

A Socialist ACTION

No. 83
21 December 1984
30p

Implement TUC congress decisions!



Photo: JOHN HARRIS

NO COAL MUST MOVE

IN SEPTEMBER the Congress of the TUC voted a clear and unequivocal policy of 'total support' for the NUM. Following that the TUC voted an explicit policy of non-use of coal and coal substitutes that if implemented would win the strike. What is completely clear today is that the general council is refusing to implement these decisions. Instead it is implementing a completely different policy of refusing to campaign for that 'total support' and instead attempting to impose concessions on the NUM.

This policy is even more criminal in that the government is now openly trying to break the NUM. It is encouraging, and helping to organise, the breakaway moves in Nottinghamshire. It has organised every legal attack on the miners.

Even if the TUC's craven plea to reopen negotiations with the NUM met a swift response from Margaret Thatcher on Monday: 'There will be no end to this strike while the NUM sticks to its proud boast that it has not moved an inch.'

In other words the reality is that the Tories are going for total defeat of the NUM. If that happens, the whole trade union movement will face the most ferocious assault on its rights for a century. No trade unionist will be able to stand aside from the consequences.

What makes this situation still worse is the stark contrast to the leadership of the NUM and the support they have. There are 140,000 miners and their families still on strike after nine months, thousands of women who have mobilised with the women's support groups, NUR and ASLEF members who have stepped coal movement for 38 weeks.

The potential for action was shown by the rail workers at Coalville who responded to the first scab train for 38 weeks with strike action. Thousands of power station workers are still refusing to handle scab coal. Hundreds of thousands of rank and file trade union and Labour Party members continue to raise money, food, and support for the miners.

The miners will continue to fight in 1985. They are as determined now as they were in March.

The government will face growing difficulties in the power stations — which is why for the first time they are now beginning to try to move coal from striking pits and to try to break the rail blockade of coal. Activists across the movement will be equally determined to secure victory for the miners. This is the mood and reality that must be counterposed to the general council.

The general council must either carry out the mandate of Congress or it must be *openly* shown that the general council *refuses* to implement Congress decisions. The NUM *does not* need TUC initiatives like the talks with Walker. It can negotiate for itself. It needs not urgings but *directives* to all unions on how to implement Congress policy.

In every union members should campaign to call their leaders to account for their actions on the general council. If the TUC refuses to implement Congress decisions, as it is doing, then TUC Congress must itself be recalled.

The message for the new year to the trade union movement must be simple — NO MOVEMENT OF COAL, DELIVER TUC CONGRESS POLICY.

Socialist ACTION

Kinnock or Lenin?

NEIL KINNOCK'S excuse for expelling Marxists from the Labour Party is that they do not defend democracy. Neil Kinnock could scarcely be on a weaker political terrain.

So much so in fact that rather than running our usual editorial we thought it useful to turn it over to Lenin who rather comprehensively dealt with everything Neil Kinnock has to say on the subject — as anyone who has ever read *State and Revolution* will realise.

The passage is from Lenin's *The Tasks of the Russian Social Democrats* — 'Social Democrat' being used in a very different sense to the one it has today. We think it should also be taken to heart by those of *Marxism Today* who believe that the way to defend, and extend, democracy is in alliance with the bourgeoisie rather than in a struggle against it.

'THE PROLETARIAT alone can be the vanguard fighter for political liberty and for democratic institutions. Firstly, this is because political tyranny bears most heavily upon the proletariat.

Secondly, the proletariat alone is capable of bringing about the complete democratisation of the political and social system, since this would place the system in the hands of the workers.

That is why the merging of the democratic activities of the working class with the democratic aspirations of other classes and groups would weaken the democratic movement, would weaken the political struggle, would make it less determined, less consistent, more likely to compromise.

On the other hand, if the working class stands out as the vanguard fighter for democratic institutions, this will strengthen the democratic movement, will strengthen the struggle for political liberty, because the working class will spur on all the other democratic and political opposition elements, will push the liberals towards the political radicals, will push the radicals towards an irrevocable rupture with the whole of the political and social structure of present society. We said that all socialists in Russia should become Marxists. We now add: all true and consistent democrats in Russia should become marxists.

We will illustrate what we mean by quoting the following example. Take the civil service, the bureaucracy, as representing a special category of persons who specialise in the work of administration and occupy a privileged position as compared with the people. We see this institution everywhere, from autocratic and semi-asiatic Russia to cultured, free and civilised England, as an essential organ of bourgeois society. The complete lack of rights of the people in relation to government officials and the complete absence of control over the privileged bureaucracy correspond to the backwardness of Russia and to its absolutism.

In England, powerful popular control is exercised over the administration, but even there that control is far from complete, even there the bureaucracy retains not a few of its privileges, and not infrequently is the master and not the servant of the people.

Even in England we see that powerful social groups support the privileged position of the bureaucracy and hinder the complete democratisation of that institution. Why? Because it is in the interests of the proletariat alone to democratise it completely; the most progressive strata of the bourgeoisie defend certain prerogatives of the bureaucracy and are opposed to the election of all officials, opposed to the complete abolition of electoral qualifications, opposed to making officials directly responsible to the people, etc., because these strata realise that the proletariat will take advantage of such complete democratisation in order to use it against the bourgeoisie.

This is the case in Russia too. Many and most diverse strata of the Russian people are opposed to the omnipotent, irresponsible, corrupt, savage, ignorant and parasitic Russian bureaucracy. But except for the proletariat, not one of these strata would agree to the complete democratisation of the bureaucracy, because all these strata (bourgeoisie, petty bourgeoisie, the 'intelligentsia' in general) have some ties with the bureaucracy, because all these strata are kith and kin of the Russian bureaucracy.'

Time to mobilise

THE MEETING between TUC leaders and Peter Walker, the energy secretary, last Friday predictably led Ian MacGregor to maintain his demand that the NUM, and Scargill in particular, should give a pledge to accept closure of 'uneconomic' pits before any talks can begin.

The government has no intention of making any concessions to the TUC. The meeting was designed to encourage the TUC in its policy of refusing to give real support to the miners, while the general council directs all its practical efforts to getting the NUM to concede the core of the NCB's case.

Earlier in the week the TUC general council had refused to assist the NUM against the court-appointed receiver who is now legally in charge of the union. The NUM needed guarantees of finance, office facilities, etc., in the event of the receiver taking these away from the union. The general council however, was not prepared to take any action which would bring them into conflict with the law.

At the end of a week which has seen the trade union movement stripped of rights which have been taken for granted for a hundred years the TUC leaders reported that they were pleased with Walker which was described as 'calm and temperate'.

No wonder it was 'calm and temperate'. The general council is now doing what the Tories want it to do. They are bending their efforts to securing a 'more flexible' attitude from the NUM. The proposals they put to Walker for a new Plan for Coal mean accepting pit closures.

But if pressure is being put on the NUM what the TUC is not doing is carrying out Congress decisions to deliver the solidarity which is needed in the power stations.

As we pointed out in Socialist Action the TUC faces a small task on this front. Action at only eight of thirteen power stations which have agreed to boycott coal would ensure power cuts by the end of January. The general council has visited none of these stations, to appeal to the workers there to back Congress policy. David Basnett who has members in all these stations has made no effort to talk to his members. Purely routine circulars have been sent out with no moves to get action.

The result is that in power stations like Didcot,

where 50,000 tonnes of scab coal a day are being moved in, the workforce is split. Two shifts are handling the coal, two are not. This situation could very easily be turned round by the TUC. It would simply be a matter of the general council appealing directly to the power station workers to back the decisions of Congress.

By Pat Hickey

Instead of steps to implement Congress policy the actions of the general council aid the Tories, and encourage them to deepen their attacks. The legal process which led to the appointment of a receiver to control the funds of the NUM was directly masterminded by MacGregor and the Tories. They would never have proceeded so far had they not relied on the general council to renege on the pledges given by the TUC Congress.

The result of this failure to act by the TUC is that the employers are piling on pressure against those sections that are taking solidarity action with the miners.

The British Rail Board is once again attempting to break the solidarity of the Coalville NUR members, and move coal from Bedworth Colliery. At Bold in Lancashire lorries have been moving coal from the pithead to Meaford power station in Stoke-on-Trent.

Norman Willis claims to be within Congress policy of 'total support' for the NUM. As Arthur Scargill commented on Friday last, 'Instead of trying to talk to people like Walker the TUC should start implementing their policy of industrial support for the miners in the power and steel industries.'

The TUC leaders, however, have a different project. They are hoping to break the NUM's deter-



Photo: PAUL MATTHEWSON



Photo: GM COOKSON

mination to stand firm by isolating Scargill and presenting him as the main obstacle to a 'reasonable settlement'. As reasonable, presumably, as were the ASLEF and NGA settlements so brilliantly negotiated by the TUC.

The right wing is now quite openly arguing for the TUC to take greater control of strikes, and to lay down stringent conditions for any support it gives. Alistair Graham stated in a major *Guardian* article on Friday that the TUC should not have supported the miners unless the union had agreed to abide by TUC guidelines on picketing, and agreement had been reached on what could be 'realistically achieved'. The TUC has to ensure, he argued, 'that the trade union movement is not hijacked into support for a dispute as it has been on this occasion.'

The TUC Conference was far from hijacked. It gave overwhelming support to the miners. Nor is

the trade union movement isolated because of the miners' strike. The recent opinion poll in the *Sunday Times* showed that 31 per cent of the public support the miners against 44 per cent who oppose them. This figure could very easily be turned round if union leaders like Graham ceased to attack 'tremendous violence committed in the name of trade unionism' and denounced the police invasions of the Yorkshire pit villages of Armthorpe, Fitzwilliam, Hemsworth and Grimethorpe.

It is the general council of the TUC which is hijacking the trade union movement. Congress gave a clear mandate to support the miners and to prevent the use of scab coal and oil. It is this policy which must be enforced by the TUC.

The latest issue of *The Miner* stated the case very clearly: 'The legal moves against us today are tomorrow's cutting edge

against the whole trade union and labour movement ... It is time for the whole trade union and labour movement to wake up and respond with maximum effort. There can be no bystanders any longer.'

The prospects for a Tory victory in this strike, as in so many before, rest on the TUC leaders flouting the will of the whole movement. They must be called to account. As *The Miner* put it, it is 'Time to Mobilise'.

The new year must start with a renewed campaign to build a national solidarity demonstration to mobilise the whole movement behind the NUM and campaign of picketing at the power stations to secure support for Congress policy. A national solidarity conference should be called by the NUM and a campaign for a recall TUC to defend and implement Congress policy on the miners should be supported.

A PIECE OF THE ACTION



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Kinnock's electoral failure

SOUTHGATE is not exactly a constituency it is vital for Labour to win at the next election. It is the twenty fifth safest Tory seat in the country. But nevertheless the result of the Southgate election, together with the recent local government results, and the opinion polls, shows very clearly where the Labour Party stands today in electoral terms.

After a temporary revival, the reality is that Labour's present level of support is quite incapable of winning the next general election. The Tory vote continues to erode even from the low level of 42 per cent it gained at the last election, but that vote is not automatically moving to Labour.

Regular as clockwork the Alliance is now gaining 30-35 per cent of the vote in every by-election which comes along. In certain areas of the country it is the *Conservative* vote which is disintegrating towards the Alliance.

By John Ross

The movement of Britain towards a three party system — with Labour fighting the Alliance in the north and the cities, and the Tories fighting the Alliance in the south and countryside — continues to steadily develop. Contrary to the expectations of much of the Marxist and Labour left in Britain the Alliance is *not* disappearing. It is consolidating itself as a permanent and structural feature of British politics. Southgate was just another confirmation of that — although by now such confirmations are really superfluous.

If we take last month's local government elections Labour actually trailed third behind either the Tories or the Alliance. Labour's standing in the opinion polls is now down to 30-35 per cent. Labour has lost its deposit in three out of the last seven by-elections. At Southgate the Alliance vote shot up dramatically to 35 per cent while Labour's vote collapsed from an already low 17 per cent down to 12 per cent.

Pattern

A very clear pattern is in fact emerging in all the election results — or rather the pattern which already existed at the last election is being confirmed still more strongly.

Labour is holding its vote, and recovering seriously from the disaster of June 1983, in the north. Labour is holding its position also in the core of the big cities — and doing better than that in London due to the massive campaign to save the GLC.

But outside these core areas Labour's vote is *not* recovering on anything like the scale needed to win an election. The Alliance has consolidated itself further since June 1983.

And where does all this leave Neil Kinnock and his project for Labour? The current myth being peddled in the press is that Labour's popularity has substantially fallen because of the miners strike — and the conclusion urged is that Labour must turn sharply to the right. Hence the great rash of articles in the *Guardian*, *New Statesman*, *Observer* etc — not to mention the *Sun* and the *Times* — demanding from Labour witch hunts, incomes policies, condemnation of Scargill, greater distancing of the Labour Party from the trade unions, more condemnations of the miners etc. A strong right



Kinnock gets that lonely feeling

wing local councils such as London, Sheffield and Liverpool. These are now threatened with laws that would completely break their ability to defend jobs, services, and their local communities. John Cunningham, backed by Kinnock, has made it clear the parliamentary leadership will oppose any Labour Council breaking the law despite the opposite position being passed by Labour Party conference.

In short at each point, Kinnock attempts to *block* any struggle which would shift the relation of forces in favour of the working class. If he succeeds in that there is no possibility of Labour winning the next election. For Labour to be victorious its supporters have to break with the line of Kinnock and shift the relation of forces in favour of the working class. Labour has the chance to win the next election *despite* the present line of its leadership — not because of it.

Finally who will gain from Kinnock's policy? Ironically it won't even be his supporters — those who are trying to recreate a Labour government by moving the party far to the right. The people who will gain are those who are even to Kinnock's right — the new realist wing of the TUC and the coalitionists within the Labour Party and trade union bureaucracy.

Neil Kinnock's political project is to avoid a coalition by moving Labour to the right. His actual role in the class struggle is to open the way for a coalition by defeating the Labour left, and permitting Thatcher to impose major defeats on the working class.

The bitter fruits of that can be seen not only in the miners strike but in Labour's election results.

turn will supposedly rebuild Labour's popularity. Alistair Graham urged a similar line for the trade unions in a major article in Friday's *Guardian*.

Unfortunately for these arguments none of them will fit the facts. Neither will the policy conclusions which flow from them.

During the early part of the miner's strike, before Kinnock started delivering his vicious diatribes against 'miners violence', Labour's popularity held up. It was after Kinnock started to openly attack the strike, that Labour's popularity began to fall. This is scarcely surprising because

if, according to Kinnock's logic, the Labour Party is based on a movement whose activists are 'creating violence' why support it?

Rehearsal

As for the incomes policy and witch hunts the record is only too obvious.

No British government, or party, pledged to incomes policy has ever been elected or re-elected. Incomes policy is the single most electorally disastrous policy in post-war British history. And as for witch hunts is it really necessary to rehearse the

story of Bermondsy?

The reality is that it is Neil Kinnock's policies which stand as the obstacle to Labour rebuilding its electoral support, and winning the next election. June 1983 was not a freak. It was a product of a definite relation of class forces. To move to a Labour victory requires moving that class relation of forces in favour of the working class — the last time Labour won an election, in 1974, it was because of a miners strike that shattered the Heath government.

But Kinnock is precisely setting Labour's leader-

ship *against* every struggle that could shift the relation of forces in favour of the working class. This is dramatically true in the miners strike — where if Thatcher lost the strike her government would be broken backed. But instead of helping take the strike to victory Kinnock has attacked and obstructed it.

Success

A similar development is already taking place around local government. The big success story is Labour in electoral terms is the popularity of the left

Maxwell makes his choice

LAST THURSDAY'S front page of the *Daily Mirror* has very big implications indeed for the future of the labour movement. Its subject was the Southgate by-election. It contained no less than 13 reasons

why you should not vote for the Conservative Party in that election.

The only thing that was carefully avoided throughout the two-page editorial articles was who you should vote for.

Don't imagine that this

was 'a slip' from a paper published by Robert Maxwell which formally claims to support the Labour Party.

The *Daily Mirror* sells well over three million copies a day. It is perfectly well aware that it is the most powerful press voice nominally supporting Labour. It has a political staff to match. If that newspaper did not mention you should vote Labour it was because it did not want to.

If the *Mirror* said you should vote against the Tories, but did not specify whether you should vote for Labour or the Alliance, that was *exactly* the message it wanted to get across.

The labour movement should not imagine that those who want an alliance between Labour and the SDP/Liberals are a few right wing professors in *Marxism Today*. The entire right wing section of

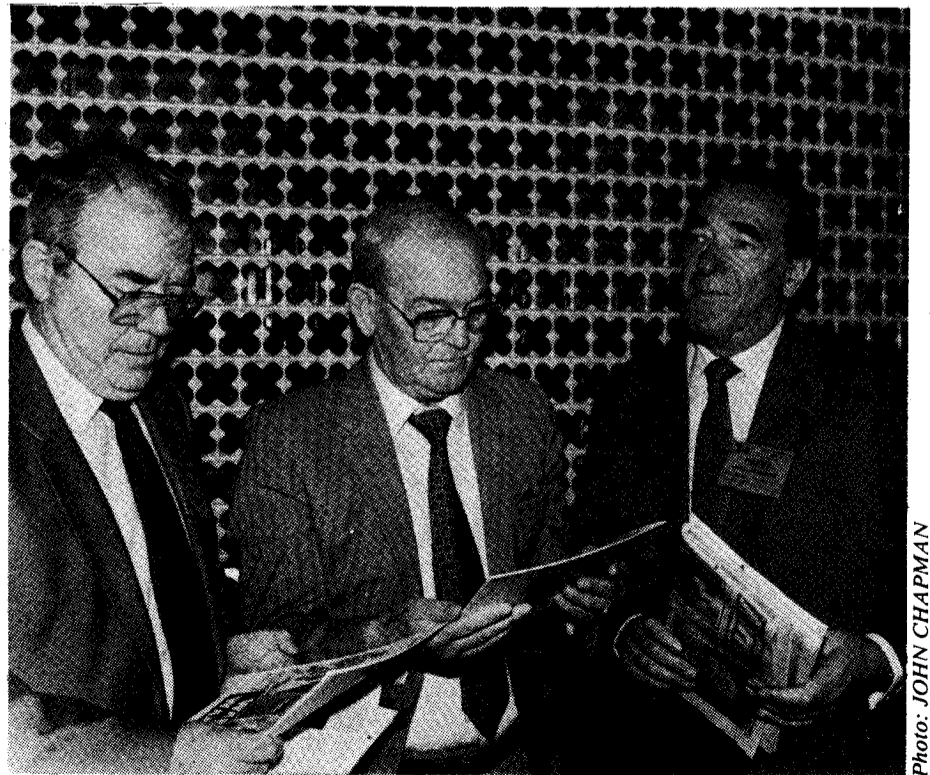
the trade union bureaucracy — the Hammonds, Duffys, and Lairds — are the real forces supporting such a policy fairly openly.

Robert Maxwell is among their political number. If anyone doubted it before all they needed to read was that *Mirror* front page.

Of course between the here-and-now and that final destination we will be treated to a great deal of sanctimonious rubbish.

The *Mirror* will explain how 'for the good of the Labour Party' the miners must be defeated. How 'for the good of the Labour Party' socialists must be expelled. How 'for the good of the Labour Party' anti-trade unions laws must be accepted.

Finally at the next election, doubtless, we will get an appeal to vote Labour. Then, after the election,



Hammond, Duffy, Maxwell: partners in crime

'regretfully' the *Mirror* will carry its editorial starting: 'We have always called for a vote for Labour. We did at the last election.

But now we must be realistic. Labour cannot win an election and it is urgent to unite all anti-Thatcher forces....'

But where Robert Maxwell, and the *Daily Mirror*, are really going was made unambiguously clear last week.



Photo: JOHN CHAPMAN

Scab threat to NUM

THE MOVES by leading scabs in the Notts NUM to make the Notts union independent of the national union represent a major escalation of the attack on the miners union by the Tory and big-business backers of the 'Working Miners Committees'. The attempt to change Rule 30, which states that 'in all matters in which the Rules of this Union and those of the National Union shall conflict, the Rules of the National Union shall apply and in all cases of doubt or dispute the matter shall be decided by the National Executive Committee of the National Union ...'

The rule change sought by the Notts scabs would effectively take the Notts area outside the national union. The Notts area would be independent of the NUM and would become, in effect, a separate union with the scabs who have led the efforts to break the strike, in control. This step is a calculated effort to break up the NUM. The people behind working miners

committees have decided that Notts is the area to start that process.

by Pat Hickey

The scab committees have been aided by donations from big business, by Fleet Street, and by sympathetic solicitors. In addition, Thatcher aides such as Tim Bell and David Hart have been closely involved.

Bell is a director of Saatchi and Saatchi. Hart has been dispensing money to working miners' committees since August. He has worked closely with MacGregor. He is a wealthy property developer. The Working Miners Committee has worked closely with these people throughout the dispute. The government and the NCB have avoided becoming directly involved in the various legal actions against the NUM. For example, even though the secondary picketing of British Steel was outlawed under the 1982 anti-union legislation, no court actions were taken by BSC. Instead, the court actions have been taken by the working miners. These actions have so far led to the fining of the NUM, se-

questration of its funds and removal of its elected leadership as trustees of the union.

This allowed the Tories to avoid being seen as the initiators of the legal attacks on the union. Instead it came from miners. The TUC right wing and centre could also hide behind this — after all it was not the Employments Acts which were being used, but common law.

This new move is from the same source. The organ grinders are the state and big business. The working miners, consciously and unconsciously, are the monkeys. They are being used to break up the structure of the NUM. The Notts move is an attempt

to form a breakaway union. It is a repeat in a different form, of the Spencer union of the 1930s. This development strips away the last pretence that the working miners such as Silver Birch were attempting to win a 'democratic' ballot in the union as a whole. These moves mean that Notts would do as it pleased regardless of the union nationally.

Appeal

Striking miners in Notts have issued a leaflet appealing to all NUM members to oppose these changes. As their leaflet explains: 'Even if you have chosen throughout this dispute not to back the National NUM, for the sake of future negotiations we must unite over this issue and vote against these rule changes.'

The people behind the National Working Miners' Committee have a very clear purpose. Miners such as Bob Copping who was involved at the early stages, and who left came to understand the real purpose of these people. Copping, who resigned in September from the Committee, said 'I am not prepared for the Conservatives to come in under our cloak and undermine the trade union movement. I don't want to see them smash the NUM, unlike some on the committee who are prepared to preach democracy to someone else but not to practise it themselves.'

The fight in Notts to prevent the breakaway will not be an easy one. The scabs have dominated the union from the start. But it is a fight for the whole NUM. The courts, the media, and the bosses who manipulate and work with the scabs will back the move. For the 'no-strike' deal right on the TUC the Silver Birches are the kind of responsible trade union member they see as the future. The fight is for the future of the trade union movement.

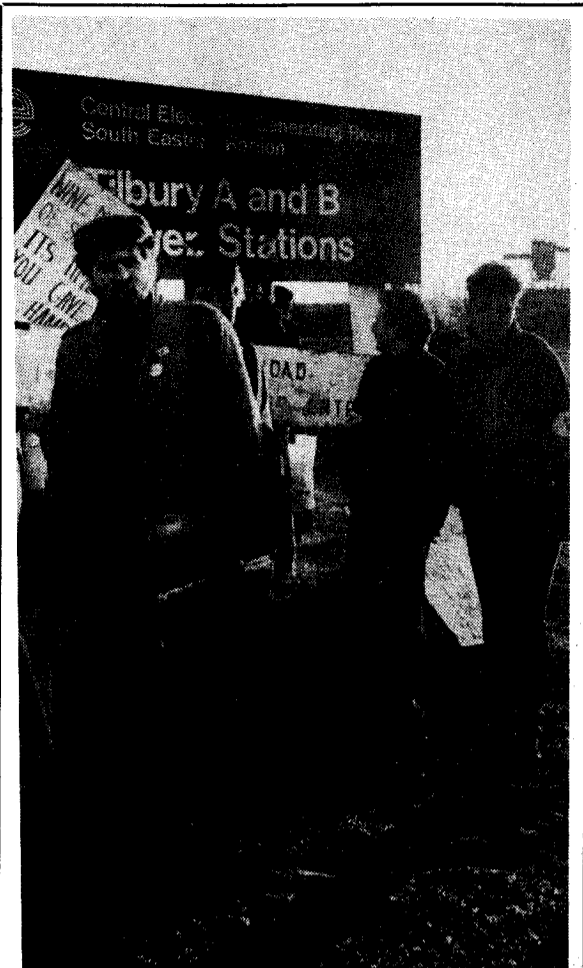


Photo: STEFANO CAGNONI

'JEREMY CORBYN, pictured above, was one of the 300 pickets who turned up to stop the oil at Tilbury B power station in Essex on 10 December. Three oil tankers were turned back despite the presence of a large number of police dressed in riot gear.'

Tom Durkin (Brent Trades Council), Ivan Bevis (NALGO, National Executive), a member of the NUR as well as Jeremy addressed the picket line,' writes Dave Palmer of Haringey Miners Support Committee.

'400 turned up to picket Neasden power station in Brent from all over London and the Home Counties on Monday 17 December. No tankers arrived while the pickets were in attendance and police behaviour was far less provocative than at Friday's mass picket.

'Two Kent miners and one woman had been arrested at that picket and their bail conditions were to keep one mile and half-a-mile away from the power station.

'One of the speakers brought greeting from these two miners. Others who addressed the picket included J. Corbyn, K. Livingstone, Andy Moynihan, Tom Durkin, Emma Tait, Alf Filer and representatives from the Haringey Support Committee and the Oxford Miners Support Committee. The Mineworkers Defence Committee banner was present.

'After the picket ended people went onto Willesden magistrates court to protest at the arrest of Councillor G. Durham. He was arrested in August in Kilburn High Street while selling copies of the Miner to raise funds for miners and their families.

'He was bound over for £100,' writes Emma Tait, co-convenor of Brent Miner's support Campaign and chair of Brent East CLP. For more information contact: 01-459 2835.

Please phone through reports of any mass picketing of power stations over Xmas to Socialist Action on Sunday 6 January. We want to make this a regular column in the New Year.

Bold coal moved

OVER THE LAST two weeks the National Coal Board have been moving pit head coal from Bold colliery to a power station near Stoke.

This 'exercise' is designed to test the resistance of the Lancashire coalfields to the movement of pit head coal.

The coal is good quality coal for domestic usage and the NUM originally thought it was being moved for concessionary users. The TGWU Region No 4 full-time coordinators, working in conjunction with the NUM traced it to Stoke power station.

Bold is a militant pit which has been solid since day one of the strike. Unfortunately the attack, coming so near to Xmas, has been difficult to counter.

The Lancashire picket numbering 100-150 has been unable to prevent the movement of up to 40 lor-

ries a day. Over the last fortnight the pickets have grown 150 other trade unionists and Labour Party members joining the picket lines.

By Dick Withecombe

The period immediately after Xmas is going to be the most difficult for the whole strike. Xmas fund raising has focussed the activity of most miners up until now.

After Xmas most of the miners will be wanting to see a step forward in industrial support. The backstabbing of Kinnock and Willis on TUC policy couldn't have come at a more difficult time.

Countering these difficulties has been the number one priority of

left-wing trade unionists in the north west. The NUM have recently established a full-time solidarity office in Manchester.

The TGWU Region No 6 have now assigned two full-time workers to monitor the movement of coal and coal substitutes. Picketing of oil refineries in the area have met with success.

The North West Regional Labour Party Women's Committee plans to hold a demonstration on 19 January. A series of meetings across Merseyside and Manchester have been organised between the NUM and leading stewards and officials from transport, power and fuel industries.

Within the Lancashire NUM the leading supporters of the Scargill leadership, in the Bold and Sutton Manor branch, are

now increasingly taking over leadership of the strike locally.

They have begun to make alliances with the left in other sections of the labour movement in the north west to fight for the implementation of TUC decisions.

Other branches controlled by the Sid Vincent's of this world are not playing such a positive role.

This is why the NCB has chosen to try and move coal at Bold. Kinnock and Willis have given the NCB the green light to put the boot in and attack the most militant sections of the NUM to try and break up the solidarity they have won in the rest of the labour movement. The north west labour movement is fighting back against these attacks.

FOURTEEN hundred people attended the Lesbians and Gays Support the Miners' 'Pits and Perverts' ball which raised over £5,000 for South Wales and Yorkshire mining communities on Monday 10 December.

Pictured is Jimi Somerville of Bronski Beat and (insert) Dave Donovan (Dulais NUM) who declared: 'You have worn our badge, you know what harassment means, as we do. Now we will pin your badge on us, we will support you.'

It won't change overnight but now 140,000 miners know there are other causes and problems. We will never be the same.'

● Contact for LGSM, c/o 39, Chippenham Rd, London W9 2AH (phone 01-444 5442).

Islington Miners Support Committee

March and Rally

**Victory to the Miners!
Stop the Police State!**

Assemble 12.30 Saturday 19 January 1985 at Islington Town Hall Upper St N1.

Speakers: Tony Benn, Jeremy Corbyn, South Wales NUM.

Join the campaign. Support committee meets every Thursday 7.30 Co-op Hall, 129, Seven Sisters Road.



Photo: CAPITAL GAY

Harsh sentences at Fitzwilliam

THE PIT village of Fitzwilliam near Wakefield is shocked by the severity of sentences handed out to members of Fitzwilliam mine.

Peter Hurst was jailed for six months on a charge of breach of the peace, arising from violent scenes during a police invasion of their village on 9 July. Three other defendants received suspended sentences, while three are awaiting social reports.

The Fitzwilliam events were the first of the full-scale police assaults on Yorkshire mining communities which were repeated later in Hemsworth, Armthorpe

and Grimethorpe.

The stipendiary magistrate has proved to be as vicious in court as the police were on the night when a force of 50 police surrounded the Fitzwilliam Hotel and burst in to it 'lashing out with truncheons'.

By Matthew Creighton

The victims of this remarkable police brutality, dazed and bruised, were then arrested. They were charged with offences like assault which carefully avoided the right to a jury trial.

Defendant Peter Doody told Socialist Action: 'The police know

they can rely on these magistrates. A jury trial would most likely have acquitted us.'

'This is police use of the law', said co-defendant Dennis Doody, who was acquitted. 'Our chief job now is to give support to Peter Hurst in Armley Jail, and his family here in Fitzwilliam over Christmas.'

● The defendants and their supporters are setting up a Prisoners Support Group. Send messages and Xmas cards to Peter Hurst, Armley Jail, Leeds. Donations should be sent to the Prisoners Support Group, 4 Rockingham Street, Fitzwilliam, West Yorkshire.

THE QUESTION that has come to the fore in every political struggle over the last year is women. 1984 began with women setting the agenda of the peace movement at Greenham Common.

Contrary to all forecasts the camp still survives, it is still women-only and it remains a source in inspiration for all those who wish to oppose cruise missiles being stationed in Europe, much to the consternation of the CND leaders.

The year is ending with biggest surprise of all. Arthur Scargill, president of the National Union of Mineworkers, has been forced to reverse his attitude towards women by the growth of a huge Women Against Pit Closures movement in support of the strike.

A movement which has brought thousands of women into contact with trade unionism, socialism and feminism for the first time in their lives.

Those feminists who chided the NUM at the beginning of the strike for being macho ('Miners are men's love objects' wrote Bea Campbell in *The Road to Wigan Pier Revisited*) completely failed to understand that working class women would see the political importance of this dispute and organise actively in support of the miners as women.

Wives, mothers, daughters, girl-friends, fellow trade unionists and Labour Party members poured into the support groups to re-organise the mining communities to prepare for a long haul where collective provision was at a premium.

By Valerie Coultas

Three national demonstrations have now been organised, a national movement consolidated, and women have gone on picket lines alongside the men to spread the dispute.

Members of the NUM freely admit to be taken aback by the power of this movement and women's commitment to the struggle.

Women in the mining communities showed themselves to be perfectly capable of not only supporting the struggle but transforming its scope as they demanded to be given space to develop their own political activities.

Men had to be confronted in this process and, in many a family, learnt what housework and childcare was really about for the first time.

The less reknowned battles of women also deserve some attention. The Barking Hospital dispute, where women have fought against privatisation for as long as the NUM, and the Birmingham school dinner ladies who also opposed privatisation and won, reflect the strength of women in the public sector unions.

Skills

The Fords machinists striking over the recognition of women's skills in a regrading battle — 270 women in a company of 42,000 male employees — proved that this new militancy would take head on the employers 14 year-long offensive to avoid the equal pay legislation. Black women, who have spearheaded the battle for black sections in the Labour Party, challenged all the priorities of socialist and feminists over the last year demanding that their concerns should be taken seriously.

And on the question of Ireland feminists have challenged the labour movement's silence by organising in support of the Armagh women



'Women have every right to disturb and challenge the priorities of the male dominated labour movement'

Photos: JOHN HARRIS/JEREMY NICHOLL

against the strip searches and harassment in gaol.

What we are witnessing is a new upsurge to feminism. An outburst of women's militancy that is both a reaction to the attacks of this Tory government and a reflection of women's social position in society today.

Women have not allowed the Thatcher administration to push them out of the workforce. Often heading up families, keeping themselves or providing an essential income to a two parent household, they need their wages.

Trapped in the ghetto of low pay, fighting to defend inadequate community services they have turned to the labour movement for a solution.

What is new about this wave of feminism is that it is deeply rooted inside the labour movement and the mass movements against the Tories.

As women turn to the Labour Party, the trade unions and the peace movement to fight the Tories they are forced to organise to transform these movements because they find that these organisations do not automatically accommodate women's needs and demands.

This is the decisively new feature about this upsurge amongst women.

The Bennite struggle for accountability within the Labour Party, from 1979 to 1981, therefore had a particular attraction for feminists.

Decade

Unionisation of women had been increasing over a decade and the pro-abortion movement had made strong links with the trade unions.

The attraction of Bennism to women was that it was open to feminism. Accountability could very easily become a rallying cry of women to men, as well as a cry from the ranks to the leaders of the party.

Women's sections gained a new lease of life. Regional and national conferences of the Labour Party were transformed as feminists launched the struggle for greater representation and went on to pass some of the most radical policies on Ireland, on the Falklands war, on NATO that any section of the labour movement adopted.

Women councillors

brought feminism to the town hall as women's committees were established.

The battle for representation was an obvious focus for women's energies given the discrimination that exists within the British labour movement. At this year's TUC for example only 13 per cent of the delegates were women and there were no resolutions relating to women's concerns on the agenda.

Positive

The labour movement accords little independent authority to women's structures within the movement.

Reserved places on Labour's NEC and the TUC women's advisory are chosen by men. The positive discrimination which exists in the labour movement is not based on feminist principles of accountability to women.

Many Bennite leaders have responded positively to the challenge of the oppressed unlike left forces like the *Militant*. Now under siege from Liver-



Dianne Abbott

Photo: ANDREA NICOLA

pool's black community it is having to learn that it is not so easy to ride roughshod over the demands of oppressed groups within the labour movement.

Militant, by counterposing the struggle for socialism to the struggle for greater representation of women and blacks in the labour movement, combined with reactionary views on gay politics show their prostration before everything that is worst about the British labour movement. Its prejudice and backwardness born out of its origins in craft unionism at the heyday of British imperialism.

Women's new militancy

the London Labour Party hard left, or the Bennite left, has been to the fore in promoting the case of feminism within the party.

To equate these forces with the anti-feminist 'tankies' inside the Communist Party is a deliberate sleight of hand designed to obscure the real debate: which alliances should the left in the Labour Party make to promote the concerns of 'the dispossessed'. This is the real issue.

Bea Campbell is really saying — steer clear of the trots and Benn and come into the orbit of *Marxism Today* and the Labour Co-ordinating Committee because we'd like to share in some of the success of the GLC.

But there's no evidence that the LCC, which is pro-Kinnock, will champion the cause of women within the party on a consistent basis. There seems to be no point in feminists taking part in this sleazy alliance.

The LCC has already decided to launch a full scale challenge to the hard left section of the NEC at next year's conference and they are unlikely to support the Women's Action Committee slate again. Bea's advocacy of a feminist incomes policy, taking money off men rather than capital to give it to women, has given a left cover for the right wing to sharpen up their offensive against the left on this question before the next election.

Right-wing

Bea's associates in *Marxism Today* are more right-wing than even the LCC about immediate alliances as the contributions to that journal reveal. What feminist could really trust David Steel, David Owen or Shirley Williams to bring about women's liberation?

The cynics and pessimists of *Marxism Today* have egg on their face because of the miners strike. The march of labour, far from being halted, has gone forward to make new alliances as revealed by the role of the NUM at the last Labour Party conference.

Women are the largest section of the dispossessed in the labour movement. They have every right to disturb and challenge the priorities of the male dominated labour movement. They have to continue to fight to transform the labour movement as they take part in the battles over the next year.

But an alliance with the exploiters will get women nowhere. It's with the exploited, and its most militant representatives, that the alliance must be made if the new militancy of women is to have its just rewards.

When *Militant* lines up with the EETPU to oppose black sections, and with Gwyneth Dunwoody to oppose the demands of women, it is crystal clear just how rotten are the politics of this tendency. It claims the name of 'marxism' but in reality it represents social chauvinism and accommodation to the labour bureaucracy.

The sectarian errors of the *Militant* on questions of women gives succour to the argument of the Eurocommunists. Bea

Alive

Campbell debating Ken Livingstone at *Left Alive* warned him against aiding the 'fundamentalists' of the 'old Trotskyist far left, the Labour Party hard left and sectarians within the Communist Party'.

'Fundamentalists', she argues, are 'opposed to changes within and without the working class, within and without the socialist movement', changes that it is obvious the GLC have promoted.

But Bea knows this is a caricature. She knows there is a definite feminist current within Trotskyism and more importantly that

THE MOST basic alliance that has to be made in the struggle for socialism in Britain is with the fight of the Irish people for independence. Complete solidarity with that struggle would be required by the British labour movement quite regardless of who was leading the Irish struggle for independence.

But something still more exciting and important has developed for socialists in Britain. Sinn Fein in the North of Ireland today has developed into the most advanced mass working class leadership in the whole of Western Europe.

REDMOND O'NEILL for Socialist Action interviewed **JOE AUSTIN**, Belfast chairperson of Sinn Fein, on the goals Sinn Fein was fighting for.

What are the aims of Sinn Fein?

The short and longterm aims of Belfast Sinn Fein are to expose British imperialism and all of its ramifications in Ireland and to plot an alternative course in the establishment of a 32 county democratic socialist republic of Ireland.

Having said that is isn't going to happen next week or even next year. There are a number of substantial problems which we have to get over — not least the British physical presence.

But the British occupation of Ireland isn't only British troops. It is controlled through the colonial set-up in the North and the neo-colonial set-up in the South.

We have the coming together with British imperialism of the tweedle-dum parties in the South — Fine Gael and Fianna Fail — supported in a pathetic fashion by the so-called Irish Labour Party.

It needs to be made clear to people, irrespective of the colour of the flag they fly over the GPO in Dublin, these parties are part of the collaboration with British economic, political and military occupation. They are part of the conspiracy against the Irish people.

People very easily identify the enemy as the British soldier on the street because of his paraphernalia: his uniform, his guns and the armoured cars and tanks.

But the politicisation has to spill over from that to identify the class enemy in order to understand that the struggle is not simply against the British military presence, or even the British political presence, but also against the economic presence that the political imperialism of the Brits will leave in their wake.

We are not struggling for geographical liberation to be again exploited by capitalists so that you remove the Brits and replace them with something apparently different but not so different at the end of the day.

So we have to link together all of the struggles from the women's struggle, through the unemployment struggle through the whole social, economic and political struggle to the national struggle. They are all part of the one struggle.



James Connolly explained that in 1916, it's not something that has been discovered last week. It's true to say that at different stages over the last ten years Sinn Fein has been on and off that track. The problem is that national sovereignty and working class rights are two sides of the same coin.

Historically in the republican movement there have been three main components in ascendancy: you've had the

militarists, you've had the constitutional republicans and you've had the revolutionary republicans.

When the first of these were in the leadership Sinn Fein was a militaristic organisation to which the working class, who were not involved in throwing the bombs, could not relate.

The constitutional republicans presented constitutional arguments to imperialism which actually did no work and the working class had no faith in them.

It is only with the revolutionary republican leadership that the movement is beginning to understand that working class struggles are part of the national struggle — and to see that in fact they are two sides of the same coin.

What is the place of support of the armed struggle in Sinn Fein's political strategy?

The armed struggle and the electoral intervention are part of the same struggle. The armed struggle is not sacrosanct. It is part of the overall struggle. It has no greater place than any other component part of the struggle.

If the armed struggle causes problems, which it has done on occasion, then we'd have to be very honest and say 'that attack or that operation was wrong'. This is not a question of affecting election results. An action is wrong if people cannot relate to it. For example, it's wrong if it's a backward step like Harrods — we condemned the Harrods attack.

Sinn Fein has been able to win well over 100,000 votes in elections in the six counties in the North of Ireland. This demonstrates very clearly that you have mass popular support. But it is obviously not enough to defeat British imperialism. What is Sinn Fein's strategy for developing the struggle in the twenty six counties in the South after the immense impact of the hunger strike?

There is no doubt that the current and past British administrations need the active collaboration of the Free State, certainly in terms of having a semi-effective security policy. But, more importantly, that collaboration is necessary in terms of confusing English working class opinion about the British presence in Ireland: 'here you have reasonable people like Garret Fitzgerald and everyone agrees that things in Ireland would be OK if the IRA would go away'. That type of argument does succeed in confusing English people about Ireland.

'Historically in the republican movement there have been three main components in ascendancy: you've had the militarists, you've had the constitutional republicans and you've had the revolutionary republicans.'

The campaign around the H-block hunger strikers had a very big response in the South, but this was mainly the result of the suffering of the prisoners, the intensity of the campaign, and of its demands, which were very reasonable demands. That is not the same as support for the struggle or for Sinn Fein. It was support for the demands of the prisoners.

We were not able to capitalise in the wake of the hunger strike primarily because the Sinn Fein organisation in the South had seen itself basically as a support group for the struggle in North. They were hypnotised by events in the North.

But the struggle in Ireland is not a Northern-based struggle. The struggle in Ireland has a number of different facets. But key to the whole liberation of the country is the social and economic struggle that has to take place in the South.

It is necessary, firstly, to begin the fightback in terms of working class rights and, linked to that, to begin to expose the role that's played by the Free State Parties — primarily Fine Gael and Fianna Fail — in the physical and geographical occupation of the North of Ireland — and in the economic and political occupation of Ireland as a whole. That struggle obviously employs different tactics to the struggle in the North. But it is just as important.

You don't have to be a political

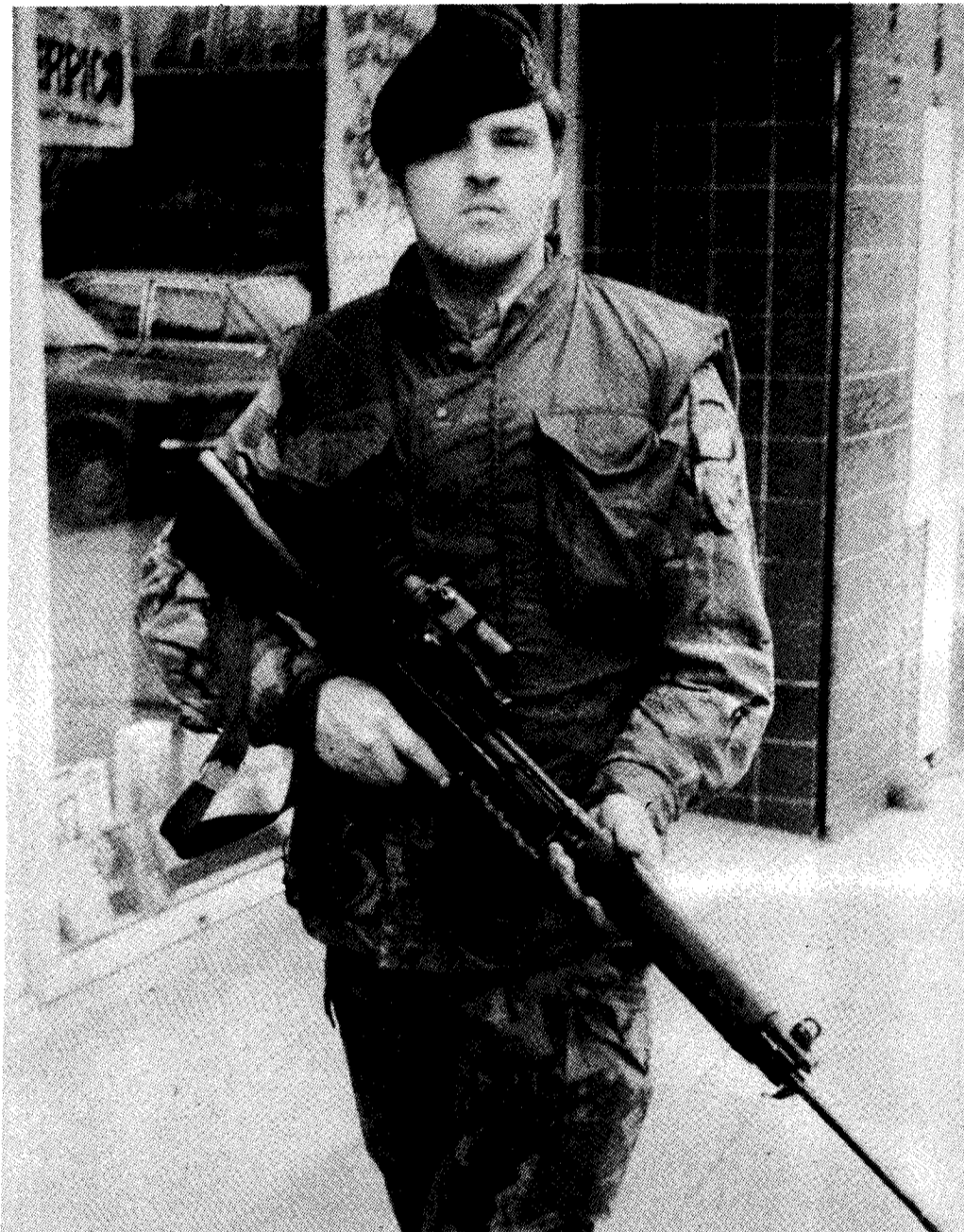


Photo: GRAHAM COOKSON

guru to understand that when the crisis comes with Brit departure the class and capitalist interests will come together and try to form an administration for the whole of Ireland which maintains their status quo. For example the Unionists who today oppose any relationship with the South will gravitate towards similar people representing similar class interests. That's happening already — perhaps not on the floor of Westminster or the Assembly — but it's happening.

Capitalism in Ireland orientates towards British capitalism because Irish capitalists see British capitalism and the forces it can muster, in terms of troops and administration, as being their guarantee. When James Prior says he's frightened of a Cuba style Republic on England's doorstep he's not only frightened on behalf of English capitalism, he's frightened on behalf of Irish capitalism as well.

Class

So we need to get out and weaken those classes now. Sinn Fein has part to play in that. But we recognise that Sinn Fein are not going to be the revolutionary party in isolation from other forces in the South.

On what class or class does Sinn Fein base its struggle?

The working class and small farmers. Our policies will not be appreciated by the large ranchers. The longterm resolution of the conflict in Ireland has got to be based on a Socialist Republic

“A revolution republican”

and obviously the people who are going to subscribe to it, fight for it and perhaps even die for it are the politicised sections of the working class.

What is the policy of Sinn Fein towards the labour movement in the 26 counties. For example there is a debate taking place in unions like the Amalgamated Irish Transport and General Workers Union on relations with the Irish Labour Party. What is Sinn Fein's attitude to this?

In Ireland we don't have a labour movement. We don't even have a bad labour movement. What we have is a very, very small Free State Labour Party, which is currently in coalition with Fine Gael — an ultra-conservative right-wing party. A small section of the trade union movement is affiliated to this Labour Party and a smaller still section vote for it.

In the EEC election Sinn Fein won over 50,000 more votes than this so-called Labour Party. We contested an election in Dublin Central, and despite all of the restrictions on Sinn Fein, our candidate beat the Labour Party into fifth place.

Again, two months ago in the Gaeltach — that is the Irish speaking area — we again beat the Labour Party into third place.

The reality is that the Labour Party is a Labour Party in name only. Its politics, its programme, its whole orientation is towards the capitalist interests in Fianna Fail and Fine Gael and it has shared office with both of these parties. For example, the Abortion am-

endment campaign and its conspiracy against women last year in the South, was instigated by sections of the Labour Party leadership along with Fianna Fail and Fine Gael. The Labour Party is part of the government which presides over the second highest unemployment rate in Europe. The Labour Party supports the repressive actions of that government.

'key to the whole liberation of the country is the social and economic struggle that will take place in the South.'

All of this cannot go unheeded by the trade union movement. It is not a question of us saying the unions should or should not be affiliated to the Labour Party. The reality of it is that when there are questions of oppression — and we'll leave aside national oppression for the moment — but when there is institutionalised oppression the trade union movement cannot be neutral.

The trade union movement in the South is trying to be neutral. As Arthur Scargill is demonstrating fairly courageously, the defence of your members does not begin and end when they clock on and off. The defence of your members means the defence of your members and the trade union movement by affiliating to the Labour Party are abdicating that responsibility.

Revolutionary leadership"



Photo: JOANNE K. O'BRIEN

We are for disaffiliation from the Irish Labour Party. But it's not a matter of us having the audacity to say the trade unions should disassociate themselves from the so-called Labour Party and associate with Sinn Fein. That isn't the question that is posed.

The question is: 'when will the bastion of working class rights that the trade union movement is supposed to defend its members?'

We are not mobilising as an alternative to the labour movement. We are mobilising to try to force the broader movement into a position where it has to defend its members rights and come into confrontation with the state.

The difficulty is that because the trade union movement has been a safety valve for capitalism in the South and because it appears unable to defend workers' rights large numbers of workers only join because of their job and not to defend working class interests. That's what is happening in England as well. You see a whole drift of support away from the trade union movement, and of course, once that support begins to drift capitalist attacks begin. That's what has happened in England and that's also what is happening in the South.

How do you see creating a political alternative to the politics of the Labour Party in the South?
Sections of the Labour Party will have to be replaced by Sinn Fein. Other sections that have a contribution to make

for example the struggle for women's rights in the South, will replace other sections. The Labour Party will be replaced by a number of different things.

There is need for politicised sections of the trade union movement to raise the standard of struggle within their own organisations. Connolly was against the division between 'the political wing' — the Labour Party — and the trade union activity. He argued the trade union movement is a political animal and trade union members are politically involved in the class struggle.

Shop

Now what's happened here is that political activity has been virtually prohibited in the trade unions — trade union leaders argue that the political struggle is reserved for the political wing because it does not occur on the shop floor.

What we are advocating is that the trade union movement is not allowed to become an organisation of observers or by-standers. The trade union movement has a major role to play in the reconquest of Ireland. It has a major role to play in the defence of working class rights. It has a major role to play in the struggle against repression. They have to do this not because Sinn Fein is saying you've got to do it, but because it is their responsibility to their members.

The trade unions are part of the

liberation vehicle. So we need to say to people both internally in Sinn Fein and externally that, irrespective of how weak the trade union movement has become, it is their vehicle — that's where you should be, that's where the struggle has to be fought. It's having some limited success.

But the conditions for work in the trade unions are quite different between Ireland and England. In England it is acceptable to organise on a left/right basis in the unions. The people on the receiving end of left organisation — I mean the bureaucrats — may not be raising their hands and clapping about it, but there's nothing they can do about it.

In the South you have the cry of 'republican, conspiratorial infiltration', and sections of the working class can be convinced by that that the conspiracy is not against the leadership but against the membership of the union.

Election

Nonetheless there have been some remarkable situations recently like the election of Phil Flynn, former Vice President of Sinn Fein, to general secretary of the white collar union in spite of a campaign organised by the Minister of Labour and Special Branch against him as a 'member of the IRA'. A campaign in which the government stated it would no longer negotiate with the union if Phil were elected. In spite of all their efforts Phil Flynn won the election virtually unopposed.

There is now a very small organisation called Trade Unionists for National Consciousness. We aim, not only to expose Labour collaboration in the system, but also to politicise the rank and file membership and whatever leadership can be found, into the beginning of the fightback. You see the fightback isn't only about the Brits in Ireland, it is also to arm trade union members to understand that their leadership is part of the conspiracy against them, and that they should have leadership that reflects their interests, reflects their wishes and will fight for them.

In the overall struggle in the South Sinn Fein is not going to be the force. But we will be part of a grouping of people and lend our support to organisations like 'Concerned Parents Against Drug Abuse' in Dublin and support strike struggles like the sit-in by workers at Rank Flour Mill.

What is the place of electoral activity in Sinn Fein's strategy and activity?

Limited electoral intervention makes it possible to challenge the Brit presentation that the IRA, for instance, are a small terrorist group with no support. 100,000 plus votes make that ridiculous. But, of course, 100,000 votes don't affect Thatcher or force withdrawal. They're not a substitute for armed resistance, street politics and organising correctly in the local areas.

There is a debate about our election tactics in the South. We stand in Council elections North and South and take our seats. In Westminster which is the English parliament there is an oath of allegiance which MPs have to take. We don't take seats in Westminster. Their is also an oath of allegiance for seat in the Free State parliament — Leinster House — and we don't take seats there either.

But the difference is that irrespective of how we see Leinster House most Southerners do not see it as a foreign parliament like Westminster. They see it as their parliament. They might not like it. They might disagree with its political philosophy but even those who see themselves as republicans generally see Leinster House as their parliament. So the abstentionism we operate in the North will not work in the South.

The argument is therefore that if Sinn Fein is to play a part in replacing the collaborationist Parties in the South it has to enter Leinster House. That's the platform they have to use.

Balance

I don't say agree with the argument, but there's some point to it. For example the majority of the present coalition government is so small that one Sinn Fein TD would tip the parliamentary balance against the government. One Sinn Fein TD would result in stopping cross border collaboration, extradition of republican prisoners tomorrow. That is the sort of discussion going on.

We will be standing 100-150 candidates — in the May local elections — in the North and 140-170 in the council elections two weeks later in the South.

The Brits and the Free state government have responded to our success with repression. In the South this has

many years of the ban from Free state radio and TV and in terms of elections we cannot even put the name of our party on the ballot paper.

In the North where well over 100,000 people voted for Sinn Fein, Sinn Fein representatives are not allowed to meet government ministers. The Free State government has mimicked this in the South. What is involved in this is not the attitude to Sinn Fein. What's involved is the political disenfranchisement of large sections of Irish people which will ultimately backfire on both the Brits and the Free State administration.

What impact has the British miners' strike had in the North?

Firstly, we give complete and unequivocal support to the miners. The nationalist population in the North may not understand all the ins and outs, but they see miners getting battered by the police every morning on TV, and they view anyone that's involved in struggle as comrades.

'we give complete and unequivocal support to the miners.'

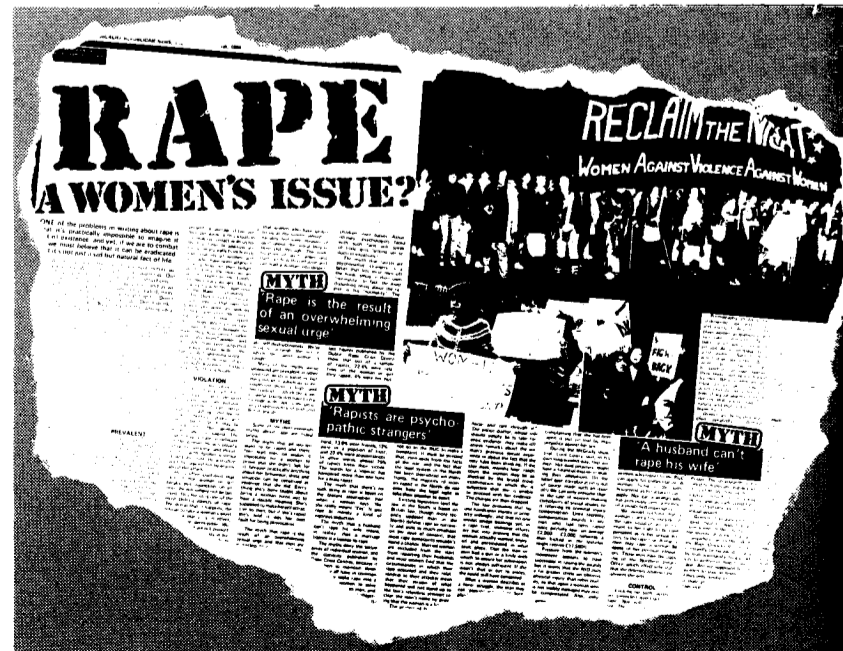
At the top of the list for financial support to the miners are the nationalist areas in the North. Myself I spoke with the NUM at the GLC anti-racist rally in London. Our attitude is complete support and, at the same time, care to do nothing which helps the British state to attack the miners, by criminalising their strike or Scargill.

At the Anglo-Irish Summit Thatcher dismissed all of the proposals from the New Ireland Forum on the future of Ireland. What is Sinn Fein's alternative to these proposals.

The national question can only be resolved when the British administration acknowledge self-determination for the Irish people. You can't dilute that. There can't be an internal solution. There can't be a solution to the conflict whilst the Brits are still here. We have to secure self-determination for the Irish people and then negotiate departure.

We did previously advocate a federal solution which has now been dropped in favour of massive decentralisation of power in terms of local councils and affiliation of those to a thirty two county parliament.

But the struggle does not end when the Brits leave Ireland. The struggle ends when you have the establishment of a socialist Republic. The guarantee for the success of that struggle, North and South, does not lie with the quantity of weapons the IRA has, or the number of British soldiers that are killed. The guarantee for the success of that struggle has its foundations in the politicisation and strength of the progressive sections of the working class. Yes, just as in 1921 there will be a counter-revolution when the Brits depart, either physically or politically, and how do you withstand that counter-revolution? You withstand it by the politicisation of the working class — which takes place now.



'The Abortion amendment campaign and its conspiracy against women last year in the South was instigated by sections of the Labour Party leadership along with Fianna Fail and Fine Gael.'

THE MASS MEDIA, especially the BBC, are using the Gorbachev visit to suggest two ideas: first, that he is coming to London because the Thatcher government has some sort of sophisticated and positive line of East-West arms negotiations, or at least a less crude approach than that of Reagan; second, that if the most senior Soviet leader to travel to the West for years chooses London it is because Thatcher has made the British state a great independent force within NATO.

Both these ideas are nonsense.

As to the projected arms control negotiations between Washington and Moscow, Thatcher's real aims are being carefully hidden from popular view because they would make her look ridiculous and would strengthen the peace movement. For the truth is that Britain takes a harder line against any arms control deal than any other NATO government, including Washington — it is linking itself with the hardest liners in the Pentagon in its attitude to the 7-8 January Geneva talks between Schultz and Gromyko.

This is evident even in the coded language of the Foreign Office. When Howe says an arms control deal with the Soviets is a long way off, this means he hopes it is. When he says there should be wide-ranging talks with the Russians not limited to arms questions, he means there shouldn't be any serious talking on arms control.

The uncoded, open voice of Thatcher can be found in *The Times* editorial of a couple of weeks ago which called for a continued build-up of military pressure on the 'evil empire' (*The Times*' words), searching for every Soviet weakness to exploit.

By Oliver McDonald

It might be thought that this hard line is the product of Thatcher's deliriously reactionary ideological hostility to the Soviet Union. But this is not really the main thing at all. What concerns her is the British state's increasingly desperate political problems in trying to keep its end up as a major power in the NATO alliance.

The British state establishment is threatened over the next few years with the prospect of sinking to the status of a third class power in NATO.

Two things count in the politics of the alliance: economic muscle and military muscle. The British economy is suffering from galloping muscular dystrophy which is not going to be reversed, making Britain a third class economic power. This in turn is linked to the growing military enfeeblement of Britain in comparison with both the French and Germans.

Trident

To keep her end up vis a vis the French and Germans, Thatcher has two ideas: slavish support for the Reagan administration, hoping for favours in return, and Trident.

Trident is, in fact, the big favour in return, even though from an economic point of view it is little short of a catastrophe. But Thatcher hopes that it will be political value for money because it will, at a stroke, enable her to get back on equal power terms with the French and Germans. She probably even dreams of the following coup.

The French and German establishments want to show their electorates that a West European defence bloc independent of the Americans is beginning to emerge. What this bloc would lack is a credible nuclear umbrella. Trident could appear to provide it, giving Britain a supposed 'lead' in the bloc. At the same time, the Americans don't want to see a genuinely independent West European military bloc. Trident solves that problem too: with it as the umbrella, the Americans keep control (since they service and target Trident!).

So instead of Thatcherite Britain sinking ignominiously between



As Gorbachev comes to London

Thatcher as world leader?

Western Europe and the US, Trident miraculously makes Britain the lynch-pin (the American lynch-pin) of Atlantic military unity.

But this sordid little piece of militarist bluff of Thatcher's could be destroyed by the stroke of a pen at Geneva. There are two big issues there. First Star Wars — Reagan's scheme for building an arsenal of space weapons that could destroy Soviet missiles in space before they reached US territory. And secondly there is the negotiation about strategic nuclear weapons — the missiles that can hit a super-power. If agreements over these issues could be reached this would obviously be an excellent thing for the British people. But it would be a catastrophe for the political aims of the British state under Thatcher.

Poodle

Taking the strategic missiles talks first, the British establishment has been insisting for some years that both Polaris and Trident are *strategic* missiles. In this way they avoided their inclusion in the talks over so-called tactical nukes — SS20s and cruise and Pershing. So now, presumably, they should be included in the numbers game at the new Geneva talks.

The Russians want this, the West Germans also want this. What about the Americans? Well, that depends upon whether Thatcher is a good, obedient little poodle.

After her Falklands triumph, made possible by US assistance, Thatcher got too big for her boots and had the cheek to start toying with the idea that she could run her own foreign policy at least in small things — for example, selling some spare parts to the Iranians and considering pulling British soldiers out of Belize.

So when she went to Washington in autumn 1983, vice-president Bush casually remarked that British nukes

would probably eventually have to be brought into the US-Soviet negotiations. In short, why on earth should Thatcher want any successful arms control deal on strategic nukes? Better to back the Prince of Darkness, Richard Perle in the Pentagon.

The second big Geneva issue — Star Wars Defence — is another nightmare for Thatcher. Once again we have a common Soviet-West German position: for a complete ban on Star Wars. Thatcher could not support this position because Reagan has set his heart on Star Wars, and if she riled him she would lose Trident and Polaris in the strategic missiles talks, very probably.

So what are the other options? The 'doves' over Star Wars in Washington appear to be suggesting two possibilities: one is limited Star Wars defence to ensure a degree of protection; the second, bolder idea is to swap research information with the Soviets so that both sides have Star Wars defence.

Hawks

Both these options could spell death for Polaris and Trident, since any Soviet Star Wars defence would destroy the credibility of the British nukes. So by far the best policy is to work to support the hawks in the US administration and oppose a deal with the Soviets on the whole issue.

But if the British government has the most hawkish stand on arms control within NATO (just as it did during SALT I at the start of the 1970s) what about the other proposition at the start of this article: that Thatcher's rule has given the British state new authority in East-West relations? The media are telling us about Howe's dynamic and audacious 'initiative' of planning to visit Bulgaria and so on next year, and even more impressive, Mr Gorbachev, no less, is coming to London.

Actually, nothing illustrated the falsity of such claims so clearly as Mr Gorbachev's visit. He is coming to London not because of the increasing independent power of the British state but precisely because of its ever closer dependence and client status vis a vis the United States. The visit is so useful to the Russians because they want to know what the US is thinking before the Geneva talks.

Ostpolitik

To avoid any misunderstanding on this score within the British establishment, the Foreign Office told last Thursday's *Telegraph* that the reason for Gorbachev's choice of London as the place to visit, 'is thought to be found in the British government's close relations with the Reagan administration.'

The same point could be made from a different angle: it is not that Britain is seen as having greater leverage in Washington than before; it is that both Bonn and Paris are seen in Moscow as having *no usefulness at all* in Moscow's present diplomatic efforts. The London trip is in large part a punishment to Kohl for his abject failure to preserve the special relationship built up between the USSR and the FRG during the 1970s.

As we wrote in *Socialist Action* last June, one central objective behind Reagan's entire policy on Europe (including deployment of cruise and Pershing) has been to call a halt to Bonn's independent, unilateral ostpolitik that became so menacing to Washington after the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979.

Kohl tried to continue this ostpolitik when he gained office while giving it a right wing German nationalist ideological flavour (down with Yalta, so sad about the loss of the 1937 frontiers of Germany, there must be German reunification

through swallowing — albeit peacefully — the GDR into the constitutional framework of the FRG) both to please Washington and trump the growing left wing nationalist nationalism in Germany. Foreign minister Genscher thought that he could satisfy Washington with this ideology while offering Moscow substantial practical benefits, making continued good relations worthwhile to the USSR.

When Kohl visited Moscow before the arrival of Pershing missiles in West Germany this approach seemed to work — he was able to make a public speech there talking about German reunification without provoking the least uproar from the Soviet side. But once Kohl's attempt to freeze further deployments was squashed by Washington early this year, Moscow changed its tune, publicly humiliated Genscher in Moscow and blocked Honnecker's visit to the FRG this autumn.

Washington's people in Bonn then stepped up the pressure on the government for a more strident right wing nationalism: the wretched Genscher had to first demand that his visit to Poland should include a memorial for the Germans who died in the course of crushing the Poles during the last war and then to call off his Polish visit the day before it was due to take place.

Germany

Fifteen years of West Germany's ostpolitik lay in ruins. To rub salt into the wounds, Washington's Italian foreign minister, Mr Andreotti, publicly denounced 'Pan-Germanism' and roundly declared that the two German states should never unite.

Thus the Reaganites simultaneously encouraged German right wing nationalism in Germany and encouraged protests against it outside Germany. Not for the first time in the post-war period, both Washington and Moscow found themselves in tactical and tacit united front against West German policy.

Does this mean that Thatcher has become the interlocutor between the super powers? Not at all: Moscow has decided to talk to the Reagan administration direct. But at the same time, it suits the Soviet leadership to have Howe wandering around Eastern Europe mouthing pompous platitudes as a snub to a West German government that has become used, in the last decade, to treating the region as its own privileged stamping ground.

As for the Reagan administration, it knows that Thatcher will not dare step an inch out of line by starting some new West European, anti-American ostpolitik. In the present atmosphere the Americans cannot do any public diplomatic circuit round Eastern Europe, so why not send this little provincial lawyer who will stick to every phrase in his brief?

Fantasy

For all these reasons, Mr Gorbachev's visit and Howe's travels are nothing more than a moment of hollow glory in this interlude before the basic power factors of East-West relations in Europe reassert themselves. It all typifies Thatcherism in foreign affairs — on everything from the Malvinas to humiliating Garret Fitzgerald: theatrical bombast for home consumption. It simultaneously makes the Tory lower middle classes believe that the British state is mighty again while actually helping along the galloping decline.

When the bubble finally bursts for the Tory masses who today hold their heads up high to bellow Rule Britannia — and burst it eventually must — those same masses will be on the rampage baying for somebody's blood. Who will burst the bubble? Reagan? Thatcher herself by being fooled by her own bombast? And will she find a scape-goat?

One thing is increasingly certain: Thatcher's Great Power fantasy is less likely to end with a whimper than with a bang.

Dynamics of world revolution today

CONTINUING ITS debate on the situation of world politics today Socialist Action is reprinting a major section from *Dynamics of World Revolution Today*.

This document, adopted by the Trotskyist Fourth International in 1963, represents probably the most important Marxist attempt in the post-war world to draw together an analysis of the overall features of world political development since the origin of the workers' movement.

Whether one agrees with the Fourth International or not therefore, it remains an indispensable element in any discussion. Articles Socialist Action has printed on this discussion include 'How Reagan will be defeated' (SA 78) and 'Lin Piao Lives!' (SA 82).

THE CLASSICAL schema of world revolution assumed that the victory of socialism would occur first in the most industrially developed countries, setting an example for the less developed.

It is true that after the revolution of 1848, Marx voiced some misgivings about one of the political assumptions underlying this schema; namely, the capacity of the bourgeoisie to carry out a classical bourgeois-democratic revolution in countries where capitalism is still immature but where a modern proletariat already exists.

Later Engels further undermined this schema when he pointed out that the relative weakness of political consciousness among the British working class was due precisely to the fact that Britain was the most advanced capitalist country, holding a world monopoly on high productivity.

Lenin

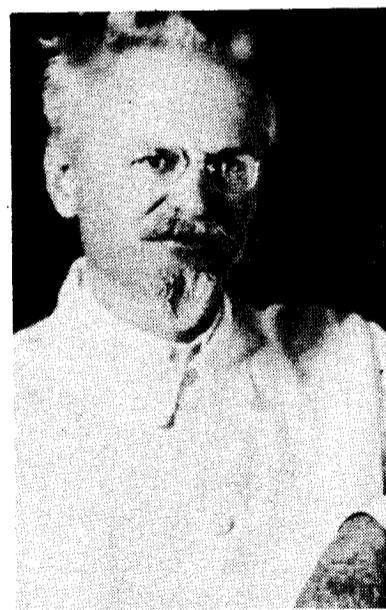
At the beginning of the 20th century, Trotsky, in 1905, in his theory of permanent revolution, which held that the working class would find itself compelled to carry out tasks historically belonging to the bourgeoisie, and Lenin, in 1914, in his theory of imperialism, which included the view that the imperialist chain would break first at its weakest link, showed that they had come to understand the main consequence of the law of uneven and combined development; namely, that the proletariat might well come to power first in a backward country as a result of the contradictions of the world capitalist system as a whole.

Both Lenin and Trotsky were firmly of the opinion that the victory of the revolution in such circumstances would prove to be only the prelude to the victory of the socialist revolution in the key capitalist countries and a means of facilitating the final outcome. It was in this spirit that the Bolsheviks took power in October 1917 and founded the Third International in 1919.

The revolution followed a more devious path than even its greatest theoreticians expected.

The betrayals by the reformist bureaucracy led to the defeat of the German and Central European revolutions of 1918-21, isolating the

first victorious revolution to backward Russia and thereby paving the way for the bureaucratic degeneration of the Soviet state and the Communist International, over which the stalinist bureaucracy established tight control. The Comintern became transformed from an instrument of world revolution into an instrument of diplomatic manoeuvre in the hands of the Kremlin thereby blocking, first unintentionally, and then with calculated purpose, the victory of the proletarian revolution in many promising situations in many countries.



At the end of World War II, social democratic and stalinist class-collaborationist policies, in combination with the efforts of western imperialism, led to the stabilisation of a capitalist economy and a bourgeois state in several imperialist countries where the victory of socialism was objectively possible and even imminent.

As a result of the successive failure of the two major revolutionary waves of 1919-23 and 1943-48 — and of the minor one of 1934-37 — the main centre of world revolution shifted for a time to the colonial world. The victory of the Chinese Revolution in 1949, following the post-war revolutionary wave in Europe, opened an uninterrupted series of colonial revolutions. All the victorious revolutions after 1917, including the establishment of workers' states through revolutionary upheavals in Yugoslavia, China, Vietnam, and Cuba, thus took place in relatively backward countries while the possibility of early revolutionary victory in the imperialist countries was postponed.

The view must be vigorously rejected that this development, unforeseen in the classics of Marxism, was more or less fatally determined by the objective factors or by lack of revolutionary energy or will among the workers in the imperialist countries. No one can seriously deny that since 1917 various mass upsurges and even uprisings of the working class made the overthrow of capitalism objectively possible in many imperialist countries (Germany and the whole of Central Europe 1919-20, Italy 1919-21, Germany 1923, Belgium, 1932-36, France 1935-37, Italy 1943-48, France 1944-48, Britain 1945-50, etc). Nor can it reasonably be denied that in innumerable general strikes, occupations of factories, mass demonstrations that have toppled governments, and even insurrections threatening the foundations of bourgeois state power, that the proletariat of the imperialist countries (excepting the United States) has shown again and again its understanding of the general need to reconstruct society along socialist lines and its willingness to carry out the task.

Germany

The failure of all these attempts is not due to any innate incapacity, to any political 'backwardness' or to 'corruption', but to the treacherous role of the official leadership which has repeatedly preferred not to utilise the objective possibility of taking power, or to deliberately destroy that possibility. The European proletariat has been hit harder by such betrayals than any other sector of the world working class, as is clearly shown in the cases of Germany and Spain.

The crisis of revolutionary leadership exists, of course, in the colonial and semi-colonial countries as well as in the advanced countries. Many defeated or aborted revolutions bear witness to this crisis — from the Chinese Revolution of 1925-27 to the more recent defeats. But in possible outcome of the struggle, a big difference is evident in inadequate leadership in a backward country and similar leadership in an imperialist country: *the enemy facing the working population is immeasurably stronger in the latter.*

Confronted with the powerful and well-experienced bourgeoisie of the imperialist countries, the working class can achieve victory only under a genuine revolutionary Marxist leadership.

The situation is different in the backward countries. Confronted by ruling classes, rotten to the core and lacking mass support, the revolution draws into struggle the mass of the working population, including the poorest peasants and pauperised petty-bourgeoisie, bringing about collapse of the traditional order and its state, and exerting such pressure on centrist working-class parties and similar formations as to bring them to power.

The failure of a revolutionary wave in an imperialist country gives way eventually to some form of temporary relative economic stabilisation and even to fresh expansion. This inevitably postpones new revolutionary uprisings for a time, the combination of political setback (or even demoralisation) of the working class and a rising standard of living being unfavourable for any immediate revolutionary undertaking.



In the colonial and semicolonial countries, on the other hand, the very weakness of capitalism, the very peculiar socio-economic structure produced by imperialism, the permanent misery of the big majority of the population in the absence of radical agrarian revolution, the stagnation and even reduction of living standards while industrialisation nevertheless proceeds relatively rapidly, create situations in which the failure of one revolutionary wave does not lead automatically to relative or even temporary social or economic stabilisation. A seemingly inexhaustible succession of mass struggles continues, such as Bolivia has experienced for

ten years. The weakness of the enemy offers the revolution fuller means of recovery from temporary defeats than is the case in the imperialist countries.

To sum up victories and defeats since 1917 express the relationship of forces between the old ruling class and the toiling masses on a world scale. The fact that the revolution won first in backward countries and not in the advanced is not proof that the workers in the advanced countries have shown insufficient revolutionary combativity. It is evidence of the fact that the opposition which they have to overcome in these countries is immeasurably stronger than in the colonial and semi-colonial world.

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Photo: MARK SALMON

Christmas with the miners

IT'S DIFFICULT not to get down when everything the press is against you. All the build up to Christmas was beginning to have an effect on people's morale. The Christmas appeal has helped to turn the tables. I reckon we'll have the most fantastic Christmas ever. It'll not only be a family Christmas but a community Christmas'.

This was how Doreen Chamber from the Mansfield women's action group described the reaction to the first cheque from the Miners' Families Christmas Appeal. Similar reactions have been coming in from all the mining communities. So far we've had 10,000 responses.

Sometimes the proceeds have helped support groups to reach a target they had set for Christmas. Durham for instance, they were determined that there should be a turkey on every miner's table. The appeal has made sure there will be.

In Wales the appeal helped maintain morale. Says Nigel Bevan, secretary of the Cardiff support group: 'I know people who have been a bit down lately and this appeal has given them a spark, a bit of fire, to show the support is building up'.

The idea of a high-

profile national appeal for striking miners and their families came up during the week of the NCB Christmas bonus. A few friends were talking gloomily against the background of the unrelenting fight for the drift back to work.

We asked ourselves how could we help to give an extra boost to public support?

The ad in national newspapers had a some-

By Hilary Wainwright

what surprising list of names. Sir Moses Finlay, the American professor of ancient history at Cambridge side by side with the Flying Pickets, Spike Milligan nudged up against the moderator of the United Reform Church of Wales, somehow turned on a flood of support from people not reached by trade union levies and local support

groups.

They ranged from over 200 pensioners giving their Christmas bonus, to company directors, doctors and professors giving cheques for £1000 out of 'respect for the miners' fortitude'. People even thanked us for giving them the opportunity to contribute.

The total balance so far is about £290,000. Another donation from John Paul Getty II and we'd reach half a million!

The 'organisation' which administers the letters and cheques — which are still coming in at a rate of £500 a day — is an ad hoc group. We hand the money over to Women Against Pit Closures to distribute.

Clearly the appeal should continue in the New Year, in a way which will turn this support into a regular commitment. The hardship will continue and the seam of goodwill amongst *Guardian*, *Observer*, *Mirror*, *New Statesman*, and even a few *Spectator* readers is not by any means exhausted.

★ Any offers of support welcome, to 14 Whittle Street London SE8 8SL

Kipling and co revisited

METHUEN'S seasonal publication of *If ... only again* makes Christmas just about bearable.

The fourth collection of Steve Bell cartoon strips (which makes the *Guardian* just about bearable) is full of assorted goodies from 1983-84, with the odd original thrown in for flavour.

The last two years has traced the growing radicalisation of penguins and friends, revisited in *Once again*.

Remember Gloria's Egg, left for Prince to hatch while she camped at Greenham? And the product of their drunken union on the last night of 'Sink the Belgrano' — my personal favourite, the foul-mouthed baby Prudence?

If you don't remember how King lost his pelt — or re-grew it — all the more reason for a night by the fire reliving the post-Malvinas capers of Kipling and Co.

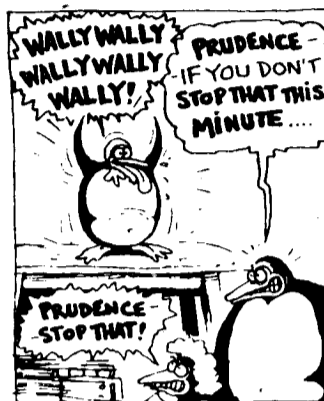
And all the baddies are there too, including Badger Courage who made a re-entry into the strip during the miners' strike as a police spy posing as a picket. Did you



know that one of the few Bell cartoons the *Guardian* refused to publish was an early Badger Courage? They were worried that portraying the thick arm of the law as corrupt might be libellous!

Reviewed by Carol Turner

Steve Bell stands high above other political cartoonists, rivalled only by Socialist Action's own Cormac (whose *Cormac Strikes Back* is still available in some bookshops). He does more than make 'a joke' of



Cartoon: STEVE BELL



topical happenings. Thousands of *Guardian* readers start each day with his timely comments on the day's bad news.

May he make many more in 1985....

...But, the trouble with cartoon books is that they simply don't last long enough. So, if you sneak a read of the inimitable Bell on your way back from the bookshop and left yourself with nothing for the Great Day, there's a few others you could try too.

Two women cartoonists are just out: *A Good Bitch*, the first published collection of Angela Martin, and *Wonder Wimbin*, from Cath Jackson.

Liking to laugh, I've a strong preference for Cath Jackson. But if you enjoy a good snarl — or want to see the men in your life squirm with every page of right-on comment — take a look at Angela Martin's

raw commentary on the evils (and conflicts) of sexist society.

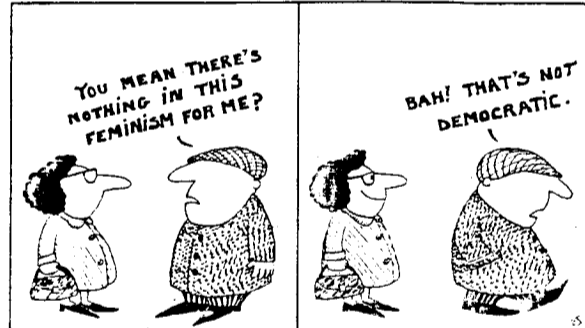
And, if that dose of varied humour doesn't fill you up, you could always turn in desperation to the middle class American angst of Doonesbury's *You give me great meeting, Sid*.

● *If ... only again*, Steve Bell, Methuen, £2.95.

● *A Good Bitch*, Angela Martin, The Women's Press, £1.99.

● *Wonder Wimbin*, *Everyday Stories of Feminist Folk*, Cath Jackson, Battle Axe Books, £2.95.

● *Cormac 'Strikes Back: Resistance Cartoons from the North of Ireland*, Cormac, Information on Ireland, 1983, £2.50.



Cartoon: WONDER WIMBIN

Hidden treasures

ANYONE who thought that the sole characteristics of early British socialism were either the pragmatism of Keir Hardie or the hopeless sectarianism of Hyndman would do well to read the works of Edward Carpenter.

They will be astonished by his breadth of socialist vision, his analysis of the oppression of women, of homosexuality, his understanding of the ways in which social and economic questions are intertwined in capitalist society, and how the freedom of the working class from economic slavery is therefore inseparable from the struggle for the liberation of women, lesbians and gays.

But although he continued to write until his death in 1929, the revolutionary and all-embracing nature of his socialism was already completely out of step with the parliamentarian narrow-mindedness

of the labour movement. His disappearance from public view and knowledge was rapid and inevitable.

Reviewed by Peter Purton

Another feature made Carpenter stand out: not only was he gay, not only did he set up house openly with gay lovers (admittedly on a remote Derbyshire farm), but he also wrote vigorously on the taboo subjects of sexuality and human relations, despite the anti-gay hysteria following the trial of Oscar Wilde.

This new collection carries two major texts: *Love's Coming of Age* (1896), and *The Intermediate Sex* (1906). These works have an interest beyond illustrating his advanced thinking. They represent insights into the relationship between the personal and the political, as developed as the theories of today's women and gay movements.

Carpenter is particularly strong on the role of sex in human relationships. His thoughts on homosexuality are hidden-bound by the then prevalent theory of lesbians and gays as an intermediate, or third, sex. But it is clear that he begins to break through this barrier to observe the universality of homosexuality and the potential for it in some measure in most human beings.

Edward Carpenter's writings (and Noel Greig's introduction) can infuriate a Marxist because of their leaning towards a romanticised and anarchistic vision and language. But ignore this weakness: Carpenter saw sexual liberation as something to be fought for now, and an integral part of the class struggle. Buy this book and broaden your mind!

Edward Carpenter: *Selected Writings, Volume 1: Sex*, Gay Mens Press, £5.95.

'Bandaid' or major surgery?

'FEED THE World' has become the fastest selling piece of plastic of all time. Every available record press in Europe is stamping out this nauseating guilt-trip that parades itself as music.

Purporting to be 'doing something practical' to relieve the famine in Ethiopia, this record has tapped the Christmas market with a huge media hype.

Over a century ago, Marx explained how the capitalist system masks the basic inequalities that its own social system produces. He also pointed out that the dominant ideas in society are those of the ruling class.

They present the famine as a natural disaster, exacerbated by a lack of adequate 'aid'. But there is no absolute shortage of food in the world. The multinational agrobusiness corporations produce cash crops such as

sugar, coffee and cotton, rather than staple foods like wheat and rice.

Food is produced and distributed according to who can pay, not on the basis of who is in need.

Reviewed by Grant Keir

The idea that famine is caused by natural disasters such as droughts is simply not true. Just look at the food mountains in the USA and Europe, built up to ensure that food sells at a profit.

The artists who recorded this song work in an industry which produces illusions for millions of pounds profit. They have fallen for the very illusions they themselves help create.

During the miners' strike, this record — and the rest of the liberal outrage about Ethiopia — serves as a diversion from the battle against the Tory government.

It is not surprising that records produced in sup-

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port of the miners hardly get a mention compared to this Christmas nap.

The 'Enemy Within' have produced a record called *Strike*. It features the speeches of Arthur

Scargill and others, dubbed onto a scratch backing track. Every socialist should be blasting it out on Christmas day to drown out the Nation's Number One.

1985 Campaign against rate-capping

THE GLC IS spending £853 million at the moment. The government target is £785 million. A £68 million package of cuts is demanded of us.

In addition, the government considers we've got £93 million worth of reserves we could use. They haven't said where they're coming from! Our financial experts tell us there are none.

In total, they are calling for £141 million worth of cuts. Their budget includes £5 a week council house rent increases, withdrawal of grants to all the voluntary agencies, laying off 1000 fire fighters, sacking about 2000 of our own staff.

Not only do we want to maintain spending at £853 million, but our budget includes £100 million of growth in what we consider essential areas: extending our grants policy, environmental improvements, major housing initiatives, that sort of thing.

Our budgetary process has now started. We have the legal duty to make a rate precept by 8 March next year. The recommendation from the Labour group leadership is that we campaign around our budget — consulting Londoners about the two, ours and Jenkin's budget, including the cuts. And the recommendation is that the GLC refuses to make cuts, by pursuing the tactic of not setting a rate.

There's almost certainly going to be a majority in the Labour group for not setting a rate, but there's only a majority of four in the council chamber. It's difficult to say whether or not we'll have a full majority in council.

I have been recommending that if Labour councillors consider they can't support non-compliance, specifically the no rate tactic, they should stand down at this point in time to allow their constituency

party to replace them. The London Labour Party regional executive supports non-compliance, recommending the tactic of not setting a rate.



By John McDonnell, GLC finance chair

It's being pursued now by a number of boroughs: Lambeth, Southwark, Greenwich, Haringay, Newham — the right wing Labour group there are supporting it as well — Camden, Islington will. Now we need the GLC and ILEA to stand firm with the boroughs.

What would be best for the government is for the boroughs to be picked off one by one, and the GLC left till later in the year. That's why we're recommending not setting a rate.

With a deficit budget we wouldn't run out of money until quite late in the year, so the boroughs could be picked off. Not setting a rate will bring us all together.

The only Labour borough in London so far which hasn't decided not to set a rate is Hackney. They've gone for a deficit

budget, but, because they've got no reserve, it's the equivalent of not setting a rate. They would run out of money in days, not months.

The London Labour Party has reconvened a regional conference in January which will have the opportunity to mandate councillors and to demonstrate the support of the party for non-compliance.

A resolution has been circulated by my GC, Hayes and Harlington, to all constituencies calling on the Labour group to oppose rate-capping and not to fix a rate. There's already a ground-swell of support in the parties.

The GLC has supported the setting up of the Democracy for London, which we fund by seconding full-time workers to the campaign. They've linked up with a similarly supported campaign, London Bridge, which is the borough trade unions.

They have a policy of non-compliance and support for the no rate tactic for the GLC and ILEA, and are calling on Labour councillors to resign and allow themselves to be



replaced if they don't support that.

We've called a London Assembly at the end of February which, after a whole series of local meetings, will bring together all the community groups, trade unions — people who represent Londoners — to endorse and support our policy. And hopefully during the week of our budget making there'll be demonstrations, occupations and industrial action — we're

asking for a one-day strike.

This will culminate with taking a budget to council on 8 March. On that day we want people at County Hall in their thousands in support of our policy and in opposition to the government attack of rate-capping.

Since 1981 London as a whole has lost £3½ million in bloc grant. The GLC alone has lost £400 million. We are demanding part of that back,

plus a rate reduction and a growth programme.

The vital thing now is for trade unionists and community activists to get involved in that campaign. If we don't win on rate-capping local government will come to an end on 8 March. That's how critical it is.

The campaign against rate-capping is the same theme as the miners' strike. We're both seeking to protect jobs and services, and communities. Whole communities will

go to the wall if rate-capping goes through. It's exactly the same struggle.

We've got to make sure that that struggle is united and brought to a head at a similar time. Because of the failure of the TUC, it looks as if the miners' strike could go on till the spring.

We need to make sure that the two struggles coalesce. That will strengthen the GLC's arm and bring about a victory that will hasten the defeat of this government.

Black protest continues in Liverpool

SAMPSON BOND, selected by Militant against the wishes of NALGO and Liverpool's black caucus as leader of the city council's race relations unit, has now taken up his post.

Since then a daily lobby has been held outside the municipal offices, with trades council, ASTMS, NALGO and black organisations' banners displayed, and signatures collected to demand the post be readvertised.

Meanwhile, support in the community and the Labour Party for the black caucus position grows. A recent combined meeting of Picton and Church inner-city wards, after hearing Steve French from the black caucus and city councillor Pauline Dunlop, deputy chair of the personnel committee, overwhelmingly voted to support the call for readvertisement.

This represents an increase in Labour Party opposition to Militant's stance. Already both Mossley Hill and Riverside constituencies have supported NALGO in this dispute.

Support is extending beyond Liverpool too. On

Wednesday 12 December, at a Liverpool conference on racial equality and employment, Russell Proffitt said he stood four-square behind the black community in Liverpool. He told the conference that in Brent — Sam Bond's previous employer — he had never seen Bond involved in race relations work.

By Tim Rigby

In Proffitt's opinion Liverpool district Labour Party were mixing a recipe for disaster by ignoring the needs and wishes of the black community.

Meanwhile Militant have been involved in disgraceful manoeuvres to block opposition that the Militant controlled DLP and city council have met. At a joint shop stewards' committee meeting on 17 November Militant supporters put an 'emergency' motion in an attempt to overturn the Joint Shop

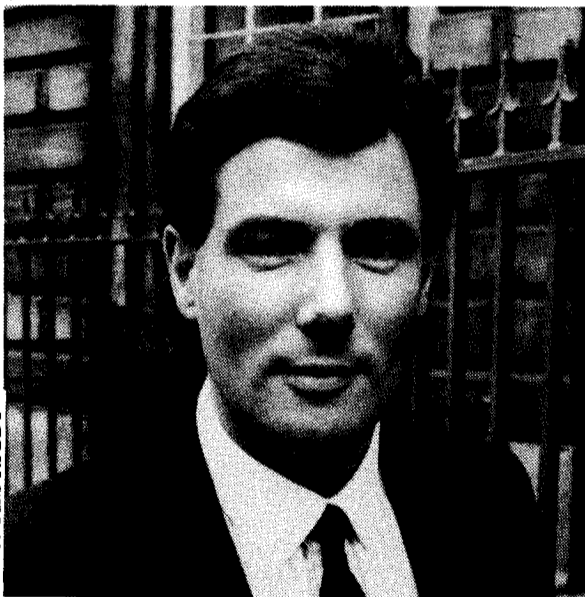


Photo: TIM RIGBY

Militant's hero Derek Hatton is rapidly losing support over the Sam Bond appointment

Steward's Committee and Liverpool NALGO's support for a boycott — a crude attempt to divide and rule in a way which is becoming all too much a part of Militant's methods in Liverpool.

The motion was car-

Militant's attempt at reversing the JSSC's position has failed, however. At an executive meeting decided that the motion was not a valid emergency.

That position was upheld by a JSSC general meeting held on Saturday 15 December, and Pete Cresswell agreed to requests to remain as secretary.

Militant will no doubt repeat such tactics in other labour movement bodies (such as the trades council which supports NALGO) thus causing further division in the local labour movement and the community as a whole. All this at a time when the city council and District Labour Party should be seeking firm unity for the struggles against the government. The present disunity is symbolised by the daily lobby. Before protesters take their places on the pavement, Sam Bond is hurried into the building in which he supposedly works — an encounter with the opposition would be too 'embarrassing'.

Camden homeless fight back

CAMDEN'S housing crisis exploded last month when a fire swept a bed and breakfast hotel killing Mrs Karim and her two children. Since then, homeless families have been occupying the town hall in protest.

By Fred Leplat, Holborn and St Pancras Labour Party

Camden council has the most homeless families in London. They're housed in B&B hotels, where space is at a premium and with no basic fire precautions. Many live there for two or three years before they are rehoused.

After the Karim family deaths, homeless families led a delegation to the Labour council to demand an immediate improvement in their conditions. Labour councillors gave them such an unsympathetic reception they spontaneously sat-in. And there they've been since.

With some honourable exceptions, councillors' intransigence has increased the homeless families' determination. They see themselves as fighting for all London's homeless.

And support has come flooding in: from council unions, organisations of the homeless, black workers' groups, and some local Labour Party members.

Last week 500 people marched from the town hall to the hotel where Mrs Karim died. Such support has taken Camden council by surprise.

Initially, councillors tried to blame these deaths on the striking staff of the homeless families unit. The families themselves pointed out that council policy was the cause.

Faced by such determination, the council now claims to have agreed the demands of the homeless families: the immediate rehousing of families harassed by racist landlords or whose accommodation is unfit for habitation. But the occupation continues — no commitment has yet been made about how and when this agreement will be carried out.

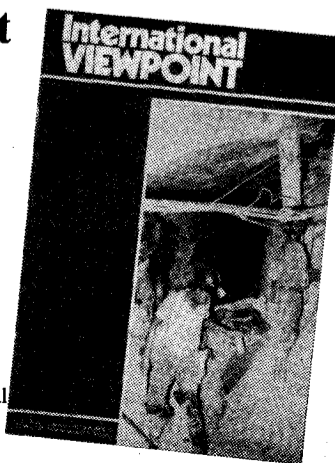
The council's attitude inspires no confidence for the fightback against the Tory attacks on local government. As long as the most dispossessed in the community suffer at the hands of the very people who claim to defend them, how can it?

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Socialist Action NEXT ISSUE

Socialist Action won't be appearing for two weeks during the Christmas and New Year break. Our next issue, no 84, will appear on 11 January. Order your copy now.

Socialist ACTION

WHEN PIET Botha launched his new 'reformed' South African constitution he had two aims in mind. He wanted to appease world opinion by showing that he was making a move away from the hard, total apartheid policies of his predecessors. But, above all, he sought to divide the non-white population by giving 'privileges' to sections of it through his tri-cameral parliament which gave a limited franchise to the officially designated 'coloureds' and Indians.

The pathetic turnout in the elections to this so-called parliament was clear proof of the rejection of this plan. In its fury, the regime turned upon those who had organised resistance to the new constitution and urged a boycott of the elections — the United Democratic Front (UDF), the National Forum, Cape Action League, AZAPO and many of the trade unions, headed by FOSATU. Peaceful demonstrations were viciously assaulted by a massive display of force by the police and the military; leaders were arrested under the iniquitous Internal Security Act, which allows detention without trial.

Repression

The most notorious case of this repression was the 'Durban Six' — the six leaders of the UDF who were first released from detention and then served with new detention orders from which they temporarily escaped by taking refuge in the British Consulate in Durban.

Although the 'Durban Six' were originally detained because of their activities in organising the election boycott — a campaign in which the only violence came from the forces of 'law and order' — they now face much more serious charges. They have now been charged with treason, which carries the possibility of the death penalty.

The state plans to call more than 150 witnesses in the trial — a procedure which recalls the infamous treason trial of 1956 when 150 black leaders, including Nelson Mandela, were charged. This trail dragged on for four years before collapsing for lack of evidence.

Two of those now facing trial were among the accused in that case — Archie Gumede, the 71 year-old Co-president of UDF and Billy Nair, one of the Durban Six.

The search for 150 witnesses willing to testify against the accused will undoubtedly be an excuse for a gigantic campaign of harassment by the South African Security Police over the next few months. The state has also intensified its campaign against the growing strength of the independent and black trade unions — several of whose leaders, including Chris Dlamini, president of FOSATU, have been detained.

The Botha regime finds itself on the horns of a dilemma. Internally it is faced not only with intensified struggle by the organisations of the liberation, but also by the growing opposition of the hard right in the die-hard Afrikaner camp. In a recent by-election in the hitherto National Government Party stronghold of the Rand, the government only just managed to retain the seat against the extreme right Conservative Party.

The Conservative Par-

ty wants to maintain the Verwoerd ideal of totally open apartheid, complete with displays of 'kragdadigheid' (absolute power) enforced by the sjambok, the rifle and the hangman's rope. The Conservative Party's supporters see even the farcical Botha 'reforms' as the thin edge of the wedge which will ultimately spell an end to white rule in South Africa.

On the other hand, even in the United States, Reagan has been forced by massive demonstrations and pressure also from within the Republican Party, to distance himself somewhat from the more open aspects of apartheid. This is because American big business, which has huge stakes in South Africa, fear that the struggle of the oppression will not simply end with the abolition of the colour bar.

The UDF subscribe to the Freedom Charter, adopted by the Congress of People in 1955. This seeks to limit the struggle in the first place to building on the common desire for full democracy among all race groups and a national struggle to win political freedom for all — in other words, a national democratic revolution.

But the National Forum in its manifesto declares: 'the struggle against apartheid is no more than a point of departure in our liberation efforts. Apartheid will be eradicated with the system of capitalism.' This is what imperialism really fears.



Students demonstrate in Soweto

South Africa: a government at bay



Black South African miners

A little democracy

AT ITS meeting last week the Labour Party NEC decided to draw up a document explaining the principles of democratic socialism against Marxists within the Labour Party. The real aim of this operation is not a 'political clarification' at all but an organisational witch hunt — which is why Dennis Skinner, Tony Benn, Joan Maynard, Eric Heffer and the rest of the left were dead right to oppose it.

Nevertheless the statement is going to be an interesting document. Therefore let us point out for it a few of the differences between Marxists and Neil Kinnock on the question of democracy.

Marxists support the right of workers in companies to elect the directors of companies and to pursue workers control of production. Neil Kinnock rejects this and believes workers should be subject to unelected directors and managers or, at best, should have a token presence on a board which is composed not of workers but shareholders.

Marxists hold that judges and state officials should be elected. Neil Kinnock rejects elections and democracy in this field and believes judges and state officials should be appointed from above

without election. The result is not merely a series of judges and state officials who hand out anti-working class judgements but a complete lack of democracy in this entire field of the state apparatus.

Marxists stand for full trade union and political rights for those in the armed forces. Neil Kinnock on the contrary supports an anti-democratic system of military law which deprives those in the armed forces of any democratic rights and makes them the shock troops for a military coup both in Britain and in every country in the world.

Marxists stand for the democratic right of women, and blacks, to

elect their own representatives on the NEC of the Labour Party — Neil Kinnock opposes it.

No control

A Marxist critique of parliament is not that it is too democratic but that it is not democratic enough. It is not sufficient for real democracy to exist that people can put a cross on a piece of paper every five years and then have no control over their representatives. Marxists believe that real democracy does not exist as long as people do not have the right to vote on the control of their community, their firm, and every other question which confronts them. Neil Kinnock on the contrary wants to restrict the right to vote within narrow confines.

Finally Marxists believe that no real democracy can exist as long as the control of the economy remains in the hands of arbitrary unelected centres of

private economic power. Only by making the centres of economic power subject to democratic control — by public, democratically accountable, ownership of the major industries and by promotion of co-operatives and similar ventures in other spheres — can real democracy in society be achieved.

No vote

Neil Kinnock on the contrary believes the economy should be left in the hands of individuals, and companies, who at their mere whim, and with no vote of their workforce, can, and have, placed literally millions of people on the dole.

In short, at every point a Marxist stands for the extension of democracy and Neil Kinnock stands for its restriction. But you can forget about any possibility that the commission on the NEC will bother to state that truth.

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