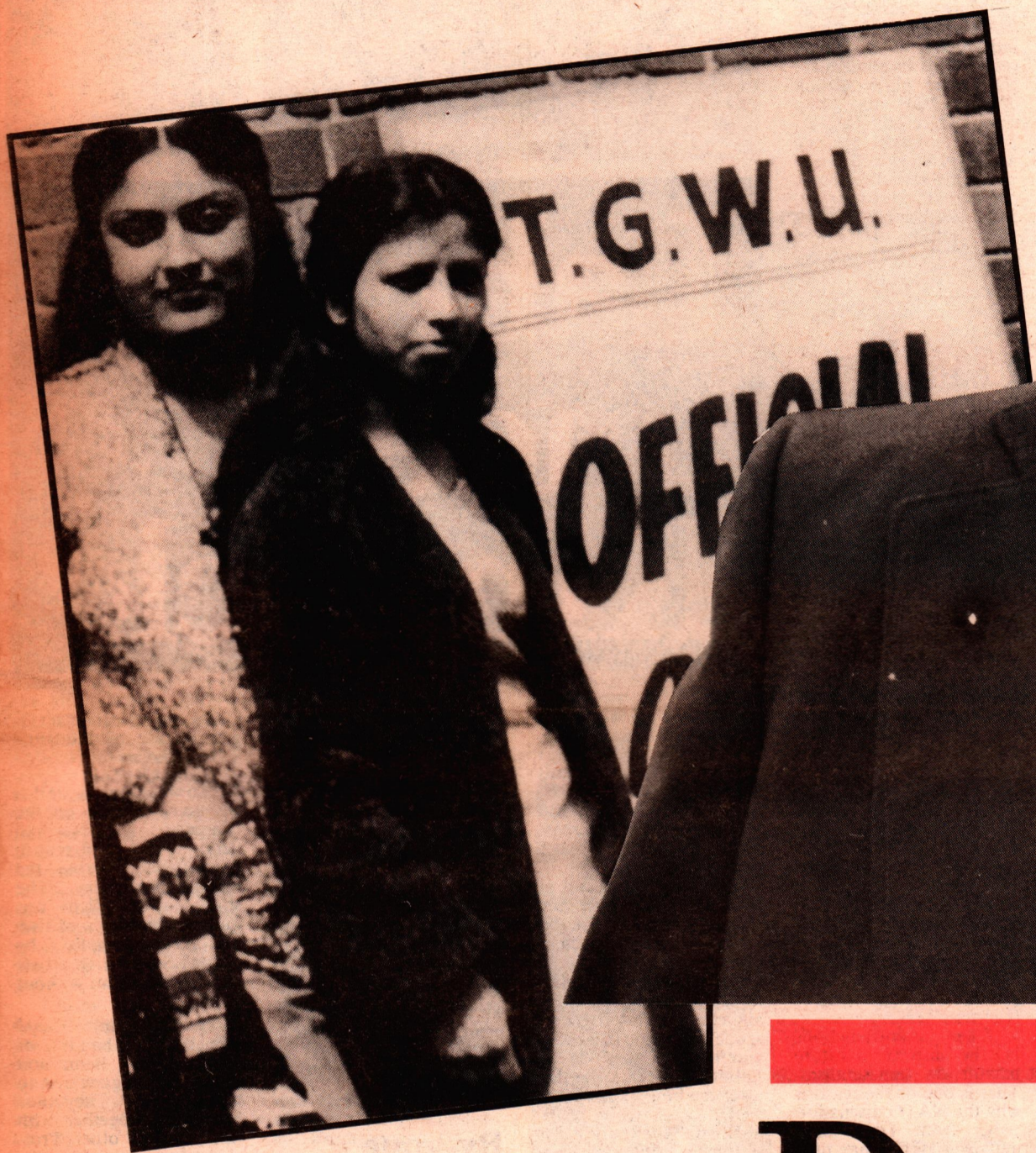


SOCIALIST

ACTION

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THE NEW REALIST right is hoping for a victory against Ron Todd, now that the TGWU executive has given the go-ahead for a re-ballot in the election for general secretary. The Tory government is looking for a chance to try to drive home the advantage gained against the NUM and the labour movement militants who supported the miners' strike, and to shift the unions firmly to the right. Neil Kinnock, by adding his voice the call for a re-ballot, has weighed into the fight on the side of the new realists and the Labour Party right wing.

No one should be in any doubt therefore about the importance of this election for the future of the British trade union movement. The general secretary of the TGWU is one of the most powerful figures in the British trade union movement. When Frank Cousins won the post from Deakin in 1956 it marked the beginning of a shift to the left. Now, if Wright were to win against Todd, it would spell a move in the opposite direction.

That is what the new realist right, Neil Kinnock and the majority of the Labour Party leadership, and the Tory, Liberal and SDP Parties all want out of this election. The concern expressed by the bourgeois press for democracy within the union is entirely spurious. The real issue is the political views of a key leader of the British trade unions, and the million and a half votes that he wields.

Last time Wright stood was during the miners' strike. He was careful not to differentiate himself too much from union policy. The new realist right as a whole was on the defensive because of the strike. Now he can come out more confidently as 'a realist' and a 'middle-of-the-road' candidate. He will be much more open in his differences with union policy.

The press is already preparing his campaign. Key figures, such as Marie Patterson, are speaking up for him. But his other backers will be the Tories and the SDP.

Wright in power would put left union policies in jeopardy — on unilateralism nuclear disarmament, on reselection, and a whole host of other crucial issues. Most important,

Defend the TGWU!

if he won the new realist leaders would have secured a key ally in their drive for class collaboration instead of class struggle against the Tories. Judging by his record as secretary of the Wales TUC, George Wright will lift not one finger to support his own members, or anyone else, who fights the Tories.

In the long term, the success of Wright in a contest for TGWU leadership would allow the Tories to drive home postal ballots and impose their anti-union laws. With Wright in the TGWU driving seat the right's attempt to regain its grip on the Labour Party would be considerably strengthened. The path would be set

for, at best, a right wing Labour government of the Wilson-Callaghan type or, at worst, coalition.

These are the stakes involved in the battle now taking place in the TGWU for the election of the general secretary. That's why every stop's got to be pulled out for a victory for Todd and in defence of the TGWU.

BUILD NAC!

THREE THOUSAND people marched from Lincoln's Inn Field to a rally in Trafalgar Square last Saturday to protest against Enoch Powell's Unborn Child (Protection) Bill. The demonstration, called by NAC, was timed to coincide with the Powell Bill's final reading expected to be this coming Friday, 3 May.

Given the short notice the demonstration was a respectable size. As the NAC speaker pointed out at the end of the march the anti-abortionists had hoped to rush the Powell Bill through parliament without public opposition.

The demonstration showed that they were wrong. The pro-abortion movement was reviving in response to the threats that Powell's attempts to ban research on human embryos and Gillick's triumph in the courts, banning contraceptives being prescribed for young people, posed to women.

The largest contingent on the demonstration was the one full of women behind the NAC banner. Young people were well represented in all the contingents, with a cluster of student union banners prominently displayed. The far left mobilised for the demonstration, particularly the Socialist Workers Party who had a large contingent.

Trade union and Labour Party representation was sparse because of the short notice, despite the backing NAC has had in the past from the Labour movement and the support NALGO gave it to build this march.

The Trafalgar Square rally was chaired by Frank Dobson, a pro-choice Labour MP who has been sitting on the parliamentary committee examining the Powell Bill. Three speakers at the rally made particularly striking speeches.

Carole Dezateux, a doctor on maternity leave and a member of the Medical Professional Unit, part of ASTMS, kicked the rally off by saying 'This is a bill that must be stopped.' Speaking as 'a woman, a mother, a doctor, a trade unionist,' she said that the Bill would: 'prevent research on inherited disorders, halt further studies with human embryos, criminalise medical treatment of infertility.'

Powell who supports the pro-Life anti-woman lobby was 'burying his head in the sands of his own dogma with his attempts to give legal status to the foetus. 'What does he know about me, my body and my life', she told the applauding crowd.

Dianne Abbott, black sections steering committee and Westminster city councillor, hit the nail on the head with a short speech describing the Bill as an 'anti-woman' Bill. 'Why do we know it's an anti-woman Bill?' she asked the demonstrators, 'because it's put forward by a small group of male MPs. It's anti-working class because it will affect working class women most if abortion becomes illegal. It's Enoch Powell's Bill and he is no friend of women, no friend of the working class and no friend of black people!'

These MPs' concern for the rights of the embryo is completely hypocritical. 'I wish they were as worried about the lives of the thousands of young people in this country on the dole and their rights.'

For the NAC steering committee Pauline Alden took the stage. Powell 'was an attack on all women' she told the crowd. Victoria Gillick's ruling was in line with the government's attacks on young people. DHSS regulations now threaten the right of young people even to live where they choose.

The decimation of the welfare state had a particular impact on women. 'Women are now answerable to an authoritarian state, husbands, male doctors, and with Powell — the secretary of state who would give women permission to have test tube babies.'

'Powell aims to shut the door on progressive parts of the Warnock Report. The support being built now for Powell is to lay the basis for restrictive time limits legislation in the future,' she explained to the rally.

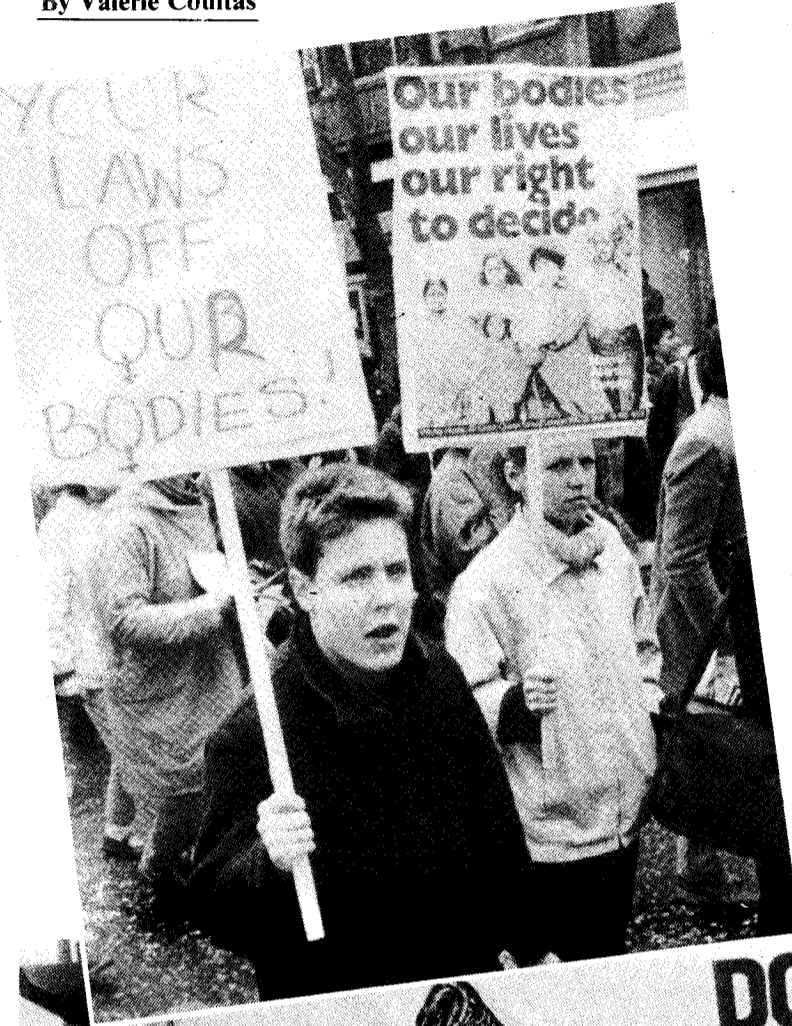
The government has already stated its intention to give a favourable reception to legislation reducing time limits. 'Women's rights cannot be defended in isolation. Women and men have to join together in a mass campaign to oppose these attacks.'

Local reports reveal that that is just what is happening. Glasgow and Birmingham NAC report new members, Cardiff, Bath, Croydon, Lambeth and Newham NAC have all been recently established. Brighton and Oxford set up Campaign Against Powell committees for the demonstration, and Manchester has a Campaign against Powell and Gillick.

NAC is once again showing that it is the key campaigning organisation that can build a mass movement in defence of a woman's right to choose. It's next national initiative, the demonstration called for 23 June, the day before Gillick's case is likely to go to the House of Lords, must be built in every town and in as many trade unions and Labour Parties as possible. The way to fight for abortion rights is to build NAC.

An emergency resolution was passed at the APEX conference opposing Enoch Powell's bill. Lynett Savings denounced the bill as a product of the 'hysterical, pro-Life anti-abortion lobby.' Despite a platform attempt to have the motion to affiliate to NAC remitted it was also passed by an overwhelming majority.

By Valerie Coultas



Photos: GM COOKSON

A Woman's right to choose

The National Abortion Campaign believes that women must have the right to choose whether or not to have children. This choice is only possible if we have the right to birth control of all kinds. If this choice is restricted, either by lack of free, safe, dependable contraceptives, by forced sterilisation as a condition for getting an abortion or by legal and medical restrictions on abortion, then we do not have a 'right to choose'.

The Law

Under the present law women have no automatic right to an abortion; they have to have the permission of two doctors. NAC wants a new law

- Where women have the right to choose
- that legalises all safe methods of abortion acceptable to women
- which gives women the right to be told about different methods of abortion.
- where women do not have to agree to be sterilised to obtain an abortion
- which doesn't discriminate against young people

NAC wants women to have early, safe abortions. But women who have late abortions are not criminals. They do so for important personal and medical reasons. The only way to reduce the number of late abortions is to make abortion freely available on the NHS.

Facilities

There are not enough National Health Service facilities for abortion. Over half the women who need legal abortions are forced to pay for them in private clinics. Until we have enough National Health Service facilities, the 'right to choose' means nothing. All Health Authorities should be legally bound to provide sympathetic staff and adequate facilities.

Abuses

For most black and immigrant women in Britain, the right to have children they want, let alone the right to control their own fertility, has never been recognised or

respected. NAC opposes:

- pressure being put on women to accept contraceptives they do not want
- women being given contraceptives (often dangerous ones like Depro-Provera) without their knowledge and/or without full information about side-effects
- women having to agree to be sterilised in order to get an abortion
- women being pressured to have an abortion or be sterilised against their will

International perspectives

Nowhere in the world do

women have the right to choose to control their own fertility. Thousands of women have to come to Britain each year to have abortions because abortion is illegal in their own countries.

NAC is affiliated to the International Contraception, Abortion and Sterilisation Campaign. Its slogan is 'women decide' — because it believes that an international network is vital to fight for a woman's right to choose in every country in the world.

Our bodies, our lives, our right to decide!

(This is an edited version of the NAC declaration. For the full version write to NAC Wesley House, 70 Great Queen St, WC2 SAX.)

Amnesty!

THE LATEST FIGURES on the number of miners who have been given their jobs back by the NCB is 280 out of the original 900 who were sacked.

But many of these men are being re-employed not reinstated, which means they lose all their years of service. Those who have 30 years of service behind them could lose more than £30,000 if they were now to be sacked because of pit closures.

The re-employment tactic is being used in the Durham, Derbyshire and Nottingham coalfields

The NUM in Scotland is refusing to take back any sacked miners, under any conditions. 180 men remain dismissed.

The figures themselves prove that victimisation occurred in this strike on a mass scale.

9,808 miners were arrested in this dispute according to Home Office figures. One in five of those arrested were never charged with any offence.

According to an analysis made by Paddy Hillyard and Janie-Percy-Smith in the Guardian (11/3/85) far from the majority of the miners being involved in daily violence and intimidation the majority were charged with minor public order offences, 4,314 with breach of the peace and 2,322 with obstructing the highway.

The methods that the police employed — riot policing, road blocks, bail conditions which imposed curfews and restrictions on movement, trumped up charges that were later dropped — prove that the law was blatantly used in this dispute as a method of social control.

The miners in prison and out of a job are not criminals. They are victims of the Tory government's revenge on a community that dared to resist the destruction of the mining industry. It is vital that the labour movement does everything it can to defend these militants.

'I KNOW MYSELF that these men should not be in prison. They shouldn't be criminalised. My husband was locked up for 32 hours in Mansfield prison. He was dragged out of bed at 1.45 in the morning and in the end he wasn't charged: it was wrongful arrest.

Brenda Greenwood was arrested in Ollerton on 26 November. She was locked up in Risley Prison for seven days. She had been charged with obstruction as she supposedly had ignored her bail conditions. But in court she was proved innocent of obstruction so she too was wrongfully arrested and imprisoned without trial.

I have seen men stood up in court and they have done nothing wrong. A lot of men in prison are not guilty of anything. They are in prison because they are miners. Some of the offences are first time offences and very trivial ones at that and men are being sent down for five years.

Neil Kinnock should be kicking up about these people being sent to prison. When I was interviewed on telly they asked me about violence. I don't believe in violence but when I was beaten up by two six foot policemen what could I do about that? Neil Kinnock doesn't talk about this side of things.

NOMPAS exists to help the families of imprisoned miners. Sometimes women have to travel a long way.

NOMPAS is backed by the Haldane Society and if the prisoners don't get their rights then the lawyers we are in contact with will make sure they know what their rights are.

It helps a lot if we on the outside make sure those on the inside are not isolated, that they're not forgotten.' (Doreen Humber)

NOMPAS is holding a conference in Sheffield University on 22 June. The campaign can be contacted at 5, Caledonian Road, Kings Cross, London N1.

TEACHERS UNION activists in Wuppertal, West Germany are organising a nationally co-ordinated campaign to support sacked and imprisoned miners and their families.

List of individuals are being circulated in their local area for support to adopt by sending money and messages of support.

The GIM (West German section of the Fourth International) has set up a special fund to raise money for Dennis Pennington sacked miner from Bold Lancashire who has just been released from prison.

This is a new column in our paper designed to highlight the campaign for an Amnesty for sacked and imprisoned miners. If you have any relevant information please tel 01-254 0261

Printworkers rally supports the miners

IN A FINE display of solidarity, over 500 Fleet Street printworkers attended a meeting last Thursday to express their continued support for the fight of the NUM against the Tory government. NUM president Arthur Scargill, as the main speaker, took the opportunity of thanking the printworkers for their magnificent support throughout the strike, both politically and financially. GRAHAM TOPLEY reports for Socialist Action.

The meeting served two purposes. It was organised by *Right of Reply*, a journal produced by printworkers on the *Sun* and the *News of the World*.

The importance of printworkers' and others' views being given the chance of expression was stressed by all the speakers. The ability to get out the truth about the miners' strike was seen as a vital act of solidarity by the printworkers. Among the filth churned out by Fleet Street, *Right of Reply* shone like a beacon and showed that rank and file trade unionists could and did support the miners.

It showed too that printworkers could produce a paper of their own in the face of the bosses' monopoly of the technical and financial skills in the 'Street of Shame'.

The meeting allowed the NUM, through Arthur Scargill, to express the thanks of its members to another section of workers faced with similar attacks on jobs. Printworkers in Fleet Street have built good, long-standing relations with the NUM.

The capitalist press played a disgusting and reactionary role throughout the miners' strike, with its lies, propaganda and boycott of the miners' case. The classic example was the infamous picture of Arthur Scargill giving a supposed 'Nazi-style' salute on the front of the *Sun*. The courageous stand of the printworkers in refusing to publish it put paid to that.

As one speaker said, producing the *Right of Reply* was an important step, but printworkers still produced some of the lies during the miners' strike. In future they have to do more — they 'had to do better' as he put it, and look at the whole question of who controls the press.

Platform speakers included Sean Geraghty from the EPTU, the electricians union, who warned of the treacherous role of the TUC in previous disputes, particularly the strikes of the National Graphical Association and the health workers. He considered the attack on miners an attack on all trade unionists.

Because of their level of organisation and their importance, printworkers could well be next on the list. Maxwell's threat to *Daily Mirror* workers' jobs underlines the point.

The meeting's theme was 'the fight goes on'. John Mitchell from Sogat '82 stressed they would be failing in their duty if they did not learn the lessons of the miners' strike. John Hannington from the AUEW echoed this and called for the campaign to continue on amnesty for sacked and imprisoned miners.

John Geleit of the NGA, who is also vice-chair of Trade Union CND, outlined the seriousness of the attacks on democratic rights throughout the strike, particularly the restrictions on the movement of miners around the country. This was made even clearer now



with the use of passes in and around Molesworth USAF base. We are told we need the bomb, he said, to stop undemocratic laws being imposed on us — but we've already got them.

The sequestration which both the NUM and the NGA have suffered was an attempt by financial blackmail to destroy the mass organisations of the working class.

The meeting collected over £10,000 for the NUM from previous collections at shops and chapels throughout Fleet Street. These collections will continue on a weekly basis and form a very important source of funds for the NUM at the moment.

Arthur Scargill began his remarks by saying that history had been made during the 12 months of the strike. The whole movement had to begin appraising the effects of the dispute and where to go from here. In his opinion there could be no talk of defeat, since the impact of the last 12 months could only be described as a success for the labour and trade union movement.

As Scargill explained, he could have got agreement during the strike as

he was now being advised by various commentators, but it would have been agreement on the coal board's terms — not the NUM's. His job as a trade union leader was to save jobs, keep pits open and fight for his members' interests.

'That should be the job of every trade union leader in Britain today', he said, clearly aiming his remarks at those 'leaders' of the TUC and individual unions that Sean Geraghty and John Hannington from Duffy's AUEW, had referred to earlier.

Scargill's central point however was that the 12 month strike had challenged the heart of the system, by challenging the right of the employer to destroy jobs, communities and pits at the stroke of a pen. For this reason the NUM had incurred the wrath of the whole state machine.

The lesson to be learnt was clear. It applied to the victory at Upper Clyde Shipbuilders and to the miners' strikes in 1972 and 1974: that mass mobilisations and the support of the whole movement are the conditions for preparing victory. Against those who argue that 'old style' trade unionism is dead,

Scargill reassured the methods of mass struggle.

The one thing which academics and would-be coalitionists can't understand, he said, was that the greatest victory of the strike was the struggle itself. 'Yes, I've been reading *Marxism Today*', Scargill said. In fact the strike had unleashed forces never before organised in the labour movement. The clearest and best example was the women's support groups, who had realised their potential and strength, and taken their place alongside striking miners, not as their back up. The women should be given full rights of NUM membership at every level.

Scargill ended with a clear statement of where he stood and what he wanted. 'There's no need to tap my phone', he said, 'everyone knows what I want: a society free from unemployment and want, with no cruise or Trident missiles, but with hospitals and adequate care.'

'You can jail our members, you can sequester our funds, but you can't imprison an idea or a mind which transcends policies established in the interests of a capitalist system.'

National Women's Solidarity Conference

THE MIDLANDS Women's Co-ordinating Committee is hosting the national women's solidarity conference in Birmingham this coming Saturday. The leaflet advertising the conference explains why women from the mining community in the Midlands see this as an important event.

'We are not going back to our kitchens, we want to repay the support we received from blacks, lesbians and gays, from the peace movement, the rank and file of the labour movement who fought with us during the strike.' The women's support groups are continuing to function in the mining communities. Women are still centrally involved in the battle against pit closures; the campaign for amnesty and re-instatement and miners wives are involved in NOMPAS, the campaign established to campaign around the prisoners.

But as Ellen Smith from Nuneaton, one of the organisers of this conference, explains, women also want to stay together to fight on wider issues of women's oppression. We want to organise around women from every walk of life, like single mothers and homelessness as well.'

The conference has consequently been organised to deal with the

amnesty issue and to draw out the wider links women have made in this struggle. Workshops will dominate the day's events, where women from the Women Against Pit Closures, Greenham Women, women involved in the Barking hospital dispute and black women will join together to discuss the lessons of their struggles.

Lesbians Against Pit Closures, the National

Abortion Campaign, Armagh women and women from the peace movement will be among those groups holding fringe meetings over the lunchtime. Miners' wives whose husbands have been sacked or imprisoned such as Liz French from Kent and Doreen Humber from Nottingham have been asked to address the final session.

By Valerie Coultas

Many women in the mining communities not only gained a sense of power from their ability to organise as women during this dispute, but they have also taken the decision to join the Labour Party. Lorraine Jackson, from Bold, Lancashire, explains why this is the case despite the treacherous role of Neil Kinnock.

'Labour is supposed to be the party of working people, but Neil Kinnock puts down working people. During the strike he

did not support us, and now that it is over he has attacked the men who have been victimised.

'There are thousands of miners' wives who are not going back to the kitchen. We have to join the Labour Party and change it into a real working class party.'

At the up-coming Labour Party women's conference in Bourne-mouth (16-18 June) there is a resolution tabled from Islington South and Finsbury to allow Women Against Pit Closures to affiliate to the party and its women's organisation. The women's section of the Labour Party, already one of the bastions of the left within the party, will be immeasurably strengthened if this resolution is passed.

The NUM is discussing a change in its rules to allow women to become associate members. The Labour Party should follow the NUM's example and welcome the

women from the mining communities into the structures of the party.

● The conference venue is Digbeth Civic Hall. Registration, £1.50 p waged and 50p unwaged, takes place from 10 am. The conference is due to finish at 5.30 and a creche is provided. For further information phone Jo on 021-745 3233, or Ellen on 0203 395972.



Vital battle in the TGWU

THE DECISION by the TGWU to hold a re-ballot in the general secretary election has exposed the real purpose of the media campaign against the union. In the last few weeks the campaign has been based on a handful of proven cases of irregularities, and a great deal of rumour. Now that the union has gone for a re-ballot the media is throwing its weight into the scales in order to secure a victory for George Wright.

When the election was held last year, the miners' strike was dominating the political scene and the new realists had been humiliated by the banning of unions at GCHQ.

The right in the labour movement was in retreat, only six months after unveiling their grand plan at the 1983 TUC. Now, in the wake of the miners' strike they are staging a comeback.

The TGWU is vitally important in this fight. The media, under cover of concern for democracy, is determined to give the new realists every possible help. Wright is carefully playing to the media gallery on this question.

His latest step is to try to discredit the union's campaign to inform members of the new ballot. His aim is to present himself as a 'strong leader', who will re-establish firm central control of the union.

This would mean curbing the power of the shop stewards and the branches, and a step back towards the days of Deakin and Bevin. A victory for Wright would be a big boost to the new realists. It is clear that if Todd wins, the right and the media will discredit the election as much as possible.

By Pat Hickey

Their long-term aim is to undermine workplace elections in favour of postal ballots, and to discredit the upcoming ballots on political funds. Wright is taking full advantage of this support to press forward his campaign. Last year, in a very different political atmosphere he was at pains to tone down his policies, and present himself as a 'middle of the road' candidate.

This time he aims to keep the media solidly

behind him with a much more explicit campaign as the 'realistic' leader who will change the direction of the union. This support will be vital for him.

George Henderson and Todd Sullivan who polled 72,000 votes between them last time will not be standing and have thrown their support behind Todd. Todd therefore starts out with a very strong chance, but the media campaign will undoubtedly intensify in the next weeks.

Clear

It will probably be necessary to win the help of the print unions to defend the TGWU. It is essential therefore that the left makes a clear stand on the policy issues — against the anti-union laws, in defence of political funds, full support for struggles, as well as defence of workplace democracy against postal ballots. The union's opposition to the new realist wing of the TUC must be explained and defended.

In addition, the basic disloyalty of the right in their use of the media and the implied threat of court



action against the union should be exposed. It is essential that the left fights for the maximum possible turn-out at the workplace

votes. The best answer to the media now is the most open and vigorous campaign throughout the channels of the union.



Colman occupation beats jobs attacks

A WEEK LONG sit-in at the Manchester firm of Colman Fasteners has beaten back the company's job-cutting plans. The 150 engineers who work there had just concluded a three-week wages strike when Colman's announced its intention to declare redundant one-third of the workforce.

Successive mass meetings had voted that compulsory redundancies or victimisations would be met with immediate strike action. But the company persisted — without regard to the 'consultation' procedures — and drew up plans to axe 51 jobs. This included the entire union negotiating committee and the bulk of union activists.

Colman's estimated that the workers would be reluctant to take action again, so soon after the last strike, and attempted to break up the union organisation in the plant by their redundancy moves.

It is only 21 months since the union was established at Colman's, after a strike in June 1983. Since then workers have made a number of gains in basic rates of pay and other conditions. But the workers have a way to go even to achieve the average wages and conditions for the area. They recognise that this won't happen without a strong union.

So, when the latest attack came, it was met by an immediate factory occupation. Management were locked out and Colman's workers sought the backing of local union officials as well as sending a delegation to the AUEW national committee.

The management responded by going to the

courts in search of an injunction against the strike leaders, preventing them from picketing and make them financially liable for any losses resulting from the occupation strike. In addition Colman's sent letters to the homes of every worker saying that the strike had broken their contracts and terminating their employment.

The strikers weren't intimidated. Their determined stand and the support for their action from the AUEW national committee forced a retreat by management.

The compulsory redundancies were withdrawn. Instead the factory has been placed on a four-day week and there is agreement to find alternatives to compulsory redundancy.

AUEW Colman's convenor Jon Silberman told Socialist Action: 'The company has reserved its "right" to reintroduce compulsory redundancies in four weeks' time if they think it necessary — but they would be unwise to do so. We voted unanimously to resume our action immediately if they try it on.'

'They underestimated us last time. They have had a clear lesson on how we feel. We've had three major strikes in less than two years. But we won't shy away from a fourth if the need arises.'

London teachers victory

TEACHERS in Inner London look set to sign an agreement with the Inner London Education Authority which would mean the end of compulsory transfers and the guarantee of no job loss in the authority in the next year.

This represents the successful conclusion of a fight waged by the left going back over nine years. It is a victory achieved without the support of the national union which has stepped in on a number of occasions and victimised militants for taking part in unofficial action in opposition to the forced movement of teachers.

Although the agreement does not achieve everything sought by teachers, the officers of the Inner London Teachers Association, which includes members of both the Socialist Teachers Alliance and the Socialist Workers Party, are unanimously recommending it to the ILTA Council on 8 May.

Teachers pay fight continues



THE TACTICS put forward by the officers of the National Union of Teachers seriously threaten to derail the current campaign of the union for £1200 for all teachers. The officers — Winters, Green, Griffin and Richardson, sometimes known as the 'Gang of Four' — together with general secretary Fred Jarvis and deputy general secretary Doug McAvoy, have consistently taken decisions and acted on them, before the executive have even met.

In their latest move, they have agreed to call off action in those local authorities who have agreed to a six point statement acknowledging the 30 per cent decline in

teachers pay since 1974 and calling on central government to provide more money. Secretary of state of education, Sir Keith Joseph has said repeatedly, that there is no

cash available.

By Bernard Regan,
NUT Executive
(personal capacity)

Many union branches are concerned at the leadership's strategy. They are demanding that action is stepped up, especially in militant areas like Inner London where members in Islington and Westminster were due to take action this week.

What is needed is a mass campaign that links up the actions of teachers in England and Wales with those in Scotland as well as with lecturers in further education and universities. Such a campaign linking up with other public sector unions and escalating the strike action represents the only way forward.

Teachers recognise that the campaign they are involved in is for high stakes. Despite the persistent grass roots calls for

SINCE THE end of the miners' strike critics have rushed to print with their view of how the miners strike was waged. In his first major interview since the end of the strike, PETER HEATHFIELD, general secretary of the National Union of Mineworkers, gave CAROL TURNER his assessment of the last 12 months and answered his critics.

The NUM has just emerged from an historic 12 months. Would you like to look back and tell me what your assessment of the strike is? Was it worth coming out?

There are many aspects of the dispute which need to be analysed.

I think the most significant feature of the strike was the willingness of the overwhelming majority of miners to resist the pressure of Thatcherism, and to indicate to the labour movement as a whole that it had to fight back, that the gains of former generations were going to be taken away. The strike has shown the rest of the movement that a fightback is possible.

Amongst the many lessons was the uniqueness of the dispute with no claims on the table. It wasn't about wages, it wasn't about improving conditions — it was in defence of jobs. For the first time a new generation were prepared to defend their jobs in a fashion that led to a dispute that extended over 12 months.

The disappointments were that we were unable to motivate the whole of our membership, and the fact that the trade union movement didn't fulfill its promises. That of course prolonged the strike and created enormous problems.

The fact that we didn't win the support of the Nottinghamshire and the Midlands miners indicates that we failed to campaign adequately before the dispute started. We failed to recognise the political lesson of what was happening in the East Midlands, which is dominated by mineworkers who elected a Tory MP in 1978 and '83. That should have shown us a great deal.

So, with hindsight, I'd say there should have been more intensive campaigning before the decision in the areas was made. We must recognise that the 1978 incentive agreement achieved its objective of dividing miner from miner, that the level of earnings in the East Midlands compared to the level of earnings in Scotland brought about divisions within our ranks that we were not able to overcome. But of course we didn't select the timing of the dispute — it was imposed upon us.

The other very pertinent point is that, ostensibly, the dispute was about four million tonnes of capacity that MacGregor wanted to take out of the industry. In reality, I think everybody recognised it was about reforming the role of the coal mining industry within the British economy.

It was preparing the industry for privatisation. Most miners recognise that. But many trade unionists in other industries have failed to recognise that miners were fighting a battle for the whole movement.

They were fighting a battle on behalf of public ownership. Sadly, I think many more trade unionists will be caught up in that because of their apparent lack of enthusiasm to join with us to defend the gains and achievements of past generations.

I'd like to ask you about some of the criticisms that were levelled at the NUM during the strike. Obviously there were those from the right of the trade union movement. I think you'd expect that. But towards the end of the strike, there was a lot of criticism from the left and the so-called left about the tactics of the union and its national leadership. For example, from the Communist Party, Tribune, the LCC and even Militant.

The main arguments, to concentrate on those of *Marxism Today*, were that the national leadership didn't do enough to persuade public opinion on to their side. Essentially it was because you refused to hold a national ballot that you weren't able to do that. And the tactics of mass picketing you adopted, and the violence that ensued, alienated a lot of people.

Militant took up a left version of that. Ted Grant, on the eve of the LPYS conference attacked the NUM leadership. He said there should have been a ballot, not having one was an indication that the leadership lacked faith in the working class.

What would you say to those critics?

I find it strange that these so-called comrades decide to criticise the leadership. Some of the individuals named in publications like *Marxism Today* throughout the dispute were part of the decision making process. They were people who participated in determining the strategy — actually, people who were arguing for mass picketing! Now, after the event, they find that mass picketing was not the way of dealing with problems.

I have been a consistent opponent of a ballot in the NUM. That has been our collective decision. The dispute started from area strikes and the national union making them official. I believe in ballot box democracy, but this raises the fundamental question of whether a worker has the right to vote his mate out of a job.

I would argue that if a ballot is to be part of the democratic process in the trade union, the question posed on the ballot paper must equally affect all those participating. I don't accept that when 70,000 jobs are going 185,000 should vote. Effectively that's giving people in long-life pits the veto over someone else's right to defend their job. I reject the view of those who with hindsight have changed their minds.

I accept that after the setbacks we've endured there will be critics. But the policies have been clearly defined to the rank and file. I have consistently advocated the defence of those policies and their application. If that warrants criticism, so be it.

There are those too who have sought to personalise the dispute. They have fallen into the media trap of Scargill versus MacGregor. In fact, Scargill, Heathfield and McGahey — indeed the national executive committee — were responding to conference decisions, collective decisions supported by the overwhelming majority of the NEC.

The question of violence is one that many of us have declared ourselves on. We must distinguish what's happened. There are many innocent victims of picket line violence among our membership. There are many of our members who are victims of police line violence. There are many cases of agents provocateurs who have created violence on the picket lines.

Our members have reacted to violence imposed on them by the state. Without defending violence, I am unwilling to accept that what happened on picket lines was at the instigation of our members. The miners have been projected as brutal people who are not interested in law and order. I reject that totally.

Photo: JOHN BIRDSALL



Some of the left have argued that the return to work represents a defeat which is qualitatively the same as 1926. They're saying that the situation now is that the preparedness of the organised working class to go into struggle is very much weakened, that we won't see any significant industrial struggles for years and years.

The Euro-communists, for example, say that the miners' strike of 1984 was the last dying gasp of a form of struggle that's no longer appropriate. Do you think that's the case? Do you think your strike belongs to another era that's past?

I'd preface any general comments with the observation that four million unemployed erodes the traditional solidarity of working people. That was an important element of the problems we faced.

Those on the left in the NUM realised that in some coalfields miners were returning to work, and it was a question of trying to retain control of the situation. As national leaders we could have made an agreement that signed away the heritage of the NUM. We could have signed an agreement selling out jobs that would have set a precedent for the rest of the movement.

We went back to work without an agreement, that's certainly an unsatisfactory conclusion to the dispute. But we went back with a measure of dignity and a recognition that the fight

could go on. I've no doubt in the future there will be struggles. It's epitomised by what's happened at Ascome colliery recently, where miners have been on strike because of the attitude of management — and that's after 12 months of struggle.

“The strike has shown the rest of the labour movement a fightback is possible.”

I don't see it as a defeat comparable to that of 1926. Thatcher and MacGregor were obviously out to humiliate the miners. It was quite obvious — having gone through the exercises of 135 hours of negotiations — that the Board didn't want a negotiated settlement to the dispute. That flowed from a recognition that the rest of the trade union movement wasn't going to support us.

We've seen the whole of the state apparatus aligned against the NUM: the Board, the government, the police, the judiciary, the media — all seeking to isolate the leadership of the NUM. Yet, at the end of the day, after 52 weeks of struggle, the overwhelming majority of Britain's coal miners were still on strike. After that, I'm not prepared to accept there was a humiliating defeat as there was in 1926.

I know that 30,000 went back between October and the end of February. They were committed to the cause of defending jobs, but they were destitute. They'd not deserted the cause, economic circumstances made them go back.

Socialist Action doesn't share the views of the left critics. We say far from being the last struggle that closes an era, the miners' strike opens a new era.

For the first time since AJ Cook, we've seen a new calibre of national leadership — a leadership of the NUM that's shown right from the beginning that it's absolutely determined to win. I believe one of the things that's helped keep the miners out for such a long time is that they've had the confidence that their national executive is not doing back-door deals, looking for ways of getting off the hook.

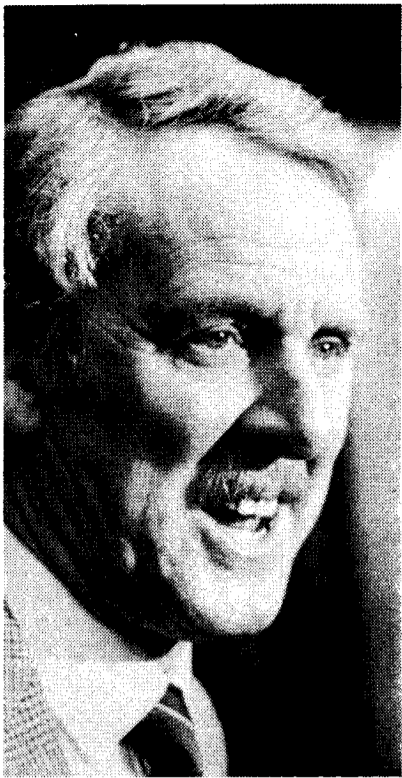
Something else has arisen from that. There is a differentiation within the left — you can see it most clearly in the Labour Party. The rank and file of the party poured into support committees, even though the leadership didn't offer anything like that same support. We've seen that differentiation among left organisations within the party. *Tribune* for instance came out in support of Neil Kinnock, the LCC made similar criticisms to *Marxism Today*, and so on.

But Socialist Action has drawn rather the opposite lesson than 'the

game's up, let's pack up and go home'. Perhaps you'd like to comment on that, and the support you've had from the Labour Party and the solidarity committees during the dispute.

I think it's far too early to draw conclusions about the impact of the 12 month strike on the broader labour and trade union movement. There are some who argue we had a Labour government in 1929 because of what happened in '26, so I would not accept the analysis that many so-called left wingers are projecting.

We've seen a politicisation within the labour movement without precedent. I know I've fallen out with some of the pundits who said in 1972 and '74 — the last two major strikes in the industry — that they had brought about the politicisation of miners. They were about declining standards of living, about money wage militancy.



Throughout the dispute there were rank and filers contributing substantially to our strike.

I'd like to come on to the future of the union. At the end of the strike the reason you'd come out — the programme of pit closures that MacGregor, supported by the Tory government, was going for — hasn't been withdrawn. Do you think the union's in a fit state to continue fighting closures and how would you project that being done?

The next six months especially are going to be pretty difficult. The National Coal Board are indicating that the agreement they entered into with NACODS will not be applied. So there are enormous difficulties facing us. I think too we have to resolve the internal difficulties with the Nottinghamshire area.

But it's important to say that the policies MacGregor projected in early



It's important that those groups raise their voices. My own view is that we should be calling for a public enquiry into the attitude of the National Coal Board. We are failing to get any publicity at all on the discriminatory nature of the Board's attitude.

We are monitoring the situation. In areas like Derbyshire for example, they are dramatically reducing the number of people presently dismissed, but there are still a lot more cases to go before the courts. There's been a breakthrough in Yorkshire where the Board have at long last agreed to discuss individual cases with the area leaders.

It's a process that's slow and cumbersome, but it's one we're obliged to go through. In the meantime we'll sustain the families of these people.

Finally, I want to ask you about the women's movement during the strike. I think it was a fantastic success, not just in terms of the amount of support and solidarity they gave to striking miners and the NUM, but also in terms of the number of women whose confidence and talents were developed during the strike.

There's been a lot of talk about the continuation of the support groups and Women Against Pit Closures, that they should now have formal links with the union. Can you comment on that?

Yes, it's been a fantastic development. I think every striking miner in the country is ready to acknowledge the contribution women have made in a whole variety of ways.

They've been incredible. They've been involved as equal partners on picket lines, planning, pamphleteering and organising the solidarity that's needed in this sort of dispute. We must find ways of integrating that valuable



support. Experience during this strike has confirmed that we've got to establish formal links with the union. It's not easy because of the need for rules to be approved. But I think within the majority of areas there's a willingness and an eagerness to maintain and strengthen links with the women's groups.

Indeed the fact that there's 750 people scattered around the coalfields that have been refused reinstatement is helping keep the women together. They are currently organising a national conference. They are organising their education, like weekends schools at Northern College, which will help maintain our internal links and those they have forged with other support groups nationally and internationally.

The political movement as well should seek to harness this new development. I would like to see more recognition for them throughout the whole labour movement. In Wellbeck, for example, about 15 striking miners' wives applied to join the local branch of the Labour Party. They didn't want to know — a sad reflection on the state of that particular branch of the party. But I hope those sort of difficulties can be overcome.

We've got to look for ways of involving the whole family in trade union activity. In my view that is an important development I'd like to see encouraged, not frowned on. The advantage would be felt not only by the NUM but by the broader trade union movement.

Peter Heathfield on:

The NUM after the strike

But this strike has certainly seen the politicisation of a new generation of miners. I think the lessons will be projected through a decade or more.

The experiences of young miners (the average age of miners is 36), the experiences of the past 12 months will make a tremendous impact on their future outlook and attitude. The movement as a whole will be much richer for that experience. It will help to sustain the labour movement in the future.

The choice that faced the leadership of the NUM was whether it was prepared to do what trade unions have predominantly done for almost a generation now: that is, to be identified with the management of the decline of British industry, or to try and project our alternative policies to ensure that working people have the right to work — that they should not be treated like flotsam and jetsam, that there are policies that would enable them to plan their lives free from the fears and anxieties of unemployment.

Out of the '26 strike the theories and philosophy of public ownership emerged more clearly and the suffering, the poverty of miners in the '20s and early '30s helped bring about a post-war Labour government that sought to take the industry into public ownership and alleviate those kind of problems. I think a future Labour government will inevitably draw on the experiences of miners in 1984-85 and hopefully

fashion policies that prevent that sort of situation developing again.

From the money pouring in from Labour Party branches, individual members, constituency parties, it was obvious the strike had captured the imagination of literally thousands of rank and filers. Indeed the response to the miners' delegation to the TUC and Labour Party conference indicated that at grass roots level there was a tremendous support, and a recognition that the fight was not only the miners' fight but that of the broad trade union movement.

The disappointment was the attitude of those leaders who chose to highlight the irrelevant aspects of the dispute when they should in fact have been clearly indicating their support for the miners' struggle.

There was tremendous solidarity from large sections of the labour movement. For example we received cheques from branches of the EETPU, from AUEW branches despite the hostility of some of their leaders. The money came pouring in from TGWU branches and from General and Municipal branches, and — surprise, surprise — from ISTC branches, indicating that at grass roots level there was considerable support.

Internationally the financial support was absolutely magnificent. I would think that 90 per cent of the cash we received came from abroad.

March '84 have not been applied. I think there may be difficulties in him applying them in 1985. In many ways we have rendered those policies inapplicable.

That in itself is some achievement. The problems facing the National Coal Board have not disappeared.

There is still tremendous spirit in the ranks of the NUM, in the course of the next year we will reassert ourselves. The principle of defending jobs and defending the industry is as pertinent in 1985 as it was in March '84. We will continue to be a campaigning organisation: we will not alter our style of leadership, we will continue to campaign amongst our members — and I'm sure we'll get a response from them.

The fact that Notts and a large part of the Midlands refused to come out on strike actually weakened the position of the union, both from the point of view of stopping the movement of coal and closing power stations but also because it gave the so-called moderate trade union leaderships an easy way out of refusing to build the sort of industrial solidarity needed to win the strike. What do you think the attitude of the union as a whole should be towards the Notts area?

I think most striking miners would readily acknowledge that had the Nottinghamshire miners joined in the struggle, it would have been over in

three months. That would have brought about a substantial modification of the Board's and the government's attitude.

Notts failed to recognise that we were defending the industry from the sort of attack that is designed to bring about privatisation. Sadly, they failed to recognise that fragmentation of the NUM was precisely what the government wants to achieve. There's been an enormous conservative influence brought into the Nottingham coalfield, advising the working miners committee. There's been a whole galaxy of Tory lawyers and business men ready to finance the breakaway in Notts.

The miners there have failed to recognise that the government are more able to attract private capital if there's fragmented trade union organisation. The development in Notts, for example would enable the prospects of multinational oil companies buying up the coal reserves there at give-away prices.

The defence of the industry is about the case for public ownership as well as the defence of jobs. Notts has created a wedge that the government will continue to exploit.

In the weeks and months ahead our job is trying to seek a reconciliation that brings them back into the fold.

Aside from the question of pit closures, the other unfinished business of the strike is reinstatement and amnesty for those miners sacked or facing dismissal. Does the union have any plans to launch a campaign?

We have said since last October that we want to negotiate reinstatement of those victimised by the Board. It's not a question of violence, it's a question of the dismissal of people who are died-in-the-wool trade unionists.

In Kent for example, the overwhelming majority of people dismissed are elected representatives. Similarly Scotland. The NCB have adopted a discriminatory policy.

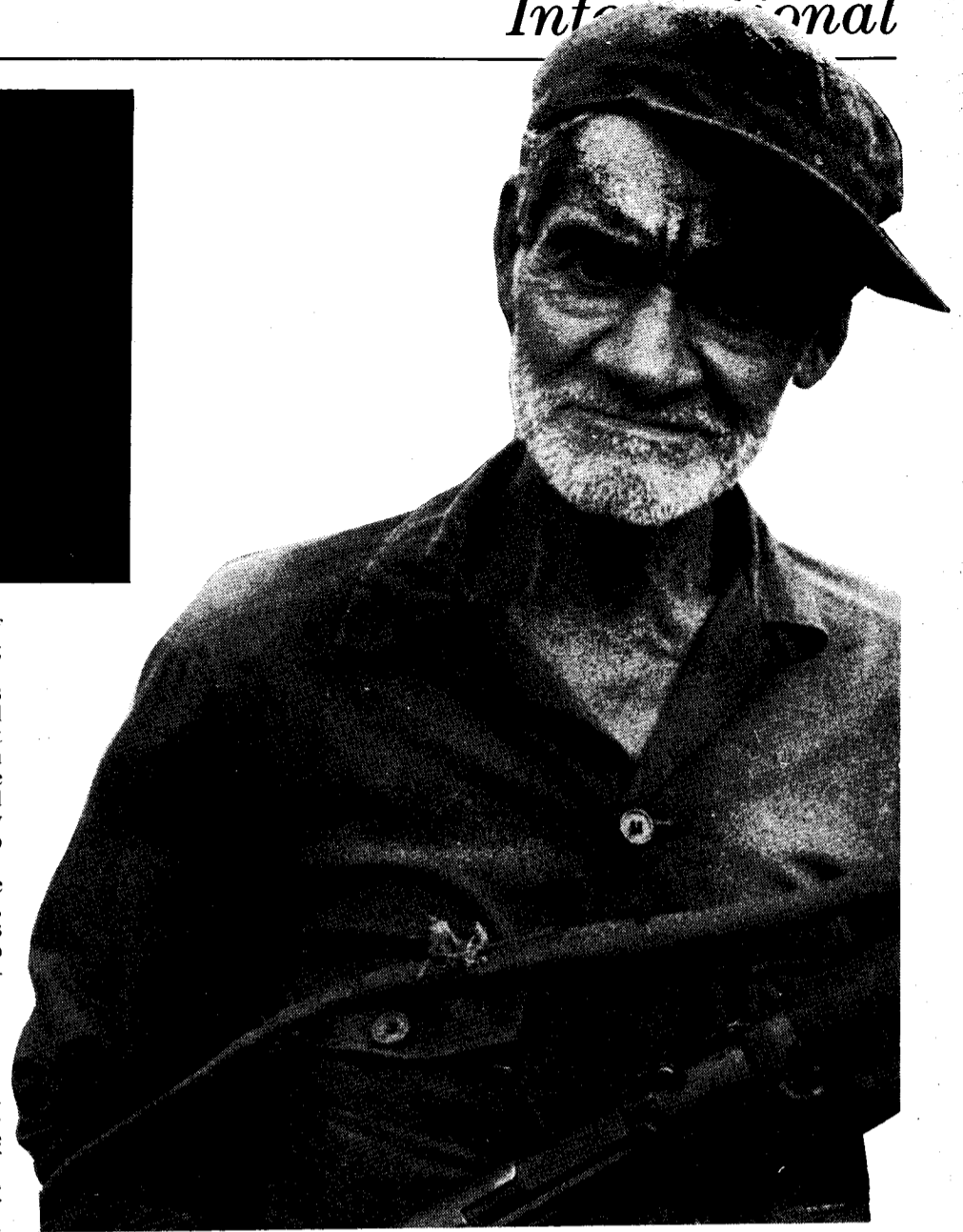
Everybody knows nationally we were denied the right to negotiate reinstatement — I don't use the term amnesty because it implies guilt. At a recent meeting with the NCB, we raised it again — we drew a blank. That doesn't mean to say we're prepared to turn our backs on those people.

We are currently helping to support them in the hope that, through the areas, we will be able to reinstate them. We have been partially successful.

The national leadership have been denied the right to negotiate by the NCB. But after 12 months of strike our campaign is obviously limited. That's the price of not winning an outright victory. I would hope that those people who went back to work early now recognise they have made our task more difficult in the short term.

That's fine for areas like, for example, South Wales where I've been recently, where everyone was pretty confident of finding a satisfactory reinstatement policy. But that's not the case for Kent or Scotland, where there are the largest proportion of dismissals. Do you think the solidarity committees set up during the strike can be brought behind a reinstatement campaign?

Break US blockade



ten years after' epitaphs for the US defeat in Vietnam piled up last week, Uncle Sam was very much back in business in Central America. Two major military exercises were going on at once.

Four thousand ground troops are manoeuvring with the Honduran and El Salvadorian military forces just across the border from El Salvador's liberated zones. One thousand marines, and two thousand members of the 101st Airborne division, together with naval and air support, are practicing beach landings on the Honduran Atlantic coast — just a few miles north of the Nicaraguan border.

While the marines are hammering up the debate in the US ruling class over intervention in Central America has taken a sharp turn with the defeat of Reagan's proposal to the US Congress to vote \$14 million to the Nicaraguan contras.

The 15,000 strong contra forces are incapable of overthrowing the Sandinistas but have been causing terrible damage to the Nicaraguan economy — including forcing the movement of tens of thousands of people from border areas.

Recent reports however show sinking morale among the contras. This is despite \$5 million dollars from private corporate sources in the US in the last six months, a stiffening of their forces by mercenaries, and continued funding by the CIA and other channels.

The defeat of Reagan's proposal for \$14 million dollars aid through Congress therefore signified a political setback for the US government and contras which they have already set about remedying.

Within 24 hours of the news in Congress Reagan had commissioned an official report on how to get further aid to the contras by means which do not re-

quire Congressional approval.

Weapons

Funding from private sources will be stepped up and 'friendly Asian countries', like Taiwan, South Korea, and Israel will be used to 'launder' crate loads of weapons. The marines on their Central American exercises will still more frequently 'lose' lots of munitions for the contras to find.

Reagan's defeat in Congress was simply due to a genuine debate in the US ruling class on when and how to use its military power when faced with a deterioration in the international situation. US Secretary of Defence Caspar Weinberger, in *Time* on 15 April, argued that the lesson of Vietnam was that 'the commitment of US forces to combat should be the last resort... if it is vital to our national interests or that of our allies', and then only 'with the clear intention of winning'. In this perspective operations such as those of the contras both put pressure on the Nicaraguans and prepare the ground for a future direct US intervention.

This line is broadly endorsed by Reagan's current

policies. It reflects a judgement of the political need for caution before direct US military involvement — as well as a wariness about both the stamina of the US military machine and concern over the stomach of the US population about prolonged foreign wars. It is however also, therefore accompanied by a determination than when the US armed forces go into action they will do so with a devastating blitzkrieg aimed at completely smashing opponents in one devastating blow. The invasion of Grenada is held up a model by this line.

Critiques of the Weinberger/Reagan approach come from both right and left. The critics on the 'right' argue that the force of third world rebellion means that the US does not have the luxury of choosing the time and place to wield the big stick.

Self styled 'liberal' critics of the Reagan line argue that simple reliance on force is not enough. Long term political problems, after military interventions, must be confronted as well. Lincoln Bloomfield, a former adviser to the Carter administration, posed the problem directly, 'How is it that you can "win" so that when you leave two years later you don't lose the country (sic) to those forces who have committed themselves to victory at any cost?'

Nicaragua poses that dilemma very sharply. The US know the Nicaraguans will fight — and that people who have just got rid of illiteracy, polio and torture will not be friendly to anyone who tries to bring

it all back in the name of 'democracy' or anything else.

This problem goes deeper than conventional war. Vietnam showed that fire power isn't enough when the majority of the working class and peasants know what they want and have the guns to defend it.

The next step for the US in Central America, one its entire ruling class will unite on, is to try to bleed Nicaragua dry economically.

Blockade

Two weeks ago Reagan was flying the kite of a formal and total, trade blockade of Nicaragua of the type which has been imposed on Cuba ever since its revolution. Whether this goes ahead or not there is already a comprehensive informal blockade — with the US vetoing all international financial credits, blocking and harassing Nicaragua's trade and continually pressuring its allies to follow the same policies. Needless to say Thatcher has been extremely obliging in following Reagan's lead.

The blockade is taking a terrible toll. Nicaraguan vice president Sergio Ramirez has said that all development projects have been stopped, no more schools or hospitals can be built, no more pipes for clean water can be laid.

Crisis management is now the order of the day in Nicaragua. A hard austerity policy has had to be announced putting priority on defence and the productive sector of the economy. This is posed

simply as a 'survival plan'.

An acute problem which faces the Sandinistas is that they cannot resolve the threat of economic strangulation simply by taking tighter control of the national economy. The continued dependence of Nicaragua on exports of coffee and cotton, and the absence of a developed infrastructure rules out any illusion that Nicaragua could survive on its own resources. One of the vital tasks for the labour movement is therefore to fight that blockade and to fight for trade and aid to give Nicaragua a chance to breathe.

This task of solidarity is now an urgent one. It puts a big weight on the shoulders of the international solidarity movement. The struggle against

the blockade must involve not just the solidarity campaigns themselves but all those sections of the labour movement that see Nicaragua's gains as our gains.

It is clear that the defence of the gains of Nicaragua means defeating US policy in Central America. For the Labour Party this means there can be no 'return to the 1960's' when Harold Wilson acted as the United States poodle throughout the Vietnam war. Present party policy, expressed in the pressure for Neil Kinnock's visit to Nicaragua in January, is against US intervention and for the gains of the revolution.

We now need to get that policy into action with a sharp campaign for increased aid and trade with Nicaragua. This should in-

clude spreading the twinning initiatives taken by Labour local authorities and using them to build direct connections through delegations and other means. The party should organise the largest possible demonstration for the autumn or early winter to defend Nicaragua against the ongoing US intervention.

The setting up of the Central America Labour Group (CALG) by Labour Party members involved in the solidarity campaigns can aid this work. It now needs support from constituency parties and sections throughout the country.

● Contact CALG c/o Flat 5, 185 Old Brompton Road, London SW5.

For more information contact the Nicaragua Solidarity Campaign, 20-21 Compton Terrace, London N1.

Death in Brazil

THE DEATH of Brazil's president elected Tancredo Neves, a week ago last Sunday, coincided with the most concentrated wave of strikes the country has seen in recent years. Two hundred and ninety thousand metal workers in the industrial regions around Sao Paulo had been on strike for 11 days alongside workers on the Rio underground. They were demanding wage increases of four per cent and, above all, a reduction of the working week from 48 to 40 hours without loss of pay.

The strikers were due to be joined by a further 20,000 metal workers in

Sao Paulo city, as well as by a series of other sectors. Those already on strike included 84,000 car workers at Ford, Mercedes, Volkswagen and other companies resulting in a loss in production of 22,500 vehicles (worth some \$200 million).

The early days of the strike had gone well. For the first time in six years a strike on this scale had not been ruled illegal by the labour courts. Even more upsetting to the large multinational employers around the Federation of Sao Paulo Businessmen (FIESP), was the fact that dozens of small and medium businesses had reached direct agreements with the unions — with each one including real wage rises and a reduction in the working week. The FIESP had always argued that such a reduction in

hours would be too onerous for the smaller firms.

Neves' long awaited death brought a broad national commotion. Millions followed his coffin in a show of public sentiment rivalling the huge demonstrations for direct elections exactly one year ago — a campaign which Neves himself had first backed then subtly derailed.

After the direct election campaign Neves moved on to stitch together a 'Democratic Alliance' which managed to represent almost every fraction of the Brazilian ruling class around a plan for a transition from military rule which would avoid real social change. In this operation Neves counted on the support of the various reformist and stalinist currents in the

popular movement. The irony is that Neves' death has left the presidency in the hands of the extreme right wing of that very broad alliance he had created.

Jose Sarney, the vice president and now Neves' successor, was a populist in his youth when populism was in fashion. But until last year he was a civilian pillar of the twenty year old military dictatorship.

Both the commotion and the new political situation took their toll on the strike movement. Several of the strikes were suspended for the period of official mourning. The unions or owners was dropped. Those that did continue were promptly declared illegal and 700 strikers were sacked.

Together these events bear bitter witness to the limits of the 'democratisation' sweeping Latin America. But they also point to the tremendous weight which hopes of democracy carry in the continent and to the extremely delicate balance deciding what sort of democracy that might be, and for whose benefit.

Of course the left of the workers movement, and especially the Workers Party (PT) were right to point out that in reality little would change under Neves, and to prepare for opposition to the 'New Republic'. But their problem is that they have not yet been able to put themselves at the head of these democratic aspirations and combine them with the kind of social demands stressed by these

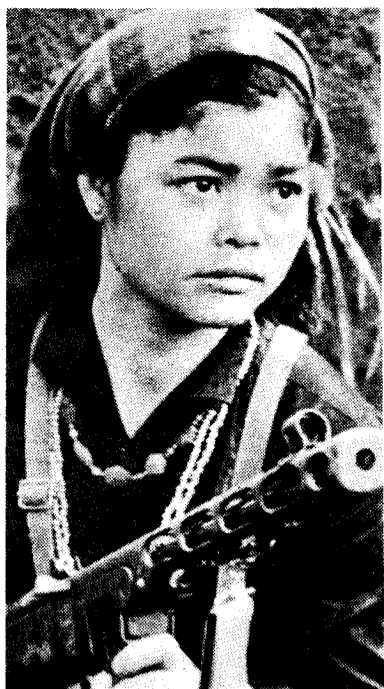
strikes. That requires quite a different project for democracy and socialism in Brazil.

Prospects for the militant wing of the workers and popular movement are now simultaneously greater and more risky than ever before. The ruling class alliance stitched together by Tancredo Neves is doing its best to look cool and collected, but already it can be seen to be tearing at the seams.

The PT leaders in turn for long saw their party's role as merely 'expressing' the social struggles already taking place. Paradoxically this meant the PT's very strong trade union base was left without organised policies for action. More recently the PT has begun to recognise the need for it actually to lead these struggles at the same

time as it begins to offer an overall political alternative to the Brazilian people.

But as one PT candidate for senator, Raul Pont points out this process hasn't gone nearly far enough as yet. In a proposal on the party's electoral policy, published in the revolutionary marxist *Em Tempo*, Pont described the need for the PT to give the lead in a new system of democratic alliances — a workers and popular bloc, under working class hegemony, based on class independence, and drawing in all sections of the trade union movement, students movement, the shanty town associations, the women's movement, the ecology movement, and all sectors of the oppressed who are ready to struggle.



The hour of the furnaces

THREE TIMES since the end of the Second World War, the ruling class of the United States has thrown itself against the workers and peasants of Asia.

In 1945 its plan for intervention in China was only thwarted by the millions of American soldiers who refused to serve as cannon fodder in yet another war. In 1950 the United States hurled its might against the people of Korea and left three million dead in its wake. Finally in Vietnam the American ruling class unleashed its most fearful savagery so far.

One hundred and forty thousand million dollars of American war effort was poured into one small country. Twelve million tons of explosives were used by the Americans and their puppets. After more than 40,000 American dead, four million Indochinese casualties, and ten million refugees, the United States was still unable to break the workers and peasants of Vietnam. Now its puppets are crashing to defeat.

The victories in Vietnam, the victories in all Indochina, are not merely a triumph of the magnificent people of these countries. The Indochinese victories are the greatest living example since the Russian Revolution of the world character of the working class revolution. Literally tens and hundreds of millions throughout the world have participated directly or indirectly in the victory of the struggle in Vietnam. Although the Indochinese people have borne the crushing weight of imperialism's assault, and the overwhelming share of the glory is theirs, they too know that their triumph is only possible because of mass action and pressure throughout the world.

Those who have participated in the struggle range from the hundreds of thousands who marched against the war within the United States itself, through Che Guevara who gave his life in the attempt to open a second front in support of the Indochinese struggle, to the martyr Nicolai Didyk who burnt himself to death in protest against the refusal of the Soviet bureaucracy to send support brigades to Vietnam. It is one of the proudest episodes in the entire history of the Fourth International that in many countries its sections have been able to play an important role in the development of the world-wide Vietnam solidarity movement.

Vietnam: a turning point in world history

TEN YEARS ago, 30 April 1975 the red blue and gold flag of the Provisional Revolutionary Government was raised over Saigon — now Ho Chi Minh City. It marked the end of 35 years of heroic struggle in the face of tremendous odds, by the workers and peasants of Vietnam. It was a

stunning military defeat for the US, and a huge victory for the workers and oppressed of the entire world. It was a turning point in world history. Below, we mark the tenth anniversary of the fall of Saigon with extracts from the left press of the time which best sum up the impact of that victory.

But if it was the world-wide development of the solidarity struggle with Indochina which helped create the conditions, even in a small way, for the triumphs of last week, then we must also understand that this solidarity was never just a moral gesture. No-one was ever more short-sighted than those who considered the tasks of solidarity with Vietnam as secondary in comparison to the intervention in their own country. Not one single event of the last decade, least of all one single trade union struggle, could have compensated in the slightest for the defeat of the Vietnamese revolution.

The crushing defeat of US military might in Vietnam is the greatest blow ever delivered against the American ruling class's ability to undertake direct military counter-revolutionary activity everywhere in the world. A repeat of the landing of the marines in the Lebanon in 1958, a repeat of the 1965 invasion of the Dominican Republic, are rendered far less likely following the crushing debacle in Indochina.

Already the fear of another Vietnam is a factor holding back the American ruling class from its insane schemes for military occupation of the oil states of the Arab East. The next workers' state created anywhere in the world will owe an incalculable debt to the Vietnamese revolution in this sense alone.

The war in Indochina struck the American monster in its very economic and social vitals. For seven years through direct armed intervention, and for twenty years through indirect sabotage and subterfuge, the greatest economic power in the world sought to crush the people of one small state.

And finally it was the colossus which broke. Its economy could not stand the strain of the war as inflation and expenditure soared. Its ghettos exploded as its own black workers refused to bear the effects of a war in which their only real interest was to support the other side. Millions of its finest youth rebelled in disgust against mechanised butchery on a scale Hitler or Mussolini could never even have envisaged.

Finally, Vietnam was the fuse which first relighted a wide consciousness in the imperialist countries of the need for socialist revolution. Millions of people first clearly understood the bankruptcy of the capitalist system through its barbarity in Vietnam. Throughout the world millions of workers, peasants and students saw with their own eyes that the imperialist monster could be defeated.

For all time the international revolutionary movement will

glory in the triumphs of the Indochinese workers and peasants. It is now that we may grasp to the full the magnificent words of Che Guevara: 'What grandeur has been shown by this people! What stoicism and valour in this people! And what a lesson for the future their struggle holds! How close and how bright would the future appear if two, three, many Vietnams flowered on the face of the earth! It is the hour of the furnaces, and you have only to look to see the glow.'



A new rise in world revolution

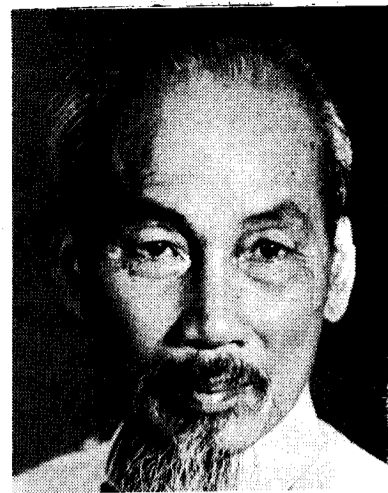
AFTER 1945 it was the advance of the revolution in the colonial countries which prevented the real political stabilisation of the capitalist world system and maintained the tempo of the class struggle when the working class in the imperialist countries was passing through 20 years of relative passivity. It was also this revolution which helped to exhaust imperialism economically and politically and to create the basis for a new revival of revolutionary consciousness in the population of the imperialist countries. The war in Vietnam was precisely the outcome of the decision of the United States to smash the colonial revolution. Instead it was the United States which was humiliated. The Americans lost their first war in history and the U.S. and international capitalist economy was stretched to the limit. This in turn helped lay the basis for a new rise in revolution throughout the world.

The outstanding analysis of

this development still remains the 1969 Political Resolution of the Ninth World Congress of the Fourth International. In order to understand fully the significance of the events which have just taken place in Vietnam we therefore reproduce extracts from the chief section of that resolution dealing with the Vietnam war.

After the victory of the Cuban revolution, the colonial revolution unquestionably marked time.

In fact, starting early in the sixties the colonial revolution suffered a series of spectacular reverses. The rise to power of military dictatorships and the momentary decline of the mass movements in Brazil and Argentina (the two principal countries of Latin America); the overthrow of the Lumumba regime in the Congo, the Nkrumah regime in Ghana and the Ben Bella regime in Algeria; the victory of the Indonesian counterrevolution in October 1965; and the military defeat of the United Arab Republic and Syria in the six-day war of June 1967 constitute the main milestones in each of the epicentres of the colonial revolution.



The colonial revolution had reached the point where it could go no further unless it made the transition into a socialist revolution — and for that the subjective factor was lacking. On the one hand, American imperialism, drawing its own conclusions from the victory of the Cuban revolution, shifted more and more openly to repressing by military force all revolutionary movements which in its view threatened even incipiently to touch off the process of permanent revolution.

Caught between the masses seeking a clear revolutionary socialist solution and imperialism, which strove to crush such tendencies in embryo, the Sukarnos, the Nkrumahs, the Nassers, and the Nehrus, who had dominated the scene in the semicolonial countries for fifteen years, reached the end of their era.

Since the formation of new revolutionary vanguards, even of the Fidelista type, lagged behind this process, the initiative passed for a whole stage to American imperialism with its CIA-financed plots, its counter-revolutionary interventions, and its ever-widening wars of aggression.

An acceleration of economic growth in the United States coincided with this stage of more direct and overt counterrevolutionary moves and created the means by which the imperialists could finance these projects for five or six years — which from 'military missions' and 'counterinsurgency' in Latin America to the war in Vietnam, including the upkeep and expansion of dozens of air-naval bases throughout the world, cost tens of billions of dollars — without opening up an assault on the living standards of the workers in the United States.

The might expansion, and arrogance of Yankee imperialism seemed to reach new heights after its failure in the fifties.

The Vietnam war also was the culmination and, as it were, the crest of this imperialist counteroffensive. The Vietnam war, became the turning point in the situation. As a result of the indomitable resistance of the Vietnamese masses, the colonial revolution was able to regroup its forces and stage a comeback in several important sectors.

In escalating its aggression against the Vietnamese revolution, American imperialism aimed not only at blocking the revolution's advance in a region of obvious economic and strategic importance (Thailand, Malaysia, Indonesia); it sought not only to create a 'deterrent' against a victorious revolution in Asia, which would represent a catastrophe of global scope for the international imperialist system. It wanted also to intimidate the exploited masses in all colonial and semicolonial countries, if not the entire world.

It wanted to put them on notice by a terrifying example that if they took the revolutionary road they would have to face the most powerful military machine in the world and pay a terrible price in blood and destruction for an attempt to liberate themselves from the yoke of capital. Thus the outcome of the confrontation in Vietnam assumed crucial importance. Today, the militant revolutionary enthusiasm of the Vietnamese masses, unparalleled in recent history, has blocked the imperialists and kept them from achieving the principal objectives of their aggression.

IRELAND UNFREE

THE LABOUR Committee on Ireland has had extensive discussions about its tactics for this year's Labour Party conference. Last year several important developments occurred that we shouldn't lose sight of.

For the first time in 60 years, the trade union block vote went against the advice of the NEC in voting to affirm its opposition to plastic bullets and the Prevention of Terrorism Act (PTA), stating our abhorrence at the sexual harassment of women prisoners in Armagh being carried out in the name of security — the strip searches. They also condemned the notorious no-jury Diplock courts.

Through opening the dialogue with Sinn Fein, Irish trade unions and feminists, the LCI is setting the pace as far as the inner party debate goes. Just about every political tendency from the Fabians leftwards was obliged to hold an Irish fringe meeting with speakers from Ireland presenting their views.

But at the same time as noting these positive developments, we have to remember that the 'withdrawal' resolution got less trade union votes than the year before. Politics is about more than ritually putting up resolutions and basking in moral righteousness.

It is about winning debates and moving the labour movement in action. This year, while encouraging resolutions reflecting the experience of the miners' strike and resolutions demanding more action from the party leadership to implement its stance on strip searching, we want to move the debate forward on the question of withdrawal.

The NEC sub-committee which was established last year is due to report in the autumn, updating the 1981 paper, which committed the party to its present policy for 'unity by consent'. It is expected that the update will more thoroughly endorse the views of Clive Soley, who seems to take a tougher line against the Unionists' refusal to discuss future options for the North and supports moves to set up a string of all-Ireland institutions prior to eventual withdrawal.

No timetable is set on this process and the programme has many internal weaknesses, particularly on how to deal with loyalist demands to turn a 'federal system' into a repartitioned sectarian state. Certainly it falls a long way short of Irish self-determination, free from British interference or conditions.

Nevertheless, it will be this paper that will form the basis for discussion over 1985-6 and it is expected that time will be set aside for a major debate at the 1986 conference. Not fast enough? Agreed. But if the trade unions are to adequately discuss the various options, then there has to be a serious discussion and that takes time.

The LCI's aim is to make sure that, in the discussion, the withdrawal option is aired alongside the consent option to be argued from the NEC. That is why resolutions to London region conference and Labour women's conference concentrate on circulating the statement of Irish trade unionists calling for unity and independence, and the Tony Benn 'Withdrawal Bill'.

We are in favour of the widest possible discussion which is why we propose the circulation of these texts and the invitation of speakers representing parties of the Irish working class, including Sinn Fein, to put their point of view. Once a free discussion has been allowed, it is possible to win the union votes. This is why party bosses like David Hughes have reacted so strongly to the proposals of the London region. And that is why, more than ever, pseudo posturing on the 'purist' resolutions has to be dropped in favour of a position that will win.

Conference believes that 12 years of direct rule has failed to alter the fundamentally sectarian nature of the Northern Ireland state. Whilst noting the continuing intransigence of Loyalist politicians this should not be allowed to block political progress. We believe there should be an open and wide-ranging debate throughout the labour movement on the matter of British withdrawal.

Conference notes the statement by 32 leading Irish trade unionists and the recent private member's Bill both advocating withdrawal and requests the NEC to promote such discussion by:

- Circulating all CLPs and affiliated organisations with a copy of the Irish trade unionists' statement and the Withdrawal Bill together with its introduction, and request that organisations discuss it and send back their views.
- The NEC organise regional public meetings on this issue with Labour Party, trade union, women section and Irish speakers.

Storm clouds, but a fair forecast

CAMPAIGNERS for lesbian and gay rights have witnessed momentous events in the last year. The annual meeting of the Labour Campaign for Gay Rights (LCGR) this week is faced with equally important decisions.

Relentless attacks on our hard won gains have continued, from the raids and prosecutions of bookshops like Gay's the Word and Lavender Menace, and attacks by councils such as Rugby on our right to work, to the Police Act.

Media-inspired hysteria about AIDS has transformed its victims into criminals and has plagued gay men everywhere, but especially at work. Even lesbians, who are actually the people least at risk, are swept up in the backlash.

But the year has also been dominated by a new, previously unimaginable alliance. The endorsement by the NUM of lesbian and gay rights at Labour Party conference was matched at rank and file level with the magnificent solidarity with the miners built up by Lesbians and Gays Support the Miners.

Lesbians and gay men were once despised in the workplace, shunned on the picket lines, and ignored in the labour move-

ment. Now we have received a boost in our fight for trade unions and councils to adopt and implement anti-discrimination policies, and for the Labour Party to publicly campaign around a charter of full legal and social equality for gays.

By Peter Purton

Such a campaign must be central to the activities of LCGR in the future. The victory over Rugby council and the experiences of the miners' strike have shown it is possible to win genuine support in the labour movement.

The struggle for the right of young lesbians and gay men to determine their own sexuality is also a significant element. For two years, the Lesbian and Gay YS have been battling away to make the LPYS more responsive to their demands.

This year, in the wake of the miners, conference was forced into conces-



Photo: GM COOKSON

sions to the demand by lesbian and gay youth for a recognition of their oppression and the need to campaign against it. Giving full backing to LGYS will be another component of LCGR's struggle.

But LCGR faces another, more fundamental challenge. Gay male sexism and a refusal to take the demands of lesbians seriously has been

responsible for a split in the movement from the beginning. Now, Labour Lesbians will be demanding that LCGR gives equal prominence to the specific demands of lesbians and implements a policy of positive action to ensure that women and black people take their rightful place in the concerns and structure of the campaign.

If LCGR can successfully restructure itself to become an effective campaigner for gay and lesbian rights, the prospects for confronting our oppressors are less bleak than the climate might suggest.

● The LCGR AGM is 4-5 May, County Hall, London SE1. Registration from 10 am.

Labour lesbians

HISTORICALLY in Britain lesbian self-organisation has always been a minority interest.

Lesbians have been scattered through the women's movement and more recently the gay movement. There we have found it necessary to organise independently to get lesbian demands taken seriously in the face of straight women's homophobia or gay men's sexism.

The immense pressure on women to relate sexually to men (and therefore the nuclear family), and the radical feminist purist idea that a woman is only a

lesbian if she never sleeps with men, tend to prevent women from coming out and organising politically. So the emergence of two new groups — Lesbians Against Pit Closures (LAPC) and the Labour Lesbians — have marked a great step forward for lesbians in the labour movement.

By Polly Vittorini

The experience of groups like Lesbians and Gays Support the Miners (LGSM) and LAPC proves that the place to organise for lesbian and gay rights is in the labour movement. In the labouring money for the miners,

supporting demonstrations, and visits to pit villages we built more concrete links and raised more support than has been achieved in the last decade or more.

This was exemplified in the support message LCGR received from the NUM at the last Labour Party conference, and the fact that the NUM sponsored the LGSM conference last March.

While aiming to combat the sexism of gay men, LAPC has built closer links with members of Women Against Pit Closures. We have now been asked to organise a workshop at the women's solidarity conference in

Birmingham on 4 May.

Since this group organised primarily around issues in the miners' strike, the need arose for a group which would specifically take up the rights of lesbians in the labour movement: a group not bound to any party political lines, which would be open to any lesbians wanting to fight for our rights in the labour movement. Enter the Labour Lesbians group.

At present it is only functioning in London. Its main focus for the next period is the Labour Party and the LCGR.

Our aim is to make LCGR more acceptable to lesbians and from there

fight for a Labour Party commitment to lesbian rights.

This means initially changing LCGR to the Labour Campaign for Lesbians and Gay Rights, and demanding a quota of at least 50 per cent women on its policy bodies. This will give us a basis on which to campaign for the rights of lesbian mothers and for equal rights for lesbians in all areas of life, such as housing and employment.

● LL meets every second Wednesday of the month in the Lesbians and Gay Centre, 67-69 Cowcross Street, London EC1 (Farringdon tube). In the meantime ring Sue on 01-883 9246.

AIDS - time to fight

IT'S NOT the AIDS virus, but the hysteria surrounding it that's the biggest threat to the lesbian and gay movement today.

That is an essential point for socialists to grasp: AIDS is first and foremost an ideological threat. Two examples illustrate this.

First, lesbians have been affected by the moral panic almost as much as gay men, yet they are the group least at risk. Second, labelling AIDS as the 'gay plague' has led American researchers up the blind alley of investigating gay men's life styles, as a possible cause of the disease.

It now seems, from

available evidence, that the disease originated in Central Africa and spread to America via the international trade in blood. It spreads so rapidly there because their health service is private — there was no incentive to fight the disease or find a cure.

In Britain there are just 140 cases, which are expected to rise to over 400 by the end of the year. Already there have been a number of cases of gay men sacked because of the hysteria.

By Paul Canning

The spread among the gay male ghettos of San Francisco and Manhattan because anal sex is a particularly efficient way of transmitting the disease. There are now over 8,000 cases there.

In France and Belgium the most affected groups have been Africans — 95 per cent in Belgium. The infection there has been

passed on by heterosexual sex. As yet there is no anti-gay hysteria.

In Britain there are just 140 cases, which are expected to rise to over 400 by the end of the year. Already there have been a number of cases of gay men sacked because of the hysteria.

The Tory right has started to call for gays to carry identification cards, stricter laws and much more besides. In Germany in the '30s the Nazis used the threat of syphilis against the Jews in a remarkably similar way.

The point is that the AIDS hysteria has fertile ground in the conscious and sub-conscious belief that you can 'catch' homosexuality.

This 'leakage' argument underlies society's whole attitude to lesbians and gays — right from panic about them looking after children, to liberal attitudes that say what people do in private is alright as long as they don't promote it.

So far the labour movement's silence and inaction has been eloquent. Kinnock and Meacher might claim to have their hearts in the right place but their mouths certainly aren't.

LCGR will be discussing plans for a labour movement conference on AIDS at its annual meeting. It has already produced a leaflet requesting information on

the state of play in the workplace. NALGO's initiative in sending a leaflet to all its workforce is the best yet.

The lesbian and gay movement has moved forward rapidly over the last few years, nowhere faster than during the year of the miners' strike. With the moral minority on the move, it's time for the left to put its foot down, start organising and join us in defending our movement.

● Further details from: London LCGR, 39 Chippenham Road, London W9 (phone: 01-286 4823). Alternatively, contact the Terrence Higgins Trust, BM AIDS, London WC1N 3XX (phone: 01-278 8745).

London Underground waves big stick

LONDON UNDERGROUND Limited headed rapidly down the road to all out industrial confrontation with Underground workers last week, by simultaneously making a pay offer short of that made on British Rail, and promising to make a wage cut of 7½ per cent unless the unions agreed unconditionally to the immediate introduction of One Person Operation and the station destaffing programme.

Management's tactics are clearly an attempt to divide and rule. On pay, they hope to convince the majority of LUL workers that the 'no strings' offer of 4.3 per cent looks entirely reasonable in today's economic climate. Management have assessed, correctly, that while many realise their wages have been significantly eroded over the last few years, they are not going into struggle after fellow unionists on BR have settled for 4.8 per cent. However, the union cannot agree a settlement on the basic rates lower than that gained on BR. That would sever a vital and traditional parity linkage.

It became blatantly clear that this was a deliberate move during negotiations. Management claimed that LUL was in better shape than ever before. There is no deficit on the current account. None of this is surprising to LRT workers who are quite well aware it is they who have been dealing with the 44 per cent in-

crease in passenger usage of the underground and the 14 per cent increase in bus usage over the past three years.

They are also fully aware that they have been doing this despite big cuts in services and large scale job cuts, particularly on the buses. They are further aware that it was the GLC

**By Patrick Sikorski
NUR (personal capacity)**

who introduced the Travel Card and the fares cuts which have brought the passengers back. It is the Tories who are cutting the subsidy to LRT from £197 million to £95 million during the next three years.

But, apparently, this massive increase in productivity has nothing to do with the workforce — they must make their contribution to the plumping up of the buses and underground for privatisation, by volunteering massive cuts in 'unit costs'.

So the pay negotiations



Photo: GM COOKSON

started with a nil wage offer because management needed to know 'where we stand on OPO and where we are on station destaffing'. But within two hours they had moved to a 'final offer' of 4.3 per cent. This was the carrot. Three days later the letters threatening the withdrawal of the 7½ per cent were delivered to every workplace on the underground. This was the big stick.

Management hope that the threatened wage cut will lead to a rank and file revolt against the union. This will not happen. First, less than half of the workforce are in receipt of

the payment. Second, after tax, it will be less than half of the £10 a week cut claimed in the London media last week. But the underlying reason why those in receipt of the payment will wait and see what lead they get from the unions, before reacting strongly to these provocations, is that they realise that large scale redundancies are the order of the day. No train crew believes the 'no compulsory redundancy' line being pedalled by management.

The NUR has reinforced its position that it will call industrial action if management impose OPO

and have called for a complete freeze on any further moves until more talks can be held between the unions to hammer out an acceptable position. This reflects the difficulties with the drivers union ASLEF, which is no longer opposed to OPO in any effective way. However, the ASLEF branch secretary at New Cross, the depot in the front line, told the NUR London Transport district council last week, that if the NUR put a picket on the depot his members would not cross. In the end it is such actions that will decide the issue.

Newham 7: police violence stops march

THE Newham 7 and the increasingly militant mobilisations of the black community against racist violence hit the national news on Saturday when police tactics halted a march of 3000 outside Forest Gate police station.

The march was led by the Asian and Afro-Caribbean community in Newham with support from black and anti-racist groups from all over Britain, two miners' contingents, Irish solidarity groups, gays and lesbians, and local Labour Parties and trade unions.

**By Iona Aranovsky,
Newham North East
Labour Party**

It was in support of the Newham 7 soon on trial at the Old Bailey for defending the Asian community against a spate of racist attacks in April last year, and also in support of Gerald Pryce, charged with affray after his brother Eustace aged 16 was stabbed to death in an attack by white racists.

As the march went past Forest Gate police station police jumped the barriers, dragged people out of the crowd and marchers vigorously defended themselves. The whole demonstration came to a halt and sat down in front of the station demanding the release of those arrested.

Whilst the police pretended to negotiate with campaign organisers and local councillors, claiming all afternoon that people would be released shortly without charges, the rally continued outside. Gerald Pryce spoke of the tragedy of his young brother's death and the stringent bail conditions imposed on himself while the white racist charged with murder was bailed with no conditions.

Paul Boateng said that the campaign and the afternoon events showed that people will not tolerate racist policing and that the GLC was fully behind the campaign.

Arrests

Later in the afternoon, when numbers had dwindled, and police reinforcements had arrived, TV cameras were turned off and the police used the 'thick blue line' tactic employed in the Whitehall miners' support demonstration in February — penning in, then brutally pushing, kicking, beating, and shoving people off the streets.

Men and women were rugby tackled by groups of police and there were further arrests. Thirty-three were arrested in all and 11 charged so far, but there are witnesses for all incidents and the campaign is fighting all the cases.

In effect the police substituted their greater

numbers for the NF march that did not materialise. But as an attempt to defeat this campaign, their tactics were an abject failure.

The Seven and the campaign organisers were delighted at the size of the mobilisation. They said oppressive policing tactics merely strengthens the campaign. This was evidenced by the anger of

the demonstrators and the refusal to put up with police violence.

This campaign and future anti-racist campaigns will not go away. One thing is certain, for all police public relations talk of fighting racist attacks, Saturday proved yet again that they are not on the side of black people.

The best way to res-

Lambeth stands firm

'FAILURE BY the council to discharge their lawful duty would bring untold disruption... A deliberate failure to perform the duty to make a lawful rate would amount to wilful misconduct'. So begins a threat from the district auditor received by Lambeth's Labour councillors last week.

Having waited for some 'trigger' to set council workers into action the district auditor's edict points to a confrontation developing within the next few weeks. Our response was to call a borough conference, open to all Labour Party members to discuss what course of action to take next.

Council officers made their position clear by writing to councillors demanding that they call an emergency council meeting to set a rate by 3 May. Lambeth's borough conference, unanimously agreed to call on all councillors to continue to vote not to set a rate. The next council meeting remains 15 May.

Whilst we have two waverers, whose resignation we are demanding, we are sure that the no-rate option will continue.



Ted Knight

**By Greg Tucker,
Lambeth Local
Government
Committee.**

First we will be mobilising for 15 May. Dennis Skinner and Hilda Kean will be joining local councillors and trade unionists at a rally im-

mediately before the council meeting. We aim to ensure the maximum turnout.

- The Newham 7 are innocent!
- Self Defence is no Offence!

After that we will prepare for the district auditor. Council workers have started to discuss precise details of their actions the minute councillors are surcharged.

The Lambeth parties are planning now for the six month period after the district auditor acts and the surcharges come into effect. We aim to mobilise the community in a way never seen before.

In conjunction with the council trade unions we are working out the details for meetings throughout the borough. We also agreed to raise money to cover legal costs.

Above all, we aim to get out to every trade union in the borough. Party members are being asked to back to their trade unions whether they are affiliated to the Labour Party or not and demand a discussion of what action their branches can take to support our stand.

Newham's Labour Council does the Tory business

**Carolyn Sikorski NALGO
(personal capacity)**

ON FRIDAY 26 April three members of Newham NALGO, including a shop steward, were summarily dismissed for attending a union meeting in the staffroom of the residential home where they work. In a crude attempt to stop the strike threatened by NALGO if the sackings went ahead, management then offered new jobs in different homes.

The new jobs all involve a wage cut and other financial penalties. For the steward it means a loss of £1000 per year and being forced to move to a remote village in Essex 18 miles from Newham in an establishment threatened with closure.

Newham council is a safe Labour authority. The sackings are part of a three-pronged attack on NALGO in the wake of their successful defence of the social services convenor Barry Gray whom management had attempted to victimise.

NALGO waged a nine month campaign in the union and in the Labour Party and on 15 April the Labour group voted to end the victimisation. At the very same meeting however, the group then gave the chair of social services, Julie Garfield, the green light to sack the three NALGO members at Luton House; to discipline six other stewards and branch officers and to impose a 'facilities' agreement which means that stewards will have to ask permission to engage in any union activity, including talking to other stewards.

Ms Garfield's attitude to the three members and NALGO were summed up by her little speech on the steps of the town hall earlier that evening. Addressing a large lobby of the group called by NALGO and supported by members of the Labour Party and a mini-bus full of miners and miners' wives from Welbeck colliery, she screamed: 'You're all a load of liars!' and to the three: 'I hope to God you all get the sack next Friday!'

Any appeal against the sackings would be heard by these very same councillors who have launched the anti-NALGO witch hunt. This attack is aimed at destroying the effective organisation that has been built up in Newham NALGO over the past five years.

Through the fight to establish a shop steward system against strong council opposition, and then in the union nationally against NEC opposition, the branch has been moved to a position where it was able to unite to defend a convenor.

The six activists in the forefront of these developments have also been targeted by the council. They have been sent letters warning of disciplinary action if they engage in any union activity without the express permission of management. There can be little doubt that if the council are prepared to sack members for attending a meeting they will do the same to stewards and branch officers who are responsible for organising the branch.

Central to the willingness of the Labour group to smash NALGO is the role of two of these activists in the Labour Party, where they have waged a campaign against the victimisation of Barry Gray and now the sackings. There has been no hiding place in the party for the Labour councillors.

The realities of the Tories' plans to smash local government unions, jobs and services have crowded in on the debate on which budget strategy to pursue. The response of the Newham North West party to industrial disputes over the last few years has been excellent. Firm links have been forged with the miners.

As a result the party's support for NALGO's fight against the victimisation and the sackings has been unwavering. This has extended into Newham North East and to a lesser extent into Newham South — the remaining bastion of the old right.

Another factor for the council crew is the imminent group elections. It is clear that they are prepared to subordinate jobs and the ability of the union to organise as well as their party mandates, for their political careers. Many of these same councillors voted consistently against setting a rate and were originally elected as part of the drive for the accountability of councillors and MPs.

The NALGO branch meet this Wednesday to discuss all-out strike action. Already 13 sections of social services have voted to walk out if the sackings occurred. It is vital that in the run up to the branch meeting and immediately afterwards these votes are translated into action.

If this attack is not defeated now it is certain that Newham Council's present leadership will offer the Tories Newham workers' jobs and Newham residents' services on a plate next year.

Photo: JOHN CHAPMAN

Socialist ACTION

Anti Apartheid calls national demonstration

The Anti Apartheid Movement's national committee has decided on a programme of action, ending in a national demonstration on Sunday 16 June. The theme will be an end to the police killings and a demand for the British government to act against the apartheid regime.

THE NATIONAL school strike which took place last Thursday 25 April has forced the issue of YTS — the Tory government's cheap labour scheme — back into the limelight. Denounced by the whole political spectrum as 'irresponsible' and the product of a sinister political manipulation, the strikes which took place were a big success. The basis now exists for a real campaign to expose Youth Training Schemes for the swindle they are.

For the Tories and the SDP, YTS represents a systematic attempt to deunionise, de-skill and depress the wages of young people coming onto the job market. YTS keeps down the embarrassing level of youth unemployment.

For Labour, YTS ought to be a big vote winner. If Labour attacked YTS, if Labour were to join with the trade unions to prevent YTS undermining union rates of pay and conditions, the massive show of anger and frustration that burst on to the streets on 25 April would win thousands of youth to Labour.

But Neil Kinnock has different plans. Labour's economic alternative to the Tories' austerity measures leaves two to three million on the dole — at best!

Kinnock has no intention of defending the interests of those who demonstrated last Thursday. No wonder that he should attack them so viciously.

Establishment politicians are worried about having to deal with a generation that has no future — especially if it starts to organise itself. Press accounts of semi-riots are an exaggeration, but reflect the real anger of the youth that participated.

By Grant Keir, Islington South LPYS

In London as elsewhere, 2500 school students with young women and young blacks to the fore overcame locked gates and headteacher threats of disciplinary action. Chanting 'Here We Go' and 'J-O-B NOT Y-T-S', the demonstration to the Manpower Services Commission had the air of a carnival and was a big success.

With Kinnock consigning Labour's 'natural' supporters to the dole queues, the Labour Party Young Socialists has correctly stepped in. Through



Photo: MARK SALMON

Striking school students say

No to YTS!

an initiative by the Youth Trade Union Rights Campaign, a national strike was organised last Thursday. Unfortunately it is not clear whether the YS and 'investigating' YTURC.

Building mass mobilisations such as those we saw on 25 April is bound to provoke the hostility of the labour leadership. But this is the only way to organise and defend the

educate school students about YTS. But it cannot be 'sectarian'. This would aid Kinnock's intentions of witch-hunting the YS and 'investigating' YTURC.

Building mass mobilisations such as those we saw on 25 April is bound to provoke the hostility of the labour leadership. But this is the only way to organise and defend the

youth victimised at work and school for demanding a decent future.

For this reason, the main campaign of the LPYS should be to build up the YTURC campaign, and through this build the LPYS.

Half-cooked notions of building a national school students' union and at the same time building Militant's periphery are

guaranteed to open up the campaign to attack. Kinnock and his cronies would then be left off the hook.

LPYS branches should be making the YTURC campaign a priority over the next weeks and months and should use the recent blaze of publicity to contact their local trade union and Labour Parties for political and financial help

to prevent the Tories forcing youth on to YTS.

● YTURC can be contacted c/o 150, Walworth Road, London SE17, 1JT; or phone 01-703 0833. Rights — Wot Rights is a 20-minute video on YTS, available from Birmingham Trade Union Resource Centre, Victoria Works, 7 Frederick Street, Birmingham B1 3HE.

Solidarity against apartheid

THE CONTINUING revolt in the South African townships and the increased repression against the liberation movements, have brought a wave of sympathy and protest from all parts of the world. For the most part, these international manifestations of solidarity with the struggle in South Africa have been organised by the Anti-Apartheid Movement (AAM) and associated organisations throughout the western world.

Almost since its inception, AAM has concentrated in giving the widest possible range of public opinion with particular emphasis on liberal, church and kindred spirits. Its main campaigns have been the organisation of consumer boycotts, the occasional peaceful picketing outside South African embassies and consulates and, as in

their current call for a demonstration on Sunday 16 June, 'a demand for the British government to act against the apartheid regime'.

In the United States it has made similar demands of the Reagan government. In the Netherlands, the sister organisation of AAM, the Holland Committee on Southern

Africa, has made its main campaign calling on the Dutch banks to stop selling Krugerrands.

All these campaigns are, no doubt, worthy of support. But, despite the occasional genuflection toward the trade unions, AAM and its associates in other countries have never really directed its main campaigns toward the organised labour movement for fear that it might alienate 'moderates' whose support it craves. Similarly the British AAM condemned the militant picketing of the South African Embassy organised by the City Branch of AAM and have dissolved

the branch, for fear that it would lose this support.

That there is a wide field of potential organised working class action left largely untapped by AAM is illustrated by the campaign organised by the San Francisco dockworkers of the International Longshoremen and Warehousemen's Union (ILWU) toward the end of last year. For 11 days the ILWU successfully resisted unloading South African cargo from a ship.

By Charlie van Gelderen

On Friday 23 November, the Ned Lloyd ship *Kimberley* was due to dock at San Francisco's Pier 80. Two-hundred-and-fifty people gathered at the pier at 6pm to urge longshore workers not to handle South African cargo on the ship. The ship's officers, however, had got wind of the demonstration and delayed the docking of the ship till nightfall.

The following morning, the gang assigned to the ship refused to work the cargo and were dismissed from the ship. The evening shift went through but unloaded only the Australian cargo, refusing to handle the South African goods in the holds.

Longshoremen on the West Coast of the United States have a long history of militancy in support of progressive causes. In 1934, it was at the forefront of the San Fran-

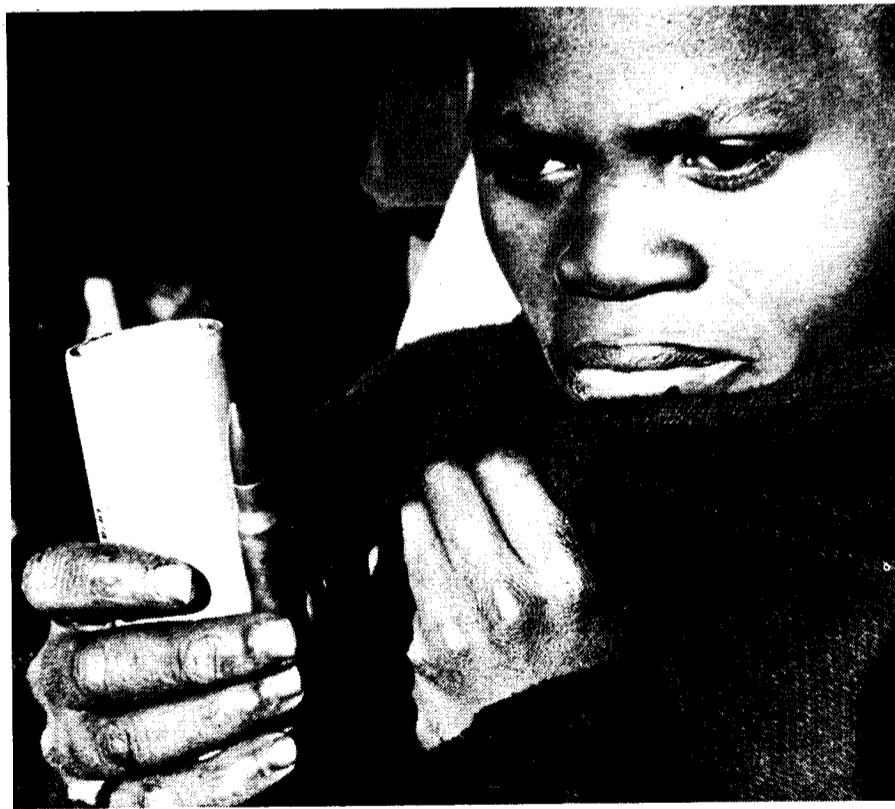


Photo: STAN WINER

cisco general strike. 'Bloody Sunday' is still commemorated every 5 July.

On that day a longshoreman and a cook were killed by police, sparking off a strike of 100,000 workers in the city which lasted for 100 days. In the 1970's, Local 10 (of ILWU) members participated in the anti-Vietnam war movement and opposed US intervention in Chile. In the late 1980's, Local 10 refused to handle military equipment bound for El Salvador.

With such a record it is no surprise that Local 10 has organised its own Southern African Libera-

tion Support Committee (SALSC), and has taken a lead in the campaign against apartheid and in support of the black risings. As the chairperson of the SALSC of Local 10 said: 'We want to call to the attention of the American people that the so-called constructive engagement with the South African regime of the Reagan administration is a sham, and really intended to aid and abet the South African system — economically, politically and socially.'

'We see our action as an expression of solidarity with the rebellion. We support not only the struggle

of the trade unionists there, but the armed struggle as well.

This is, surely, the direction in which the solidarity movement with the people of South Africa should be heading; toward the organised labour movement, for industrial action in support of the anti-apartheid struggle. This would produce much better results than demands for the Thatcher government to act.

Like Reagan's, the Thatcher regime's protestations is a sham and they will do nothing to bring down the edifice of repression which is apartheid.

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