



Socialist ACTION

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Stand by the miners

THE NATIONAL Coal Board and the Tory government are sitting tight waiting for the magic 50 per cent of miners to return to work. But after 11 bitter months the majority of miners are still out on strike.

In the militant strongholds of South Wales, Kent and South Yorkshire the return to work is still only between 1 and 10 per cent. Very little coal is actually being produced in these areas as few of those returning are face workers. The miners will not accept unconditional surrender terms.

They are not prepared to sign a blank cheque on pit closures. They are not prepared to abandon 600 miners victimised during the strike. They are correct to maintain the struggle. Despite the stabs in the back being delivered daily by the Labour leadership, they recognise that there is more to be gained by maintaining the struggle than by accepting the NCB's current terms.

Their courage has been an inspiration to the whole movement for the past 11 months. It is even more so now.

The Tories are determined to smash the NUM to prepare the way for more attacks on the working class. As Arthur Scargill put it, 'they are coming for the NUM today, but they will be coming for you tomorrow.'

Now is the time to rally round the miners as never before, and to show that the labour movement is with the miners all the way.

A massive display of solidarity with the NUM is the best answer the movement can give to the Tories. In London schools, town halls, print-workers, transport workers are among those planning action. There will be mass pickets of power stations in the South East, the North West and Yorkshire and elsewhere.

The action on 11 February should be used to revitalise the campaign in support of the miners. The message must be loud and clear: we stand with the miners all the way!

ALL OUT 11 FEBRUARY!

Socialist ACTION

'Scargillise' the labour movement

THE CLASS struggle is seldom illuminated by the goings on in the House of Commons. Last Monday's debate on the miners' strike was therefore an exception to the general rule.

For the government, Peter Walker insisted that the closure of uneconomic pits must be 'number one item on the agenda' before there can be agreement to resume substantive negotiations between the NUM and the NCB.

For the Labour Party, Neil Kinnock and Stan Orme begged the government to accept that the NUM's offer of negotiations without preconditions was a formula which covered the closure of uneconomic pits. The whole thrust of the Labour Party's front bench was to plead for peace around a 'reasonable' formula for closing uneconomic pits — a position which was quite clearly intended to distance the front bench from Arthur Scargill.

The Tories seized on this to quote Kinnock's statement that 'commercial considerations must be included in deciding on pit closures.' They were also quick to play off the TUC against the NUM.

In fact, the real debate was between the Tories and 'Scargillism'. Only the Labour left offered any serious opposition to the government's attempts to smash the NUM.

The Tories concentrated their attacks on Arthur Scargill, while Kinnock and Orme carefully avoided the issue. Tony Benn defended the NUM leadership. He pointed out that the only way to end the strike quickly was to 'follow the lead of the NUR, ASLEF and the NUS by providing industrial support and further political action.'

The issue was not uneconomic pits, but the fact that the government had starved viable pits of investment, so that money could be put into high-productivity mines 'with the intention of selling them off'.

The real line of divide in the debate was not between the government and the opposition, but between those who support the miners and those who capitulate before the Tories.

The direction that Kinnock et al have decided on was reinforced at the weekend, with their explicit rejection of 'illegality' in the local government fight. This will continue to be the divide on every major question in the class struggle.

The positions of Kinnock and the right on these questions are not even capable of standing up to the Tories in the House of Commons, let alone in struggles such as the miners' or defence of local government.

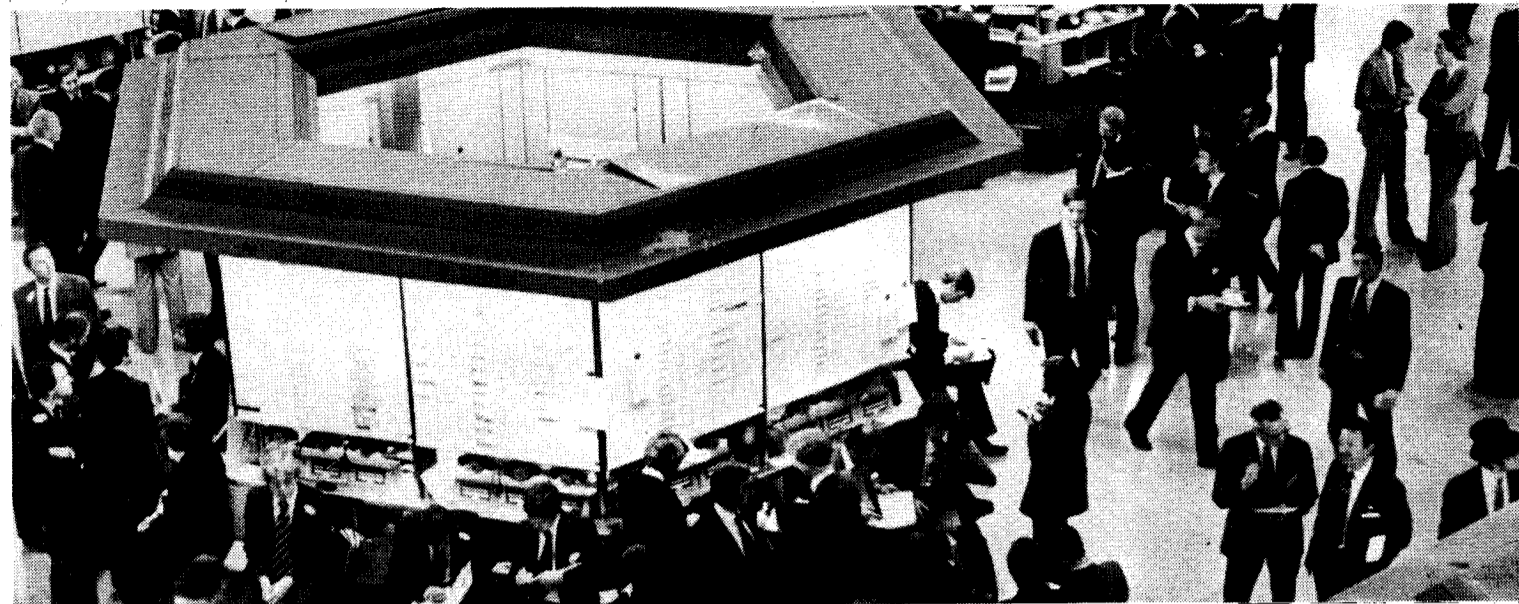
The left has the responsibility, in the next period, of fighting for the leadership of the whole labour movement, against those who have betrayed the miners and will betray any other major struggle that emerges — and there will be many of them.

There can be no truce with Kinnock and those who have failed to support the miners, because they will also fail in every other struggle. They must be called to account in every section of the movement.

The task for the left will be to take the class struggle methods which have been followed in the miners' strike, and which will be necessary in the defence of local government into the labour movement itself. The fight to remove Labour's misleaders must be pursued as vigorously as the fight against the Tories every section of the movement needs the kind of leadership that the miners have had in the last 11 months.

The parliamentary debate proved yet again that those Labour leaders who do not stand with the class struggle stand against it. They are an obstacle which must be removed.

Editor: ALAN FREEMAN
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The British stock exchange

Photo: CHRIS DAVIES (Report)

Why Thatcher's economic policies aren't working

AS THE LEVEL of mass unemployment resumes its upward trend under Thatcher's regime of savage deflation, the last fortnight has witnessed a rise in interest rates to their highest levels, in real terms, for at least 150 years. At the same time the pound has plummeted and forced the government to mount a technical U-turn, by intervening in the foreign exchange markets. Are Thatcher's economic policies falling apart?

The mood on the 'serious' side of Fleet Street is suggesting that they have, but a more fundamental class analysis shows that her policies have had a mixed showing so far, and may yet be successful.

To understand what has been happening one must reject the rhetoric of the Tories' ideology and go behind the technical economic jargon. The policies were originally posed as aiming to reduce inflation, and this objective seems to have been achieved, as it has now dropped below five per cent.

Yet inflation as such was never the fundamental problem for capitalism. It is quite possible for capitalists to continue to make profits when prices are rising. Rather, the anti-inflation rhetoric was a smokescreen for a massive contraction of the economy designed to weaken the working class.

Similarly the 'technical' objectives of

controlling the money supply and the PSBR (Public Sector Borrowing Requirement) are incidental to the Tories' real agenda.

By Francis Green

For example, it has been shown conclusively and several times over by bourgeois economists that it is quite irrational even from their point of view, to try to target a given level of the PSBR. Yet it does help in the ideological presentation of strategy, by providing a mysterious cloak for their deflationary objectives.

The method behind their apparent madness is to be found in the political philosophy of Margaret Thatcher's guru, the economist FA Hayek, who is concerned not with monetarism or any other technical 'ism' but with the twin long-term aims of dismantling the welfare state and removing the power of unions. Her real

objective has been to restore the conditions for profitable accumulation.

The task however was never going to be easy. Unlike President Reagan who set off on a similar road in 1981, Thatcher had to contend in the early days with massive political opposition, and in particular with a labour force which was already half unionised.

In the US, unionisation was steadily decreasing in the 1970s and it did not take long for Reagan to deliver a substantial blow through his defeat of the air traffic controllers. It was not until 1982 that Thatcher seriously began her assault, bolstered by the enormously divisive impact of unemployment.

There is little evidence of any success (on her terms) so far. Profit rates plummeted initially in the wake of her artificially created recession. By the beginning of 1984 they had recovered only to about six per cent, the same as they were in 1979, far less than the returns capitalists could obtain in other countries.

Productivity, after dropping initially, rose sharply from 1981 to 1983, an achievement which has been hailed as a

'breakthrough' for British capitalism. Yet much of that was due to cyclical factors and the once-and-for-all effect of kicking out backward capitalists. This rise was unlikely to be repeated, and indeed productivity levelled off in 1984.

Meanwhile, despite the extraordinary economic repressions of the unemployed, she has not yet succeeded in making widespread cuts in the real wages of those still working.

Her problem is that she cannot afford to let up on unemployment if she is to continue her offensive after the miners' strike is over. Yet the massive deflation of the last few years is destroying the British economy. Major public infrastructural investments have been postponed to meet the demand for cuts; yet what is to happen when in the future the sewers start collapsing?

Private investment remains low. Small businesses have been destroyed in their thousands. The skills of the workforce have been squandered and are not being replaced. In the long term, Mrs Thatcher could

succeed in restoring profitable accumulation in Britain. But the capitalists who benefit will be the multinational corporations, who will treat the British economy as one among many backwaters in their global empires.

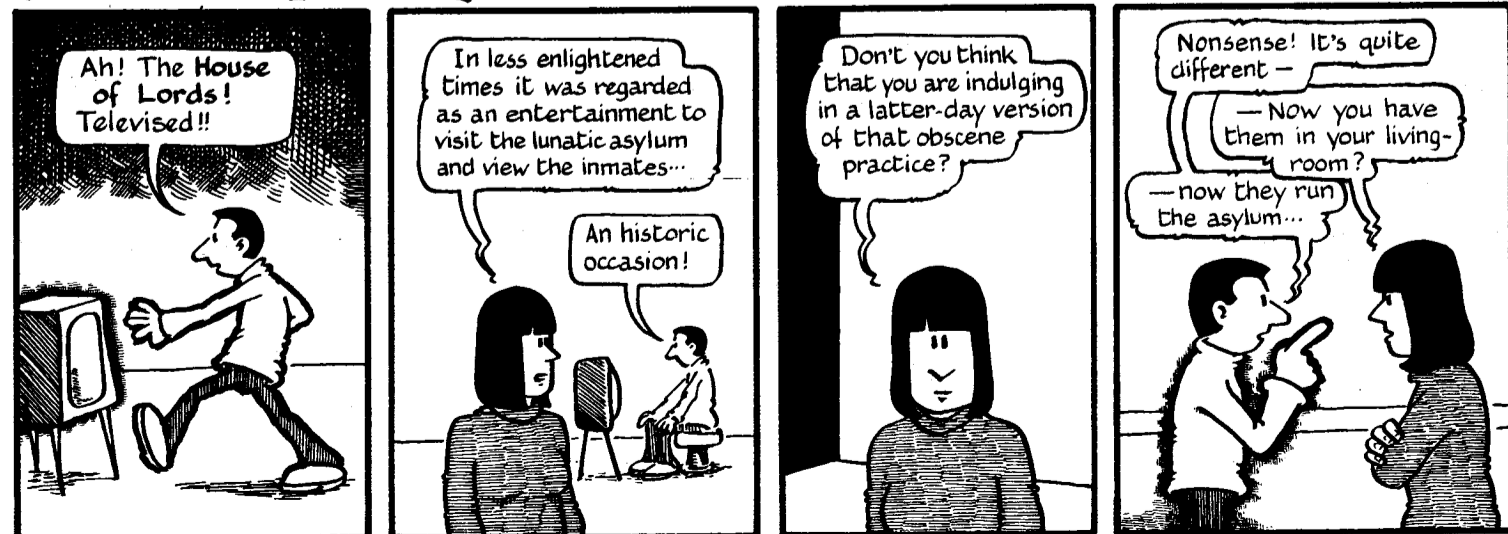
More immediately, she has to deal with the present contradictions of her strategy. She has already destroyed large chunks of the economy, which, now weakened, seems a bad bet for international capital despite Britain being the fifth largest oil producer in the world.

It is hard to see where a recovery could come from. The beleaguered economy is therefore disproportionately threatened by the unstable world oil market and the strong dollar. If, as some analysts predict, the oil price collapsed to under \$20 by the middle of this year, the situation could become critical.

Mrs Thatcher is still pruning the tree of British capitalism down to a few short branches. Some of her allies in the British upper classes may hope that the frost will not weaken it further. But multinational capital will be merely inconvenienced if this occurs, for they have other soil to grow upon.

A PIECE of the ACTION

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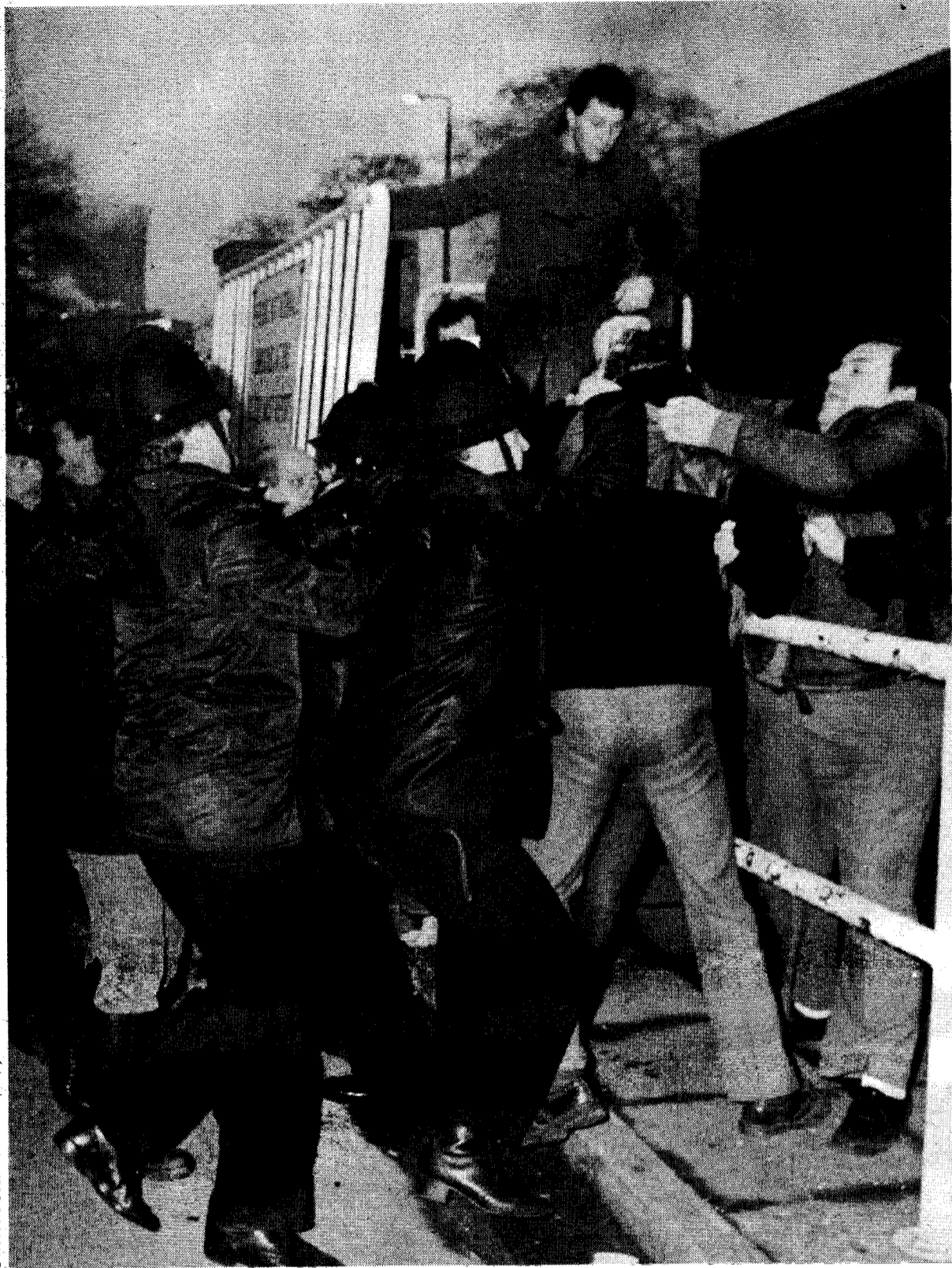


Photo: JOHN SMITH (JFL)

Picket at Agecroft

'Cat and mouse' game fails

THE HOPES OF the Tories and the NCB that the miners could be starved back on total surrender terms have been dashed by the bitter determination of the striking miners, and the clear stand on the NUM executive. While the media will claim that the back to work movement is turning into a flood, the fact is that the return on Monday and Tuesday was well short of the NCB's hopes.

Last weekend Michael Eaton was predicting 5000 new faces on Monday. In the event less than 2000 turned up. In Yorkshire, where the board had hoped for a major breach under 500 returned — less than 10 per pit.

The overwhelming majority of those who have been on strike since 6 March are still out. To make the board's problems worse, the majority of those returning are not the face workers, who continue to be the solid core of the dispute. As a result, very little more coal is being produced. The NCB has pursued a tactic of blowing hot and cold with the NUM in order to confuse and demoralise the miners.

By Pat Hickey

In January, for example, MacGregor stated that a simple verbal agreement to discuss the question of uneconomic pits would suffice. Later this was changed to demands for written commitment to accept closure of uneconomic pits. Alongside that, the NCB was declaring that there

would be no possibility of reinstating the 600 miners sacked during the dispute.

Sacked

After the meeting between Ned Smith and Peter Heathfield the NUM executive was ready to agree an agenda for talks. But the government stepped into head off the possibility of talks. Again, last week after talks between Heathfield and Merrick Spanton (board member for personnel) talks seemed again possible. But by Friday the NCB had issued a letter demanding that the NUM accept in advance, a pit closure procedure.

The board's cat and mouse game has not produced the results that they wanted. In fact, the normally right wing power group has called on its members to rejoin the

strike, while the pit deputies union, NACODS, believes that the board is reneging on the agreement reached last October. The demand that the board is making on the NUM is that it accepts the board's definition of uneconomic — something that NACODS has not agreed to.

The response in the coal fields is a flat refusal by the overwhelming majority of strikers to give the board a blank cheque. The strikers are also determined to stand by their victimised colleagues. In addition, there are a large number of miners whose cases have yet to be considered and who would face disciplinary action on a return to work.

Response

In the Doncaster area about 160 miners have cases suspended at present. Despite the efforts of the Tories, the media and many in the labour movement to advise the miners that the strike is over and the union must accept unconditional surrender, it is clear that there is still much to be gained by continuing the struggle, and forcing the Tories to back off from their attempts to humiliate the NUM. For the rest of the movement the task is still solidarity with the miners.

Campaign group begins to organise

NEIL KINNOCK has provoked a lot of anger in the Labour Party throughout the miners' strike.

He has thrown his lot in with the right-wing at nearly every crucial stage.

The Campaign Group of MPs, fresh from their triumphs of disrupting Parliament and forcing a debate on the strike, are now discussing how the anger of the ranks in the Party can be built into a constructive opposition to that right-wing drift.

Neil's recent piece of sound advice to the NUM, that commercial considerations should be taken into account in the closure of pits, is the latest in a long line of attacks on the Scargill leadership of the NUM.

Whether it was for the ballot, against violence on the picket lines, against the general strike at each point he aided the campaign of the ruling class to isolate the miners.

Now he is singing a different verse of the same song in the battle to save the cities.

Last weekend in Birmingham, at the Local Government conference, he avoided backing the stance of the non-compliance of the threatened authorities.

'Public dramas' and 'exciting excursions' were not what was required he said urging councils to stay in power at all costs. 'Bet-

ter a dented shield than no shield at all'.

These statements have to be looked at in close association with the policy retreats that Neil's team are trickling into Labour Party policy.

By Valerie Coultas

They didn't get away with overturning reselection at the last party conference but you can be sure they'll have another try at the next.

And they have been successful in watering down Labour's commitment to withdraw from the EEC, to seriously cut defence spending, to return to full employment.

All this has been achieved in the name of increasing Labour's popularity, winning the next general election.

Yet as many a rank and file party member knows

Labour was higher in the opinion polls in the summer than it is today.

A very large number of constituencies' members just do not believe that the stance of the Party leadership in this strike has been correct.

Indeed the overwhelming feeling at the Labour Party conference last year went in the opposite direction.

The Labour Party ranks were behind the miners heart and soul. They wanted the leadership to be there with them.

Neil may be pleasing the press but he's not pleasing his members. As the regional conference season of the Labour Party begins in March the rank and file will once again have a forum to express their views on his

performance.

The Campaign Group of MPs, which has made no secret of its close association and support for the leadership of the NUM, is organising meetings at every regional conference jointly with the Campaign for Labour Party Democracy and *Labour Briefing*.

If these meetings create the kind of alliance that we

saw come to fruition at Labour party conference — between the Labour left, miners, the rate-capped authorities, women, blacks, lesbians and gays and the nationalist minority in the North of Ireland — they will certainly eclipse *Tribune* meetings.

Indeed both at a Parliamentary and at a grass roots level *Tribune's* decision to distance itself

from criticising the Kinnock leadership throughout this strike has meant that it is losing any credibility as a left force.

The Campaign Group wants to strengthen its links with the rank and file of the Labour Party by encouraging more contact between MPs, Councillors and activists through forming local groups and by the possible production of a Parliamentary newsheet that would inform CLP activists of the work of the Party in Parliament.

The motive behind such organisation is clear — the left of the Party is not going to allow the political victories of the last five years to be overturned without a fight.

The ranks of the Labour Party, with a whole new influx of miners and women from the mining communities want a Labour government that will implement different policies than the Tories and the SDP, not the same dressed up in different clothes.

Steps by the Campaign Group to organise their support if followed through will be greeted with enthusiasm in the Party at this time.



Photo: JOHN HARRIS

Kinnock

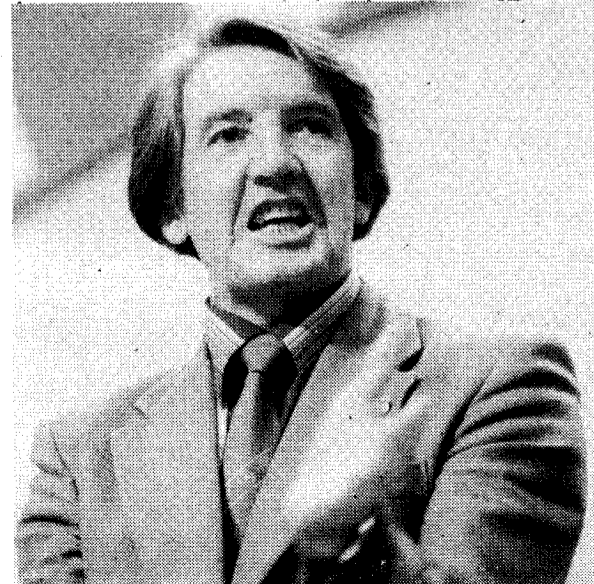


Photo: JOHN HARRIS

Skinner

Doncaster says

STAND FIRM

Interview with Dave Douglass

DAVE DOUGLASS is the NUM delegate from Hatfield Main, and is a member of the Yorkshire NUM executive. In this crucial week for the miners' strike he has been busy on the picket line arguing for continuation of the solidarity action.

GRAHAM TOPLEY spoke to him for Socialist Action about the current state of the strike.

What do you think about the current negotiations and the attitude of the NUM leadership?

Firstly, I think that the leadership is responding to strong pressure from below, in its talks with the NCB. For example there were two resolutions from the Yorkshire area council of the NUM, from Cortonwood and Hatfield Main which clearly called for talks without preconditions.

There was a strong feeling about this from the membership. So it's actually been the Yorkshire position that has been conveyed to the NEC and has become the NUM's position in any negotiations.

There was also a call from Northumberland delegates for an expanded executive, so that there was greater participation by the membership in the negotiations. More people should have a say in what the Executive does and says.

The same Northumberland delegates two weeks earlier were arguing for a

general strike to win the dispute.

What about the position of the hundreds of miners who've been arrested and then sacked?

Our attitude on that is there can be absolutely no compromise on their reinstatement. We demand that as central to the negotiations. It's actually 700 miners now.

The collusion between the police and NCB is incredible. The NCB point out individuals on picket lines and tell the police who immediately go and arrest the targeted people.

We've got two miners from Asken pit who've been charged with breach of the peace — the most minor offence — who've been sacked and people at Edlington who were found not guilty but have still been sacked.

Eaton, for the NCB, has made it clear in public that they won't compromise on this so it will be a big fight because we won't give in either.

What do you think are the

next steps for militants to take in the strike?

Those people who are going back now are making the situation much worse than before. They're taking away any chance of those who've been sacked being re-employed after the strike.

Secondly the role of NACODS will become more important again over the coming week. They're against the closure of pits on uneconomic grounds the same as the NUM, except they call for outside arbitrators to decide and that each case should be taken on its merits.

If they join up with the NUM on this it would make our position stronger.

What role do you see for the days of action and solidarity tasks?

The days of action on 11 and 24 February should be supported and built. In fact the solidarity action should be stepped up while the talks are going on.

But there's more that can be done. We don't need to wait for the leadership to call for action. People should be taking strike action themselves and walking off the job. The rank and file should take the strike into their own hands.

There are still big possibilities for the

sabotage of scab coal. We're still in a strong position in the strike.

Yes, but the solidarity action still has to be fought for and led by the leadership, it can't be substituted for by the rank and file. What about the disgraceful role of the LP/TU leadership for example?

Well, I think that this is an industrial dispute and hasn't got much to do with the Labour Party. It will be won by the miners and other people on the streets.

What about the role of the solidarity groups now in the strike?

The solidarity groups should be transformed into Councils of Action — that's their role now in the local areas — they have that potential.

We want thousands of people to join the picket lines as they did at Cortonwood this week.

We had a mass picket at Hatfield Main of about a thousand strong called by the Women's Support Group.

This is what we should be doing now. If the media gave as much attention to the strike from that point of view as they do to the balance of payments or the falling pound we'd be very pleased.

Left MPs fight right

THERE HAS been a change of mood in the Parliamentary Labour Party. The right has been pushed back a bit, shown by the fact that the Labour front bench agreed to a debate on the miners' dispute, and the fact they've put down a vote of censure against the government.

We had one debate in the House of Commons in July, and that was forced on the PLP because the NEC demanded such a debate. Apart from an adjournment debate, which gave MPs an opportunity to raise the miners' dispute in the early hours of the morning (again a back bench effort) that has been the *only* debate till now.

The left have been criticised because we demanded that parliament carry out its duties. If you want to look at it in a parliamentary sense, we were saying use parliament for what it's supposed to be used for, debating matters of grave importance to the country!

The running has been made by the back benches, by left wing members of the party. What was happening prior to that — the silence in the House — has been knocked back a bit.

That doesn't mean we have to drop our guard, but there's a unity in the party now precisely because of our actions.

A couple of months ago there was a feeling on the right that they ought to begin a campaign to root out the left. That has been pushed back. Whether it's temporary depends on us.

Party miners are questioning where their MPs stand on issues like the miners' strike. They are quite right. When the party has determined its policy at conference — particularly on fundamental struggles like the miners' — members have the right to ask their MPs where they stand. And, if they feel dissatisfied, they also have a right to reselect them. I've defended that

right and I intend to defend it now.



By Eric Heffer MP

Neil Kinnock has given a 'guarantee' that the next time (whether he meant next conference or the next round of reselections I don't know) that the whole situation would be changed: there would be one person one vote in the constituencies.

We all favour the extension of democracy but in the minds of some people clearly that's a way of trying to avoid the pressure of being reselected if they are un-

popular among the activists of the party.

The last NEC of the Labour Party decided to expel Brychan Davies from South Wales. It wasn't carried by a big majority; in fact the previous NEC reversed the position.

There is a minority, a quite powerful one, that would like to see an all-out attack on left-wingers throughout the country. This decision could be a green light for those constituencies dominated by the right to begin the process of weeding out *Militant* first, others at a later stage.

Originally the proposal to the NEC was that a committee should be established to look into *Militant* and others in the party and to draw up a statement on democratic socialism, I presume of such a kind *Militant* and others couldn't accept. That was changed by the NEC.

We did agree to establish a committee (which has good people on it) to look at the best way of projecting democratic socialism. This has to be based on the constitution and Clause 4.

If there's an attempt to use that for a witch-hunt it will be seriously resisted.

MINERWORKERS DEFENCE COMMITTEE

National Recall Delegate Conference

Sat Feb 9
Octagon Centre, Sheffield
11.00am - 5.30pm

SPONSORED BY: The National Union of Railwaymen, The National Union of Seamen and The Fire Brigades Union
SPEAKERS: Peter Heathfield, Tony Benn, Betty Heathfield, John Tocher, Phil Holt, Paul Whetton

Solidarity tasks

MWDC conference 9 February

FOUR national unions have now sponsored the Mineworkers Defence Committee conference on 9 February to be held at the Octagon Centre in Sheffield.

They are the National Union of Railwaymen, the National Union of Seamen, the Fire Brigades Union and the Baker's Union.

The attendance is likely to be smaller than the last conference in Camden Town Hall in December but it will hopefully be more representative of trade union support for the miners. Trade unions have been invited to send two delegates and other bodies one.

At its last meeting however the MWDC voted to allow *all* organisations attending to send two observers.

The conference is open to all members of the NUM and women from the pit communities.

Coming at a point where all the fury of the Tory government has been unleashed on the NUM because the NUM executive have refused to sign a statement that would endorse the closure of the pits that their

members have fought to keep open for 11 months, it is vital that the solidarity movement decides on concrete and practical initiatives that can help the miners win.

By Valerie Coultas

The first way in which this can be achieved is by backing the call that Arthur Scargill has made to step up mass picketing to show the Tories that their intransigence over talks will be met in full by a hardening of the pit communities and by rallying support from other trade unions.

Three workshops will take place after the opening rally, one on trade unions, one on the solidarity groups and one on Women Against Pit Closures.

The trade union group will discuss a model resolution to be taken to all organisations calling for stepping up industrial support and for the active implementation of TUC guidelines.

It's likely that a central part of the discussion here will be how to deal with the TUC leaders who have sat on their conference decisions and done nothing to fight for support for the miners.

The solidarity workshop will want to discuss stepping up the fundraising through appeals both in Britain and abroad but it will also have to concern itself with the mounting number of miners and women supporters who have been imprisoned during this dispute.

The vicious sentences they have received have little to do with the actual 'crimes' they have committed and rather more to do with the stakes in this struggle.

The Women's workshop can discuss the 9 March demonstration and

other initiatives that encourage the self-organisation of the mining communities.

In the final plenary session there will be an opportunity for floor discussion and many amendments have come forward to the statement agreed at the last conference.

The last issue of the general strike and turning the solidarity committee into 'councils of action' will undoubtedly be posed.

Action

While Socialist Action supporters will by then have worked flat out to make 11 February a day when as many workers as possible *do* take strike action in support of the miners we do not believe that the call for a General Strike can come from a body such as the MDWC.

The MDWC is not an alternative TUC. It is not strongly implanted in the unions. It is an alliance between the Labour left,

the solidarity movement and *sections* of the trade unions which can play a vital co-ordinating role in centralising support work for the miners.

In bodies of the trade union movement we can step up the campaign for industrial action around concrete focus like 11 February or around Coalville on 17 January and support for the LCDTU-called demonstration on 24 February.

But if the MWDC is to continue to be of use to the NUM it should not pass grandiose resolutions that it has no hope of delivering on next weekend in Sheffield.

Delegates credentials with the relevant material will be available on the door. £3 per delegate. Miners and pit women free. For creche ring 0742 24076 extn 215. More details are available from 127, George Lane, London SE13 or tel 01-981 3289.



Photo: B YOUNG

'Scargill's carried out his mandate'

KAY AND PHIL Sutcliffe live in Aylesham in Kent. They have both been working day and night since the miners' strike began for an NUM victory against pit closures.

Kay is a member of Aylesham Women Against Pit Closures. Phil works at a Snowdon pit and is a member of Kent NUM.

They were talking to Valerie Coultas about the state of the dispute on Thursday 31 January after an Aylesham Women's Support group meeting.

VC: What do you think of the NUM's attitude towards negotiations with the NCB at the present time?

KS: As far as Arthur Scargill is concerned he's always stuck to his principles. When he came to this village in 1981 in October he warned us about pit closures then.

What he has done throughout this dispute is stick to the 1983 conference policy that if any pit was threatened with closure there should be a national strike.

He's carried out what the delegates at that conference wanted. If he was willing to negotiate closure he would be giving up the principle behind the strike. Scargill is not the NUM. He's just carrying out our policies of opposition to pit closures.

The Tories are refusing to negotiate because they don't want to pay people redundancy money any more. They're refusing to talk to force the NUM to carry on the strike.

There are men that have been dismissed in this dispute even when they were not on NCB property.

There's been an argument between a scab and a working miner and the NCB's used it to dismiss the striker. At any other time that kind of argument would never affect a man's job.

VC: But why are the NCB refusing to talk? How do you think the NUM should deal with this?

PS: The coal board and the government are sitting back and waiting for the magic 50 per cent to return to work. But what you've got to realise is just who is returning to work right now.

It's mostly those workers who deal with supplementary material, pit top men. The younger miners have been the fighters in this dispute. They actually dig the coal.

The NCB are paying people not to produce coal but simply to try and break the strike.

You can't produce coal without the faceworkers. The strike will not be lost until these miners go back.

There have been scabs working in Kent since September but even though they've been paid full wages there have been so few miners underground they haven't been able to produce coal.

KS: The NCB up until last week seemed to be giving the impression that they would negotiate. But then

Michael Eaton went on television saying that they wouldn't talk unless the NUM signed a written statement saying that the strike is over.

It's ridiculous for the NCB to put his conditions on the negotiations.

VC: How do you see the next steps in the dispute?

KS: I don't think that the other trade unions have done enough in this dispute.

If the TUC were going to do anything constructive they should have started to campaign for solidarity at the end of last March.

PS: The NUM should have put more pressure on the rank and file in other trade unions to support us. We should have gone out and explained the case for action.

KS: They all know what is going on. But it's different when you ask other workers to take an active part.

PS: If you compare the situation to 1972 and 1974 it's interesting. I've been up picketing at Battersea power station in this strike and I was there in 1972.

Then they came out and told us not to bother picketing because coal would not be touched.

Now we've been there for 10 months and there's still a forest of oil tankers going through the picket line.

KS: I think the government has done their homework since those strikes 10 years ago.

They've worked on people. They've built up their police force. They've allowed people to buy council houses. They've given people no deposit terms on hire purchase. They've deliberately set up working people to get them into debt so they have ties and commitments.

PS: Yes and 10 years back there wasn't such a threat of unemployment hanging over people's heads.

KS: Some people in the trade unions have got an 'I'm alright' attitude and these right-wing trade union leaders, they play on this.

In my own union, which is a staff association, the men have just been given a 4½ per cent pay rise and the women have been given 3¼ per cent. This is what is happening because of this 'I'm alright' attitude. The employers are able to divide us up.

VC: But you have had support from the railway-workers, the dockers and the seamen.

KS: Yes and the railway-workers got rid of Weighell but they haven't really done as much as they could have, these left leaders.

PS: Yes we need to change some of these leaders. But new leaders will come out of this strike.

If the strike is lost it will set that process back. That's why it's so important for the miners to win.

The Daily Mirror and the right-wing are baying for Scargill's blood. They know what the lads have learnt in this strike. Some have learnt more in 11 months than in the rest of their entire lives.

VC: What about the Women Against Pit Closures movement. How do you see that going forward?

KS: Well I'd like to see more organisation on the ground. The women's



Kay Sutcliffe



Phil Sutcliffe

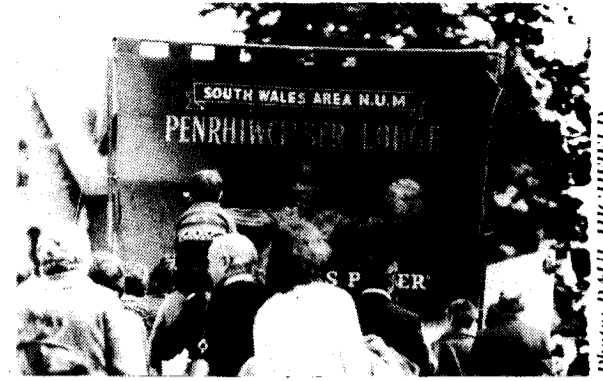


Photo: PAUL HUGHES

groups are very spread apart from each other.

The activists meet at the Women Against Pit Closures meetings but that leaves out the women who need to organise together most.

Mining communities have always had women's organisations. The basic structure was there before the strike started.

PS: There were women's groups but they were for darts matches, tupperware parties. They were an excuse for women to meet together but they weren't political.

But now women don't need an excuse to get together. Now these meetings are there because it's a political way of organising.

KS: There's much more motivation now. The first few weeks were crucial. We had to find a public way of expressing support. That's why we demonstrated in Coalville.

There's been a lot of women involved in the canteens as well and that's

a very vital part of this strike.

We're planning an anniversary demonstration in Coalville on 23 March — one year since we first had our demonstration.

PS: It's quite amazing really when you think how women have kept up their momentum in this strike. Women who weren't interested in politics have got involved.

Look at that meeting tonight. Even though it's partly for social reasons they know it's going to be a political meeting and they still keep coming.

KS: Yes we've got to work to organise these women in to the labour movement and the Labour Party.

We've got to get them to understand politics so that after this strike we are still organised.

We need to have more contact with other groups. We want education, political education so that we can learn from each other.



Photo: JOANNE O'BRIEN

Lesbians against pit closure

LONDON LESBIANS and Gays support the miners has been thriving now since July 1984.

After all its successes, including an excellently received delegation to a South Wales pit, £10,000 collected, a benefit with Bronski Beat raising over £5000 and a public message of support from the NUM at this year's Labour Party conference, this is a great achievement in itself.

However, as tends to be the case in the gay movement, the group has been totally male dominated since its inception.

Until October, the group, while amassing up to 100 male members, had only two lesbians in attendance. Later developments were a slight improvement with six new women!

However, four of these were hardened politicians from the CP and the SWP and the other two walked out in disgust! Clearly the meetings were not attracting the significant numbers of lesbians supporting and radicalising around the strike.

Out of this situation came a new and important development: Lesbians Against Pit Closures.

While this group started as a way of maintaining sanity for women in LGSM, it now involves a majority of lesbians who are not organised by LGSM.

Though the group is still tiny — 20/30 women, this represents at least 300 per cent increase in membership over five weeks and £300 has been raised so far.

By Polly Vittorini

The group is growing all the time and has just twinned with Rhodesia Women's Action Group in Nottinghamshire.

While maintaining friendly relations with LGSM, which continues to be a mixed group (just), we are also beginning to forge links with other groups like Greenham Women for a miners victory and the Mineworkers' Defence Committee women's group.

Although some baulked initially at the idea of an

autonomous lesbian group in the gay movement — self-organisation within self-organisation — the experience of the last few weeks alone is positive proof of the need for such a group and the opportunities it provides.

While lesbians have a common fight with the women's movement and the gay male movement, we also face oppression in both, which is why this autonomous lesbian group, like labour movement lesbians before it, represents such a positive step forward.

While there are miners who actively oppress lesbians and gays it's vital that we support the miners against the Tories, who pose the real threat to lesbian and gay liberation. LGSM has already shown that miners can be won to support lesbian and gay rights.

It is links like these that have been crucial in building support for the miners' strike so far. No to the oppression of lesbians and gay men. Victory to the NUM!

● Lesbians Against Pit Closures meets every Friday at 6.30pm in the Drill Hall, Chenies St, WC1.

Come to Penrhiceiber 16 February

By Nigel Bevan, Penrhiciber NUM

THE SOUTH WALES miners have been solid throughout the strike because we face a life on the dole if the strike is lost.

The few that have abandoned the strike — one per cent — have been miners who do not live in the tight-knit mining communities. The remaining 99 per cent have been with us all the way.

We have seen a tremendous rise in the political awareness of the people involved in this strike. They now look with disgust at our so-called TUC and Labour Party leaders who have done nothing to win the strike.

As a result a radical current is developing with a new outlook. Miners have experienced the birth of the Women Against Pit Closures movement, the massive support from certain parts of their communities and the left-wing of the labour movement, as well as the treachery of Kinnock and Willis.

People in the pit villages now see that they have to become involved in politics and fight to create a party that will really represent our views.

The meeting Socialist Action is organising in Penrhiciber will take place on 16 January in the heart of the Cynon Valley where 6,000 miners and their families are on strike. The discussion and the atmosphere will be electric if the last Socialist Action Miners meeting held at Bold in Lancashire in October is anything to go by.

This meeting takes place in a totally different situation to last October when we all believed the strike would be won through carrying out the TUC and Labour Party conference decisions.

One of the lessons likely to come through is the necessity of taking the commitment shown in this through the whole labour movement and organising to remove those leaders who have shown they have nothing in common with workers in struggle.

That includes joining the Labour Party and removing those representatives who have shown themselves to be traitors to the working class.

A highpoint of the meeting will be the large number of international guests who will bring home the point that international solidarity has been indispensable to sustaining our strike.

In the evening the will be a social giving people the opportunity (rare treat these days) of an evening out.

So the scene is set. Make sure you are there.

Second

Socialist ACTION

Miners' International Solidarity Meeting

An opportunity to meet miners from every coalfield and representatives of the worldwide solidarity movement with the miners.

Saturday 16 February 12 noon

Penrhiciber Miners' Institute
Penrhiciber
Cynon Valley
South Wales

Speakers
Dai Davies (South Wales NUM exec)
Tower Lodge NUM
Roy Butlin (Coalville NUR)
Lorraine Johnson (Bold Womens Support Group)
Malcolm Pinnegar (Leicester 'Dirty Thirty')
Kay Sutcliffe (Aylesham Women Against Pit Closures)
Anne Jones (South Wales Women Against Pit Closures)
Joe Mohammed (Notts striking miner)

Plus speakers invited: Ernest Mandel and speakers from Japan, Australia, USA, France, Belgium and many other countries.

Evening:
Social with Bar

Transport
Train from Cardiff to Mountain Ash. Minibus shuttle from Mountain Ash to Penrhiciber

Admittance
£2.50 waged, £1 unwaged, Free for strikers and families
Organised by Socialist Action, PO Box 50, London N1. (Write or phone 01-369 8371 for more information).

Through what stage

WHEN I SPOKE recently at Sokolniki, at the jubilee gathering of educational workers, I was asked a question of great importance in relation to principles, a question closely connected both with the international situation, in the widest sense of the word, and with the Fifth Congress of the Communist International, which is now taking place.

And instead of making a hundred-and-first or thousand-and-first attempt to describe comprehensively the so-called 'international situation', I am going to give, even though only in broad outline, an answer to that question of principle which was put to me at Sokolniki and which I will now tell you about.

The note I received is in my pocket — here it is: 'Comrade Trotsky, please explain why the most advanced capitalist countries have the weakest Communist Parties (USA, Britain) and are furthest from the social revolution. This problem worries me very much and I request you to explain it.' That is the question.

The answer to it is the key to the international question, broadly understood, that is, both from the standpoint of the relations between the various states and the relations between the capitalist states and the Soviet Republic and from the standpoint of the development of the revolution throughout the world....

How then can it be explained that the most advanced and cultured countries have weak Communist Parties, while, on the contrary, our country, which cannot, unfortunately, be called the most cultured in Europe, has a very strong Communist Party, which rules the state?....

We know that international Menshevism, starting with our own Russian Mensheviks, builds upon this contradiction its chief 'accusation' against international communism and against the Soviet Republic. You see, if this contradiction be taken in a simple way, so to speak mechanically, then you are not far from the conclusion that communism is an expression of backwardness and barbarism. The more backward a country is, you deduce from your first glance at the problem, the stronger is communism in that country, whereas super-civilised countries like Britain and America have very weak Communist Parties, in proportion, as it were, to the small amount of survivals of barbarism in those countries.

At the congress of the Communist International one of the weakest of the European parties is certainly the British Communist Party. The American party is even weaker, true, but we are talking for the moment only about Europe. The strongest party is our party. Then

comes the German party, and then the French.

What in reality explains the fact that in such a powerful, cultured, educated, civilised country as Britain, the Communist Party still exists as a mere propagandist society, not yet possessing the power to play an active part in politics? In order to answer... I will recall a few other phenomena and institutions in the life of Great Britain.

In Britain there is — I ask you not to forget it — a monarchy, whereas there is none here or in France or in Germany... In Britain there is still to this day an aristocracy enjoying distinctions of rank. There is a House of Lords. In Britain, finally, the church, or rather the churches, wield tremendous influence in all spheres of life...

Thus it turns out that in Britain, alongside of the fact that the Communist Party is exceptionally weak, there are to be found such other facts, not matters of indifference for us, as the existence of a monarchy, an aristocracy, a House of Lords and a tremendous influence of religion in politics, in social life, and in everyday affairs. And if you approach Britain one-sidedly from this aspect,.... then you would doubtless say that the most barbarous and backward country in Europe is Britain.

That would be as true as the statement of the Mensheviks that communism is a product of backwardness; that is to say, it would be as untrue, as one-sided, as false.

Can one really agree that Britain is the most backward country in Europe? No, this idea cannot at all be fitted into the framework of our general picture of Britain. In Britain technique is at a very high level, and technique is decisive in human life.

How can one find a way out of this contradiction? For a contradiction stares us in the face: on the one hand, high technique, science, etc; on the other, monarchy, aristocracy, House of Lords, power of religious prejudices over people's minds.

What conclusions can be drawn? This conclusion, that there is no single yardstick with which one can measure the development of a country in every sphere, and on the basis of that measurement make a uniform evaluation covering all aspects of social life. Development is contradictory. In certain spheres a country achieves tremendous successes, but it happens quite often that by these very successes that country holds back its own development in other spheres.

Let me speak concretely about this matter. Britain was the first country to take the road of capitalist development and won, thanks to that fact, the hegemony of the world market in the nineteenth century. The British bourgeoisie became, again thanks to this fact, the richest, strongest and most enlightened of the bourgeoisies.

These conditions enabled it, as we

know, to create a privileged position for the upper strata of the British working class and thereby to blunt class antagonisms. The British working class is becoming conscious of itself as an independent class hostile to the bourgeoisie much more slowly than the working class of other countries with less powerful bourgeoisies.

Thus it turns out that the growth of the British bourgeoisie, the most advanced bourgeoisie in Europe, having taken place in exceptionally favourable conditions, has for a long time held back the development of the British proletariat.

The British bourgeoisie developed under the protection of ancient institutions, on the one hand adapting itself to them and on the other subjecting them to itself, gradually, organically, 'in an evolutionary way'. The revolutionary upheavals of the seventeenth century were profoundly forgotten. In this consists what is called the British tradition. Its basic feature is conservatism....

The British working class has developed quite differently from ours. Our young proletariat was formed in a period of some 50 years, mainly from peasants and handicraftsmen who had lived in the countryside, along with their fathers and grandfathers, in ancient surroundings, in economic backwardness, amid ignorance and religious prejudices.

Capital ruthlessly seized the peasant lad or youth by the scruff of the neck and at once flung him into the cauldron of factory life. The change in his conditions took place catastrophically. When the young peasant felt the blast of the factory's steam he at once began to think about who he was and where he was. It gained ascendancy over him all the more easily because he had no conservative ideas: the old village notions did not fit at all; he needed a complete and radical change in his whole outlook on the world.

With the British worker things went quite differently.

For him, the British worker, there was not this sudden, sharp, catastrophic transition from the closed little world of the village to modern industry;...

Technique

British technique is a fundamentally capitalist technique. It was not brought in from outside, destroying national economic forms, but has developed on the basis of these national forms. The consciousness of the working class reflects this 'organic' growth of technique, while lagging very much behind it.

It must not be forgotten that human consciousness, taken on the scale of society, is fearfully conservative and slow-moving. Only idealists imagine that the world is moved forward through the free initiative of human thought.

We speak frankly if we say that classes and peoples have hitherto not shown decisive initiative except when history has thrashed them with its heavy crop. Had things been different, would people have allowed the imperialist war to happen? After all, the war drew nearer under the eyes of everyone, like two trains hurtling towards each other along a single track. But the peoples remained silent, watched, waited, and went on living their familiar, everyday, conservative lives.

The fearful upheavals of the imperialist war were needed for certain changes to be introduced into consciousness and into social life. The working people of Russia overthrew Romanov, drove out the bourgeoisie and took power. In Germany they got rid of Hohenzollern but stopped halfway....

Think over this process to the extent necessary to understand the profound difference from our development, which was extremely delayed and therefore extremely contradictory. Take our metal-working and coal-mining south: boundless expanses of steppe, thinly populated steppe set-

Most bourgeois

TODAY IN the eleventh month of the miners' strike, it is incontestable that the British labour movement is undergoing a profound transformation. One aspect of this has received the greedy attention of a host of university professors, trade union new realists and Neil Kinnock's kitchen cabinet. That is the decline in Labour's vote following the creation of the SDP-Liberal Alliance, to only 28 per cent in the last general election.

On this basis an unholy alliance of extreme right wing trade union bureaucrats like Frank Chapple, professors like Eric Hobsbawm and the majority faction of the British Communist Party have joined forces to campaign for Labour to turn sharply to the right in order to create a popular front against Thatcher with the SDP-Liberal Alliance.

Of course these forces have, at best,

been deeply embarrassed, at worst viciously hostile, to the titanic struggle of the miners and to the forces that are leading it. Because what has been hammered out by the sheer scale of this struggle is a class struggle wing of the labour movement prepared to break the law and to forge the most advanced alliance of the oppressed with the British labour movement in living memory.

Not only have the young miners of the NUM not been 'bought off' by mortgages and cars, but they have shown themselves to be the most politically advanced mass force that the labour movement has created since the 1920s. Hobsbawm's *Forward March of Labour Halted* looks somewhat ridiculous when you see the NUM coming forward not only as militant fighters for jobs but as champions of the demands of women, of blacks and of gay people in the labour movement!

What has been revealed over the past 12 months is two facts about the British labour movement. First it is not particularly advanced but on the contrary amongst the most politically



tlements with deep mud around them in spring and autumn....and suddenly huge metal-working enterprises arise in these steppes.

They did not of course develop out of our own economy, but broke in upon us thanks to foreign capital. From the backward and scattered villages, European (and sometimes American) capital assembled fresh cadres of workers, tearing them from the conditions which Marx once called 'the idiocy of rural life'.

And there you had these fresh proletarians of the Donets basin, of Krivoi Rog and so on, not bringing with them into the pits and the factories any hereditary traditions, any craft conservatism, any fixed and firm beliefs. On the contrary, it was in these new, unfamiliar and stern conditions that they only for the first time properly felt the need for firm beliefs, which would give them moral support.

To their aid came social democracy, which taught them to break with all their old prejudices and so gave a revolutionary consciousness to this class which had been born in a revolutionary way.

It is possible to put the matter like

this: the richer, stronger, mightier, cleverer, firmer a bourgeoisie has proved to be, the more it has succeeded in holding back the ideological and consequently the revolutionary development of the proletariat. Here is another expression of the same idea. The British bourgeoisie has got used to the servility of the so-called workers' leaders whom it has educated.

Let me interrupt myself to introduce a very interesting quotation from the British newspaper the *Sunday Times*. The newspaper complains because in Britain today, under the MacDonald government, stormy strikes are taking place, and it says: 'We have in Great Britain the finest body of Labour leaders in the world, men of experience and patriotism, with a real sense of responsibility and a wide knowledge of economics. But they are rapidly being thrust aside by the avowed revolutionaries, whose influence is increased every time the government capitulates to them.'

Of course, revolutionaries are increasing in number in Britain too, but unfortunately they have still far from sufficiently 'thrust aside' those leaders whom the *Sunday Times* calls wise



Food convoy, 1926 General Strike

ge are we passing?

is of nations

backward working class movements in Europe with fewer workers voting for the Labour Party than for virtually any other mass workers' parties in the major countries of Europe.

But, contrary to the claims of Professor Hobsbawm, this does not represent a 'forward march' that has been 'halted'. It is the basic character of a labour movement created in what was the richest, the first and the most powerful imperialist power in the world.

As Engels wrote to Marx in 1858: 'The British working class is actually becoming more and more bourgeois so that this most bourgeois of all nations is apparently aiming at the possession of a bourgeois aristocracy and bourgeois proletariat as well as a bourgeoisie. Of course this is to a certain extent justifiable in a country which is exploiting the whole world.'

In creating the SDP the ruling class were simply exploiting the fact that whilst the majority of the working class is anti-Tory this does not at all mean it is permanently attached to the Labour

Party and still less that it supports socialism.

The second fact revealed in recent months is the creation of a minority within the British working class which is politically advancing, becoming more pro-Labour, more committed to defending the cities, more in solidarity with the miners, more in support of the demands of women, more against nuclear weapons and so on. It is this minority which gives its support to Benn, Scargill and Livingstone.

The past eleven months of struggle have revealed both the power of this current and the obstacles it confronts in the form of the majority Labour Party and TUC leaderships and the political traditions they are based upon.

In order to arms ourselves in the long struggle to overcome these obstacles it is necessary to grasp the true historical character of the British labour movement. It is to help in that objective that we reprint the following article of Leon Trotsky dealing with precisely this question by comparing the Russian and British working class movements.



politicians, filled to the brim with wisdom and patriotism.

How has this come about? In our country there have never been leaders who won such praise from the bourgeoisie — discounting the sharpest and most decisive moments, when things were at their most critical — was dissatisfied even with the Socialist Revolutionaries and the Mensheviks.

Leaders

What is the cause of such satisfaction with the workers' leaders on the part of the bourgeoisie over there in Britain? It is due to the fact that the British bourgeoisie themselves have trained these leaders.

How did they get the opportunity of training 'labour' leaders? This was due to the circumstance that they were powerful and cultured, being the ruling class of an advanced capitalist country. As fast as the working class advanced

young leaders from its ranks, all sorts of political 'specialists' in the service of the British bourgeoisie at once settled on them, won them over, brought to bear on them all that could be imagined by a powerful bourgeois culture...

What the British bourgeoisie has been able to achieve is a sort of hypnotic fascination for its culture, its world-historical importance. By means of this skilfully-organised hypnosis it has influenced the workers' leaders whom it has known how to keep always surrounded by its reporters, photographers, sportsmen, clergymen, lecturers and so forth, all cunningly turned on to each newcomer among the workers' leaders.

And in this hypnosis of a way of life lies the art of a ruling class, a powerful, cultured, hypocritical, base, greedy class — an art which consists in exercising an everyday influence whereby to work upon and subject to itself everyone who comes forward from among the working class, everyone who stands a head taller than the other in every factory, in every ward and borough, in every town and throughout the country.



Other British newspapers are not so solid as *The Times*, but they are built on the same model, so as to capture the reader's attention from every direction and lead him to genuflect before the British national tradition, that is, before the bourgeoisie. And the workers' press is very weak; besides which, with the exception of the communist publications, it is permeated through and through with the same hypnosis of bourgeois culture...

The so-called Labour government headed by MacDonald is also a product of the age-long education of the workers' leaders in this way. That is the reason, in the last analysis, why British Menshevism is so strong and communism so weak. Now let us repeat our question: is the weakness of communism in Britain a symptom of the country's high level of civilisation or is it a symptom of backwardness? After our analysis we have no grounds for falling into the trap of such a mechanical presentation of the question. We say it is at one and the same time a symptom of very early development and of great backwardness, because history operates not mechanically but dialectically: it combines during long periods advanced tendencies in one sphere with monstrous backwardness in another.

If we compare, from the standpoint of world-historical development, the 'Labour' government of MacDonald and the bourgeois-nationalist government of Turkey, the conclusion we draw is not in MacDonald's favour...

There is now in Britain a government of Mensheviks and in Turkey a bourgeois-nationalist government.

And this bourgeois-nationalist government of Turkey has found it necessary to abolish the Caliphate. The Caliphate is the central institution of Pan-Islamism, that is, one of the most reactionary trends in the entire world. But the Menshevik government of Britain has re-established the Caliphate in the Hejaz, in order to uphold the rule of the bourgeoisie over its Moslem slaves.

History's conclusion is that the Menshevik government of Britain, in spite of the British civilization, etc, is playing in this conjuncture of forces a reactionary role, whereas the bourgeois-nationalist government of backward Turkey, as of a nationally-oppressed country, is playing a progressive role. Such is the dialectic of history!...

There is no abstract yardstick applicable to all spheres of life. It is necessary to take living facts in their living historical interaction. If we master this dialectical approach to the question, the latter becomes much clearer to us. Germany, for example, is placed not by accident, as regards this question of the relationship between the forces of the Communist Party and of social democracy, between Russia and Britain.

This is to be understood by the course of development of capitalism in Germany. It is necessary, of course, to investigate concretely the history of each separate country, in order to discover more exactly the causes of the delayed or hastened growth of the Communist Party. In a general way, however, we can draw the following conclusion: the conquest of power by the proletariat in countries which have entered the path of capitalism very late in the day, like our country, is easier than in countries with an extensive previous bourgeois history and a higher level of culture.

But this is only one side of the matter. A second conclusion, no less important, declares: socialist construction after the conquest of power will be easier in countries with a higher capitalist civilization than in countries which are economically backward, like ours. This means that for the British working class to break through to real proletarian power, to dictatorship, will be incomparably harder than it was for us. But once having broken through to power, it will advance to socialism much quicker and much more easily than ourselves...

Such is the dialectic of history. Politics has held the British worker back, has for a long time, so to speak, hobbled him, and he is advancing with such timid, pitiful, MacDonaldite little steps. But when he frees himself from his political trammels, the British racehorse will outstrip our peasant nag.

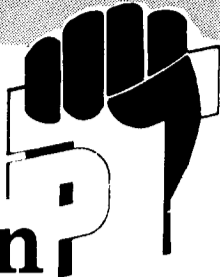
To generalise theoretically what I have said, in the Marxist terminology which is familiar to us, I should say that the question itself boils down to the interrelation between the basis and the superstructure and to the interrelation of bases and superstructures of different countries with one and another. We know that superstructures — state, law, politics, parties and so on — arise on an economic basis, are nourished and determined by this basis. Consequently, basis and superstructure have to correspond.

And this happens in fact, only not simply but in a very complicated way. A powerful development of one superstructure (the bourgeois state, bourgeois parties, bourgeois culture) sometimes holds back for a long time the development of other superstructures (the revolutionary proletarian party), but in the last analysis — in the last analysis, not immediately — the basis reveals itself nevertheless as the decisive force.

We have shown this by the example of Britain. If we approach the problem in a formal way, it may appear that the weakness of the British Communist Party contradicts the Marxist law of the relationship between basis and superstructure. But this is certainly not the case. Dialectically, the basis, as we have seen, will, in spite of everything, secure its victory. In other words: a high level of technique, even through the barrier of ultra-conservative politics, nevertheless will manifest its preponderance and will lead to socialism sooner than in countries with a low level of technique.

That, comrades, is what I conceive the fundamental answer to be to the question which was put to me at Sokolniki.

Brazil



Civilian rule OK?

Brazilian metalworker speaks

Luis Inacio da Silva, or 'Lula', the Brazilian metalworkers' leader and president of the Workers' Party (PT), visited Britain briefly in late November. He met with Peter Heathfield and Mick McGahey, addressed a miners' picket in Kent and spoke at a large London public meeting.

We print here parts of that speech, where Lula talked about the hand-over to civilian rule in Brazil and how the PT sees it.

BROTHERS and sisters, comrades,

The political, economic and social situation in Brazil hasn't changed much. A huge number of workers are still unemployed. A huge number of workers go hungry today.

We have 12 million rural workers with no land to work. We see the people in the north east dying as a result of the drought. They go on dying when it rains because they have no land to cultivate. And they die when they've got land because they haven't got the seeds or credit they need to plant and produce.

We see illiteracy continuing, with 18 million illiterate people today. Housing problems continue.

This is the situation in which the presidential succession is taking place, in a country where the minimum wage is about £13 a week, and where almost 15 million Brazilians earn this or less.

When we began, in November 1983, the campaign for direct elections, we knew that it wasn't through the vote that workers would solve their problems, but that the vote could help the workers to take a step forward in winning more freedom.

It was a six month long campaign, which raised enormous hopes amongst the Brazilian people. Never, in all our country's history, have we seen such vast demonstrations.

Nonetheless, we have to recognise here and now that the workers still aren't strongly enough organised to impose their political aims.

Once again what is happening throughout the world is repeated. The oligarchy, the bourgeoisie, the politicians, succeed in deciding the path the Brazilian people are to take. The fight is abandoned in the middle of the war.

We in the PT understand that Maluf (the regime's ultra-right official candidate — Ed) and the regime are not one and the same thing. Maluf is just one tooth on the cogs of the regime's machinery, and the wheels of this machinery can turn quite happily without one tooth.

That's why we insist that the regime has to be defeated as a whole, and not just one part of it. This great chunk of the regime

which now supports the Liberal Front are people who, for 20 years, have supported the regime, who made a pact with corruption, with repression, with gangsterism, and now they've been redeemed to serve a few people's greed for power.

Yes, we think Tancredo Neves is better than Maluf, but we don't want the Brazilian people to yet again have to settle for the best of a bad lot. We want the Brazilian people to have the right to choose the best.

Tancredo Neves has said publicly that he won't break with the IMF, that he's not going to change the incomes policy, that he won't recognise the independent trade union congress, the CDU.

I cannot for a moment agree that the interests of Brazil's biggest banks are the same as the workers' interests or that the interests of Brazil's biggest industrialists are the same as the workers'. I cannot understand how the big landowners' interests can be the same as those of Brazil's rural workers.

Those are the reasons why we don't go into the electoral college. Tancredo Neves has already had talks with the businessmen. He has promised to open up the economy, to privatise many state enterprises and help Brazil's firms grow stronger.

He's already had talks with the big agricultural producers and promised them incentives. He's talked to the bankers and promised them peace and calm.

To the workers he has promised nothing; he has asked them for time. He's asked for a 9-12 month truce in order to get the economy back on its feet.

But, look, to whose benefit is this economic recovery going to be achieved? Is it going to be recovery for the workers or for the employers, for the workers or the bankers, for the workers or for the big landowners?

We believe that the PT's role is not to react like the rebellious child that doesn't like the pudding and just stands there stamping its feet. The party's job is to explain to the Brazilian people what Tancredo's alliances and all these people represent, and to turn its energies into the social struggles which originally gave birth to the PT.



New Caledonia

Interview with murdered independence leader

ELIO MACHORO was general secretary of the Caledonian Union, the largest of the independence organisations grouped together in the Kanak Socialist Liberation Front (FLNKS), a coalition which was formed in September 1984. On the morning of 12 January this year he, together with Marcel Nonarro, was assassinated by French colonialist forces at the end of a large-scale military operation and a siege that had lasted the entire preceding night.

The French High Commission claimed that the two leaders were accidentally killed when orders had been given only to wound. Commissioner Edgar Pisani also claimed that the FLNKS activists were holding a meeting at the time on the property of a European colonist.

The truth is that they were murdered in cold blood by the National Gendarmerie Intervention Group (GIGN) in close collaboration with a group of fascist commandos who were on the spot at the time. The meeting was held on Kanak property.

The reasons for this murder by the French imperialists in New Caledonia were clear. Elio Machoro led the occupation of the town of Thio, following the Kanak

The action conducted around the town of Thio has been an important initiative. What is your explanation for it?

In this region, we could have staged actions locally in all the townships. We preferred to conduct an action at Thio because on the east coast this town has always been one of the strongest bastions of the anti-independence forces. The mayor, Roger Galliot,

had control of the town in their hands.

What was the attitude of the FLNKS towards the European population of the Thio when the town was occupied?

We asked for a meeting with the Europeans in the town to explain to them the meaning of our action. Unfortunately, they were afraid, and only about a dozen of them came to our meeting.

We made it clear that we had one specific aim for this town — to make



Elio Machoro

sure that the town was run by people who wanted to work together for the benefit of everyone and not to gain their own personal ends, as was the case of the present mayor, Roger Galliot.

Galliot was the one who obstructed discussion among people. Everyone knew that he belonged to the extreme right.

He banded together a half-dozen 'super-hards'. We gave a list of their names to the non-Kanak inhabitants of Thio.

We also explained to them that their tranquility depended also on their behaviour and the rela-

PEOPLE CELEBRATED in the streets up and down Brazil in mid-January at the news that the country would have a civilian, Tancredo Neves of the PMDB liberal opposition party, as its next president. The 686 delegates at the usually tame electoral college 'elected' Tancredo by a big majority over the military regime's own candidate. At the same time three striking cane-cutters were shot by police on the vast industrial plantations that produce sugar for alcohol fuel.

Yet now, just one year after the huge mass demonstrations against the dictatorship for free elections, Neves will be moving into the presidential palace not through the ballot box but via the tightly controlled electoral college, with scarcely a pretence at resistance from the military. How was it done?

The answer is 'pacts'. In the course of 1984 the PMDB opposition party wound down the movement for direct elections which it had led and set about stitching together pacts with everyone it possibly could.

The PMDB was itself already a mixed bag that included the Brazilian Communist Party, but firmly led by politicians associated with local business interests and sections of the local state government machinery.

It set about extending this alliance to include all the major sections of the business class, including multinational capital,

most of the national state machinery and a torrent of political figures noted for their servility to the dictatorship.

To the military hierarchy this new 'Democratic Alliance' promised no turning over old stones to settle accounts with those responsible for torture, 'disappearances' and wholesale corruption. And just as important, it promised not to touch the retired officers who head up many of Brazil's huge nationalised corporations and who make up an important part of the new oligarchy.

One pact, however, remains in doubt: the most important one. This is the social pact that Tancredo is proposing with workers' organisations.

Tancredo can only deliver on the promises to all his friends if he can persuade the Brazilian people, especially the organised working class, to accept even more searing austerity measures in exchange for ... well ... in exchange for civilian government!

tions they maintained with the Kanaks.

We also asked the gendarmes in Thio not to come out of their barracks, promising them that order would be maintained.

As regards the negotiations that are to begin with the representative of the French government, Edgar Pisani, you may be offered a referendum to determine the future of the territory with the right to vote accorded to the Europeans and immigrants who have been here for example for more than six or more than ten years. What do you think about that?

Such a proposition by the French government would be a bad one. Why ten years and why not the 'victims of history' as we have described the European Caldoches whose fathers or mothers were born in New Caledonia? And, to take it further, why not the Kanaks alone?

In fact, the government's problem is that it does not want to take a position. It does not want to adopt our point of view so as not to be accused of letting the FLNKS drag it around by the nose.

But, the French government should decide either to stick by the French constitution or to carry out a decolonisation policy favourable to the Kanak people.

We have always demanded a reform of the electoral register to ensure that it is the real inhabitants of the territory who decide on its future.

This request has been rejected by the National Assembly (in Paris) as unconstitutional.

At present, we are fighting for self-determination of the Kanak people alone, and we have legal grounds for this.

Article 75 of the French constitution recognises the special character of the Kanak people by granting them a special status.

In order to take up the discussion with Pisani, we made a lot of concessions, such as releasing the subprefect of Lifou, or removing the road blocks.

In return for this, they are still killing us, as in Hienghene. In the incidents that have occurred, the Kanaks have never been the ones to start it.

Everytime they have fired, the Kanaks have done so to defend themselves. In Thio, we took over the town without firing a single shot at a European.

The Socialist Party government has been carrying out a right wing policy here because the right is helping the government keep the territory under the domination of France. The French government does not want to let New Caledonia go because of the strategic position it holds and because of its riches.

The only basis of support for such a position here is the colonialist right. So, decolonisation remains on the agenda, it has not yet started. For the Kanaks, the colonial situation has not changed.

THERE IS A widely held belief that some sort of arms negotiations are going to begin in Geneva on 12 March. Except in the most superficial sense, this is simply false. There will be Russian and American diplomats talking about all kinds of weapons, but there won't be any negotiations about any thing that really matters, such as intercontinental ballistic missiles and space weapons, for the simple reason that the two sides are further apart than ever before on such issues.

In case anyone had any doubts about this, Reagan in his usual genial way has dispelled them. He declared last week that he thought it unlikely that a deal would be agreed within the next four years — in other words it may happen only over his dead body, under a new president. And a few days earlier, in his inauguration address he explained why no deal will be achieved: he devoted the core of his address, which is supposed to outline a president's main aims, to a lyrical and uplifting song of praise for his Star Wars project.

Now the whole purpose of Geneva is supposed to be negotiating away Star Wars and without an agreement to end the plan there is no possibility of a deal to reduce or control intercontinental missiles. Star Wars is supposed to shoot down enemy missiles before they reach their targets, so combatting such a system requires the other side to maximise its missile arsenal, thus ensuring adequate penetration of the Star Wars screen. Thus Star Wars and intercontinental missiles cannot be treated separately, but must be tackled as a whole.

At the Geneva meeting of 7-8 January, Gromyko seems to have persuaded Schultz to agree to the inclusion of Star Wars in the negotiations and to the common sense notion that other aspects of the negotiations must be linked with Star Wars. This brought a swift, public repudiation from Weinburger, the Pentagon boss, and the subsequent confusion has still not been cleared up. So even to get the Geneva panto on the road at all has been an extremely tricky business.

By Oliver MacDonald

But one of the most amusing, and at the same time touching, sights in what promises to be one of the longest-running pantos this side of Broadway, is the attitude of one part of the audience: the British media pundits. Anyone who takes a three or four year old child to the panto will know how they take every word literally, and easily forget that the dame isn't a woman at all, but a man masquerading as a woman.

So it is with our supposedly hard-boiled media experts. Instead of laughing or jeering at the latest patently absurd piece of buffoonery, the way an eight year old would, they solemnly note it down and repeat it. Reagan, they are told wants to get into history books as a peace maker.

'Experts' on Reagan here repeat this, to the point where the *Financial Times* has to devote an editorial to telling big business that this is a piece of nonsense. Then we are told excitedly that Mr Paul Nitze is not only a dove but also designated to be the supremo in charge of the negotiating team. Until we learn that Nitze happens not to be a dove over Star Wars and also happens not to be the supremo at all. (Nitze is actually a hawk with bad nerves, who lost his nerve during the cruise and Pershing talks and is no longer taken seriously in the Reagan administration except as a PR sop to the West Europeans). Then we find that Reagan has actually appointed extreme hawks as top negotiators in the Star Wars and intercontinental missile talks.

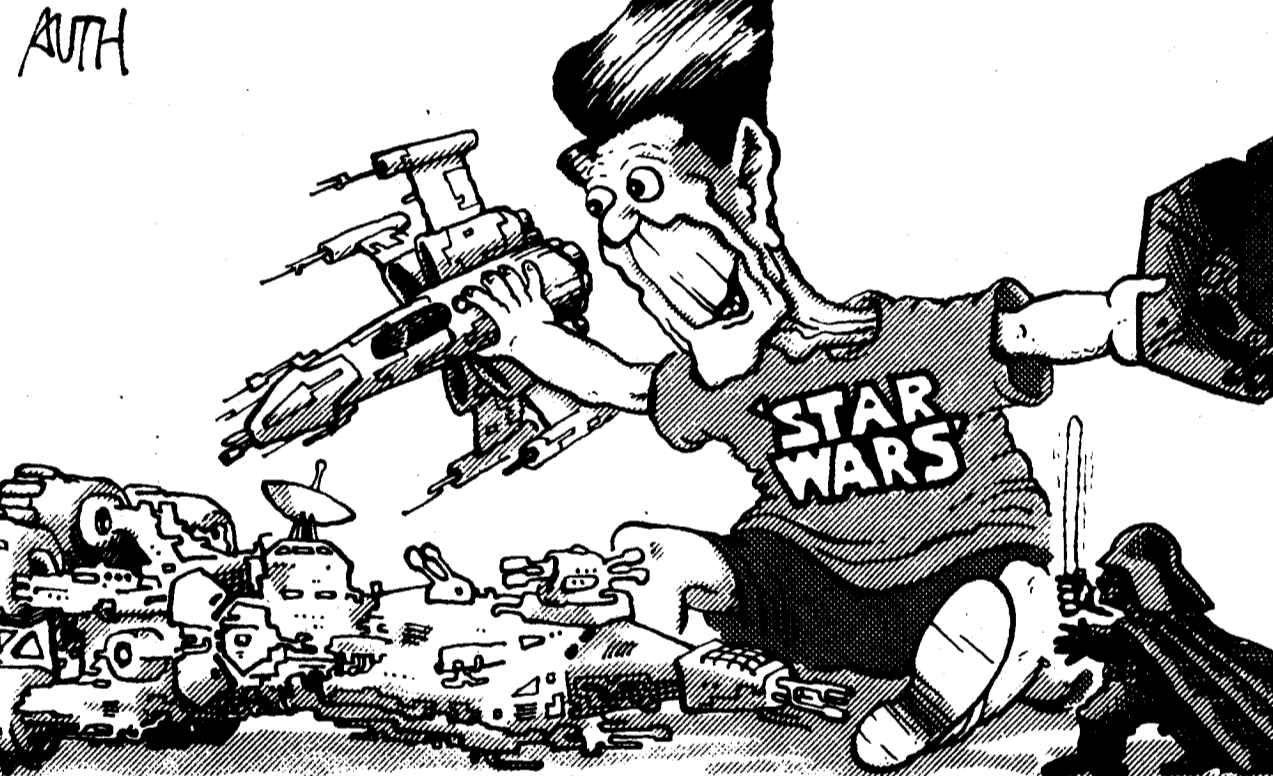
Unable to deny this, our media pundits produce the following brilliant idea: the fact that hawks

The Geneva Panto



Schultz

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have been chosen proves that Reagan is serious about reaching a deal that sticks — he has appointed hawks to ensure that the Senate is more keen on making concessions to the Soviets than Reagan is. Even Senator Goldwater has casually remarked that he is fed up with all these US nukes and feels like scrapping Reagan's beloved MX missiles.

Horried

The reality is that the only serious arms negotiations that will be taking place during the next year will be in Washington, not Geneva, and will be between the congress and the president over Reagan's military budget. Reagan's enthusiasm for getting phoney arms negotiations going in Geneva is in large measure a product of his fear that he will be forced into arms reductions in his tussle with congress over the budget deficit. And one of the oldest tricks for combatting congressional efforts to cut US military spending is to say that such moves will undermine the US negotiating position with the Russians — it will be a stab in the back to our boys in the negotiating front line. And by appointing ex-Senator Tower to head the negotiating team, Reagan is further arming himself for the coming battle with congress.

There is thus overwhelming circumstantial evidence to indicate that the White House will use the Geneva talks as nothing more than a public relations smoke-screen confusing

domestic and West European opinion, while pressing ahead with Star Wars and the rest of the arms programme. In other words, the talks will be managed like the earlier INF talks on cruise and Pershing. As the book *Deadly Gambits* by *The Times* magazine journalist Strobe Talbot makes abundantly clear, the Reagan administration never had the slightest intention of reaching any agreement with the USSR on cruise and Pershing, operating throughout on the explicit guide-line that the talks 'should not stand in the way of NATO's modernisation programme' for cruise and Pershing.

Change

Why then do our media pundits go to such lengths to contradict the facts? The obvious answer is that they want to combat the peace movement and the much larger sentiment here that Reagan is a dangerous man. But this is not the full explanation. At a deeper and more pathetic level we must understand that they want to convince their own Tory elite supporters as well and they even want to convince themselves. Convince themselves what? That it is, or really may be, possible for the British state to exert influence on policy-making in Washington.

The fact of the matter is that Whitehall and the great bulk of the Tory defence and foreign policy establishment, as well as the bulk of the military here are opposed to Star

Wars and to much else about Reagan's military policy. The reason is that this policy will make British nukes an irrelevant joke, while it has finally sunk in that cruise missiles here will have the effect of totally destroying the decision-making power of the British state in the event of an East-West crisis in Europe. Moreover, there are signs of a deeper alarm over Reagan's entire political and military strategy towards the USSR, as well as anger over the Pentagon's brutal drive to bring Western Europe to heel for its programme of economic warfare against the USSR.

Such differences of policy between London and Washington are not in themselves especially disquieting in the Tory leadership or in Whitehall. But the problem these days is that in this period Britain can exercise no significant influence within Washington for a change of policy to bring it more into line with the requirements of the British right and Whitehall.

'Chaos'

This is the terrible state secret which Thatcher's trip to Camp David before Christmas was designed to obscure. She came out of that meeting waving a bit of paper to the press saying that she had carried off a great diplomatic triumph: she had agreed with Reagan that there should be negotiations before Star Wars was deployed: an empty pledge from Reagan in return for her meaningful

support for something concrete — continued work on the Star Wars programme.

All the nonsense about the Reagan Administration being divided between good guys and bad guys is similarly an exercise in self-deception. Thus reviews in the mass media here of Talbot's *Deadly Gambits* fall into the same myopia. They seek to paint the State Department and its man Richard Burt as the good guy, while seeking to paint the Pentagon's Richard Perle as the Prince of Darkness. Yet any close reading shows this to be nonsense. Indeed it was Burt, not Perle, who ended up taking the hard line for deployment, overriding West European governments' worries.

The fact is that these days in Washington, nobody significant, whatever nuances of disagreement they may have about Reagan's policy, is prepared to be cast in the role of champion of West European security interests. Haig used to play the role of Western Europe's champion and for that very reason he lost his job. So if such champions don't exist, they have to be invented. And the doubters here must be served up with idiotic claims by such US pawns as Woodrow Wyatt in *The Times* and Sir A Burnett on ITV that far from Britain being impotent to influence the US, it virtually dominates the Americans through the power of sentimentality.

In the face of all this, two ideas have been floated on the right, here. One has been the revival of the Western European Union, if not as an authentically independent military block — a pipe-dream in the foreseeable future — then at least as something that could make sections of public opinion here believe it was some sort of force because at least it would speak with a 'European voice'. This has so far turned out to be pure farce.

Before Christmas, the WEU Assembly of MPs somehow passed a resolution from a Dutch MP calling for a freeze on all further cruise and Pershing deployments while the Geneva talks get underway. Consternation! Apart from an inch or two in the *Financial Times*, this news was blacked out: one 'European voice' that shouldn't be heard.

Pundits

Meanwhile some other obscure WEU committee of spare MPs simultaneously produced another resolution calling for Western Europe to enthusiastically cooperate with the US in developing Star Wars so that the hardware would have a European as well as an American label on it. Consternation! Another 'European voice' to be ignored (though it couldn't be since the Tory MP by the name of Hill involved in this 'decision' wrote letters to *The Times* and *Telegraph* hailing the idea and declaring Star Wars should be used 'pre-emptively', presumably hitting Soviet missiles before they'd left their silos!)

So much for the WEU. The second idea on the right is for Britain to leave NATO and become a 'neutral' armed-to-the-teeth little imperialist state. Enoch Powell is floating this with recent backing from a book by a certain Air Commander Johnson DFC etc. This has the merit, from the right's point of view, of asserting Britain's independence from the US while keeping Britain's role as a capitalist and militarist bastion of imperialism — it is a formula that would win strong popular support on the right and centre of the electorate, but has no chance of getting off the ground because of the immensely powerful British capitalist interests now tied in to the US. It is significant only as a symptom of the foreign policy crisis in the British establishment.

An authentic strategy for neutralism can only be a socialist one ready to break with capitalist power in Britain and ready to link up with socialist forces in Western Europe. The Geneva Panto makes the elaboration of such a socialist neutralist perspective all the more urgent within the labour movement.

Labour's defence policy flawed says Scottish LCND

SCOTTISH LABOUR CND held its annual meeting on 26 January in Glasgow's city hall, considering among other things the ambiguity of Labour's defence policy posed by *Defence and Security for Britain*.

That's why Scottish LCND organised a fringe meeting at the recent Scottish CND conference in Perth, and why Labour CND chair Joy Hurcombe (also a vice-chair of CND) was invited to address the LCND annual meeting.

Activists at the AGM noted that Labour's commitment to non-nuclear defence was within the context of continued support for NATO membership — which means a continuing debate is needed to sort out Labour's policy.

The annual meeting passed a resolution expressing concern that 'the document:

- continually insists on support for NATO, from its origins an aggressive US dominated nuclear pact;

- asserts that only US nuclear bases will be removed, thus allowing the continuation of communications facilities like that at Edzell that are an integral part of nuclear war-fighting strategy;

- fails to make a clear commitment on reducing arms expenditure and poses non-nuclear defence implicitly as meaning increased conventional defence spending.'

Delegates considered that these flaws were as 'potentially disastrous' as the 1983 manifesto. They reaffirmed their determination to campaign for CND's full programme within the party: unilateral nuclear disarmament for Britain and full withdrawal from the nuclear alliance.

The annual meeting also considered the lack of active support for LCND from the Labour Party Young Socialists. This is

especially important as youth are a big component in the anti-missiles movement.

Campaign

Last year's success — getting through Scottish Labour Party conference a resolution calling on the YS to build CND — was seen to be largely a paper victory. Electing active YS members to Scottish LCND committee and prioritising a meeting at this year's Scottish party conference to build the 1-2 June YCND anti-Trident demonstration were ways of overcoming this problem in the future.



Local government workers demand a fight

THE DEMOCRACY for London campaign is the trade union body of the GLC set up to fight the Tory attacks on local government. Its central focus has been abolition. But with the rate-capping deadline fast approaching, its emphasis has increasingly changed. If Thatcher's plans to axe the spending of the hit-list authorities are successful, the fight against the abolition of the GLC and metropolitan counties will be severely weakened.

With that in mind, DFL held an activists' conference on Wednesday 23 January to discuss both aspects of the campaign.

The conference ended abruptly, with industrial action strategy undiscussed, when the chair ruled eight resolutions out of order and closed the conference at lunch-time.

On the surface what is at issue is the constitution under which DFL operates. In reality the issues are how involved shop stewards and convenors will be in the decision-making of the campaign, and what strategy will be pursued.

The official joint union structure at the GLC is the TUJNC, the trade union joint negotiating committee. It is that body which has facility time for union activity within the local authority and which negotiates with the employer.

DFL is a sub-committee of the TUJNC, which is controlled primarily by officials and lay officials of the unions

concerned. Shop stewards' organisation at the GLC is a relatively new phenomena.

In September, DFL's acting secretary Jimmy Fitzpatrick gave an under-

taking that shop stewards and convenors would be integrated into the campaign structure. At the TUJNC meeting prior to the January conference, that undertaking was thrown out and he subsequently resigned.

By Carol Turner

The difference in view was whether the conference was consultative — designed to impart information to the union ac-

tivists — or whether those same activists, ultimately responsible for bringing their members out against the government, have a real say in the campaign.

When conference closed feelings ran high. Many delegates protested being treated in what they regarded as a fundamentally undemocratic way. Of the 119 stewards at the meeting, 80 reconvened after conference closed to discuss the business conference refused to take.

The fight against the Tory onslaught on local authorities will be of major importance in the coming months. Unity within the unions on a clear strategy of effective industrial action to combat the attack on jobs and services will be a significant factor in contributing to the success of the fightback.

At last Saturday's local government conference Jack Dromey of the TGWU made clear the

position of the union officials when he said he wanted 'the best deal possible' for his members. It is this approach — attempting to compromise with a government that has shown itself to be completely intransigent — which reveals why tensions exist between union officials and activists.

Talks

Thatcher's attitude to

the dispute of the miners makes clear the only 'deal' she has in mind is total capitulation to the Tory attempts to smash the labour movement. Those activists at the DFL conference who stayed to discuss a fighting strategy got it right.

In the months to come an all-out fight against the government onslaught is the only strategy which will turn the tide on jobs and spending cuts. The only 'deal' to do is stand up and fight.



Photo: JOHN CHAPMAN

Jimmy Fitzpatrick told Socialist Action:

I WAS the campaign officer who gave the commitment to the shop stewards' conference in September that once the shop stewards' committees were functioning we would integrate them on a permanent basis into the Democracy for London campaign and therefore extend the franchise. Equally I was responsible for circulating the letter soliciting resolutions from the JSSCs for discussion at the 23 January conference.

Those two points were overturned on the day. That made my position untenable. I indicated on the eve of the conference that although I would interpret those decisions to the conference that would be my final act on behalf of the campaign because I couldn't go along with the decisions which had been made.

So having explained to the conference what the position was, I also explained that I had resigned as of the conference. Of the nine secondees we originally

had, seven have been suspended by the GLC because of the City of Westminster legal action; the last two of us decided we could no longer continue as campaign staff and have resigned also.

Through the DFL we have facilities to meet and discuss abolition and rate-capping. We have facilities for JSSCs to meet, for shop stewards' conferences, and structures whereby activists can get together. We must continue within that structure and try and amend the constitution to accommodate the

aspirations of the shop stewards and convenors who want a more democratic orientation for the campaign.

The difference between the GLC and the London boroughs is that the boroughs are shop steward and convenor controlled while the GLC is predominantly official and lay official controlled. Understanding that, the Democracy for London campaign will continue because there is no alternative for fighting for to protect local government jobs and services.

Labour CND Annual Meeting

Saturday 20 April • 10 am till 5 pm
County Hall, London SE1

Afternoon workshops with members of the Parliamentary Labour Party defence team

voting entitlement:
(all organisations must be affiliated to CND nationally)

constituencies — 5 delegates
branch parties — 2 delegates

All delegates must be fully paid up members of the Labour Party and of national CND

Please try and let LCND know your delegates by 12 April

Resolutions must be in by 30 March

more information from:
Kate Edwards, secretary LCND, c/o BBC, 2 Eaton Gate, London SW1

Militant organise Pollok witch-hunt

MANY Labour Party activists will have noted strange alliances in their local parties over the last year. On the issues of women's rights, black sections, self-determination for Irish people local supporters of the *Militant* tendency have been carrying their paper's wrong line to its logical conclusion and blocking with the right against the left.

Militant members of Pollokshields ward have taken this even further when they recently circulated an 'open letter' to some ward members claiming the left had abused the constitution to take over the ward. Such letters are by now familiar — in right dominated constituencies which looks as if they're moving left.

What are the com-

plaints of *Militant* in the Glasgow constituency of Pollok? That 'long-standing, hard-working office bearers' were being ousted at the 1985 annual meeting. And that this was being done unconstitutionally because the ward treasurer collected membership money half way through the meeting and not at the beginning!

The fuss is explained

by the fact that Pollok constituency — one of the safest seats in the country — is about to select itself an MP. *Militant* are hard to work touting around their own candidate.

By Annie Brady

Jean Mackenzie, vice chair of Pollokshields told *Socialist Action*: 'Some comrades were told that if we were elected we would vote with the right wing. In contrast, it was an alliance of *Militant* and the right that outvoted the rest.'

'We don't want to start a witch-hunt. In fact we have been foremost in defending the *Militant* comrades against it. But we think comrades should be aware of the lengths *Militant* are prepared to go

to get their candidate selected for MP'.

Militant in Pollok have learned nothing from the national attack launch-

ed on their own tendency — except perhaps how to use the same methods for their own witch-hunt when the time is right.



Manchester launches campaign

ON 22 JANUARY Manchester city council launched its official campaign against the Tory government's attacks on local government. On the platform of the public meeting, alongside council leader Graham Stringer, were local trade union and community representatives as well as a couple of TV personalities supporting Labour's fightback.

Stringer spelled out the facts concerning Manchester: that it has the highest level of urban deprivation outside inner London. 'As need has been increasing we have lost over £1 million every week since 1979,' he said.

'In the last five years there has been tremendous pressure on services, the rates have been increased and we have lost 6000 jobs in local government. We want to join with the people of Manchester to say: *enough is enough!*'

Dick Pickering of GMBATU underlined the problem of job losses when he said that: 'For every three direct jobs lost in the public sector we lose a further two in the private

sector.' Total unemployed in Manchester stands at 23.3 per cent and the worst hit areas are inner city regions like Moss Side where it's 50 per cent, of which 24.6 per cent are women and 40.4 per cent are men.

Central district has an unemployed level of 34 per cent. Both these areas reflect severe disadvantages among ethnic minorities. The city council is committed to improving employment among women, ethnic minorities and the disabled.

More than 40 per cent of Manchester's unemployed have been out of work for more than a year, and worst hit age group is the 25-54 band



Council leaders lobby MPs

Photo: JOHN CHAPMAN

which is a staggering 47.6 per cent.

In 1985-6 Manchester will be hit even harder on two fronts. First there will be big cuts in the Rate Support Grant. The Tories will keep around £53 million that should be used to pay for jobs and services.

There will also be cuts in capital spending. If the government had only

maintained Housing Investment at only '79/'80 levels, there would have been £50 million more available to be spent: the equivalent of 40 new homes built every week.

The city council are calling on the government to return the money it has taken from the council and to restore local democracy to Manchester and all other councils.

● All information from Manchester city council information broad sheet is available from Campaign and Information Unit, Room 305B, PO Box 532, Town Hall, Manchester M60 2LA; or phone 061-234 3057/3024. The unit has copies of a petition for signatures and can provide speakers for meetings.

WAC plans for executive

THE NATIONAL Labour Women's Conference takes place this year in Bournemouth on 16-18 June.

Given the tremendous rise of activity among working class women in the 11-month long miners' strike we can expect to see a large attendance.

The women's organisation inside the Labour Party is growing and its debates, unlike the TUC Women's conference are not confined to issues of specific concern to women.

At the last national conference the resolution passed on strip searches of the Armagh women became national Labour Party policy at conference.

By Valerie Coultas

Despite all the enthusiasm and energy that is directed by women into the Labour Party however our conference and our concerns are not taken seriously by the party as a whole.

The conference is not minuted; it only has an advisory status; and above all women are not considered responsible enough to elect their own women representatives on the NEC.

This is why the demands of the Women's Action Committee for greater representation of women command an overwhelming majority every year at the women's conference.

Only the *Militant* tendency dared to get up and oppose them at last year's conference.

WAC has concentrated on explaining to the Party as a whole that it is the on-

ly section of the movement that is excluded from electing its own representatives.

The youth elect theirs, the trade unions elect theirs, the Co-Op elects theirs and the CLPs elect theirs. But when it comes to women the male bureaucrats in the trade unions decide the women's section of the NEC.

Women end up getting Anne Davis and Gwyneth Dunwoody, backed by the right-wing, having the authority to speak on their behalf.

At the last Party conference WAC fielded its own slate for the NEC. Each candidate got more than a million votes. Clare Short, with nearly two million votes, is in a good position to win this year.

Campaign

Now WAC plans to step up its campaign to highlight its case against discrimination by demanding that the Labour Women's Committee carries out 'Shadow Elections' at the women's conference itself.

This would wipe out at a stroke all the so-called *technical* objections to women choosing their own section of Labour's NEC. This is the first priority resolution WAC are urg-

ing their members to put through their women's sections for this year's conference.

The second resolution points out that very little has been done to change parliament from a white, male, middle class institution and that sex, race and class barriers still exist continuing to prevent ordinary men and women from entering parliament.

Expressing concern at the low numbers of women parliamentary candidates it calls upon the NEC and the PLP to campaign for a normal working day.

The third resolution welcomes the change of rule at annual conference to allow CLPs with over 400 women members to have one extra delegate and urges the trade unions affiliated to the Labour Party to adopt a similar principle to be added numerically or proportionately according to the number of women in each trade union.

This would change the face of trade union delegations attending Labour Party conference.

One small paradox should be noted however about the unions that supported WAC's slate at the last conference (the ACTT, AUEW (Construction); TASS; FTAT; NUM; POEU; and NUPE). They are, in their majority, male dominated unions but they are also of the left.

The closing date for resolutions is 1 March, for amendments 26 April, for delegations 10 May.



Fred Jarvis, NUT General Secretary

Photo: CHRIS DAVIES (Report)

Teachers pay fight starts

By Bernard Regan

MONDAY 11 February sees the next round of talks on teacher's pay in the Burnham Committee.

In an unprecedented move, however, members of the National Union of Teachers will begin national action on Wednesday 6 February.

It is a real sign of the real determination which is building up around this year's pay claim.

The claim submitted by the teachers aims to restore the 35 per cent decline in the value of their pay which has taken place over the last 10 years.

On 28 January, 3 months after the claim was first submitted the employers offered 4 per cent.

The teachers side unanimously rejected this and further opposed the bosses attempts to move the claim to arbitration.

Last year the teachers agreed to arbitration and saw the employers' meagre offer of 4.5 per cent turned into an award of merely 5.1 per cent.

The National Union of Teachers Special Salaries Conference in September rejected any moves to go to arbitration and instructed the Executive to organise 'escalating stages of action' to win the claim by 1st April 1985.

It is under this pressure from the membership that the Executive have agreed to call no cover action and withdrawal of 'goodwill' from this Wednesday.

NUT members will no longer cover for teachers who are ill.

Normally if a teacher is absent they would be expected to look after extra classes instead of marking and preparing.

The NUT is totally opposed to this — at a time when there are an estimated 40,000 unemployed teachers.

In addition they will refuse to do other 'out of hours' voluntary duties, like parent evenings for which they are not paid.

At a series of regional meetings throughout the country last week, briefings took place on the current plan of action.

However, recognising that teachers are going to be confronting a Tory Government already fighting the miners, many union activists were demanding that the executive organise escalating strike action and a levy.

What is needed is a united campaign by all public sector workers against the Government's attempts to limit pay increases.

Teachers in England and Wales need to persuade Scottish teachers already involved in action for an independent pay review to abandon that goal and set up a united fight against the Government for pay increases.

Such a review would simply be arbitration under another name — an employers' con trick.

The Socialist Teachers Alliance has been arguing that teachers will stand the best chance of winning their claim by fighting now whilst the miners are continuing to fight and that this would be the best form of solidarity with the NUM.

The Lambeth and East London NUT branches are organising a recall Salaries Conference on 9 March to organise within the union to fight for the £1200 flat rate which is at the centre of the claim.

It will also be necessary to prepare for a counter-offensive by the employers whose leaders have taken more than a leaf or two out of MacGregor's book.

Above all it will be necessary to organise independently to force the union executive to lead a real fight.



London Greenham women organise

THE MORE the government tries to suppress our protest, the more women need to organise, was the conclusion of a well-attended meeting in London a week ago, of Greenham groups and women, called through CND.

This is why the meeting saw the fight of Notts miners' wives and of the NUM as our struggle and agreed to organise solidarity action in London and a delegation to Notts.

By Ilona Aranovsky, London Region CND

It was also felt that we needed Greenham women, to communicate and be organised across London to overcome the isolation groups have felt, to co-ordinate support for the camp, plan action including International Womens Day, and cash in on the policy won at CND conference, for material

and practical support for Greenham.

It was decided that we urgently needed new office space for the Greenham groups, as the Caledonian Road base is being repossessed by Islington council, and the campaign will have its own office near Greenham.

We will approach CND, the London Labour Party, the GLC, and nuclear free zones for assistance. Meanwhile, London Region CND will be the temporary address.

The next meeting will be at County Hall on Sunday 17 January at 5.30 pm, to discuss finance, transport, rota, telephone trees and action for International Womens Day.

A Socialist ACTION

LOCAL GOVERNMENT CONFERENCE

The 'dented shield' controversy

'Butcher's Apron' councillor launches democracy campaign

'THE BUTCHER'S Apron' is an old name for the union jack among Irish nationalists. It came into common parlance at the end of the last century, associated with British General 'Butcher' Cumberland's highland clearances. It has recently been used as an excuse for Belfast council to permanently debar one of its members from attending any council meetings.

In December, People's Democracy councillor John McNulty used the reference in a debate where the Tricolour was called a 'rag' and after one unionist councillor expressed support for the Shankill Butchers (a unionist gang who engaged in indiscriminate killing of Catholics).

By Carol Turner

In previous council meetings not a word of protest was uttered when death threats were made against John McNulty, nor when a pro-unionist SDLP councillor physically attacked another People's Democracy councillor Fergus O'Hare.

Both McNulty and O'Hare stood for election to Belfast council on an anti-H block, socialist republican ticket. During the H-block campaign they refused to take up their seats in protest against the treatment of nationalist prisoners.

At the same council meeting which threw out McNulty, Sinn Fein councillors were excluded from a council delegation and the people of West Belfast were threatened with closure of their leisure centre if a Tricolour was not removed from the roof. Paddy Devlin, regarded by the media as the North's leading socialist sat impassively through the proceedings.

After the exclusion Clor McNulty said: 'Daily we see from the

British and Unionists further attacks on democratic rights: first on Sinn Fein, then other anti-imperialists like PD, and finally on the whole anti-unionist people. Someone has to take a stand and fight back — and that's what I'm doing.'

Since that meeting John McNulty has been evicted from a special council meeting on 14 February by the RUC when he asserted his right to attend meetings to represent his constituents, despite the ban.

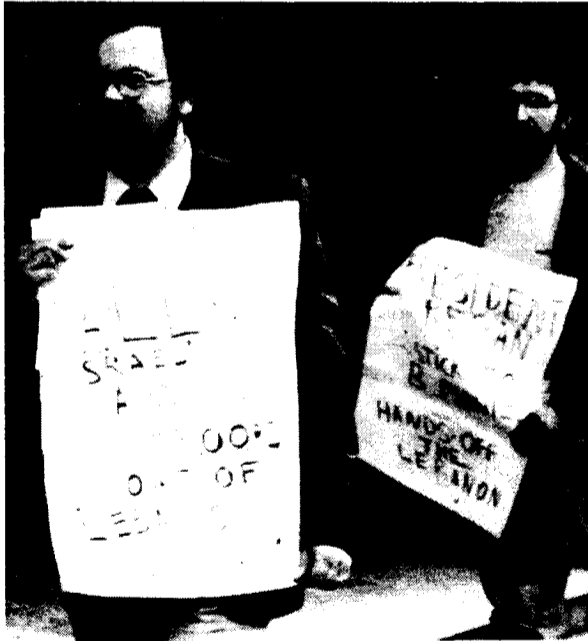
People's Democracy is launching a campaign to protect the democratic

rights of anti-imperialist representatives. And John McNulty is challenging his exclusion from Belfast council in the High Court.

People's Democracy say of the campaign: 'We want to launch a campaign not just to oppose the attack on a PD councillor but also and more importantly to fight the "creeping ban" on Sinn Fein which both British and Free State governments are promoting.'

PD have set up a fighting fund and need to raise £1000 by March to fight the case. They will also be organising a conference to unite all those forces who are actively prepared to defend democratic rights.

● Financial donations and messages of support should be sent to: Cllr John McNulty, c/o Horizon Books, 6 Avoca Park, Belfast 11.



John McNulty



Photo: JEFF BIGGIN

NEIL KINNOCK'S dented shield speech caused controversy among delegates at the Labour Party's local government conference in Birmingham last Saturday.

Urging councillors to stay in office at all costs 'to negotiate the best deal they could' he said 'better a dented shield than no shield at all.'

Ted Knight, furious at Neil Kinnock's deliberate fudge on party policy of non-compliance with the Tories Rates Act, retorted that this speech was 'totally inadequate and out of touch with the rank and file.'

The crucial question up for debate is whether or not the 16 Labour councils threatened with ratecapping and the 9 authorities which are heavily penalised under the government grants system should continue to pursue the policy of protecting jobs and services by taking illegal action, including a refusal to fix rates and defaulting on local authority debts.

Neil Kinnock, in his speech, deliberately set out to avoid the issue of confronting the government by stressing the issue of staying in office under any circumstances.

As many delegates pointed out it would be impossible to protect jobs and services if Jenkin's spending limits were met.

Alex Wood, leader of Edinburgh council, intends to introduce an illegal budget. He said that Kinnock's speech was 'less

than constructive'. 'If 30 Edinburgh councillors are disqualified from office there are 30 people eager and ready to take their place.'

Absence

The absence of official representation from the TUC at the conference, despite the plans in early march for a democracy week of action called by the TUC's local government committee, reveals a certain half-heartedness, about the TUC's commitment to such rebel Labour authorities.

While Ken Livingstone has backed Kinnock's appeal for Labour councillors to stay in office, he has turned the issue round to make it clear that the reason for this to make no cuts.

Urging councillors to stick to their manifesto commitments he pointed out that paying wages and providing services were higher priorities than paying back the banks.

The City of London would have to wait for its money while the GLC presents the 'case to the government for the money we are owed', he said.

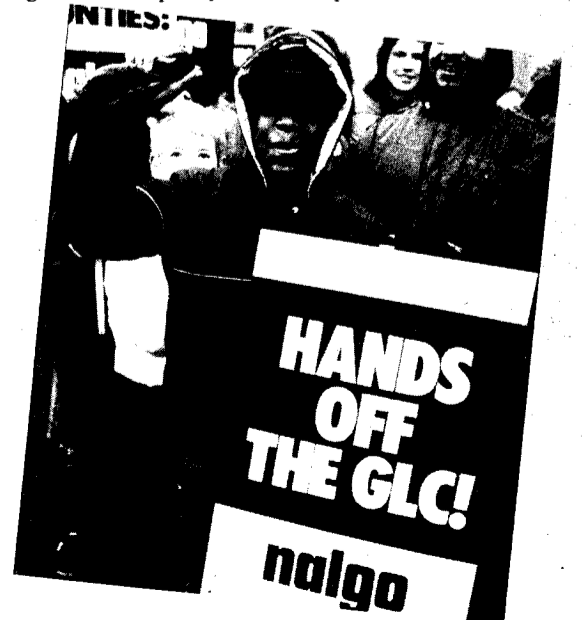
Two lines are clearly emerging in the Labour Party over how to fight ratecapping.

One involves defending conference policy and

the jobs and services. The other involves selling them down the river with no shield at all.

John Walker, leader of Greenwich, made it clear that the parliamentary leadership faced the same test over the cities as they had with the miners.

'In our fight for minimum services we call on the support of the parliamentary party and the party leadership, support that has not been forthcoming for the leadership of the NUM.'



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