Photo: GM COOKSON



'Taking on Murray is the key issue'

KLMNOPQRSTU
IJKLETERSTU
IJKLMNOPQRST

Constituency consultation conference

THANK YOU for reporting our forthcoming consultation conference (SA 45).

However, there are one or two mistakes that require correction. Most importantly, the consultation is to be held on Saturday 24 March, commencing at 10am at the Workers' Education Association, 14-22

Shakespeare St, Nottingham.

It is not called by Rushcliffe constituency but by the steering committee agreed at the previous gathering in Brighton.

TONY SIMPSON, Treasurer, Steering Committee



'Another imperialist policy is possible'

Reagan's policy bone-headed

I WOULD like to make some comment on Paul Lawson's Middle East article in SA 47.

The ignominious defeat of Reagan's policy towards Syria and Lebanon is a defeat for that strategy alone rather than for any possible US imperialist strategy.

It has always been clear that Reagan's policy was bone-headed and unrealistic. Other sections of US imperialism wanted a different one. Most particularly the confrontationalist position of Assad of Syria was not chosen by Assad — who has clearly been dying to do a deal with imperialism for some time — but by Reagan.

The balance of military and political forces which existed between the Christian right, the Phalange, and the Druze and Muslim groups in Lebanon made Reagan's strategy a non-starter.

It is now probable that imperialism will do a series of deals with Assad

et al to arrive at an accommodation in the Lebanon — so that the revolutionary sting is drawn from the situation.

Paul's article the previous week, in which he characterises the nature of the various groups in the Lebanon, indicates a basis for this.

HUGH LOWE, London W4

Our mistake

WE HAVE received complaints about the reference in Oliver MacDonal's report on the Andropov's death to 'aged cripples of the Kremlin', SA45.

Physical disability and age are not in themselves reasons for political incompetence and degeneracy and we recognise that older and disabled revolutionaries have found a place in our history.

Point taken comrades, we should know better!

BLOC confusion

I THINK the articles in SA 45 and SA 47 by Pat Hickey on organising the left in the unions and building the Broad Left Organising Committee (BLOC) conference are, to say the least, confusing.

When closely examined they show a total misassessment of the present nature of the labour movement and the relationship between the trade unions and the Labour Party.

In SA 45 it states 'The BLOC conference offers an opportunity to begin the fight to organise the very large minority which opposes the surrender of the TUC leadership'.

Quite right! But the next paragraph says that the political levy and the GLC-Met Counties should be to the fore and that when discussing what to do in the unions the

left will not build a base on sectoral issues.

Firstly we should understand that all these issues can be generalised as attacks on the labour movement, but we should also understand the differences. The main concern of the very large minority that Pat speaks of — the trade union militants — is their democratic right to organise, as trade unionists, an opposition to the vicious Tory trade union legislation and the belly-crawling betrayals of the TUC leadership. There is no way round this.

If trade union rights are taken away, affiliation to any political party becomes irrelevant. Organising to take on Murray and the trade union leadership and recall of the Wembley

conference is what BLOC should be discussing.

The issue of the political levy will take second place at the BLOC conference.

The initiative for a campaign on the levy, by its very nature will have to come from the Labour Party. This is already taking place with the LCC campaign. Labour Party members understand that the Labour Party will be strangled and cannot survive in its present form if starved of political funding from the unions.

We have to examine who will be affected by each specific attack if we are to judge where and how effective campaigns can be built.

T WONGSAM, Manchester

Who's under the table?

THE statement in Ireland Unfree (SA 46) that, 'He (i.e. Dick Barry) is said to have hidden behind a table in the departure lounge of Belfast airport to avoid being photographed with Ken Livingstone and councillors Kathy and Steve Bundred ...', is completely untrue.

In fact I spent most of my time waiting to board the flight to London in conversation with Steve Bundred. If any photographers were present it was they who were hiding behind the mythical table.

I do, however, admit to rejecting an invitation from Steve to meet Ken Livingstone — seated some twenty feet away. After all, a mere 'Labour Party office boy' is surely unworthy to sit in the presence of someone as important as the leader of the GLC.

DICK BARRY, Hampton, Middlesex

Write to us!
This is your page. Send us your comments, criticisms or even congratulations. But please be brief — letters over 300 words will be cut. Write to: Letters, Socialist Action, 328 Upper Street, London N1 2XP. (Tel: 01-359 8180)

DIARY
(These listings are free for all major labour movement and campaign activities — up to a maximum of 50 words. Semi-display advertisements cost 5p per word and must be paid in advance. Send to: Diary, Socialist Action, 328 Upper Street, London N1 2XP to arrive not later than Thursday, one week prior to publication).

- Labour Movement**
- **Broad Left Organising Conference** Octagon Centre, Western Bank, Sheffield, Sat 24 March 11-5.30. Credentials from George Williamson, 11 Sutton Place London E9 6EH.
 - **Defend London democracy.** Public meeting, Thur 22 March, 8pm, Kingsgate Community Centre, 107 Kingsgate Rd, London NW6. Speakers include Phil Turner, leader Camden Council and John McDonnell, GLC finance chair. Organised by Hampstead and Highgate Labour Party-Kilburn branch.
- Anti-cuts campaigns**
- **London Health Service**

- Campaign.** 34 Dalston Lane, London E8 3AZ 01-249 8086.
- Disarmament**
- **Labour and NATO** Labour Briefing discussion conference. Sat 24 March, 10.30-5pm County Hall, London.
- Ireland**
- **Labour and Ireland** day school for budding writers, workshops with trained journalists. London, Feb or March, £1. Write to Labour and Ireland, BM Box 5355, London WC1N 3XX.
- International**
- **Sri Lankan Research & Information Group** will provide speakers on the

- current situation there for meetings. Write to 9 Grays Inn Buildings, London EC1.
- **Anti Apartheid Action.** Demonstration 24 March, Assemble Hackney Town Hall, Mare St, London, 11am, march to South Africa House, Trafalgar Square. 21 March, anniversary of Sharpsville massacre, picket SA House, Trafalgar Sq. 1-2pm. 19 March, West London AA group event, 8pm, Lancaster Rd Methodist Church, W11, film on Angola and speaker from Mozambique information centre. 21 March, lobby of MP's, 12 noon to 8pm.
 - **El Salvador day of action** national day of activities against British government observers to Salvador elections. Hunger strike in London, St Martin in the Fields, 24 hrs.
 - **Nicaragua study tour** 8-24 April, 1984. Information from NSC, 20-21 Compton Tce, London N1.

The Other Bookshop

For Marxist books, posters, postcards, badges Feminist literature

London 328 Upper St. London N1 telephone 01-226 0571
Open — Mon, Tues, Sat, 10-6 Wed 12-7
Thur, Fri, 11-7.
Birmingham 137 Digbeth Birmingham B5 telephone (021) 643-5904
Open — Mon-Sat 10-6 Closed Wed.
Mail Order Service — Add 20% for P&P

- Cuba Resource Centre, 29 Islington Park St, London N1.
- Civil Rights**
- **Action Group on Immigration and Nationality** Conference on the case for reform of the law, Sat 24 March, 10-4.30, AUEW House, 43 The Crescent, Salford.
 - **Immigration Widows Kit** information and advice on organising against the immigration attacks on women. From Women Immigration and Nationality
- Group, c/o 44 Theobalds Rd, London WC1, 85p (inc p&p).
- Lesbian & Gay Liberation**
- **London Labour Campaign for Gay Rights** new office at 39 Chippenham Rd, W9 2AH 01-286 9692, open Tues-Thur 11am-7pm. (Westbourne Grove tube. Bad access, help available).
 - **Labour Movement Lesbians** is a new organisation of lesbians in the labour movement to

- support each other and organise initiatives on issues that affect lesbians. Further information from Sarah c/o Feminist Library, Hungerford House, Victoria Embk, London WC2.
- **Glasgow Labour Campaign for Gay Rights** meets second Thursday every month in AUEW halls at 7.30. Info from 1CGR Box 35 488 Great Western Rd, Glasgow.
- Miscellaneous**
- **GLC workshops** Employment and training for the future. 22 March Migrants in the NHS, County Hall, 7-9.30 pm, 5 April Migrants, black women and trade unions, County Hall, 7-9.30pm.

New pamphlet: Politics in the 1980's — The British Crisis.
Articles reprinted from Socialist Action and International — John Ross, British politics in the 1980's; Alan Freeman, How Labour Can Win; Steve Marks, The 1983 Election; John Ross, Facing 1984; Alan Freeman, Rebuilding the Labour Party.
Available from PO Box 50 London N1, price 35p. (plus 16p. p/p).

Socialist Action
Join the fight for socialism

If you want more information about Socialist Action or to be put in touch with local supporters send this form to Socialist Action, 328 Upper Street, London N1.

Name

Address

Tel

Age Union/CLP (if any)

Women in India

AT THE 1981 CENSUS there were only 935 women per thousand men in India. In only four countries in the world, namely, Iran, Pakistan, India and Australia is the sex ratio adverse to women.

In Australia, the majority of the population has been migratory, mainly men, so it is understandable that there are less women than men. But in the other three countries, the adverse sex-ratio for women is an indicator of the degraded status of women. High mortality, neglect of the female child and overall discrimination against women are the main reasons for this dismal reality. Nowadays, techniques like amniocentesis — which makes possible ante-natal sex-determination testing — are used, or rather abused for decisions to abort female foetuses because boys are preferred.

In post-independence India, there has been a continuous advance of the female literacy rate. But still today three-quarters of Indian women are illiterate and higher education has remained the privilege of only 2.1 per cent of women.

By Vibhuti Patel

A positive feature however is the growing importance of women's education in urban areas. (The demand for educated and working women is increasing in the marriage market too!).

Advancement of Literacy in India (1901-1981)

Year	Percent	Male	Female
1901	5.35	9.81	0.60
1911	5.92	10.56	1.05
1921	7.16	12.21	1.85
1931	9.50	15.59	2.90
1941	16.10	24.90	7.30
1951	16.67	24.95	7.93
1961	24.02	34.44	12.95
1971	29.45	39.45	18.69
1981	36.17	46.74	24.88

Source: Census Report, 1981

As a United Nations report reveals, women do most of the work throughout the world. Right from the birth of the human species women have been working. But their contribution is not socially recognised. Women's work in the home — cooking, cleaning, mending, child-care, care of the old and the sick — is not treated as 'work'. It is unpaid work. Everyday there is the slog, without rest, without leave, without 'overtime', without 'bonus'.

The discrimination that a woman faces within the family is extended to all areas of life including fields and factories. Women form a source of cheap, unskilled and auxiliary labour — last to be hired and first to be fired.

Since 1951, there has been a great increase in the work participation of women in India. Nevertheless the 1981 Indian census shows only 14 per cent of women to have 'gainful' employment. An increasing number of women are being thrown out of the 'workforce' but at the same time more and more women are entering the 'labour force' looking for jobs. Among the total unemployed, women constitute more than 60 per cent.

Half of all women workers in India are employed as agricultural labourers. Only 6 per cent of the entire female workforce is in the organised sector, thereby having relatively secure jobs, better facilities, wages and work conditions. The rest of their working sisters are in the 'informal sector' in low paid, low productivity and unskilled jobs.

Technological changes have badly affected women's jobs opportunities in manufacturing, petty trade,

'Women constitute half the world's population, perform nearly two-thirds of its work hours, receive one-tenth of the world's income and own less than one-hundredth of the world's property' — United Nations Report, 1980



household and cottage industries and agricultural sectors. Non-agricultural working women are concentrated mainly in industries such as garment, electrical, electronics, food-processing and construction, doing monotonous and tiring jobs.

The number of women employed in the cotton and jute textile industry and the manufacture of dairy products, originally known for its job opportunities for women, has declined drastically. Low-caste women are forced to work as domestic servants, sweepers and scavengers.

Women in the service sector, popularly known as 'white collar employees' are found mainly in professions like teaching and nursing. In post-independence India, the number

of highly educated women — lawyers, doctors, engineers, scientists — has increased, but it is negligible in comparison with the millions of poor, illiterate, semi-literate and poorly-paid working women.

Brutal

In agriculture, plantations, mines and small scale industries, women are usually paid lower wages than male colleagues for doing similar chores. Only a microscopic minority of working women get facilities like maternity leave, creches, housing, trade union rights etc.

The fight for legal provisions to improve the status of women in India started around the mid-nineteenth

century. As a result the Female Infanticide (Dudha Piti) Prohibition Act, the Sati Prohibition Act, the Widow Remarriage Act and the Age of Consent (Sadra) Act, were all passed. The constitution of free India announced equality between the sexes and denounced discrimination against any citizen because of sex.

Yet the provision of personal laws regarding marriage, inheritance, property and divorce is a glaring example of the hollow claim to equality. All these personal laws consider women as inferior to men, devoid of any individuality. Now progressive and women's organisations have started pressing for the enactment of a uniform civil code for all citizens.

Recently a number of progressive

Bills have been put forward and there have been heated debates regarding the judgement of the Andhra Pradesh High Court on Restitution of Conjugal Rights, the Rape Bill, the Dowry Bill, and the Marriage Laws Amendment Bill. But these proposed legal reforms will have limited impact on improving the status of most women because of economic dependence, poverty, illiteracy and the hold of traditional values. For effective enforcement of these laws, strong pressure groups are needed.

Throughout 'history' women have been violated — raped, battered, tortured, insulted, degraded. Society turned a blind eye and a deaf ear to this reality but now one finds increasing awareness of such problems.

More and more cases of wife-murder are declared as 'suicide', there have been mass rapes during caste and communal riots, gang rapes, sexual harassment of women in the streets and workplaces are reported. In most cases the police and other state forces have come out as notorious perpetrators of atrocities against women. They use brutal and perverse techniques to torture women under trial and women prisoners.

The evil of dowry — that has spread among many castes, communities and religious groups — has resulted in the cold-blooded murder of brides. In Delhi alone, during 1982, on average 500 brides were killed and one woman burnt daily. During the period of 1975-78, the total number of deaths of women due to burns in our country was 6248. They were recorded in the police registers as 'accidents' or 'suicides'.

Reforms

The primary role of women is considered to be that of child-bearer and home-maker. It is not unusual to hear that women who fail to produce a child — particularly a male child — are tortured or taunted by relatives and in many cases deserted by their husbands. Traditional norms and taboos perpetuated and strengthened by the caste system, the joint family and religious institutions make the oppression of women blatant. The mass media — radio, TV, press, advertisements, cinema and the education system — idealise the masochistic tendencies among women, portray a sexist image and attributes stereotypical roles to women.

Amidst this stark grey reality, there are a few bright spots. After 1975, more and more women fought against injustice and oppression which has resulted in a blossoming of women's groups and organisations. These organisations and groups of younger women have a certain freshness of ideas, readiness to come out on the streets, tremendous militancy and courage.

Initially the women's organisations attracted mainly educated middle and upper middle class women but slowly and gradually they are influencing other strata too. As a result, there was an organised nationwide anti-rape campaign during 1980.

The women's organisations also organised huge protest demonstrations against dowry deaths, the portrayal of women in the media, against beauty contests and for legal reforms concerning women.

A number of feminist magazines, not only in English and Hindi but also in the regional languages are being published. Many specialist interest groups working on different areas concerning women have been created. As a result, one finds a gradual change in the attitude towards women among political parties, planners, academicians, law makers and the media.

The calls of Indian women's groups and organisations have begun to stir women and they respond from an inner consciousness evolved out of their own experiences, unexpressed over the centuries...

NALGO LOCAL government branches meet on 20 March to discuss a national strategy against government proposals to rate-cap high spending local authorities. At present, 33 councils are under direct threat. This would mean massive cuts in their 1985 budgets, forcing widespread cuts and redundancies.

NALGO already has a 'cuts strategy' advocated by the NALGO national leadership of publicity campaigns, lobbying parliament and financial support for branches facing redundancies. It has been a total failure.

By Bill Hamilton (Newham NALGO)

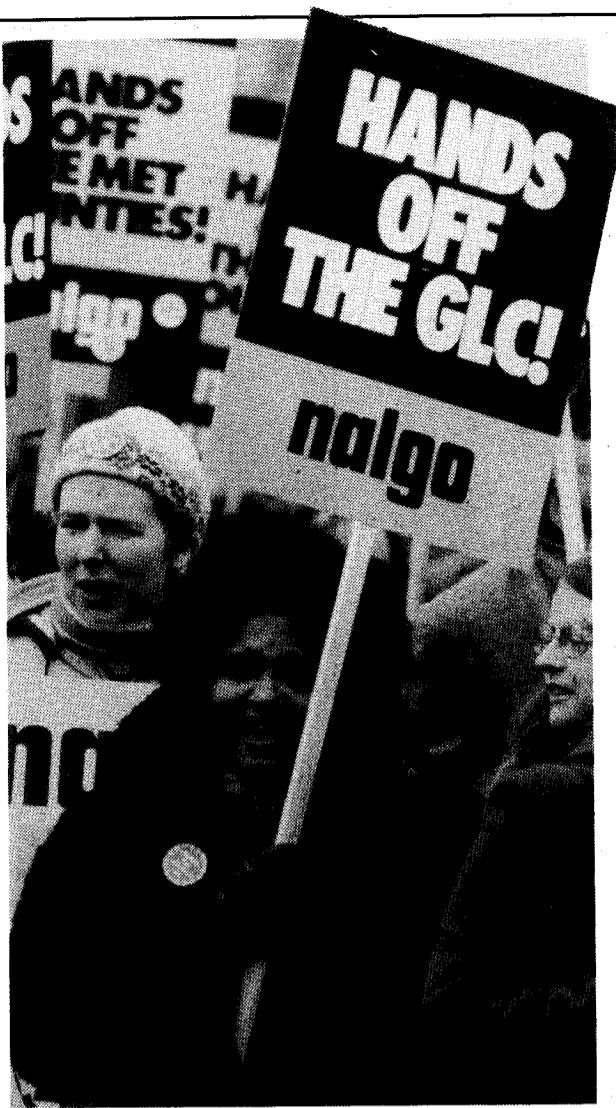
The Tories are not frightened by groups of NALGO members lobbying parliament. Even though Labour peers in the Lords claim a majority against the rate-capping bill, they will not press for a vote. Why? Because Thatcher has a mandate from the country!

The union must change course now if the membership is not to be misled — through futile half-cocked days of action, petition filling and lobbying — into massive defeat. Some sections of the NALGO left have also gone down the road of pressure group politics, at the expense of building our membership's strength and confidence to take sustained action.

Programme

London branches have tion they will be calling on the national union to take up. The programme gives full support to Liverpool council and any others making a stand against cuts.

It reiterates and takes up boycotting work to do with the transfer of powers from the GLC and metropolitan counties, and proposes all-out strike action in every branch on



NALGO needs a strategy to win

the government's initial hit list if any one of the employing authorities

make cuts or propose redundancies. Also the national group meeting would be recalled to discuss escalation.

Delegates to the 20 March meeting will no doubt have to sit through enough hot air to fill the 'Put People First' balloon. But only a clear national strategy of strike actions to save jobs, services and local democracy will stop the Tories' plans to permanently reduce the role of local government and destroy democratically elected local authorities which oppose their views.

The excluded four have just received official confirmation that their membership is rejected, and will now be lodging an appeal. During the course of their protracted fight for membership, local support for their case has grown.

The five are asking Labour Against the Witch Hunt to help mount a national campaign to get the unfair decision overturned. All Labour Parties should support the Yardley Five, and protest to the Birmingham-Yardley party and Labour's national executive.

• Copies of resolutions and letters supporting the five should be sent to 13 Oxford Road, Acocks Green, Birmingham 27. More information on the case can be provided by contacting the above address, or Labour Against the Witch Hunt, 11 Wilderton Road, London N16.

Support the Yardley Five!

THE BIRMINGHAM witch hunt moved into top gear when the Yardley general committee recently voted to exclude four of the five people whose membership has been 'under consideration' for many months now.

By Carol Turner

Dealing separately with each individual, the general committee voted 30 to 25 to uphold the executive's recommendation that two new member applications and two transfers be rejected. The fate of the third transfer, Bob Smith, still hangs in the balance because the meeting closed before a vote was taken. Bob faces the prospect of a further two-month wait before he hears that his transfer is not accepted.

Afia Begum must stay



IN JANUARY 1982 Afia Begum was granted an entry certificate to join her husband in Britain. In March he was killed in a fire which swept his Brick Lane tenement. Afia and her baby daughter Asma were allowed in to clear up his affairs but told that as her circumstances had changed she and her daughter wouldn't be allowed to stay.

Afia's father and uncle are settled here, and her mother has applied to come. None of this was taken into account by the Home Office, in their haste to reinterpret the rules in the harshest possible way.

By Harry Cohen MP

The personal consequences for Afia are dire, condemning her to a solitary future. Now Afia and her daughter have been forced into hiding for nearly two years, protected by a group of Asian

women known as the Sari Squad.

Countless representations have been made on her behalf, but the Home Office have shown nothing but a shameful insensitivity.

Afia's case is not unique. The current immigration rules are racist in substance and in execution. Great obstacles are put in the way of ethnic minority citizens who want to visit Britain, let alone those who want to stay with their families already here.

Families are split, and black women in particular

are likely to experience humiliation and suffer long-term disruption to their lives. In many cases, the people concerned have no rights under the law. They have to rely on compassionate treatment which is rarely forthcoming.

If necessary her case will be taken to the European Court of Human Rights.



• Harry Cohen is the author of the Entry Clearance (Change of Circumstances) Bill, which was passed for first reading on Wednesday 8 March.

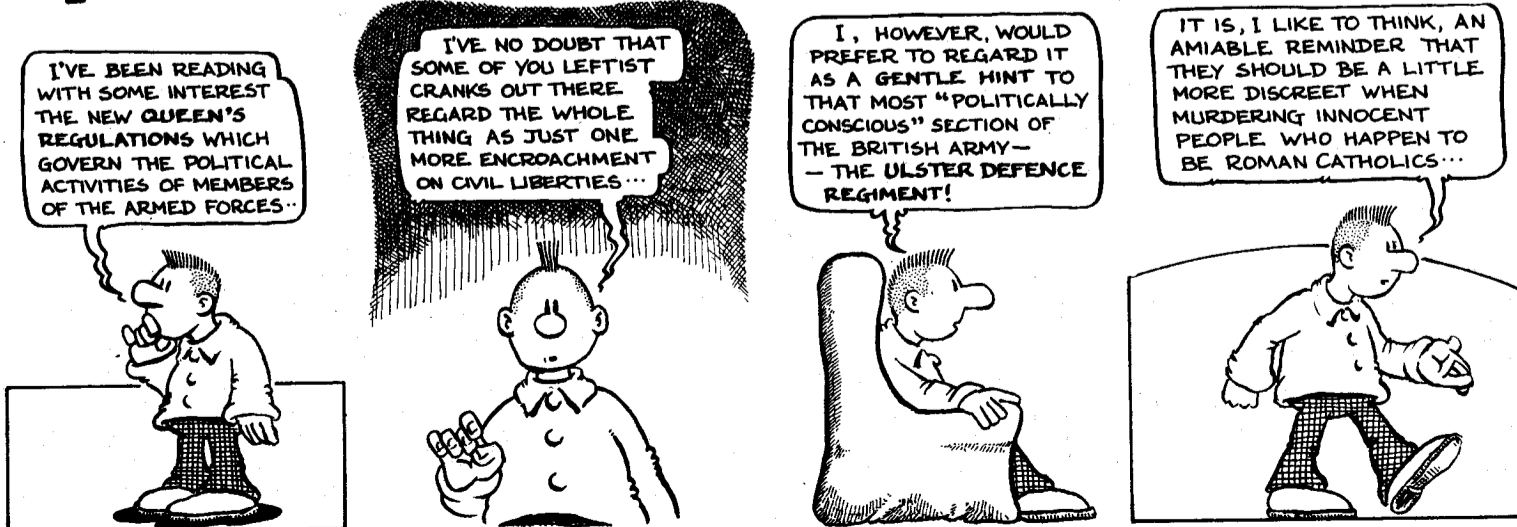
Centre

The Entry Clearance (Change of Circumstances) Bill aims to tackle just one small injustice by giving back women like Afia their rights by enabling them to stay despite the death of a spouse or parent.

The Bill will act as a campaigning tool. The Sari Squad has just opened a centre in Brick Lane, and plan to tour Britain building support for Afia.

a piece of the ACTION

BY CORNAC #46 3/84



Liverpool

Kinnock's rapid retreat

WITH LESS THAN three weeks before Liverpool's budget day on 29 March, Labour leader Neil Kinnock has moved in to break up the council's stand against the Tories. This comes at a time when labour movement support for the council is growing.

Liverpool council workers have voted overwhelmingly to strike on the 29th. London Labour Party regional conference has voted unanimously to support Liverpool. And Ken Livingstone has stated he will move a motion of support in the GLC Labour Group.

Liverpool MP and Labour Party chairperson Eric Heffer has called on the labour movement to give full support to councils in the front line of Tory attacks. But the dream ticket leadership is not in favour of a real fight to defend local government. It has begun to show its true colours.

The Labour Group defections gave Neil Kinnock and John Cunningham (shadow environment spokesperson) the opportunity to step in. They have met Liverpool

councillors and MPs to persuade them to adopt a budget of 60 per cent rate increases and £1.50 rent rises.

Kinnock has made clear he is opposed to councils defying the law. Instead, they should stay in office and administer Tory cuts. Presumably this means Labour should also accept the abolition of the GLC and metropolitan councils, and stay within the law by cooperating to transfer powers. It would also mean that when rate capping comes into effect

next year Labour councils would make big redundancies and cuts in services.

The result? Labour would take the blame for the Tory attacks. To avoid this, Labour must fight these attacks — and that means defying the law. The dream-ticket course is indistinguishable from the right wing's. Kinnock's stand on Liverpool shows that when it comes to the decisive issues, the 'middle of the road' unity offensive ends up in the arms of the right.

Socialists must defend Liverpool. If the council's stand is defeated, it makes it harder to defend the GLC and metropolitan councils, and harder to resist rate capping. If Labour doesn't lead the fight against Tory attacks, the working class will never see it as the main alternative to the Tory government.



Ferry across the Mersey

Support grows

THE PRESSURE is mounting as Liverpool's crunch day approaches. Union support is growing, but rebel councillors are wavering.

Last week, six Labour councillors — Pat Johnson, Peter Murphy, Joe Morgan, Paul Orr, Eddie Roderick and Bill Snell — declared they would not vote for an illegal budget. Over the weekend, the six were joined by a seventh, Margaret Donaley.

Their hypocritical statement claimed they could not support an 'illegal' or 'improper'

budget, which 'jeopardised the livelihood of council employees'. In fact, it is the action of these councillors — a group large enough to break Labour's majority — which puts into jeopardy council workers' jobs and the services of Liverpool's whole population.

Liverpool District Labour Party held a special meeting on Monday — open to all party members

— to discuss action against the turncoats, and to organise the next stage of Liverpool's campaign.

By Carol Turner

The decision of the seven comes at a time when the Communist Party in Liverpool is backing Neil Kinnock's call to 'stay within the law'. John Blevin, secretary of Merseyside CP, has made a public appeal on behalf of the rebels, attacking Liverpool's proposal not

to raise the rates.

Despite the cowardice and treachery of some sections of the labour movement, more council workers are coming out in favour of supporting the 24-hour strike on 29 March. Several NUPE branches have already voted to overturn their shop stewards' decision not to support the stoppage. And a recent mass meeting of NALGO members voted by over 18,000 to less than 150 to back the strike.

Over 1000 NALGO members were locked out of the meeting when

management insisted that fire regulations required no more than 2000 be allowed in. Despite this, support was overwhelming.

NALGO Secretary Pete Cresswell, pledged that all excluded members would be given the opportunity to vote on the resolution passed by the meeting. He later told a press conference that such a ballot would not affect the outcome of the vote. 'I don't see any reason to believe,' he said, 'that the people excluded would have voted against.'

Scottish Labour: an unclear conference

AS THE SCOTTISH Labour Party conference opened in Perth, opinion polls showed a 14 per cent increase in Labour's popularity since the general election. But conference failed to grasp the opportunity to channel this into an organised fightback against the Tory government.

The weekend was one of general resolution-making, rather than specific commitments to militant action now. Conference opened with broad resolutions on local government democracy.

Although pledging to campaign against rate capping, cuts in jobs and services, and the undermining of local democracy, a key resolution from Pollok — calling for no rent or rate rises, job losses or privatisation — was neither heard nor voted on.

Since Glasgow district council has such a policy, this resolution had a particular relevance to the debate. Added to this, the failure to hear a resolution specifically defending Liverpool council gave the whole debate an abstract rather than practical air.

Conference was united on the importance of campaigning now for a Scottish Assembly, recognising its relevance to organising labour movement resistance to Tory policies. Despite statements distancing our position from a nationalist one, it is unclear how far this campaign will be organised

and led by the Labour Party.

A composite resolution on disarmament strategy typified the weekend's political compromises. It contained two completely different analyses of the arms race and correspondingly contrasting strategies. The composite contained a continued commitment to unilateral nuclear disarmament, together with calls for negotiation, a freeze and a no-first-use agreement.

By Anne Kane (Pollok Labour Party delegate)

By agreeing to promote the view that leaving NATO is not a prerequisite for unilateralism, the policy leads the Scottish Labour Party away from opposing NATO as a nuclear alliance. The position was won dishonestly. Even so, 190,000 voted against the proposal.

Delegates had to be particularly attentive to catch the few words uttered on women's oppression. Since the NEC had finally accepted the right of the Scottish party to

reserve five seats for women, four resolutions on this issue were replaced by a statement from the Scottish executive welcoming this decision.

Women activists were quick to stress that this is only the beginning of the substantial reforms needed. Any doubt that women's issues have to be constantly aired was removed when delegates saw a SPUC fringe meeting advertised in official Labour Party briefings.

Plight

Despite much reference to the plight of youth on YTS schemes, conference adopted a weak resolution from Linlithgow constituency. Pious statements about improving the schemes turned the debate into how Youth Training Schemes were an improvement on YOPS.

Sunday's international debate was more positive. Conference unanimously opposed US intervention in Central America and supported the revolutions in that area. It remains to be seen whether the campaigning experience of the coming year will lend the clarity of the Central American debate to home policies for next year's conference.



Protesters in Glasgow demonstrate their opposition to Tory policy for Scotland

MOLES EYE VIEW



Problem child

NOW THE Fraud Squad are looking into the affairs of a collapsed unlicensed broking operation run by a Hong Kong company, one of whose directors is Mrs Thatcher's 'problem child' Mark. Mind you, it all seems above board.

It's just that some people are complaining about the way it handled investor's funds and claimed that it was sold to a financier who was being sued for a debt of £115,000. The same man faces charges of defrauding his own company and dealing in forged Euro-bonds.

But what's wrong with that if it's true? Capitalism has always produced a long and honourable line of people who have dipped their hand in other people's pockets. Mrs Thatcher is denying that her lad should be put 'in care'. She points out that all this is good business experience for Mark and insists that she and his Dad have also mixed in business circles for years and says 'look where it got me'.

No new job for Mark

OUR TORY government like the prime minister believes business should maintain the highest standards. That is why

it's giving an enthusiastic reception to the US firm National Semiconductor, who are setting up shop in Greenock.

The firm is going to get a dollop of dough from the government but officials of the Scottish Development Agency are just too coy to tell anybody that National Semiconductor has just done a deal with the US law officials and settled a two-year investigation into its testing of military microcircuits.

It was charged with 40 counts of making false statements to the US government and mail fraud.

The firm are expected to plead guilty and pay costs and fines of \$1.7 million. There is no truth as far as we know in the rumour that Mark has offered to do a spot of PR work for them.

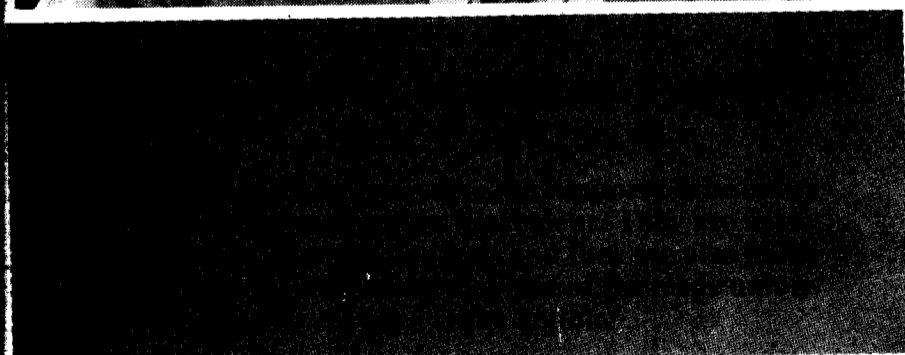
An election winner?

WE CAN now reveal that the Spartacist League was the real force behind the Benn victory in Chesterfield. Not only did they write offering 'critical support' — in itself worth some 20,000 votes. They also put him straight on programme telling him in an 'open letter' that abolishing the 'licensing laws' was one of the ways to win.

A thirsty and grateful Chesterfield electorate endorsed this and Benn zoomed home. When you have the Spartacist it just proves you don't need politics.

A Socialist ACTION

Miners deserve the support of the entire movement



SUBSCRIBE

RATES:
Inland
6 months £8;
12 months £15
Overseas
(12 months only)
Europe £17; Air Mail £24
(Double these rates
for multi-reader institutions)

Special free book offer!

Take out a years inland subscription and we will send you free one of these books:

Thatcher and Friends by John Ross

Over our Dead Bodies — Women Against the Bomb

Introductory offer for new readers: Eight issues for just £2!

Please send me as special offer
I enclose cheque/PO payable to Socialist Action for £.....

Send to: Socialist Action Subs, 328 Upper St, London N1 2XP.

Fleet St: The lie machine

THE UNFREE PRESS are having a carnival over the miners' strike. Each paper competes with the other in a barrage of lies, misrepresentation and spite. Top prize for rank bad journalism goes to the self-proclaimed 'Voice of the People' — the Daily Express.

As 55,000 miners struck, the Express discovered 'Battling Bob' — no, he is not some colliery out of a Lassie film, but Yorkshire's only scab. He got the headline and the 55,000 strikers got a slugging. The Express affirms that this is in line with their policy of reporting the facts. Mind you, the hacks on the Express do tend to select their facts!

On page 9 of last Monday's edition the Sun touched the strings of my heart with the story of this man who earned £35,000 a year but was not wealthy. No, this was not some miner in a high productivity pit, but poor old Nigel Lawson, Chancellor of the Exchequer. The Sun funnily enough was less sympathetic to the miners who get a hell of a lot less.

It accused them of 'making the name of the miners stink in the na-

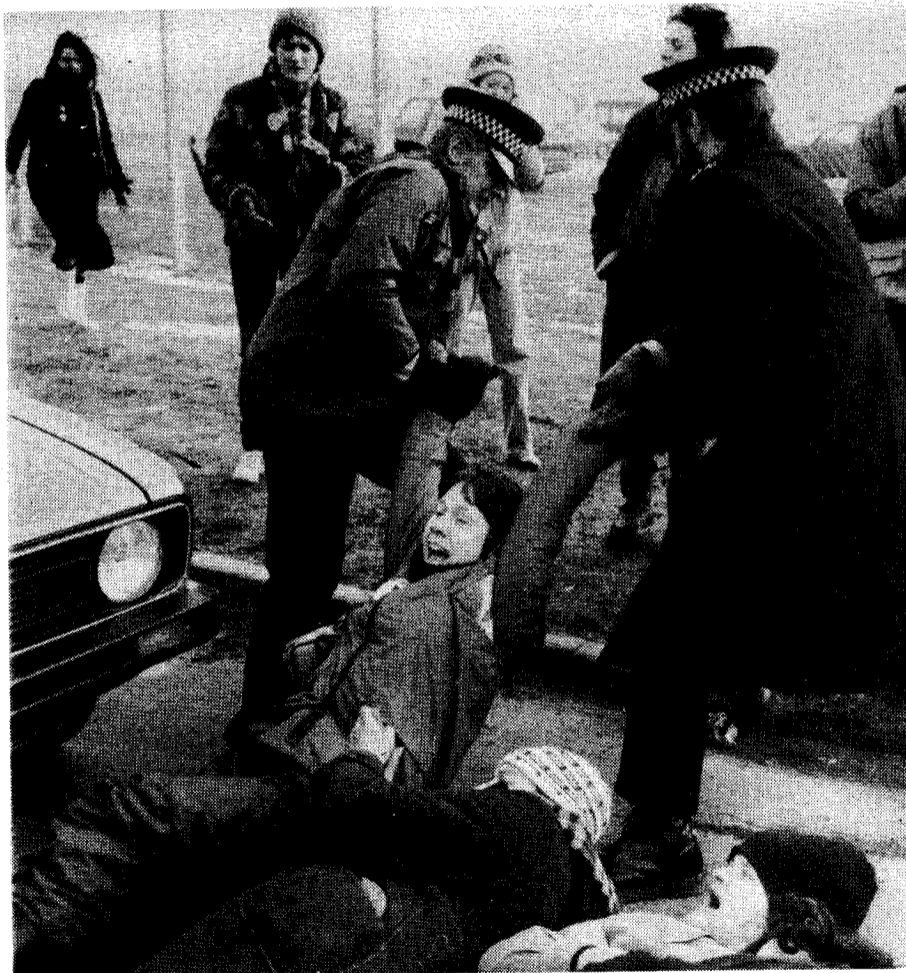
tion's nostrils.' Obviously they should put up with their lot like Nigel does. Then we had the whimper of Liberalism. The Guardian editorial — like all good non-conformist newspapers — started with a little homily explaining what a 'dirty, dangerous and in the ultimate, a distressful trade...' mining is.

By Bob Pennington

But don't worry, it doesn't support the miners. Maybe the Express and the rest snarl and bite but the Guardian yelps and snaps and it dutifully told the miners this was a dispute it did 'not believe they could, or indeed should win.'

Funnily enough the miners never thought the Guardian would think anything otherwise.

Greenham in danger



LAST WEEK the first test run of a Cruise missile launcher on the roads of southern England was carried out. The Ministry of Defence, if they were indeed in charge, were playing it cautiously. Only a few vehicles were involved, not the massive convoy that would accompany a real cruise launch. The operation was commanded by United States Air Force officers, but there were British personnel 'in attendance'.

The convoy was alleged to have gone to 'West London', but in fact probably went to the MoD's test site at Salisbury Plain.

Despite the limited number of vehicles which took part in the operation, and the fact that it was carried out in the dead of night, it was an undoubted victory for the death-dealers. The limited number of women at Greenham Common were kept away from the Blue Gate from which the laun-

cher convoy left, and were powerless to make any attempt to stop it. This latest government victory means a very sober assessment of the Greenham situation is needed.

Without doubt, the government decided a long time ago that the peace camp was an embarrassment which had to be



Voice of what Britain?

fence to be present at the Greenham peace camp.

The second part of the state's pincer movement has been the co-ordination of the legal campaign by Newbury Council, the Ministry of Defence and Berkshire County Council to evict the peace camps from the ground which they own. Over the past week this has meant a systematic police campaign to close down the camps.

Chosen

The government has chosen its moment well, waiting until after the missiles had been installed, and on the verge of becoming operational before making their decisive move. They hope that demoralisation among the women themselves, and a sense of resignation among their supporters nationally, will lead to an eventual decision to abandon the camps.

Obviously there is a limit to the endurance of the women put in an impossible position by constant harassment.

A major effort is therefore needed to ensure that the camp stays in place. The Greenham camp is the product of a gigantic amount of effort and sacrifice, and it would be a gigantic propaganda coup for the Tories to stop it.

While there are still some shelters remaining the women are expecting these to be torn down at any time. Therefore they are asking for people to provide them with Gortex survival bags, heavy duty polythene sheets, candles and other items needed for basic survival.

They are also asking for as many women as possible to go down there, if only for a short time — perhaps a weekend or a couple of free days. They want to be prepared to track the launch vehicle if it makes another sortie.

For further information, contact the Greenham office on 01-833 2831.