

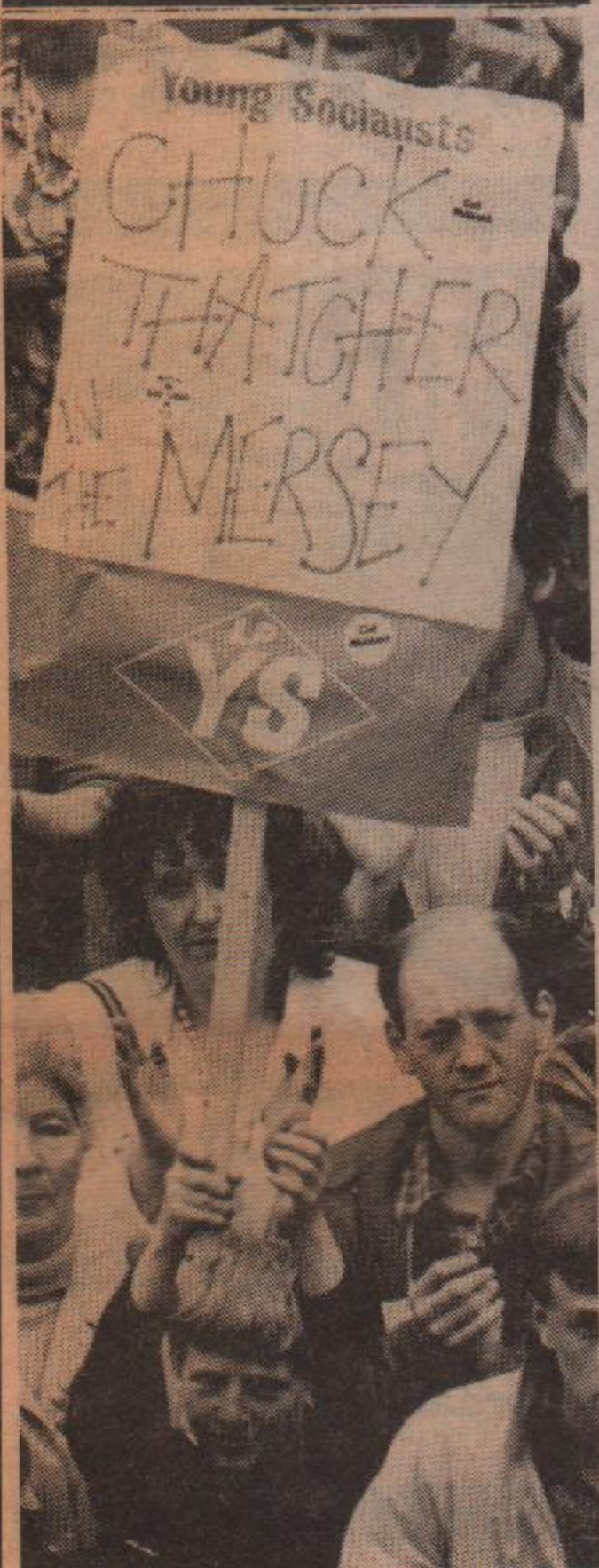
# SOCIALIST ORGANISER

FOR WORKERS' LIBERTY EAST AND WEST



**INSIDE:  
4 PAGE  
SPECIAL  
ON THE  
TELECOM  
STRIKE**

## Liverpool Labour Council in court



THE 47 Liverpool Labour councillors facing surcharges of £106,103 and five-year bans from office are currently appealing to the House of Lords.

The hearing, before a panel of five Law Lords, follows a Court of Appeal decision last July upholding the surcharges and disqualifications for 'wilful misconduct' in delaying setting a rate in 1985-6.

The councillors' crime is to have tried to fight for the interests of the working class in Liverpool. The charges should be dropped.

Labour should make a commitment to overturn the decision and reimburse the councillors, if they are successfully surcharged. Neil Kinnock should retract his infamous attacks on the Liverpool councillors, and focus his fire on the Tories, not socialists in the Labour Party.

## Support the NCU

# Take on the Telecom profiteers!

British TELECOM



## Wapping police outrage

Wapping: the News International dispute anniversary demonstration. After police truncheon-charged people out of the park opposite the

entrance to Murdoch's plant, this man was left lying unconscious on the grass. Story: back page. Photo: Andrew Wiard, Report.

## By Eric Heffer

**THE NATIONAL strike by telecom engineering workers must be a central concern of the labour movement. A victory for the NCU could roll back some of the effects of the miners' defeat.**

**It could put the Tories on the run, and give confidence to other workers. It would be a tremendous boost for the whole trade union movement.**

**ERIC HEFFER M.P. explains some of the basic issues.**

Obviously the Labour Party should declare its unqualified support to the British Telecom workers. That's the first point and there should be no argument about that.

We should be seeking an early debate to put across the case of the workers in the House of Commons. But I don't think you'll get much from the front

bench even with demanding that, although a friend of theirs — John Golding — is a leading light in the union.

They are all so embarrassed by industrial disputes! I imagine that some of them would even like it to go away, on the grounds that 'this can do us great harm'. That is the way they think.

But the fact is that a victory for British Telecom workers would help to restore the strength and the determination of workers, and help restore belief in their power. If BT workers are defeated it would be, in my opinion, as bad a defeat as the miners'. It would be one further example of how the British ruling class is able to exercise its power and strength in the defeat of the working class movement.

We have to give the strike every possible support. It's just started and the immediate reaction is to rely on the strikers themselves to take the initiatives. I am sure it will be discussed at the Campaign Group of MPs meeting, and we will have to see what we can do from there.

# Warwick students face jail

Warwick University Students Union is once again the target of writs and injunctions. Students now face jail for defying the courts.

## SSiN

By Mick O'Sullivan

The University administration have a history of running to the courts and withholding the Union's grant at the first sign of any student action which might damage their prestigious and lucrative relationship with local big business.

The Students Union is on rent-strike because the college charge full rent for rooms over the holidays. In the past this didn't matter because students could claim it back as housing benefit. But soon this right will be taken away. So the rent strike is to back the demand for a reduction to half-costs during the holidays.

Last week the college offered to meet the students' demands — but only if they agreed to poorer conditions like less heating!

To back up the rent strike there was a canteen boycott which hit the

college badly — but it also hit the bonuses of TGWU members who staff the canteens. That boycott has been called off for the time being.

The injunctions on Lee Robson, Mark Britnall, Andrew Woodhouse, and Terry Durkin try to prevent them from organising pickets and leafletings of the Arts Centre. This centre is where local businesses hold jamborees and the University makes money.

But the leafleting and demonstration went ahead last Saturday when Julian Bream played to a British Gas-sponsored concert which is part of a series. Tickets for the whole series cost £1000.

The original four have also been

landed with a writ. The University intends to charge them for lost revenue or future lost revenue — which they say will be £2.1 million.

The college have already withheld £112,000 of the Union's grant.

This week's General Meeting will be discussing reinstating the canteen boycott, organising a lecture boycott for Friday and a picket of Senate and another picket of the Arts Centre on Saturday.

The Union intends to invite trade unions which have also been hit by the courts — the NUM, NGA, and SOGAT — to send speakers to the demonstrations and lobbies.

Please make sure your Student Union sends a minibus to Warwick. Ring Lee or Mark on 0203 417220 for precise details.

**Socialist Students in NOLS can be contacted at 54a Peckham Rye, London SE15.**



## PHILIPPINES

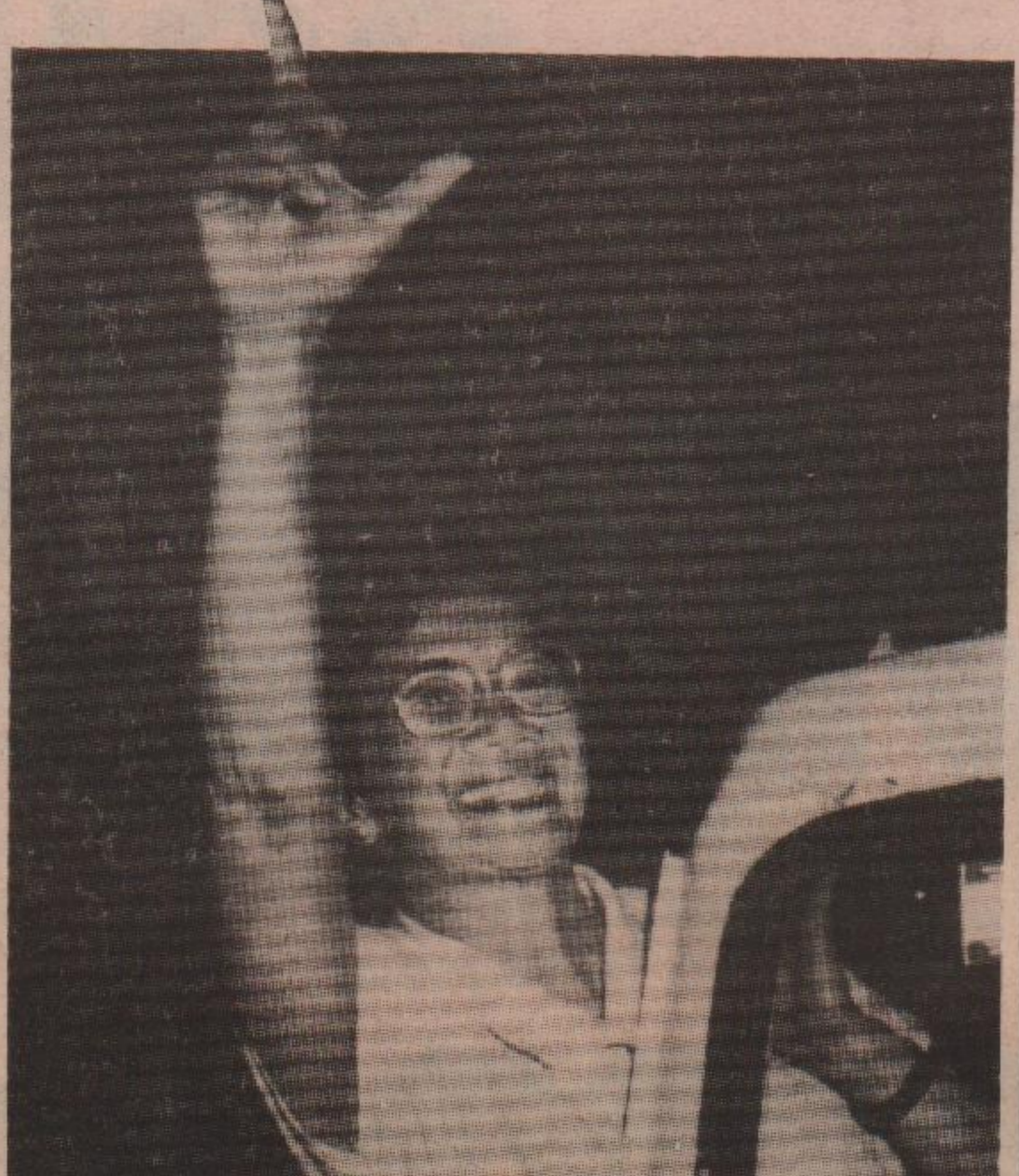
### Manila coup plot fails

An attempted coup on the night of Monday 26 January failed to overthrow the government of Cory Aquino in the Philippines. The army in its majority stayed loyal to Aquino.

The coup attempt came at a time when Aquino faces increasing opposition from the left. A demonstration earlier on Monday, protesting at the killing of 15 peasants by the army the week before, went off peacefully.

In addition to peasant groups, the May 1st Union Federation, student groups and left wing groups also took part. They marched past the presidential palace with clenched fists, and banners saying 'Land not bullets!' and 'Aquino's (New) Armed Forces are still murderers!'

Aquino, who came to power when the dictatorship of Ferdinand Marcos collapsed at the end of 1985, has survived right wing threats in the army and continued left-wing guerrilla opposition. She now faces opposition for a



constitutional referendum due to be held that would confirm her in office for several more years.

Leaked tape recordings have shown that Aquino put pressure on the supposedly independent panel that drafted the constitution.

## APARTHEID

### US helps Buthelezi's union

The US trade union federation, the AFL-CIO, is helping right-winger Gatsha Buthelezi to set up a fake union movement in South Africa in opposition to the mass, militant, non-racial unions.

Buthelezi's movement, the United Workers' Union of South Africa (UWUSA), was set up last year — headed by an employer. Shortly afterwards, two UWUSA leaders were seen in a Washington restaurant with top AFL-CIO officials and on returning to South Africa the UWUSA leaders said they had met the AFL-CIO and asked for money.

The Black Allied Workers' Union, which is close to Buthelezi and is reported to be considering joining UWUSA, has already received money from the AFL-CIO.

The AFL-CIO has also given money to CUSA, the most right wing of the main black workers' federations, and to breakaway unions in competition with the major federation COSATU. It has helped splinter unions

in the mines (AMAWU) and in metal industries (UMAWUSA).

However the new CUSA-AZACTU federation is neither a fake union nor insignificant. It includes some sizeable affiliates that are in no way tame trade unions. CUSA-AZACTU's mining union for example organises around 100,000 miners according to South African NUM sources. And CUSA-AZACTU unions supported the May Day and June 16th stayaways.

The AFL-CIO receives \$43 million a year from the US government to finance its international activity. COSATU is calling for direct union-to-union links between COSATU affiliates and US unions. (Information from 'Labor Notes', December 1986).

## WEST GERMANY

### After the elections

West Germany's right-wing chancellor, Helmut Kohl, came out on top in last week's general election — though more narrowly than was expected.

The ruling coalition of Kohl's Christian Democratic Union and the right-wing Christian Socialist Union won 44.3% of the votes, and 222 seats in Parliament.

The opposition Social Democratic Party (SPD) won 37% and 187 seats (as against 193 in the last Parliament). Both the ecology-concerned Greens and the liberal Free Democrats increased their vote.

It was the SPD's worst election result since 1981. Under the leadership of Johannes Rau, Premier of North Rhine-Westphalia, the party refused any electoral alliance with the often radical Greens, opting for a 'moderate' image.

It looks likely that there will now be a left wing challenge to long-time party chair, Willy Brandt.

# The Met and racist attacks: the truth

Last week at a press conference at Scotland Yard, the Metropolitan Police unveiled a new 'initiative' against racist attacks.

The symbol of the police campaign shows a police officer and a member of the public grasping a serpent — that represents racial harassment.

At the conference the Metropolitan Police Commissioner, Sir Kenneth Newman, pointed out that the campaign was necessary in order to achieve a better relationship between the police and 'ethnic minorities', especially the youth.

He said that 'we cannot progress against the common enemy unless we trust each other.'

The police campaign involves running a pilot scheme in Ealing and Newham — two London boroughs which between them account for over one-third of all 'reported' cases to the police.

A recent Harris Poll sponsored by Newham Council showed that there were over 1500 cases within Newham, which is a mere hundred short of the total the Metropolitan Police have for the whole of London!

The police have issued an Action Guide on racial harassment which describes what they consider as racial harassment and what the police and other organisations can do about it.

The response of community groups within both the pilot areas has been swift and critical. Southall Monitoring Group has called the project paying lip-service to the black community. The Newham Monitoring Group brought the parents of Trevor Ferguson whose attack was reported in this column last week, to the press conference. They had earlier protested outside Scotland Yard with placards stating 'Racism has made E16 (Newham) a no-go area for black people'.

The police in Newham have set up a Racial Incidents Squad — whose alleged role is to investigate organised attacks. Three black policemen are



Around 5,000 trade unionists took to the streets of Cheltenham to protest on the third anniversary of the ban on trade unions at GCHQ.

included in this team of two sergeants and seven constables.

In Tower Hamlets a racial incident panel was set up last year. The panel was however almost scrapped because of lack of confidence and support from community representatives. The FBYO (Federation of Bangladeshi Youth Organisations)

Newham Monitoring Project, community patrols had been formed to respond to these attacks.

All available evidence so far points to the new police 'anti-racist initiative' being a superficial response from the top levels of the Metropolitan police force, presented in front of the national media to try and isolate those who criticise police inaction on racist attacks.

The other aim would seem to be to take the initiative away from those who have organised themselves against racist attacks; so that 'people do not take the law into their own hands.'

New issue of *Race and Class* out now. Available from IRR, 2-6 Leake St., Kings Cross Road, London WC1X 9HS.

## RACE AND CLASS

By Payman Rezaei

boycotted it.

However, the immediate response in Newham last week to racist attacks was a 100-strong picket of the police station, followed by a larger meeting. According to Unmesh Desai of the

## Taking the fight against apartheid onto the streets

Northampton YS took to the streets on Saturday to raise the issue of the liberation struggle against apartheid in South Africa.

We had gone fly-posting on Friday night (you have to go flyposting in Northampton on Friday because there is a squad of Community Programme workers who go round tak-

ing posters down during the week. Real training or what?)

On Saturday we went out with leaflets and megaphone and attempted to rouse a rather damp and chilly Northampton. Quite a few people stopped for a chat and we raised £10.75.

We are doing the same thing next Saturday; very different as we will have a band as well!

**Demonstrate for British withdrawal from Ireland**

**Sheffield, Saturday 31 January**

**Remember Bloody Sunday! Assemble 1pm Carlisle Street. March to rally at City Hall**

**National Justice for Mineworkers Campaign**  
(South East Region)

Joint public meeting with NUM, Hangers, Printworkers, Silentnight Speakers:

Peter Heathfield, Irene Scott (Silentnight), Alan Barnes (Hangers), Liz Short (printworkers). 7.30pm

Friday 30th January  
Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London WC1

# The class war and Kinnock's dream

NEIL KINNOCK has a dream, a bloodless technicolour Hollywood-musical sort of dream.

He will lead the Labour Party to power and save Britain.

Britain is governed by the most hard-faced, brutally exploitative, slave-driving Tory government for at least two generations. The ruling-class offensive is in its eighth year, aiming to crush even the woefully inadequate welfare state established after the Second World War.

The unions are shackled. Democracy is being undermined by the naked use of police power.

## Image

Neil Kinnock has the answer. Rise above it all. Rise above politics. Hire a good advertising agency. Project a bland classless presidential image.

When the party of the ruling class makes class war, Labour must be the party of all the nation and talk class peace — peace even in face of the brutal display of naked class warfare such as we have at Wapping.

Kinnock offers a revamped pseudo-presidential Harold Wilson image — a quarter of a century on from 1964, when Wilson became prime minister, and a quarter of a century down the spiral of British capitalism's decay and decline.

Many people on the left who know better have let themselves be persuaded to go along with Kinnock's dream in the hope that maybe he can scrape enough votes to get into Downing Street. Don't rock the boat; let's see what Neil can do. That has been the story.

Now there are many Neil Kinnocks in the labour movements of the world. There is a Neil Kinnock in West Germany. His name is Johannes Rau, and he is the leader of the SPD, the nearest though not the exact equivalent to the Labour Party.

Or rather, Johannes Rau is not the Neil Kinnock of Germany; Neil Kinnock is the Johannes Rau of Britain, for Neil Kinnock is known to have been greatly influenced by Rau.

Germany has been the model for Kinnock in the mid '80s, just as the German labour movement was the model for the Labour Party leader Hugh Gaitskell at the beginning of the '60s. The aim was the freeing of the Labour Party from too much working-class influence, and from any notion of a socialism understood to mean the replacement of the existing system and the achievement of the common ownership of the means of production.

Now the German voters have given the answer to Kinnock's line. They have rejected Rau at the polls, despite the terrible record of West Germany's ruling Christian Democrats.



Policemen move in to beat up pickets, Wapping 24 January. Photo: Andrew Wiard, Report.

Opinion polls in Britain, for what they are worth, indicate a similar fate for Neil Kinnock's Labour Party here if an election is held soon.

The conclusion for Labour Party members who want a Labour victory is that Neil Kinnock's 'dream' is too mean, tawdry, self-serving and insubstantial to rouse the passion and commitment among working-class women and men which we need to rout the filthy Tories. The answer is not to respond to the Tories by trying to rise above the struggle, but to put the Labour Party at the centre of the struggle.

Neil Kinnock played a truly despicable role in the miners' strike. When the Tories threw everything at

the heroic miners, Kinnock denounced the violence of... the strikers, defending their jobs and their communities.

## Condemn

Now Kinnock has done it again. In face of the violence of the police at Wapping against people demonstrating for their jobs or supporting those fighting for their jobs, Neil Kinnock has jumped to attention when the rabid press and the ruling class politicians demand that he 'condemn violence' — the violence of the pickets.

The labour movement needs an anti-Tory crusade to rouse up our

own people and put the Tories on the defensive. Labour will find few better targets at which to fire socialist propaganda than Rupert Murdoch, who has so brutally used his financial muscle to smash up a group of workers.

Instead of indicting the Tories for backing Murdoch with an army of police thugs, Kinnock denounces workers for fighting back.

It is an outright disgrace and a scandal that the parliamentary leader of the labour movement should behave like this yet again. The lesson from Germany is that this belly-crawling before the Tories may not even help to get him into Downing Street.



# Why the Royal Court was wrong to cancel 'Perdition'

**UNDER** pressure of a powerful outcry, the Royal Court Theatre has decided to abandon its production of Jim Allen's anti-Zionist play 'Perdition', a couple of days before it was due to open.

We have not read — nor, of course, seen — Allen's play. It is, we understand, an attempt to blame the Zionist movement for the passivity with which the vast majority of Hungarian Jews submitted to their own deportation to the Nazi death camps.

That the big majority of the Hungarian Jews did submit in this fashion is a matter of history, testified to by many academic and non-polemical studies.

What role, if any, did Zionists play in this? This is an important question. Similar questions arise in the history of other peoples.

How, for example, did it happen that about a million people in Ireland let themselves starve to death in 1845-8 without anything remotely

like an uprising?

The basic reason for the passivity of the Hungarian Jews is probably linked to the class structure of their society. The Polish Jews, too, at first submitted passively, and organised their own segregation and deportation: Jewish police were in charge of the Warsaw Ghetto. But the last remnants of the Ghetto, after having made concession after concession, finally revolted, magnificently though hopelessly.

The passivity of so many (or, in the Irish case, all) of the victims is one of the most terrible things about the Holocaust, as about the Irish Famine. It can only be a source of pain to think of such things. It is especially painful for the survivors and the relatives of the victims of the Nazi slaughter.

But these issues are difficult to separate from the politics of the Middle East today. If you hate what Israel is doing and has done to the Palestinian Arabs, it is tempting to read a condemnation of 'Zionism'

back into history.

You can weave the story of various Jewish, including Zionist, collaborators in what became their own destruction, into an account which puts on the victims part of the blame for the mass murder of the Jews of Europe.

Jim Allen may have done that, or erred in that direction. But Jim Allen is not conceivably an anti-semitic.

He has been a Trotskyist for about 40 years. He joined the movement in 1948-9.

He was then a clothing worker in North Manchester, in a predominantly Jewish district, at a time where the Mosleyite fascists had had a new lease of life, partly thanks to the wave of anti-semitism generated by the Israeli Jewish war with Britain in 1946-8. He would not have come over to the then very puny Trotskyist movement if he had any anti-semitic tendencies, or the inclination to find scapegoats for the things he found intolerable in

capitalism.

40 years is a very long time in politics — especially for one who has written some of the best-ever drama about the working class and its conditions and struggles.

If Jim Allen and Ken Loach make and produce such polemical drama, they cannot be surprised if they provoke a violent reaction from those who are outraged — and have old wounds opened by it.

It is not a matter of cold historical evaluation, but of controversy which relates both to the terrible events of the recent past and, indirectly, to the current politics of the Middle East.

Nevertheless, the Royal Court Theatre should not have bowed to the pressure. The play would cause distress. Many things cause distress. The urge to ban and stifle is almost always wrong.

Freedom, said Rosa Luxemburg, is always for the one who disagrees — for the one whose views you find distressing and offensive.

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# Don't swallow propaganda!

## GRAFFITI

### APARTHEID

## Soviet plot to give whites veto

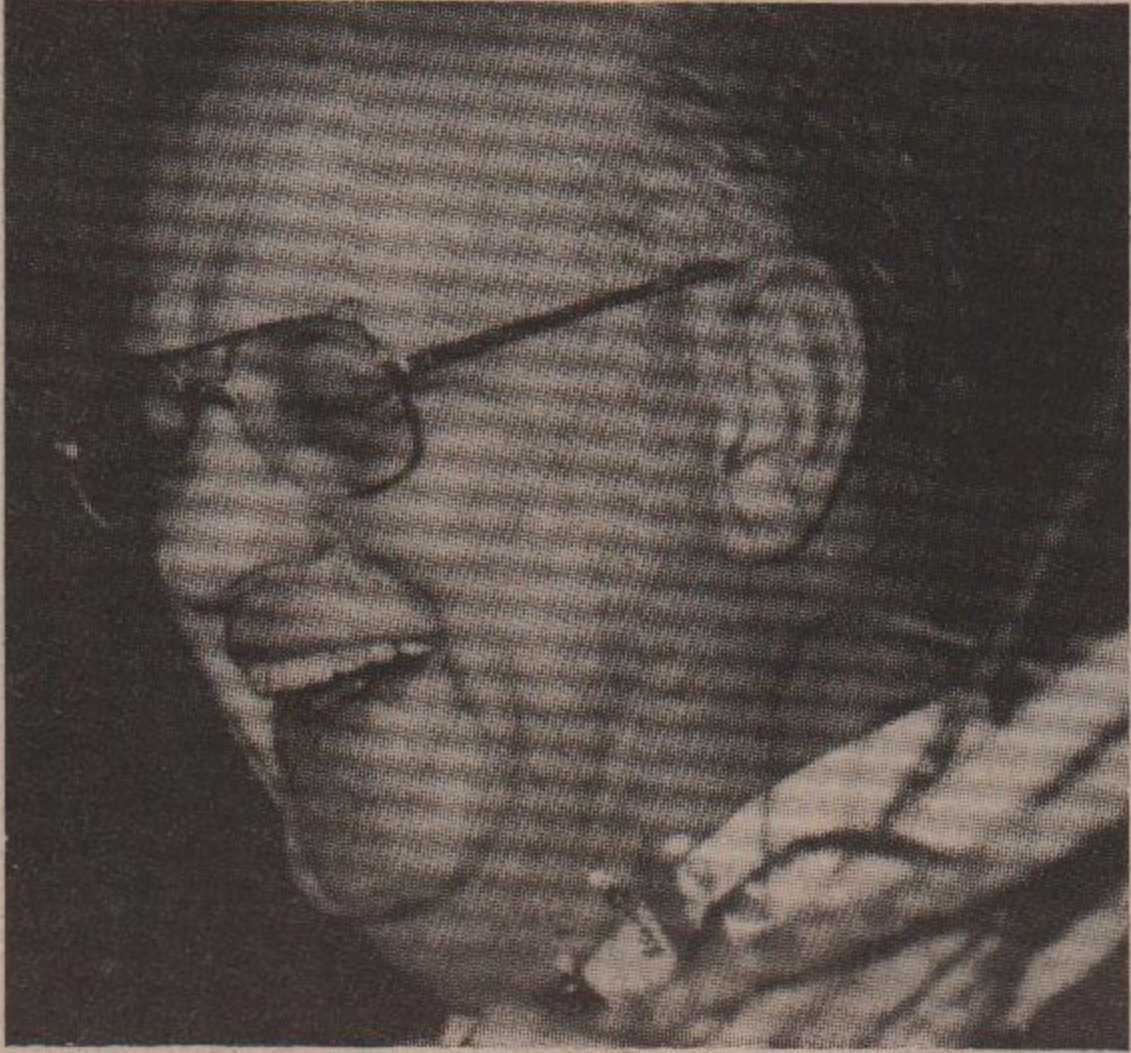
One of Mrs Thatcher's favourite arguments against the African National Congress is that it is a 'terrorist' organisation determined to impose a Soviet-style regime on South Africa.

In this context it is worthwhile taking a look at what a leading Soviet expert on South Africa has to say.

Gleb Starushenko of the USSR Academy of Sciences has advocated continued support for the 'free market' capitalist system and a minority veto for whites in a future 'democratic' South Africa.

Pointing to Zimbabwe where in Starushenko's words "the white minority feel absolutely safe" the Soviet 'expert' has called for an elected second chamber in a future South Africa with the automatic right of minority veto for representatives of the white community.

This 'anti-apartheid' House of Lords would be based on "equal represen-



tation of the four communities", each white vote would be worth five 'African' votes. (Some democracy).

The 'liberal' white mine bosses have nothing to fear under this Soviet model.

Starushenko's advice to the liberation movement is: "The programmes of

the anti-racist forces do not advance plans for a broad nationalisation of capitalist property as an indispensable condition and are willing to give the bourgeoisie a corresponding guarantee".

So the 'line' is: full support for private enterprise and a white veto.

### PRIVATISATION AND WAGES

Where does deregulation and privatisation lead? Look at the US air industry.

Texas Air, now the Western world's biggest airline, is planning to halve the wages in Eastern Airlines, which it bought up in November last year.

The unions have rejected this ultimatum, and now Texas Air is expected to sack thousands of the unionised workers in Eastern Airlines and reallocate routes and planes to its non-union subsidiary Continental.

The Texas Air empire has been built up in a hectic series of takeovers by Frank Lorenzo. In Continental he declared the company bankrupt — which makes it legal to scrap all union contracts — sat out a long strike, and reopened the airline as non-union. Continental now has the lowest labour costs of any airline.

Lorenzo's giant also controls New York Air and People Express. At Eastern Airlines, the main union, the IAM, had



negotiated an elaborate 'employee involvement' agreement in 1983, supposed to protect workers' basic conditions in return for wage concessions. All that is now waste paper.

Air fares did fall after deregulation, but US air services are now almost entirely dominated by five big firms, which will be well placed to push fares back up again.

### GORBACHEV

Maybe the magazine 'International', launched last year by dissidents from Socialist Action, should rename itself 'Indecisive'.

In its first issue, it said that the Sandinistas in Nicaragua might or might not have been wrong to form a coalition with the anti-Somoza capitalists. No hasty judgements; they had only had six years since the 1979 revolution to ponder and debate the issue.

Now the latest number of 'Labour Briefing' (a fortnightly paper supported by 'International' and other groups) carries

an article by Oliver MacDonald of 'International' on Gorbachev. Do Gorbachev's plans mean only "tactical liberalisation plus some new, more flexible methods of social control"? Or "far-reaching democratic change"?

"Too early to say... Nobody, including Gorbachev himself, may know the answer..."

After all, it is only 30-odd years since de-Stalinisation, and heaven forbid that the rough-and-tumble of active politics should push the comrades into practical conclusions.

### TECHNO

Without the spur of the market, innovation would stop. We might be spared some dreck, but our high streets would be reduced to the drabness of Moscow. Or so the Tory/SDP argument runs.

In fact, according to a new survey by US management consultants, new products are "pushed along initially by technology, and not pulled by the market. The curiosity of an individual researcher is more compelling than any clamouring demand from the marketplace."

Such things as the Sony Walkman, the computerised body scanner, and the anti-ulcer drug Tagamet were pushed into production only by obstinate researchers, against the resistance of top managers.

A socialist planned economy, giving greater scope for research, would increase innovation. The problem in the USSR is not 'planning' but bureaucracy.

I was somewhat taken aback by Simon Lawlor's ability to swallow hook-line-and-sinker the Militant propaganda defence of Liverpool City Council (SO 298). Surely the scales have fallen from the eyes of most of the left by now, regarding the sectarian and corrupt practices used by the Tendency over the last four years? For some reason, Comrade Lawlor prefers the Militant version of events rather than reports published in SO and elsewhere.

He has a perfect right to be sceptical of embittered and 'spiteful' old codgers such as myself, but if he thinks what I say is a load of old rubbish then he is welcome to come and find out for himself. There is no shortage of genuine left wingers in the Labour Party and the unions who oppose the witch-hunts but would broadly agree with my criticisms of Militant.

Until he is prepared to take up that offer, I would like to put him straight on a few things. The 'meals on wheels' record isn't just a legacy of the Liberals. Labour was in office for most of the 1960s and '70s and did next to nothing for black people.

I notice that for all Lawlor's bluster about "the facts" he doesn't dispute the gross underrepresentation of ethnic groups in the Liverpool Labour Party. The leaders of Haringey and Brent Councils are black, yet in Liverpool no black people hold positions of responsibility or office to this day.

The explanation must be that local Labour leaders — past and present — have been at best indifferent to the needs of 8% of the City's population.

Lawlor also says the council has spent more in Liverpool 8 on housing than any other local authority in their total budget. This is complete nonsense.

The council may well have spent more in the City as a whole than, say, Labour authorities such as Sheffield have in their areas. But this has mainly been done by bleeding other council departments. The housing programme is the council's saving grace, but it has been carried out in a highly bureaucratic fashion, often with scant regard for the wishes of local



Militant rally: photo John Harris communities.

We also have the unsubstantiated assertion that over 20% of all new employment intakes have been black. How can Lawlor possibly know this, if Militant refuse to keep ethnic monitoring records?

This claim actually comes from one of Derek Hatton's publicity stunts at the time of the Bond affair. It refers to 100 YTS trainees taken on by the council, 20 of whom were black. (The poor youngsters were photographed on the Town Hall staircase for the evening paper with the smiling Hatton in their midst!) If it were true in all other circumstances, you can bet your sweet life Flash Derek would have had more photo-calls!

### Caucus

On the question of the Black Caucus, Lawlor argues that they were supported by the Tories and the Churches. So what? The Pope, Thatcher and Ronald Reagan 'support' Solidarity in Poland. The caucus was also supported by trade unions and local Labour Parties, but Lawlor fails to mention that.

The Bond appointment was decided at Militant's HQ in London, and anyone who says otherwise is a liar. At the interview charade in Liverpool, Bond could only answer the questions Hatton had primed him for. He was silent for most of the time when others questioned him.

A group of people representing — at least to a significant extent — a community suffering discrimination, argued for equal opportunities. Hatton and Co. appointed a 'house-black' above their heads in a blatant display of interview-rigging. What do you call that, comrade Lawlor?

Finally, anybody who criticises Militant is said to be 'isolated' from the labour movement. If anyone is isolated at the moment it is poor Sam Bond, as he sits in his council office boycotted by unions and community organisations.

The Militant has isolated itself too, largely because of its own sectarianism. It has been in dispute with every local authority trade union on countless occasions over the last two years, mainly over the issue of cuts in jobs and services.

It has also aroused the wrath of voluntary organisations over the cuts it wants to make there.

Militant's strength now rests on their possession of the local state machine. It is precarious as a pack of cards.

The May elections will show that and Labour will probably lose many votes from disillusioned supporters. Yet this will probably be hailed as 'a victory' if past performances are anything to go by. Then there will still be poor saps like Simon Lawlor around to believe all Militant's self-inflated rubbish.

Yours fraternally,  
BAS HARDY,

## A socialist critique of Israel

PERHAPS the clearest way to reply to John O'Mahony's comments (Letters, SO 295) is to explain briefly my overall views.

Much of what passes as 'anti-Zionism' is implicitly, and sometimes explicitly, anti-semitic. The nice-sounding programme of a 'secular, democratic state' is a utopia, and in fact could only be implemented by force. In reality, whatever people mean by it, it is a programme unrealisable except by military conquest of Israel.

If it is supposed to be voluntary on the Jews' part, it is not an answer to the national question. A long (who could know how long?) process of change of heart by the Jews is not much of a programme for Palestinians facing oppression now. Withdrawal of Israeli forces from the post-1967 occupied territories, combined with the right of secession of majority Arab areas within pre-'67 Israel, is a big part of an immediate democratic programme.

So, I support Israel's right to exist. I agree with John O'Mahony that this is an unconditional right — that is, it is ridiculous to say that we support

the conquest of Israel until such time as Israel is a nicer place. I am completely opposed to the conquest of Israel.

### Chauvinism

John O'Mahony says that we should champion the rights of the Palestinians, and support Jews fighting Jewish chauvinism. On what basis, though? What does opposition to Jewish chauvinism mean?

It seems to me that it must include trenchant criticism of the refusal of Jews to countenance a large influx of Arabs into their state. We should not advocate 'return' on the point of a chauvinist's gun, nor deny the Jews rights until they agree to allow Arabs in. The agency for opposition to the racist, exclusivist character of Israel, and therefore for change, is the working class in Israel.

But Israel is exclusivist, and we do have a socialist responsibility to oppose this exclusivism. Israel's right to exist is not conditional upon it ceasing to be exclusivist, but opposition to its exclusivism should be part of our programme.

Israel's definition as a state for Jews rather than its citizens, which O'Mahony sees no problem with, is an expression of this exclusivism. It is part of the institutional structure that denies Arabs rights within Israel.

Because of this, I think it is wrong to identify ourselves with 'Zionists' even as a quiet way to make a stand against the hysterical 'anti-Zionists'. The Zionist movement — though not, of course, all individual Zionists — are our political enemies too.

I think it is possible both to make a stand against anti-semitism on the left and to maintain a socialist critique of the Israeli state.

CLIVE BRADLEY,  
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**NCU: ALL OUT FOR FULL CLAIM**

# NO STRINGS!

# NO SUSPENSIONS!

**John Bloxam looks at the background to the current NCU dispute and argues a strategy for victory.**

ON ITS first day, the national strike by 110,000 British Telecom engineers was nearly 100 per cent solid, with only a handful of non-union members scabbing.

There were widespread reports of the workers' action affecting the BT network.

On Monday night, 26th, National Communications Union (NCU) leaders and Telecom bosses discussed for two hours after a routine quarterly meeting. Both sides said there had been no progress.

Squeezed by the BT bosses and pushed by the militancy of their own members, the right-wing NCU leaders have stood firm so far, but clearly with little heart. General secretary John Golding said resignedly on Tuesday morning, 27th: 'There is going to be a very big confrontation' — as if there wasn't a confrontation already.

Telecom bosses, their vision focused on future profits in the booming world telecommunications market, want to crush the union. On Thursday 22nd, BT chief executive Ian Vallance told workers that they were in a 'no win situation'. The strike was doomed.

At the same time, bosses in some areas were manoeuvring to try to split the engineers.

## Promise

Most of last week, the bosses said that workers who had taken action must sign a written promise to 'work normally' (drafted by BT) before they could return to work. If they didn't, they were locked out.

Towards the end of the week, the bosses shifted tack and said they only required a word-of-mouth undertaking. But if workers making that undertaking subsequently refused overtime, they would be suspended immediately!

The bosses will now turn their attention to trying to organise sufficient scabbing to demoralise the strikers and weaken the effect of the dispute. Letters have already been sent out to many strikers' homes.

Telecom also rapidly concluded a deal last week with the management union STE, to buy their support.

But the hardline approach has so far rebounded. STE national leaders have told their members not to cover NCU work. In Sheffield NCU members discovered a secret BT school trying to train managers to do repairs. And from Tuesday 27th, BT face a national three-day strike of the 34,000 NCU clerical workers, who last weekend rejected a separate pay deal.

These are the workers who process telephone bills and get in BT's income.

## Divisions

The BT bosses do have problems with divisions within their own ranks. Many managers are clearly not happy with the aggressive union-busting approach of the new top bosses.

The union is making much of this. But these divisions within management will only become decisive once they have been beaten by the strike. Without that, the top bosses will call the tune — as MacGregor did for the Coal Board during the miners' strike.



Photo Ian Swindale

## Four points for action

- Lift the suspensions, smash the strings.

The objectives of the strike are, at the moment, unclear. It was called in response to BT's suspensions and lock-out. The union leaders have said that the strike remains until all the suspensions are lifted and Telecom withdraws the 'work normally' demand.

They oppose the strings, they say, but John Golding says that these could be negotiated afterwards.

Ricky Houston (Edinburgh External NCU) told Socialist Organiser: 'If management withdraws the suspensions, this means we are winning anyway. We should stay out until all the strings are withdrawn, because if we go back before that then there are no guarantees. We will have lost our strength.'

'It will be difficult to get workers to come out again, and management will be able to play around with us'.

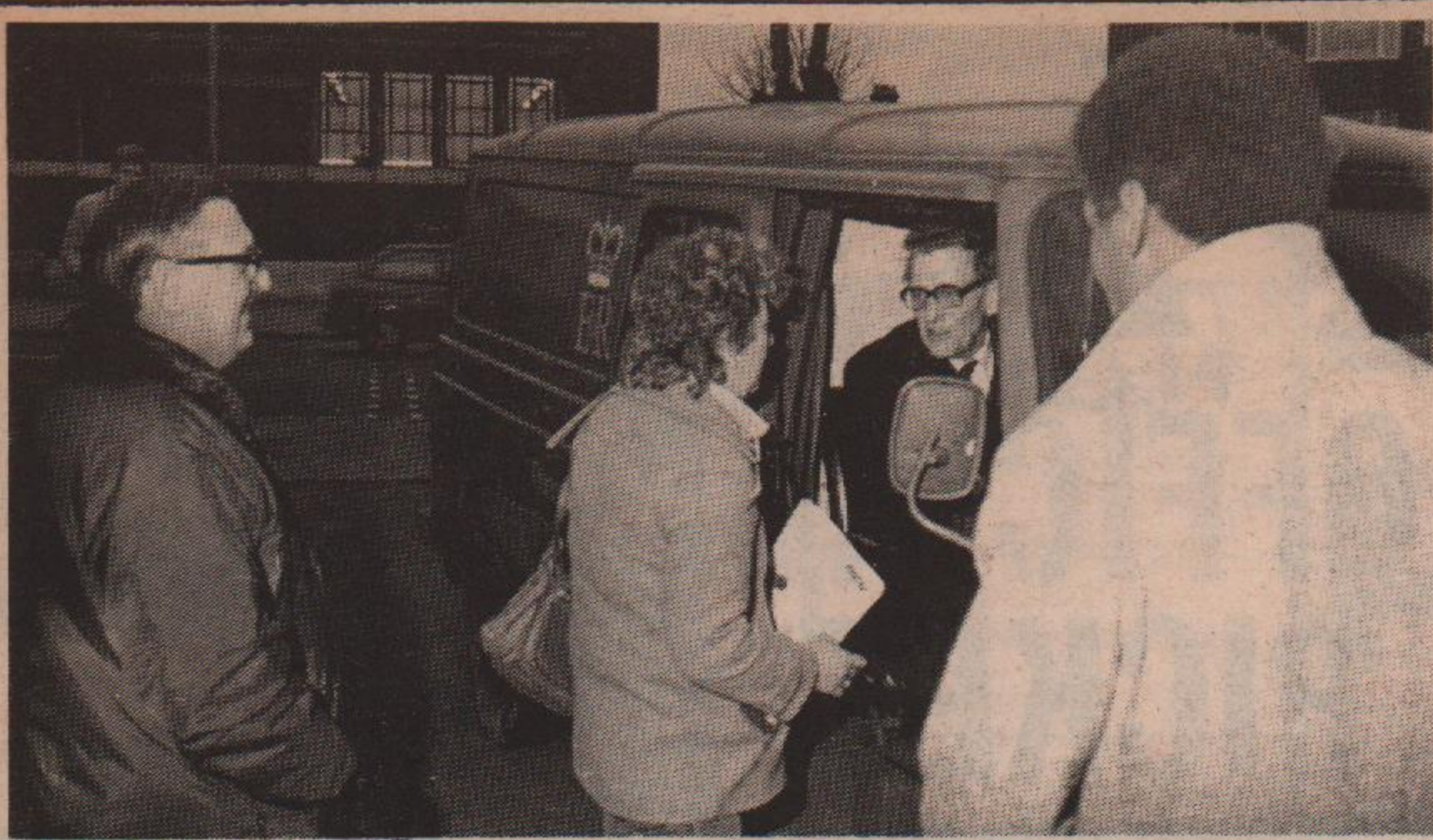
Strikers' meetings should demand no return until all the suspensions are lifted and all the strings are

withdrawn.

- Keep the strike solid.

Letters to individual strikers are now a common first weapon in any boss's arsenal. They can only be countered by ensuring that all the strikers remain involved and part of

**Turn to page 6**



Pickets turn away a van. Photo: Ian Swindale

## FOUR POINTS

From page 5

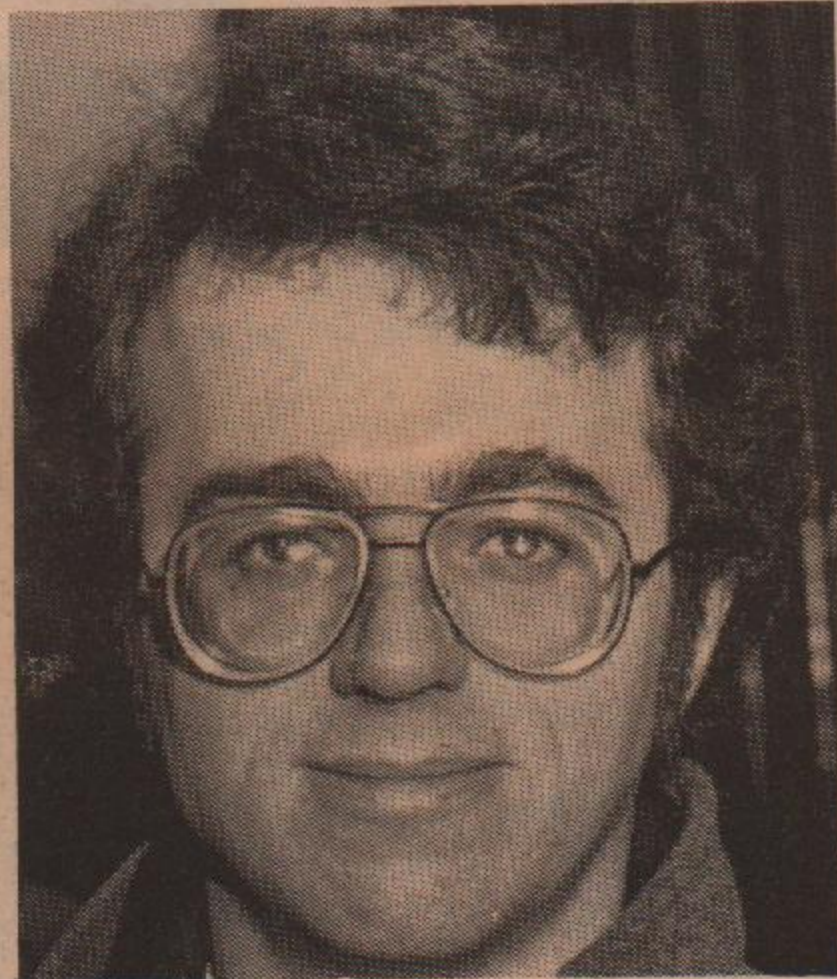
the action.

So far there is a high level of involvement of strikers on the picket lines and at branch and mass meetings. Picketing rotas have been drawn up involving the overwhelming majority of branch members. Lists of members absent from meetings have been drawn up, and regular contact arranged with them.

Arrangements for street collections have also been started in some areas.

Local strike organisation varies. In many areas, the existing branch structure has been opened out, with strike offices open to all who want to help. The Met South NCU branch has gone further and elected a strike committee based on two representatives from each picket line.

It is also holding meetings open to all strikers. This democratic way of organising is the best for helping to bring in new activists from the strike.



*Richard Moore, chair Met South NCU.*  
**"As far as I am concerned, it is all out indefinitely until the whole thing is settled, both the strings and the suspensions".**

### • Emergency cover under workers' control.

The NCU has always said that it will provide 'life and limb' emergency cover. It has no desire for lives to be endangered.

In fact, any threat to life has come from the bosses' provocative attempts to smash the union. In many areas, management have prevented NCU members providing cover. They have refused to negotiate on the issue, locked the workers out, and taken away the keys.

Many militants have responded by saying "Let management get on with providing cover themselves. It could help us by diverting their resources from maintaining commercial services".

The trouble with this argument is that it concedes control of emergency cover to the bosses — and they will certainly use it to interpret 'emergency' to mean any work they want to help break the strike. It also gives the bosses more control over an important political issue. They will try to

use any deaths or serious injuries as a propaganda weapon against the strikers.

The best arrangement is the one organised in Edinburgh, where the NCU vetoes all calls for emergency cover. This has been accepted by the local STE.

Ricky Houston explained: "If we withdraw emergency cover, the STE will cover everything. It would give it to them on a plate".

Where workers have been prevented from doing emergency cover, the facts need to be explained widely.

If that continues, and working-class lives are put at risk, the next step would be for the workers to take over the areas which control the emergency lines and faults. Such action could also escalate the impact of the whole strike.

### • Strengthen the action.

The clerical section should join the all-out strike. The common picket lines of the three days this week should cement unity, and many clerical workers may stay out after Thursday anyway. The union leaders should make it an official all-out stoppage.

Most scabs at present are from the management union STE. They are crossing picket lines, though many are also still abiding by the national instruction not to do NCU work.

The NCU should appeal to the STE *not* to cross picket lines, and this should be enforced locally by mass pickets.

Telecom bosses have hinted that they will bring in private contractors from GEC, Marconi, etc. These could only be relatively small numbers, not comparable to the STE. But NCU delegations should be sent immediately to the unions in GEC, Marconi, etc. to establish links and seek support.

The telephone operators, members of the Union of Communication Workers (UCW), cannot provide scab labour. They cannot maintain or repair the lines. At most, they can route calls after automatic exchanges have broken down. Both the NCU and the UCW leaders have given them dispensation to cross picket lines.

This is short-sighted. If those UCW members could be convinced to come out alongside the NCU strikers, while still providing emergency cover, it would strengthen the strike and boost morale enormously.

And UCW members are just as much at threat from British Telecom's cost-cutting plans as NCU members. Telecom wants to cut the number of operators from over 25,000 at present to 4,000 in the year 2005, as automation is extended.

This is the best opportunity UCW telephone operators will ever have to defend their jobs and conditions. British Telecom has a common strategy against the NCU and UCW; UCW and NCU should have a common strategy against the bosses.

The strike could be a long trial of strength. The workers will have to consider ways of stepping up their action. The BT bosses may be able to organise widespread scabbing by STE members, or at least sufficient to keep the main business lines going.

The alternative then will be for the NCU to occupy the exchanges, and take direct control over which lines function and which do not.

# Telecom's drive for profits

**51% of British Telecom was sold off by the Tory government in November 1984. It was the biggest-ever share issue in the world, and one of the biggest hand-outs ever to the moneyed classes.**

The initial price was 130p per share. It quickly rose to 180p, and is now 218p. That's a gain for shareholders of 88p per share — or, adding up over the 3 billion shares, over £2.5 billion.

On top of that there are the dividends which BT pays out to shareholders — £500 million last year.

Most of these gains have gone to the rich. Banks, insurance companies, pension funds, etc. own 73% of the non-government BT shares. BT workers own about 2%; other individuals 25%. Most of those other individuals are well off. Not everyone has the £260 cash spare which you needed to buy the minimum shareholding in BT.

Banks, stockbrokers and so on also made £200 million fees and commission on handling the sale.

Some other people have done well from privatisation. BT boss George Jefferson has increased his own salary from £84,000 to £172,000.

But BT workers and ordinary phone users have lost out. In order to compete with Mercury, the other phone company licensed under Tory legislation since 1981, BT has cut its rates on major business uses, like inter-city calls in work hours. Mercury only serves the peak users. It has no costly rural services to maintain. To compete with Mercury for those peak users, BT has rejigged its rates to charge more to the ordinary domestic user.

Phone boxes in remote areas are being closed, because they are not profitable.

And jobs are being cut. BT's

workforce is down from 253,000 to 230,000 since privatisation. The threat is not only to engineers. Operators, organised in the UCW, could have their numbers cut from over 25,000 today to 4,000 in 2005.

Telecom is a very profitable industry — BT's profits in the last financial year were £1 billion — and a very important one to the British capitalist class.

With modern microelectronic technology, production depends less and less on direct manual labour. Computers direct the tools. The key is information, and computers to process the information and telecommunications to transmit it.

Information technology, including telecommunications, is among the world's fastest-growing industries. British Telecom wants to beat down its workers and crush the unions so that it can range freely in this growing market, competing internationally.

But in the meantime telecom workers are probably more powerful than the miners. Telecommunications are increasingly vital to modern business. In the City of London, for example, since the 'Big Bang' last October, most share-dealing is done over telephone lines rather than face to face. The \$90 billion-a-day foreign exchange market has always been run over the phone.

Telecoms workers have enormous power to paralyse capitalism. Now is the time to use it.

## LABOUR'S POLICY

**Labour is committed to re-nationalise British Telecom. But a National Executive document in 1986 watered down this commitment a lot.**

As a first stage, it says, "Labour will make full use of" the 49% government shareholding that already exists. The second stage will come "as soon as parliamentary time permits" (i.e. in the misty future).

Even then it won't be very good. All privately-owned shares in British Telecom will be swapped for *non-voting* shares, not bought outright.

Suppose that British Telecom under a Labour government goes for big job cuts. The unions resist and are strong enough to push the Labour government into opposing the cuts.

What happens then? Share prices will crash. The shareholders will lean heavily on the government. The bosses will say the job cuts are necessary to avoid disaster.

Even the NCU's present right wing leadership has protested at the weakness of Labour's current re-nationalisation policy. Labour should be pledged to full re-nationalisation on the basis of running telecom as a public service under workers' control.

## The strings

**The union has claimed a 10 per cent pay increase.**

**British Telecom replied with a 5 per cent pay offer plus two lump-sum payments, all tied to a series of proposals to restructure working conditions radically. These 'strings' include:**

- Severely restricting promotion prospects by cutting down the number of higher technician grades, and opening up entry to the grades from outside.

- Changing staffing agreements and ratios, to be imposed by local management.

- Changing the present 37½ hour working week (or 'nine day fortnight') to a 40 hour, five day week, with attendance between 7am and 7pm to be determined by the bosses.



Confident of victory. Photo: Ian Swindale

## ORGANISE BROA

In Edinburgh, the Trades Council has already provided offices for the NCU strikers, and is organising street collections. It has written to Labour Parties and trade union organisations, asking them to start collections and to invite NCU speakers to their meetings.

In Manchester, the City Labour Party will be considering a motion to organise collections, support picket lines, and stage a demonstration to back the NCU.

The strikers are getting no strike pay. British Telecom is clearly ready for a long strike, so collections for the strike funds will be important.

Activists should start building support committees, like the miners' support committees during the 1984-5 strike.

As well as doing direct support work, they will have to campaign to establish their right to do street collections. During the miners' strike hundreds of people were arrested for collecting. Labour councils should be pressed to provide facilities for collections.

The NCU will need to establish rank-and-file controlled strike committees at regional level to liaise with support committees and to make sure that money is fairly distributed.

# Strike roundup

## NORTHAMPTON

In Northampton the BT strike is solid. 550 engineers have been on strike for a week, and the clerical section is also on strike. Les Marriott, Northampton branch secretary of the NCU, told Socialist Organiser:

"Management thought that the workers in the East Midlands would be a soft touch, and were surprised at the level of feeling. The strike is solid. Although the STE, the middle management section, has settled, many local members were disgusted at the settlement and have contributed to the strike fund."

Another striker reported that management's attitude had hardened since privatisation. "Management have sought the dispute."

The engineers had agreed to cover emergency faults but the management had locked them out.

## GLASGOW

In Glasgow, support for the NCU strike is solid. A picket at Marland House, BT's Western Scotland headquarters, told Socialist Organiser early Monday morning, 26 January:

"The mood of the men is very angry. It's our intention to stay out to the bitter end this time — it's a fight that must be won.

This isn't just an attack on wages, it's an attack on our conditions of service won over many years.

The strike is 100 per cent. We have had non-union members trying to join the union and coming out on strike in support of the union. Every telephone and engineering premises in Glasgow — and in Scotland — is being picketed. This is organised by the Glasgow and Scotland West Centre NCU branches.

Every rank and file member is quite aware that the dispute was provoked by management; they knew that suspensions would result in walkouts, but they went ahead with suspending members.

Management in Glasgow is a mixture of old-style management and the new-style macho management. There is probably an internal struggle going on among them, but they have put on a united face against us.

We have had a lot of support from the lowest level of management. They feel that their union, the Society of Telecom Executives (STE), sold us down the river by settling on the day we walked out.

Some telephone exchanges have a 24 hour picket on them. These are the ones in a critical state.

Later in the morning picketing rotas were drawn up and a rundown was given on the current situation at a mass meeting of Glasgow's 2000 NCU members. An NCU member told SO at the meeting:

"Things are going well. Picketing is being organised, with members reporting to the local exchanges for picket duty, to ensure that picket lines are maintained at all exchanges throughout Glasgow.

We have heard of several instances of members of the STE resetting broken-down equipment. They have been told by the union just to do paperwork, but BT management above the level covered by the STE is coming down heavy on them.

The main issue at stake is not the pay claim itself but the strings that management have attached to the offer. What's needed is all-out action to get the productivity strings withdrawn.

Only an hour after the start of the NCU engineers' mass meeting, clerical members of the union met in

Glasgow and gave a further boost to the strike by agreeing to go on strike immediately, rather than waiting for the start of their official three days strike the following day.

NCU speakers can be obtained by contacting the NCU strike office, Glasgow Trade Union Centre, 1236 Maryhill Road, Glasgow G20. Phone: 946 1932. Donations to the same address or to D'Airley, 74 Main St, Cumbernauld Rd, G67 2RY. Cheques payable to Glasgow NCU Branch Hardship Fund.

## MID-ANGLIA

Socialist Organiser spoke to a Mid-Anglia BT engineer:

Morale is high and there is a spirit of euphoria that the union is actually doing something now. The situation has been brewing for some time. People have been provoked over a long period on the subject of overtime and other matters. BT management have run Telecom with insufficient staff since privatisation and they depend on overtime.

The management deliberately brought on confrontation, and the union never sought an all-out strike. It is believed the management provoked the current dispute to undermine the union's ability to defend itself. This is NCU's last stand at Telecom.

I don't think we can win the dispute in weeks but must be prepared to stay out as long as necessary.

Management have used the Society of Telecom Executives as a divide and rule mechanism. STE were offered 6% and no strings only because the NCU were in dispute. They took the money and are now doing engineering work in Telecom offices and exchanges.

The clerical section of NCU and BT are taking industrial action this week on a national basis.

A lot of grassroots people are pissed off with an NCU divided between clerical sections and engineering sections. We need to be one union. Separate negotiations on this issue have been imposed by management.

The three-day strike this week by the 34,000 clerical workers is a boost to engineering strikers. Some engineers do feel let down by clerical section but they will be side by side on the picket lines.

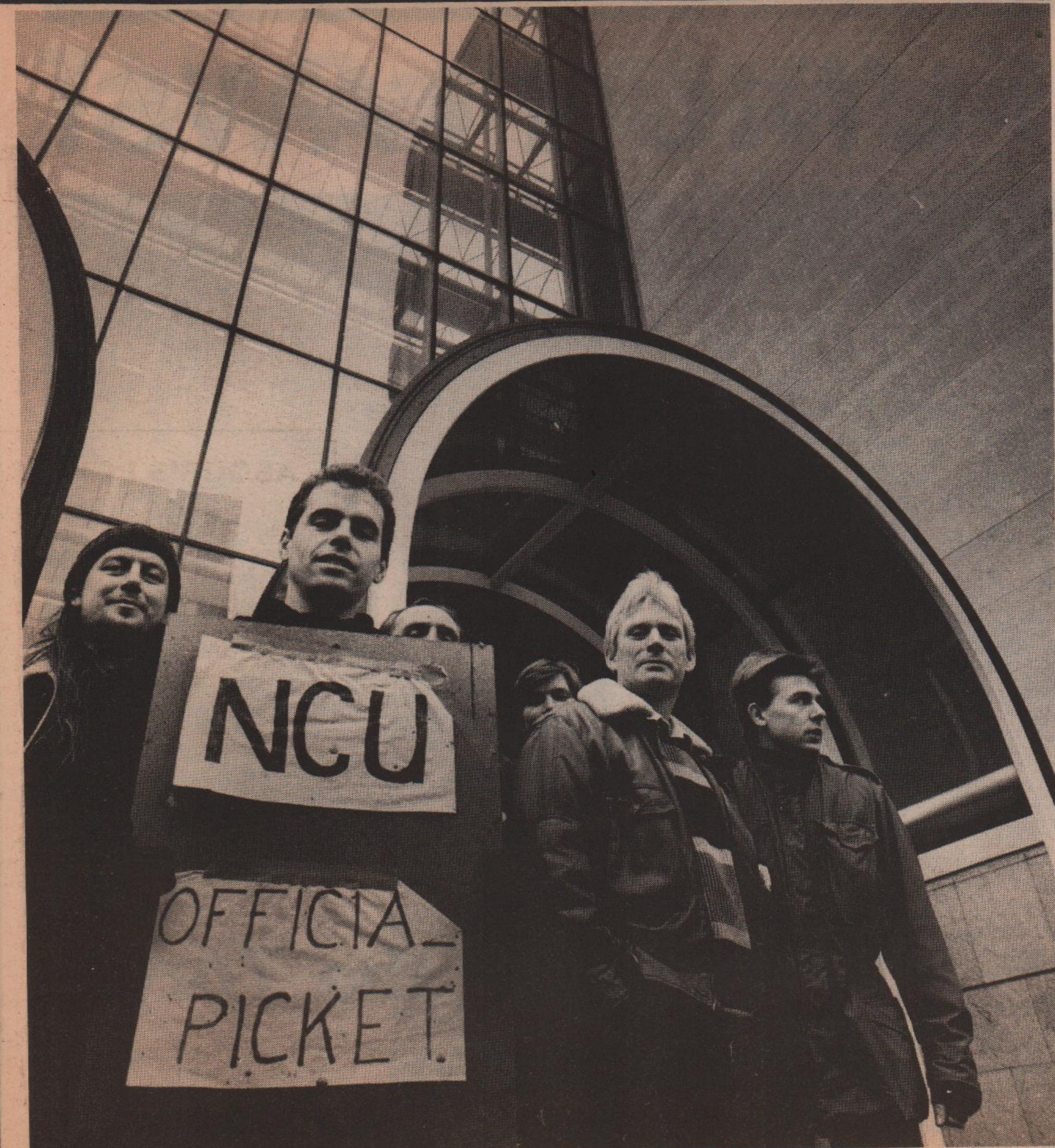
## BASINGSTOKE

Just over 200 NCU members at the Basingstoke exchange were out on strike. The response from the local branch, which was not noted for its militancy, was solid. A strong picket has been mounted at both entrances to the exchange, and the strikers are in no mood for compromise.

Both the Trades Council and the Labour Party in Basingstoke have visited the picket lines and offered facilities and financial assistance. Local activists in Basingstoke will also be looking to set up a support group as soon as possible.



John Golding



Pickets at BT centre. Photo: Jez Coulson, IFL

## WHY AMERICAN WORKERS LOST

Last June the giant US telephone company, AT&T, beat a 26-day strike by its workers.

Automation helped it. Installation of new equipment stopped during the strike, but modern exchanges are reliable and easy to maintain. AT&T kept them going by using the supervisors to scab.

But there was more to it than that. The strike was severely undercut by a directive from the president of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers to his members to cross the picket lines of the strikers' union, the Communication Workers of America. The giant 26,000-worker Western Electric telephone equipment factory, owned by AT&T, was kept going by IBEW members crossing picket lines.

The workers were also weakened by the break-up of the old AT&T in January 1984. AT&T used to dominate the US telecom system completely, but the Reagan administration broke it up to create seven regional companies and a rump AT&T running long-distance lines.

It was the 155,000 CWA members in AT&T who struck. A number of the regional companies also had disputes last year — over the same basic issue, their cost-of-living pay increases — but separately. Divided, the workers were weaker.

The Tories would like to see British Telecom broken up, too. Now, while it is still more or less intact, is the time to fight. And with solidarity from other unions the NCU can win.

## AD SUPPORT COMMITTEES

### Women's groups

By Jean Lane

DURING the miners' strike, women proved themselves to be crucial to the success of that dispute in fundraising, speaking, picketing and fighting to win.

That potential must not be lost. It will boost and bolster the NCU dispute, but there is another more far reaching reason than that. The growth of Women Against Pit Closures, a militant organisation of working class women, filled a

massive gap in the women's movement and in the labour movement. Never before in this country has the women's movement been organised on the basis of working class socialist politics. The repercussions were felt in the pit dispute, in the mining villages and also inside the Labour Party.

For the first time, in 1985, the demands for democracy of women's sections were supported at Labour Party conference by a male-dominated trade union — the NUM. It had been proved to them that working class women organised, benefitted, not only women themselves in being able to draw together their demands and

strengths, but also benefitted the working class movement as a whole.

The support groups and the women's groups that were built up all over the country in a tireless effort to help win the miners' strike are a perfect basis for setting up support groups for the NCU strikers. Don't lose the momentum for solidarity. Rebuild these groups and throw their weight in with the latest battle of the working class against attacks on our trade union rights and living standards.

This dispute gives us the opportunity to get rid of the Tories and more importantly to transform the Labour Party. Don't wait for an election — get stuck in now.

# FIGHT ANTI-UNION LAWS!

**The NCU strike comes after several years of setbacks for the labour movement. The defeat of the miners' strike was only the most dramatic example. How have the Tories been able to secure their successes? And how can trade unionists make sure we defeat them this time round?**

**THE TORIES did not introduce their anti-union laws all at once, and they were very careful about it when they did introduce them.**

The Industrial Relations Act in the early 'seventies provoked widespread opposition from trade unionists, building up to a spontaneous strike wave in July 1972 when five dockers were jailed. The strikes made the Act unworkable, and eventually it was repealed. The Tories were anxious not to create a similar situation this time round.

And the almost complete inaction of the trade union leaders — especially the central TUC leadership — has helped them enormously.

There are three anti-union laws: the 1980 and 1982 "Employment" Acts, and the 1984 Trade Union Act.

The 1980 and 1982 Acts make it possible for unions to be prosecuted for a large number of reasons. It is individual employers or individual scabs who take the initiative to prosecute, so shifting the target for opposition away from the government itself.

The Acts mean that industrial action is now lawful only if:

- It is between workers and their own employer.

- It relates wholly or mainly to pay and conditions, dismissal, jobs, discipline, union membership or a similar issue.

- It is to do with a dispute in the UK.

In other words, industrial action is unlawful if:

- It is in support of other workers.
- It is political.

- It is to do with a dispute outside the UK (e.g. in solidarity with workers who are employed by the same multi-national company — perhaps in South Africa).

Solidarity action is under almost all circumstances illegal. Picketing is severely restricted. And it is up to the 'discretion' of the police to enforce legal guidelines about the size of any picket. 'Secondary' picketing is, of course, illegal.

The closed shop is also severely

weakened legally by the laws. Anyone with a 'deeply held personal conviction' against the closed shop is legally protected and has the 'right' not to join the union.

Anyone who faces reprisals (from unions or employers) can sue the employer, union or named individuals.

To have any real legal status, a closed shop agreement has to have been approved by 80% of the workers covered by it, or 85% of those voting.

And 'union labour only' contracts, or industrial action in support of them, are illegal.

The 1982 Act reversed British law since 1906 by making unions liable for damages. That means fines of up to £250,000 for big unions. And if fines are not paid, all union funds can be seized ('sequestered'). Apart from the fact that this law could mean bankruptcy for unions, it also makes it unlikely that timid union leaders will fight the bosses or their courts for fear of the cost.

## Illegal

The 1984 Act makes it illegal to strike without first holding a secret ballot of all those workers involved in the action, more than four weeks before the action is due to take place, winning a majority.

The wording in the ballot must require a 'yes' or 'no' answer and must specifically ask if the individual is prepared to go on strike in breach of contract.

The intention of much of the law is to use the threat of legal action to deter strike action. In particular, they rely upon timid union leaderships to back down in the face of legal threats, or to police their own membership.

When the NGA resisted the law over the Stockport Messenger in 1983, they were abjectly betrayed by the TUC. When the South Wales NUM's funds were sequestered in July 1984, nothing was done; and less was done when the national NUM's



North London Internal Branch NCU members vote for strike action. Photo: Andrew Wiard, Report.

funds were sequestered (although not under anti-union law) in October of that year.

Since then, the laws (especially the law on balloting), have largely been complied with. The right wing EET-PU and AUEW have even accepted provisions in the 1984 Act for government funding for secret ballots (which is why they have been threatened with expulsion — although many other unions have not been much better).

An attempt to get union members to vote away their right to a specifically political fund failed miserably.

Many of the legal penalties only apply to official strikes. Union leaderships can avoid legal action by refusing to make strikes official. And the enforced shift to ballots weakens and isolates militants, who can't put over the arguments in the way that they can in mass meetings.

We need a commitment from the Labour Party to repeal all these anti-trade union laws, and to bring in laws guaranteeing the rights of workers — the right to strike, the right to a closed shop, the right to self-defence.

To fight the laws now we need to demand that union leaders ignore legal injunctions, and do whatever is necessary to win disputes. And we need to rebuild the sinews of rank and file solidarity so that no individual union is ever left to stand alone.

## Behind the Tory offensive

**A number of factors have given the Tories an advantage over the labour movement since taking office in 1979.**

The previous Labour government paved the way for the Tories with public-spending cuts and an incomes policy, which eventually led to the 'winter of discontent' of 1978/9. Then neither Labour nor the trade union leaders launched a militant campaign against the new Tory government. They allowed the Tories to whittle away at working class self-confidence, allowing further and further attacks on the NHS, education, trade union rights, employment, women's rights — and so on and so on.

### Plan

The labour movement had no plan of action. Steel workers, health workers, rail workers, and others were picked off by the Tories. Then after Thatcher's re-election in 1983, the miners, and more recently the print workers, have been allowed to stand alone. Resistance to the banning of unions in GCHQ was only token.

The Tory government, on the other hand, had a coherent strategy, to which, in most respects; it has stuck. Much of their preparation for the miners' strike was detailed in the 'Ridley Report' — in 1977. To deal with a future coal strike, the Report advised the Tories to "a) build up maximum coal stocks, particularly at the power stations; b) make contingency plans for the import of coal; c) encourage the recruitment of non-union lorry drivers by haulage companies..."

It went on, "There should be a large mobile squad of police equipped and prepared to uphold the law against picketing."

When you consider that the 'law against picketing' had yet to be introduced, the foresight of the Report was considerable. It shows the extent to which the Tories planned the miners' strike. And they picked their moment: in February 1981, they shied away from a fight with the miners over pit closures.

The Tories have deliberately in-

creased unemployment to discipline workers — but of course unemployment existed anyway. Mass unemployment has had a seriously demoralising effect on many workers. The weakening of shop floor organisation has added to this. Certainly the lack of an organised movement of the trade union rank and file — able to act despite weak-kneed officials and national leaders — has made the problems of winning solidarity action all the greater.

Increasingly, the courts have been involved in industrial disputes, and the Tories have introduced wide-ranging laws limiting trade union rights and the right to strike.

At the same time, there has been a big shift in the style of policing in strikes. Heavy-handed policing at Grunwicks in 1977 shocked trade unionists: now it looks like small beer. Police Chiefs today not only believe they have a hot line to God: they organise militaristic assaults on picket lines.

Warrington, Orgreave, Wapping: these have been the scenes of increasing police violence — and there is no reason to believe that it will not get worse.

Trade unionists need to think about how to respond to this development. In other countries, and in the past, strikers have resisted police violence and violent scabbing by forming their own 'defence squads': large groups of workers able to deal with the scabs in the language they understand — be they in or out of uniform. We have to face up to the growing violence of disputes and work out a democratic and effective way of strengthening our picket lines.

Beyond that we need to organise a democratic movement of the rank and file, within individual unions and spanning them, committed to policies and action that can roll back the Tories' attacks.

The unions as a whole need to be democratised, so that they are fully accountable to the rank and file, able to discuss and act on policies, and so that inadequate leaders can be replaced by militant fighters. Not only the unions, but the Labour Party, too, needs to be transformed in this way, so that we can have an overall working class alternative to the Tory government.

## WHERE WE STAND

Socialist Organiser stands for workers' liberty, East and West. We aim to help organise the left wing in the Labour Party and trade unions to fight to replace capitalism with working class socialism.

We want public ownership

of the major enterprises and a planned economy under workers' control. We want democracy much fuller than the present Westminster system — a workers' democracy, with elected representatives recallable at any time, and an end to bureaucrats' and management's privileges.

Socialist can never be built in one country alone. The workers in every country have more in common with workers

in other countries than with their own capitalist or Stalinist rulers. We support national liberation struggles and workers' struggles world-wide, including the struggle of workers and oppressed nationalities in the Stalinist states against their own anti-socialist bureaucracies.

We stand:

For full equality for women, and social provision to free women from the burden of

housework. For a mass working class based women's movement.

Against racism, and against deportations and all immigration controls.

For equality for lesbians and gays.

For a united and free Ireland, with some federal system to protect the rights of the Protestant minority.

For left unity in action; clarity in debate and discussion.

For a labour movement accessible to the most oppressed, accountable to its rank and file, and militant against capitalism.

We want Labour Party and trade union members who support our basic ideas to become supporters of the paper — to take a bundle of papers to sell each week and pay a small financial contribution to help meet the paper's deficit. Our policy is democratically controlled by our supporters through Annual General Meetings and an elected National Editorial Board.

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# The Daily Mail's view of Poland and Solidarnosc

P R E S S  
G A N G

## Prophet

THE ALMIGHTY moves in mysterious ways His wonders to perform. Like when He spoke to James Anderton on the motorway.

The hirsute Chief Constable was on his way to make a speech about AIDS when it happened. As he later explained on Radio 4's religious programme, "Something was speaking to me inside and the words that I was using in my speech just flooded into my mind. I couldn't change them... I had to say what I was compelled to say".

What he actually said, you may remember, was that AIDS is a sort of punishment visited upon us by God and spread about by homosexuals, prostitutes and drug addicts, "swirling about in a cesspool of their own making".

He said plenty more when questioned on the radio. I missed the programme (which goes out at 8am on Sundays) but the Daily Mail carried a detailed account: "Police Chief James Anderton said yesterday that he believed God had chosen him to be a prophet.

"And he admitted he used his job as 'an instrument of God's judgment'. Mr Anderton, Chief Constable of Greater Manchester, was asked... if he regarded himself as an Old Testament prophet or as a modern equivalent of John the Baptist.

"He replied, 'I smile because I don't actually suggest it myself. It's a very great compliment'".

By Jim Denham

Do you remember back in 1984 when Tony Benn stood in the Chesterfield by-election. The Sun, on the day of the election, carried a story on the subject of Benn's mental health entitled "Benn on the Couch — A Top Psychiatrist's View of Britain's Leading Lefty".

In 1981 the Daily Mail did a similar job on Ken Livingstone on the basis of telephone calls to three psychiatrists. No prizes for guessing what conclusions the Sun and the Mail came to in each case — although the shrinks themselves later claimed to have been misquoted.

James Anderton, though, need have no fear of a visit from the men in white coats, to judge by the tabloids' reactions to his latest 'controversial' comments.

The Mail's report (headlined, 'I'm an instrument of God, says Anderton') was admirably factual, unsensational, and entirely devoid of psychological analysis.

Thursday's Sun (which I did not buy, incidentally) devoted an entire page to defending the Chief Constable, under the headline, 'He Speaks No Evil'.

The piece was written in an appropriately evangelical style. "There is evil in our society. It is the source of everything that is wrong in our lives. It can never be combatted merely by physical measures.

The struggle demands the force and the strength of religious conviction. It demands that people should be encouraged by word and example to live by moral standards.

"There have been suggestions that James Anderton is mad. The same charge could just as easily have been brought against Jesus Christ when He came to earth".

This stirring defence seems particularly poignant when one remembers that upon being appointed Chief Constable of Greater Manchester in 1976, Anderton's first act was to launch a vigorous crusade against pornography. His special squads raided over 200 bookshops, newsagents and warehouses.

Their seizures included the Sun Page Three Girl Annual.

By Belinda Weaver

TOM STOPPARD'S play 'Squaring the Circle' had the same tone as the 'Let Poland be Poland' extravaganza, in which 'democrats' like Reagan shed crocodile tears about workers' rights in Poland. Reagan and Thatcher are happy to use Solidarity, the trade union outlawed by the Polish Government, as a stick to beat Poland with, all the while attacking their own working classes at home.

I wonder how Reagan would feel if confronted by a trade union leader with 10 million workers behind him, all clamouring for change. Or whether Thatcher would welcome a Catholic Archbishop's lecture on workers' rights. I certainly can't see Stoppard penning a new play about GCHQ, Patco or Wapping.

Stoppard uses real personages into whose mouths he puts a lot of fatalistic, ponderous speechifying. In fact, none of the characters talk — they declaim. Lech Walesa's 'I made a decision — it takes guts to make a decision' was probably the nadir of Stoppard's dialogue. And Stoppard freely reinvents real people so that, half the time, they express his ideas rather than their own.

For example, a secret meeting is shown between Lech Walesa, Archbishop Glomp of the Polish Catholic Church, and General Jaruzelski. After a bit of speechifying, the narrator figure is careful to tell us that this particular scene is pure conjecture, as no one knows what was really said. But Stoppard has put his ideas across. The disclaimer is about as useful as a judge telling a jury to disregard what they just heard.

The narrator is a curious figure, half off-stage — an American offering a detached and cynical commentary on events. His role is structured to allow the play to be generally pro-Solidarity without letting people identify too closely with the working class activists.

Solidarity's militants are not the heroes of this play. They're only raw material for the narrator's com-



Illegal Solidarnosc demonstration

ments.

Stoppard puts stern-jawed, telling-these-commies-where-to-get-off speech in the mouth of a Catholic Archbishop, who firmly declares he is on the side of workers' rights. The fact that the Catholic Church in Poland accommodates to the regime, and has tried to suppress worker militancy, is ignored.

### Lies

Stoppard's central indictment of Poland's rulers is that they tell lies, that they can't be trusted. He is much less concerned about their making workers live in poverty, deprived of rights.

The play is phoney, because Stoppard's sympathies aren't with Solidarity's struggle. It's just an excuse for a cold war outing, an attempt to show socialism as inherently wicked. When the Polish bureaucrats

talk about a party strictly organised from the top down, they invoke Lenin's name. But that was Stalin's idea, not Lenin's. When another says, 'The Party must take the leading role — that's communism!', that is another Stalinist distortion. Stoppard attacks the Polish Stalinists as if they were Lenin's direct descendants, as if Poland today is what Leninism inevitably leads to, rather than a grotesque parody.

Genuine socialism, as seen by Lenin and Trotsky, was for workers' control over production and distribution through the workers' own organisations. The Party had to win leadership of the working class — such a leading role could not be taken for granted, or worse, enforced.

Many in Solidarity were hoping to achieve that kind of self-organisation. Others like Walesa and Jacek Kuron, believed that to take on

the state machine head on would be a recipe for disaster. They promoted the idea of a 'self-limiting revolution' — where they would work within the constraints of existing structures but hollow them out from within. But the movement couldn't be limited — it came up against the state time after time. The question of 'who rules?' was posed.

Solidarity was a movement in ferment, with many different strands. No sense of this can be gained from this play. The movement is invisible. One doesn't get a sense of people struggling to come to grips with events as they unfolded — there are no uncertainties, just speechmaking, and attitude striking.

The narrator observes that, in private, Party officials probably don't talk like the Pravda editorials. Stoppard talks like a Daily Mail one.

Tom Stoppard's 'Squaring the Circle', Channel 4, last Thursday, 9.30pm.

# A festival of black cinema

There's no business like show business. The film business is certainly a competitive world: big stars, big money, big finance. For example, did you know that Rupert Murdoch now owns 20th Century Fox? So amongst all the Hollywood hype it's refreshing to see independent film makers supplying alternative images and messages for our cinema screens.

Black film making has certainly taken off in the eighties. There is a vast wealth of Asian, Afro-Caribbean and Chinese films/documentaries on the circuit, but of course none of these are commercial, so unless you live near a trendy cinema it's highly unlikely that you'll get to see them. In fact, your ticket to black history and struggles will begin and end with the likes of The Colour Purple or The Cotton Club.

Anyway I live near such a cinema, the Ritzy in Brixton who, to their credit, recently held a festival of Black film making. They screened an impressive 27 in all.

Many of the films were made on a small budget or no budget at all which means the quality is often poor — after all, it's a risky business investing in lefty subver-

By Tracy Williams

sives — but if you cope with bad sound and shaky cameras, the films offer a history of black struggle here and abroad.

I saw three films, the first called "Angry Still" by Kelvin Richard — an animated visual Dub film — to be honest I'm not that keen on animated films but this has some good scenes like the racist skinhead being squeezed in the hand of an angry black man.

The second one was called "Territories" from the Sankofa Black Film Workshop which looked at race, class and sexuality. Focusing around the Notting Hill carnivals and how the police have tried and tried to get the carnival off the streets, thus the title "Territories" and the message that the black community has none of its own.

The third film I saw was the much talked about "Born in Flames" by Lizzie Borden, a political fantasy set in an allegorical future 10 years after a democratic peaceful revolution has taken place in America!!!

What I hear you cry, well it is a fantasy.

The women in the film are quick to realise nothing much has changed (you don't say) — in fact things have got worse as far as women's rights, employment, etc., is concerned. (I wasn't sure whether this was a stab at revolutionaries).

Anyway various women like Honey and her Black sisters who run an underground radio station, Isabel the punk rapper and Adelaide and her mixed women's army start to take the law in their own hands and eventually make war on the city by blowing buildings up. For example a woman is being attacked on the street by two men. She screams for help and suddenly a group of women vigilantes on push bikes (!) with whistles come to her rescue — a little like calling for the police except there are some major differences — a) they actually believed she had been attacked; b) they didn't ask her why she was wearing a short skirt.

There was also a great scene on the tube where a man is obviously sexually harassing a woman — you know what it feels like, you try to be nice at first because you are scared that the man may get violent. You feel frightened and alone but full of rage yet helpless. However two women from the women's army step in — a bit like knights in shining armour — only a

feminist version and the next thing you know: "Hey man, what's your problem, do you know this woman? No? Well get the fuck out of here".

The underlying message of the film was mainly that women of all classes and colours are victims — yes, right on, sister! — however their programme was one of separatism to the extent that Isabel, the punk rapper, spouted on and on about women being the prophets of the future. What? Listen, Isabel, if you are in Manchester next week maybe you should get together with our man Jimmy Anderton.

Quick to advocate that change was needed, the film didn't give a clear programme of how to actually change it — I'm all for single issue campaigns but on their own they are limited. To be frank I used to be a bit of a feminist-separatist myself. Unfortunately it raised lots of ideas but didn't supply any answers. I can remember sitting around talking about my body and plotting the next stink-bombing of the local cinema. All good stuff, but on their own women will never be free from sexual oppression. No wonder there was no change after the revolution — we must unite together as a class to fight oppression. Alone we are limited, together we are strong.



## Les Hearn's SCIENCE COLUMN

# Hypothermia

Recent weather conditions have brought hypothermia back to the headlines as a major factor in deaths amongst the elderly in Britain. With it come many questions.

Hypothermia, which means simply "low temperature", can and does kill young people, too, but this is quite rare. Why? Also, why do fewer old people die during winter in the far colder countries of Scandinavia?

Humans are "warm-blooded" creatures, i.e. they have a constant deep body temperature of about 36.9°C (98.4°F). This is like all mammals and also all birds. Dinosaurs may also have shared this feature. One theory of their extinction is that they may have died of hypothermia during a forerunner of the Ice Ages.

Warm-bloodedness is a useful attribute, enabling us to be alert and lively in cold and hot climates alike. There is, of course, a price to pay.

Firstly, since we are almost always warmer than our surroundings, we have to expend a large amount of energy just keeping ourselves the right temperature. Small, thin, hairless people (such as babies) lose heat faster and are at a greater risk of not maintaining their temperature.

Secondly, while cold-blooded animals just slow down and become sluggish in the cold, recovering easily when warmed-up, with us it is more complex. Our bodily functions match each other in rate at our normal temperature. If our temperature falls by even a quite small amount, the functions get out of "synch" and our bodies (and minds) start getting confused.

This rarely happens and we are capable of holding a constant temperature (within 1/2°C either way), whatever the temperature of our surroundings, but how? The answer lies in the brain — in particular, the *hypothalamus*, a small area at the centre of the head. The hypothalamus is responsible for many basic or "primitive" functions, such as feeding, drinking, regulating the blood system, expressing emotions. As soon as it detects a fall in blood temperature, it signals a series of actions:

• Closure of blood vessels in the skin (making fingers go white).

• Contraction of skin and hair standing on end ("goose-pimples").

• Shivering — muscle activity whose purpose is to generate heat.

If not adequate to conserve heat, more vigorous activity can be undertaken or an external source of heat found. If these are inadequate, the body's core temperature will fall. Below 35°C (95°F), hypothermia sets in and as the temperature falls further some bizarre things seem to happen.

Blood vessels in the skin open up again (a protection against frostbite) increasing the rate of heat loss and making hypothermia even worse. People become uncoordinated and

confused, they feel warm because of the rush of blood to the skin and often start removing clothing ("paradoxical undressing" or "mountain undressing syndrome"). Near 30°C (86°F), unconsciousness occurs, and at 28°C (82°F) and below imbalances in the body's electrolytes (various salts) result in heart arrhythmia. Here, the normal strong rhythmic heart beat is replaced by a sort of futile quivering which cannot pump blood round the body. At that point the brain is starved of oxygen.

Now, at normal temperatures, the brain would have four minutes left before damage leading to death occurred. However, at very low temperatures, the brain has less need of oxygen and survives longer. This may be the justification for the body's apparent hastening of hypothermia.

At 28°C, the brain has up to 30 minutes to survive. One child survived immersion in an icy river for 40 minutes with his temperature at 24°C. If surgical operation requires interruption of blood flow to the brain, the patient's body temperature will be artificially lowered to increase the time available for the operation.

How do people get hypothermia? Young, healthy adults can get it simply by exposing themselves to cold, wet and wind for a certain period of time. Common victims include hikers, mountaineers, pot holers and divers. Water is 25 times worse at taking away body heat than is air and shipwreck survivors frequently die of hypothermia even in fairly warm water. Cold water normally kills in a matter of hours or less. People survive six hours in water at 15°C, down to under an hour at 0°C.

There was an interesting exception two years ago in the person of Gudlauger Fridthorsson, an Icelandic fisherman who survived a six hour swim to shore through 5°C waters. However, at 19 1/2 stone he was exceptionally well-endowed with a layer of insulating fat (and must be a good, fit swimmer). Exercise can counteract hypothermia until exhaustion sets in. Other victims include babies and old people who are not easily able to counter cold with exercise. Obviously, poverty may be a major factor in preventing adequate heating of their accommodation, but other factors exist.

These include the fact that babies cannot shiver and may not actually look cold when they are. Elderly people often lose heat when they turn off heating at night and leave bedroom windows open overnight. Long walks and waits for buses are also important (an indictment of public transport cuts).

These latter points seem to account for the fact that death rates amongst the elderly are similar whether they live independently or in sheltered housing with free heating. While few deaths are actually recorded as "hypothermia", many result from diseases encouraged by the lower resistance caused by mild hypothermia.

# Campaign Student: broad forum or narrow group?

By Jane Ashworth

WE PRINT this press statement, produced by Socialist Action and distributed at the Labour Left Liaison meeting last Monday, 26 January, for the enlightenment of SO readers.

Like Socialist Action's entire 'Campaign Student' project, it suffers from a central contradiction which reduces it to nonsense. Either 'Campaign Student' is a narrow SA factional grouping (which is what it is), or it is a broad grouping (as it tries to present itself). And if it is a broad group, then it cannot claim the right to function as a tight, exclusive, closed-in SA faction.

It is either-or. They must choose one or the other.

'Campaign Student' presents itself as a broad left-wing student movement, the student wing of the loose association at the head of which stands the Campaign Group of MPs. The statement says that the aims of 'Campaign Student' "are to help link students with the Alliance for Socialism which Campaign Forum is building in the wider labour movement".

But the Campaign Group of MPs and the local Campaign Groups are not a tightly-organised or precisely-defined political entity of the sort SA wants 'Campaign Student' to be.

And the fact is that 'Campaign Student' has nothing to do with the Campaign Group of MPs, which has told them to stop using its logo and to stop pretending to be what they are not. 'Campaign Student' is a get-rich-quick enterprise of Socialist Action, attempting to purloin the Campaign Group label and franchise in the student field.

Its purpose is to group students around SA, attracting them by the name of the Campaign Group.

This requires that they must try to exclude undesirables such as SO supporters — and this is especially urgent because there are so very few SA students.

To exclude undesirables — i.e. SO — SA saddled 'Campaign Student' right from the start with a full set of 'principles', comprehensive enough for a rather tight political party. No dissent on any of the points is possible. More than that: as can be seen from the press statement, no disagreement on interpretation of the principles is possible.

Who will decide? The SA 'founders' will decide! Even when they are in a minority at the meeting they have called.

For example: SO supports the right of black people to organise, so we agree with the principle they enunciate. But it is also demanded that we accept SA's interpretation, that this means automatic support



Students at Wapping. Photo: Ian Swindale

for whatever the existing Black Section nucleus decides.

Even so, on the level of principle their tight Socialist Action platform does not make 'Campaign Student' "a clear alternative to other currents in NOLS and NUS".

## Exclude

For example, only on the question of Israel is there a fundamental difference with SO. (And since we are talking about the self-appointed student wing of the Campaign Group, it should be said that it is unlikely that all or even most of the Campaign Group of MPs would back Socialist Action's demand for the complete destruction and elimination of the Jewish state!)

From all this you get the nonsense of a 'broad' so-called 'Campaign Student' run by SA as a narrow, tightly-controlled and policed factional enterprise, essentially aimed against Socialist Students in NOLS (SSiN).

Where SSiN allows a variety of opinions, 'Campaign Student' allows only the rigid SA 'party line'. Where SSiN has open meetings and conferences (and Polly Vittorini of SA attended the last one), 'Campaign Student' wants to close itself off.

But if they call a conference in the guise of the student wing of the

Campaign Group, they do not have the right to close themselves off so that they can safely function as an SA faction.

Nor the right to arbitrarily impose 'conditions' and an unchallengeable 'platform' worked out by the SA caucus. The broad 'Campaign Student' meeting must — like SSiN gatherings — have the right to decide on the platform and to decide to change it.

That is how the labour movement operates. That is democracy. The alternative to it is tight factional autocracy dressed up as a broad campaign.

When the 'Campaign Student' meeting closed and SA — together with some supporters — went away to have an admitted SA caucus, nobody dreamed of interfering with them, or "intimidating, disrupting or wrecking" their caucus, which they had every right to hold in as much privacy as they liked.

But the private caucus was as bizarre as the aborted 'Campaign Student' meeting. Ms Vittorini, leader of the half-dozen SA people present, shouted at the argumentative sympathisers that if they didn't like her way of doing things they could "f... off". One non-SA participant afterwards ruefully reflected that SA was "more Stalinist" than SSiN, where your right to disagree and dissent and decide by voting was taken for granted.

The rest of the open letter is just hysteria and lies, which nevertheless need to be nailed in detail.

Polly Vittorini declares that the 'Campaign Student' meeting on 30 November had decided that SSiN supporters could not participate in 'Campaign Student'. Robin Laney, a member of the Campaign for Labour Party Democracy (CLPD) and one of the three ad-hoc officers of 'Campaign Student', said that this never happened, and that if it were to be forced through then he would resign.

The meeting was not 'broken up'. SA were in a minority at the broad meeting they called, and spent the time trying to work out political reasons for excluding the majority of the meeting from participation.

It was, they said, 'their meeting'. The majority of the meeting could not scrap 'their' proposals or conditions at 'their' meeting.

The recent ex-student visitor who wanted a different policy on Israel was Danny Nicol, neither an SO nor a SSiN supporter but a CLPD executive member (and, in fact, part of the initiating 'Campaign Student' group; the small group of CLPD students supported the setting up of 'Campaign Student').

What 'forced' the meeting to close (in fact the chair, Kingsley Abrams, ruled that it had never properly been convened)? It was the autocratic minority, faced with a meeting that was not 'theirs'.

'Campaign Student' was 'prevented' from 'adopting criteria for endorsing candidates in NOLS and NUS elections' because the minority did not have the votes to get their way.

SO endorses and will support SA's right to organise without 'intimidation, disruption or wrecking'. But not its right to call a fake broad meeting which it then tries to run as a narrow factional grouping. You have no such right, comrades.

All this hysteria, and the preposterous charges that SO used 'gangster tactics', result from the crisis of SA's 'Campaign Student' enterprise. For SA's real grievance against SO is that we blew the whistle on their attempt to pass themselves off as the Campaign Group's student wing.

Either this talk of 'gangster methods' is slanderous bluff and bluster, or they can cite specific incidents and cases, and name names.

If they can, they should do so immediately. They can have space for it in SO. If they can't, they should shut up. If, having issued their press statement, they shut up, they thereby convict themselves as excitable liars.

## SOCIALIST ACTION'S PRESS RELEASE

# Indefensible gangster tactics

Open letter to all left newspapers and student journals from the officers of Campaign Student.

On 24 January 1987 Campaign Student held a meeting to prepare for NOLS (National Organisation of Labour Students) conference in February. The meeting was broken up by members of SSiN (Socialist Students in NOLS), led by Socialist Organiser supporters. They flooded the meeting demanding votes, attempted to scrap proposals on candidates, and shouted speakers down — including the chair — throughout the meeting.

One visitor, not even a student, proposed to delete a commitment to anti-Zionism from Campaign Student's platform for candidates. SSiN even accused Campaign Student supporters of being sectarian for refusing to allow them to outvote us in our own meeting!

The meeting was forced to

close with no vote taken and Campaign Student was prevented from adopting criteria for endorsing candidates in NOLS and NUS elections.

Clearly it is indefensible that any organisation in the labour movement such as SSiN should use these gangster tactics to prevent a current with which it disagrees from organising.

Campaign Student's stated aims are to help link students with the alliance for socialism which Campaign Forum is building in the wider labour movement; to build support for the self-organisation and demands of women and black people; against all witch-hunts of socialists in the Labour Party; for lesbian and gay rights; for British withdrawal from Ireland and a united Ireland; for removal of all US bases from Britain; breaking all links with apartheid; for a democratic secular Palestine and against US aggression in Central America. Cam-

paign Student is fighting for NOLS to affiliate to Labour Left Liaison and its constituent campaigns.

This platform makes Campaign Student a clear alternative to other currents in NOLS and NUS. SSiN's politics are quite counter to the above. For instance, at December 1986 NUS conference SSiN opposed the right of women students to elect their own representative onto the NUS executive, SSiN support the continued existence of the Zionist state of Israel, and SSiN are running their own candidate against a Black Sections-endorsed candidate for the next NUS executive.

Campaign Student will continue to organise, and assert its right to do so without intimidation, disruption or wrecking. We call on all organisations of the left to publicly support our right to organise in NOLS and NUS and condemn the anti-democratic wrecking tactics of SSiN.

# Fighting a Labour boss

By Tony Dale

Manchester City Council's NUPE Housing Branch, with 280 members, is due to start an all-out strike on Thursday 29 January in solidarity with 21 Housing Aid NUPE members who have been on strike since last Thursday, 22 January. The immediate issue at the root of the dispute was office accommodation.

The Housing Aid service is split among three offices in the Town Hall. The workers were given three working days notice that one of the offices had to be vacated. The three options put forward were all unacceptable as they would lead to worsening working conditions. Housing Aid workers have been willing to put up with inadequate office accommodation while a long term move out of the Town Hall was still on the cards. However late on Tuesday 20 January, this proposed move fell through.

Management responded to the workers' objections by threatening disciplinary action on Thursday January 22. In response, the NUPE members walked out.

That night the NUPE branch backed the strike and called for a one-day strike of all its members on Monday 26 January.

Since the Housing Aid workers

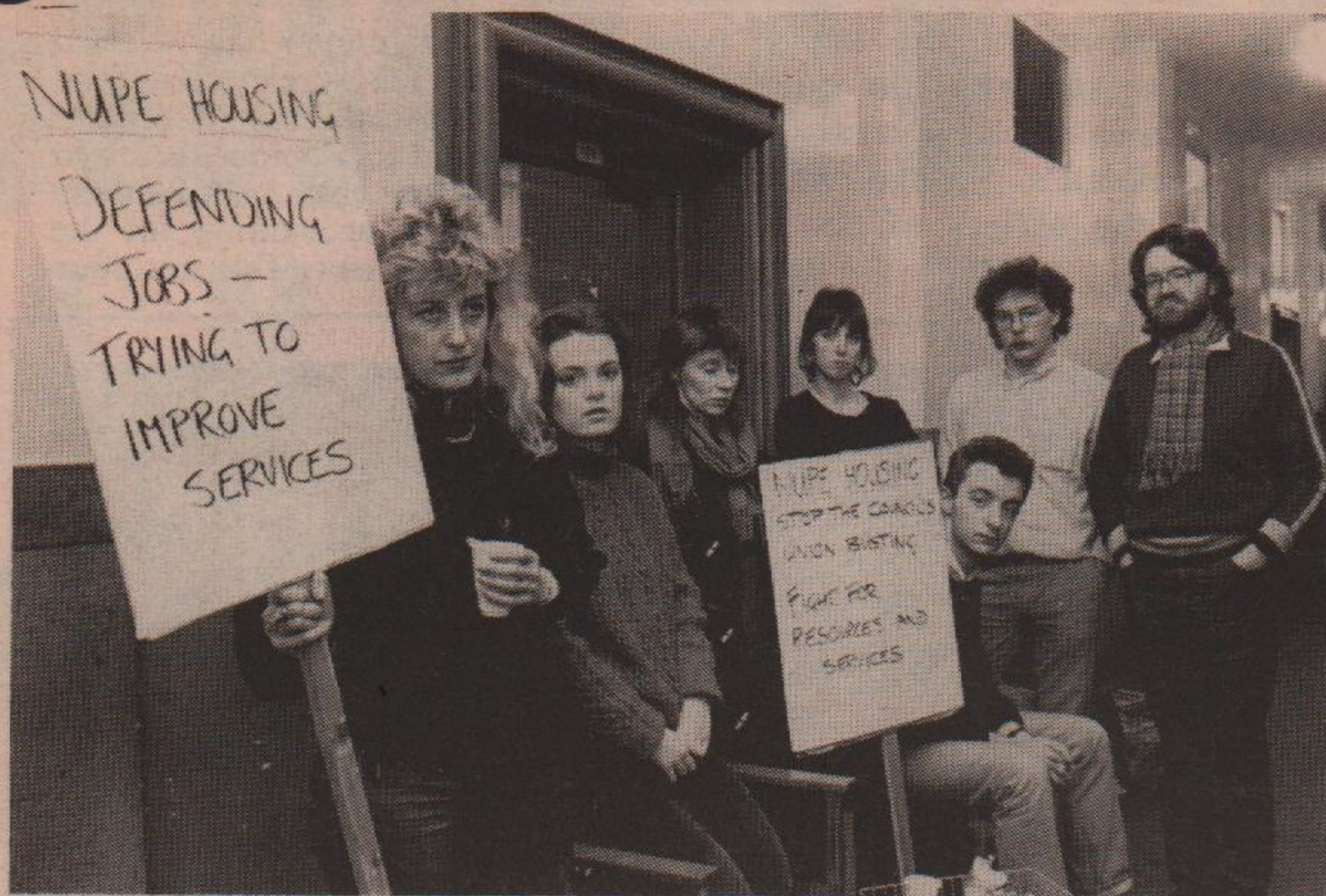


Photo Paul Herman

went on strike the threats and attacks by the Council on the strikers and on NUPE have come thick and fast. The trade union facility time agreement was threatened; strikers were told that they would be disciplined if found on Council property; strikers and NUPE members were threatened with disciplinary action if planned meetings at the Area Offices, to hear the case of the strikers, went ahead. The councillors were consulting the legal section over legal possibilities — they were considering issuing an injunction against the strikers.

The director of Housing wrote to

all members of staff, basically calling the strikers liars. This letter was issued in an attempt to bypass existing trade union structures.

By Friday the fight for decent office accommodation had also become a strike to defend union rights. The decision to attack the union was taken by 'left wing' Labour councillors. Sam Darby was heavily involved in the negotiations and was clearly taking the decisions to issue the threats.

The all-out strike on Monday was solid among NUPE members. In addition other workers walked out in support, including the Information Centre, creche workers, Community Development, and some porters. Unfortunately NALGO, the other major union in the Housing Department, voted not to strike. However, a significant minority stayed out after refusing to cross NUPE picket lines.

Management and councillors met NUPE late Monday and have offered a deal. The full details are not yet clear, except that the Council has been forced to withdraw many of the threats and take the Housing Aid complaints seriously. However, any settlement must include decent offers for accommodation to the Housing Aid workers. Without this, the strikers must stay out and the all-out strike on Thursday go ahead.

## BUSES

### Strikes against victimisation

By Richard Bayley

West Yorkshire Road Car Company bus workers voted 344 to 190 for strike action in support of Derek Smallwood, victimised steward from York, at a mass meeting in Leeds Town Hall on 22 January.

Strikers in Bradford told Socialist Organiser that the strike was solid in Bradford, Otley and Keighley, but that some workers have been crossing

the picket line in Leeds and 80% of workers are going to work in Harrogate.

Pickets from the solid areas will be going over to Leeds and Harrogate to picket these people out.

They told us that if the strike is to be successful there has to be 100% support and that total commitment from all workers in the company would give the workers more confidence in their fight to get Derek Smallwood reinstated.

# ROF privatisation

By Paul Woolley

You wouldn't think it, but 12 Royal Ordnance Factories (employing some 18,000 workers) are up for 'lightning privatisation'.

The ROFs have been under threat of privatisation since 1981 — ROC Leeds is already owned by Vickers. In the run-up to privatisation, ROF's 1200 workers at Patricroft near Manchester have already lost out. They are on piece work and have worse conditions.

Like anywhere else, privatisation would be a disaster for the workforce and the area — job losses, lower wages, loss of union rights could all follow. The factory could close altogether. It is sited in a highly-populated area, so speed-up and lower safety standards could lead to an explosion, wreaking carnage and destruction.

What is the unions' response? The joint union leadership nationally say they are "stepping up the pressure" — lobbying Parliament, organising public meetings and industrial action. That sounds OK. But why have we

heard *nothing* of the proposed sell-off?

The experience of the rank and file at Patricroft is a wall of silence from their local leadership. There is no evidence of preparation of any campaign, let alone industrial action. The unions have so far tried to 'fight' privatisation by winning the paper support of such noteworthies as Lords Scanlon and Winstanley. That has got them nowhere.

Now leaders at Patricroft reject industrial action, saying it will damage their reputation in the eyes of their prospective private owners! There is a yawning gap between the words of the national leadership and the reality of the glum, passive silence at Patricroft.

If privatisation is to be defeated, the unions need to move into action fast. Local Labour Parties have pledged their support. If the union leadership will not move, the rank and file need to organise a campaign with local Labour Parties and the community — and link up with the other ROFs at Blackburn and Chorley.

## KEETONS

### Help build the pickets!

By Neophitos Ttofias

"The only way we're going to win this strike is if we've got a mass presence on the picket line."

This was the opinion of Neil Ershaw, chief convenor of the Keeton's strike.

Monday morning pickets have been taking place and local labour movement and community support is sought to make these real mass pickets.

"The more people on the picket the faster the scabs drive in. Maybe they are in, but they're certainly not enjoying their breakfasts. They will probably be saying 'I don't want to go through that again'."

The convenor also said that the pickets were vital if the trade union movement was to be constantly reminded of the strike so more lorry drivers will refuse to cross the line.

The strike convenor said that one

lorry driver who had been a thorn in our side since the day the dispute had started has said that he won't be crossing the line as from today.

"Anyone who does is a scab and can't call themselves a real trade unionist."

The strikers are finding that they face opposition from many sides. On the one hand they have got an inflexible boss who refuses to reinstate them unless they forfeit trade union rights. A management that has already started to advertise in the local press with "job vacancies".

On the other hand there are the police who are trying to enforce the six person picket (so central to Thatcher's anti-union legislation).

Supporters leaving the picket have been followed and harassed by the police, clearly attempting to intimidate people into not attending the mass pickets.

In addition to this, last week the caravan on the picket line which the strikers use to shelter from the cold weather was set alight.

The strikers realise that they can beat the boss because he is "only a small fish in a big pond".

## CATERPILLAR

### Work-in

Workers at the endangered Caterpillar plant near Uddington in Lanarkshire endorsed a decision to convert their sit-in to a 'work-in' at a mass meeting held last Thursday, 22nd.

They were due on Monday to begin production of a token tractor, symbolising the workforce's determination to keep on producing the goods. The work-in will also see a job rotation experiment — with welders learning machining, machinists learning to weld and secretarial staff learning to drive forklift trucks. The plan will be doubly endorsed by a secret ballot presided over by local clergymen.

At present this is of a piece with the current outlook of touting for another buyer or indeed effecting a change of heart at Caterpillar HQ in Illinois.

Representatives of the Joint Union Occupation Committee were due to meet this week with stewards from surrounding plants, Lanarkshire MPs and Shadow Industry spokesperson John Smith. Through Euro-MP for Strathclyde, Ken Collins, contact is being made with a French and a Belgian socialist Euro-MP, both of whom have Caterpillar factories in their areas.

Trade union branches and Labour Party wards should contact the occupation in order to lend support and invite speakers, as should Labour Club and college activists in the West of Scotland.

# The daily grind of office work

Office work is supposed to be a cut above factory work — you can wear nicer clothes because the work isn't dirty, and the work is a little more varied than on the factory floor.

That no longer holds. Office work may be cleaner, but its variety has been slowly whittled away. The typist on a VDU or word processor may be called a more fancy name now, but s/he is controlled by the machine rather than the other way around — just like the person on the factory floor.

Office work used to be the entering of figures and information onto files, the filing of documents and their retrieval, and so on. Now it's the entering of data into computer systems — a job with little or no variety. It's sedentary and dull, and can cause injuries through repetitive strain.

I worked as an office temp doing VDU work for six weeks. I'd always had fairly interesting work before, so VDU work came as a bit of a shock. At my first job, I typed name and address data into a terminal all day. By the end of the day, I was thoroughly exhausted — too tired to think. I stood on the Tube going home like a person in shock. When I got home, I was too tired to read, or do anything but go to bed early.

The worst part about the work is that you aren't in control of it. I never had any idea what the work I was doing was part of. No one explained the computer system to me. I couldn't log in or out without help as no one showed me how, so I felt shy

## WOMAN'S EYE

By Belinda Weaver

about going to the loo or taking a tea break as I had to interrupt someone else to do so.

The machine would count each document I did, so I felt this compulsion to go faster all the time. If I made an error, I had to ask someone for help as I knew so little of the system I was using. That made me uncomfortable about making errors — no one likes to hassle others busy at work. It was a pressure job.

The next job was more interesting as I learned a whole new computer program while I was there. That felt useful to me. I was there three weeks — long enough to become more than just a faceless temp to the permanent staff. Temping can be alienating because most staff ignore you — you aren't going to be sticking around, so they don't bother.

And to some people, you'd never become a real person. Going out of the building one day, I heard the men in front of me call out offensive sexual invitations to the young, black security guard (female) on the lobby desk. I caught her eye, and we both shrugged in disgust. To men like that, women aren't real persons, however long they work in a place.

The next job was another tied-to-

the-machine job. Huge piles of documents were passed to me in the morning — the day's quota. It looked like a lot more than I could do in a day, as my typing isn't very fast. The work was repetitive and boring. I felt really depressed all the time I was there, and dreaded going each of the four days. Some of the people had worked there for years — I couldn't imagine how they maintained their sanity.

One thing they did was to listen to pop music loud all day long while they worked. I hated it, but they said it was the only thing that kept them going. The supervisor didn't like it either — like me, she found it distracting rather than soothing as the others did. But she let them listen all day — she had no choice. They couldn't work without it.

When it was my last day there, the supervisor told me how good my work was — how fast and accurate I was. I was really surprised, as I think my typing is pretty slow. But then I realised that the others didn't go as fast as they could — if you did, if you let the machine's counting push you into going faster, you'd go mad. The others paced themselves. That was how they survived.

At our tea breaks there, we all just sat around, dazed. Conversation was pretty desultory. The work grinds you down so much that you just feel drained of all energy.

My last job only lasted a day — thank goodness. It was a combination of telephoning and typing data into a computer. I pity who has to do telephoning as a job — it's horrendous.

Not many people I called were abusive, but most were impatient or annoyed. I felt sorry for disturbing them. Dialing numbers all day, keeping track of all the responses, engaged numbers, etc., is very, very boring, and you feel tense because you know the person you are calling is going to be irritated at having to answer questions.

The jobs were found for me by an agency. They kept offering me work — I could have continued. The pay was tolerable — not brilliant, though it did go up the more skills and speeds you had.

But the work was killing. The only thing that makes temping bearable is the variety of places — the work is always the same. Wherever you are working you know it's not for ever — that's the only thing that keeps you going.

## Keen

Employers are quite keen to take on temps to fill in for staff off sick or on holidays or to cope with extra loads. Temps don't come cheap, as the agency has to get a cut as well as the temp. But employers like being able to get rid of temps once they're no longer needed — it's not like having to sack workers, so they don't really begrudge the extra pennies. And temps generally work harder and faster, as I found out. The permanent staff are pacing themselves — they're not going full bore, so at first the temp can be more thoroughly exploited, which makes up for the extra the boss has to pay to get him/her, anyway.

# SOCIALIST ORGANISER

## Wapping police outrage

What we saw at Wapping on Saturday was nothing short of state brutality of the highest order. I believe without a shadow of a doubt this vicious, unprovoked attack was premeditated.

It clearly illustrates the determination of the Thatcher government to intimidate the News International strikers and their supporters by the crudest methods available. Savage, staff-wielding thugs in blue, clubbing men, women, children, anything that gets in the way, creating panic and fear.

They are using the media to whip up mass hysteria in order to put pressure on the likes of Willis, Dean, and Dubbins, to condemn those who tried to fight and getting Kinnock to disassociate even further from the strike. The statements of the union bureaucrats bear little resemblance to what really did occur.

Of course, the massive display of solidarity to the printworkers on their anniversary day must have shocked the TUC and Labour leadership. More than 25,000 trade unionists, socialists and supporters joined the demonstration at the Temple. The march to Wapping was good-humoured, with plenty of working

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class spirit and cheer. The police at Wapping decided that the carnival atmosphere was to end, and any attempt to have a peaceful mass picket.

Horses and police lined up across the road in the Highway just beyond the entrance to Virginia Street, which leads to the plant. With Wellclose Square full in no time people jostled to get a close view of the plant. With that the first snatch squads appeared, revealing line upon line of riot police in Virginia Street. Behind them the cavalry, waiting to be brought into action.

The scene was horrendous. Sticks and stones are little use against these men and women, specially trained with crash helmets, padding, shields and clubs, with a mandate to do what they will against unarmed, ordinary working class people, out only to fight for jobs, their heritage and trade union organisation.

Let me describe two scenes for

## Big Brother is back

The 'freedom of the press' is freedom to say what the government allows. Or so it seems after last weekend's Special Branch raid on the offices of the New Statesman.

The New Statesman had revealed details of the Tories' expensive (and covered-up) spy satellite, Zircon. An article by Duncan Campbell showed how Zircon has cost half a billion pounds without accounting for the money to Parliament. This was done

in contravention of the government's agreements with the Parliamentary Accounts Committee.

A TV programme made by Campbell about Zircon was banned by the BBC.

The Zircon scandal has broken just as it has been unearthed that the GCHQ, the government's intelligence-gathering centre, has been bugging the Irish Embassy in London. Telephone, telex and radio traffic to and from the embassy is intercepted by GCHQ's sophisticated scanning computers.

The labour movement must fight to protect civil liberties — the right to know about government 'defence' spending, and the right to publish about it. Neil Kinnock in Parliament condemned the Tories for not hiding the details of Zircon well enough! If Kinnock goes on trying to be to the right of Thatcher he will drag the Labour Party down to miserable defeat.

We need not this kind of nonsense, but a serious campaign for public information. The undemocratic Official Secrets Act should be repealed.

And squads of police like Special Branch, used to enforce the restrictions on our civil rights, should be scrapped.



Wapping Highway, the News International dispute anniversary demonstration. Legal observer John Bowden is truncheoned by police. Photo: Andrew Wiard, Report.

Deputy Chief Inspector Wyn-Jones. The first a patrol leader of some 20 riot police thugs. After encouraging his men to lay into the crowd at random, clearing the path for horses to gallop along the Highway and inflict more injuries, he put his helmet down in the middle of the road beckoning

people to him as if a prize fighter. Then down went his baton onto the ground, now calling out that we were cowards in the most obscene way possible. However, he was still surrounded by his troops ready to batter anybody foolish enough to venture forward.

The second, a railway worker was sneeringly told "no wonder the railways are in such a state, you wanker."

The words shouted out by the police thugs, provocative in the extreme, show the utter contempt, the open hostility, to the labour and trade union movement. However, Kinnock, Willis, Dean and company would never know, they never got near enough to the front line to hear inflammatory words or feel the pain of a truncheon over the head or body.

They never have to scatter and, hopefully, reach safety away from the marauding cavalry charges of so-called 'officers of law and order', ever ready to smash you to the ground with their thick sticks or to be trodden under foot by a horse. Instead of calling for an independent inquiry, wasting time blaming 'outsiders' for the few bricks that were thrown in defence, Dean and Dubbins would be better employed demanding the rest of the printing industry comes to our defence, closing down the national newspaper industry, the wholesale section, etc. This is the real way to answer the lies and distortion of the media; this is the proper response to the Tory government.

For the Home Secretary, Douglas Hurd, is using this police riot as a camouflage to give the state even greater powers to curb the rights of organisations to protest. The trade union leadership know this and stand back and do nothing. They can only wring their hands now their beloved alternative, 'to write to the Times', has been taken away from them.

This course of appeasement will lead to disaster.

So therefore I ask that trade unionists, socialists, and supporters are not frightened by this disgusting and cowardly act by the police thugs, but come down to Wapping in their thousands in answer to Murdoch, Thatcher and Hammond and the weak Labour leadership, for we have far, far more courage and tenacity than to give in to state thuggery and intimidation.

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working  
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## The UDM threat to labour

IT WAS interesting to sit as a spectator at Mick McGinty's industrial tribunal on his sacking last week.

Originally the Coal Board were going to bring forward three witnesses, and the hearing was going to last a week or less. Now it looks like stretching over three weeks — not three consecutive weeks, it's going to be two days here and two days there.

They've now got up to seven witnesses. It looks as if Mick McGinty's case has got the Coal Board really scared, and they are pulling all the stops out.

It will be interesting to see what happens at my tribunal next Friday.

We won a significant victory today. The Coal Board recognised the NUM in Notts for the first time when they accepted that we were the majority union in Bolsover Colliery and recognised our right to do workmen's inspection.

It will be a blow against the UDM and could be the beginning of recognition for us in other pits in the coalfield.

The Justice for Mineworkers Campaign is now planning its next demonstration, following last year's demonstration which was such a suc-

WHETTON'S WEEK



cess. It will be in September.

We understand that the UDM are contemplating putting on a demonstration sometime in the middle of the year in Mansfield.

The recent launching of the 'Moderate Labour Party' in Notts proves what we have been saying all along, that these people are traitors to the working class and to the labour movement. The Labour leadership have been acting coy with them, but these are people who would never vote Labour anyway.

The leader of the 'Moderate Labour Party', Mick Gallagher, was a Labour MEP, then defected to the SDP. I'm very much of the opinion that the 'Moderate Labour Party' will be a nine-day wonder. The UDM will flock to them and give them financial support, but people are going to see through it very easily.

The people they have got spearheading it are of dubious reliability at the best of times.

But I fear that they could cost the sacked miners their jobs. They may

well attract a few Labour votes, just enough to sway the balance and to be responsible for putting Maggie Thatcher back in.

Last week John Liptrott from the UDM spoke at a meeting in Haringey organised against the Labour council's support for gay rights, and he was reported as saying: 'Your battle against Haringey council is the same as our battle against the NUM'.

I don't know how John Liptrott has got the gall to do it. One of the things they have condemned the NUM for is supporting weirdos, pinkos, and gays. He's living in a dream world.

I wish every success to the rank and file of the NCU. To see John Golding labelled as the reluctant militant was, I thought, the understatement of the week.

I have no doubt that the management and the government would dearly like to crush the NCU. But the union has got tremendous strength. They can make the City squeal, and I hope they won't be reluctant to use the power they have got.

If they think they are in a game of cricket with honourable people, then they are going to find out very shortly that that isn't so.

The working class and the trade union movement in this country need a victory, and this could be the one.

There is that framework still there of support groups from the miners' strike. Some of them have tied in with the printworkers. I'm sure that if British Telecom engineers could rally that support, then that would be a tremendous blow against Thatcher.

### Wapping

We sent representatives from every pit in the Notts coalfield down to the demonstration at GCHQ, and they got a tremendous reception. It's a pity it clashed with Wapping.

There what we saw was the full array of the State, and it shows the lengths they are prepared to go to. People saw what we saw all through the miners' strike.

Unless something is done, that dispute is going to fester on. It should be brought to a head by the TUC calling on all the trade union movement for action, but I'm afraid what we have seen in the past does not give me much hope of that.

Their own leadership is one of the things that is holding the printworkers back. I still argue that Fleet Street should be called out, and that we should escalate the dispute.

Paul Whetton is secretary of Bevercotes NUM, Notts.