

# Socialist Organiser

## Demonstrate against apartheid

Demonstrate against apartheid! Saturday 2  
November, London. Called by AAM.



No.248 17 October 1985 25p Claimants and strikers 10p

# APARTHEID'S RACIST FRIEND

At the Commonwealth conference this week Britain's Tory government will be condemned for its cooperation with the white racist regime in South Africa.

It will be condemned even by Bob Hawke, prime minister of a country which until the 1960s had immigration policies aimed at a 'White Australia' and which still today keeps its indigenous black population oppressed and degraded.

On South Africa, the Thatcher government stands almost alone in the world — even less willing to put pressure on the white regime than Ronald Reagan's USA.

Why? Because there is money at stake.

Of 2,000-odd multinationals present in South Africa, 1,200 are British.

British capital's total investments in the apartheid state, direct and indirect, are worth about £11 billion — 40 to 45% of all foreign investment in the country. British direct investment in South Africa represents almost 10% of all British investment world-wide.

The biggest British companies in South Africa include ICI (through its associate AECI); Metal Box;

Blue Circle; NEI; Dunlop; Barclays; Standard Chartered and Hill Samuel banks; Rio Tinto Zinc; Shell and BP.

Altogether Britain draws about £1.2 billion per year from South Africa in profits, dividends, and other 'invisibles'. South Africa is, or at least was until recently, one of the most profitable capitalist economies in the world.

As of March this year, only 29 out of the 139 biggest British companies in South Africa recognised non-racial trade unions. At least 1800 black workers in British firms were paid below minimum subsistence levels, most of them employed by the notorious privatisation-merchant Pritchards.

British capital profits from the white supremacy state. That gives British workers a special responsibility — but also special leverage.

As part of the broad campaign of solidarity with the liberation movement in South Africa, British workers in firms with South African subsidiaries should establish links with the nonracial unions in those firms and take action in Britain to force the firms to concede the non-racial unions' demands.



Photo: John Harris.

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# LIVERPOOL: WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

From a leaflet put out by Socialist Organiser supporters on Merseyside

After the defeat of the call for all out strike action there is no doubt that the fight against the Tory government's destruction of Liverpool's jobs and services has suffered a severe setback. So where do we go from here?

It is pointless saying that NALGO and their leadership are solely to blame for that strike not going ahead, even though they played their part. We need to look at all the possible reasons for the defeat and the best way to take the struggle forward.

## Council

NALGO's local leadership didn't put in anywhere near the work that was needed to achieve a successful strike vote. But we also believe that their task was made harder by the way the campaign is being conducted by the City Council.

Only the odd one or two people on the City Council know the true financial situation. The date of running out of cash has changed throughout the campaign. Information and communication is restricted.

White collar workers are considered to be second in importance to manual workers in the

class struggle. Working class is interpreted narrowly as manual workers while middle class is used to describe white collar workers and those who don't unquestioningly subscribe to the City Council's interpretation of how to conduct the fightback against the Tories.

Labour's City Councillors have said that rather than carry out cuts in services and jobs, and rather than massively increase the rates, they would be prepared to defy the law and risk imprisonment, disqualification and surcharge.

We have seen letters issued to the workforce which say their services will no longer be required as from December. Whether you call these redundancy notices or not, and we do, their effect is to give legal cover to councillors who say they are prepared to defy the law.

Those arguing in favour of the letters/redundancy notices say that it will give time to organise for strike action before the end of the 90 days — how can this be true? Look at the reaction of NALGO to the letters/notices. And NALGO is an important union to win over to the strike call.

The notices should be with-

drawn and the political leadership of the City Council — the Labour Councillors — should take on the full responsibility of their position and lead from the front, facing all the consequences of breaking Tory laws, thereby showing all the doubting Thomases that the City councillors are not desperately trying to hand on to their positions but are prepared to put their necks on the line to protect the working class of Liverpool.

## Leadership

Such leadership cannot fail to win respect and support from socialists and trade unionists throughout Merseyside, Britain and internationally. To keep on delaying taking that lead is to give further credence to those who believe that Liverpool City Councillors are another bunch of bluff merchants hardly distinguishable from the Livingstones of this world.

Capitalisation as an option is one that should not be considered unless we are admitting defeat. No matter what the unions decide, the Labour Council has given a commitment not to carry out cuts in jobs and services as well as not raising

rates massively, and they should continue this stand even if it means removal from office. The vacancies can be filled by people who will give the same commitment before they are selected.

For Liverpool's socialist council to admit defeat and agree to manage the local system in line with Tory policy, with a few face saving deviations, would mean demoralisation among the working class, especially in Liverpool, and would make it much harder for the left of the Labour Party to convince people of the need for a socialist society.

The cry of 'You're all the same' would echo around Merseyside.

Leadership also involves facing the consequences in defence of our class. History shows that socialists have been prepared to suffer degradation and death to advance the fight for socialism. What price a seat on Liverpool City Council?

The campaign to win support for the City's stand has been much more low key this year and we need to boost the campaign. There is no need to wait for action to start before support groups are established. There is no need to wait for action to start before all those supporting the

City Council are invited to take part in the planning of the defence of the City.

Plans need to be made now to: \*Act on the council running out of money, such as the occupation of City Banks and other bases for the loan sharks.

\*Prevent the councillors' property being seized and the councillors being jailed.

\*Inform people at risk how emergency cover will be provided.

\*Show how the Tories' agents, such as the Auditor, will be prevented from undemocratically running the City.

\*Build mass action where it hurts the Tories rather than the working class, such as demonstrations/occupations in Tory heartlands and in the City of London.

## Democratic

A democratically based committee can be set up now with delegations from stewards' committees, union branches, Labour Party branches and other organisations supporting the City Council to organise for a working class victory in Liverpool.

\*Withdraw the redundancy notices.

\*Stop the talk of capitalisation!  
\*Set up a delegate-based support committee now!

\*Unite in the fight-back to save Liverpool.

Neil Kinnock's attack on the Liverpool City Council, not just on redundancy notices, came as no surprise. Kinnock is a career politician intent on seeing himself as Prime Minister and appealing to 'popular opinion', whatever that is, to achieve his career goal.

Ramsey McKinnock does not see socialism as the democratic involvement of the mass of the working class but as a continuation of the present system with tinkering here and there. Kinnock has no room to criticise — he offers no alternative to the Callaghans and Wilsons. He certainly offers no chance of socialism.

Kinnock has played on the divisions in the City Council unions which are increased with the letters/redundancy notices.

Withdraw the notices/letters now and face the fight with no more delay. Lay the redundancies and cuts in the lap of the Tory government.

The Blunkett solution is one of managing the local system and muddling through with no improvement for our people.

# JUSTICE FOR THE PRYCES!

On November 29 1984, Eustace Pryce was murdered by racists on the streets of Newham. Although not involved in the fight, Eustace was stabbed in the back of the neck and died almost immediately.

Three plain clothes police witnessed the event from a bus. Instead of arresting the murderer they arrested Eustace's brother Gerald.

Gerald was re-arrested on December 18 and charged with affray. The white murderer, on the other hand, was only arrested after considerable community pressure and was given bail almost immediately.

The trial began at the Old Bailey on Monday October 14.

In accordance with the wishes of the family, a

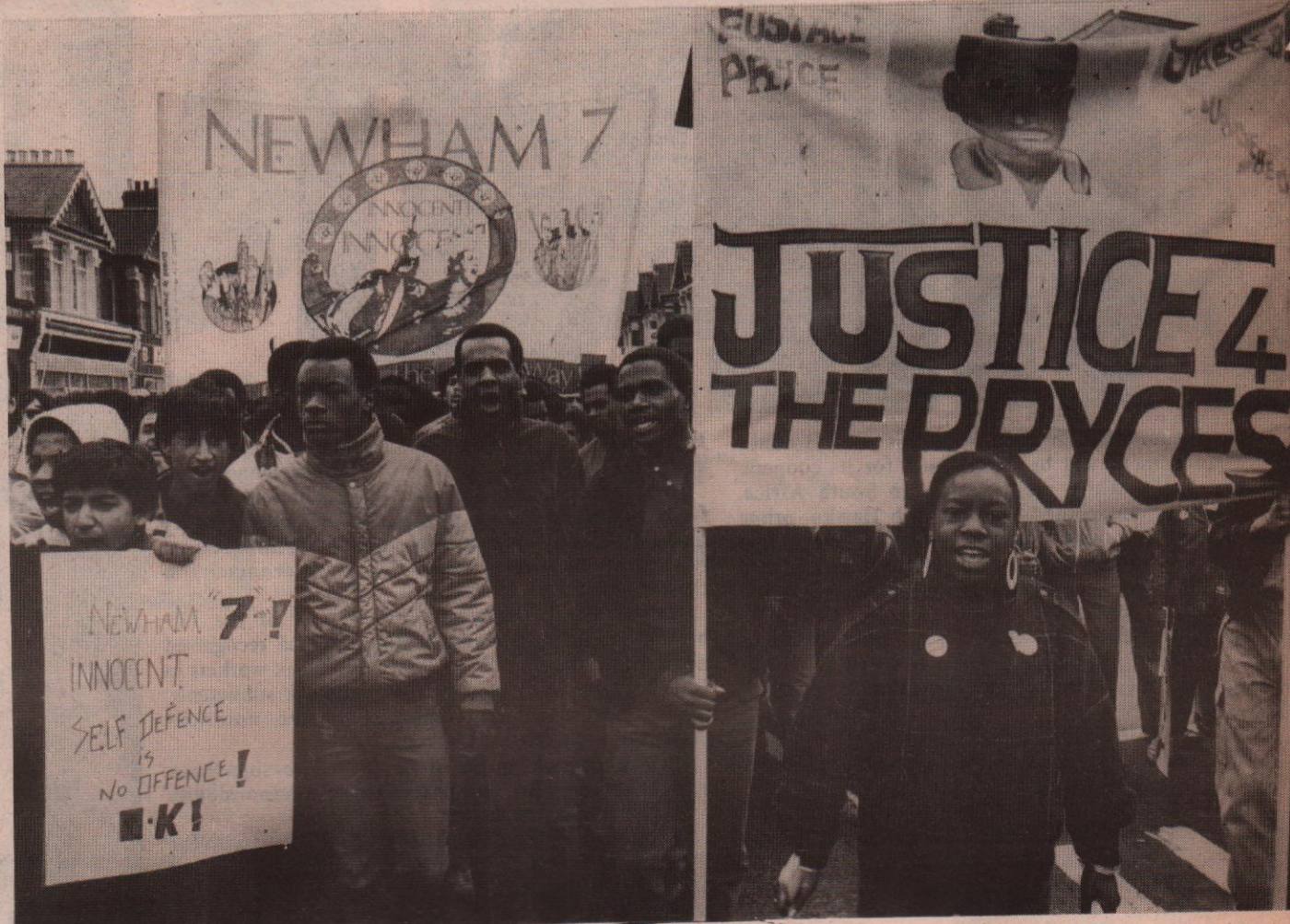
demonstration is not being called for but there is a week of action.

Tuesday 22 October: Picket of Forest Gate Police Station, Romford Road, London E7. 6.30 - 8.30.

Wednesday 23 October: Picket of East Ham Police Station, High Street South, London E6 (East Ham tube). 6.30 - 8.30.

Thursday 24 October: Picket of Plaistow Police Station, Barking Rd, E13 (Buses 5, 15, 23, 58, 244, 262, 147). Also wreath-laying ceremony at the spot where Eustace died - 6.30 - 8.00 p.m.

Monday 28 October: Public meeting at Newham North East Labour Party Halls, 241E High Street North, London E6. 7.30. Speaker from Handsworth Legal Defence Campaign.



Newham 7/Justice for the Pryces demo, April 1985. Photo: Andrew Wiard, Report

Regular pickets of the Old Bailey are also planned and these will take place on the first day of the trial and every Monday thereafter, between 11 and 12 noon. It has been decided that the pickets will be held at the Old Bailey.

If you belong to an organisation please encourage it to affiliate to the campaign. Write to the campaign, c/o Socialist Organiser, 224 Euston Road, London NW1 2AF.

It is also very important that the public gallery is filled with supporters of the family.

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E6) demanding that the charges against Gerald and the four other black youths be dropped.

\*Write to Commander Jones and Commissioner Newman, New Scotland Yard, The Broadway, SW1 and to the DPP (4/12 Queen Anne's Gate, SW1) stressing the need to prosecute Eustace's murderer with conviction and determination.

It is especially important

that we make it clear to the police and courts that we will not tolerate a half-hearted prosecution and possible light sentence for the murder of one of our black brothers.

Yours in struggle  
CAROLE BURGHER  
Secretary

Justice for the Pryces Support Committee can be contacted at PO Box 273, Forest Gate, London E7, tel: 01-553 8151.

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For: Socialist Organiser, 224 Euston Road, London NW1 2AF

# PEACE WITHOUT FREEDOM?

'Social peace' has begun to break down in Britain. Street violence has become a part of political life.

The Tory government wants to reassert control. Football violence worries it. So do political events from small-scale protests like Stop the City or animal rights stunts, through to large-scale anti-fascist mobilisations.

But most worrying for the Tories are big 'mass disturbances': the Grunwick's pickets 1976-7; the Southall events in April 1979; the inner city riots of 1981; and the miners' strike.

For all their speeches about riots being caused only by 'evil' and by 'agitators', the Tories can see that poverty, hopelessness and the behaviour of the police have made some inner cities explosive. Many working class youth, especially black youth, see the police starkly as the enemy.

The brutality, and equally the racism of the police, has built up huge reserves of anger and resentment that can easily be triggered into full-scale street fighting.

So what do the Tories plan to do about it all? Increased repression, that's all.

Even from a narrow capitalist point of view it would make sense to try to reduce tension by social reforms — job schemes, development projects, measures against racial discrimination like the obligation on firms with government contracts to employ a minimum proportion of blacks recently suggested by Tory minister David Waddington. The US government responded with such reforms to the black urban risings there in the 1960s.

But the Tories have no faith in the ability of such reforms to restore social peace in any short term. So they try to slap a heavier lid on.

From 1980 they have been building up an armoury of anti-union legislation — laws that make effective picketing and many strikes unlawful.

They have also been increasing the numbers, equipment and autonomy of the police.

Tory plans for increased repression go much further. The Police and Criminal Evidence Act, passed last year but not yet fully implemented, massively extends police powers to 'stop and search' and control public protests.

## White Paper

A White Paper on 'Public Order' published last May proposes to increase police powers still further.

Demonstrations — marches and 'static' protests — will be made much more difficult. Organisers will be legally bound to give a week's advanced notice — making impromptu protests almost impossible; and the police will have authority effectively to ban demonstrations for a host of reasons, including the threat of interference with shopping!

The organisers of demonstrations may be liable to pay the costs of policing. Policing costs of the CND demonstration on June 9 last year, for example, were over £720,000: the bigger the event, the more you would pay. It is unlikely that any organisation could manage such expenses.

The White Paper proposes to create new crimes. Common law offences — like 'riot' (which is actually a very unspecific charge) — would become 'statutory offences' and carry heavier sentences. It would increase police power to arrest people on vague, on-the-spur-of-



Who's worse? Photo: Paul Herrmann.

the-moment charges.

The Tories are now also suggesting a new catch-all charge, 'disorderly conduct' — which could apparently be used against anyone on the scene at a militant demonstration, mass picket or riot.

These proposals go hand in hand with providing the police with more efficient methods of inflicting pain on people — plastic bullets, CS gas, 'flail truncheons'.

The Tory plans are a threat to basic democratic freedoms like the right to assembly. British law in fact does not recognise 'rights' to protest: it lays down guidelines for what is *not* permitted; and our freedoms occupy the gaps in between. The Police Act and the White Paper fill in a lot of the gaps.

Even the Public Order Act 1936, which was first introduced to deal with fascist marches, has been used mostly against the labour and radical movements — anti-Vietnam war protesters, thousands of miners. New laws would go much further.

But what's the alternative? Isn't some limitation on freedom a price worth paying to stop chaos on the streets?

Such a view is short-sighted and wrong. Increased police powers will be used against even the most conservative bastions of the white, male labour movement in the future. The 11,000 miners arrested during their strike were not left-wing activists or foot-loose youth on the streets. Many of them — before the strike, anyway — were respectable, law-abiding, house-proud family men.

Other workers who today think of themselves living a world different from the rioters and pickets will be on the front line tomorrow.

Even bastions of the white, male labour movement should be prepared to take sides. Disorganised street fighting cannot be an instrument of working class struggle: even if it forces

some changes by alarming the Establishment, it tends to divide and atomise the working class rather than uniting us.

## Spirit

But it is an expression of a spirit of resistance in the inner cities that the labour movement would do well to learn from; and which the labour movement must give a lead to if there is to be an alternative to Thatcherism.

The youth who took to the streets in Tottenham — includ-

ing the youth who killed the policeman — are our people. They are the victims of Thatcher's Britain, on the front line against police racism; and they are *right* to resist.

Many youth, and especially black youth, feel alienated from a labour movement that has done little to fight racism or repression, and has offered no solution to social deprivation.

Yet Labour must draw in these youth whose anger with and hatred for the system can be a powerful force for revolutionary

— dramatic, total, liberating — change.

The trade unions and the Labour Party must campaign for jobs and housing, wages worth having and houses worth living in. We must defend black people from racist attacks, and do away with racist laws like immigration controls. We must support black people who defend themselves against racists.

We must resist increased police powers. We must pursue every avenue to control the police, to make them accountable to elected authorities and to

# Plastic bullet murders

- FRANCIS ROWNTREE, Belfast, aged 11, died April 23 1972.
- TOBIAS MOLLOY, Strabane, aged 18, died July 16, 1972.
- THOMAS FRIEL, Derry, aged 21, died May 22 1973.
- STEPHEN GEDDIS, Belfast, aged 10, died August 30, 1975.
- BRIAN STEWART, Belfast, aged 13, died October 10, 1976.
- MICHAEL DONNELLY, Belfast, aged 21, died August 10 1980.
- PAUL WHITTERS, Derry, aged 15, died April 25, 1981.
- JULIE LIVINGSTONE, Belfast, aged 14, died May 13 1981.
- CAROL ANNE KELLY, Belfast, aged 12, died May 22 1981.
- HENRY DUFFY, Derry, aged 45, died May 22 1981.
- NORAH McCABE, Belfast, aged 33, died July 9 1981.
- PETER DOHERTY, Belfast, aged 40, died July 31 1981.
- PETER MAGENNIS, Belfast, aged 41, died August 9 1981.
- STEPHEN McCONOMY, Derry, aged 11, died April 19 1982.
- JOHN DOWNES, Belfast, aged 22, August 12, 1984.

public scrutiny.

We also have to face up to the fact that the police cannot ever be made fully accountable. The police chiefs will always owe more allegiance to the bosses than to working class communities; they will always recruit reactionaries and racists, and train them to be worse reactionaries and racists.

Working class communities must find ways of policing themselves, in an organised and democratic way, without a police force of professional thugs separated from society.

# Racism in Haringey

By Mick O'Sullivan (UCATT, Haringey council DLO, in personal capacity)

OVER THE past week Tottenham has come to resemble Orgreave at the height of the miners' strike.

Police vans are parked at every corner. The Broadwater Farm estate is saturated with police who are systematically picking up black youth throughout the area.

The sharpest reactions have come, however, in the local council unions.

The basis for this has been remarks attributed to the Labour council leader, Bernie Grant — that he couldn't condemn the rioters, that the policeman who died might have been killed by another policeman, and that the rioters gave the police 'a bloody good hiding'.

On Wednesday 9th the local leadership of the TGWU and NUPE called on all unions to join a mass meeting on the Friday, 11th, to con-

demn Grant's remarks. Underlying this call was a very simple rationale — racism — though a minority of workers were motivated by genuine dismay at Grant's remarks.

Fortunately the other union leaderships refused to participate in the meeting.

The meeting was attended by between 300 and 500 people, mainly manual workers. A considerably watered-down motion was put, specifically about Grant's statement, condemning violence, recognising the problem of unemployment, and recognising the need to maintain a Labour council.

Three people spoke against the motion, two black and one white. (The white speaker was howled down). The loudest applause came for a speaker in favour of the motion: a branch secretary for NUPE Officers, who stated "I'm British, I'm a trade unionist, and we live under the Crown.

"Anyone who doesn't

accept the rules of the Crown shouldn't have the right to live here".

Whether she fully understood what she was saying is debatable, but the racists who applauded certainly did.

Only a handful of black workers attended the meeting, and they stayed literally on the periphery of it. In the fitters' shop, which has 50% black workers, the steward refused to participate.

Members of the NALGO branch executive who observed the meeting returned to the Civic Centre and organised a counter-demonstration which got it right when they called the meeting racist — though many of the workers who attended were genuinely alarmed by Grant's statements.

The repercussions of the march in the local labour movement are far from finished. It is essential that the next meeting of the local authority shop stewards comes out unequivocally against racism and shows sup-

port for the council in their call for a public inquiry.

Statement by NALGO, TGWU, NUPE, and UCATT members working on the Broadwater Farm estate

The workforce on the Broadwater Farm estate condemn the action of our respective trade unions in calling meetings, strikes and demonstrations, and issuing press releases, without any form of consultation with us.

We have been and will be committed to working long hours to restore good relations in the community. We oppose any further actions by trade union officers from outside the area which will jeopardise our work in our community.

We the workers of Broadwater Farm are opposed to racism. We further believe that much of the mobilisation of some trade unions has been racist mischief-making, and we are planning to oppose this.



## Top Salaries

Five UK company directors get over £1 million a year in pay and dividends. Another 23 get over £½ million, and 47 more get over £300,000.

A survey published in the October issue of the magazine Labour Research shows a rapid increase in top incomes. 338 directors in all receive

over £100,000; the last Labour Research survey, a year ago, showed only 179 directors at that level.

## City

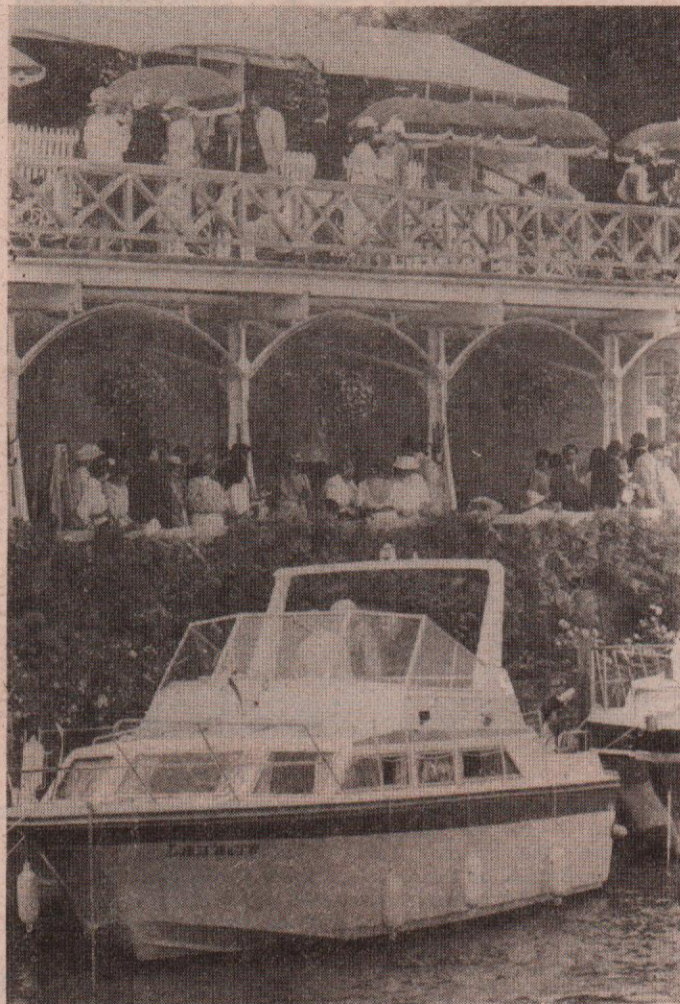
Top salaries have risen particularly fast in the City, according to the research group Incomes Data Services.

The reason, it says, is more US banks setting up shop in London. The US banks pay very high salaries, and now UK banks are paying high rates to compete.

According to IDS, top executives in UK merchant banks average £80,000 a year in total cash earnings. Their counterparts in US merchant banks walk off with £100,000 on average, and in US investment banks, some £240,000.

Those are averages. For a successful stockbroker, IDS says, "a total earnings package in a good year... would be over £1 million".

Graduates fresh from university start in stockbroking houses on £7,500 to £9,000, rising to £15,000 to £75,000 after two years.



The rich get richer

## Bosses perks

And there's more! Cash earnings are by no means the whole of a top manager's or banker's loot.

Figures collected by the Inbuc management consultancy, and published in the Financial Times of October 10, give some

picture of executive perks.

80% of managers get full use of a company car (it was only 72% in 1980). 10% get assistance with buying houses (6% in 1980). 71% get free medical insurance on a private health scheme (it was 58% in 1980). 13% benefit from share buying schemes, and 35% from share option schemes in their companies (5%/10% in 1980). And 33% get a subsidy on their phone bill at home.



## Pay

Meanwhile, low pay is also increasing. Labour Research finds that 4.02 million full-time adult workers are below the "low pay" level defined by the Council of Europe.

Another 2.65 million part-time women workers are on "low-paid" hourly rates, and an unknown number of part-time male workers and young workers.

A major aim of Tory government policy in recent years has been to reduce young workers' wages relative to adult rates. The Youth Training Scheme is part of this effort; so is the government's plan to remove all workers under 21 from the protection of wages councils.

According to Labour Research, already "The Low Pay Unit says that pay rises for young females have fallen 30% behind the equivalent increases for adults and for males 23%."

A new book 'How Britain Votes', by Heath, Jowell, and Curtice, substantially changes our picture of the relationship between voting and social class.

Conventional poll analyses seem to show that Labour support is declining steadily in the working class, and that support for the Alliance is spread evenly throughout all social classes.

But these analyses do not separate off the self-employed from the working class, or supervisors from other workers. Moreover, they classify women not by their own jobs but by their husbands'.

Reanalysing the data, Heath, Jowell and Curtice show that rank and file manual workers vote Labour as consistently as

## Watershed

The NGA/Eddie Shah dispute at Warrington in 1983 was a watershed. A survey by Labour Research shows that employers' use of the Tory anti-union laws has increased sharply since then, especially in the print.

The Tories have introduced three anti-union laws, in 1980, 1982 and 1984. Up to the end of 1983 the laws had only been used 35 times. In the 20 months to August 1985 another 35 cases have been brought.

21 of the 46 cases brought

since 1983 have been in the print.

Employers almost always win their court cases — they have failed on only two of the 46 cases brought since 1983. But Labour Research reports that in the three cases where workers ignored injunctions employers took the matter no further — Shell, Barking Hospital and the National Bus Company.

Despite closed shops now being unlawful, Labour Research reports that they have held up fairly well. There have been only ten court cases against closed shops since 1983, seven of them promoted by the right-wing Freedom Association.

(Labour Research, 78 Blackfriars Rd., London SE1 8HF).

## Luck

Remember monetarism? The term is still used to describe Tory policies — but in terms of economic theory the Thatcher government is no more monetarist than you, me or John Maynard Keynes.

The central dogma of monetarism is that the government must strictly control the money supply, allowing the stock of money in circulation to rise by only a modest — and fixed — amount each year. This will restrain inflation and assure stability. If unemployment still remains high — well, that's life. According to monetarist theory, trying other economic measures to improve matters can only make them worse.

Since 1979 the stock of money in circulation (M3: cash plus bank deposits) has risen at a very rapid and highly fluctuating rate — sometimes at over 20% per year, sometimes at only about 8% a year. It has almost always grown faster than the targets set down by the government.

If monetarist theory were correct, we would have roaring inflation. In fact a central assumption of monetarism is that the velocity of circulation of money is fairly stable; over the last six years the velocity has decreased markedly, so inflation is relatively modest.

From the Tories' point of view, it's all more by luck than by judgment. Some people on the left think that the Tory government, though evil, is immensely hard-headed, competent, and consistent. Don't believe it!

## How classes vote

they did in the 1960s; that the long-term decline in the Labour vote is entirely due to the increase in the 'salarial' and the relative decline in the manual working class; and that the Alliance vote is concentrated in the middle class.

These are their figures for 1983.

	Con	Lab	All
Salarial	54	14	31
Petty bourgeois	71	12	17
Foremen etc	48	26	25
Clerks etc	46	25	27
Manual workers	30	49	20

It's a pity that 'salarial' does not distinguish between managers and the very high-paid on the one hand, and highly-quali-

fied wage-workers on the other. Still, there is plenty of food for thought.

The figures could be taken to support the people who argued after the 1959 election that Labour was declining because of the growth in the number of relatively well-off white-collar workers, and that therefore Labour must become more moderate, more middle class.

But there is another way of looking at it. Over recent decades salaried and clerical workers have become unionised in large numbers, and often militant. Couldn't their lack of attraction to Labour be due to the fact that Labour is too 'moderate', too fuddy-duddy, too timid and stodgy?

# Socialist Action splits up

The supporters of Socialist Action have split. A minority, describing itself as a 'public faction' will no longer sell and support the weekly Socialist Action. Instead they will distribute Labour Briefing (a monthly bulletin oriented to the left in local government); Youth Fight-back, and the Paris-based fortnightly International Viewpoint. They also plan to publish their own journal, quarterly to begin with.

The minority sees the Socialist Action editorial board as suffering a "growing ascendancy" of co-thinkers of the US Socialist Workers' Party — a group that "is revisionist and evolving in the direction of some crypto-Stalinist positions".

SA, they say, is run by a coalition of these semi-Stalinists and a group round SA editor John



Castro

Ross. "The Ross clique systematically puts organisational alliances and manoeuvres above politics. Its gyrations around first excluding the [semi-Stalinists] from SA and now blocking with and handing over the paper to them is final proof of its utter bankruptcy."

"Its small and declining base is increasingly a hard core who...are prepared to swallow any ideological baggage which fits the latest alliance".

### Wavered

For nearly 40 years now the international current of which SA is part has wavered between class struggle and 'power bloc' politics. Time and again it has veered away from a working class programme in order to embrace 'revolutionary processes' led by Stalinists or nationalists — Tito, Mao, Ben Bella, Castro, Ho Chi Minh.

But it always retained some reservations, and the ability to veer back again.

In early 1979, following the death of its veteran theorist Joseph Hansen, the US SWP made a bigger-than-usual lurch — and, it seems, a decisive break with working-class politics.

It has identified itself completely with the one-party bureaucratic regime in Cuba. It has not only supported the Sandinistas against US-sponsored counter-revolution (as indeed every socialist must), but also endorsed every detail of Sandinista policy, including their alliances with the bourgeoisie and their suppression of strikes.

It fully supported the USSR's invasion of Afghanistan in December 1979 (though it has changed its mind since). While

still criticising the Kremlin to some extent, it prints articles about how good life is for workers in the USSR. It has rejected almost all action in solidarity with Solidarnosc as an affair of social-democratic cold-warriors.

It has explicitly discarded the Trotskyist theory of permanent revolution. Currently, its policy on South Africa is to identify completely with the Stalinist-led ANC. The recent SWP congress ended with the delegates chanting in unison "ANC! ANC! ANC!"

### South Africa

John Ross says he still supports permanent revolution, but in practice he fully agrees with the SWP on South Africa and Nicaragua. The same political approach has been applied to Irish and British politics.

SA describes the Provisional Republican movement as the nearest thing in Europe to a mass revolutionary workers' party, and sees no need for a Marxist organisation in Ireland fighting for Catholic-Protestant workers' unity on the basis of class struggle rather than militarism. In Britain, the role of Castro, Ortega, Oliver Tambo or Gerry Adams, is played by Arthur Scargill: SA pretends that the least criticism of or differentiation from Scargill is a betrayal of the miners. It denounces practically all the Labour Left — including such groups as Labour Briefing and Militant — as "ultra-left", and has vocally and persistently opposed any challenge to Kinnock's leadership.

SA's lurch towards such politics has drastically reduced its profile on the British left — partly because of the politics themselves, and partly because of the factional conflict accompanying their development. For some time SA's supporters have been divided into three main groupings — pro-SWP-US; Ross; and the present public faction — with none of the three having a majority. There are also smaller sub-groupings. Ross has run the paper first in alliance with one group, then with another.

The public faction does not go as far in criticising the Ross/SWP approach as Socialist Organiser would — in fact, in most respects this grouping simply continues the old-style politics of SA's predecessors before the post-1979 lurch — but there should be a good basis for practical collaboration and political dialogue between us and them.

We have suggested discussions to them, although they say that they want to get themselves in shape before major discussions with other groups. They plan a conference next spring. They hope to gather round themselves many old SA supporters who have stopped selling SA in despair at the factional conflicts of recent years but who remain active in the labour movement.

They also hope for international support. The majority of the international current to which SA belongs is opposed to the SWP-US's politics, or at least to its worst excesses, and so the new public faction expects sympathy from groups in France, Sweden, etc.

# 'Kinnock has gone over to the right'

Graham Norwood, Deputy Leader, Lambeth Council

What we expect now is that the NEC of the Labour Party fulfill its immediate commitment to give practical, financial and political support to those councillors in their legal case, but also to ensure that there is no let-up in the demand over the next couple of years for the next Labour Government to ensure that Lambeth councillors and any others who may be penalised in the next two years of struggle, do in fact have the retrospective legislation applied in favour of them.

### Decisive

In a more general sense, Kinnock's attack on Liverpool, and his whole tenor, show that he is no longer the sort of windbag leader that he was. He is much more decisive and he has gone over much more firmly to the right.

There have also been conspicuous moves by people

like Blunkett to some extent in his support for Meacher, despite Meacher's betrayal of the miners, to align himself with Kinnock.

We've also seen people like Livingstone virtually disappear from the conference in order to avoid being put on the spot for their own past performances.

I suspect this may be one of the last conferences where we will be seeing a lot of the genuine debate for which Labour Party conference is rightly renowned, towards a Tory-style rally around the leadership.

In that case fringe meetings and other events will become more important.

The left needs to do two things aimed at getting one end result: we need to get a constructive analysis of what the left has to offer as an alternative to Kinnock.

Ten or twelve years ago when Wilson was leading the

Labour Party in much the same way that Kinnock now is, people were trying to give the left some sort of focus to galvanise it against the leadership. Benn was also rising as a potential new leader. What we need to do now is to get a similar set of circumstances.

### Analysis

So we need an analysis around which much of the left can unite as an alternative to Kinnock. It has to be something more constructive than simply booing Kinnock.

Secondly we need to get a leader or a potential group of leaders as a collective left leadership. Whether that is people like Benn, Heffer and Skinner or whether we want to look to other sections of the labour movement than simply Parliament and try and get local government leaders, rank and file people, gays and lesbians, etc. around



"We must begin a fightback". Photo: John Smith, IFL

a united left who would be the spokespeople for the left that is what we need.

I cannot see Kinnock being defeated, but if we do not challenge him then the climate of intimidation against any dissenter will only get worse.

We have to begin a fight back, simply for the democracy of the Labour Party.

Kinnock said before coming to conference that whatever resolutions were passed, if he didn't like them he would ignore them.

### Miners

There was also a climate at conference, particularly during the miners' debate, where anybody dissenting in some sections of the hall,

from the Kinnock line, were being treated as absolute traitors, as friends of Mrs Thatcher, and that general climate Kinnock did nothing to deter. Quite the reverse.

I'm optimistic in the sense that we've had some good decisions coming out of conference and you cannot miss the general goodwill towards the miners from rank and file delegates, and towards the councillors.

Unfortunately I think there is a growing cynicism compared with even a few years ago, that while there may be a better chance of a Labour government, we're heading for another Wilson/Callaghan style government, with Kinnock not promising very much even in Opposition, and likely to deliver a good deal less when in power.

From our point of view in Lambeth, the local government debate was the most crucial. Blunkett's very clever, but stage-managed theatre of trying to dissolve the crisis in Liverpool has worked for the moment. What still remains to be seen is when he and the trade union leaders go to Liverpool to look at the books and if, as seems the case, there is no alternative but to go for some form of confrontation with the government, whether or not the final words of conference are put into effect.

In terms of Lambeth, we interpret the unanimous vote in favour of composite 32 as supporting the position of the councillors who have been surcharged.

## 'The only way to change it is to get in'

Vicki Smailes, Rhodesia Women's Action Group.

It's the first time I've been to Labour conference. It's not very representative of the working class — the NEC in particular.

Most of the delegates are good, but the NEC don't seem to be listening to what they're saying.

Kinnock talks about representing "not the people in here but outside".

Who do the delegates represent? The delegates are treated with contempt.

We have to make the NEC more representative. There are only about four on that platform who represent the working class. That's not many, is it?

The most appalling thing I've seen is the way that Kinnock and Co. condemn the miners and yet had the Chair presenting the ANC bloke with a miner's lamp. It really grinds when you see that.

How can they support miners in one country and not miners in this one?

Because it's too close to home!

The chair was very discriminatory in the way he chose speakers, especially in the miners' debate.

On Black Sections the same reasoning applies as on Women's Sections. They need it because they're not getting fair representation. If you support Women's Sections, you must support Black Sections as well.

If they had equal representation they wouldn't need a Black Section — but they haven't.

The Welshman who talked in the gay and lesbian debate about it being a sickness probably spreads more germs just coughing.

I think some of the fringe meetings were better than the actual conference. We went to all of the GLC ones because it's got to be kept at all costs. We had a lot to do with it during the strike, so we got to see how important it is to the working class.

I would still encourage those who haven't to join the Labour Party. The only way to change it is to get in. It's no good sitting watching Kinnock on TV and saying I don't agree with that, or joining the SWP where you haven't got a voice.

You have to change Labour into a proper socialist party which it isn't at the moment.

Elaine Callaghan, Rhodesia Women's Action Group.

It's the first time I've been to Labour Conference. It's very different from what I expected.

I've only watched it on TV before. You get more het up here.

And you see different opinions here — more so than on TV where you only see the bits they want you to see.

What Kinnock said about the miners was disgusting. He should have stuck up more for the miners. He's lost a lot of votes for Labour by not stand-

ing up for the miners.

I thought the women's debate would be better. I agree with the women's demands — it's about time they had a few more women on the NEC.

I'm hoping the lesbian and gay rights motion will get through — to get the police off them and get their rights. They are only the same as everybody else, after all.

It's only since the strike I've thought like this. It was never anything to do with me until I met them. They organised support for us — a lot more than some who should have done — like the unions.

I don't think Labour will win the next election. I lay the blame on Kinnock.

Walter Wolfgang, Labour CND.

Before the conference [right wing MP] Austin Mitchell wrote

# 3,000 march in Blackpool

# YOUTH AGAINST THE

No college cuts!  
No compulsion onto YTS!

3000 youth and students descended upon Tory Party conference last Thursday. The march, organised by Manchester Area and Tyne and Wear Area NUS, demanded an end to college cuts and closures, proper grants for all, no compulsion onto Youth Training schemes, and real training to lead to real jobs. Socialist Organiser spoke to some of the participants



Simon Pottinger, Socialist Organiser supporter on NUS Exec, addresses the rally Photo: Paul Herrmann

## GILLICK RULING EXPECTED

By Michele Carlisle

A decision which will affect the lives of thousands of young women will be made public this Thursday, 17 October. The Law Lords are expected to announce their ruling on the issues raised by Victoria Gillick in her crusade against under-16 sex.

Several months ago the Appeal Court gave the Gillick Ruling, describing as unlawful the long-standing DHSS Circular which advised doctors to give contraception and abortion advice and treatment to under-16s if required and without parental consent.

The Appeal Court forced the DHSS to withdraw it, advising that parental consent must be obtained in cases concerning contraception and abortion for under-16 women.

The DHSS took a further appeal to the Law Lords.

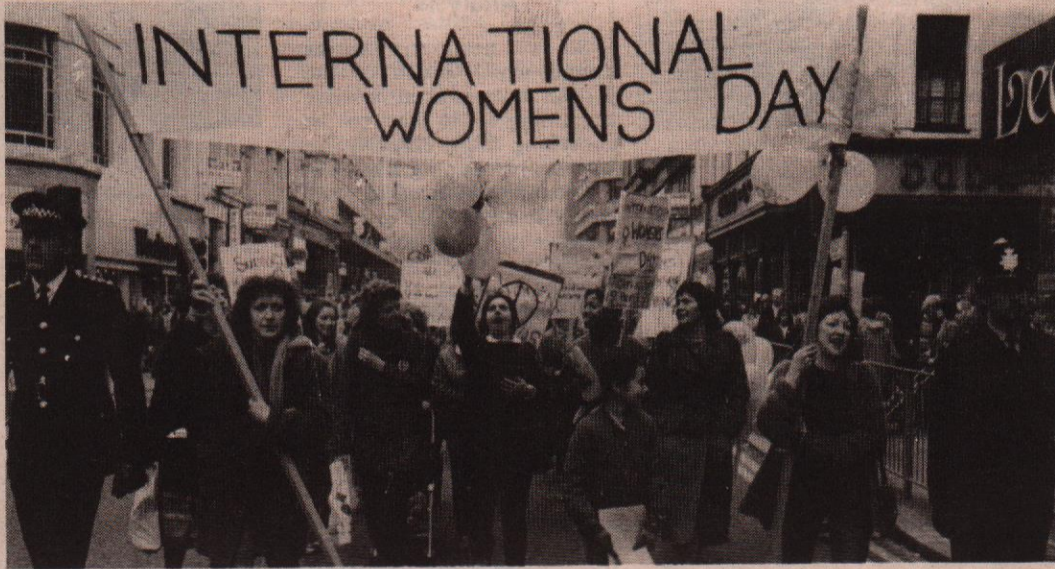
The arguments against the ruling are well-known: women should have the right to control their own bodies; lack of contraception does not stop under-age sex, it merely makes it more dangerous; children are not the property of their parents and should be given the information with which to make an informed decision about sex sooner rather than later.

The losing side in this fight will try to bring emergency legislation into the House of

Commons. This would be especially important for those of us opposing Gillick and all she stands for, because a ruling in her favour would literally put in jeopardy the lives of young women. Women have already killed themselves because they cannot get an abortion and under-age pregnancies are increasing.

We must use every method we can to ensure that a ruling in favour of Gillick would never be put into practice. The Parliamentary Labour Party would have to show firmly where it stands as emergency legislation is pushed through; pressure must be put on Labour controlled health authorities to cooperate with use of the DHSS circular; doctors must be encouraged to and supported in giving abortion and contraception advice and treatment to young women; trade unions in the health service must be mobilised.

If the Law Lords find against Gillick, then the war is not yet won. We still have to fight for improved facilities, better sex education, free abortion and safe contraception on demand for all women and the right of women to control their own bodies. A ruling against Gillick would be a very small step on the road to achieving all these.



International Women's Day, 1983. Photo: John Harris.

## A FIGHTING CHARTER?

By Tracy Williams

The Labour Party's "Charter for Women and Work" shows a pitiful lack of understanding of the deep-rooted oppression of women in society today.

Did we honestly expect anything better? Did we realistically expect anything at all?

The Charter suffers from a central defect. The focus on 'Women and Work' is far too narrow — and so it continually fails to answer, tackle or even raise the burning issues of sexism and racism that women have to fight against. The main demands of the Charter are admirable enough, but they are far from adequate.

Unemployment is only one issue, albeit a major one, where women face blatant inequality and oppression.

Women are far more vulnerable to unemployment than men; and to imagine that access

to a new training scheme or the 'promise' of employment will solve these problems is like thinking that Live Aid would end famine in Ethiopia.

The labour movement is still dominated by white men — reflecting a society that treats us as mothers or as workers as it chooses, and in which traditional images of women have been reinforced since the recession in the 1970s.

The Charter should be a means of drawing women into the labour movement — making it a movement that reflects the needs of working class women. But it falls far short of the kind of charter we need. It only scratches the surface of the real problems of women's oppression. And so it is unlikely to be much use in winning the support of working class women.

The Charter attacks the laws

that the Tory Party have made — affecting women's employment, tax benefits, pension schemes, the fair wages resolution and schedule 11 of the Employment Protection Act; but it's not sufficient simply to attack the Tories. The labour movement must take women seriously — and the Charter smacks of mere electoralism. We need a positive policy.

For far too long the male-dominated white labour movement has been only too content to let women remain in the background. It seems that the last thing the labour movement wants is an influx of militant, politicised women upsetting their cosy set-up.

Black and Asian women are worse hit by unemployment than their white sisters; but they also live in poorer housing con-

ditions, receive the lowest wages, have less access to decent health care facilities and education. They often face language difficulties that white women have little knowledge or understanding of.

They continually face racist abuse, attacks in their own areas and more seriously their own homes.

Yet the Charter offers little more than a tiny section condescendingly entitled "Ethnic Minorities".

The short section on sexual harassment is limited to workplace concerns. Of course sexual harassment takes place at work, but also in bus queues, in our homes and on picket lines with our "brothers".

The Charter says: "Sexual harassment is a form of victimisation which employers and trade unionists must resist, if necessary by taking disciplinary action..."

I'm terribly sorry comrades, but a few slapped wrists will do little or nothing at all to do away with sexism of the typical male.

The Charter fails to raise issues important to all working class women — issues such as pornography, rape, domestic violence, abortion, contraception, advertising/media, sexuality, lesbianism, (the list is endless). We're not all white working heterosexuals.

Working class women are in daily struggle campaigning in and around these issues. They are extremely important concerns for a mass working class women's movement. They cannot be ignored — they cannot be de-prioritised because they will not disappear.

The Charter shows us just how much work is needed within the Labour Party to make it change, to make it accountable, to seriously fight for working class women's struggles.

# THE TORIES

**'I can't stand this government'**

Steve from Basford College: "I've been on CND and other demonstrations before but this one was louder, with more chanting. I went on the demonstration because I can't stand this government and the way Thatcher treats the country, like an autocracy. I don't like the way she's cutting up the welfare state and the way she's using the police.

The police presence was particularly noticeable on this demonstration. The horses were particularly frightening. One nearly knocked me down.

The demonstration was really good, I really enjoyed it."

Rachel and Andrew from Clarendon College:

"The best thing about the demonstration was when people came out of their hotels and lined the streets to wave to us, clap and give us the thumbs up."

Vree from Clarendon College and Naz, who's unemployed.

Naz: "Once you come on something like this you realise that other people feel the same way about the education cuts."

Vree: "It wasn't something I'd thought about much before coming on this. It makes you realise you can't just sit back and do nothing. I'm going to get involved in the Labour Party Young Socialists now. It was better than I expected. I was really impressed by the people from the Manchester college who walked here. It's good to see how motivated people are. I think it was worthwhile, I hope Thatcher takes notice." Danny and Dave from Clarendon College:

"We didn't expect to see so many police. We don't think it will change the Tories' minds, but at least it shows that people are against her policies. We should have more demonstrations like this but the NUS should do more to coordinate them nationally rather than leaving it just to the areas."

## Bringing something extra

St Martin's College, Lancaster brought something extra to Blackpool and they brought it by foot. It was that extra determination that a union

often needs when it finds itself isolated, with few allies and indifference from its national leadership.

Starting at midnight and

arriving in Blackpool at 5.00 a.m., a contingent of 25 students marched the 29 miles from Lancaster.

Their efforts were warmly applauded at the rally on the sands, not least because we all realised that it is this sort of determination which, if given a lead, can transform the NUS into a real fighting organisation in alliance with youth and working class struggles.

But one wonders how much such effort and such spirit is appreciated by the NUS national leadership. As marcher Adrian Escott commented, "We feel isolated. We are a small budget union in a conservative environment. Many national events are simply too expensive for us to attend. We get only £650 for conference expenses. One NUS conference alone costs £300. Why can't there be some kind of pooled fare scheme to help encourage the small budget colleges?"

"Also we suffer from poor links with staff unions and other groups like those at FEs and YTSers. This needs more regional initiatives and resources from the NUS to help break our isolation."

Last year Lancaster Union closed their college for the day and got 250 students on a demonstration. Not bad out of 550. By my reckoning that is more than Woolas and co. got onto the streets all that year. Perhaps we should give Woolas and co. their marching orders.

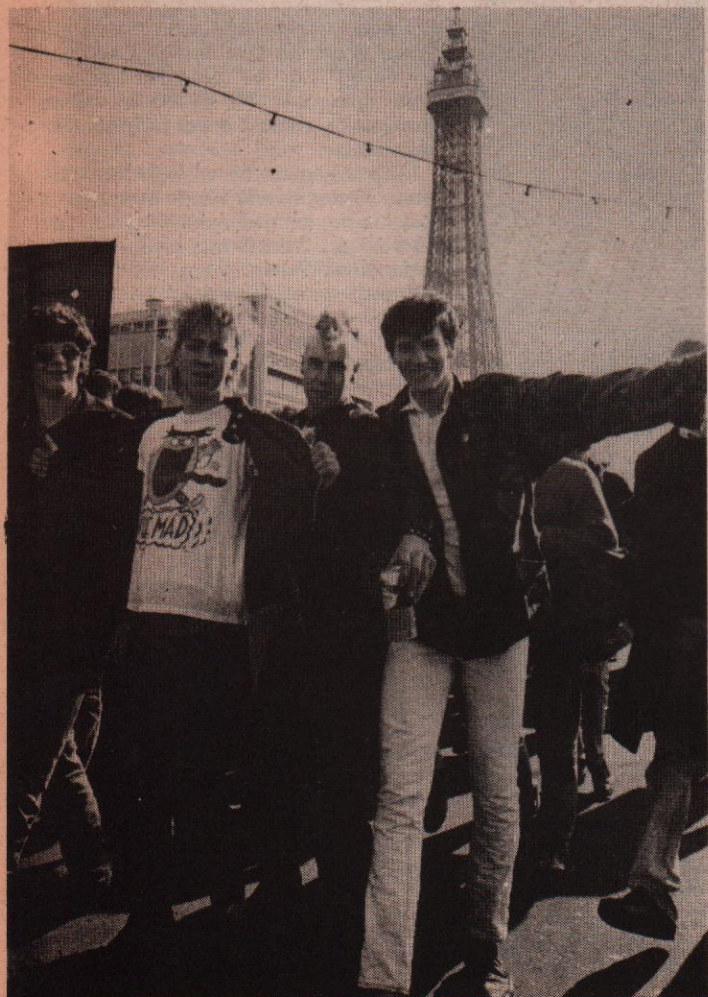


Photo: Paul Herrmann



Mary with Jesus, well on the road to crucifixion.

## Desperately seeking the exit

Edward Ellis reviews 'Hail Mary', the new film by Jean Luc Godard, currently showing at the Metro Cinema in London.

Now in my book a story has got a beginning, a middle and an end: if it's got a moral or a message, it should put it across simply and clearly with no beating about the bush.

And that goes for a film. If, for some bizarre reason, eccentric directors consider it artistically desirable to make films in French, or even in German, that's all right by me, so long as someone puts legible sub-titles at the bottom.

What I can't stand is long, boring, arty films with no story and no good tunes.

John Luke Godard's 'Hail Mary' is therefore a very bad film.

It has its attractions, of course. Any film that sends Catholics into apoplectic frenzy can't be all bad. Probably even 'Life of Brian' gained a certain 'je ne sais quoi' after getting into trouble for threatening to bring heavenly retribution crashing down about our heads. And apparently 'Hail Mary' has provoked lots of protests from outraged papists, angry at its blasphemous subject matter.

The wonder is that anybody, papist or otherwise, understands enough of it to notice the blasphemy.

Okay, so it is about a woman called Mary who is a virgin and yet clearly pregnant; and okay, her perplexed boyfriend is called Joseph. And okay, the unpleasant little brat to which she gives birth disappears at an early age commenting laconically 'I am He that is. I must be about my Father's business'.

But apart from that, your guess is as good as mine.

### Puritanical

Much of the film consists of long close ups of bits of Mary's body. It is this that has so upset devotees of the real Mary. The more puritanical presumably rest their case on the well known fact that the real Virgin Mother did not possess such bits; while others with more of a feminist bias have claimed that the film is merely high-brow pornography — a false claim on two counts, because it falsely equates the incomprehensible with the high-

brow, and because it falsely assumes that anyone would be sufficiently awake to be erotically stimulated.

There are lots of shots of natural things — full moons, half moons, water, sky, that sort of thing. There are some pretty impressive shots of the sky, in fact, every time Mary thinks about God.

### Morbid

And she thinks about God a lot, not always in the politest of terms. Joseph, as you might expect, doesn't really get a look in, which traumatises him greatly — so that he spends the entire film looking morbid and sullen and chasing no-doubt allegorical characters into no-doubt allegorical clothes shops.

Meanwhile, two further characters (no doubt allegorical) take their clothes off in front of the fire, and then have a trauma because one of them is going back to his wife in Prague... (Is this in the Bible?).

On the other hand, Godard's work is in reality deeply subversive: it undermines our own learned perception of the relationship between sequences of events; Godard squeezes the essence of mortal existence out of painful human situations as if squeezing puss out of a spot. He seizes upon our latent fixations, explores the contradictions between the empty spaces, opens up the inner reality of the gaps in our misconceptions of reality; sends us to sleep...

Perhaps others, more stupid than I might enjoy this God-awful load of old rubbish. Apparently some of those in the GLC's plush new Metro cinema with me did enjoy it — although I had the feeling that they probably would have enjoyed a blank screen with a high-pitched squeak if it had been directed by the right person.

I don't want anyone to get the idea that I'm a philistine or anything. Far from it. I watch Channel Four. I even read City Limits occasionally. So I know soporific garbage when I see it. Trust the GLC to fund it, that's all I can say.



Heavens, what shall I do?

# Labour and

WHY IS THE Troops-Out-Of-Ireland current so feeble in the British labour movement?

For 13 years or so now opinion polls at various times have shown as much as 50 per cent, and sometimes more, of the British people to be in favour of British withdrawal from Northern Ireland. Yet organised campaigning or even persuasive advocacy of British withdrawal is no important part of British political life — sixteen years after British troops took control of Northern Ireland; nearly 14 years after Britain abolished the old Protestant Unionist home-ruled government in Belfast, replacing it by what has become indefinite direct rule from London; and 11 years after the Orange general strike of 1974.

Even after a notable accession of strength in the last three or four years, the Troops Out current still counts for little in our movement. As one advocate of Troops Out, Sheena Clarke, put it at this year's Labour Party conference, "We have a clear position on Nicaragua — why are we different on Northern Ireland?"

The debate on Troops Out at this year's Labour Party conference is one place to go looking for an answer to this question. Not long ago it was difficult and usually impossible to get Ireland debated at Labour Party conference. Now 'the Irish debate' looks like becoming a hardy annual, providing us with a public register of the state of labour movement opinion on Ireland. A Labour Party National Executive working party on Ireland is due to report within the next year.

This year's debate took place on the eve of the latest British government attempt to change things in Northern Ireland. The terms of a new Dublin-London deal on Northern Ireland will be announced in two or three weeks, after many months of 'secret' negotiations between the British government and the 26 County coalition.

This deal is likely to include some 26 County government involvement in the running of Northern Ireland, together with a unification of Dublin-

**Public opinion in Britain wants troops out of Ireland. Labour movement activists by now know the basic facts about the troops' brutality and the plight of the Northern Ireland Catholics. Yet there is little activity in the British labour movement on Ireland. Why? John O'Mahony reviews the Irish debate at Labour Party conference this year, and concludes that the campaign for the single slogan 'Troops Out' needs to be replaced by a broader agitation which would make 'Troops Out' one element in a coherent programme.**

London police activities against the Provisional IRA. The London government very much wants to involve Dublin; but central to its calculations is the question of how much they can concede to Dublin without provoking a massive Orange backlash. That's what will determine the degree of 'movement' from the eleven-year-old Northern Ireland stalemate which the Dublin/London negotiators will dare agree on.

## Backlash

It was the Protestant backlash, in the form of an Orange general strike — a movement of revolutionary scope and implications, but serving reactionary goals — which wrecked the last London-Dublin attempt to build Protestant/Catholic power-sharing political structures in the Six Counties, back in 1974. 11 years later all the signs are that the politicians have nerved themselves for a new attempt to remodel Northern Ireland.

Where Labour stands on Ireland may be very important in the months ahead if the Tories come into head-on conflict with the Orange majority in Northern Ireland.

Official Labour has evolved a little from the Party's politics of the '70s, when it was responsible for terrorising, jailing and torturing the half-a-million

Northern Ireland Catholics. When Ireland was debated at the 1979 conference, soon after Labour ceased to run the government, the debate was dominated by men like Michael Foot and Stan Orme, both of them exuding the political stench of Long Kesh concentration camp. Official Labour now has a new face turned to Ireland.

Today its representatives stress that they are for a united Ireland, pledging themselves to work for it gradually by creating all-Ireland political structures which will, over time, sap the will of the Northern Ireland majority to resist a United Ireland.

However, this is on the level not of serious politics but Walter Mitty fantasy. It's the equivalent of the joke answer to the question: how do you catch a bird? Put salt on its tail.

Like your average bird, the Orangeists won't stay still long enough to have the salt rubbed in.

In government Labour would run Northern Ireland, perhaps make a few reforms here and there, and leave the basic framework intact.

Against Troops Out, official Labour stands on three positions, two of them clearly interlinked.

1: That British withdrawal would be followed immediately by sectarian civil war, and therefore,

2: Troops Out leads not to a united

Ireland but to bloody repartition and two Irish states; and

3: That Northern Ireland is some sort of legitimate expression of the rights of the Protestant community, which can only be changed fundamentally with their consent.

These arguments command widespread acceptance in the labour movement, and have to be demolished if the left is to make progress. If the left is unable to deal with these arguments, then there will be no decisive shift in broad labour movement opinion on the Irish question — or on Ireland's 'British question'.

Against the 'official' position, the left rallies around 'Troops Out', which has now become something of a shibboleth, uniting behind it forces who have very different assessments or programmes to offer in answer to the question: after Troops Out, what then? Some sections of the left argue that no-one in Britain has a right to an opinion on the internal affairs of Ireland — other than to support Sinn Fein.

But what this year's Labour Party conference debate seems to me to show conclusively is that it is now counter-productive to use Troops Out alone without spelling out a positive programme too.

The conference saw a very important discussion around two resolutions, one

calling for Troops Out during the life of the next Labour government, and the other calling for a discussion on Troops Out in the labour movement. I propose to give full summaries of the speeches, discussing the issues that arise as we go along.

Geoff Bell, from Hackney North and Stoke Newington Constituency Labour Party, said that the key to the debate on the Irish question was the Loyalist veto — the so-called right of the Unionist minority in the 32 counties to halt application of Irish majority rule and to insist that the forces of the British state are used to back their right.

(Yes, this Loyalist veto is very important — but the Loyalists have a veto and can insist on Britain remaining only because of the credibility with which they can threaten to do the job against the Six County Catholics and the 26 County state themselves, bloodily. That is the reality behind Britain's acceptance of the Orange veto.)

## South Africa

Essentially, therefore, Bell was beside the point. In the minds of honest delegates what matters is the threat of Orange militarism.

Bell continued by quoting Ramsey MacDonald, pioneer Labour leader, first Labour prime minister (1924, 1929-31), and renegade, who broke with Labour to fig-leaf a Tory-based 'National Government' in 1931. 'Is Ulster going to deny the right of the Irish majority to be a unified nation? No, emphatically no!' Bell concluded: to vote against his composite is to be to the right of Ramsey MacDonald.

But all that was long ago, wasn't it? Some say Ireland should forget the past and live for the present. But now we live with the consequences of the past, of the unjustified partition imposed against the opposition of 75% of the Irish people. The consequences have been long and bloody.

Should we say partition was wrong but nevertheless we should now accept it as a fact and live with the consequences? Geoff Bell invited the delegates to transfer that argument to South Africa. No-one would use the argument that South Africa exists as it is and that no new settlement can be accepted without white agreement. We should not use an analogous argument about majority rule in Ireland.

(This argument by analogy has little force. The whites in South Africa are a social caste, with an average income per head about 12 times that of the African population. Whites monopolise top jobs in industry and the state, taking some 98% of property income; the working class, apart from skilled craft workers, supervisors, and some white collar grades, is almost entirely black. In Northern Ireland the Protestants' privileges are marginal. The bulk of the Protestants are workers, their privileges consisting mostly of a better chance of a more secure job in a more highly-paid industry. The Protestants are the majority in Northern Ireland. The whites are a 1-in-7 minority in South Africa.)

Bell anticipated one of the arguments of the opponents of Troops Out. (Like everyone else on his side of the debate, he ignored the other one, about Troops Out contradicting a united Ireland). He replied to the argument that withdrawal means a bloodbath in two contradictory ways. First, he seemed to concede the point.

"I'm not going to say that the minute Britain leaves Ireland peace will follow. But I would say it is a precondition for peace in Ireland". This seems to mean that there would be civil war immediately after British withdrawal, though perhaps not a very serious one.



Catholic family in N. Ireland — no carpet on the floor, no room and bread to eat. Photo: CameraWork.



# Troops Out



British troops in Belfast. Photo: Camerawork.

But Bell immediately went on, 'speaking as someone from the Protestant community in Northern Ireland', to denounce the idea he had just conceded.

'Do not believe all these horror stories about civil war and the holocaust that will follow if Britain leaves Northern Ireland. Because what that is really saying is that the Irish are stupid, bloodthirsty, and incapable of ruling themselves. That sort of argument is just one more anti-Irish joke...'

What reason did Bell have for believing that the conflict following British withdrawal would lead to peace and a united Ireland, rather than to full-scale civil war, repartition, and population movements? Either he had none, or he didn't dare spell out his reasoning: that he thinks a civil war can be won.

So he swung over to his second position on civil war: only the 'anti-Irish' can believe it will happen.

Do communal civil wars arise because people are 'stupid, bloodthirsty, and incapable of ruling themselves'? Yes, perhaps, on one level. But Marxists do not usually limit explanation to these 18th century utopian-rationalist arguments.

Civil wars arise because there are irreconcilable differences. Ireland has already had one civil war; the old United Kingdom, before Ireland seceded, came close to an Ireland-centred civil war just before World War 1.

So the notion that bombast

about 'anti-Irish jokes' is any sort of answer to the real questions is a pretty strange one. It answers nobody, and cannot reassure those who support keeping the troops in Ireland for humanitarian reasons.

Bell's key point seems to be the allegation that anti-Irish racism is at the root of opposition to Troops Out — an attempt to shout at, indeed to abuse the conference, using the charge of anti-Irish racism as a blackjack. But it wasn't a well-chosen blackjack, even if black-jacking were the right thing to do.

## Torturers

It was time — Bell continued — for Britain to withdraw from Ireland — for Britain to take away its Bloody Sundays, its torturers, its strip-searches, to take away its plastic bullets and its lead bullets. 'Leave Ireland in peace', he said, 'and then peace will come'.

Seconding, the delegate from Kensington CLP, Miriam James, who is also Irish, said that withdrawal is in Labour's interest as well as Ireland's.

Labour's reputation in Ireland is not good: a Labour government sent troops to the Six Counties in 1969 and brought in the Prevention of Terrorism Act in 1974, 'which the Tories have used against everyone who stands for freedom and civil rights, not only in Ireland but in this country also'.

But there is a new understanding on Ireland in the Labour Party. Confer-

ence can commit the Party to 'first consultation', then withdrawal — 'not', she added, 'from Ulster, but from six counties of Ulster'.

Set up consultation with political organisations and trade unions throughout Ireland, and it will help Labour on its way to creating a free and united Ireland — by removing the British troops. The Irish issue is dividing people in Britain. Britain in Ireland is Ireland's problem: that's the 'Irish problem'. Labour should formulate policy to get troops out, and 'then and only then can we shake hands with brothers and sisters in Ireland as equals'.

## Consent

Councillor Sheena Clarke (Sheffield Hillsborough CLP), herself recently arrested and questioned under the Prevention of Terrorism Act when she visited Northern Ireland, moved the other composite.

It is 17 years, she said, since the civil rights marches in Northern Ireland brought home to us the horrors of Unionist rule: what progress has been made? There is a fudge on unification. The commitment to unification only by consent is commitment to an insuperable obstacle to unification. How will unification come by consent? Wait for a nationalist majority in the Six Counties? Nobody can seriously believe that rational argument will change Protestant

minds. Britain will have to go sometime.

(What would happen then? If not 'rational' persuasion — to what, submission to a Catholic state? — then what? Withdrawal or coercion? Would a united Ireland follow? Or would there be a civil war? Sheena Clarke said nothing about this. She conceded that it is 'understandable that people have reservations'; but then she turned down the road of the argument that Britain's presence in Northern Ireland is analogous to colonial or imperialist presences in Third World countries).

We have a clear position on Nicaragua, said Sheena Clarke: why are we different on Northern Ireland? Her composite asked for a debate in the labour movement. She recalled the recent BBC censorship to eliminate an interview with Martin McGuinness of Sinn Fein.

We should talk to trade unionists in the whole of Ireland, she said, reading out part of the declaration of 'Trade Unionists for Irish Independence and Unity', a group of Stalinist and other nationalist full-time Irish union officials (and a few others). The declaration says that 'a united working class in a 32 County Ireland could be a dynamic force leading to an Irish government pledged to working class interests. A divided Ireland produces the converse: weakness and division'. Britain must declare its intention to disengage and 'hand over to the Irish government'.

Sheena Clarke urged Labour to 'consult Irish comrades, both trade unionists and members of nationalist parties. We need practical proposals to schedule British withdrawal'.

Well, no. Before 'we need practical proposals to schedule British withdrawal', we need to convince people that Britain should withdraw, that Britain has no place in Ireland. We need to convince the labour movement that the argument that Northern Ireland expresses the democratic rights of the Protestants is wrong.

We need to convince people either that civil war will not follow British withdrawal, or that some good can come out of civil war.

The most striking thing in Sheena Clarke's speech, though, was her apparent endorsement of the statement she read out. Yes, of course, a 'united working class in a 32 county Ireland could be a dynamic force...' The problem is to get it.

It is sleight-of-hand and abracadabra politics to pretend that a united Ireland and a united working class are the same thing. It is utterly wrong-headed to postulate a united working class arising after and out of a united Ireland. For if the workers are not united, who will unite the country (whatever that may be without its people)?

No, the relationship between a united Ireland and a united working class goes

Continued on page 10

# Labour and Troops Out

Continued from page 9.

in the other direction. There will be no united Ireland without a united working class, or at any rate unity of the big majority of Protestant and Catholic workers.

Who else would unite the country so that the conditions for working class unity come into existence? The 'Trade Unionists for Irish Independence' are plain about it: Britain must 'hand over to the Irish government'.

There is more said here than is actually put into words. For if Britain just hands over to 'the Irish government' there will, for a certainty, follow immediate and probably very bloody civil war between Catholic and Protestant Ireland. Nothing is more certain. After the Orange general strike, the development of a mass UDA, etc. it is impossible to believe otherwise.

## Humanitarian

Now the 'Trade Unionists for Irish Independence' want sectarian civil war just about as much as Sheena Clarke or I want it. What they in fact mean is that Britain should collaborate in coercing, bludgeoning, beating down and disarming the Protestants, as part of the withdrawal package.

In this they line up on one side of a long-standing Irish nationalist divide: with those who look to Britain to coerce the Orange population, against those who seek intra-Irish solutions.

Valerie Vaz from Ealing CLP seconded the composite.

The government, she said, refuses to have a dialogue with the 'people of Northern Ireland' because it alleges they are terrorists. Terrorists produce extreme fear, therefore — she came triumphantly to the point — Margaret Thatcher is the biggest terrorist.

She recalled the children killed by plastic bullets, the strip-searches of women and men prisoners. In Brixton we have seen the results of the policy of 'shoot first and ask questions later'. People in Northern Ireland live with it every day. In the name of humanity we must begin the dialogue now.

Stuart Bell, MP for Middlesbrough and a front-bench spokesman on Northern Ireland, was first in the discussion. He made the most of Labour's new 'official' face on Ireland and of the alternative between Troops Out and a united Ireland.

Since 1981, he said, Labour has been for a united Ireland — unity of hearts and minds of the people. Labour will create policies that will bring unity — not unity by way of the armalite but unity by way of bringing Northern Ireland into harmony with the South.

Labour doesn't want a united Ireland which is united in conflict. We take up the challenge of a united Ireland, working through a Labour government we will bring it closer.

He appealed to delegates not to throw away the possibility now offered by way of the deal being discussed by Dublin and London. It offered the Republic the same status as Northern Ireland and the same status as Catholic minorities there. Bell eloquently denounced the fate of Northern Ireland Catholics under

Protestant supremacy, and pledged that Labour will build on any progress made by the Tory government.

Next came Sarah Roelofs of Hornsey CLP. She told conference about the strip-searching of women in Armagh Jail, and of two Republican women in Brixton jail who are regularly body-searched. We need to discuss British withdrawal, she said, and have an end to censorship 'that prevents rank and file Labour Party members' discussing issues. Labour should 'end its collusion' on censorship. 'We want women's voices, black women's voices, and particularly Irish women's voices, to be heard'.

Listen to women for a change, she appealed to conference. This was the main emphasis of her speech: let some other people, your moral or intellectual superiors, make up your minds for you.

Roelofs' vacuous speech is significant because she is one of the most prominent and ubiquitous activists in the London Labour movement on Ireland, promoter of the 'dialogue' with Sinn Fein, and contributor of articles to London Labour Briefing.

The humanitarian element in the left's agitation — about strip-searching, plastic bullets, etc. — concerns real issues, but is demonstrably insufficient. You may well think body-searches unnecessary or wrong, and object to plastic bullets as dangerous and indiscriminate, without shifting to belief in Troops Out. For someone who believes in the civil war/bloodbath argument to be moved, their arguments have to be met. The humanitarian agitation will not do that. It might well be part of a general campaign on Ireland, but at present it often serves the left as a substitute for dealing with the issues.

The incoherence here is basic and ingrained. It shows how little the left has learned over the last 14 years. On two issues, the left has mushroomed, briefly — on the hunger strikes and on internment. There is still some continuing spin-off from the hunger strikes visible in the Labour Left. But still the response was very limited, and many roused to lodge a horror-stricken protest when the government allowed ten men to starve themselves to death didn't become convinced of the arguments for Troops Out.

## Waverers

Against internment there was a powerful movement in Britain — for a while. Nothing very much was gained from it. The movement had dissipated long, long before internment ended. The reason was that in the final analysis liberal outrage could not answer the fundamental questions. And liberal outrage had a limited audience when the fundamental questions were not answered. Many people thought that if the choice were between mayhem and cutting legal corners, then they'd cut corners. They were not 'gut liberals'.

Peter Archer, the main Labour spokesman on Northern Ireland, followed Sarah Roelofs, making a speech as empty as Stuart Bell's.

The debate, he said, signifies that Labour is serious about Ireland. Northern Ireland's future is now in the mainstream of Labour policy, and the Tory government must face a debate.

Labour makes plain its belief that Ireland is one country. Labour will restore civil rights in Northern Ireland, ending no-jury courts, the informer system, strip-searching, etc. It will search for a further consensus in the movement. Archer hoped women would take part.

Trade unionists in Northern Ireland have had to live with sectarian division and stagnation and cuts. They don't all agree about the sectarian issues, but all want jobs. The people of Ireland have waited too long for unity. But we need a way of achieving unity which does not deepen and widen the divisions. If we can heal the wounds and not make the existing wounds fester, then it is worth spending a little additional time on it.

He appealed to conference not to vote on the matter this year, but to wait for the report of the Labour Party working group on Ireland.

This was Militant-style economism grafted on to promises of a reforming Labour administration in Northern Ireland.

From the aspirant Labour Secretary of State for Northern Ireland and his would-be assistants this is not enough. The question is: what will they do in Northern Ireland if Labour wins the next election? Will they continue to preside over the repression of the Catholic minority? Will they run the artificial Six County bearpit state? Good-sounding noises about a united Ireland somehow, some day, aren't enough from these people as they move towards government office.

Alex Kitson, deputy general secretary of the IGWU, summed up for the National Executive. It was a clownish speech, which nevertheless dealt devast-

'key word' consent was missing from the 'Troops Out' motion.

No-one wants to give the Unionists a veto 'on political change'. But you cannot unify Ireland by forcing one million people into what they see as a foreign country. They don't want it; people in the south don't want it.

Geoff Bell's composite for Troops Out was 'overwhelmingly defeated' on a show of hands. The composite calling for an open debate in the Labour Party on withdrawal was lost on a card vote by 4,383,000 to 899,000.

I think the left lost the argument at this year's Labour Party conference. Worse. With the partial exception of Geoff Bell, the left did not even seriously attempt to answer the arguments. The left could be used as a scarecrow to help the right and soft left establish that their position is reasonable, 'humane', and practical, and that their opponents are either fools who do not understand the implications of what we advocate, or blood-thirsty Catholic nationalists. That same soft-left and right who will assume the main responsibility as custodians of Northern Ireland and chief jailers of the Catholic minority if Labour wins the next election were able to win the argument.

## Rearrangement

When you got right down to it, the left didn't have answers to the questions raised against Troops Out. For immediate British withdrawal unaccompanied by a rearrangement acceptable to the Protestants and Catholics of N. Ireland and to the people of the south would lead to sectarian civil war and to two Irelands rather than a united Ireland.

The weakness of the left at the conference was no accident: it flowed necessarily from the belief that Troops Out alone is a sufficient platform.



Orange butchers with Long Kesh banner. Photo: Camerawork.

ating blows at the advocates of Troops Out.

Alex Kitson said it was an important debate. He noted that his own union had 100,000 members in Ireland, north and south. Paying tribute to the courage of the people of Northern Ireland, he said that many of those present did not understand what was involved because they had never been to Belfast. He himself visits Belfast regularly.

'We as a Labour Party have done everything we possibly could do to help'. (At which point he was interrupted for three or four minutes by loud heckling). 'It's the trade unions that hold Northern Ireland together', he continued.

## Delegates

Having spent most of his time clowning like that, he then got to the point. He challenged delegates to go to Ireland and ask the people who live there about British withdrawal. 'They'll tell you it won't work. It's a recipe for civil war between Protestant and Catholic communities which will not bring a united Ireland any nearer. Instead you will end up with an independent Protestant state and a helpless Catholic minority'.

The Irish Republic doesn't want British withdrawal either, he said — none of the three main parties does. The New Ireland Forum has said that unity can come only by way of 'freely negotiated and agreed arrangements'.

'For us to say that we know better than the people in the Irish Republic, and the people who would have to live with the consequences, is not only stupid. It would be downright dangerous'. Labour Party policy is for unity by consent, which presupposes greater working class unity in Northern Ireland. The

But a socialist programme needs to include a complete and coherent set of democratic demands, and a possibility of relating to the division and anguish now.

If we put self-determination for Ireland as a whole and autonomy for the Protestant areas alongside 'Troops Out', does that amount to British chauvinism? No. The humanitarian objections to the bare 'Troops Out' slogan are reasonable objections. Since it is a fact that sectarian civil war in Northern Ireland would probably spill over into Glasgow, if not Liverpool, the British working class has a direct and immediate interest in avoiding it. The Irish nationalist notion that Britain has no right to intervene in the affairs of Ireland is necessarily qualified by the fact that one in five of the people of Ireland define themselves as British. In any case, we should be internationalists, not any sort of nationalists. Workers have a right and duty to try to 'intervene' in the politics of every country. British Labour has the right — in collaboration with the Irish labour movement — to intervene in Northern Ireland. Only it should intervene with a democratic working-class programme, and not with the visage of a Roy Mason or a Merlyn Rees — or even a Peter Archer.

The British troops have no right to be in Ireland, and do no good there. At best they freeze and perpetuate the conditions for sectarian civil war, all the while carrying on their own simmering war against the Catholic minority. That the situation and the prospects now are so bleak is in large part Britain's work.

But we should stop using 'Troops Out' as a sectarian ultimatum, and instead engage in a dialogue with those in Britain (and Ireland) who think they have good reasons against Troops Out. We should try to convince them.

For that a merely negative point of view is not enough. As well as 'Troops Out' we need a positive programme. Lenin said it a long time ago:

'There is not, nor can there be, such a thing as a 'negative' Social-Democratic slogan that serves only to 'sharpen' proletarian consciousness against imperialism' without at the same time offering a positive answer to the question of how [Marxists] will solve the problem when [they] assume power. A 'negative' slogan unconnected with a definite positive solution will not 'sharpen', but dull consciousness, for such a slogan is a hollow phrase, mere shouting, meaningless declamation'.

The argument goes back a long way. In early 1969 some of us argued against the almost-exclusive concentration of the SWP (then IS) on 'Troops Out' (until the troops went on the streets, in August 1969, and IS dropped the call in panic!) We criticised the implied notion that the Catholic civil rights movement would organically 'grow over' into socialism; and argued for propaganda for the workers' republic.

In the mid-'70s we argued against the notion put forward by some on the left that a mass movement could be built in Britain on the single slogan 'Troops Out'. It was not out of anti-imperialist 'purity' that we insisted that a movement in Britain must explicitly argue solidarity with the Republicans: it was because we believed a movement must give some positive answers, and none was clear from the slogan 'Troops Out'.

Today Protestant leaders talk about armed resistance even to the promised Thatcher-Fitzgerald plan. The danger of sectarian civil war is a serious issue.

To say that the Protestant bigots' militancy would collapse once Britain withdrew is wishful fantasy. To say 'There's already a bloodbath' is an evasion. Simmering war with hundreds of casualties is different from all-out war with thousands — different not only in immediate human terms, but also in terms for the future possibilities of socialism or even democracy. And the other standard left answer, 'Revolutions always involve bloodshed', is worse. There is no comparison between the revolutionary violence of the working class against its exploiters, or of a subject nation against a conquering army, and the violence of two working-class communities slaughtering each other.

We should support Troops Out. But to give this call any political grip and substance we must couple it with some proposals for a solution within Ireland. The only conceivable solution given the present facts of the situation or anything resembling them is a united Ireland with federalism, i.e. an attempt to negotiate between sections of the Irish people and to conciliate the Protestants.

# FIGHT THE PIT CLOSURES!

By John Bloxam

In the past week, miners at five pits have agreed their immediate closure with the loss of 2500 jobs, and miners at Sacriston (Durham) have voted to bring forward the closure of their pit.

At Cortonwood, whose threatened closure provided the spark for the 1984/5 strike the branch voted 176-67 on 7 October to take the pit out of the review procedure and accept immediate redundancies or transfers. On the same day neighbouring Brookhouse pit voted 286-50 to do the same; so too Aberpergym and Penrhwi-ceibr in South Wales.

On 9 October Abertillery New Mine in South Wales followed suit with a 4-1 vote.

At Manton, which is one of the pits earmarked to take men transferred from Cortonwood, Brookhouse and Yorkshire Main, branch officials are

already advising members to take voluntary redundancy.

This collapse arose from the threat of large cuts in redundancy and unemployment payments unless closure was agreed before 9 October. The NCB also panicked miners by suggesting that the only way to guarantee transfer to a neighbouring pit was by applying quickly.

But at the same time a very large meeting at St. John's, South Wales, voted clearly to fight closure. Miners at Bold, Lancashire, voted to keep their pit in the review procedure. And Darfield Main, next to Cortonwood and Brookhouse in South Yorkshire, is still maintaining its fight.

## Local

What's made the difference is the local branch leaderships. At both St. John's and Darfield Main the campaign has been well established. At Penrhwi-ceibr, however, the campaign

was only just getting off the ground.

At Cortonwood, the branch secretary from Yorkshire Main was invited to the meeting to explain why they had also collapsed, but a proposal to invite a speaker from Darfield Main was ruled out of order.

The centre of paralysis, however, is clearly the Area leaders. In Yorkshire, they have done nothing. South Wales Area leaders have called a special delegate conference — but only after the decisive votes. Area official Kim Howells commented "...in the end it's the price we pay for losing".

But some branches are still fighting. The labour movement must give them full support.

Demonstrate against closures. Support Darfield Main. Saturday, 19 October, Barnsley Town Centre. Speakers: Arthur Scargill, Jack Taylor, Dennis Skinner — called by Barnsley Area NUM.

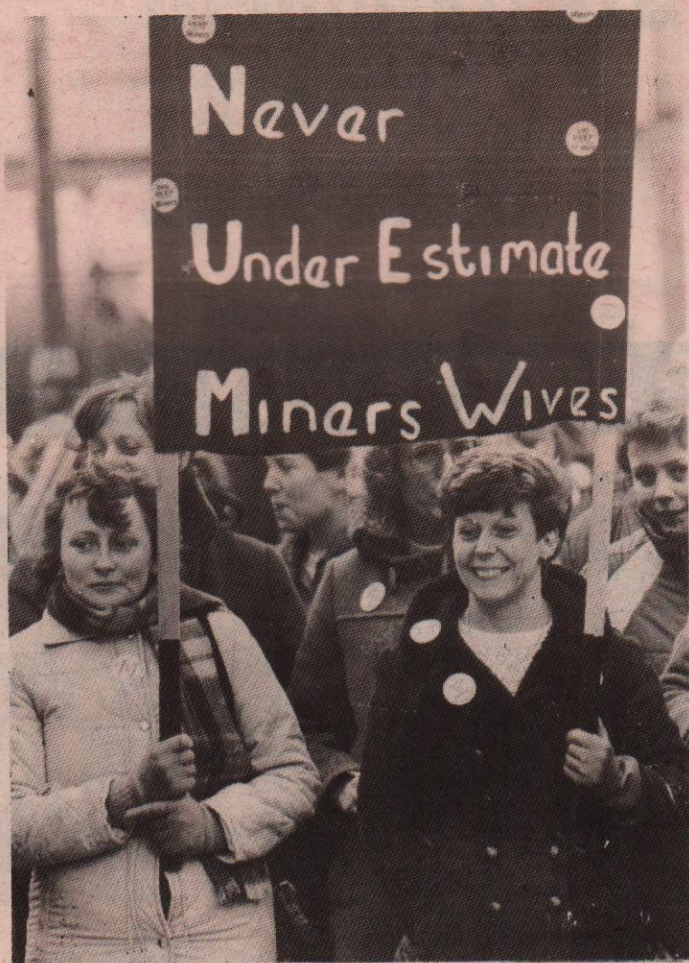


Photo: John Harris

## S&N Breweries

The strike at the Scottish and Newcastle Brewery at Moss Side, Manchester continues in the face of management refusal to budge.

On Monday morning there was a picket of all the workers on strike. In addition to the admin and laboratory staff the five electricians and the two painters who are in UCATT crossed the picket line.

Management have been using every means to put pressure on the strike and try to break it. At first they claimed that the letter making the strike official was a forgery. Then they told workers that if they scabbed and lost their union card they would still be employed.

Now the contractors are putting out rumours that if their workers don't scab they will be sacked.

The strike is against attempts by management to introduce a three-shift system without the workers getting any extra money for working a Sunday night shift.

The strike is solid among the 40 TGWU members. They are getting support from other workers in the brewery but some workers in admin and the laboratory section are crossing the picket line.

## Stop the retreat

The retreat in the National Union of Railwaymen, begun and led by general secretary Jimmy Knapp at this year's annual general meeting in June goes on... and on... and on.

The retreat continued at the special general meeting when Knapp argued successfully for an open-ended mandate to sign a deal with British Rail over the introduction of Driver Only Operation trains. The NUR have now lost two crucial ballots over industrial action, and have indefinitely postponed a third ballot over cuts, closures and redundancies in the Railway Workshops.

This is the logical outcome of Knapp's acceptance of the ballot — in the name of union democracy — but actually, as we have seen, giving some members the right to vote others out of a job. Indeed Knapp has stated categorically that "Ballots are here to stay" — whichever government is in power, whatever legislation is on the statute book.

The postponement of the Workshops ballot reflects the general view of the NUR leadership that the members won't fight, and has been brought about as a result of the AUEW's decision not to ballot its members over the cuts programme.

Since the AUEW has great influence in the Confederation of Shipbuilding and Engineering Unions, this may now mean that all the unions in the railway workshops, including the NUR will now accept the closures plan without a fight at all. Subtly, we can expect the emphasis to be shifted to campaigning *a la Gartcosh*, i.e. 'among the whole community', pinning hopes on alternative proposals for the work sites based on feasibility studies funded by sympathetic local authorities.

In Strathclyde, all the Guards who were sacked have now been unconditionally reinstated. But the terms of the agreement signed are significantly and alarmingly vague. It refers to "...changes in working practices and other proposals (which) will be considered within the Machinery of Negotiation", while in fact the Special NUR meeting agreed only to DOO and

specifically not to other general productivity items which the Board were demanding.

The left in the NUR must keep a close watch on this situation, and demand that the matter be clarified. The defeat in the ballots represents a tremendous setback for the left in the NUR which in recent years has forced the leadership, often reluctantly, to back local and unofficial action.

Many of the best activists have been completely demoralised by the recent events, which inevitably will, at least temporarily, help to strengthen the grip of the right wing bureaucracy at all levels of the union.

An urgent priority for the left in the NUR will be to organise and build Broad Left meetings for activists to begin to clarify the present situation, assess the damage, and develop strategy and tactics for the coming period.

## Poundswick teachers strike

Five fifth form boys at Poundswick High School in Wythenshawe are alleged to have daubed obscene and apparently sexist and racist remarks concerning teachers on the walls of the school.

They were suspended last June by the head teacher and a subsequent meeting of the school governors recommended that they be expelled.

As is normal procedure, the matter then went to a sub-committee of the City Council's Education Committee. After six hours of discussion, the sub-committee decided that because of conflicting evidence over who wrote what, and indeed over whether some of the pupils had written anything, the boys should be returned to the school.

Although this isn't the first time that the sub-committee has turned down a school governors' request to expel a pupil, on this occasion the reaction of the staff at Poundswick was explosive. They not only demanded that

the sub-committee, which has delegated powers, reverse its own decision, but refused to teach the pupils. So when the five returned to school they were singled out and made to sit on their own at desks in the main hall.

After three days of this the head sent the boys home again, only to take them back again on the instructions of the Chief Education Officer. And as successive teachers refused to teach them, they were sent home as being in breach of contract.

Most of the rest of the staff walked out and the dispute really took off.

The affair has now reached hysterical proportions with a motley collection of Tories, Liberals, right-wing Labour councillors, head teachers, teachers' unions, the hang 'em and flog 'em brigade and the Socialist Workers Party all joining together to attack the Labour Council under the slogan "Save Our Standards".

Those Labour Councillors who took the original decision have been deluged with hate mail, including at least one from a teacher, have been threatened with physical violence. The local secretary of the NAS/UWT has stated: "We shall not be looking for a settlement but for outright victory".

So what are the real issues behind this dispute? Some, including the SWP, argue that it is a simple industrial dispute around the sending home of the teachers.

The decision to send teachers home is not one socialists would take with any enthusiasm, although given the state of affairs in the school it is difficult to see what other action could be taken.

But to maintain that that is what the action is about is dishonest nonsense.

In reality the dispute is a wholly reactionary one which should not be supported. At the root of it is the decision three years ago to do away with the strap, which was a permitted form of corporal punishment in Manchester.

Since then head teachers have reacted with a wave of suspensions, 154 in the last two years, of four weeks and over.

At Poundswick itself there

has been a suspension on average every two weeks and there have been 11 official complaints regarding unfair punishment.

Undoubtedly there are problems in schools, and not just in Manchester. Successive cutbacks have meant that schools are ill-equipped to deal with the situation they find themselves in, where a growing number of people are reacting to their lack of any future under capitalism in a rebellious and sometimes anti-social manner.

Manchester has a better support system for classroom teachers than most authorities but even this is not really enough.

As the boom years of the '50s and '60s have turned into the slump of the '70s and '80s, so the liberal views of many teachers have disappeared. The disaffection of working class youth is seen as a threat by them, something to be beaten down at all costs. So the education system is once more becoming one of the means to whip the working class back into line.

At the moment there seems no solution in sight. But when it has all died away, as it will in the end, the real battle remains to be fought. That battle is to make sure that teachers, as well as other council workers, have jobs to go to next year.

The secretary of Manchester NALGO described the teachers as the weak link in any fight against the cuts, at a recent meeting. Despite the Poundswick affair I still hope the teachers will prove him wrong.

## Adelphi Theatre

On Friday 4 October backstage workers at the Adelphi Theatre, Strand, (current show "Me And My Girl") came out on strike in support of a wage claim which they had been attempting to negotiate since July 25.

The theatre management's response was to bring in scabs to do the work of the strikers — dressers, flymen and stage

crew. On Monday the strikers agreed to go back pending the result of conciliation talks. However management chose this moment to sack them and then a day later reinstate them.

Striker Tim Rudd told Socialist Organiser:

"Working conditions in West End theatres are totally archaic, dating back to when most of the theatres were built at the end of the last century. Heads of department and deputies are employed on a full-time basis but "showmen", the extra workers needed to put on most shows work 30 hours on average and take home £51-£54. Per show this is little over half the price of a good ticket.

"Support from the union, British Entertainments Trades Alliance (BETA) has been mixed at best. BETA is the product of a recent merger between NATTKE and the ABS. The NATTKE 'old guard', which for the last 30 years has been agreeing with management that our wages are fair, has given us practically no help and would clearly much rather we went back to work.

It's difficult to explain to many workers that you practically have to fight the union as well as the bosses.

"A growing number of us have been building a large active branch in the West End. We demand to be recognised as skilled full-time workers.

"In the Adelphi, if a reasonable offer from management is not forthcoming we will come out again with the solid support of cast and musicians and stop the show".

During conciliation it has emerged that the union signed a no-strike deal over 30 years ago.

## FUND

The signing of the lease for our new premises has been delayed a few days by administrative hitches at the solicitors', but there seems no obstacle to the transaction being completed in the next day or so.

Work on the premises will start straight away, with the removal of asbestos. Other major jobs that we have to do before moving in include rewiring, some plumbing, replacing rotten woodwork, erecting partitions, and painting.

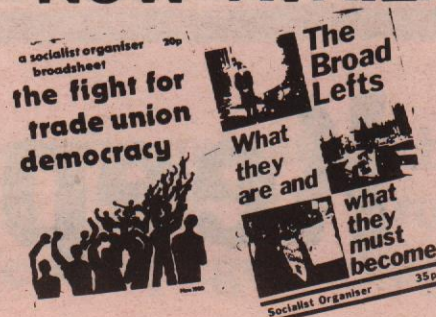
We're working on the compilation of a full estimate of the costs (including the initial payment on the rent, and the legal costs). But the time to prepare for a final stage of our fund drive is now.

London SO groups have already met and decided on a programme of fund-raising including jumble sales, sponsored events, a social, and direct approaches to readers.

Discuss in your local area and let us know your plans.

Thanks this week to Chris Whytehead, £11.50, and Michele Carlisle, £3.80. Send donations to 214 Sickert Court, London N1 2SY.

## NOW AVAILABLE



Two pamphlets available from SO "The fight for union democracy" 20p & p&p and "The Broad Lefts" 35p & p&p. From 214 Sickert Court London N1 2SY

# Socialist Organiser

## NO PIT IS SAFE!

If the Coal Board is allowed to close what it describes as 'uneconomic' pits, then Notts miners are at risk just like workers in other coalfields. According to figures published by the NCB for August, they reckon that nine out of 14 pits in Nottinghamshire are 'uneconomic'. The NCB says that any colliery producing at a cost of more than £39 a ton is unprofitable, and costs in Notts range up to £171.20 a ton for Pye Hill and £106.41 for Hucknall.

Resistance to closures will be made twice as difficult if the miners are split by Lynk's breakaway.

### STOP THE BREAKAWAY!

# VOTE NO

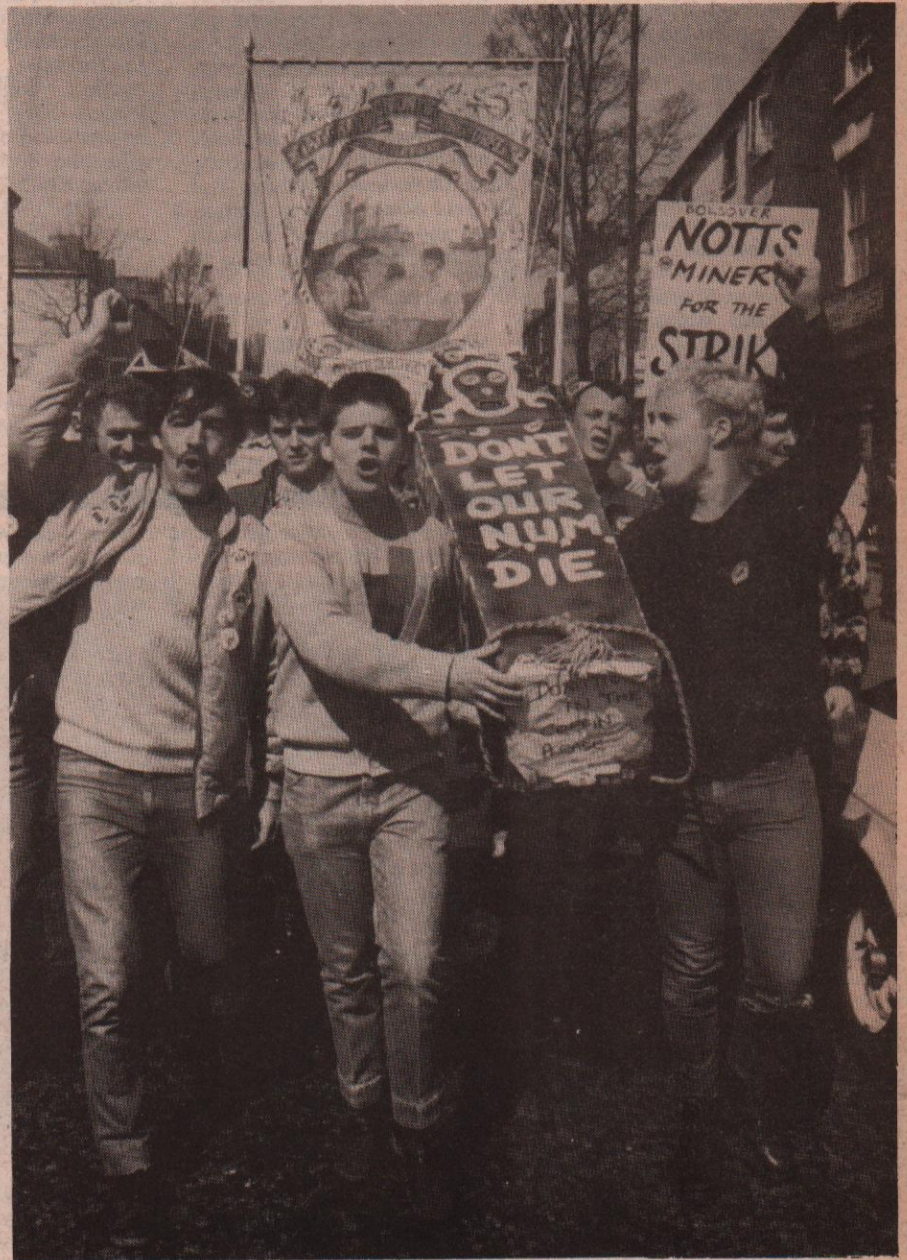


Photo: John Harris

This ballot is about how miners face the attacks from the Coal Board and the government now. It is not a vote for or against the 1984-5 strike.

Is it better to be united or divided in face of closures, new technology, and privatisation plans? That's the issue.

#### Withstand

The ballot is about our ability to withstand the attacks being made on our industry.

No-one should allow themselves to be fooled by the argument that in the event of these attacks coming to fruition that Nottinghamshire can, on its own, withstand them.

The only way we can with-

## By Paul Whetton Bevercotes NUM

stand the attacks being made on us at the present time is by remaining within the umbrella of the National Union of Mineworkers.

One union for one industry - that's the best way we can protect every single miner and the mining communities and everything associated with the mining industry.

The threat is quite real here in Nottinghamshire with the Coal Board saying that by their latest standards a num-

ber of South Notts pits are no longer 'economic'.

#### Move on

We saw this before in Derbyshire in the 1960s. One pit goes down so the men are transferred to other pits, which puts the manpower up, the output per man-shift down, it puts the profit per tonne down and then that pit becomes unprofitable and that is closed and

the men move on to another pit.

That could happen in the Notts coalfield.

The Coal Board are now pouring millions and millions of pounds into new technology. That machinery cannot be allowed to stand idle. So how long will it be before the Coal Board start arguing for a continental shift system?

That in itself would be destructive to the mining communities, with kids going to school Monday to Friday and their dads having their weekend in the middle of the week.

They are a real threat and a real challenge to the NUM. The only way we can withstand them is by remaining in one union - the National Union of Mineworkers.

It is clouding the issues to

say that the vote is for or against Scargill. This is a vote to decide whether or not splits appear within the National Union of Mineworkers.

#### Cushion

Many of the rules in the proposed Instrument of Amalgamation which will form the basis of the ballot are there to cushion and protect certain individuals in the proposed new union and make sure that they've got a job for life.

These are things they have criticised the NUM for in the past, but when it comes to putting pen to paper they have made sure that they are going to be well looked after.

Whatever the outcome of the ballot, Lynk and Prender-

ghast will not be putting knee pads on again and going down the pit. They've got a secure future.

I asked an Executive member what would happen if the scab leaders lose and he said that everything remains just as it is at the moment.

I can't see that. It will be a major blow against Lynk, Prenderghast and co. They will be in a hell of a dilemma.

In the heat of the strike, people lashed out in all directions - they stopped their political levy, they stopped their contributions to the Miners' Welfare. Since then many have thought about the arguments. If they now vote to leave the NUM, they will aligning with leaders who have no political interest except to look after number one.

# Keep Notts national!