

# A **Socialist** ACTION

## Stop the frame-up

THE SOUTH WALES valleys were shocked and angered last week by the murder verdict on miners Dean Hancock and Russell Shankland for the death of the scab taxi driver David Wilkie.

The verdict of Cardiff Crown Court, after a trial lasting eight days, was greeted by scenes described as unprecedented. There were spontaneous walk outs at two South Wales pits in protest against the sentences.

The entire morning shift at Taff Merthyr colliery went home. Vic Hughes, chair of the Taff Merthyr NUM lodge, said the men staged a spontaneous walk-out. Russell Shankland worked as a belt attendant at the pit before the miners' strike.

'Russell was a smashing boy,' said Mr Hughes. 'He was so quiet and inoffensive.' He added: 'I didn't feel like working and wanted to show solidarity with Russell who spent 12 months trying to save jobs. The men want to show support for Russell and Dean.'

By Graham Atwell

They were joined by miners from Oakdale colliery, where Dean Hancock had been employed. Lodge chair Danny Conniff said: 'I was shocked rigid when I heard this verdict, because the summing up did not seem to be going that way.'

He gave the general view of most South Wales miners and their supporters when he said: 'I was left feeling "there but for the grace of God ...". To me it wasn't justice. No one in the pits believed that these boys deliberately tried to kill anyone, just frighten them from going to work.'

Few doubt that the verdict was political.

The trial was held in an atmosphere of growing hysteria against the strike. The judge in his advice to the jury, told them to put the strike out of their minds. This, he said, was a simple case of a man who was killed to prevent him exercising his fundamental right to go into work.

Even the defence council got in on the act. Speaking after the verdict, he said he'd earlier talked of a nation at war during the coal strike: 'In that war

alright.' Their bunker mentality is based on rebuilding friendly relations with South Wales NCB management.

Those miners for whom the NUM cannot negotiate reinstatement are being found jobs with private contractors. The area executive maintained friendly relations with these people during the strike.

Russell and Dean's case has been weakened by the South Wales NUM strategy. There was no public campaign in their defence. It is only in the

wave of shock following their sentences that a campaign is emerging.

Hopefully this will be in time for the trial of 70 men who occupied the cranes at Port Talbot, due to begin in June. Here too the executive's advice has been to keep quiet and rely on backdoor diplomacy.

Miners are beginning to see through such a strategy. Pickets and public meetings have been called in defence of the men on trial. The murder trial must be the spark for a fightback.

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**Demonstrate against the frame up**

**Assemble 10.30am outside St David's Centre, The Hayes, Cardiff.**

**Speakers include Betty Heathfield, Dennis Skinner and Euro-MP Ted Rowlands.**



Photo: JOHN HARRIS

### Risks

The NCB had put intense pressure on individuals to return to work, with letters, telephone calls, and visits. South Wales area NCB management, pushed by MacGregor, were desperate to break the strike in Wales. They were prepared to take any risks to get miners back to work.

There should be no doubt about the class nature of this trial. It was a political trial, the verdict and sentence were a political verdict and sentence.

A disturbing feature was the South Wales NUM's approach to the trial. Since the end of the strike, they had a line of 'keep your heads down and everything will be

# Free Hancock & Shankland!

## The decline of Stalinism

IN BRITAIN the most spectacular manifestation of the rise of forces to the left of the Communist Party is the development of the Bennite left of the Labour Party and the current represented by Arthur Scargill's leadership of the NUM. These are indeed today the most advanced left wing mass alternatives to the Communist Party to have emerged in any imperialist country. But they are only one part of an entire international process — a process that has gone much further outside the imperialist countries in the creation of left wing alternatives to Stalinism.

Stalinism was a product of the tremendous defeats of the international working class in the 1920s and 1930s. The break up of international Stalinism began, logically, during the 1940s — the moment when, superficially, Stalin appeared to be at the very height of his power and prestige.

The victory of the USSR in World War II, and the other victories of the international working class which accompanied and followed this, led not to a reinforcing but to a *weakening* of the hold of the Soviet bureaucracy and of Stalinism.

The first wave of the break up of Stalinism took place within some of the Communist Parties themselves. The Yugoslav, Chinese and Vietnamese Communist Parties — while remaining *bureaucratised* parties — all broke with the grip of the Soviet bureaucracy and took power in their own countries.

In 1959 however a further decisive step was taken. In Cuba Fidel Castro's 26 July Movement became the first force in the world originating outside the Communist Party to overthrow capitalism. More important than its origins however the 26 July Movement was *not* a bureaucratized party.

Despite its close ties to the Soviet Union, and political support given to the Soviet bureaucracy — including in Eastern Europe — the Cuban Communist Party to this day has developed within it no qualitative bureaucracy. It has attempted to spread the revolution outside Cuba. Other such non-bureaucratized developments appeared subsequently.

In Grenada, in March 1979, the New Jewel Movement, led by Maurice Bishop, overthrew the regime of Eric Gairy — before that revolution was finally destroyed by Stalinist-influenced forces led by Bernard Coard who murdered Bishop and opened up the way to the United States invasion of the country.

In Nicaragua the FSLN, itself inspired by the Cuban revolution, overthrew the Somoza dictatorship and established the state power of the working class.

While the FSLN and the New Jewel Movement are by far the most advanced recent examples of forces emerging to the left of the Communist Parties — because they are genuine revolutionary socialist organisations which overthrew capitalist state power — they are simply the most developed examples of a general trend.

Other forces breaking, or standing, to the left of the Soviet bureaucracy and Communist Parties have and do exist at lower stages of development. Two of the best known internationally are the mass reformist Workers Party (PT) in Brazil and the Philippines Communist Party — an organisation which, despite its name, pursues a revolutionary struggle independent of either Moscow or Peking.

In the early 1960s the development of the black American revolutionary Malcolm X was another expression of a similar process.

Within Ireland and the British state the two most advanced examples of such developments to the left of the Communist Party are Sinn Fein, since its leadership was taken by supporters of Gerry Adams, and the Scargill current of the NUM.

All these phenomena, while part of an *international* process, are of course at totally different degrees of development. The FSLN and NJM are revolutionary socialist organisations. Sinn Fein is a revolutionary nationalist formation. The Scargill current of the NUM is a class struggle force. But *all* are part of the international process breaking to the left of Stalinism and the Communist Parties.

It is this process on an international scale which has opened up the way to Marxists to gain real contact with sections of the working class. Both internationally and in Britain it is in *these* forces that the possibility exists to create a real mass left wing alternative to the Communist Parties and to Stalinism.

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# The alternative to



FOR SIXTY years the Communist Party of Great Britain has dominated politics to the left of the Labour Party. Its political influence extended far into the left wing of the labour movement itself. The CPGB was the *only* political force to the left of Labour taken at all seriously by the majority of working class activists.

Therefore the split of the Communist Party last weekend — a split in reality if not in words — marks a major turning point for the labour movement. A Communist Party which in the 1920s and 1930s could reduce its left wing critics literally to a few tens of people, is itself splitting today, and is confronted with significant political currents to its left. Some of these are small Marxist forces but others have a mass base in sections of the working class.

In a special feature, JOHN ROSS looks at the long road from the supremacy of the Stalinist Communist Party in the late 1920s to its present split — and above all at the alternatives to its left which have developed in the labour movement.

wilderness outside the Labour Party. The majority of left forces in the Labour League of Youth were dragged into support for the popular fronts in Spain and France and dispersed accordingly.

## The Marxist groups

IT IS almost impossible from today's vantage point to appreciate just how isolated any left wing alternative to the Communist Party in Britain was in the 1920s and 1930s — when the Stalinisation of the CPGB was beginning. Reg Groves, one of the founders of British Trotskyism, recalls that the organised left wing opponents of Stalin at that time were less than a hundred people — with a usual audience of a few hundreds.

The Communist Party was able to use every means from political argument to physical violence to exclude any Marxist force to its left from serious influence in the labour movement.

In the 1930s the first small Trotskyist organisations were relatively easily isolated by the CPGB within the Independent Labour Party, the Labour Party, the Labour League of Youth, and the other areas of left wing activity of the time.

The Independent Labour Party was left by the Communist Party in the

Healey's organisation was degenerating rapidly.

It was the year 1956 which marked the really serious beginning of the crisis of the Communist Party — and the beginning of the permanent existence of significant forces to its left. Internationally Nasser's nationalisation of the Suez canal, and the debacle of the British and French invasion that followed, helped fuel a further major upturn of struggle against colonialism. Most important of all Khrushchev's 'secret' speech denouncing Stalin, and above all the support of the CPGB for the Soviet invasion of Hungary, led thousands to break with the Communist Party — and dealt a blow to its political support from which it has never recovered.

Most of those breaking with the CPGB did so to the right — that process creating a wide range of forces from Frank Chapple to the original 'new left' symbolised by EP Thompson. But a small layer, both of workers and 'intellectuals', broke with the CPGB to its left.



Gordon McLennan

At the level of mass politics the development of CND in the early 1960s, for the first time since the 1920s created a major movement which escaped the Communist Party to its left. The CPGB came into CND late, with considerable reluctance concerning its demand for unilateral nuclear disarmament, and never achieved the dominance it had secured in all previous 'peace' movements.

Most of the working class militants who broke leftwards from the CPGB in the 1950s were attracted by Healey's organisation — and were politically destroyed by the ultra-leftism, and tyrannical internal regime, of that formation. But out of the shake up of the left wing of the labour movement following 1956 two currents emerged which were to leave a permanent mark in the left wing of the labour movement.

The first was the revitalised and transformed *New Left Review* (NLR) under the editorship of Perry Anderson. NLR was remarkable, in British terms for its resolute internationalism.

It translated and popularised in Britain the entire range of Marxist ideas developed in Western Europe and the United States since the 1920s. In particular *New Left Review* was heavily influenced by Gramsci, Isaac Deutscher, and Ernest Mandel — the latter two being respectively the biographer of Trotsky



Scargill addresses the May Day rally, 1984

and the best known leader today of Trotsky's Fourth International.

The entire nature and range of Marxist debate in Britain today would be inconceivable without the role played in that period by *New Left Review*.

The second force to emerge from the aftermath of 1956 was the International Marxist Group (IMG). This formation also was marked by its sharp internationalism — it became the first ever really serious, as opposed to largely nominal, section of the Fourth International in Britain.

The IMG's internationalism was shown further in the decisive role it played in the late 1960s in building the Vietnam Solidarity Campaign — the second mass movement which, after CND, clearly outflanked the Communist Party to its left. The IMG then went on, in the 1970s, to build up a reputation as the only organisation of the Marxist left with a seriously democratic internal structure — as well as one characterised by internationalism and support for women's, black, and gay self-organisation.

Up until the 1970s however all the groups to the left of the Communist Party were essentially small Marxist currents — and with only a marginal foothold in the labour movement. But from the early 1970s onwards the development of the 'Bennite' current of the Labour Party began to create a serious *working class* force to the left of the Communist Party. It was this Bennite left that gained spectacular victories inside the Labour Party after the debacle of the 1974-79 Labour government.

## The rise of Bennism

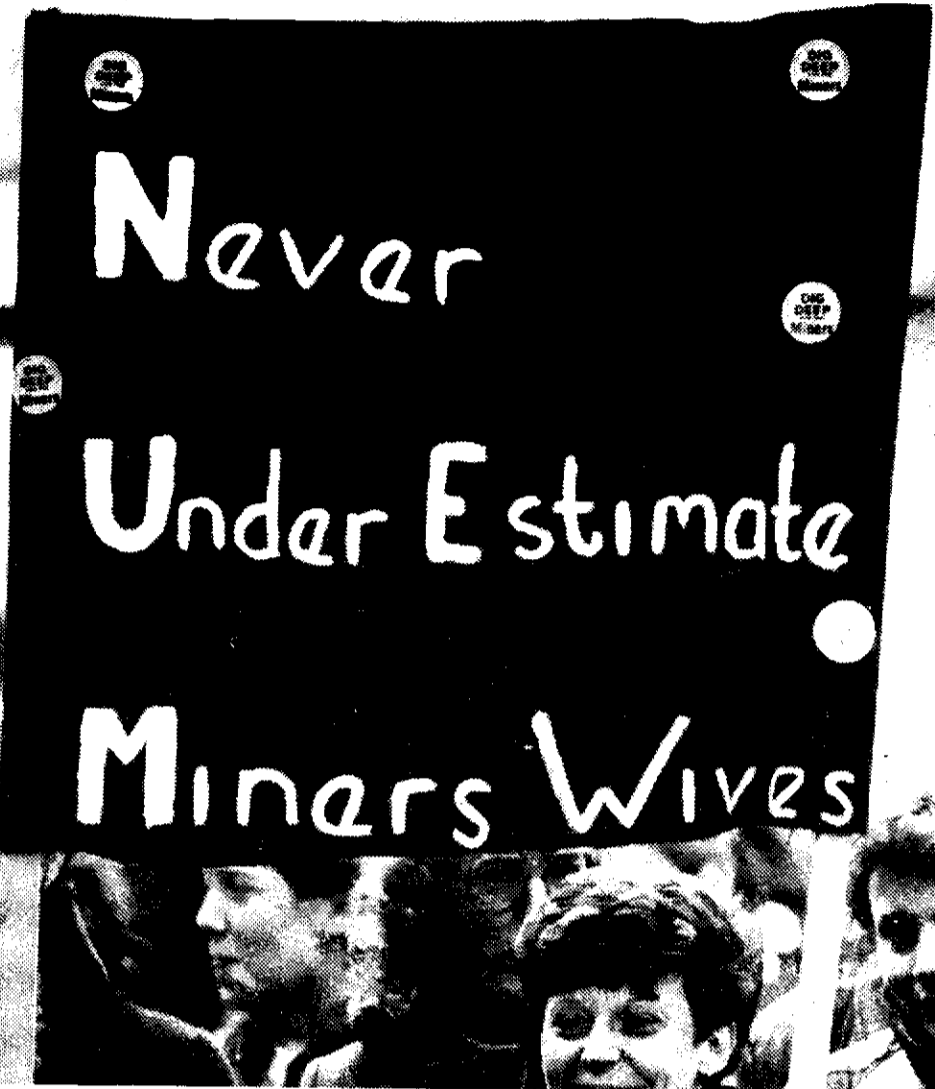
THE ORIGINAL 'Bennite' left of the Labour Party, as it developed in the 1970s, had strong support among constituency party and trade union activists. But it was further deepened in the late 1970s by specific processes.

In local government significant Labour developments which achieved its greatest popular success with Ken Livingstone's election as leader of the GLC. Most significantly of Arthur Scargill — based himself on the Yorkshire miners and the strikes of 1969, 1972, and 1974 — to the presidency of NUM.

The miners, vanguard of the British working class, and the traditional base of the CPGB had given rise to a trade union leadership which now qualitatively to the left of the Communist Party. This reality was revealed in the 1984 miners' strike when the Communist Party dominated areas of South Wales and Scotland were far to the right of Scargill's supporters. In the miners' strike the entire process of development of the Bennite left took a qualitative step. The section of the NUM leadership symbolised by Arthur Scargill broke with anything seen in the last sixty years since the defeat of general strike.

The Scargill leadership of the NUM did not go away, or try to limit the

# the Communist Party



It is little wonder that in struggles with these types of ideas the CP has come out with far more credit than it deserves. Indeed the Communist Party is very content to see the debate over the future of the Labour left as polarised between itself on one side and ultra-leftism on the other. This is exactly the terrain on which, despite the CPGB's decline, it has the greatest credibility. Furthermore ultra-left posturing is something the left can no longer afford when Marxism now has real historic opportunities to participate in the Labour left, and profit from the split in the Communist Party, to gain real roots in the Labour movement.

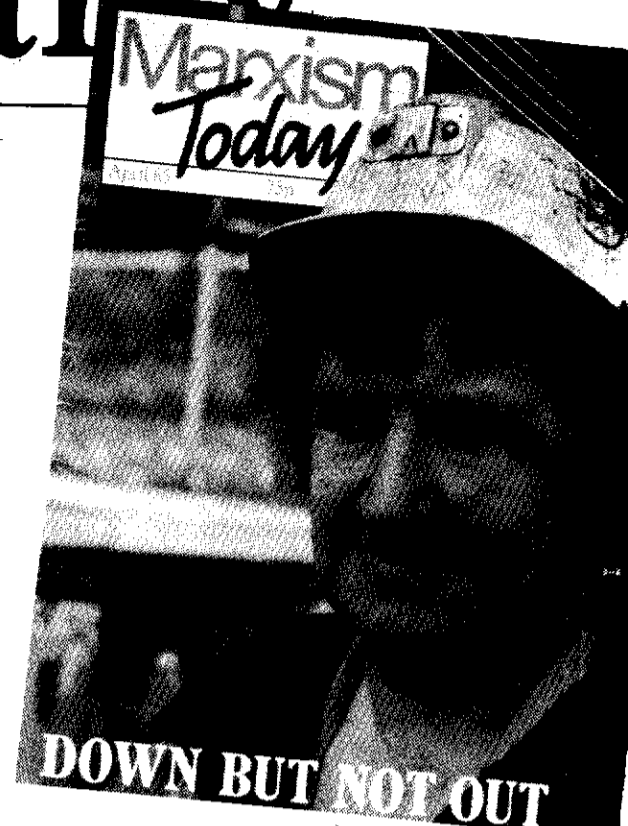
The real challenge to Marxism in Britain is to break with such ultra-leftism and lay down the foundations of a serious socialist strategy in this country. This will necessarily take up and answer from a different angle virtually every key issue the CPGB itself deals with — for at least the Communist Party has the merit of addressing itself to the most important questions in British and world politics.

The key elements of such a strategy are clear

- Internationally, not peaceful co-existence and detente, but the international extension of the class struggle. Support for the Nicaraguan revolution, for the international anti-imperialist movement, for those such as Solidarnosc fighting Stalinism in eastern Europe are decisive examples of this.

- Within the British state not a 'broad democratic alliance' but an *alliance for socialism* — an alliance of the working class and the whole of the oppressed against the bourgeoisie and for socialism. This is the core of socialist strategy in Britain. It is from this that all the decisive politics of Socialist Action flow.

- Fighting for a real 'party of labour'. Britain is nowhere near a situation where socialist revolution is on the agenda. The fight today, and for a prolonged period, is precisely to create a 'popular majority for socialism' — or, to use Leninist language, what is



on the agenda today is not a struggle to conquer power but a struggle to conquer the masses. That fight, today, above all passes through a struggle to transform the labour movement into a more adequate instrument for struggle.

This type of perspective corresponds in practice to the line of a call for a refounding conference of the Labour Party of Tony Benn, and others.

- The creation of a class struggle left wing, as opposed to the politics of 'Broad Leftism', is the key strategic goal in the trade unions, Labour Party, and other mass organisations.

This today, of course, means participating in and organisationally building the Broad Lefts. In some cases existing Broad Lefts may actually, through struggle, become transformed into real class struggle left wings.

But there is a qualitative difference between the politics of an Arthur Scargill and that of Jimmy Knapp. Scargill systematically oriented the NUM to struggle, and based its strike strategy on the social alliances which were developed through that struggle. That is qualitatively different to the politics of a Knapp — as the failure of the NUM to respond effectively, for example, to the attack on Coalville depot during the miners' strike showed.

## Broad leftism

Even although they may be in the same left wing formations in the unions, there is a qualitative difference between class struggle forces, forces of the Scargill type, and the politics of 'Broad Leftism'. It is on these class struggle forces that the real future of the left wing of the labour movement — a left wing that stands and fights — depends.

- Finally the fulcrum for this entire debate and struggle is today within the Labour Party and labour movement.

It is this, therefore, that is the real alternative to the Communist Party. Join the Labour Party, and there fight for an alliance for socialism, a real party of labour, a class struggle left wing. That is the road which should be followed by all those locked into the twin dead ends of *Marxism Today* and the *Morning Star*.

It is, in fact, the line that should be pursued by every activist in the labour movement. The line which Socialist Action has no hesitation in presenting.



Bea Campbell

From this fight flows the absolute centrality of demands such as the defence of the political levy, the creation of black sections, securing the demands of the Women's Action Committee and similar measures.

what has passed for Marxism in the labour movement in Britain is in fact little more than primitive, and systematised ultra-leftism — although its origins in general lie in an adaptation to British imperialism.

Ideas of currents such as the *Militant* or Workers Revolutionary Party that socialist revolution in Britain is only a few years away, that the British bourgeoisie is at the end of its tether and held up merely by a thin layer of labour traitors have been, and are, presented as the authentic Marxist alternative to the CPGB — despite the fact that such views have nothing to do with the 'classical Marxism' of Lenin, Trotsky, Rosa Luxemburg, Gramsci and others.

Finally, with the rise of working class struggle after 1968 the development of the Bennite left in the 1970s, and culminating in the 1984 miners strike, Marxist ideas could once more seriously strike roots in the labour movement. At the very same time they were doing so the Communist Party was splitting.

## An alliance for socialism

**IF THE development of the left wing of the labour movement, and in particular the aftermath of the miners' strike, opens up the door for serious Marxist ideas to gain roots in the labour movement which they have not had for sixty years then there is a condition for success in this task. This is that the Marxists in Britain have to break with both their primitive conceptions of Marxism and their 'infantile' ultra-left past.**

The Communist Party, precisely because of its links to a mass international movement based on the Soviet bureaucracy, had, and has, a coherent strategy — albeit a completely disastrous one. Its 'broad democratic alliance', a simple updating of the popular front strategy of the 1930s, gives a clear coherence to its policy at every level.

In contrast to that strategy of the CP much of

miners' strike right through to the end. They finished up far to the left of their previous positions — and took with them one section of the left of the labour movement. With the miners' strike a radicalisation of the left set in whose cutting edge was the NUM but which extended far beyond that.

A second section of the old Bennite left peeled off to the right — a left which is now symbolised by Michael Meacher, David Blunkett, and Tom Sawyer. Ken Livingstone tries to occupy an intermediate position between this 'inside left' and the left which developed around the miners and Benn.

The wheel had in fact gone full circle. The Stalinisation of the Communist Party in the 1920s had pushed its left wing Marxist opponents to the very fringes of the labour movement — and confined them to tiny groups of people. The long upturn of international class struggle from the 1940s onwards — and above all that after 1956 — began to reintroduce these Marxist ideas in a serious and permanent way into British politics.



Tony Chater, editor of the *Morning Star*



Tony Benn

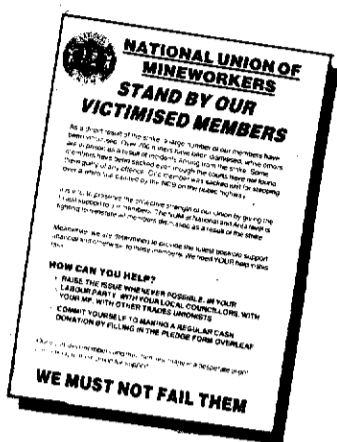
tion of the 1984-85 strike. On the contrary for an entire year it systematically mobilised the miners and their supporters against the government in the greatest working class struggle outside war since the general strike. It defied the courts, based itself on working class democracy against parliamentary law, and created around the NUM the greatest alliance of the working class and oppressed seen since World War II.

## Inaction

The emergence of the Scargill leadership of the NUM was a *qualitative* moment in working class politics — a rupture in the politics of the labour movement equivalent to that in ruling class politics which had been created by the decline of support for the Conservative Party and the emergence of the SDP.

The working class radicalisation which had begun in the late 1960s had now given rise to something qualitatively different to the Broad Leftist politics developed in the trade unions in the 1960s and 1970s — the 'Broad Leftism' earlier symbolised by Hugh Scanlon or Jack Jones, and carried on today in a different form by Jimmy Knapp or Ray Buckton. The Scargill current of the NUM saw the emergence of the first class struggle leadership of the working class for sixty years.

The force of the miners strike in turn split, and recomposed, the old rather amorphous Bennite left. One part of that left, including Tony Benn, Dennis Skinner, and the Campaign Group of MPs, defended the



The Miners Solidarity fund is the only official fund. The account is at the Co-operative Bank plc, West Street, Sheffield. Sorting code 08.90.75, account no. 30000009. The NUM are asking trade unionists to sign a pledge for at least 50p a week or to take out a standing order.

**BIRMINGHAM TRADES** Council Miners Support Committee has continued to meet since the end of the strike. On June 1 it takes its most important initiative to date with a demonstration calling for amnesty for sacked miners and no pit closures. The demonstration will assemble at 11 am at Lancaster Circus and march to Chamberlain Square for a rally at 12.30 pm. Speakers will include Peter Heathfield, Jack Collins and West Midlands Region TUC.

The demonstration has received the support of miners, Women Against Pit Closures groups and support committees in many other parts of the country.

Supporters travelling from outside Birmingham should contact the Trades Council on 021-236 1240 for details of how to get to the assembly point.

## Women Against Pit Closures

'WE SEE it as our duty to raise funds for the sacked and imprisoned miners here in Nottingham. The Womens Support Group has sent letters to everyone who supported us throughout the strike telling them that we haven't gone away. That we are still here and we are still fighting to stop pit closures. We need money now not for striking miners but for sacked and imprisoned miners.'

Women Against Pit Closures is made up of all the different areas of the coalfields. Each area is involved in raising funds and sending them to the national fund. A special leaflet is being produced nationally by Women Against Pit Closures to advertise this fund.' (Pam Oldfield tel 0623 20226)

**THE NATIONAL** Organisation of Miners in Prison and Supporters has called a demonstration for Saturday 8 June around three demands — Free the Prisoners, Reinstate the sacked men, Stop the Victimization.

The leaflet advertising the event points out that there 'are now eighty miners and their supporters in prison serving sentences of between six months and five years'.

NOMPAS was set up just before the end of the strike. Its committee consists of NUM members and women from the coalfields. It is mounting a campaign to free the miners and their supporters imprisoned as a direct result of government policies in the mining industry.

Jackie Kaye explained why NOMPAS was concentrating on the issue of the prisoners. 'We've had two meetings since we were established as an organisation. We are concerned with miners in jail. We are not a welfare organisation.'

We support anyone who has been sent to prison as a result of the strike. The NUM has set up a fund for the sacked and victimised miners. But we see our role as being a political campaign and we have been unable so far to give financial support to the sacked men. We support the demand for an amnesty and for re-instatement.'

**THE FIGHT** against the Tories rate capping proposals is reaching the crunch. Some hard choices are having to be made and the need to take a clear stand against setting a rate has divided Labour authorities. A number have capitulated and abandoned the fight against cuts in jobs and services.

Others, such as Hackney and Lambeth, continue to fight. The key to that fight must be united action of councillors, local authority trade unionists and the local community.

In Hackney, council workers occupied the Town Hall to prevent any possible rate setting meeting taking place and in Islington thousands of council workers demonstrated their support by blocking the road with council vehicles.

Those councils still fighting deserve the support of all those in the Labour movement committed to a campaign against the Tory attacks. Surcharge and illegality have to be risked as an essential step on the road to victory. Socialist Action looks at two councils, Hackney and Lambeth where the example of how to fight is being put into practice.

# Hackney: Council workers take action

**COUNCIL WORKERS** took over Hackney Town Hall last Thursday afternoon to stop right wing Labour councillors joining with Tories and Liberals to set a rate.

The occupation was a success. The special council meeting was unable to take place. But this week will see another vote at a normal council meeting and Labour could split down the middle. If a rate is set the struggle will pass onto the council workers who seem likely to continue to resist cuts in Hackney. VALERIE COULTAS reports

The occupation of Hackney Town Hall by the Joint Shop Stewards Committee reflects the strength of feeling among the Hackney labour movement about the need to fight Jenkins' ratecapping laws.

In a surprise move at the beginning of last week Howard Pallis and Charles Clarke decided to defy agreed Labour Party policy and propose a rate rise of 14 per cent.

Betty Shanks, Deputy Mayor, explained that a budget based on this rate would mean cuts of £6 million this year and perhaps 16 million next year. 'It would affect the old age pensioners, meals on wheels and home helps would go.'

Anger at the break with Labour Party policy motivated the council workers' action. 'We said we would fight side by side or against the council to stop cuts', said Alf Silverman, leader of the union's joint shop stewards' com-

mittee. 'They are now fighting against us and our response is total non-cooperation. We will not let them betray us.'

Hackney is already one of the poorest boroughs in England. Like Liverpool last year complying with the government's limits will mean the decimation of many vital services and jobs in an area where social services are a lifeline for many and jobs are few and far between.

Setting a 14 per cent rate in Hackney would be a cuts budget as Di Parkin, Vice Chair of Hackney North Constituency Labour Party points out. 'The budget proposed last Monday included a maximum rent rise of 18 per cent for council tenants and immediate cuts of two million in staff. There was also a clause that referred to other "unspecified negative contingencies".'

'It included one-off savings, re-scheduling loan charges to pay back more in the future, buying



Betty Shanks Deputy Mayor



Photo: JOHN CHAPMAN

furniture, they can't take my car because I haven't got one. They can put me in prison. Fortunately my family is right behind me.'

'I've voted against rate increases all the way through. That's the platform I stood on. These trade unionists are standing up for what they believe in.'

The view expressed by many demonstrators outside and inside Hackney Town Hall was that if the splitters pushed through a rate there would be continued opposition from trade unionists to cuts, including strike action.

'They cannot run Hackney on this proposal. The organisation and militancy in Hackney will not allow them to go ahead' explained Di.

And indeed it does seem likely that whatever happens in the council the

fight will continue in this borough because of the solid stand the labour movement has taken in support of no rent rises, no rate rises (above the level of inflation) and no cuts. But the problem still remain that Hackney could be isolated because of the backdown of so many other Labour Groups in the fight against ratecapping.

The council workers in Hackney are showing the Labour left nationally what was clear from the battle to defend Liverpool last year.

It's no good relying on Labour councillors to lead the fight. It is only an alliance between the community, the councillors with trade unionists in the lead that can win a successful fight to defend the cities and push back the cuts.

## Lambeth continues the fight

**FEELINGS RAN** high last week when Lambeth Council met with the Labour councillors barely able to hold off attempts to set a rate. Council workers struck from 3 pm on Wednesday in order to leaflet the public. Then over 300 people attended a Labour rally addressed by Denis Skinner, John McDonnell, Hilda Kean and Sharon Atkin among others, before marching to the Town Hall, where lobbyists were able to watch the Council meeting on closed circuit television.

With a majority of only four and three Labour councillors putting rate making amendments, it looked as if the end could have come. However, with only two of the defectors voting with the Tories and because they wouldn't vote for each others amendments, no position was able to receive a majority. By agreeing to move to next business no rate was set.

As councillors pointed

out, addressing the lobbyists after the meeting, only the unity of Labour and council workers had ensured victory. Now Labour Party members will be trying to get the three defectors to resign while council workers will be preparing their next step. Perhaps they will be mindful of the way other workers in Southwark and Hackney have had to occupy their town halls when Labour voting becomes too uncertain.

Lambeth Miners' Support Committee Public Meeting

## 'Defending Jobs'

Speakers:

Dennis Skinner (MP for Bolsover),  
John Moyle (sacked Kent miner),  
Chris Gunter (Lambeth Bridge),  
Vanessa Wiseman (Lambeth NUT),  
Women Against Pit Closures

Wednesday 22 May, 7.30pm

St. Matthews Meeting Place,  
Brixton Hill (opposite Town Hall)

This shows the potential voting strength that the right has to push for a rate to be set before 31 May.

Betty has a very clear stand on the question of councillors being surcharged. 'I don't own my own home so I haven't got much to lose', she explains. 'They can take my

Photo: JOHN CHAPMAN

# For a national union

**DAVE CROWTHER**, North Derbyshire area delegate from Warsop Main colliery, spoke to *Socialist Action* about the proposed rule changes.

Two main arguments against the rule changes have been put forward. The first is the simplistic argument of Lynk and the rest of the Notts leadership.

Their line is that the rule changes will turn the NUM into some kind of totalitarian dictatorship in which Scargill will be able to do anything he wants. It is a line designed to play on the worst anti-union prejudices and not worth discussing.

The second argument is that the rule changes will strengthen bureaucracy within the union, giving more power to national officials and area full-timers, and taking decision-making out of the hands of the membership at area level.

These criticisms deserve to be properly discussed. It is important that we are able to discuss the objections without seeming to line up with Lynk in any way.

Two arguments can be put up in favour of rule changes. The first is simply that the national leadership is putting the changes forward, the national leadership is a good leadership, and therefore the changes should be supported.

This argument boils down to blind loyalty to the national leadership. That might be OK in some circumstances, but it doesn't deal with the issue.

the national union. The new rule book is also designed to help protect the union from legal attack by the courts. It will indemnify all actions taken by NUM officials in line with union policy.

Some argue that this will mean making the leadership less accountable to the membership. But this misses the point.

The rule changes don't make the leadership any less accountable to the membership — they make sure that the union is not accountable to the courts. The membership has a say in making policy and the indemnification of NUM officials refers specifically to acts carried out in the course of fighting for these policies.

## Policy

The same goes for the removal of Scargill's casting vote so that he won't have to comply with Tory anti-union laws and stand for re-election. For a start, this 'change' is in line with decisions of the 1983 NUM conference. It protects the 1983 decision from interference by the courts but the real issue is not the question of Scargill as an individual.

Again it is a question of protecting the policy of the union. We must get away from personalities and look at policies.

Those who attack the rule changes tend to focus on personalities, but what they are really doing is protecting the area leaderships against the national union. Although they do it for different reasons, that goes for South Wales as well as Notts.

The rule changes are designed to move towards a united national union and to defend union policies against interference by the courts. It is not a question of protecting individuals, or of taking accountability away from the membership.

The changes are a constructive package which will strengthen the union in the difficult times ahead. Other areas should follow North Derbyshire and support them for that reason.



PHOTO: Notts Collier

## Why we need the rule changes

**THE NOTTS COLLIER** is the paper that supports the national executive and the national union in the Nottinghamshire NUM. Its May issue carries an article on the NUM rule changes that we have reprinted below.

The Tory press and others have in recent days been spreading rumours about the proposed rule changes.

Check the following details with your branch officials, who will have copies of the proposed rule changes. You will find that:

★ It is not true that the new rules will transfer power from the members to the officials.

The new rules include a series of fresh areas of jurisdiction for the conference of elected delegates and for a national ballot of the membership.

For the first time, conference delegates and members will have voting powers on whether to remove the national officials and area officials. In the past this issue never came before delegates or members.

As in the old rules the authority of the union is vested in conference. 'The government of the union shall be by conference as provided for in these rules. In the periods between conference the NEC shall administer the business and affairs of the union and perform all duties laid down for it by resolution of conference, and it shall not at any time act contrary to, or in defiance of, any resolution of conference.'

★ It is not true that the new rules will make it impossible to get rid of officials.

As explained above, it will actually become easier for the membership to remove officials who break democratically agreed union policy. The removal of national and area officers will be decided for the first time by conference and a membership ballot — not just a small group on the National Disciplinary Committee.

## Autonomy

Rules for the removal of the NEC or any of its members remain unchanged.

★ It is not true that the new rules destroy the independence of the Areas.

The proposed rules differ in only minor respects from the old rules — despite the claims in the press.

Every right of the Constituent Associations in the old rule book is upheld in full. They are registered trade unions in their own right. The proposed rules confirm the continuing local autonomy over local funds and state that the district rules for the constitution of area executives and councils still stand.

National, area and branch officials have always been subject to the authority of the union conference, ever since the NUM was founded.

Anyone claiming the autonomy of areas has been curbed under the proposed rules has probably

never consulted the old rule book. This states explicitly that no industrial action by any branch or area can take place without the previous sanction of the NEC. The same wording is adopted in the proposed new rule.

★ It is not true that delegates or officials can be indemnified for any act, whether it is in line with union rules or not.

The indemnity clauses in the rules state explicitly that any act must have sanction of conference, or the NEC subject to conference where the NEC is bound to uphold union rules, before it earns indemnity.

## Benefits

In fact, the national officials are the only ones under the old rules to have implicit indemnity under law. The new clauses are included because it is only fair that rank and file delegates should have similar protection for carrying out the wishes of those who elect them.

★ It is not true that the proposed category of Associate Membership will give them powers in the union, or allow them to act on behalf of the union.

The proposed rule states that 'an associate member shall not be eligible to vote, receive benefit, attend meetings (except by specific invitation) nor hold any office in the union'.

Associate members exist for many other unions, and as many under the



How the Nottingham Miner portrays the national leadership in its 'Vote No' issue

proposed NUM rules, they have no powers.

★ It is not true that Nottinghamshire Area NUM members could be placed under the leadership of the Kent Area NUM.

Both old and proposed rules on the rights of Constituent Associations rule this out completely. Under a new rule, dealing with Constituent Associations, it is clear that the Nottinghamshire NUM is a separate union. None of its members could be taken out and placed in another Constituent Association.

★ It is not true that the Notts pension fund could be taken over by the national union.

No such powers are proposed, nor have they ever existed. The new rule states: 'Each Area or Branch in accordance with the provisions of its rules, may collect from its members contributions in excess of those provided for in these Rules for the purpose of provident, welfare and other benefits and shall retain control and autonomy over such funds.'

## Regroup

The real argument for the changes has to start from the situation we face in the mining industry. The outcome of the dispute means that we now face job losses through pit closures and voluntary redundancies.

Our industry faces a period of contraction. The union has to reorganise and regroup under these conditions. We need to do this by moving towards being a genuine national union with united membership and united purpose.

The new national rule book is a means to move in this direction. It will help consolidate the areas into

**SPLITS ARE emerging within the Coal Board over how to deal with NACOD's overtime ban.**

One side wants a head on confrontation insisting that pit deputies work weekend rotas and treating those who refuse as being in breach of contract. Those who hold this view are also threatening not to pay members of the NUM who cannot work as a result of the deputies action and to go over the heads of NACODS to encourage members to defy the ban.

The other side thinks a sharp confrontation with a normally 'moderate' union is unnecessary and negotiations should be resumed as soon as possible.

The problem for both sides is that NACODS don't trust the Coal Board to establish the new review procedure or use the old review procedure and consult the unions if a pit is threatened with closure.

14 pit closures have been announced since the end of the dispute and the board is trying to completely ignore the unions in the coal industry.

60 per cent of NACODS members voted for the action and reports suggest that up to 30 per cent of coal production is in jeopardy from this action.

**DESPITE THREATS** from Labour's national executive, several constituency parties now look likely to go ahead with selection or reselection of their parliamentary candidates with the full participation by their local black sections. One such constituency, Lewisham East, has already held its selection meeting. A nomination from the black section was accepted by the party executive — and the two black section delegates played their full part in the process of selecting Russell Profit as Labour's first black candidate in a winnable seat.

Because the Labour Party refuses to recognise the constitutionality of the Lewisham East decision, Walworth Road declined to send any observers to any of the selection meetings. Russell is not recognised by headquarters as Labour's official candidate. Lewisham East general committee three times discussed the situation — and three times decided to take a stand in ending the institutional racism of the Labour Party by going ahead regardless of the edict against black sections.

The constituency had held all of its short-listing and selection meetings with well-established figures from the labour movement present, to ensure that there is no come-back on secondary issues. The procedure of the meetings is accepted by all as fair and above-board. In addition every member present at the selection meeting — including the two delegates from Lewisham East black section — have signed the 'oath of loyalty' demanded by Labour's national executive. And Lewisham black councillor, Russell Profit is still the party's choice to fight the marginal seat for Labour in the next election.

The ball is now firmly in the national executive's court. As the statement from the black section national committee (reprinted below) points out, it's now up to the Labour Party leadership to decide whether or not they'll be 'shooting themselves in the foot on the race issue'.

In Brent South, a safe Labour seat, the party has decided to short-list three black section activists — Sharon Atkin, Keith Yaz and Paul Boateng — as potential replacements for Laurie Pavitt who is retiring at the end of this parliament. But the party is currently considering selecting their candidate without the participation of the local black section.

One of the three candidates, Sharon Atkin, correctly points out that solidarity with the black sections campaign is more important than one or

two black members of parliament. She said: 'One black MP in parliament is not going to solve the problems of black people. We are campaigning for recognition as well as representation.'

Sharon puts it well. What is at stake is not seats for a new new black MPs, but the whole role of black people in the Labour Party. The black section campaign has spearheaded the fight against racism in the party. The question, of black people's right to organise independently within the party is in itself a political issue. The Labour leadership adamantly oppose black section rights precisely because it is a question of changing the fundamental relationship within the Labour Party, one step in turning it into what Tony Benn calls a 'party of labour' — that is a party whose organisation attempts to represent the interests of the working class and their allies by ensuring that their voice is given real weight within the party.

It has been pointed out time and again that black people are among Labour's most solid voters. There's only one way to make sure that remains the case, and that's by ensuring that the party — its policies and its public representatives — genuinely support and reflect black people's interests. Labour can't be just multi-racial, it must be anti-racist.

This is where the difficulty of Neil Kinnock and the rest of Labour's leadership lies. Not merely do black sections involve tackling the issue of racism head-on, but black people are much more likely to adopt radical policies — and stick to them — than their white male counterparts who currently fill the Labour benches in parliament. The same goes for women.

More black and women MPs are not by themselves going to solve racism and sexism within the party. But the support of black sections, like the support for women's demands, is reflected in the issue of selection of black candidates for parliament. That is a real threat to what Russell Profit calls the 'softly-softly socialism' of Neil Kinnock and the institutionalised racism throughout the party.

That is why black sections' part in the selection process has been blocked. It is also why every single socialist in the Labour Party has the elementary duty to support defend the actions of the Labour Party black section. That means today supporting Russell Profit and the correct stand of Lewisham East constituency. Resolutions and protests should flood the NEC and party conferences.

CAROL TURNER discussed with RUSSELL PROFITT the issue surrounding his selection.

Your selection by Lewisham East as parliamentary candidate hasn't been accepted as official by Labour's national executive. Can you explain why that is, and what your own view of the Lewisham East's decision is?

In an effort to highlight the position of black sections and of black people in the Labour Party, Lewisham East decided to include its two black section delegates in the selection process. The NEC representatives told us that would be in breach of party rules. Nevertheless, at three successive general committees, the position was upheld.

The situation now is that because those two delegates were at the selection meeting and also because the local party accepted a nomination paper from the black section, my candidature is not official. We've not received a communication to that effect. However, reading the press — it's the only way we ever get to hear about what the NEC's doing — we gather they're likely to take a long view on the question, and seek to get a timetable for the selection of an official candidate for Lewisham East.

The black section has been a campaign I've been associated with for the last two years. As someone who has been campaigning on the issue, I was delighted that the party took the stand that it did. This has really dramatised the whole question of the position of black people in the Labour Party. It took the issue a stage further than in a number of other constituency parties, where they were just carrying resolutions.

I was impressed with the tremendous unity in the party around this issue. At the GC after GC when the



Russell Profit

Photo: JOHN CHAPMAN

question was discussed, we were winning votes by massive majorities: 37 in favour, 5 against — that's the type of votes we were winning.

What was also interesting was the way members of the party began to see the question of race, as a personal responsibility for action. It became a question of the right of black people to be heard in the labour movement.

Another development was the increase in the level of black participation in the party locally. It became an issue, it became a cause — it became something which black people who hitherto have not played an active role in the party could see was their direct concern.

# The ca

That whole process has energised the party and made it more determined to fight for equal opportunities issues in a more direct way than was ever the case. The party has put itself on the line.

The position is still delicate. The NEC could close down the party if they wished. They could block any attempt to bring about a change in Lewisham, and could also stop us taking on Thatcher and the real challenges that exist within our community.

**Do you think the NEC is likely to go for that sort of confrontation, or would it want a compromise?**

Soundings from Walworth Road suggest they are trying to find a way of dealing with the issue. Our position is clear: we've got a parliamentary candidate, we're satisfied with the procedures, and we'll continue backing that candidate.

I don't know what the NEC's going to do about that, but that's the position which this GC's taken. The overwhelming feeling is that the party's got to sort out those rules so we can get on with beating Thatcher.

**So, is Lewisham East going to start campaigning with its new candidate?**

Yes. Three central issues in this constituency will be picked up over the next few months. Firstly, the question of getting more jobs into the area. Employment has never been particularly bright in Lewisham, especially in the east. The party will be involved in a campaign to highlight the need for more jobs within the constituency.

Secondly, we've got an ageing housing stock in East Lewisham. We need to demand that action is taken to improve housing and the management of housing estates, and at the same time to explain the reasons why the Labour council is being forced by a Tory government to cut back on the housing improvements.

The third campaign we're going to wage is a community-based campaign to defeat the local member of parliament. The Tories have alienated so many groups with so many different actions they've taken over the last few years. I think it's quite important that we see a broad-based campaign emerging to defeat Thatcher, by getting the Labour Party in more contact with tenants' and residents' associations, young people, people who need child care facilities, and so on.

Those are the three things we'll be working on, taking the issues to people in the constituency so they can see precisely where the Labour Party stands. But in doing that we've got to prepare clear policies, we've got to project that a vote for Labour is not just an anti-Thatcher vote. It's a vote for socialism.

It would help us tremendously if the leadership of the party actually started talking in those terms, rather than simply clobbering local parties like East Lewisham and ducking a number of central questions that have been posed, particularly the miners' dispute.

**Given that Lewisham East has chosen to fight for black sections' rights and has chosen a black candidate, is there going to be a particular emphasis on black people in the campaign?**

I'd emphasise that the Labour Party can't just be a multi-racial party, it's got to be an anti-racist party — the difference being you've got to say it's important that black people define for themselves the features of the struggle that's taking place and are actively involved in overcoming the resistance to race equality which exists in this country. That means that through the campaign which has already begun we've got to bring more black people into the work of the Labour Party.

In talking about the number of groups who have lost out through the Thatcher government, we've got to recognise that at the bottom of every economic and social pile you will find large groups of black people. In taking this stand it's very important we set out to work consciously and deliberately with black people in the constituency. The black section is involved in raising the issue within the party and at the same time raising the case for more activity to bring more black people into the party.

One's got to be realistic however, and recognise that the record of the Labour Party on the question of race and equal opportunity means it's very, very hard to convince many black people that it really is worthwhile joining the party. That's the question we will



Photo: JOHN HARRIS

ple, whatever questions we raise have a black perspective. There's no question of us not being up-front on this any longer.

**You mentioned the miners' strike as an example of the Labour leadership not doing as much as it could. One of the rather special things about the way Arthur Scargill led the miners' strike was the alliances he made with all sorts of people. The strongest was with women but there was a significant number of black groups who organised as black people to support the miners. Are there any lessons in that for your own campaign?**

Yes I'm certain there are lessons to be learned. The National Union of Mineworkers has always been at the forefront of struggles for trade union rights in this country. It's always taken a sharp view. That has helped that union define who its supporters are and at the same time to seek alliances with groups who are also on the front line. So it's quite natural for the NUM to make connections with women and black people.

The role of the miners' wives during that struggle also helped create an alliance for women's rights generally. There was a community of interest developing right throughout the dispute.

With the full support of the trade unions and of the Labour Party we could have seen an uprising of interest overcoming the Tory government and bringing them down. That wasn't the case, but it doesn't mean that all the connections made during that struggle need disappear.

During the miners' strike the fact that there are a number of black miners in this country emerged, particularly in the Nottingham area. And they certainly weren't the ones who were at work during the strike.

A lot of black people could see that the struggle the miners were waging — which was basically a struggle against institutionalised power in this country — was their struggle. And a lot of mineworkers also found out that the way authority responds to challenges is similar in each case.

When previously they saw what was happening to the black community they probably didn't make the connection. But through picketing and in their communities — the use of massive force to overwhelm trade unionists — they could see that this is a brutal state, a centralistic society which uses whatever power it can to deny rights to disadvantaged groups or those who are out to change the fundamental orientation of power within this country.

I think that lesson is not going to be lost on this generation. And I certainly hope we can maintain the links and develop them for the future.

One of the few major British unions which backed black sections at party conference last year was the National Union of Mineworkers. That is an indication of the understanding within that union of these sorts of questions.

**Let's develop what you're saying about power relations. Tony Benn calls for the refounding of the Labour Party, which he means Labour has got to rebuild itself based on broader sections within the working class movement than just organised labour — black**

# Blacks

# Case for

people, women, opposition to the missiles and so on. Is that the same thing you're talking about?

I think the Benn argument is very important. It's saying that there are large groups of people for whom no one speaks, whose only avenue to change is at the level of the streets. That can only lead to frustration and bitterness. I support the idea embodied in the Benn argument. I would say that the key is direct involvement, for the grass roots organisations to emerge and force the issue through in the party.

That's where black sections come in. It wasn't a bureaucratic initiative to garner blacks around the flagpole of the Labour Party, it was a demand from people who've been working within the labour movement, who could see little prospect of getting things done unless we did it for ourselves. I think that more and more over the next few years we will see those developments taking place.

But for a real change to occur we're going to have to see a clear-out of the leadership of the Labour Party. The things they represent, the views they hold, are out of step with the community and the party.



Photo: GM COOKSON

That's true. The other point Benn makes is the need for extra-parliamentary activity. If we rely on parliament to change things, we'll end up with exactly the same old status quo. But the argument in the labour movement after the miners' strike is about recomposing the left around Kinnock, rather than around the class struggle principles that Tony Benn and Arthur Scargill represent. What's your position?

I have strong views about Kinnock. He doesn't strike me as the leadership figure that many within the party think him to be. I remain unimpressed by his efforts to come to grips with the central issues facing the labour movement. In terms of understanding the forces at

play within the labour movement and seeking to encourage those to grow, I've been disappointed with his reactions.

Whether or not therefore the left should be urged to group themselves around him is an interesting question. If there was a groundswell of support within the Labour Party for Neil Kinnock those sorts of allegiances — which he doesn't appear to have — would have been there. But as I see it a lot of party members are distrustful, a bit wary about the sort of softly-softly socialism he's offering to the British people.

We are in a difficulty in terms of an alternative to Kinnock. I think the party is facing the dilemma about whether this is the time to become involved in a battle about leadership. I don't think it is, but at the same time I don't feel wholehearted support for the current leadership. I would want to argue the case for change, for a whole different team of activists in the party to take this movement further.

As to whether Tony Benn has got it right, or whether we're moving towards a sort of Bennery without Benn: my view is that if there were other people within the Labour Party that spoke with the socialist force of Tony Benn, they would have emerged. But there isn't. I respect him greatly for his ideas, his analysis, and for posing the issues as he does, without watering them down.

The sort of socialist change we want will only come through mobilising people and arguing the questions with them. If we ignore that we'll never get the socialist community we all want.

**Let's come back then to what you were saying earlier. Be specific about the sort of policies you would be fighting for if you were in parliament today.**

I've been involved in various civil rights and civil liberties campaigns, so I'd what to do that. I also believe we need to break down the barriers to involvement on a local and national level. So I'd be seeking better representation of women and black people in various decision-making forums in the country.

I support the campaign for a united Ireland, and welcome Sinn Fein's support via the ballot box. That is a positive sign for the future of that country. I also support proposals to reinvest in building Britain up again, to create jobs and better social services.

I would also be associated with campaigns designed to get Britain away from the coat-tails of Reagan, and for a fairer share for third world countries. Labour should certainly be speaking out against what Reagan is doing in Nicaragua and Central America. The party has the most appalling record of speaking out for the rights of those countries fighting for freedom and self-government. It would be important to ensure not just that Labour spoke out, but made the links with struggles for independence and freedom in Central and Latin America.

I would happily vote for Britain to withdraw from NATO, and to send the American missiles back and to renounce the need for nuclear weapons. And I would want to see the party more conscious of environmental issues, particularly the use of nuclear power.

Those are the sorts of issues I'd be taking up in parliament. That's not to say I think you get those sorts of

changes just through working in parliament. The problem with many MPs is that they see parliament as the be-all and end-all. Working with communities, working with campaigns, to get the debate and discussion outside parliament, that's important — rather than flogging away in the Palace of Westminster thinking you're making real changes.

**A final question. I think Lewisham East's stand will encourage other constituencies to do likewise. What message do you have for those constituencies, and how confident do you feel that there'll be other black candidates chosen to run in the next election?**

I'm sure there'll be more black candidates chosen, the question is whether they'll be running in winnable constituencies. I hope that by the action Lewisham East has taken we've set an example for other constituencies.

One Lewisham is not going to create the transformation we need to make the party anti-racist. I look to other parties taking the same stand because it seems to me that by that we'll press on with our demands for change. Parties would do well to choose black socialist candidates to stand for parliament.

Lewisham is now in a situation where we need support. We hope other parties will take strength from our stand and also that they will put pressure on the NEC to make sure that Lewisham East is not isolated.

## Black sections national committee

**THE BLACK sections national committee has criticised as 'provocative' the recent statement by George Foulkes MP, a shadow foreign affairs spokesperson, that our actions could cost Labour the next general election.**

**The current row over black section involvement in selection and reselection of Labour candidates is yet another example of the party leadership shooting themselves in the foot on the race issue and then scape-goating black people.**

Referring to the decision of Constituency Labour Parties who support us to include black section delegates in their selection-reselection process, even though the party constitution forbids this, the black sections national committee said: 'It is the Labour Party national executive committee who are hell-bent on confrontation on this issue, not us. What difference will the addition of two black delegates make?'

Let us not forget there are at least 50 Labour MPs who owe their seats to black voters in their constituency who hold the balance of power. As black section activists we have proved by our actions our commitment to Labour victories. In the past year we have helped increase the amount of black coun-



Black miners' support group take a collection at last year's Nottingham carnival

cillors in London from 70 to more than 80.

Bernie Grant, chair of Tottenham Labour Party black section, has become Britain's first black leader of a council in Haringey, and Lorna Boreland has been picked, with full black section involvement, to fight the forthcoming GLC by-election in Vauxhall. When she is elected in July, Lorna will become the first black woman GLC member.

Black section activists are committed to the return of a Labour government at the next general election, but party leaders must be reminded this will not happen without the support of black people — Labour's most loyal supporters.

### Confidence

The confidence of Britain's black communities in Labour is understandably low as a result of the party's past failures on issues like immigration, policing, employment and racial equality. This worrying situation has been made worse lately by the Labour leadership's open hostility to the fundamental issue of black political representation raised by black activists in the party.

The language of Labour leaders like George Foulkes when they refer to black people is patronising. We are no longer prepared to be treated as voting fodder by white, male MPs. Furthermore, the Labour Party cannot preach about racial equality without first sorting out its own house.

Mr Foulkes and party leader Neil Kinnock have repeatedly proved themselves out of touch with grassroots black opinion. It is no good them saying they are powerless to deliver up black rights in the Labour Party because conference voted against black sections. That conference was over-

whelmingly white like the union bosses who wield the big block votes. This sort of reasoning is contemptuous of the black communities.

The black sections national committee applauds the brave stands in support of us made recently by Lewisham East Labour Party, Deptford Labour Party and Norwood Labour Party. We have agreed to ask Constituency Labour Party supporters currently involved in selection-reselection without black section delegates on their management committees to defer the process. This will immediately affect nine CLPs — Norwood, Deptford, Hornsey and Wood Green, Tottenham, Southall, Brent South, Westminster North and Bow and Poplar, Norwood and Deptford have already voted to defer.

The extra CLPs who are intending to go ahead with their black section delegates are Vauxhall, Streatham, Nottingham East, Lewisham East and Newham North West. The national committee unanimously agreed to press for selection-reselection processes not to go ahead until after Labour Party conference in Bournemouth this year has had an opportunity to agree black sections. We are confident the NEC's positive discrimination working party will recommend acceptance.

The NEC must allow their report to go before conference. We are urging deferment of selection-reselection processes in CLPs where black sections exist but, for various local reasons have so far been left out of the process, in the interest of party unity. After all, we believe that without this involvement of black people in a number of key seats, the process can only further entrench black community lack of confidence in the Labour Party.

The Labour leadership have it within their power to call off the threatened action against black section supporters. They should do so immediately.

# Sections

## Turkish socialist dies in jail

Turkey's military authorities have announced that Fikri Sonmez died on Saturday, 4 May. The military communique claimed he died from a heart attack. Yet, in spite of requests from his family and Amnesty International for a postmortem, the military authorities enforced a rapid burial the very next day.

Sonmez, who had been detained since the military coup of 12 September 1980, was in the last two months put once more into solitary confinement and subjected to torture. His death, like those of many others who have died in the hands of the torturers is highly suspicious.

It was in the municipal elections of October 1979 that Fikri Sonmez, a tailor, was elected mayor of Fatsa, a small town on the Black Sea coast of Turkey. He was instrumental in implementing with the active support of the inhabitants of Fatsa a radical programme of civil works.

This popular movement in the tiny town of Fatsa could not be tolerated by the military, who before the coup, on 13 July moved into Fatsa and dissolved the municipal council. One thousand people were arrested on that day.

When the military seized power, Fatsa was again a prime target. Today 740 people are standing trial, 691 of whom are in custody. 261 are being tried with the death penalty, 416 for sentences between 5-15 years and the rest for 2-5 years. The rights of the accused to defend themselves are severely curtailed and they are having to face brutal conditions in military prisons, subjected to torture and hunger.

Town councils throughout Western Europe have already passed resolutions condemning the Fatsa trial in an international campaign for the defence of the prisoners. In Britain, through the Turkey Solidarity Campaign, the councils of Barnsley, St Helens, West Yorkshire County Council and the London boroughs of Hackney, Islington, Haringey and Camden have added their voice to the international outcry.

The death of Fikri Sonmez is proof of the necessity to maintain and extend the campaign for the defence of political prisoners and victims of military repression in Turkey — a NATO country. Next to the 740 in Fatsa, tens of thousands more throughout Turkey face the inhuman conditions and brutal methods of military prisons.



Torture is still widespread in Turkish jails

## 'Grey Wolves' leader released

One prisoner who will no longer be facing the brutality of Turkey's jailers (if he ever did) is the former leader of Turkey's neo-fascist National Action Party. Alparslan Turkes, Turkes, 68, is liable for capital punishment but was released in April after a four and a half year detention.

He is accused of responsibility for about 600 crimes committed by the 'Grey Wolves' — as his party's shock troops were known — and of having stirred up political violence with the aim of

establishing a fascist dictatorship in Turkey.

In the course of his interrogations, ex-colonel Turkes claimed repeatedly that with the military takeover all the objectives of his party had been achieved and that his detention could no longer be justified! While all the leaders and activists of the neo-fascist movement have been released, more than 20,000 leftists are still in prison.

● For more information contact the Turkey Solidarity Campaign, BM Box 5965, London WC1N 3XX.



# NICARAGUA Trade unionists appeal for aid

THE FOLLOWING international appeal 'For Peace, against aggression' has been issued in Managua by the CST — the main Nicaraguan trade union federation.

Socialist Action hopes this appeal will be taken up in the whole labour movement.

The translation is by the CST.

Revolution. That is why thousands of mercenary troops supported by the president of the United States, Mr Reagan, and under the guidance of the Central Intelligence Agency have launched attacks from the neighbouring territories of Honduras and Costa Rica that include kidnapping, rape and horrific murders of more than 8,500 people including children, young people, women, old people, workers, students, peasants and professional people.

## Counter revolution

They have unleashed terrorism, destroying and burning down homes, schools, farm cooperatives, childcare centres, transportation, oil and food depots. This has resulted in over \$1.08 billion in economic losses.

In addition, the foreign debt of \$1.65 billion has risen to \$4.35 billion because of interest. Due to the international economic crisis and the US government's aggression, Nicaragua will have a balance of trade deficit of approximately \$500 million in 1985.

Of the earnings from exports, 37 per cent goes to service the foreign debt left by Somoza and 40 per cent goes for oil purchases. These two categories alone add up to 77 per cent, leaving 23 per cent for obtaining the things that we must buy abroad: medicines, vehicles, spare parts, inputs for agriculture, etc.

Nicaraguan working people are being brutally attacked by the US superpower. Nicaragua and its people's democracy need committed solidarity in order to survive. The involvement of the US government against Nicaragua becomes ever more dangerous with the present Big Pine III military manoeuvres, in the course of which the number of US soldiers stationed in Honduras 20 miles from our border has risen from 5,000 to 10,000.

There they are stockpiling inordinate amounts of ammunition, bombs, and missiles. Units of armoured M-60 tanks have been deployed barely 3 miles from our borders. There are aerial manoeuvres involving highly sophisticated planes; the secret units like Task Force 160 of the 101st Airborne Division; and naval manoeuvres in the Pacific and Atlantic Oceans. These shows of force are carried out very close to our coasts, in open provocation and violation of Nicaragua's territorial waters and air space.

## Criminal

The economic, commercial, and diplomatic blockade has weighed down on the backs of the Nicaraguan

workers. One small example is the recent blocking of the \$58 million loan that the International Development Bank was to provide Nicaragua for use in basic social and infrastructural programmes benefitting the Nicaraguan people.

There is overwhelming evidence of Mr. Reagan's aggressive policies: the cuts in the quotas for our main agricultural export products such as meat, sugar, and bananas, which has a seriously damaging impact on the Nicaraguan economy; the US refusal to accept the ruling of the International Court of Justice in the Hague; the ignoring of the United Nations Security Council Resolution 530; the pressures exerted on the governments of Costa Rica, Honduras, and El Salvador not to negotiate or sign the Contadora Peace Treaty.

This administration's political and foreign policy line rests on the platform of criminal aggression by the Reagan government against Nicaragua. Likewise, the Nicaraguan workers are being bled white, and the United States wants to totally destroy them, as US vice president George Bush stated in Honduras, on 17 March, 1985.

## Solidarity

In the face of such a difficult situation, today more than ever we are asking for solidarity so that Nicaragua may survive.

Therefore, we propose that trade unions take part in the following concrete tasks:

- 1) Organise a week of solidarity with the people of Nicaragua on 15-21 July, 1985. Prior to that week, we propose that messages be sent to the US Congress condemning Reagan's action and calling for US troops to leave Central America, as well as backing peace initiatives that do not infringe on the dignity of our peoples.
- 2) For that same week of 15-21 July, we propose that workers be urged to donate one day's wages to partially overcome the damage the war has caused us.

We Nicaraguan workers are sure that we will find a high moral sense of solidarity and that our request will meet with an effective response. Therefore, we repeat our thanks in advance for all the gestures of brotherhood and solidarity. We wish you success in carrying out these tasks.

Faternally,  
Lucío Jiménez Guzmán  
General Secretary  
Sandinista Workers Federation (CST)  
Denis Meléndez Aguirre  
International Relations Secretary,  
CST



Managua

Dear Brothers and Sisters: Please allow us to send you greetings and to express our deep confidence that we will achieve the peace that we long for and are fighting for daily.

Brothers and sisters, we would like to take this opportunity to summarize the critical situation our people are living through as a result of Mr. Reagan's warmongering policy, and to raise with you the idea of urgent action in solidarity with our cause. Let us explain.

Nicaraguan workers are suffering under and confronting the onslaught of the Reagan administration's policies of aggression. As Nicaraguan workers we appeal to the trade unions of the world to help us survive.

The US aggression that is bleeding the working people of Nicaragua affects each and every aspect of our life. We must call attention to the difficult economic and social situation we inherited from Somoza's military dictatorship — such as the \$520.3 million in damage caused by the bombardment of some 50 per cent of our industries and housing; \$518.8 million in decapitalization and plunder of the government in 1978-79; the foreign debt of \$1.65 billion; the cost of the 50,000 human lives of those who perished and the care for 40,000 orphans; the feeding of one million people — with a totally dependent economy.

The aim of the brutal US war of aggression is the total and complete destruction of the Sandinista People's





# Stop South Africa treason trial

THE TRIAL which has opened in South Africa of 16 supporters of the United Democratic Front (UDF) is the largest since the massive trial of 156 people which dragged on from 1957 until March 1961. Among those on trial were Nelson Mandela, Walter Sisulu and other leaders of the African National Congress (ANC). They were charged with membership of a 'country wide conspiracy to overthrow the state by force and violence inspired by international communism'.

The accused were found not guilty at the time but Mandela was arrested once more in August 1962. In 1963, together with Walter Sisulu and other leaders of the ANC and Communist Party, he was sentenced to life imprisonment.

They spent the major part of this sentence in the hell hole of Robben Island. There was a very real danger of death sentences at the time, and this was only averted as a result of widespread international protests and the fear of the consequences within South Africa.

The 16 accused in the present trial include leaders of the multi-racial United Democratic Front (UDF), Tumunsti and other organisations. They include the 'Durban 4', the people who sought asylum in the British consulate in Durban when they were being threatened with arrest because of their participation in the successful campaign against the Tri-Cameral elections last year.

Among the better known people facing trial is Albertina Sisulu, presi-

dent of the UDF and wife of the imprisoned ANC leader, Ismail Mohammed of the Transvaal Anti Presidents council committee. Others include Sam Kikine, Isaac Mcgobo and Thozamile Gwqeta, president of the South African Allied Workers Union (SAAWU).

By Charlie Van Gelderen

The accused are being charged with association and support of 'a revolutionary alliance' formed by the ANC, CP and the Congress of Trade Unions. According to the indictment the ultimate aim of the alliance was the 'armed seizure' of state power. The prosecution alleges that the insistence on 'non violent forms of political struggle' which the accused espoused was only a cover for their real revolutionary aims.

Under South Africa's draconian laws all those found guilty of high treason could face the death penalty and it will again be necessary to arouse the widest move-

ment of support for these victims of apartheid. When the trade unionists were arrested in February, Donald Anderson, Labour Party front bench spokesperson on South Africa, said that this had further frustrated hopes of a dialogue between the Botha regime and the 'extra parliamentary opposition'. But if the regime is determined to make an example of the accused in the hope that it will cover the liberal forces, it will take more than platitudinous statements to save their lives.

These women and men are guilty of nothing else but carrying on a legitimate struggle against the repressive and racist regime. The only violence during the anti election campaign came from the police and the military. It is not for any covert or overt act of treason that they stand in the dock.

In the present climate of revolt in South Africa any political ideas coming from any section of the liberation movement can raise the consciousness of the people and inflame the situation.

It is for their political beliefs that these people now face the possibility of prolonged prison sentences or even death. The international labour movement cannot stand idly by and allow this to happen.

# Important debate on strategy

IN THE face of the escalating political situation in South Africa all the anti apartheid and liberation forces are seriously reassessing their strategy. A recent issue of *Work in Progress*, an influential organ of dialogue reflecting the views of all South Africa's extra parliamentary forces of struggle, published a broad analysis of the rethink that is now going on in various organisations.

The African National Congress (ANC) is holding its first consultative conference since 1969 in Lusaka. Although no official statement has yet come out of the conference the South African journalist Howard Barrell visited Lusaka and interviewed the ANC leaders. In an editorial, *Work in Progress* comes to the conclusion that 'many old formulas are losing validity and some tried and tested opposition responses have to be rethought. In a volatile and fluid situation all formulas, cliches and assumed truths are challengeable'.

Howard Barrell came away from Lusaka with the firm impression that it is 'open season' for fresh ideas. There was a determination that there should be absolutely free and open debate. He found among the rank and file 'discernible excitement at the prospect of a conference at which their voices will be heard louder than usual on several pressing issues.'

While no official statement has yet come from the Lusaka conference, Barrell, on the basis of his interview with ANC leaders, says the ANC is gearing itself for a re-examination of some key aspects. These include the role of the armed struggle, admission of whites to the

ANC, the tactics of 'popular warfare' and the principle of talks with the South African government.

By Charlie Van Gelderen

He quotes ANC sources as stating they have no objection to discussions with individual members of the South African government. But not in such a way as it would be seen as negotiations. They emphasised that there had been no talks, negotiations, contact or diplomatic exchanges between the ANC and the South African government over the past year.

Any talks had to be premised on an agreement that apartheid had to be completely dismantled and centre on the practical ways and means of constructing a united, non racial country.

The dynamic growth of the black trade union movement is reflected in the demand for a closer definition of the primary position of the working class and its interests. Now that the black working class forms the largest and best organised force in the black community there's a strong feeling for the need to move away from the vague reference to the 'leading role' of the work-

ing class as defined by the Moro Goro conference in 1960 to a more positive stand.

One aspect of policy which clearly differentiated the ANC from the National Forum (NF) and its chief affiliate AZAPO, is the reliance which the ANC leadership still places on pressure from 'liberal' outside sources to speed the process of dismantling of apartheid.

Over the past 24 years the ANC external mission diplomats have striven to isolate the apartheid regime internationally by pressure on especially the United States big business and politicians. Thus it recently held talks with Senator Edward Kennedy and supported his visit to South Africa.

The NF and its affiliates organised demonstrations against Kennedy's visit and greeted him with placards which read 'No to imperialism', 'We will not forget your part in Vietnam' and 'Our struggle is for a Socialist Azania'.

This illustrates the major difference between AZAPO and ANC. AZAPO's manifesto lays down that apartheid cannot be ended without smashing the capitalist system which sustains it. The Kennedys of this world they maintain will stop short by a long distance from a struggle which has as its aim the destruction of capitalism. As the fight against apartheid cannot be separated

from the fight against capitalism to rely on the Kennedys was spurious.

The same issue of *Work in Progress* also debated the main differences between the UDF and NF. It would be misleading to counterpose UDF and NF as 'organisational incarnations of progressive democratic versus black consciousness political movements.' UDF officials admit that after 18 months of existence it lacks a clear ideological stand.

NF's policy defines it as an anti-imperialist, anti-racist anti-sexist and anti-collaborationist group. It is explicitly left wing and socialist in its self defining manifesto and programme. UDF is not. Opponents say UDF is explicitly ambiguous. The Western Cape branch secretary of the UDF admits that at its formation divisions were blurred.

But different opinions and perspectives are emerging. It is necessary to do battle at an ideological level to define a clearer political stand.

The issues of course will not be decided in the debating chamber or in the columns of journals. As the liberation struggle intensifies, the organisations will be tested in the crucible of battle. At this stage those abroad who support the struggle for liberation must give unconditional solidarity with all organisations engaged in that struggle. It is for the black working class and its allies in South Africa to decide which path they want to follow.

## NO TO APARTHEID!

Anti-Apartheid Movement

# NATIONAL DEMONSTRATION JUNE 16th

Assemble  
12-lpm,  
County Hall  
York Rd,  
London

Rally  
3pm,  
Trafalgar  
Square



Stop the massacres

## Sanctions NOW!

- NO investment in apartheid
- END trade relations with South Africa
- NO British arms for apartheid
- ACT UP AGAINST immigration to South Africa
- END the South African apartheid and demand the British government to pressure the South African government to end apartheid
- NO loans to apartheid
- NO North Sea oil for apartheid
- NO support of apartheid trials and attacks
- END the British agreement with S Africa
- END the British agreement with S Africa
- End the British agreement with S Africa

# Mirror supports a woman's right to choose?

**YOUNG WOMEN and sex is big news. It sells papers faster than a million pound bingo game at the moment. The Sunday People were 'the first to ask young women themselves', and the Daily Mirror headlines with 'Love before sex — some of the prettiest girls are still virgins'! So why the sudden big interest?**

Don't think for a minute that either papers are taking seriously the attacks on young women's sexual rights. Don't think they are the slightest bit worried by the fact that since the Gillick ruling in the Appeal court women under the age of 16 can no longer get contraceptive or hardly any other medical advice without their parents consent.

The real interest is quite the opposite. It is,

apparently, a 'woman's right to chose'. But no, the tabloid press has not overnight transformed itself into the champion of women's rights — far from it. Its main concern is put in a nutshell in the *Mirror* editorial (15.5.85) — 'the right to choose ... the right not to be permissive'.

While the question of sexual coercion is a real issue for young women, it is not one that will be

resolved by taking away every other right we have!

The Appeal Court ruling on the Gillick case is an attempt to coerce women into 'non-permissiveness' (ie save yourself til Mr Right comes along then gallop off into the sunset/bed/kitchen with him!). No choice is involved here.

**By Sue MacDonald**

Post-Gillick life for many under-16 women will be a nightmare. It has never been easy for young women to control their lives in any way, but this ruling asserts that young

women are the *property* of their 'elders and betters'. Any notion of a 'right to choose' for young women in the future will be a joke.

The Gillick ruling will not work. Women are not going to sit back and wait for their sixteenth birthday for permission from those that supposedly know better.

DHSS figures show that in 1983 over 17,000 under-16s attended Family Planning Clinics in England and Wales, almost all of whom were already sexually active. Only one third of these had any sort of support

from their parents.

The other two thirds now feel unable to make even an initial visit for fear their parents will find out.

As a result more young women will be forced into having children they don't want. More young women will go through the trauma of childbirth followed by adoption, more young women will have to have abortions — and particularly more *backstreet* abortions.

Gillick is a godsend for the backstreet profiteers. If a young woman is terrified of her parents finding out she wanted contraceptive advice, then she is not going to risk them discovering she is requesting an abortion.

Gillick is no 'concerned mother', out to protect young women from being pressured into sex. She is part of the new 'moral' right — with Thatcher at

the helm steering us all towards family responsibility and victorian values. There is no protection or defence of women involved in this — just an all out attack on the few rights we have won.

Rulings such as this will *never* defend any young woman from being forced into sex by a boyfriend, it will *never* result in closer communication between mothers and daughters.

Just as the Age of Consent laws are used to restrict and punish young women, this ruling is designed to ensure that those of us who 'step out of line' have to 'pay for our sins'. It reinforces yet again the notion that what young women chose to do with our bodies can be classified as a crime. While young men — well, that's a different story.

Gillick may have won in the Appeal Court, but she cannot reverse our expectations.

Today young women *do* expect the right to choose. Not the *Mirror's* warped conception, but the right to choose a form of contraception suitable to us if we decide to have sex with men.

And, if that fails, then many will no longer resign themselves to the responsibility and restrictions of bringing up a child in intolerable circumstances.

At some point the Law Lords, with all their vast understanding of young women's lives and sexuality, will make a decision on whether to uphold or reverse the Appeal Court ruling.

The message must be clear — we will *not* be forced onto the backstreets, we will *not* be forced back into the home as either dutiful daughters or dutiful wives.

# WAC plans for Bournemouth

**THE DEMANDS of the Labour Women's Action Committee once again dominate this year's Labour Women's Conference (Bournemouth International Centre June 16th-18th). Following the clean sweep for the long-standing WAC demands at last year's Conference, the committee has moved on to build imaginatively on its successes. This year three WAC model resolutions have been adopted by a total of 15 women's organisations.**

ONE CALLS for Parliament to operate a normal working day in an attempt to break down the gentleman's club atmosphere of the House of Commons, with some MPs still taking the nineteenth century view of the House as an after-hours watering hole.

A second WAC resolution calls on the facility for an additional woman CLP delegate agreed for national conference to be extended to trade unions, to enable trade union women to play a greater part in Labour Party affairs. It is on the union side that the overwhelming male domination of Conference

is most apparent. But arguably the most challenging WAC resolution relates to the election of the Women's Section of the NEC. Following the WAC-inspired '84 Women's Conference, the '85 WAC model calls on the National Labour Women's Committee to organise a shadow election for the Women's Section.

**By Josie Edwards  
(Press Officer WAC).**

Nominations would be sought from all eligible women's organisations in time for elections to take place at the '86 Women's Conference. WAC

believes that such an election would shop up the yawning gulf between the present male-elected women and those that rank and file women would wish to elect themselves.

To recite again the demand that the Women's Conference elect the NEC Women's Section sounds dry, but the consequences of male domination in the Labour Party are far from academic.

The reality of Party power is domination by middle-aged, white, conventional men. They are very little different from the average civil servant, bank manager or businessman, especially those drawn from the union side.

Like all men of this ilk, they cling desperately to the outdated stereotype of the super-hetero, macho, blue collar married-man-n-two-kids, in both their personal politics and their decision making.

Anyone who doubts

this should see the puzzled disbelief that greets women when they ask for what ought to be an automatic provision — that women are chosen for Party women's organiser posts.

The painful struggle with such men has exhausted many a sister, and the only strength is in numbers. White men are uniquely privileged. However they differ on politics and personal style, they can confidently recognise themselves wherever they see images of success and power.

They can never know the alienating experience of constantly facing 'the other', and being the outsider, the sore thumb sticking out. The connexion between sexual politics and feminist political reform is a profound one. The WAC demands will pave the way for both.

*This article was reprinted from the June issue of Labour Briefing.*



Still defending abortion rights six years after the Corrie Bill

# LCGR AGM

**THE ANNUAL General Meeting of the Labour Campaign for Gay Rights took place over the weekend 4/5 May. It was attended by 70 people and decided to change its name to the Labour Campaign for Lesbian and Gay Rights.**

**PETER PURTON argues below that this promises to be more than a cosmetic change.**

The campaign found itself at a new and higher stage of the struggle. The profile of lesbian and gay rights has been massively boosted in the last 15 months. The work of Lesbians and Gays Support the Miners, and Lesbians Against Pit Closures has created genuine and massive shifts in the attitudes of important sections of both the Labour Party and the trade unions.

The political effects have already been demonstrated in the victory over Rugby's Tory council by an unprecedented alliance between a Labour group, a national trade union (NALGO) and the lesbian and gay movements.

LCLGR was faced with the task of gearing itself up to consolidate these gains and make further progress to winning a firm commitment from the Labour Party and the trade unions to equal rights policies.

Vital to this has to be making LCLGR an organisation which recognises the specific oppression and demands of lesbians — a campaign which takes up sexism as well as heterosexism, which campaigns around the rights of lesbian mothers, for example, and which strives to end the invisibility of lesbians within the women's

and gay movements. There was a vigorous and very political debate around the demands of Labour Lesbians for such a shift in position and for positive action to give it organisational form.

The final vote was overwhelmingly in favour, and LCLGR now stands ready to face the immense challenge of creating a genuinely mixed — and therefore strengthened — campaigning organisation. The immediate target now is winning a debate at Labour Party conference. LCLGR will be organising a forceful campaign to win support for this from all sections of the labour movement around the model resolution.

● Copies of the latest issue of LCLGR's magazine 'Lesbian and Gay Socialist' is available for 50p plus 13p p&p from 39 Chippenham Road, London W9. The model resolution is available from the same address.

# 6 County elections 59 seats for Sinn Fein

IN THE district council elections held in the occupied 6 Counties of Northern Ireland on 15 May, Sinn Fein beat their pre-election target, taking 40 per cent of the nationalist vote and returning 59 Councillors in 15 of the 17 District Councils they contested. Silent are those who claimed that the Sinn Fein vote consisted of 50 per cent personation. Silent are those who claimed that the Sinn Fein vote had peaked and we were about to witness a chaotic downturn.

The intention of republican leaders to use the elections to consolidate Sinn Fein's position as representatives of the most working class nationalist areas stands every chance of being fulfilled as many advice centre workers now take their place as elected representatives and a new layer of activists are thrust into the public eye. This was the issue to be decided in these elections and the issue to

which all parties and the governments in Dublin and Westminster turned their attention.

By Martin Collins

The traditional issue of local government elections — housing, education, rate-capping found little place on May 15. Paddy Devlin's newly formed Labour Party of Northern Ireland — set to

'transform the political scene' by ignoring the national question and concentrating on 'gas and water' socialism was sunk without trace. Devlin — one of the central trade union figures of the 1974 Power Sharing Executive was eliminated on the first ballot.

By Northern Ireland standards, it was a quiet election. The explosions which threatened to erupt over implementation of new regulations requiring voters to produce evidence of identity did not materialise as thousands voted with UB40s or other 'non-recognised' forms of identification. Even so, all parties agree that between 10 and 15 per cent of the electorate — particularly the elderly and young unemployed were disenfranchised by the confusion surrounding new regulations and simply didn't turn out to vote. There were the traditional cases of harassment of nationalist campaigners by the army and RUC. In Dungannon, 4 women complained that a British soldier was exposing himself as women went to register their vote. An Irish Independence Party worker was dragged from his car accused of reckless driving — displaying an election poster in his rear window. In Belfast, until ex Peoples' Democracy

councillor Fergus O'Hare intervened to stop them, the RUC were running their own identity checks 'in the interests of security'. In Lisnaskea, so enthusiastic were the identity checks that a senior member of the judiciary accompanied by RUC body guards was turned away.

The two major unionist parties competed to be identified as the party that could 'smash Sinn Fein' (Democratic Unionists) or 'put Sinn Fein out of business' (Official Unionists). The DUP discovered new evidence which 'proved' the British intended to release all political prisoners within three years and replace troops with UN forces.

The SDLP campaigned against unemployment and Sinn Fein's 'gunmen', although not necessarily in that order. The media coverage of Sinn Fein's campaign hardly reflected the centrality accorded them by others. Ulster TV set the 'quota' for the 'right' to an electoral broadcast as those parties receiving more than 15 per cent in the most recent Westminster elections: Neatly giving coverage to the SDLP (17 per cent) but excluding Sinn Fein (11 per cent).

Ironically, commentators are now claiming

that the Unionists are pleased with the election results as it bolsters their claim that without firm security policies Sinn Fein will force a united Ireland. The SDLP will be able to call upon extra government help to boost their credibility by pointing to the danger of increasing popularity for militant republicanism if they go under. The Dublin Government will be able to tell the Tories that 'alienation' in the North is not dead, and plead for more concessions.

All parties will now try to combine to minimise the effect of Sinn Fein in the Councils. The Unionists have already announced a pact to have no dealings with Sinn Fein representatives — 'we face as one the common enemy'. The Conservative Government have already made it clear they will back this policy. Last year, Dr Rhodes Boyson refused to meet a delegation for the Belfast Council Gas Committee which included a Sinn Fein councillor.

Sinn Fein will be fighting for an alliance with the SDLP to prevent exclusion and maximise nationalist influence — a move that will sow more division in the party especially in Belfast where they were out polled by Sinn Fein by a margin of some 2,000 votes.



## LT setback

THE ALL-OUT indefinite strike called by the Executive Committee of the NUR on London underground collapsed within hours as the majority of tube workers booked on for work normally. The decision was taken last Thursday in response to management's announcement the previous day that it would impose one-person operation (OPO) on trains in East London line from 20 May without agreement with the union.

To its credit the executive had unanimously reaffirmed its strike call on Friday in defiance of an injunction which management had won from the High Court. This declared the strike illegal because of the lack of a ballot. Management's provocative and well-planned attack came in a letter to all staff which also stated that OPO will be imposed on the District line later this year and on the Metropolitan line in 1986. The NUR had been claiming a significant cut in driving time of OPO operators in pursuance of a no job loss policy adopted by LT district council. There is no doubt that the response of the union was the only option open to it. To have 'kept the powder dry' would have been another nail in the coffin of any future fight for jobs.

However failure of the strike means that 6000 jobs will be lost by the end of management's three year plan in 1988. The seeds of the defeat were partially sown by productivity deals conceding the principle of OPO signed in the days of full employment in 1968. But since then the introduction of OPO has been fought off time and again.

The real responsibility has to be laid at the feet of the rail leadership who failed to prepare the ranks to struggle against the wide-ranging attacks on jobs that have been clearly in the government plans ever since the Serpell

report.

The NUR and ASLEF leadership didn't explain the parallels between the miners fight and that in rail. They didn't mobilise the rail membership during the two wage negotiations at the time of the miners' strike. An active campaign around Coalville within the membership would have helped prepare it to fight around our own demands. The rail union leaderships failed to counter adequately the failure of the TUC to deliver support to the miners.

Following hard on the heels of the miners' strike an obvious issue that had to be explained was the question of the law or balloting before strike action. While many workers look to this question as an excuse not to take action, many others were genuinely confused, wanting the right to express themselves on strike action and other major decisions of the union.

ALSEF members who took this stand did so despite the complete failure of the union to take any action against the imposition of OPO, or in support of a sister union in struggle. Those who fought did so in stark contrast to the complete collaboration or at best half-hearted support of the majority of sectional councils and branch officials. The sectoral council system has rotted the union from within. It must be replaced with a shop steward system.



## Disappointing vote for PD

ON A PLATFORM which argued for the creation of an anti-imperialist workers' party as a 'totally new political force' in Irish politics, John McAnulty, the former Peoples' Democracy Councillor scored a disappointing 160 votes in the 6 County District Council elections.

McAnulty, who recently reasserted his right to attend council meetings after Unionists used his famous 'Butcher's Apron' reference to the Union Jack to exclude him was elected to Belfast City council in 1981 when there was a need for nationalists to use the elections as an extra weapon in the struggle for political status for the prisoners and hunger strikers of the H-blocks and Armagh.

Peoples' Democracy have been critical of Sinn

Fein's political campaigning which went under the slogan of 'a responsible leadership'. They argued that SF's belief that a high profile campaign would boost the SDLP vote was incorrect. In his election address 'The Road to Freedom', McAnulty criticised the leadership of the Irish trade union movement and called for an organisation of anti-imperialist trade unionists to further the interests of working people. This, he said was obtainable, but

not enough on its own. Alongside such a body should go a separate anti-imperialist party of the working class. 'Such a plan is not an attempt by PD to outflank Sinn Fein' said the manifesto. 'We welcome the shift to the left of Sinn Fein and look forward to working with them in the trade unions. Nor is it unnecessary duplication of 'yet another political party'. What is proposed is the creation of a totally new political force.'

PD's second councillor Fergus O'Hare did not put himself forward for election this time round and asked his supporters to vote Sinn Fein.

## Newham 7

THE TRIAL of the Newham 7 which was due to start on 13 May has been postponed due to lack of a courtroom. But the police attacks on the two demonstrations, and the Defence Campaign's determination not to be intimidated by police violence has put the campaign firmly on the map.

Over 200 letters of support, many of them from labour movement bodies, have been received in the past two weeks. Support has come from Aberdeen, Derbyshire and Liverpool councils.

South Yorkshire miners have been prominent in their support. Following the police disruption of the first demonstration the Sheffield Asian Youth Movement showed videos of the attacks in pit villages. A number of miners attended the demonstration as a result.

With the experience of police violence in the strike still fresh in peoples' memories, support from the labour movement is impressive, according to organisers.

It is much greater than it was for the Newham 8 trial last year. In addition, the recent upsurge in the universities and colleges has produced wide support from students.

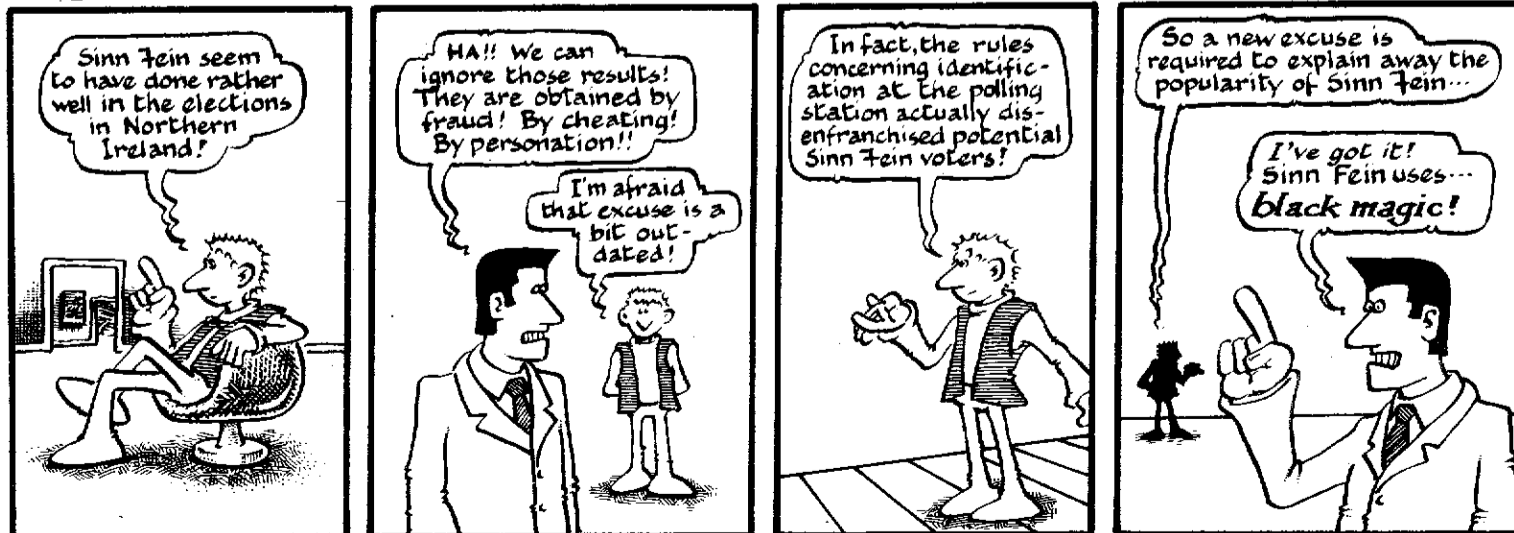
The campaign is maintaining its pickets of the

Old Bailey each Monday at 9.30am. When the trial starts marches are planned throughout the country, and also a nationally coordinated picket of police stations.

The campaign urgently needs money to keep the campaign growing, and for the defence of the 49 people arrested during the demonstrations. Many of these have been charged with assault on the police, and heavy fines can be expected. Socialists throughout the movement should give all possible support to the fight to establish that self-defence is no offence.

• Money and messages of support to Newham 7 Defence Campaign, PO Box 273, London E7. Cheques payable to Newham 7 Defence Campaign.

## A PIECE OF THE ACTION



#99 © GORMAN 5/85

# Socialist ACTION

## Communist Party on verge of split

LAST WEEKEND'S Communist Party emergency congress marked a further decisive step in the split of that party.

The congress voted by a two to one majority to confirm the expulsion of *Morning Star* editor Tony Chater and deputy editor David Whitfield. The appeals against expulsion, or suspension, of 40 other Communist Party members were rejected by a similar margin.

Three other fundamental decisions were also taken by the congress. Firstly every single opponent of the line of the party leadership was excluded from the 45 person party executive — a fitting comment on the 'democratic principles' of the Eurocommunist wing of the party.

Secondly, the openly Eurocommunist wing of the party supporting *Marxism Today*, gained for the first time a clear majority on the party executive — 25 votes to 20 by most calculations — compared to the 'centre' grouping around party general secretary Gordon McLennon.

Third the congress of the party was put off for two and a half years — until November 1987. The next round of the internal party struggle will be the fight for control of the *Morning Star* — a fight to be waged during July at the annual meetings of the People's Press Printing Society.

The net effect of these decisions is to leave the Communist Party more clearly than ever in the hands of a bloc between *Marxism Today* and party general secretary Gordon McLennon — with *Marxism Today* acting as the political cutting edge of the party.

The political implications were spelt out by party organiser Dave Cook in the *Guardian* on Saturday. He decisively supported the new 'realigned left' of Michael Meacher, Tom Sawyer, David Blunkett inside the Labour Party.

This means sharply opposing Tony Benn, Arthur Scargill, Dennis Skinner and the other key figures in the left wing of the Labour Party.

The result of this policy has already been spelt out not simply in *Marxism Today* but also in party industrial organiser Peter Carter's draft pamphlet on the miners' strike — which was extensively leaked to the *Daily Mail*.

By Dick Carter

But while *Marxism Today's* support for Neil Kinnock's adherents will come as no surprise more confusion may be created by the *Morning Star* wing of the party's turn to an attempted explicit alliance with Tony Benn and the left wing of the Labour Party — an alliance which Tony Chater has been trying to push through the pages of the *Morning Star*, and trying to cement in rebuilding organisations such as the Liaison Com-

mittee for the Defence of Trade Unions.

The Labour left should have no illusions regarding the line of the *Morning Star*. Its policy is based on support for bureaucratic repression in eastern Europe. While today, for its own purposes, the *Morning Star* has a tactical line to the left of *Marxism Today*, if it ever suited the requirements of the Soviet leadership it would readily adopt a policy just as right wing as its Eurocommunist rival.

Tony Benn, Ernie Roberts and others are making a major mistake in becoming associated with the manoeuvres of the *Morning Star*.

The attitude of the Labour left should have to the deepening split in the Communist Party is quite simple. It should welcome it. It should take no side in the dispute between the two factions but explain each is as bankrupt as the other. It should appeal to all to leave the Communist Party and join the Labour Party.

That is the sole road forward for the militants who are today trapped in the twin dead ends of *Marxism Today* and the *Morning Star*.

Inside: 'The alternative to the Communist Party, pages 2 & 3.'



## 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.

## Justice for the Rhymney Two!

THE RECENT court verdict of murder and sentence of life imprisonment has shocked and appalled the mining communities of South Wales. Those of us who were active on picket lines during the miners' strike know only too well the frustration of being herded by police and prevented from talking to scab miners.

The anger and despair built up over nine months of the strike made the two convicted miners victims of that frustration.

The moment that Thatcher and her cronies shouted 'Murder', the 2 Rhymney boys were marked down for life. The establishment and their courts set them up as an example and their decision to punish them severely is, in fact, an attack on the whole trade union movement. Those of us who value our trade union rights must speak out and protest against this verdict.

We call upon the people of South Wales to join our protest and demonstrate against the verdict in Cardiff on Saturday 25 May, at 10.30am in the Hayes, next to St Davids Hall. The demonstration will proceed via Queen St to the Welsh Office, led by Betty Heathfield and the people of Rhymney.

We also ask you to sign our petition, distribute it, and bring signed copies to the demonstration next Saturday.

Gethin Jones, Rhymney (0685) 842228, Colin Matthew, Caerffili 886101, Mary Crofton, Newport (0633) 215983

## Cardiff demo 25 May

OUTRAGED AT the murder sentences passed by Cardiff Crown Court on Rhymney miners Dean Hancock and Russell Shankland, more than 800 Rhymney villagers gathered outside the local cenotaph last Sunday and marched to the bridge where scab taxi driver David Wilkie was killed. They stood silent for a few minutes before marching back to the village. Ignoring a barricade of police cars, they marched down the scab's street chanting: 'I'd rather be a picket than a scab', then back to the cenotaph where they peacefully dispersed after the six mile hike.

The message from speakers at the impromptu demonstration was: 'tell Thatcher we've got a campaign off the ground. We demand it be made official by the NUM, and supported by the TUC and Labour Party. We'll continue till the decision's reversed.'

RAY DAVIES, Mid Glamorgan county councillor and steelworker at Llanwern, is organising what's expected to be a massive protest demonstration in Cardiff next Saturday. He told CAROL TURNER how it started and what's planned.

THE campaign in support of Dean and Russell started during the trial itself. People in South Wales were wrongly advised to play it cool and not organise any public demonstrations.

On the second day of the trial I was a solitary demonstrator outside Cardiff Crown Court. By the fourth day I'd been joined by some of the Newport miners' support committee.

As soon as the verdict was announced we decided to organise a demonstration in Cardiff for this coming Saturday. There are shock waves going up and down the valleys at the verdict and sentence. Every one has fallen in behind the idea of a demonstration.

It will be a big scream from South Wales, a scream of outrage at the trial result.

A really grave injustice has been done — not just to the two Rhymney miners, but to the whole mining community here. Our boys are not murderers.

Despite the fact that the police would prefer otherwise, we've organised next week's protest to go right through Cardiff town centre where it will cause maximum attention and disruption to traffic. We'll be marching on the Welsh Office to deliver a letter of protest, accusing Thatcher and her cronies of being responsible for the verdict.

When she shouted 'murder' all the way from Brussels, it was obvious those boys were never going to get a fair trial. The Cardiff court simply rubber stamped her decision. Margaret Thatcher is guilty of a massive contempt

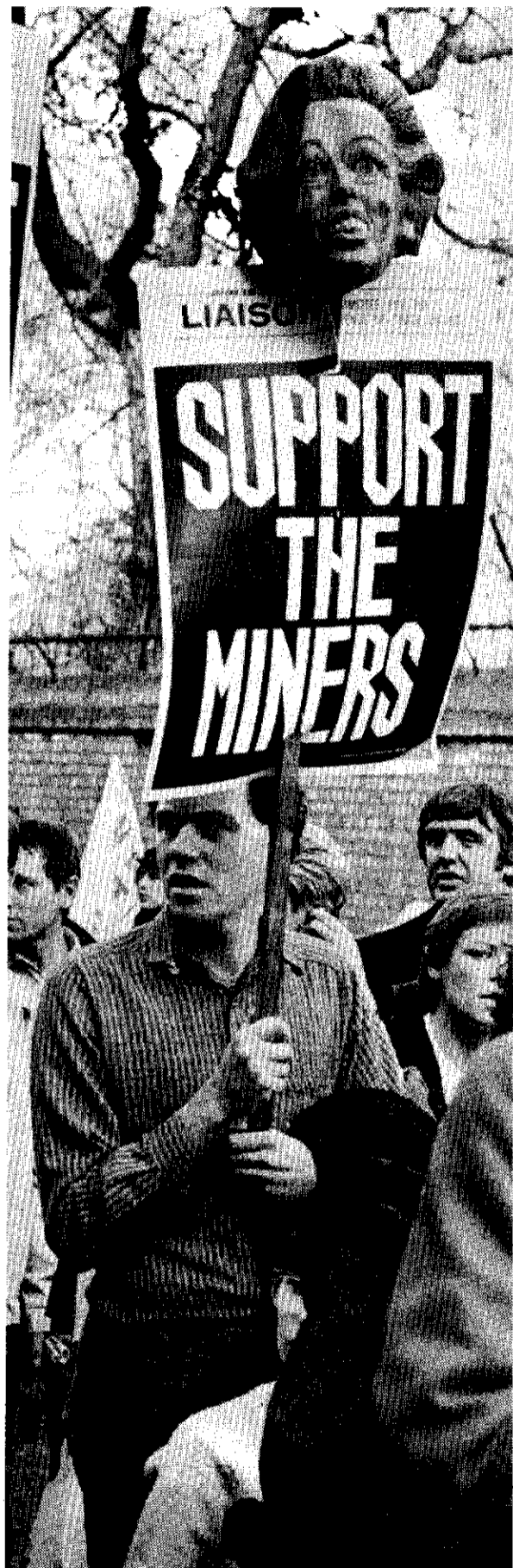


Photo: JOHN STURROCK (Network)

## Petition

We the undersigned, appalled at the verdict and sentence of the two Rhymney miners convicted at Cardiff Crown Court, call on the Court of Appeal to quash their conviction of murder and reduce their sentences.

of court.

Our march will be led by the families of the two victims and by Betty Heathfield and others who've agreed to come and speak. We are also calling on those who can't come to Cardiff to picket the offices of the *Sun* at the same time as our demonstration takes place. We want everyone to protest at the outrageous editorial of

that paper which claimed that the lads were murderers.

● Assemble 10.30am outside St David's Centre, The Hayes, Cardiff. March through Queen's Street and Park Place to the Welsh Office. Speakers include Betty Heathfield, Dennis Skinner and Euro-MP Ted Rowlands. Bring your banners!

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