

A **Socialist** ACTION

Stand with the miners!

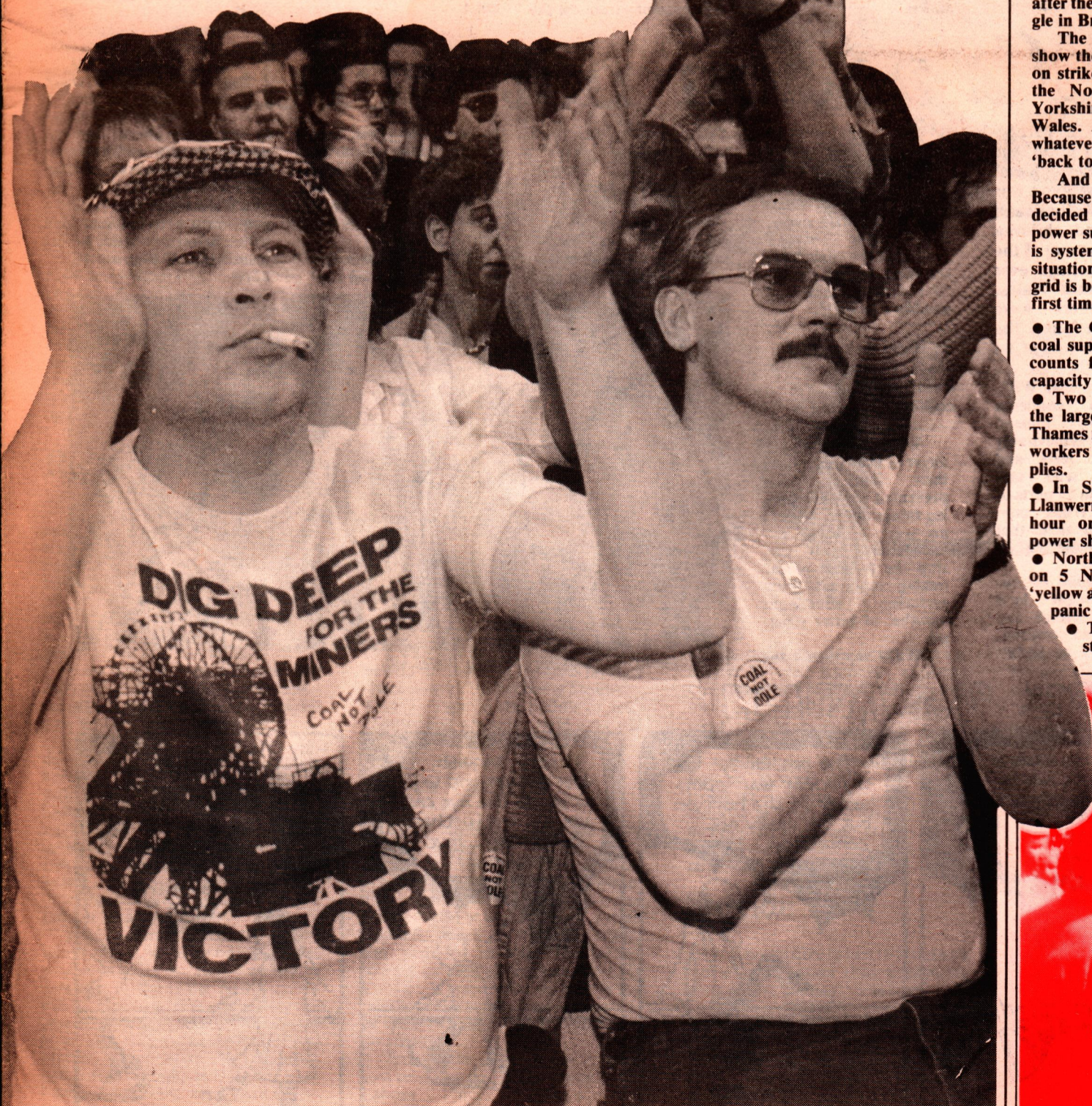


Photo: MARK SALMON

CND CONFERENCE SPECIAL



pages 6 and 7:

● Gunter
Minnerup on
European
defence

● Joy Hurcombe on what's at
stake for CND in 1985

back page:

What's happening at
Greenham?

EIGHT MONTHS of pounding by the police, the courts, the social security and the media has made the first small dent in the miners' strike over the last two weeks. Now the government are trying to exploit it to the full.

The endless television headlines about the 'move back to work' have as their goal to demoralise the miners and break up solidarity. But their aim is also to systematically hide the real facts of the strike. Even if the NCB figures on 10,000 miners going back to work over the last two weeks were true, which they aren't, that would still only be *seven per cent* of the miners on strike.

Well over 90 per cent of those who started the strike in March are still out after the longest mass industrial struggle in British history.

The figures for the core areas show the picture. Ninety per cent are on strike in Scotland, 93 per cent in the North East, 97 per cent in Yorkshire, and 99.6 per cent in South Wales. No coal of any significance whatever is being produced in the 'back to work' areas.

And that last point is vital. Because this strike is going to be decided by brutal power. For in the power supply industry the Tory press is systematically *concealing* the real situation — the fact that the national grid is beginning to be affected for the first time.

● The CEGB is desperate for fresh coal supplies in Yorkshire which accounts for 20 per cent of its total capacity.

● Two weeks ago West Thurrock, the largest coal fired station in the Thames region, was closed down after workers refused to accept fresh supplies.

● In South Wales British Steel's Llanwern plant was shut down for an hour on 7 November because of power shortages.

● North Thames power was so low on 5 November that there was a 'yellow alert' — one step from the full panic of a red alert.

● The POEU reports that standby generators have been

brought into service to compensate for power losses over the last two weeks.

The media claims that this strike is about to break are complete lies. The problem which confronts the strike is the total contrast between the massive and direct assistance being given to Thatcher by the courts, the police, the CBI, and the media and the total *lack* of support being given to the miners by the leaders of the TUC and Labour Party.

While Owen is praising Thatcher, Willis insults the miners, and Tuffin and Lyons move to knife the miners by calling on the TUC to back out of congress commitments. An appeal by the TUC to miners not to return to work would by itself have virtually halted the 'back to work' drift in its tracks.

Above all the NUM, and those carrying on solidarity, must be able to feel and see the massive support for the miners which exists in the movement. The movement has to speak out quite regardless of whether Kinnock and Willis do — and the impression must be ended that they speak for the Labour Party and the trade unions as a whole.

It is the solidarity action on the railways and in the power stations which shows the way forward. The TUC should issue a fresh declaration of support and call for no return to work — and if they won't do it then the left trade union leaders backing the miners should do so.

The appearance of Labour not backing the miners given by Kinnock has to decisively rebutted. The best and most effective way to do that would be for the NEC to call a national Labour Party solidarity demonstration for the miners — this would be the largest march London has seen for decades. National and regional days of action are also urgently needed.

These are hard weeks for the strike. But once the 'Christmas bonus' pressure is over, and it becomes clear the strike has not cracked, the initiative will begin to slip back into the hands of the NUM. Thatcher still has a long hard winter ahead of her.

Mineworkers' Defence Committee SOLIDARITY CONFERENCE

Speakers

ARTHUR SCARGILL

BETTY HEATHFIELD

TONY BENN
and others

SUNDAY DECEMBER 2nd
CAMDEN TOWN HALL, LONDON NW1
(opposite St Pancras Station)
11.30-4.30

Socialist ACTION

Gerry Adams and the British left

AT THIS year's Sinn Fein Ard Fheis Gerry Adams made a very remarkable presidential address. It summarised the entire last years of work by Sinn Fein. It is reported on page eight of this week's Socialist Action. But the speech was an event worth taking note of for the entire left in Britain itself.

The theme of the speech was the radical, and in the case of Sinn Fein, revolutionary struggle for democracy. That theme went through the address right from the title *An Phoblacht*, or Gerry Adams, chose to give the speech — 'We have the right to be free'.

His starting point was the right of the Irish people to independence and self-determination. But to develop that theme Gerry Adams went far beyond purely political democracy. For Ireland to be free it was necessary to control its own economy. For Ireland to be free it was necessary for Irish women to be liberated. For Ireland to be free it was necessary that democratic rights existed for all.

In fact, if one wanted to be theoretical, it was a rather good recapitulation of how the first Marxist actually came to be one. Karl Marx, it should never be forgotten, did not start as a 'Marxist' — or even a socialist. He started as a revolutionary democrat — a revolutionary democrat who found, logically, that the consistent extension of democracy is incompatible with capitalist society. Because to achieve democracy you have to eliminate exploitation, oppression in the family, dictatorship at work.

In short any thorough going struggle for democracy, a struggle that does not stop half way, will blow up capitalist society itself.

In Ireland that truth has always been relatively obvious in the dynamic of the Republican tradition itself. Only the working class, and small farmers, will fight consistently for Irish independence. Or, to put it in the words used by Sandino of Nicaragua, only the workers and farmers will go 'all the way'. And precisely by going 'all the way' in the fight for democracy capitalist society itself comes under attack — which is exactly why the capitalist class itself long ago gave up any thorough going fight for democracy at all!

Any thorough going fight for democracy in our society therefore inevitably becomes inextricable intertwined with a struggle that goes far beyond capitalism — a class struggle for socialism. That was the dynamic of Gerry Adams' speech.

Gerry Adams, in Ireland, is not a socialist despite the fact that he is a nationalist. He is a socialist because he is a thorough going fighter for the national rights of Ireland.

And what does all this have to do with the British left? It is not a matter simply of solidarity — vital as that is. The point is Gerry Adams is actually tapping the same vein as the most popular and advanced mass currents in the British labour movement itself.

If one were to summarise the real cutting edge of the popularity of someone like Tony Benn or Ken Livingstone it would be in their stance and representation of radical democracy. Benn's central theme is democratisation of parliament, the Labour Party, government and every sphere of politics. Ken Livingstone's central concept in London, the huge popularity of the GLC, is the 'state as resource' — a state that expands the sphere of democracy, by providing a material base for it, and not a state that restricts democracy.

Arthur Scargill's best speeches and acts are also those, as at the Labour Party conference, where he acts as a tribune of the entire history of the labour movement and its fight for the right to exist.

It also happens, not by accident, that the most authentically mass radical and revolutionary tradition in British and Irish society is that of the fight for democracy — the Irish struggle for independence, the Chartists, the Suffragettes.

Gerry Adams' speech was not just a question of solidarity. It was an object lesson for the entire left within what is now (unfortunately) the British state.

Willis goes ape

THE NOOSE DANGLED in front of TUC leader Norman Willis at the miners' rally in Aberavon, expressed the hatred felt by every class conscious worker towards the labour establishment.

Willis's speech was a deliberate provocation. His aim was to attack and demoralise the miners in the middle of the most difficult fortnight of the whole dispute.

In his speech he spent one sentence on police violence, six on miners' violence. He used the violence on the picket lines as an excuse for the TUC's pathetic response to the court and police attacks on the strike.

He gave no commitment of further practical support — instead he complained: 'Delivering effective support is hard and difficult'. This to miners and their families who have suffered eight months of hardship!

His most militant comment was that there needed to be 'a surge back to negotiations' — in the knowledge that the NCB has refused negotiations until the NUM agrees, in advance, to shift its positions.

Speed

The speed with which the right wing moved in to attack the NUM after the rally makes it clear that Willis went to South Wales as their messenger. The TUC right, supported by Kinnock, are attempting

to back out of the commitments given at congress.

Kinnock's statement of support for Willis, and Hattersley's call on the NUM to consult the membership, were

By Pat Hickey

deliberate blows at the strike which can only reinforce the back to work moves. Bassett, Tuffin and Jenkins were quick to follow suit.

Now, John Lyons of the Engineers and Managers Association, which represents engineers in the power stations, has demanded a review of the policy adopted at Brighton. He claims that the NUM's aims of total victory: 'do not represent the TUC's position'.

Bill Keyes of SOGAT '82 was correct to condemn ... prominent members of the TUC general council who have the temerity to make statements which are anti-TUC policy, and anti- NUM and indeed anti-miners.'



Norman Willis

The right wing are moving to stab the miners in the back. This means that the fight for solidarity will have to be conducted despite the scab leaders.

The decisions of the TUC congress have to be defended against the right.

Arthur Scargill's declaration that we need 'a TUC as committed to the NUM as the CBI is to the NCB' is a clear call to the rank and file of the movement to act despite the leadership. The united front to support the NUM will have to be constructed through militants in the unions forcing the leaders to act — and by acting independently of the leaders to help the miners.

A TUC such as that demanded by Scargill will mean taking the class struggle line of the NUM through the whole movement. It will mean the replacement of almost the

entire leadership of the labour movement — both the Labour Party and the TUC.

Leaders like Willis are a threat to the whole movement. They regard the class struggle as something to be avoided like the plague.

Willis is typical of the breed. He has never led, organised or participated in a struggle in his life. He started his career as a T.G.W.U. messenger boy — good training for his present job — became a research officer, assistant to Jack Jones (where he didn't learn much) then to Len Murray (where he learnt a lot) and now he's 'leader' of Britain's 10 million trade unionists.

Scargill

The contrast with Scargill's career could hardly be greater. He started out as a working miner in the Barnsley Miners Forum, went through the unofficial strikes of 1969, the mass struggles of '72 and '74, and the fight in the NUM to replace the Gormley-led right wing.

The labour movement needs the kind of class struggle leadership that the miners have got. Such a leadership will only be won through the most bitter struggles. It will not be quick.

At present the Scargill wing of the bureaucracy has the support of perhaps 15 to 20 per cent of the working class. But that minority is the most important and dynamic section of the working class, and includes in its ranks women, blacks, youth, and the most class conscious sections of the labour movement.

Fight

The fight can begin now. First is the task of building support for the miners, and defeating the labour traitors.

Any attempt by the general council to reverse congress policy must be met by a demand for a recall TUC. The Labour Party must be pressed into building a national demonstration in support of the miners, and repudiating Kinnock's stand. In the reselection of MPs and in union elections, accounts must be settled with all those who failed to help the miners.

Labour

The labour movement has to fight for a Labour Party, and a Labour government, as loyal to our class as Thatcher is to hers. A TUC as loyal to the NUM as the CBI is to the NCB.

TUC: action not words

WHAT THE PRESS did not say about the South Wales miners' rally at Aberavon was that with 6000 miners, women and children there, it was one of the biggest meetings ever held in South Wales. The speakers were well-received and the atmosphere was at an all-time high.

When Norman Willis started to condemn violence by miners' pickets, he was inevitably greeted by jeers and shouts of 'scab' and 'traitor' from all parts of the hall. Willis consciously provoked that reaction for the benefit of the press.

At one point the audience thought he'd finished his speech and gave him an ovation. Then he said he hadn't

finished — and went on to attack the so-called violence of the miners. When he was interrupted, Emlyn Williams tried to maintain order. But Willis himself prevented the chair from restoring order, saying: 'If I couldn't take it, I wouldn't be here'.

By Nigel Bevan and Mark Thomas, Penrhiwceiber colliery

Willis provoked the anger of 6000 miners and their families, and prevented anyone calming things down. There's no way, in those circumstances, you can stop the feelings of the mining community from surfacing — after eight months' of bitter struggle.

Willis represents the

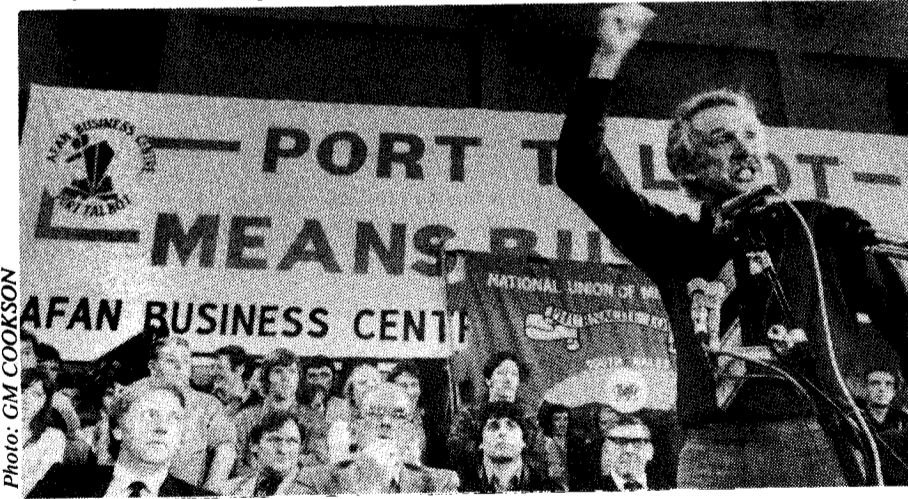
TUC. Shouts of 'we want action not words' means we want results. Some actions form the decisions of the TUC congress in support of the NUM are long-awaited in the coalfields.

By contrast, and ig-

nored by the press, was the enormous solidarity of the meeting. When Arthur Scargill started to speak, you could have heard a pin drop in the hall.

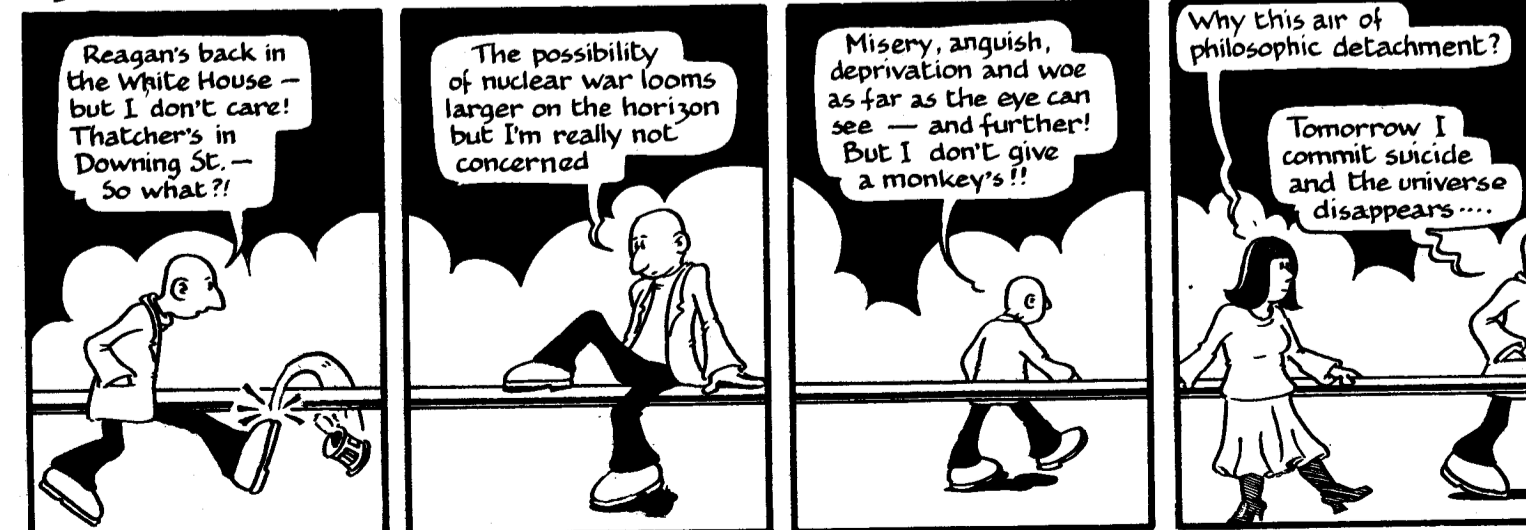
If anyone shares the prejudices whipped up

by the press about the miners' pickets, we leave you with the words of Mick McGahey: 'Tell me of a Welsh miner that has gone onto a picket line with a helmet, a shield, a truncheon, a dog or a horse.'



Peter Heathfield speaking at South Wales rally

A PIECE OF THE ACTION



NEIL KINNOCK got a very bloody nose indeed from the rank and file of the labour movement for his refusal to speak at the five national rallies organised by the NUM.

The media made a rather feeble attempt to portray that reaction as a simple 'hard left' conspiracy. Socialist Action's front page of two weeks ago, labelling Kinnock as a scab for his refusal to speak at the NUM's rallies, was featured in the *Sunday Times*, and on the ITN's lunchtime news last Wednesday.

Socialist Action was invited to appear on the same ITV news programme — to discuss the resolution passed in Kinnock's branch of Ealing/Southall Labour Party demanding his expulsion from the party. We declined. Firstly because we don't favour Kinnock's expulsion at all (expulsions are the tool of the right and not the left); secondly, because we had nothing to do with the resolution in Ealing; and thirdly because the whole thing was a frame-up — an attempt to portray the real anger which exists against Kinnock as coming only from a paper whose full views are shared today by an absolutely tiny minority inside the Labour Party, but which in this case simply accurately articulated deeply-held views of wide sections of the movement.

By John Ross

Despite these rather feeble media attempts to divert attention from the real question the truth concerning the anger in the labour movement over Neil Kinnock's actions *ditto* come out. Last Friday Kinnock was forced to meet members of miners' lodges from his Islwyn constituency after Oakdale lodge explained there was 'widespread resentment' over his position on the strike.

We know that the issue of Socialist Action proclaiming Kinnock a 'Scab' was one of the most popular issues — in the labour movement and among miners — we have ever produced. The outburst of anger and hatred against Kinnock for his stand was no 'conspiracy' but an immediate, spontaneous, and deeply-held reaction by a major section of the labour movement.

Because of this response Neil Kinnock was temporarily forced to try to present a 'softer' image on the miners' strike at the end of the week. He announced he would be speaking at a rally in Gwent organised by the South Wales NUM. This was in addition to the 30 November Labour Party rally for the miners already decided on.

Retreat

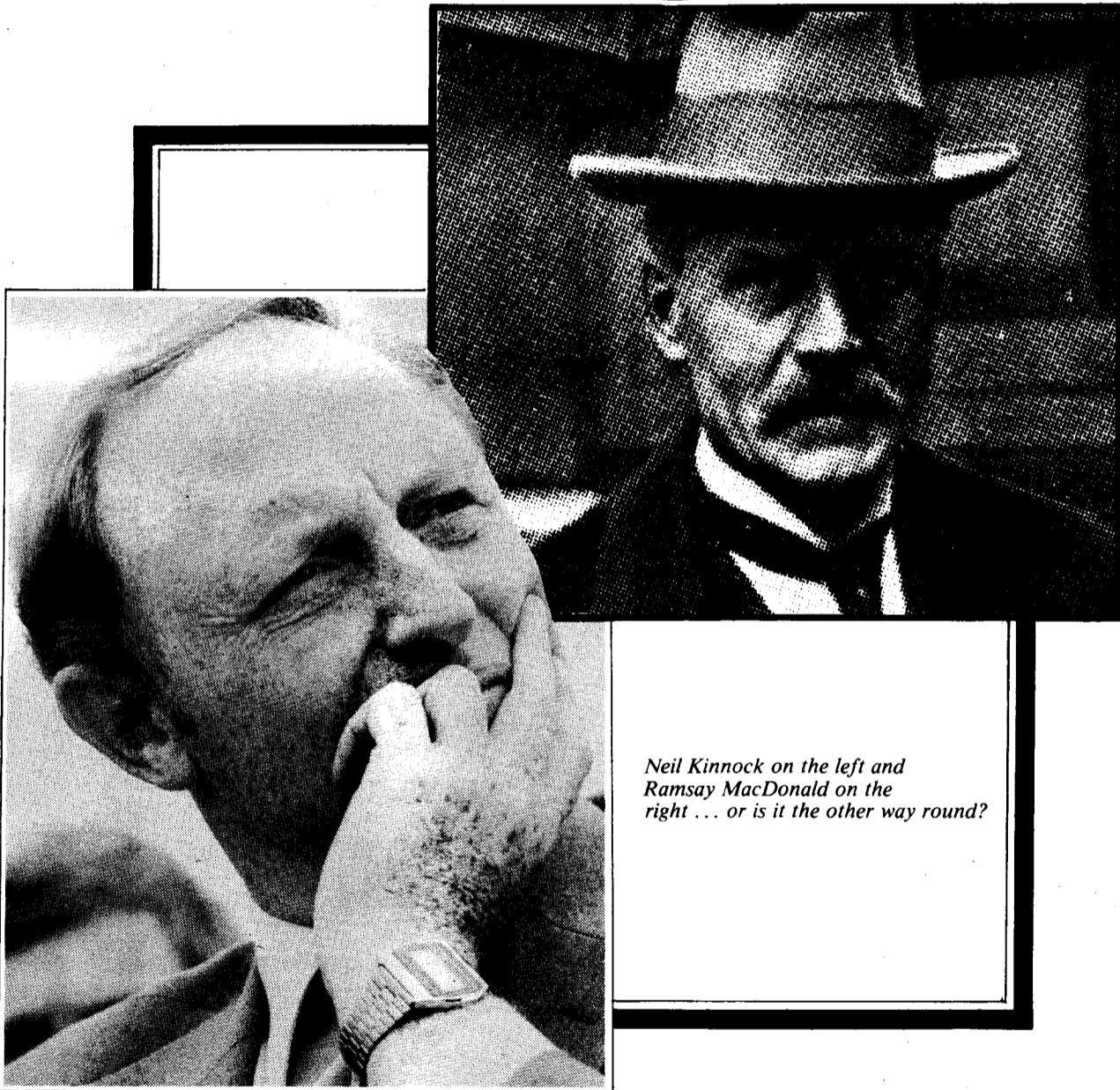
Kinnock stated he would be meeting the South Wales NUM executive and would 'observe' a picket line. He also, at least temporarily, retreated on his demand for a ballot, stating that: 'When you are committed to a battle you don't stop and worry about what would have happened in the first five minutes'.

How nice if Neil Kinnock had decided on all these things eight months ago — and had *joined* a picket line, and not just 'observed' it.

After these declarations the delegations from the four lodges in Kinnock's constituency carried a unanimous vote supporting him as Labour leader and next prime minister. This however actually reveals the depth of the shockwave created by Kinnock's actions rather neatly — it is an extraordinary thing to vote on merely one year after a Labour leader is elected!

Despite any immediate tactical moves there should be no illusions as to what is going on. Firstly we can be sure that at the rallies Neil Kinnock will do his usual 'violence' act for the press. Secondly the scale of the 30 November rally shows the lack of real support to the strike. Neil Kinnock and Arthur Scargill on the same platform would fill the largest hall in Britain. Instead the rally is to be limited

Where is Ramsay MacKinnock leading us?



Neil Kinnock on the left and Ramsay MacDonald on the right ... or is it the other way round?

to 1,400, will be ticket-only, and will be held not in one of the areas facing a 'back to work' threat but at Stoke-on-Trent — right in the middle of scab country and where the right wing will be strong.

Nifty tactics

More important than any nifty tactical moves are Neil Kinnock's original decision and the overall direction of events that are taking place. The last two weeks were the hardest for the NUM in the entire strike. Neil Kinnock, aided by Norman Willis, was prepared to knife the miners when they needed support most. If Kinnock is prepared to do that in the middle of the biggest trade union battle since 1926, then he is prepared to do anything.

Exactly the same course is being seen on policy and organisation in the Labour Party. Labour's new economic policies, authored by the

team around Roy Hattersley and endorsed by Neil Kinnock, explicitly abandoned any pledge to full employment. Apparently a Labour government is now going to state it will preside over two million unemployed — and far more in practice. In addition an incomes policy will be introduced — which should be worth millions of votes to Thatcher not to mention its economic effects of attacking the working class and labour movement.

Suicide

It is impossible in fact to imagine a worse combination than continuing mass unemployment, combined with an incomes policy, for shattering the labour movement and for electoral suicide.

On defence, the new policy document — as Gunter Minnerup discusses in this week's centre pages — is based on fitting Britain into the

framework of a revamped NATO. A Britain specialising in conventional weapons, and (heaven help us!) with a 'strong navy', will fit within a continuing nuclear alliance based on the atomic arsenals of the United States and France.

Mockery

These policies are a complete mockery of unilateralism. The conventional weapons spending involved would furthermore wreck the economic policies of any Labour government — in addition to the other stronger objections to them.

On organisation and party democracy, the old right wing and its methods are being reinstated by Kinnock. In the name of 'electoral realism' the supporters of the people who led Labour to disaster in 1970 and 1979 are being rehabilitated.

Neil Kinnock and Roy Hattersley

have spent their time recently nipping into almost every NEC committee meeting to vote the left out of the chair. Expulsions are also continuing of *Militant* supporters.

Meanwhile the results of the shadow cabinet elections are too well known to need commenting on and John Cunningham, shadow spokesperson on local government, was permitted, without any rebuke from Neil Kinnock, to openly violate conference policy and attack any Labour council planning to violate the law in the fight against rate-capping.

The pattern behind all this is clear — if anyone had any doubts before. Neil Kinnock has abandoned anything but a purely verbal pretence of balancing between left and right in the party. He rests his position more and more firmly, and exclusively, on an alliance with the centre and right of the trade union leadership, in particular David Bassett, and on the right wing of the PLP.

Enemy

Who Neil Kinnock's parliamentary supporters regard as the enemy in the party was made abundantly clear in those shadow cabinet elections. The Tribune group of MPs voted solidly with the right in the elections and against Tony Benn and the left. Smashing the 'Bennite' left in the party, to make Labour 'acceptable' to the bourgeoisie again, is the core of Kinnock's and the right wing's policy.

There should also be no illusions as to the consequences of all this. *In addition to the current sabotage, a government led by Neil Kinnock on its present policies would be a disaster for the labour movement.* Its right wing policies would utterly demoralise the working class and prepare the way for political forces and changes to the right even of Thatcher. Anyone who doubts that should look across the channel at what is happening to the French left under Mitterrand — the French politician whose politics most clearly resemble Kinnock's.

Catastrophe

Furthermore on its present line, it should be stated openly, Labour is most unlikely to be led to any victory by Kinnock at all. The June 1983 election was not a fluke. It expressed a real relation of forces — although one which is much less unfavourable than Labour's catastrophic campaign made it seem. For Labour to win the next election there has to be a real move in the relation of forces in favour of the working class. Simply relying on Thatcher or Owen to mess it up is hopeless — there is no tactic in politics more bankrupt than relying on the weakness or stupidity of your opponent.

But Kinnock is precisely orienting to blocking the struggles — the miners' strike, the defence of local government and so on — that *could* decisively shift the relation of forces in Labour's favour. *If* he were to succeed in this, which is by no means certain, then there would not be a Labour government at all.

And if Kinnock does not win the next election on his present 'go it alone' course then every 'closet coalitionist' in the Labour Party — from Eric Hammond, through Frank Field, to Gavin Laird — is going to come out in the open with their proposal for a grand 'anti-Thatcher bloc' with the Alliance.

Whether by that time Kinnock will have become a puppet of forces even to his right time will tell.

There is a wonderful analogy. There was a Labour leader in the 1920s who conducted a witch hunt against the Communist Party — long before it became a Stalinist party. He then aided the bourgeoisie to defeat the general strike of 1926. He finished up joining a coalition government.

Common decency prevents us from recalling the fellow's name but it might be a good idea if Neil Kinnock started reading a few history books.

Whether it would deflect him from his course we doubt very much.

Behind the NCB's lies:

A tiny percentage in South Yorks

THE NATIONAL Coal Boards' back to work campaign has failed so far in Yorkshire. With only one per cent of the miners crossing picket lines no coal will be cut. And it will be difficult to move coal from Yorkshire pitheads.

There are only two only pits in the Board's Yorkshire are with more than 100 miners working. But Manton and Shireoaks are both physically in the county of Nottinghamshire, which the police have made a no-go area for Yorkshire miners.

My pit has one of the largest number of scabs in the area. But with less than 50 out of 800 working it is hardly the collapse of the strike that the press would have you believe. Most pits have just a handful of scabs.

Most of the scabs that are working are part of the industrial staff. These electricians fitters and overmen are the lower management levels in the pit. On top of this the four who went back came out on strike again before the end of the week.

No effort has been spared by police to get scabs to work. They occupy Thurcroft village patrolling in convoys of vans. Scabs are collected from their houses and any attempt even to speak to a scab could result in a three month jail sentence.

Then the police try and make sure the scabs do not even see the 150 pickets as they are driven through the gate in their armoured bus. Anybody who goes to work in these conditions needs his head examined!

The return of some people in Yorkshire has nothing to do with 'Silver Birch' or working miners' committees. Neither is it to do with hardship, although this has had its effect and greater financial

support is needed more than ever.

It is November and there have not yet been major cuts. On top of this people have just seen a whole barrage of so-called public opinion in the media. A few people begin to think that we might not win.

By Dave Parry, Thurcroft NUM (personal capacity).

So it is very damaging to morale when you get Willis shooting his mouth off in Wales and when Kinnock just refuses even to get on the fence never mind coming down on our side. Holding the line against this campaign is now the key task.

The five rallies were good for active miners. Now we need to organise public meetings in villages and we need to increase the level of picketing, especially mass pickets.

Only the government knows exactly what the coal stocks are but most people do not realise how near we could be to seriously effecting the power stations and the economy in general.

Solidarity, both financial and in the form of industrial action, is still the road to victory.



Scabs stopped at Cwm colliery

North-West power stations

By Dick Withecombe

ALL BUT one of the coal-fired power stations in the North West are now implementing the TUC decisions on the handling of scab coal. Fidler's Ferry, the largest power station in the north is now very low on stocks.

The TGWU region number 6 have established

a 'boycott committee' which meets weekly with the NUM. This monitors and plans actions against the movement of coal and coal fuel substitutes.

The North West TUC are due to call a meeting of their executive, the NUM, power and transport unions to further this action.

The NUM plans a mass picket at Agecroft power station and at Ellesmere Port around the oil depots.

The back to work movement has been portrayed by the press as a reaction of ordinary miners to the strike. In fact it is a carefully organised, and well-financed, campaign by the government, Tory Party and extreme right wing legal groups. John Marshall looks at the links of the movement to the Tory Party.

The first key link in the 'back to work' movement is Thatcher and the Tory government itself. A senior journalist involved in the scab miners' organisation is David Hart — who has both close links with Margaret Thatcher and, according to Hobart House executives, also close links to Ian MacGregor. These links were exposed in last week's issue of the *Miner*.

The *Sunday Times* reported that Hart is part of a group 'advising Mrs Thatcher on matters of state.'

Hart is a freelance journalist with his own company who normally avoids making any comment on his Thatcher/Coal Board connections which could cause embarrassment. He is especially keen on playing down his MacGregor contacts.

But at Hobart House there is no such reticence and executives there say he has been instrumental in influencing MacGregor's thinking 'particularly in boosting the importance of the working miners,' reports the *Financial Times*.

Yet another Conservative Party connection is in the shape of David Negus, the solicitor to the National Working Miners' Committee. During the Conservative Party Con-



Picket at Lewis Merthyr pit

Who's behind the 'back to work' movement?

ference he was a prominent speaker for the Society of Conservative Lawyers.

A further strand in the Tory web comes in the shape of a Mr Tim Bell. Mr Bell is a director of Saatchi and Saatchi, the advertising company which played a major role in persuading the electorate to vote Mrs Thatcher into power.

Like Mr Hart, Mr Bell has regular contact and major professional in-

fluence over Ian MacGregor.

The 'back to work movement' is no spontaneous outburst of miners. It is a carefully organised and financed campaign by the Tory Party and its allies.

• Further details of Tory and right wing links to the scab organisations can be found in *The Miner* 2 November and *The Enemy Within* published in the Kent coalfield.

A flop in South Wales

THE NATIONAL Coal Board's plan to starve the miners back to work has flopped in South Wales. Even if the NCB figures of 77 are true, this is a tiny percentage of the 26,000 miners in this area.

Mass picketing has been successfully carried out at Abercwmboi, St John's, Maestag and Nangarw collieries. Women Against Pit Closures have been actively involved in this picketing.

Women from Cynheidre occupied the pithead baths for over 16 hours and prevented scabs from going underground and from washing up after their shift!

Trade unionists have joined our picket lines. The bus workers branch of the TGWU have given the miners their unequivocal support. Of the 28 coaches booked by the NCB not one has carried miners back to work. The buses were not driven out of

depot or drivers refused to cross picket lines.

Bus workers understand that if the mines are closed their jobs will be on the line. Half of the contract work for the buses is provided by the Coal Board in South Wales.

By Nigel Bevan and Mark Thomas

Where strike breakers have entered collieries the local NUM lodges have withdrawn safety cover, implementing union policy, and ensuring the rapid closure of the pit for fear of flooding. Scabs have been sent letters by the union explaining that they will be expelled from

the NUM for their anti-union action.

But the most important reason of all for the failure of this back to work movement in South Wales is political: South Wales has lost more collieries over the last ten years than any other coalfield.

Strikes

There have been numerous strikes against pit closures. The strike in 1981 threatened to become a national strike and forced Thatcher to make a U-turn on pit closures. A few months later it became clear that Thatcher's promises were paper thin.

Each year since then the South Wales coalfield has been forced to take action against pit closures.

But balloting nationally did not produce a sufficient majority for a national strike. The NCB consequently succeeded in closing an average of five pits each year.

Picket

South Wales miners at the beginning of this strike knew that it was make or break for us. Thatcher will never starve or bribe the South Wales miners back to work. We have far too much to lose if we ever go back on her terms.

In the Cynon Valley there is already 26 per cent unemployment and 90 per cent of teenagers leaving school will not find work for at least a year. Sixty per cent will still be out of work three years later. Thatcher has given us no choice but to fight.

Solidarity conference takes off

REQUESTS for delegates credentials are pouring into the Mineworkers Defence Committee to attend the solidarity conference taking place in Camden Conference centre on 2 December. The provocative attack made by the TUC general secretary, Norman Willis, on the South Wales miners underlines how vital the tasks of the solidarity movement are.

The attack, and Neil Kinnock and John Cunningham's backing for it, has provided an opening for the right to push the TUC to 'review' their position of support for the miners.

Those who have stood by the NUM in their eight month long battle have to take the message of the five NUM rallies calling for more support to heart and begin to plan the counter-attack. Solidarity must be stepped up.

The Mineworkers Defence Committee conference is one forum in which to do this. Speakers

now confirmed include Arthur Scargill, Betty Heathfield, Tony Benn, Kay Sutcliffe, Lesley Boulton, Joe Mohammed, a black miner. Among those invited are Ray Buckton (ASLEF), Jimmy Knapp (NUR) and Roy Butlin from Coalville NUR.

By Valerie Coultas

The first meeting to plan the conference took place last Wednesday. Quite a large number of comrades from the Socialist Workers Party were in attendance, along



Steve Shukla, with translator Sylvie Charbin, speaking before wives of striking maritime workers in Quebec, Canada. Shukla, touring US and Canada to win support for British miners, was stopped by US customs agents and denied the right to re-enter the United States.

with NUM members and representatives from solidarity committees. Everyone agreed that we needed a working conference.

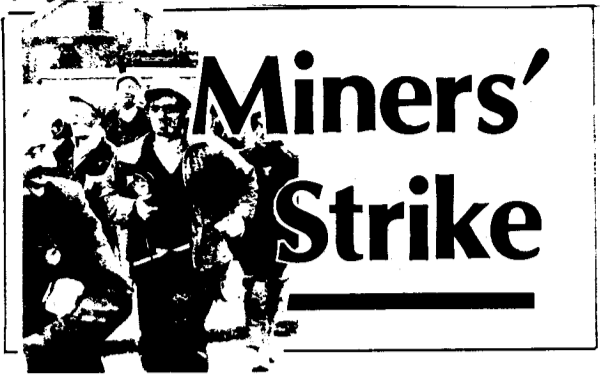
Food and finance is vital to sustain the miners over the winter and large donations should be brought to this meeting. But most important of all is to ensure that this conference expresses the view that Neil Kinnock and

Norman Willis do not speak on behalf of the Labour movement when they condemn the miners.

The ranks of the labour movement and the left leaders must combine to force a public demonstration of support through the call for a national Labour Party demonstration. The mass pickets at power stations must be increased and the

fight to halt the movement of coal must be stepped up. The conference has to be broad-based to achieve these goals.

● *Hurry to get your delegates credentials from 31, Cranwich Road N16 or phone 01-981 3289. New leaflets available from Wednesday's planning meeting at County Hall, 6pm. Ask for room booked by John McDonnell.*



Urgent: funds needed at Dawdon pit

FOOTBALL FANS will have heard of Terry Fenwick, the Queens Park Rangers and England football player. His father Alan works at Dawdon pit, in Seaham, Co. Durham, where over 1700 miners are on strike.

Alan is a member of the Pit Welfare Committee, set up at the start of the dispute. He spoke last week to a meeting of Langbaurgh Trades Council, in Cleveland, about the desperate need for funds to sustain the miners and their families.

Dawdon pit has not so far been 'twinned' with any labour movement organisation. It is sandwiched between the larger Easington Colliery and other pits such as Vane Tempest and Monkwearmouth, and the lodge officials feel that it has been forgotten by the solidarity movement.

The Welfare Committee can only manage to provide two meals a week, on Tuesdays and Thursdays. Single miners who are not receiving Social Security have to fend for themselves the rest of the week, and the lodge officials are spending a lot of their time visiting single miners to ensure they are alright.

Alan also explained that 30 per cent of children at the local school did not turn up for the first day of term because they had no adequate footwear. Many of the single miners have not had their electricity cut off for the last 3 weeks.

When Alan visited one miner last week, he found him cooking chips for his two children over an open fire in his hearth. One miner has been fined £90

for stealing £3 worth of coal. A local security firm has set their dogs on miners and children found taking coal from the heaps in the pit.

By Dave Carter

It is often said that Thatcher is trying to 'starve the miners back to work'. In the forgotten pits like Dawdon, which is solidly behind the strike, this is literally what will happen unless the labour movement responds immediately.

Alan Fenwick and his colleagues see the next two weeks as the make or break point in the strike, with the Coal Board's Xmas incentive bribe being used to tempt miners back to work. They are relying on us to deliver the support so often promised.

● *Rush all donations to Dawdon Advice & Distress Centre, Mount Stewart Street, Dawdon, Seaham, Co. Durham.*

Cheques should be made payable to 'Dawdon Advice & Distress Fund'.

Welsh Labour Party women swing left

LEFT-WINGERS and women's rights campaigners made major advances in the Welsh Labour Party at the weekend.

Tight organisation centred around the hard-Left magazine, *South Wales Labour Briefing* resulted in delegates to the Labour Women Wales conference three times revolting against the official line.

Voting coups on policy motions were followed by the election of a hard-Left slate to the committee running next year's conference. And every left-winger being promoted for the women's committee for Wales was elected.

The women's conference — held in Cardiff on Saturday 10 November — has previously reflected the conservative attitude of the party in Wales.

Anne Delaney, a delegate of the engineering union AUEW (TASS) said, 'We have managed the breakthrough. Two of the women's rights motions were passed. And the one which was lost failed by only a small margin.'

The women activists won a large majority for the demand that the Welsh women's conference be allowed to send five motions to the Welsh party's main annual conference in the spring.

The right-dominated women's committee for Wales opposed the idea because they said it would lead to women losing in return some of their rights at the main conference.

A demand that women members on the national executive committee be elected by the annual women's conference rather than by the party in general was also passed.

On the third motion the conference platform could muster only a small majority for its opposition to a women's rights demand that every shortlist for both parliamentary and local government elections must include a woman, should one apply. Delegates have few doubts that this demand will be accepted by Welsh women next year. 'For us, feminism and socialism are inseparable,' said Gill Jenkins of Cardiff.

Militant

The women's rights activists pinpoint their opposition as coming from two sections of the party — the Right and Militant supporters. The conference bulletin contains a long attack on Militant's views. But most unions are also criticised for lack of support for women's rights.

Anne Delaney said, 'We have got to get across that we are not anti-men: it is a matter of extending to women in the party their full democratic rights. Delegates' opposition, the conference voted to support total opposition to Tory policies, even if it means breaking Tory laws.'

Stevi Jackson, of Cardiff, one of the organisers of the *South Wales Labour Briefing* group, told the conference, 'The question is, do we implement Tory Policy or Labour policy?'

Kinnock

The conference passed unanimously a motion deploring 'the inflammatory statement of Leon Brittan (Home Secretary) threatening picketing miners with life imprisonment, and his reference to jackboots, which is far more applicable to the role of the police in this dispute.'

The conference called for full support of a rally by miners' wives in Cardiff on December 8. Labour leader Mr Neil Kinnock was accused of 'scabbing' on the miners strike for refusing to speak at the official NUM rallies.

Vera McElhone, of Cardiff urged the conference, 'write your strongest letters of complaints to the national executive committee and to the Parliamentary Labour Party. Neil Kinnock has been scabbing on the strike. I feel appalled by the statement of Leon Brittan. He is a scab on the miners.'

This article is a shortened version of one written in *The Western Mail*.

HERE WE GO
A BENEFIT FOR WOMEN IN MINING COMMUNITIES

INCLUDING:
PEGGY SEEGER, JANE LAPOTARE, HARRIET WALTER, CAROL GRIMES AND THE IGUANAS, ROSY GIBB, MIRIAM KARLUN, MAGGIE STEED, THE WIDOWS - ANNIE MITCHELL, FIONA HENDLEY, MAUREEN O'PARRELL, KATE WILLIAMS, MITZI WILDBEEST, CHARLOTTE CORNWELL, PRUNELLA SCALES, ANNA CARTMARET, DIANA QUICK, JULIET STEVENSON, BRID DOOLEY, JULIE WALTERS, THE ANNIE WHITEHEAD BAND, BEVERLEY, PAULINE BLACK

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FRIDAY 15 DEC. TOWN HALL MARE ST. £3.00

WOMEN

- Saturday Dec. 8th.

Is Your Day Why?

Mass Rally of Women in Support of the Miners

Cardiff - 12 noon

Assemble Law Courts

Short March to Rally in Sophia Gardens

SPEAKERS: ANN SCARGILL Terry Thomas Vice-President NUM (South Wales Area)

David Bookbinder
Neil Davies
Ann Davies
Anna Gale

United We Will Win



Photo: GM COOKSON

Unilateralism & "European defence"

THE MAIN ISSUE facing this week's annual conference of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament is what attitude it takes to non-nuclear defence. This debate, bubbling up in peace movement circles for a year or more, has surfaced still more clearly with the publication of Labour's defence policy statement at the beginning of the summer.

Many unilateralists in the party, and in the peace movement, have been deeply confused by this document. On paper it seems to uphold Labour's unilateralist policies but, simultaneously, in fact it pledges Labour to maintaining or increasing conventional arms spending and commits the party more firmly than ever to NATO membership.

These apparent contradictions led Tony Benn, in a recent interview for Socialist Action, to describe the document as 'a curate's egg': good in some parts, bad in others. Tony Benn was wrong.

The 'contradictions' of the document disappear when it is seen in its true light — as part of the plans of the West European powers and the United States for revamping and strengthening NATO.

GUNTER MINNERUP looks at the recent revival of the West European Union and how it will contribute to modernising NATO. JOY HURCOMBE looks at the key issues facing this year's CND conference.

THE WEST EUROPEAN Union (WEU) was set up in 1954-55, from the Treaty of Brussels. Its membership is the West European NATO countries — excluding the less reliable ones, namely Greece, Turkey and Norway.

Originally it pretended to be a substitute for the West European Defence Community (WEDC), which flourished on the French assembly veto in the early 1950s. It was designed to promote increasingly greater integration of military and defence policies of the West European NATO member countries, and at the same time to allay the French fear that had led to the rejection of the WEDC.

Initially the WEU, played an important role. For instance, the referendum which returned the Saarland to West Germany was organised under the auspices of the WEU. But very soon, with all the important strategic, political and technological decisions being made by NATO, the WEU fell into disuse.

It simply maintained an office and a small staff, and gave the occasional junket for parliamentarians of the member governments. But in terms of serious political relevance it was rather ignored until fairly recently, when it was revived on the initiative of the French and Germans. This met with initial resistance from the British — who only jumped onto the band wagon when the Americans gave them the all clear.

The WEU was formally relaunched

at the end of October, and a manifesto issued at the Rome meeting. The official agenda given for the WEU meetings is issues such as arms standardisation between the European member countries, greater coordination of arms technology, arms development programmes, and procurement.

These are issues the West Europeans have bleated about for a long long time — citing the horrendous expense they suffer as a result of the American arms-technology monopoly and the fragmented nature of the occasional counter attacks, particularly by the French, in that field.

Disarmament policies are another thing that's been thrown in to the WEU. That may be taken simply as a sop to the peace movement, but I think what's really hidden behind that is the potential development of an alternative West European line on detente with the East. That remains to be seen.

One of the things decided is that the WEU ministers should meet half-yearly, just before NATO meetings. That can mean one of two things: either some sort of faction to speak with a joint European voice in occasionally confronting the Americans, or exactly the opposite — namely that the most pro-Atlanticist participants of the meeting will sort out all the problems the Americans would otherwise have to deal with before the NATO meeting.

There are other interesting aspects to the WEU revival. For instance the October meeting emphasised the role the WEU would play in space technology, and in discussing initiatives outside Europe — a rapid deployment force and intervention capability in the third world. And all this was discussed without the participation of the Americans — the WEU is the only organisation mandated by its own treaty to deal with defence matters which excludes the United States.

The question is what possibilities are apparent in these developments? It's very important that the peace movement keeps a close eye on all this. On the other hand, I think there is a great deal of exaggeration about the Euro-bomb as things stand at the moment.

The role of the WEU is a question

of finding a balance between the increasing confrontation, competition and disharmony between the United States and Europe — and still keeping one's feet on the ground, making it absolutely clear what is the real relationship of forces.

American hegemony is a very, very serious force. A fully-fledged European force completely independent and equidistant from the Soviet Union and the United States, with its own integrated nuclear and conventional force, at the moment is simply not on. There's are plenty of countervailing factors that militate against this — not least the enormous expense.

If Western Europe was to throw out the Americans and set up its own credible nuclear deterrent and the conventional forces that go along with it, and have to invest in its own arms technology at the same level as the Americans — that would ruin the West European economy.

'Free world'

The Americans used to say they were financing the West European welfare state by agreeing to pay for the bulk of the defence expenditure, letting the Europeans off the hook with a relatively low level of defence commitment. Of course that would end with a break up of the Atlantic alliance. At the time of economic crisis, West Europe would be forced severely adapt its economic structures.

Not only would there be the financial cost, but also an enormous political cost of detaching from the United States. America's political reputation has been severely eroded by developments since the 1960s, but this has to be balanced by the continued strength and importance of the ideological commitment to 'the free world'.

So there are many reasons to rule out dramatic developments towards a total uncoupling of Western Europe from the United States. The immediate result is something which is perhaps best described by what Genscher — now the president of the council of

ministers of the WEU and the West German minister of foreign affairs — has said: 'This union for our common defence must be revived to focus an increased European awareness of common security interests and European contributions within the NATO framework.'

'Europe should increasingly speak with one voice within the alliance. It should identify its common security interests. On the matter of common defence, too, Europe should close ranks and pool its resources. It must emerge from its role as a lodger in the shelter of American strength, and do more to guarantee its own security through its own efforts.'

By Gunter Minnerup

This fairly well describes the actual agenda: a kind of two-pillar NATO, a NATO which reflects more adequately in its decision-making structure and internal arrangement the changes in the relationship of forces between the two parts of NATO, since the alliance was set up in the late '40s. Under the pressure of the peace movement and the political pressures of the more rampant anti-Americanism in Western Europe, such a 'rebalancing' might well include a partial substitution of the more embarrassing aspects of the American role in Europe by developments like the French *force de frappe*, or by a general European military build up.

It's difficult to project all this because we are in the realm of speculation. We can only describe tendencies and extrapolate them on the basis of what does leak into the public domain.

For instance an article by Leo Hamon, who was the minister of information in the French government before Mitterrand, reveals the development of French security policy, deals with the WEU, and speculates about certain European divisions of labour in the military field — like the French *force de frappe*. He has actually written a book about it. He claims the 'sanctuary' which was originally France is now being liberated from its enclaved status and taken into the whole of Western Europe, in other words creating a nuclear umbrella over Italy, West Germany, etc.

He assigns other roles to other

European states — for example he favours specialisation in West German high technology, conventional forces and army-land forces. So a natural European 'division of labour' almost arises in his view.

There is a tendency, a dialectic, between cooperation with the Americans and remaining within the NATO context, and at the same time of conflict with the Americans. It is really a gradual redefinition of the relationships within the Alliance which could lead to all sorts of developments in the years to come.

That leads to an important political point for us here. How does the Labour Party defence policy document fit in with these developments?

Contradiction

The defence document argues for greater European independence but no third bloc. By and large this is in tune with what the SPD are saying, and reconcilable with what the French are saying because the French emphasise they don't want to break with NATO. Labour's defence document fits in well with certain statements of the other European socialist parties — although the Labour leadership is very luke warm about the WEU.

There is of course an important problem with this Labour Party policy, namely the contradiction between the commitment to unilateralism and the commitment to continued NATO membership. Being realists, Neil Kinnock, Denis Healey, and Roy Hattersley have to consider this possibility: what happens if Labour does win the next election? What do they do then?

Initially CND posed the issue in terms of betrayal: will they betray us or will they remain true to party policy? That is not the problem. Strengthening the West European role opens a road whereby a Labour government could without betraying unilateralism, still remain within the NATO context. The conventional military and navy role could be left to Britain and the question of the nuclear role left open.

I think there is a distinct possibility,



Photo: JOHN SMITH (IFL)

even though Labour's leaders are now very luke warm about the WEU, that they will have to grasp that straw in the wind — when they're tied up with this whole problem of how to reconcile the commitment to NATO membership with a commitment to unilateralism, which will be difficult for a Labour government to get out of.

Such a policy ties in with the heavy emphasis that can be observed recently in the rhetoric of the Labour Party leadership, around the need to cooperate with other European socialist parties and governments. This theme pops up everywhere: at the level of economic policy, some kind of Euro-reflation and Euro-Keynesianism. I'm sure it will pop up on the question of military strategy, some kind of 'Euro-strategy'. The SPD and the French are open to this.

At the German SPD congress following their dismissal from power, they adopted the line of greater independence for Western Europe, rejection of cruise and Pershing, of Airland Battle strategy, and strengthening the European role within NATO. This was coupled to rhetoric about persuading Europe to pull its weight in favour of detente and non-nuclear policies — or at least to reduce its reliance on nuclear weapons. Mary Kaldor of the Alternative Defence Commission puts an almost identical policy in Britain.

Detente

All these moves has been received with deep suspicion by the peace movement. Mike Gapes in the END journal argues such policies aren't a very good idea because they would destabilise the world and make arms control even more complicated. He claims it's much better to stay within NATO and argue the policy of detente — developing the Helsinki process, as he calls it — rather than starting third bloc adventures.

Now that's not the kind of argument I would put forward: throwing out the baby with the bath water. The argument is not against destabilisation. As socialists and unilateralists we must be prepared to destabilise the status quo. That's what we are in business for.

The problem is that the 'Euro-defence' argument is put within the same framework as NATO — that of a military alliance against the Soviet

Union, an anti-communist military orientation, a particular variant of capitalist society. The bogey of a Russian threat, of the need to defend ourselves against the Reds both under the beds and beyond the Iron Curtain, is the ideological bedrock of all this.

It is impossible to tackle this whole issue of unilateralism, of nuclear disarmament and NATO, unless you face this question of the so-called Russian threat. You cannot develop a coherent strategy unless you have a convincing answer — not simply on the level of arms technology and military alliances in the diplomatic sense — but on the level of substance, namely who do we defend ourselves against and with whom? Who are our enemies and who are our allies?

This means taking up the role of the Americans, taking up the role of the West Europeans, and taking up the role of the Soviet Union in its real political substance — and not just in terms of abstract schemes of opting out of the arms race. Unless we do this, we will never get around the issues that hampered us in the last general election.

We need not just a unilateralist policy, but a unilateralist policy which is embedded in a socialist foreign policy; and not just a unilateralist policy embedded in a socialist foreign policy, but one embedded in a socialist economic strategy — because NATO, the Western alliance, the free world, are complex social-economic and political-military phenomena. We can't break with one aspect without being forced to look at other aspects as well.

This is the fundamental problem with Labour's defence policy and the Labour left hasn't come up with a solution yet. For instance, Tony Benn has put a position that a Labour government which only took a small step towards rejecting the American war drive against the Soviet Union, would precisely mean massive destabilisation.

Reaction

We cannot seriously discuss a socialist British government — be it on the level of economic policy, be it on the level of foreign policy, be it on the level of strategic military policy — without taking into account the likely reaction from the United States and not only from the US but also of course from Western Europe. What are the French or the West Germans going to say about the election of a Labour government committed to a socialist and unilateralist platform? What are we going to do then?

How do we avoid the big black hole, left open in Blackpool? We have to face it and convince the electorate in order to gain a majority for radical socialist policies.

I believe the only way of getting around this is to actually put forward, in an offensive sense, the view that the only credible security policy, the only credible foreign policy, the only credible economic policy for a socialist Britain is one which alligns itself not with France under Mitterrand, not with West Germany under Kohl, not with America under Reagan or Mondale, but adopts a socialist policy which comes from understanding the Soviet Union and the Eastern bloc. Unless we grasp that nettle we will never be able to give convincing answers to these kinds of questions.

This is an edited version of a paper prepared for a Labour CND dayschool on NATO, Saturday 10 November 1984.

'84
CONFERENCE
SPECIAL



Which way forward for CND?

THERE ARE big decisions facing delegates to CND's annual conference. The outcome will direct the campaign in the years to come. This year non-nuclear defence will be the centre of a political controversy over which way forward for CND.

Recently CND and the Labour Party have spent much time and energy getting expert advice on non-nuclear defence. Up and down the country there's been meeting after meeting devoted to studying alternatives to nuclear weapons.

CND's leadership has increasingly turned its attention to finding 'credible' alternatives to the nukes, on the assumption that public opinion must be placated. Since when did peace campaigners start from the status quo?

By Joy Hurcombe, vice-chair CND and chair Labour CND (personal capacity)

Now we could knock on any door with a shopping basket full of non-nuclear goodies: interceptor aircraft, precision-guided missiles, laser weapons, or even old-fashioned conscription. But where does it all get us?

Did the Greenham women — the section of our movement who have done the most to build and inspire our campaign against nuclear weapons — start from accommodating public opinion?

Of course they didn't. They set out in the most determined way to change it. And just look at the results! It's still the case that a majority of public opinion is opposed to the new missiles.

Goals

Now CND leaders are asking us to give all this up and turn from disarmament towards defence. CND is a single-issue campaign. That means that its supporters agree on one thing and one thing only: the burning need to get rid of nuclear weapons.

Our movement contains people who are pacifists, who believe all war is wrong. It contains socialists, who believe that the justice of a war is determined by which enemy we're fighting.

This year James Hinton has presented a Forward Planning statement to the campaign which says: 'Our over-riding goal is to convince the majority of the public by the next general election of the case for complete nuclear disarmament by Britain, and the adoption of a credible defence policy which does not rely on nuclear weapons.'

Who's going to decide what's credible, and on what grounds? The October

national council meeting had this paper presented to it. But it wasn't even allowed to vote. Instead we were told that the document — or something like it! — would go straight to conference. It was a hot potato at the council meeting and it will be at conference too.

Labour's defence policy has now been quite widely publicised. It advocates non-nuclear defence — in the context of a 'firm' commitment to stay in NATO, and at the expense of the party's policy to cut arms spending.

Much has been made of the document's commitment to unilateralism. CND council went as far as welcoming it. Not a word was said about the conflict between unilateralism and NATO membership.

For two years now Labour CND has been accused of being sectarian and pushing Labour's policies inside CND. Now the boot's on the other foot: it's the leadership of the movement who are going over to Labour's version of non-nuclear defence. A version that doesn't rock the NATO boat at all, that assumes Americans are our friends and Russians our enemies. And as long as you accept the rationale for dividing the world into two armed camps, accepting the need for nuclear weapons is only a small step away.

'Multilateralists'

Labour CND decided neither to support nor endorse Labour's policy. We are campaigning in the party for CND's unilateralist policies, and we're not convinced this defence policy will safeguard them.

Of course, we welcome a public commitment to nuclear disarmament. But when 'multilateralists' like Peter Shore and Denis Healey are bursting with support for the same defence document (precisely because it does commit the party to NATO) there's cause for concern.

A resolution from Deptford calls on CND to take no position on non-nuclear defence. Labour CND supports this resolution. Along with many other groups we submitted an amendment to strengthen it. Without a by-your-leave, it's been left off the agenda. Instead the Christian CND amendment aims to change the resolution around.

This amendment must be defeated, and the other amendments debated this weekend. We must continue as a single-issue campaign whose first priority is refusing the new generation missiles by continuing the mass action CND has built in past years.

Another deliberate — and connected — omission from the conference agenda is any resolution on campaigning for Britain's withdrawal

from NATO. Earlier this year, the conference arrangements committee arbitrarily ruled out of order a composite resolution from more than 20 groups which contained the demand that CND should step up its educational campaign on NATO and highlight the question during action at the bases.

These groups pointed out that CND has failed to fulfill such commitments in the past. Their resolution was dropped because it 'reiterated existing policy'. Amendments to the AirLand Battle resolution from those same groups have likewise been quietly ditched.

Of course, this begins to raise the whole issue of democracy in the campaign. Who's really in charge: us or a selected few? The resolution calling for a biennial conference (and similar constitutional amendments) are very worrying. The idea of a biennial conference comes from an individual member. Why does it have more weight than a composite from 20 groups?

Cruise

If anyone's in doubt what's at stake in this conference, an incident at the last national council gives reason for grave concern. On the recommendation of the leadership, council decided to hold a mass lobby of the Warsaw Pact embassies on 8 December, instead of marking the fifth anniversary of the announcement of cruise deployment. Emergency resolutions calling on CND to support the 12 December action in London called by Student CND and London Region must be supported.

The leadership has its priorities wrong. Nowhere is this clearer than the question of Greenham. Throughout the year CND has failed to give real support to the women at the Greenham camp who faced increased police harassment, intimidation and violence.

Time after time the camp has been torn apart. And CND has done nothing about it. If we are going to keep the campaign on course, the first thing to do is assert the centrality of Greenham and the women's peace movement.

The resolution calling for a women's peace conference in 1985 must be put back on the agenda. Then women can begin to plan the ongoing support that CND must give the Greenham camp in the year ahead.

But conference must do something else immediately. The Greenham women have called a women-only action at the camp on 9 December — the traditional way to mark the anniversary of cruise. Conference must support the emergency resolution and demand that CND puts Greenham at the top of its priorities, thus ensuring that the campaign keeps on in the right direction in the year to come.

Sinn Fein Ard Fheis 1984

DEFYING THE critics and sceptics who were all too ready to quote the Brighton bombings as an indicator that the disappointing EEC election results were to lead to the victory of the bullet over the ballot, and a retreat from the leftward advance of Sinn Fein, this year's Sinn Fein 'Ard Fheis' marked further gains for the anti-imperialist movement in Ireland. The key note address by president Gerry Adams MP, clearly indicated that the role of the conference was not a jamboree for the party faithful rallying around traditional slogans, but an opportunity for discussions and learning.

Policy discussions on both economic policies and women's oppression cut deep into the divide between socialist and republican traditions. This largely reflects experience gained through the numerous Sinn Fein advice centres where the majority of problems raised could only begin to be tackled by adopting an active campaigning approach to encourage and direct the self-organisation of the oppressed.

The extent of the development of Sinn Fein can be gauged by looking at its economic policy. At the 1983 Ard Fheis, delegates were locked in debate over whether the trade unions should be recognised as 'mass organisations of the working class', whether this was important to discuss or indeed whether union members should be identified simply with their right wing leaders.

Jobs

This year the leadership came forward with resolutions for Sinn Fein members to organise within and alongside the unions to resist state attacks and defend living standards. They called for job creation based on the setting up of state run companies which make maximum use of natural resources and recommended state takeover of key productive industries which are threatened with closure. Additional amendments updated Sinn Fein's social and economic programme to advocate bringing all industries under public control, opposing personal ownership where it involves the exploitation of workers. Moves to return to traditional support for a 'decentralised state' were strongly rejected. In denouncing the Southern government's so-called national plan for the economy, which tries to make working people pay for the crisis, the Ard Fheis returned to the campaign for the 35 hour week overturning the out-of-

hand rejection of the previous year.

The rapid political development of Sinn Fein has meant so many programmatic resolutions going onto the agenda that motions dealing with agriculture, housing, welfare, travelling people, drugs, and education were unable to be thoroughly discussed. This has led to a re-evaluation of the traditional structures of debate.

Women

This year over two hundred motions had to be debated and voted on by the individual branches and then by a two day conference. Perhaps a fore-taste came on the women's oppression discussion where motions were brought together and introduced in the form of a revised policy document which was then open to amendment.

The redraft strengthened traditional policies on sexism and stereotyping, on equal work and equal pay. It adopted a new section on violence against women which openly tackled 'taboo' subjects of domestic violence, incest and rape which was seen as 'an act of violence, hatred and domination' rather than its narrow legal definition.

The new document reaffirms Sinn Fein's view on the right of divorce and committed the organisation to campaign for a 'yes' vote in the proposed referendum on the issue in the South.

The Ard Fheis clarified that contraception should be a right of law, and that it should be free, safe and readily available to all through GPs and family planning clinics.

Three years of conference discussion on abortion has moved policy from being 'totally opposed to abortion' (1982); 'opposed to abortion' (1983); and 1984 'opposed to abortion as a means of birth control'.

Despite the defeat of



Gerry Adams speaking to the Ard Fheis

resolutions supporting 'a woman's right to abortion under certain medical circumstances', the ongoing educational campaign by the women's department of Sinn Fein looks like confirming the views of the traditionalists that it is 'only a matter of time ...'

Democracy

The Presidential address brought all policies together with organisational proposals, urging reality and flexibility. Using the analogy that in its day the pike was an extremely good weapon but had eventually to be rejected in favour of the ArmaLite, he supported the winding up of British Sinn Fein — an organisation long since marginalised in

the struggle to build an effective solidarity movement in Britain. Also proposed was the launch of a new self governing youth department of Sinn Fein.

The speech as a whole (which has been published in *Republican News* November 8th) is remarkable for its attention to the theme of political democracy running through subject matter from the international fight against imperialism, through questions of sexuality and morality and ending in a scathing attack on the hypocrisy expressed in the collaboration of constitutional nationalists with the Thatcher government under the name of democracy.

He contrasted their talk of democracy with their common acceptance

of the right of the Dublin government to speak for Northern nationalists without one vote being cast for them and their mutual refusal to accept the results of the ballot box when voters choose revolutionaries to represent them.

Sinn Fein is a small minority in the South. The obstacles to growth of a mass anti-imperialist workers' party there are immense. But one thing is certain — that the determination to develop a revolutionary programme based on the struggles of the oppressed, combined with a political offensive which has the theme of political democracy on its banner, is sure to place Sinn Fein in the leadership of such a struggle.

It is a struggle that we in Britain have a vital interest in seeing won.

STUDENTS

ALL OUT TO STOP THE CUTS!

By Karen Talbot, NUS Executive (Personal Capacity).

THE 21 NOVEMBER 'National Shutdown' will see a huge and militant response from students. The NOLS dominated NUS Exec has finally had enough of being 'patient' and containing student protest to 'lobbying'. The time for action has come. And not before time too!

The latest cuts to student grants, in particular the abolition of the minimum award of £205 and introduction of £520 tuition fees for students whose parents income is £20,000 are only the continuation of attacks on students' rights to education that have been going on for years. However, the attacks now are going further along the road to private education than ever before. If parents do not, or cannot, pay their contribution — especially the £520 fees that have to be paid in advance — education will be denied to those unable to pay.

The call to hold nationally co-ordinated shutdowns and occupations is long overdue. The plan to hold a National demonstration and rally on November 28, (for details see Diary below), should be built for on a massive scale. But these activities and mobilisations have to be seen as the start of a campaign of mass action to stop all Tory attacks on Further Education and student union autonomy.

To survive, the national union has to integrate and build all the struggles of all sections of the student movement. This means paying much more attention to the struggles of the FE students, who have been systematically stripped of their rights to a grant to support them through their education. It means supporting those unions facing legal attacks over ultra-vires payments to the Miners. It means supporting those attempting to get rid of the fascist Harrington from PNL.

This December's National Conference should not be forgetful of the fact that the current course of action being advocated by the NUS Executive has come about because of the Tories' intransigence and contempt for students' demands and rights. The fact that NUS's 'key demand' is to get college Principals and Directors to repudiate the Chancellors cuts, is evidence, if any were needed, of the overall direction that NOLS wants to take this campaign.

However, it would be leftism of the most infantile kind to do anything other than build the occupations and demonstrations that have been called. Mass action of the kind being organised will educate students, through their struggles, as to the type of activities and leadership they need to defend the education system. As socialists, we must be at the forefront of these mobilisations. Precisely in order to be in the best position to lead the struggle against the backtracking of the current NUS leadership, it is necessary to stand and fight with them NOW.

STOP THE CUTS! ALL OUT NOVEMBER 21 and 28!



ACTIVISTS DIARY.

28 November, NUS National Rally and Demonstration, Queen Elizabeth Hall, (next to Festival Hall), London, 3.30pm.

Every Friday, Picket the racist Harrington, Holloway Road, (PNL site), 8.30am onwards.

Socialist Action Student Forum; 'Ireland and the struggle for Socialism', Martin Collins, LSE, East Building room E 195, starts 2.00 pm. Wednesday 21 November.

Refuge Cruise December 12, 6.00pm Trafalgar Square, called by Student CND. Book coaches NOW!

Gerry Adams on the Brighton Bombing

RECENTLY we suffered London's media response to the IRA's attempted execution of the British cabinet in Brighton.

The London government's response to that Irish action, was, dare I say it, much quicker and probably much more considered than its long-awaited response to the Dublin Forum is likely to be.

Regardless of what one

thinks of that operation, and we can be assured that Margaret Thatcher got little sympathy from nationalist Ireland, or indeed from an increasingly disaffected working class in her own country, it is obviously totally hypocritical for British apologists to describe the Brighton bombing as an attack on democracy.

The quality of democracy in Britain is, of course, a matter for the British people. It is their business, not ours. But the

British connection, the partition of this country, and the resultant suffering and grief is far from democratic. On the contrary, it is undemocratic, unwanted, illegal and immoral.

All casualties and fatalities in Ireland or Britain as a result of the war are sad symptoms of our British problem and the Brighton bombing was an inevitable result of the British presence in this country. Far from being a blow against democracy it was a blow for democracy.

We will continue to campaign for the restoration of Irish democracy and to articulate the desire of our people for freedom and independence, regardless of Dublin smears or British violence.

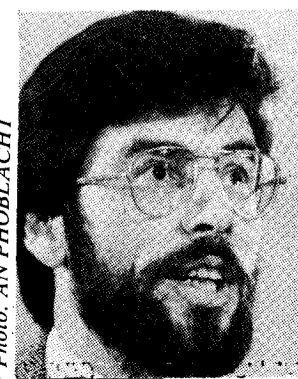


Photo: AN PHOBLACHT

Ireland geographically, historically and culturally is one nation. We as one people have the right to be free, and in that freedom the divided sections of our people will find the will to unite, regardless of religious affiliations, in establishing a society which meets the needs of all our people.

Imperialism's famine in Ethiopia

EUROPEAN ATTENTION has been focused recently on Ethiopia for the first time in many years. The appalling drought has brought a whole spate of articles in the press.

Quick to apportion blame, few of them have attempted to analyse the political developments within the country over the past few decades, and how this has contributed to the present situation. PAUL HIGHFIELD looks at the situation in Ethiopia.

ETHIOPIA, WITH A population of about 35 million, is bordered by Sudan to the west, the Red Sea to the east, Somalia to the south-east, and Kenya to the south. In the north lies Eritrea, presently part of Ethiopia but fighting a 23 year war of independence. Tigray province is also at war for the same reason.

Ethiopia is the third poorest country in the world, with an income last year of only \$111 per head. In 1930 Haile Selassie was crowned emperor, and ruled until his overthrow in 1974.

Little changed during that long period, even with the Italian occupation of 1935-41, which was defeated by the Ethiopian resistance movement and the British (Selassie himself ran to exile in London).

Despite British encouragement, Selassie did little to transform Ethiopia — a country dominated by pre-capitalist forms of agriculture and a feudal monarchy which gave him absolute power. Nevertheless, his power in the provinces was weak, and different ethnic groups and nationalities were always unevenly treated. The Christians were dominant and the minority Amharic language was imposed on others, even though Muslim groups made up 35-40 per cent of the population.

By the 1970s, the transition to capitalism was still scarcely apparent, and overseas trade was virtually non-existent. Sixty per cent of Ethiopia's tiny export earnings for 1965-75 came from one product: coffee. There were only 50,000 cars and trucks in the whole country, when three-quarters of all farms were more than a half-day's walk from the nearest road.

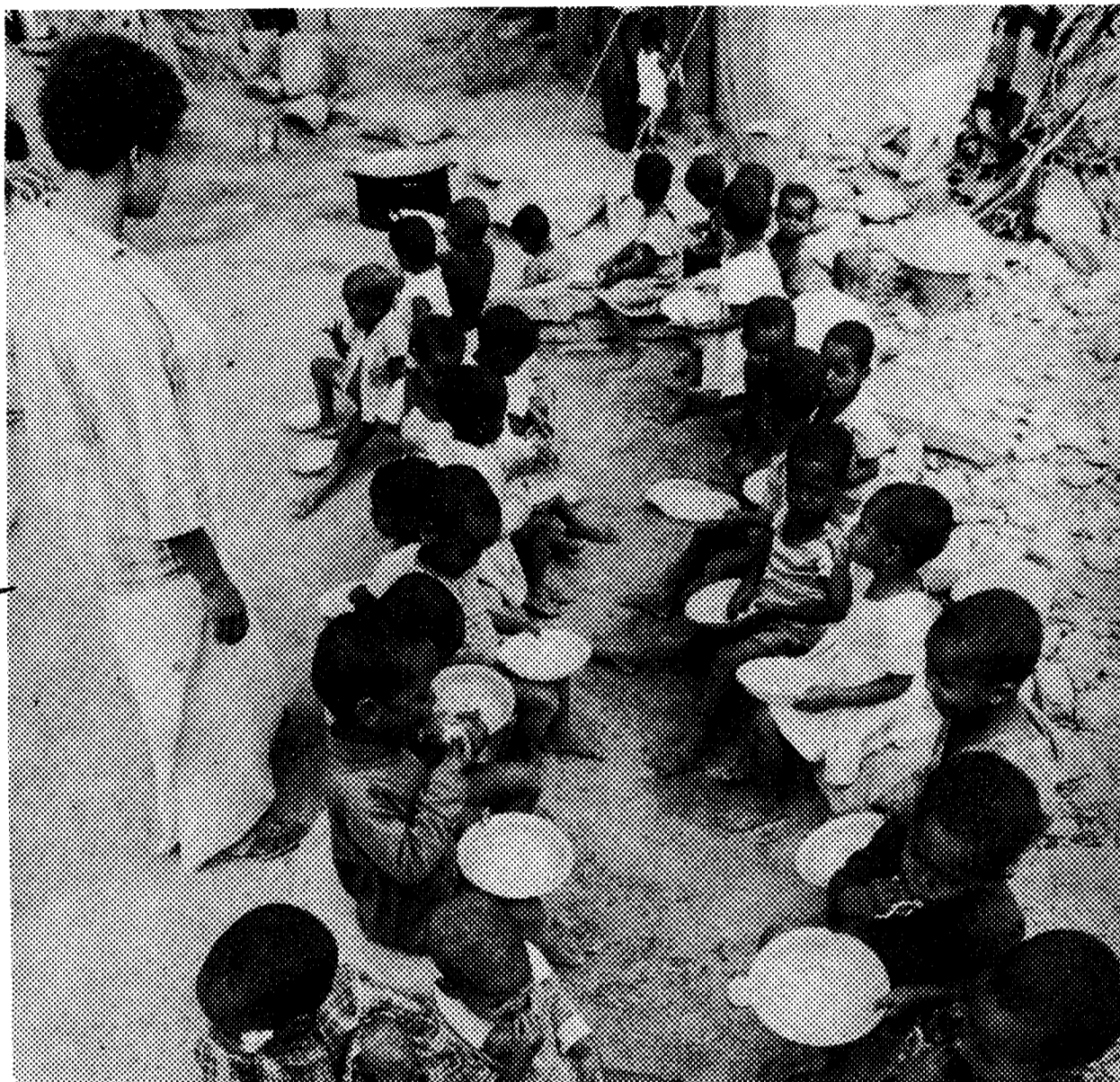
Subsistence

The vast majority of the rural population lived in subsistence conditions, with primitive health care and 80 per cent plus illiteracy. The peasantry — over 90 per cent of the population — had to pay rent or tribute to the local nobility and church. Outside their local communities, these people were not a cohesive body. Different language, religion, tribe or clan were all-important.

Selassie thus failed to build a nation-state which could develop towards capitalism with a native bourgeoisie and, inevitably, a major working class.

The exception to this situation was Eritrea. A long-time Italian colony, Eritrea had been developing capitalist agriculture and commodity production since the 1880s. It possessed a significant urban working class. Haile Selassie ruthlessly suppressed opposition within Eritrea despite UN intervention aimed at securing a federal settlement between the Ethiopian government and the Eritrean people.

Within Ethiopia itself land was confiscated to pay for favours, and the Oromo people of the south (about 40 per cent of the population) had their language banned and were forced to pay between 50 and 75 per cent of their crops in dues — a far higher



proportion than Christian peasants in the north.

It may be surprising then that the 1974 revolution occurred from within the country and not from outside. The reasons are complex. Very important was the dissension from the armed forces and civil servants in the slowly expanding state structure, a significant proportion of whom were highly educated and — crucially — centrally organised in the capital, Addis Abbaba. Of course, there was widespread but uncoordinated opposition from the Eritreans, Tigreans, Oromo and other nationalities.

The absence of an Ethiopian capitalist class of any size, and the fact that such a minute proportion of the population directly benefitted from Selassie's regime, meant there was little resistance when a combination of the provincial nobility, the middle ranks of the armed forces, the tiny urban layer, and students seized power.

In 1974, a new body took power — the coordinating committee of the armed forces, the police and territorial army — known more familiarly by the Amharinya word for committee: the Derg. The Derg's official programme was confused, but certainly not socialist. (Given that not one single work by Marx, Lenin, or Trotsky had ever been translated into Amharic, this is perhaps scarcely surprising.)

What was surprising though, after the Derg had set up a Provisional Military Administrative Council (PMAC), was the shooting of its spokesperson General Aman Andom by a military faction within the Derg, opposed to his attempts to achieve a negotiated settlement in Eritrea. Soon more executions without trial occurred signalling the end of the last hope of a return to civilian rule.

Despite repression, the Confederation of Ethiopian Labour Unions (CELU) and the illegal Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Party (EPRP) demanded an elected

assembly and a peoples' democratic republic. To this end, the CELU held a general strike offensive in autumn 1975. The refusal of the Derg to agree to these demands led to a civil war.

The EPRP liquidated hundreds of PMAC supporters, and the Derg responded by launching a 'red terror' campaign in 1977. Tens of thousands were shot without trial.

All this occurred in a period when the Derg had allegedly embraced socialism. Colonel Mengistu was then at its head, and has remained there ever since. No elections have ever taken place, but the military junta maintains a fragile hold on the country.

The response of world powers to these developments was complex — made more so by the war with Somalia over Ogaden, a desert region in the south of Ethiopia bordering Somalia, which the latter invaded in 1977. The United States provided large scale support to the Somalis, looking to overthrow the Derg and install a more openly pro-capitalist regime.

They were backed in this by the conservative Arab states, who feared the spread of anti Muslim governments — and saw the Sudan as the possible next victim. The old pro-Israel Selassie regime was preferable.

After years of courting Selassie, the USSR hedged, mistrusting the erratic nature of the Derg. The turning point was November 1977, when the Somalis expelled all Soviet and Cuban advisers from their country. The USSR had never backed their claim to the Ogaden.

Had it not been for the support of several thousand Cuban troops, plus massive Soviet military aid, the Derg could well have fallen. At the same time, the Eritreans had been making major advances in the north. Any qualms the Cubans had about Ethiopian repression were eventually overcome, Castro referred to Mengistu as a 'revolutionary leader' by 1978.

Since that time Libya has also

become a big supplier of arms, to further Qaddafi's battle against the conservative Arab states.

The model of 'socialism' which the Derg has introduced to Ethiopia is now fully supported by the USSR. A 'workers' party' was set up last month, at celebrations which cost the equivalent of several billion pounds. Ordinary workers and peasants won't be getting much for this gigantic squandering of funds though. The workers' party has no internal democracy whatsoever, and is strictly a 'cadre' organisation designed to maintain the backing of the expanding bureaucracy.

On the crucial question of land reform, all resources have gone to developing state farms producing cash crops for export. This has drastically reduced the amount of food for internal consumption. Hence the appearance of Ethiopian melons in Britain last month.

Advances in the health and education sectors have been extremely slow, as has development of industry or even an adequate transport structure for the country. External economic or project aid either from the Eastern bloc or the West has been pathetic.

The *Morning Star* in its 5 November editorial says that 'the guerilla activity in the northern provinces is in many ways directly responsible for the acuteness of the famine problem in many regions.' This is a gross distortion. The truth is that the Derg spends one third of its entire budget on defence — better termed war — fantastically distorting the fragile economy.

Tens of thousands of peasants have been conscripted into the army, leaving entire areas short of people to plant seeds and harvest crops. Further, large amounts of food are requisitioned for the armed forces from areas that need it themselves.

The Derg has totally alienated the peasantry in all areas. It maintains a huge, cumbersome bureaucracy whose lifestyle is comparable to that of Western diplomats; with immense

privileges. The Derg stubbornly refuses even to consider the demands of the Eritreans and Tigreans, let alone the opposition movements in the south, of which the Oromo Liberation Front is the largest.

The drought has obviously made the current crisis far worse, but after the imperialists, the chief responsibility for the famine in the country lies with the Ethiopian government and its backers.

Much of the suffering would have been avoidable if the Derg had pursued even a remotely socialist path, implementing meaningful agricultural reform based on land redistribution, and recognising the rights of the various nationalities and ethnic groups. It is this refusal which has led the Tigrean People's Liberation Front to nine years of war with the Derg.

Alternative

Needless to say, the British government has pursued a typically devious path over the past few years. Just before the present wave of publicity, Malcolm Rifkind, Minister of State for the Foreign Office, went to Ethiopia and had extensive discussions with Mengistu. It seems that Thatcher was reconciling herself to stable Ethiopian regime — even if it is allegedly anti-capitalist and affords the Soviet Union major strategic port facilities in the Red Sea.

The alternative (which the West has given support to in theory but not in practice) is more unpalatable. Thatcher, as the prospect looms closer — that is, of revolutionary socialist regimes in Eritrea and Tigray province, with complete control over those areas, plus a socialist advance in the rest of Ethiopia as the opposition movements gain ground.

This is tricky ground indeed. The stakes are very high. Just across the Red Sea lies Saudi Arabia, which nervously watches the developments and prays that the Soviet Union and Cubans will leave. Saudi Arabia also helped arm the Eritrean People's Liberation Front (EPLF), but this is a complicated issue which must be examined another time. It does not follow from this though — as the *Morning Star* claims — that the EPLF itself is reactionary.

In the meantime, the West seeks to score propaganda points over drought relief aid. This will lose value as the USSR steps up its own programme in a big way. The British public has shown itself to be far more generous than Thatcher. It is a gratuity therefore, thanks to Fleet Street and the *Morning Star*, they are not being given the true story of political events in Ethiopia.

One final point. It is incorrect to argue (as Jude Woodward did in her article in *Socialist Action*) that socialists should be demanding unconditional aid be sent to the Ethiopian government without also demanding that the British government deal directly with the Eritreans and Tigreans — who control around 85 per cent of their respective areas. Further, War on Want, the Eritrean Relief Association and Christian Aid are the only British aid agencies dealing on such a basis. All the rest have been sending aid to Addis Abbaba knowing full well that it has been diverted to the Ethiopian army.

War on Want and the Eritrean Relief Association are also the only bodies concerned with long term development aid projects, rather than short term food distribution.

It is a colossal tragedy that so many have died in the three year famine and in the wars. It would be an equal tragedy if socialists in Britain were to be denied the facts or systematically misled — not just by the West, but also by the USSR, Cuba, and the *Morning Star*.

ILEA resists rate capping

THE INNER LONDON Education Authority, at a special meeting on 20 November, looked set to pass a budget which represented in essence a 'no cuts no loss' stance against the Tory threats from rate-capping.

The budget of nearly £1 billion will contain limited increases of £3 million, and cuts and savings of about £3 million. This decision is a victory for those who campaigned in the trade unions and in the Labour Party for the Labour group on ILEA to take such a stand.

The ILEA leadership put out a consultation document which spelt out the implications for services of the £75 million in cuts which the Tories were demanding. If implemented, these cuts would mean 7,000 redundancies among the workforce.

During the consultation period, ILEA received nearly 2000 responses, a mere 12 of which supported the Tory proposals. The overwhelming majority called on the authority to stand firm.

The campaign which achieved this was not the

result of clear leadership from the ILEA Labour group itself. It was the result of a campaign by trade unionists, especially ILEA Teachers Association, and activists in the Labour Party, which took the debate into schools, work-places, union branches, wards and constituencies.

By Bernard Regan, NUT executive (personal capacity)

The strength of this campaign was reflected in the strike action on 7 November.

Francis Morrell and Ruth Gee, leader and deputy leader of ILEA, opposed this action. Increasingly over the past 12 months they have sought to distance themselves from the unions and sought to concentrate activity on producing advertisements and influencing Tory wets.

When the Tories on Westminster city council took legal action to challenge ILEA's campaign spending, the Labour group put an immediate stop to a series of local shop stewards conferences aimed at uniting the work force.

Meanwhile, the Socialist Teachers Alliance within the Inner London Teachers' Association have pushed through a call for a workplace based delegate conference of Democracy for London, ILEA, and London Bridge to hammer out a strategy based on commitment to united action in defence of jobs and services.



Photo: STEFANO CAGNONI (Report)

GLC: We will fight

'LABOUR IN parliament cannot hint at, incline toward, or acquiesce in illegality as a policy in local government,' Dr John Cunningham told a parliamentary press gallery last Wednesday. Two months after Labour Party conference had declared its support for defying the law to defend jobs and services in local government, the leadership is preparing to ditch the struggle.

Cunningham's statement comes just when Labour councils are preparing the fight-back against rate-capping. On 7 November 100,000 local government workers in London struck against the Tory proposals. Labour groups are preparing to set deficit budgets, or to set no rate.

ILEA is set to confront the Tory proposals for £75 million cuts.

Labour cannot afford

legality.

By Pat Hickey

Speaking at the November rally, Ken Livingstone spelt out the GLC's approach. 'I give a commitment that the budget drawn up by the GLC Labour group and presented to the council will be a budget which takes account of the growth of the last four years, is completely devoid

of any cut-back in any service or staffing, and will allow a continued expansion of the programme we have carried forward.

'That is the budget we will put to council irrespective of what the government says our rate-capped budget should be. In line with the rest of the London labour boroughs we shall not make a rate, we shall not levy a precept under the rate-capped system.'

With such a policy he explained that the GLC will not have enough money coming in to meet all its outgoings. The GLC will therefore 'prioritise the payment of wages and the provision of services. And I'm afraid we shall have to say to the banks,

who we owe £2.5 billion to, I'm sorry — you'll have to wait until after the struggle is over. That will not only present City of London but also the government with the sort of challenge they have not seen in local government this century.'

The line for Labour councils should be the one spelt out by Livingstone: 'We aren't giving up, we aren't walking away, we aren't letting the trade unions just carry on that struggle and the members slope off in a series of by-elections or dramatic gestures. We will fight with you.'

'We have the chance to defeat this government, to break its will, and to bring it down.'

St Helens strike

FOR WELL over a month now, the 18,000 members of St Helens NALGO branch have been on strike against the Labour-controlled council. The council has tried to restructure its services without agreement with the unions.

The unions fear that St Helens council is not interested in discussing how its plans will affect trade union members.

The council computer development section for example were compulsory transferred, and office equipment and furniture moved overnight by a private contractor, without any union agree-

ment on new working arrangements. Eight members of NALGO refused to move and were suspended.

by Mark Hackett

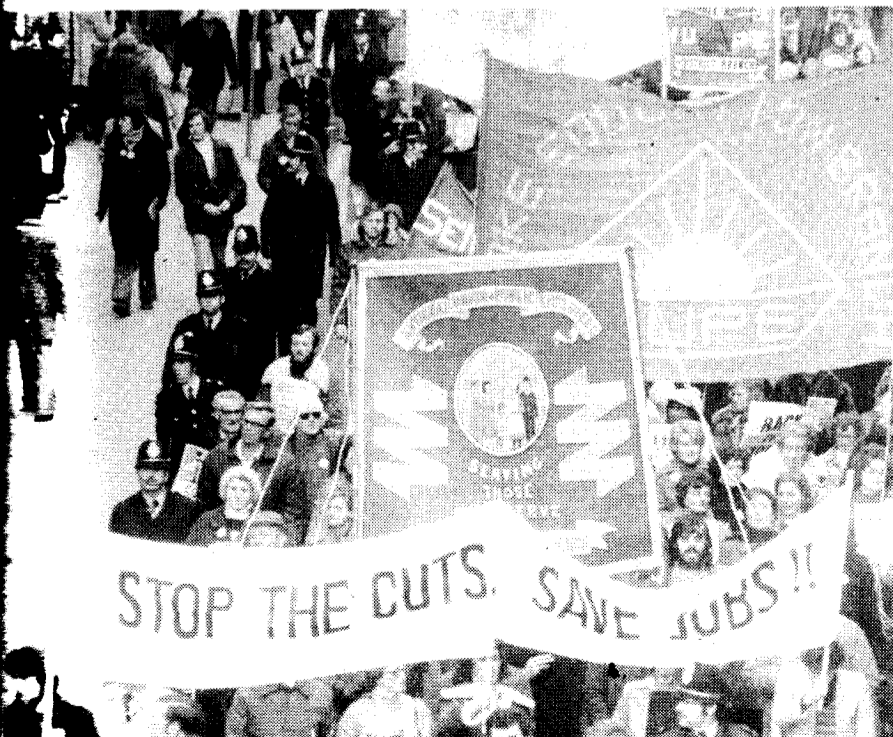
After a branch meeting, and a ten to one vote for action, NALGO came out on strike. Other unions, including NUPE and NATFHE, refused to cross NALGO picket lines. NUPE struck for two weeks. NALGO are still on strike.

The council's attitude is an object lesson in how left led council's should not act. They have attempted to portray NALGO's action as 'master-minded by a clique of town hall officials who all earn £17,000 a year', and whose aim is to thwart the council's

'socialist policies' and election pledges.

Ken Ince, a former officer of NALGO admitted at a NALGO annual meeting that he was a Freemason. The council now claim that the Freemasons are orchestrating the union's campaign, despite the fact that NALGO has campaigned to expose the role of Freemasons in the town halls.

The council's failure to win the support and co-operation of its workforce in honouring election pledges to improve services is disastrous. No council can hope to defeat the government's attacks on jobs and services by attacking, weakening and dividing its own workforce.



Militant vs Black Community

Liverpool Labour council has recently appointed Sampson Bond, as head of its race relations unit — and created a dangerous division between itself and Merseyside's black community and labour movement.

The appointment was made in flagrant disregard for the opinions of the council's race relations liaison committee's black caucus, which consists of elected representatives of community groups.

The caucus's position was simply that Bond was not the right person for the job — he did not possess the necessary qualifications or experience. For reasons best known to Derek Hatton heading the selection panel, Bond's appointment was bludgeoned through.

The views of black caucus members present on that panel were ignored. But subsequent lobbying and negotiations caused Derek Hatton to reverse the original decisions and promise to readvertise the post.

This was thrown out at the District Labour Party meeting, where Hatton complained of intolerable pressure from the caucus. Since then leaflets believed

to be from the Militant black section have implied that members of the caucus behaved like thugs.

Liverpool's black community is incensed. On 17 October a black caucus support group was set up.

By Tim Rigby

Caucus member David Okueta told Merseyside Labour Briefing: 'We feel that an injustice has been done, that local people have been victimised and that an appointment has been made which flagrantly ignores the feelings and opinions of the black caucus representatives who were present at that selection panel. That is the

issue we want to address ourselves to.

'I feel that the role of the support group is to give the black caucus support at this particular time when it has come under attack from the Labour leadership.'

Steve French said: 'Although the Labour Party are looking at things more positively, they are still not coming out and doing it. All they keep on about is the threat of a white backlash.'

Struggle

'This is just a myth. It covers the fact that they need to start redressing the imbalance in black employment, black housing, and black education.'

Now there is talk within the black community of setting up an independent black political organisation in Liverpool. Not only is this issue seriously threatening to alienate a black people

from the party, but it has caused a massive rift in the Merseyside labour movement.

NALGO has decided on non-cooperation when Bond takes up his post, and has been backed by the joint shop stewards' committee and the trades council. Riverside and Mosley Hill constituencies have called for the post to be readvertised.

If the Labour leadership is unwilling to act on this demand of the black community, supported by the labour movement, what hope for continuing united support in its own campaign against the government?

This point is tragically underlined by the results in the council by-election in Arundel ward last week. From being a marginal, and despite the fact the Liberals fielded two opposing candidates, Labour lost by 600 votes. Black abstentions undoubtedly played a major part.

Ford women lead pay fight

STRIKING women sewing machinists are leading the fight of all Ford workers for a decent pay deal. Their action has already led to the Halewood plant being laid off, and car production at Dagenham will stop this week.

The machinists walked out last Wednesday in protest at the company's 16-year long refusal to meet their claims for 'C' Grade pay. The sewing machinists are the only group of workers at Fords who need a certificate of competence to do their job, who do not get a higher rate of pay.

The women's strike makes the 32 to ten decision of the Ford National Joint Negotiating Committee trade union side to recommend acceptance of the company's final offer of seven per cent plus an extra two days holiday, doubly treacherous.

Treacherous to the striking women because one of the company's

conditions on the offer is that all grading grievances must be resolved before agreement is reached.

By Mick Drake,
Dagenham

Treacherous to the striking Leyland workers who would be strengthened by a Ford strike, based on our traditional methods of a show of hands at a mass meeting — whatever the Tory anti-union laws say.

All Ford workers can win much more this year. The company remains very profitable in a fiercely competitive market. In three sets of negotiations it has moved from a four per cent to seven per cent offer and extra holidays. Strike action now could push that towards the 13½ per cent won by Vauxhall workers.

That means coming out with the sewing machinists now. Better to be fighting on our feet than be laid off on our knees.



Photo: CARLOS GUARITA (Reflex)

Austin Rover go back

AUSTIN ROVER car workers started out with a strike that Jack Adams, Longbridge convenor, described as 'the most solid here for thirty years'. The mass meetings had given overwhelming majorities for the strike, and at rank and file level the feeling of unity and solidarity was the highest it has been for many years.

But the strike quickly ran into the obstacle that has so often in the past blocked BL workers efforts to fight the company. From the beginning, Ken Cure of the AEUW was claiming that the company offer was adequate, and a strike would win nothing more. The company's offer was for 5 per cent a year for two years. The claim was 20 per cent. Austin Rover took its line from Cure and refused to improve on it.

To back up its hard-line stand, the company

has wheeled out the 1984 Trade Union Act to attack the unions. The High Court declared that the strike was unlawful, because it had not been preceded by a secret ballot. The unions were instructed to repudiate the strike.

By Pat Hickey.

The response was immediate. The EPTU instructed its members to return to work to enable a ballot to be held. The

AEUW instructed its officials that they were not 'in any circumstances to be party to any statement or action that purports that the union is in favour of the strike.'

Only TGWU refused to repudiate the strike — and even they hesitated to make it official. For Grenville Hawley, national automotive secretary for the TGWU, the court action was the end of a love affair. He told the Financial Times 'Quite frankly, British Leyland have had a hell of a lot of support from the national union leaders in the past. I think this departure from normal negotiations has soured the opinion of a lot of people.'

The result was that the AEUW members began to



return, followed by the smaller craft unions. The majority of the membership, mainly in the TGWU, stayed solid. The pickets at Longbridge and Cowley were the biggest for years. Only small numbers crossed the picket lines, not enough to start production.

With Longbridge and Cowley stopped the return to work at some of the smaller ancillary plants

was of little consequence. They merely cost the company money, and would soon have been laid off anyway.

But the failure of the union leadership to back the action, and their surrender to the courts, inevitably led to demoralisation and confusion. The mass meetings were forced on the plant leaders when the strike was at its weakest.

Assembly plant shop stewards at Cowley voted unanimously to recommend continuing the strike. But the failure at national level won the day for a return to work. Austin Rover intend to underline their victory by pursuing the court action against the TGWU despite the return to work.

Defend political levy

THE LABOUR Co-ordinating Committee is holding a major conference on defending the trade union political levy to the Labour Party at Central Hall, Westminster on 1 December. JOHN DENHAM, chairperson of the LCC, explains what he sees as the goals of the conference.

The mounting flow of registrations for the LCC's Labour and the Unions conference on 1 December clearly indicates the key role it will play in the campaign to win the ballots on trade union political funds.

The success of the conference will be judged, not only by the numbers who attend, but by its ability to answer a number of central questions: what are the political reasons for trying to win the ballots? How should the arguments be presented to union members? And how can the campaign be organised to win the ballot in the short term and to strengthen union-party links in the longer term?

The Tory 'Employment' legislation is not simply about removing union finance, and structural involvement, from the Labour Party. The real aim is to provide the legal framework for a non-party political union movement.

For most of this century the law has made an arbitrary distinction between political and industrial roles of trade unions. While, up to now, the distinction has been largely limited to support for actual political parties, the intention now is to deepen the division. The government wishes to restrict unions to a so-called 'legitimate' role of defending narrow sectional interests, while preventing the raising of wider and more fundamental solutions to members' problems.

This is why the ballots are not, as the press will have it, about affiliation to the Labour Party, but about the existence of political funds. Those

non-affiliated unions, such as NALGO and the teaching unions which have attempted to influence elections are equally threatened if they fail to establish political funds.

One aim of our campaign is therefore to defend the democratic right of unions to take political action. Political action can take many forms, from intervention in local elections to support for political parties to mass action of many types.

It is not, however, purely a question of democratic rights. In any conceivable transition towards socialism, unions must play a conscious, political role in both instigating and implementing change. Unions which are barred from even a limited political role will have scant chance of building up this broader awareness of their role in political change.

Some sections of the labour movement have argued that the ballots should be fought on the issue of democratic rights alone, but this would be fatal. The media, the Tories and the Alliance will spare no effort to turn the ballots into a referendum on the Labour Party. Our campaign must be prepared and able to argue the positive case for trade union links and support for Labour.

The challenge is not to persuade union members to vote for 'business as usual' but to persuade them that Labour's policies, coupled to a new active campaigning relationship with the union movement genuinely offers a positive alternative to Thatcher.

Tory axe falls on 'down and outs'

A LITTLE known area of the welfare state has come under the threat of the Tory axe. The DHSS has seen fit to lose its responsibility for the 'down and outs' at the bottom end of society.

At present the DHSS runs 21 resettlement units (RUs) and re-establishment centres around the country, providing over 2000 beds nightly for itinerants.

The department plans to hive off the RUs to the voluntary sector, putting a vital area of the welfare state out to charity. The CPSA, SCPS and CSU have called for massive protest action to protect jobs and services.

A joint union conference was held in Birmingham on 14 November attended by over 100 activists from the three unions. There was a marked difference in the approach of the CPSA to the other two unions, who saw the conference more in terms of a showpiece for unity than as a forum to thrash out the basis for a campaign of industrial action.

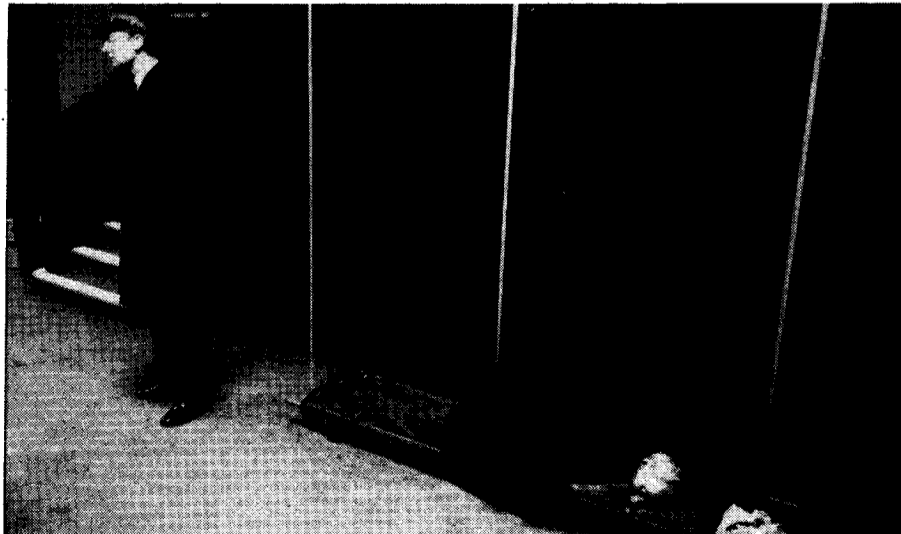
CPSA activists drew up a counter resolution to that of the CSU/SCPS

bureaucrats, and called for a campaign of disruption across the DHSS, and the unification of the RU campaign with that of other specialist areas of the DHSS which are also under threat.

By Howard Fuller,
CPSA

The CPSA also called for unity with the membership in the local supplementary benefit offices, as this would be the only way the struggle could be escalated, if necessary, to a national strike.

In a Socialist Action conference bulletin it was pointed out that the campaign would coincide with the miners' strike, and the struggle against rate-



capping. This would mean that the civil service unions would not be fighting alone.

Many well-meaning, but obviously misguided, activists were pessimistic about the call for a strike, and argued that they had a responsibility to look after the claimants. This argu-

ment is false, as it is policy to provide emergency (unpaid) cover in the event of industrial action. In any case, if we cannot stand up for ourselves how can we be expected to look after others?

CPSA activists will now take their case to their Section executive commit-

tee in January, and will be arguing that the CPSA can launch a campaign on its own, and shame the more reticent unions to follow suit.

● Socialist caucus for all Civil Service unions on 24 November at the Cock Tavern, Phoenix St., Kings Cross tube 11 - 5pm

A Socialist ACTION

Black trade union power

SOUTH AFRICA continued to be shaken last week by its growing black revolt. By Monday officially 165 people had been killed in the protests since the introduction of the new apartheid constitution three months ago.

The press attempted to give publicity over the weekend to the protests against the South African government's repression by various white opposition groups — notably by Helen Suzman of the Progressive Federal Party. But the most significant move has been the actions taken by the black trade unions.

South Africa's black trade unions have tripled in size in only four years — going from 220,000 members in 1980 to 670,000 members at the end of 1983.

Blacks are now the single largest group within the unions with 43 per cent for coloureds and Asians.

By 1983 15 per cent of the working population were unionised — a doubling compared to 1970.

The black unions had earlier held back from the wave of protests sweeping the black townships and the participation of hundreds of thousands of students in the schools boycott. But on Monday and Tuesday 5 and 6 November the industrial heart of South Africa was brought to a halt by a two

day black general strike.

Official South African sources, whose aim would be to underestimate the effectiveness of the strike, reported 90 per cent of the workers staying away from work in the black townships south of Johannesburg, 85 per cent away to the east of Johannesburg, and 66 per cent on strike in Soweto.

By Dick Carter

It is this political strike which has ignited both the new wave of police repression and the sudden well publicised 'concern' by white 'liberals'.

Police and army units raided Tembisa, a township north east of

Johannesburg, last Tuesday. This followed an earlier, still larger, raid on Sebokeng, 40 miles south of Johannesburg, two earlier. Black trade union leaders were arrested immediately following the success of the political strike.

Progress

South Africa has recently been making progress on its northern borders. A treaty was imposed on the Mozambique government. Heavy pressure is being applied to the Angolan government through South African backing to the UNITA guerrilla movement, and through the demand for withdrawal of Cuban troops protecting the country.

These were seen as strengthening the hand of South African prime minister Botha in his drive for international 'respectability'. But now South Africa is facing a massive new crisis inside its own borders.

And that is one of the most important developments in the world today.

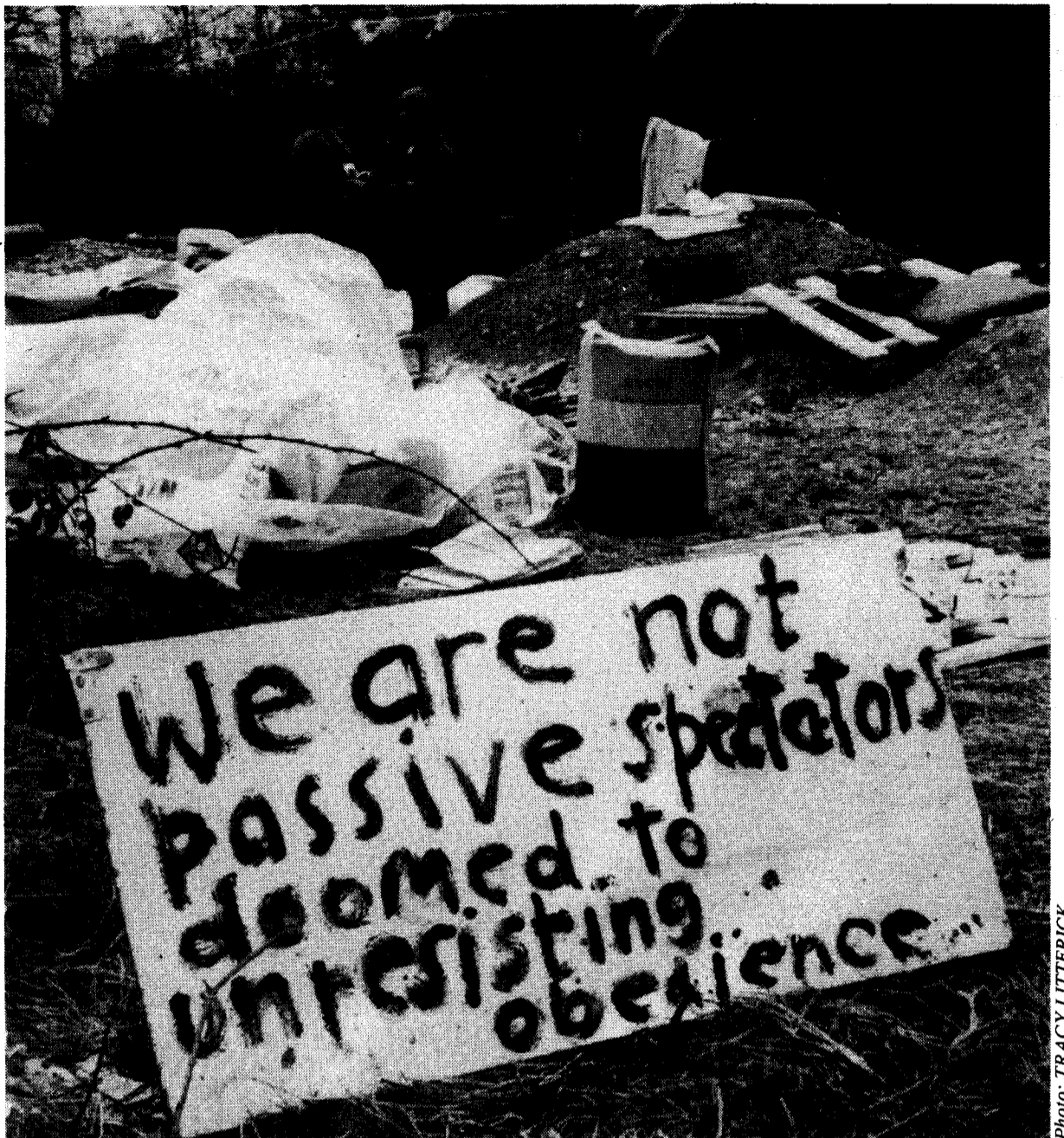


Photo: TRACY LITTERICK

View from Greenham

THERE ARE now about 30 wimmin living at the camp: ten on the main gate, ten on the blue gate, and the rest scattered around green and indigo gates.

The wimmin face the brutality of the bailiffs every day, and have lost all but one bender. They are forced to sleep in this one bender or the ambulance because it is pointless to re-erect benders when the police come and take them down.

They face constant abuse from the police and the US personnel. And the abuse is not only verbal — violent attacks had been made on four wimmin just before my arrival last week. One had been injured to the point where it was difficult for her stand up on her own.

There is also the physical violence of the local vigilante groups to endure. This has involved both petrol bombs — unreported by the press, who take a different attitude if they think miners are using them — and beatings.

In December, it will be one year since the 16 cruise missiles were sited at the airbase. The wimmin intend to have a protest on Sunday 9 December. This is supported by Swansea Wont (Wimmin oppose the nuclear threat).

From Ruth Kilgallon, at the Greenham camp

The campfire meeting will decide the exact form it will take, but they are asking wimmin to bring with them as much food as possible, to give it to the miners and the unemployed.

The wimmin have suggested that local wimmin's groups and CND groups should adopt a gate, for wimmin to come down on a rota basis to stay at the camp or do a nightwatch and to take action when the cruise convoys come out.

One of the wimmin at the camp, Rebecca Johnson, is standing for CND council at its upcoming conference. The CND conference standing orders committee has wiped the debate on its own women's conference off the agenda. It was listed as the eleventh priority when only ten resolutions could be debated.

So we're likely to see a large Greenham contingent protesting at this year's CND conference. What an insult to all those wimmin in the peace movement that have led

the campaign against cruise missiles and suffered the hardship of a three year long peace camp at Greenham!

Despite all the hardship wimmin are still resolved to remain at the camp. They understand and support wimmin's involvement in the miners' strike. In fact they almost are more concerned that the miners should win than about their own camp. 'If you go and visit the miners, tell them we support them all the way' was the message they left me with.

The Greenham wimmin understand that their fate is intimately linked up with the miners' battle against pit closures. Every struggle will advance if the miners' win. Wimmin Against Pit Closures and wimmin's peace banners can come together on 9 December in this year's event.

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WELL, THE cash has started coming in for the building and development fund but it's still only a trickle.

Remember if we raise £4,000 in the next few days we can save £2,000 on the price of the latest and most up-to-date typesetting machine in its range.

That's the kind of economics we just can't afford to ignore. So you readers get out and beg, borrow ... we leave the last suggestion unwritten!

But that £4000 is just

the beginning. We need money for moving and building our printshop and offices in the way that we want. That boils down to hefty donations.

If you can't afford a lump-sum pay us in easy payments via the Socialist Action credit scheme. You do that by spreading your payments out with a bankers' order. Simply tell us what you will pay and the rate per month.

Locally you could raise cash by raffling off a small item at each readers' group — readers could take it in turn to donate a prize. Socials,

especially around Christmas and the New Year, are sure-fire ways of raising a bob or two.

There must be a few unfortunates in your readers' group still puffing away at those obnoxious weeds and just dying to give up. Why not sponsor them to?

These are just a few ways we can get the money we need. If you can think of others drop us a line and we will pass them on to other readers.

The guy in the picture won't be making any donations. As you can see, he is too bloody mean to buy a paper and goes in for nicking one!

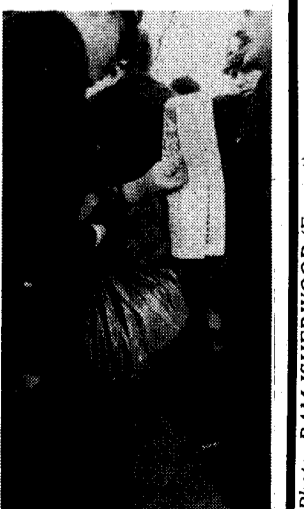


Photo: PAM ISHERWOOD (Format)