

32

Published fortnightly

50p

Solidarity price £1

Strikers and
claimants 25p

No 32

21 November, 1992

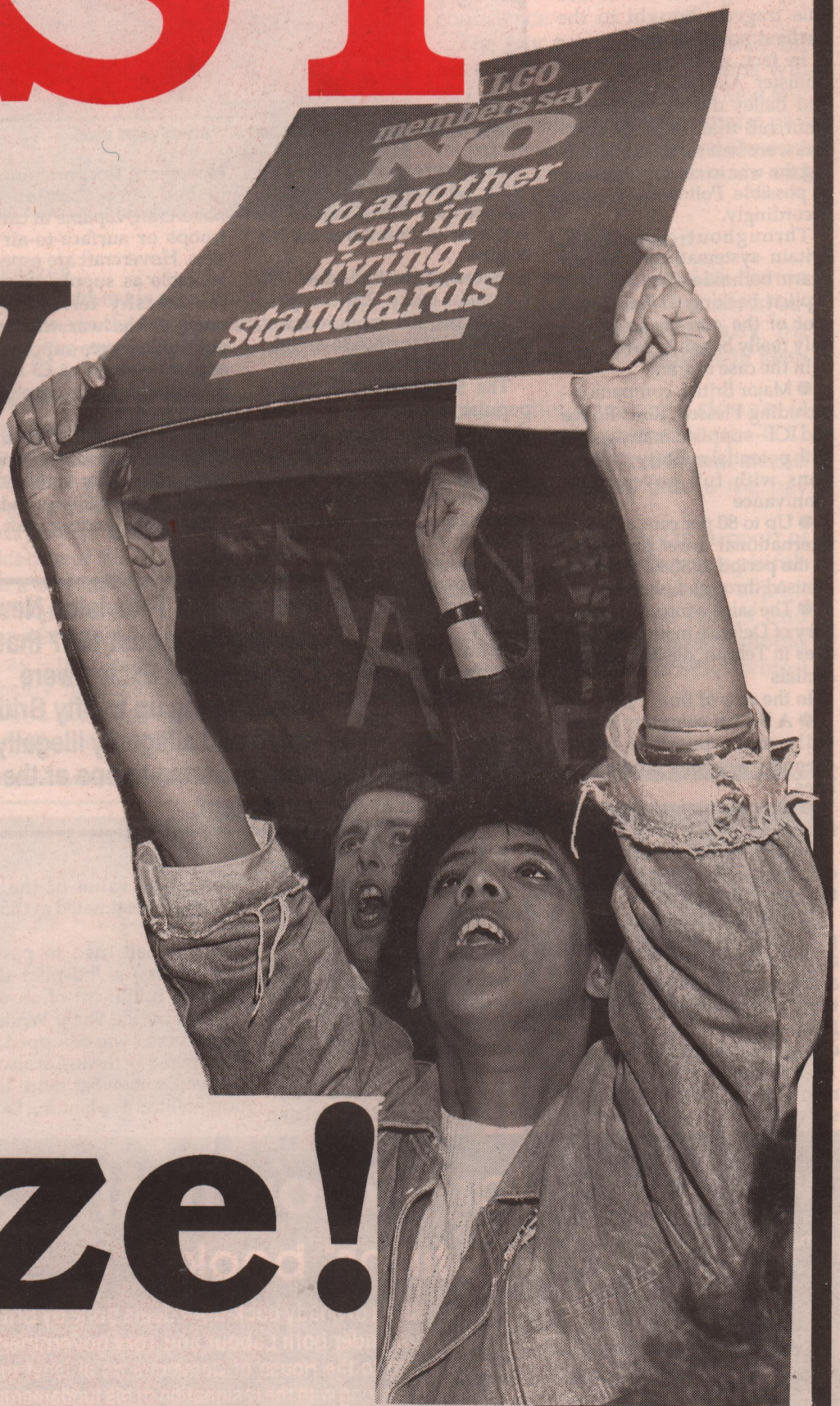
socialist OUTLOOK

BUST

Tory

pay

freeze!



John Harris

Miners' support pp4-5 Iraqgate p2

Sordid saga of arms dealing Countdown to Iraqgate

By Dave Osler

Lord Howe, then foreign secretary and plain Sir Geoffrey, told the House of Commons on 29 October 1985: 'The United Kingdom has been strictly impartial in the conflict between Iran and Iraq.' He went on the speak of 'our policy of doing everything possible to see this tragedy brought to the earliest possible end'.

In fact, as former defence minister Alan Clark told the Old Bailey during the Matrix Churchill trial, Britain's interests were best served by allowing the war to continue as long as possible. Policy was shaped accordingly.

Throughout the 1980s, Britain systematically helped to arm both sides. The switch to explicit backing of Iraq – the root of the current scandal – only really began in 1987.

In the case of Iran:

- Major British companies – including Plessey, Rolls Royce and ICI – supplied many goods with potential military applications with full government connivance

- Up to 80 per cent of Iran's international arms purchases in the period 1980-87 were organised through London

- The sales wing of the Ministry of Defence maintained offices in Tehran, despite official denials

In the case of Iraq:

- A British company reportedly made possible Iraq's chemical weapons production lines

- Britain trained Iraqi officers

British arms dealers illegally engaged in large scale arms trading with both combatants.

The Shah of Iran was put in power in 1954, after the British and American secret services arranged a coup which toppled the radical Mossadegh regime following the nationalisation of their oil interests.

Successive UK governments, both Labour and Conservative, allowed British



Guess which one of these was part of a shady arms deal!

manufacturers to supply him with advanced weaponry, despite their knowledge of the repressive character of his regime.

Armaments included 900 Chieftain tanks, 250 Scorpion light tanks, 400 armoured cars, 2,100 Rapier surface-to-air missiles and much more.

The Shah fell in 1979 in a popular insurrection in which the Islamic clergy, led by Ayatollah Khomeini, emerged as the dominant force. Seizing a chance to assert regional dominance, Iraqi president Saddam Hussein launched an invasion the following year in the hope of a quick victory.

Britain initially favoured Iraq. But as the conflict slowly swung in Iran's favour, bets were suitably hedged. Between 1980 and 1982, Iranian combat forces were still being trained by the British military.

As late as 1984, Iranian officers were instructed in anti-aircraft weapons techniques at the British Manufacturing and Research Company's establishment at a former Royal Air Force base near Lincoln.

The years 1984-85 saw state-owned British companies massively augment Iran's amphibious capacity. British

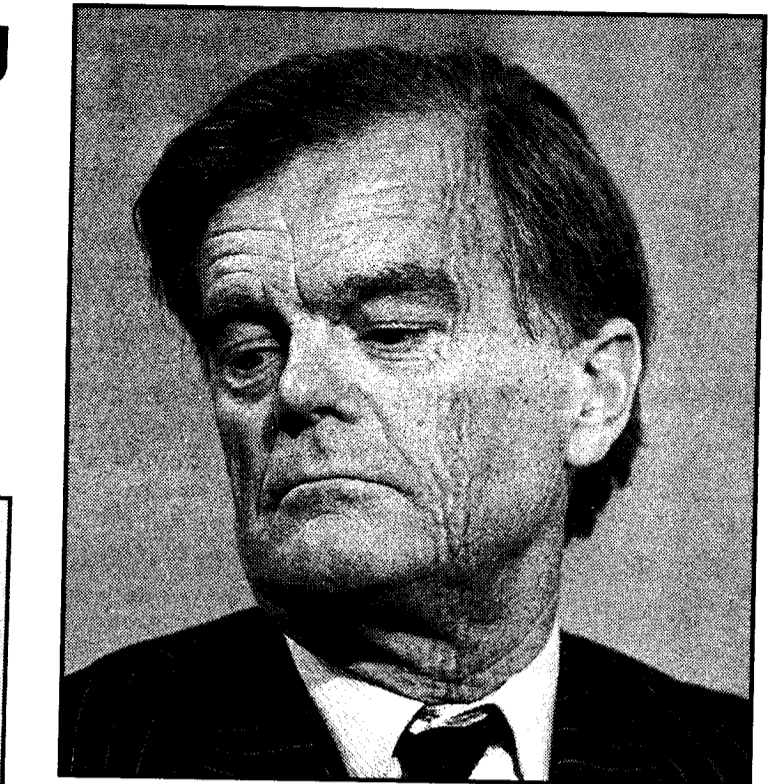
Hovercraft Corporation refurbished two Iranian BH7 hovercraft, capable of carrying troops or surface-to-air missiles. Hovercraft are especially valuable as supply vessels in the marshy terrain where much of the war was fought out. Rolls Royce supplied five engines, valued at £3 million, for probable use in amphibious landing craft.

In early 1985, Clyde and Tyneside shipyards supplied the Iranian navy with a 33,000 tonne fleet auxiliary and two 2,500 tonne landing craft. The

Independent Television News claimed in August 1987 that Customs and Excise were investigating up to fifty British firms which had allegedly illegally supplied arms to one or the other combatant.

combined value of the contracts was estimated at £85 million.

Whitehall tried to pass off the orders as 'hospital ships' sent in fulfilment of an order placed by the Shah. While the main vessel was equipped with an operating theatre, it also displayed somewhat more lethal capabilities as a landing facility



Blowing the gaff on Tory corruption – ex-minister Alan Clark

for helicopters engaged in anti-shipping operations.

Britain knew the possibilities. Similar craft had performed the same role in the Falklands War. Even the US publicly distanced itself from the deal – rank hypocrisy given that it was supplying Khomeini through the Irangate back door.

Again in 1985, the Iran's opposition National Movement of Resistance leaked documents proving that fifteen jumbo jet loads of spare parts for British-built tanks arrived in Tehran after a secret deal was reached in Paris.

It then emerged that International Military Services, sales wing of the MoD, had maintained an office in the Iranian capital throughout the conflict. The official line was that it stayed only to meet contractual obligations entering into with the Shah.

Iran's arms buying mission in London's Victoria Street, responsible for 80 per cent of its overseas arms purchases, remained open until September 1987.

In November 1986 Plessey beat off rival Marconi to win a £240 million Iranian order for the sophisticated AR-30 radar system, claiming that these were static systems destined for the border with the Soviet Union and Afghanistan and thus the deal was in western interests. Standard military text books show AR-30 as trailer mounted and thus totally mobile.

Independent Television News claimed in August 1987 that Customs and Excise were investigating up to fifty British firms which had allegedly illegally supplied arms to one or the other combatant.

Meanwhile, British-owned companies documented as having – legally – sold explosives to Iran include then nationalised Royal Ordnance, now part of British Aerospace, and subsidiaries worldwide of ICI.

By early 1987, when Royal Navy vessels formed part of a US-led task force in the Gulf objectively intervening on behalf of Iraq, Britain came down clearly for Saddam.

Prior to this turning point, backing had been equivocal. Two major arms deals early in the conflict were spiked. In 1981 British Aerospace, then still nationalised, negotiated supply of 30 Hawk fighter trainers to Iraq, and was even considering establishing a factory in the country.

In 1982, International Military Sales was reportedly negotiating to repair Chieftains captured from Iran by Iraq. Tory MP Geoffrey Pattie observed: 'It is for the Iraqi authorities to decide on the use of these tanks once repaired.' One wonders how many uses for tanks Pattie envisages in a state at war. Both deals were quietly squashed.

Chemical weapons

Iraq was allowed to purchase 300 military Land Rovers are large quantities of radar equipment in July 1985. Moreover, British companies were reportedly instrumental in allowing Iraq to manufacture chemical weapons.

In December 1985, *New Scientist* claimed Primary Medical Aid of Fareham, Hampshire, sold 10,000 sets of protective suits and breathing apparatus to protect workers making the weapons.

John Stanley, then armed forces minister, confirmed in February 1984 that 'a small number' of Iraqi airmen were being trained in the UK at both commercial and government establishments.

Iraqi Solidarity Voice put the number at 100. *Flight International* claimed that 80 were being trained at Specialist Flight Training of Carlisle alone.

Following the seizure of 200 Iraq-bound machine guns at a London dock in February 1983, a trial took place in 1985 involving three executives of Sterling Armament Company and two employees of Atlantic Commercial Ltd.

Sterling's Anthony Bianco was fined £4,000, Atlantic's Andrew Schlesinger £3,000 and Reginald Dunk, also of Atlantic, £20,000 with £7,000 costs. Atlantic was later found to have supplied 50,000 130mm high explosive shells worth £7.5 million. This consignment was bound for Iran.

WE SAY: Liar Major must go! Open the arms firms' books!

The Iraqgate scandal is just the tip of an iceberg of shady back-door deals done by British imperialism and British arms manufacturers under both Labour and Tory governments.

- Major knew about Iraqgate all along and lied to the House of Commons on at least three occasions. Labour must demand his resignation, along with the resignation of his fundamentally corrupt government.

- The weapons industry now employs ten per cent of Britain's manufacturing workforce; jobs are at risk because management have ignored campaigns for conversion to peaceful production.

- Unions must fight to open the books of these firms to elected workers' committees, empowered to uncover all the dirty dealing and institute a new workers' plan for alternative production.

Bust the pay freeze

NORMAN LAMONT'S autumn statement means misery for millions. Tory strategy in presenting the statement was to stoke up fears of benefit cuts, and when they didn't materialise to make people think that the poor had got off lightly.

In reality the poor are being hammered. The one and a half per cent pay maximum is going to push down living standards amongst hundreds of thousands pitifully paid public sector workers - including nurses, local government workers and railworkers.

But the second vicious attack is on the council tax. Councils have to keep pay to the one and a half per cent norm, or face severe capping. A new round of redundancies and cuts is being prepared in local government, which again will hit low-paid workers and council services to the poor.

Using the 1979 methods of calculation, unemployment is today four million. And through the next year that figure is set to push remorselessly towards 5 million - much higher than during the 1930s slump.

Manufacturing

Lamont's statement did nothing to restart the economy. Lowering interest rates doesn't work any more because what matters is *the rate at which the banks are prepared to lend to business customers*. In any case, manufacturing is so flat on its back that only a giant programme of state-led investment would begin to solve the problem.

To the fight to defend the miners and resist redundancies must now be added a campaign to bust the pay freeze. Prices are starting to rise, especially on basic goods like food. Living standards are going to plummet if the



Andrew Wiard

pay freeze isn't broken.

While Major's government is accident prone and further revelations in the Iraqgate scandal could destabilise it, Tory strategy for survival is becoming clear.

A one-year deal over coal is aimed to slow the pit closure programme; if the Tories have their way the ten immediately threatened pits will close, and the death of the 21 will be drawn out - in an attempt to defuse public outrage.

In addition Major has decided on a long drawn-out ratification of the of the Maastricht treaty to prevent a convulsive crisis wrecking government stability.

But there is another major obstacle in the government's way - the Council Tax. Lack of government subsidy means that for millions there is going to be a dramatic increase in their bills compared with the Poll Tax. Howls of

outrage will rock the government when the first bills start to arrive.

In this situation there is now an urgent need to link up the struggles, both against redundancies and the pay freeze.

Alliance

Workers must demand union leaders build a public sector alliance. But here and now, using miners' support groups, links on the ground can be created between miners, hospitals workers, and all other workers in struggle.

The decision of miners to lend their support to protest action at Burnsalls, the Birmingham strike of Asian car component workers, is exactly the kind of thing which can begin to rebuild collective action and confidence.

The pay freeze will primarily hit next year's pay round. Unions will be formulating claims in the next few months; militants must demand pay increases to meet the rise on the cost of living, indexation of awards and action to fight low pay.

Occupation

Attention will be rapidly focused on the ten threatened pits; in the end only industrial action, including occupation of any pit threatened with immediate closure, will keep them open.

While protest action against pit closures is vital the demand must be pressed for the TUC to call a *one day general strike* to demand an end to the jobs massacre and an end to the pay freeze.

The TUC have called for a day in support of 'national recovery' on 9 December. It is pitifully inadequate, and aimed at being a joint protest with employers, wet Tories and bishops. Nonetheless the opportunity should be seized to get whatever strike or other protest action in possible on that day.

Food price rises hit poor



No takers for Gummer's £10 diet

Food manufacturers say that prices will rise sharply in the new year. Butter is expected to rise by 10 pence a pound, cheddar cheese by nine pence. Bread will increase two pence a loaf, sugar by six pence a kilo bag.

Other foods set for big increases include meat products, chocolate, marmalade and

jam, and many other products.

The increases are due to the devaluation of the pound; EC farm prices have not been lowered in line with the devaluation.

But these increases come on top of steady food price increase since the last two years. Cheap food in Britain is becoming a myth, mainly because of the price-fixing

policies carried out informally by the big supermarkets like Sainsbury's, Safeway and Tesco - all of which make vast profits.

Meanwhile John Selwyn Gummer, the agriculture minister, announced a model £10 a week food bill for the poor. It includes absurdities like one fresh egg every two weeks and half a fish finger a day.

According to government statistics released last week, two-person households in the top 20 per cent income bracket spend about £94 on food and drink a week.

John Gummer earns £65,000 a year and obviously hasn't been near a supermarket for a long time.

Brutal new clamp on claimants

TORY plans to crack down on hundreds of so-called 'new age travellers' could lead to up to 60,000 claimants a year losing social security benefits.

Mental illness sufferers and people with disabilities could be penalised as a result of more stringent enforcement of the rule that claimants must be 'actively looking for work'.

In place of warning letters, they could find their benefit arbitrarily suspended, pending an appeal.

Yet of 29,000 warned in this way in one six month period, 24,000 were able to satisfy the rules and 5,000 won on appeal.

The new regulations would prevent social security officers from continuing 'hardship' payments of 60-80 per cent of benefit until the appeal was heard.

Frickley defies closure threats

By Joe Pass

Continual union pressure on management at Yorkshire's Frickley colliery has kept the pit going full tilt despite the shutdown threat, NUM branch secretary Steve Tully told *Socialist Outlook*.

After the Heseltine's initial announcement, production ceased for one week. Now it is back at 25,000 tonnes a week, and a new seam is being developed.

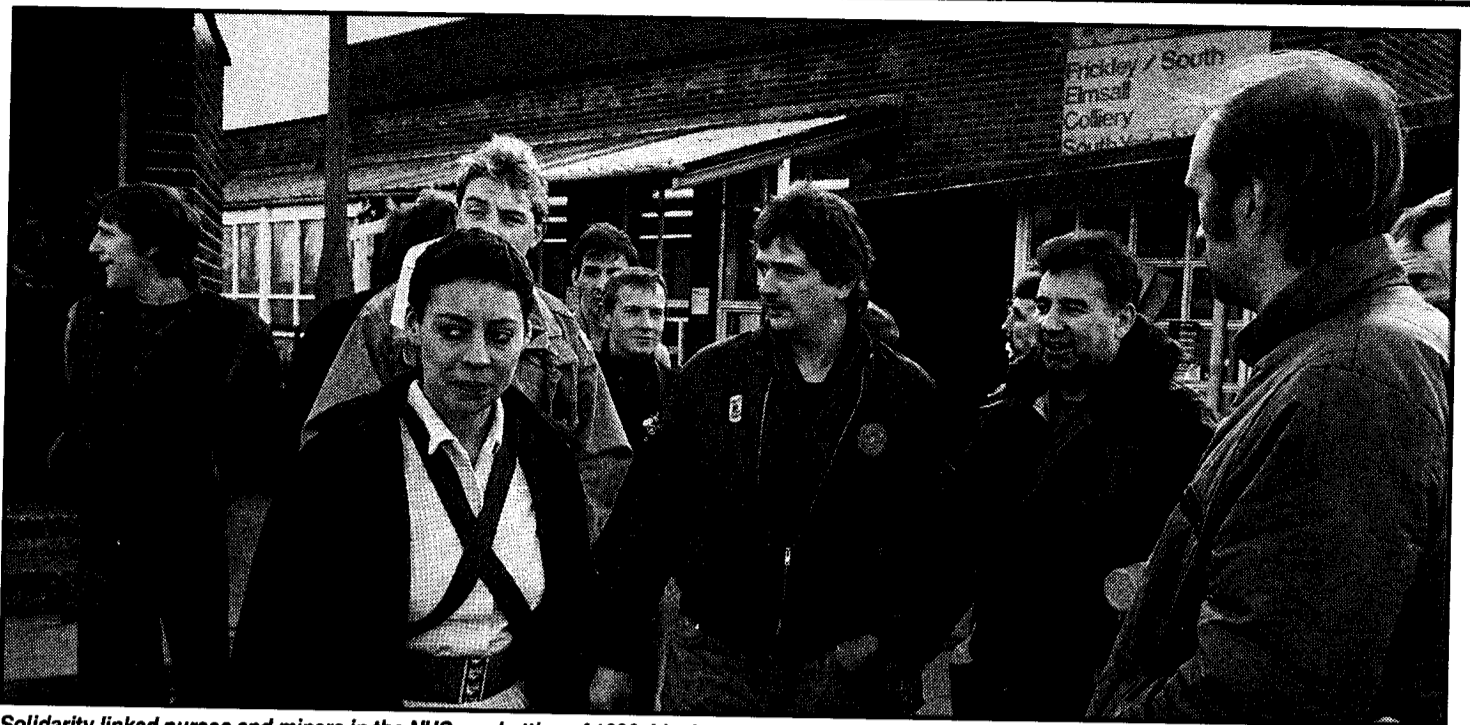
'We've managed to keep on top of the situation,' he added. Only 70 of the 900 miners at the pit had taken voluntary redundancy.

While he supported attempts to win over public opinion, it was obviously difficult to keep the pit situation continually on the front pages given the number of other crises the Tory government is going through, he conceded.

His advice to other workers threatened with mass sackings was simple: 'Get your banners out and come and campaign with the NUM!'

He also called for support for the unofficial lobby of special TUC general council meeting to be held in Doncaster on November 25.

Lobby of the TUC general council; Wednesday November 25, 9am, Mansion House, Doncaster



Solidarity linked nurses and miners in the NHS pay battles of 1988: it's time to rebuild the links!

We say:

Miners: Don't let fudge demobilise movement

The government's strategy for dealing with the pits crisis gradually came to light last week. Under government pressure, British Coal is concluding a one-year deal with the electricity supply industry which will slow down the rate of pit closures.

There will be no reprieve for the 10 immediately threatened pits.

But execution of the other 21 will be postponed.

If this deal is finalised, it would explain why, for example at Frickley pit near Doncaster, one of the 21, new coal faces are being cut; and why at neighbouring Grimethorpe, one of the 10, the mine is being allowed to deteriorate despite court injunc-

tions.

The deal has every sign of political expediency. Of course, if the 21 pits are given at least a temporary reprieve it will be a partial defeat for the government. But the scale of mass anger over the closure programme made some delay inevitable.

But in the medium term this will

only the sugar the bitter pill of shut-down.

The ten target pits are due to close down in the middle of January - there's only about eight weeks left to save them.

On these pages we list some of the key protest actions taking place in the next few weeks. Don't let up the pressure.

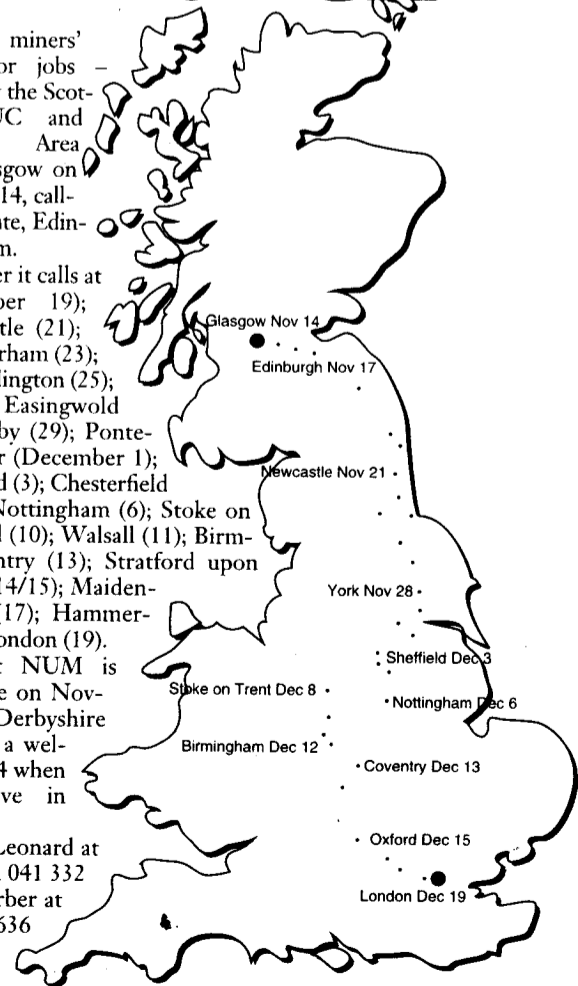
Scotland on the march

A Scottish miners' march for jobs - backed by the Scottish TUC and Scottish Area NUM - leaves Glasgow on Saturday November 14, calling at Airdrie, Bathgate, Edinburgh and Coldstream.

South of the border it calls at Morpeth (November 19); Blyth (20); Newcastle (21); Sunderland (22); Durham (23); Hartlepool (24); Darlington (25); Northerncoat (26); Easingwold (27); York (28); Selby (29); Pontefract (30); Doncaster (December 1); Barnsley (2); Sheffield (3); Chesterfield (4); Mansfield (5); Nottingham (6); Stoke on Trent (7/8); Stafford (10); Walsall (11); Birmingham (12); Coventry (13); Stratford upon Avon (13); Oxford (14/15); Maidenhead (16); Slough (17); Hammer-smith (18); central London (19).

The North East NUM is preparing a welcome on November 19, and Derbyshire NUM is organising a welcome for December 4 when the marchers arrive in Chesterfield.

Contact Richard Leonard at the Scottish TUC on 041 332 4946 or Brendan Barber at the TUC on 071 636 4030 for more details.



UDM - from sellout to buyout

By Bill Sutcliffe

The Union of Democratic Mineworkers' bid to buy at least 12 pits is still on, despite protestations from the breakaway union's president, Roy Lynk, that he is opposed to privatisation.

Its consortium partners include East Midlands Electricity - the very electricity supply company that is at the forefront of the 'dash for gas'.

Lynk has also been talking to private sector opencasting outfit R J Budge, which has offered to buy all the 21 pits currently under select

committee review, plus NUM stronghold Markham Main.

The idea is for UDM members to take an equity stake in the company. But meanwhile, RJB boss Richard Budge has been boasting in the energy trade press that he will cut back heavily on 'overmanning' in the name of 'rationalisation'.

Discussing privatisation at a fringe meeting at last year's Conservative Party conference, Lynk made the disgusting comment: 'If rape is inevitable, you might as well lie back and enjoy it'.

UDM members that want to fight

pit closures and defend their jobs should think on all this carefully. Arthur Scargill's stance during the 1984-85 pit strike has been proved right ten times over.

The NUM is absolutely correct to insist there can be no truck with out-and-out scabs such as Lynk or other UDM leaders like Neil Greatorex. But the picture is very different at rank and file level.

Several hundred UDM members have rejoined the NUM in recent weeks. There are indications that many more would follow if the NUM campaigned to recruit campaign.

Linking up in St Helens

by Glen Vorris
Chair of St Helens miners support group

Socialist Outlook supporters have been at the forefront of setting up the St Helens miners' support group. The town is just three miles from threatened Parkside colliery.

The group started life after a Socialist Movement Trade Union Committee at St Helens town hall, attended by around 75 people, including speakers from the NUM and Women Against Pit Closures.

The meeting decided to form a miners' support

group despite trade council demands that we should wait until the trades council and Labour Party formed one.

Since then we have had weekly meetings, and carried out activities including:

- weekly stalls on Saturday, which have raised over £200 for miners' support group
- issued weekly press statements to local papers
- building the TUC demonstration in St Helens on November 7, which around 3000 people attended
- sending out letters to trade union and Labour Party branches, asking for affiliation
- advertising the North

West day of action on November 17, and building for strike action in St Helens area

● trying to set up a coordinating committee of all miners support groups and leading trade union activists in the Merseyside area

In the coming weeks we will be holding a meeting with the students' union at St Helens college.

Most importantly, we are currently trying to organise a mass meeting with council workers and the NUM to build a public sector alliance in the St Helens area. If we are able to do this it will be a big step forward in the struggle for jobs and to unite the working class.

Circular opposes strikes TUC line is 'unbelievable'

Socialist Outlook spoke to **BILLY PYE** from Parkside NUM – one of the ten collieries threatened with imminent closure. Billy is also a member of the union's national executive.

How well is Parkside standing up to the closure threat?

On Saturday 14 November, the Parkside branch voted unanimously to continue the struggle to fight the pit closure programme.

So far, only 40 miners out of 800 have taken redundancy and we believe this is a very good sign, considering all the pressures we have faced.

The NUM have carried out its own inspections of the coal faces. Have you found any deterioration?

After several thorough inspections, we have found that one of the two faces wouldn't last much longer than a month without being worked.

However, whether we win or lose the battle in court to

start turning coal again, we will continue our fight against the pit closures.

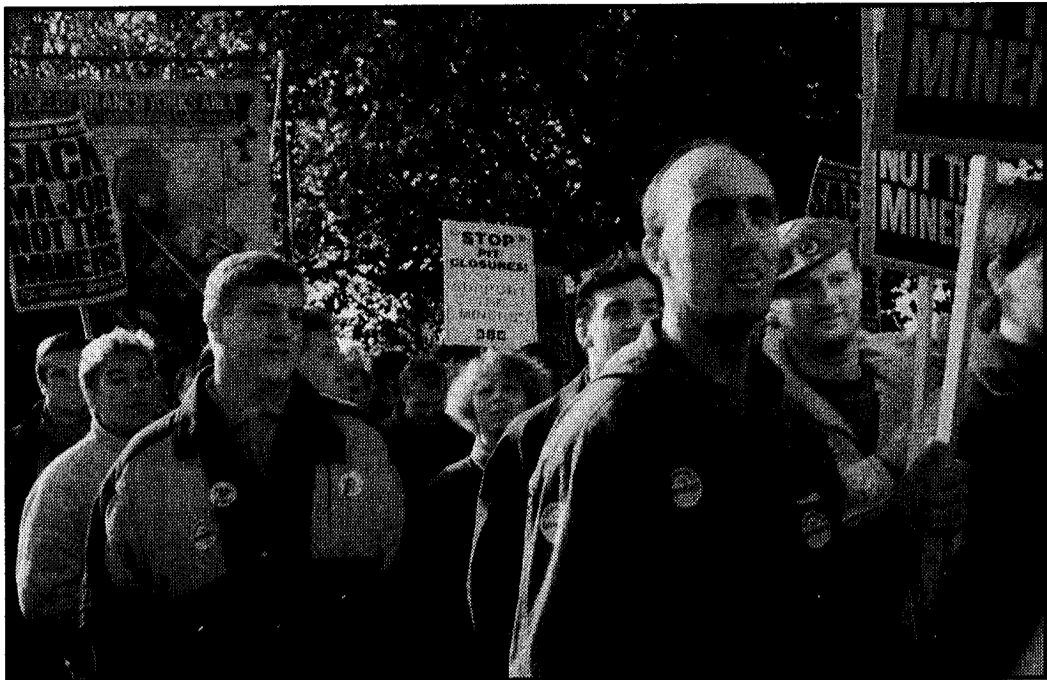
What campaigning has been carried out in the Lancashire area to defend Parkside?

We have spoken to many public meetings to promote our case and have called for miners' support groups to be set up everywhere. So far, there have been over 25 miners support groups set up in the North West area.

We have been calling for a day of action on Tuesday 17 November, a working day. Our branch has spoken to well over 100 trade union branch meetings, mainly in the public sector, calling for solidarity strike action over the past two weeks. We have made it quite clear that we must unite our struggles to drive the Tories out of office.

Council workers in Manchester, Liverpool and Wirral are taking strike action, along with the Liverpool dockers. Many other workers will also be taking solidarity action.

There are two main demonstrations and rallies in the North West on the same day, in Manchester and Liverpool. Additionally, there are at



TUC want to restrict support to marches and protest

least ten other demonstrations and rallies being held on the same day in other towns in the North West.

Scargill and Benn will be speaking at both the main rallies. We expect tremendous support for the day of action.

Has the North West TUC helped you to organise the day of action?

The North West TUC has promoted and widely advertised the rallies and demonstrations in Liverpool and Manchester. Additionally, they helped us to organise the demonstration in St Helens on November 7, at which around 3000 people marched. Also, they are hoping to organise the

torchlit procession at Liverpool docks next week.

However, the North West TUC have sent out letters to all trade union branches, stressing that they only support the Liverpool and Manchester demonstrations and do not support any strike action.

That the TUC sent out these letters to trade union branches is unbelievable, because this undermined their very low standing even further. Basically the TUC is out of touch with the situation. They have no confidence in their own membership.

What steps need to be taken after the North West day of action?

We must firstly build up the confidence of the working

class and build up a public sector workers' alliance to bring unity. Our next task is to at least promote regional days of action, leading to a general strike.

To build for a general strike we must use the network of miners support groups, trade union branches and the Socialist Movement Trade Union Committee. Additionally, we must unite all left groups around this one aim of kicking out the Tories.

Lastly, as a socialist, I am calling for a general strike not just for the miners' cause, but to fight against mass unemployment, falling living standards, and destruction of the hospitals and council services. We should not have to pay for the crisis of capitalism and the mess the bosses have created.

Miners' 'regatta' brings it home to Heseltine

Frickley miners made their views known to Michael Heseltine by dumping two tons of coal across the entrance to his country mansion. Now Oxford Miners' Support Group and Henley Labour Party are organising a demonstration in Heseltine's constituency so his voters get the 'coal not dole' message.

Big support is expected from the NUM. So campaigners in the

South and Midlands should not miss this opportunity to join the miners in saying hello to Tarzan.

The demonstration is on Saturday 5 December. Mark that date in your diary now! Socialist Outlook will be updating details, but immediate information can be obtained from Tony Richardson on 0865 715921.

Supporters in the North East can join the Newcastle march (main speaker Arthur Scargill) on the same day.

Czech miners march in Prague

Five thousand Czech miners demonstrated in Prague last Wednesday against privatisation and restructuring of their industry which threatens thousands of jobs.

Already thousands of miners in the coal, iron ore and uranium mines of Bohemia and Moravia, including 29,000 coal miners, have lost their jobs. Estimates suggest that at least 20 per cent of the 230,000 Czech miners could lose their jobs.

The restructuring of the mining industry is part of the marketisation sell-off plans, using the vouchers distributed to all citizens. A large proportion of the vouchers has been bought up by 'holding companies', often representing foreign capitalist interests.

A key weakness of the miners' protest is their view that 'they are not opposed to privatisation as such', but just want better compensation, retraining and consultation with the government over closures and redundancies.

Hull marches for miners

By Keith Sinclair
President, Hull Trades Council

Around 500 Hull trade unionists marched against pit closures last Saturday. The demonstration – organised by the local trades council – attracted support from most active union branches in the city.

A city centre rally following the march was addressed by speakers including David Nixon from Hatfield Main NUM. Hatfield Main pit is twinned with Hull Trades Council. Meanwhile, the campaign for in-

dustrial action in support of the miners received a setback when an emergency meeting of the regional TUC voted down resolutions in favour of striking.

A motion from Leeds Trades Council arguing for a 24 hour general strike was very heavily defeated, with even the NUM arguing against. Unfortunately, the NUM has not submitted its own resolution, which would have a strong possibility of being carried.

Given the lack of leadership, activists will have to build independently for industrial action on December 9, which the TUC has designated 'national recovery day'.

Key dates for the miners

(see also box for dates of Scottish march)

Friday 20 November

NANTWICH public meeting 7.30pm

Saturday 21 November

LEICESTER march and rally. Speaker: Dennis Skinner.

Sunday 25 November

BRISTOL march with Arthur Scargill

Wednesday 28 November

DONCASTER Lobby of TUC General Council meeting; meet at The Dome at 10am. Evening rallies at The Dome; Adwick Town Hall; Brodsworth Miners' Welfare.

BOOTLE candle-lit march from South Park 5.30pm.

Saturday 28 November

WAKEFIELD march and rally; 11am from Clarence Park, rally town hall. NEWPORT, Gwent; march and rally organised by Newport Labour Party, noon. BOURNEMOUTH. March and rally. CARLISLE, NUM demonstration in market-place 12 noon.

Monday 30 November

HARROW Trades council public meeting, Victoria Hall, 7.30pm

Saturday 5 December

March through HENLEY (see article this page) NEWCASTLE-UPON-TYNE, march and rally with Arthur Scargill, noon.

Saturday 12 November

AMMANFORD, South Wales, march and rally. Marches and rallies in DARLINGTON and SEAHAM.

Thursday 17 December

Reading rally to meet Scottish NUM marchers (with Tony Benn).

Saturday 19 December

Scottish NUM marchers in CENTRAL LONDON

Labour's answer to Tory economics Neither red nor radical

By John Schofield

LABOUR'S strategy to counter two years of Tory slump is seemingly based on boosting Britain's national output of rhetoric.

Last week's policy statement *Labour's Campaign for Recovery* explicitly referred to itself as 'new-Keynesian'. Shadow Chancellor Gordon Brown even heralded it as 'a British New Deal for the 1990s'.

But a massive programme of government-funded public works this was certainly not. If John Maynard Keynes or Franklin D. Roosevelt were alive today, they'd be well advised to sue.

Rehash

Labour's Campaign for Recovery is a moderately beefed-up rehash of Labour's post-Kinnock economic thinking. It makes the 1983 manifesto read like the transitional programme.

Forget silly ideas about raking back anything from the beneficiaries of Thatcher's massive tax cuts. Even April's general election commitments to raise the top rate of income tax and the upper limit on Na-

tional Insurance contributions have now been dropped. Denis Healey can now be appreciated for the dangerous radical he really was.

Funding

This 'New Deal' is apparently to be funded by stamp duty on share transaction, a one off levy on the rip-off profits made by privatised water and electric companies in the recession, and whatever money the private sector may be willing to put into infrastructural projects.

Several of policies outlined in *Labour's Campaign for Recovery* actually formed part of Chancellor Lamont's Autumn Statement when it was unveiled three days later.

Interest rates were duly cut, public-private sector infrastructural projects encouraged, and councils were given the opportunity to use capital receipts for new housing projects, at least for a limited period.

Michael Heseltine, too, stressed his commitment to the 'new partnership' between government and industry demanded by Brown, when he spoke at the Confederation of

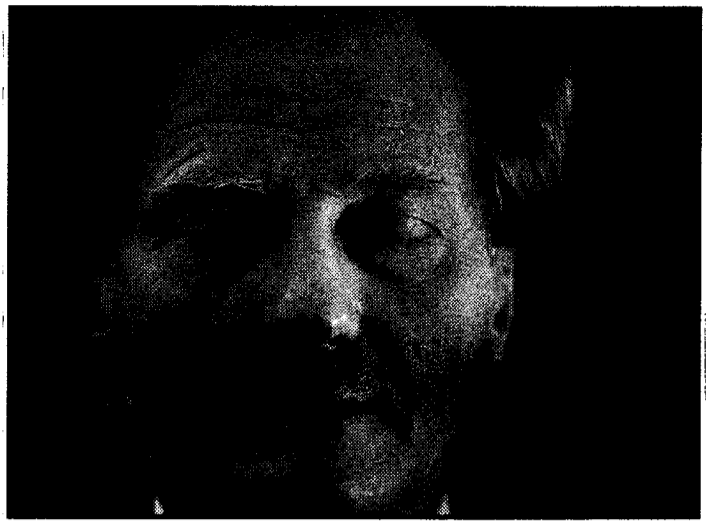
British Industry conference.

Of the policies the Tories are not ready to enact immediately, Labour is calling for the implementation - on a scale 'substantially bigger than originally planned' - of the job creation plans which were drawn up by the Department of Employment in the expectation of a Labour victory!

No mention here of real jobs at trade union pay rates - labour movement orthodoxy not ten years ago. These 'schemes' and 'programmes' would amount to little more than dead-end workfare. Even then, Brown conceded they would not ensure full employment.

The document's philosophy is summarised by its claim that: 'The difference between Labour and the Tories is not a dispute about the importance of the market, but is in our recognition that government also has clear responsibilities to act, internationally and nationally'.

This stance substantially concurs with two recent articles - an editorial in *The Economist* and a piece by Sir Leon Brittan's brother Samuel in *The Financial Times* - both



Baffled covert to Labour's line? Heseltine

stressing the benefit of limited economic interventionism.

Even the ruling classes of America and Japan have been willing to go further than Labour, with major reflationary packages in prospect in both countries next year.

Growth

Revolutionary Marxists have never accepted the formulations of key theoreticians of British Labourism, from Anthony Crosland in the 1950s to Stuart Holland in the 1970s, who have argued that government action could generate permanent economic growth as the basis for continuous expansion of the welfare state.

Ultimately, the only way to

avoid slumps recurring again and again is to replace the very market deified by both Brown and Lamont with conscious democratic economic planning, based on production for use and not profit.

But in the interim, even a serious Keynesian package now could boost employment - and with it, working class confidence and combativity. It would undermine the ideology of the market that dominated politics throughout the last decade.

That's why socialists should press the case for Keynes. What the hell is the Labour Party doing lagging behind punks like Bill Clinton and Kiichi Miyazawa anyhow?

Lamont slashes NHS

AS THIS year's NHS cuts and closures bring the new phenomenon of nursing jobs being made 'redundant', Norman Lamont's Autumn Statement heralds more brutal cuts to come next year.

Behind the bravado of a mini-budget for 'growth', the grim reality is that next year's NHS budget is to be cut by £700 million from its previous target.

Labour's David Blunkett has pointed out that the allocation to hospitals and community services will be reduced by a massive £1.7 billion.

To make matters worse, the Tories are basing their cash limits on the ludicrous assumption that inflation will run at only 2.75 percent next

year. Every one percent of additional inflation would axe £300 million spending power from health authorities.

Caught in this squeeze are next April's community care reforms: it is clear that neither health authorities nor local councils (wrestling with the council tax) will have the funds needed to provide a comprehensive service for some of the most vulnerable patients.

Adding insult to injury, Virginia Bottomley has said that a share of the national NHS budget will be siphoned off next year to pay for the redundancies and other costs of implementing the Tomlinson plan for massive hospital closures in London.



1 million NHS staff could form centre of public sector fightback

Tory NHS job massacre

By Harry Sloan

Even before the Autumn Statement, redundancies and ward closures were stalking the NHS as managers struggle to balance the books of floundering Trusts and units.

● In NORTHAMPTON, up to 100 jobs are threatened in a brutal cuts package.

● STOKES MANDEVILLE hospital is axing jobs and services.

● WYCOMBE health authority is to close wards and is expected also to cut jobs.

● BANBURY'S Horton General hospital is to shed 35 jobs in a package of cuts in preparation for opening out.

● DERBY CITY Hospital is making staff redundant some compulsorily before opting out in April.

● The new FOREST Healthcare Trust is to axe 60 jobs and close two wards at Whipps

Cross Hospital, East London, after exceeding target levels for treating patients.

● Nursing staff at LODGE MOOR hospital face threats to their jobs as management transfer work prior to closure.

● Nursing care for the frail elderly has been privatised by NOTTINGHAM health authority, who have forced staff to work for the contract firm or be compulsorily seconded.

● Up to 300 domestic staff employed by REDBRIDGE health authority are balloting on strike action after news that they will be made compulsorily redundant through privatisation of 'hotel services'.

It's clear that health workers face a rough road ahead, and will need all the strength that can be gained from the merger of COHSE, NUPE and NALGO into the new UNISON mega-union. Ballot papers on the merger are now out.

Low-paid workers hit hardest by pay freeze

THE IMPOSITION of a 1.5% pay limit is a major blow for thousands of health workers on ancillary grades - people whose living standards have suffered more under the Tories than almost any other group of workers.

Whilst average real earnings rose by 22% between 1981 and 1990, the real wages of NHS ancillary staff fell by 7% over the same period.

The basic rate of pay for Scale A ancillaries is just over half the level set by the Coun-

cil of Europe's 'decency threshold'.

The scandal over these poverty levels of pay amongst ancillary members is indicative of the discrimination felt by a largely female workforce with a high proportion of part-time workers, black workers, and people from ethnic minorities.

One hospital domestic summed up the current mood amongst ancillary workers:

"There is no way that we can put up with our wages buying less and less each year.

"Why should we be the ones to pay every time the government makes a mess of things? There are plenty of highly-paid managers who could pay for this more easily than us."

● Senior NHS managers are to escape the freeze and pick up a 3.9% pay rise from September 1 in a deal sneaked through just ahead of the Chancellor's crackdown.

With many Chief Executives on salaries of £50,000-plus, this should mean an increase of at least £40 a week.

Wage councils face axe Shephard backs cowboys in war on low-paid

By Dave Osler

EMPLOYMENT secretary Gillian Shephard wants to scrap wages councils – currently the only legal protection for millions of Britain's lowest paid workers – because they 'destroy jobs'.

Ms Shephard can perhaps be forgiven for her ignorance of the realities of life on a low income. The poor woman has to scrape by on her £63,047 a year cabinet salary, with only a little extra income from her agricultural business interests.

But such a direct attack on the worst off is only one aspect of the Tories' disgusting new Trade Union Reform and Employment Rights Bill.

It will also give 'the public' – in practice, outfits like the Freedom Association – the power to take 'illegal strikers' to court, impose a seven day cooling off period before ballots on industrial action, hamper the collection of union dues and extend state powers to regulate internal labour movement affairs.

The TUC's so-called 'Bridlington Agreement' on which



Angry – Willis

unions organise which sector will be scrapped, allowing the AEEU to recruit to its hard right bloc, wrecking smaller unions in the process.

We don't ask to write the rule book at the Carlton Club or the CBI. Why should the Tories tell our class what its organisations can or cannot do?

Finding ways round the bill's few plus points, including extension of maternity leave, and protection against dismissal for pregnancy or for carrying out safety rep duties, will be easy enough for most bosses.

Wages councils set rates of between £2.50 and £3.10 an hour for some 2.5 million

workers, four-fifths of them women, in areas like retailing, hairdressing, textiles and catering.

They were set up in 1909 by Winston Churchill, then in the Liberal government of the period, specifically to prevent 'good employers being undercut by bad and bad employers by worse'.

However, Shephard insists wages councils are an example of 'damaging, outdated practices' with 'no role to play in the 1990s'.

If they are abolished, Britain will be the only EC country without some form of legally enforceable minimum wage protection.

Already, the average hourly minimum set by the councils has steadily declined as a percentage of the national average wage since the Conservatives took office in 1979. Since the late '80s, they have ceased to cover young workers.

Shephard waxes lyrical that the bill 'is designed to increase the competitiveness of the economy'. Chris Pond, director of the Low Pay Unit, agrees: 'Scrapping the councils will

Andrew Ward



Major's anti-union hardliner – Gillian Shephard

turn Britain into the Taiwan of Europe.'

Low pay for women is justified, she seemingly argues: 'Eighty per cent of people in wages council industries live in households with at least one other source of income.' Never mind that this may well be a dole cheque or a second low pay packet.

'Where companies pay above the pay levels laid down by wages councils, they are irrelevant. Where the wages councils force companies to pay more than they can afford, they destroy jobs.'

Between 1979 and 1991, over 100,000 employers were found to be paying beneath wages councils rates. This is illegal. Total number of prosecutions? All of 67.

Shephard goes on: 'I am glad

to say our strike record is now at an all time low. We need to make sure that we keep it that way. This bill provides further protection against the damaging consequences of strikes.'

TUC general secretary Norman Willis branded the bill a 'charter for cheating cowboy employers' and pledged Congress House to 'all we can do' to oppose the measure.

'All we can do' apparently translates to leaflets, stickers and posters, 'a full briefing from the TUC on our assessment of the bill' for every MP, and consideration of legal action.

However half-hearted these efforts may seem, the TUC campaign can and should be linked to the defence of the many other groups of workers whose jobs are under threat.

Rover union chiefs opt for pay standstill

By a Cowley carworker

ROVER workers have voted by 11,000 to 9,200 to accept a six month pay freeze, followed by a 3.6 per cent increase in May and November 1993.

This outcome follows the successful efforts of national trade union officials to persuade both the Rover National Joint Negotiating Committee and a delegate conference to recommend a yes vote.

It is the same story as the case of the 'Rover Tomorrow' package of new management techniques drawn up earlier this year. An overwhelming vote of the negotiators – only two of the 35 joint national committee members came out against – just scrapes home in a ballot.

Sell-out

If there had been a call to reject the deal, there is no doubt it would have been thrown out by an overwhelming margin. The union leaders have yet again accepted the economic argument that workers should pay for the crisis.

Skilled workers and team leaders will get £7 more than production workers. Staff have also been given the guarantee that if they are move onto production they will maintain their grade for two years.

Both these points are contentious for production workers. In the end, the lowest paid workers are the only ones who get nothing out of the deal.



Union chiefs suppress fighting strength of Rover workers

Rover's Cowley, Oxford, plant is booming following a reduction in the workforce from 9,500 to just 4,000 over the last five years. The Maestro, Montego and Rover 800 are currently in production, and a new model, the Synchro, will go into full production at the start of 1993.

Vast amounts of overtime are already being worked, yet the company expect the plant to virtually double production by July next year with no extra labour.

Instead they want complete flexibility of labour, with every member of staff learning production line jobs and the implementation of 'team working'.

In effect, bosses are asking for a huge increase in productivity from a plant that has just received a pay freeze on top of an effective £7 a week pay cut, after a bonus scheme stopped paying out earlier this year.

Cowley workers are now the lowest paid carworkers in Europe, yet the company is still expecting 'best in class' productivity levels. And this, bosses warn, is only the first stage.

Hostility

Rover management are strengthened in their offensive by the attitude of the union leadership. But with the prevailing levels of shopfloor hostility, it is difficult to see how they can achieve the dramatic output increases they want.

A recent *Socialist Outlook* leaflet for Cowley workers challenged the company's claims about its financial position, demanding it should open its books to the workforce.

The leaflet also argued that if Rover cannot provide jobs – and maintain wages – it should be renationalised without compensation.

**National Demonstration
Against the Asylum Bill**

NO racist Asylum Bill

Saturday 21 November

Assemble: 12 noon, Hyde Park
● Rally in Trafalgar Square

Called by **Refugees Ad-Hoc Committee for Asylum Rights**
and supported by the **Anti-Racist Alliance**

● Further information from: **ARA PO**
Box 2578, London, N5 1UF
Tel. 071-607 3988.

Anti-Racist Alliance

Depression heralds new phase of crisis

Chaos as capital runs out of control

The long period of capitalist boom in the 1950s and 1960s has been replaced by two decades of recession. Within that long wave of recession there have been mini-booms like the one in the 1980s, and deep depressive crises like the one today. Here we publish an edited version of the speech on this topic made by Fourth International leader ERNEST MANDEL at the Socialist Outlook rally on 23 October.

We are living in a generalised recession of world capitalism – the third since the early 1970s. It promises to be the longest depression in the history of capitalism.

When you have a depression it doesn't mean that the normal business cycle of 7 to 10 years has stopped.

You still have recoveries. So it is not excluded there will be a recovery from this present deep recession, without any prospect of getting out of the long depressive wave.

There are two basic characteristics of such cycles within a long depressive wave which have today come to the forefront. You have to see these as basic long term trends of the capitalist economy. **The most important one is the steady rise of unemployment.**

Unemployment in the imperialist countries was around 10 million in the early 1970s and is around 50 million today. A very high figure which continues to rise. It may increase by between 15 and 25 per cent in two to three years. Figures in the 'Third World' are indescribable.

According to some estimates 500 million are unemployed. This depends on your definition of 'unemployment' under conditions of very grave underdevelopment.

The second characteristic is the gradual disintegration of hegemonic imperialist powers (like Britain or

America). Today there is no one hegemonic imperialist power. There is inter-imperialist competition, internecine war or semi-war, and there are trade wars and currency wars.

Disintegration

Something very significant has happened. **Every bourgeois state, including the most powerful states – the US, Japan and Germany – is losing control over basic economic processes.** There is a real disintegration of state control. There is increasing semi-chaos in the world capitalist economy.

Every working day the total amount of money capital which is traded on the currency markets is *three trillion dollars*. That's a figure with 12 noughts, a figure that doesn't mean anything any more, it goes beyond imagination.

It is more than the total annual volume of world trade. It is many times the total currency reserves of all the world's central banks.

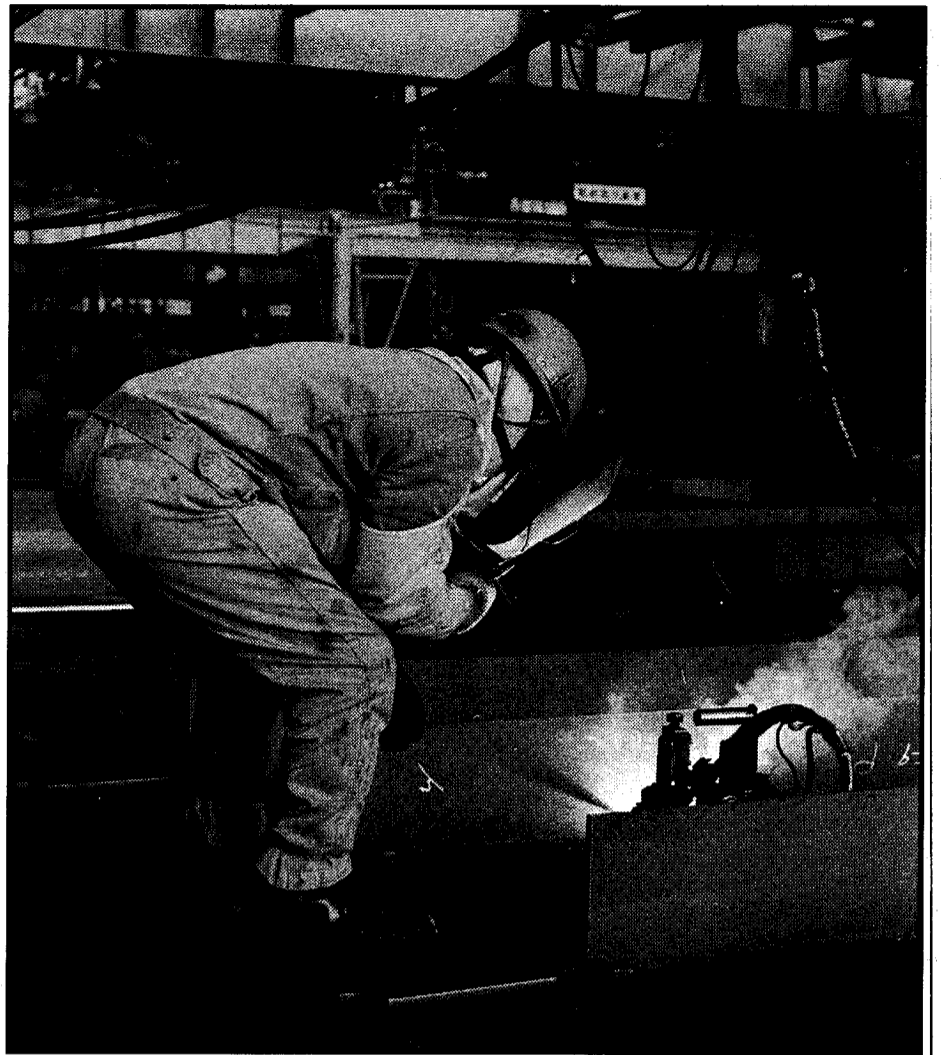
Money capital is totally out of the control of any state or semi-state institution. So much so that the Bank of International Settlements in Basle, Switzerland say that nobody knows the exact amount of this volatile capital. It could be up to five hundred billion dollars. Nobody knows.

This capital has totally escaped the control of the state and quasi-state institutions. When we had the recent waves of currency speculation and the



Ernest Mandel

Money capital is totally out of the control of any state or semi-state institution. ... Nobody knows the exact amount of volatile capital. It could be \$500 billion



Japanese workers under pressure as economy runs out of steam

near collapse of attempts to install a European Monetary System, 'speculators' were blamed.

But look at the so called speculators. They were not small fry. They were the big banks. They weren't acting out of principled opposition to Maastricht or a strong European common market. They did it to make a fast buck and they made a lot of money.

What is behind this is a fundamental re-privatisation of money. This is unheard of in the history of capitalism. You have to go back to the 17th Century to find something similar. Governments have no more power over money; even central banks and the semi-continental quasi-state institutions are losing power.

Monetary power is back in the hands of private institutions – banks and multinational corporations.

This happened because the basis of 'post-war prosperity' was essentially debt! The international capitalist economy floated to prosperity on a sea of debt. It was a debt economy of hyper-liquidity. With this tremendous increase in the amount of money, liquid-capital or quasi-liquid capital there is an internal logic which leads to depression – a depression similar if not worse than that of the 1930s.

Crisis of bourgeois leadership

In this vice of uncontrollable hyper-liquidity and the threat of grave depression there is a **growing paralysis of decision making by bourgeois leadership.** They are too paralysed to act.

We speak about a 'crisis of proletarian leadership', but the crisis of bourgeois leadership is of at least the same historical impact. The G7 meetings of the biggest imperialist powers have achieved nothing since the beginning of the present depression.

Meeting after meeting has not reached a serious collective decision. They have no capacity to make collective decisions!

This is logical. It is easy to make compromises between imperialist powers and multinationals in times of prosperity. You can give and take – everybody gets something. Cartels like OPEC can function in conditions of prosperity. The EC could be slowly built in conditions of prosperity.

But when recession and depression

set in, there can be no more 'give and take'. It's 'everybody for themselves', bickering, and the increasing incapacity to compromise.

Many years ago the Fourth International said that the future of the European Community was undecided. It might go forward to more consolidated supra-national institutions; or it might go backward to a type of free trade zone. We said that the next big recession would decide the outcome.

We are now at the stage where everything is put into question. For us all these economic phenomena are combined or co-related to what happens in the real economy.

Over-production

We have the very serious danger of a blow up of the Japanese banking system. The biggest bank in the US, Citibank, is in serious trouble, not essentially because of all these phenomena, but because **there is a real crisis of over-production and in the realisation of surplus value – the decline of the rate of profit.**

All these are essentially identical phenomena. They are just different expressions of the same reality.

The most striking example is Japan. The solidity of Japan's economy is greatly exaggerated for obvious ideological reasons. What's happening to Japan is very simple. They are selling less colour televisions! They are selling fewer cars and electronic components.

They have no new products which can replace these on the same scale. They can still sell a lot of things, but not on the same scale. The world is very simple in the final analysis.

I will now add something much more precise about use value. In the post war boom probably 40 per cent or more of that expansion was supported by just two sectors – housing (and the consumer durables like washing machines that go with housing) and cars. That's all. They were the two mainstays.

How many automobiles were sold during 20-25 years on a world scale? A tremendous figure! About 550 to 700 million. How many houses were built during that period? The same – 400-500 million. What's going to be sold in the next years on that scale? Personal computers? No! A normal worker doesn't need a PC. They will sell some, but not



Austerity in the third world is leading to fresh military crackdown

in the vast amount to spur a new boom.

There have probably never been so many new products on offer as in the last ten years. This is classical. In a period of depression, technical research and initial innovation goes on favourably – but people have to buy the goddamn things!

Who is going to buy 600 million electrical knives or PCs or other goodies being offered? Nobody! We don't have that type of demand today.

Under these conditions it is extremely unlikely that the *real* economy, which centres on what is being produced and what is being sold, will take off.

Lenin and Trotsky said many times: there are no situations without a way out for capitalism, if the working class is prepared to pay the price. Nobody can say that in 10 to 25 years that this or that is not possible.

Tough

But, in the foreseeable future there is no chance that capitalism can extract itself from this really tough crisis, unless there is a radical change in the world.

One thing would make a decisive change: the total disintegration of Russia and China and their total re-integration into the capitalist world market. That is to say – the biggest single defeat



Bank of England boss Leigh Pemberton

lapse is certain; I believe that it is possible, but not likely.

The American government cannot abandon the Chase Manhattan Bank, because the American government *is* the Chase Manhattan Bank!

But what is the price they must pay? If the price is galloping inflation, they might accept it, but it won't let them off the hook. They just fall from one ill to another.

"What's happening to Japan is very simple. They are selling less colour televisions! They are selling fewer cars and electronic components"

Where we stand

So that is the general framework of what is happening in the international capitalist economy. We now have to look at what that means for our class and for the international labour movement and where we stand.

The class relationship of forces has deteriorated at the expense of the workers ever since this depression

started.

Our class enemy have been on the offensive. Our class has been on the defensive especially as a result of the capitulation of the leaders of the traditional working class organisations.

Seduced

There has been retreat and very limited fightback. But there is also an objective element of the situation which we must remember if we are not to be seduced by semi-conspiracy theories.

There was genuine disarray in the working class and amongst militant trade unionists on how to respond to a new situation when the austerity offensive started in the mid-1970s.

By and large working class militants know how to fight inflation, but suddenly high unemployment erupted. Combined with an employers' and government offensive, they did not have immediate answers to the way to fight back.

They had to look at the new situation and learn how to organise a fight-back independently of the bureaucratised traditional working class organisations, whose leaders were unwilling to fight. We may cautiously say that, by-and-large, the low point is now behind us. Now the fightback has started!

A fight-back doesn't mean that revolution is just around the corner. It means essentially defensive struggles, but ones which are not doomed to defeats. They can be successful.

Turning point

This turning point has occurred in a series of countries. Probably the biggest fight back has been in Italy – where there has been a big wave of street demonstrations and strikes throughout the country.

Impressive on a more modest scale, because it is a much poorer and weaker country, is the fight back in Greece. Spanish workers, especially the steel workers, have started to fight back.

There is one basic dif-

"Today there are around 15 countries in the world where the Trotskyists are numerically larger than the Communist Parties"

ference from the 1930s – the labour movement. Nowhere in the world, certainly not in Europe, has the working class suffered any defeat comparable to the 1930s. There has been no crushing of the labour movement like that imposed by Hitler or Franco – anywhere. The working class has by and large kept its potential and therefore it can still go over to the counter-offensive.

This is also true for eastern Europe and the ex-Soviet Union. The working class has suffered serious defeats there, but it has not been crushed. And I would add, controversially – not all left forces accept this – the weakening of the working class movement's organisations is not universal.

It is very strong in certain countries, limited in others, but it is non-existent in others. The working class movements in Brazil, South Africa and South Korea have not been weakened – they are stronger than ever. I could add other countries to the list. Even in countries where the situation is unclear like EL Salvador – things are not finished.

If you look at history you can say the labour movement, the left, especially the socialists and communists are much weaker than they were in 1918 and 1927/8 or at the end of world war two. But are they weaker than they were in 1914?

Midnight

That's dubious to say the least. Certainly they are stronger than they were between 1938 and 1944, which was the period of the big defeats: the midnight of the century.

Stalinism and Social Democracy have caused tremendous havoc within the international working class. They have been the cause of tremendous defeats.

This big obstacle can slowly be overcome by genuine honest socialist forces.

We have today around 15 countries in the world where the Trotskyists are numerically larger than the Communist Parties.

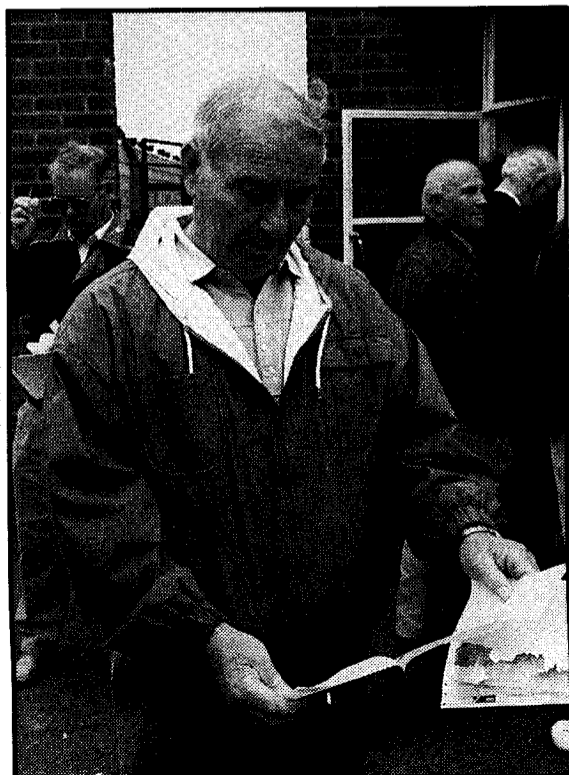
That is something new. The number of these countries is slowly increasing. That means something. It gives us a modest new chance – a chance to move closer to the day when the mass of women, men, toilers throughout the world take their fate into their own hands and too say 'goodbye ministers', 'goodbye employers', 'goodbye to that riff-raff, we are the in charge our own destiny now!'



of the working class since Hitler. In that case a lot of things could be possible for capitalism.

However, there is not going to be total integration of Russia and China in the foreseeable future. There will be a continuing crisis in the world capitalist economy with a growing risk of the collapse of the international banking system.

I don't say that a new 1931-style col-



More redundancy notices as British industry closes down

????????????????????????????????

What is to be done about...

!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!



Making a future for the industry - Paul Gascoigne

By Glenn Sutherland

PROFESSIONAL football, in common every other sector of British capitalism, is in trouble.

Enormous interest rates payable on the big debts virtually every club has run up - coupled with compulsory investment in ground improvements have driven many of the smaller clubs to the verge of bankruptcy.

In a situation like this, you would expect your average capitalist to strip the company's assets, sell up and invest his capital somewhere more profitable - or simply hang on to it.

Some club owners have, in fact, done this by selling their biggest asset - the land on which the ground stands - for development or speculation. The slump in property prices means that this is no longer an option for most clubs. Owners have to look elsewhere to maximise their income.

Several clubs launched 'bond' schemes in order to finance ground improvements and the conversion to all-seater stadia required by the Taylor report. These schemes consisted of supporters forking out large sums of money in order to guarantee the right to buy a ticket for a particular seat in the 'new' stand. Understandably these schemes did not meet with unreserved delight from the fans, and most have now either been dropped or changed out of recognition.

Raising admission prices is the traditional solution, and one which has been followed by many clubs. In recession-hit Britain, however, this solution can backfire too. The West Ham directors recently had to cut prices by a third after average attendance dropped by more than 10,000.

The deal between the newly-formed

Football An industry of two halves

English Premier League and BSkyB for exclusive TV rights to live games has provided a welcome breathing space for top clubs.

Not only does the deal provide clubs with significant money for the first time from a TV deal - but because of the split of the Premier League from the Football League, a much higher percentage is retained by the biggest and richest clubs. Arsenal, Manchester United and Leeds have already benefitted by hundreds of thousands of pounds this season.

Monopoly

BSkyB's side of the deal doesn't look quite so good. Murdoch was prepared to make a sizeable loss in the first season in order to pave the way for sewing up a monopoly - possibly for a future European 'Super-League' - and selling matches to viewers on a pay-as-you-watch basis. However, the tiny viewing figures for BSkyB matches this season must have made him think twice.

Channel 4's coverage of Italian Serie

'A' games has attracted more than double BSkyB's viewers. This may not be unconnected with the fact that the Italian League has attracted the world's best footballers, and so provides consistently better football, higher levels of skill and much more entertainment than the average Premier League game. The choice of viewing AC Milan vs Juventus or Arsenal vs Wimbledon is not a difficult one to make for anyone who enjoys good football!

So why should any of this be of concern to socialists and, if it is, what should we be doing about it?

Football was the first mass spectator sport in Britain. Its development closely mirrors the development of the industrial working class. In its present form, football is a relatively modern sport. Most of our major clubs were founded at the end of the last century or the beginning of this. Many of the big stadia date from around the same time, although there was a big expansion in the 1920s when huge crowds became common, due to the increases in leisure time for many workers. From then to the present day football crowds have been almost entirely working class in composition.

Working class football fans formed their own organisations early in the development of the Football League. These supporters clubs were often very democratically run. They organised travel, social and sporting events, fundraising and in some cases, elected representatives onto the boards of the football clubs.

Over the years, a lot of official supporters clubs have lost accountability to the fans, and have been co-opted into the club structures where their activities can be controlled.

Over the last ten years, however, there has been an explosion of independent self-organised supporters clubs and fanzines. Although such organisations often have a very short life, they do represent the authentic voice of a section of the organised working class.

The existence of football as a mass spectator sport and the self-organisation

of football fans should be supported wholeheartedly by all socialists. In some cases football provides the only collective experience which young working class people have available to them. The collectivity of the terraces and of supporters organisations represents a gain for the working class as a whole.

As with all working class social formations under capitalism, football crowds are contradictory phenomena. Forms of ruling class ideology - sexism, racism and nationalism - are deeply rooted in the mass of football supporters (most of whom are white and male).

The ruling class actively encourages nationalist sentiment among football fans and smiles benevolently at racism, sexism and homophobia in working class. Their attitude to the collective experience and self-organisation of working class people is, however, another matter.

All-seater

The compulsory introduction of all-seater stadia for all Premier and first division clubs cannot be justified on safety grounds. It will, however, have two important results. It will price many working class fans out of the game and it will speed up the transformation of football from a mass spectator sport into a spectacle produced to be passively consumed through a TV set.

Instead of ignoring these issues we should be developing a political programme for the transformation of football into what it has always had the potential to become - the 'people's game'.

Such a programme must start from an understanding that there are no long term answers to football's problems while the game remains under the control of football clubs through their own independent organisations. As a first step, elected supporters representatives should have a majority on club boards. Clubs and grounds should be nationalised or, more likely, municipalised. All debts should be cancelled.

TV coverage should not be limited to the big Premier League clubs and proceeds from TV coverage should be distributed equitably across the game, including to women's football.

There should be women-only sections in every ground. Most grounds need big investment to make them safe and pleasant venues. Matches should be stewarded by supporters themselves - kick the police out of grounds.

Such demands will find a very sympathetic audience among supporters. They should also be directed at and argued inside the Labour Party and trade unions. Socialists cannot continue to abstain on the important questions which are being raised by supporters themselves.



Italian league matches more attractive than British?

Miscast adrift on the ocean blue

1492 Conquest of paradise

Directed by Ridley Scott
Starring Gerard Depardieu, Sigourney Weaver

Reviewed by Kate Ahrens

THERE HAS been a wealth of information and entertainment about the 'discovery' of America over the past year, and Hollywood was certainly not going to miss the bandwagon.

You would think then, that Ridley Scott's version of events would have something special to make people want to go to see it rather than get their fix of Columbus-mania from elsewhere. It hasn't.

The flaws in this film are almost countless. It fails miserably in presenting a coherent historical account of the reasons behind the trip, both from Columbus' viewpoint, and that of the Spanish aristocracy.

Its attempt at an examination of the tensions between the state and the church is laughable. And its 'explanation' of the failure of Columbus' colonisation expedition creates far more questions than it answers.

Depardieu struggles admirably with a part for which he was hopelessly miscast - as an actor whose real strength is exploring the hidden depths and character flaws of his parts, the two dimensional nature of the script considerably hampered his performance.

Depardieu was not the only casting mistake - Sigourney Weaver as Queen Isabella was ridiculous; I mean, the queen of Spain with an American accent?!

However, if the worst thing wrong with this film had been a stray American

accent, I could have been persuaded that it had some quality. But worse is to come.

Scott's version of events goes something like this: Columbus was a visionary who wanted to work with the native tribes he found and dreamt of creating a truly equal society in the New World, but was brought down by devious and corrupt elements in the Church and in the Spanish court.

He then sets about dramatising this tale by means of the worst melodramatic effects.

Baddies are immediately recognisable by the way the music becomes sinister the moment they walk on screen. Columbus is a man of such honour and kindness that his wife is prepared to wait patiently for him to return from this journey that no one is convinced will succeed.

Indeed she urges him to go and doesn't once even mention the fact that he is going off on some hare-brained adventure from which he will almost certainly not return and leaving her to look after their two children on her own.

The queen is persuaded to give her royal blessing to the trip because 'he's not afraid of me'. What a load of rubbish!

There is also the small matter of the almost obscene amount of gratuitous blood and gore.

I must say it took me most unpleasantly by surprise and as far as I could see, most of it advanced the plot not one iota.

I want to be charitable and find a good word to say about this film (cos that's just the kind of person I am!) so here goes: if you like wildly inaccurate historical films, think that Sigourney Weaver and Gerard Depardieu are wonderful actors who can do no wrong and really enjoy lots of mindless violence, then this is the film for you.



Reeking of success - REM

Automatic answer to prince of posers

Prince 'Symbol' REM 'Automatic for the People'

Reviewed by Ian McLarty

PRINCE has devoted one CD/long play tape/four sides of vinyl to what really appears to matter in his life ... himself.

This is a concept album (read: same subject throughout) based on love (read: lust), and furthermore based on a relationship involving the 'Princess of Cairo' and - would you believe it -

Prince.

In the past, Prince at least managed the occasional stab at social comment, such as 'Ronnie Talk to Russia' and even 'Sign O' the Times'.

Now we are offered a range of duff titles such as 'Wanna Melt with U', 'God Created Woman' and 'The Sacrifice of Victor', interspersed with mind-numbingly infantile spoken sections. When Prince asks, 'we got seven hours baby, so watcha wanna do?', the obvious temptation is to reply: 'Anything but listen to this album again.'

And musically? Formula funk, pretty good but definitely less than innovative. In the end, I just can't get over the crass chorus of 'Sexy MF', which runs 'You sexy motherfucker'.

Verdict - worth taping if they bring out an instrumental version, but not much more.

Just because REM have a name with three initials in it, don't be fooled into thinking they are another irrelevant Trot sect. They are now fully-fledged stadium rockers.

Their new album, 'Automatic for the People', apparently takes its name from the catch

phrase of the owner of the group's favourite cafe haunt. It is an impressive follow-up to 'Out of Time' - anything but an easy task.

'Out of Time' was hailed by the pundits as finally putting REM on the map, even as an epoch-making album. In fact it was neither, but a slightly more mainstream (less psychedelic?) version of what the band have been doing for years.

'Automatic' is more of the same in a more subdued and laid back format. The first single from the album, 'Drive', is a relatively typical track and as such a logical choice.

If the record company has any taste, or the band any control, the songs 'Monty' or 'Man on the Moon' should follow.

REM are a distinctive taste. If you hated them before, 'Automatic' is not going to convert you. And if you have not heard their material before - what planet have you been living on?

This album reeks of success. If the next one is in the same mould, the risk is there that success will turn into complacency.

Pilger's damning clarity

Distant Voices

Written by John Pilger
Reviewed by Dave Osler

Journalism anthologies rarely work. Feature articles shorn of immediate context, ripped down from the centrespread and republished in book form years later minus their banner headlines, are frequently just plain dull.

Not so with 'Distant Voices'. This volume provides a textbook of left wing journalism at its finest. Pilger has mastered the craft of marshalling fact after fact, quote after quote, to win his arguments by the written equivalent of Chinese water

torture.

A palpable sense of anger pervades these pages, savagely lashing out at imperialism, poverty and racism and from Britain to the Philippines, from Alabama to Australia.

One article on Cambodia, 'Return to Year Zero' succeeds in packing a book on that God-forsaken country into thirty odd pages. It is an absolute bravura performance.

'Return to Year Zero' explains with damning clarity how the British government Pol Pot's genocidal Khmer Rouge to lay the land mines which blow kiddie's legs off, while simultaneously denying it in parliament.

Even if you are aware of the facts in outline already, reading the piece will still

move you. The collected material on Britain and the Gulf War is absolutely outstanding too.

Not that 'Distant Voices' is beyond criticism. Pilger lacks two key things; a mass audience and Marxism. Thanks to the *Daily Mirror* and the SWP, Paul Foot gets the edge both times.

With Pilger's written work now largely confined to the broadsheets and *New Statesman*, it is unfortunately inaccessible to many of the very people it should be reaching.

Pilger is a committed radical, from a socialist family. But unfortunately, he lacks the sole political theory that can both interpret the world and change it.

Don't get mad, get even. Get Marxism.

Miners' supporters need...

Coal not dole!

First issue out now - free!

For copies contact:
The National Miners Support Network, c/o
Jeremy Corbyn MP, 129a Seven Sisters Road,
London N7 7QG.

Debate: How should we analyse Russia today?

Can Yeltsin roll back the wheel of history?

By Paul Clarke

Old socialist debates about 'the Russian question' seem positively antique in 1992. Surely, the real issue is what Russia and the other CIS countries are *now* and not what they were. Old categories (workers state, state capitalist, bureaucratic collectivist etc) are, surely, only of interest to historians of obscure factional conflict.

This view is only partly right. How we view Russia now must depend on what we think it *was* before the experience of perestroika, the collapse of that project and the seizure of power by Yeltsin and the pro-capitalist forces around him after the August 1991 attempted coup.

Authoritarian

During his London visit Yeltsin warned that 'right wing' forces may attempt to seize power; and that he might be forced into authoritarian measures to stop them (which of course would only be 'temporary'). These statements were a reflection of the huge conflicts now raging in Russia because of the attempts to restore capitalism.

Yeltsin's neo-liberal marketisation plans are being resisted by a wide spectrum of political forces, from the small socialist forces like the new Party of Labour, to the social democratic 'Socialist Workers Party of Russia', the Stalinist and nationalistic Communist Workers Party, to much more right-wing nationalist forces that lined up with the Stalinists in the National Salvation Front.

But behind these political alignments is a much deeper social reality; important elements of the old bureaucracy in charge of industry and the factories are resisting the destruc-



Stalin's bureaucracy trampled on the vision of socialism. Can Yeltsin finish the job and restore capitalism?

tion of state planning, state ownership and state subsidies to industry.

These forces are engaged in a bitter battle against Yeltsin's pro-marketisation prime minister Gaidar; they are organised in the Russian Union of Industrialists and Entrepreneurs, part of the much wider anti-Yeltsin alliance 'Civic Union', which includes the right-wing Peoples Party of Free Russia.

Opposition to Yeltsin from sections of the old bureaucracy does not reflect any principled anti-capitalist approach; it is a matter of survival. While sections of the old bureaucracy can fit themselves into the new

order, tens of thousands of bureaucrats and factory cadres cannot. Full marketisation means simple bankruptcy and the dole for them.

'Shock therapy'

So far, the attempt to introduce a market economy through 'shock therapy' has resulted only in shock and no 'therapy'; more precisely marketisation reforms have succeeded *only in dislocating the old state-planned economy while not creating a new fully capitalist one*. Why is this so?

Hundred of smaller firms have been privatised, generally

by fake purchases and other pilfering by corrupt bureaucrats. But Russia and the CIS more generally, has tens of thousands of state-owned factories. To privatise these, to create full-scale capitalism needs *capital*; enterprises need to be *bought*. There is only one realistic source of that capital - the Western governments, banks and other financial institutions. But they will not invest without seeing the prospect of rapid profits; and that in turn means a docile labour force, a workable infrastructure and above all a guaranteed market for the goods produced.

The IMF has agreed a \$24 billion package of aid to Russia, but it depends on progress towards marketisation which has been stalled by political opposition. Only \$1 billion has been forthcoming.

In desperation Yeltsin and Gaidar invented a 'voucher' scheme for privatising the factories; it seems to have gone down like a lead balloon.

Clearly Russia and the other CIS countries have pro-capitalist, politically bourgeois, governments. But that does not equal a *capitalist* social system. Non-capitalist social relations predominate. Private capital is accumulated by corruption and the still relatively marginal private sector.

The character of the *state* depends on the fundamental question: which social rela-

tions does the state apparatus defend historically? That is the only possible theoretically coherent criterion. Thus, if a left wing or socialist government comes to power under capitalism, but leaves the state apparatus intact, the state is capitalist irrespective of the character of the government.

The old central Soviet state apparatus has collapsed and been replaced by the authority of the state machines of the republics. Russia has however incorporated whole sectors, especially the military and security apparatus, of the old central Soviet state apparatus into a reconstituted Russian state.

The provisional answer has to be that the existing Russian state politically defends capitalist social relations, but so far lacks the power to crush social opposition to a full marketisation programme which would radically alter the character of the economy.

But the social layer in power remains the *bureaucracy*, even if key sectors of the bureaucracy have the ambition to turn themselves into a capitalist class.

We thus have are faced with a hybrid, extremely unstable, social formation. Capitalism, because of world economic crisis, is having difficult birth-pangs; and maybe it will never succeed in being born.

Right wing

Without a big change in the world economy, or successful defensive struggles by the working class, the prospect for Russia is of right-wing, authoritarian government based on a still largely statised economy.

Should this configuration become stabilised, debates on the social character of Russia would be posed anew. Statisation of the economy, in itself is not a decisive criterion for the absence of capitalism.

State capitalist regimes have existed in the post-war world, in a series of third world countries, where the majority of industry was nationalised, but which were totally integrated into the world capitalist market and subject to the law of value. Nasser's Egypt is a classic example.

It would be premature to draw the conclusion that any form of capitalism is stabilised in Russia.

But in the long-term, in a capitalist world, some form of capitalism will be established, unless the working class can impose its own solution against the extreme right wing forces waiting in the wings to replace Yeltsin.

Abortion attacked from east and west

Abortion rights are facing major attacks in Poland and Ireland. Fourth International women are calling for solidarity action in other countries in a bid to pressurise the two governments.

In Poland, anti-abortion legislation has been drawn up by a special parliamentary commission. It calls for a two-year prison sentence for doctors who practice abortion, or for the pregnant women herself if abortion is self-induced.

Lesser prison sentences would also be dealt out to women who use contraceptives. The proposals would even forbid pre-natal ex-

aminations.

Anything up to 600,000 abortions a year are carried out in Poland. Criminalisation could double the country's prison population inside a year.

Abortion rights supporters recognise their forces are weak, and are appealing to pro-choice activists abroad to undertake protests outside Polish embassies.

Ireland is to hold a referendum on abortion to coincide with the general election on November 26.

The pro-choice movement is calling for a no vote on the first proposal, which would ban ter-

minations unless they are 'necessary to save the life, as distinct from the health, of the woman'.

The second and third proposals would enable women to travel abroad to obtain an abortion, and legalise dissemination of information on services lawfully elsewhere in the EC. These should be supported.

For information about Poland fax (in English) 48 71 51 20 07.

In Ireland, contact Repeal the Eighth Amendment, PO Box 3441, Dublin 8 or the Women's Coalition, PO Box 3514, Dublin 1. Tel: (for both) 353 1 746113.

GATT Triad gangs on verge of war

THE US decision to impose tariff sanctions on European goods has panicked EC capitalist governments.

But it was the absolutely foreseeable outcome of worsening relations between the three main trading blocs – the US-dominated American zone, Western Europe and the Japanese-dominated Asian zone (the so-called 'Triad').

Two factors lie behind the current conflict: world economic recession and the long decline of the US as the major economic and military power. As recession deepens and trade and markets decline, the US is engaged in a furious campaign to reassert its domination.

It is no surprise that the conflict has broken out over agriculture. The US and Europe are the two dominant agricultural areas (Japan only produces one tenth of its own food needs); and food exports impart enormous *political* clout to the power which controls the markets.

American talk of a 'level playing field' is nonsense. The fact is that the EC wishes to subsidise its farmers, whereas the United States does not. This in turn reflects the continued existence of a substantial rural farming population, especially in France, Italy and Germany. The domination of large-scale agribusiness, while growing, is less developed than in the US.

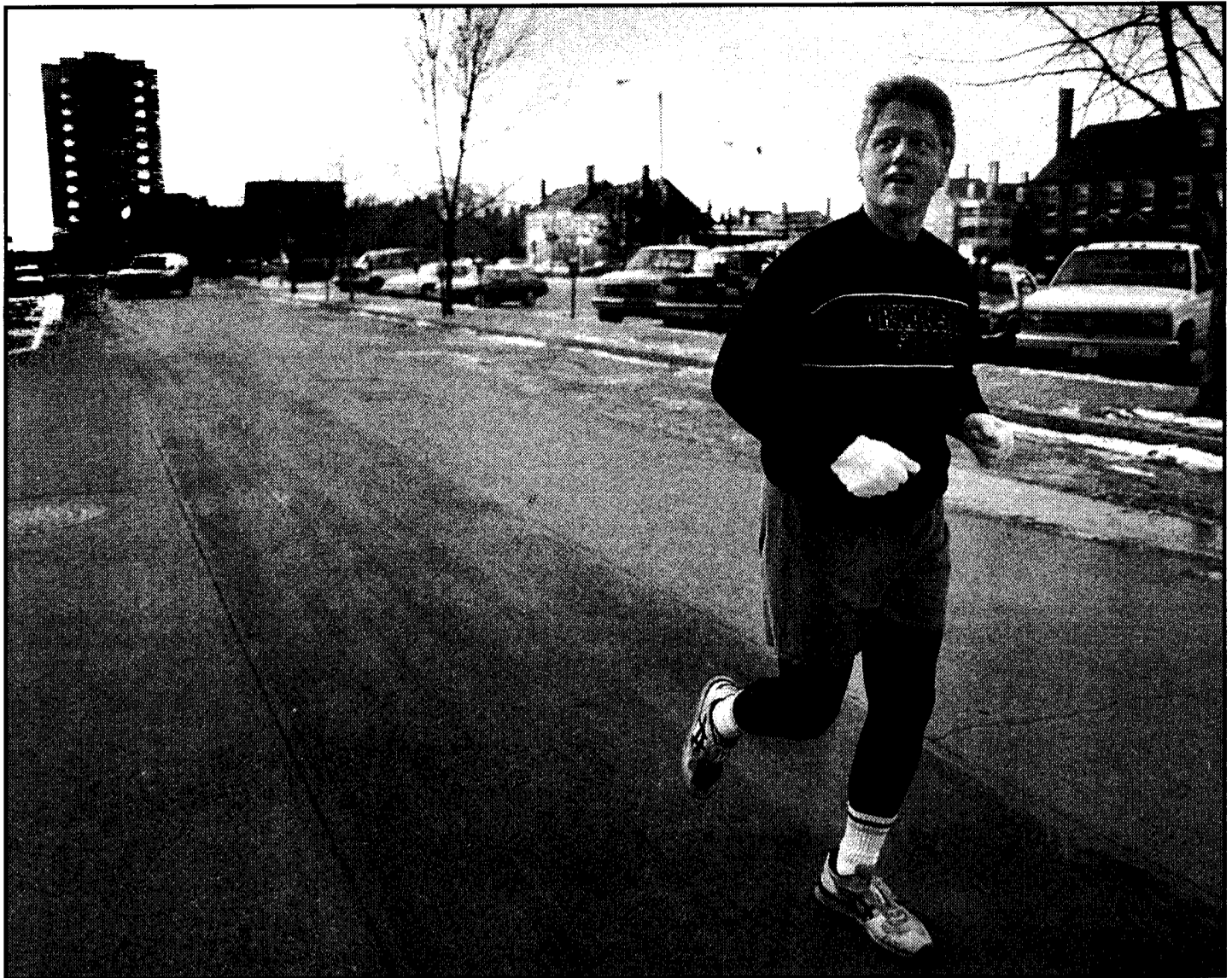
The real scandal over agriculture is not this or that subsidy regime but the fact that both sides produce vast amounts of food which the hundreds of millions of starving people worldwide are too poor to buy. This is literally a crisis of overproduction of commodities; but if the poor had the buying power, there would be no 'overproduction' at all.

Trade between the three major blocs is today heavily managed by negotiated quotas and tariffs; 'free trade' is a myth. This again reflects the irrationality of modern capitalism; the lack of buying power can't sustain the productive potential of modern industry. As a result who can sell where has to be heavily regulated.

The row over farming subsidies is just the first incident in what is bound to be escalating conflict. Two factors will accelerate this process. First, the decline of US economic dominance is so great, that the US faces a major tactical choice; either to fight now with every weapon available, or to risk a situation in 10 or 15 years time when it is too late.

Second, the collapse of the USSR removes the necessity to moderate inter-imperialist conflicts in the name of fighting a common enemy.

Since the Reagan years the Americans have shown clearly they intend to use every ounce of their military and political might to impose their dominance. But a deepening of economic conflict would destabilise the whole system of international capitalist alliances since 1945. This is the kind of thing people go to war over.



Running from reality of US economic crisis – Clinton

Clinton is no Roosevelt No New Deal for US workers

By Louis Johnson

STEVE BELL'S cartoon characters, lying among the rubbish-strewn filth of cardboard city in the downtown area of any US city, had a perfect analysis of the result (*Guardian* 4 November): the bourgeoisie won again.

Given that the US workers have not conquered class independence and created their own labour party, the victory of the bourgeoisie was not exactly difficult to predict.

Every principled socialist in the US rejects any support for the Democratic Party, which is like the Republicans a party of big business led by multi-millionaires. Indeed the view that the two big US parties are basically *factions* of one party is not far off the mark.

Simplistic

But there are good reasons for thinking that it is simplistic to say that Bill Clinton's victory will make 'no difference'.

In the first place, the defeat of George Bush was a defeat of some of the most sinister right-wing forces in US politics.

This year's Republican convention was a showpiece for the 'moral majority', 'family values', anti-abortion extreme right wing. It is clear that the abortion issue rebounded on Bush; and it is likely that the

Supreme Court will not now have the power to permit further state anti-abortion laws.

But the main reason for Bush's defeat was of course the economy. More than anything, Clinton's pledge to 'get America moving' won him the election. But can Clinton deliver?

Excesses

There will be some tax increases for the super, super rich. Probably there will be some attempt to alleviate the worst horrific excesses of the health insurance nightmare, where by tens of millions of Americans have to pay out thousands of dollars if they get sick and 40 million have no medical insurance cover at all. Defence spending will be cut back, and troop withdrawals from overseas speeded up.

But these things are playing around on the margins of the American crisis. To do anything to help the tens of millions of unemployed, homeless and poverty-stricken a huge economic turn away from neo-liberal economics towards reflation would have to be taken; and Clinton will not do that.

He will not do it because US big business, which he represents, is overwhelmingly against such a project.

They are against it for class reasons; the resources for boosting state welfare and



Not much to laugh about now for Bush – or US workers

regenerating industry could only come from big taxes on the rich. The only alternative would be massive borrowing, which would collapse the US economy into a new and horrific debt crisis.

Continuity

In the wake of his election Clinton immediately announced continuity of US foreign policy. If anything, he will be tougher in pursuing an 'America first' position, which means economic war with Japan and Europe could be stepped up.

Clinton and running-mate Al Gore made much of the fact that they were on the *right wing* of the Democratic Party, and were moving into the 'mainstream' of US politics.

Since by any British standards the Democrats have always been a right-wing party, this shows the scope of what they were doing. Given the unpopularity of Bush, they felt no need to make significant welfare promises, and felt no need

to make a gesture towards black voters by bringing a very willing Jesse Jackson into the campaign.

Much of urban America is dying on its feet. The US dream of the 1950s and '60s has turned into a nightmare of collapsing industries, big city squalor and grinding poverty. More than anything, the vote for Clinton reflected a thirst for change.

Clinton and Gore will attempt a first 100 days of dramatic announcements and important-sounding legislation. But in the end nothing fundamental will change.

US politics are stuck in a log-jam because throughout this century America's rulers have, through extreme violence and repression, succeeded in defeating labour upsurges and channelling trade union aspirations into the Democratic Party.

American workers are about to get another demonstration of the fact that for labour to take giant steps forward, an independent party of the working class needs to be built.

Tube strike against jobs axe likely

by John Schofield

London Underground workers now seem almost certain to take industrial action against the management's 'Company Plan' proposals to axe 6,000 jobs and impose new contracts of employment.

The result of a ballot of RMT transport union members was due on Tuesday as *Socialist Outlook* went to press, with a heavy yes vote anticipated.

Drivers' union ASLEF has already rejected the principle

of the Company Plan after a membership referendum and is now expected to hold a second ballot, this time over industrial action.

The continuing series of crises facing the Conservative government and the massive turnout on recent demonstrations in support of the miners have played a significant role in boosting rank and file confidence.

Anger has also been stoked by another round of savage cutbacks for London's rapidly deteriorating tube system, announced in chancellor Norman

Lamont's Autumn Statement last week.

While the Jubilee Line extension to Docklands may get the go-ahead if the private sector stumps up £400 million towards the project, desperately-needed moves to modernise the Northern Line and lengthen the East London line have now been nixed.

Taking action now - and linking up with the many other groups of public sector workers facing mass sackings - could result in a bloody nose for both the tube bosses and the Tories.



Will the Circle be unbroken?

Crunch for NALGO strike

By Doug Thorpe
Islington NALGO

The long-running Islington council NALGO dispute is at an important turning point as *Socialist Outlook* goes to press.

The Labour-controlled local authority has issued sacking threats to 700 strikers; so far only about 40 have buckled under this massive pressure and returned to work.

The council is likely to carry through its mass dismissal threats on Tuesday November 17 if a last ditch settlement is not reached at negotiations scheduled for the previous evening.

Daily negotiations have taken place for the last week, but the employers are unwilling to meet the basic demand of an alternative job offer for every worker whose post is cut.

The NALGO national executive



Departing: Hodge

has authorised escalation. Around 400 further members, in sectors including libraries, central support services and the architects' department, have been balloted on joining the strike. A yes vote was expected at the time of writing.

Despite the sackings threats, the authority has now publicly declared itself in favour of a negotiated settlement. While this change of heart is mainly down to the strength of the dispute, the departure of Kinnockite leader Margaret Hodge - chief author of the council's hardline stance - has also been a factor.

The election of her successor is now taking place, with anti-cuts candidate Liz Davies picking up a surprise level of support. While she is unlikely to win, her campaign is putting pressure on other candidates to make concessions.

Court rebuff to NUT right

By Keith Sinclair
President, Hull Trades Council

Suspended National Union of Teachers treasurer Ian Murch - a prominent left activist in the union - has been reinstated following successful legal action.

This is the second time in recent years leftwingers have won court cases against the NUT executive majority, and the victory represents another

significant setback for the right.

Ian was disciplined after commenting on union affairs on a Channel Four programme. The leadership set out to defeat a key political opponent by bureaucratic methods.

While many socialist teachers were rightly critical of the decision to go to court, the campaign for Ian's reinstatement missed several opportunities to involve activists in the fight for reinstatement.

College pay sellout

By a University NALGO member

Wage strikes in the new universities - the former polytechnics - have been sold out. Fearful of the government's public sector pay freeze, the national union leaderships collapsed in the face of employers' moves to impose local deals.

NALGO leaders accepted a 4.3 per cent pay award, while NATFHE agreed to only 3.9 per cent, despite national ballots for industrial action by members of both unions. The settlements are well behind equivalent groups in other sectors.

NATFHE collapsed only two days after a national strike.

Meanwhile, NALGO members are bitter at the leadership's failure to call a membership-approved national three day strike to coincide with the lecturers' action on 4 November; this was also a day of action by students and London local government NALGO members.

Reliance on local selective action proved a hopeless strategy in the face of the employers' determination. Despite the sell out, battles are likely to continue.

NATFHE members face performance related pay being imposed locally and all union members face continued pressure as student numbers continue to rise without extra resources.

Unity and a fighting leadership will be needed if the 1.5 per cent public sector pay limit is to be challenged.

Stop Ford job losses!

By Bill Sutcliffe

UNIONS AT Ford are set to ballot for industrial action after the company announced possible compulsory job losses for the first time in almost 30 years, and repeated demands for hefty pay cuts for workers on short time at three key plants.

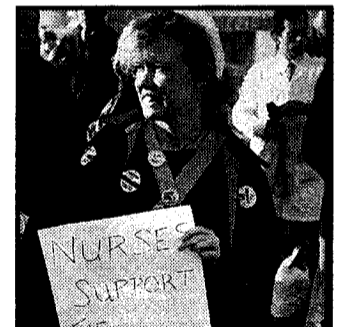
Talks broke down last week after bosses backtracked on Ford's long-standing voluntary redundancy only policy. Management are seeking 1,400 redundancies, despite union fears that this implies 300 outright sackings.

Ford - still Britain's biggest volume car manufacturer - has axed an average of 3,600 jobs a year since 1980. Some 2,100 redundancies were announced only last February.

The company is also seeking to reduce lay-off pay from 100 per cent of basic to 60 per cent from the new year for employees at Dagenham, Southampton and Halewood, who have been on short time since last August. Halewood - on slump-ravaged Merseyside - is to commence single shifts from November.

Ford is also negotiating transfer of seat production to Poland, and agreements on the ratio of engineering done in Britain rather than Germany have also been scrapped.

It is understood to be considering contracting out sub-assemblies,



Side by side in 1988 - and 1992?

janitorial and security.

Management blame the Tory slump. Personnel director John Hougham stated: 'We are prisoners of the economic climate. We believe the market is going to stay totally flat throughout the year and see little sign of an upturn before 1994.'

But Ford bosses have already received a personal undertaking from Jack Adams, deputy general secretary of the Transport and General Workers Union, that there will be no immediate strike whichever way the vote goes: 'We certainly won't walk our members into a major problem.'

Unfortunately, compulsory redundancies and massive wage reductions are 'major problems', whether Adams realises it or not.

Ford workers are now faced with the same jobs fight as miners, healthworkers, railway workers and local authority employees.

Activists have to work for a yes vote in the ballot and ensure that union leaders deliver on it.

300 Club

More fun than Sun bingo!

For just £5 a month you get the chance to win £50 in our monthly draw. We give better odds than the football pools and we're a more deserving cause than Littlewoods!

Yes, count me in!

My bank.....
 Bank address.....
 My full name.....
 My bank sorting code..... My account number.....
 My address.....
 Please pay to the Co-operative bank PLC 78/80 Cornhill, London EC3V 3NJ (sorting code 08-02-28) for the account of Socialist Outlook Supporters fund (account number 70186297) the sum of:..... (in words)..... (in figures)
 on the..... day of..... (month) 1992
 and thereafter every month until countermanded by me in writing.
 Signed..... Date.....

Please complete and return to Socialist Outlook, PO Box 1109, London N4 2UU.
 Do not send directly to your bank.



Getting the low down

Making the bosses whine

Workers at the occupied Forges de Clabecq steel plant in Belgium plan to sell off 7000 bottles of wine seized from the manager's cellars to boost their strike fund. The occupation is against a restructuring plan that includes a 10 per cent pay cut and the loss of 3000 jobs. A union rep said: 'We've got 7000 bottles and we're selling it for 200 francs (four pounds) a bottle. We're liquidating the stock.'

Brassed off

Meanwhile workers in the toolroom at Dagenham have been forced to spend more than 200 hours, some of it at overtime rates, making a brass port decanter for retiring chairman Lindsey Halford. Halford is responsible for making compulsory redundancies.

Let them eat mince pies

'Mr Kipling' company Manor Bakeries have scrapped their annual gift to company pensioners - a Christmas card and a sub-standard cake. The recession is cited as the reason. The cakes were badly-made ones rejected by stores. Union leaders are asking workers to make donations to ensure the pensioners get their cakes.

New Healyites?

What kind of organisation is the SWP becoming? Pretty obnoxious if the *Socialist Review* obituary for David Widgery is anything to go by. It can't resist recording that 'Dave always had an uneasy relationship with the party' because he 'only fitfully understood that without the humdrum work of organisation and routine, the world will be condemned...' etc etc. Gerry Healy would have loved it.

Watch your water

Anglian Water is to force four million customers to have water meters fitted in 1994; most other authorities will follow. For this privilege customers will have to fork out 200 quid - for the privilege of paying higher water charges.

So sad

Tory ex-Chancellor Nigel Lawson has sold his Leicestershire house The Old Rectory for a knockdown £239,000 - £100,000 less than the asking price, because of the slump in property prices. Well we all have to pay the price of the recession. Lawson can cheer himself up with £200,000 a year as a non-executive (ie very part time) director of Barclays Bank. He also got £250,000 for his memoirs.

Maxwell Bonkers

Robert Maxwell was a crook who ripped off his workers and pensioners. He was also off his trolley, according to a new book by the foreign editor of the *Daily Mirror* Nicholas Davies. At his wife's 70th birthday party he made a very long speech, without mentioning her once. Before allowing her to spend a few thousand pounds from his vast fortune on furniture, he insisted she agree to sell all her jewellery - in writing. He put locks on his kitchen to stop his daughter helping herself to food. And he sent a long detailed letter to one of his adult sons, containing headings like 'How to Make Friends Amongst Young and Old' and 'Observing the USA and Having Fun'.

National Government

A BBC2 poll has found strong support for a national government with John Smith as leader, Prince Charles as minister of the environment and Richard Branson as president of the board of trade. God help us.

Eye Injuries

A staggering 300,000 working days were lost last year because of eye injuries, according to Health and Safety Executive. The most common injury was a burn, generally caused by welding or cutting without proper eye protection. As for most kinds of injuries, the industry which suffered worst was construction.

Lobby parliament December 10 Two months to save London's hospitals!

By Harry Sloan
WILL London's left support the miners but stand by as their own local hospitals close down?

The evidence of the past two weeks suggests this could well be the case - but it is not too late to change.

The labour movement left has mobilised to produce a rapid growth of miners support groups,

but done little or nothing to campaign against the threatened closure of ten London hospitals. Miners' leaders have been as puzzled by this as health campaigners.

However the absence of conscious left-wingers has fortunately not prevented many other individuals and organisations from taking up the fight, with active local campaigns now developing around Bart's, Charing Cross and St Thomas's hospitals.

Around 200 campaigners including GPs, union activists, pensioners groups and others supported the London Health Emergency rally called for Camden Town Hall on November 10.

There the link between defending the NHS and defending the miners was strongly made by the presence on the platform of Yorkshire miners' leader Ken Capstick and of Jeremy Corbyn MP who is secretary of the National Miners Support Network.

London's HOSPITALS

London's LIFELINE!

The next London-wide focus is a Lobby of Parliament, called by London COHSE for Thursday December 10 and now supported by SE Region TUC. The date offers a target for local groups of health workers and campaigners wishing to build for action.

Publicity leaflets for the lobby are available from the Londoners Need London's Hospitals hotline 081-543-5914.

300 back anti-racist conference

Pete McDonald and Jeff Lowe.

Over 300 people - nearly half of them Black - attended the Anti-Racist Alliance "Community Action, Legal Remedies" conference on 14th November. The conference

took place in Greenwich, an area in which racist attacks - including murders - have been increasing.

Amongst a large number of speakers in the morning session the most moving contribution came from Clara Buckley. Clara is the mother of Orville Blackwood, who was killed in Broadmoor

hospital after being given 2 injections simultaneously.

Normally these injections should be administered 2 weeks apart! Orville was forcibly taken to a seclusion room and injected for exercising his legal right not to attend occupational therapy.

Clara is also the grand-mother of Rolan Adams, a 15 year old murdered by white racists in nearby Thamesmead. Her personal tragedies graphically illustrate the links between institutionalised state racism and the activities of racist thugs on the streets.

There was little opportunity for discussion in the morning session so most debate took place in the afternoon work-shops.

The role of the police force was attacked in the "Police and Racist Attacks" workshop. The panel introduced with the comment that the title may seem strange to delegates when the single biggest perpetrator of racist attacks is the police.

The meeting agreed that self-

defence is the key question and most people thought there was no possibility of reforming the police.

The role of the police was again raised by a speaker from Germany in the "Racism and Europe" session. He pointed to the collusion between the police, government, employers and neo-nazis in carrying out attacks.

Conference organiser Benny Bunsee argued that "if the ARA is going to grow it must base itself upon community actions; otherwise it will become a bureaucratic institution".

We totally agree with this. It can only be achieved, however, through involving organisations that already have a track-record of building local campaigns with the capability of taking on a national profile.

Any initiative around racist attacks must include organisations such as Southall Monitoring Group, Newham Monitoring Project and the Manchester Memorial Committee.



Behind the Asylum Bill Fortress Europe hammers refugees

THE TORIES' Asylum Bill is a major attack on immigrants and asylum seekers. But, argues Paul Clarke, behind the Asylum Bill is a move by all EC governments to hit refugees.

Moves by Home Secretary Kenneth Clarke to exclude Bosnian refugees by ludicrous visa requirements are an early application of a policy being adopted throughout the EC.

Preparations for the EC Summit in Edinburgh include wide-reaching changes in European policy on asylum. These have been prepared in great secrecy, but leaks show what is going on.

Draft documents have been prepared by the Ad Hoc Group on Immigration, which includes Interior and Justice Ministers from the 12 EC states.

This body meets in secret and is not accountable to any EC body. Its proposals will be adopted by inter-governmental treaty; amendments by national parliaments are effectively impossible.

The most recent leaked draft resolution proposes grounds for

categorising asylum applications as 'manifestly unfounded'.

People 'who fear violations of their civil rights should if possible remain in their own countries, and seek protection from their own authorities'. This is absurd: how is anyone going to 'seek protection' from their own authorities if they are escaping an authoritarian and oppressive regime?

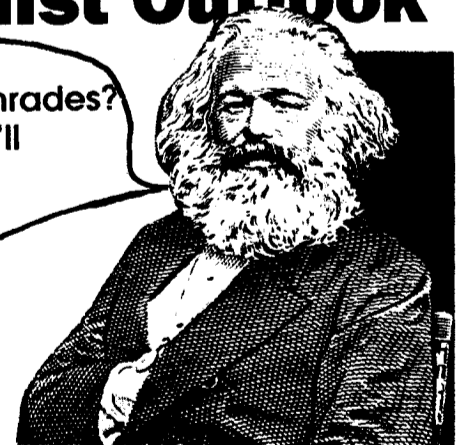
A very sinister statement is that 'intercontinental movements of asylum seekers are seldom necessary for protective reasons'. In other words - people from the third world keep out! The 'own continent' provision is an entirely new concept in dealing with refugees and asylum seekers.

The latest draft criteria drop an earlier suggestion that a list be drawn up of countries that are considered permanently 'safe'. But it suggests there that the possibility of drawing up such criteria for assessing asylum claims remains valid.

Over 80 per cent of the world's refugees live in poor countries. Fortress Europe is preparing to ensure that this percentage only goes up.

Subscribe to Socialist Outlook

Only £15, comrades? Hang about, I'll just get my wallet.



Subscription Rates

- EC Europe (including Britain):
- 1 year's subscription (24 issues): £15
- Six months' subscription (12 issues): £8
- Non-EC Europe: 1 year £20 Six months £11
- Rest of the World: 1 year £24 Six months £13

I include a donation of £ _____

Name _____

Address _____

Send to Socialist Outlook, PO Box 1109, London N4 2UU

Published fortnightly

50p

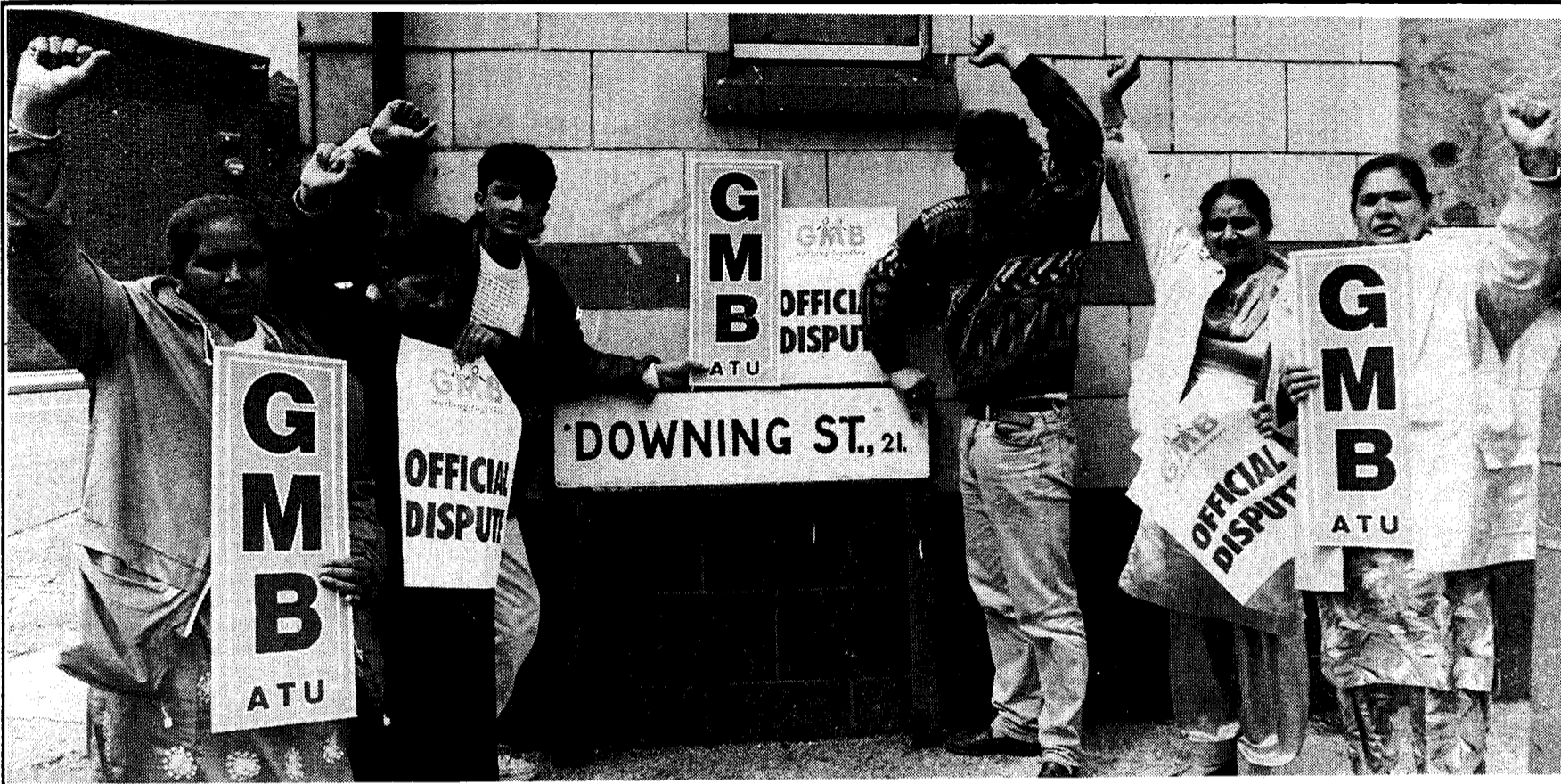
Solidarity price £1

Strikers and
claimants 25p

No 32

21 November, 1992

socialist OUTLOOK



Mark Salmon

Victory to Burnsall strikers!

Demonstrate!

November 28

*Assemble 10.30am Fenton Street, off High Street
Smethwick*

Called by the GMB

*Donations to and
further details from:*

*Burnsall Strike Fund, GMB,
Will Thorn House, 2
Birmingham Road,
Halesowen, B63 3HP*