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Link up the struggles

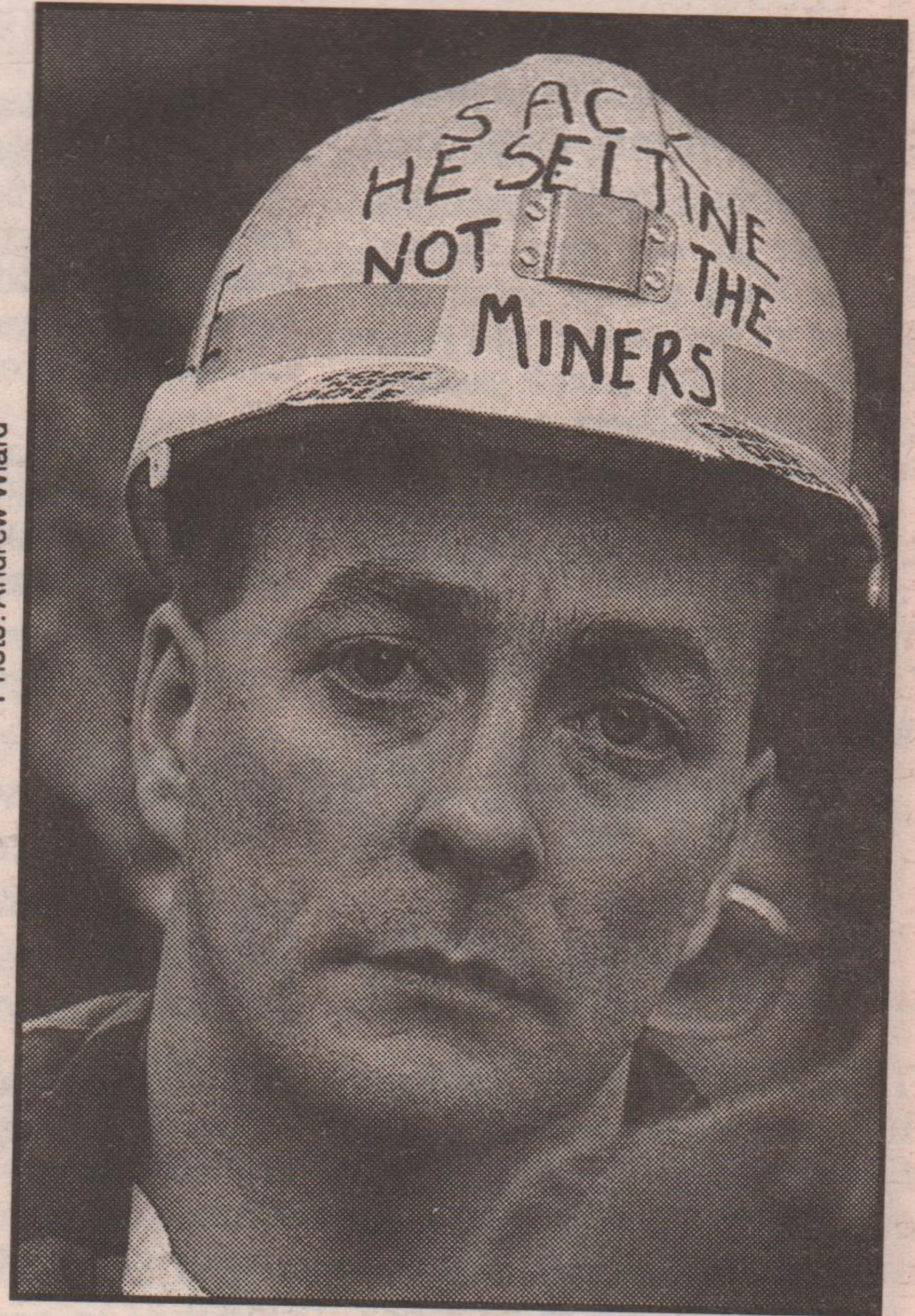


Photo: Andrew Ward



PHOTO: Andrew Ward



Photo: Andrew Ward

Kick out the Tories!



Pull-out special - centre pages

All out on December 9!

Reading's Lib-Lab carve-up

READING Labour Party last week became probably the first in the country to agree a mutual local government stand-down deal with the Liberal Democrats.

Under the new deal, Reading Labour Party will not select candidates for two wards in next year's Berkshire county council elections, giving the Lib-Dems a clear run against the Conservatives.

The authority is currently run by a Labour/Liberal Democrat/Inde-

pendent coalition after the Tories lost control following a by-election defeat last May.

In return, a discussion document marked 'confidential' notes: 'Major concessions have been secured from the Liberal Democrats in Bracknell, where local knowledge suggests that their withdrawal from certain seats will increase the chances of a Labour victory.'

The position was carried around 60-2 at the constituency's general committee last week, with most of the so-called 'left' abstaining.



Ashdown - Labour backing?

Sections of the Labour right are now openly arguing for coalitionism at a national level. Having abandoned any residual commitment to socialism, they now see a pact with the Lib-Dems as the only way to secure an electoral majority against the Tories.

No price would be too high, including complete severance of links with the trade unions. Moves like this have to be opposed at all costs.

London Underground Tube workers ballot on strike action

By a tubeworker

OVER 10,000 members of rail union RMT on London Underground will be balloted for strike action against management's 'company plan' cuts package this week and next.

At stake is 6,000 jobs and every single condition of service won since the end of the Second World War.

Voting takes place between November 5 to 10, with a result due on November 17. The union's general grades committee took the unanimous decision to ballot in the face of management's announcement that the plan would be unilaterally imposed from November 23. Eleven months of negotiations had failed to persuade even one union to recommend acceptance.

New rosters

Train crew will be asked to work to new rosters based on new terms and conditions of employment. Every single London Underground Limited worker will get a new contract of employment - together with the promise of the sack in the event of non-compliance.

New contracts will be distributed from November 1. During the following fortnight, everyone will be seen by their 'centurion' manager and asked to sign. If they refuse, they will be given a fortnight to consider their position.

If after four weeks a worker still hasn't signed up, they will be given notice of dismissal on the basis of one week for every year worked up to the statutory maximum of 12 weeks.

This is mass intimidation is an attempt to smash the unions' effective bargaining strength in

the workplace, in line with personnel director Gwyn Evans' boast: 'In two years there will be no unions of LUL'.

Victimisation

Evans cut his teeth at British Leyland (now Rover) in the seventies, where he participated in the victimisation of Derek 'Red Robbo' Robinson, convenor of the Longbridge car plant in Birmingham and leading Communist Party steward.

Yet in the face of this open union busting, drivers union ASLEF and white collar workers' TSSA are conducting postal 'referendums' on the plan; ballots that do not include the key words 'are you prepared to take industrial action?'

Their leaderships would dearly have loved to recommend the plan because some extra money has been on offer. But their memberships - especially in view of the opposition of the RMT District Council - have refused to swallow.

Decency, fairness and collective strength through the union at the workplace would be replaced by a mass of powerless individuals, each on their own rates of pay linked to performance.

Tactics

Even though ASLEF and TSSA members have been denied a strike ballot, the tactics of the rank and file leaders of the RMT have exposed the real meaning of the plan behind the talk of big pay rises.

Instead of it being probable it was last April, that ASLEF and TSSA would have worked in the face of an RMT strike, there is every chance of these workers now supporting the fightback.

Tories press Asylum Bill

THE TORIES' new Asylum Bill proposals would see a further addition to Britain's existing arsenal of blatantly racist immigration laws.

Meanwhile, an EC interior ministers' discussion document calling for a virtual end to asylum for 'intercontinental' (read: black) refugees has been leaked to the BBC. Its authenticity has subsequently been confirmed.

Socialist Outlook argues for the right of workers to live wherever they choose. We stand unequivocally against all immigration controls whatsoever.

The government was last year forced to ditch an earlier version of the Asylum Bill following widespread outcry in the run up to the last general election. Now the fight is on again.

All asylum-seekers will ostensibly get a right of appeal. But some applicants will be subject to a 'fast track' procedure leaving them just eight days to give notice of appeal

and to prepare a case.

Universal fingerprinting of asylum-seekers will be introduced, and the current automatic right to housing will be ended.

New immigration rules sneaked in under cover of the bill will take the very right of appeal granted to asylum seekers away from prospective visitors refused a visa and immigrants with grounds for appeal considered 'manifestly unfounded'.

The EC document forms an integral part of the 'Fortress Europe' plan that goes inseparably with Maastricht. Refugees would have to go through 'all legal remedies' in their own country before seeking asylum - an obvious impossibility under many dictatorships.

The exclusion of civil war victims is also under consideration, probably in the light of the current turmoil in Yugoslavia.

The Tories justify their racism with the claims that Europe is being 'flooded' by

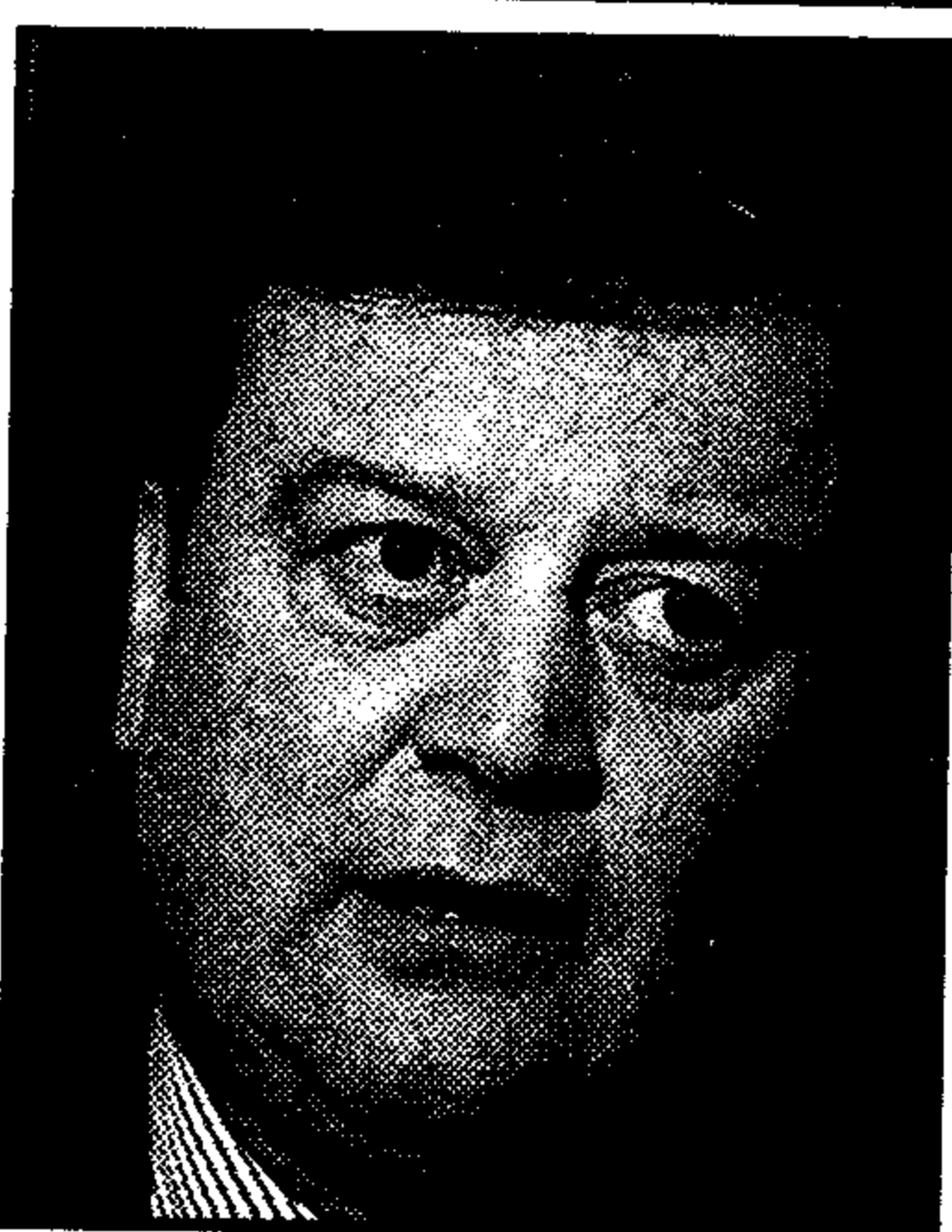


PHOTO: Andrew Wigard

Home Secretary Clarke

'bogus asylum-seekers' who are in reality 'economic migrants'.

Yet of 15 million refugees internationally in 1990, only 5 per cent came to Europe. As ever, it was the world's poorest countries that took the major share. Asylum applications in Britain have actually halved in the last 12 months.

Two of the seven victims of racist murders in the UK so far this year - Ruhullah Aramesh and Panchadharan Sahitharan - were both refugees.

The Anti-Racist Alliance has called a national demonstration against the bill for November 21, assembling at 12 noon in London's Hyde Park. Details from ARA, PO Box 2578, London N5

THEY SHALL NOT PASS!

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MASS DEMONSTRATION

NOV 21 1992

ARA
Anti-Racist Alliance

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Striking back
Fighting privatisation on the railways

To make sure of your copy send a cheque for \$1.25 (inc. postage) to Socialist Outlook, PO Box 1109, London N4 2UU

Ignore Lamont's 'U turn' fairy stories Don't let up: Kick out the Tories!

John Major's government is engaged in a desperate effort to restore an air of calm and normality after the battering of the last two months. They are even spreading fairy stories - that they will now prioritise economic growth, and that they are engaged in serious reconsideration of the pit closure programme.

The reality is that this government is deeply wounded and could be finished off by a massive mobilisation of the labour movement. But it is also true that the Labour and TUC leaders are doing everything possible to let them off the hook.

Despite the magnificent 200,000 turnout on the 25 October TUC demonstration, the push to close the 10 pits earmarked for closure goes on. Now there are just 11 weeks to stop the pits shutting.

Redundancies

While the miners have held centre-stage, redundancy has piled upon redundancy. Aerospace workers demonstrated days after the miners against sackings. Outrage has spread over plans for hospital closures in London. Tube workers are also balloting over rationalisation plans involving 5000 redundancies. Eight thousand jobs could go in BR privatisation and thousands more in Royal Mail.

But as we report on page 6, the Tory party and the government are divided and panicked by Maastricht and the scale of the economic crisis. Like cornered animals they are lashing out at the working class. What the labour movement needs to confront this situation is a policy to fight pit closures; a strategy to fight back against all anti-working class attacks; and a political alternative which can galvanise working class opposition.

To stop the closure of the 10 pits, plans must be drawn up to *occupy the mines* if no reprieve is granted. The message must be driven home that this is a realistic struggle that can win; and

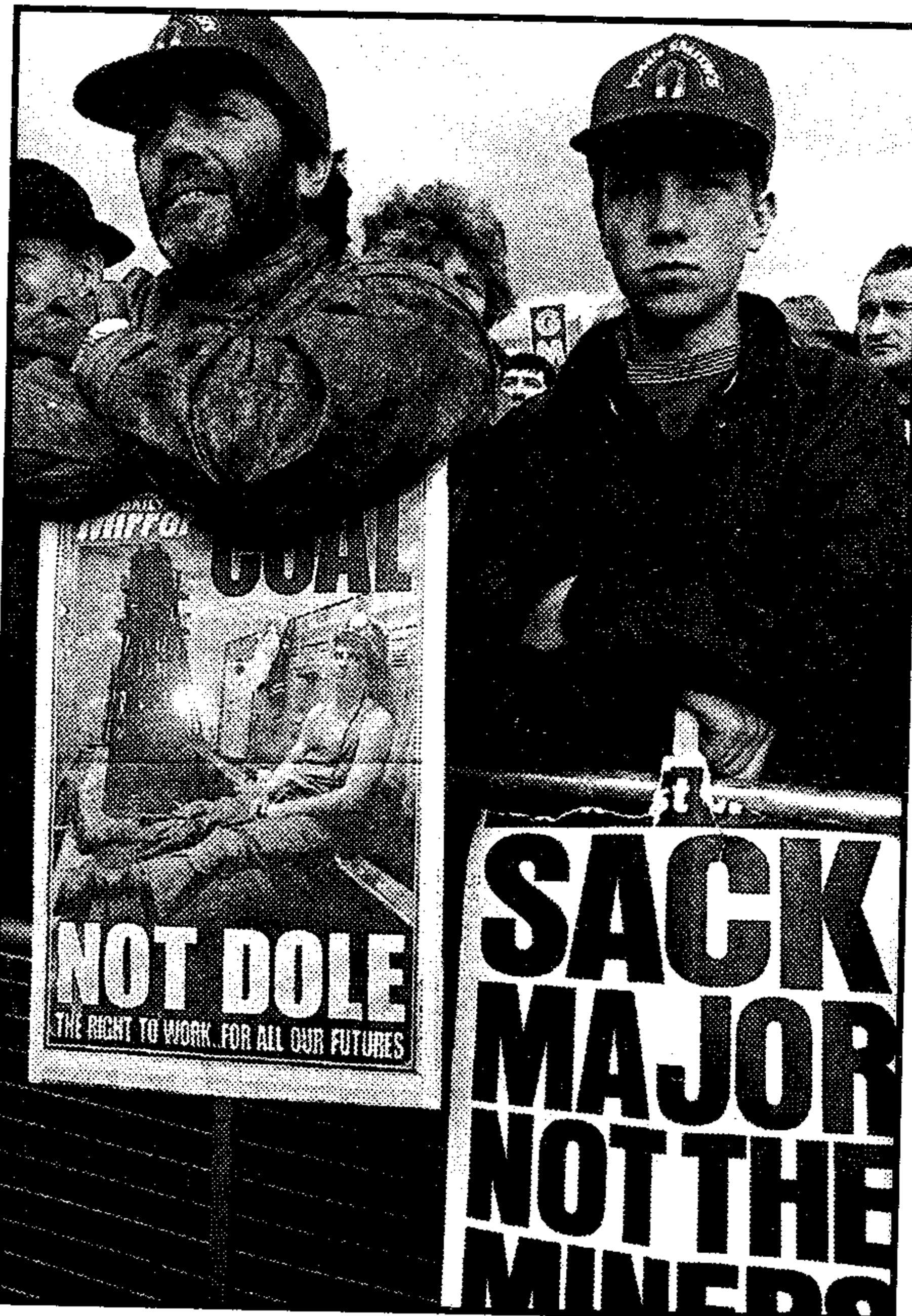


PHOTO: Andrew Wierd

that occupations in themselves would spark a huge solidarity mobilisation.

There is now an obvious need to unify the struggles, to work towards industrial action across the public sector. Since the Spring, NALGO workers have been conducting strike action in different boroughs against redundancies and cutbacks. Now RMT is calling for strike action on the Tube.

And on 21 October thousands of workers took (probably illegal) strike action to go on the first miners' demo. The mood is changing; ballots for strike action can be won.

To begin to unify the struggles, to develop class-wide action, the TUC should call a *one-day general strike* against redundancies and the threat of a wage freeze.

No one should be taken in by Lamont's and

Major's promises that they will now prioritise economic growth (honest). This is not a matter of what they *want*, it is a matter of what they are able to do. Sustained economic growth and a revitalisation of industry is excluded without an upturn in the world economy and a completely changed political order in Britain.

The talk of an economic revival is therefore just ideological window-dressing; in the real world the perspective is one of continued decline towards slump.

Alternative

To knit together the anti-Tory resistance the working class needs an alternative political perspective. This can only be the fight for a Labour government, raising the demand that the leaders of the movement assume their responsibilities and fight to drive out the Tories, by backing workers' struggles and by campaigning and voting against Maastricht.

Immediately socialists must raise the demand for worksharing with no loss of pay to meet threatened redundancies; and strike action and occupations such as that at Lyons Maid in Kirkby to stop redundancies and closures being pushed through.

Trade unionists must raise the demand now for no capitulation to wage freeze in the public sector; and in a period when inflation will rise because of the devaluation of the pound, for cost-of-living indexing of wage settlements.

On the economy, socialists should argue that Lamont and Major have no intention of industrial regeneration, and that what we need is massive programme of state investment and public works financed by taxing the rich.

The mood is changing, but the anti-Tory drive must not be allowed to stall. This means socialists piling into the fight to defend the miners through building miners' support groups in every area; building support for the struggle against hospital closures; and supporting every group of workers resisting redundancies. Now is the time to act; don't let the Tories off the hook!

Become a Socialist Outlook supporter

The fightback against the Tories is starting in the working class. Now more than ever an organised force is needed which is going to fight, inside the unions and inside the Labour Party, against the do-nothing policies of the movement's leaders.

If you agree with the ideas in this paper get in touch with us, become a Socialist Outlook supporter. Fill in the form below.

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PHOTO: Roy Cuckow

Over 200 people came to hear leading Marxist Ernest Mandel speak at a Socialist Outlook rally on October 23. Pictured (L to R) are Alan Thornett of the Socialist Outlook editorial board; Ernest Mandel; Carolyn Sikorski (chair); and Ann Conway of People's Democracy, Irish section of the Fourth International.

An Urgent Appeal for Cash

Send us £20!

WE WANT every reader to consider sending us a minimum of £20 now.

Over the past few weeks the political situation has begun to change dramatically - and with it the tasks of socialists. *Socialist Outlook* sales have shot up; but so have our costs.

Restricted as we are to a fortnightly schedule, we have had all the added costs of producing leaflets and posters, organising meetings, speakers' trips and so on.

In this situation we cannot afford to hold back on our activity and the new opportunities for winning people to socialism.

But we depend on you, our readers and supporters, to give us the money to enable this activity to go forward.

Just now, we are in the middle of a £7000 fund drive. As we go

to press we have raised £2600 of this - there is still a long way to go.

We earmarked this money for investment in new computers and printing equipment which we urgently need.

But there is a danger that if we don't step up our fundraising, then fund drive money will go to finance our current campaigning.

We have been receiving a steady stream of enquiries and new subscriptions from our sales on the miners' demonstrations. This has proved the value of *Socialist Outlook*, despite the meagre resources for its production.

If you value *Socialist Outlook*, then please act now to boost our fund appeal and send as much as you can. Send all contributions to Socialist Outlook, PO Box 1109, London N4 2UU.

NALGO members fight on in local government, education Islington strikers scent victory

**By Doug Thorpe,
vice-chair, Islington
NALGO**

ISLINGTON'S Labour council is now threatening mass sackings of NALGO members on strike for the last five months against compulsory redundancies.

Council leader Margaret Hodge – an erstwhile Bennite who is stepping down to join chartered accountants Price Waterhouse – desperately wants to break the dispute as her parting shot.

A verbal motion was recently put to the Labour group authorised the leader to terminate strikers' contracts if this proved necessary 'at some point in the future'. Within 24 hours, the plan was implemented.

Strikers have been sent letters threatening to terminate their contracts of employment unless they return to work by November 2, the day *Socialist Outlook* goes to press. Delivery – even to places as far away as

Hastings and Andover – was by private motorcycle courier.

They will only be re-engaged if they sign a contract specifying that strikers will be first out in the event of redundancies, even ahead of scabs. They will lose even the meagre redeployment and enhanced redundancy pay terms imposed on the rest of the workforce.

The legal department reportedly warned Hodge that the first draft of the letter, threatening summary dismissal at two days' notice, was too harsh.

Yet this tactic has produced a backlash among Labour councillors who did not understand what they were voting for. The authority has now backed down from its refusal to negotiate and has met NALGO for the first time since the dispute began.

Further meetings are scheduled, with the council promising to hand over vital information about vacancy levels it had previously withheld.

NALGO is now set to ballot



the libraries department and some central support staff after the union's national emergency committee agreed to let the branch bring the number on strike up to 1,000. If there are any victimisations, the entire membership will be balloted.

But the success of the dispute now depends on the current strikers being prepared to defy the sacking threat. At the time of writing, it seems any drift back to work will be a small minority.

Towards the end of last week, even wavering sections such as managers and supervisors were registering majority votes to stay out. All strikers were due to be contacted by the union at home over the weekend.

The likelihood is the dispute will continue and even escalate. Given that the council is now talking and is due to elect a new – hopefully less intransigent – leader, victory looks increasingly probable.

● Pay battles in higher education are hotting up, a university NALGO member writes. NALGO administration workers in the 'new' universities – the former polytechnics – last August rejected a 4.3 per cent 'final' pay offer in a ballot that authorised up to six days of strike action.

Three have already successfully taken. Now national negotiators are delaying calls for a three day strike in order to spread selective action now

proceeding in a number of universities.

NATFHE lecturers across the new universities have also rejected a 3.9 per cent offer, with a one day strike due on November 4.

In the 'old' universities, lecturers in the AUT are in dispute after a 6 per cent rise agreed with employers earlier this year was vetoed by education secretary John Patten. A 4.3 per cent increase has now been imposed by employers.

With the likely announcement of a public sector wage freeze this month, both local government and university workers should line up with the miners and many other groups in a public sector alliance against the Tories.

Injunction threat ends Lyons Maid occupation

SIXTY-SEVEN workers occupying the Lyons Maid factory in Kirkby, Lancashire, were forced out of the occupation by a court injunction last Thursday afternoon. The injunction was obtained by the receivers employed by National Westminster Bank.

The background to the two-and-a-half week occupation was the sudden collapse of Lyons Maid, after it was sold last year by Allied Lyons, the

group dominated by the Australian Allied Breweries, to American asset stripper Henry Clarke.

Clarke received £1.6 million towards redundancy payments when the plant was bought, but that money has gone missing. All 200 London Lyons Maid workers have now been made redundant by the receivers.

The receivers decided to close the Kirkby plant despite the fact that 30 firms had expressed an interest in buying it.

Henry Clarke is a former US arms dealer; he failed in his attempt to impose a no-strike deal on the firm before bankrupting the firm.

Despite abandoning the occupation, the Lyons maid workers have pledged to continue the fight for their jobs.

Messages of support and donations should be sent to: Steve Alcock, TGWU 6/556 branch, c/o 2 Melrose Mount, Kirkby, merseyside. Cheques payable to: TGWU 6/556 branch.

CPSA Licensed to strike over sackings

By a CPSA activist

THE DRIVING Vehicle Licensing Agency headquarters in Swansea has been badly disrupted by strike action called by low paid civil servants union CPSA over bosses' secret plans for mass sackings.

In addition, many local vehicle registration offices have also seen shutdowns. Unfortunately, higher grades organised in NUCPS voted 2-1 against coming out.

The disputes follow the leak of a senior management discussion document on the likely effects of DVLA privatisation in two years time, which predicts: 'It is unlikely that contractors would base their operations in Swansea ... using DVLA staff'. Some 4,600 jobs face the axe nationwide, with some 3,000 chopped in Swansea alone.

It goes on to counsel a hush-up, arguing: 'There is little we could say to staff and unions that would be helpful'. Quite. The only consultation management are interested in is how to implement this government-inspired sell-off.

Some people argue there's no need for a fight, as alternative civil service jobs will be readily available. In fact, many workers at DVLA have transferred there from departments already privatised. Where are 4,600 people

supposed to transfer to?

The need now is to link up workers across the public sector in defence of their jobs and in opposition to privatisation.

● Socialist CPSA activists are calling for an open conference to draw up a unified left slate for next year's internal elections.

A crippling split between the Militant-dominated Broad Left and the Kinnockite/Stalinist breakaway Broad Left '84 has repeatedly handed power to hard right, often on a minority vote.

This year saw the election of perhaps the most rightwing leadership within the TUC. Many fear that new general secretary Barry Reamsbottom is intent on taking CPSA down the class-collaborationist road pioneered by the EETPU.

The Socialist Caucus group, which includes CPSA members both inside and outside the Broad Left, is proposing a left unity conference to agree a joint left ticket on the basis of proportional representation for all groupings in attendance.

With up to 90 per cent of workers on civil service terms and conditions now facing privatisation, the very survival of the union could be at stake, it warns.

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20,000 jobs under fire

Plan to axe
London
hospitals

By Bill Sutcliffe

THE TORIES are out to devastate healthcare in London by implementing the Tomlinson report, which recommends closure of seven hospitals at the cost of 20,000 jobs.

Purposely designed as a blueprint for massive cutbacks, the document calls for the scrapping of 4,000 beds treating 200,000 patients a year, up to a quarter of the capital's current caseload.

Three casualty units treating over 200,000 accidents and emergencies every year also face health secretary Virginia Bottomley's axe.

Tomlinson - named after an inquiry chaired by experienced hospital hatchetman Sir Bernard Tomlinson - calls for the closure of four teaching hospitals; St Bartholomew's, Middlesex, Charing Cross and either St Thomas' or Guy's.

Three specialist units - the Royal Throat Nose and Ear, Queen Charlotte's maternity and the Tropical Diseases hospitals - also stand to go,

while the Royal Marsden and Brompton hospitals would merge.

Tomlinson argues, in pure cost accountant speak, that London is somehow 'overbedded'. This is another Tory lie. Even current capacity cannot meet the demand for care.

London has lost 8,000 acute (short-stay) beds over the last ten years, almost a third of the total, while waiting lists have soared 30 per cent to hit 133,000. Tomlinson offers no hint as to where the patients displaced by his cuts should go - potentially adding tens of thousands to the queue for treatment.

London's hospitals have already been badly damaged by the Conservative's ideologically-driven 'internal market' schemes because of their inflated property prices and other overheads.

Lost contracts to treat patients from other districts and cuts in London health authority budgets will mean a cash shortfall of at least £80 million this year for inner



London's hospitals.

Unfortunately, Labour's defence of the NHS - supposedly a surefire vote winner - has been pathetic. Health spokesman David Blunkett openly accepts many of Tomlinson's premises and has even welcomed its supposed emphasis on primary health care (services such as general practitioners and health visitors). Yet even he has been forced to brand Tomlinson 'a front for cuts and closures'.

Roger Lyons, general secretary of MSF, has written a letter of 'protest' to Bottomley which fails to oppose hospital closures, merely arguing that

any money saved be ringfenced for other healthcare uses.

Blunkett's sponsoring union NUPE has likewise softpedaled on the question, although one London official has issued a press release correctly arguing that 'the deadly cocktail of the market, Tomlinson and public service cuts offer the prospect of London's streets being paved with the sick, mentally ill and dying.'

By far the best response has come from the Confederation of Health Service Employees, which is working with pressure group London Health Emergency around a 'Lon-

doners Need London's Hospitals' campaign.

LHE has developed a simple five point alternative plan which includes calls for an immediate cash injection of 100 million into London's NHS and the abolition of the health care market.

Commented LHE's John Lister: 'If the government can be forced to hold back on pit closures, a London-wide campaign can stop them closing our hospitals.'

London Health Emergency, 446, Uxbridge Road, London W12 0NS. Tel: 081 749 2525

London's ambulances
From cock-up
to catastrophe

By Harry Sloan

THE FIASCO of the London Ambulance Service which has brought the resignation of its chief executive is much more than a computer cock-up.

The chaos in LAS emergency services brought the death of an estimated 20 patients in 36 hours, and many more before: but it flows from years of under-funding, made much worse by the ludicrous 'business methods' imposed by the Tory health reforms.

Disgraced chief executive John Wilby was hand-picked for the job in 1990, after a career including a stint as a manager in South Africa. He ushered in a restructuring of LAS which created a new Board of Directors and massively expanded management ranks while the jobs of front-line ambulance staff were axed.

Accountants

The Board replaced the traditional uniformed chief officers with a platoon of directors on £30,000-plus salaries and no less than 19 additional top managers and accountants. At the same time a total of 300 non-emergency posts (over a third) were deleted, forcing a reduction of over 10 per cent in patient journeys, and repeated crises in which emergency crews and

vehicles were diverted to pick up patients left stranded.

Refusing to meet with or discuss with unions, Wilby's new-look management forged recklessly ahead, learning nothing from experience on the ground.

One disastrous computerised system which had cost £7.5 million but failed to work since 1983 was replaced ... with another, completely untested system costing £1.5m.

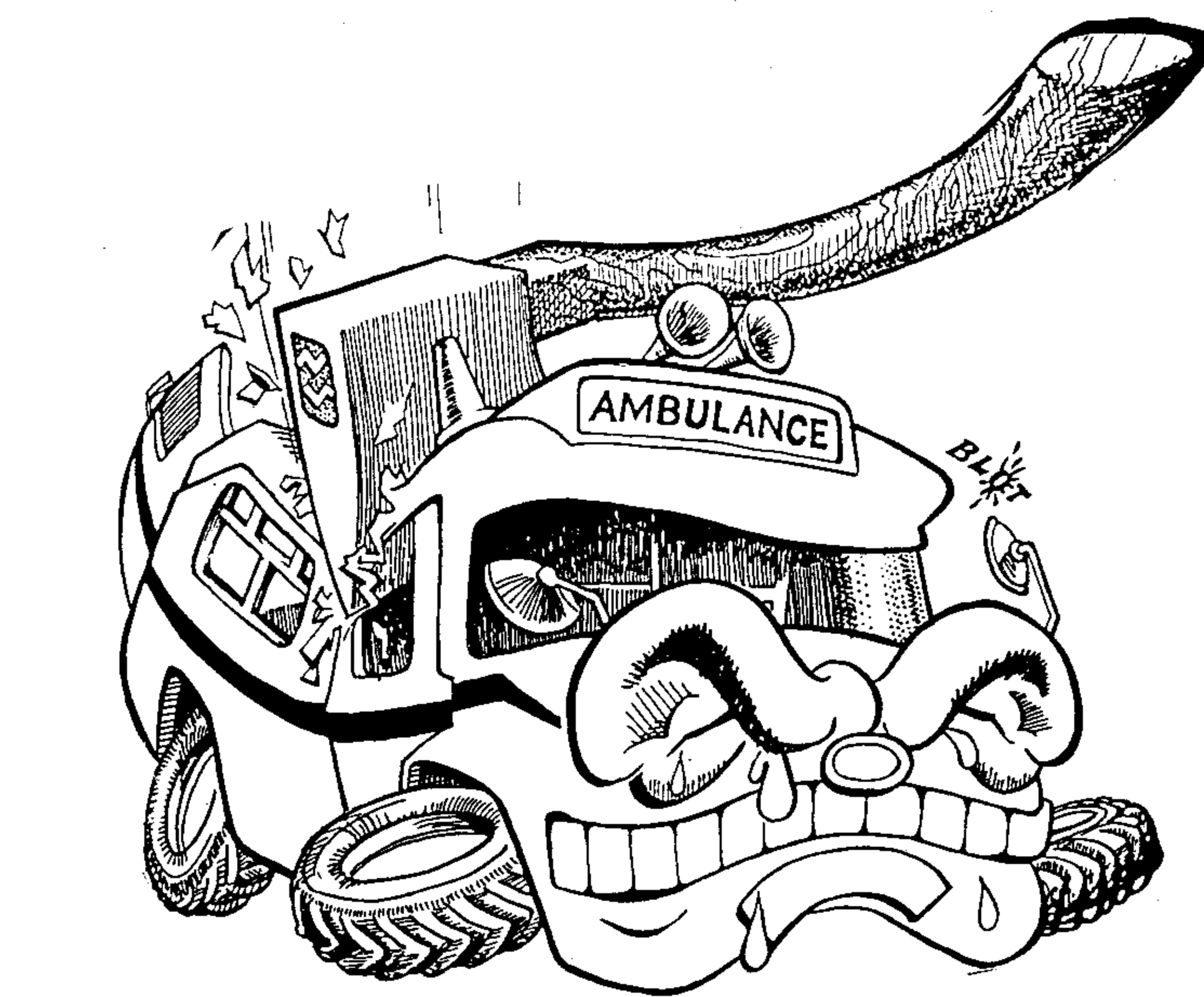
Converted vans

Wilby announced that the LAS would buy not custom-built ambulances but converted Leyland-DAF vans to save just £3,000 per vehicle: union objections to the poor specifications of the vehicles were ignored. And despite a clapped out fleet of 999 ambulances, Wilby axed eight of the 18 repair workshops.

Chasing a 'high-tec' image, the LAS splashed out £2.3m a year and assigned scarce paramedic staff to a controversial helicopter and 'instant response unit': last year the helicopter carried just one patient a day, while over 1,900 other emergency patients a day waited an average of 26 minutes for an ambulance.

Behind the public relations facade, the LAS performance plummeted under the new management.

In 1990 just 74% of 999 calls saw LAS ambulances activated within 3 minutes compared with a government



target of 95%. But by 1991 this had fallen to 49%, and in early 1992 it was only 30%!

In 1990, a mere 76% of LAS ambulances arrived within 14 minutes of a 999 call, against a government target of 95%: by 1991 this was down to 66%, and in 1992 it fell to 59%.

The new computer system was the final straw that brought the emergency service to the point of collapse. It was introduced without testing, without proper staff training, and in two stages instead of three. The computer immediately showed an ability to lose calls and malfunction.

No confidence

On April 3 1992 the 500 LAS staff working the system in NE London sent the Board a formal vote of no con-

fidence and called for the removal of the managers responsible.

In September, NUPE published a detailed account of the chaos in the LAS (999, *The London Misery Line*), and called for a full Select Committee inquiry. It took a 36-hour total failure of the computer, costing up to 20 more lives, before Wilby resigned at the end of October.

His departure should be followed by the whole LAS Board, and a full-scale public inquiry must lead to additional funding and a complete reorganisation to scrap the 'business-style' reforms and ensure London gets the comprehensive ambulance service it needs.

This means abolishing the crazy 'internal market' system, and placing the LAS under the control of an elected London Regional Health Authority.

London
fights
back
for NHS

The *Londoners Need London's Hospitals* campaign has received an overwhelming response from members of the public since it was launched by pressure group London Health Emergency (LHE) on Tuesday.

Its launch was sponsored by London Labour MPs, council leaders, union officials and hospital consultants and GPs.

It has won surprisingly strong backing from the London Evening Standard and regular coverage on regional radio and TV.

The campaign hotline (081 543 5914) received over 500 calls in the first four days and campaign packs have been dispatched to London commuters living as far away as Lincoln.

The LHE office has also been swamped with letters of support from a cross section of Londoners from all walks of life.

A public meeting has been called for November 10, 7pm at Camden Town Hall, Judd St, WC1

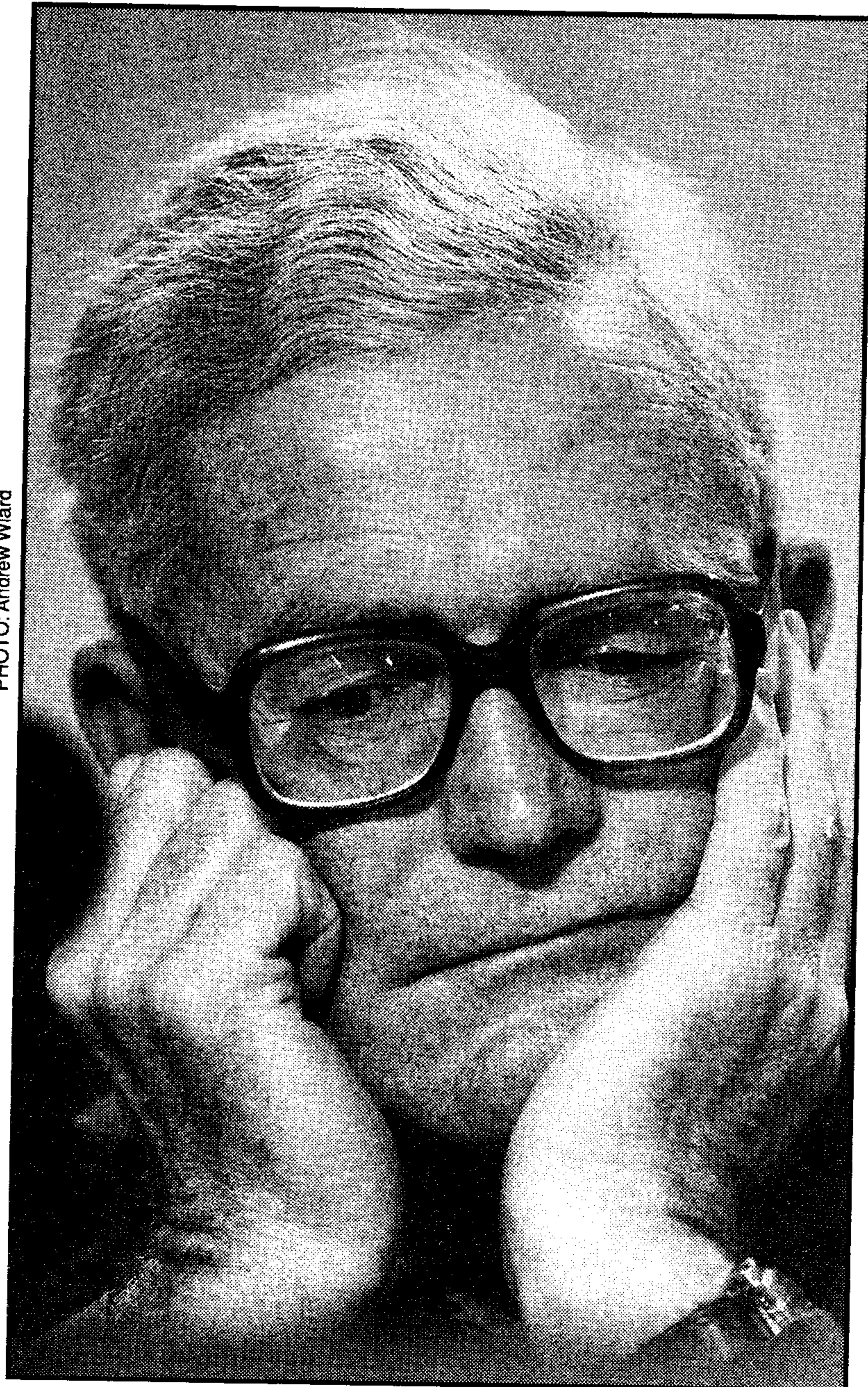


PHOTO: Andrew Ward

Not happy: Major's man in Europe, Douglas Hurd



Italian pensioners – threatened by Maastricht

Behind Tory Maastricht blues

The Tories are deeply split over Maastricht, and the process of European capitalist unification is in trouble throughout Europe. To dig deeper into the crisis we spoke to PETER GOWAN, founder of *Labour Focus on Eastern Europe* and a member of the *New Left Review* editorial board.

Why are the Tories tearing themselves apart over Europe?

The critical and most explosive factor is the deep attachment of sectors of British capital and the British state to the Anglo-American 'Atlanticist' option of capitalist development.

This is deeply explosive. The Atlanticist lobby is out to 'get' Major. This is not because of petty revenge against Major for his part in ditching Thatcher, but because Major and Heseltine are programmatically committed to British participation in what will be a Franco-German led European unification

process.

The 'Europe versus America' split is still a major fault line in bourgeois politics. The pro-Americans are engaged in dirty tricks. For example *The Times* is engaged in a hysterical campaign to topple Major. Sectors of capital linked to US investment are involved. Elements in the military and security elite are implicated in this campaign, because they are intoxicated with the link with the US military and security establishment.

This division is vital because in a situation where a 1930s-style slump is possible, fundamental choices over economic, strategic and military alian-

ces have to be made. Choices made now will reverberate for decades.

Then there is straightforward nationalism and opposition to the submergence of 'British' identity in Europe. This may seem an objectively unimportant consideration, but nationalist symbols are very, very important for ideologically cementing the Tory party together.

The overall background is of course the catastrophic slump of the British economy, which shows the utter failure of Thatcherism to strengthen British capitalism.

During the recent crisis there was an urgent need for manufacturing capital to see interest rates cut and the pound devalued – both of which were obstructed by ERM membership. So this was an immediate issue fuelling the 'Euro-sceptics'.

British manufacturing capital needs access to European markets, especially Germany – the biggest single export market. But British capital is uniquely international in its world-wide investments. Why can't it survive the collapse of its manufacturing sector, and base itself on international investments and the financial profits of the City?

This is very important. While the British domestic economy is in crisis, the core of the British ruling class is immensely wealthy, because of its financial, rentier operations.

But this situation cannot last for ever. Until the collapse of the pound and the ERM, the financial, rentier element of the

ruling class was dominant. A high-valued pound discriminated against export of manufactures, but benefitted the financial sectors of the bourgeoisie and corporations involved in foreign investment.

But a successful rentier capitalism depends on maintaining open international financial markets, and keeping the City as a major international financial centre. In a period of gigantic capitalist crisis it is far from clear that this will continue to be the situation indefinitely.

When you have the world breaking up into major rival trading blocs and the threat of growing protectionism, it will be all too easy for Britain's competitors to smash up British financial operations – unless Britain has a solid domestic manufacturing base to sustain the value of the pound.

You can discuss theoretical models until you are blue in the face, but all the historical experience is that without a powerful domestic economy, the base for international financial operations eventually disappears.

We should note in this context the rise of Frankfurt as a financial centre to rival London, based precisely on the immense strength of German industry and the strength of the Deutschmark.

So in the long term the parasitic, rentier-capital concept of British capitalism is unworkable. And this of course is a powerful factor in ruling class debates about the Europeanist option.

What is the way out of this crisis for British capitalism?

It is very difficult to say that either a Europeanist or Atlanticist option

"So in the long term the parasitic, rentier-capital concept of British capitalism is unworkable. And this of course is a powerful factor in ruling class debates about the Europeanist option"

will get British capitalism out of crisis. The fundamental thing the capitalist class could do would be to go for industrial growth – but this is fantastically difficult to achieve.

It would require protectionist measures to defend British industries, which would strike hard at the interests of the rentier financial capitalists. It would require not just a fundamental turnaround of economic strategy, it would require reconstructing the ruling social bloc – for example by attempting a new 'corporatist' alliance with the trade unions

It is not something that Major or any successors could easily pull off. It would mean exterminating the Thatcherite heritage, fundamentally changing the tax regime to the disadvantage of the wealthy and and it would mean state-led investment.

You could only get this kind of turnaround through a political upheaval of giant proportions – a split in the Tory party, a national government, or a Labour government.

The inability of the ruling class to make this kind of choice only prolongs and deepens this terrible and catastrophic crisis.

Why is Maastricht stalling Europe-wide?

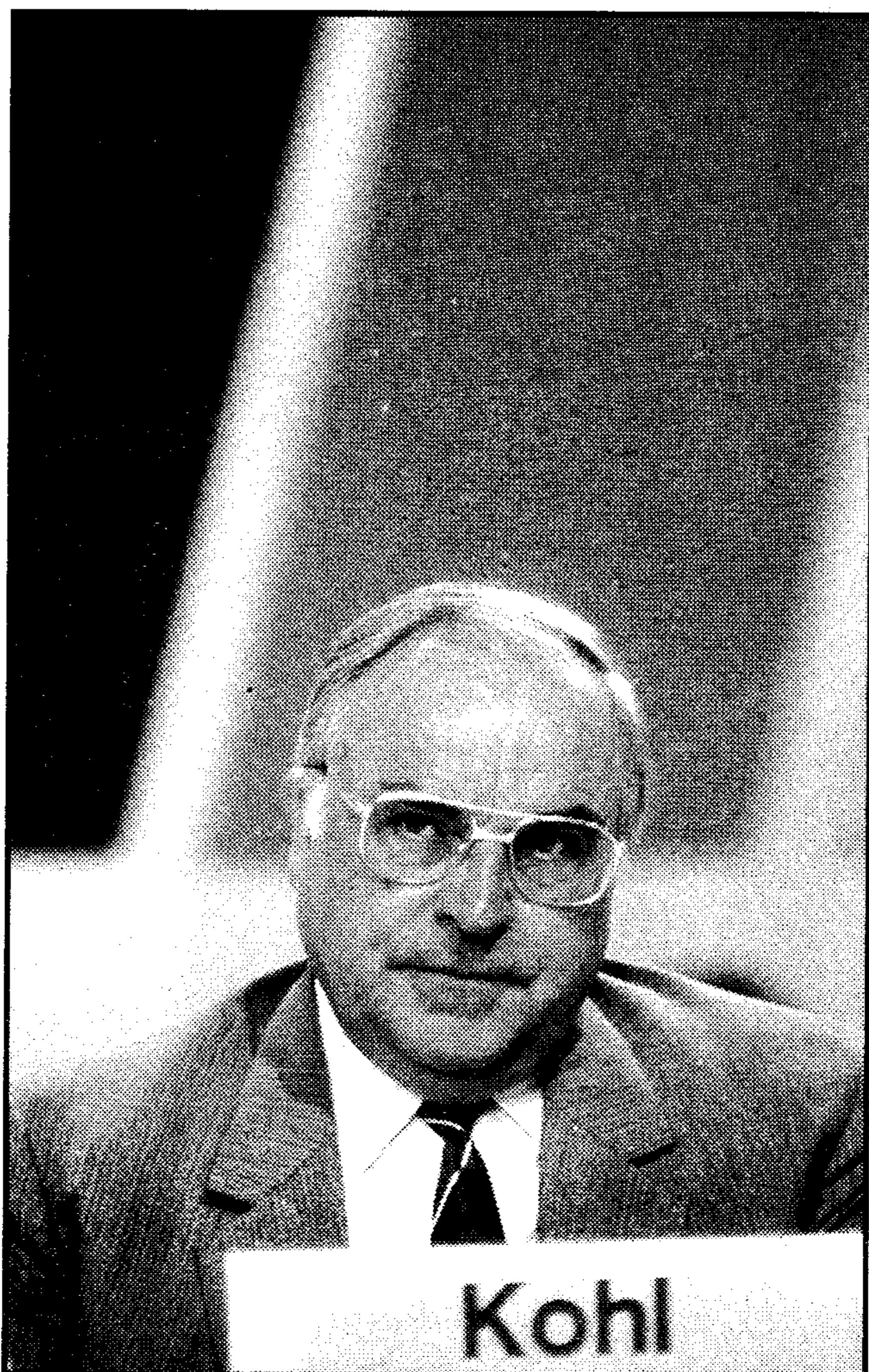
If the treaty including monetary union is carried through this is a major step towards a unified European state, the biggest step in the history of the EC. There was bound to be a big reaction against this.

Capital in Western Europe is still organised on a nation-state basis; the development of pan-European capital is still very limited, and important sectors of capital still benefit from national protection and thus feel threatened by the loss of that protection.

Big multinational enterprises, including US firms, could benefit from pan-European unification; but many smaller firms feel threatened. Many sectors of industry throughout Europe are worried by a single market, fearing that their nationally-protected markets could be blown away.

In addition the recession has meant mounting pressures on each government towards protectionist measures.

Politically the whole Maastricht operation has been badly handled. There is nothing in it that could mobilise mass support, for example new commitments to democratic rights, defence of the en-



Covering costs of unification – Kohl

vironment or new social rights: in reality the Social Chapter is very weak.

In fact many sectors of the masses in Europe feel threatened by the attack on social conditions which is implied by economic convergence.

Monetary union has been undermined by the enormous waves of currency speculation torpedoing the ERM. This has been caused by the complete liberalisation of capital markets in the 1980s and of course the fantastic economic crisis shaking the capitalist world.

It has also been undermined by high German interest rates, a product of the need to finance unification. This incidentally was a reflection of the very rapid gobbling up of the GDR by West Germany; they felt they had to do this very rapidly because of French and British opposition to unification.

This begs the question of whether there was a deliberate attempt in some quarters to undermine the ERM. This we don't know; what is certain is that the American banks made a killing from the financial crisis, and they are known to be against the ERM.

How do you explain the budgetary and social welfare cutbacks in Italy. Are the strikes against them the first 'anti-Maastricht' strikes?

Of course the cutbacks in Italy are connected to preparation for European monetary union. Budget deficits have to be reduced to 3 per cent of GDP according to the Maastricht rules, and this is impossible without massive reductions in state spending.

But the cutbacks in Italy are not just about Maastricht. They are also an attempt to preserve the unity and integrity of the Italian state, under threat from the right-populist Northern Leagues. The Leagues are campaigning against what they see as huge subsidies from the industrial north to southern Italy.

The Italian budget deficit is not just caused by the huge size of the Italian welfare state, which of course is a massive historic gain of the working class. It also arises from a hugely bloated state apparatus. Tens of thousands of state agencies exist for no good reason except to provide employment to hangers-on of the Christian Democrats. This is the cor-

rupt clientalist structure which has enabled the Christian Democrats to stay in power in the post-war period.

But having said that of course the Maastricht preparations do involve vast attacks on the rights of Italian workers. And it is very positive that the European left has generally understood what Maastricht involves; for example in Italy the Party of Communist Refoundation has played a very active role both in mobilising against welfare cutbacks and

"The main point is to popularise the idea of an alternative Europe, the way Tony Benn explained it in his 'Europe Bill' in parliament."

in fighting ratification of the Maastricht treaty.

Will the Tories be compelled to make cutbacks of a similar scale?

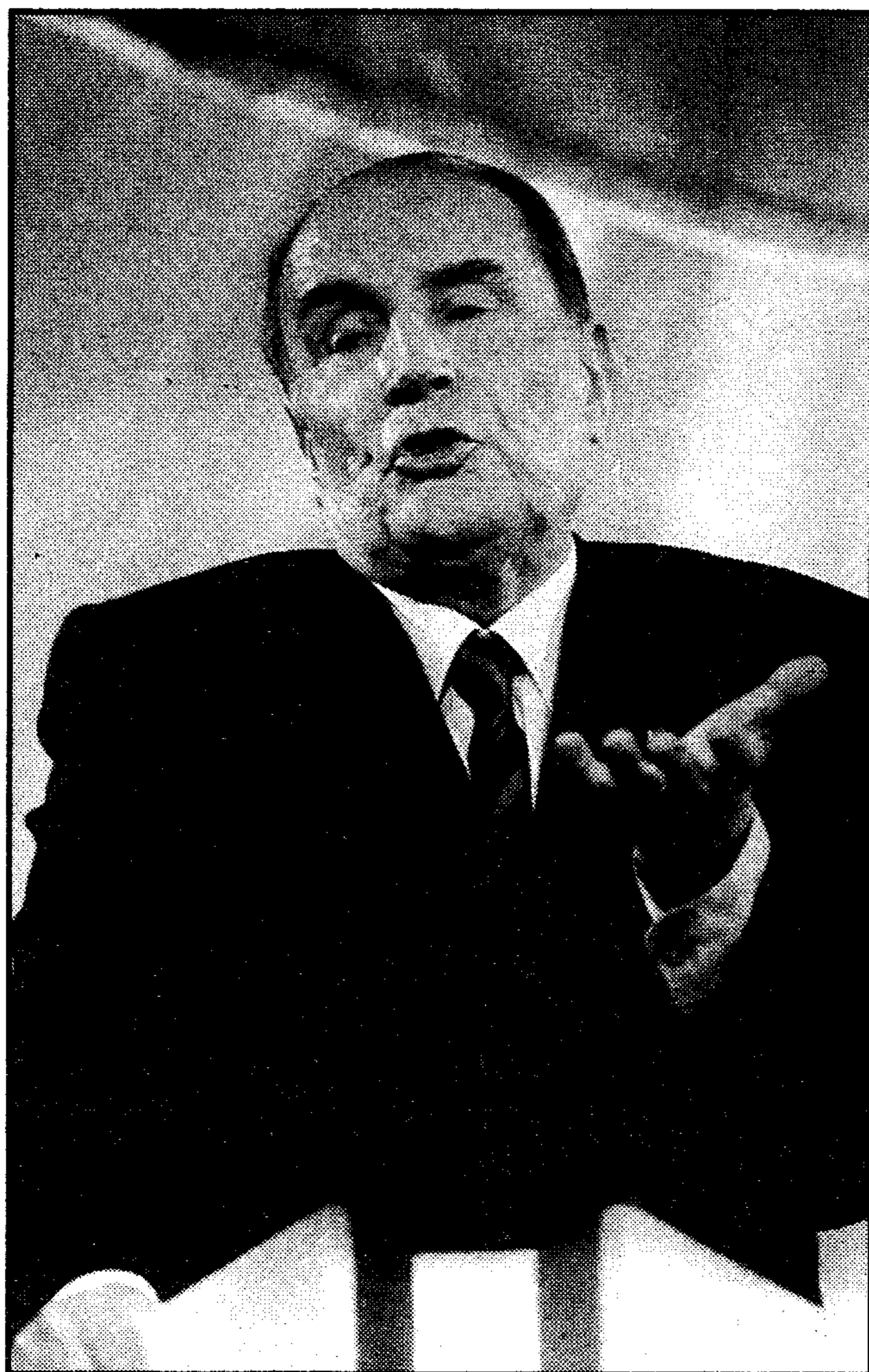
It's not at all clear that the Tories will be able to go into monetary union. Certainly the Tories won't be able to reduce the budget deficit sufficiently to meet the Maastricht rules in the foreseeable future. This could only happen if there was a sustained economic growth.

But in any case there will be massive pressures for social welfare cutbacks in Britain with or without Maastricht. The present government knows that confidence in the pound will not be restored without demonstrating to international financial markets they can make 'tough' economic policies work.

If the GATT trade talks fail, will it lead to an international trade war?

There's no doubt about that. There is a really bitter conflict going on in these talks between the major trading blocs, especially between the US and Europe over farm subsidies.

But there should be no illusions; if they do stitch up a deal for GATT there will be no return to a free trade regime internationally, but just a stabilisation of what is increasingly managed trade between blocs. Even a successful GATT outcome cannot revitalise the world economy.



Bogey figure of Tory right – French president Mitterrand

How should the left respond to the Maastricht crisis?

It should respond at several levels. In the first place of course it must continue to fight Maastricht and the attacks on state spending it implies. This also means fighting not only attacks on welfare rights, but all the reactionary aspects of 'Fortress Europe' – for example the barriers erected against immigrants and asylum seekers and the tariff walls against eastern Europe and the third world.

But the left must advance an alternative programme to Maastricht. We have to argue in favour of stepped-up state spending and in favour of economic expansion to combat these

monstrous levels of unemployment – 30 million unemployed in Europe. Maastricht-style deflation will not get us any of these things.

But in the end a new leap forward in the productive forces does indeed mean a deepening integration of the national economies. What the Maastricht crisis shows up is the extreme difficulty that nationally-based imperialist states have in making a new leap forward, to create a new European-wide capitalist state.

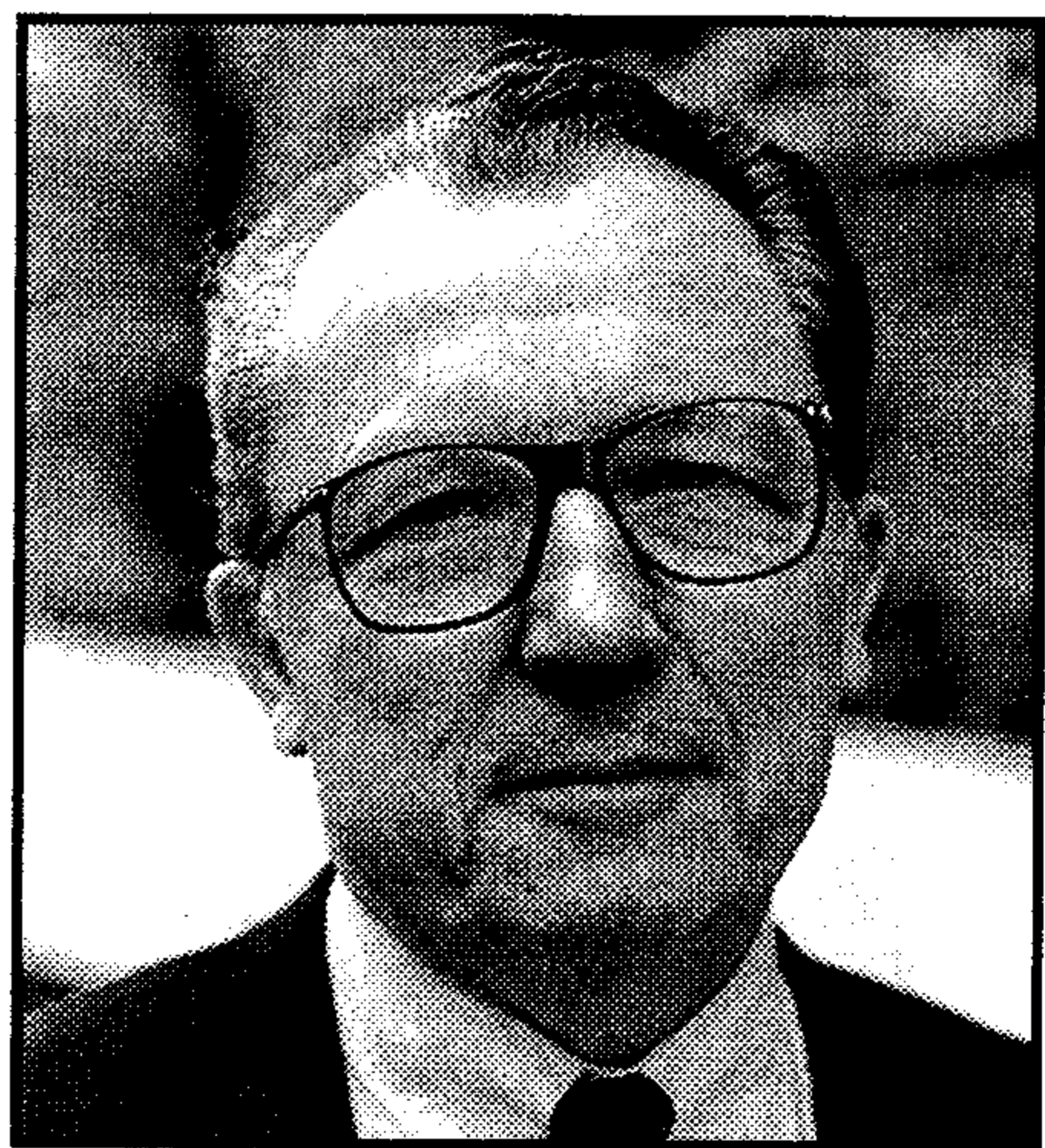
As internationalists we are not for defending national sovereignty. We must put forward a programme for the integration of European economies in the interests of the mass of the population – workers, women, youth and immigrant workers.

This is what Trotsky meant when he advanced the slogan of a 'United Socialist States of Europe'. We can explain this in many ways, the words are not the key thing.

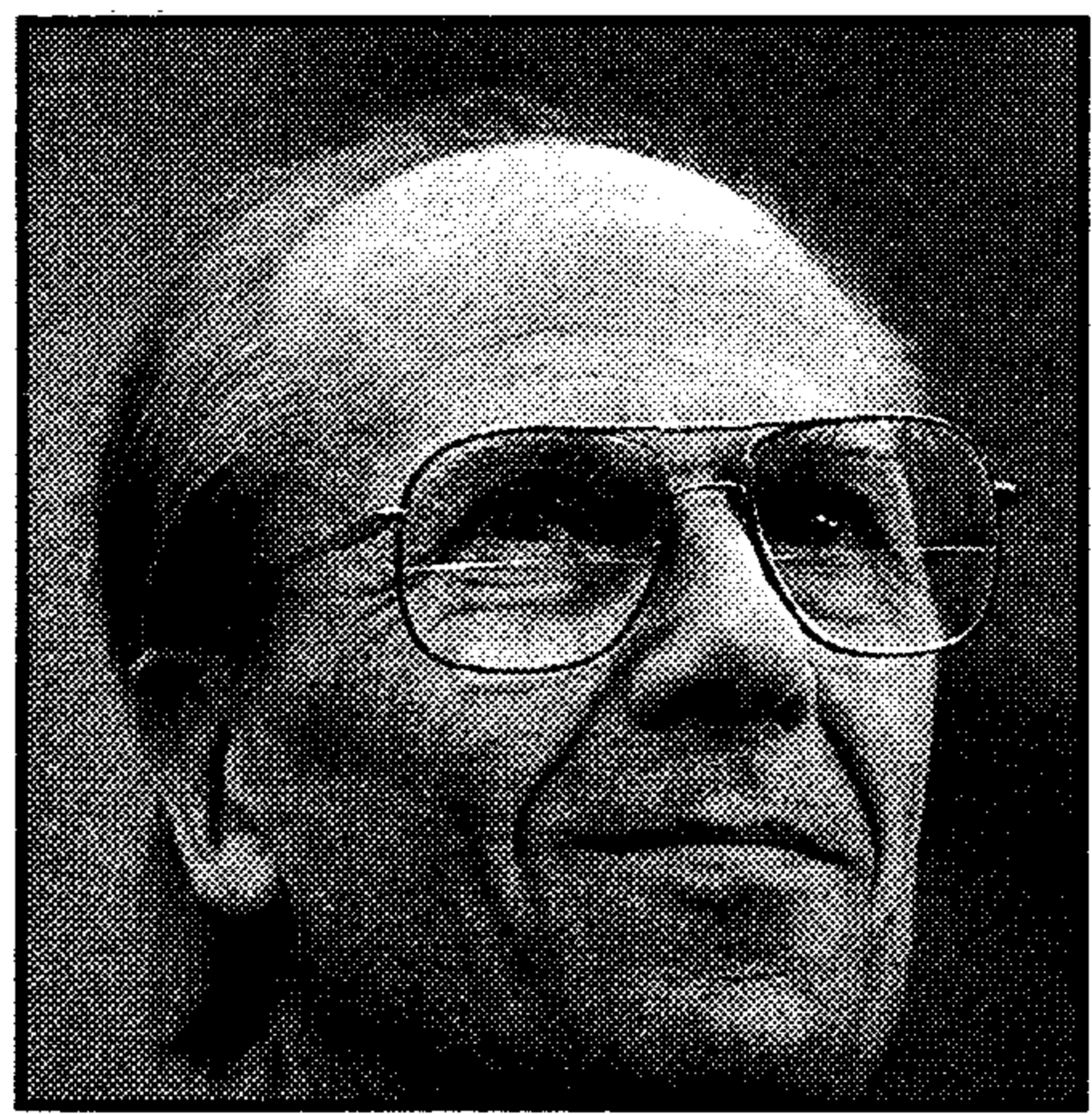
The main point is to popularise the idea of an alternative Europe, the way Tony Benn explained it in his 'Europe Bill' in parliament.

A Europe which guarantees social and democratic rights: the right to work, the right to social welfare benefits, equality for immigrants and women, defence of the ecology, economic growth, breaking from imperialist exploitation of the third world.

Europe has enormous resources to guarantee all these things. But it means taking a very different road from that envisaged in the Maastricht treaty.



Top Eurocrat – Jacques Delors



Leading the opposition – Benn

Why Che Guevara was not a Stalinist

In Socialist Outlook 29 John Lister explained, on the 25th anniversary of Che Guevara's death, the strengths and weaknesses of the Cuban leader's politics. Here ROLAND WOOD outlines an alternative view.

IN THE PAST Latin America possessed – in the best of cases – what Gramsci called 'organic intellectuals'.

Writers, journalists, and political economists linked *directly* to political and social struggles against imperialism as an integral part of the workers and peasant movements.

Camilo Torres in Colombia, Luis de la Puente and Mariategui in Peru, Roberto Santucho in Argentina, Julio Castro in Uruguay are just a few of the many intellectuals that integrated their work with the social struggles of their country.

Fusion

The person who symbolised this fusion of theory and practice more than any other was Ernesto 'Che' Guevara, who died 25 years ago in Bolivia at the hands of the CIA.

Since his death, an image has been created; that of an adventurer guerilla fighter, a sort of martyr. This is a view that is propagated, even by some trotskysts, the better to bury his *political* ideas.

But Guevara was not a Trotskyist, and while we cannot simply brush our criticisms under the carpet, we have to ask: was he closer to Stalinism or revolutionary marxism? I say he was closer to revolutionary marxism.

With the threat to the survival of the Cuban revolution and the increasing danger of military dictatorship in Latin America as a whole, many of his ideas are as relevant today as they ever were.

Much of his strategy was developed as a break with the fatalism of those who thought that because of the strength of US imperialism it was impossible to take power. Guevara reaffirmed the possibility of taking power; but only if the bourgeois state apparatus was destroyed and imperialist intervention was resisted by the *armed struggle*.

Further, in a break specifically with the practice of Stalinist parties, he re-emphasised the necessity for the leaderships of struggles to be politically and organisationally independent of the bourgeoisie.

Lesser evil

He did not rule out that in the struggle for power individual bourgeois or even sectors of the bourgeoisie could, within a certain context, support a revolutionary process, seeing it as the lesser evil.

In his writings he points out that this actually happened in Cuba. But he reflects upon the reasons for this. He points to certain ambiguities in Fidel Castro's formulations during the first phase of the struggle and in the practice of the guerillas of the July 26 Movement.

He describes for example how, under the impact of the peasants, the guerillas went from an absolute respect for private property to the systematic expropriation of livestock and the decision to apply radical agrarian reform.

While he clearly believed that the Cuban revolution was not an exception, he understood that important sectors of the Latin American bourgeoisie had learnt their own lessons, and that in other countries things would certainly not occur exactly as they did in Cuba.

His conclusions on these points are expressed most succinctly in *Message to the Tricontinental*: 'The national bourgeoisie are no longer at all capable of opposing imperialism – if ever they were – and they now form its rearguard. There

Guevara understood that the fate of the Cuban revolution depended on the weakening of imperialism by other revolutions.

is no longer any other way: either socialist revolution or caricature of revolution'.

On these strategic questions, Guevara remains correct.

So what do we criticise? First, an analytical weakness concerning the social base of the revolution. The guerilla warfare tactic advocated by Guevara was based primarily on the peasantry at a time when urbanisation and industrialisation was changing the social conditions of the revolution.

Guevara did not understand this, or understood it only very partially.

Secondly, Guevara left Cuba for Bolivia banking on the Bolivian Communist Party as his support. A prop that would betray him, as Fidel Castro said later.

How could the author of the Algiers speech (which denounced the complicity of the 'socialist camp' with capitalism), or the message to the Tricontinental – how could this leader in open conflict with the Soviet leadership and its international policy find himself in this situation?

Contradiction

This contradiction showed the difficulties of the Cuban leadership, caught on the one hand between its diplomatic policy and on the other, its policy of support for the Latin American revolu-

tion; and the difficulty of criticising Soviet policy while depending on one's survival on Soviet aid, with all that implies in terms of "good relations" with other CPs.

If we examine Che's ideas only through the prism of the *Russian* revolution we will always seriously underestimate the enormous contribution he made to the revival of revolutionary marxism in Latin America.

He understood that after the Russian revolution there had to be a two-fold answer to the problems encountered in building socialism. First, to extend the revolution, because socialism cannot be built on a single island. Second, to analyse and find answers to the problems of bureaucratisation in post-capitalist societies.

The first answer was internationalist. Guevara understood that the fate of the Cuban revolution depended on the weakening of imperialism by other revolutions. This is the political content of the formula "Create two, three, many Vietnams".

This has nothing to do with adventurism. Once the conditions for taking power have been defined, this power has to be defended, both internally and externally. Here, Guevara was linking up with longstanding revolutionary traditions.

His internationalism cannot be separated from his conception of the

transition to socialism. His last political fight in Cuba, which is perhaps the most relevant today, took place from 1963-65. A number of Cuba's leaders were involved and took different positions. This discussion was not simply about economic problems, but about the conception and significance of socialism.

Humanism

This debate is summarised in Guevara's book, *Man and socialism in Cuba*. Here Guevara restores the dimension of revolutionary humanism to socialism, of a struggle for a society free of exploitation and alienation.

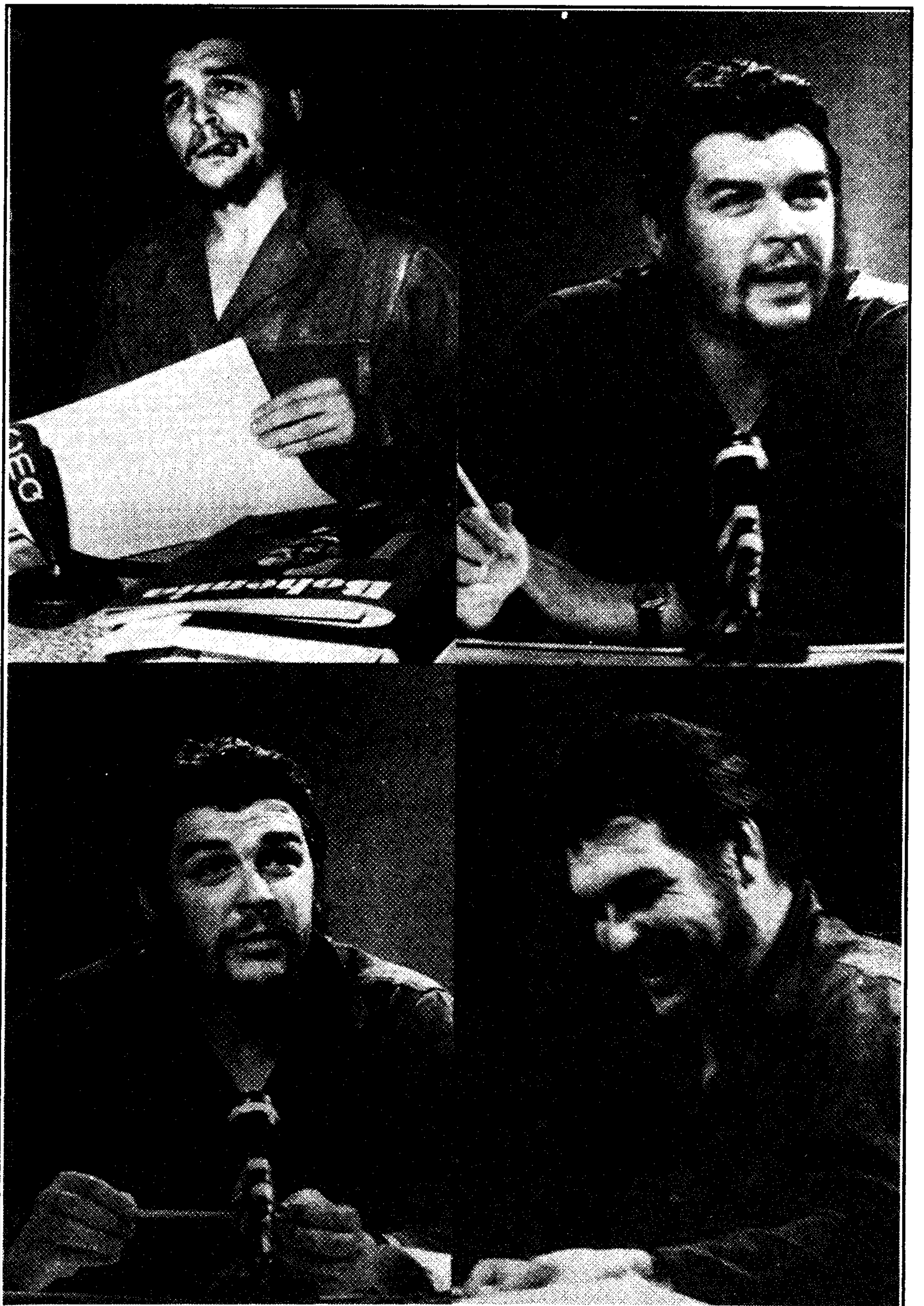
We should however, point out the weakness of Guevara's thinking on these issues – the lack of an institutional conception of socialist democracy.

He had stated his own powerlessness. He did not want to become an oppositionist. He estimated that he had made his contribution to the Cuban revolution and that from the inside he could do no more.

We may be critical of him for having reached this decision but that should not undercut the true value of the struggle that he did carry out against bureaucratisation and privilege.

He wanted to build an egalitarian society centred on solidarity. This may not be very fashionable today, but it is still surprisingly relevant.

Guevara died as he lived, in the service of the revolution. We should pay due tribute to his contribution to our revolutionary heritage.



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What is to be done about...

!!



PHOTO: Andrew Ward

Loved, defended - but closed to inpatients - Elizabeth Garrett Anderson hospital

By Harry Sloan

The Tory offensive against the National Health Service has been so comprehensive and so dominant in the thinking of most health workers and campaigners that it has been easy to get bogged down in simply 'fighting cuts'.

Since 1979 Thatcherite policies have:

- Slashed the share of national wealth allocated to health care,
- Privatised a growing element of continuing care for the elderly,
- Closed tens of thousands of hospital beds,
- Privatised key support services in many hospitals,
- Boosted numbers subscribing to private health schemes from around nine to almost twelve percent of the population.

The Tory onslaught has now introduced the bureaucratic nightmare of the 'internal market', generating a runaway increase in numbers of top managers, accountants and clerical staff at the expense of front-line nursing and support staff.

Means-testing

From next April, community care reforms will subject tens of thousands of elderly people to means-tested charges for care they could previously have received free under the NHS - while millions of sufferers from mental illness receive little or no support from the NHS or social services.

Although John Smith's wretched Labour Party, and its especially wretched shadow health secretary David Blunkett, are content to echo Tory arguments and show no sign of opposition to the Tory approach, there is an alternative that socialists can fight for.

While it is obvious to all that the chaotic Tory health market must be scrapped, Trusts abolished and services brought under local and national planning and control, this is only the first step that must be taken.

A starting point must be a complete rejection of the Tory myth that demand for health care is necessarily 'infinite'. A finite, measurable number of people stand in need of a finite, measurable amount of treatment: but the Tories have no interest in measuring these numbers because they have no intention of treating them all.

The real problem is that the government - having set other political priorities, such as tax cuts for the wealthy - has set an arbitrary limit on the resources available to provide health care, and the limit falls far short of demand. The result, as with any shortage, is a queue: the waiting list.

Rather than increase the cash available, to clear the list, the Tories have

Health care



preferred to keep fiddling the figures to cross names off and make the queue appear smaller than it really is.

But most other capitalist countries in Europe manage to provide health care without enduring the 'British disease' of waiting lists - because they invest a greater share of their national wealth in health care.

There is no way around the necessity for a massive increase in spending on health services: even the TUC has raised the demand for an immediate extra £1 billion a year - less than half the amount by which health spending has fallen behind inflation and growing demand for care since 1980.

We need an immediate cash injection, coupled with a serious effort to measure the real levels of need for the various forms of health treatment, including care and support for mental illness sufferers and people with learning difficulties who are currently largely cared for by relatives with little or no state support.

A proper costing of the services needed to meet these demands can then be carried out, together with a plan to tackle the vast £2 billion-plus backlog of maintenance on NHS hospitals. A socialist government would incorporate these cash allocations into its core budget of basic and indispensable services.

Of course not all health services are best provided in hospital. But community-based services, notably for the care of people with mental illness, must be properly planned and resourced if they are not to result in tragic gaps in care. In almost every case these services

are more expensive than hospital-based care, and require additional 'bridging loans' to enable vital capital investment in facilities before old-fashioned Victorian-style hospitals are closed.

It should be a principle of any socialist health policy that all means-tested charges for community care, prescriptions, eye tests and dental treatment should be scrapped, and NHS facilities developed in place of profit-seeking private nursing homes for the elderly.

Recently the Tories, again obediently backed up by Labour's David Blunkett, have chosen to claim that improved 'primary care' (GP services) and community health services can replace hospital beds by reducing levels of hospitalisation.

This might prove to be true - if the new services were fully resourced, though there is no hard evidence to support these claims.

Yet this is the same government that has hacked back and closed down community and cottage hospitals, axed family planning and many other community services, imposed cash limits on GPs, and drastically widened the 'poverty gap', creating an equally large 'health divide' between rich and poor.

While Tory health White Papers prattle on pointlessly about setting targets for reducing ill-health, other government departments preside over a rising tide of unemployment, chronic poverty, a housing crisis and a collapsing infrastructure of local government and other public services.

Tory policies actually generate avoidable illnesses and conditions and thus increase demand for health services.

In these conditions to expect GPs and community services to make any significant difference to levels of hospitalisation is completely utopian.

As the Black Report pointed out (before it was largely suppressed and ignored by the Tories in 1979), a systematic alternative would begin by tackling the roots of ill-health.

Poverty

This means eradicating poverty - especially among children and the elderly, who are the main consumers of health care - and taking action to remedy poor housing and inadequate diet. Only if these steps are taken at the same time can real progress be made with community-based services, expanded GP services and improving health education.

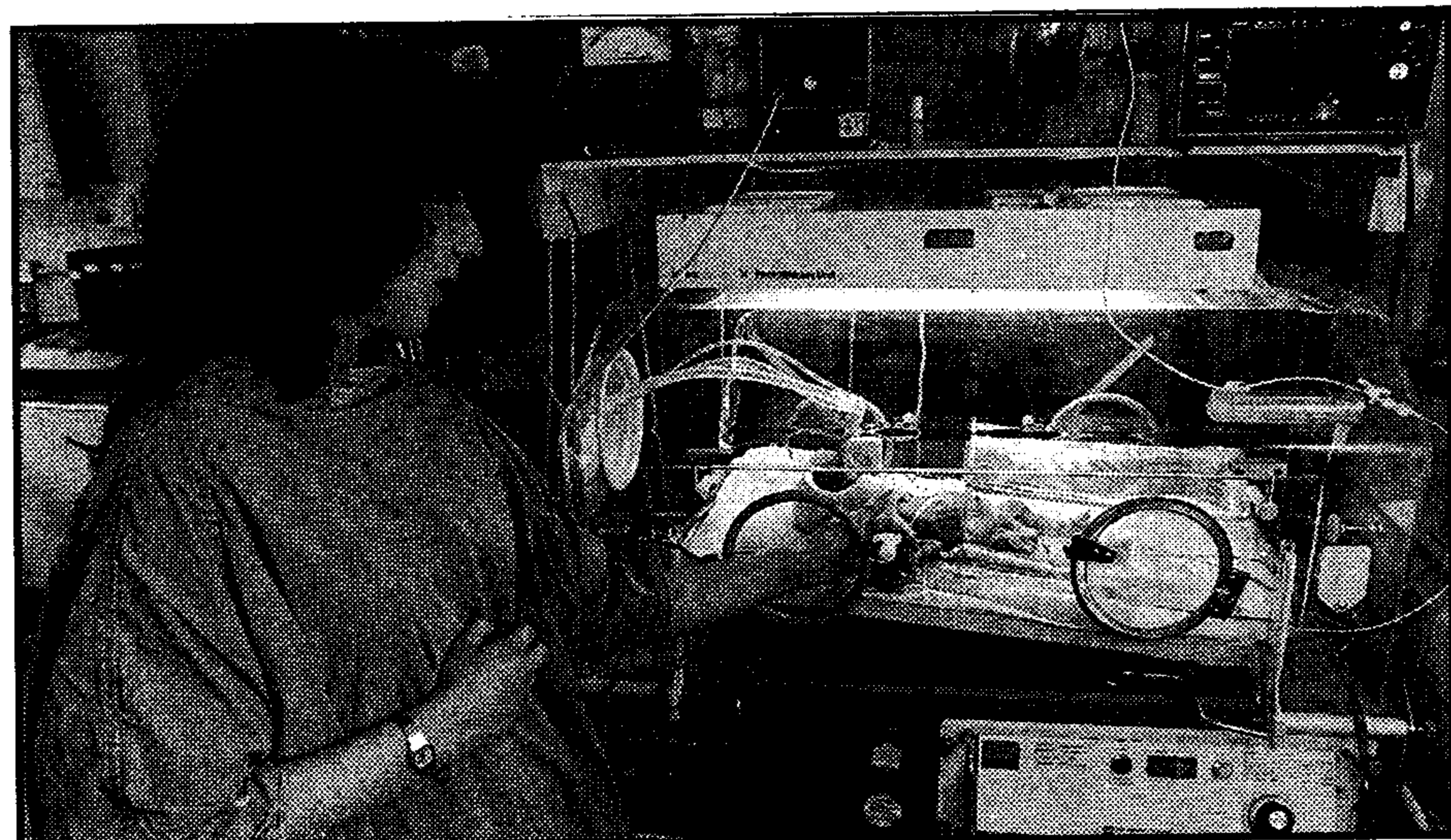
On the basis of a real improvement of living standards, further progress can also be made through developing preventative medicine and establishing an occupational health service to look after people at work.

With adequate funding of NHS services, and immediate steps taken to treat the one million now on waiting lists, a socialist government could legislate to give patients for the first time a legal right to treatment - and establish again for the first time a network of elected health authorities to carry through the planning and allocation of services.

These elected authorities should include not only representatives of local communities and councils, but also elected representatives of health workers, many of whom have valuable expertise to offer.

With this kind of accountability and control, the NHS could prove a model of socialist planning on which other nationalised industries could be modelled.

But don't just sit dreaming. The fight starts now - to save the NHS we have from the Tories!



GP services can't substitute for all hospital care

'Democrat' Yeltsin cracks down

By Steve Kaczynski

RUSSIAN President Boris Yeltsin last week signed a decree banning the National Salvation Front – a political alliance comprised of remnants of the banned Communist Party, officers in the armed forces and militant nationalists.

Established on October 24, stewards at the front's launch rally were ominously described by Reuters news agency as 'guards in black uniforms, berets and jackboots'.

The newspaper *Moskovskiy Komsomolets* reported that the front was blending the organisational experience of its 'red' wing with the parliamentary and local government skills possessed by some of its 'white' nationalist elements.

Hostility

The front's public pronouncements and its bitter hostility to Yeltsin and his policies have led to comparisons with the people who organised the failed coup of August 1991.

Its leaders have reacted defiantly to the ban, accusing Yeltsin of panic. Some western diplomats share this view. Most commentators don't see the organisation itself as a threat. So why was it banned?

First, social and economic



No longer feted by the masses, will Yeltsin repress them?

conditions in Russia are ripe for demagogues appealing to nationalism and nostalgia for the old USSR. Unemployment is rocketing, people literally faint with hunger in the streets, and Russians living in some former Soviet republics have been mistreated or turned into refugees.

The winter is going to aggravate distress and social explosions are possible, which a group like the front could exploit, even if it couldn't use them as a springboard to power.

Yeltsin also banned the Russian parliamentary guard, perhaps fearing that it would link up with his opponents and overthrow him in the way already seen in Georgia, Azerbaijan and Tajikistan.

Authoritarian

Secondly, Yeltsin himself has authoritarian instincts, and favours presidential rule by decree – something often forgotten by western admirers of this 'democrat'.

The International Monetary

Fund is applying the screws on a Russia lurching into chaos, and Yeltsin probably feels obliged to show he can use strong arm methods which could bulldoze the path to a market economy.

The decree against the front is worded in a way enabling it to be used against people who stir up 'social' strife (strikers, perhaps?).

At the end of October Yeltsin presided over the founding of the Russian-American Investment Bank, whose honorary chairmen is former US president Richard Nixon, in power during the CIA-inspired coup in Chile that ushered in the notorious dictatorship of general Pinochet.

Presumably Yeltsin is buying a used car from Nixon, called 'authoritarian incompetence', while the rouble goes into freefall against the not over-mighty dollar. With such a market, such a democracy and such jackbooted feet among the opposition, anything horrible could happen.

Turkish troops out of Kurdistan!

By Geoff Ryan

20,000 TURKISH troops are reported to have invaded South West (Iraqi) Kurdistan. They claim to control over 150 square miles of 'Iraqi' territory.

New troops cross the border every day, supported by bombing raids. They are reputed to have massacred over 1,000 people at Haftanin last Saturday.

Not surprisingly neither John Major nor George Bush has voiced a single word of condemnation of this invasion of another sovereign state.

NATO

After all, Turkey is a member of NATO and a loyal western ally.

The decision to invade was taken because the Kurdish Democratic Party (KDP) and Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) had failed to militarily defeat the Kurdish Workers' Party (PKK).

Turkey was already stepping up war against the Kurdish people and PKK when the KDP and PUK leaders decided to join in. KDP leader Mas-soud Barzani and Jalal Talabani

(PUK) met with Turkish Prime Minister Demirel just after the Turkish army had razed Sirnak.

Attacks on the PKK are a logical consequence of Barzani's and Talabani's reliance on the major imperialist powers to grant them autonomy within the existing borders of Iraq. They prefer power in a truncated 'Kurdistan' to waging any fight for real Kurdish independence. Turkey, the main military force in the region, armed and supported by imperialism, is an important ally. Hence the attempts by the KDP and PUK to prevent PKK fighters returning into North East ('Turkish') Kurdistan.

Equally they don't want to upset their pro-imperialist allies in the newly formed Iraqi National Congress in which Barzani sits as one of the three members of the presidential council.

Bloodshed

The PKK must also take its share of responsibility for the recent blood-letting. In August they organised a blockade of South West Kurdistan, preventing lorries from crossing the border.

Since Saddam continues to block-ade the only other access route it is

obvious the PKK's actions would be resented. The PKK called off their 'boycott' after 3 weeks but resumed again at the beginning of October.

There is a long history of Kurdish groups settling their political differences through bloodshed. During the Iran-Iraq war Talabani and the KDP of Iran joined forces with Saddam Hussein to fight against Barzani and his allies in the Iranian regime.

Each time imperialism has used the differences to deny the Kurdish people their own state. Barzani and Talabani appear to have, belatedly, recognised that the Turkish government's actions are also directed against them, even if they continue to blame the PKK.

Repression

Whatever our differences with the politics and methods of the PKK we stand fully with them against the repressive Turkish regime.

Socialists must demand the immediate withdrawal of Turkish troops from the whole of Kurdistan and the right of the Kurdish people to self-determination. Barzani and Talabani should unite with the PKK to repel the Turkish invasion of Kurdish territory.

In BRIEF

Scottish Militant trounce Labour

SCOTTISH Militant Labour has won a second seat on Strathclyde regional council after Willie Griffin overturned a Labour majority of 2635 to take Queenslie/Barlanark by some 520 votes last week. SML also polled 1771 in Drumoyne/Govan, finishing third as the Scottish Nationalists took the seat from Labour.

Euro rail strike success

A TRANS-European one hour rail strike saw trains paralysed in 14 countries across the continent on October 27. The action came in

protest against the privatisation, declining services and massive dismissals seen in many countries. Later that day, a rail union delegation met EC transport commissioner Karel van Miert.

Derecognition spreading

OVER 200 employers have derecognised unions in the last four years, a new study from Labour Research indicates. This is four times the number of cases found in a similar survey for the years 1984-88. However, 22 of 42 unions covered reported no derecognition attempts.

Police protect nazi conference

THE BRITISH National Party's annual conference, held in London on October 26, was only able to proceed after police detained around half of the hundreds of protestors who turned up at the fascists' redirection point at Euston station. The counter-mobilisation was organised by Anti-Fascist Action.

Edmonds calls Burnsall demo

By Bob Smith

JOHN EDMONDS, general secretary of the GMB, has called a national demonstration on 28 November to support the Burnsall strikers, who have been picketing since June 15.

It will assemble at 10.30am, Fenton Street, of High Street Smethwick, marching past the Electroplating works at 10 Downing Street for a rally at Handsworth Leisure Centre.

The strikers (mainly punjabi women) are out for trade union recognition (GMB), equal pay, adequate health and safety, ending of forced overtime (65 hours weekly) and a living wage (men received 120 and women only 90).

Industrial Tribunal cases are pending on wrongful deductions, dismissal and equal pay.

Horrified officers of the Health and Safety Executive

have finally forced Burnsall's owners the O'Neill family to install four ventilation extractors and to carry out other safety measures. They are now paying scabs 115 (instead of 80) to start, but cannot keep them (only 18 out of 40 remain) because of the atrocious conditions.

People sent from the Job Centre have even joined the pocket. Production is seriously affected and the strike is really biting now.

Coaches are coming from GMB branches in London and other areas, hopefully other trade unions, labour movement bodies, Black Communities and feminist organisations, will supply the support needed on the day.

For further information, messages of support and donations contact: Burnsall Strike Fund, GMB, Will Thorn House, 2 Birmingham Road, Halesowen, B63 3HP. 021 550 4888



PHOTO: Mark Salmon

Supporting the miners

By Bill Sutcliffe

THE TUC's so-called Campaign for Jobs and Recovery – formally launched at the magnificent 200,000-strong march the Sunday before last – is as bland as Norman Willis' taste in ties.

As you will no doubt not be aware, one day in December – 'probably' December 9, according to a TUC press release – is to be designated 'a National Day for Recovery'.

For Congress House, this means a London forum with bosses, boffins and bishops and ... wait for it ... 'meetings at workplace level between employers and representatives of recognised unions to discuss the future of employment, the need for partnership and the case for growth in their (sic) own firm'.

Regional rallies

You'll also get five regional rallies, a petition and a lobby of parliament. To cap the excitement, 'an edited video of Sunday's march and rally is to be produced and further consideration is being given to events to be held over the Christmas period'.

It's down to the rank-and-file to deliver solidarity and support for the miners. December 9 can be used as focus for action to rock the boat. It's an ideal opportunity to take up your own grievance against your own boss and flout the Tory ban on solidarity action.

Grassroots initiatives in support of the struggle against pit closures are springing up everywhere, as many of the miners' support groups formed in the 1984-85 Great Strike are reconstituted.



Miners must rebuild the network they established in 1984

Meetings called at short notice in towns and cities across Britain have attracted large audiences, often numbering several hundreds.

One activist from Swindon told *Socialist Outlook* how 20 union activists collected 2,200 signatures in support of the miners in just three hours of petitioning in the town centre one Saturday morning.

People were literally queuing up to sign it. A well-attended emergency trades council meeting subsequently passed a resolution calling for a 24 hour general strike.

In Hull, the first meeting of a new miners' support group, officially sponsored by the trades council, is planned for Friday 6 November, at 8.00pm in the town's Trades and Labour Club.

Meetings

In the North West, the Socialist Movement Trade Union Committee has organised meetings in Liverpool and St Helens. An official North West Regional TUC demonstration is planned for Manchester on November 17.

Lancashire NUM have called a demo in St Helens, the nearest

town to the threatened Parkside pit, on November 7.

In an attempt to provide some co-ordination, a National Miners' Support Network has been launched by the Socialist Campaign Group of Labour MPs, with backing from the National Union of Mineworkers and Women Against Pit Closures. A major national conference will be organised as soon as possible.

Journalists

Radical journalists are planning a regular mass circulation bulletin in the network's name. Sympathizers in the music business are examining the possibilities of a major fundraising concert, and are confident of attracting some top name rock bands.

Unfortunately, the network's early planning meetings have been dogged by sectarian head-banging from some irresponsible political tendencies. Ultimately, the project can only succeed by winning support from the mainstream labour movement as well as the far left.

National Miners' Support Network c/o Jeremy Corbyn MP, 129a Seven Sisters Road, London N4.

Socialist women back pit closure fight

By Sarah Parker

SOCIALIST FEMINIST group Women for Socialism is actively organising support for threatened pits alongside the Women Against Pit Closures movement.

Three WAPC women told a WFS meeting in London last week how British Coal is piling on the pressure at Trentham colliery, one of the ten originally scheduled for instant closure.

At the end of their shift on Friday October 16, miners were told by the local paper – not British Coal itself – that they needn't come in on the following Monday.

When they turned up anyway, they found themselves locked out, with only a few men allowed in to do safety

work. The rest were told they could have a week's pay and had better sign their jobs away by Friday 23 if they wanted redundancy money.

In spite of this threat, only a few people complied, so the deadline was pushed back to Monday 26, and then back again to Friday 30. So much for British Coal's expectation that the miners would give up their jobs so easily!

WAPC are asking trade unionists to table resolutions at labour movement bodies calling for a one day general strike in support of the miners. Women's groups are asked to get in touch with threatened pits quickly, sending people to visit and inviting local women to visit them.

Quick action is needed, it was stressed. Whatever the media claims, British Coal is pressing ahead to shut

the ten pits supposedly being 'consulted' over. All but one have stopped production.

WFS has agreed to petition and raise funds in support of miners, and members will be writing to their union general secretaries pushing the one day general strike demand.

The women present each agreed to contact one of the ten pits immediately threatened, and build links between the colliery and local support groups.

The next WFS solidarity meeting will be on Thursday November 12 at 7.30pm in the Quiet Room, University of North London, Prince of Wales Road, Kentish Town, North London.

Contact Women Against Pit Closures c/o NUM, Holly Street, Sheffield. Tel: 0742 766900.

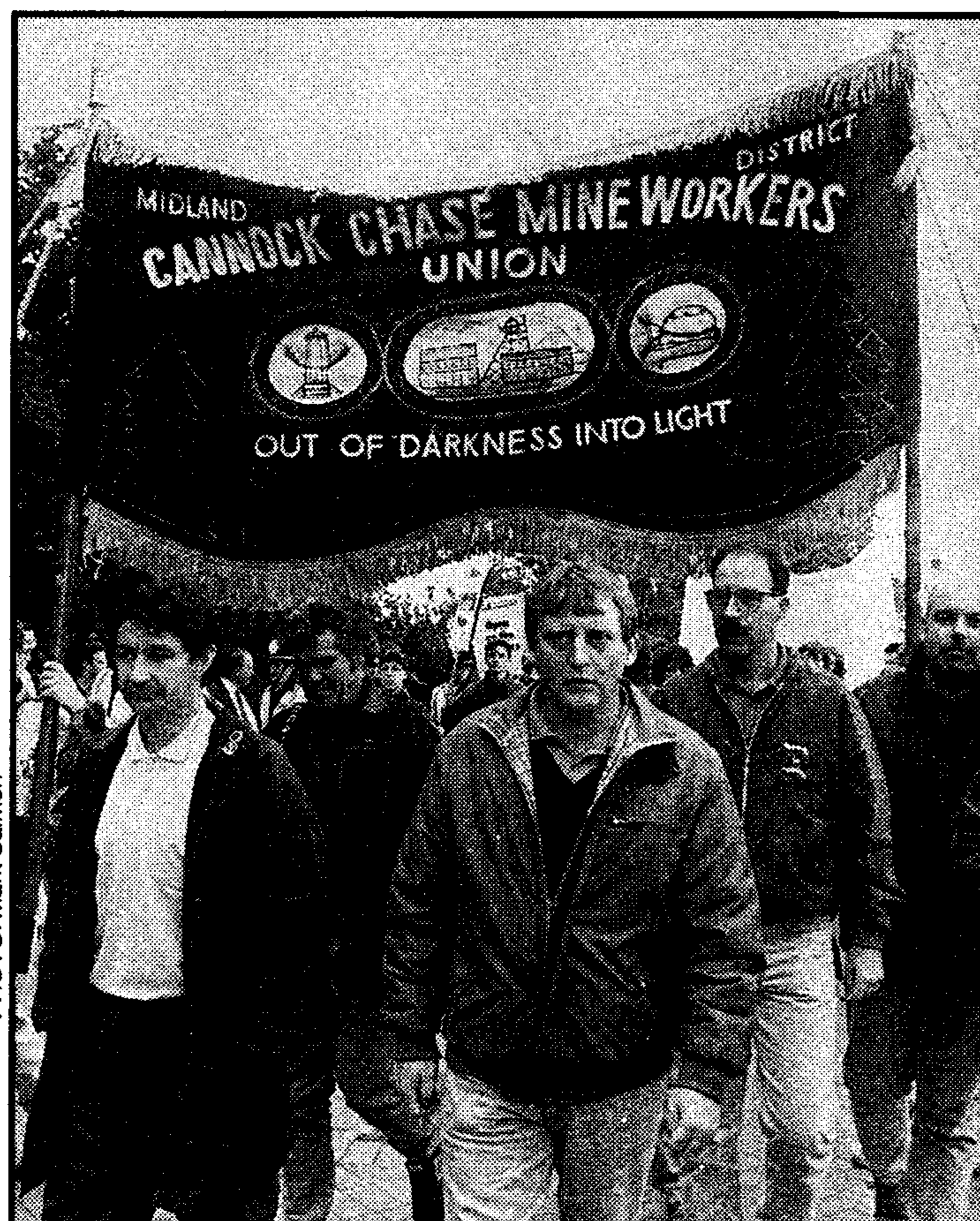


PHOTO: Mark Salmon

Students build solidarity with miners

By Duncan Chapple, Manchester Area NUS

Socialist Outlook supporters in the National Union of Students are mobilising support for the miners in the colleges. Students facing attacks on grants, education spending and the NUS have an unequalled opportunity to support a fight to reverse the new round of government and employers' attacks.

In the city with the greatest concentration of students in Europe, *Outlook* supporters have won the Manchester Area NUS to a programme of actions in support of the miners.

A MANUS free newspaper will be produced to help draw student on the November 4 national demonstration against student debt onto the TUC regional demonstration, now to be held on November 7 near Parkside pit. Student organisations have been en-

couraged to 'twin' with Parkside, the last remaining pit in the North West.

Lancashire Area NUM are calling for an all-industry strike on the day of November 17 march in Manchester. Our proposal that MANUS back the call for a one day strike was blocked by the *Socialist Organiser* leaders of MANUS, but socialist, labour and green activists are organising for big student contingents on both demonstrations.

● A November 15 dayschool in central London will provide a valuable opportunity for socialist students from around Britain to place the British crisis in context. Organised by *LIBERATION now!*, the student and youth paper of *Socialist Outlook*, students can hear labour and student movement activists join in discussion with international. For details of the event, write to *LIBERATION now!*, PO Box 1109, London N4 2UU.

National Demonstration

End Student poverty

Defend student unions

Tuesday November 10

Assemble 12 noon, Malet Street
(Nearest tubes Russell Sq,
Euston)

Organised by NUS London

Published fortnightly

50p

Solidarity price £1

Strikers and
claimants 25p

No 31

7 November, 1992

socialist OUTLOOK



999 for our NHS!

IT'S AUTUMN, and NHS management all over the country are doing their sums, totting up the cuts they must make now to balance their books by next April.

Our NHS is under sustained, relentless attack. A combination of under-funding and the anarchy of the new 'internal market' is leaving services at risk.

In London, the Tomlinson report has called for the closure of seven inner-London hospitals treating up to 200,000 in-patients a year – and the axing of 20,000 NHS jobs. More than half of these jobs will be nurses; over 70 percent will be women. A majority are likely to be black. While they lose their jobs, waiting lists could quickly double.

These are not the only NHS jobs at risk. Elsewhere in the capital and in other towns, NHS jobs and services are being cut back.

But staff, patients and public are already fighting back. In London there has been a huge response to the campaign to stop the closures. (See p5)

The fight is a nation-wide battle. In the small market town of Banbury a massive 3,500-strong torchlit demonstration surged through the streets in protest at planned ward closures and 35 redundancies at the Horton General Hospital.

Protesters at a huge over-flow rally outside the Town Hall heard trade union and campaign speakers warn that the future of the hospital is in doubt as a result of the Tory market reforms, since its main 'purchasers', Oxford and Northampton health authorities, will both lose money next year.

Oxford health chiefs are already discussing plans to withdraw contracts for specialist services, leaving the Horton (which 'opts out next April) struggling for survival.

Health workers all over the country must prepare to link up with their own local communities, the miners and other struggles: now is the time to take on this wretched Tory government.

The fight is on to defend our NHS!