

Iraqgate: Major should be impeached!



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17 Nov. day of action



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What is a general strike?

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# SOCIALIST

ORGANISER

Unite the left!

## Tories in crisis

# LABOUR



# MUST FIGHT!

**T**he labour movement needs to do three things now: build active industrial solidarity with the miners; push forward other industrial battles, as on the London Underground; and mount a political campaign against the Tories.

Demand that the TUC organise a day of action on a working day to back the miners! Try to bring forward your own claim or demand; persuade your workmates to take action, however limited, in support of the miners.

Demand that the labour

movement's elected leaders launch a powerful campaign of meetings, demonstrations, and days of action against the whole thrust of Tory policy, and of which the attack on the miners is only one part! Working-class people want a lead that gives them hope of an alternative to the destruction of the National Health Service, the crippling laws which stop trade unions taking effective action, and mass unemployment.

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- Solidarity with the miners! TUC — call a day of action!
- Rebuild the NHS! Restore the Tory cuts!
- Support all workers in struggle!
- Free our trade unions from Tory laws!
- **KICK OUT THE TORIES!**

# U for U-turn, T for Tory disaster

One of the Tory tabloids did an "A to Z" of the economy last week. "K", it said, was for Keynes — "whose ideas showed the way out of depression in the 1930s and have a lot to teach us today".

Keynes, a British Liberal economist, argued that governments could and should pull capitalism out of slumps by increased public investment. Since the mid-1970s, his ideas have been scorned

and discredited. The Tories have told us, again and again, with the dogmatism of priests declaring god-given truth, that "you can't spend your way out of a recession", "you can't buck the market", "there is no alternative".

The Tories have been forced into another U-turn. Their "Autumn Statement" on 12 November proposed big new public projects like the Jubilee Underground line, a big excess of government spending

over government income, and lower interest rates (also a Keynesian precept).

Keynesian policies work sometimes, to some extent. The Tories' new pale-Keynesian policy is unlikely to produce industrial growth.

It will certainly cut deep into the living standards of five million public sector workers, many of them already low-paid.

Their pay rises are to be limited

to 1.5 per cent. That is a cut in real wages even on the Government's official forecast of inflation (3.75% next year). In fact, with the pound losing value and the price of imports rising as a result, inflation of 5%, 6% or more is quite likely.

That higher inflation rate will also turn what the Tories present as increases in spending on welfare payments and services into cuts in real terms.

Central government money for local authorities has been squeezed, to make way for public spending to placate construction industry bosses on projects like the Jubilee Line. This will mean huge bills for the "council tax" which replaces the poll tax next April, and further cuts in local services.

Growth in industry is unlikely. Lower interest rates will not make the bosses go for expansion until they see profitable new markets opening up. Market demand in Britain will be depressed, with real wage cuts and more people unemployed. All the big capitalist economies — the US, France, Germany, Japan — are depressed, so exports will be sluggish, too.

The "balance of payments" deficit — the amount by which the money flowing out of Britain, for imports and other reasons, exceeds the money coming in for exports and so on — will get worse, as imports get more expensive. This problem may even force the Tories into another U-turn — raising interest rates again, to draw cash into Britain to cover the deficit.

The only good thing about the Autumn Statement is that it shows the Tories to be disoriented, floundering, and stumbling from U-turn to U-turn. The labour movement can force another U-turn on them. Smash the 1.5% limit!



Margaret Thatcher's role has yet to be uncovered

## Iraqgate cover-up

That Britain and other capitalist countries built-up and armed Saddam Hussein has long been known. Britain's unfolding "Iraqgate" scandal is about uncovering who did what, and who knew exactly what was going on. After the invasion of Kuwait, and the Gulf War, all the Tory politicians are saying "Who, me?" and trying to look innocent. Evidence suggests that all the key Tory ministers and former Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher knew, approved and connived at covering up what was going on. They even kept silent as Matrix-Churchill businessmen were jailed.

Now, in a transparent attempt to play down this latest Tory crisis, they have appointed a Royal Commission to enquire. Such commissions cover up more often than they uncover. That is what they are trying to do here. They may not be able to.

And they may not be able any longer to stop the publication of details of how some members of Mrs Thatcher's family used Thatcher's period in power to enrich themselves vastly. Her son, Mark Thatcher, has made vast millions in mystery-shrouded comings and goings in the Middle East. He may — if the commission is not to be a complete cover-up — be called upon to give an account of his connections in the Middle East, where he seems to have continued to have dealings even as his mother beat the war drum in 1990.

That's capitalism for you! That is how the Tories have ruled Britain. For a long time, it looked like it would be a generation or more before any detailed accounts of the deep corruption that surrounded Mrs Thatcher's rule came before the public. It begins to look as if it will be closer than that. But British official secrecy is still sheltering the Tories. If this scandal had broken in the US, John Major would already be impeached.

# Labour must fight!

Continued from front page

Only the organised labour movement is in a position to lead the powerful ongoing campaign we need. *Socialist Organiser* and the Alliance for Workers' Liberty are launching a drive to demand that the Labour Party and the TUC give a lead.

On this page we print the text of an appeal addressed to the leaders of the TUC and the Labour Party. Get labour movement activists to sign it. Pass the text (suitably amended) as a resolution at your trade union and Labour Party branches. Organise broad, local meetings to build support for these "Labour must fight" demands.

The address for queries, completed petition forms and reports of activities is: "Labour must fight", c/o AWL, PO Box 823, London SE15 4NA.

## Draft appeal

We call on the Labour Party and TUC leaders to lead a fight against the Tory Government, with the aim of driving them from office and forcing a General Election.

We call for:

- Solidarity with the miners. For a national TUC day of action on a weekday!
- Rebuild the Health Service! Stop the Tory cuts! Labour must commit itself to reverse all Tory cuts in health, education, and other public services.
- Support all workers in struggle! Smash the Tory 1.5% pay limit. Occupy to stop closures!
- Free our trade unions! Support all workers in conflict with the anti-union laws. Labour must commit itself to repeal those laws and replace them by laws guaranteeing the right to organise a union, to strike, to picket effectively, and to take solidarity action.

# Ireland goes to the polls

By Jack Cleary

The Republic of Ireland is within a week of a General Election. The voters will also be voting in a simultaneous referendum about whether or not the country — where a referendum wrote a ban on abortion into the constitution a decade ago — should slightly liberalise its abortion laws.

Southern Ireland politics is dominated by two big bourgeois parties, Fianna Fail and Fine Gael, which originated as the two main wings of the old Sinn Fein Party, which fought a year-long civil war in 1922-3. There is also a cluster of smaller parties. On the right, the Progressive Democrats are Thatcherite liberals. On the left, there is a small Labour Party and the two wings of the old Stalinist "Work-

ers' Party", recently split (into the Workers' Party and the Democratic Left).

The linking of the abortion referendum with the election means that few politicians will dare campaign for liberalisation, though the Democratic Left, with three outgoing TDs (MPs) says it will.

Northern Ireland traditionally plays little part in Southern elections.

This time, the Progressive Democrats, recent junior partners in a Government coalition with Fianna Fail, have accused the Fianna Fail leader, Albert Reynolds, of being "ungenerous" towards the Northern Ireland Unionists in the recent three-way talks. Reynolds refused to consider dropping Dublin's claims to Northern Ireland except as part of an overall new deal. Fine Gael has sided with PD. Fianna Fail responded by calling Fine Gael's leader, Bruton, a "neo-Unionist".

Opinion polls show that only 1% of the electorate think Northern Ireland or the war there are major issues facing the new Dublin Government.

Sinn Fein, the political wing of the Provisional IRA, which was not represented in the outgoing Dail (Parliament), is standing in 33 constituencies, combining support for their activities in Northern Ireland and Britain with agitation on welfare entitlement and similar social questions. They say they expect to take one seat in Dublin.



The NUM marches in Nottinghamshire, where most miners are members of scab Roy Lynk's Union of Democratic Mineworkers — the UDM, betrayed by its Tory puppet masters. According to Arthur Scargill, hundreds of men have left the scab union and joined the NUM: nearly 100 in one Notts pit alone.

## Students face racist attacks

At the Bermondsey site of Southwark College, in South East London, six racist attacks have been reported by students since September.

Bermondsey is a target area for the fascist British National Party. The Labour-run Southwark council presides over large areas of low-quality council housing. Unemployment is high.

Students, many of whom are

black or Asian, have demanded better security at the college. Some attacks have used baseball bats and knives.

**Southwark Anti-Racist Alliance public meeting**

7pm, Tuesday 24 November  
Pitt Street Community Centre, East Surrey Grove, London SE15.

# What the socialist left must do

On 28-29 November the Alliance for Workers' Liberty (AWL) will hold its 1992 annual conference. What is the AWL? What is the reason for its existence?

If you want the answer to that question, then take a good look at the picture on this page, and think about what happened in the great miners' strike of 1984-5, and why. That is one way of understanding AWL and what we in AWL are trying to do.

It is a famous picture. In it, Arthur Scargill is being arrested at the "Battle of Orgreave", on 30 May 1984, where miners fought a long battle with troops of police and with police cavalry at a coke depot outside Sheffield. It was one of the turning points of the 1984-5 miners' strike.

The picture symbolises and what happened in 1984-5. Mrs Thatcher's police thugs beat down the miners with physical violence and they were able to do it because the labour movement left the miners to fight alone.

## Advisory Editorial Board

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For the Tories and the police, it was no holds barred. They had been planning and organising to beat down the miners since the early 1970s. They had a centralised, semi-military police operation all prepared. Margaret Thatcher said, during the strike, that if the police needed any laws changed to enable them to beat the miners, then changed they would be.

As the police smashed into picket lines, and became an army of occupation in many pit villages, it was, once again, the situation depicted back in the 1840s in the famous *Punch* cartoon in which a government "Special Constable" tells a labour movement Chartist: "If you kill me, it's murder. If I kill you, it's nothing".

In 1984, the miners had either to fight in the unfavourable con-

**"There are no replays in the class struggle!"**

ditions they found themselves in, or let the Tories win a crushing victory over them peacefully. The Tory class warriors controlled the British state, and used it with grim resolve to make war on the labour movement.

All the patronising "sympathy" now — some of it, the *Sun's* for example, half-gleeful — can not undo the effects for the last eight years of the Tory victory over the miners — communities devastated and ruined; jobs lost; and the labour movement, which had played an immense role for many decades in "civilising" British capitalism, marginalised.

There is no substitute for victory! There are no replays in the class struggle! Those who lose suffer the consequences.

Could we have beaten the



The cop who arrested Arthur Scargill in 1984 now says (according to the *Daily Mirror* last week) "Sorry Arthur". But there are no replays in the class struggle.

Tories in 1984?

Yes! Despite all the police preparations and all the Tories' determination, they could have been beaten and overwhelmed in 1984 as they had been in 1972 and 1974. It would have been more difficult but it could have been done.

What, in 1984-5, would have made the difference between defeat and victory? Solidarity! General labour movement action! The leaders of the TUC and the Labour Party could, had they backed the miners instead of openly and covertly undercutting them, have rallied the indus-

trial and other support necessary. But they are what they are - tame trade union officials and second-string Westminster politicians. That being so, only an organised network of revolutionary militants in the trade unions, Trades Councils, and Labour Parties, pursuing a common strategy, could have rallied the labour movement to a common battle together with the miners.

That was what was missing in 1984. That was what the miners needed in 1984, and no trade

*"The emancipation of the working class is also the emancipation of all human beings without distinction of sex or race."*

Karl Marx

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# Frozen out again

**N**orman Willis is an affable, well-meaning chap, but you couldn't honestly say that he's had many triumphs to tuck under his belt in his 8 years as TUC General Secretary. This year, however, Our Norman scored a real coup: for the first time in the TUC's 124 year history, the Director General of the CBI came along to Congress to give delegates the benefit of his wisdom.

## INSIDE THE UNIONS



By Sleeper

Howard Davies's contribution went down pretty well, apart from that embarrassing walk-out from the NUM delegation and a few individual malcontents from other unions. Our Norman, barred from No 10 and the corridors of power by nasty Mrs Thatcher and her slightly-less-nasty successor, beamed with pleasure as Mr Davies took the rostrum. After the speech, union leaders from Bill Jordan to Bill Morris lined up to say how much they agreed with the bulk of Mr Davies's argument. Perhaps the good old days of "partnership", "consensus" and "co-operation" were about to return?

The TUC General Council followed up this brilliant triumph by inviting the CBI to join them in their imaginative "Jobs and Recovery Campaign", inspired by popular hostility to the government's pit closure plan and aimed at creating a national consensus, involving church-people, the CBI and fair minded folk the length and breadth of the land. Quite a few church-people and fair-minded folk rallied to the TUC's banner. But so far the CBI and nice Mr Davies have not got round to returning Norman's calls.

One possible explanation for this lack of enthusiasm on the part of the captains of industry may be a section of Mr Davies's TUC speech that went almost unnoticed at the time: he proposed "tight control of public sector pay" and indeed "that the total public sector pay bill should not rise at all" as a way out of recession. Whether Mr Davies knew at the time that this was precisely what Norman Lamont would be proposing two months later, or whether the Chancellor got the idea from Mr Davies, we shall never know. But either way, it leaves Our Norman (Willis, not Lamont) and the General Council out in the cold once again.

They had hoped, of course, to preside over a "National Economic Assessment" under Neil Kinnock's triumphant Labour Government. Even denied this prize, the TUC had not ruled out playing a similar role for the Tories (a document drawn up by John Edmonds and Alan Tuffin a couple of years ago made the offer quite explicit) once John Major and the post-Thatcher Tories saw sense and returned to consensus politics. The TUC would act as "policemen" of their members' wage demands in exchange for some "consultation" on national economic policy. A bit like the Social Contract of the 1970s, the one that lost Labour the 1979 General Election.

With Lamont's announcement of a public sector pay freeze, all the TUC's hope lie in ruins. There was no "consultation", no attempt at "consensus" — just the stark announcement in the Autumn Statement. Now Our Norman has to decide whether to fight or flee. No prizes for guessing which he'll choose.

**T**he proposed amalgamation between the TGWU and the GMB seems to be virtually signed, sealed and delivered. But still the rank and file of both unions have had no consultation whatsoever. It's enough that Bill Morris and John Edmonds have established a "chemistry".

At least the AEU/EETPU merger involved extensive debate within the AEU (EETPU members' support was taken for granted) and considerable coverage within the AEU Journal. To date, no discussion of the merger has taken place in the TGWU Record or in any GMB publication. Yet TGWU deputy General Secretary Jack Adams has told regional officials that the merger is now a virtual "fait accompli".

As a matter of fact, a GMB/TGWU get together is a good idea as far as industrial logic goes. A united general union throughout industry offers great possibilities for unskilled and semi-skilled workers. But what about the rule-book? What about the structure of the new "super-union".

The officials' (from both unions) main concern seems to be to counter the AEU/EETPU merger and the forthcoming NUPE/NALGO/CoHSE amalgamation. Officials who don't expect to stay are mainly concerned about their pay-off arrangements. Perhaps delegates to the TGWU's special Rules Revision Conference in December (to discuss the mainly uncontentious Klein Report) should take the opportunity to demand some rank and file involvement.



Liverpool City council, under *Militant* leadership, failed to make a common cause with the miners in 1984, and paid the price a year later

# What socialists must do

continued from page 4

union, however heroic, could provide it.

Serious working-class politics demands, centrally, the integration and coordination of the different fronts of the class struggle - trade unions, politics, and the fight against the ideas and propaganda of the ruling class - into a coherent strategy against the common capitalist enemy, with an organised force to push through that strategy. Given the character of the entrenched leaders of the labour movement, trade unions and Labour Party alike, only an organised network of socialists can achieve this, and such a network has to be built up over years, in advance of such big confrontations as the miners' strike.

Such a network did not exist. Just as the organisations of the broad labour movement were split up into unions acting at cross purposes, refusing the synchronise their efforts, and sometimes acting against each other, and a Labour Party whose official leaders served as auxiliaries of the Tories, denouncing the "violence" of the miners in chorus with the *Sun* and Mrs Thatcher — so too is the left divided. The reasons are different, but the effect is the same.

The left is broken up into a plethora of groups, factions and coteries, with nothing like a common strategy. It took the SWP, the biggest revolutionary group - immobilised by a deep pessimism and defeatism about the downturn in the class struggle - some six months to even begin to engage in miners' support work. Never in 13 months - not until eight years later, in fact! - did

they get round to advocating general labour movement strike action to stop the miners being ground down.

They abstained on principle from activity in the trade unions' political wing, the Labour Party, though the rank and file of the Labour Party were usually active supporters of the miners, despising their own leaders.

*Militant*, which in 1984 controlled the Labour Party and the council in Liverpool, and might have brought the city of Liverpool into a common struggle with the miners to defeat the Tories, chose instead to do a stupid short-term deal with the Tories. The miners beaten, the Tories came back and

**"An organised network of socialists must be built in advance of the big confrontations"**

carved up Liverpool a year later. Then Kinnock inside the Labour Party finished the job.

Many other examples could be cited. The revival of the labour movement, which has been semi-dormant since the miners' strike shows how urgent now is the creation of an adequate network of revolutionary socialists, active in both the trade unions and the Labour Party.

The class struggle does not end. It goes on. If the working class is quelled, it rises again. The class struggle is the pulse of social life under capitalism. The job of socialists is to learn from the class struggle and from history, and to prepare and organ-

ise the workers' side so that we can win the major class struggle confrontations like the miners' strike.

The Alliance for Workers' Liberty, an independent revolutionary organisation, exists to do this work. It groups together and coordinates trade union and Labour Party activists to fight the class struggle, and works to win support for socialist politics by combatting bourgeois ideas in the labour movement. It works to overcome the chaos and disorder on the would-be revolutionary left.

That chaos is rooted in the long chain of defeats suffered by revolutionary socialism at the hands of the Stalinists and the bourgeoisie. The conditions which have reduced the would-be revolutionary movement to an archipelago of often irrational sects are only now lifting.

Against the sectarians, with their airtight undemocratic organisations, the Alliance for Workers' Liberty counterposes open, rational discussion, combined with proposals for practical cooperation and coordination in the class struggle - unity in action, dialogue about our differences, and recognition of the fact that revolutionary socialism in the tradition of Marx, Engels, Lenin, Trotsky and Luxemburg must be recomposed, re-elaborated and redefined for the conditions in which we live now.

On 28-29 November the Alliance for Workers' Liberty will meet in conference to discuss these issues and to plan its activities in the months ahead. The AWL is an organisation of a few hundred people,

**Trotskyism after the collapse of Stalinism**

An open letter to Ernest Mandel

by Sean Matgamna

40p (+18p p&p) from  
PO Box 823,  
London  
SE15 4NA

most of them young. We believe that its ideas, and its rational, democratic approach to the problems which beset the left, will allow it to grow, develop, and, perhaps, unify what is salvageable in the existing "revolutionary left", in the period ahead.

We believe, therefore, that this conference is an important event in the life of the labour movement. *Socialist Organiser* will do everything it can to promote the programme and perspectives of the Alliance for Workers' Liberty.

## Next issue

*Socialist Organiser* will be missing a week because of the AWL conference. SO no.544 will be published on Thursday 3 November.

**The AWL conference, in London on 28-29 November, is open to members and friends of the AWL. If you are interested in attending, contact AWL, PO Box 823, London SE15 4NA.**

# Tube bosses threaten to sack strikers

The executive of the railworkers' union, RMT, has agreed to call an all-out strike from the morning of Tuesday 24 November. ASLEF, the other main union, mainly representing drivers, is still balloting on industrial action, and is not due to announce the result until 30 November.

Every available option must be explored to ensure a united strike. A tubeworker explains the background.

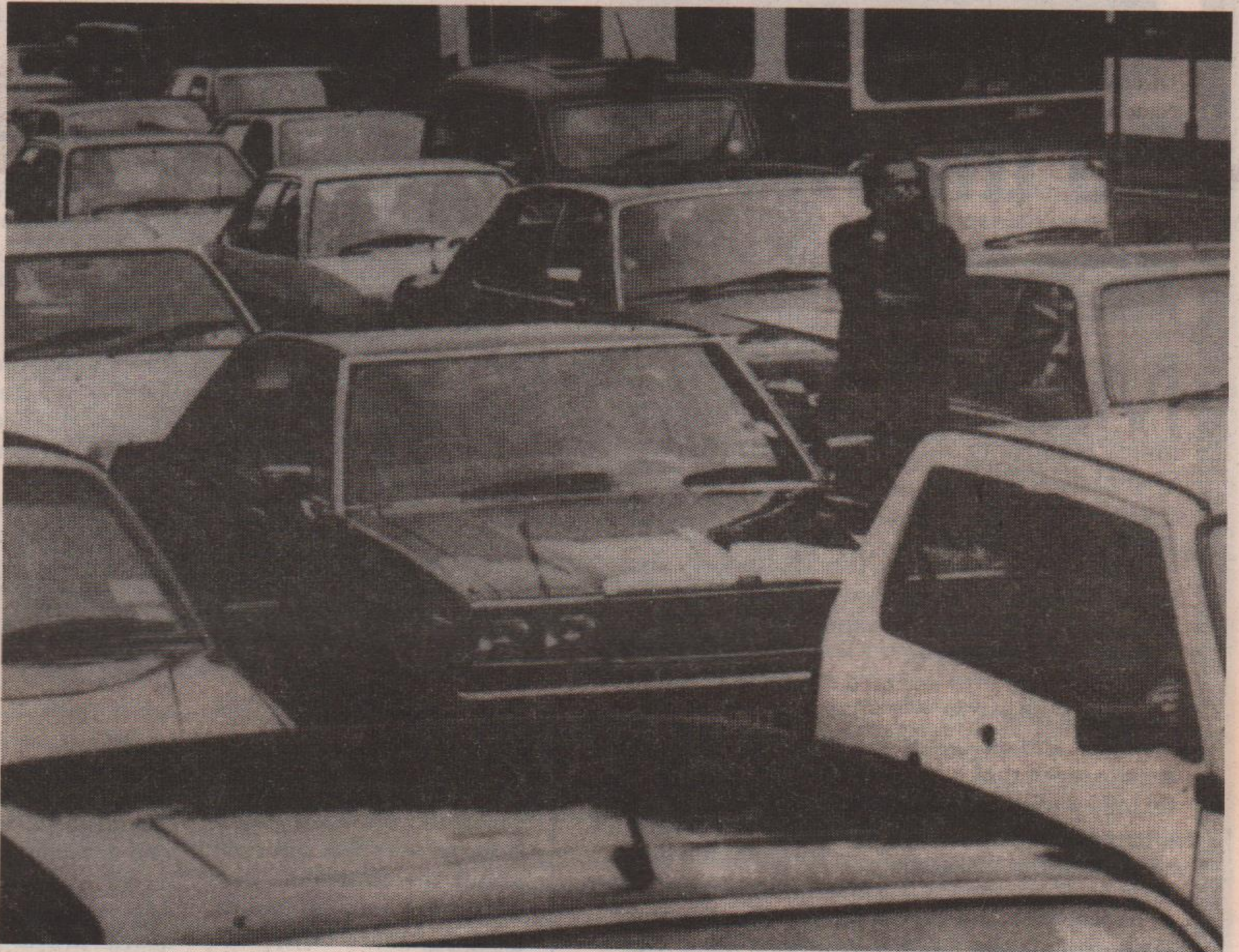
Ian Arthurton, director of passenger services for London Underground, made Thames News and the *Evening Standard* with his threat to sack any tubeworkers taking strike action. Arthurton should remember the fate of personnel director Roger Straker who, after threatening "there will be corpses" if strikes went ahead earlier this year, was unceremoniously sacked a few months later.

Anyway, like the first cuckoo of spring this is the first sighting of this favourite management threat in the current dispute. So has it got us tubeworkers quaking in our DMs? Only if it's with laughter. As one Central Line tubeworker said today (Tuesday 17 November): "I hope he's on TV a few more times this week. He only puts our backs up and it'll get us more public sympathy when people

see what our management are like". This *does* mark the beginning of a heightened campaign of intimidation by management, but their usual gross inefficiency meant that virtually no tubeworkers have even seen Arthurton's threatening letter. The 3-1 result against the Plan in the ASLEF referendum, and the 78% vote for strike action by TSSA, have obviously given them a big shock.

Management's threats may have more effect if ASLEF issue instructions to their members to cross RMT picket lines. Some ASLEF full-timers have already been going out of their way to luridly spell out the supposed consequences of not crossing RMT picket lines. The point is, if one ASLEF member refuses to cross an RMT picket line they are in trouble, if hundreds do it then management are in trouble. But that's not the best option. ASLEF still have time to move forward the timetable for their ballot so that they can strike alongside the RMT. They could organise a workplace ballot in a day if they wanted to! But RMT should do all it can to avoid presenting ultimatums to the ASLEF rank and file.

Generally the mood is definitely gearing up towards taking action. In the mess rooms and canteens the talk is about the Company Plan and nothing else. We're on collision course. There's a real feeling we can win!



Traffic jam during the 1989 strikes. A tube strike can paralyse London's transport system and costs private bosses £25 million a day

## Tubeworkers:

# Together we can win!

By a Central Line guard

When Pol Pot came to power in Cambodia, he announced it was Year Zero. Well, we've got our own Year Zero coming up!

Time is running out. Management's date for implementation of the Company Plan is December 7. We have three weeks left... and counting! The new rosters and timetable come in then. We must act before that happens. There is

one thing and one thing only that can stop management — united action by us all, regardless of grade and union. If we stand together, there is not a thing management can do. We are a strong, well-organised group of workers with enormous economic power — you can stockpile coal, but you can't stockpile trains or train journeys!

**"Whatever union, we are all tubeworkers, all affected by the Plan. If we don't stand together we will hang together."**

The signs are good for us — but there are pitfalls we must avoid. It is now a real possibility that we can kick out the Plan *but* it all depends on the next few weeks.

Look at the situation. In the face of massive threats and intimidation from management, the ballot results so far have been excellent. ASLEF had a 3:1 majority for rejection of the Plan on a 65% turnout — an excellent result with a massive return for a postal bal-

lot. Even TSSA got an 88% vote for rejection of the Plan and 78% for strike action. TSSA are hardly going to stop the tubes — but this is an indication of the feeling over the Plan across grades and unions. RMT is set for a clear majority for action. ASLEF is now holding a strike ballot. The ASLEF ballot paper has two questions — one asking support for industrial action short of a strike! Is this some kind of joke?! What we need is united *strike* action by us all. "Industrial action short of a strike" is short of useless!

What we have to do is ensure that we get as big a vote as possible for *strike action* and demand that the unions co-ordinate that action.

The central thing now has to be for us to build unity. If we leave that up to the bureaucrats in our union headquarters, we will wait forever. We have to build unity from the bottom in the depots and workplaces. Whatever union we may be in, we are all tubeworkers and we are all affected by the Plan. If we don't stand together we will hang together. Anything that creates that unity must be our first priority. Depot meetings to discuss what's happening, joint branch meetings, joint branch

leaflets, anything and everything that links us together for the fight ahead.

The real testing ground for unity is the picket line. It is the ABC of trade unionism that you do not cross picket lines. To do otherwise is to turn all the talk about unity into just that... a load of talk, of hot air. And, more importantly, it will sink us all.

Management and the Tories are weak. If they appear strong, it's because we are on our knees — let us rise!

## By what rights?

Can London Underground management legally get away with sacking strikers? The answer, from a legal point of view, is yes. But, whether they can succeed in reality depends on the level of resistance and the strength of the strike. During the one-day strikes in '89, Underground bosses threatened to sack strikers but withdrew under the threat of an all-out strike.

Under the common law, bosses can sack workers for striking, as the act of going on strike amounts to a repudiation of their contracts by the strikers themselves.

The Employment Protection Act of 1978 - brought in under the last Labour Government - allows bosses to sack strikers so long as no selection takes place.

However, this does not stop the bosses discriminating between different workplaces in the same combine. They can sack strikers at

workplace A and not workplace B, so long as they sack all the strikers at any particular 'establishment'.

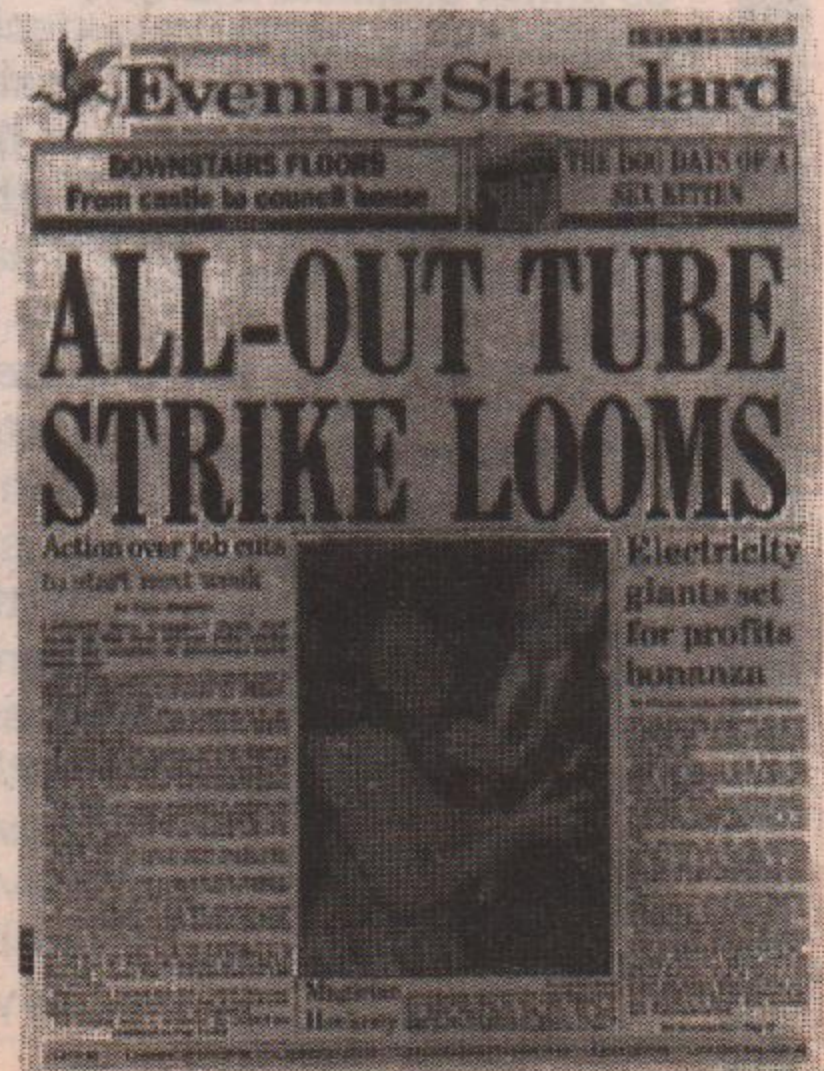
LUL bosses could use this to root out militants from depots where a majority are working. This law, brought in by a Labour Government, should be scrapped and replaced by a positive legal right to strike.

The existence of this law shows how inadequate it is for socialists and trade union activists simply to demand a return to the legal situation as it existed in 1979.

The legal situation is further complicated by the 1990 Employment Act, which allows management to selectively sack strikers involved in unofficial action.

This law could be used to sack ASLEF members who refuse to cross RMT picket-lines in the event of RMT striking alone.

To avoid this danger, we need a co-ordinated strike.



GRAFFITI



Paddy: wrong line on euthanasia

# Do the Mao!

GRAFFITI

**M**ao Tse-tung is the hottest property in the trendy nightspots of Shanghai. A Chinese musician has set such classics as Mao's song "For our peasant friends" to dance beats and has reportedly sold millions of cassettes of the collection.

The idea seems so tasteless and devoid of artistic merit that it can be only a matter of time until Andrew Lloyd Webber picks up on it.

**T**he women of the ruling class seem to be organising to defend their rights. For too many years the "Old Boys' Club" has controlled the top jobs. Women's Networks for creating business contacts for women are multiplying. Organisations with names like "Forum" and "Club 200" boast members such as Employment Secretary Gillian Shepherd, the Director of Public Prosecutions Baroness Denton and the female "chairmen" of leading firms.

Girls' public schools are also adapting themselves to the '90s. Not a few years ago they were training up the daughters of the rich to be good wives to the bourgeoisie rather than the bourgeoisie itself. Now business leadership courses for the sixth form are the order of the day, and the plans for future lucrative "networking".

So Gillian Shepherd is a feminist after all, and we shouldn't have to worry about the effect of the abolition of wages councils on many low-paid women workers.

**T**hese are strange and topsy-turvy times we are living in. The Murdoch-owned *News of the World* released a record to publicise the case of the miners — although the proceeds of the record go to the Grimethorpe Colliery

Band who play the single "The miners' prayer" (a version of the finale from Saint-Saëns Organ Symphony No. 3, for all you tweekers out there). OK, take the publicity and run.

But now the *News of the World* has taken out a full-page ad in the paper of the soft left, *Tribune*. The ad itself is a mock-up of the front page of the *News of the World*. Only a naive idiot in a hurry would believe that News International has forgotten or forgiven the left's campaign against Wapping or the boycott of Murdoch titles. The suspicion has to be that the *News of the World* is shaking the working class by the hand today so it can shake it all the better by the throat tomorrow.

**I**s it fair to end a useless life, where the eyes stare but the brain no longer functions? Is it fair to end a life to save the Health Service from being squeezed further? Should the life support be turned off? No, he just couldn't do it. So Paddy Ashdown and the Liberals voted to keep the Government breathing.

**R**emember how films like *The Exorcist* served the purpose of scaring many faint-hearted, lapsed Christians back into the hands of the church? Now the Catholic church has decided not to leave matters to the vagaries of the market. One Father Pellegrino Ernetti has hit the best-sellers list in Italy with his *The Catechesis of Satan*, with official Vatican backing. The book is packed with pictures of the supposedly demonically possessed. That's not all, Father Ernetti adds: "I have taped the Devil's cavernous voice too". Roll on the CD. Relic anyone?

# Monty's double-whammy

PRESS GANG



By Jim Denham

**O**K. I admit it. I was wrong to sneer at the *Mirror's* journos for getting all hot under the collar about David Montgomery's appointment as chief executive of MGN three weeks ago.

People like Joe Haines and Paul Foot had been quite willing to work under Cap'n Bob, so why the big fuss about the charmless but (relatively) harmless Montgomery, I asked in my best condescending tone. The answer came last week, when the two most independently-minded of MGN's editors — Bill Hagerty of the *People* and Richard Stott of the *Daily Mirror* —

were ousted by Montgomery.

Stott has been replaced by David Banks, a friend (probably the *only* friend) of Montgomery. Like Montgomery, he is a former Murdoch editor, not noted for pro-Labour sympathies. Banks's first actions were to suspend all free-lance journalists (about a third of the *Mirror's* staff are free-lance) and then to refuse a request for a union meeting in the premises to discuss the decision.

All this may or not break the letter of Montgomery's pledge of no redundancies and no change in political line (Paul Foot has said "We are seeking legal advice to try to get an injunction to see if this action against casuals is illegal") but it bodes ill for the future.

Behind Montgomery lies the hand of the bankers who now control the majority of MGN's stock and who are determined to see a quick profit on all the shares they accepted from the Captain as collateral for loans to his private companies.

The *Mirror's* loyalty to the Labour Party is unlikely to come under threat in the

short-term at least, if only because a change of line would certainly result in a loss of circulation. But, in the words of Roy Greenslade (himself sacked as editor of the *Mirror* by Cap'n Bob), "the Mirror Group is in danger of being taken over by people with

**"The Guardian's response to Lamont's public sector wage freeze was to propose a total pay freeze across industry. This was accompanied by the suggestion that dividends be frozen as well. Very fair, I'm sure."**

little regard for its historical political allegiance."

The worst of it is that the *Mirror* was just beginning to find its feet again after the Maxwell trauma and has been challenging the *Sun's* circulation for the first time in twenty years (it would almost certainly have overtaken the *Sun* but for the disastrous decision to

raise the price to 27p — a move foisted upon the paper by another bankers' placeman, the new chairman of MGN, Sir Robert Clark).

I now pass on my apologies to all *Mirror* staff and pass on to readers their less than affectionate nick-name for Montgomery: Rommel ("at least Montgomery was on our side").

**M**y campaign against the *Guardian* is gaining momentum: no less than two people from Balsall Heath, Birmingham, have told me that they have followed my advice and switched over to the *Telegraph* in order to escape the *Guardian's* hypocritical, whingeing sanctimony.

For the unconvinced, I offer yet another reason to boycott the miserable rag: its editorial response to Lamont's public sector wage freeze was to propose a total pay freeze across industry. In typical *Guardian* style, this was accompanied by the suggestion that dividends be frozen as well. Very fair, very 'radical', I'm sure. Why not call it "the Social Contract"?

# Women workers must organise

WOMEN'S EYE

By Rebecca Van Homan

**T**wo million women workers already on low pay will be forced to depend on state benefits following the Government's plans to abolish wages councils, according to Margaret Prosser, chair of the TUC's Women's Committee.

Gillian Shepherd, the Employment Secretary, in announcing their abolition says wages councils have "no permanent place in our system of wage settings".

This is bad news for women and for the working class as a whole.

Wages Councils are undoubtedly a good thing — as is all legal protection of workers. Their abolition is in line with a whole series of attacks by the Tories on the working class which have particularly affected women workers.

**"The TUC needs to take attacks on women more seriously."**

One area where women are better represented is in the public sector

unions, but the threat of contracting-out, and the pay cut announced in the Autumn Statement mean these gains could be lost.

The TUC needs to take attacks on women more seriously. Membership of the TUC has dropped from 12 million in 1979 to a present total of around 8 million.

If they seriously fought to organise women — for example, if they organised better part-time workers, a section of the workforce dominated by women — we would have a different trade union movement altogether, a much bigger, stronger one.

The mood is changing in the labour movement, with stirrings of activity following the announce-

ment of the pit closures. We should push to link the miners' fight with the fight of public sector workers, and with the fight for better legal rights for workers.

Unfortunately, the leadership of most trade unions is dominated by male bureaucrats who care more about their expense accounts than women workers.

The trade union movement needs regenerating from below. A fantastic example of how this can be done is the Burnsall strikers in Birmingham — a group of Asian women fighting for trade union recognition in their workplace. Join the demo at Smethwick, 10.30 on Saturday 28 November.

North West TUC day of action

# "One redundancy every minute. It's time something was done!"

"We voted unanimously to take strike action in sympathy with the miners and the unemployed. One person is being made redundant every minute in this country, and it is time something is done about it."

Dave Laird,  
Chair of Wirral Health Service TGWU Branch.

## Thousands take to the streets for the miners

Over 5,000 demonstrators marched through Liverpool last Tuesday (17 November) on the North West TUC's Day of Action in support of the miners. TGWU members working in three hospitals in the Wirral voted to take a half day's strike action in support of the miners, although faced with the threat of disciplinary action in one of the hospitals. Firefighters in Liverpool voted to answer 999 calls only on the Day of Action.

With the exception of Sefton, all local authorities on Merseyside agreed to let their employees take a day or half-day off work (unpaid).

Local strike action in support of the miners seems to have been limited to the TGWU health workers in the Wirral. A

promised 24-hour strike by Liverpool dockers, for example, failed to materialise.

At the rally which concluded the demonstration, Arthur Scargill declared: "The battle in which we are engaged is not just a battle for the miners and the coal industry.

"It is a battle to save the health service and the five hospitals in London threatened with closure. It is a battle against a Government intent on destroying the state education system, local government, and the social services. The Government wants to keep down pay rises. We should tell them to stuff their pay policy.

"We must not let up in this campaign to reverse the Tories' policy on the mining industry. The whole movement must be mobilised.



Arthur Scargill is calling for national days of action

"If people's power, then it can change the Government's stupid policies in this country. But if the Government refuses to budge, then we must intensify our campaign, and we will be calling for national Days of Action.

"We are fighting to save all 31 pits. The only redundancies I

want to see in this country are those of Heseltine, Major and this Tory government."

In Manchester, 5,000 joined the miners' march. Strikes took place in the Council's Housing Benefit sections.

A vast number of unions send their banners and delegations.

## Local support groups

**Banbury:** support group: 2 Mascord Road, Banbury, Oxfordshire.

**Bexley:** support group: Steve McKenzie: 081-303 777 x 3433.

**Birmingham:** support group: leafleting Saturdays; 021-236 8620.

**Brighton:** Trades Council has set up support group;

Penny Iveson: 0273-54114.

**Brent:** Graham Durham: 081-452 7227.

**Ealing:** support group set up; Leonora Lloyd: 081-993 2071.

**Hackney:** Pete Shields, 51 Bayston Road London N16, 071-254 8189.

Or Trade Union Support Unit: 071-249 8086.

**Hammersmith and Fulham:** Trades Council organising activities.

Pete Turner: 071-731 1494.

**Haringey:** support group: Kevin Hargreaves, 31b Muswell Hill Close, London N10, 081-442 0090.

**Harrow:** Trades Council coordinating activities.

Jack Gilbert: 081-427 1785.

**Hendon North:** local Labour Party running stalls in Broadwalk Shopping Centre. Andrew Whiteside 071-261 4060.

**Hull:** support group set up by Trades Council.

**Lancaster:** Trades Council has set up support group: Margaret and Eric Jones, 8 Dorrington Road, Lancaster LA1, 0524-61585.

**Lambeth:** Trades Council organising public meetings. Contact TURC, 12-14 Thornton Street, London SW9.

**Leicester:** support group working with Shirebrook colliery; Nick Holden, 12 Southfields Avenue, Oadby, Leicester LE2, 0533-716573.

**Manchester:** Rick Sumner, 19 Whalley Grove, Manchester M16, 061-881 3508.

**Newcastle and Northumbria**

**Universities:** support groups twinned with local collieries. Nick Brereton/Fiona Smith, Student Union, Newcastle University; Tom Robin, SU, Northumbria University.

**Nottingham:** Nottingham Campaign Against Pit Closures: 191 Burford Road, Forest Fields, Nottingham 0602-705788. Stall: St Peter's Gate, Saturdays, 9.30am onwards;

meetings: Tue evening at International Centre, Mansfield Road, 7.30pm.

**Oxford:** Roy Leach 0865-777851.

**Reading:** TGWU coordinating activities; Andy Frampton, 89 Southampton Street, Reading, 0734-750777.

**Scotland:** Solidarity Network; Bill Ramsay: 041-423 0244.

**Sheffield:** Sheffield Alliance Against Pit Closures: Julian Bass, 25 Smithywood Crescent, S8 0NT, 0742-507740.

**Sheffield Woman Against Pit Closures:** weekly women's meetings at Sheffield Coordinating Centre Against Unemployment: Enid Salvin: 0742-766900 (NUM HQ) or Debbie Matthews: 0742-724866.

**Southampton:** support group set up by Trades Council: Paul Wozny, 52a Romsey Road, Southampton SO1, 0703-774333.

**Stevenage:** support group: Perry Alderson, 15 Lonsdale Road, Stevenage, 0438-355351.

**Swansea:** 0729-466570.

**Swindon:** Trades Council organising activity.

**Tower Hamlets:** support group: 6 Osier Court, Osier Street, London E1.

# Emergency appeal for funds

The National Miners' Support Network, set up by a wide range of people on the left, has won strong backing from the labour and trade union movement and has been

active in organising meetings and other activities in defence of the threatened pits.

If this campaign is to succeed it needs £3,000 at once to pay for the mailings and printed

material.

We are appealing to you and your organisation to make as generous a donation as possible.

Please make it payable to

"National Miners' Support Network" (address below).

We have not got much time to save the pits and a lot hangs upon the extent to which we can mobilise the backing of all those who are sympathetic to this cause — which is the cause of all of us.

Please help — and help now.

**Tony Benn MP;  
Frank Cave, Vice-President, National Union of Mineworkers.**

## National Miners' Support Network:

Secretary: Jeremy

Corbyn MP, c/o 219

Mare Street, London E8

or 129a Seven Sisters

Road, London N7.

Telephone:

071-263 9450;

Fax: 071-281 5720.

## Diary of events

### Fri 20 November

Nantwich: public meeting, 7.30pm.

### Sat 21 November

Leicester: march and rally with Dennis Skinner.

### Sun 22 November

Bristol: rally with Arthur Scargill.

### Wed 25 November

Doncaster: lobby of TUC General Council meeting, the Dome 10am; in the evening there will be rallies in the Dome; Adwick Town Hall; Brodsworth Miners' Welfare.

Southampton: NALGO day of action.

### Sat 28 November

Wakefield: march and rally, 11am from Clarence Park; rally Town Hall, 12.30pm.

Newport, Gwent: march and rally organised by Newport Labour Party, noon.

March and rally in Bournemouth.

Carlisle: NUM demonstration in market-place, mid-day.

### Mon 30 November

Harrow: public meeting organised by Harrow Trades Council, Victoria Hall, 7.30pm.

### Sat 5 December

Henley: march through town, noon.

Newcastle upon Tyne: march and rally with Arthur Scargill, noon.

### Wed 9 December

NW TUC half-day conference on coal at University of Manchester.

### Sat 12 December

Ammanford, South Wales: march and rally.

Darlington: march and rally.

Seaham: mass rally.

### Thu 17 December

Reading: rally to meet the Scottish NUM marchers, with Tony Benn.

# How to fight

Norman Lamont says "Unemployment is a price worth paying to beat inflation". This adds great urgency to the need to drive the Tories from office and replace them by a Labour government. At the same time we must fight them every inch of the way, contesting every job, fighting every closure.

Trade unionists need to learn from the experiences of earlier struggles to prevent workplace closures and job losses, many of which occurred in the years 1979-81.

## CHALLENGING MANAGEMENT'S ARGUMENTS

To challenge and undermine the bosses' case for closure (or job losses) is the necessary starting point: for workers to decide to mount a campaign in defence of their jobs they have to disbelieve and reject management's case. They have to believe that there is an alternative. In the private sector the standard argument for a workplace closure is that it is running at a loss. But, especially where a company owns a number of sites, artificially creating a loss — on the books! — at one particular plant through accountancy techniques is the easiest thing in the world.

Claims that a factory is running at a loss are often a cover-up for other motives: for a decision to switch production to a low-wage area, for example, or a failure on the part of management to plan investment.

The purpose of challenging management's case for closure is not to give the bosses good working class advice about running their business. Rather, challenging and undermining the employers' arguments is a means of attacking their "credibility" exposing their dishonesty, boosting the confidence of the workforce and beginning to harness broader support for a fight by exposing the weakness of management's case.

But exposing the weakness in management's case can never be enough by itself.

When the British Aluminium Company announced the closure of its plant in the Neath Valley in 1981 for example, the unions ripped the company's arguments to pieces. Within six months of the initial announcement, however, the plant had been shut down.

## FIGHT TO SAVE EVERY JOB

Experience shows that the fight to save jobs is crippled unless any discussion about redundancy is stifled at the outset: severance pay is one of management's favoured methods of undermining resistance to job losses. Some workers foolishly accept comparative riches now — or the hope of them — in return for the griping poverty of the dole in the near future.

Discussion about redundancy terms saps morale, as it assumes that jobs will be lost. It opens the door to the myths of management and the media that huge severance payments will allow redundant workers to live a life of luxury or open small businesses.

In fact, 50% of workers made redundant receive no statutory redundancy payments at all. Those workers who do receive large payments soon discover that they are counted as "savings" to stop their welfare benefits.

With only a few exceptions, efforts by workers to save jobs and prevent workplace closures have raised the question of when to take industrial



Timex workers occupy their factory over forced redundancies, April 1983. Occupation

action, and what form of industrial action.

Typical exceptions were some of the campaigns to save NHS jobs and prevent hospital closures in the early 1980s, when the Tories' dismantling of the NHS had hardly got off the ground.

In 1982, for example, proposals to close the Prince of Wales Hospital in Cardiff and to slash £52 millions from the NHS in Wales were defeated by mobilising public opinion without taking strike action.

But the advance of the Tories' attack on the NHS, coupled with the deepening economic crisis, has undermined the effectiveness of mobilising "public opinion" as the sole method of struggle.

the company was as devious as I thought, they would make the excuse that they might have kept the plant open had it not been for our action. I didn't want to give them any excuses so my advice was — keep on working".

Shop stewards at the Storeys factory in Essex who managed to save most of the jobs at the factory when its closure was announced in 1981, followed the same logic as Helen Monaghan:

"The stewards got the commitment of the members to continue normal work they believed was essential, because they felt that any form of industrial action would play straight into the hands of the directors of Storey Brothers."

## TIMING

The timing and form of industrial action in defence of jobs are both questions of tactics, dependent upon the assessment of the shop stewards (or their equivalents in other industries), of the bosses' strategy and the mood of the workforce.

When the management of the Lee Jeans factory in Greenock announced the decision to shut down the factory in January 1981, the response of shop steward Helen Monaghan (future leader of a seven-month long occupation) was to oppose immediate industrial action:

"I asked the workers to keep on working for the next week because, if

## ACT QUICKLY, OCCUPY!

In other fights to save jobs, industrial action has been an immediate necessity.

In shipping, for example, sit-ins on ships need to be speedily organised in response to the announcement of job losses, given the ease with which a seafarer's "workplace" can be moved out of the country. Hence the series of sit-ins on ships staged in the early 1980s in defence of jobs.

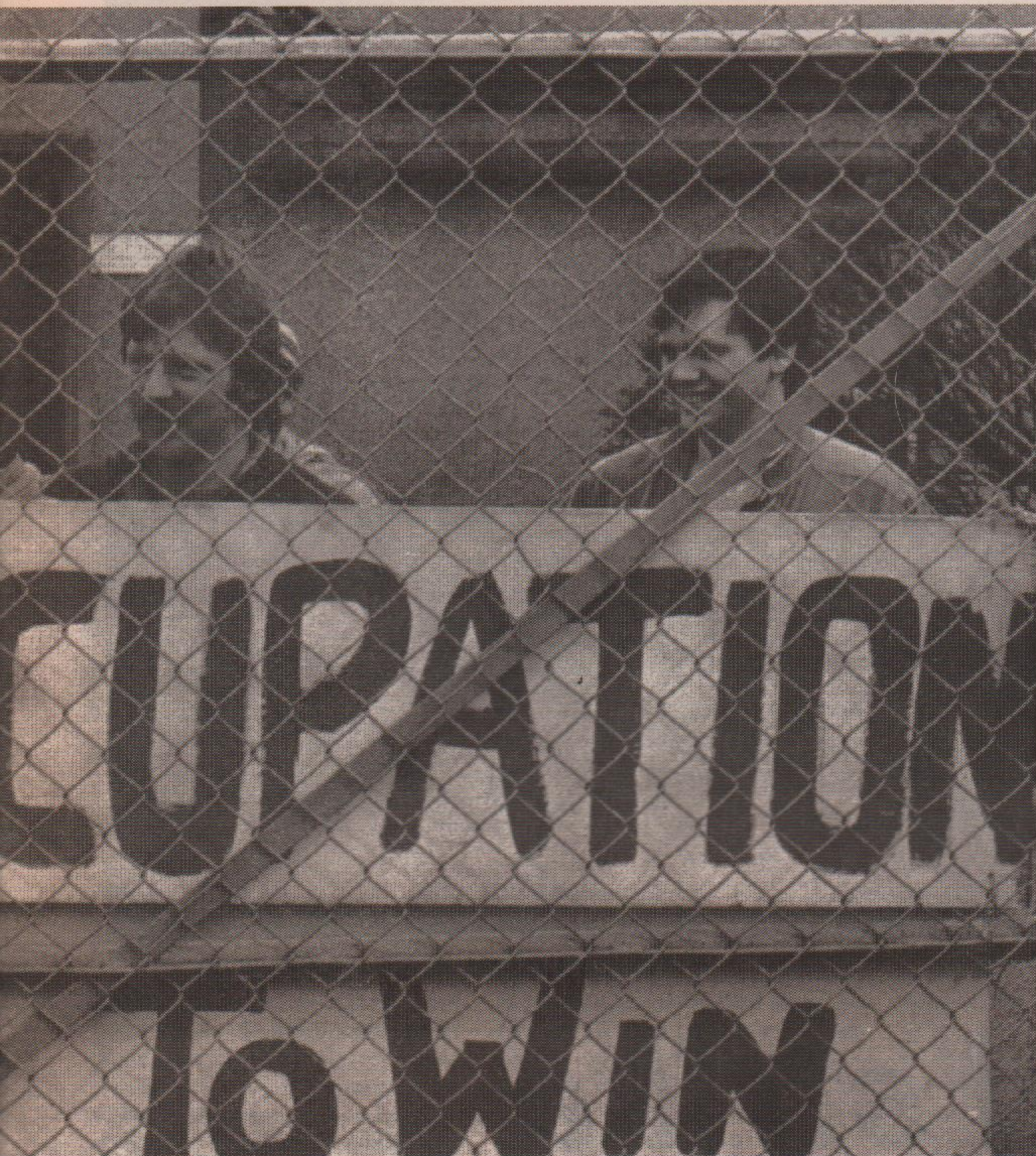
Similarly, in a more famous case, the NUM was quite correct to call an immediate strike — in the absence of a national ballot — in March 1984. Not to have done so would have



Charing Cross Hospital 1992. Although mobilising public opinion is important — especially against attacks on the Health Service it cannot be the sole method of struggle. Photo: John Harris.



# nt closures



is a powerful tactic against closures and redundancies. Photo Rick Matthews.

meant surrendering to the National Coal Board even before battle had commenced.

## SOLIDARITY

**W**here workers have taken action in defence of their jobs, support from workers in other workplaces owned by the same employer has been of crucial importance.

Bosses often claim that the closure of one workplace is necessary to ensure the survival of others, thus seeking to isolate workers threatened with redundancy from workers in other factories.

Unfortunately, such tactics of "divide and rule" have often been successful. One reason the British Steel Corporation could shut down the Corby steelworks in 1979 was that workers in other BSC plants accepted the argument that closure of Corby safeguarded their own jobs.

Similarly, the efforts of British Aluminium Company workers in the Neath Valley to save their jobs in 1981 were hindered by a lack of support from the company's plant in Falkirk.

Although relations between the workforces in the Neath Valley and Falkirk were not hostile, they had never developed beyond 'phone calls and an exchange of letters. Consequently, the chances of company-wide action in defence of jobs were much reduced.

## DEALING WITH THE UNION OFFICIALS

**O**ne of the problems faced by workers fighting in defence of their jobs and seeking to win active support from other workers has often been the half-dead attitude of the leaders of their own trade unions.

After the Lee Jeans occupation, for example, Helen Monaghan criticised the National Union of Tailor and Garment Workers (NUTGW) for its inactivity: the NUTGW failed to make the sit-in official for six weeks, and then withdrew that status before the sit-in had ended.

Trade unionists who successfully fought in defence of jobs in the NHS in Wales in the early 1980s were equally critical of their unions, citing "over-cautiousness" by union officers in some unions at and above regional level, in particular an emphasis not to break the law regarding sit-ins etc."

The role of the leaders of the Iron and Steel Trades Confederation (ISTC) in the closure of Corby in 1979 was even worse. They refused to criticise the BSC's corporate plan which dictated the closure of Corby, having endorsed the plan as being "on the right lines" when it was first produced. They left Corby to fight alone.

## LOCAL SUPPORT

**W**hile certainly not being a substitute for support from one's own union or from other workers employed by the same company, support from the community in which a workplace is situated and from which it draws its workforce has been vital to many campaigns in defence of jobs.

Right from the outset, for example, the Lee Jeans workers had the backing of their local community, as too did the trade unionists who took action in defence of jobs in the NHS in Wales in the early 1980s. Support from the mining communities was vital to maintaining the miners' strike of 1984/5 over a 12 month period.

Community support is not by any means sufficient to secure victory. The experience of the miners' strike, unfortunately, proves this.

But, like exposing the weakness of the bosses' case for closure, community support for a fight can help boost the confidence of workers defending their jobs. When workers find sympathy in the street and pub rather than lack of interest or hostility, it boosts their morale and stiffens their resolve.

## LEARNING THE LESSONS

**T**he experiences of earlier struggles in defence of jobs contain many lessons as to how trade unionists should react after the announcement of plans to axe jobs:

- challenge the bosses' case!
- divert discussion away from redundancy terms;
- win broader support from fellow trade unionists and from the surrounding community.

Experience points also to the need for major changes in the nature of the labour movement and in its entire approach to the question of workers'

rights. Workers must strive to be better positioned to fight job losses before they are announced; now, we simply react to the bosses' job-cutting agenda.

- The experience of workers having to "go it alone" in a fight in defence of jobs without support from the workforces at other plants owned by the same company underlines the need to build strong combine committees which bring together shop stewards form all the company's workplaces.

- The standoffish attitude usually displayed by union leaders to their members' rights to save jobs makes very urgent the need for greater accountability in the unions and for rank and file control over union leaders.

- Most workplace closures and jobs losses are predictable well in advance: the BSC's corporate plan of the mid-1970s, for example, was explicit that major job losses were coming.

Shadowing management's plans for job cuts and planning out a strategy in defence of jobs in advance of the announcement of redundancies — rather than trying to close the stable door after the horse has bolted — should be integral to the routine work of the trade unions.

- Trade unions should be prepared where necessary to defy the Tories' anti-union legislation. They should also campaign for its complete abolition and replacement by a Charter of Workers' Rights, including the right to inspect management's books at any time they wish to do so.

- Above all, the fight to stop redundancies must become part of a national, if not a European-wide, campaign for a shorter working week with no loss of pay. Struggles in individual workplaces can certainly achieve success. But they cannot create another three million jobs for the unemployed.

- With so many workers in different industries threatened with redundancies — miners, railworkers, NHS workers, council workers and civil servants — now, more than ever, the fight to save jobs must combine struggles in individual workplaces with a national campaign for a shorter working week.

# SOCIALIST

## ORGANISER

This poster was produced by the Alliance for Workers' Liberty which publishes the weekly socialist paper, *Socialist Organiser*.

For more information, contact:  
SO, PO Box 823, London SE15 4NA.

# Socialists and the

After a long prostration, the labour movement has at last begun to rise up off its knees, roused by the inhumanly casual brutality with which the Tory Government proposed to throw 30,000 miners out of work in the middle of the worst economic slump for 60 years.

The two big October marches for the miners — 100,000 on a weekday, and then 200,000 at the weekend — and a token solidarity strike by a few hundred power workers are so far the high points of the revival of the labour movement. Socialists will now combine a political campaign against the key Tory measures of the 1980s — destruction of the National Health Service, anti-union laws, and so on — with a drive to win active solidarity for the miners and promote industrial action in other disputes, and thus help develop the labour revival, which is so far only in its early, tentative stages.

In these circumstances, the idea that the left should focus its activity around a campaign for an all-out "General Strike Now" would not merit serious discussion were it not for the fact that it is raised by the biggest organisation on the revolutionary left, the Socialist Workers' Party (SWP).

The size of the SWP can not make "General Strike Now" a sensible project. It does make it necessary to discuss the question seriously. One way of doing this is to bring in examples of how the General Strike was raised or discussed by serious Marxists in the past; and this we do with these extracts from the work of Leon Trotsky.

Most of those who have been shouting for a General Strike Now seem not to know what it is they are proposing. If they ponder Trotsky's opinion, expressed here, that the General Strike is the most advanced slogan short of revolution, then young SWPers might understand the reception their call for a "General Strike Now" has received from trade unionists.

In the two extracts published here, Trotsky shows that the General Strike must grow out of the previous struggles and mobilisations of the labour movement. It can not be arbitrarily evoked without that preparation — not by the leaders of powerful labour movements, and still less by very small revolutionary organisations.

Trotsky shows that a serious General Strike must normally end in crushing defeat either for the bosses or for the workers. Where, as in the second extract here, Trotsky favours propaganda and agitation for a General Strike, he links it with such things as the arming of the working class in preparation for a struggle for state power.

Other possibilities exist — for example, when the bourgeois state (the state, not just the government) is in disarray, concessions by the bourgeoisie, as in Belgium in 1893, when a general strike won the right to vote for the workers.

Trotsky writing nearly 60 years ago can not, of course, analyse the situation in Britain now for us. That we do for ourselves. Nor should we go to Trotsky for dogmatic recipes and extrapolations. Trotsky's work is best taken first as a valuable record of past discussions, and then as a model of how revolutionary Marxists who take ideas seriously approach such questions and how they analyse reality.

The SWP's demagogic left phrasemongering will be of some use if it sends serious socialists to the study of this important question.



The 1926 General Strike. Betrayed by the trade union leadership who, as Trotsky pointed out, went along with it the better to control and end it as soon as possible

## A general strike against war?

**In this 1935 article, Leon Trotsky discusses the politics of the Independent Labour Party (ILP), which "promised" to call a General Strike to stop the Second World War. The ILP was the core organisation inside the Labour Party until the union-based Labour set up the individual membership-constituted Labour Party in 1918.**

**In 1932, the Party disaffiliated from the Labour Party, refusing to accept its discipline for its half-dozen MPs in Parliament. It had, perhaps, 17,000 members led by James Maxton MP and Fenner Brockway. It moved strongly to the left and to revolutionary socialism. But the Party stagnated and wasted away as the Thirties wore on. Maxton died and Brockway rejoined the Labour Party in 1945, ending his — generally respectworthy — life in the House of Lords.**

The question of the general strike has a long and rich history, in theory as well as practice. Yet the leaders of the ILP behave as if they were the first to run across the idea of general strike, as a method to stop war. In this is their greatest error. Improvisation is impermissible precisely on the question of the general strike.

The world experience of the struggle during the last forty years has been *fundamentally* a confirmation of what Engels had to say about the general strike towards the close of the last century, primarily on the basis of the experience of the Chartists, and in part of the Belgians.

Cautioning the Austrian Social Democrats against much too flighty an attitude towards the general strike, Engels wrote to Kautsky, on November 3, 1893, as follows: 'You yourself remark that the barricades have become antiquated (they may, however, prove useful again should the army turn one third or two fifths socialist and the question arises of providing it with the opportunity to turn its bayonets), but the political strike must either prove victorious immediately by the threat alone (as in Belgium, where the army was very shaky), or it must end in a colossal fiasco, or, finally, *lead directly to the barricades.*'

He differentiates, as we have seen, between three cases in relation to the political strike:

(1) The government *takes fright* at the general strike, and at the very outset, without carrying matters to an open clash, takes to concessions. Engels points to the 'shaky' condition of the army in Belgium as the basic condition for the success of the Belgian general strike (1893). A somewhat similar situation, but on a much more colossal scale occurred in Russia,

October, 1905. After the miserable outcome of the Russo-Japanese War, the Tsarist army was, or, at any rate, seemed extremely unreliable. The Petersburg government, thrown into a mortal panic by the strike, made the first constitutional concessions (*Manifesto*, October 17, 1905).

It is all too evident, however, that without resorting to decisive battles, the ruling class will make only such concessions as will not touch the basis of its rule. That is precisely how matters stood in Belgium and Russia. Are such cases possible in the future? They are inevitable in the countries of the Orient. They are, generally speaking, less probable in the countries of the West, although, here too they are quite possible as partial episodes of the unfolding revolution.

(2) If the army is sufficiently reliable, and the government feels sure of itself; if a political strike is promulgated from above, and if, at the same time, it is calculated not for decisive battles, but to 'frighten' the enemy, then it can easily turn out a mere adventure, and reveal its utter impotence. To this we ought to add that after the initial experiences of the general strike, the novelty of which reacted upon the imagination of the popular masses as well as governments, several decades have elapsed — discounting the half-forgotten Chartists — in the course of which the strategists of capital have accumulated an enormous experience.

That is why a general strike, particularly in the old capitalist countries, requires a painstaking Marxist accounting of all the concrete circumstances.

***"If a political strike is promulgated from above, and if, at the same time, it is calculated not for decisive battles, but to 'frighten' the enemy, then it can easily turn out a mere adventure."***

(3) Finally, there remains a general strike which, as Engels put it, 'leads directly to the barricades'. A strike of this sort can result either in complete victory or defeat. But to shy away from battle, when the battle is forced by the objective situation, is to lead inevitably to the most fatal and demoralizing of all possible defeats.

The outcome of a revolutionary, insurrectionary general strike depends, of course, upon the relationship of forces, covering a great number of factors: the class differentiation of society, the specific weight of the proletariat, the mood of the lower layers of the petty-bourgeoisie, the social composition and the political mood of the army, etc. However, among the conditions for victory, far from the last place is occupied by *the cor-*

# General Strike

*rect revolutionary leadership, a clear understanding of conditions and methods of the general strike and its transition to open revolutionary struggle.*

Engels' classification must not, of course, be taken dogmatically. We should also add that Engels did not point out another 'category' of general strike, exemplars of which have been provided in Britain, Belgium, France and some other countries: we refer here to cases in which the leadership of the strike previously, i.e. without a struggle, arrives at an agreement with the class enemy as to the course and outcome of the strike.

**"A strike called artificially must turn inevitably into a putsch, and into an obstacle in the path of the revolution."**

The parliamentarians and the trade unionists perceive at a given moment the need to provide an outlet for the accumulated ire of the masses, or they are simply compelled to jump in step with a movement that has flared over their heads. In such cases they come scurrying through the backstairs to the Government and obtain permission to head the general strike, this with the obligation to conclude it as soon as possible, without any damage being done to the state crockery. Sometimes, far from always, they manage to haggle beforehand some petty conces-

sions, to serve them as figleaves.

Thus did the General Council of British Trade Unions (TUC) in 1926. Thus did Jouhaux in 1934. Thus will they act in the future also. The exposure of these contemptible machinations behind the backs of the struggling proletariat enters as a necessary part into the preparation of a general strike.

To which type does a general strike belong which is specially intended by the ILP, in the event of mobilization, as a means to stop war at the very outset? We want to say beforehand: it pertains to the most inconsidered and unfortunate of all types possible. This does not mean to say that the revolution can never coincide with mobilisation or with the outbreak of war. If a wide-scale revolutionary movement is developing in a country, if at its head is a revolutionary party possessing the confidence of the masses and capable of going through to the end; if the government, losing its head, despite the revolutionary crisis, or just because of such a crisis, plunges headlong into a war adventure — then the mobilisation can act as a mighty impetus for the masses, lead to a general strike of railwaymen, fraternization between the mobilized and the workers, seizure of important key centres, clashes between insurrectionists and the police and the reactionary sections of the army, the establishment of local, workers' and soldiers' councils, and, finally, to the complete overthrow of the government, and consequently, to stopping the war. Such a case is theoretically possible. If,

in the words of Clausewitz, 'war is the continuation of politics by other means', then the struggle against war is also the continuation of the entire preceding policy of a revolutionary class and its party. Hence it follows that a general strike can be put on the order of the day as a method of struggle against mobilization and war only in the event that the entire preceding developments in the country have placed revolution and armed insurrection on the order of the day. Taken, however, as a 'special' method of struggle against mobilization, a general strike would be a sheer adventure. Excluding a possible but nevertheless an exceptional case of a government plunging into war in order to escape from a revolution that directly threatens it, it must remain, as a general rule, that precisely prior to, during, and after mobilisation the government feels itself strongest, and, consequently, least inclined to allow itself to be scared by a general strike.

The patriotic moods that accompany mobilization, together with the war terror make hopeless the very execution of a general strike, as a rule. The most intrepid elements who, without taking the circumstances into account, plunge into the struggle, would be crushed. The defeat, and the partial annihilation of the vanguard would make revolutionary work difficult for a long time in the atmosphere of dissatisfaction that war breeds.

A strike called artificially must turn inevitably into a *putsch*, and into an obstacle in the path of the

revolution.

In its theses accepted in April, 1935, the ILP writes as follows: 'The policy of the party aims at the use of a *general strike* to stop war and at *social revolution* should war occur.' An astonishingly precise, but — sad to say — absolutely fictitious obligation! The general strike is not only separated here from the social revolution but also counterposed to it as a specific method to 'stop war'. This is an ancient conception of the anarchists which life itself smashed long ago. A general strike without a victorious insurrection cannot 'stop war'. If, under the conditions of mobilization, the insurrection is impossible, then so is a general strike impossible.

In an ensuing paragraph we read: 'The ILP will urge a General Strike against the British Government, if this country is in any way involved in an attack on the Soviet Union...' If it is possible to forestall any war by a general strike, then of course it is all the more necessary to stop war *against the USSR*. But here we enter into the realm of illusions: to inscribe in the theses a general strike as *punishment* for a given *capital crime* of the government is to commit the sin of revolutionary phrasemongering. If it were possible to call a general strike at will, then it would be best called today to prevent the British government from strangling India and from collaborating with Japan to strangle China.

The leaders of the ILP will of course tell us that they have not the power to do so. But nothing gives them the right to promise

that they will apparently have the power to call a general strike on the day of mobilization. And if they be able, why confine it to a strike? As a matter of fact, the conduct of a party during mobilization will flow from its preceding successes and from the situation in the country as a whole.

But the aim of revolutionary policy should not be an isolated general strike, as a special means to 'stop war', but the proletarian revolution into which a general strike will enter as an inevitable or a very probable integral part.



Rosa Luxemburg wrote the classic Marxist analysis of the great wave of strikes with which the workers in Russia, Poland etc., fought the Tsarist system in the years before the October 1917 workers' revolution

## General strike and insurrection

What follows is extracted from *Once Again, Whither France* published by Leon Trotsky on March 28 1935.

Trotsky and the French Trotskyists advocated a General Strike, as part of a revolutionary offensive with the aim of seizing state power. They believed that France was in a pre-revolutionary situation. 13 months earlier, the Stavisky Scandal — during which a vast network of financial corruption was revealed to the people — had led to large-scale riots (on February 6 1934) and an invasion of the French Parliament by a fascist mob armed with razors, followed by a great one-day protest General Strike (on February 12). The Government had fallen. A Government ruling without a parliamentary majority and based on the police and the Civil Service took over (thus what Trotsky here describes as the "Bonapartism of Doumergue-Flandin").

Trotsky saw this regime as as the prelude to fascism, unless the working class took power. The French labour movement was divided into a powerful Communist Party, led by Maurice Thorez,

organising tens of thousands of revolutionary workers and supported by one million more, and a strong, reformist Socialist Party (the SFIO) with two weak trade union federations, the stronger of which was the CGT led by Jean Jouhaux (reformist, but keeping a distance from the SFIO). Trotsky proposed a comprehensive programme on which the French working class could mobilise and prepare itself for the taking of power, including the General Strike and the arming of the working class. These extracts are from a discussion by Trotsky of the French CP's contradictory attitudes. Denying that France was in a pre-revolutionary situation and refusing to prepare for the necessary armed struggle against the powerful fascist organisations and the bosses' state, the CP leaders nevertheless demagogically called for "the strike", using it to "expose" the socialist leaders. Here Trotsky exposes the unseriousness of the CP leaders who merely trifled with revolutionary slogans. What follows has been cut and edited to highlight what the great, revolutionary Marxist has to

say about the General Strike, and the reasoning process by which he reached his conclusions.

The Central Committee of the Party (French Communist Party [CP]) proposes the general strike for the struggle against the Bonapartist legislation of Doumergue-Flandin. With this we are in full accord. But we demand that the leaders of working class organizations themselves understand and explain to the masses the meaning of the general strike under the present conditions, as well as how it must be prepared.

Let us view more closely the line of reasoning relating to the general strike. We have in mind not an ordinary demonstration, nor a symbolic strike of an hour's or even twenty-four hours' duration, but a war manoeuvre with the aim of forcing the enemy to submit.

It is not difficult to understand what a terrific aggravation of the class struggle the general strike would imply under the present conditions! The fascist gangs would sprout on all sides like mushrooms after a rain and they would attempt with all their might to introduce confusion, provocation, and demoralization among the ranks of the strikers.

How else can we guard the general strike against needless sacrifices and even against complete annihilation if not by means of military and strictly disciplined workers' detachments?

**"The general strike, as every Marxist knows, is one of the most revolutionary methods of struggle. The general strike is not possible except at a time when the class struggle rises above particular and craft demands."**

The general strike is the generalization of the partial strike. The workers' militia is the generalisation of the picket squads. Only windbags and pathetic braggards can play with the idea of the general strike under the present conditions, and refuse at the same time to carry on the stubborn work for the creation of the workers' militia!

The general strike, as every Marxist knows, is one of the most revolutionary methods of struggle. The general strike is not pos-

sible except at a time when the class struggle rises above particular and craft demands, and extends over all occupational and district divisions, and wipes away the lines between the trade unions and the parties, between legality and illegality, and mobilizes the majority of the proletariat in an active opposition to the bourgeoisie and the state. Nothing can be on a higher plane than the general strike, except insurrection. The entire history of the working class movement proves that every general strike, whatever may be the slogans under which it occurs, has an internal tendency to transform itself into an open revolutionary clash into direct struggle for power. In other words — ie general strike is not possible — except under the condition of extreme political tension, and that is why it is always the incontestable expression of the revolutionary character of the situation. How then can the Central Committee propose a general strike in this case? "The situation is not a revolutionary one!"

Perhaps Thorez will retort that he had in mind not a real general strike but a little strike, quite peaceful. Or perhaps he will add discreetly that, foreseeing the

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# General Strike and insurrection

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refusal of the leaders of the SFIO, he risks nothing by proposing a general strike to them?

But every Communist worker who has a head on his shoulders must ponder over the crying contradictions of his hapless leaders: it is impossible, you see, to build workers' militias because the situation is not revolutionary, it is impossible even to carry on propaganda in favour of the arming of the proletariat, that is to say of preparing the workers for a revolutionary situation in the future; but it is possible, it appears, even today, to call the workers to a general strike despite the absence of a revolutionary situation. In truth, we find transcended here all the boundaries of giddiness and absurdity!

But is the general strike possible in the immediate future? To a question of this sort there is no *a priori* answer possible, that is to say, none ready-made. To obtain an answer it is necessary to know how to question. Whom? The masses. How question them? By means of agitation.

Agitation is not only the means of communicating to the masses this or that slogan, calling the masses to action, etc. For a party, agitation is also a means of lending an ear to the masses, of sounding out their moods and thoughts, and reaching this or another decision in accordance with the results. Only the Stalinists have transformed agitation into a noisy monologue. For the Marxists, the Leninists, agitation is always a dialogue with the masses.

But in order that this dialogue give the necessary results, the party must estimate correctly the general situation within the country and outline the general course of the immediate struggle. By means of agitation and probing of the masses, the party must bring into its concepts the necessary corrections and exactitude, particularly in everything relating to the rhythm of the movement and the dates for major actions.

The situation in the country has been described above; it bears a prerevolutionary character along with the nonrevolutionary character of the leadership of the proletariat. And since the policy of the proletariat is the principal factor in the development of a revolutionary situation, the nonrevolutionary character of the proletarian leadership checks the transformation of the prerevolutionary situation and by this very thing contributes toward transforming it into a counterrevolutionary situation.

In objective reality there are, of course, no sharp boundaries between the different stages of the political process. One stage interpenetrates with another and as a result of this situation reveals various contradictions. These contradictions certainly make diagnosis and prognosis more difficult, but they do not at all make it impossible.

The forces of the French proletariat remain not only unexhausted, but are indeed still intact. Fascism as a political factor among the petty-bourgeois masses is relatively feeble as yet (much more powerful, nevertheless, than it seems to the parliamentarians). These two very important political facts allow us to say with firm conviction: nothing has been lost



The Paris Commune: the importance of the General Strike is that it poses the question of power in a revolutionary manner

as yet, the possibility for transforming the prerevolutionary situation into a revolutionary situation is still entirely open.

But in a capitalist country such as this there can be no revolutionary struggles without the general strike: if working men and women remain in the factories during the decisive days who then will do the fighting? Thus, the general strike is on the agenda.

***"Perhaps Thorez will add discreetly that, foreseeing the refusal of the leaders of the SFIO, he risks nothing by proposing a general strike to them?"***

But the question of the moment for the general strike is the question of knowing whether the masses are prepared to struggle and whether the workers' organizations are ready to lead them to battle.

Up to the present moment there has been not a single case either in Paris or in the provinces where the masses remained deaf to a call from above.

The greatest case in point is the general strike of February 12, 1934. Despite the complete division of the leadership, the lack of any serious preparation, the tenacious efforts of the leaders of the CGT to reduce the movement to a minimum — since they could not evade it altogether — the general strike achieved the greatest success possible under the given conditions. It is clear that the masses want to struggle. Every class-conscious worker must say to himself that the pressure from below must have been extremely powerful if Jouhaux himself was stirred for a moment from his immobility. True, involved here was not a gen-

eral strike in the proper meaning of the term, but only a twenty-four hour demonstration. But this restriction was not put by the masses; it was dictated from above.

The rank and file want to fight, the leaders apply the brake. It is here that the chief danger lies; and it may end in a catastrophe.

One should not think, however, that the radicalization of the masses will proceed by itself, automatically. The working class waits for initiative on the part of its organizations. When it arrives at the conclusion that its expectations have been false — and this moment is, perhaps, not so very distant — the process of radicalization will break off and be transformed into manifestations of discouragement, apathy, and isolated explosions of despair. At the periphery of the proletariat, anarchist tendencies impinge upon fascist tendencies. The wine will turn to vinegar.

The shifts in the political mood of the masses demand the greatest possible attention. To probe this living dialectic at every stage — that is the task of agitation.

To determine to what degree the masses are ripe for the general strike and at the same time to strengthen the militant mood of the masses, it is necessary to place before them a program of revolutionary action. Partial slogans such as the abolition of the Bonapartist decree-laws and of the two-year term of military service will find, of course, an important place in such a program. But these two episodic slogans are entirely inadequate.

Above all tasks and partial demands of our epoch there stands the question of power. Since February 6, 1934, the question of power has been openly posed as a question of armed force. The municipal and parliamentary elections can be of importance insofar as the evaluation of forces is concerned — but nothing more. The question will be settled by the open conflict between the two camps. Governments of the type of Doumergue-

Flandin, etc., occupy the forefront only up to the day of the decisive climax. On the morrow, either fascism or the proletariat will govern France.

It is precisely because the present intermediate state regime is extremely unstable that the general strike can achieve very great partial successes by forcing the government to take to the road of concessions on the question of the Bonapartist decree-laws, the two-year term of military service, etc. But such a success, extremely valuable and important by itself, will not reestablish the equilibrium of "democracy": finance capital will redouble its subsidies to fascism, and the question of power, perhaps after a brief interlude, will be posed with redoubled force.

The fundamental importance of the general strike, independent of the partial successes which it may and then again may not provide, lies in the fact that it poses the question of power in a revolutionary manner. By shutting down the factories, transport, and in general all the means of communication,

## Glossary

**Engels:** Frederick Engels (1820-1895), socialist and close comrade of Karl Marx.

**Chartists:** The first movement of the modern industrial working class. Active in England, mainly from 1838 to 1848. Demanded the vote for all citizens, including workers, and other democratic reforms. Organised a general strike in 1842.

**Belgian general strike:** For the right to vote for parliament, in 1893.

**Russo-Japanese war:** In 1904-5 Japan defeated Russia, occupying Korea and ousting Russia's previous influence there. The Russian Government, headed by a Tsar (king) who ruled without any democracy, was weakened, and mass workers' strikes in 1905 forced concessions.

**The TUC in 1926:** Called a general strike in support of the miners, who were resisting wage cuts and longer hours, but called it off after nine days when it was still growing.

**Jouhaux in 1934:** Leon Jouhaux was

power stations, etc., the proletariat by this very act paralyses not only production but also the government. The state power remains suspended in midair. It must either subjugate the proletariat by famine and force and constrain it to set the apparatus of the bourgeois state once again in motion, or retreat before the proletariat.

Whatever may be the slogans and the motive for which the general strike is initiated, if it includes the genuine masses, and if these masses are quite resolved to struggle, the general strike inevitably poses before all the classes in the nation the question: Who will be the master?

The leaders of the proletariat must understand this internal logic of the general strike, unless they are not leaders but dilettantes and adventurers.

The general strike is by its very essence a political act. It opposes the working class as a whole to the bourgeois state.

The general strike poses directly the question of the conquest of power by the proletariat.

**the leader of the main French trade union organisation, the CGT. He called a one-day general strike on 12 February 1934 (see the second article from Trotsky), but with no follow-up.**

**India:** Was then ruled by Britain, and China was ruled by Japan.

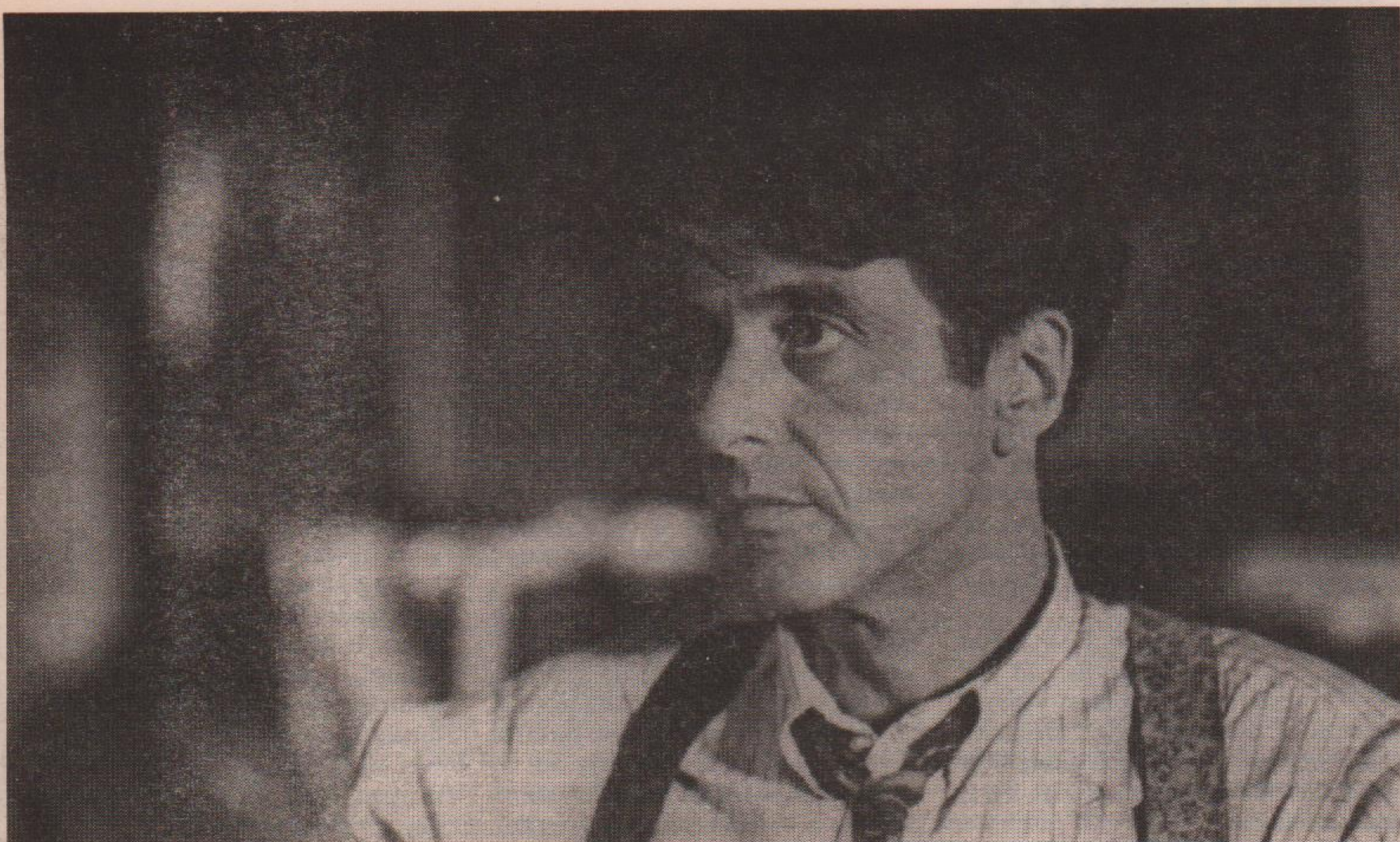
**Doumergue:** Head of the Government of "National Union" set up after the Radical Party government fell in February 1934. It sought special powers to rule by decree, without reference to parliament. A similar government, headed by Flandin, followed from November 1934 to May 1935.

**Bonapartist:** A regime which raises itself above any democratic control by society, usually by balancing between social classes (so called after the two Bonapartes who were Emperors of France, Napoleon I, 1804-15, and Napoleon III, 1852-71).

**Thorez:** General Secretary of the Communist Party.

**SFIO:** The Socialist Party.

**Petty-bourgeois:** Middle-class.



Al Pacino plays Ricky Roma, the purring cat of a salesman.

# Life of a salesman

## Cinema

Belinda Weaver reviews *"Glengarry Glen Ross"*

**"G**lengarry Glen Ross" is very dark, very fast, and very funny. It's the story of four salesmen, whose job is to con suckers into real estate "investments" in Florida.

The men work for a shady, flea-bitten outfit, whose manager treats them with contempt. The men are all self-hating, apart from Ricky Roma, who's currently on top, with the highest sales. Roma (played by Al Pacino in tremendous form) is sleek and self-satisfied, with a purring cat manner that soothes the suckers into buying.

The others — Moss, Aaronow and Levene — are in a trough. They're not selling; they have no hope of selling. Levene, who's old and at the bottom of the heap, doesn't have a single sale on the board.

The men gripe endlessly to each other, and about each other. There's no loyalty. They blame the company for the bum leads it gives them. It's all a cover for their worst fear, the fear that they've lost it, that the bad streak will never end.

For Levene, it's life or death. At his age, with a daughter in hospi-

tal, sacking would be disaster. Aaronow, fiftyish, would also suffer; he's lost the confidence to get another job. He can barely function in the one he's got.

Moss still has the guts to put up a front, but it's a sham. He, like Aaronow and Levene, has been wrecked by the work he's had to do.

They're con artists. What they have to sell isn't worth anything; it's a rip-off, pure and simple.

***"Glengarry Glen Ross" could be a textbook film on how capitalism distorts people, how it bends them into grotesque shapes.***

Because they can and do manipulate people, they start to see them as stupid, as suckers who deserve all they get.

The flash sales trainer the company brings in is no help to the men. He's contemptuous of them; he treats them like dirt. To him, success is all that matters. A real salesman gets out there and sells, he tells them. He's successful — always — despite bad

leads, despite everything. If Moss and Levene and Aaronow can't sell, it's because they never were real men in the first place. They don't have the balls.

"See my watch?" he jeers at Moss. "It cost more than your car."

To him, first is all that counts. Second is nowhere. Welcome to the cut-throat, competitive jungle.

The film is taken from David Mamet's play, and Mamet shows clearly how salesmen have to kill off the best of themselves in order to do their job. They have to suppress every finer feeling - pity, kindness, generosity; they have to trample down their humanity. Like sharks scenting blood, they must go for the kill.

The film is very well acted. Only Jack Lemmon, in the showy role of Sheldon Levene, failed to touch me. His performance seemed false and busy, as if he'd worked out every tic, every teary eye, in advance, but had left out the feelings. He shoved pathos at me till I gagged. Moss and Aaronow, who didn't angle for sympathy, touched me more.

"Glengarry Glen Ross" could be a textbook film on how capitalism distorts people, how it bends them into grotesque shapes. It's not the death of a salesman that's tragic; it's the life.

# The political fight and the miners' union

## Book

Gary Scott reviews *The Miners' Association — a trade union in the age of the Chartists* by Ray Challinor and Brian Ripley

**B**enwich Press, have republished "The Miners' Association", the first detailed history of the Miners' Association.

The authors refute claims made by some historians that there was a divorce between Chartism and the trade unions... Hobsbawm for example in "Labouring Men" states:

"Miners — whether coal or metal — were an isolated body of men, often geographically separated from the rest of the working people and concerned less with political than with their specialised economic struggles. Hence, in most parts of the country, they took surprisingly little part in radical and Chartist agitation."

Challinor and Ripley show this was not the case. Thomas Hepburn, leader of the 1830-32 miners' union turned to Chartist activity once the union had been shattered. Many of the leading men in the Miners' Association were also Chartists. In 1849 the Chartist journal, the *Northern Star* stated: "As we ascribe all to system, we will once again lend our aid to the reorganisation of the Collier's Union which, while in its strength, was the most powerful Labour Union ever known in this country."

The Miners' Association was formerly established at Wakefield in November 1842. At its peak it had a membership of between 60,000 and 1,000,000 and continued to operate throughout the 1840s. After its decline it continued to operate at a grass roots level and began a tradition among mineworkers that has continued down to the present day.

The inspiring and vividly told story of the Miners' Association is set at a time of economic recession. Unemployment was high — in some towns accounting for half of the population. Those in employment were subjected to frequent wage cuts. Many families were on the verge of starvation.

In each coalfield miners had to overcome their own particular problems — such as the Truck System that existed mainly in Staffordshire, some parts of Yorkshire and Scotland. This was described by the Midlands Mining Commission as follows:

"One of the essentials of the tommy system is to pay wages only once in a month or five, six or even seven weeks. Now, as the men cannot go without any fresh supplies for so long a period, their only resource is to

apply to the masters' shops and get goods in lieu or part of what they would otherwise receive from the butty at the reckoning."

And Durham and Northumberland miners had to contend with the Yearly Bond, a legally binding contract drawn up between the coalowners and the miners. The following contemporary description of the Bond illustrates the degree to which it favoured the coalowners:

***"It is possible to build powerful and militant trade unions despite the most abject economic circumstances".***

"When binding morning was come, and the owner, peeping out of his office window, saw the hungry unbound men coming up the road and clustering round the office door, to compete with men of the colliery he saw at once he was going to have his own way and began his speech by saying 'We are not going to bind so many this year as last'. Then the poor hewers pressed still nearer the door and cared little what was in the bond when they heard it read."

Heavy fines were imposed on miners for a variety of offences such as arriving for work late, leaving too early or refusing to work in dangerous conditions. If the miners protested more fines would be imposed.

Against this background of economic depression, miners took part in the first ever General Strike of 1842 inspired and organised by the Chartist movement. They were involved in a long strike in Durham and Northumberland in 1844.

The Miners' Association was one of the first unions to be seriously involved in political and parliamentary action. In 1847, two of its' leaders William Dixon and WP Roberts stood for Parliament. Though they had no chance of winning they used the opportunity to raise Chartist demands and expose the unjust electoral system that denied the majority of the working class a vote.

There are lessons to be learned for present day socialists and trade unionists in this book. Perhaps one of the most important lessons is that, contrary to various theories of the "down turn", it is possible to build powerful and militant trade unions and possible to win gains for the working class, despite the most abject economic conditions. The republishing of this excellent book is very timely.

# Militant as self-help task force?

## Television

Geoff Ward reviews *Comrade*, (Channel 4)

**"C**omrade" Channel 4's documentary "Cutting Edge", last week featured Militant's election campaign in Liverpool Broadgreen, where Terry Field lost his seat to the official Labour candidate.

Sticking narrowly to Militant in Liverpool the programme gave Militant badly needed publicity but it gave the viewer no insight into Militant's politics.

The Militant founder Ted Grant, had been expelled only months earlier over his opposition to Militant's fiasco in the Walton by-election.

What we did see was Militant's ordinary working class supporters knocking on doors, putting up posters and — together with others — chasing after bailiffs over the poll tax.

A self-appointed right-wing Labour

vigilante, Frank Dunne, (who described Militant as being "obsessive") was shown popping up everywhere taking photographs of anyone selling the Militant. Obviously for use as evidence in the Labour Party purge.

The programme portrayed Militant sympathetically I thought, as some sort of self-help task force. Getting council flats for homeless families; giving advice and support to people with bailiff troubles; even giving youth a meaning to life.

One woman compared one of her off-spring's involvement with Militant to another one's joining the Jehovah's Witness.

Their younger people tried to explain their ideas but came across like idealistic adolescent dreamers "going through a phase". One young woman thought that under socialism we'll find a cure for AIDS — straight away.

We were told what Militant is against — "the poll tax" or "the Tories" — but little about what they stood for.

No Militant hacks braved the camera to explain further, and no interviewer asked probing questions.

Like: how come Militant, after spending decades lambasting the "sects on the fringes of the labour movement" has now joined them?

Or: after the collapse of Stalinism, what's left of Militant's shattered world view predicting the inevitable birth, growth and development of similar regimes in the developing world?

Like: have they got any "perspectives" which relate to the real world.

Terry Fields, whose integrity and commitment to the socialist struggle cannot be doubted has gone from being a respected Labour MP jailed for his stand over the poll tax, to running a Liverpool bar.

He is probably a good publican, but he'd be more useful to the labour movement as MP for Broadgreen, as he was before a combination of right wing witch-hunting and Militant's stupidity blew him out of it.

# A man of many faces

## AGAINST THE TIDE

By Sean Matgamna

A man of many faces is ex-Labour leader Michael Foot's rebel nephew, Paul, the *Daily Mirror* columnist and best known member of the SWP. He has, after thirty years in the SWP, a strange and politically ambivalent relationship with "the party". The SWP placards him for its meetings as the "Daily Mirror columnist". Foot, for his part, operates in the mass media as the soft, reasonable, reformist face of the r... r... revolutionary leather-jacket tough SWP.

It has happened again and again, over many years and it tells us something important about the SWP. It helps explain why ex-SWPers can flip over into prostrate reformism. I'll take three examples.

In the 1979 General Election the SWP while proclaiming itself "the socialist alternative" to the Labour Party, declined to put up candidates, backed the Labour Party! It was as if to say: we'll work the "revolutionary" side of the street, in the unions, and leave the politics to the Labour Party. That is what they still try to do.

Since, in contrast to the active left wing of the Labour Party, they had no connection with the living, critical, oppositional rank and file movement in the political wing of the trade unions, all they could do was uncritically support the discredited Labour

Prime Minister, Jim Callaghan. It fell to Foot, in a much-quoted interview in the *London Evening Standard*, to express the SWP's dualism, the approach which left the political labour movement to the right wing, in all its crassness. He said:

*"For the next three weeks I am a strong Labour supporter. I am very anxious that a Tory government shouldn't be returned, and I shall be going around to meetings we are having telling everyone to vote Labour"* (9 April 1979).

My second example is Foot's pamphlet in the Chatto and Windus "Counterblast" series advocating British withdrawal from Northern Ireland.

As we have often proved in *Socialist Organiser*, the SWP line on Ireland is not what it seems. They call for Troops Out Now, but usually add some impossible conditions in the small print to cancel it out ("look, boss, I'm not serious"). They demand that Britain should first disarm the Protestants, which implies a lot more troops, and troops for the foreseeable future too.

The SWP tells its members that Troops Out would be the beginning of "Permanent Revolution" in Ireland: the Provisional IRA's nationalist struggle will grow over into a working-class struggle for a socialist revolution. This idea is gibberish, but it is central to securing the consent of thinking SWPers for the "militant" Troops Out Now line. It squares the circle and allows them to avoid an understanding that Troops Out without a political settlement can only mean sectarian civil war and repartition.

tion.

*There is not a hint of this "Permanent Revolution" argument in Foot's pamphlet.* He advocates nothing beyond straight British withdrawal, argued on the level of normal bourgeois politics (and argued very badly, with astonishing journalistic ignorance: as someone said, there are so many ABC errors that when you read in this pamphlet that Ireland has 36 counties you do not automatically conclude that it is a printer's error for the correct figure of 32).

The pamphlet shows Foot once again as the right-wing face of the SWP, presenting its real ideas without benefit of the mystifying "socialist" and "militant" phrasemongering that *Socialist Worker* and official SWP pamphlets use.

The third example, and the occasion for this footnote, is from *Tribune* last week. Discussing the affairs of the *Daily Mirror* in an interview, Foot said:

*"I'm amazed at how unconcerned the Left is". At issue is not so much the Mirror's voting advice at election times but its tendency "to take at least a reforming position on a huge variety of issues"* (*Tribune*, 6 November).

But... but... surely the SWP, and its best-known member, are not concerned with reforms? Well, no, officially they are not, but others had better be, or else the ecological balance of British working-class politics will be destroyed. "Politics" is for the Labour Party — and reforming journalism for... Robert Maxwell!

Once more you have the crass dualism, the notion that "politics" — in

this case, concern with the sort of reforms, and resistance of Tory counter-reform, around which the labour movement can most readily be mobilised now — is for others, in practice for the right wing (and even, retrospectively, for strike-busting Robert Maxwell), while the revolutionaries look after strikes, demonstrations, and economic struggles, and "build the party".

The SWP is a hybrid organisation which combines devotion to "building the party" — as a fetish outside of politics and irrespective of politics — with an essentially anarcho-syndicalist idea of working class action (that is, an idea of working-class socialist revolution growing directly out of strikes and workplace organisation, without a broader political struggle). Therefore it has many historical parallels, none of them quite exact.

Despite differences, the parallel between the SWP and the turn-of-the-century Russian "Economists" is quite striking. These were rather stodgy and mechanical Marxists who believed it was their job to organise the working class in trade unions, make general socialist propaganda, and thus build a working-class socialist party, while leaving current politics — the struggle against the Tsar (king), who then ruled Russia, for political freedom and parliamentary democracy — as the monopoly of the middle class and its politicians.

Lenin and Trotsky pointed out that since the workers must inevitably be concerned with those immediate political questions, an "Economist" policy by the Marxists would simply push the workers into the arms of the bour-

geois and middle-class politicians. The Bolsheviks, led by Lenin, combined trade union organising with socialist propaganda and action by the revolutionary party on immediate "reformist" political issues.

In Britain now, the same approach means that the independent revolutionary socialist organisation, the Alliance for Workers' Liberty, combines trade union work with fraction work in the Labour Party and the putting forward of perspectives and policies for the broad labour movement. It means *not* putting forward policies — such as the call for "General Strike Now" — that are nonsense for the broad labour movement, however useful they may be in creating a militant image for the phrasemongering revolutionaries abstaining from politics.

The SWP's antics can only push workers in the broad labour movement into the arms of the John Smiths — especially when, as now, the Smiths show some little sign of life.

The SWP both denounce the Labour Party, proclaiming themselves the socialist alternative to it, and also leave it in uncontested possession of the entire terrain of current working class politics! It is hard to see the real shape behind their contradictory facets. That is where Paul Foot comes in.

In his role of SWP ambassador to the bourgeoisie and the media, Foot often blurts out the truth about the SWP's politics, without the usual "socialist" obfuscation and phrasemongering. Michael Foot's nephew Paul is thus a useful man to have around.

# Genetically engineered animals

## SCIENCE COLUMN

By Les Hearn

Genetic engineering techniques have made it possible to insert genes from one type of living thing into another, often apparently unrelated, type. Thus, there is the possibility of inserting a gene from some plants into a sheep or of putting growth hormone genes from humans into pigs. We will look later into why people should want to do this. But first, we will consider people's reactions to something that, while apparently bizarre, does not seem worse than many of the other things that are done to animals.

Part of the problem is the terminology used. Even *New Scientist* ("Guess what's coming to dinner?" by Gail Vines, 14.11.92) falls into the trap of referring to "genetically engineered organisms" when what is meant is "organisms containing one gene from another organism".

It was ten years ago that a foreign gene was first inserted into an organism. This was a mouse which had been injected with rat growth hormone genes before birth. Consequently, it was twice the size of its litter mates. Now, at least 60,000 "transgenic" animals are produced in British labs alone each year.

Veteran opponent of biotechnology (the new sort — not the old sort of making cheese and yoghurt with mould and bacteria) Jeremy Rifkin believes transgenic techniques will "reduce the whole living planet to commercial property". This is

more a criticism of the intrusion of capitalist economics than of genetic engineering. Nevertheless, Rifkin has launched the Pure Food Campaign. Its logo, to be displayed by food retailers, shows a DNA double helix of the sort found in every cell of every living thing, over stamped with the "forbidden" symbol. The slogan surrounding it reads "We do not sell genetically engineered foods".

Sue Mayer, scientific director of Greenpeace UK, sets the issue within the context of "genetic pollution", the unpredictable spread of DNA from transgenic organisms to others. This, some believe, could destroy the barrier between species. "Do we need a technology that undermines the integrity of nature", she says. But there is no reason why artificially inserted genes should show any greater tendency to escape than any other genes. These genes are, after all, natural genes. Genes do spread across species boundaries naturally and this is how many of these new techniques were developed. However, it occurs almost entirely among bacteria.

Joyce D'Silva of the animal welfare charity, the Athene Trust, points to the ill-effects of traditional animal breeding, giving us crippled broiler chickens and bulls that cannot mate because of their shape. She believes that genetic engineering is unlikely to improve the welfare of farm animals. Once again, this seems a flimsy argument. Logically, there should be a campaign against traditional breeding methods, or at least against perpetuating breeds with particular distressing defects. Already, dog breeders try to eliminate hip and eye disorders from pedigree animals.

Now let us look at the reasons for introducing new genes into

living things. In some cases, the purpose is to increase yields. The case is often quoted of the pig with an extra gene for growth hormone. The gene was of human origin, which excites horror among opponents. In fact, human growth hormone is very similar to that from many mammals.

The pig in question suffered badly from arthritis, possibly as a result of its treatment. This is the only ill-effect of genetic engineering I have seen mentioned. Other research of this type includes an attempt to increase wool yields by inserting an extra gene for a particular building block of wool into sheep.

Often the motive is to help the organism resist attack by parasites. In Australia, the group working on the woollier sheep is also trying to insert a gene that produces an enzyme called chitinase. This enzyme, which originates from some plants, breaks down chitin, a substance only found in insects. If successful, the gene will allow sheep skin to kill the larvae of blowfly which burrow into it, causing wounds and infection. Other examples of this type involve putting genes into plants that enable them to produce their own pesticides to kill insects that eat them.

Medical research is another large area. In some cases, genes for useful proteins are put into animals. A British company has produced sheep that make a substance in their milk that could be an effective treatment for emphysema. It is difficult to see how this harms the sheep and it is not possible to make it in sufficient quantities by other means.

In other cases, the transgenic animals display conditions similar to ones suffered by humans,

such as cancers or cystic fibrosis. Treatments can then be investigated before being extended to humans. Some people will oppose this not because it involves genetic engineering but because it involves research on animals, a separate question. It is a truth missed by most of the arguments about genetic engineering that it is only possi-

ble because of the fundamental unity of life on Earth. All of us, from slime mould to monkey, from cabbage to king, have the same genetic material organised in similar ways. No doubt, there are arguments to be had over the ways genetic engineering is carried out. In part, this can be tackled by laws on animal welfare. Political and economic

arguments need to be fought out, too, over whether people's livelihoods are threatened by the introduction of cheaper methods of production. But mystical nonsense about "going against nature" is something that no socialist should get tangled up with.

## AWL meetings

Thursday 19 November

"How to beat the Tories", Leeds AWL meeting. 7.30, Adelphi Hotel. Speaker: John O'Mahony.

"Is revolution possible?" Nottingham AWL meeting. 8.00, ICC, Mansfield Road.

"Is there a backlash against women?" Sheffield AWL meeting. 7.30, SCCAU, West Street.

Saturday 28 November  
How to fight and win. Socialist Organiser rally. Speakers include: Billy Pye (NUM Executive); Paul Whetton; John O'Mahony; Jill Mountford and a tubeworker. 7.00, Kingsway College, Sidmouth Street, London WC1.

Five Day School  
The Alliance for Workers' Liberty is holding a five-day political school, Friday 18 - Tuesday 22 December, in London.

The two themes of the course are political economy and our programme.

The economics will cover: why does capitalism have crises?; the business cycle; unemployment and inflation; the world market.

Sessions on the programme will discuss: maximum, minimum and transitional demands; the workers' government and the Transitional Programme.

Reading material will be available from 21 November. Registration costs £5/£2 (waged/unwaged) and accommodation is available in London.

To register, contact Mark on 071-639 7965. Also coming up... Saturday 21 November National demonstration

against the Asylum Bill. Assemble: 12.00, Hyde Park, London.

Saturday 28 November  
Burnsall Strikers Support March. Assemble: 10.30, Fenton Street, Smethwick. Called by GMBU.

Labour Party Socialists  
Annual General Meeting  
Organise the Labour left!  
Back the miners!  
Drive out the Tories!  
Saturday 5 December  
Sheffield Hallam University Students' Union  
Details from LPS, c/o 106 Lyham Road, London SW2

# Build a public sector alliance!

## By a Civil Servant

Workers in the Public Sector are to pay for the Tories economic failures with the restriction of public sector pay settlements to 0-1.5% for at least the next year.

Many public sector workers are already on the breadline. A pay freeze will be an added blow.

It is an outrage that we have to pay while the Tories and their friends continue to live in the lap of luxury.

Civil Servants have now been officially informed of

the pay freeze and the suspension of sections of the Pay Agreements (heralded by the right in the CPSA as ending poverty pay!)

There is no time to waste. Union activists have to start preparing and laying the basis for a united response to the Tories.

The public sector is now probably the stronghold of trade unionism. The Tories are determined to break up that base through contracting-out and privatisation. If our unions don't fight on pay then it will give the

Tories the message that we are a pushover.

We need a public sector alliance to defeat the pay freeze and unite all the other isolated battles that are taking place across the country on cuts, privatisation and contracting out.

We should demand that the TUC public services committee call an official conference in the new year of all public sector trade unions to hammer out a strategy to defeat the pay freeze.

In the meantime the rank

and file need to get some kind of unofficial co-ordination off the ground.

Move this motion:

"This .... notes the Government's decision to suspend the recently concluded pay agreements and insist on maximum public sector pay settlements of 1.5% in 1993. This calls on the NEC to:

1. Begin immediate talks with other civil service and public sector trade unions on a common strategy for ensuring members' living standards are protected

from government attack.

2. Call for the TUC public services committee to organise a special conference of affiliated unions on

this issue.

3. Keep members fully informed of their efforts to achieve a united front of public sector unions."

**"The momentum is being lost — we need some solidarity"**

## A Bentley miner spoke to Socialist Organiser

The two demonstrations in London were fantastic. To see council-workers, trade unionists from all sectors, and even trade unionists from the mining contractors marching for us gave everyone a tremendous lift. This soon petered out though. It was short-lived because miners can see that the TUC are doing absolutely nothing. Who do these people think they represent? It certainly can't be the working class, because every time we get attacked, they sit back and do nothing.

We know that the Tories do not listen to public opinion, the only language they understand is that of industrial action. We need action urgently. The trouble is, I don't believe that NUM members will vote for a strike unless they see that other workers will strike alongside them. That is why we urgently need the TUC to call a day of action. This day of action should be turned into a day of strike action. From this we need to build towards a General Strike. If miners could see, via a day of action, that workers would strike for them, then a vote in the NUM could be won. Without such solidarity action, I don't believe we will get such a vote for action.

The North West TUC day of action is an excellent start. Other regions should call days of action as well. This, combined with a lobby of the TUC when it meets in Doncaster next week, could pressure the TUC to name the day. December 9 has already been nominated by the TUC as a day for a "Convention of Recovery". We don't want a picnic — this day must be made into a day of strike action.

I think the situation in the

10 pits put into the 90-day review is very bleak indeed. We all know how quickly conditions deteriorate. This shows how vital it is that something should be done for these 10 pits. Certainly, we need big demonstrations outside every one of them on the 90th day. I am not sure what I think about occupying those pits. We need to think about that very carefully. Certainly, if it were to be done, it would need to be planned down to the last detail. However, I can see why some people are advocating it.

Generally, the momentum is being lost. That is why the Tories announced their review, to take the sting out of things. Our pit is still making £250,000 profit each week. However, if we do not force the Government to back down by strike action, then we are all in the laps of the Tory gods. If this happens, some of us may get a reprieve, but we won't be depending on it. We need to take matters into our own hands. We need strike action now. We need a day of action.

**Turn December 9 into a day of action!**

The TUC is organising a national convention for recovery on December 9. Trade Unionists need to push for December 9 to be turned into a proper day of action from the unions. We should make this point clear to the General Council at their meeting in Doncaster on 25 November.

## DSS union launches contracting-out campaign

### By Mark Serwotka, CPSA DHSS Section Executive

Following the recent election victory of the Broad Left in the DSS election re-run, the first meeting of the new Executive took place last week.

The right wing won only 3 seats out of an Executive of 27. Unfortunately, one of those seats was that of Section Chairperson. It is clear that they will use the power of the Chair to

block as much as possible. The corruption of these characters knows no limits. Last year, they used Chair's rulings to block everything they opposed. Although the left had a majority, it was not two-thirds so we were thwarted on many issues. This year, we do have the two-thirds, majority, so the Chair refused to make a ruling. Instead, he announced (unconstitutionally) that he had consulted the General Secretary, and was making a statement which could not be challenged!

Thus, by this disgraceful method, the right wing blocked the left in appointing left-wingers to some negotiating positions. The left majority refused to get bogged down in this particular battle, instead registering a protest whilst moving on to more important matters. Nevertheless, this blatant, undemocratic manoeuvre does indicate what is likely to happen for the rest of the year.

Two important decisions were made by the Executive. In a vote proposed by supporters of

Socialist Organiser we agreed full support for the miners' campaign, and urged the national union to affiliate to the Miners' Support Network. On the issue of contracting-out/market testing we agreed to launch an immediate campaign. We will be pushing to get the Executive to name the day for a one-day DHSS strike, which will be part of a campaign to stop market testing. Activists and branches should take up this issue now, and link it to the campaign of the miners to defend jobs.

## Ian Murch, NUT and the courts

The courts have ruled that Ian Murch, the victimised treasurer of the National Union of Teachers, must be reinstated to his position in the union.

Murch was elected treasurer earlier this year in a postal ballot of the membership, but was then prevented from taking office by a right-wing kangaroo court. The union executive was determined to stop Murch by any means necessary. They did not want a left-wing treasurer who could expose their role in the union's financial difficulties.

Undoubtedly the result is a blow to the right wing. It will boost everyone on the left, and allow the union rank and file

to build up pressure for the resignation of everyone who backed the witch-hunt.

The right wing is now on the run. They have already dropped their "reorganisation" plans to gut union democracy. With the Murch affair settled, the road is now open for a serious discussion throughout the union on how to defend teachers from the Tory attacks.

However, there are problems as well.

The fact that there was no big campaign built in defence of Murch on the ground will make it more difficult to capitalise on his reinstatement.

The use of the courts - and particularly of the hated Tory

anti-union laws, in this case - could set a precedent which leads to NUT oppositionists going to court to fight the right wing rather than building among the rank and file.

This point is underlined by the fact that internal union avenues - in particular, an

appeal to conference and a re-run election - remained open to Murch. It was not as if legal action was his only option.

Nevertheless, the ruling right-wingers in the NUT are now in complete disarray. It is up to the left to drive home their advantage.

## Railworkers shout at Knapp

RMT General Secretary Jimmy Knapp got a very rough ride indeed in Glasgow last Thursday 12 November.

Knapp was shouted down by a very angry audience of over 200 rank and file railworkers who had turned up to a rally on privatisation but were more interested in getting an answer about why the sectional council had not even known of 21 redundancies among P-Way workers at the Mossend Yard.

According to one railworker,

"Knapp was lucky to escape with his life."

Knapp ended up by promising - in a very shaky voice - that he would go back to London and start a fight against privatisation. We can only hope. Meanwhile, last Saturday, 14 November, Motherwell and Wishaw RMT held a meeting on "The crisis of leadership". About 80 railworkers attended and decided that it is vital to stand against Jimmy Knapp when he seeks re-election.

## Newham strike still solid

Over 1,000 Newham Council workers are on strike. The strike is solid and more workers joined the dispute last week.

Newham NALGO has three sets of demands: a redeployment agreement which guarantees no compulsory redundancies a back to work agreement; specific demands relating to victimisations which include the case of seven temporary workers whose contracts were not renewed after the last Newham NALGO strike.

The workers have National NALGO backing and are on full take home pay.

The Labour Council have dug in for a fight and are using

"flexible" extra payments to bribe scabs. The Council is refusing to negotiate.

### Off the rails

The new "Off the rails" bulletin in an attempt to link up activists in the railway industry by providing basic information, and analysis. The national union leaders are providing little fight and even less information to those of us in the front line. We want to gather and spread information as the basic ingredient of organising to defend our jobs and conditions. Spread the word! Sell copies of "Off the Rails" and send any information you may have to: Off the Rails, 17, Belgrave Square, Sheffield S2 4UN.

Over 2,000 people marched through Inverness on Saturday 7 November, to protest at the threat of 5,000 redundancies at McDermott's and Nigg oil rig construction yards.

The Construction Safety Campaign is set to lobby Parliament. They are demanding imprisonment for negligent bosses responsible for acci-

dents. Assemble: 1pm, St Stephen's Gate, Houses of Parliament, Wednesday 25 November.

GMB strikers at Burnsall's in Smethwick have called a national solidarity demonstration for November 28. The dispute is over union recognition, reinstatement and equal pay. Assemble: 10.30am, Fenton Street, Smethwick.

## Lyons Maid: "We can win"

"If we don't get our jobs back, then the whole of Clarke Foods can go down the pan as far as we're concerned. We're fighting to keep jobs in the area, and we're confident we're going to win."

This is how Lyons Maid convenor Steve Alcock summed up the feelings of the 67 workers at the Lyons Maid factory in Kirkby when he spoke at last Saturday's demonstration in support of their fight for jobs.

The factory went into receivership in mid-October, just seven months after its takeover by Henry Clarke — a four-times-bankrupt American businessman with a record of asset-stripping, arms-trading, and junk-bonds-dealing.

After two weeks in occupation — ended by a High Court injunction — and two weeks of

round-the-clock picketing, last Saturday's demonstration through Kirkby was the latest stage in the local workforce's campaign to save their jobs.

The three aims of that campaign were outlined by Lyons Maid shop steward Carol Austen:

"The first aim is that the 67 workers have to be re-instated. We have taken out 67 applications for unfair dismissal and for unfair selection.

"Our second aim is to make Henry Clarke as notorious as Maxwell for the dirty dealings which have been going on behind the company going bankrupt.

"£1.4 million set aside for redundancy payments have gone missing. The company's accounts reveal a deficit of £40 million. And now questions are being asked about the pensions

funds of Clarke's other factories in the Midlands.

"Our third aim is to make workers realise that they can stand up to receivers. People might think that receivers cannot be made accountable, but we will bring into the public eye the dirty dealings that go on behind the scenes."

Last Saturday's demonstration — numbering over 500 and including large contingents from other TGWU branches and from Merseyside Pensioners — was not only a morale-booster for the Kirkby workforce. It was also an expression of solidarity with other workers facing either the reality or the threat of unemployment, exemplified by the presence of the speakers' platform of a participant in the recent People's March for Jobs, and also the President of Lan-

cashire NUM.

As Steve Alcock put it at the closing rally: "This was not just a demonstration in support of ourselves. It was also a demonstration against unemployment and against the way the miners have been treated.

"With your support we will win this fight, we will win that factory back, and we are going to give it to the people who matter — the unemployed in this area."

Show your support for the Lyons Maid workers by attending the mass picket of the factory on 23 November. Bring trade union/Labour Party banners.

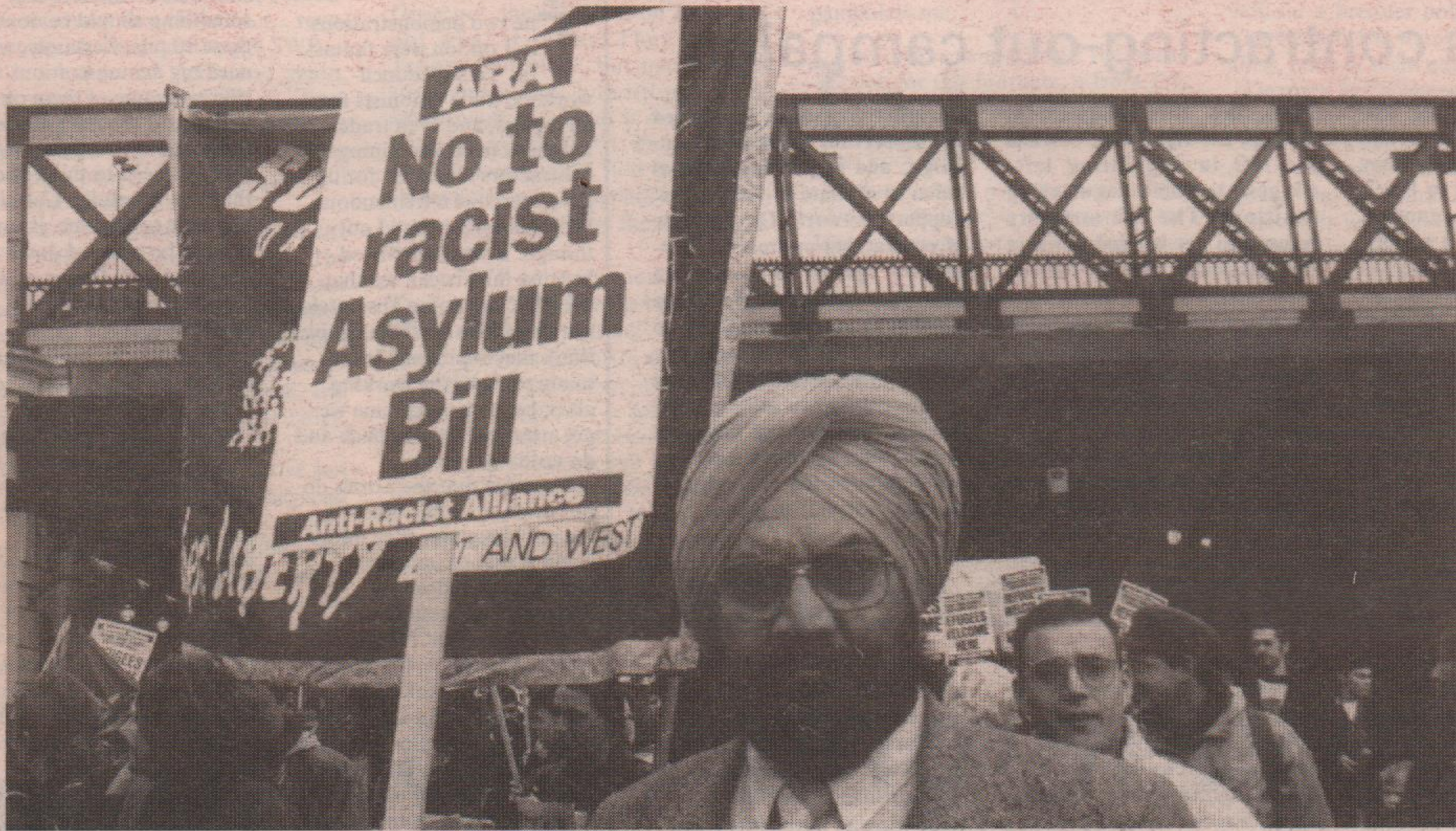
Stop Press: Last Monday (16 November) the purchase of Lyons Maid by the Swiss multi-national Nestle was announced. But Nestle has not given any guarantees about jobs.

# SOCIALIST

ORGANISER

# Grand Xmas Draw

## Stop the Asylum Bill!



White and black workers should unite against the Tories

# No more deportations

**A**nti-racist organisations, trade unions and Labour Parties are mobilising for the demonstration against the Asylum Bill, on Saturday 21 November in London.

The Asylum Bill had its second reading in Parliament on 2 November. The Bill proposes new, tighter regulations against asylum seekers.

The Tory Government is attempting to scapegoat refugees as a convenient diversion from their current economic and political problems.

The Tories aim to set white against black. The labour movement must unite to stop the Government.

Current immigration policy is clearly racist. For example, one in five

Bangladeshis are refused visit visas, but only one in 2,014 American citizens were rejected in 1991. The Asylum Bill will make matters worse.

White British workers have no interest in seeing a wave of xenophobia and racism engulf Britain. *White*

*workers need unity with black in order to win trade union and other struggles. Divided, white and black will both lose.*

Don't let the Tories get off the hook — actively help to stop the Asylum Bill and campaign against racism!

## What the Asylum Bill means

- Removing the rights of appeal for many people applying to enter Britain
- New, tighter procedures to deal with asylum applications
- Finger-printing asylum-seekers and their children on arrival
- Removing the normal right to housing
- Appeals against refusal of asylum have to be lodged within two days.

The Alliance for Workers' Liberty is holding an Xmas raffle.

- **First prize:** video recorder
- **Second prize:** colour television
- **Third prize:** Xmas hamper.

The draw will take place at 6.00 at the Red Rose Club, North London, on Tuesday 22 December.

Raffle tickets are 50 pence each, and books of tickets and further details are available from: Xmas Draw, AWL, PO Box 823, London SE15 4NA.

## Fund drive

Socialist Organiser is raising money to fund our expansion plans. Our target is £5,000 by the end of January 1993.

We received £207 this week. Our drive so far has raised £2,228.80.

Thanks this week include to Sheffield AWL for £80.

## Why not help us?

You can help your socialist paper by sending a donation. Send cheques/postal orders payable to "Socialist Organiser" to: PO Box 823, London SE15 4NA.

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