

# A **SOCIALIST** ACTION

## Protest Apartheid

Demonstrate outside South African government offices in Britain, at offices of firms that collaborate with apartheid and shops selling South African goods.

Ring Anti-Apartheid 01-387 7966 for details of action in your area and for material for the actions.

# South Africa

The South African regime has replied in the most horrific fashion to the massive upsurge of black protest it has faced in the past seven months. It chose the twenty fifth anniversary of the Sharpeville massacre to gun down black mourners at the Langa township near Uitenhage in the Eastern Cape.

Official figures admit 10 deaths. Others put the figure of those killed at 45 — with 50 more wounded. A further 10 were killed in the immediate aftermath of protest and reaction.

The flimsy police story that they opened fire in self defence is believed by no one. The *Black Sash* women's civil rights movement in South Africa testified that armoured personnel carriers intercepted the funeral procession and opened fire without provocation or warning. Re-inforcements immediately brought in by helicopter joined in the massacre.

Other witnesses, testified for by Alan Boesak, President of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches, explained how the police had then gone around killing the wounded and planting bricks on them in a vain effort to give credibility to their story.

Whether this massacre was a carefully planned set-up job by the Botha government, or whether it resulted from a panic reaction by some local police commander is completely irrelevant. Such atrocities are part and parcel of the apartheid regime. Despite massive international pressure, prime minister Botha rejected calls for any criticism at all of the killings.

But the massacre and the escalating repression has failed to stem the tide of black protest and black rebellion. The course of black protest and struggle has progressively moved from within the black townships into the heart of white South Africa and its economy. These latest killings occurred, symbolically, as the mourners approached the white city of Uitenhage.

The police massacre came after 10 days of escalating protest against police repression and killings. This followed the attack on the Crossroads squatters camp near Cape Town in February when 18 people were gunned down by police.

So far this year 100 people have been murdered by police. Last year the figure was 200.

Apartheid has not changed its spots in 25 years since Sharpeville — despite the much-publicised and phoney electoral reforms.

But the reaction of the black masses has changed.

The protests which have been virtually continuous for seven months now have not been undermined by the Langa massacre. On the contrary the shootings have spurred further protest and revolt.

At the funeral of six of those killed, 35,000 mourners turned out shouting defiance. Further protests have followed in the townships near Uitenhage and other parts of South Africa.



Since August last year all sectors of the oppressed black majority have been drawn into active struggle against white racist rule. The overwhelming majority of Indians and 'coloureds' boycotted elections to the new, segregated parliamentary bodies set up by the regime as part of its effort to pit those communities against the 24 million blacks.

Hundreds of thousands of students have been involved in student strikes. Residents of black townships have risen up time and time again over the past few months in protest against high rent, taxes and bus fares. Last November one million black workers participated in the largest political strike in South African history — one organised directly to protest the apartheid regime's racist policies and repression.

This is the change from Sharpeville in 1960. Whereas then blacks were unorganised, they now have trade unions, student unions and community associations. Powerful coordination has been achieved through the United Democratic Front — a broad coalition of more than 600 anti-apartheid organisations with a membership of more than two million. And the influence of the African National Congress has won mass political support.

The majority of blacks now directly connect their fight around immediate economic issues, with the task of overthrowing the apartheid regime itself. This is what is worrying imperialism not only in Pretoria but also in London and Washington.



# explodes

# Socialist ACTION

## The Kinnockites move in

THE FOUR weeks since the end of the miners' strike has seen a rapid process of recomposition within the labour movement as the lessons of the strike are driven home.

The overwhelming shift has been the move of the Kinnockites — and their allies in the Communist Party — to attempt to isolate those who led the miners' strike, their allies.

The bourgeoisie, Neil Kinnock, and the Communist Party in this are working as a division of labour in the drive to break every force within the labour movement that stood up against the bourgeois offensive. This means first and foremost against the Scargill wing of the NUM. But after this is the attempt to isolate those who want to fight in local government, to attack the LPYS, and to try to break up those sections of the Labour Party that stood intransigently with the miners.

The result has been seen not only in Kinnock's moves but in a shift to the right by ex-sections of the Labour 'left' — symbolised by the shift of Ken Livingstone in London. Others have deepened their course of radicalisation. The result is an increasing polarisation in the movement. The shifts are evident.

● The GLC, the largest local authority in the country, buckled under when it came to the crunch and refused to break Jenkins law. The move to do this was led by Ken Livingstone — who has since purged the chief committees of the GLC to exclude the left and bring the right and centre into key roles.

● Decisions by other councils on 7 March ducked the issue by saying it was impossible as yet to make a rate. We have yet to see who actually will refuse to set a rate.

● In the local government unions sections of the left, led by the Communist Party, have now proposed the tactic of a work-in instead of strikes to stop cuts in jobs and services.

● George Bolton, Communist Party vice-president of the Scottish NUM, has called for lifting the national overtime ban.

The result will be completely predictable. No jobs were saved in British Leyland or British Steel by the policy of retreat and moving to the right headed up by the Communist Party and Labour right. No local government services will be saved by these means either. Those such as George Bolton, Livingstone, *Marxism Today*, or Kinnock who advise retreat simply become forces disorganising and demobilising struggle. A Kinnock government, with or without a coalition with the Alliance, would be an historical disaster for the Labour movement opening up a far greater demoralisation even than in 1979.

It is from this situation that shifting alliances within the labour movement are necessary. It is not possible to unite those who do not wish to fight with those who do. That is the lesson both of the miners' strike and the local government struggle.

The Bennite left that crystalised around internal reforms in the Labour Party in the 1970s has been tested in the heat of the class struggle over the last 12 months. Tony Benn, Arthur Scargill, Dennis Skinner, and a whole part of the rank and file of the labour movement have passed that test and moved to the left — to real involvement in the class struggle. Others have failed that test and are now being driven to the right — as the purge which is beginning in the GLC shows.

The Kinnockites are going on the offensive against those who have moved left. An alliance of those willing to fight the Tories must be consolidated and organised if this offensive is to be effectively countered.

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# Amnesty battle setback

THE RESULT of the ballot in the NUM for a 50p a week levy to support miners victimised by the NCB for their role in the strike is a blow to the miners and to the left in the union. Of those who voted, 50,429 (46 per cent) were in favour and 58,721 against (54 per cent).

Less than 60 per cent of those eligible voted, while four areas including Notts refused to participate. Had these areas voted the number against would undoubtedly have been increased.

Some of the abstentions were due to opposition to the levy, by militants, who felt that the decision to hold a levy was a backdown by the leadership on the question of amnesty. They believed that it was a substitute for a continuing fight to secure the reinstatement for the 620 who have so far been sacked.

This kind of confusion reflected the weakness of the campaign in the coalfields. There was insufficient time for the activists to organise effectively behind it. It is clear that in some areas notably South Yorkshire and South Wales, there was a failure by the leadership to campaign effectively for the levy.

The return to work has changed the conditions in which the left has to fight. While on strike the ac-

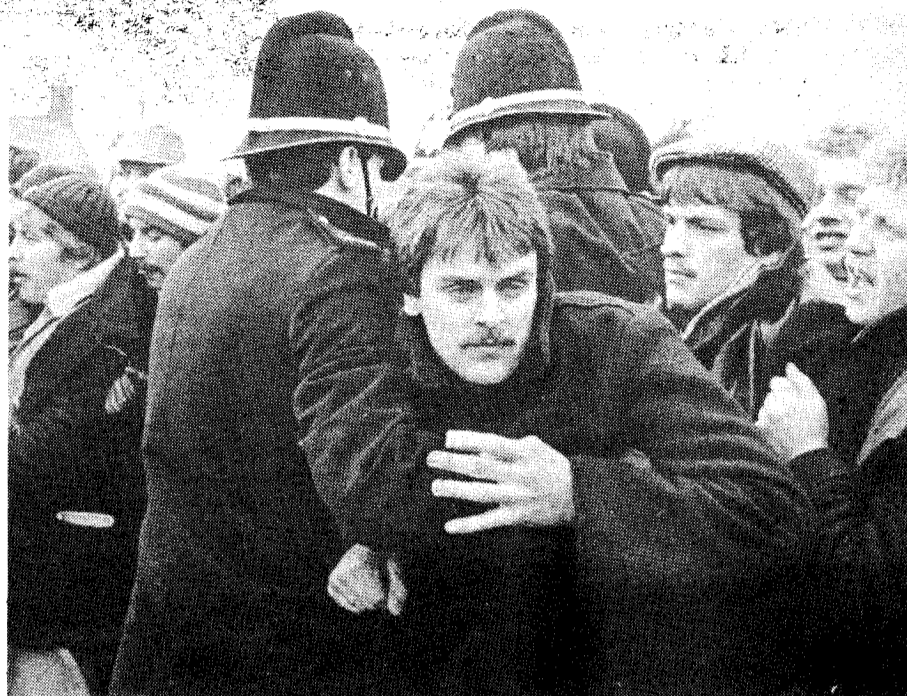
tivists were able to meet and organise on a continuous basis — which they did to considerable effect.

By Pat Hickey

The return to work has meant that the miners who carried through the strike are broken up on different shifts and in different workplaces.

Those who were not active in the strike did not have the experiences of those who were on the picket lines, so their attitude to the mass picketing and the arrests are coloured by the media. Neil Kinnock's scabbing line that only those not convicted of serious offences should be reinstated strengthened the erroneous understanding of this layer and reinforced the right.

The NCB however, need not take too much comfort from these figures. 'Scargillism' is not defeated in the NUM — in fact a long way from it.



The difference in the vote was only 8000. This understates the support in the union for the victimised miners, and the support for Scargill.

However there are two lessons that need to be drawn from this result. One is the need to openly break with those in the movement such as Kinnock who draw a distinction between those 'engag-

ed in lawful trade union activity' and others.

To criminalise some of those sacked is to criminalise all. They are all being victimised for defending their jobs and communities.

The second lesson is that the activists who fought this strike through for 12 months now need to find new ways of organis-

ing in the context of the return to work. There has to be organisation of the militants on the ground to back up the lead from the left, Scargill, wing of the national executive.

The leadership must find ways of organising and unifying the pickets who led the strike, in the day-to-day activity in the union.

## No hostages for the NCB

FOLLOWING THE return to work SOCIALIST ACTION discussed the situation in the pits with DAVE PARRY, from Thurrock and BRIAN, who does not wish to be identified because he is facing serious criminal charges arising out of the strike.

Dave: I think the people who were involved in the strike still see it as the dispute continues. But for a lot of people its like they've had 12 months taken out of their lives, and now they're starting again.

A lot of people haven't been involved. The experiences and lessons of the last 12 months aren't that clear to a lot of people.

Brian: The atmosphere is different. Before the strike everybody would help everybody else. Now everyone is suspicious of everybody else. When we talk about our experiences on the picket line we're only half believed.

Dave: In our pit we have an almost 50-50 situation between those who went

back and those who stuck it out to the end. If you're ever going to have a union again you have to do something about the 50 per cent who went back. You have to find out who was financially driven back and who was proud of it. They are the people you've got to isolate.

Brian: Then there's a lot of people who sat at home watching Jackanory on telly for 12 months. They think they've done enough and when they talk about the union they talk about you — why didn't you do this, why didn't you do that? They don't talk about 'we'.

The activists who've been on the picket lines have seen situations, and the lies on the TV and in

the press, but those who've been sat at home don't understand that. Some of them doubt union policies.

Dave: There's a lot of people around now who've been through the experiences and learnt a lot. But a lot of people who haven't.

We had 15 sacking to start with. We've had five reinstated. The Board insists that they will stay sacked. The local manager says its an area problem.

Brian: We've had one lad suspended. He was on two charges and found innocent on one and no evidence brought on the other.

But he had to prove that he was acquitted before being reinstated. He was classed as a militant, because he was on the branch committee.

We had four sacked for pinching off Coal Board premises. But if we

hadn't been in this situation they wouldn't have been pinching.

Dave: What it is is that they've been to court and been fined, and some of them imprisoned, and the Coal Board now says you've got 30 years unemployment on top of that.

The injustice of it should stare people in the face. At the end of the day they've done no more than fight for their jobs.

But a lot of people who haven't been active pickets don't understand that. Its being in the wrong place at the wrong time.

That's the thing about the levy. Its come out of the blue.

Originally, I thought that they would take it out of union funds, but they've put it there in front of everybody's eyes: 'do you support these lads or don't you?' If the answer is 'no' then we've got problems. If the answer is 'yes' then we're going

some place.

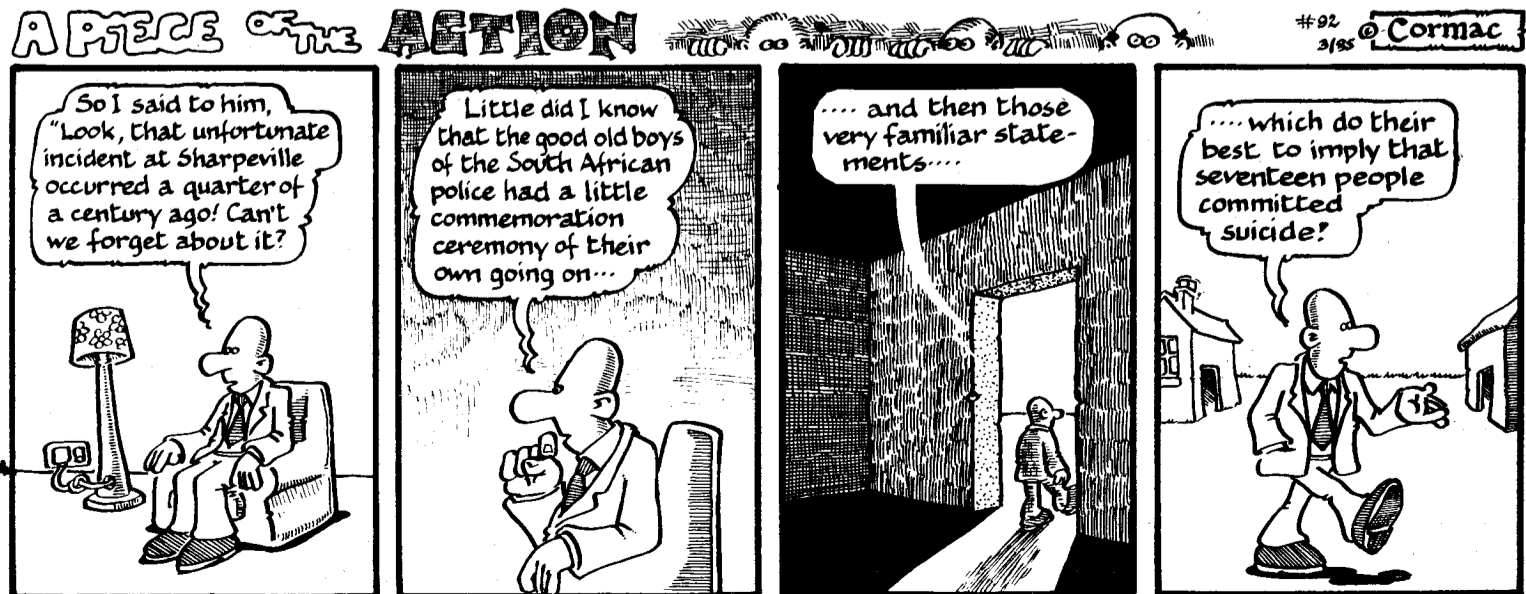
Its right to make the political point about the lads that have been sacked. It can't be left to individual cases, like who's the goody-goody or who's not, or to pit managers and area directors.

They're hostages to the NCB, and they are saying we'll let these lads work if you allow us a certain leeway on what has been common working practices, or on the over time ban and so on.

Brian: People realise after the last year that overtime is a complete and utter self-defeating exercise.

Its been a fantastic experience, and we've educated thousands and thousands of people. Its been worthwhile.

I think in the years to come, when the youth that's been educated do come to power in the trade unions, this will be the answer to your question.



## War continues in Yorkshire

Steve Shukh, is a miner from Arncliffe colliery in Yorkshire which was the last pit in that area to go back to work, staying for an extra week to demand an amnesty for sacked miners.

He gave us this report for Socialist Action on the situation inside the pit.

Originally 3 pits decided to stay out in Yorkshire. We tried picketing the others but it didn't work. The other two decided to go back so we were forced to accept the national decisions.

ask, it demands. If you breach one of management's new rules they send you a letter and you get a warning.

Any offence committed after the warning and you're sacked. I got my first letter after my first shift back at work.

The mood in the pit is angry. So far they have kept the scabs isolated but they are slowly trying to reintegrate them into the pit.

The 34 scabs in our pit will never be forgotten. They are completely ignored and soon the pressure will become too much for them to take.

The management are out to get rid of 70,000 miners. They will sack you for anything just to get rid of manpower. We have to keep our heads low or else we're out.

The miners haven't been defeated though. We were betrayed by the TUC and the Labour Party bureaucracy. Even despite this I would do it all again.

It's better to have fought and stood up for your principles than follow the dictates of this anti-working class government.

It's not over yet. The strike's over but the struggle goes on. Everyday we go to work we are waging a war.



Photo: DAVE DRONFIELD (Derby NUM)

About 3,000 of us marched back into the colliery on 8 March, half miners and half supporters.

Inside the pit it's a reign of terror. The managers read off a list of things you can be disciplined for on the first day you get back.

You can be fired for intimidating scabs or leaving your work area early or for being late.

They are trying to ignore the union altogether. The management doesn't



## LEFT FIGHTS BACK IN NOTTS

Following the decision to call off the overtime ban this week has seen more provocations against the NUM by the leadership of the Notts area.

Socialist Action talked to Joe Mohammed, striker from Cotgrave about the situation developing in Notts.

The area leadership has organised to boycott the national ballot on the issue of a levy to support the sacked miners.

With branch elections coming up in a few months, Roy Lynk and his merry men are also trying to prevent the strikers from standing for positions in the union.

They claim they can debar the strikers because they paid no union dues during the 12 months of the strike and they are supposedly no longer in good financial standing.

'These moves are

designed to hasten the area's expulsion from the NUM. The union still has the capacity to respond, but I don't know which is the best move to make,' says Joe Mohammed.

### Eager

Why are Lynk and Prendergast so eager to get kicked out of the NUM? And why are the tactics of the expulsion such a difficult issue for those who are loyal to the NUM?

Contrary to most expectations, the returning

strikers have not found themselves to be in a beleaguered minority.

In fact, since the return to work, the 'recruitment campaign' to sign up working miners who wish to remain in the NUM has really taken off in some pits.

This has been aided by the heavy-handed way the management have cracked down on the scabs they treated so well during the strike.

Redundancy agreements at Moor Green and Pye Mill, due to shut in June, have been reneged on.

And the considerable numbers of young miners taken on during the strike are finding many agreements on training are being flagrantly ignored

by management.

Getting no satisfaction from the scabs who run the

Notts NUM branches, they have had to turn to strikers for help in taking these matters up.

With their support beginning to crumble Lynk and Cogane are desperate to bring matters to a head.

### Provoke

Unable to walk away from the NUM they are seeking to provoke their own expulsion.

Many of the strikers are re-thinking their attitude to the expulsions because of these developments.

'Some of us feel that an expulsion might damage this process. It might just break up the closed shop in our pits, which is what happened with the Spencer breakaway', said Joe. 'I can see the benefits of expulsions, but I can see the pitfalls too.'

The main problem is that the expulsion of the area seems the only possible way of dealing with hardened right-wingers like Lynk and Co who hold their union positions for life.

We asked Mohammed what the situation will be with the strikers running for NUM branch elections. 'The union will find the money in the next week to pay back dues. We'll be running in these elections.'

## Striking miner witch hunted

Graham Naylor was one of the 46 miners out of a total workforce of 1200 at Bilsthorpe pit in North Nottinghamshire who stayed on strike until the end.

8 days later, on Wednesday 13 March, Graham was suspended from Mansfield Labour Party.

His crime, according to the right-wing General Management Committee, was having spoken at a public meeting of the Militant tendency on 4 June in support of the miners. Valerie Coultas reports.

In fact Graham wasn't able to attend the meeting and made it clear to the Mansfield executive committee that he was not a supporter of the Militant Tendency, that he was not a seller of the Militant and that he given no money to the Militant.

Paul Shawcroft, who explained that he was a Militant supporter, backed up Graham on this point. 'When the Executive Committee produced a leaflet advertising the meeting which said that it had been printed and published under my name he and I both pointed out that this had been done without my permission'.

The EC was convinced and decided to recommend that no action be taken.

This didn't satisfy the McCarthyites on the GMC. Happy to be in the

heart of scab land throughout the dispute the Party had sat on the fence and was now to seek vengeance against those miners who had fought against pit closures and backed the NUM leadership.

Paul Shawcroft was expelled and they voted to suspend Graham pending an investigation. 'They told me that as the Political Education Officer that I should have phoned up the officers and asked permission to speak.'

'I replied that I had been asked to speak as a striking miner and that I had spoken at many left meetings in support of the miners dispute — SWP, CP — and would continue to do so.'

'I asked the Chair and Secretary if it was normal practise to ask permission

and they told me no.'

Special rules are obviously being applied to catch Graham Naylor out. He first joined the Labour Party five years ago but at one point left to join the SWP and rejoined.

He is aware of why the finger is being pointed at him. 'Since the strike's been on a lot of miners and miner's wives in this area have been joining the Labour Party.'

### Threat

'They've got me marked down as a threat to their position. People are joining the Labour Party because their political consciousness has been raised in the strike and they want to get involved. The Labour Party should be welcoming this enthusiastically not trying to push us out.'

13 members of the Militant Tendency have now been expelled from the Labour Party and Graham believes that if Mansfield CLP can get away with expelling him other mining militants will be vulnerable to attack.

Every expulsion in the Labour Party must be fought. It's a scandal that NUM militants like Graham should be under threat of expulsion for doing what the Labour Party should be doing — backing its own class.

## South Wales exec. lost their bottle

There was a conspiracy by certain area executives to get a return to work without agreement. It was not the policy of Arthur Scargill. South Wales was one of those areas because a sub-section of the executive lost their bottle. They were afraid that if the strike continued a split would have occurred in South Wales. We know that there were lodges who wanted to fight and lodges whose heart was not in it.

But we also know how many miners were likely to go back and the vast majority of South Wales miners would have stayed out. The delegate conference was not given the full facts about the national return.

The essential difference between Scargill and the South Wales executive is that he believes in mass picketing and involving the rank and file of the trade unions and they don't.

The South Wales executive thought that they could get better results with guerilla tactics. The effect was to sideline the majority of our membership who should have been mobilised for mass

picketing.

By Huw Edwards (Tower colliery).

At the time of the occupation of the cranes at Port Talbot mass pickets could have been put on the motorway at Port Talbot and Llanwern. This had the potential to prove mass picketing was effective. It would have stopped all ore and coke movement. It would have put pressure on Sirs and the ISTC to accept an agreement to use only enough coke to keep the steelworks ticking over.

Scargill's lead in the strike was exemplary. He made some minor mistakes when he succumbed to pressure from the TUC not to appeal over the heads of TU leaders. Unity gave space to the TUC not to carry out the agreements made at the Congress. I think he should have split the TUC right down the middle. He should also have publicly spoken out against Kinnoek, but that may have alienated some of our members. Overall though

his lead was excellent

The TUC did not want Scargill to be emulated so they agreed policies but sabotaged their implementation. The rank and file should demand the resignation of the General Council. If that doesn't happen after 3 months we should adopt a policy of withdrawal and stop our

levy. Willis, Kinnoek and others are calling for unity to fight the Tories. Unity is needed but not unity of the right of the TUC. Their unity is to ensure their own jobs. The NUM has shown that it is possible to push for union rule changes to give more participation to the rank and file. This should be done in all unions.

## The Third Socialist Action Miners Solidarity Meeting

Saturday April 20

### 'Lessons of the Miners Strike'

Snowdown Colliery Welfare Club (New Club) Ayelsham Kent

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

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

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

Coaches from London tel 01-254 0128

# Britain out of NATO

Last week TONY BENN presented a paper for discussion by Labour's National Executive arguing that Britain should withdraw from NATO. It was widely reported in the press.

Socialist Action asked Tony Benn why he had taken this initiative and to explain his views on the press reports. We will be running other responses, and views, on NATO membership in coming issues.

IT HAS been reported in the press that you have opened up a discussion for the NEC on the question of withdrawal from NATO — that you are against NATO membership.

Yes, because at the heart of the argument about the future of our society, in a very real sense, lies the foreign policy we pursue. What the right in Britain has succeeded in doing very cleverly is using the experience of socialism in Russia to frighten our people. It is also using the allegation of the threat of a Soviet invasion to create a big military establishment in Britain, which is then able to imply that any critic of the government is a traitor.

This lies at the whole heart of the NATO argument. You get big military establishments which, because they deal with nuclear weapons, are secret, and therefore anyone who is critical of them — as we saw through the Massiter revelations — can be classed as a subversive.

Another argument is presented, which is wholly fraudulent, that the United States, all over the world, is for freedom and civil liberties and so on. Whereas actually the United States is at a period of its imperial growth. It is using its military power, like any imperial power in the past, to consolidate and protect its interests.

## Superpowers

You have to have a new perception of what it's all about. I think that if you have a different perception of the two superpowers — I won't say they are identical to each other — but they are superpowers with great economic and military capacities, who are going to see that around their own territories are *cordons sanitaires*.

In the case of America, you invade Grenada, try to neutralise Cuba, and indeed, go as far as they did in Vietnam. In the case of the Soviet Union, because of their experience, Eastern Europe is part of a protective alliance and Afghanistan is brought into the orbit again — in much the same way that Britain invaded Afghanistan four times when we were an empire.

If you see it that way it's different from the way it's presented in the media. Then the question arises 'is our role as a client state of America?' One where our intelligence is integrated with theirs, where they have a mass of nuclear weapons based in Britain, where we are really subordinate to

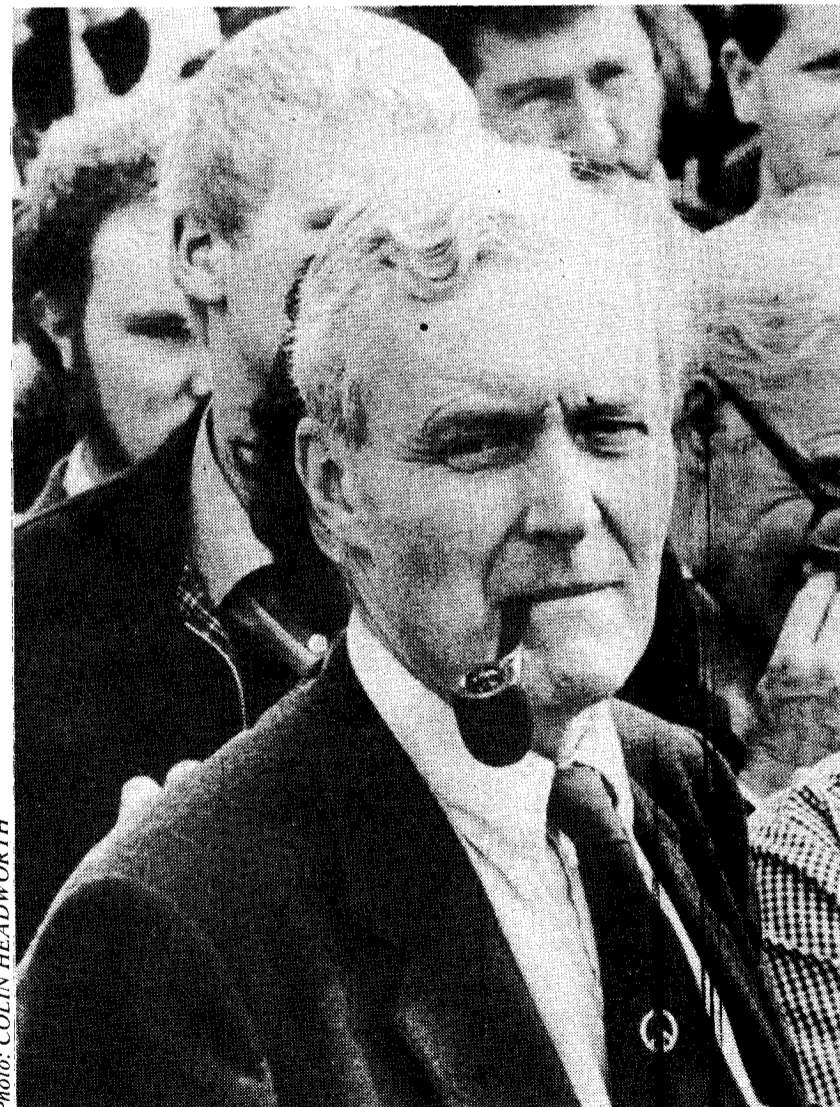
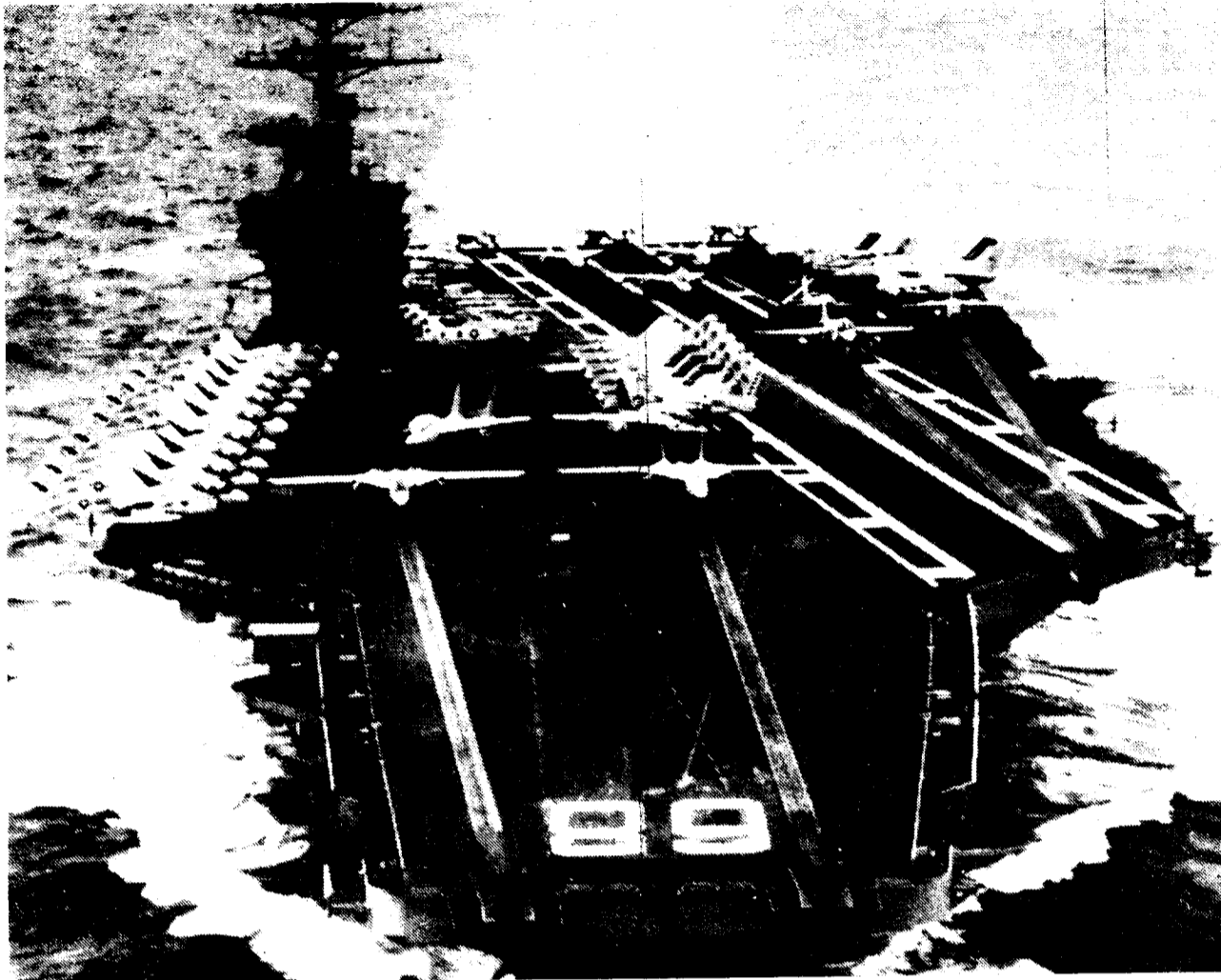


Photo: COLIN HEADWORTH

Tony Benn: at 1982 demonstration demanding withdrawal of the British fleet from the South Atlantic

Washington in their world system. Is that the best way that Britain can bring its influence to bear for peace? And the answer is that it isn't.

I gave a lecture at Chatham House 18 months ago that raised these questions in a tentative form. I put that same paper into the national executive a year ago. Last July we had a seminar about it. We are going to have a foreign

policy conference at the end of the year organised by the Labour Party.

## Discussion

Our discussion paper, on whether Britain should remain in NATO, which ended up with a request for a paper to be presented by the international department for discussion, was actually

defeated. But my own opinion is that the question will continue to come back. And I think it's very important that we should discuss it. And a whole range of other subjects such as what we do when we withdraw from the Common Market, how we deal with the banks and financial institutions, with the ownership of land — what I would call socialist items going back on the agenda.

## Forum

All this must be done without personal hostility and really to allow the labour movement to perform its other function — which is to be the grand forum of the nation. Discussing how Labour can best contribute to a solution of world problems as well as domestic problems.

**Does that mean that you are now against British membership of NATO? Or do you merely think the matter should be discussed?**

I think the matter should be discussed. But in the paper I put in with Eric Heffer we were arguing the case for withdrawal.

The French are not in NATO of course. They are in what they call the Alliance but not actually members of NATO. I think the removal of American bases is very important.

I think in the light of what Reagan is doing to New Zealand, after New Zealand said she didn't want American ships with nuclear weapons entering her ports, gives some indication of what the Americans would do if we were elected with our present policy. All these questions need to be discussed. If they were discussed it would be a very important part of the political argument.

I don't believe the British public will ever accept a non-

nuclear defence strategy if at the same time they're not asked to re-examine the question of whether there is a military threat from the Soviet Union.

I do not believe there's a military threat. I just don't believe it. I believe it's been built up for other reasons in the way that before the war the Axis powers (Hitler's Germany and Mussolini's Italy — ed.) built it up.

## Defence

You've got to turn your mind to that question. If you turn your mind to that, and you win that argument — and I believe there's a very good reason for believing you would — then the defence aspects of it fall into place. If you don't turn your mind to that argument then people will go on saying: 'Well the Russian's have got the SS20, so we've got to have the American cruise' and you'll never make any progress at all.

So I think it's also a very important part of the process of winning public support for Labour's existing defence policy.

**Could you explain when you say that you don't think there is a similarity between what you called the superpowers?**

I'm not talking about parity of responsibility. I think if you were to analyse the way we regard, or are invited to regard, the Soviet Union — as a country which is dedicated by its Marxist analysis to the conquest of the world by military means, to create a Marxist world — then that is a false analysis, quite false.

If you're asked to regard the Americans as the upholders of parliamentary democracy, civil liberties and trade unionism, that's a false analysis.

What you have to differentiate between is what I would call the 'inherent interests of superpowers', and the conduct of their own affairs on their own borders, and the real question — which is why can't we in Britain develop socialism in our own form, in our own way. If you try and achieve that the Americans say the Russians are trying to take over. They'll use the power of the 'Western Alliance' to crush it. I don't want to see that happen.

## Constructive

And of course the socialism I want to see develop here and elsewhere is not a Stalinist form — Russian history and special circumstances were totally different. British socialism would be a home grown, relevant socialism, that we would develop ourselves. And in doing so I think we'd find ourselves able to work with a whole range of people including the progressive movement in the United States, the peace movement, trade union movement, the third world, and a lot of the people in Europe who are part of the peace movement. I think we can play a very constructive part.

So I'm not applying the simple theory of equality of responsibility. I don't think that's true. That is a simplistic analysis. But Britain must free itself from NATO, in the military alliance of the West.

# Women's solidarity conference 4 May

The Midlands Women's Co-ordinating Committee has set a date — Saturday 4 May — for the women's solidarity conference and Digbeth Civic Hall Birmingham has been booked as the venue for the day.

A planning meeting at County Hall, held jointly with the Mineworkers Defence Committee Women's Group, last Friday finalised the agenda.

The conference aims to draw the links between the Women Against Pit Closures movement, the women's peace movement and other struggles women have engaged in against the Tory government over the last few years.

The morning session of

the conference will be introduced by a woman from the CGT and a miner's wife from the Midlands Co-ordinating Committee. Block workshops will then take place with women leading the discussion who have been engaged in struggle to try and draw out the common lessons.

By Valerie Coultas

During the lunch hour

fringe meetings are planned with Women Against Pit Closures, Lesbians and Gays Support the Miners, the National Abortion Campaign, Greenham women, Armagh women and black sisters.

In the afternoon the block workshops will continue and the conference plenary at the end will draw together the discussions from the workshops.

It is intended that the conference should end with a short public protest against the threat to women's fertility control posed by Enoch Powell's Unborn Children (Protec-

tion) Bill.

The planning meeting was pleased to hear that Women Against Pit Closures nationally was calling its own conference as everyone in attendance seemed to agree that the women's solidarity conference had a distinct but complementary role to the WAPC movement.

## Decisive

That role is to strengthen the self-organisation of women in all the mass organisations and movements in which they are active today, making links that can push

that process forward and by having a high profile for the trade unions and the Labour Party. This will encourage women to join the labour movement and strengthen its leftwing.

The next London Planning meeting for this conference, when leaflets will be available, takes place on Tuesday 2 April. For further information contact Geraldine on 021-236-1240 or Valerie on 01-254-0261. A creche will be available all day.

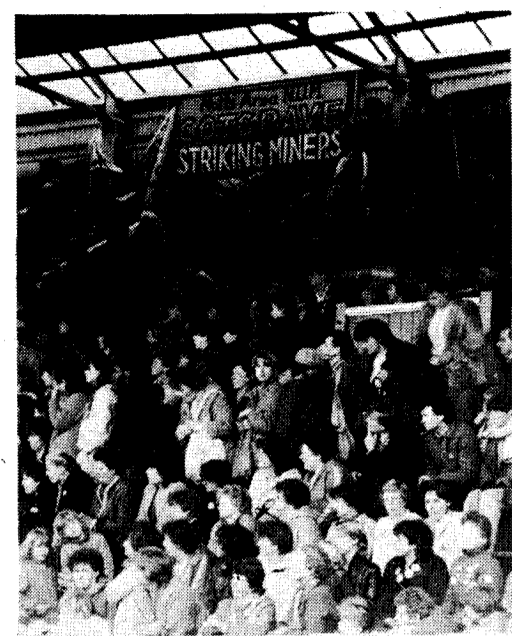


Photo: DAVE DRONFIELD



## 'The enemy within'

Janet McCreadle from Rotherham went to Belfast for International Women's Day. She said:

Every one of us can fight now, whereas 12 months ago we were housewives. Before the strike I saw things on the television news and thought 'that's awful', but that was it. Now if we don't like something we're going to try our best to get it altered.

And if it means coming to Belfast — or anywhere — we'll do it because we want firsthand experience. We want to know the facts that the people who are involved tell us, not what the news says, because all that's biased.

The strike's ended, but our fight isn't, not by a long way. We've not been defeated. Last July Thatcher called us 'the enemy within'. Well, she's still got the same enemy within and we're proud of it.

# MTFS: More Trendy Financial Stupidity

NIGEL LAWSON's budget revealed itself as extremely unpopular — a special snap opinion poll in the *Sunday Times* showing the Tories falling two per cent behind Labour immediately after the budget. But also significant was the rise in support for the SDP-Liberal Alliance — and Roy Hattersley came up with an 'alternative budget' which was extremely similar to that proposed by Edward Heath and David Owen.

JOHN HARRISON and BOB MORGAN look at the background to Lawson's budget.

BUDGETS ARE not what they used to be. A few years ago, chancellors rose to explain how their governments would both raise and spend money over the coming year. This is most people's idea of budgetting — planning income and spending.

The serious financial commentators compared tax and spending charges, and dubbed budgets 'expansionary' or 'contractionary' according to their likely impact on total spending.

In comparison budgets today are non-events. Lawson's key innovation has been the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS). This aims to bring government spending closer and closer to their income from taxes as the years go by and to rein back growth in the amount of money floating around the economy. Tory chancellors now must cut their budgets according to the MTFS cloth.

Recently public spending plans have been announced some months before the spring budget. So anyone

masochistic enough to digest the MTFS, dissect public expenditure plans and monitor economic events over the winter months can easily assess the sum of money the chancellor can play around with come March. For the lazy there is always the pre-budget newspapers.

Yet budgets retain a certain mystique. Even a radical privatisation merchant like Lawson shrinks from auctioning that battered dispatch box. The *Financial Times* still serves chicken legs and wine to its staff in a desperate attempt to replicate an Oxbridge party. But it's the Treasury that takes the biscuit. The 3500 souls who work in that late Victorian neo-gothic building which dominates the southern end of Whitehall have just suffered from a rough few weeks.

## Leaks

Last year's budget leaks prompted an unsuccessful attempt by the police to smoke out the mole among the Mandarins. After Tisdall, Ponting and Massiter nobody was taking any chances this time around. The Treasury clings to tradition. All related paperwork must hang together on short pieces of metal tipped cord, called Treasury tags, and be boxed in buff coloured files.

This year those concerning the budget carried sticky labels bearing the legend 'secret' in red capitals.

Those privy to budget discussions — including the chief economic advisor Sir Terence Burns — had to report all contacts with journalists however casual. This reportedly generated masses of paperwork for one official married to a reporter. Paranoia about leaks led to security staff minding the xerox machines.

Last year Lawson's budget performance was feted by the financial press as 'bold, imaginative and radical'. They have got it wrong before. This year he knew he was in for a rougher ride. Unemployment had both edged up and elbowed itself into the centre stage of political debate. Leading 'wets' like Heath were starting to winge in public and Tories in marginal seats were looking nervously towards the next election.

But, most importantly, those superior Arthur Daleys who populate the financial community were getting queasy. Nobody seemed to believe Nigel's claim that he wasn't going to spend any more money this year. The *Economist*, commenting on the government's expenditure plans, wrote: 'Government public spending white papers are looking more and more like interesting Treasury discussion documents rather than statements of intent ... this year's paper contains assumptions about public sector pay and state industries down to 1987-88 that are beyond belief. Even before threats of oil price cuts unsettled them further, financial markets were unimpressed, sterling tense, shares twitchy, interest rates edging up.'

## Tight

Twitchy shares, tense sterling, this would never do. The City demanded a tight budget, and Lawson duly obliged. Money that had been promised for tax cuts was now to be allocated to the contingency reserve so as to offset overspending. The £1.5 billion of promised tax cuts was halved. Bankers evidently carry more clout than Ted Heath.

The Tory budget was obviously a non-starter for the millions

unemployed. But has Labour got an alternative?

Ask Roy Hattersley and he'll say 'yes'. We should go for more infrastructural investment and a few token hand-outs to the poor. Labour's alternative budget for 1985 would be to spend £5 billion more than Lawson — which, just by 'accident', is similar to the figure proposed by the SDP and Tory 'wets'.

This may sound like a big deal but with unemployment at its current level, it's peanuts. In fact if the Tories were to overspend as much this year as they did last, then Lawson's package would not look much different from Hattersley's.

So what would a socialist budget look like? The starting point would be jobs. Around 3.3 million people are officially registered as unemployed. Another million or so — at least — lack recognition in the statistics. Mass unemployment is morally unacceptable, economically crazy and politically disastrous for the labour movement. Jobs for all would boost working class struggle more effectively than a dozen revolutionary newspapers.

In a market economy employment depends on production and output on sales prospects. So the only way to boost jobs is to bump up spending. Governments can do this by widening the gap between their own expenditure and what they funnel away from you and me via the Inland Revenue. Keynes called this increasing effective demand (a good thing). Lawson dubs it an increase in the Public Sector Borrowing Requirement (PSBR and a bad thing).

Back of an envelope calculations suggest that creating four million or so jobs would require an expenditure boost of at least £25 billion — taking

the PSBR to around one tenth of out-

put. Both the establishment and the Labour leadership greet such proposals with guffaws. Such go-for-broke policies would, they point out, scupper the pound, send prices through the roof, and cause epilepsy in financial markets.

They are of course right — given current economic arrangements. But there's the rub. 'Current arrangements' which confine millions to the dole queues are moribund. They belong in the garbage bag of history.

When politicians cover before the whims of financial markets, it is time to nationalise the banks. When hot money flows cost tens of millions of pounds in lost output, it is time to 'regulate' the currency exchanges.



These types of steps, let alone the measures of nationalisation that would be necessary to move to a socialist economy, would of course be denounced by Lawson as 'extremist'. But many of them are no different than those which capitalist governments themselves have taken in time of war.

As long as Labour remains trapped within a framework where it refuses to mount any assault on the financial and industrial institutions of capital it will be incapable of coming up with any credible alternative to the policies of Lawson.

THE NUM has always run an Easter school and school for the students on the release course. For at least the last years I've been going to Skegness to the weekend school.

Gradually over the years the women moved from just going for a family weekend, and looking after the children while their husbands went to school, to having their own part of the programme and choosing their own speakers for the weekend, while the husbands looked after the children.

There have been several attempts to keep the women together in between schools. They weren't all that successful — although we have had quite a few meetings — because of the fact that the people coming were from all over the county of Derbyshire. But it was difficult to find a time and place that would suit all of them.

So when the Chesterfield Labour club was opened, I thought it was a good idea to start again, to try and get a permanent miners' wives' group going with the women I knew who'd been to the last school. It wasn't all that successful.

But then the by-election came up and I joined the women's canvass team, with quite a number of other miners' wives. It eventually became the Chesterfield Women's Action Group, formed about a week before the strike began.

At that very first meeting we said that it was quite probable that there was going to be a miners' strike and that we would need to collect money for the miners. I went round the strike centres in the first weeks of the strike, with Margaret Vallins, helping to set up women's groups.

We started off with three or four groups, which gradually grew to about 15. We eventually ended up with 34 women's groups all over the county of Derbyshire. A coordinating committee was set up, which was called Derbyshire Women's Action Group. That's how it all began.

We organised our first public meeting in the mining village of Duckmanton, because that was one of the first villages we'd been canvassing in. A group of Barnsley miners' wives and students from Northern College came to that meeting. They set up a group. But lots of groups were set up spontaneously, all over the country in a response to the strike. It was a kind of survival instinct I think.

## Different

We knew immediately that it was different from the last strike. The £15 from social security was taken away, deemed to be strike pay that we didn't get. So not only couldn't you pay your bills, but you hadn't enough money for food either. The groups were a reaction of the women to the fact that they had very little money, and were very, very worried about how they were going to feed their families.

It was quite staggering, at the first meeting we had at Duckmanton, over 100 women turned up, all of them worried. Just this coming together gave them a little bit of confidence. It took a little bit of the fright out of the situation.

Once they knew there were hundreds of them in the same situation, a bit of the fright went. And it wasn't very long before women were actually coming to us, saying 'how do we set up a group?'

As there were so many groups all over the country, all doing the same kind of things — like giving advice on how to sort out mortgages, electricity bills, and so on, going out collecting for food and providing food parcels or setting up soup kitchens — we all needed to be in contact with each other.

The first attempt at national coordination came just after the Barnsley rally. Our first weekend national meeting was at Northern College, near Barnsley. We didn't get the numbers right, but at least we all met together and a lot of discussion took place.

Out of that came our first national rally, in London in August. That rally had over 20,000 people, an absolutely fantastic success. I think it was the first time we all realised how large our organisation was, and how strong a movement we could be. Our recent International Women's Day event in Chesterfield was rather a big success too.

We were offered an office in the National Union of Mineworkers' national office in Sheffield. It was set up as a liaison office.

Our organisation went from strength to strength. The time came



# A new women

**ONE OF the most important developments from the miners' strike was the emergence of a new movement of women built around the women's support groups, central to which was Women Against Pit Closures.**

**Many working class women from the mining communities are taking part in active politics for the first time. At meeting after meeting, the story is**

**the same: 'Before it didn't mean anything to me. Now I understand what politics is all about — and I'm going to stay active.'**

**Throughout the strike, BETTY HEATHFIELD has been prominent in the Women Against Pit Closures movement. She gave CAROL TURNER an overview of WAPC: how it began, what it's done, and where it wants to go now that the strike is over.**

when we thought we must have proper representation, we must launch ourselves as a properly organised body. We've got the name Women Against Pit Closures because that included everyone, not just miners' wives.

There's always been a bit of controversy over this. Some women think it should only be female dependants of miners.

At the conference we decided that people who held office would be miners' wives and that representation would be, in the main, people who were dependants of miners, but that the other people would be included as well.

We based our national delegate committee on the same formula that the national executive of the NUM is based on. We have one delegate for each area of the coalfield. Ann Scargill and myself are ex officio on the committee. Neither of us have a vote and neither of us deprive a miner's wife from taking a position on the committee. The national treasurer is not a miner's wife, but most of the others are.

Now we still have to get down to the problem of what we're going to do now the strike has ended. Even though the strike's ended the struggle has got to go on, and we want to stay together.

We are now quite a powerful body of women, a part and parcel of the women's movement, part and parcel of the trade union movement and the political movement — and we want to stay that way. We want to stay strong.

Certainly it's true in this area and, I know, in a lot of the other areas, that this past year has meant that a lot of women who were formerly unorganised have got themselves involved in an organisation which has done a very useful job during this strike. I don't think we were unique — a lot of other women have been involved in struggles in other areas, like the Greenham women, and even in the mining industry.

In the Derbyshire area, women worked down the pit in the 1850s and there are records of them picketing and being arrested — all the kinds of things that we've been doing. There are other examples of women's struggles in the mining communities, for example, coming out and banging their dustbin lids when the scabs were going to work in the 1926 strike.

But they were isolated in communities, they didn't band together. This is what we have done this time. We're not doing something absolutely new. But what has been done that is new is to form ourselves into an organisation.

We've not only united the communities within each area, but we've also united the coalfields. Quite the opposite to what this government said we were doing: dividing communities, dividing the mining industry. The divisions came when the Coal Board and the government started the back-to-

work campaign. That's what divided communities.

At the beginning of the strike the Barnsley women were incensed by the Notts miner's wife who escorted her husband across the picket line and held up a toy gun saying she was going to shoot Arthur Scargill. They said: 'that's it, we must organise ourselves. It's terrible that women are used in this way'.

The press didn't report all the women who are in support of their husbands being out on strike for their jobs. They only wanted to report women who didn't want them out. For once they were forced to find a lot of wives who fully supported their husbands, their sons and their fathers who were on strike.

The press have still under-reported the women's movement. When they realised how strong it was, then they either under-reported or, very often, misreported it. Our demonstrations weren't given full coverage for the size and strength of them. I haven't seen very many TV programmes where the women's pickets were shown.

We had pickets, especially in Notts, where women came from all over Yorkshire, Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire to do a women's picket. These went on every week during the strike, at the request of the Notts women. We went on those pickets to show the women and the men they weren't alone in Nottinghamshire.

## Women's Pickets

In fact they were very successful. They showed the men who were going to work in Nottinghamshire that a lot of women supported the strike from other areas.

Certainly, I know the police didn't like the women's pickets — there was a lot of violence on the women's pickets I went on, not coming from the women but the police. They were as violent with us as with the men. I think it was done to intimidate the women, make them feel that they wouldn't go again, because it was a frightening experience. A lot of women had rough handling from the police.

Hundreds and hundreds of women have become politicised during this dispute. They've learned a lot in a very short space of time. Now they're thirsty to know more.

The strike seemed a long time for all of us to suffer as much as we have, but it's been short in terms of giving



ourselves an education. Women could never have done that by reading or going to classes. It's been done in action, and it's the quickest kind of education that they've ever had. They'll never forget it.

Not only have women learned about political parties and parliament and how they work, about their own local councils and how they work, they've also learned a tremendous amount about the women's movement. For instance, about Greenham Common. I think women in the mining communities didn't relate to that very much, didn't take seriously what the women there were doing. Now they do.



# n's movement



Photos: DAVE DRONFIELD (Derby NUM)

On the future of Women Against Pit Closures, I think the national organisation will be the body that puts on a couple of events a year, something like that. The actual activities will be much more area orientated.

It's already under discussion whether to have some sort of formal relationship with the union. Areas have been asked to bring this up in their groups and discuss what kind of relationship we should have with the NUM, and what form it should take. We've had preliminary discussions with one or two officials of the NUM to sound out how they feel about it.

We don't want the NUM to think we're going to take them over!

Our organisation was formed to fight a battle which was theirs — the union belonged to the men. But what that union is fighting for is of equal importance to the women and the families. We still want to be part of that. There are plenty of struggles still coming up.

## Victories

I don't think the strike has been lost. Throughout this whole struggle we've had so many victories that we can count along the way: the strength and the growth of the women's movement has been phenomenal; the vast network of friendships and solidarity that we have created with the trade union and labour movement, the peace movement and other women in struggle.

There are a vast number of organisations who are in touch with each other now and find that the struggles are the same: rate-capping and abolition of the metropolitan councils, the fight of ethnic minorities. We're not going to lose these links.

And we've spread our net to almost every country in the world. This network is quite unique. That is a marvellous victory.

The leadership of the NUM was united in the strike. That is perhaps why the majority of miners stayed out for so long. They knew they had leaders who were intending to lead them to a victory.

While we got a luke-warm reception from some of the leaders of the labour and trade union movement, you certainly can't say that about the rank and file.

All these are victories.

Anyone who watched films of miners returning to work could not deny that they were still united. They have such dignity, and such pride in the trade union that has been fighting for them.

No matter what kind of victory the Coal Board or the government think they might have gained, they'll find they have another thing coming.

don't we have more nursery schools and more creches so that I can have a life as well?

Some of them who have jobs, I know, will be thinking a lot more about whether they need to be in a trade union or not. Now they'll attach more importance to that.

I don't think a lot of women have involved themselves in the peace movement. We've got women in this area now wanting to start up women's peace movements in their own villages.

A lot of women will now branch out in a lot more different ways than they've ever done before. Very few will be happy to return to the kitchen sink, although inevitably some of them are going to end up that way. Now the men are back to work it's quite a different story coming out to meetings, gadding off to a foreign country somewhere, and leaving the pots and the washing all behind.

Each and every one of the women will have their own personal problem to sort out within their own families — to be able to take the role they've been taking for the last year and even extending that role. But I'm sure they'll be successful.

I don't think you can discount the influence of the women's movement on us. If you look at women in the trade unions, they've been making slow but steady progress for women's equality. And you can't discount a lot of the groundwork which the women's liberation movement in the '60s laid, in the sense of bringing equality for women to the notice of people.

Possibly most women in the mining communities may not have related to that kind of movement because they didn't think it affected them, and they didn't think that kind of woman was what they were. Now they've had their eyes opened.

You can't discount all that, but this movement of the miners' wives, for the first time, has brought a lot of working class women out of their homes and given them a look at a wider world. It's given them the confidence to know they can blossom into that world which is much more than just the family and the housework.

This kind of activity they've been doing is much more positive. Because they'll be thinking, when their husbands have gone back to work — and they're already coming up against it now. If they've small children they are stuck there in the home with their children, they'll now be thinking why



Women Against Pit Closures organised a successful International Women's Day event in Chesterfield recently

# Sharpeville — twentyfive years on

**MONDAY, March 21, 1960.** That date always will stand out in bold red letters on the calendar of South Africa's history of struggle against the regime of oppression and humiliation which is known to the world as apartheid.

On that day and the next the world's press and television screens carried pictures of the carnage in that remote black township near Vereeniging in the Transvaal. Who can forget the picture, spread over two pages of the *Daily Mirror* of those bodies of dead women, men and children sprawling on the ground in front of the police station in Sharpeville?

It brought home to the whole world the real nature of the white capitalist regime in south Africa — a minority regime which could only keep itself in power by the exercise of naked brute force against the overwhelming majority of the population. Sixty-nine people died on that day in Sharpeville, among them eight women and ten children. One hundred and eighty people were wounded. The majority of those killed and wounded were shot in the back.

The demonstration in Sharpeville was part of a campaign organised by the Pan African Congress (PAC), an Africanist break-away from the African National Congress against the hated pass laws.

The pass is the document which every South African who is officially designated as black in South African nomenclature has to carry.

Failure to produce the pass to an authorised person on demand can lead to instant arrest. Pass laws are almost as old as white rule in South Africa. They were first introduced by the Dutch colonists in the 1650's when the first slaves were imported into the Cape from Madagascar and the East Indies.

## Passes

All slaves travelling between rural and urban areas had to carry passes from their masters. With the penetration of white rule into the interior, the system was applied to the whole of the black adult population in varying degrees. It was extended to black women after the Nationalist Government came into power in 1948. The object of the pass laws, from the viewpoint of the white ruling class was to maintain strict control over the movements of black people.

For the Blacks it was a symbol of slavery and humiliation. With the introduction of apartheid, came a tightening of the pass laws.

Blacks did not calmly accept the new repressive laws. Women, especially, fiercely resisted the extension of the hated laws to them. Protests against the pass laws mounted. In 1958, there were 400,000 convictions for offences against control regulations.

Pressure from the masses were urging the leaders of the liberation organisations to take some action.

The ANC decided on a campaign which would include deputations to local government authorities urging the abolition of passes and a 'day of prayer'.

The more militant PAC, under the leadership of Robert Sobukwe had resolved on 'decisive and positive action against the pass laws as the first step in achieving freedom in 1963.'

**By Charlie van Gelderen**

The campaign was planned to begin on March 21 when people would be asked to leave their passes at home and surrender at local police stations for arrest.

The slogan would be 'no bail, no defence, no fine.'

Sobukwe had informed the police of the demonstration, emphasising that it would be of a peaceful nature and that the demonstrators had been told to disperse in orderly manner if the police ordered them to do so.

Although the PAC was not a large organisation at the time, its campaign caught the mood of the masses.

On 17 March it distributed a leaflet telling people to stay away from work on the Monday.

A bus boycott was organised with women playing a prominent part in the picketing of bus terminals.

PAC pickets were posted on the road to Vereeniging to stop pedestrians and cyclists.

By 10 o'clock a large crowd had formed in the open space in the centre of Sharpeville.

In the neighbouring townships of Bophelong and Boipatong a large group of people gathered and marched, 4000 strong, to Vanderbylpark police station.

In the case of Vanderbylpark and Everton (another township), the crowds were dispersed after a baton charge and lowflying Sabre jets.

## Protest

At Sharpeville the aircraft failed to intimidate people.

Nyskane Tsolo, one of the leaders of the protest, explained to a police lieutenant that they wanted to be arrested for not having passes with them.

The lieutenant explained that this was impossible because of lack of space in the jail.

Tsolo also told the police "We will not call off the demonstration until Sobukwe has spoken."

Shortly after 1.30 p.m., without any warning, several police began shooting.

Others followed. A number of demonstrators started to laugh, thinking the police were firing blanks but the laughter

soon turned into terror as bodies started falling to the ground. Volley after volley of pistol and automatic weapons fire tore into the fleeing crowd.

The shooting lasted for less than a minute. When it stopped, the ground was literally covered with bodies. This was Sharpeville, March 21st, 1960.

The immediate repercussions shook South Africa to its very foundations. In the days which followed the shootings, while the people of Sharpeville mourned, Vereeniging was held in the grip of a general strike by the workers from the townships. They did not return to work till after the mass funeral on Wednesday 30 March.

At the other end of the country, in the Cape, thousands of black workers rose in fury in the townships of Langa and Nyanga. What was significant was that for the first time the PAC was able to mobilise migrant workers alongside the urban-based working class.

The shooting of two Blacks in Langa was the signal for three weeks of upheaval and confrontation in the Cape Town area. A 'stay at home' strike was called jointly by the PAC and ANC on March 28. Several hundred thousand Black workers around the country observed the strike call.

PAC speakers urged Blacks to continue striking until passes were abolished, a £35-a-month minimum wage had been won, and the authorities had pledged not to victimize strikers.

For a brief moment in history it appeared that the government would bow to the pressure from the masses. Prime Minister Verwoerd, the architect of



Police open fire at Sharpeville

apartheid, was in hospital recovering from an assassination attempt. The government ordered the temporary suspension of the pass laws.

The acting Prime Minister, Paul Sauer, said: 'The old book of South African history was closed... for the immediate future South Africa will reconsider in earnest and honestly her whole approach to the Native question. We must create a new spirit which must restore overseas faith — both white and non-white in South Africa... We must alter the conception of baaskap (white boss mentality)... there should be absolutely no reference to baaskap...'

Of course Sauer was moved not only by the events in Sharpeville and Langa but by the massive

withdrawal of overseas investments which gave rise to a short-term business slump. And his views were not to prevail. The hardliners in the government asserted themselves. Verwoerd returned to the scene. A state of Emergency was declared and both the PAC and ANC were banned.

At that time, Blacks in South Africa were still represented in Parliament by white MPs. The Congress of Democrats MP, closely associated with the Communist Party of South Africa, made the shameful plea in Parliament that the government should only ban the PAC and not the ANC. He said '... if ever there was a need, it exists today for the Government to realize that it has in the ANC a friend and not an enemy, because

these organizations that we are asked to ban are so diametrically opposed that the government should seize the opportunity of appealing to the ANC to assist it to restore peace and order in South Africa.' (Quoted in Peter Dreyer, *Martyrs and Fanatics: South Africa and the human destiny*, p174-175).

But if Sharpeville and its consequences brought more repressive legislation from the regime, it also brought a wealth of lessons to the oppressed. In the words of Robert Sobukwe 'In Sharpeville we overcame the fear of the consequences of disobeying colonial laws... It became respectable to go to jail... We stripped the white man of that weapon against us.

The white man now, in

Soweto, had to fall back on his ultimate weapon, the gun. Soweto has been a lesson in overcoming the fear of the gun... now that he relies on the gun and we too can get the gun, confrontation is inevitable...'

That lesson has been well learned and is inspiring the current wave of unrest which brought 7,000 armed military and police to Sharpeville a few months ago; the school boycott which has kept the schools empty for months; the growing resistance to the forceful removals of people to the barren wildernesses of the 'homeland'; the rapid growth of the Black and Independent Trade Union Movement; the rejection of the fake constitution; the growing unity between all sections of the Black working class — 'Black', 'Coloured' and 'Asian'.

# Bolivian general strike — eyewitness report

By Bridget Orr



Bolivian miners receiving donation of bread

**THE SLOGAN** of the miners occupying La Paz during the 16-day general strike which ended at the weekend was 'No Elections; We Want Bread'. This strike, which was the longest since the Siles government came to power over two years ago, was significant for the advanced demands of the Bolivian trade union federation, the COB and the apparent strength of their position.

7,000 miners were already in La Paz when the COB announced the

general strike on Friday the 8 March. During the next few days truckloads of miners, easily identifiable in their miners' helmets, were seen driving into the city. Many were put up in church-run hostels, and others stayed with families in private homes. A support system was mobilised and by Monday sympathetic households had been contacted and requested to provide one square meal a day for two miners for the duration of the strike (as many as four miners were known to appear unexpectedly for a meal!).

Whatever the feelings of the people of La Paz about the strike, and there was a certain amount of criticism of the disruption of the relatively well-off privately employed sector, it could not be ignored.

All commercial activity in the centre of the city came to a standstill; banks, offices and shops were closed without exception. Transport and communication outside La Paz was frozen. There was an air of tension and expectancy — not least due to the constant explosions of dynamite, exaggerated by

La Paz's surrounding hills.

Rallies, addressed by helmeted miners, were taking place in every market square. "Blockeos" (barricades) were thrown up across main bus routes (the privately-owned bus companies did not join the strike although many buses could not operate due to petrol shortages).

Miners and demonstrators sat across the Prado, La Paz's main thoroughfare. Armed police surrounded the Plaza Murillo, containing the seat of the government and the presidential palace, in response to rumours that they would be blown up.

By Tuesday the Siles government had offered an increase in the national minimum wage which had been rejected by the COB — which instead demanded Siles' resignation. The following day the headlines reiterated his refusal to resign, and also proclaimed 'if the miners had arms, their enemies would be hiding under

their beds.'

Despite the strength of the miners' position, their acceptance of the government's settlement which entailed dropping their most advanced demands indicates that both they and the COB recognise that the early elections demanded by the right would only result in the return to power of General Banzer. The policies of the Siles' government in the economic crisis have strengthened the right. Not only has Banzer more money than any other political party to invest in an election campaign, but people remember his regime for its high level of spending — forgetting that that is what they are now paying for.

What is clear is that the people of Bolivia cannot continue to exist in a situation where inflation runs at well over 3000 per cent. Prices have been rising daily, there are queues for bread, for paraffin for cooking, and for petrol, and where strikes paralyse transport every other month. One class must prevail.



# The ballot or the bullet

**MR MODERATOR, Brother Lomax, brothers and sisters, friends and enemies: I just can't believe everyone in here is a friend and I don't want to leave anybody out. The question tonight, as I understand it, is 'The Negro Revolt, and Where Do We Go From Here?' or 'What Next?' In my little humble way of understanding it, it points toward either the ballot or the bullet.**

Although I'm still a Muslim, I'm not here tonight to discuss my religion. I'm not here to try and change your religion. I'm not here to argue or discuss anything that we differ about, because it's time for us to submerge our differences and realize that it is best for us to first see that we have the same problem, a common problem — a problem that will make you catch hell whether you're a Baptist, or a Methodist, or a Muslim, or a nationalist. Whether you're educated or illiterate, whether you live on the boulevard or in the alley, you're going to catch hell just like I am.

We're all in the same boat and we all are going to catch the same hell from the same man. He just happens to be a white man. All of us have suffered here, in this country, political oppression at the hands of the white man, economic exploitation at the hands of the white man, and social degradation at the hands of the white man.

Now in speaking like this, it doesn't mean that we're anti-white, but it does mean we're anti-exploitation, we're anti-degradation, we're anti-oppression. And if the white man doesn't want us to be anti-him, let him stop oppressing and exploiting and degrading us. Whether we are Christians or Muslims or nationalists or agnostics or atheists, we must first learn to forget our differences.

Don't let anybody tell you anything about the odds against you. If they draft you, they send you to Korea and make you face 800 million Chinese. If you can be brave over there, you can be brave right here. These odds aren't as great as those odds. And if you fight here, you will at least know what you're fighting for.

Everything that came out of Europe, every blue-eyed thing, is already an American. And as long as you and I have been over here, we aren't Americans yet.

Well, I am one who doesn't believe in deluding myself. I'm not going to sit at your table and watch you eat, with nothing on my plate, and call myself a diner. Sitting at the table doesn't make you a diner,

unless you eat some of what's on that plate. Being here in America doesn't make you an

American. Why, if birth made you American, you wouldn't need any legislation, you wouldn't need any amendments to the Constitution, you wouldn't be faced with civil-rights filibustering in Washington, D.C., right now.

No, I'm not an American. I'm one of the 22 million black people

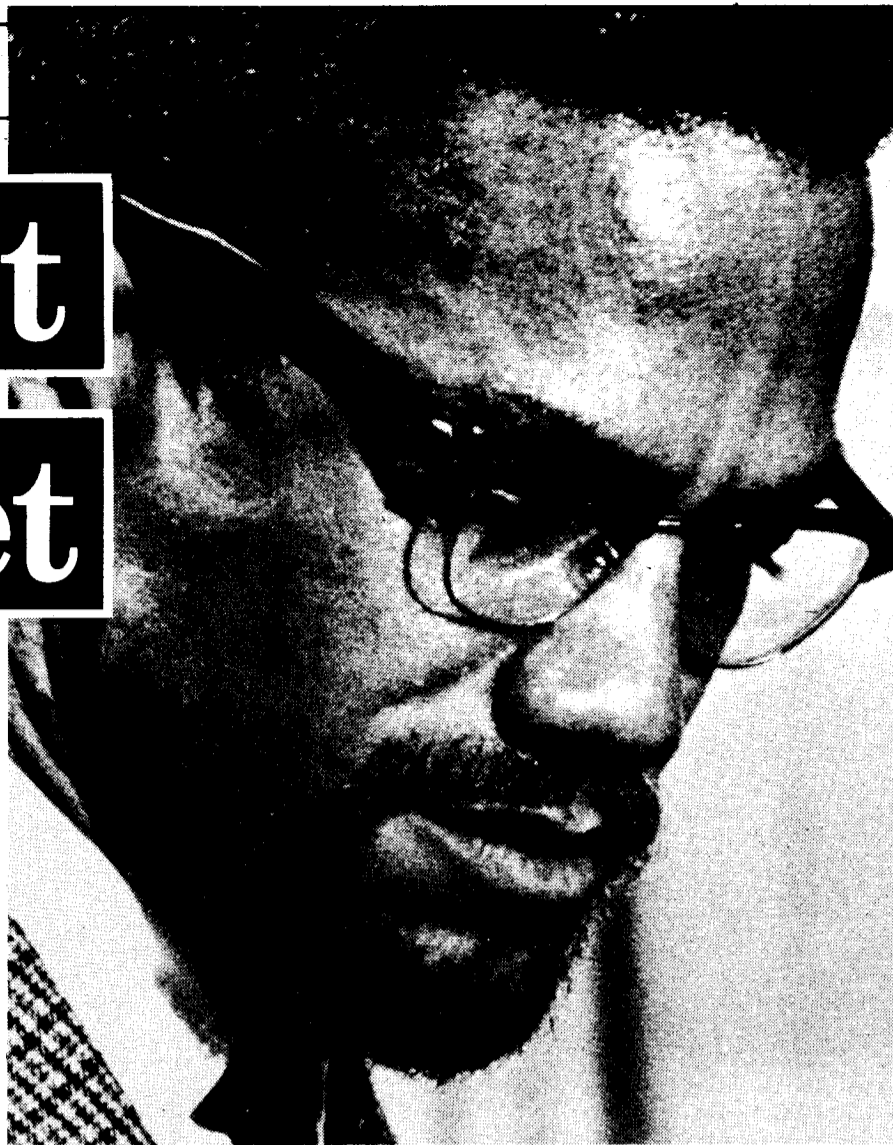
**TWENTY YEARS ago the great black American revolutionary Malcolm X was assassinated. All evidence points to the hand of the US government behind the murder. Malcolm X had begun to inspire US blacks to fight for their freedom independently of the racist and imperialist Democratic/Republican party system.**

Malcolm X advocated black nationalism. For this he was labelled a racist — a slander repeated by the publishers of the British version of his autobiography. As Malcolm himself pointed out, blaming the victim is always the response of oppressors.

Today Malcolm X's ideas have inspired a new generation of black freedom fighters in the United States. They particularly showed why it was necessary to reject Jesse Jackson's presidential nomination campaign for the racist Democratic Party. Malcolm X's ideas are just as relevant for Britain.

Below, to commemorate his anniversary we print one of Malcolm's speeches on the need for black self-organisation — organisation on a programme which breaks from capitalism and imperialism. It was written in the United States where there is not even a Labour Party to confront the capitalist parties.

The refusal to recognise black sections at the last Labour Party conference, and the new demand for a 'loyalty oath' that constituencies will not acknowledge the votes of black sections in the re-selection of MPs shows the same resistance in Britain to black self-organisation that Malcolm X condemned in the United States.



who are the victims of Americanism. One of the 22 million black people who are the victims of democracy, nothing but disguised hypocrisy. So, I'm not standing here speaking to you as an American, or a patriot, or a flag-saluter, or a flag-waver — no, not I. I'm speaking as a victim of this American system. And I see America through the eyes of the victim. I don't see any American dream; I see an American nightmare.

These 22 million victims are waking up. Their eyes are coming open. They're beginning to see what they used to only look at. They are realising that there are new political trends from coast to coast. As they see these new political trends, it's possible for them to see that every time there's an election the races are so close that they have to have a recount.

They had to recount in Massachusetts to see who was going to be governor, it was so close. It was the same way in Rhode Island, in Minnesota, and in many other parts of the country. And the same with Kennedy and Nixon when they ran for president. It was so close that they had to count all over again. Well, what does this mean? It means that when white people are evenly divided, and black people have a bloc of votes on their own, it is left up to them to determine who's going to sit in the White House and who's going to be in the dog house.

It was the black man's vote that put the present administration in Washington, D.C. Your vote, your dumb vote, your ignorant vote, your wasted vote put in an administration in Washington, D.C., that has seen fit to pass every kind of legislation imaginable, saving you until last, then filibustering on top of that.

And your and my leaders have the audacity

to run around clapping their hands and talking about how much progress we're making.

It's got to be the ballot or the bullet. If you're afraid to use an expression like that, you should get out of the country, you should get back in the cotton patch, you should get back in the alley.

They get all the Negro vote, and after they get it, the Negro gets nothing in return. All they did when they got to Washington was give a few big Negroes big jobs. Those big Negroes didn't need big jobs, they already had jobs. That's camouflage. I'm trying to knock out the Democrats, for the

**(Speech by Malcolm X on 3 April 1964 in Cleveland USA)**

Republicans, we'll get to them in a minute. But it is true — you put the Democrats first and the Democrats put you last.

The same government that you go abroad to fight for and die for is the government that is in a conspiracy to deprive you of your voting rights, deprive you of your economic opportunities, deprive you of decent housing, deprive you of decent education.

You don't need to go to the employer alone, it is the government itself, the government of America, that is responsible for the oppression and exploitation and degradation of black people in this country. And you should drop it in their lap. This government has failed the Negro. This so-called democracy has failed the Negro. And all these white liberals have definitely failed the Negro.

So, where do we go from here? First, we need some friends. We need some new allies. The entire civil-rights struggle needs a new interpretation, a broader interpretation. We need to look at this civil-rights thing from another angle — from the inside as well as from the outside.

To those of us whose philosophy is black na-

tionalism, the only way you can get involved in the civil-rights struggle is to give it a new interpretation. That old interpretation excluded us. It kept us out. So, we're giving a new interpretation to the civil-rights struggle, an interpretation that will enable us to come into it, take part in it.

And these handkerchief-heads who have been dillydallying and pussyfooting and compromising — we don't intend to let them pussyfoot and dillydally and compromise any longer.

How can you thank a man for giving you what's already yours? How then

can you thank him for giving you only part of what's already yours?

And now you're facing a situation where the young Negro's coming up. They don't want to hear that 'turn-the-other-cheek' stuff, no. In Jacksonville, those were teenagers, they were throwing Molotov cocktails. Negroes have never done that before. But it shows you there's a new deal coming in. There's new thinking coming in. There's new strategy coming in.

It'll be Molotov cocktails this month, hand grenades next month, and something else next month. It'll be ballots, or it'll be bullets. It'll be liberty, or it will be death. The only difference about this kind of death — it'll be reciprocal.

Three hundred and ten years we worked in this country without a dime in return — I mean without a dime in return. You let the white man walk around here talking about how rich this country is, but you never stop to think how it got rich so quick. It got rich because you made it rich.

You take the people who are in this audience right now. They're poor,

we're all poor as individuals. Our weekly salary individually amounts to hardly anything. But if you take the salary of everyone in here collectively it'll fill up a whole lot of baskets. It's a lot of wealth.

If you can collect the wages of just these people right here for a year, you'll be rich — richer than rich. When you look at it like that, think how rich Uncle Sam had to become, not with this handful, but millions of black people. Your and my mother and father, who didn't work an eight-hour shift, but worked from 'can't see' in the morning until 'can't see' at night, and worked for nothing, making the white man rich, making Uncle Sam rich.

This is our investment. This is our contribution — our blood. Not only did we give of our free labor, we gave of our blood. Every time he had a call to arms, we were the first ones in uniform. We died on every battlefield the white man had.

We have made a greater sacrifice than anybody who's standing up in America today. We have made a greater contribution and have collected less. Civil rights, for those of us whose philosophy is black nationalism, means: 'Give it to us now. Don't wait for next year. Give it to us yesterday, and that's not fast enough.'

## Hypocrite

Uncle Sam's hands are dripping with blood, dripping with the blood of the black man in this country. He's the earth's number-one hypocrite. He has the audacity — yes, he has — imagine him posing as the leader of the free world. The free world! — and you over here singing 'We Shall Overcome.'

Expand the civil-rights struggle to the level of human rights, take it to the United Nations, where our African brothers can throw their weight on our side, where our Asian brothers can throw their weight on our side, where our Latin-American brothers can throw their weight on our side, and where 800 million Chinamen are sitting there waiting to throw their weight on our side.

So you're dealing with a man whose bias and prejudice are making him lose his mind, his intelligence, every day. He's frightened. He looks around and sees what's taking place on this earth, and he sees that the pendulum of time is swinging in your direction. The dark people are waking up. They're losing their fear of the white man. No place where he's fighting right now is he winning.

Everywhere he's fighting, he's fighting someone your and my complexion. And they're beating him. He can't win any more. He's won his last battle. He failed to win the Korean War. He couldn't win it. He had to sign a truce. That's a loss. Any time Uncle Sam, with all his machinery for warfare, is held to a draw by some rice-eaters, he's lost the battle.

# Wrong road in LPYS

**JUDGE** by the reports in *Tribune*, *Labour Weekly*, and *New Statesman* about the resolution on the Young Socialists passed at Scottish Labour Party conference on 10 March, it would seem that the goal of a mass campaigning youth movement in Britain has suddenly found new and unexpected support among sections of the Labour Party leadership. The composite resolution passed at the Scottish conference has been applauded as an attempt to end the 'grip of sectarianism' on the LPYS.

But this move has not been done by increasing the pathetic budget of the LPYS (currently 1 per cent of total Labour Party expenditure), nor by politically supporting the LPYS. It has supposedly been achieved by changing the relationship between the LPYS and the Labour and trade union leadership.

The resolution has been heralded as Scotland's prescription for Labour's youth. But reality it is not a prescription for a healthy, mass youth movement but one to remove the potential of building a socialist youth movement which could be any serious political or organisational challenge to the Labour leadership.

The resolution reflects the concerns of the Kinnock leadership of the Labour Party rather than the interests of working class youth.

The first part of the resolution was pitched to attract the left. It aimed 'the grip of sectarian politics on the YS and the lack of campaigning by the party as a whole...for the lack of youth by Labour's youth movement.'

The experience of the last year does prove that the political concerns of the LPYS and the

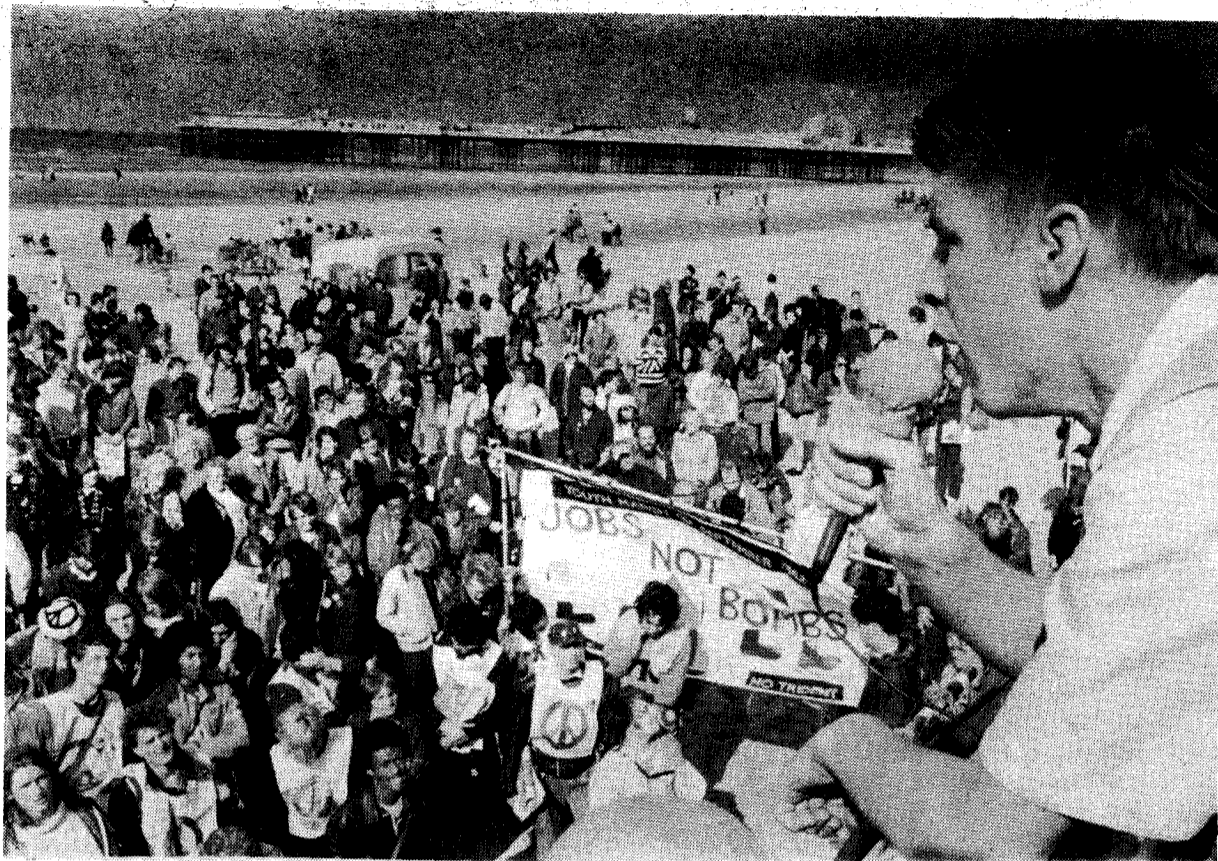
Labour Party leadership though very different — are blocks to building a mass campaigning youth movement.

By Anne Kane

The last year has been one of historic class struggle. Young women and men have led this struggle in the mining communities. There has been a mushrooming of lesbians and gays support the miners groups, the women against pit closure groups, the black solidarity groups.

The political ideas of thousands of young people have been forged in this battle. All this has added to the already existing struggles of youth in the Youth CND, the women's movement, the Irish solidarity movement, and all the struggles of the oppressed. It has helped forge a class struggle current among youth. This alliance strengthens the struggle of the whole working class by taking up the specific concerns of all the oppressed and exploited.

The approach of the leadership of the LPYS during this historic struggle has been to ignore the political lessons of



Has the Labour Party leadership become the friend of youth?

solidarity, and the self-organisation of the oppressed. The *Militant* leadership failed to organise even one national LPYS demonstration in support of the miners. Its sectarianism led it to miss the opportunity to win many thousands of young people to the LPYS. How the leadership of the Labour Party proposes to attract these youth to the LPYS, given its complete scabbing role during the

miners' strike, is a complete mystery however.

The second part of the Scottish resolution proposed a 'solution' to the problem. Apart from the party as a whole campaigning for recruitment to the LPYS the resolution includes discussing direct trade union delegation to national and regional LPYS conferences, and involving the Scottish council of the Labour Party much more directly in the

affairs of the Scottish LPYS.

Greater political involvement of young trade unionists in the LPYS is entirely to be welcomed. This is not proposed by the resolution however. Direct involvement by trade unions at a national and regional level today means concretely increasing the hold of the trade union bureaucracy in the LPYS — not increasing the involvement of young

workers. Without democratising the trade unions, building real youth sections in the trade unions, and making the leaderships accountable 'direct trade union delegations to national and regional LPYS conferences' simply means the YS being brought more firmly under the grip of the leadership of the trade unions.

The trade union youth sections which presently

exist are nothing more than puppets. What would be created without tackling the problem of accountability in the trade unions would be a youth organisation which would be more like a women's movement of the Labour party — that is where the trade union bureaucrats can act as a block to political change. It would deprive young people of control of their own organisation.

The need for such political change in the LPYS, and the potential for a mass youth movement, have been proved beyond any doubt over the last year. The way to secure real political change is to support the organisational independence of the LPYS — not to undermine it. Young people, not trade union bureaucrats, must control their own organisation. Without that it will never be built as a mass force.

Activists in the Scottish LPYS who want to build a mass campaigning youth movement have organised around the Scottish LPYS *Bulletin*. Some of the most enthusiastic about the resolution adopted which threatens the organisational independence of the LPYS, were giving very little support to this *Bulletin* and its aims — to build a mass campaigning LPYS and fight any witch hunting moves.

The stagnation of Labour's youth movement is a political problem. The Labour Party leadership is part of the problem posed in building a mass youth movement. Building a youth movement does not just mean more campaigning. It means campaigning for socialist policies, supporting workers when they are on strike, and making leaderships accountable. The Scottish Labour Party resolution goes in exactly the wrong direction.

## Learning from the miners strike

**SIX MONTHS** ago, Central Manchester and Greater Manchester Labour Party Young Socialists launched *Youth Action*, a bulletin for activists within the North West region YS. There is also sponsorship for the bulletin from several other YSs.

The bulletin's aims are to reach out throughout the North West region to the independents in the YS who want a radical change in the direction of the LPYS. Its launch during the miners' strike was aimed at linking up with many young people who had been galvanised by the political struggle by the miners' dispute.

Throughout the country, and particularly in the North West, the leadership of the LPYS has failed to learn the lessons of the strike or even organise a single national demonstration of youth in support of the miners. Narrow sectarian politics have held the LPYS back from participating as far as possible in the struggles of the last year, and bringing together broad layers of youth in support of all the struggles of the working class.

The lessons of the strike stand in stark contradiction to the YS leadership's views, particularly on women, gays and lesbians, and black people, and generally in building a broad-based support for these struggles.

By Gary Croft

The dayschool organised by *Youth Action* will be a further step in the fight to build a YS on these lessons. Its first session will be on the key result of the strike: the creation of a new class struggle alliance which unites the oppressed and exploited.

The speakers will be from Bold NUM, Bold miners' wives, Liverpool black caucus, and Les-

bian and Gays Support the Miners. The second session takes up the question of leadership and the implications of the strike for the LPYS, contrasting

the heroic struggle of Scargill and the NUM to the leadership of the Young Socialists.

On the theme of 'A leadership that stands and

fighters', there will be speakers from the NUM, the LPYS regional committee and Manchester city council. The final session discusses how best *Youth Action* can fight to organise the LPYS around the political lessons of the strike. Here we hope to have discussions with regional activists from other LPYS bulletins around the country.

The project of building this current is a number one priority for the YS if we are to respond to the magnificent example set by the miners and their leadership.

On top of this we must link our project into the Labour left in the region, especially in Manchester. Bringing the developments and advances of the Labour left to bear on the YS will be decisive for the survival and development of this project.

The lessons of the miners' strike are central to creating a leadership which is truly as good as that we saw during the miners' strike.

## No fake unity

As the Tory rate-capping noose is slowly tightened around local government jobs and services, the continuing public row between leaders of the GLC is increasingly a sideshow.

The damage that has been done, however, will continue to have its effect. It has strengthened the hand of the centre and right on labour controlled councils, and made the job of those who are prepared to fight much more difficult.

Livingstone's failure to lead the battle against the rate-capping legislation was a betrayal of his responsibilities. But the problems go deeper than the debacle of the GLC. The plans made last July at the local government conference were intended to ensure that all the rate-capped councils would go illegal at the same time.

The decisions made on 7 March in fact avoided doing this. By stating that it was impossible to make a rate, instead of refusing to make a rate, they ducked the key issue facing the boroughs. Many of those who are now attacking Livingstone were keen supporters of this decision.

The decision to take this course was taken when it became clear that many

Labour groups were not in fact prepared to go all the way. It is an attempt to unite those who do not want to fight with those who do. As the GLC has shown, this kind of unity does not stand up when the test comes.

by Pat Hickey

It is a problem that has dogged the local government fightback at national and at local level. Its effects will become clear nationally as some boroughs fall by the wayside, and within the boroughs as the right and centre vote with the Tories, Liberals, etc., rather than go illegal. In the local government unions a similar problem is emerging as sections of the left propose a work-in-tactic instead of strikes to deal with cuts in jobs and services.

The left must break with this method. It makes those who want to fight, the prisoners of those who don't: not only of the right, but the fake lefts who are happy to allow the right to get them off the hook. The left must wage a sharp fight against this fake unity, and take the issues directly to the unions, the Party and the community.

### YOUTH ACTION DAYSCHOOL

the struggle continues

SATURDAY MARCH 30th  
BOLD MINERS WELFARE CLUB  
FLEET LANE, FLEET LANE,  
PARR, ST HELENS.

THE MINERS STRIKE HAS SENT SHOCK WAVES THROUGH THE LABOUR MOVEMENT AND IN THE PROCESS IT HAS MOBILISED TENS OF THOUSANDS OF YOUTH. THIS DAYSCHOOL WILL LINK THESE DEVELOPMENTS AND HAMMER HOME THE LESSONS OF THE PAST YEARS STRUGGLES.

IN THE LPYS AND RIGHT ACROSS THE LABOUR MOVEMENT, WE NEED A LEADERSHIP AS GOOD AS THE MINERS!

Sponsored by Bold NUM and Manchester Central LPYS.

## Ratecapping

# National action needed

A CLEAR DIVISION emerged over the trade unions' strategy of fighting rate-capping at the London Bridge shop stewards day on 19 March. Over 500 stewards heard speakers from Bentley Womens' Action Group, Liverpool joint shop stewards committee, and from Camden NUPE boiler section who have been on strike for five weeks.

One strategy is that of working as normal if the money runs out.

Hackney council workers have been told that they may not be paid next month, because of a court injunction which prevents the council borrowing against rate income, until a legal rate is set. A similar court action has followed against Islington.

The work-in tactic was put forward forcefully at the London Bridge meeting, and not surprisingly, had the support of Margaret Hodge, Leader of Islington council, representing the Association of Labour Authorities (ALA).

Keith Veness from Hackney NUPE officers' branch compared considering strike action to saying: 'If you decide to hang me I'll shoot myself.' A representative from the Greenwich joint shop stewards committee stated that they would be seeking to delete all reference to 'all-out' strike action from London Bridge policy.

Ivan Beavis, NALGO NEC member, tried to give the work-in tactic a left flavour. The tactic is part of an overall strategy in which unions are proposing to carry on working in order to win public sympathy and maintain it until the Tories back down.

It is described as form of 'workers power' and a method of preventing the appointment of receivers and subsequent privatisation.

It is ironic that workers are being told in the face of attacks on jobs to work rather than strike. In effect this is a serious erosion of the right to strike.

The other strategy put forward at London Bridge is one supported by the joint trade union campaign in Camden. This provides the only basis for defeating the rate-capping legislation and the gradual erosion of the right to strike with the loss of jobs and services. This is not to counterpose work-ins and occupations to all-out strike, but to say that national action and solidarity is the only way to win.

In the context of all-out strike action, occupations and some emergency cover will be necessary but the workforce must be mobilised first. We should look back on the civil service and the health service

disputes, and recognise that months of localised actions demobilise the unions and ultimately lead to demoralisation and defeat.

As Dave Burn, Islington NALGO branch secretary pointed out, work-ins simply cannot be sustained without money. It costs £3 million per week to run Islington services.

**By Bob Golinski, Camden Nalgo**

The moves towards the work-in strategy are not yet a disaster, but whether the crisis comes first in Hackney or elsewhere, the action must be rapidly escalated. The solidarity action needed cannot be developed unless national action is seriously built by

## Hackney Fight still on

**THE FIGHT is still on in Hackney! That was the message from the council unions last week. The question is: who will they be fighting — The Tories or the council?**

That will be decided within the Labour Group and at the council meeting this week. The unions meanwhile are pressing ahead with the crucial job of organising to make that fight a reality.

A clear opening to scab on the defence of jobs and services is available to Labour councillors, as a document from the directors of finance makes clear. It purports to outline various ways of saving money, and implies that Hackney council could set a rate and get by without major cuts.

The joint shop stewards committee in Hackney, however, is clear that this document represents a thinly disguised attack on jobs and services.

The unions are still demanding that the council refuse to comply with the High Court instruction to set a legal rate. It must break the law as the only way to defend jobs and services.

Questions remain: who leaked the document? Were chief officers or Labour Councillors involved?

local authority unions on a joint Union basis.

There must be total rejection of compromise budgets and maximum rate increases, or we will have lost — and the Tories will be back for more next year and the year after.

### Implications

The debate has important implications for the national local authorities shop stewards conference in Liverpool on 30 March. This will be a major focus for the trade union response to rate-capping.

A national body will be set up to coordinate this response. We need to be clear on the strategy that can win.

We must defeat the notion that public sympathy can change the Tories minds, and build for the type of action that can genuinely mobilise the workforce.



### Showdown in Manchester

MANCHESTER City Labour Party voted to accept a budget last Thursday 25 March, which will mean £300-£350m. spending.

**By Duncan Edwards**

This is £100 million over government target. In the council chamber there are

meetings every day as Liberals, Tories and Labour right felt that an illegal budget will be passed. The Labour right have called a council meeting for Friday 29 March to discuss this, so a showdown is imminent.

The city party executive committee are on standby at each council meeting to be consulted so that they can determine party policy for councillors.

### In memory

**of JOCK VEALL, a beloved friend and comrade. Died 16 March 1985. David and Mary Anne Woolf.**



Hilda Kean, Leader Hackney Council

inside and outside the council, and to organised groups of the working class in Hackney. In this way the campaign would be based on a working class and a council workforce that understood the issues, and was willing to act to defend jobs and services.

It is not too late for the Labour group to employ these methods, although Wednesday's meeting may see the end of a fightback from the council, leaving the ball firmly in the union's court. The spotlight is on certain Labour councillors — whose side are they on?

## NUR's political levy campaign

**BY LAW all unions have to ballot their members by the March 1986 on the right to keep their political funds. It's clear that the Tories aim to slash the links between the unions and the Labour Party, thereby stifling the efforts of the working class for an independent voice.**

Instead of meeting the challenge head on, the Labour Party and union leaderships are trying to win 'on the cheap' by obscuring the fundamental issue of the Labour Party and stressing other issues. APEX for example didn't mention the party at all in its recent campaign, and this aspect is weak in the rail unions's official approach.

So with the probability of industrial action on jobs and pay looming, we also have to defend the right of the unions to a political voice. These are not two separate tasks.

**By Toni Gorton, NUR guard**

As the miners' strike has shown, the fight for jobs and living standards is a political fight in its most dramatic form and one which the Tories want to outlaw. Concretely the NUR (ASLEF seems to be dragging its feet) has set up a special campaign unit — a group of experts who are a full-time resource for the activists in the union — and sent some 600 members to special day schools to learn techniques for effective campaigning.

The campaign is seen as the 'steady drip' method of talking to fellow workers about the importance of a 'yes' vote. It will be organised as an election campaign.

We will make up canvassing cards to record the name of every member on our patch with an indication of how they'll vote — and make sure to get the 'yes' voters there on the day.

The stage to argue that the unions should boycott the ballot has passed. The NUR agrees that government money will not be taken to finance the ballot, but at least part of it will have to be postal as there are some 10,000 pay points for the 140,000 rail-workers.

A survey has shown that support for the political fund lessens the further south one moves. It points to the crying need

for a national campaign across the unions and Labour Party to make the general propaganda, fighting against the media onslaught that is bound to increase as the ballots come closer.

Unfortunately the leadership of the NUR have no plans for the tours of workplaces, public meetings, and rallies that are called for.

The national campaign so far has produced a leaflet and two bulletins laying out the arguments. For example, one gives an idea of the money that big business pours into the Conservative Party, and what is SDP policy on transport as well as Labour's.

By concentrating on the activists, the union is explicitly recognising the weakness of its structures as a vehicle for the campaign.

Attendance at most branches is low, some branches don't exist. In some areas, branch officers have led an 'opting out' campaign.

Headquarters advises setting up special action committees where necessary, and has given direct access to union resources for individual members.

This is quite a contrast to Sid Weighell's stifling of the independent activity of ASLEF members.

The big danger is that, if the campaign fails, the leadership can again blame it on the 'backwardness' of the rank and file. We cannot let this happen. A vital task for all activists is to call for Knapp and Buckton to lead this fight. We must also explore jointly working with local GMCs.

### Correction

The article on rail by Doreen Wepler in last week's Socialist Action was not only considerably altered from the original, but included the statement that the Rail Board planned an increase of 21,000 jobs. It should of course have been a decrease.

# A Socialist ACTION



# Teachers to step up action

**THE NATIONAL Union of Teachers' executive meeting on Friday 22 March decided to draft a motion for the annual conference of the union at Easter, calling for the action on the teachers' pay claim to be stepped up. Resolutions demanding that the executive escalate the action and begin a national levy have come from all over England and Wales.**

The three-day selective strikes, for a minimum £1200 rise for all teachers, are now in their fifth week. Schools balloted to take part have regularly returned votes of over 80 per cent in favour, and frequently 100 per cent. Although this can be partially explained by the fact that teachers on strike have received full pay, it does reflect a widespread determination to fight.

The national ballot which was held on the

question of no cover and refusal to cover out-of-hours work was 78 per cent in favour of continuing the action.



**By Bernard Regan, NUT executive (personal capacity)**

Teachers in Lambeth and Westminster used the three-day action to campaign for the backing of parents, as well as approaching other public sector unions to build a common fight.

Teachers see this campaign as involving more than pay — it is about government policy on education and the priority attached to it. In her Newcastle speech, That-

cher singled out striking teachers for attack, blaming them for providing a 'bad example'.

This is part of a growing move by the media to isolate teachers who have already had the courts used against their action. There will be increasing demands for teachers to be 'assessed', to weed out inefficient teachers.

Keith Joseph education secretary wants to see this introduced in order to give power to individual heads and local authority employers to deny teachers the annual pay increment, but — more fundamentally — to produce a pliant workforce frightened to challenge Thatcher's plans for the education of working class youth based on YTS-type schemes.

The left in the NUT held a successful conference on 9 March, attended by 90 activists. Conference pledged itself to campaign for action and this included pro-

posals to link up with other teaching unions — that is the NAS/UWT and NATFHE — and other public sector unions, who are fighting for pay increases.

During the miners' strike strong links were built especially between London teachers and the mining communities. During the Westminster strike action, members of Notts women's support group toured a number of schools to speak in support of the teachers.

Although teachers recognise that they have a hard fight, it is that kind of support which will strengthen their determination. The next crucial step is to build a fighting alliance with all other public sector unions with outstanding claims.

● *Socialist Teachers Alliance pre-conference meeting in Scarborough: The Palm Court, 7.30pm, Friday 5 April — to discuss the pay campaign.*

# Stop the Powell Bill

**IT NOW LOOKS as if Enoch Powell's Unborn Children (Protection) Bill won't get through parliament — but only this time round! If it doesn't, there'll be the government's own Bill on the Warlock Report coming soon.**

During the preparation of Powell's Bill, the situation has been daily changing. It got through committee stage earlier than expected, but Powell hasn't succeeded yet in finishing one of the Friday slots allocated to third readings of private members' bills.

Nevertheless, we must recognise his supporters on the Tory backbenches will be putting pressure on the government to find extra time.

Although the Bill will go to its third reading with a number of amendments, these do not substantially affect the nature of the

Bill. And MPs who don't support the Bill will be putting down amendments too.

**By Leonora Lloyd, NAC**

The Bill aims to prevent experimentation on embryos and, although it does not stop in vitro fertilisation (popularly known as test tube babies), its provisions will seriously damage the possibilities of that procedure being successfully carried out. So

far IVF has enabled some 250 babies to be born in this country, and about 1000 worldwide.

Under the Bill, all fertilised eggs will have to be implanted in a 'named' woman. This means either the chance of multiple births is increased (because several eggs are implanted) or, alternatively, doctors will implant only one egg and the chances of its successful development are reduced.

In the latter case there is only a 1:30 chance of success and many doctors think the expense and trauma isn't merited for such a low success rate.

And there is another problem: *only* implantation is allowed. There can be no testing for disease or abnormality.

Although the rates of handicap for this method are no greater than in ordinary conception, it is an obvious drawback for those using this method due to infertility.

The main idea behind the Bill was to prevent research using human embryos. The Bill's promoters are encouraging the idea that mad scientists are cutting up tiny babies limb from limb.

In fact the important research that is going on is mostly using conceptuses donated by women having sterilisation. Such ex-



Photo: ANGELA PHILLIPS

periments too are overseen by ethical committees.

It is not surprising that racists such as Enoch Powell and the Tory backwoods people are promoting the Bill. They believe we are our genes, we are our biology.

The Bill is bad enough on the surface that it must be opposed, but supporters of the Bill have already made clear that, if it goes through, they will turn next to the question of abortion.

From its start 10 years ago, NAC has always turned to the labour movement for support and action. That goes for the Powell Bill too. The whole labour movement must be mobilised to stop the new attack: by petitions, lobbying and demonstrations, by meetings, and articles and letters to the press.

NAC is calling for a demonstration on Saturday 27 April against the Powell Bill, and is supporting a lobby of parliament

between 2-10pm on Wednesday 24 April. Make sure your local trade union and Labour Party branches are involved.

● *The lobby is organised by ALRA. Phone 01-359 5200 for further details. For copies of the bulletin on Powell's Bill, and any other help or information, contact NAC at Wesley House, 70 Great Queen Street, London WC2B 5AX, or phone 01-405 4801.*

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