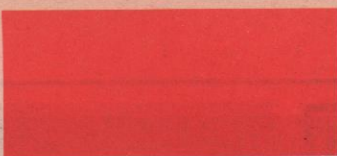
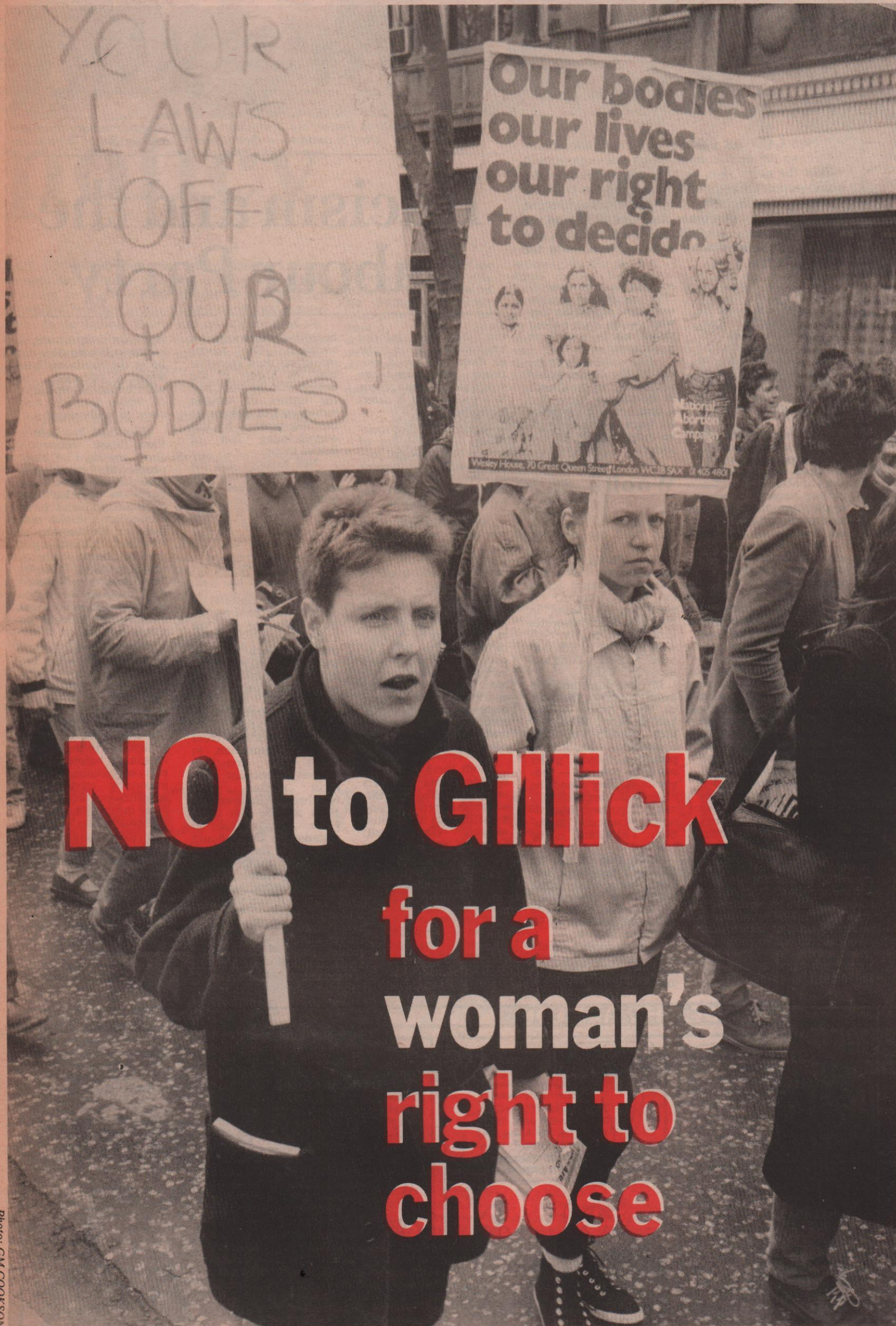


Socialist ACTION



Demonstrate against the
Gillick ruling
23 June
Assemble Lincoln's Inn
Fields 11am
Inside: Women's rights under
attack p 6-7



NO to **Gillick**
for a
woman's
right to
choose

NO to Gillick

NO

Socialist ACTION

The great Kinnock moving right show

NEIL KINNOCK is now treading a well worn path. Only the 'realigned left' — Michael Meacher, *Tribune*, and the rest — can possibly have any illusions on that score.

Kinnock's strategy is the same as was Wilson and Callaghan's. Move Labour to the right and capture the 'centre-ground' of politics. Everyone knows just how successful that policy was. Between them the 1964-70, and 1974-5, Labour government's permanently smashed down Labour's support. We are getting another example of the same policy over the Channel where the Mitterrand government in France has succeeded in advancing the fascist vote to its highest post-war level.

Chastise

This is what any serious current in the left wing of the labour movement has to face up to. Kinnock is not just blocking struggles now — as with the miners and rate capping — but he is preparing a disaster for a future Labour government. To support Kinnock is to fail to support the Labour Party and labour movement.

But how is the left to respond to the situation? With the defeat of the miners' strike a definite setback was suffered. Not in any sense a decisive defeat as Ron Todd's victory over George Wright, and the victory in the political levy ballots, continue to show. But nevertheless a significant setback. One from which the left has to rebuild. This means having a clear understanding of the political situation.

The key line of divide in politics today is not against Kinnock, as some on the left are suggesting. The key line of divide is against Thatcher. Kinnock today stands in the way of the fight against Thatcher — and that is why he must be fought. That means the left will advance in support to the degree to which it advances the struggle against Thatcher — which is one of the reasons why we strongly support the initiative and stance taken by Tony Benn and Eric Heffer in their May Day manifesto to the national executive of the Labour Party.

Sharp

This means that priority is not given at present to inner party issues of the type which dominated from 1979-81. The emphasis must be on mass campaigning, the fight against the Tories, and opening up the policy issues.

But there are two dramatic exceptions to this — which relate directly to the fight against Thatcher as well. This is the question of black sections and that of the demands of the Women's Action Committee.

Labour has no chance of victory whatever if it fails to unite the working class internally, and create an alliance between the working class and its allies. And that alliance can only be built on the basis of accepting the right of the oppressed to organise themselves. Women's liberation will be no more 'given' to women by men, or black liberation given to blacks by whites, than any beneficent government will 'give' socialism to the working class and oppressed.

Neil Kinnock is no more a 'democrat' or a 'socialist' on these issues than he is on any other. There must be no truce in the labour movement on women's and black self-organisation until these issues are completely won.

Editor: ALAN FREEMAN
Published weekly except two weeks in August and the last week of December.
Signed articles by contributors do not necessarily represent Socialist Action's views. These are expressed in editorials.
Send all correspondence regarding subscriptions, sales and receipts to Socialist Action Distribution, PO Box 50, London N1 2XP
Send all material for publication (including advertising) to Socialist Action Editorial at the same address. We regret that due to the high cost of postage we cannot return or acknowledge unsolicited copy or photographs unless accompanied by a stamped addressed envelope.



Photo: JOHN HARRIS



Photo: TIM RIGBY

Neil Kinnock and Derek Hatton: the Kinnockites and the Militant tendency share one thing in common — their refusal to challenge British imperialism

AS 1985 LABOUR Party annual conference draws closer, so the debate about black self-organisation within the party heats up. Two alternatives to the black section are beginning to emerge: one from Mr Kinnock and enlightened *Guardian*-reading liberals; the other from none other than our old friend the *Militant* tendency. CAROL TURNER looks at, and discounts, the alternative to black sections in the Labour Party.

WITH a few blatant exceptions, most Labour Party members would be downright indignant if you accused them of racism. Yet the furore gathering around the demand of black members to organise independently within the party is provoking some responses which are exactly that.

Neil Kinnock's reply to the positive discrimination working party report that favoured the establishment of black sections was racist. Nevermind what might have been in his head at the time, what he said was that, as a matter of basic values, people with different coloured skin should not be given separate status.

Now he's busy thinking up a solution something like that recently suggested in a *Guardian* editorial. It puts the case eloquently: 'At constituency level, many parties in multi-racial areas are focussing their efforts on ethnic minority voters.'

'Several have adopted informal mechanisms of positive discrimination to ensure better black and Asian representation on party committees. And a number of constituencies are going out of their way to select ethnic minority candidates, sometimes from "all black" short-lists. All this has been done without recourse to the setting up of separate black sections.'

This 'healthy political trend' of course, must go further. Why not establish a Labour campaign for black and Asian rights, and affiliate it nationally like Paole Zion or the

cooperative movement? 'That would not give the separatists everything they want — but then Labour should not be a party of separatism.'

This is the sting in the tail of the 'compromise' put forward by the liberals in the Labour Party: that is somehow not legitimate for black people to organise independently of that society.

Woolly

Militant offer no more than a left cover for this sort of woolly-minded racist ideology. Their alternative for this year's annual conference debate on black sections? A resolution on famine in Ethiopia, which advocates (can you believe it?) reform of the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank.

In their desperation to avoid supporting the rights of black people in the Labour Party, *Militant* — that bastion of nationalisation without compensation and under workers' control — advocate fiddling round the edges of imperialism's most important international financial institutions. Ted Grant, do be brief!

Both Kinnock and the *Militant*'s anti-black section arguments come together for one reason, and one alone. It should be addressed, head-on, by its real name: racism.

Racism doesn't simply mean those people who refer to blacks by perjorative names, or believe

that they have inferior brain-power. It includes all those who would propagate and defend the supremacy of white people in a society that is determinedly racist.

Britain is such a society. Its history is one of repression of colonial people, justified in the name of bringing them the benefits of our own 'advanced' white culture.

Militant supporters who think that condemning a famine in Ethiopia, created by a ruthless imperialist drive for profit, is an alternative to be counterposed to building strong caucuses of black people in the Labour Party in Britain, are every single bit as racist as Neil Kinnock and his ilk — who believe that black people have no rights separate and independent to those bestowed on them by the predominantly white, male leaders who hold power within the party.

Both these strands of opinion within the party rest on hundreds of years of British imperialism, and its effects on the British working class itself. Socialists, especially those of the white male variety, must get it into their heads that unless they fight side by side with their black sisters and brothers struggling for their own liberation in a racist society, they will never achieve their ends.

The fight against racism in every form is a

bedrock of the struggle for socialism. The labour movement must recognise that the history of the British working class, and the history of socialist movements in Britain, is indelibly marked by this overwhelming fact of British racism.

Neil Kinnock and the *Militant* are not the only so-called socialists who hold such views of course. The British left is blessed with more than its fair share of white chauvinists.

Electoralism

A recent editorial in *Socialist Worker* opposed black sections in the Labour Party, and explained: 'Such a fight (against racism) cannot be built by establishing black sections in a party whose commitment to electoralism inevitably means concessions to racism.'

'It requires a different sort of organisation, in which the conscious minority of socialist, anti-racist workers work together to intervene in every struggle that takes place. And in such an organisation there should be no need for black sections, since it is the duty of every member, of whatever colour, to fight all forms of racism and oppression.'

Thus do the white 'socialists' in Britain explain to their black comrades that demands for self-organisation are unnecessary and devious.

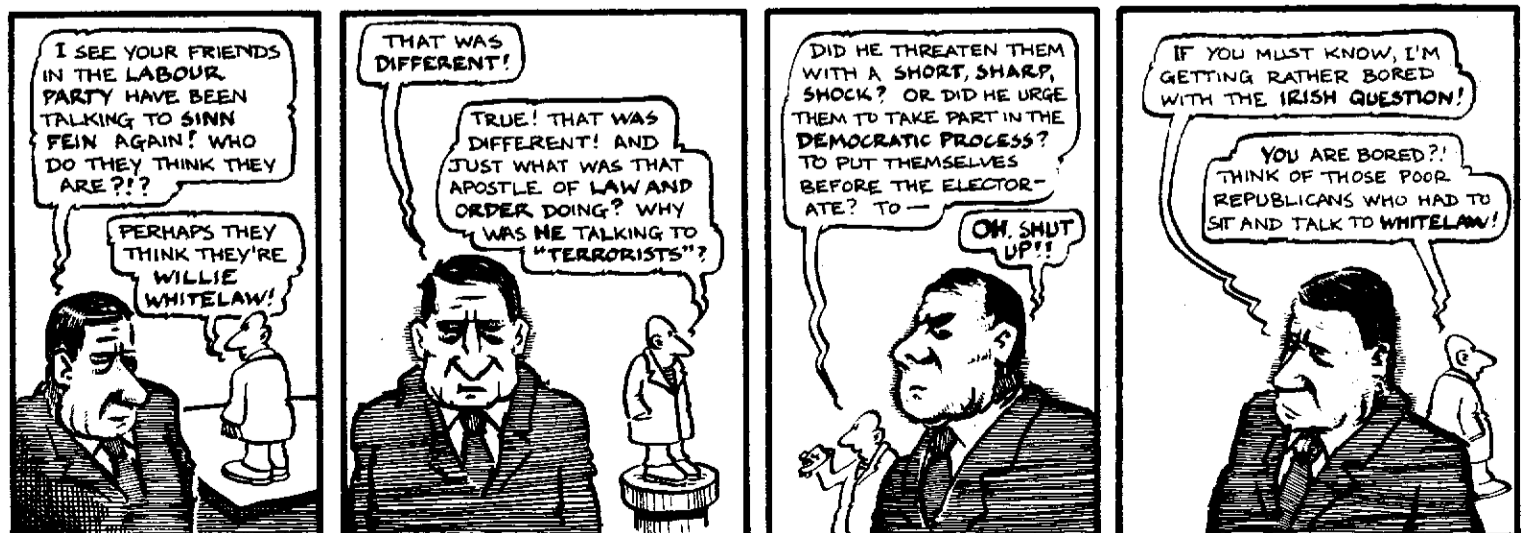
Apparently, the answer to racism in Britain does not lie in the hands of those whom it oppresses, but with the moral imperative of white socialists who claim to 'understand' it.

The fight for Labour Party black sections is about the right of black people to organise, in whatever way they think best, to combat the discrimination and racist oppression which puts them at the bottom of every social, economic and political pile. It is not for the oppressor, however beneficent or enlightened they consider themselves to be, to decide how best black people should do that.

The strongest support that white socialists in the Labour Party can offer to black people fighting for their rights, is to support their demand that they be allowed to organise in the way they want and to be recognised. In the months remaining before annual party conference, the most important service that socialists can offer black party members is to stand alongside them in their fight for self-organisation — the prerequisite in the battle against the institutional racism that has always existed in the Labour Party.

Neil Kinnock and *Militant* lining up against black sections represents, from both of these forces, opposition to any fundamental challenge to British imperialism.

A PIECE OF THE ACTION



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Labour women make left policy

NEIL KINNOCK spoke for 30 minutes to Labour women last Sunday without making one single reference to the two hour debate he had just sat through — whether or not women should have more power in the Labour Party. His speech indicted the Tory government who 'after six years under the first woman prime minister' had made women 'less safe, poorer, (having) less access to care and opportunity and (being) less free than when the decade began.'

Applauding the role of the 'women in the mining communities, the Ford workers, the women 'in Greenham and Molesworth, in Barking hospital, in Cambridge, in the nursing profession, in education' he pointed out that women 'are not agonising, they are organising.' He pledged a Labour government to 'improve contraception and abortion facilities on the NHS', follow 'positive action policies in recruitment and training' and 'establish a Ministry for women's right'. He was insistent that Labour, committed to Democratic Socialism, could win the next election. Heard politely, he won the only round of applause during the speech when he said

that there would be no pre-election pacts or deals.

By Maureen Lansbury

But it really wasn't enough for Labour women to hear lots of promises. The debate on women's organisation showed that women knew that their demands would not be handed down from on high and that equality would only be secured if women won it for themselves.

That debate proved once again that the demands of the Women's Action Committee for greater representation command majority support among Labour women. A new experiment was decided on by con-

ference. Next year will see a shadow election take place for the five seats of the National Executive Committee reserved for women. This will demonstrate that women on the NEC have to represent women.

A challenge to the position of conference came



from the *Militant* tendency in the form of a resolution from Berkshire East CLP that suggested women should have parity with the LPYS by being allowed to elect one seat on the NEC and have one resolution submitted to Conference.

This argument was savaged by Audrey Wise



Women machinists from Ford Dagenham: smiles of victory after their 17-year long battle for equal pay

summing up for the National Labour Women's Committee. 'It's insulting to suggest that 52 per cent of the population should be treated the same way as the Young Socialists' she said. None of the places on the NEC were representative of women and this was the issue.

A COHSE delegate had made this point when moving the resolution in favour of shadow elections. 'Will the NUM have women on its delegation to Labour Party conference this year? No woman has ever been elected to the trade union section of the NEC', she remarked.

Debate

The regional representation of women was also used by *Militant* to try and undermine WAC's position on the accountability of the National Labour Women's Committee. On a card vote WAC's position was carried defending the committee being elected at national conference but allowing nominations to take place on a regional basis.

The *Militant* speaker from Liverpool got a sympathetic response when she asserted that it was capitalism that women had to fight, not men. Other speakers tried to play on-

the danger of federalism and separatism to dampen support for women's demands and even to counterpose the Women Against Pit Closures movement to the fight for self-organisation in the Labour Party.

But when the Islington South and Finsbury resolution was passed calling on Women Against Pit Closures to affiliate it became clear that women in the party rejected the artificial divide being made between the battle for representation in the NUM and a complementary battle in the party. The presence of Sue Bence from Aylesham women's support group at the WAC rally on Sunday and the *Labour Briefing* meeting on Saturday drove this point home clearly.

Solidarity

The *Militant* also clashed with the majority of conference over Black sections. The resolution passed not only affirmed support for black sections

but went on to argue for an increase in NEC seats by five 'to be elected at an annual conference of black sections'.

Outraged that the platform was supporting this resolution the *Militant* stormed to the rostrum to make a hysterical speech denouncing positive action for blacks and claiming that there were only three people from Liverpool in the Liverpool black caucus, and that the tactics of the caucus were intimidatory towards *Militant* supporters.

The speaker claimed she had been beaten up, her daughter had been threatened, and her house petrol-bombed. The right wing in the conference loved the speech but after a card vote the delegates showed they had not been fooled by these hysterical lies.

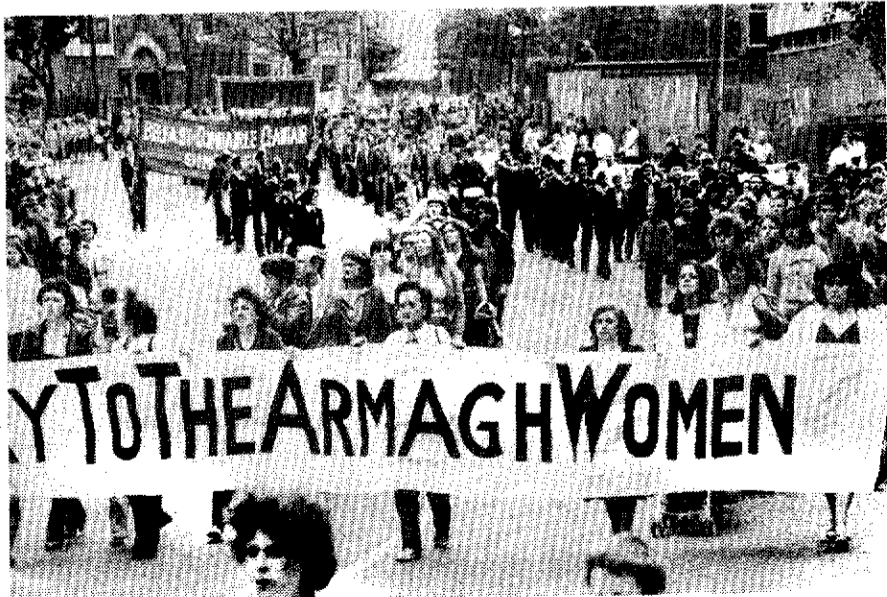
Conference debated many other issues from low pay and employment, to sexual harassment, the NHS and abortion — where the main resolution simply defending the '67 Act was a retreat on previous policy.

On South Africa the resolutions from Glasgow Pollock and the National Organisation of Labour Students urged the Party to back the struggle of the South African Liberation movement and to support the efforts of trade unions in South Africa to establish one united federation.

The results of the elections for the conference arrangements committee confirmed the hegemonic role of WAC at this conference. All but one of the WAC slate was elected, including a Socialist Action supporter, with between 170 and 180 votes each. WAC's failure to stand a full slate, however, allowed Carol Bevan, a *Militant* supporter, to squeeze on with 140 votes.

Labour women are clearly making left-wing policy but the Women's Action Committee still has to work out how to use its base among women to confront the intransigent leaders of the Party.

Labour women for Ireland



LABOUR WOMEN went one step further in challenging Labour's traditional bi-partisanship over the Irish question in Bournemouth last Sunday when they backed a resolution calling for a public campaign, debate and discussion to be mounted for withdrawal of British troops.

Mandy Moore, speaking for the National Labour women's committee, backed the successful resolution. She explained how Jo Richardson, Brenda Wilkinson and herself

had visited Belfast, in line with last year's conference decision, and talked with victims and relatives of those who had been hit by plastic bullets.

They had visited the

Divis Estates and relatives of women in Armagh gaol. She stressed how vital it was that the British labour movement should take note of what the majority of republican opinion had to say.

The resolution passed linked the issue of civil liberties and strip-searching to the question

of British withdrawal. It called for the NLWC to circulate the Benn-Heffer Bill for Withdrawal to women's sections and councils and stressed the need to continue the dialogue with Irish feminists and the republican movement. An amendment from Birmingham Sparkbrook, protested at the arrest of 65 year old, Dr Marie O'Shea under the Prevention of Terrorism Act.

The *Militant* resolution backing official Labour Party policy, called for the establishment of a 'Northern Ireland Labour Party' and denounced the 'policies of individual terror of the IRA'. It condemned the Brighton bombings and was rejected both by the platform and the conference.

During the lunch hour before the debate newly elected Sinn Fein councillor Lilly Fitzsimmonds gave a speech to a Labour Women for Ireland fringe meeting that answered every single one of the adaptations to imperialism in the *Militant* resolution.

'If you ignore the role

of British imperialism in Northern Ireland,' she said, 'you end up condoning it.' She explained how Northern Ireland had been created by British imperialism against the wishes of the Irish people.

By Valerie Coultas

She told of how the civil rights movement of the '60s had been ruthlessly suppressed by the pogroms of the 'B specials'. 'We were glad to see the British troops in 1969,' she reminded the audience, 'but in 1970 when the unionists attacked us and we tried to defend our homes they turned their guns on us'.

A curfew was imposed on the people in the Lower Falls and they were not allowed out of their homes for two days. 'We women of the Upper Falls defied the British Army. We marched down the road with our prams full of food. The British troops attacked us from a primary school.'

Then in 1971 internment was introduced and

the British troops were let loose on the nationalist population resulting in the events of Bloody Sunday in 1972 when 14 people were shot dead in cold blood.

Lilly pointed out that repression has continued since that time. 'The techniques of repression have become more refined and the censorship in the media has grown'.

She highlighted the role women had played in that struggle. The soldiers called their patrols 'duck patrols'. We invented 'hen patrols' and followed them around the streets blowing whistles and banging dustbin lids.

Many men had to leave their homes and the women were left alone. 'But we're very used to looking after ourselves and the men. We took over the defence of our homes and our children.'

This was the origin of the Relatives Action Committees in March 1976. 'We agitated, we organised demonstrations, vigils and pickets whenever they brought the men to courts.' Lily's eldest son

was arrested as a school boy, interned without trial for 16 months and re-arrested a year later.

She pointed out what the constant harassment of the British army meant for Irish women. 'Marie Drumm was shot dead in hospital. Miriam Daly, a lecturer at Queens University, was shot dead in her home. Sadie Lamour was killed. Susan Bunting was critically injured. You hear about the deaths of British soldiers but you never hear our side.'

Labour women with the exception of the *Militant* tendency, are not only hearing the republican's case but they are leading the fight to get the rest of the British labour movement to listen to it.

● *Labour Women for Ireland* can be contacted c/o Feminist Library, Hungerford House, Victoria Embankment, London WC2 6PA.

● *Dr Maire O'Shea Support Committee* can be contacted c/o 448 Stratford Road, Birmingham B11 4AE or phone 021-773 8683.

How to fight for amnesty

BY MID-APRIL 1985, 994 miners had been dismissed as a result of the 12 month strike. The latest net total of those still not reinstated is 671. Not one single sacked miner in the Scottish and Kent areas has so far been reinstated.

In contrast not one single scab convicted for similar offences has been sacked. Eighty miners are currently still serving their prison sentences.

The NUM national leadership have made repeated calls for an amnesty for sacked and imprisoned miners, and have recently established a national miners solidarity fund. Each sacked miner is being paid between £25-35 a week out of this fund by their areas.

Thousands of leaflets have been distributed on the coalfields to raise money for the fund. But the response from many NUM area leaderships has been 'keep it quiet, play it softly-softly', and to prevent the launching of a national campaign.

NUM and South East Region TUC, providing offices for sacked miners and encouraging their continued organisation.

By Dick Withercombe

NOMPAS — the National Organisation of Miners in Prison and Supporters looked set to bring together these area campaigns, with the blessing of the NUM national leadership. Unfortunately, its decision to break from the wishes of the NUM leadership has wiped this out.

Established at the end of the strike by the authors of the excellent book, *State of Siege*, it began to organise a national campaign run by many sacked miners and by miners wives. Doreen Humber of Notts WAPC, and a former leading spokesperson of NOMPAS who has recently withdrawn from the campaign, reports that Peter Heathfield and Arthur Scargill had indicated that the NUM were considering sponsoring NOMPAS as the main national campaign in support of the prisoners.

But NOMPAS, posturing about the 'ineffectuality of the Scargill leadership', has turned its back on providing a much-needed service to the whole movement. The NUM's support is no longer forthcoming, and national WAPC have decided not to support it either.

The first issue of *Liberator*, NOMPAS' monthly newspaper, makes clear its new direction: 'NOMPAS is not a welfare organisation and we are not interested in short-term sympathy for



Kent NUM leader Jack Collins calls for a national amnesty campaign: not one of the 147 sacked Kent miners has been reinstated

the prisoners, or such things as "adoptions" or letter-writing to prisoners,' it says.

'We were not set up to give material or financial help to prisoners' relatives ... Nor are we campaigning directly on behalf of the sacked miners ... Our concern is with a political analysis of the means of repression and a process of education within the trade union movement.'

Not surprisingly, the national demonstration it organised on 8 June was attended by only 300 people. The national leadership of the NUM and sacked and imprisoned miners needed that sort of help like a hole in the head.

Campaigning for amnesty, and for support for sacked and imprisoned miners, is the number one task for the left of the labour movement. First and foremost that means supporting the national solidarity fund and the campaigns of the NUM leadership.

Many areas campaigns are doing exactly that. The Kent NUM and South East Region TUC have called for a lobby of the TUC congress in Blackpool in September, and are approaching the NUM nationally to support it. They have also organised a national meeting in July to launch a campaign for reinstatement, inviting Arthur Scargill as the main speaker.

Jack Collins, Kent area secretary, said: 'I hope other regions of the TUC will follow up to launch local campaigns. Let's have a massive national campaign.'

The North Western Area Miners Defence Campaign, and Bold NUM in Lancashire, have already given their full support to the TUC lobby.

They are contacting the union NUM national leadership, Kent, and others to discuss organising a fringe meeting at this year's Labour Party conference in Bournemouth.

● Kent campaign meeting: Thursday 18 July, 7.30pm, Friends Meeting House, Euston Road, London (nearest tube: Euston).



Amnesty Bill announced

SPEAKING at the Yorkshire miners' gala in Rotherham this weekend, Tony Benn announced:

'The Campaign group of Labour MPs has decided to introduce an Amnesty Bill into the House of Commons, under which all those who were fined or imprisoned as a result of their activities during the miners' strike will be given a pardon which will wipe out all their sentences. This Bill is based upon the ordinance signed by Lord Soames, who as the last Conservative Governor of Rhodesia granted a pardon to Mr Ian Smith and all those who supported him during the period of his illegal regime there.'

'This Bill is being presented to parliament now, as part of the campaign for a total amnesty which will go to the Trades Union Congress and the Labour conference this autumn. The Labour movement will expect the next Labour government to provide a complete amnesty and pardons for all those who were punished for their courageous and principled stand in support of the mining communities over the last eighteen months, and will go on pressing until such an amnesty is granted.'

The Southern Rhodesia Amnesty Ordinance was signed by Lord Soames on March 20 1980. Its first provision was: 'A free pardon is hereby granted to every person in respect of any act committed by him, being an act which constitutes a criminal offence'.



Labour Party resolution from Bold NUM

Conference notes the campaign waged by the National Union of Mineworkers to reinstate all miners dismissed as a result of the 1984-5 strike, and for the release of all prisoners imprisoned as a result of the strike. Conference further notes and welcomes the Labour Party Scottish executive statement, adopted by Labour Party Scottish council conference on 9 March 1985, pledging 'full support for the campaign to ensure reinstatement of all men victimised by dismissal during the dispute'.

Conference further recognises that the miners were fighting a legitimate battle in defence of their jobs, their communities and their union, and that the miners' strike was deliberately provoked by the Tories. With regard to miners sacked/imprisoned as a result of their activities during the strike conference therefore calls for:

- a) the Parliamentary Labour Party and the national executive committee to mount a campaign for dropping of all charges against miners, reinstatement of all sacked miners and release of all imprisoned miners;
- b) the next Labour government to release from prison any miner still serving prison sentences and to ensure the reinstatement of all miners still sacked.

In pursuance of these aims conference calls for:

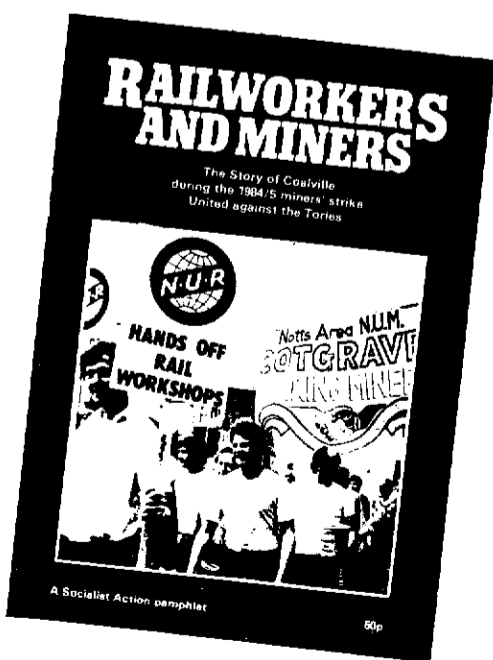
- 1) the national executive to approach the National Union of Mineworkers to discuss jointly organising a national demonstration as part of this campaign;
- 2) the national executive to discuss measures to support the NUM national miners' solidarity fund and the raising of money for the families of sacked and imprisoned miners, and to recommend to CLPs and other affiliated organisations the collection of a regular 50p levy from the membership towards these ends.



Jack Collins

Nevertheless, militants have been able to use the national leaflet to collect regular levies, despite the defeat of the national ballot. And many support groups have continued to raise money and campaign for the sacked and imprisoned miners. Women Against Pit Closures (WAPC) nationally have made this their main campaign.

In many areas, groups have worked with the NUM to organise sacked miners, WAPC, and supporters in campaigning for amnesty, raising money, and supporting the families of miners in prison. In Kent an exemplary campaign is being organised by the area



Socialist Action supporters in rail have produced a pamphlet called 'Railworkers and Miners', the story of Coalville during the 1984/5 miners' strike. It costs 50 pence per copy and is available from Socialist Action, PO Box 50, London N1 2XP.

Crossed off the list

SPEAKING at the Militant rally on the eve of 1985 LPYS conference, Ted Grant jumped on the bandwagon to criticise the NUM national leadership's conduct of the miners' strike.

The few young miners in the audience walked out in disgust. In fact, that conference was remarkable as the smallest in several years, despite the historic opportunity to link up with young NUM militants that the strike had represented for the Young Socialists.

Offering a left version of the Euro-communist criticisms of

Scargill's conduct of the strike, Grant said that the reason the leadership of the mineworkers' union hadn't called a national ballot was because ... (wait for it) ... they lacked faith in the working class.

The NUM leadership recently passed its judgement on the Militant.

Addressing NALGO annual conference, general secretary Peter Heathfield said: 'I used to buy the Militant out of politeness until Ted Grant decided to turn on the leadership of the NUM after the strike. Now the Militant is crossed off our list.' Right on Peter Heathfield!

Britain, Ireland and the miners' strike

SPEAKING RECENTLY at the Black Delegation to the Mining Communities conference, Irish freedom fighter **BERNADETTE McALISKEY** highlighted the connection between repression in Ireland and the events of the miners' strike. We reproduce below an edited version of her speech.

IT seems to those of us in Ireland that we don't have an 'Irish problem', we have a British problem. In fact, for 15 years we've been trying to explain that if British people do not address themselves to that problem as it manifests itself in Ireland, then as sure as night follows day that problem would creep up upon them, they would find themselves unable to face it here either.

The inability of the leadership of the trade union movement in Britain to see the wood for the trees and stand solidly in support of their comrades in the miners' strike, and the total bankruptcy of the Labour Party in the face of the assault on the miners, shows the truth of that. They didn't know what to do. They didn't know principle from collaboration.

They have had years of collaborating with British imperialism, and they've backed themselves into a corner and don't know the way out of it.

There is one thing that we clearly understand, because it's from our point of view, the case for British withdrawal. The very first — simple and straightforward — point we have to make is that the most fundamental reason why Britain should withdraw from Ireland is that Britain has no right to be there. From that follows all Britain's problems.

Not just for the past 15 years, but the past 800, Ireland has been exploited so that other people could make money. To continue to try to justify what is fundamentally wrong — and propagate it to your own people as something that is right — is crucifying us, but must of necessity also crucify and distort the thinking, the rationale, and the ability of that country's own people.

What is to be brought home to the body politic of Britain is that despite all the years of the development of the British working class, it has hung around its collective political and industrial neck an historic inability to recognise British imperialism. It is time for the British working class to relearn its history.

The merchant classes of Britain, who now constitute the backbone of Britain's ruling class, made their money, their wealth, and their power by — as Mrs Thatcher wants to put it — no more noble private enterprise, than they got in little boats and went to other people's countries and sold human beings for money. On that was the strength of British capital and British imperialism built.

Until this country recognises that it will never come to terms with that which prevents its progress — that is, the inherent, historic racism of the British ruling class be it towards the West Indian community, the black or the Irish community, or to people who play football and come from a different country than they do.

It is the root-cause of violence, the root-cause of an inability to seek justice. It comes from the assumption that god made the world and those parts that he didn't make British deserved all they got.

From the day that Mother England set her big flat foot in our country we have known better, and resisted and been determined to get her out of it. Because that big foot prevents our development, our progress and our peaceful existence.

Most people in this country don't see it like that, but maybe now people in the mining communities do, because they have learned from the hard school of experience what is the problem of



Bernadette McAliskey

we can see the wood for the trees.

At the time of World War I the Irish Republican Brotherhood and the Irish Citizen Army under the leadership of James Connolly organised an armed resistance. They decided that if you were going to fight and die for the freedom of small nations, you could save yourself the fare to Flanders.

By the end of World War I when Britain held elections 85 per cent of the Irish people voted for Irish freedom. They voted for Sinn Fein.

Britain's response to the will of the people — expressed peacefully and legitimately through the ballot box — was to send gun-boats up the Liffey, and declare war on Ireland. At the end of that war Ireland was partitioned, and the 13 per cent of the national minority have

not against democracy. It's not that we don't do things through normal political channels. We do. We get these bursts every now and again of trying the normal political channels once again.

But every time we win through the normal political channels, the eleventh commandment of the British ruling class is: 'Thou shalt not win. By fair means or foul we will still allow you to lose'.

We started campaigning peacefully within the democratic channels. They changed the law to make our civil rights movement and the things we were doing illegal. So we went to prison.

It got to be a farce. Hundreds of people were queuing up for three-month sentences. Things were getting out of hand. So we had internment, a peculiarly British phenomenon.

Terrorism doesn't mean terror. It means any act carried out by those who are opposed to the establishment. Miners going on strike is terrorism.

Miners on strike frighten scabs. Black people organising against racist attack frighten racists. But it's somehow not terrorism if people are taken to police stations and terrorised. That's reasonable use of force to protect the country against terrorism.

It has come to the point where people in this country have got to face reality. In the supposed name of democracy, the British government have taken away every democratic right that we had. In the name of peace it has imprisoned and slaughtered, brutalised and terrorised.

In the name of law they have broken every international concept of law. In the name of justice they have stood the principle of courts and justice on its head.

If you are not there to defend us, and to learn from our experience, how are you ever going to be fit to defend yourselves from a regime that is blooded and tried and tested against somebody else?

Our freedom we will fight for and our freedom we will have. If we can unite, then there is a political way forward for all our people: for our freedom and yours.

If you don't try to learn from Ireland, then you are going to get Mother England's big ruling class boot over your head.



Tamil refugees recently arrived in Britain

Stop Tamil genocide!

DESPITE NEW evidence of genocide against the Tamil-speaking population of Sri Lanka, the British government are persisting in refusing entry into Britain for refugees from the island. Since 31 May the British High Commission in Sri Lanka have refused to issue any visas to potential refugees.

This policy was applied after Leon Brittan, the Tory home secretary, announced on 29 May that in future all Sri Lankans, despite being holders of

By Steve Roberts

Commonwealth passports, would require visas from the High Commission before entering Britain. The High Commission announcement confirms that this amounts to a total ban on Tamil refugees entering the country.

This ban is totally contrary to United Nations conventions to which the United Kingdom is a signatory. The Tory government's flouting of the convention — the imposition of visas on refugees — was justified on the basis that it was safe for Tamils to return from Britain to Sri Lanka. However events in Sri Lanka are increasingly showing that Britain's contention is false.

In the last weeks in the eastern province of the country, more than 15,000 Tamils have fled their homes for the jungle or refugee camps in Muslim areas. Over a dozen villages in the area have been razed to the ground by security forces acting alongside armed Sinhala vigilantes. (The Sri Lankan government is encouraging 250,000 of its supporters to arm themselves and settle in the north and east of the island.)

But Brittan is not only aware of these facts. The British government is actually providing aid to the Jaywardene government's campaign of terror.

There are 3000 soldiers and 900-1200 navy personnel currently occupying the Tamil speaking areas of the island today, attempting to crush the armed struggle being waged by the Tamil guerilla organisations. As in Central America, the imperialist powers are providing covert aid for the government's war against the guerillas.

The countries most heavily involved in the counter-insurgency operations are the US, Israel and Britain. American and Israeli intelligence agencies not only have been involved in training units of the government forces, but have also been involved in field operations, leading artillery units in bombardments of Tamil areas.

The British government has been involved in the training of the most feared of all the police commandos. In a device which is now well known SAS regiment members are given leave to work in politically sensitive areas. These 'ex'-SAS men are deployed all over the world, not just in Sri Lanka, but in the Gulf states and other regions where the British government wants to buttress repressive regimes at the least political cost to itself.

Sri Lanka is a vital part of imperialist strategy in the South Asia region. Under the UNP government of JR Jaywardene, the island is increasingly becoming a base for US communications and military operations. In addition the government is trying to crush the previously powerful trade union movement on the

island to allow it to become a paradise for multi-nationals.

The UNP government faces two main obstacles in its drive to carry through its project. The first is the militant struggle of the Tamil people now in its ninth year. The second is the predominantly Sinhala labour movement.

Jaywardene has now started to turn up the heat against the labour movement. Martial law now effectively exists throughout the country. Increasing numbers of arrests are being made in the south, with Jaywardene accusing 'Marxist groups' as being behind the unrest.

Unfortunately the majority of the labour movement still remain opposed to the struggle of the Tamil people.

Only organisations like the Socialist Workers Party, the Sri Lankan section of the Fourth International, have fully supported the struggle of the Tamil people and made their defence the chief priority of the whole Sri Lankan working class. In order to carry out its militarist policies against the Tamil speaking people the UNP government has sought to intensify repressive measures against the critics of their policy amongst the Sinhalese.

In Britain the campaign to defend the Tamils is building up strength, with public meetings being organised in north and south London. The meetings will protest against the atrocities and the action of the Tory government in first collaborating in the terror and then refusing refuge to its victims.

For more information contact the Tamil Refugee Action Group at 52, Acre Lane, Brixton SW2 or tel 01-737 4144.



Britain's response to the will of the Irish people, peacefully expressed through the ballot box, was to declare war on Ireland.

England, what makes people supposedly think the way they do — and to tell the truth makes people not think at all, but let the Star and the Sun and breakfast television do their thinking for them.

We don't have that problem, simply because we have had to fight against a system which represses us so directly that

held a veto ever since. The rest of us who lived in the North of Ireland were stuck in along with them.

That position has prevailed since the 1920s. There is no way you can make that work democratically, because it is not democracy.

The Irish Republicans are not against democracy. The anti-imperialists are

Photo: GM COOKSON

Photo: GEOFF MORLEY

Photo: J. J. VAN NESTER

THIS WEEK the 'Gillick ruling', which restricts the possibility of women under the age of 16 receiving contraceptive or abortion advice, goes to the House of Lords for final appeal. Last week, the Powell Bill, which would have undermined the legality of abortion in any form, was pushed off the agenda of the House of Commons.

Next year we can expect new legislation, this time backed by Thatcher, to reintroduce the basic content of Powell's Bill, and further legislation restricting time limits for legal abortion. In fact, we find ourselves in the midst of a sustained attack on women's hard won rights for some minimal con-

trol over their fertility.

And this is not an offensive that is confined to Britain. In the USA, Reagan gave explicit support to the anti-abortion campaigners with a New Year's day message direct from the White House. He is on record as supporting a constitutional amendment to outlaw abortion altogether.

In Ireland the most fundamental attack has recently taken place, with abortion not only illegal, but ruled out in the Southern state's very constitution.

Why is it that the ruling class chooses this terrain, above all others, as the spearhead for its attacks on women's rights generally? JUDE WOODWARD explains.

In order to arrive at an answer to this question it is first necessary to understand the context in which these attacks are taking place.

Over the last two decades, particularly in the imperialist countries, women have made some important advances not just at the level of their legal rights, but also in their economic position. The widespread entry of women into the workforce since World War II has not been structurally reversed in any of the major imperialist countries during the '70s recession.

Despite the inequality of wages, this has meant that women have achieved a far higher degree of economic independence from the family than existed previously. This is reflected in higher divorce rates, accompanied by a major increase in the proportion of divorce proceedings initiated by women. More and more single women are bringing up children without the 'help' of a man, out of choice rather than necessity.

Alongside these social reflections of the changing position of women, we can see deep-going political changes. In nearly every advanced capitalist country there is an identifiable shift to the left among the mass of women. In Britain this is seen in an ongoing movement of women away from electoral support for the Tories, towards the Labour Party. More recently this shift has been somewhat mediated by the SDP-Liberal Alliance who have made explicit, and partially successful, attempts to channel the support of women deserting the Tories to themselves.

In the USA there is increasing support among women for the Democratic Party rather than for Republicanism.

This shift in political identity is by no means confined to the electoral arena. On the contrary, it is most strikingly revealed in the leading role women have played in virtually every major social and political struggle of recent years — from the way the women of the nationalist communities in the North of Ireland initiated the mass movement culminating around the hunger strikes; through to the impact of the Greenham women on the missiles question; to, most dramatically and most significantly, the tremendous movement of women, led by the women of the mining communities themselves, in the 1984-85 strike.

Abortions

It is this eruption of women into the class struggle and its impact on political developments, that the ruling class seeks to reverse.

The ruling class faces the crucial necessity of rolling back all these advances of women, and of the working class, on the economic, social and political level. It is in this context that the abortion issue plays a key political role.

Before World War I and in the 1920s, the failure of the labour movement to support the demands of the Irish people for independence; its failure to support the demands of women for the vote; its failure to turn the horror and disgust of working people at the slaughter of World War I into a powerful movement against the imperialist war; its failure to campaign in support of the demands of Gandhi and his followers for Indian independence all left the labour movement isolated from its potential allies when the ruling class came to smash home its advantage in the 1926 general strike.

Arthur Scargill put the issue very well during the miners' strike when he paraphrased the famous phrase in relation to the Nazis: First they came for the Jews, I said I wasn't a Jew and it didn't concern me. When they came for the communists, I said I wasn't a com-

munist and it didn't concern me. When they came for the trade unionists I said I wasn't a trade unionist and it didn't concern me. And when they came for me and there was no one to defend me.'

The working class has to urgently learn this lesson in Britain today in relation to the Irish, women, blacks, gays, even in relation to the demands of Scotland and Wales, and in relation to the international class struggle in South Africa, Nicaragua and El Salvador. Breaking up the possibilities of such an alliance emerging is the chief political concern of the ruling class.

In relation to women the bourgeoisie has a dual approach.

On the one side it seeks to convince women that it will find better allies among sections of the ruling class than it will in the labour movement.

Left

Unfortunately these ideas gain some currency in sections of the left of the labour movement, precisely due to the paucity of the labour movement's own attempts to take steps to defend women. The disgusting spectacle of the reselection process in the Labour Party producing only one new woman selected for a safe Labour seat gives real succour to these views among women in the Labour Party itself.

This is what forces like *Marxism Today*, and its prime exponent among women — Bea Campbell — base

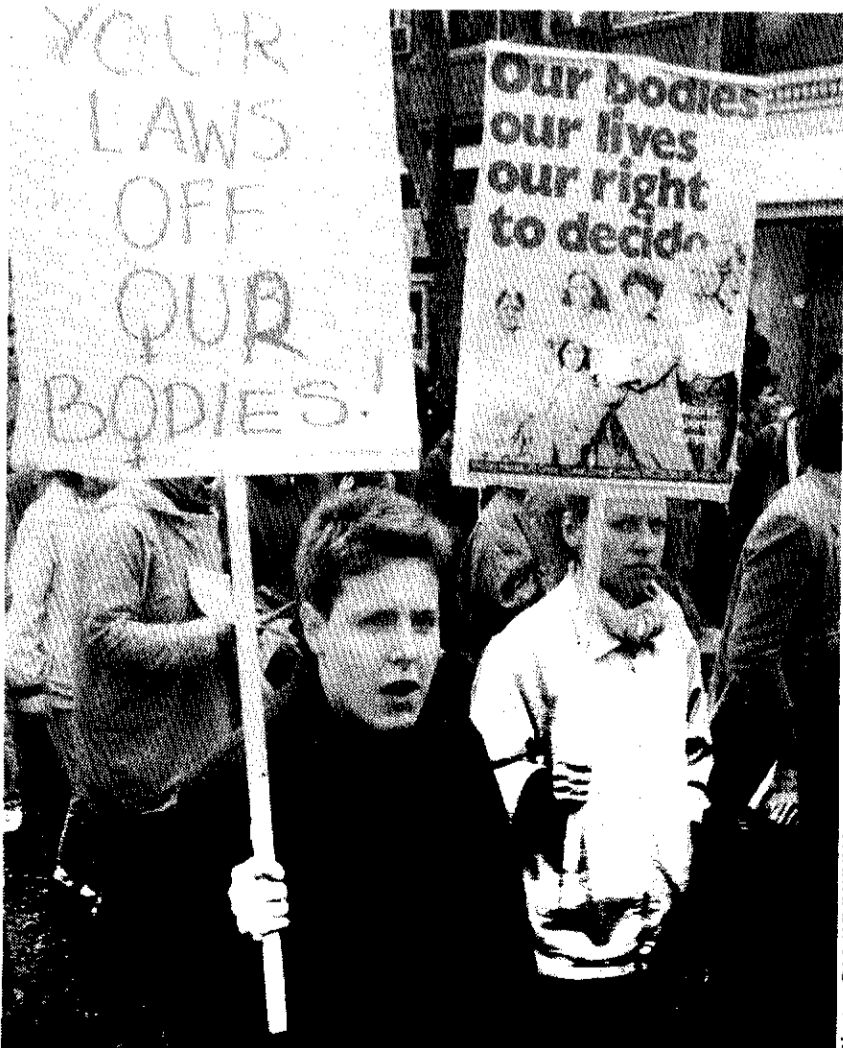


Photo: GM COOKSON

'bourgeois' feminists, the truth is that the demands of WAC stand diametrically opposed to the project of Bea Campbell.

Alongside this offensive among women, the ruling class will also exploit the contemporary political backwardness of the labour movement — particularly its privileged, white, highly-paid, male, bureaucracy — to persuade it to turn its back on women, as it did at the time of the Suffragettes.

First the labour movement refused to support the demand for 'Votes for Women', describing it as 'divisive' — a complaint that has an only too familiar ring today. Alongside this the Tories came forward to bargain with women, offering vague promises of the franchise in the future in return for the Suffragettes' support for the imperialist war effort in 1914 and electoral support for the Conservative Party.

In the light of the failure of the labour movement, it is not surprising that a majority-wing of the Suffragettes went over to this policy, led by Christabel and Emmaline Pankhurst.

The abortion and contraception issue can, within limits, play the same political function today. A reversal of women's hard-won abortion rights would be a real material blow against women. Any failure of the labour movement to do this would be a real blow to the working class in the face of the new hammer blows.

Women have won the vote; it is no longer possible to stand up in the Labour Party, or the trade unions and argue that women do not have

themselves on in their offensive to turn women away from the labour movement and to place reliance on the 'newscaster' feminism of the SDP.

This is counterposed to the objective dynamic of forces like the Labour Women's Action Committee, which precisely struggle to turn women towards a fight within the labour movement itself, to change it, to turn it into a real instrument of struggle for all the oppressed. And contrary to the views of many on the left, including particularly sections of the so-called 'far left', which denounce WAC as the instrument of white, careerist.

the right to work, or to equal pay; the labour movement formally oppose discriminatory employment practices even sexual harassment at work has at least been adopted as a legitimate area of concern for the labour movement as a whole, if grudgingly, and with little action taken.

But on abortion and contraception the labour movement — and the ruling class knows it — has a long, long, long way to go. Winning on this issue becomes the key therefore to unravelling all the gains that women have made since the second World War.

The Labour Party declares the issue

to be one of 'conscience' and not a class issue at all. No party whip is ever used in parliamentary votes on these questions. Progressive policies that are adopted at conferences never make it into the election manifesto.

As a result, as the Powell Bill progressed through parliament, more Labour MPs voted for the Bill than against. At the third reading only a handful of Labour opponents of the Bill even bothered to turn up.

Weakness

The Scottish Labour Party is a positive bastion of support for the anti-abortion lobby, with a large majority of the Labour MPs — all of whom are men — voting for the Powell Bill, and opposing abortion rights.

In the unions only a tiny handful of unions have policy on the abortion issue, and these are predominantly unions with a high female membership. The TUC, forced in 1979 to take a stand against the Corrie anti-abortion Bill, has never followed this up with a campaign in its affiliated unions. And has said not one word in the current round of attacks.

This all makes fertility rights extremely easy ground for an offensive against women's rights, aimed at both a real and material deterioration in women's position in society, and cutting right into the developing alliance between women and the labour movement.

The whole issue constitutes one of the labour movement's chief weak-



Sylvia Pankhurst

flanks on the question of women's oppression which the ruling class can exploit against both women and the unity of the working class movement as a whole.

In a similar, if not more fundamental way, in Ireland the abortion and contraception issue has been used to divide women from the nationalist movement led by Sinn Fein. Sinn Fein's continued adaptation to the 'moral' authority of the Catholic church on these questions has meant that, despite the tremendous political progress represented by Adams leadership of Sinn Fein, on these questions it has lagged behind. Sinn Fein played no central role in the campaign in the South of Ireland against the constitutional amendment outlawing abortion.

This is the kind of error which if it is not corrected will have an increasingly corrosive effect on the unity of women with the nationalist forces. If a united Ireland means the hegemony of the moral pronouncements of the Catholic church, not just at the level of individual conscience, but enshrined in law, then undoubtedly many women will be driven away from support for the nationalist cause.

Similarly in Britain. The emerging unity between women and sections of the labour movement under attack will soon be dissipated if the majority of the parliamentary Labour Party, either passively or actively, supports attacks on women.

Those forces in the labour movement that do see the necessity of building a fighting alliance with women must act urgently to build the campaign against these attacks.

Unity

The importance of this unity began to be learned in the course of the miners' strike, when the involvement of women sustained and strengthened the struggle. What was true of the miners' strike is true in general, but the next step in forging this unity demands that forces like the NUM now throw their weight behind the struggles of women.

If this occurs, then the present round of attacks on women's fertility rights can certainly be reversed. And those women, like Bea Campbell, who argue that women should turn their backs on the 'macho' miners, in favour of the 'reasonableness' of Neil Kinnock, will have to argue why women should turn away from forces that will fight alongside them, and support those who stand idly by.

Building such a campaign started with the demonstration against the Powell Bill. The next step is the demonstration against the Gillick ruling. Every miner, every activist, who learned the lessons of the miners' strike, sufficiently well to be on that demonstration will be the first links in the chain of a movement that can stop Thatcher in her tracks, not just on abortion, but on everything else.

When NUM branches start to affiliate to the National Abortion Campaign, we'll know our battle on this issue is already half won.



Photo: GM COOKSON

Women's rights under attack

Reverse the Gillick ruling

THIS SUNDAY thousands of young people will expose the lie that people like Victoria Gillick — and Margaret Thatcher — actually want to protect their interests.

The message of the young people who will lead the demonstration called by the Campaign Against Gillick Ruling will be that it is young people themselves — not parents, lawyers, doctors and certainly not the Tories — who know what's in their best interests. No amount of propaganda about good old-fashioned family values will convince young people who have been through six years of Tory government, the miners' strike, the YTS, and 1.3 million registered youth unemployed that the Gillick ruling is anything but an *attack* on their rights.

The 'Gillick Ruling' was the decision of the high court in December 1984 in favour of Victoria Gillick's claim that no treatment or advice on contraception or abortion be given to any of her daughters without her consent. In practice this has meant that since the court decision it has been illegal for doctors, or anyone else, to give anyone under 16 advice about contraception without parental consent. Books on sex education which are freely available for sale in shops, and sex education in schools, can be declared illegal.

By Anne Kane

The Gillick ruling has nothing to do with the so called 'protecting' of young people. Supporters of Gillick sometimes talk as if it was contraception that invented sex! Restricting contraception and abortion won't prevent teenage sex — or youth radicalisation, opposition to the Tories, and defence of youth rights and all those other things Mrs. Gillick finds so offensive.

The fact that there has been a dramatic fall so far this year in the number of people under 16 who attended family planning clinics in England and Wales — well down on last year's 17,000 — doesn't indicate mass youth celibacy. It means that there will be more fear and ignorance about sex, more unwanted pregnancies, and more illegal backstreet abortion and suffering on the part of young, working class, women in particular. Those willing to provide illicit abortion facilities will make a lot of money out of this suffering. The likely delay until September of any decision by the House of Lords over the Gillick appeal means drawing this state of uncertainty out still further.

Mrs Gillick won't lose too much sleep over this however. Her campaign has nothing to do with the actual problems facing young people. It is to do with patching up and preserving an ailing social and economic system. To attempt to deal with this crisis the government is obliged to attack the most basic

rights of women and young people in particular. And to attack the most basic elements of control women and young people have over their place in the work force and in society generally. The Gillick ruling fulfills this function in two ways.

Firstly, it is part of a mounting attack on the existing rights of all women to abortion and contraception. Since the defeat of the Corrie Bill there has been a long slow build up of attacks on the rights of women to control their own fertility, and thereby have some measure of control over their destiny. Gillick is the latest but not the last in the line.

Secondly, Gillick is part of a general attack on the rights of young people. The ruling actually means that people under 16 now have *no* legal rights to make any decisions for themselves.

Campaign

The context for these attacks are more than 1 million youth registered unemployed, a reduction in unemployment benefit for the under 25s as part of Fowler's welfare benefits cuts, no social security money for 16 and 17 year olds who refuse a YTS place, and an attack on housing benefit for young people.

Young people are to be cheap labour, to be forced to live at home, and to have no legal rights under the age of 16. This is wrapped up in protecting the 'family' which is to fill the gap in the welfare services and police the activities of youth.

Another factor motivating Thatcher is the memory of thousands of young people who mobilised behind the miners during the last year. This unity, strength, and defence of the interests of the working class and oppressed provides the key to the way to defeat attacks like the Gillick ruling.

The National Abortion Campaign previously showed that it was possible to defeat attacks on the rights of women, such as the Corrie Bill, by drawing on the united strength of the women's and labour movements. The miners showed that it was possible to strengthen the whole working class by uniting and supporting the interests of *all* the oppressed.

To defeat Gillick — and the further attacks on abortion rights which are still to come — means following these examples. The broadest possible united campaign is required. This means rebuilding the base of the National Abortion Campaign. It means in particular that the Labour Party Young Socialists, as the main political voice of youth, has to be forced to change its present purely token support for the campaign against Gillick. This in turn means a fight to replace the present leadership of the LPYS with one which understands the links between all these attacks on young people — rather than one which counterposes simply fighting against YTS to fighting for abortion rights.

THE ARTICLE by Dick Carter 'The nature of World War Two' (SA 101) is one of the most bizarre to appear in Socialist Action.

The article is contradictory and confused about the nature of the war and, conveniently for Carter's 'periphery to the centre' view of world revolution, writes off the role of the European working class. The conclusions about the outcome of the war are utterly one-sided and schematic.

Carter seems to imply that the basic character of the war was one of a struggle between Germany and the USA for world dominance — thus he says the period could be described as 'the struggle for world supremacy between Germany and the USA — 1914-45'. But at the same time, it appears, it was also primarily a war against the Soviet Union and Communism. Come off it Dick, make up your mind.

By Paul Lawson

Of course, the war was part of the struggle of German imperialism to free itself from the shackles imposed on it by American, British and French imperialism, through the Treaty of Versailles after World War I. But Hitler's primary mechanism for doing this had always been — expounded many times both publicly and in his secret speeches before 1941 — expansion to the East, a war of conquest against Bolshevism. That was the primary character of the war, and it was this war that Hitler lost.

Carter seems to think that Hitler lost because the Japanese didn't invade Russia, and this in turn was due to the war in China, and the role of the Chinese Communist Party. So the Chinese masses defeated Hitler, get it? This one is a real turn up for the books.

The Japanese did not invade the Soviet Union

because their overall aims were different to those of Hitler. Theirs was a simple inter-imperialist war, primarily against the United States, for control over the Pacific, which was vital for Japanese imperial expansion. To become bogged down in the Soviet Union would have been utterly irrational in this war.

Now, it is quite true that the primary conquerors of fascism were the Soviet masses. Their victory showed not a lucky tactical break (the fact that they weren't invaded by the Japanese) but their commitment to the post-capitalist social relations established by the Bolshevik revolution. The heroism of the Soviet masses, and their unbelievable sacrifices, cannot be explained outside of this central political factor. But the Soviet masses were not the only ones who fought against, and in some instances defeated, fascism.

Europe

Carter says: 'The West European working class proved incapable of defeating fascism'. So much for the West European working class — they really are hopeless compared with the peasant masses of Asia, aren't they Dick?

But the reality was different. Before we go into it, what is this category,



very odd for a Trotskyist, of the 'West' European working class? — an even odder category before the division of Europe!

Virtually everywhere that was subject to fascist occupation there was armed struggle, waged by this poor, useless European working class, against fascism. Waged generally, let it be noted, by forces under the political leadership of the Communist Parties — precisely those who, incidentally, had not 'broken with Moscow'.

Contrary to the lies and mythology of the apologists for Western imperialism, virtually every major city and capital in Europe was liberated by the armed masses, as the

Germans collapsed under the impact of defeat by the Red Army.

In Italy Communist-led general strikes brought down Mussolini in 1943.

The whole of northern Italy was liberated by the Garibaldi brigades under the leadership of the Communist Party. In Paris, between 19-26 August 1944, the Communists organised an insurrection against the Germans. In Greece the Italians and Germans were defeated by the CP-led ELAS. In Yugoslavia Tito's forces defeated the Nazis. So why does Dick Carter write off this struggle of the European working class? Only

to doctor the facts to fit his thesis that all serious struggles have, during the twentieth century, taken place at the 'periphery' of the world imperialist system.

Stalinism

The CP-led struggles in Europe did not result in the posing of the question of political power in a revolutionary way, except in Yugoslavia, because of the counter-revolutionary role of Stalinism. But it was these uprisings, and the struggles between the end of the war and 1949 in Europe and in many other parts of the world which

were the 'post-war revolutionary wave' which Trotsky had expected.

Carter lists all the revolutionary victories since World War II, and seems to imply that they are all in some way attributable to the victory over Nazism — even the Nicaraguan and Cuban revolutions, which happened 14 and 34 years after the end of the war respectively. In other words, World War II led to revolutionary struggles and victories.

But that is only one side of it. Trotsky had expected that Stalinism would not survive the Second World War, but it

did. And this enabled the Stalinist parties to strangle the post-war revolutionary wave, which in turn helped lay the basis for the long post-war imperialist economic boom — which was also an outcome of World War II, and which helped delay revolution in the West. But such contradictions and problems find no place in Carter's schemas in which 'revolution' goes back and forward across the decades without even a passing reference to real facts, real movements, or real people.

Revolution

After all, the post-war boom had its most devastating negative effects on the struggle for socialism in the advanced capitalist countries. And if you have Dick Carter's politics, why the hell does that matter when the workers in the advanced countries have the historic destiny to sit and wait for the semi-colonial masses?

One further omission by Carter is symptomatic. His argument is essentially that Trotsky was right to found the Fourth International because, yes, revolution was on the agenda after the war. But as we have outlined, so was counter-revolutionary betrayal. Its most important and consistent name is Stalinism, and the programme of any revolutionary current has to put the struggle against it right up front, including in those countries where the social overturn of capitalism was led by Stalinist parties. Why does Carter omit this decisive programmatic question, so central to the post-world war reality he attempts to outline?

Offside!

THE EVENTS in Brussels demand some answers and understanding from all socialists. Frank Gorton (in SA 105) applies himself to this question but gives all the wrong answers. Frank argues that sport is influenced by the ideological content of the competing nations, the 'star' system should be rejected, those involved in the Brussels riot are scabs and that the labour movement should deal with its own.

Frank's effort is one-sided and therefore idealistic in its approach. There's a problem if your starting point is that sport is all a sideshow or simply a reflection of the dominant values and ideas of a particular society.

Of course, in one sense that is true — no more so than under capitalism where individual endeavour is prized and actively encouraged. But that is only half the story.

Sport under capitalism is contradictory, particularly its function in different classes. For many working class youth, male and female, it represents the best way to express yourself, earn some self-respect and possibly excel in at least one area of life. That's only false consciousness if you don't understand the contradictions.

It also has the value of employment, no small thing in a world where the unemployed are a growing problem. Sport in Eastern Europe and Cuba

leisure under capitalism it can be a motivating force, the genuine collective experience Frank calls for. A one-sided approach like Frank's leads you to wrong and dangerous conclusions.

By Graham Topley

Yes Frank, against the 'star' system which is part of the use of sport as a subtle means of control — but not against excellence in sport. Economistic ideas about sport's diversionary role normally stem from an elitist view that sees it as somehow less important, therefore to be rejected. The aim should be to get an integrated system of work and leisure.

In Eastern Europe, despite some of the contradictions of the planned economy, sport is totally integrated and budgeted for as a central aspect of everyday life. Sport in Eastern Europe and Cuba

ways a model of the relationship between a society's political aims and its ability to provide adequate services for its people. Compare the preparation and performance of East European athletes for example with the heroic individualism of many of those from the capitalist countries.

Any attitude on sport therefore needs to be combined with a clear understanding of the contradictory role it can play in forming that necessary collectivity.

The second part of Frank's piece compounds the error by lapsing into some fairly crude sociological drivel. His reference to scabs is sadly misplaced and confuses what are genuine vermin within the labour movement, people who are prepared to jeopardise and sell other people's jobs, with violence on the terraces, albeit between the working class. Deep-rooted tribal loyalties whipped up by a hysterical press are hardly in the same category.

Similarly the argument that this is all the pathetic thrashing about by the lumpen proletariat who really don't deserve to be part of the labour movement is rubbish. The vast



The Heysel stadium after the slaughter

majority of those who organise and get done for football violence see themselves as, and act like, an elite, defending some of the most reactionary ideas in society. It costs a lot of money to be a proper 'Casual' which simply can't be sustained by being part of the lumpen proletariat.

Then the idea that the sensible, respectable sections of the working class will deal with 'their own' has very far-reaching and serious conclusions. Why don't we call for a workers' defence guard on the terraces, ready to move

in at a moment's notice? You don't expose the hypocrisy of the bourgeois state at this point in time by demanding dual power — our guardians against theirs.

Swamp

Yes, it is a question of proletarian morality against the hypocrisy and swamp of bourgeois morality. We have to prove ours is a higher form in practice, but you can't do that by arguing for the pristine-pure vanguard to come to the rescue, or by

creating islands of socialism in a sea of reaction: socialism in one stadium.

Bans and identity cards are not the solution either — it will only transfer the problem elsewhere and allow the state to increase its restrictive powers and step up policing of inner city areas: they are the real threat to the peaceful assembly of the working class.

What is needed is a positive programme that integrates sport into an overall strategy for society. Football is no longer our game. It's been taken

over by big business and turned into a commodity like any other.

Our approach has to be based on the social ownership of stadiums, sports centres and so on, under democratic control. The labour movement has to campaign for it now against the Tories who ultimately are responsible for defending and worsening the conditions for this type of violence to exist. The labour movement will deal with the situation but not by plugging a gap here and a gap there — or by misunderstanding the nature of what faces us.

LAST SATURDAY Arthur Scargill spoke to the Yorkshire miners gala on the lessons of the strike and the way forward for the NUM. The following is a slightly shortened version of his speech.

I SAW a late news flash on ITN last night about the New Years Honours list. I thought 'there's been a mistake', and I phoned them. I said 'you've missed my name' — they said 'you're not on it'.

But I'll tell you who was on it. Roy Ottey, Colin Clarke, the chairman of the CEBG, and a lot more people who did a number of things against our union, and my class, during the course of the miners' strike.

This 1985 Yorkshire miners' gala takes place in the wake of the longest, bitterest and most historic battle we have ever seen. The decision to take strike action was not taken, as Jack Taylor said, because we want to be involved in strikes. We didn't pick the time. We responded to an attack and its my understanding as a leader that when members of the union are attacked both leaders and members respond, and take action to defend those who are under attack. That's the basic principle of the movement.

I believe that today we should draw some lessons from that strike. Let's remind ourselves first of all what the strike was about.

To hear some academics, intellectuals, and historians talk on television, to see what they print in newspapers and magazines, to listen to some leaders of certain political parties, one would have assumed that if we had not taken strike action everything would have been alright. In fact if miners had not taken action in March 1984 then, today, as we meet in Rotherham, 25 pits would have been closed — including Cortonwood and nine in Yorkshire.

It is now being demonstrated that the Board's intention is not about a reduction of four million tons, nor is it about the proposed closure of twenty pits, or five pits within a short space of time. What's behind the Coal Board and government's thinking is their long term policy of closing 70 pits and axing 70,000 jobs.

The miners strike would have been won quickly if, first of all, miners in Notts, South Derbyshire and Leicestershire had come out on strike and supported this union. Secondly if they disagreed with our policy but nevertheless, as members of a trade union, they had respected the basic tenet of our movement and refused to cross picket lines, not only would we have won but David Jones would be alive today.

Action

If Eric Hammond of the EETPU, instead of inviting Tebbit to open his new union centre, had told his workers to take strike action in support of the miners we'd have won in a matter of days. That's the sort of action we should have been entitled to expect.

I don't blame working people. I blame the leaders of those unions for lack of leadership in a situation like that. If steel workers had been prepared to give the miners the same support we gave them in the 1980 steel strike, production would have come to a standstill in a matter of five weeks. And if Bill Sirs had been less inclined to jog along the front in Brighton, and more inclined to join our picket lines, that policy would have come to fruition.

If transport workers, with a few honourable exceptions like Ray Buckton's ASLEF and Jimmy Knapp's NUR, had refused to move coal our strike would have been successful in a very short space of time.

Finally, if in October last year, with an 82 per cent ballot vote behind them, the pit deputies had refused to accept a sell out this dispute would have been over.

But I want to make one appeal to our members. There are lessons to be learned from our dispute. If there is one overriding lesson above all others it is that you don't start to turn inwards, and you don't start being vin-



Photo: MORNING STAR

Lessons of the miners' strike

dictive towards other working people.

As far as I'm concerned, as a socialist and a trade unionist, I pledge from this rostrum that no matter what is the section of the working class anywhere in Britain, if they are involved in industrial action then this union supports them.

There was an abject failure on the part of the TUC General Council to translate into positive action the resolution that was passed in the September congress last year. There was also an obsession on the part of Labour Party leaders with alleged violence. They should have been doing for our class what Thatcher did for hers! They should have supported miners without equivocation.

And if there's any doubt among the Fleet Street hacks about where I stand I'll tell them once again and I'll tell them slowly. I will not be a part to condemning the brave men and women who manned our picket lines throughout the 1984/5 dispute.

Rodney Bickerstaff and Tony Benn talked about the things that have taken place in this dispute. But you ain't seen nothing yet!

Courts

The appointment of a receiver (for the union) was designed to emasculate the NUM. Yes, I want to see us freed from the impact and effect of receivership. Yes I want to see sequestration lifted. But I tell you what. We've got a bigger task.

I don't believe this union should crawl either to the Tory courts or to receivers or sequestrators either. Because we've done nothing wrong.

I've also been reading in some of these intellectual magazines that one of the reasons the miners were not wholly successful was the failure of mass picketing. It was not a failure of mass picketing but a failure to mass picket in my submission. That was one of the main reasons why we didn't have the kind of breakthrough that we should have.

The decision to go back to work without an agreement has led to enor-

mous problems for this industry. Over 900 men have been sacked and 700 have not yet been re-instated. Fifty of our members have been jailed. And their only crime was fighting for the right to work.

Those who've been jailed should be regarded as political prisoners who've been taken by the state and incarcerated for the stand they took in support of this union.



Tony Benn and I want to say to you, to every Labour MP on this platform, and to the Labour Party leadership, that the next Labour government should give an unequivocal commitment to free those who've been jailed and reinstate into work all those who've been sacked.

There are those who have suggested that the miners' strike has demonstrated a failure of traditional militancy and in particular of picket line militancy. Nothing can be further from the truth.

The miners' strike has shown how vital it is to have mass action. Class commitment is involved when you fight a class enemy of the kind that we've endured over the past 12 months. The demonstration of the lengths to which this government is prepared to go should be seen in the cost of this dispute.

The cost of the miners' strike, and the overtime ban, is over £8 billion, more than 50 per cent of the NHS bill, more than the cost of kidney machines, or heart machines or the cost of maintaining or improving human life.

If one judges MacGregor's stewardship on the basis of efficiency market forces or economics his is an unmitigated disaster. In the 93 weeks since his appointment as the chairman of the NCB he has cost Britain's taxpayers over £90 million a week.

Choice

Twenty pits have been earmarked for closure, nine in Yorkshire with a loss of over 20,000 jobs. The Board has announced its intention to close 12 out of 23 workshops with a loss of over 2500 jobs. The issues which confronted us in March 1984 are as real today as they were then. But there are now additional features which colour the picture for the NUM.

There has to be a campaign to free those in jail. There has to be a campaign to win reinstatement for those dismissed for offences alleged to have been committed during the course of the dispute. This union will never relax until every single miner has been reinstated.

There are other and more sinister developments reminiscent of the 1930s. The Board's draconian measures being deployed at every pit in Britain, wiping out overnight agreements, customs and practices, indicate that their long-term aim is to slaughter this industry and go for privatisation with the parts that are left.

The British miners, each and every one of you, have got a simple choice.

You can either bow the knee and accept the Coal Board's dictates, you can either relax your vigil and concede that the Board and the government are going to push through their policy, or you can say with one almighty voice that the heroic struggle of the last 12 months has not been in vain, and that if they try to close our pits we will take industrial action to stop the pit closure programme.

Let no one talk to me of defeat in the course of the miners' strike. Those who talk about defeat don't understand the nature of the system under which we live and certainly misunderstand the nature of class war.

I believe the miners' strike was one of the greatest struggles in world history. Out of the miners' strike has come a whole new generation of class conscious fighters, young men of whom their parents would have been proud, and whose forefathers would have held them in the highest esteem.

Victory

An even greater achievement was the establishment of the magnificent Women's Support Groups. Thatcher's policy in establishing the women's support groups by default, has unleashed a phenomena that will change the nature of British politics in the future.

But the greatest victory in the strike was the strike itself. People became conscious and began to understand how you tackle cuts in the NHS. They began to understand for the first time in their lives that there is something wrong with a world in which we spend billions on arms and death and destruction while we can't provide money to save kids from death and starvation in Ethiopia. They began to understand that throughout history some of the greatest struggles were seen by certain misinformed people as apparent setbacks. Nothing could be further from the truth as far as the miners' strike is concerned.

As far as the women's movement is concerned I have heard lots of conflicting rumours as far as the proposed new national rules are concerned. But when you see the *Sun* newspaper, the *Daily Mail* and the *Notts Miner* against these changes that's the best reason for supporting those rules and giving women their rightful place as part and parcel of the NUM.

When people talk to me of setbacks let me remind you of a few political lessons. Who, looking back, would regard the Vietnamese as having suffered a setback in the Tet Offensive when later they took Saigon and got rid of the Yanks? Who, looking back, would regard Fidel Castro as suffering a defeat in 1956 when three years later his supporters took Havana and established socialism?

Strength

Those weren't defeats. They were steps on the way to victory. And that's what the miners' strike of 1984 and 1985 was all about.

Let's pledge from this demonstration and gala our determination to the historians, to the hacks of Fleet Street, to the hangers-on in the political scene, that the miners' strike of 1984-5 was but a step in our campaign to save our pits, our industry, our communities and our trade union movement.

Because our fight is a fight to save trade unionism, democracy and freedom all of which are currently being threatened by the Tory government legislation. You don't respond to attacks by demonstrating weakness. You respond to attacks by showing your strength. This is our strength. It's here to day — men and women whose courage and determination are second to none.

The campaign to save our pits should start from here.

There are two overwhelming reasons why you should rededicate yourselves today to take any action in the fight to save your pits, your communities, and your union. Two lads died on picket lines, David Jones and Joe Green. You owe it to them to say 'The miners united, will never be defeated.'

Todd Victory

RON TODD's victory in the second ballot for general secretary of the TGWU is a major blow to the efforts of the new realist right to shift the balance of forces in the labour movement in their favour.

In a 40 per cent turnout, Todd won 76,840 more votes than George Wright. This is a big improvement on the 40,000 majority he won in the

By Pat Hickey

first ballot. It represents a strong rejection of the right and their tactics of using the media to attack the union.

This is a strong enough majority to prevent any repeat of the campaign run by Chapple and the *Daily Mail* to discredit the TGWU voting system and press for secret postal ballots.

The *Daily Mail* campaign, which started 11 months after the original ballot, hoped to build on the defeat of the miners strike, attack union democracy and draw the TGWU into the camp of Duffy and Hammond.

However it is clear that the majority of TGWU members have not drawn the conclusion that it is all up with the class struggle and that the only alternative is the total surrender offered by the right. While Ron Todd is not an Arthur Scargill, the result does mean that the TGWU will continue to be an obstacle to open 'new realism', and will also not



Photo: GM COOKSON

Todd's victory helps maintain unilateralism

be a clear instrument for attacking the Bennite wing of the Labour Party. The TGWU will continue to have a pro-Kinnock, but not an anti-Benn position, and will continue to be an

obstacle to the open right. In addition its stand on issues such as nuclear weapons will remain unilateralist.

The TGWU will not make any swing to the left

as a result of this election. There will be no major changes. But it does confirm that the defeat of the miners has not given the scab right a clear road to victory.

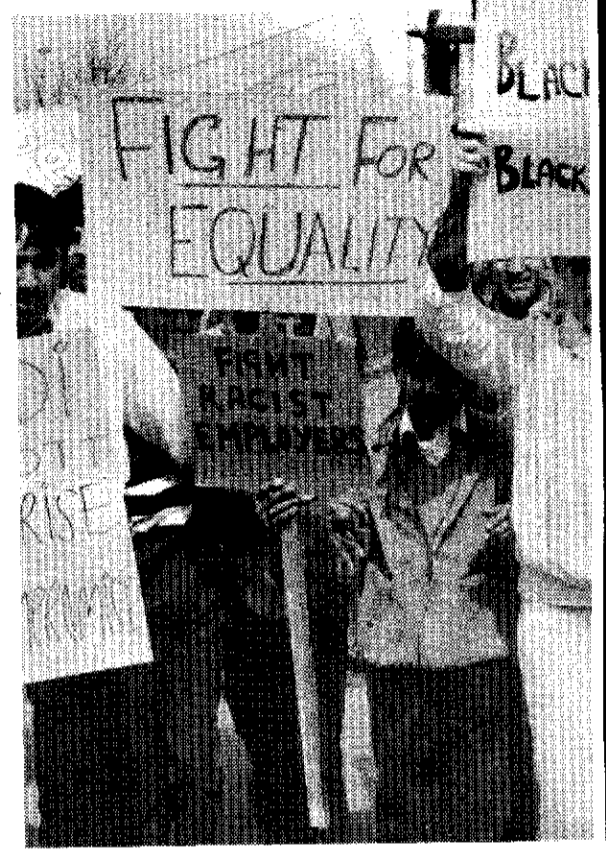
AT THE end of last week, Brent South constituency Labour Party chose its next parliamentary candidate for this safe Labour seat, from an all-black shortlist of Sharon Atkin, Paul Boateng, and Keith Vaz. Paul was chosen by an overall majority in the first round of 31:12:12.

It is only proper that Brent should take the stand it did. The 1981 census showed that 46 per cent of the population are from the New Commonwealth — the closest official estimate of the size of the black population in this country.

Because Brent decided to go ahead with its selection on the basis of a general committee frozen for that purpose — and before the Brent black section had elected delegates to the GC — Paul will be officially endorsed by the national party.

He's not the first black candidate chosen of course. But Russell Proffitt, recently selected by Lewisham East, has not yet been endorsed by the national executive because his selection took place with the full participation of the local black section.

Labour's second black candidate selected



CPSA Broad Left debate continues

HOWARD FULLER'S article in SA 104 on the CPSA and in particular the Broad Left — Broad Left 84 split provides an analysis which only addresses some of the major factors. While being in agreement with the general tone of the piece I felt an understanding of the nature of *Militant* and the way it operates was missing.

Describing the split in the BL as a 'walk out led by the Communist Party and a section of the Labour lefts' is formally correct but bald. What led to the split was not simply the numerical dominance

By S Dillon, SCPS (personal capacity)

of the *Militant* but the fact that *Militant* makes it almost impossible for views other than their own to be expressed in many BL led branches.

Some individual non-aligned activists found working in *Militant* led BL branches in impossible task as *Militant* supporters are prepared to use all kinds of dirty tricks to maintain their prominence.

This feature of *Militant* is expressed in many other sections of the labour movement. The tactics used by *Militant* to block anyone they term as 'the sects' have never been pristine. Is there any reason to presume that CPSA *Militant* supporters are any less sectarian than their comrades in the LPYS or the rest of the Labour Party?

Of course the danger of overstating the sectarian nature of the *Militant* is that it can lead to an ambivalent attitude towards the prevailing witch-hunt. As Socialist Action has maintained a clear position against any purge of socialists from the Labour Party it seems unlikely that its supporters will lose sight of the real

reasons behind the anti-*Militant* attitudes of the bureaucracy.

Howard Fuller's piece correctly identifies the nature of the CP. His labelling of some leading Broad Left 84 members as 'ex-revolutionaries' may seem cruel. But against the background of their position on anti-trade union legislation it is justified. All that is said of the *Militant* however is that they have some 'incorrect policies'.

For Socialist Action's ideas to make gains within the CPSA a clearer understanding of *Militant* is needed.

The idea that *Militant* has been forced to the left is questionable. Like most centrist currents *Militant*'s position fluctuates. It could be said the *Militant* is at present going through something akin to third period Stalinism, brought on by their increasing isolation in all areas of the labour movement apart from those they dominate. This argument is offered not as an ultimate explanation but as a contribution to the area of debate which is absent from Howard Fuller's article.

Within the CPSA the *Militant* does not have a particularly outstanding record. They have been indifferent and sometimes lukewarm on many major issues.

Their attitude towards campaigns they don't dominate such as the 'campaign for union democracy', the abortion rights campaign and autonomous women's groups,

has been one of obstruction. Clearly if Socialist Action supporters are to organise within a *Militant* dominated BL a clearer statement of how this can be done is required.

I contend that also a new debate on the question of union mergers within the civil service is required. The civil service trade union movement is divided and suffers from a long history of departmentalism. Despite the moves away from a merger it can be argued that something like industrial trade unionism can only be achieved through greater unity. Organisational safeguards would of course be necessary.

The pessimism of the argument that lower grades would be dominated by higher ones, has prevailed for too long. Prolonged industrial action is no longer the prerogative of lower grades as the action at Newcastle Central Office has shown. For Howard Fuller, Broad Left 84's support for the merger of CPSA-SCPS is the 'most obvious sign of... political degeneration', yet he ignores that until very recently *Militant* were almost alone in arguing for a merger at any cost to grade autonomy. If the *Militant* returns to its former position how are SA supporters then to act?

Finally Howard is absolutely correct to stress the importance of building among the rank and file and the Socialist Caucus alliance with SWP. This is the only way to challenge the new realism in the CPSA but to classify *Militant*'s political bankruptcy as some 'idiosyncratic positions' is not only dangerous but out of step with most of the analysis expressed elsewhere in Socialist Action.

Coalville under attack

COALVILLE RAIL depot was a symbol of solidarity with the NUM during the miners strike. Now it is under increasing attack by British Rail management. ROY BUTLIN writes on the latest development.

BRITISH Rail isn't giving up at Coalville. They are hitting our depot with one cutback scheme after another. The latest — the fourth since the end of the miners strike — is a plan to close the Coalville crossing signal box. This box controls not only the mainline, but also a very

busy road crossing. It involves the jobs of three signalmen.

All these schemes are part of a relentless campaign of punishment against our depot because we stood firm and refused to shift coal during the miners' strike. We are

determined to resist this scheme, just like every other one management has come up with over the past three months. To date, 25 jobs have been earmarked for the chop, but we are convinced that the wholesale closure of our depot is in the pipeline.

With every scheme management has come up with to date, we insisted that we were being punished for refusing to shift coal. But it was difficult to pin down this claim.

The most recent cutback scheme involving the signalmen's jobs is the most blatant of all. There is no justification for this scheme except to remove three signalmen who refused to shift coal during the strike. Management hopes to eventually move control over the crossing to the Leicester power box, which will open in March 1986. But if the power boxes in the East Midlands during the miners strike are anything to go by, then the new box won't get involved in any industrial disputes. It is a reasonable assumption that the men who will staff Leicester power box will probably be hand-picked, and they certainly won't be strong union members.

We're going to approach the fight to save these three jobs just like the rest of the schemes. We've scored a minor victory over the scheme to

cut 11 jobs in Mantle Lane yard.

Our union negotiators (at Sectional Council level) fell down badly when they conceded the loss of 10 of the 11 jobs. When that happened, we decided that we wouldn't accept this outcome. It was to our good fortune that management hadn't followed their own rules carefully enough. We caught them out on a loophole, and despite the Sectional Council's unwillingness to fight, we have now won the right to a brand new meeting at regional level over these jobs. In our industry Sectional Council invariably gets its own way, so this second chance is practically unheard of. The fact that we've got a second chance goes to show something I've said many times. Nothing is inevitable.

If we can get our Sectional Council back to the table after a decision has been reached, then surely that should give railworkers more confidence to see that the same kind of thing can be achieved with our national leadership. That's why I remain optimistic today, despite the attacks from management that we are having to face daily.

● 140 copies of the pamphlet *Railworkers and Miners, the story of Coalville depot during the miners strike*, were sold at the Yorkshire miners gala.

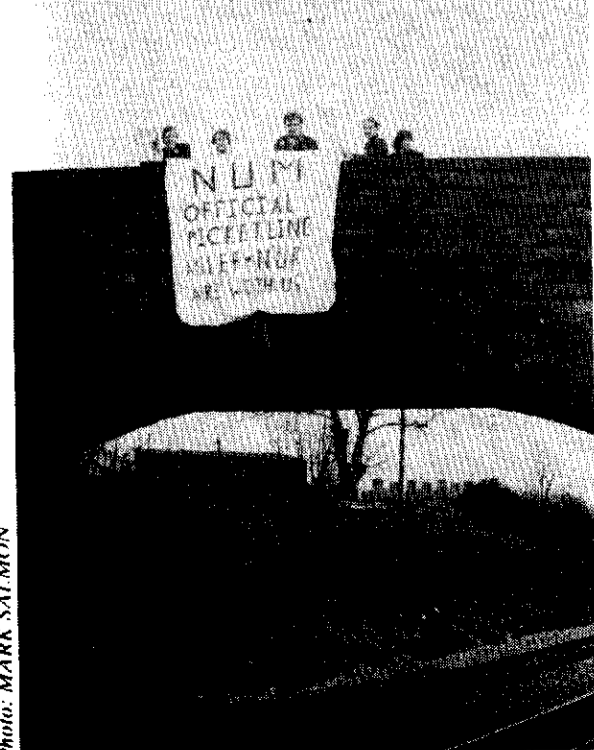


Photo: MARK SALMON

LAST FRIDAY Liverpool City Council's Labour majority agreed a deficit budget coupled with a 9 per cent rate rise. As a result Liverpool have set a £265m spending limit and will undershoot by £117 million, of which £88 million is in government penalties. Derek Hatton, the council's deputy leader immediately announced that they expected and demanded the full support of the Labour Party nationally. John Hamilton, council leader said the budget 'is what Liverpool needs, what is reasonable to regenerate the area and provide for the needs of the people'. The council will now be seeking the support of the local authority unions.

The joint shop stewards committee, representing 27,000 of Liverpool council's 31,000 workers, has already pledged that it will demand an all out strike if legal threats are carried out against councillors. The threat of prosecution will be notified to councillors in the next ten days.

Liverpool agrees deficit budget



Photo: TIM RIGBY

Trade unions key in Lambeth

LAMBETH is now the only Labour controlled authority not to have set a rate. As a result surcharge certificates have been issued. **GRAHAM TOPLEY** interviewed councillor **GRAHAM NORWOOD**, deputy leader of Lambeth council about the next steps for Lambeth and the way to win the fight.

Can you fill us in on the present situation and how you came to not set a rate?

We recognised that this was very much the crunch year in terms of being able to stand up to legislation that was deliberately aimed against Labour councils and against socialist policies of any kind. So Lambeth went to try and get a level of support for that at both the industrial and political level.

Industrial

In industrial terms, councillors went for six months before the original meeting on 7 March and we spoke to just about every member of Lambeth's 10,000 employees at workplace meetings, organised by the joint shop stewards. So that meant at 7.30 we were talking to bin men to midnight, when we were talking to some social workers who'd just come off duty.

Councillors were actually putting across the policies that were endorsed by Lambeth Labour parties, that were agreed by a number of councils against the rate capping laws and actually secured a lot of industrial support. Without exception the town hall trade unions gave overwhelming support for the council's position.

As far as we could see, the only alternative to defying the legislation and facing the sort of consequences we now see, was to make cuts of £14 million. That would have meant an immediate vacancy freeze, an end to some of the more political activities in terms of policies and resources to help women in the borough, to have a police unit. These would have

seemed non essential in a cuts budget.

For those reasons we did a lot of preparatory work. We had public meetings in each ward of the borough, and spoke to two thirds of the 400 community organisations.

Class

What's your view of the deficit budgeting strategy that some people have favoured?

No one strategy has a monopoly of wisdom. But the deficit budgeting now has both political and practical drawbacks. The political drawback is that if people feel unable to stand up to the law now there is no reason to think they will stand up in six months time when they're faced with the real consequences of a deficit budget.

If you go for deficit budgeting you allow officers to slow down recruitment, to effectively manipulate the finances. Instead of having a clear class based position of saying no, the law is wrong and is intentionally aimed at suppressing the sort of people we want to help, you're allowing people who are not politically sympathetic to us but in prominent positions in council bureaucracies to arrange a budget which may or may not end up in being a deficit.

What choices are you faced with now that you're the only authority not to set a rate?

We haven't got any choice in terms of future strategy. In 1979 Lambeth had 6,000 people officially unemployed, now in 1985 despite the government doctoring the figures, there are 29,000

unemployed. One in nine families are headed by single parents. Overcrowding and lack of facilities make Lambeth living conditions among the worst in Britain.

So you can't say you can't set a rate because you can't exist on these resources and then suddenly change your mind.

If we change our mind we would have retreated politically from the major challenge that now exists of a local elected council challenging the right of a government to step on democratic rights. If we ran away we'd be running too late. In the next few days we are going to get a letter specifying how much we're alleged to have lost and we may be liable to pay personally. The state is using the law as a weapon to try and make us run. That's what we have to resist.

Unions

Would you agree that there has to be a shift now to the trade unions? It seems to me that Lambeth unions are quite well prepared for what needs to be done.

Absolutely. So far as the council's concerned we will be having meetings — the Tories have requisitioned the next one for 3 July and we are confident we will hold the position and not set a rate. But the emphasis does go to the trade unions.

We've got to rely on industrial muscle to make sure every effort made by the Tories is resisted. In an alliance with the council, the unions have been instrumental in creating and consolidating the successful polices in Lambeth. The joint trade unions in London, through London Bridge, have been influenced strongly by Lambeth and there is a very optimistic mood.

We've had joint shop stewards meetings since the auditor's letter and we're arranging mass

meetings. We will effectively have to bring Lambeth to a halt if the government interferes with the right of Labour councillors to carry out Party policy.

The next stage nationally has a party political direction. While the Lambeth unions have to resist any attack, they also have to spread the arguments throughout the country. We're planning to contact all CLPs and trade unions or Labour groups especially those that have been rate capped. They are the ones whose fight we are effectively engaged in.

The fact we're on our own isn't our desire. Our fight has important ramifications for the whole labour movement.

Are you optimistic about the amount of support you're likely to get nationally? There's the attitude of the Labour Party leadership it seems to me, as well as the unions and activists in the boroughs that have been ratecapped

If we were to rely purely on the leadership of the Labour Party or trade unions we wouldn't be very optimistic. In grass roots terms Lambeth has tremendous support from the trade unions. Five hundred attended the fringe meeting at NALGO conference, the biggest ever.

In terms of the leadership of the Labour Party, frankly I think that they are embarrassed to see a council putting up the sort of fight they are lacking. Even under the criteria that Kinnock and others establish what is good, we are doing the right thing.

We've had five by elections in the last nine months and had an overwhelming majority in each. Labour is on the offensive politically, electorally and in industrial terms in Lambeth. It's up to Neil Kinnock to say why he's not backing us, not us to explain why we need to struggle without his support.

What immediately are the next steps?

We've got this conference on 22 June to which we're inviting all the local groups that support us plus the joint trade unions to explain what will be happening to the council now. Our group decision is to carry on exactly as before — we'll be paying our workforce, and the mechanism we've set up with the unions since voting not to set a rate, means we've been running our services better than before in some cases.

The unions are saying recruitment is going better than before. The work has been taken from councillors and put in the hands of shop stewards.

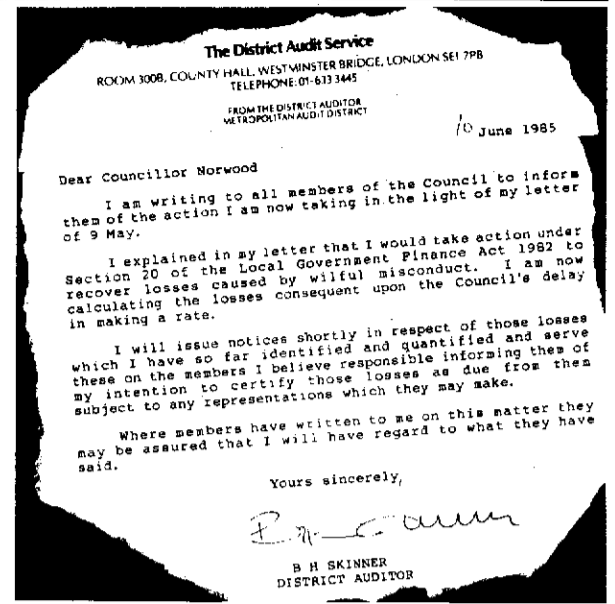
Fight

If we don't put up this fight with broad support from the party as a whole it will be everyone's loss not just Lambeth's. Lambeth is now only a symbol of what the party and the movement should be standing for.

If events are drawn out and go into the autumn do you think the issue should be taken to Labour Party conference?

I think we've got to take it to conference. There are also five major union conferences over the summer and we're taking the issue to each of them. We'll be organising fringe meetings and we expect a good response. We'll also be going to the TUC. I've no doubt that at conference the grass roots will be seen to be supporting us.

Most of all it will be an indication of the Labour Party's will to fight. What we are seeing now only a few weeks after the miners strike is another major resistance against the government. As long as we have these things the labour movement is in good heart. It will also put Kinnock on the spot.



Lambeth still fighting

AS REPORTED in last weeks Socialist Action the District Auditor has decided to start the process of surcharge against Labour councillors. He has written to every councillor telling them 'I will issue notices shortly'. The end result of his action could be to leave 32 Labour councillors bankrupted and barred from office for 5 years.

It is up to the whole labour movement to respond to this threat. Although the District Auditor has decided to act, the whole process takes time. Councillors first can make representation to the District Auditor and then once certificates are served there will be 28 days to lodge appeals with the High Court. That could take up to mid August. The High Court would not sit until October.

We aim to use that time to raise the issues throughout the country. Many people have already closed the door on this year's rate cap struggle. Until Lambeth's fight is finished the struggle is far from over. Next month the government will announce next year's rate capped limits. They will also be trying to force the pace over privatisation of council services. The best way to start the fight against these new attacks will be to back Lambeth now.

Our Labour group met last Wednesday to decide its strategy. Though some councillors wanted to back down 'having made our point and held out till last' the majority are still willing to fight. We are confident we can hold the line at the next council meeting on July 3. As some pointed out 'to back down now would be the worst of both worlds being surcharged and losing the support of the community and trade unions by setting a rate'.

Instead councillors discussed how best to raise their defence. A fighting fund has been set up and it is aimed to seek meetings with Constituency Labour Parties, Labour Groups, trade union branches and representatives of the labour and trade union

movement at every level throughout the country. One councillor, Jock Quinn, president of BLOC, has been struck off to coordinate trade union contacts while black councillors are being asked to contact and agitate among black and ethnic minority groups.

By Greg Tucker
Chair Lambeth Local Government Ctee

An indication of the potential support came when the joint union committee announced that NALGO conference had voted overwhelmingly in favour of non compliance with the rates act and a telegram from conference delegates was read out. The Southern District Council NUR has agreed to support the councillors and was asking the NUR NEC to give their support. London Bridge has set itself the target of raising a quarter of a million pounds for the fighting fund and will be recommending that its members take industrial action when the 'certification of surcharge' takes place.

Lambeth Labour Parties, councillors and council trade unions will be meeting together with community groups at a morning conference on 22 June to discuss local strategies and that afternoon the Labour Party will be kicking off its campaign with a rally — 3.00pm at Brixton Recreation Centre — with speakers including Jo Richardson. Speakers for meetings from the Labour group and Lambeth Labour Parties can be got from 582 2955.

**Lambeth Council
Against Ratecapping**
Public meeting
Saturday 22 June
3.00 pm
Brixton Recreation Centre
Speakers include Jo Richardson

A Socialist ACTION



FIFTEEN THOUSAND people marched through London last Sunday on the demonstration called by the Anti-Apartheid Movement to protest against the racist regime in South Africa.

The demonstration was timed to coincide with the anniversary of the Soweto uprising in 1976. It was one of the largest seen

in Britain so far this year, bringing together a wide range of organisations from the labour movement, the student movements and solidarity movement.

Demonstrators called for the overthrow of the Botha regime and for meaningful economic sanctions, pointing out the connections with South Africa through institutions like Barclays bank. They also called for the release of freedom fighters

like Nelson Mandela imprisoned for over 20 years for opposing apartheid.

At the rally in Trafalgar Square Dennis Goldberg of the African National Congress condemned as liars those who claimed that investment in South Africa was helping all South Africans. Neil Kinnock pledged a future labour government to end all support for the apartheid regime and fully enforce the United Nations sanctions.

Photo: GM COOKSON



Nicaraguan women train for the militia to defend their revolution

Reagan steps up attack on Nicaragua

THE US congress has just voted \$38 million of 'non-lethal' aid to the Nicaraguan Contras. This clear signal of US support gives the Contras the backing they need to get further aid from private capital and US client states such as Taiwan and Israel.

The Contras were quick to take advantage of the situation. A press conference held the day after the US congress vote announced the fusion of the two main Contra groups — the FDN based in Honduras and Alfonso Robelo's Costa Rica based ARDE. This declared a target of achieving a Contra strength of 22,000 by September and an autumn offensive to overthrow the Sandinistas.

The US military and state department have a more realistic assessment of the Contras achieving their aim however. General Paul Gorman, commander of the US military base and regional headquarters in Panama, reported to congress in February that the Contras have no chance of significant military success 'in the foreseeable future' even with increased aid from the US.

This view is based on experience. Not once have the Contras been able to set up a zone they control since they started their incursions into Nicaragua in Spring 1983. They have never been able to hold a town. They have never been able to mount any urban campaigns, either military or political. There have been no demonstrations in their support. Nothing!

The Contra policy of raid, burn and murder is not an aberration or a mistake. They have nothing to offer to advance the interests of the peasants in the countryside where they operate. The peasants know that they never had health centres, clean water, schools, and land before the revolution, and that their only chance of getting or keeping them is to defend the revolution.

The Contras therefore cannot operate like a classical guerilla army, moving like fish through the water of popular support. They can only function by terror. And terror does not win hearts and minds.

In the last month the Contras have been hit hard. The FDN has admitted to the loss of two of its main advance bases on Nicaraguan soil. The Honduran government, sniffing defeat in the wind, has appealed to other Latin American countries to take responsibility for 'dispersing' the Contras, ie get them out of Honduras.

The US aid will therefore be a holding operation to save the Contras from collapse and to maintain their campaign of destruction — in particular in the coffee producing zones that are vital for Nicaragua's overseas earnings. The aim is to force Nicaragua to put still more of its slender resources into defending itself. As such, the Contras are no 'solution' for the US.

By Paul Atkin

The vote in the US congress is a more clear indication of the attitude of the US ruling class towards the Nicaraguan revolution than the previous vote to reject aid in April. The *Washington Post* noted at the time, 'virtually no member of the House or Senate defended Nicaragua's leftist Sandinista government during the debate... it is significant for the future that most Democrats probably would agree with Shultz' goals for Central America.'

The 'option' of military invasion is therefore now being openly discussed by Reagan administration officials. The material preparations for such a course have been under way since at least 1983. Listening posts have been set up by the National Security Agency to cover Nicaragua, a series of exercises have taken place in Honduras — the last of them in spring this year being almost exclusively for US troops themselves. No less than eight airfields have been built in Honduras.

Eugene J Carroll Jr, director of the Centre for Defence Information, wrote last year: 'accelerating US military preparations suggest that the decision has already been made by president Reagan to send US troops into Nicaragua'.

The policy of the Reagan administration seems to be to put the screws on the Democrats within congress. They are aiming to create a clear two party 'consensus on the nature of the Sandinista government and the potential threat it poses to US interests' — as the Republican head of the senate intelligence committee put it.

Putting the military option firmly on the agenda means there is no question of economic sanctions being left simply as a 'soft option' alternative. They are part of a process to try to politically, economically and militarily soften up Nicaragua for an ultimate invasion. The US are thinking months and years ahead.

Reagan is also trying to soften up congress and US public opinion to the view that an invasion of Nicaragua would be more like Grenada than Vietnam. 'Intelligence' reports, liberally leaked, put across a bizarre vision of a Nicaraguan population ready to rise up in support of the incoming marines.

All first hand reports from Nicaragua indicate that these views are about

as accurate as the old 'intelligence' reports that the US was just about to win the Vietnam war. A few more thousand troops, a few more air strikes, just one more offensive, and the war would be won. As the world knows it wasn't.

The military scenario that is being rumoured for Nicaragua is even more bizarre. A US 'political military officer' is quoted in the *New York Times* as stating: 'The US would come in heavily for a month or so, mostly with air strikes against major facilities. Then a new government would be put into place (sic!) and it would come with its own army'. That's where the Contras come in.

This extraordinary failure to learn anything from the Vietnam experience — that an armed people can't be defeated by napalm, that a stooge army of over-equipped mercenaries is not a stable base for a pro-US regime — won't stop the US ruling class falling victim to its own war drive. The only thing that will stop them is the continuing dermination of the Nicaraguan people to defend themselves and their revolution, and the mobilisation of a mass anti-intervention movement that extends from solidarity campaigns, to mass organisations of the labour movement, to governments! This is what the labour movement in Britain has to build.

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