

# A Socialist ACTION

## UCW, TGWU, NUR...

# New Tory attack on unions

No. 96 5 April 1985 30p

**THE TORIES** are trying to make the labour movement pay for the failure of the TUC and Labour leadership to mobilise support behind the miners in their 12 month battle against pit closures.

- Immediately following the decision of the NUM delegate conference to call off the overtime ban Scottish MPs showed the NCB has plans to close eight of Scotland's 12 remaining pits.

- After a five and a half hour executive meeting on Tuesday Alan Tuffin, general secretary of the Union of Communication Workers, negotiated a deal with management over new working practices. This followed the union executive instruction to call off the strike at Mount Pleasant sorting office in the face of a High Court injunction.

- The leaders of the NUR and ASLEF have accepted a five per cent wage offer — one below the rate of inflation.

- The press, at the prompting of that renowned union 'democrat' Lord Chapple, is stepping up its campaign against 'ballot rigging' in the TGWU in the hope of replacing general secretary elect Ron Todd by right winger George Wright.

The Tories are not at all sure how far they can go in exploiting the failure of the TUC to back the NUM. But they are particularly determined to try and drive home their attack on the left in the unions simultaneously with their assault on jobs and conditions.

There is big resistance against this further retreat by the union leaderships. Mount Pleasant workers showed their opposition not merely by walking out against management attacks but by initially rejecting the UCW instructions to return to work. Resistance from rail workers forced BR to concede the separation of pay and productivity and there is widespread disgust over the acceptance of the five per cent wage offer.

The elections in the NUM continue to show the pattern of clear victories by the pro-strike left against the right in the union — the latest being in the elections for the national executive in Durham.

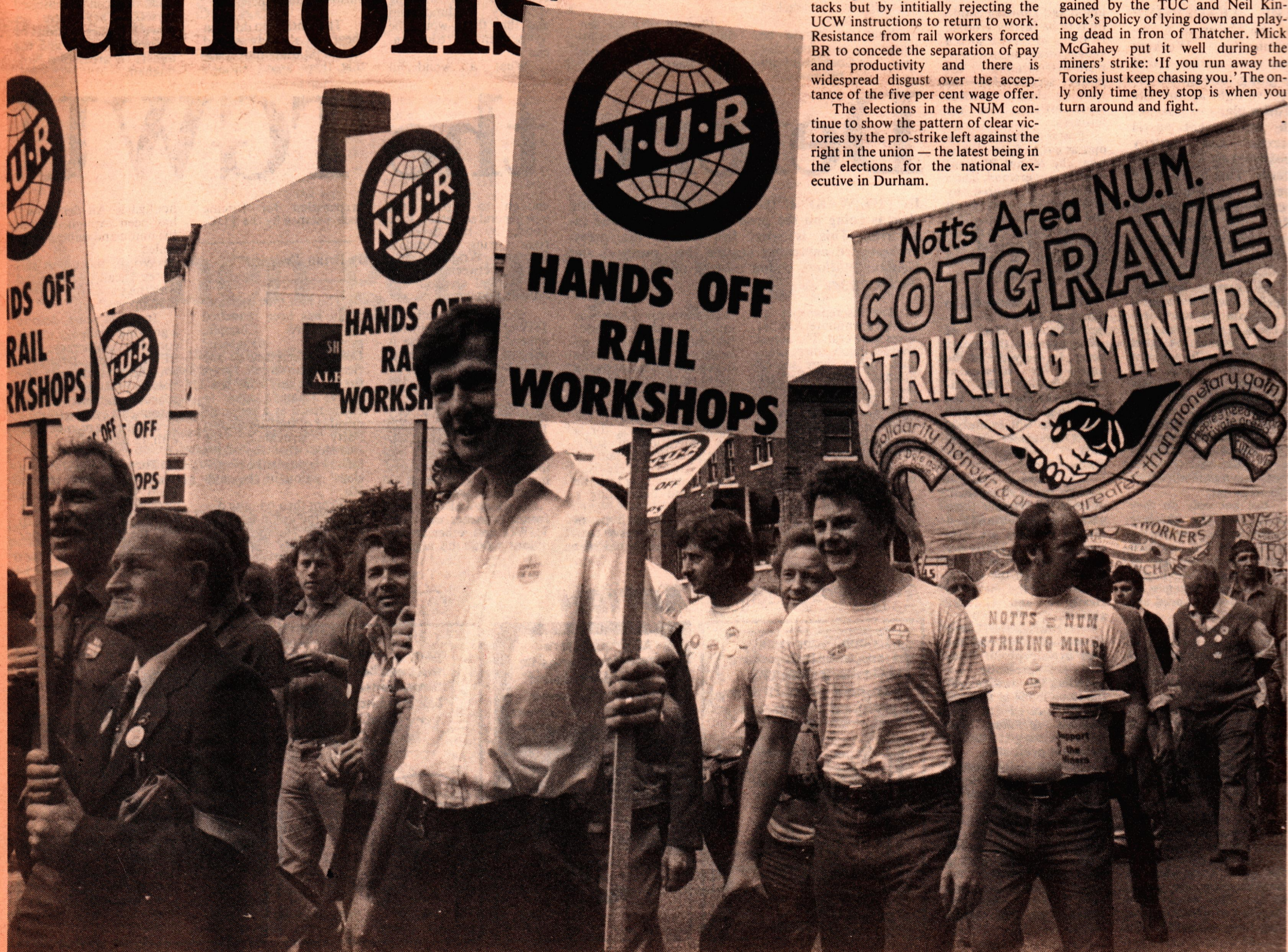
The problem for this resistance is that it is being disorganised by the union leaderships — as shown by the UCW instructions to return at Mount Pleasant. Equally Neil Kinnock has stepped up his campaign to divert resistance to the Tory attacks into resting on hopes of a future Labour government.

Roy Hattersley's words at the last Labour Party conference have now been turned into Labour Party policy in the new **Jobs and Industry** document and campaign launched around it. This abandons any pledge to full employment, to nationalisation, or to defence of wages. As the *Guardian* commented in its editorial on Wednesday the document could be sampled by Tory wets or the Alliance without indigestion.

Neil Kinnock also made clear at the weekend for the first time that he is prepared to consider an agreement with the Liberals after the next election — although as yet he opposed any deal with the SDP. David Penhaligan, Liberal Party economic spokesperson, said he could accept large parts of the new Labour economic policy provided it was coupled with a firm commitment to wage controls.

The different options facing the labour movement in resisting the Tory attacks are becoming crystal clear. Kinnock, Willis, and Hattersley are trying to take the movement further and further to the right. The Scargill left wing of the NUM, a large part of the rank and file of the labour movement, and major parts of the Labour Party support want to fight back.

The events of the last week show that there is literally *not a thing* to be gained by the TUC and Neil Kinnock's policy of lying down and playing dead in front of Thatcher. Mick McGahey put it well during the miners' strike: 'If you run away the Tories just keep chasing you.' The only time they stop is when you turn around and fight.





Alan Tuffin, UCW general secretary

# Postal workers — no option but to fight

THE LEADERSHIP of the Union of Communication Workers has given notice that it is going to wage no effective fight against the Tories plans to dismantle the present postal service and destroy postworkers living standards. This is what lay behind the criminal executive instruction to the Mount Pleasant sorting office workers to return to work in line with the court order.

Management has in the pipeline one of the biggest attacks on the workforce yet seen in nationalised industry. It includes what amounts to a 20 per cent wage cut through the abolition of overtime working by the introduction of a system of part time and casual workers. Overtime pay averages £29 per week. Management claim that 'productivity' payments will offset this wage cut.

But not only do they admit that the absolute maximum this would bring would be £14 — which is a very narrow layer of workers could have hoped to get — such schemes inevitably involve speed ups and redundancies.

Something much more dangerous is involved in accepting such a proposal — that is the introduction of a two-tier system of working conditions. A whole layer of workers on part time and casual basis will have the status of second class citizens.

The proposal is for 20,000 such workers. As if the four million unemployed are out of work because really they are seeking part time or casual employment!

And then behind this is the open Tory plan to monopolise the postal service. This would have the effect of weakening the bargaining strength of the

union and allowing conditions to be further eroded. In terms of service such a system would mean a complete deterioration of the postal service for the working class — with a super efficient one for business.

Postal workers have no option but to fight. This is what the Mount Pleasant workers understood. Their sentiment is shared by rank and file workers up and down the land. This has been revealed in the intransigent stance of the last couple of national conferences of the union.

What the leadership is banking on, is the destabilising effect of adherence to the court order. In the wake of the hoped for subsequent demoralisation the executive calculates that the upcoming May national conference will capitulate to its agreement on part time working with management.

The Mount Pleasant workers are in an excellent position to scupper these plans. Three thousand and seventy workers are concentrated there. Thirty per cent of the nation's post passes through the office, including all the post from Heathrow and Gatwick airports.

Of course, the Tories are poised to unleash the scab private postal firms that are presently anticipating the massive profits to be made in a postal service geared to big business spending. The rest of us can go to hell — we're not profitable.

However, the movement is quite capable of staying these scab outfits. The airport workers could strike a death blow with a flick of their wrist by enlarging all incoming mail. The outstanding question is whether the lesson in unity has been learned from the experience of the miners defeat.

# Jack Collins: 'NCB knows how to push home their advantage'

THE NATIONAL COAL Board has closed two pits since the miners' strike ended on 5 March, Frances in Scotland and Bedwas in South Wales.

The Coal Board and the government are now trying as Jack Collins describes below, to push home their advantage by demanding that the NUM agrees to both voluntary and consequential redundancies, that is pit closures.

What is your view of the results of the ballot on the levy?

We won it in Kent with a 78 per cent vote. This would suggest to people that if you campaign then you get a good result. Others areas didn't campaign.

A lot of miners didn't vote in the ballot. They thought it was not necessary to have a ballot for a levy (because our rule book's clear on this). Others saw it as conscience money that could lead to sacked miners being forgotten by the union.

What do you think of the decision to call off the overtime ban?

I think it's completely immoral to say some men should work overtime when others can't even work normal time. I'm referring to the sacked miners of course.

What we should be demanding is a four day week. The Coal Board are

putting all sort of conditions on workers in the industry now. One of them is that miners must work overtime when the Coal Board wants them to.

Some people are suggesting if we lift the overtime ban we can go to the law over the sacked men.

That's almost laughable. For 12 months we've seen which side the law is on. We'll get no justice in the courts. We're not involved in a game of cricket. We're involved in the class war.

If we all go back to normal working — and that means to the levels of production before the strike began — some people think the Coal Board will come back and be pal-ly.

But they know how to push home their advantage. That's why the Kent area voted against the lifting of the overtime ban.

In Kent they are sending letters to every miner and a lot of men are showing an interest.

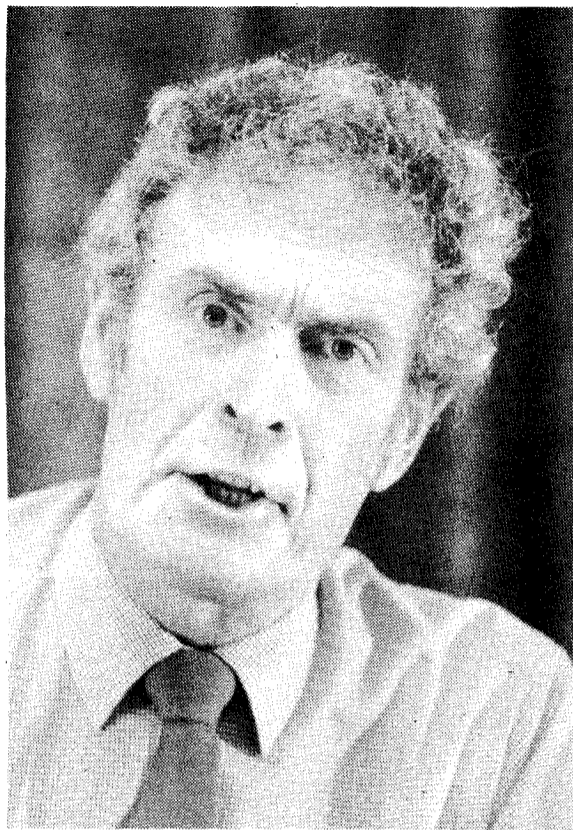


Photo: GM COOKSON

Jack Collins, secretary of Kent NUM

In an article in the *Guardian* it said that the coalboard was offering voluntary redundancies and that there would be 'consequential redundancies'.

What a wonderful

language we have. For consequential read compulsory redundancies.

They intend to do what they did at Bedwas and close a pit using the excuse that there aren't enough

miners left.

If they succeed in getting away with breaking national agreements and customs and practises, ignoring the Mines and Quarries Act, then it seems to me that even the TUC — with what authority it has left — the political parties of the left and the Labour Party will be taken apart.

Why the majority of the British working class can't see this I don't know.

The Coal Board have a plan. Those who are prepared to take voluntary redundancies will go. Then the scabs that are prepared to move will go. And then they'll try and sack the militants and all the wonderful past traditions of the miners will be lost.

We'll have to oppose this but we need other workers to stop throwing money at us and start putting down their tools!

One last point, the press is having a real go at Scargill and the NUM leadership in the dispute. What's your view?

The three national leaders did a good job. I don't think they can be criticised myself. They were let down by other sections of the working class and the miners in areas like Nottingham.

# Defend the TGWU

IN THE WAKE of the miners' defeat, the ruling class is going on the prod in other unions and industries. This is what lies behind the press-orchestrated campaign against the Transport and General Workers Union centred on the charge of 'ballot rigging'.

The discrepancies involved are minute: 630,541 votes were cast. The actual charges involve three branches with a mere several hundred votes between them — only two or three votes of which proved to have been forged. As a result of this, the TGWU has expelled two officials from holding office.

This, of course does not satisfy the Tory press. 'Union poll rigged storm' screeched the *Daily Mail*, posing its own campaign for a new ballot as 'growing pressure'. The more

sedate *Sunday Times* was satisfied with innuendo: 'although there is yet no evidence of a centrally organised campaign by the left to rig the ballot' was its poisonous back-handed defence.

Clearly, what the Tories are looking for is the generation of sufficient charges and innuendo to give cover for the courts intervening into the union and demanding a new ballot.

They would hope in such circumstances to confuse the rank and file

enough to replace the new general secretary, Ron Todd, by the defeated right wing candidate George Wright. The margin between them in the original election was only 45,000 votes.

Because of the role the TGWU played within the miners' strike, because it did not fully mobilise its entire membership in practical support of the miners, it is vulnerable to such a campaign. But a short sharp rebuff by the TUC to the Tories' campaign — a declaration that it would not tolerate the interference of the courts into an affiliated union — would see this one off.

Motions of support from branches of the TGWU and other trades unions would be a good

preparation for forcing such a stance by the TUC.

By Brian Grogan

The fact that the campaign has been launched by Lord Chapple, previously dictatorial General Secretary of the electricians' union, gives the lie to the Tories campaign. Chapple came to prominence as a renegade member of the Communist Party providing the evidence for the CP's ballot rigging in the electricians' union in the mid-50s.

From then on, any dissent in the union has been ruthlessly stamped upon by Chapple and his

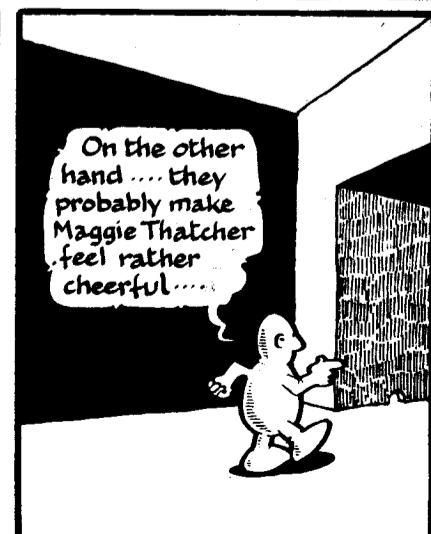
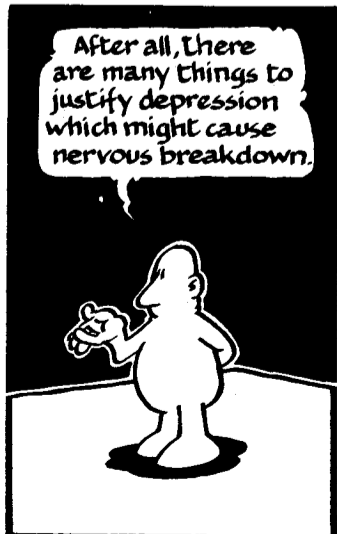
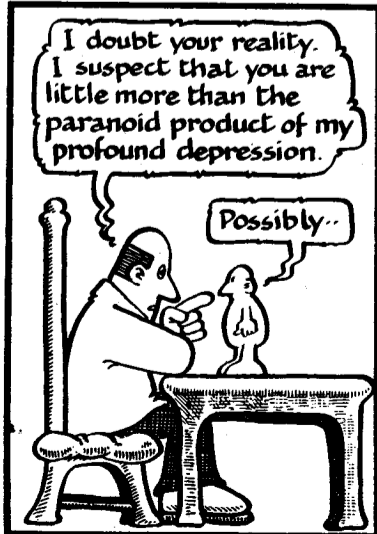
hooligans. All democracy has been expunged from the union and militants expelled.

Worse, the union has systematically conspired with the bosses to victimise militant workers.

In recent years, despite a growing challenge to this complete autocracy, the EEPTU has pioneered sweetheart deals with the bosses priding itself on concluding 'no strike' agreements and foisting them onto the membership with an iron fist.

There are big stakes in this Tory challenge to Ron Todd. If George Wright is installed it will weigh heavily in the offensive to shift the axis of the labour movement to the right.

## A PIECE OF THE ACTION



3/85 #91

© Cormac

## North Derbyshire

## Wanted: a national union

DAVE CROWTHER, North Derbyshire Area delegate from Warsop Main colliery, gave his view to *Socialist Action* of the situation in the NUM following the strike.

IN NORTH DERBYSHIRE we are in the position that people who broke the strike are in the majority. The strikers have got control of the union structures. Now we have to regain the backing of the men.

We have a real chance to get back our base especially from those men who went back since December for personal reasons.

We have got to test the waters by facing up to inevitable confrontation with management.

These are already occurring through local issues — over the imposition of a four shift system, travelling time.

Men who went back before the strike ended are taking these up perhaps to redeem themselves. By doing this they will again feel themselves part of the union.

While I understand the reason for calling off the overtime ban I disagree with it. There's been no call from the ranks in general to take the ban off.

It just gives credence to Notts who have broken the national union's policy by ending the ban on their own.

It's wrong to think the coalboard will now soften up and negotiate in good faith. The coalboard have already indicated they will go to war.

Whereas before the conciliation procedure was there to use they are now saying for instance 'Where there is an alleged grievance we will consider using the procedure.'

There is nothing to stop them in the future from breaking with what has been sacrosanct before.

People think that we can have the threat of another overtime ban kept in reserve to use in future times like next Autumn but the board would launch a campaign for miners to ignore the ban then just as viciously as they would do now.

While we retain the ban on overtime it would give us that slight bit of dignity we need right now and I believe we could control it.

This would test the union out for the future battles we have to prepare for.

## Sacked

The levy should have been called in the first instance just for those who have been sacked not to include money for those who may be sacked in the future.

Some miners saw this as the first step towards the establishment of a future strike fund.

This got in the way of



Johnny Moyle, sacked President Betteshanger NUM, Nicky Boyle (wife of a sacked miner), and Betty Heathfield (above) addressed the 2,000 people who marched through Sheffield



on Saturday demanding an amnesty and reinstatement for all those miners imprisoned and sacked during the NUM dispute.

A leaflet distributed by the South Yorkshire Defence Campaign who called the march pointed out that managers were out to



victimise more militants. Derek Law, manager of Silverwood colliery was quoted as saying 'We've got a faction of about 30-40 militants and this is an ideal time to sort them out'. 900 miners have been sacked so far. 300 of them in Yorkshire.

the case for the sacked miners and wasn't properly motivated.

I'm confident that the same miners who voted against the national levy will come back for a local levy as well as supporting the sacked miners on a voluntary basis.

Area by area we should conduct our own raising of funds. There should be national co-ordination for re-instatement to campaign against the glaring inconsistencies.

In North Derbyshire men have been taken back who have been convicted

of criminal damage such as smashing the scab's windows.

But in Scotland miners accused of petty offences are sacked.

We should fight to have the precedents in North Derbyshire applicable to Scotland.

The national union is now getting fragmented. Areas and branches are turning inwards. Men who stayed out became very aware of the national union. This awareness is now breaking up.

To counter this we should hold out with the

overtime ban, work to rule, and call the special conference to kick out the Notts area and to restructure the NUM areas.

Instead of affiliated bodies we want divisions of the NUM centrally under the control on the national union.

We want to codify that sense of unity developed during the strike.

We do not have the luxury of allowing the Notts scab leaders Lynk and Pendergast to carry on.

Like Spencer their leadership is self justify-

ing. They will continue to seek to justify their 12 month scabbing.

We cannot wait for time to prove them wrong, to wait for Lynk to fall

down holes. By setting up a new Notts division with the Notts strikers and those who refuse to follow Lynk we will be in a stronger position to act as a truly national union.

**MICK RICHMOND** from the Leicestershire Dirty 30 told *Socialist Action* the state of the union in Leicestershire.

Leicestershire scabs thought it couldn't happen to them. Bagworth pit where I work had £1.1 million profit last year up until November.

That has now been reversed to £1.2 million loss since November due to water damage. That's how vulnerable this so called safe area is.

We still haven't got recognition from our union at Bagworth. This week the electricians went on strike on the day shift.

The official Callaghan asked one of the Dirty 30 to honour the strike after scabbing on us for 12 months and denying us our union rights. Even so, we agreed.

But it didn't make any difference. The electricians on the afternoon shift scabbed on them anyway. Once a scab always a scab.

Now they're facing the result of their actions with the NCB announcement that 40 pits are in danger of closing. It would serve them right if this includes Leicestershire.

## Women get angry too

JUST AS THE miners' strike was ending LORRAINE JOHNSON, secretary of the Bold miners' wives' group, and JEAN MURRIE, chairperson of the Skelmersdale wives' group, toured France at the invitation of the Confederation Generale du Travail (CGT). Their views expressed in the interview with JUDITH BAKER below, stand out in stark contrast to the analysis of women's attitude to violence in the dispute argued by Beatrix Campbell in the *New Statesman* (8 3 84).

In an outrageous article, defending the 'democratic left's' assessment of the dispute, she said that violence 'is a peculiarly masculine characteristic' which explained the 'tendency of the male left to equate muscular militancy and violence with political strength'.

The fundamentalist left, she argues, hijacked Women Against Pit Closures against feminism, eagerly burying the trendy middle class women's liberation movement, and failed to popularise the issues in the strike by learning from the tactics of peaceful protest of the Greenham women. She recalls that it wasn't hard to find miners' wives from Ollerton, who supported the strike, who felt alienated by the 'angry, brutal, and useless' behaviour of the miners.

But why does Beatrix leave out of her analysis the response of thousands of miners' wives to the 'brutal', 'chaotic, macho violence' of the police? She knows full well that hundreds of miners' wives were forced, the same as the men, to confront the police on picket lines and did so with as much gusto as the men.

They didn't choose to confront the police. The police chose to confront them. Bea Campbell and her allies in the Labour centre and right will not be allowed to pit mining women against men in this dishonest fashion if the answers below are anything to go by.

Do you think the outcome of the strike was a victory for Margaret Thatcher and the government?

Lorraine: It is neither a defeat nor a victory. If the

miners had gone back without a union, that would have been a victory for Thatcher.

But we still have the union and it will stick together. For example, I don't think Nottingham

really want to split off and it's important that we all stay together.

Jean: Before they had the Spencer union, and that was forced to come back into the national union. The point is the struggle is not over yet.

There's more to come from MacGregor yet. Some men weren't happy with the way they had to go back. But I think in the end we had to go in order to stop Thatcher getting an all-out victory.

Lorraine: Yes, but on the first day they went back at Bold, they were only there for an hour and a half, and they came out again. They all marched in together.

They refused to go on the Coal Board buses. They said, 'if it takes us all day to get there we're going in together.' They went in about 10am.

We went home and were phoning each other up because we really didn't know what to do with ourselves. At 12.30 my husband phoned up to say that one lad had been suspended for picking coal and they had all walked out.

Also apparently women canteen staff who had scabbed during the strike had locked

themselves in the toilets. The girls who had been on strike had got rather angry. I hear stories of cups and plates flying around.

I think the men were out to prove that they've still got some fight left in them.

Who do you blame for the outcome of the strike? How do you think you could've won in other words?

Jean: What we needed was leadership from the TUC. Instead of giving it us, they seemed to be afraid of the government.

The rank and file supported us. Thatcher really did not calculate on the support we were getting from the general public. But with the dockers the support was there, they were just bribed back to work.

Lorraine: Yes, if the leadership had been strong enough we could have had a general strike.

But what are the prospects then for the future? How can you change the leadership?

People have become more active in their unions. In our union, we've got the

leadership we want, and the rank and file in other unions should fight for the same. It's the same with the Labour Party. I intend to join the Labour Party when I go back.

Why?

Lorraine: Because that party should be working for us, and during the strike I've realised that it isn't, and something ought to be done about it. It's no good just criticising from the outside.

Jean: Yes, a lot of us are going to join the Labour Party. Me and four of my friends are all going to join together.

Lorraine: A lot of people are going to join — miners, miners' wives, supporters — so we won't be on our own. That is the thing about the strike — so many people have got involved in politics who never were before, especially young people and women.

What do you intend to do now to keep the miners' wives' groups going?

Lorraine: We will be involved in the campaigns of the NUM, but also we

want to get involved in other women's struggles. At the moment we've got the teachers on strike nationally and the hospital workers in our area. They're mainly women so we will want to support them.

Jean: I think we should be allowed to join the NUM myself, after what we've done.

During the strike we linked up with Greenham Common women. I went down there for a weekend to stay, and after Easter I'm going to stay for a week. We are going to build for the international day at Greenham called for September 5.

Would you call yourselves feminists? What in your view is a feminist?

Lorraine: After all this I would call myself a feminist because I don't like being told what to do.

Jean: I am, because I want to control my own body. I had eight children, and my husband didn't believe in sterilisation. Why shouldn't I decide what I do with

my own body? Why should you have to explain to men, to doctors or to anyone else, why you want to do something?

Lorraine: There was a strike in the social services in St Helens [a town in Lancashire] because one bloke leaked information about one of his clients, who was trying to get an abortion, to one of the pro-life groups.

We supported the strike. I think there should be free abortion. There should be more nurseries for under-fives so that women can go out to work.

This strike has taught me a lot. It's made me more responsible — it's taught me not to rely on men.

This strike has let the government know that miners will fight and that people won't just lie down and let the government walk all over them.

Reprinted from International Viewpoint 25 March 1985.

# NUT conference must step up the action

**THE CURRENT TEACHERS pay fight will dominate the first day of the National Union of Teachers annual conference at Scarborough this Easter. Teachers are campaigning for £1200 rise for all teachers as a first step to restoring the 33 per cent decline in their pay over the last 10 years. They have rejected the employers' offer of four per cent, and a proposed move to take the issue to arbitration.**

Teachers learnt a lesson last year when despite opposition from the Socialist Teachers Alliance (STA) and others on the left, the claim was taken to arbitration resulting in a mere 0.62 per cent increase on the employers 4.5 per cent offer. The conference will be discussing an executive motion on the next phase of the campaign.

There are increasing calls to step up the level of action, which is based at the moment on three-day strikes in selected areas. The union needs to call out much greater numbers than the 8000 involved in the last week. A substantial number of teachers in selected cities need to be called out indefinitely, and

the whole of the membership involved in rolling strike action.

A one-day national strike should be added, to organise mass meetings and mobilise support for the monthly levy to sustain the campaign.

**by Bernard Regan, NUT executive, personal capacity.**

Keith Joseph has produced a white paper provocatively entitled 'Better Schools'. Coupled with his proposal to introduce 'merit pay' for outstanding teachers this represents a concerted attack on and attempt to isolate teachers. The Tory's objective is to produce a

pliant workforce which will fall in line with their proposals to reintroduce a selective system of education tailoring education to the employers' priorities.

The campaign is therefore about much more than salaries — it is about the condition which teachers work in and the whole education system. At the conference members of the STA will be arguing the need to take the campaign out to win the active support of working class parents, and to link up with other trade unions involved in pay campaigns and defence of jobs and services.

Teachers are conscious that the fight will not be easy one after the miners' strike. There is however no choice but to fight.

The leadership of the union is constantly worried about the fierce competition for members in teaching but during the recent action there were more recruits than the union could handle cen-

trally. Marie Price of the Mansfield Womens' Support Group told striking teachers in Westminster never to say that three-day strikes are 'piddling'. She told them 'What you are fighting for is extremely important and I am going to spread your message everywhere I go'.

● *Socialist Teachers Alliance conference meetings: All at the St Nicholas Hotel.*

*Friday 7.30pm: The pay campaign. East London and Lambeth NUT followed by STA pre-conference briefing.*

*Sunday 7.30pm: Jeremy Corbyn, MP and FDR/FMLN representative.*

*Monday 7.30pm: Women in the NUT.*

*Tuesday 7.30pm: Rate-capping. Hilda Kean, leader Hackney Council. Wednesday 7.00pm Better Schools. A socialist reply. Disco tickets £3*

*Conference caucus every lunchtime.*



## Rate-capping defeat in Manchester

**Manchester City council met on Sunday 6 March and agreed to set a rate, with an increase of six per cent. Thirty one Labour councillors once again deserted party policy and voted with Liberals for a Tory resolution to set a rate. Earlier 22 of those councillors had called a council meeting to do just this. Although 45 councillors remained loyal to party policy, the budget was passed with a majority of six.**

A budget by Labour right winger Allan Wood which involved cuts larger than those proposed by the Liberals and aimed at crippling the equal opportunities policy, the police monitoring committee, and the campaign units was defeated by an amendment which set the rate. It called on the policy and resources committee to draw up a budget to put to a council meeting not later than the end of the first week in May.

This removed the im-

mediate threat of the right wing voting through a cuts budget. It was argued for in terms of no cuts and no rent or rate rises above the rate of inflation.

**by Duncan Edwards**

Mark Hackett, a member of the city party executive which was present in the council chamber in order to discuss tactics with the Labour group, said of the meeting, 'The decision of

the right wing to vote with the Tories and Liberals to set a rate was a betrayal of working people of Manchester who need the £7 billion stolen from the city by the government since 1979. It reduces the pressure on Patrick Jenkin, and endangers those councils, such as Hackney, who are in Jenkin's firing line.

'A united front would have made it impossible for the government to administer all the cities and boroughs refusing to cooperate with the rate-capping legislation'. After the defeat on the rate issue, many in the council and the party will be pushing for deficit budget. In the meantime, City constituency has given a lead in demanding the resignation of the 31 scab councillors.

## Pressure increases on Hackney

**The foundations for a defeat on the defence of jobs and services were laid at a meeting of Hackney Council on 27 March. This followed a 23-22 vote by the Labour group to set a legal rate at some future date. A minority of Labour councillors joined hands with the Tories and Liberals to water down the council's previous position of 'finding it impossible' to set a rate to merely deferring it.**

They also sent the leadership away to look at the issues raised by the director of finances report. This report which outlines possible 'savings', i.e., cuts, was prepared without the knowledge of the council. It was leaked to the media at a time when it seemed that money was running out and council workers would not be

paid. Whoever leaked the document was making a carefully considered political move to undermine the council's stand against rate-capping.

**by Tony Hunt, Hackney NALGO (personal capacity)**

The High Court has lifted its ban on the council

borrowing money, but its 'reminder' that the council must set a rate stands. This reminder was changed to an instruction on Monday. If the 22 Labour councillors who voted with the Tories and Liberals at the meeting on the 27 March continue to do so the result will be a legal budget and rate.

The gap between the original Labour budget of £118 million and a legal budget — possibly £92 million — will be impossible to bridge without cuts. The unions in Hackney joint shop stewards committee have been united in calling on the council to defy the rates act and the High

Court. However, at two NALGO branch meetings the membership has been split over the question of taking action — i.e., striking or at least 'working in' under union control — or not.

The work-in proposal would mean employees keeping some services running under trade union control while supported by a levy on union members in other local authorities. However these decisions were taken in the context of continuing resistance by the council. If this should collapse the unions will have a much more difficult situation to deal with.

## Local government delegates meet

**MORE than 200 delegates representing, on paper at least, up to 250,000 council workers met in Liverpool on Saturday 30 March to discuss national organisation against the government's attacks on local government jobs and services.**

Conference passed a resolution establishing a National Co-ordinating Committee of local authority shop stewards — to organise solidarity strike action in other authorities, in the event of compulsory redundancies, legal action against coun-

cillors or council workers, or the appointment of commissioners or other agencies to run a local authority.

### Cuts

Conference called on Labour authorities to resist the rate-capping legislation and to refuse to cut jobs or services. The first meeting of the co-ordinating committee was set for 13 April.

However, there was a marked lack of clear discussion on how the problems facing local government unions were to be

dealt with. In the face of the retreat by labour authorities from the rate-cap fight the onus has passed to the unions. The conference did not grapple with the problems.

Building national action by local government unions will be a difficult task. It is not made easier by resolutions which fail to pose this question as the core of a national strategy.

Equally important will be the policy of the unions involved. The national co-ordinating committee will need to be a campaigning body as much as a co-ordinating body. Developing that aspect of its policy will be its first task.



Powell & Gillick

# Victorian values

VICTORIA GILLICK, Enoch Powell and Mrs Thatcher share a belief in a long lost golden age when families were happy and united and everyone knew their place, especially women and children. Such an age never existed of course.

In Victorian times small children were forced by poverty to work, little girls were sold into prostitution, servants who got pregnant were thrown onto the streets and unwanted babies were abandoned or drowned. Mrs Gillick would have been lucky to have survived ten pregnancies with all her children alive and well. Neither she nor Mrs Thatcher would have had the vote. Mrs Gillick would not have been able to make use of the courts without money of her own.

Thanks to hard fought battles by the working class and by women, we've come a long way since then. But in one respect, we are still in the Victorian age. Women still have little say over what happens to their own bodies.

It is true that contraception is freely available to all — unless you are under 16 of course. Thanks to Mrs Gillick, young women are once again seen as the property of their parents — regardless of whether those parents are caring or not.

Her campaign is similar to those which have been conducted in the United States, where a number of states have passed 'Family Laws' which put children firmly in their parents' control. Minors — and in some states that means under 18 — cannot obtain contraception or abortion without parental permission.

Some of those states have also outlawed sex education. At the same time, TV and the press pump out heavily distorted pictures of sexuality, leaving young people confused and ignorant.

In New York schools young women go to school armed with guns against possible rape by their school fellows on or off the premises.

The anti-abortion organisations have led the campaign against sex education in the naive belief that information about their bodies will lead youngsters into promiscuity.

## Parents

Young women in this country are today at the mercy of their parents. Mrs Gillick's victory in the Appeal Court preventing doctors prescribing or even advising about contraception will not stop them having sex. If they get pregnant, it is for their parents to decide, with the doctor, if they can have an abortion.

But for all women the decision as to whether or not to have an abortion is not theirs to make. Abortion is still illegal under a law of 1868 and the Abortion Act of 1967 requires that two doctors make the decision — they determine who are 'fit' or 'unfit' mothers — her choice is secondary.

For young women, used to modern methods of contraception and believing perhaps that abortion is relatively easy to get, the importance of fighting to maintain what few rights we have and to extend those rights may not seem to be a priority. But for



'Woman in White Stockings' by Suzanne Valadon whose paintings completely broke the mould of female subjection. What Powell and Gillick share is complete opposition to women having control of their bodies and being allowed to express their sexuality freely.

four years — from 1975 to 79 — we fought battle after battle to prevent the 1967 Act from being destroyed. Now we are having to fight the same

people in new ways. Their confidence boosted by the right-wing climate of this government, anti-abortionists are turning to such fields as

## Armagh body snatchers

PAULINE MCKINNEY was arrested in December 1982 on the evidence of 'supergrass' Christopher Black. She was among the first of the women in Armagh to be subjected to the strip search procedure — it was introduced two or three weeks before Pauline was imprisoned.

On Thursday 28 March in Stratford, East London, a packed meeting heard Pauline explain the strip search regime and its purpose.

I WAS arrested through Christopher Black who was a paid informer. The strip searching then had been in progress for around two to three weeks.

We didn't know this when we went in. We didn't know it until the second day of the trial until we had to go down to reception.

We were taken into reception one at a time. There were three to four screws in reception.

When we went in they told us to strip off. I thought it meant just jumper and skirt. But they

said everything off.

There were four or five screws in the reception area that morning. They stood in front of me, looking over my body then they turned me round to check the back. Then they said put your clothes back on.

Liz was brought down and then Margaret. This happened to the three of us about 30 times in one week.

Then we started to question it. They said security. It was not security.

They didn't care whether you had a period or not. They didn't care

whether it was a heavy period or not.

We pressed for the security reasons to be explained. But they wouldn't explain. The reason that this was being done to us was not only to break our spirits, but also to degrade us, to dehumanise us, to humiliate us.

## Security

It was just another tactic along with others that had been used in Armagh jail over the years to break the spirits of the women in that jail. But they didn't break them. They were petty harassments. Only this was not a petty harassment. This was serious.

You've all heard of the film *The Invasion of the Body-Snatchers*, well these were the body-snatchers of Armagh jail, because they were trying to take our

bodies, they were trying to snatch our bodies.

They did not strip search the men. We do not want the men to go through this procedure, but if it's for security why doesn't the same procedure apply?

Nicholas Scott claimed that the strip search was for security reasons because of the massive break-out in Long Kesh, which is a men's prison. But the strip search started in November '82. The break-out was in November '83.

How can stripping women stop men from escaping?

Because of the protests the strip searches have been scaled down. But it's still going on.

It does leave a mark on you when you get out. It's left its mark on me, I just haven't got the guts to explain here how it has affected me as regards my husband.

APRIL 24TH  
MASS LOBBY  
OF PARLIAMENT  
HOUSE OF COMMONS  
LONDON WC2

**OPPOSE THE POWELL BILL!**

**DEMONSTRATE**

SATURDAY 27 APRIL

ASSEMBLE  
1PM  
LINCOLNS  
INN FIELDS  
WC2

RIGHTS FOR EMBRYOS MEANS  
RIGHTS TAKEN AWAY FROM WOMEN!

National Abortion Campaign, Walsley Street, 74 Great Queen Street, London WC2 8AJ

sex education. The group called Family and Youth Concern (the Responsible Society) have produced a video for schools which depicts young people leaving church happily married having kept themselves pure for each other, whilst other less fortunate youngsters gaze on with regret that they too did not keep themselves pure, because now all chances of happiness are gone for ever.

## SPUC

The current concern over the Pill emphasises how important continuing research into better and healthier methods of contraception are and how important it is that abortion remains as a back up for failed contraception — a very common reason for abortion — so that women can use less certain, but less harmful, contraception. But this sort of research, and abortion itself, are

endangered by the Unborn Children (Protection) Bill promoted by Enoch Powell. He now claims it should perhaps be called Embryo Protection Bill. The principle remains that the embryo should be given status.

The Bill endangers in vitro fertilisation which will especially harm poorer women who cannot get private treatment here or abroad ... One in ten couples are infertile in this country and research into the causes will also be damaged by the Bill.

Anything which threatens abortion rights especially affects young women. 24% of women having abortion are between 16 and 19 and 27% between 20 and 24. A further 2.7% are under 16.

That means that one in five women between the ages of 16 and 25 are having abortions. Therefore any attack on abortion is not a theoretical question but one which deeply affects the lives of all young women.

Although women who have children must be able to take a full part in society, the ability to determine if and when to have children is central if women are to achieve liberation and equality.

It is hard for us now to realise what it was like when women did not have this ability at all, although it is only 50 years ago that women in the labour movement were fighting for family planning clinics and the right to contraception. A few brave souls even then also argued for abortion. Meantime women spent a week's wages on pills that were more likely to kill them than give an abortion.

Thanks to advances in modern medicine, we will not return to those days, even if abortion becomes illegal again. But if the Powells and Gillicks of the world have their way women will once again be forced into illegality increasing the risks to their health and making them feel guilty and furtive. Again the poor will suffer the most.

We have had to fight long hard battles to win and retain our limited rights. We should now be fighting to extend them.

Instead yet again we are having to defend them. It is important that we do not take our rights for granted because if we do they will disappear. That is why we must support the campaign against Powell and Gillick.

RIGHTS GIVEN TO EMBRYOS MEAN RIGHTS TAKEN AWAY FROM WOMEN!

- Organise contingents to the demonstration against Powell on Saturday April 27.
- Distribute petitions, leaflets, posters.
- Write to/lobby MPs.
- Organise local meetings.
- Affiliate to NAC.

NAC can be contacted on 01-405-4801

## NAC at NUS

Out of a proposed 17 guest speakers at the NUS conference, top of the ballot was placed the NAC speaker, Leonora Lloyd.

She outlined the importance of the current attacks on abortion rights represented by the Powell Bill and the Gillick ruling and called on student unions to mobilise against them.

They should organise in their colleges to get people to the rally and lobby being organised on 26 April and the demonstration which NAC has called on 27 April and which is being supported by the NUS. The conference agreed to have a collection for the campaign.

# For a mass ca

THE LABOUR Party Young Socialists' annual conference meets in Blackpool over Easter. It will be dominated by the impact of the 12 month struggle of the British miners. The strike was one of the most powerful and courageous mobilisations of youth ever seen in Britain.

As Arthur Scargill put it: 'How many times have we heard the saying "young people today are not like their forefathers. They're too busy making mortgage repayments." But now we are sick and tired of listening to the Jeremiahs of the movement saying young people will never fight as well as the older generation that built the movement. I say, without fear of contradiction, that if those who built our trade union movement could look on this scene today, they would salute our young miners.'

What is at stake at this year's LPYS conference is very simply whether or not the Young Socialists can become an organisation for taking the immense political lessons learnt by those thousands of young miners and their active supporters through the labour movement as a whole.

Of course this is the last thing that Neil Kinnock and the right wing of the labour movement would like to see. Despite their very real concern to build up Labour's votes amongst youth, the last thing they want is a mass youth movement — one through which young miners could take the lessons they've learnt about the police, the courts, the role of women organising in their own groups, the role of black organisation, the need for Labour to support all struggles against oppression and, not least the role of the present leaders of the labour movement in failing to deliver their promised support to the NUM.

## Gimmicks

That is why all of Kinnock's gimmicks to appeal to the youth vote stop short of actually building up a self-governing Labour Party Young Socialists. On the contrary, as the resolutions on the LPYS adopted at this year's Scottish regional Labour Party conference showed, the Labour leadership and its supporters are actively considering ways to bring the LPYS under the control of the dead-hand of the trade union bureaucracy. The response of Kinnock and friends to the magnificent role of youth in the miners' strike is to take steps to keep the lid on the LPYS.

But, unfortunately, despite excellent work by many, many branches, the LPYS nationally did not come forward presenting a clear political alternative to Kinnock in the course of the miners' strike. The LPYS national committee could and should have been a voice of opposition to Kinnock's policy — with statements denouncing every retreat from support for the NUM, lobbies of the NEC and party leadership, and a campaign for a national solidarity demonstration in support of the miners. This would have made the YS very unpopular with Kinnock, but it would have won the support of every young supporter of the miners and thousands of recruits.

## Failure

It was a similar wish not to rock the boat of accommodation with the Labour bureaucracy, based on accommodating to imperialist backwardness, which resulted in the failure of the LPYS to build out of the wave of youth rebellions which swept British cities in 1981. At that time, the infamous 'Rioting is no answer' leaflet distributed in Liverpool won the LPYS and its Militant leadership the contempt of thousands of militant black youth, even though it certainly found favour with the leadership of the party.

Militant's policy of peaceful co-existence with the Labour Party leadership will not defend the YS from witch-hunts and attacks. But it will undermine the ability of the YS as a national organisation to build the kind of sup-



port and alliances necessary to defeat such attacks.

For the past 16 years there has been an implicit understanding between the Labour bureaucracy at Walworth Road and the Militant leadership of the LPYS. Whilst left wing groups outside the Labour Party threw themselves into such campaigns as the Vietnam Solidarity Campaign, the National Abortion Campaign and the Anti-Nazi League, the Militant-led LPYS largely abstained from them on the grounds they were 'not part of the labour movement'. This suited Walworth Road because it meant that thousands of youth radicalised through such campaigns were not coming into the Labour Party and challenging its leadership. The Labourist politics and resulting sectarianism, of Militant suited the interests of the Labour Party leadership.

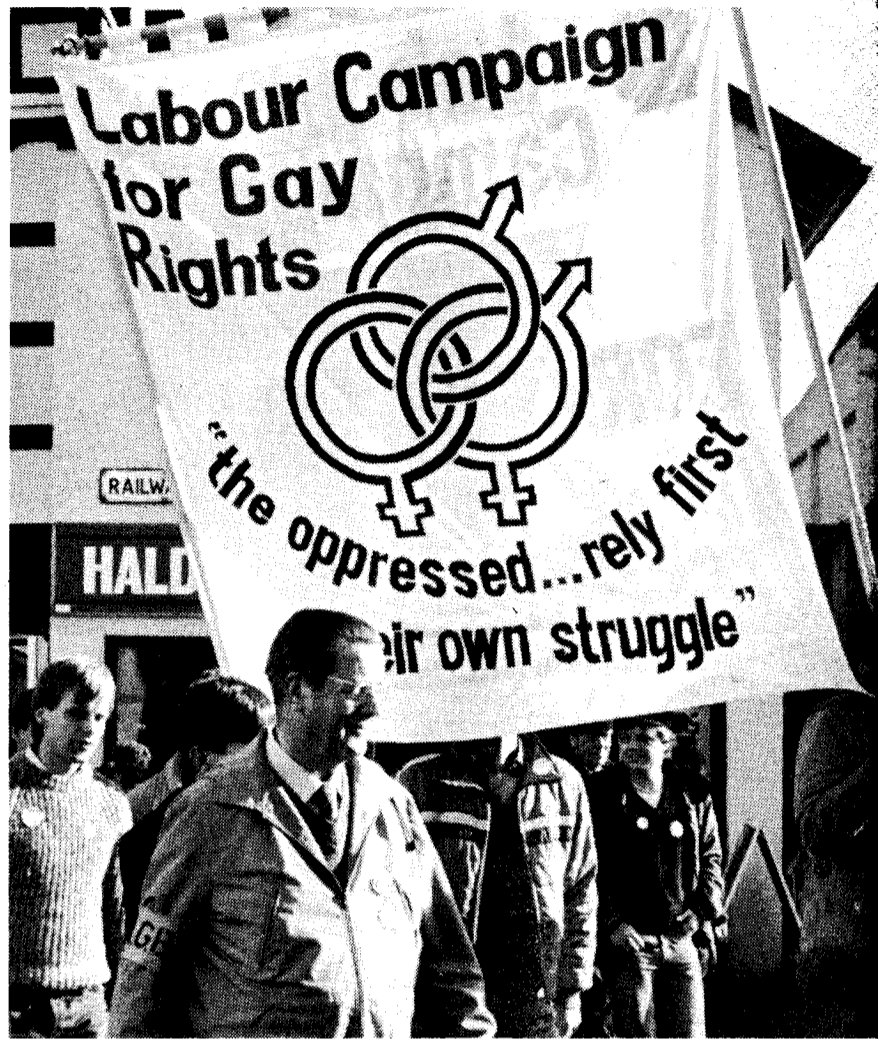
This whole relationship is undermined by the forces which emerged in the course of the miners' strike. As we saw at last year's Labour Party conference, all the movements rejected by

Militant as 'middle class' and divisive found their expression in the very core of the British working class with the NUM's support for the demands of women and women's organisation, for black sections, for gay rights, and against repression in Ireland.

## Alliance

These formal positions of the NUM simply reflected the practice of the Scargill leadership in the course of the strike. The NUM came forward in practice as the *de facto* leaders of an alliance of the exploited and oppressed against the Tory government led by the vanguard of the industrial working class.

The policy of the NUM demonstrated in embryo an entirely opposite model of working class leadership to that advocated and practiced by Militant. They argue for the most oppressed and exploited — for black people, for women, for oppressed nations and semi-colonies — to abandon major



parts of their own specific demands in order to get unity with the white working class. Scargill in practice allied the most powerful section of the British working class to whole layers of the oppressed and exploited. In so doing, significant parts of the NUM broadened their outlook and began to take up important demands of those oppressed and exploited by British capitalism.

## Contrast

The results were clear in the contrast between the tremendous unity created in and around the mining communities and the disastrous split that Militant's politics have engineered between Liverpool city council and Liverpool's black communities.

The NUM's approach to 'class unity' will inevitably find increasingly strong expression in the LPYS itself — and will be brought there first and foremost by the young miners who received their political education in the past 12 months of struggle.

Since 1979, the LPYS leadership has proven on issue after issue to be, in practice, to the right of left wing forces in the Labour Party itself. This was shown on the Malvinas war, on support for the Nicaraguan revolution, on Ireland and the dialogue with Sinn Fein, and on the rights to self-organisation and representation of women and black people. But the Labour Party left, have in many cases maintained their traditional, aristocratic disdain for youth in general and the LPYS in particular. They have preferred debates in GMCs and various committees to actually building up a socialist youth movement.

The colossal impact of the miners' strike has the potential to change this situation. In the course of the greatest class struggle outside war for 60 years in Britain, an alternative to the pro-imperialist sectarian politics has begun to emerge in practice in the class struggle. The forces carrying out that alternative were the young men and women of the mining communities.

What is possible following that struggle is to build the LPYS in the image of the Scargill leadership of the NUM and in doing so to build up a campaigning political alternative to Militant's leadership within the LPYS.

NEVER SHORT of ingenuity, Labour Party apparatniks have dreamed up a new and esoteric way of killing two birds with one stone. Seeking to stop the spread of black sections throughout the party and, at the same time, to give a helping hand to their favourites in the current round of MP reselection, they are instructing constituencies that each general committee delegate attending the reselection meeting must 'sign the pledge' before they are allowed to participate.

Every single delegate of every single constituency party is expected to sign an undertaking to uphold a non-existent rule, the effect of which will be to prevent delegates from black sections (which the party refuses to recognise) voting on who should be their candidate in the next general election. But there is no provision in the party constitution that allows the national executive to interfere in this way.

By Carol Turner

This 'loyalty oath' is designed to mop up the effects of the recent upsurge of black activity in the party, which find a reflection in the party, fairly and squarely where it belongs — with the ruling class who are the real beneficiaries of any such divisions — Militant demand black people cease and desist from their campaign to break up the racism of the Labour Party. The Militant tendency claims that this demand is in the interest of 'working class unity'. It is in fact, objectively speaking, in the interest of the right wing.

# mpaigning LPYS!



constituencies out of five, support the black caucus. Liverpool Trades Council and the Liverpool city council joint shop stewards support their position, as well as TGWU, NUPE, NATFHE, ASTMS, NUT and 70 black organisations.

Liz explained: 'In face of all this, the District Labour Party which is *Militant*-controlled has defeated motions encapsulating our demands on three separate occasions. If the Labour Party is a broad church, as is claimed, then we should be able to hear the voice of black people. Our position on Mr Bond will not change, because what we are talking about is the question of the oppression of black people.'

'This is not just an issue for black people. We want your solidarity and support. As we say in Liverpool: we will stay and we will fight. No more Bondage!'

Not all of the Labour left has the same attitude as *Militant* of course. Many constituencies are already supporting the black sections' demands.

Vauxhall, in South London, is one such local party. A black section has already been set up, with full voting representation on the general committee. Like others they have recently received Walworth Road's new dictat.

Reaction came sharp and quick. Bryn Davies, Vauxhall's GLC councillor, slapped down a resolution to the GC, rejecting the proposals of the national executive and demanding that, subject to consultation with affiliated organisations and ward parties, the constituency refuse to comply. It was carried with only three votes against.

## Accountability

Bryn says: 'There is no provision in the constitution for the national executive to stop people being delegates. The issue for us is that our delegates are accountable to their branches — not the NEC.'

'The loyalty pledge directly undercuts the accountability of GC delegates. I am personally in full support of black sections and will argue this view in my branch.'

Marc Wadsworth, also a member of Vauxhall Labour Party, is elected to the Black Section Steering Committee. He was forthright in his view of the latest attack on black self-organisation. 'This is a classic tactic,' he said, 'of the right wing. They are determined to crush everyone in their path.'

'The loyalty pledge should be extremely concerning to the whole of the movement. All those on the left should close ranks against a new round of witch-hunts — which is what this move against black sections means. Whether you support the right of black sections to exist and being opposed to the witch-hunt are twin issues.'

'The Black Section Steering Committee believes that, conference decision or not, black rights in the party are non-negotiable. Our policy is for black representation in the reselection process and for more black MPs in parliament.'

'Black sections aren't just about recruitment to the party, they're about recruiting activists. To accept the pledge would be a stab in the back of the black community.'

'The pledge is only the thin end of the wedge. Vauxhall Labour Party GC has taken a strong stand. We want the wards and the affiliated organisations to do the same.'

*Militant* should take a leaf out of the Vauxhall book. What they have to learn from the battle for the black sections, in the words of Liz Drysdale who paraphrases the famous poem, is this: 'They came for black people first, they came for the women next, and then they will come for everybody. You can't save yourself by turning your backs on other people as they didn't concern you.'

# Militant and black people

This is the section of the party, and the labour movement as a whole, which has most to fear from increased participation by black people. The same arguments have already been rehearsed during the past few years of debate around the demands of women in the party.

It has been argued that women are ghettoised into women's sections. Far from enabling them to better express and represent their interests through all-women discussion and organisation, the right wing and *Militant* alike say that women's special interests should be taken up by the party as a whole.

## Special measures

Of course, women agree with this. But they also understand that special measures are needed to make sure this is the case. In the Labour Party, these 'special measures' start with women's sections. Active women's sections help recruit women to the party, and once recruited, help them articulate with confidence their political opinions, and — most important — organise to put them into practice.

One of the clearest examples of this during the miners' strike was Chesterfield Labour Party's women's organisation. Starting as a canvass team — and the most successful one — during the by-election at the beginning of 1984, the women turned themselves into the Women's Action Group and immediately plunged wholeheartedly into support for the miners' strike.

The truth of this argument isn't evident just in local examples either. The

Labour women's conferences, regional and national, consistently take progressive positions on all aspects of politics. And Labour women are in the forefront of mass campaigns such as Greenham.

During the Malvinas war, Labour women demanded that the British fleet be withdrawn. This year's London Labour women's conference came out in support of Britain leaving NATO. These are only two examples out of many.

The same goes for black people. The most oppressed sections of society have little material interest in upholding the status quo, in society in general or the Labour Party in particular. It is in the interests of all socialists in the labour movement to support demands for self-organisation.

## Reactionary

But since the movement for black sections in the party first began, *Militant* have openly campaigned against them. They have lined up with Labour's right wing time and again to block the aspirations of black activists, using the same reactionary arguments that have been used — and proved wrong — against women.

All this said, one of the most telling arguments against the *Militant* tendency is an extremely practical one: the fact that they feel constrained to put forward those arguments through their own (misguided) black members. At party conference, at regional conferences, in the Young Socialists, and wherever possible in the constituencies,

it is their black members who are expected to front their arguments against black self-organisation. This in itself is a compliment to the strength of black activism in the party.

## Bankruptcy

In Liverpool, where the *Militant* tendency are politically dominant, they've had ample opportunity to demonstrate in practice the bankruptcy of their views. Since the appointment of Sam Bond (a *Militant* supporter from Brent in London) as race relations chief for the city council, the Liverpool black caucus have picketed the council offices and openly organised against the council's attitude.

Liz Drysdale from the black caucus explained it thus: 'The Sam Bond affair isn't the first dispute that Liverpool's black community has had with the council, but it's symptomatic of the problem with the politics of *Militant*.'

'They say the black caucus isn't representative of the community as a whole. But we are representative of all the black organisations in the community: Chinese, Caribbeans, Asians and so on. They, and the trade unions in the city support us.'

'The dispute over Sam Bond's appointment as such is a diversion. But I want to put you in the picture. About this time last year we were having a whole series of problems in our liaison with the *Militant*-dominated city council.'

'The issue was their exact commitment to fighting racism and to positive action for black people. In that context



**Black Caucus Support Group**

Liverpool Trades Council: N.T.U.C.U.R.C.  
 Westley Hill C.P.: Riverside C.P.: Picton Ward  
 U.P.: Southside Ward U.P.: Grandby Ward U.P.: Arundel Ward  
 U.P.: Merrylea Ward U.P.: Vauxhall Ward U.P.: Tabor  
 M.A.S.: M.I.T.S.: M.C.S.T.U.: M.P.C.

Small Association: All  
 Centre: Caribbean  
 Community Organisation: All  
 Circle of Liberty  
 Friends: All  
 Pakistan Women  
 Association: All  
 Sheppard: Arch  
 Bishop: Northwick: St.  
 Bernard: Church: St.  
 Margaret: Centre: St.  
 Redhill: Centre: St.  
 Tech Centre: L2  
 M.C.S.: All: L2  
 L.A.: Centre: Charles  
 Weston: Centre: St.  
 Progressions: Centre: St.  
 Advisory: Centre: St.  
 Women: Technology  
 Centre: L2  
 Profile Group: University of Liverpool Sociology Dept.  
 Dept. of Principles & Community Council: M.I.T.S.  
 M.P.C.: Labour Party Black Sections: South  
 Liverpool: Personal: M.I.T.S.: Postmill Lane  
 City: M.I.T.S.: Liverpool Black Women Group  
 SHOW YOUR SOLIDARITY IN OUR COMMON STRUGGLE

Send your letters of support to: The Black Caucus Support Group, 105 & 107 Moorfields, Liverpool, L3 5SH

Send your letters of protest to: John Henson, Leader of the City Council, 105 & 107 Moorfields, Liverpool, L3 5SH

AN INDUSTRY HAS BEEN DONE — IT MUST BE SEEN TO BE UNDONE!

one of the issues that had been on the table since 1981 was the establishment of a race relations committee.' Bond was appointed against the wishes of the Liverpool black caucus, and they organised to protest it. Support gathered from the Liverpool labour movement.

To date 11 out of 33 Labour-controlled wards in Liverpool, and two

THE ARTICLE we reproduce below appeared as a prominently displayed double page spread in *Republican News* — the political newspaper supported by Sinn Fein in Ireland. It shows the complete identity of the Republican movement with the goals and methods of struggle of the British miners.

*Republican News* had not wanted to make any public comments whilst the strike was on for fear that any such overt support might be used against the miners by the Tories. But Republicans had participated massively in the raising of funds and solidarity for the miners in Ireland.

It is clear from the article that *Republican News* had followed the strike closely. The article is particularly sensitive to and supportive of the miners efforts to reach out to women, black people and other oppressed and exploited layers.

The British miners' strike was from the very start, a highly political strike. It was not simply an attempt to win higher wages from a reluctant employer. Rather, it became a confrontation about a fundamental question: should society be organised for the benefit of present and future generations of working people, or should it be organised to make profits for a few multinational capitalists?

On the one hand, Margaret Thatcher and her government plan to ruthlessly reduce the mining industry to a few 'superpits' in the central coalfields. These would be equipped with the latest technology and be highly productive, with few miners and a weakened union, and could then be sold off to multinational mining enterprises.

Pits in the outlying areas, and the communities that depend on them, would be left to die, and the miners and their children would be forced to join the army of at least four million unemployed that Thatcherite policies have already produced.

The miners, for their part, argue that the coal industry should be organised for the benefit of both those who work in it and for the community as a whole and that long-term plans should be made for the careful exploitation of Britain's greatest natural resource. It does not make sense either in social or economic terms to destroy communities, to swell the ranks of the unemployed or to leave viable pits producing high quality coal to rot for lack of investment.

The attack on the miners is part of

# Sinn Fein assesses the miners' strike



Photo: MARTIE VOLK

a long-term strategy, also being implemented in other nationalised industries and in the welfare services, of restructuring the British economy in the interests of multinational capitalism. The miners have recognised, as Arthur Scargill has repeatedly stated, that they are in the frontline of the fight not just for their own jobs, but for everybody's jobs. In failing to support them, other trade unionists are undermining their own position.

As far back as 1978, right-wing Tory MP Nicholas Ridley drafted a report on Conservative policies for the nationalised industries.

This put forward contingency plans for a miners' strike which included: building up coal stocks, particularly at power stations, introducing dual coal/oil-firing in all power

stations, cutting off state benefits to strikers and equipping and preparing a large mobile squad of police to act against violent pickets. 'Good non-union drivers', the report said, should be recruited to cross picket lines with police protection.

When the Tories came to power, these plans were swiftly implemented. They organised their defences and prepared to beat and starve the miners back to work. Coal stocks were tripled, generating stations were switched to more flexible fuel and the policing plans were acted on. Laws were brought in to make mass picketing and secondary picketing illegal and to the establishment that are treated as a priority.

At the same time, the government moved to cut off funds to the miners

and their families. Although the National Union of Mineworkers was not severely restrict the payment of social security benefits to strikers' families.

The British government has thrown every available weapon into the battle: public money, the police, the law, the media, 'divide-and-rule' tactics. Under this onslaught, tens of thousands of miners and their communities have been politicised to an extent not seen in Britain since before World War Two. Many swear that they will never see the state through the same eyes again.

The government's plan to develop a few pits and leave the rest to die meant that 'divide-and-rule' was an obvious tactic. The strike started with miners at threatened pits coming out. The NUM leadership's decision to transform this into a national strike without a ballot was to provide a propaganda weapon for the government.

But, as the striking miners pointed out: 'Why should we allow people in safe jobs to vote away the jobs of other people?' The Tory Party and the Coal Board worked behind the scenes to set up scabs' committees. Business tycoons poured in money and some of Thatcher's advisers assisted in planning the 'back-to-work' campaign and designing advertising material for it. Using the so-called working miners as a cover, Tory lawyers initiated a succession of legal actions against the NUM.

In pursuit of its objective, the British government has poured huge amounts of public money down the drain. It paid £1.5 million to buy veteran union-breaker Ian MacGregor from an American merchant bank to make him the 'axeman', first of British Steel and then of the Coal Board. By the end of the miners' strike, over £3,000 million had been spent — much of it on importing coal and oil for the power stations — in order to achieve an annual saving of £250 million.

As with the occupation of the Six Counties, which costs British taxpayers some £1,500 million per year, and of the Falklands-Malvinas, which costs more than £1,000 million annually, it is the long-term interests of

paying strike pay, the 1980 Employment Act 'deemed' that strikers were receiving £16 per week from their union and their social security benefits were reduced by that amount. So two adults with two school-age children were receiving just £24.75 a week. Single men got nothing. Also, legal action by the National Working Miners' Committee succeeded in freezing the £6.8 million assets of the NUM, which meant that funds for financing flying pickets ran out.

While financial hardship was the main factor forcing miners back to work, it paradoxically also helped to produce the most remarkable feature of the strike: the unprecedented mobilisation of women. Women in mining communities have traditionally been confined to the home, but over the last twelve months thousands have decided to 'stand up and be counted'.

They have organised women's action groups in all areas and allied with feminists to form the national Women Against Pit Closures movement. They have raised money, bought food and provided regular meals for the strikers day in and day out. Women with no previous political experience have toured Britain and abroad speaking at meetings, joined picket lines and gone to prison and suffered degrading strip-searches.

The massive and sophisticated policing operation against the strike has brought many in the mining communities to see the British state in a different light. In effect, Britain's local police forces have been welded into a national force through the National Reporting Centre, a co-ordinating body based at Scotland Yard. Aided by a computer, this arranged the deployment of police around the country — it arranged 220,000 assignments in the first 10 weeks of the strike alone, from a pool of 13,500 men.

The police operate in squads of 23 officers known as 'police support units', which have received riot training which includes the 'snatch squad' technique as developed in the Six Counties.

Suddenly, villages where relations with the local 'bobby' had generally been friendly found themselves besieged by vast numbers of often brutal police. The use of police cordons around Nottinghamshire, of road blocks, and of riot shields provoked many comparisons by miners and their supporters with the situation in the Six Counties.

Many hundreds have been arrested, and extraordinary bail conditions have been imposed, preventing strikers from picketing anywhere in the country or attending demonstrations or addressing meetings.

Miners' anger has been compounded by the media coverage, which gave massive coverage of picket line violence but said nothing about police brutality. Whereas everyone in Britain has heard of the taxi-driver who was accidentally killed, few have heard of the two pickets who died, Davy Jones and Joe Green.

Throughout, television and the press have behaved — as they do in Ireland — like agents of the British government, trying to persuade the strikers back to work, attacking Arthur Scargill and failing to present the reasons for the dispute. 'I don't know anyone who buys the *Sun* newspaper any more,' said one miner.

As a result of their treatment by government, police and media, and indeed the shameful behaviour of Labour Party leader Neil Kinnock, who failed to support the strike, many in the mining communities have come to see British politics in a new light. They are developing a new solidarity with Britain's black communities, who have given a lot of support.

The reaction of many to the Brighton bomb was 'Pity they bloody missed'. There is the beginning of an understanding about Britain's role in Ireland, which, hopefully can now be developed.

● This article is reproduced from the 14 March edition of *Republican News*.





# NATO—the case for withdrawal

ERIC HEFFER and Tony Bebn last week presented a paper to the Labour Party National Executive Committee arguing the case for withdrawal from NATO. NATO membership is currently Labour Party policy, endorsed at successive conferences.

We print below in full the paper presented to the NEC.

THIS PAPER argues that the time is ripe for a discussion about Britain's membership of NATO and it attempts to set out the arguments for and against that course.

## The case for remaining in NATO.

1. Membership of NATO is Labour policy as endorsed by successive Labour conferences.
2. To reopen that issue now would be divisive and might harm Labour's prospects for re-election.
3. If that argument is resumed it might reopen the Party's commitment to a non-nuclear defence policy and the removal of all US nuclear bases in Britain.
4. Public opinion, much of which still accepts the idea of a Soviet military threat, may not be ready to countenance so radical a change in Britain's defence and foreign policy, after nearly 40 years during which it was part of the all-party consensus.
5. There are other and more urgent policy priorities.

## The case for re-opening the question of NATO membership

Labour Conference policy actually calls for the

simultaneous disbandment of both the Warsaw Pact and NATO, and the substitution of a pan-European security system. This year, 1985, the Warsaw Pact comes up for renewal, and therefore it would be very appropriate for us to raise the possibility of disbanding NATO now, before the Warsaw Pact powers decide on the future of their alliance.

## Cold

NATO was established to deal with the possibility of a Soviet attack upon Western Europe, and this assumption has been the basis of all western military thinking since the cold war began, though there is no factual basis for that assumption and while people continue to believe it they may never accept Labour's non-nuclear policy.

NATO is dominated by the USA and is seen in Washington as a way of maintaining American hegemony in Europe, just as her other defence pacts — like SEATO and ANZUS — do in other parts of the world.

NATO ministers have tended to take the collec-

tive defence spending decisions of member states out of the normal public expenditure procedures, requiring them to expand at a fixed percentage at the expense of social programmes, a process that could lead to the joint financing of the 'Star Wars' project where much of the production work will be done in America.

American bases and nuclear weapons in Britain are under the umbrella of NATO, and as we are seeing in the case of the New Zealand government, a refusal to allow US nuclear weapons in their ports has produced an angry US response, including the threat of trade sanctions and exclusion from ANZUS.

Public opposition to the siting of US cruise missiles, as at the Greenham Common and Molesworth bases, has led the government to use military and police powers to crush civil liberties; and much of the Civil Defence planning is, in reality, designed to deal with dissenters.

## Bases

Despite the argument that the acceptance of US bases, and the existence of our own nuclear deterrent, gives Britain influence with the USA and a seat at the top table arms control talks, this country is excluded from all the superpower disarmament negotiations, and has



precious little influence on their outcome.

The reality of the so-called special relationship with the USA is that we are a client state, dependent on the provision of US military technology and intelligence for the building and operation of our nuclear weapons, and are expected, in return, to accept their missiles here and furnish them with all the intelligence that we gather through our own security services, the Special Branch and GCHQ.

Meanwhile the continual propaganda about the imminence of a Soviet military threat acts as a means of identifying all domestic critics as 'traitors' or 'subversives'. In addition, our member-

ship of NATO effectively freezes out any British foreign policy initiative that might be taken to reduce tension in Europe or develop closer links with the USSR or Eastern Europe.

It is beginning to be clear that, for all these reasons, an incoming Labour government would not be able to implement its existing policy without facing implacable US and NATO opposition, and thus those who have argued that there is an inherent contradiction between Labour's present defence policies, and our commitment to remain in NATO, are correct.

## Conclusion and recommendations

These issues should now be made the subject of a full, realistic public debate, conducted inside and outside the party, so that we can come forward with a fresh policy statement — designed to prepare the way for withdrawal from NATO

— to be put to conference with a view to including it in our next election manifesto.

Such a statement would need to be entirely positive and to spell out how we see Britain's foreign and defence policy role in pursuit of detente and cooperation in the United Nations, in the whole of Europe, and in our work for peace, development, democracy and justice in the rest of the world.

This would be a major undertaking, designed to develop a new, and distinctive, Labour approach and it should be set in hand as soon as possible.

# Cruise action now!

'THE WANDERING tribes came together' is how the *Observer* described the 500 CND activists from all strands of the peace movement — Greenham, Molesworth, cruisewatch, NVDA, Comiso, Holland, Denmark — who took over Manchester Town Hall (with the council's blessing and 100 per cent cooperation) for a cruise conference on the weekend of 16-17 March.

Saturday started off on a high with some excellent speakers. But the ovation was reserved for women from Greenham and Italy.

Thirty workshops ran simultaneously, with videos, TVs, stalls, and exhibitions. Everyone exchanged ideas and planned how cruise could be kicked out. The conference was very exciting. The only sour note came from James Hinton, the lone national CND representative.

By Mary Kelly

He suggested that at Molesworth at Easter people should refrain from actions until after 3.30pm — in case of trouble!

Sunday started with a vigil at Manchester Cathedral organised by Helen John to show solidarity with the people of Belgium and the women from the Pacific who had spoken so movingly of their nuclear problems.

People had been asked to let the organisers know what they wanted from conference, and all these ideas were taken into the final workshops on Sunday afternoon.

At the workshop I attended the general feeling was that national CND must broaden their

horizons to avoid a split with the activists who condemned them for not coming out on the side of the miners.

People felt CND must spend more money on actions as opposed to media coverage. Also they were unhappy at the way the chair at national CND conference had manipulated the meeting to stop a miner being invited to speak.

The cruise conference was not mandated to move resolutions and demand changes, but they suggested that CND back the women from the Pacific in their fight against nuclear weapons and that a special group be set up to deal solely with cruise.

Conference brought a lot of fresh ideas and new ways of campaigning against cruise. Credit really must go to Rusholme and Longsight CND and Greenham Umbrella Group for their magnificent organisation.

On a sad note: in the early hours of Monday morning my telephone tree broke the news that cruise was out again. This shows just how much the conference of cruise activists was necessary, and that cruise must continue to be the main focus for peace movement activists in the months to come.

# El Salvador on film

IN THE Name of the People is a new film shot in El Salvador's liberated zones. Watching it drew many parallels with the miners' strike, but multiplied and intensified a thousand times over.

Watching government soldiers spread-eagling peasant suspects and kicking their heads brought back picket line memories. But, here, five miners died in the last 12 months of struggle. In El Salvador, 50,000 have died over five years.

To fight a government army financed, trained and equipped by the USA, the popular opposition (the FMLN-FDR) has had to mobilise and organise the whole population in the zones it controls — about a third of the country. Like the miners' support networks, but running everything — and fighting a war.

Everything is organised around the struggle. To take part you have to read and write, so the guerrillas run schools — for everyone, not just the kids. You have to eat, so there is collective organisation of food, from crop cultivation to canteens.

You have to fight, so everyone gets arms training. You have to keep healthy, so the guerrilla para-medics run both emergency surgery for the wounded and basic health care for the general population — the first it has ever had.

experience of women in the miners' strike here, everyone takes part — the kids run messages — women run food distribution and fight with the guerrilla units.

By Paul Atkin

These people are fighting a society that only has room for them as silent, powerless and expendable units. Many of them have returned to El Salvador from refugee camps in Honduras. Only in the liberated zones can they survive, rebuild their lives and defend themselves.

The film does not glorify or prettify the war. Sequences late in the film of a guerrilla sortie into San Salvador show two comrades killed in action, and shots of the El Salvador army — up to that point an unseen threat, picked up at a distance on crackling radios — in a very



vigorous counterattack, display a homicidal toughness that may be taut to snapping point. But they show the struggle ahead will be long and hard.

It also shows why the government cannot win in the end. Against popular mobilisation based on popular needs, the oligarchy and the USA can only pit a ruthless killing machine half-drunk on its own violence.

The film's politics are low key. It doesn't go into the situation since the election of Duarte nor elaborate on the FMLN-FDR proposals for negotiation. But it does look at the position on the ground — gives a glimpse of the way the war is experienced by the population. As such it has played to big audiences in the USA (even getting into the *Variety* 'Top 100 Films' list).

At just over an hour long it's very useful for meetings and deserves widespread showings through the solidarity and labour movements.

● In the Name of the People opens at Rio, Dalston, Sunday 14 April. Hire in 16mm or VHS Video from: The Other Cinema, 79 Wardour St, London W1C 13TH (01 734 8508/9).

# Crisis in Peru

**THE DEFEAT of Bolivia's general strike, alongside the constitutional crisis triggered in Brazil by the near fatal illness of president elect Tancredo Neves, shows a new and contradictory phase in the so called 'democratisation' of Latin America's 'Southern Cone'. The coming elections in Peru make the situation even more complicated.**

Below we reprint an interview with **JORGE LUCAR**, a leader of the Peruvian Revolutionary Workers Party (PRT). It first appeared in the Spanish weekly *Combate*.

**HOW IS the Peruvian left approaching these general elections on April 14th?**

It is the first time in history that the left is united. There is a left alternative with a real chance of coming to government, the United Left (IU). Then there is APRA, which in effect is the bourgeoisie's fallback option. It's almost certain that the second round will find APRA facing IU.

There is at present a tremendous process of radicalization. 80 per cent of the mass organisations are controlled by IU. Many people without party commitments are wary of APRA, whose traditions they see as bureaucratic, violent and coercive: in the end they may opt for IU.

**But APRA presents itself as nationalist, democratic and socialist. Can it possibly ally with the right?**

APRA's aim is to win the elections at the first round. This is not the same populist APRA of 30 years ago. Today it has lost the leadership of the trade union and popular movements. Its main enemy is IU, and that will force APRA to ally with the right.

**You speak of the left in general, but what of the revolutionary left? How is it approaching the elections?**

There are two basic questions for the revolutionary left. The first is that there is a battle for the left to win hegemony in the country. Today this battle is against APRA. We are all agreed on this. Nonetheless, within the left there is another battle over which current has the lead.

One of the currents in the left sees the elections as an end in themselves — believing that it would be possible to have a government of the left which

would call on APRA to participate in the government and so make a historic compromise with the Armed Forces. A process of radical reform would be initiated, without questioning the limits of bourgeois democracy. This current is in a majority on IU's executive committee and is personified by Alfonso Barrantes, together with the Peruvian Communist Party, the Revolutionary Socialist Party and a number of independents.

The other pole is the revolutionary current, which understands the need to fight on the electoral field in order to win hegemony in the country, but thinks it would be foolish to imagine we can take power through elections, or that the right and the Armed Forces would respect the outcome if we did win the elections. We see the elections as a means of mobilizing people and carrying on the political struggle, but in the end we believe things will not be decided by a vote, but by a confrontation that inevitably will be violent.

**Are the revolutionary currents in IU united? What do they have in common?**

There's the Unity of the Revolutionary Left (UNIR), of Maoist origins, which is one of the largest organisations in IU. There's the Mariateguista Unification Party (PUM), which was previously the Popular Democratic Unity, and for some years ran on roughly Maoist lines. Together with the PRT, and some other organisations, these groups all share some basic judgements: the country is heading for confrontation and inevitably this will be violent; that the fight now is expressed in electoral tasks.

The lessons of the Nicaraguan revolution, of the struggles against dictatorships in the southern cone, of Solidarnosc, pose a series of new questions. For example, that the seizure of power doesn't necessarily mean a single party, but might involve a plurality of parties. We want to discuss this, and many other things, together.

**The experience of the Mariateguista Unification Party (PUM) is an interesting one. How does this fit into what you've just been saying?**

The founding of the PUM has been very important. Firstly because it has turned into a proper party with clear discipline. Secondly, it has allowed a series of vague and imprecise positions to be spelt out clearly. The last programme of the Revolutionary Vanguard one of the main components of the PUM, was a Stalinist programme. Now, eight years later, the PUM is a revolutionary organisation with extremely advanced programmatic positions. For example, the incorporation of these on the party's democratic internal regime. Objectively, this is a step forwards, even if they still display a lot of sectarianism towards ourselves.

The PUM still see themselves as the leading force, somewhat in contradiction with their programmatic positions, and there are still internal struggles, but it is certainly a positive development. **You say that violent confrontation is inevitable. Yet in some areas of the country such confrontation is already taking place. What is your attitude towards Sendero Luminoso (SL)?** What's happening in Ayacucho, Huancavelica and Apurimac is what will inevitably happen in the rest of the country. SL has real roots in sectors of the peasant movement. Many of its leaders are real leaders of the peasant movement, and have been for 10 or 15 years. They have led land seizures and so on. That's one reason why SL has been able to resist repression of the most extreme brutality.

**But what are your differences with Sendero Luminoso?**

The difference is not that they are in favour of armed struggle and we are not. It is over whether this is the right time to be launching armed actions and whether the way they are carried out is right or not. SL places no value on the role of mass organisations whilst for the revolutionary currents this is fundamental. What is more there is a problem of democracy. SL is a deeply Stalinist and intolerant organisation. This, in a country with so many mass organisations, comes into contradiction with our continuous calls for a united front.



## Cape of storms — South Africa

**HARDLY a day passes now without reports of increased repression in South Africa as the government confronts the growing anger and militancy of the oppressed. The killing of 19 people at Uitenhage — the liberation organisations maintain that the true figure is nearer 40 — only attracted universal attention because it took place on the anniversary of the Sharpsville massacre twenty-five years before.**

Earlier in the year, 18 people died at the hands of the police in the squatter township, Crossroads. In South Africa shooting blacks is the government's idea of maintaining 'law and order'.

In less than seven months since the new constitution came into force, (hailed by South Africa's imperialist allies as a great step forward!) more than 200 people have been killed by the police. Some 600 were killed in Soweto and other townships in 1976.

As the *Guardian* stated: 'There is nothing unique or unprecedented about Langa except for the macabre coincidence that it took place on the twenty-fifth anniversary of Sharpsville. It could have happened at any time ...'

Why has black South Africa exploded in a wave of unrest and protest? Undoubtedly the movement against the racist regime, which is endemic, has reached boiling point because of the worsening recession, increased unemployment and rising cost of living.

The recent budget, which included an increase in the general sales tax and which followed sharp increases in the price of petrol, airline tariffs, and postage costs has contributed to rising prices generally without a commensurate increase in workers' incomes. As black workers get no unemployment relief their

families face increasing and unbearable hardship.

**By Charlie van Gelderen**

All outdoor meetings, except sport gatherings and bona fide church gatherings are already banned. Now the banning has been extended to all indoor meetings dealing with boycotts of schools and universities. In the so-called independent Ciskei homeland a number of members of UDF and South Africa Allied Workers Union have been arrested. The Ciskei is a commuter area for the industrial complex of the Eastern Cape which includes Uitenhage.

The government will not accept that the risings in the townships are the spontaneous outburst of a people who have taken all they can take, and are desparately looking for scapegoats among the leadership of the liberation movements. Neither the UDF nor the NF are structured to give leadership to the kind of militancy now manifest. They are loose alliances of varied organisations united only by their opposition to apartheid.

Despite the arrests, the violence in the townships have not abated. Black policemen and members of the new township councils, who the people regard as collaborators, are increasingly coming under attack.

A feature of the current unrest is that it is not confined to the townships

and squatter camps near the great metropolitan conglomeration. It is also occurring in little known townships in the rural areas.

There can be no doubt that South Africa is approaching something like a pre-revolutionary situation. Quite certainly the oppressed classes are no longer prepared to quietly accept the rule of their oppressors. The ruling class is no longer confident that it can go on ruling in the old way.

That is why it has attempted to adapt to the new situation with 'reforms', only to find that these do not work because the oppressed are unwilling to be fobbed off by these half-baked measures. So the regime has to fall back on brute force despite the fact that this can only bring dismay to its imperialist allies, the United States and Western Europe, who fear for the safety of their investments.

But while the underlying cause for the militancy of the black people is economic there are also significant political factors at work. A feature of the revolts have been the attacks on the collaborationist black councillors in the townships.

The imposition of undemocratic community councils and bantustan authorities is a cause of deep resentment and a significant pointer to the growing political awareness of the masses. To this must be added the perennial demand for the abolition of the hated pass laws and the fight for equal education opportunities for Black scholars and students and the abolition of corporal punishment in the schools.

Faced with this massive wave of black revolt, the apartheid regime knows only one answer — increased repression. Even before the Langa shootings, after the successful campaign to boycott the elections to the new constitution, 16 opponents of the government — leaders of the United Democratic Front (UDF), from the black trade unions and the National Forum (NF) — were arrested and face charges of high treason for which the maximum penalty is death.

In the wake of the Uitenhage massacre, there has been a wave of arrests. Two hundred and thirty nine people, demonstrating against the shootings, were arrested in Cape Town when they marched on parliament. Among them were the church leaders Allan Boesak and Beyers Naude.

All public meetings calling for workers to stay at home in the Eastern Cape and the Vaal triangle — which includes Sharpsville and Soweto — has been banned for three months. All meetings of 29 anti-apartheid organisations in these districts, including those held by UDF, NF and AZAPO (Azania Peoples Organisation) are prohibited.

All this will be of no avail. In South Africa today, the government is confronted not only by the traditional nationalist liberation movement but by the growing strength of the working class organised in trade unions and closely integrated with the communities. These are the forces which will bring down the apartheid regime and the capitalist system with which it is bound up.





Colman Fasteners picket in Manchester

## Coleman fasteners now face jobs attack

JUST THREE days after returning to work, the strikers at Colman Fasteners in Manchester face the prospect of a major redundancy. The Company has announced its intention of axing 65 of its employees including 51 of the 162 shop floor workers! If the Company is seeking to build on the 3-week strike over wages in order to push through the job cuts then it has certainly misjudged the mood of the workforce and another confrontation in the near future seems certain. JON SILBERMAN, AUEW Convenor at the firm, explained to *Socialist Action*:

'The wage deal was only reluctantly accepted by the workforce. It has pushed the skilled rate up to £120.75p which is still £12-£15 behind the average for the area — which was our target. But the return to work in no way signalled that we had been defeated. On the contrary, we accepted the wage deal in the knowledge that we now have a new fight on our hands — to save our jobs.'

The workers considered staying out on

strike until the management gave a commitment that there would be no enforced redundancies. 'The will to fight on was there' Silberman says 'but our Executive Council member, Ken Cure, strongly advised against staying out on the basis that the jobs issue was a new one, and that we should go through the 'recognised procedure'.

'In fact, there was strong feeling for staying out on the wages question too, but again Ken Cure advised against, saying

that in his view the offer was the highest we'd get. So we decided to recommend a return to work and seek a mandate for a fight against enforced job cuts.' In the event, the mass meeting voted unanimously for immediate strike action in the event of any victimisation or compulsory redundancies, and the proceedings ended with chants of 'here we go, here we go!'

As the strike began to bite, so the strikers' confidence soared. At each mass meeting, the majority in favour of staying out increased, until on Thursday, 21st March, despite threats of closure and legal action against the union, and despite the fact that management actually mobilised for the mass meeting, only seven votes were cast for going back.

Within one hour of that mass meeting, Ken Cure had arranged a

meeting with the national Engineering Employers Federation over the heads of both the strikers and the local officials. Cure explained to the shop stewards and to John Tocher, the local Divisional Organiser, that because the strike had been made official by Executive Council it was then under the control of EC.

This view is certain to be hotly contested by the union locally and more generally in the run-up to the Union's Presidential election contest, in which John Tocher is the Broad Left candidate. In the event, the meeting went ahead, the stewards were excluded by the Company, and the formula for the return to work was reached. The role of the union leadership has also been a salutary lesson to the strikers — one which they will take with them into the next stage of the struggle.

## Yardley witch hunt

LABOUR'S NEC has confirmed the expulsion of two members of the Labour Party and the refusal to admit two new applicants to its Birmingham-Yardley constituency. A third member has also effectively been expelled, in that despite appealing against the refusal of the constituency to admit him he has never been interviewed.

The decision is an ominous one for three reasons. First, the three members excluded from Yardley were all transfers from other branches. Their membership was in order.

They have never been disciplined. Rather the transfer procedure has been used to prevent them joining the constituency in which they live because the local officers disapprove of their views. The NEC has de facto endorsed this.

By Mick Archer

Second, it is generally believed that a regional Labour Party enquiry supported them being accepted into membership. Normally such a recommendation would be endorsed by the appeals and mediation committee and the NEC itself. Not on this occasion.

When the recommendation came to the NEC, Ken Cure of the AUEW

intervened to block their acceptance. He inferred that fresh evidence had come to light. This so-called evidence has never been presented to the members concerned. Nor it seems has it ever been presented to the NEC.

In fact it is clear that Cure merely wanted to delay a decision until the climate was more favourable. The defeat of the miners' strike has seen a resurgence of the party's right wing, or what Roy Hattersely likes to call 'the real Labour Party'.

The Yardley 5 are amongst the first casualties. True to form Neil Kinnock supported the expulsions.

Third, reports suggest that the only evidence offered was the

assertion that all four were 'enthusiastic sellers' of Socialist Action. This is simply a lie, and show the character of the amalgam the witch-hunters are forced to construct.

Three of the five support and sell Socialist Action, and have openly stated this throughout the dispute. But Socialist Action is not proscribed and it is the ideas that it stands for, rather than the act of selling it, that concerns the Yardley officers.

When interviewed in Yardley all those expelled were subjected to questions about their support for CND and extra-parliamentary struggle.

The NEC's decision therefore creates a new situation where party ac-

## Rail unions still under attack

WHEN BRITISH RAIL announced this week that they were offering five per cent without productivity strings many railworkers felt a sense of relief that the threat of all out national strike had receded. But the issues remain the same. The five per cent offer is an insult to one of the lowest paid groups of workers in the country and job loss is still on the cards, both within the London Regional Transport authority and in the agreements already come to around one person operation and via local agreements.

BR management consider that its productivity proposals are 'already well down the road to agreement'. While the union negotiators are bound by Annual General Meeting not to discuss productivity the tactical approach of management is to pick off jobs grade by grade and depot by depot.

A big propaganda campaign has been launched about how freight income and jobs have been lost by the freight workers who refused to move coal during the miners strike. This lays the basis for getting rid of freight guards — but they were already scheduled for the axe under the BR Corporate Plan.

In the rail industry the unions set national policy but the regions, districts, and depots can reach so-called local agreements. This opens the door for national policies to be eroded from the base, for management to divide the workforce and crush the collective strength of the union.

For example within the last few days a letter has been circulating from the area manager at Willesden to every ASLEF driver within his authority. He makes the case that trains are being cancelled because of the shortage of drivers and therefore it is necessary for drivers to work their rest days. It is national policy for ASLEF not to work rest days, for a variety of reasons but primarily health and safety.

Who wants to put their faith in a train driven by someone who is working seven days a week, 12 hours a day which is quite common in other grades?

But this manager points out that drivers on

southern region do work rest days and its only the union leaders on his patch who are blocking this. He explicitly invites individual ASLEF members to scab on their union by telling them to contact him directly — 'after all its £40 a day extra and summer holidays are coming up...'

by Toni Gorton  
NUR Guard

It is important to note that the government in their initial flush of 'victory over the miners' have climbed down from going all out to take on the next sizeable sector of industrial workers. This reflects the balance of forces in the rail industry as well as society as a

whole. There is a proven will to fight against Tory attacks. Given leadership, workers will defend their livelihoods and living standards against the onslaught of government.

But the leadership of the rail unions are wobbling all over the place. Rumour has it that Knapp/Buckton will settle for the 5% on offer and allow the productivity deals to be made by the back door. The miners strike has shown how one union can't go it alone and neither can depots, branches or districts. The government hasn't dropped its plans for the railways its simply going about them in a different way.

The death of Beecham a few days ago is a salutary reminder of the failure of the rail unions to fight government during the '60s. This failure cost us 100,000 jobs, 2,000 route miles, 900 freight depots and 700 stations.

Whatever else happens, the rail leaders have made the case for a substantial increase in basic wages which still has to be fought for.

Stop Press: this article was written before the five per cent was accepted.

### Nottingham Socialist Action Day School

Saturday 13 April

'After the strike...the struggle continues'

10am to 6pm Queens Walk Community Centre, The Meadows, Nottingham

Social and Disco 7pm till 11pm

### The Third Socialist Action Miners Solidarity Meeting

Saturday April 20

### 'Lessons of the Miners Strike'

Snowdown Colliery Welfare Club (New Club)  
Ayelsham Kent

Workshops include Women's Liberation, Black Liberation, Ireland, the Young Socialists, the Labour Party and the Miner's strike, Internationalism and the Strike.

Registration will take place from 10am. First session starts 11am.

Transport: British Rail from Victoria to Ayelsham, Kent  
Road by the A2 to Dover.

Coaches from London tel 01-254 0128

# A Socialist ACTION

# Stop the missiles at Molesworth

**THIS COMING weekend there'll be a hell of a lot of people going to Molesworth, including lots who haven't been there before. This will bring the next round of support that will keep the protest against cruise going. Molesworth is still an empty field. With the right support, hopefully it will remain so.**

The importance of Molesworth is the commitment to keep it an empty field, that there's no second Greenham built in England. Later in the year we want joint action, so that bases like Faslane, Molesworth and Greenham come together to show that we're not working in competition but working in greater cooperation.

The star marches will be passing Alconbury. We should use this opportunity to link Alconbury and Molesworth. That hasn't happened so far.

Alconbury is already functioning, with spyplanes in place. It will be the control base for Molesworth.

This weekend will be a testing one. On Sunday night there will be vigils and so forth taking place, which will set the scene for crunch time on Monday.

That's when we'll see how the police behave. The Ministry of Defence are very nervous. There's already been 60 arrests at Greenham to date. New by-laws have been enacted to make entering the bases illegal, which heralds a different phase.

**By Helen John, Greenham Women Against Cruise**

We don't know how fast that phase is going ahead or what's actually going to come out of that. But of course, it isn't the demonstrators themselves who decide how the police behave.

Symbolically the fence is already in place at Molesworth. During the weekend events it will be constantly challenged. The base security will be undermined.

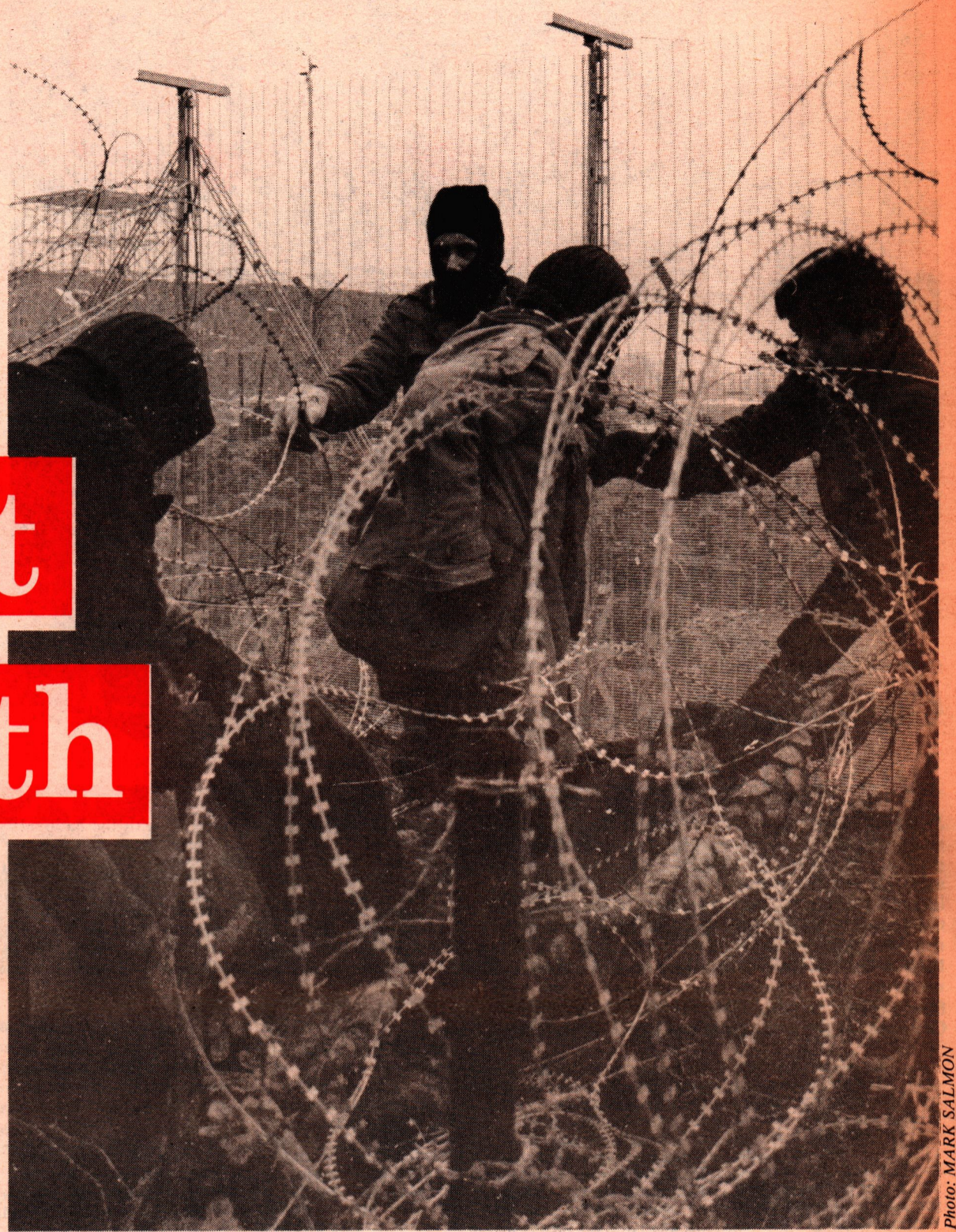
That's what the people

involved in the pledge understand: they've been chivvying away ever since the MoD itself gave such good publicity to the base by evicting the Rainbow Villagers. We should thank them for helping make Easter a success!

Introducing by-laws now, for Easter, doesn't make much difference — that constant undermining of security will continue. The MoD police know that.

What I would like to see most of all though is a greater commitment from the trade union movement. When Arthur Scargill made his speech in Chesterfield on International Women's Day, he said the mining communities and the NUM are going to put a very high profile into the peace movement opposing cruise, Trident and Pershing.

I am really looking forward to that transferring itself into action at the bases. Then perhaps the NUM can inspire the other unions to do their bit as well.



Molesworth: the fence is already up

Photo: MARK SALMON

## New protests at Greenham

**GREENHAM WOMEN are calling for a month of protest in and around the base in response to new by-laws passed by Newbury council. In force from April Fools' Day, they allow women to be fined £100 for entering the base and decorating the fence.**

The action is also in support of Rebecca Johnson, on trial at Reading for entering a control tower and facing three months' jail. Meanwhile new inner fences of fine-mesh and barbed wire — are being rapidly constructed at Greenham.

**By Ilona, Aronovsky, London Region CND**

Last Saturday saw a farewell party at Green Gate for two women from the Nuclear Free Independent Pacific movement who had been on a tour in Britain organised by Greenham women.

Chailang Salacios from Micronesia (US strategic trust territory) spoke of the effects of nuclear testing and dumping on the Pacific Islands. Sixty per cent of babies born there are deformed.

Titewai Harawira, a Maori woman, spoke of

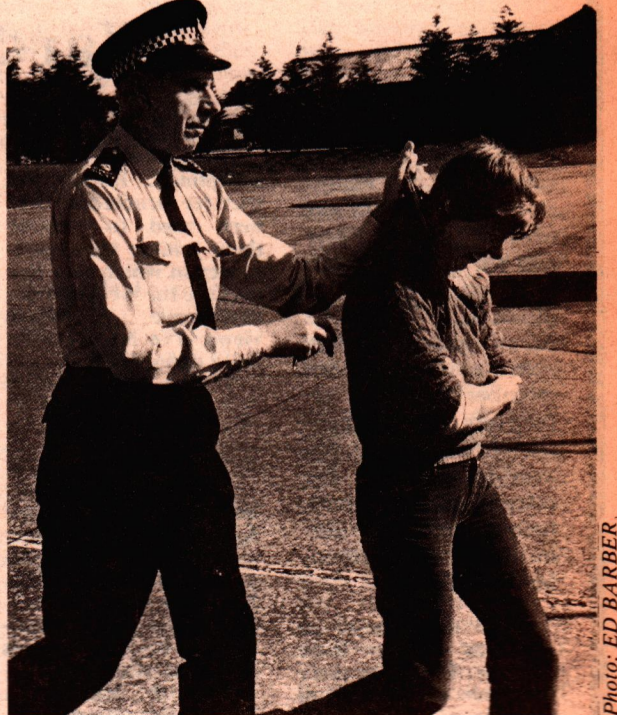
the fight for national self-determination of the 'first world nations' in the Pacific and New Zealand against colonialism, racism, and the US nuclear bases and weapons, testing and dumping by US, France and Japan.

She quoted Henry Kissinger in 1969, who said of the West Pacific: 'There are only 90,000 people out there. Who gives a damn?'

Women are still needed to stay regularly at the camp. This remains urgent because the numbers are still low and the evictions are continual.

A night-watch rota is now being organised, linking in with successful tracking of the missiles when they leave the base by cruisewatch, which London groups are now becoming involved in.

● London women have now found office space, and the next meeting to discuss organising a rota is on 10 April at 52 Featherstone Street, near Old Street.



Helen John, founder member of the all-women camp at Greenham was arrested many times in the early days of the cruise campaign

Photo: ED BARBER

# SUBSCRIBE

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

Name .....  
Address .....

Please send me as special offer .....  
I enclose cheque/PO payable to Socialist Action for £ .....  
Send to: Socialist Action Subs, PO Box 50, London N1 2XP.

## Special free book offer!

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

**Thatcher and Friends** by John Ross

OR  
**Over Our Dead Bodies — Women Against the Bomb**

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