

Socialist ORGANISER

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SOLIDARITY!



JOHN HARRIS

ORGANISE FOR A GENERAL STRIKE!

German workers fight for 35 hours

AS WE go to press, leaders of IG Metall, the 2.6 million strong West German metal workers' union, are meeting to prepare a ballot of members on strike action in support of the union's demand for a 35 hour week.

For the ballot to give a mandate for strike action, there has to be a 75% majority in favour! The rash of token strikes over the previous weeks, however, suggest that this level of support might be forthcoming.

Just in case it is, IG Metall's leaders have already begun backtracking. Like the AUEW, IG Metall is talking about a gradual movement towards the 35 hour week, and instead of demanding "no loss of pay" it is talking about the pay element being negotiable.

IG Metall is not alone in raising this demand. The print and paper union IG DruPa has for some time had the 35 hour week as policy and the public service union IG OTV has now adopted a similar policy.

This demand — "35 hour week with no loss of pay" — has become a popular one throughout the West German labour movement as a response to the steadily mount-

By Andrew Hornung

ing unemployment. Official figures estimate unemployment to be standing at 2.4 million now.

Against the class wide response the West German employers have mobilised a whole arsenal of diversions and counter-plays. In fact, they hope to use the current drive for the 35-hour week as the occasion to try to ram in new "flexibility" and other work-intensification agreements.

Volkswagen

Volkswagen workers at Enden, for instance, are already committed to an arrangement by which they can be "on loan" to other works within a radius of 200 miles! Some firms are trying to get their workforces to accept a similar arrangement in exchange for a reduction (not necessarily to 35 hours) in the working week. The Daimler-Benz works at Mannheim operate a "roving worker" system imposing total flexibility on a group of workers.

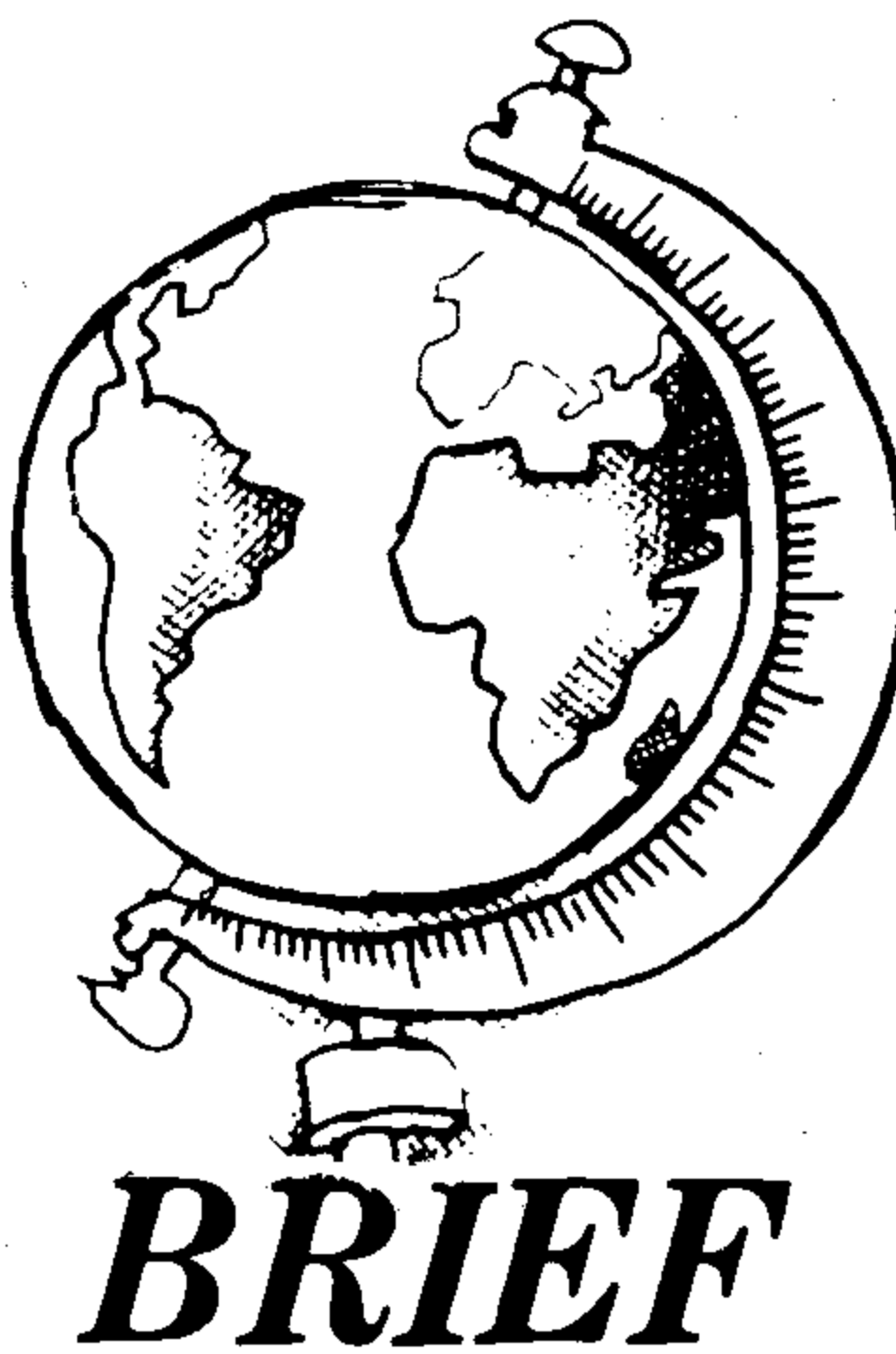
At the Bremen Mercedes works management is trying to get rid of washing time, but a more general tack for employers is to offer individual break times. That way there are no set break times for everybody.

The basic approach of the bosses is to concede some sort of reduction in the working week, but to try to get the workers to pay for that reduction by flexibility and intensification. Quite apart from the fact that this would enormously increase the exploitation of the workforce, the whole point of the demand as a response to unemployment would then be lost.

Meanwhile the token strikes continue: one tactic being used is to march out of the workplace after seven hours, thus imposing a do-it-yourself 35 hour week.

The dithering of union leaders, the decisive tactics of the employers and the demoralisation still in the air following the defeat of the steelworkers' strike in 1978-9 will all be a factor on the bosses' side. But there is such widespread enthusiasm for the 35 hour week with no loss of pay that the ballot may yet provide a majority in favour.

WORLD



BRIEF

Sandinistas push back US-supported invasion

THE SANDINISTA army has recaptured the small town of San Juan del Norte for the Nicaraguan government, so ending the brief occupation of the deserted site by Eden Pastora's Revolutionary Democratic Alliance (ARDE).

The aim of ARDE's brief occupation was probably to set up a 'provisional government' that the US could then recognise. Any such hope was quickly dashed. The Sandinista government admitted that they were for the first time faced with a serious military offensive by the 'contras' and dispatched a suitably large force to retake the town.

Pastora responded to the setback by claiming that his forces

had 'withdrawn' without being defeated.

San Juan is not an important town, and it took the 'contras' three days to take it after receiving a fresh shipment of arms from the US. So any prospect the US might have had of toppling the Sandinistas before the November elections seems to be utterly fantastic. Their second-line option is to provoke the Sandinistas into declaring a state of emergency and thus not carrying out the elections.

Meanwhile more evidence is appearing to show that the CIA was not only responsible for mining the Nicaraguan port of Corinto, but took part in earlier attacks on Nicaraguan oil-storage facilities. It is now playing a leading role in all the 'contra' organisations, both those of the FDN based in the north in Honduras and those of ARDE based in the south in Costa Rica.

Kowalewski defeats ban

THE SOCIALIST Party led government of Francois Mitterrand has dropped its plans to deport exile Solidarnosc leader Zbigniew Kowalewski from France, for the time being at least.

Kowalewski, the Lodz regional leader of Solidarnosc, was in France at the time of Jaruzelski's coup in December 1981, and has remained there since.

He has associated himself closely and actively with the revolutionary left in France, and that seems to have been the government's motive in wanting to expel him. But a support committee was set up for Kowalewski, and the move to expel him has now been adjourned "for at least a month".

How many other stories got cut by the bosses?

A CLASH between the Observer's editor, Donald Treford, and the paper's owner, Tiny Rowland, has highlighted repression in Zimbabwe.

Rowland was furious because an article by Treford about massacres carried out by the Zimbabwean army in Matabeleland might harm his large business interests in Zimbabwe.

It looks like Treford's position is strong enough to prevent Rowland shutting him up. Rowland is now negotiating to sell the newspaper to Robert Maxwell — which, as Maxwell himself commented, is bad news for the print unions on the Observer.

Meanwhile the killing in Matabeleland continues, and a British military aid programme continues, training officers in the Fifth Brigade, which is responsible for the massacres.

Treford, in his articles, stressed that: "These outrages have to be seen against the background of Rhodesia's blood-stained past, in which over 25,000 people died in 15 years of civil war, and for which Britain must bear some responsibility. The Fifth Brigade and the CIO (Central Intelligence Organisation) took their lesson from Ian Smith's Selous Scouts, whose methods were every bit as ruthless".

It is also probably true that South Africa is assisting and promoting dissident forces in Matabeleland.

Nevertheless the repression is part of the process of creating a

strong capitalist state in Zimbabwe. It goes together with continuation of laws from the white-settler regime to restrict the trade unions.

And one other question: how many stories in other papers have been suppressed without us knowing because of the owner's business interests in Britain?

Brazil: the generals try to halt mass mobilisation

THIS WEDNESDAY, 25th, Brazil's Congress considers a constitutional amendment to provide for direct elections for the presidency.

The amendment has become the focus of a huge mass mobilisation. One million people marched in Rio de Janeiro on April 10 to demand direct elections, and over one million in Sao Paulo on the 16th.

President Figueiredo has declared a state of emergency in the area around the capital, in an attempt to prevent demonstrations on Wednesday.

Brazil has been ruled by a military regime since 1964. In recent years the military have tried to carry out a controlled programme of return to civilian rule. Congress is heavily stacked in favour of the PDS — the party closest to the military — and the electoral college which on present plans will choose the next president in March 1985 is even more so.

But the fight for direct elections has now become a focus for the anger generated on many other issues — unemployment and poverty (greatly increased by the Brazilian government's moves to deal with its international debt problem), and the 20 years of military repression.

The major political force in the campaign for direct elections is the PMDB, which was originally set up by the military as a twin stooge party to the PDS but has now become a bourgeois opposition party of some substance.

Large sections of the Brazilian left have submerged themselves in the PMDB, but the Workers Party (PT) is still fighting for an independent working class line, linking the question of elections to the struggle for working-class economic demands and for trade union rights.

49 face death in Turkey

DEATH sentences were handed down by Turkish military courts last week at the end of the latest mass trials of left wingers. 49 people were sentenced to be hanged, and 529 were given jail sentences.

Starvation still threatens millions in drought-hit Africa

HUNDREDS of thousands of people in Africa still face death through famine.

According to the UN Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) 1.6 million tonnes of cereals are still needed in the short term to prevent people dying from starvation.

To get that food is a vast task in relation to the resources of the famine-hit states and the international relief agencies. What is needed, however, is a tiny amount in relation to the stocks of the rich capitalist nations.

For 1983, the EEC's carry-over stocks of cereals were 18.3 million tonnes, and North America's 169 million.

To put African agriculture on a viable basis for the longer term would require \$64 billion capital investment (at 1975 prices), according to the FAO. Again, it is a small amount by comparison with the resources of the big capitalist powers — a large amount by comparison with the resources of the African states.

The immediate cause of the crisis is a drought. But the reason why the natural calamity produces such terrible results is world inequality — and also the class relations within the African states.

These states were left with a very bad starting point by colonialism — which, usually, had not substantially transformed the primitive techniques in agriculture but had simply drawn profits from intensified exploitation of the peasants (often forced labour). Between 1952 and 1963 only four people from the whole of French-speaking Africa obtained graduate qualifications in agricultural science.

Then after independence the new ruling classes, related to the mass of the peasants not very differently from the way the colonial administrations had done. They channelled the available resources into prestige projects and profit-making for an urban elite.

As a result, over the last decade food production per head has gone down 20% in Africa, while it has increased by 10% or 15% in Asia and Latin America.

The productivity of the land in Africa is much less than on other continents. The average yield per hectare of cereals is 890 kg in Africa, 1480 kg in India, 3580 kg in the USA, 3660 kg in China, and 5370 kg in the UK.



A tiny percentage of the West's stocks could save them from hunger

LABOUR MOVEMENT CONFERENCE ON TURKEY

Saturday September 22, from 10.30 at NUR headquarters, Unity House, Euston Rd, London NW1.

Called by Clare Short MP, Richard Caborn MP, Chris Smith MP, Jeremy Corbyn MP, Ernie Roberts MP, Bill Michie MP, and Roland Boyes MP.

Five delegates per labour movement body: credentials £2 (50p unwaged) from 'Turkey conference', 129 Seven Sisters Rd, London N7.

General strike in Bolivia

By Colin Foster

BOLIVIA'S TRADE unions have organised a three-day general strike against new government austerity measures, and are threatening an indefinite general strike if the measures are not dropped.

It was a general strike, in October 1982, which brought the present government to power after many years of military rule. The government is a popular front coalition, headed by the left nationalist leader Hernan Siles Zuazo and including three parties — Siles Zuazo's MNRI; another left nationalist movement, the MIR; and the Communist Party.

The new government was welcomed by the imperialist powers, who saw it as more capable than the severely discredited military regime of getting the workers and peasants to make sacrifices so that the international banks could get their interest payments.

The government has tried hard. But it has faced an almost impossible economic situation, and a highly combative working class.

Bolivia is South America's poorest country, and its most lucrative trade continues to be the illegal cocaine traffic pioneered by the military after 1976. The 'black economy', of one description or another, is far more flourishing than the official

economy, and a very large part of the proceeds ends up in the US bank accounts of rich Bolivians.

The trade union federation COB organised a 48 hour general strike in December, followed by a hunger strike in January, and won major concessions from the government: a 57 per cent pay rise, a four month freeze on the prices of basic necessities, and a majority say for the trade unions in the running of the tin mines.

The bosses responded by calling a 48 hour lock-out in retaliation. And now the IMF has turned the screw.

Price rises

On April 13 Siles Zuazo announced an austerity package including a 480% price rise on bread, 400% on petrol, and 180% on fares.

The COB responded with the general strike. But the Paris daily Le Monde reports:

"The COB leaders met on Sunday (15th) and decided to negotiate with the authorities. The most militant elements from the POR (a Trotskyist group), who were calling for an indefinite general strike and had a perspective... of overthrowing the government, were thrown out of the trade union meeting.

"The Communist Party, which is in the government, confirmed its moderating influence inside the COB".

USSR union militant dies

ALEXEI Nikitin, a pioneer of the struggle for Solidarnosc-type trade unions in the USSR, has died.

Nikitin, a mining engineer from the Ukraine, had been shut up in psychiatric hospitals ever since 1969, on and off, because of his efforts to fight for workers' rights.

When a psychiatrist dared to declare Nikitin sane, the bureaucrats responded by locking up the psychiatrist too.

Nikitin's death from cancer was reported in the Financial Times, quoting 'reliable reports from Moscow', on April 21.

Afghan war is stepped up

ACCORDING to one of the main leaders of the Islamic resistance, the USSR has stepped up its war in Afghanistan.

Interviewed in the Paris daily Le Monde (April 18), Borhannuddin Rabbani leader of the Jamiat-I Islami movement, said:

"The Andropov period marked a clear change of Soviet tactics in Afghanistan: military activities proper decreased, but everything was based on penetration of the resistance by the KGB and its Afghan counterpart, the Khad.

They tried to turn groups round and to organise selective assassinations of leaders.

With Chernenko there has been a return to massive military operations. Since the beginning of March we have noted a considerable increase in air traffic from the USSR. Military operations are involving big units again, and are preceded by several days of intensive aerial bombardment.

This bludgeoning is aimed, of course, at the strongpoints of the resistance — Mazar, Herat, Laghman, North Basakhashan — and we expect an attack on the Panjshir valley and on Kandahar."

The 'Economist' magazine has recently had a similar report.

Jamiat-I Islami is generally reported to be the strongest of the resistance groups, and is the one recognised by the Islamic states.

According to some reports it is more liberal-minded on social questions than the rightist Hezbi-Islami movement led by Gulbudin Hekmatyar. But ethnic and regional dividing lines are probably as important, and moreover many local resistance groups have only a nominal adherence to one or another of the main parties.

Meanwhile in Moscow Pravda has claimed that the Afghan army recently defeated a force of 3000 rebels trying to constitute a provisional government in the south of the country. According to most reports, the Afghan government has very little base other than the USSR forces, and has stable control over very little of the country.

Step up the pickets!

Nottinghamshire miners turned out on the picket lines in large numbers on Wednesday 25th, when the pits had reopened after Easter.

At Ollerton there were 300 pickets, and at Cotgrave about 200. Other pits, like Thoresby, Bevercotes, and Gedling, had 30 or 40 on the picket lines.

At a number of pits in North Nottinghamshire the pickets were highly successful. Very few, if any, face workers went in at Thoresby.

At Bevercotes 75% of the face workers were out, and management closed down one of the faces. At Clipstone only 60 workers went in out of 400 on the day shift.

Further south in Nottinghamshire the pickets were not so successful. At Cotgrave they were turning away about a quarter of the shift, at Calverton and Gedling fewer.

But the evidence is that if the picketing is kept up with sufficient energy, then at least the majority of Nottinghamshire's pits can be progressively shut down.

The NUM special delegate conference last Thursday, 19th, was a resounding success. The conference called for every area to join the strike, forcing the Midlands and Nottinghamshire area leaderships to make an official call to their members.

It rejected proposals for a ballot, but reduced the ballot percentage required for a strike from 55% to 50%.

Leadership

It showed what can be done by a determined union leadership. It's not a matter of special clever tricks, but simply of standing firm on principles.

The thousands of militant miners, mostly young, who rallied outside the conference, are now potentially the vanguard of a massive picketing operation to shut down all coal, all the power stations and wider sections of industry.

The conference decided to put the organisation of picketing into the hands of the national office under Arthur Scargill. What we need now from Arthur Scargill is another operation as vigorous and well-organised as the 1972 picketing!

The TGWU docks trade group decided last Thursday that if any dockers were disciplined for supporting the miners and refusing to handle coal, then a national docks strike will be called.

There is already a build-up towards action on the docks over Tory government threats to scrap the National Dock Labour Scheme.

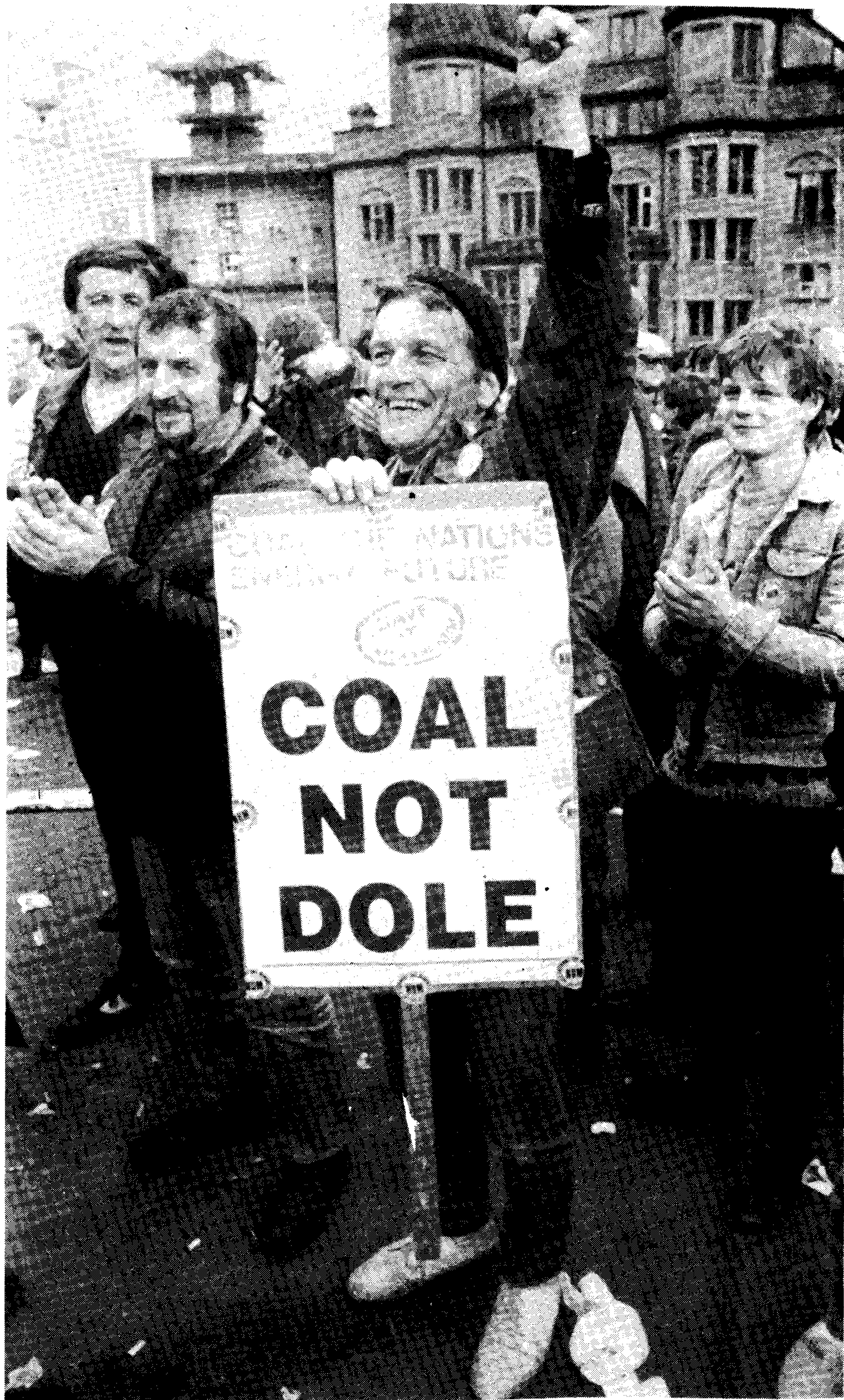
A day of action in solidarity with the miners has been called by the Scottish TUC, though a date has not yet been fixed. (There was talk of May 1, but STUC leaders have said it is too soon).

General strike

Such a day of action, when finalised, should be extended into a full one-day general strike. The best way to defeat the Tories is to draw together all the threads of solidarity with the miners and other outstanding trade union claims like the railworkers', into an all-out general strike.

There are already signs that the Tories and the Coal Board are feeling the strain. Ian MacGregor has talked about postponing the pit closures, though as yet he insists that only the timing of the closure programme is negotiable. The bosses' magazine the 'Economist' still thinks Thatcher can win, but only just:

"Ballot or no ballot, Britain seems unlikely to see much coal mined after this month... Is Mrs Thatcher likely to win her second battle to close uneconomic mines in Britain? As a full miners' strike moved a stage closer this Easter weekend, the answer is still yes, but a hesitant one".



50 miners at SO meeting

OVER 50 miners packed into the meeting called by Socialist Organiser to coincide with the lobby of the National Union of Mineworkers Sheffield special conference last Thursday, 19th.

Many were from Notts NUM, part of a courageous minority who have stood out in support of the union against scabs and saturation picketing.

These strikers have had little or no publicity, with the area being painted by the media as solidly against the strike. The reality is different, and the reception they received on the lobby itself was testimony to the respect they have earned within the union nationally.

Leading the platform speakers was Paul Whetton, secretary of the newly-formed Notts miners rank and file strike committee. The tremendous pressures that strikers in Nottinghamshire have had to withstand were

evident from his report of the struggle they have been through.

At one pit a single striker had to confront the whole of the workforce.

But harsh conditions have combined to produce tremendous militancy among the Notts strikers, and the formation of the rank and file committee is evidence of their growing organisation.

Rob Dawber (Sheffield NUR) detailed the various solidarity actions taken by the rail unions in the area. He referred to some isolated trouble spots, and proposed joint NUR-NUM rank and file action to enforce the union boycott on coal.

The meeting vocally endorsed his moves to get action from the NUR on their own wage claim. The review date has now passed.

The appetite for political discussion which exists among the strikers was apparent from the enthusiastic re-



Pat Lally

sponse given to Pat Lally, winding up for Socialist Organiser. Presenting the miners' strike in the context of the Tories' offensive against the public sector and the whole trade union movement, he said that the strike had to be used not only to defeat MacGregor and the Tories but the right wing in the labour movement as well.

Labour Movement Conference on Palestine
Saturday May 19. County Hall, London SE1.
Speakers include Moshe Machover, Uri Davis, Jeremy Corbyn MP, Colin Talbot (POEU), PLO representative, and Peter Tatchell.
Two delegates per labour movement organisation: credentials £2 from Andrew Hornung, 28 Carlton Mansions, Holmleigh Rd, London N16.

SOCIALIST ORGANISER

EEC elections are important

IN FRANCE, steelworkers are fighting against the Socialist Party led government's plans to cut tens of thousands of their jobs. The government also plans to chop jobs in the collieries.

In West Germany metal workers and others are fighting for a 35 hour week.

In Britain miners are on strike against pit closures.

These are all different fronts of one and the same struggle. Capitalism is an internationally integrated system. Socialists need an internationally-integrated response.

Work-sharing under workers' control with no loss of pay; public ownership of the major industries and banks; a working-class plan for industrial reconstruction — all these measures require an arena at least as wide as Europe to take full effect.

The struggles start in individual countries — but socialism in one country is not an option. Victories in single countries will be temporary and provisional unless they are extended at least Europe-wide.

The capitalists understand this international dimension. It is time that we did too.

The EEC elections coming up in June are a chance to put across the message of international socialism.

But it is up to the rank and file to seize that chance. The leaders won't. The Labour Party is working out a joint platform with continental Socialist Parties. But what socialist programme on jobs can be devised jointly with Francois Mitterrand, who is himself leading the attack on jobs in heavy industry in France?

The Labour leaders are not even trying, anyway. Their line on the EEC is that Thatcher is not defending "Britain's interests" well enough. They look to national interest, not working-class interest. They keep talking about the turn-back-the-clock option of British withdrawal from the EEC as though such an 'independent' capitalism would have some advantages over capitalism within the EEC.

So it is down to us. Yet many in the Labour Party, especially on the Left, regard the EEC elections as a second-rate affair, much less important than local council elections, for example.

It is true that the EEC Parliament has few powers. But the June election will be a major test for the Labour Party, a test the Party can't afford to fail. The key question should be: how could this Parliament, and the elections, be used as a *forum*, a *sounding-board*, by socialists?

Jobs is an obvious issue on which the elections can be used to make international links, ideologically and practically. Nuclear disarmament is another.

We can't afford to let the Tories triumph on June 14. The 'Falklands factor' is gone now, and Mrs Thatcher is becoming unpopular again. If we do well against the Tories in the EEC elections, it will undercut and undermine their credibility as a government. If Labour does very badly, it will boost the Tories.

The Left should stop sulking on the sidelines. We should take the lead in organising a vigorous, positive, internationalist campaign for June 14.

Labour CND: keep left!

By Walter Wolfgang

IN October 1983 the CND Executive "superseded" the Labour CND Committee elected at the 1983 AGM although Labour CND had proved to be one of the most effective pressure groups within the Labour Party.

Composite 40 on nuclear disarmament passed by the Labour Party conference by an enormous majority — after unsuccessful attempts to get the NEC to ask for remission and pressure on the movers to withdraw it — was largely based on a draft circulated by Labour CND immediately after the General Election.

But some Labour Party members resented Labour CND's campaigning style and its determined defence of Unilateral Nuclear Disarmament.

The Annual CND Conference remitted a resolution asking for reinstatement to CND National Council, thus refusing to endorse the action of the CND executive.

At the same conference, Joy Hurcombe, who was elected Secretary of Labour CND at the 1983 Labour CND AGM was elected vice-chair of CND. I was elected to National Council in my own right for the first time since 1979. Another 1983 committee member Dick Withecombe was also elected to National Council.

Rather than prolong a sterile dispute when an active campaigning Labour CND was urgently needed, Joy, Dick and myself leaned over backwards to compromise. We suggested that a consultative committee made up of regional representative and the four officers of the 1983 Labour CND commit-

tee should be called on to organise an AGM at an early date. That committee allowed the AGM to elect more representatives to the new committee than was suggested by the 1983 CND EC. The AGM will take place on April 28.

The Labour Disarmament Liaison Committee had pre-

We did want maximum publicity for the AGM and wanted it to be large and representative. We welcome the fact that the Labour Coordinating Committee has given it publicity in its last bulletin and included information about registration.

We do however regret the

ence of CND was one of the CND Executive members most hostile to the 1983 committee.

Mike Gapes was a member of the minority on the 1983 Labour CND committee who resigned and asked the CND executive to intervene. He also opposed reinstatement of the 1983 Labour CND Executive at the CND conference.

Many LCC members — including myself — have been critical of some of the stances taken up by the LCC recently. Many if not most LCC members agree with the style and unilateralist commitment of the 1983 Labour CND committee.

We need a Labour CND determined to propagate and defend Labour's unilateralist commitment. We also need a Labour CND which will open up a discussion on NATO with-in the Labour Party.

The Labour CND conference on NATO and non-nuclear defence in Sheffield on January 28, which I was allowed to organise together with Mo O'Toole (a sacked member of the 1983 committee) was a good start and so was the Labour CND fringe meeting on NATO at the 1983 Labour Party conference. All this is at risk if the LCC sponsored takeover bid is allowed to succeed.

Details about registration and attendance at the Labour CND AGM are given on this page. Every Socialist Organiser reader who wants an effective campaigning Labour CND should not only turn up at the Labour CND AGM but encourage other committed Labour unilateralists to come along.

DELEGATES and individuals attending the AGM must be individual members of the Labour Party and national members of CND. They should bring their Labour Party membership card and their National CND card (or other communication showing their CND membership number).

The basis of representation is as follows:

Individuals one vote.

CLPs affiliated to National CND, 5 votes. (Non-affiliated CLPs are allowed to send observers without voting rights but as individuals who are members of the Labour Party and National CND they will have one vote).

Affiliated Party branches, CND groups, Labour CND groups, 2 votes.

Trade unions, 2 to 5 votes.

The AGM will be held on Saturday April 28 at the University of London Union, Malet

St. London WC1, from 11am to 5pm. Registration will start at 9.30am. People who have not yet registered should not wait until the AGM but do so right away. Registrations will be accepted on the day, space permitting.

Those who are not yet National CND members or have not renewed their membership can do so when registering (either beforehand or on the day).

CND membership is £6 adults, £9 people living at same address, £1 for under-21s, £2 for pensioners and unwaged, £3 for students. Please apply to Duncan Rees, Labour CND, 11 Goodwin Street, London N4.

FRINGE MEETING: On the eve of the AGM, on Friday April 27, London Labour CND will hold a fringe meeting in County Hall at 8pm, on 'Mobilising Labour Parties for the Reagan demonstration on June 9'. Speakers will include Joy Hurcombe and Walter Wolfgang.

viously been used by our critics in an attempt to clip Labour CND's wings. Now it has accepted an extremely good draft resolution to be circulated to Labour Parties, largely based on a draft by Joy Hurcombe. All seemed sweet and light. We hoped the disagreements of 1983 were forgotten and were ready to make a new start.

inclusion of the following paragraph in that notice: "For further information about Labour CND contact Cathy Ashton . . . And for information on the Labour Party's policies on defence and disarmament, contact Mike Gapes . . ."

Cathy Ashton, who was a CND vice-chair until the December National Confer-

Workplace branches

THE FIRST steps in a national campaign to set up workplace branches of the Labour Party have been taken — not by the Party's machinery, but by the branches themselves.

An informal national meeting of workplace branches last year decided to organise a national register of branches, a "starter's guide", and information on the experience of existing branches.

Drafts of all these have been sent to all the workplace branches we know of to get their suggestions. Copies available from Geoff Dixon, 1 Pelham Court, 44 Hatherley Road, Sidcup, Kent.

Activists

When the material was produced a number of workplace branch activists met the National Executive member responsible for them, Audrey Wise, to discuss what next. The discussion, held as a workshop at the Institute for Workers Control conference in March, showed how much work is still left to do getting basic information across.

Audrey, though in theory responsible for the new branches, hadn't been told a great deal about them and about the problems that regional offices of the Party had put in the way. And workshop ideas about setting up new branches were being done by the Party at any rate.

Instructions

The discussion produced results, though. It was agreed to press Regional Committees of the Party to clearly encourage branches being set up, and give clear, positive instructions to regional officials. Audrey Wise promised to press for a special feature in Labour Weekly on forming branches, to be written by the branches themselves.

By Nik Barstow (secretary, Islington council workers Labour Party branch, in personal capacity).

Most importantly, it was agreed to work for fringe meetings on workplace branches at major unions conference. It was generally thought that the one area no branch had yet tackled was how to get real support from affiliated unions for setting up branches, though a SOGAT 82 member did say that they were planning some moves to encourage more political involvement by their members.

The second national meeting for workplace branches, now being organised, should help to overcome these problems.

Second national meeting for Labour Party workplace branches

..WORKPLACE BRANCHES AND THE UNIONS"

Saturday May 12. Meeting Room, St Pancras Library, Shaw Theatre, Euston Road, London NW1.

Open to Labour Party members in workplace branches or who want to find out more about setting them up

Details from Nik Barstow, 165 Liverpool Road, London N1, or Geoff Dixon, 1 Pelham Court, 44 Hatherley Road, Sidcup, Kent

The left press on the miners' strike

Everyone agrees on one thing about the miners' strike: that it is a major political confrontation.

But on that level the response of most of the left press to the dispute has been pretty inadequate.

All the left papers have done useful work in publicising the miners' case and putting the basic arguments for solidarity. But many have done little more than that.

The Morning Star has political answers of a sort. An article by Communist Party chair and Scottish miners' vice-president George Bolton on April 10 put it like this:

"It is in the interest of the British people to have an independent energy policy. Any policy based on the import of coal — since supplies of North Sea oil and gas have peaked — will seriously undermine and weaken Britain's ability to reindustrialise and develop industries as it sees fit, free from outside influences."

This sort of "socialism in one country" — or, "people's industry in one country" — argument does nothing to strengthen the case for defending jobs.

No industrial economy, least of all Britain's, is or can be "free of outside influences". To attempt to make it so would be to try to turn the clock back 200 years or more.

The idea of socialism is to build on and transform the international processes of history which capitalism set to try to reverse it. Nation-against-nation divisions in the working class can only weaken us, just as area-against-area divisions damage the miners.

Militant presents a more radical answer. "The political implications are clear: there is no road out for workers on the basis of the present system. Capitalism is itself creating all the conditions for class conflict and social upheaval" (editorial, March 23).



But there is a vast gap in Militant's politics between this maximum perspective and the minimum immediate proposals it makes for developing the struggle. The only proposal that seems to have any relation to bridging this gap is Militant's call for a 24 hour general strike. It sometimes seems as if Militant thinks that this 24 hour action backed by the international processes of history will be sufficient by itself for the social revolution.

Socialist Action has also portrayed the miners' strike as a symptom of great world-historic processes (in a characteristic article by John Ross, April 6). Again, however, the immediate proposals do not quite match up to the sweeping scenarios.

Socialist Action has advocated support committees (and carried a lot of useful reports of local activ-

ity), stressed the importance of financial support through collections and levies, and called for the TUC to organise a day of action.

Oddly, Socialist Action leaves its call at the vague term "day of action", rather than specifying a one-day general strike. And none of the weekly left papers other than Socialist Organiser has proposed organising for an all-out general strike (though on the ground, in the coalfields, this call has met a very good response).

From Socialist Worker this is not surprising. In recent years it has swung round from its ultra-optimism of the mid-'70s (when it argued that straight industrial militancy would quickly produce a revolutionary challenge to the Labour government), to a depressed pessimism. This is not a time for bold political perspectives, it says, but for painstaking

detail work in the rank and file.

It has stressed organising collections for the miners, and carried interesting coverage of problems in organising picketing. Socialist Worker argues that the NUM area leaderships are dragging their feet and makes the call for elected rank and file strike committees central to what it says about the struggle.

Apart from the call for a general strike, some other political demands raised by Socialist Organiser have been avoided or neglected by the rest of the left press: the slogan 'Police out of the coalfields', for example, and the call for a detailed socialist programme to save jobs (work-sharing without loss of pay; a workers' plan for the energy industry; open the books, nationalise banks and supply companies without compensation).

Shaking up the LPYS

IT IS NOT usual at Labour Party Young Socialists conference for votes to be decided by a margin as small as 14 (out of about 300 delegates).

The Militant tendency has a big majority in the movement, and runs a tight conference, with long National Committee summing-up speeches and National Committee recommendations from the platform on every vote.

Yet on a challenge to the platform on the exclusion of an emergency motion about the police raid on Gays The Word bookshop, the margin was as small as that even after Militant delegates had been herded in from the coffee bar.

The platform had said that because the raid was run of the mill we didn't need to talk about it.

After seven years of lobbying by Class Fighter, and year's strong campaigning by the Lesbian and Gay Young Socialists, LPYS conference actually debated what they called "homosexual rights".

The composite moved by Clive Bradley from Gorton YS which called for action in solidarity with lesbians and gays was defeated in favour of a motion from Militant which opposed discrimination but proposed doing exactly nothing about it. There were 69 votes for our motion and 172 for Militant's.

The political debates ran along much the same lines as recent years.

Quite rightly, conference supported Liverpool council's stand against the government and the miners against the Coal Board and Thatcher.

Action to build YCND was rejected. In the Irish debate Militant again insisted that workers in the North should ignore the border and concentrate on building unity over economic issues.

A composite calling for a women-only conference to be organised by the LPYS was moved by Rosie Sibley from

By Jane Ashworth

Beeston and seconded by Judith Bonner from Peckham. It was defeated, with Militant supporters arguing that positive discrimination for women is reactionary tokenism. They would not



Judith Bonner

believe that we did not think it was a substitute for a campaign to involve working class women in the labour movement.

The general level of debate was low. During debates there were huge gaps in the delegates' seats, and most of the time there was a lot of noise, indicating that the visitors were chatting rather than listening.

There were more delegates than last year, but far fewer visitors than for many years.

Very few opposition delegates

were called to speak, and most of the time conference was treated to anecdote after anecdote, with dollops of rhetoric on top.

Class Fighter called an open caucus to discuss democracy in the LPYS, and over 85 people came to it. We elected six people to look into a series of proposals on such matters as how long the NC should have to reply to debates; the balance of speeches for and against motions in debates; ensuring that delegates have copies of the standing orders and compositing rules; and electing the National Committee from conference itself (rather than from the regional conferences beforehand).

A most disturbing feature of the conference was the rabble-rousing techniques of some Militant speakers. A delegate only had to mention Militant for loud cheers and foot-stomping to break out.

As we explained at our fringe meeting, a youth movement should train young socialists to think, not provide a political version of football matches.

In the debate about the National Organisation of Labour Students (NOLS), Class Fighter delegates were appalled. We believe that John Dennis, the Labour Party National Executive's man in NOLS, was absolutely wrong to close the conference. We also demand an inquiry into the running of the conference to show if there was ballot-rigging or irregularities in the issuing of credentials.

But, that said, we challenged the chair to allow John Mann, chair of NOLS, the right of reply. We wanted him to answer the allegations. We are also against kangaroo courts and Stalinist-style show trials. The accused must be given the right to speak.

In the election for the LPYS place on the Labour Party National Executive, the Class Fighter candidate, Judith Bonner, polled a record 39 votes, proving that there are YSs prepared to support a revolutionary alternative to Militant.



The YS still gives only verbal support to Youth CND (above: a Youth CND demo)

Close Princes Lodge!

PRINCES Lodge, a large former seamen's hostel in Tower Hamlets now used to house homeless families, has been branded as a 'living hell' by John Pilger of the Daily Mirror.

It has some of the worst housing conditions to be seen in any inner city.

On Wednesday April 18 three hundred attended a protest meeting at Poplar Town Hall following national press coverage about the hostel. Councillor Dennis Twomey said that at least 70 more bathrooms and 100 more toilets were needed to bring the hostel up to a minimum standard.

The local press reports frantic activity this week at the hostel before a council visit. Special cleaning squads were seen at the building, and new furniture and fittings have been moved in.

The demand locally is for the council to use its powers and implement a control order and then a compulsory purchase order.

The leadership of the Labour council is reluctant to take on this extra burden in an area of London with 9000 already on the housing waiting list. However, Greater London Council housing chair Tony McBreary has written offering to take on the burden. A special meeting of Tower Hamlets council to discuss the issue is scheduled for May 2.

Socialist Organiser supporter Sue Carlyle is one of only a few Labour councillors to call publicly for the closure of Princes Lodge.

The outcome of the council meeting is uncertain, but what is needed is clear:

- ★ end Rachmanism
- ★ rehouse Princes Lodge residents

THE RECENTLY released Environmental Health Advisers' report on Princes Lodge is a damning indictment of appalling conditions. The report concludes that Princes Lodge (owners Namecourt Ltd) is:

- unfit for human habitation,
- a statutory nuisance in contravention of the Public Health Act,
- statutorily overcrowded,
- fails to meet acceptable standards for house in multiple occupation.

It is not just the physical conditions which make Princes Lodge unfit for the late 20th century. The cruel and summary eviction of three families who tried to do something about the conditions is an indication of the constant threat hanging over the residents of the hostel.

In January this year the management of Princes Lodge put

- ★ compulsory purchase Princes Lodge from Namecourt.

up the rents by a massive amount. This means that even an adult (defined as a person aged over 11) pays £42.70 per week. The McKirdy family were paying the staggering sum of £196.85 per week for the privilege of sharing two small rooms between the eight of them.

Clearly few people in Princes Lodge are able to work, so the huge sums of money pouring into the landlord's hands come from the DHSS. The landlord is exploiting not only homeless people but also the DHSS.

Princes Lodge will not go away. The continuing serious risk of a major tragedy and the contempt shown by the management for the residents make it imperative that the council must act now.

(From the newsletter of the Tower Hamlets Centre for the Unemployed).

How not to fight Militant

REVOLUTION Youth (the youth group linked to Socialist Action) came to conference with a whole new approach to Militant. It was very clever, they thought.

The tactic was to water down criticisms of Militant to little more than objections to Militant not campaigning. At the back of Revo's minds was an attempt to launch a junior 'Briefing'-type activists' paper in the LPYS.

It was doomed to backfire. Presenting themselves as YS activists, and very busy ones, they lost an independent political presence. Most ridiculously, the lead headline on their final day's conference bulletin was "Build YS summer camp".

Being better YS activists than Militant is not enough to free the YS from Militant's political domination. Proposing campaigns about the Police Bill, for instance, will not defeat Militant.

Obviously the YS can be pushed. It has been over questions like women and CND. From rank hostility the YS has moved to affiliating to CND. Quite likely Militant will change their line on Labour Party black sections, too. They will support

them when enough pressure is mobilised. But none of these changes have taken matters out of Militant's control.

Revo deliberately limited themselves to operating below the level of political debate necessary to tackle Militant.

Arguing that the YS should take up solidarity campaigns, Revo refused to criticise the movements that they wanted the YS to support. On Ireland, Revo wanted to delete our criticisms of the IRA. When their amendment was defeated, only half of them still voted for our motion, the only one on offer which supported the Republicans and the Labour Committee on Ireland!

Revo were behind a meeting called to discuss setting up local YS bulletins. Obviously these bulletins are a good idea. Ideally they should be rooted in local working class youth culture. They are not, however, a new idea — even if Revo insist that they are. Class Fighter supporters were producing them seven years ago.

In the NEC election the Revo candidate, Bernie Wilde, did not come out as a Revo support-

er. Instead she just criticised Militant for not campaigning for Greenham and for women's rights. She polled nine votes less than Class Fighter candidate Judith Bonner, who stood as a revolutionary Marxist in opposition to Militant's reformist charter of 'nationalise the top 200 monopolies' as the answer to every question.

The experience of this conference, the numbers going to fringe meetings, showed that, yes, we should challenge Militant on their lack of support for campaigns that they don't control, but we must also challenge them politically — take up their ideas of how to transform society and give an overall alternative to them.

As Clive Bradley pointed out at the meeting called to discuss local bulletins, Militant can appear extremely radical. They talk about nationalisations and socialism, and try to make the opposition seem to talk only about women and Ireland.

The last thing the left opposition in the YS needs is a public face which does not have an answer to the critical question: how do we transform society?

YTS Action special

15p from Class Fighter, 214 Sickert Court, London N1



Ian MacGregor is

By John McIlroy

Ian MacGregor is, I'm afraid, a bully. Like all bullies he panics when he senses defeat. That is the simple explanation behind his bad-tempered attacks last weekend on Arthur Scargill.

According to MacGregor, Scargill spent the last six weeks avoiding a ballot and juggling the rules of the NUM. McGregor is somewhat mistaken.

Arthur Scargill has not once deviated from the rules of the NUM. Under Rule 41 and with the complete support of his executive, and as recently as last week at the national delegate conference, he has sanctioned area strikes against closures, supporting the clear policy of successive NUM conferences.

According to the NUM rules there is no need at all for a national ballot. Certainly given the changes wrought by six years of area productivity schemes, it needs the most patient consideration according to the rules of the NUM, and according to the law of the land. For it was in 1977 when the NUM executive decided to ignore the result of a national ballot to a deafening silence from the NCB and the government that Mr Justice Watkins turned down flat a suit brought by the left wing areas against Lord Gormley "the result of a ballot nationally conducted is not binding on the national executive committee in using its power between conferences" said the noble judge.

Indeed, "it has not great force or significance".

I am sure Ian MacGregor will have no further hesitation in deferring to Her Majesty's Judges on these matters.

But Arthur is not yet off the hook. He has, according to MacGregor, also been indulging in politics and utilising the miners for his own personal ends.

This dispute has, of course, nothing whatsoever to do with politics.

That's why the Financial Times states: "The prongy war is over. The real struggle, the most profound and serious labour challenge to have faced the Thatcher government has begun."

That's why The Times claims: "Mrs Margaret Thatcher is willing to spend any amount of time to ensure the government is not defeated by the miners."

That's why the whole of the Cabinet has spent the last six weeks denouncing Arthur Scargill.

It's strange, isn't it that Scargill should be accused by the National Coal Board of using his members for his own personal ends. They never, never said that about Lord Gormley.

Perish the thought. In his capacity as a director of the British Investment Trust, with a holding in De Beers Consolidated Goldfields, and the Anglo-American Corporation, Lord Gormley, I can say without fear of contradiction, always acted without the slightest desire for personal gain, in the interests only of his members and their brothers toiling in South African mines.

When Lord Gormley was a director of the British Investment Trust and of Vancouver Wharves Ltd and leading the miners at the same time, nobody accused him of being involved in a conflict of interest. Nor did they suggest that his behaviour in the NUM just might be coloured by the teeny-weeniest bit by the share-holding capitalist system he carried in his back pocket.

Intimidating

That rascal Scargill is a different kettle of fish altogether. And MacGregor hasn't had his full say yet. Scargill, he assures us, has actually been intimidating his members. MacGregor should know about intimidation, shouldn't he. After all, he's the joker who's threatening 20,000 miners with the loss of their livelihood. He's the one who showed the level of petty intimidation to which the bosses can sink, by having to be persuaded from sacking the miners who demonstrated against him at Ellerton Colliery before the dispute began. He has threatened the loss of a further 25,000 jobs if the strike goes on and he's been wildly enthusiastic about police physically intimidating miners, vicars and Mr Joe Average out for a drive with the wife and kids.

I'm afraid, as I write this on the top of a Clapham Omnibus, that it is with the greatest reluctance, of course, Ian MacGregor and not Arthur Scargill that I find guilty of intimidation.

Liar

MacGregor's final charge is, however, a truly devastating one.

Arthur Scargill, he claims, (the man is nothing if not blunt), is a liar. Well, from what you've read up till now, MacGregor is not exactly George Washington reincarnated. And it is Arthur Scargill who kept telling us, despite denial after denial from the NCB, that there was a hit list; and that there would be wholesale closures.

It strikes me, as your average person in the pub, that while MacGregor is not assuring us that there will be only 20 pits closed, and no compulsory redundancies, that the situation may look a little bit different once those 20,000 jobs have gone, and the union is that much weaker.

It strikes me that if the miners took his advice and



JOHN HARRIS

Thatcher went to work now, the demoralisation would be such as to allow the man who axed 70,000 jobs in steel to go through the remaining opposition like so much margarine.

The Economist has, for example, recently claimed that with the new technology available to the NCB, 60,000 miners could do the work 190,000 miners do now. And of course the coalfield most conducive to new technology is Nottingham.

Arthur Scargill, I conclude, is telling the truth. It is Ian MacGregor who is being less than frank. Mind

you, he's only doing his job. The people who are really spoiling my pint are Sid Weighell "never in a thousand years would this happen under Joe Arthur is using the miners as his cannon fodder" and Frank Chapple "miners, transport workers and any other groups Scargill can muster and hoodwink are his expendable cannon fodder. Only the intimidation of the flying pickets keeps him on course."

Is it possible that these two creatures have really sunk so low that they've taken to employing Ian MacGregor as a speech writer?

POLICE OF THE COAL

By Martin Thomas

THE police force is changing. The current operation against the miners' strike highlights two shifts which service chiefs and top civil servants have been consciously working for since the early '70s.

Over and above the local police forces — locally financed and nominally subject to local control — a national police force is in effect being developed. And special squads — Special Patrol Groups, Tactical Aid Groups, Instant Response Units — have come to play a bigger role.

The shape of things to come is shown by France — where the special riot police, the CRS, have the reputation of being the most brutal uniformed thugs in Western Europe.

The CRS started out as a supposedly left-wing force. In 1944, at the Liberation, the only effective police or army in the country was the



Resistance militias, largely working class and largely dom-



JOHN HARRIS

Scargill gets an enthusiastic response as he arrives for the Special Delegate Conference

Take a collection in your workplace.

Send cheques and postal orders to Miners' Solidarity Fund, St James's House, Vicar Lane, Sheffield.

Or open a bank or credit to Miners' Solidarity Fund, Co-op Bank, Sheffield branch, account number 30000009, bank sorting code 08-90-75.

a liar!

OUT OF LFIELDS!



JOHN SMITH (IEL)

inated by the Communist Party. They were the only



force who could carry out arrests or impose order. The police force which had served the pro-Nazi Vichy regime was totally discredited.

But the Communist Party's slogan was 'One State, one police force'. They helped to dissolve the militias, and to set up a new, supposedly 'reformed', police force.

In early 1945, as the militias were disarmed, 7000 men were purged from the police. Some Resistance fighters joined the new police force. The police were unionised, and in Bordeaux the union was able to kick out a CRS commander who had been involved in corruption and black marketing.

For the time being, the bosses rode the punch. But in 1947, with a mass strike wave and the Communist Party out of the government, they started to transform the CRS into a hard weapon against the working class.

But in November 1947 there was a general strike in Marseilles. Workers invaded the law courts, liberated five militants on trial, and occupied the Town Hall.

The police and the CRS just stood by. Indeed they seemed to be sympathetic to the workers. The new Minister of the Interior — Jules Moch, a member of the 'Socialist' Party — sent a 'strong man', Mossenet, down to Marseilles with full powers. Mossenet promptly disarmed and dissolved two companies of the CRS.

In Bordeaux, also, CRS companies were dissolved because of working class sympathies. In many cities, notably Paris, the old Vichy police, purged in 1945, were brought back.

Troops were used to beat down the workers and thus 'firm up' the determination of the CRS and the police. In May 1948, there were factory occupations and a general strike at Clermont-Ferrand. The police union declared its solidarity with the strike. 1,000 troops were sent in — thus inspired, the CRS laid in to the strikers with such energy that their commander later wrote: "I was myself shocked . . . by the conduct on the part of the personnel . . ."

And in some places the CRS was used to 'firm up' the ordinary police.

The conclusive demonstration that Moch had formed the police into an effective anti-working class striking force was the coal strike, starting in October 1948. 30,000 police and troops were sent into the coal fields, and took by force 120 pits occupied by the miners. Two miners were shot dead. Workers were forced down the pits at gun-point.



Nottinghamshire miners at the rally outside the Sheffield conference

JOHN HARRIS

What is a miner — what is he worth?
When he spends his life in the bowels of the earth,
Where darkness surrounds him
The air full of dust
Work is no please — hard feelings are just.

But who sympathises? — Who seems to care?
The bosses don't worry as long as he's there
To carry on working — a bonus to earn
But who reaps the benefit? When will he learn
That where there's incentive
There also comes greed
And those that earn plenty
Forget those in need.

When his job is threatened then he has the right
To strike for his future and urge all to unite.

Each miner should listen and then heed the call
Come out together
Gain a future for all.

But shame on the miner who'll sell out his soul
When he condemns another to life on the dole.
Each one has a duty to his fellow man
He must join the battle against this closure plan.

A union miner will join in the fold
A union miner won't waver and wait to be told
For he knows he's worth more than redundancy payments
That only result in a queue of dole claimants.

Kay Sutcliffe,
Keat miners' wife.

Join the Labour Party

Socialist ORGANISER

Scargill gets it right

BREAK LINKS WITH TORIES!

By Harry Swan

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Cuts

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Do we need a new Popular Front?

By John McIlroy

TWO SPELLS of reformist government without reforms have paved the way for the most right wing government in Britain since the war. And until recently, anyway — that government's hold looked pretty strong.

So much so, that the country's most distinguished Communist intellectual (as the Financial Times refers to Eric Hobsbawm) tells us that Labour must at least seriously consider some pact or coalition with the SDP-Liberal Alliance. "Some way", Hobsbawm insists, "of uniting the majority of the British people which is opposed to Thatcherism must be found. If at the next election Thatcherism is everywhere pounced by two or more candidates competing for each other's votes, the Tories can look forward to being in power into the 1990s".

This government is so terrible, he says (and the exaggeration of what Thatcherism represents is functional to Hobsbawm's conclusions), that there can be no doubt about it. "The issue of electoral unity will have to be faced".

Why does Hobsbawm think that the SDP is so much better than the Tories? It is not made quite clear.

He tells us that the SDP's leaders should never have left Labour. Their loss he blames on the "sectarian radicals" who fought the battles to democratise Labour and turn it left.

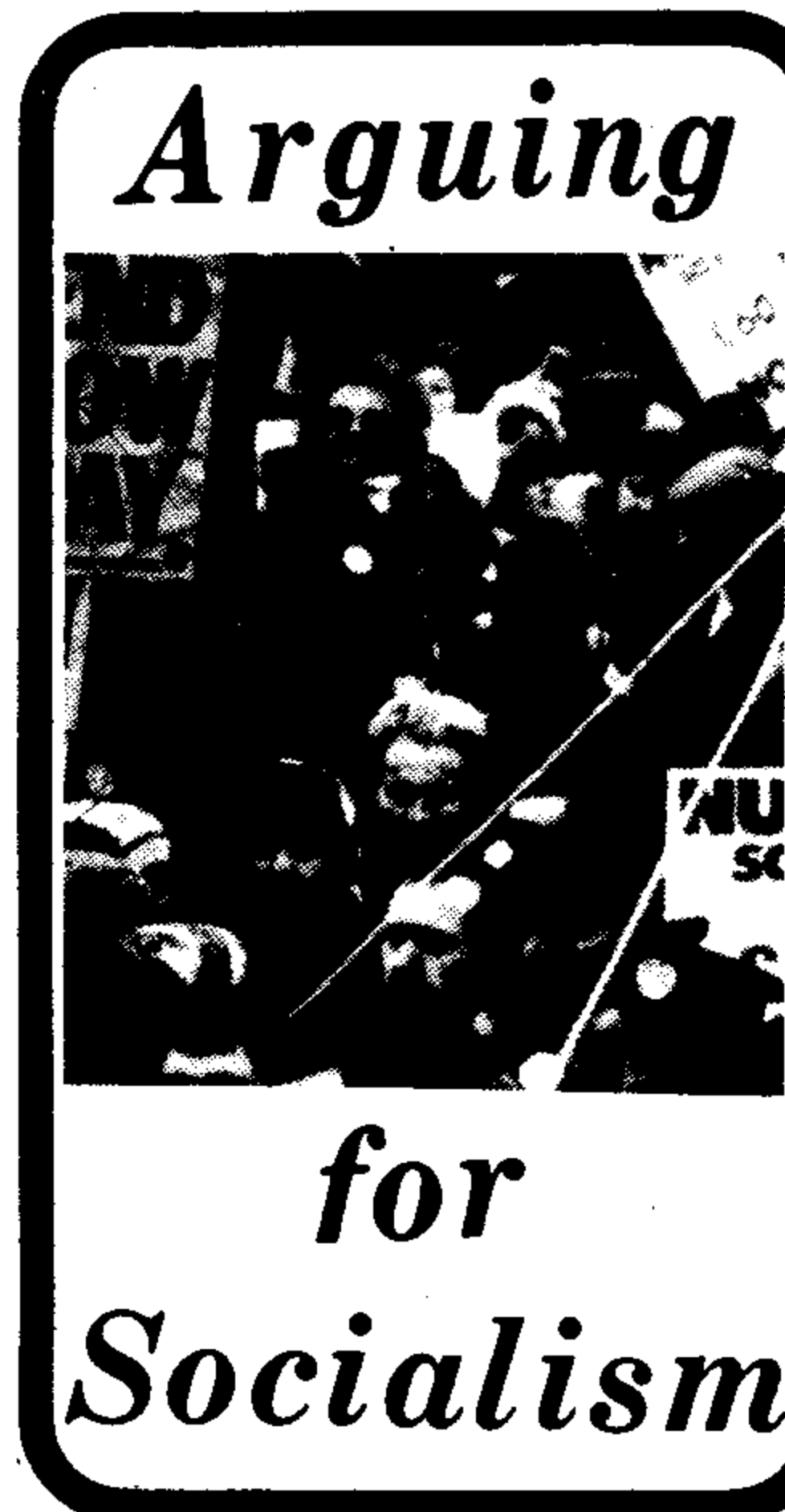
But what do the SDP leaders represent? Why were they a loss to Labour?

We are simply not told — just given the vague impression that they are very civilised people, rather like Tony Crossland, who enjoy their wine and the welfare state just as much as the rest of us but are perhaps a trifle more hard-headed and less romantic. Down to earth, but decent. Not mean of spirit like Thatcher or Tebbit.

The fact that these decent middle-class people want to go further than Thatcher in union-bashing; that they want to ban free collective bargaining; that they swear by the

cold war; and that they are still moving rightwards (witness Owen's 'social market' speech last autumn) — all this simply lead Hobsbawm to speculate that perhaps Owen is "a Thatcherite element".

"The country's most distinguished Marxist intellectual" may know a thing or two about the development of the labour aristocracy in the 19th century. His researches have not, apparently, taught him to start with a class evaluation of political parties.



Eric Hobsbawm

difficult for Labour to form a majority government without relying on it in some fashion. If the Tories' legal changes on the political levy work satisfactorily for them, then they will provide the possibility of strengthening the Alliance further by detaching at least some unions from Labour and moving them towards the Alliance.

The Alliance's 'Thatcherism or a human face' is a means to ensure that if Thatcherism is defeated then there will be a second capitalist party, at best able to take over, at worst able to supervise Labour and draw its sting.

So what should be our response? Bob Rowthorn, a Communist Party member like Eric Hobsbawm, agrees with Hobsbawm that we need a broad anti-Thatcher alliance. However, he goes even further.

"It would help", he assures us, "to prevent the Alliance from drifting (!) in a Thatcherite direction and strengthen the hand of the more progressive elements within the Alliance".

But however much Rowthorn may cajole them to turn left, class interests put the Alliance solidly on Thatcher's side. They are not waverers, or men and women in the middle of the class war. They are aware and die-in-the-wool champions of Capital and enemies of the working class.

Any agreement between Labour and the Alliance would mean taking any pretence of socialist politics off the agenda.

But Hobsbawm is prepared to accept that. The situation, he repeats and repeats, is grave enough to justify that. After all, even university tenure is not sacrosanct these days.

A purist desire to cling to the necessity for socialist change is self-indulgent and sectarian. It could endanger milk deliveries to the door and next-day post. Now that flat caps and brylcreem and whip-pets have gone forever, we must all pull together to defend public libraries, sherry at eleven, Grantchester, the British Museum, Posey Simmonds and walks on Hampstead Heath...

Historically coalitions between working-class parties

and capitalist parties have been called Popular Fronts. In the past they have been justified to the working class in terms of defending democracy against fascism in the '30s.

But every time the arrangement meant that the working class parties accepted the hegemony of the capitalists, acted to discipline and demoralise their own working class base, and thus paved the way for the fascist threat that they sought to combat. A workers' movement fighting for socialism could have brought about a completely different outcome.

Yet the historian Hobsbawm refuses to learn the undeniable lessons of history. His ideas, he proudly asserts, are "an up-to-date version of the Popular Front".

The only difference is that the fascist movements of the '30s did represent something seriously different from the traditional bourgeois parties, whereas the differences between the Tories and the Alliance are very minor.

The basic problem is the same: in the harsh world in which we live today, political parties have to help capitalism run smoothly — which means attacking the workers with whatever force is necessary to sustain the system — or they have to move to replace capitalism with socialism, and that means attacking the capitalists. You cannot stand around in the middle of the road.

Eric Heffer hit the nail on the head when he said, "unfortunately some Euro-communists have moved to a right wing social-democratic position".

Eric Hobsbawm deserted socialism long ago. He thought socialism was what existed in the USSR, and no wonder he deserted it.

He is that walking tragedy, a reformist in a world without reforms. He is a sad figure.

The good old British middle class decency which he seeks to defend jointly with the Alliance never really existed. Nor did the idealised Coronation Street good old working class whose death Hobsbawm also laments.

If we followed his advice the Labour Party wouldn't be around very much longer either.

Exploring space

By Alex Simpson

THE intense publicity given both to the Shuttle's mission to repair the stricken Solar Maximum satellite and the Soviets' hosting of an Indian cosmonaut aboard the orbiting Salyut space station highlights once again the intense rivalry and the refusal to enter into mutually beneficial collaboration in the field of space exploration.

The USSR, still smarting at the 1969 American moon landing, may intend to use the operational experience derived from the Salyut programme to pave the way for vengeance against the US by being the first to make a manned landing on Mars before the year 2000.

Many analysts working for the American space agency, NASA, are of the opinion that Russia has nearly all the technological and personnel prerequisites for an attempt.

Increasing numbers of Soviet cosmonauts have experience of a state of prolonged weightlessness by missions of up to a year in the orbiting Salyut space station.

The outward journey to Mars would be of almost the same duration and it is believed a sophisticated life support system is under development capable of sustaining a crew of cosmonauts in space for a projected round trip lasting a little over two years.

The only great difficulty or controversy Soviet scientists might run into is the possible construction and use of nuclear powered booster engines. A nuclear engine would be twice as efficient as any existing chemically fuelled rocket motor. It is considered that atomic power is the only way to overcome the constraints caused by limits to size of the eventual payload within presently existing technology.

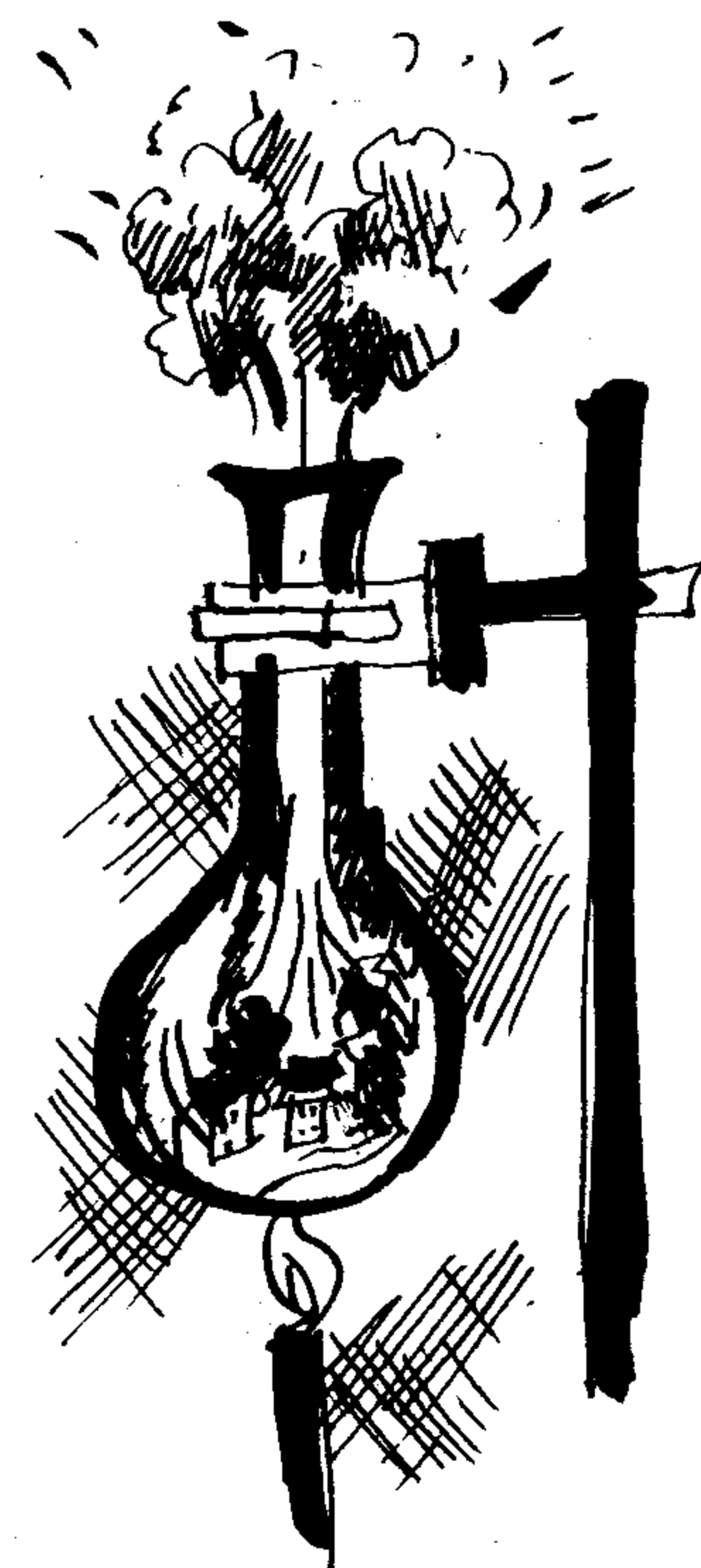
The United States hopes that its present mission will put the shuttle on course for a commercial viability in the satellite repair and retrieval business.

The Shuttle is also involved in another ludicrous twist of the space race as it tries to steal customers from the European space agency by proving itself a more reliable satellite launcher than the ESA's Ariane rocket.

The United States may decide to enter the race for Mars and the adoption of such a policy might be signified by moving forward plans for a permanently manned space station presently set for 1992.

Though Alex has not entered into arguments for or against space exploration, guarded approval for certain aspects has been expressed within the Science Column. If comrades have views on this or related subjects, the Science Column would be very pleased to receive (and publish) them.

LES HEARN



SCIENCE

Let them eat grass!

By Les Hearn

Humans have the most varied diet of any species (or can have), and are classified as omnivores. As such, we have about ten metres of guts, with different regions specialised to digest different types of food.

Now, a long stretch of gut, the large intestine, has seemed to have little nutritional importance up to now.

To be sure, it is important to our general health in that if we don't eat enough fibre or "roughage", we tend to develop such unpleasant complaints as haemorrhoids ("piles") or bowel cancer, both common in the West.

But does the large intestine exist mostly to punish us for our "refined" habits?

What does it do with all that fibre, anyway? Conventional wisdom has been that the bacteria that exist in billions in the large intestine can break down fibre to nourish us, if we could only absorb them, but that very little can actually be absorbed by the body. Now it seems this may be wrong and a significant amount of dietary fibre can be digested.

The average UK intake of 20g of fibre a day would only give about 40 calories of energy, but a rural African's intake of 100g per day would yield some 200 calories — about 10% of daily energy needs.

Gathering and hunting societies (closer to original human life-styles) would probably eat still more fibre than this, and the fibre would make the difference between life and death.

WOMEN'S FIGHTBACK
will be holding a national conference on
WOMEN: FIGHTING LOCAL
GOVERNMENT CUTS!

on: Saturday June 23 (provisional date)
in: London (venue to be confirmed)
Open to: delegates from women's and Labour Movement organisations and individuals.

If you'd like to receive notice of our conference or would like to be involved, contact Women's Fightback, 10b Landseer Road, London N19, or phone Gerry (789 7587) or Mary (263 2073).

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The real Tarzan

Frank Higgins reviews the new Tarzan film, 'Greystoke'

THIS is the 39th Tarzan film, and it must be one of the best.

Which isn't surprising, maybe, since most of the 39 have been cheap and uninspired B movies. 'Greystoke' was made by the same team that made the much-acclaimed and much-awarded 'Chariots of Fire', and it is very well done.

The B movie formula had villains of different shades and descriptions — from petty crooks to Nazis — coming to the jungle to be sorted out by Tarzan. 'Greystoke' is Edgar Rice Burroughs' original story.

It tells how the infant Tarzan is orphaned in the jungle and adopted and reared as an ape by a female ape whose offspring has just died. He becomes an adult indistinguishable from the others — except that he has found and learned to use a knife.

King

With its help he makes himself 'King of the Apes' (incidentally, nobody refers to him as Tarzan).

Discovered and recognised as heir to the Earl of Greystoke by a Belgian, he is taught to speak and other human things. He goes home to England and the stately mansion of the Greystokes.

I can't judge the depiction of ape society for its authenticity, but the first part of Greystoke was very strikingly done. Moving too. The famous Tarzan cry occurs in 'Greystoke' just once, as an outpouring of pain when his ape mother is killed by savages.

Second half

A series of boy actors through the stages of growing up culminate in Christopher Lambert, excellent as the adult Tarzan.

The film is still likeable in the second half, at the Greystoke mansion, but it goes off a bit. Jane is here Tarzan's American cousin.

'Greystoke' is very 'contemporary' — full of environmental message and concern, overfull in fact. Against vivisection, it tilts at what someone seems to label damningly as 'imperial science'.

This, of course, is an improvement on Edgar Rice Burroughs. The original 'Jungle Book' fantasies of



The infant Tarzan adopted by the apes

Burroughs, the turn-of-the-century New York writer, was racist, as you would expect from the time, place and subject.

In one of the final episodes Tarzan discovers a male ape who helped rear him locked up in a vivisection lab, and releases him.

Jungle

Pursued, the grey-haired old ape and his son dressed up as an Edwardian gent climb a tree in the park. The ape is shot dead. Cradling the dead ape, Tarzan shouts at the crowd, "He was my father".

After that Tarzan finally

goes back to the jungle. (The doesn't go).

The problem with the environmentalist messages is that they make an ending like that seem to suggest that the jungle is a better place than society.

But I liked 'Greystoke' quite a lot.

How red is Red Ken?

THIS WEEK 'Red Ken' Livingstone was elected a vice-chair of the Young Liberals!

According to the Morning Star he had been consulted and agreed to it.

The Young Liberals are, of course, members of the self-same party that has vied with the Tories in Parliament, and with its SDP partners, to express vicious hostility to the miners and ardent support for the police.

Ken Livingstone supports the miners. But he is a nice guy and perhaps he doesn't like to offend the Young Liberals.

Livingstone also hobnobs closely with Tory critics of Thatcher's local government policy in a sort of Popular Front to defend the GLC. And why should hobnobbing with the Tories make him blench, when he is having the Queen to open the new Thames Barrier and publicly claims her as one of his fans. [Obviously Red Ken has not quite given up all hope of one day becoming Lord Redken].

And on the other side, so to speak, he works rather closely with that strange and very unpleasant sect, the WRP, without whose help he could not have launched 'Labour Herald'.

A man of parts, you might say, even if it is difficult to fit the

John O'Mahony reviews 'Citizen Ken', by John Carvel (Chatto and Windus £2.95)

parts together. In fact the perceptive Young Liberals have probably got it right.

For all his verbal adherence to the politics of a mid-1970s identikit lefty, what Ken Livingstone pans out as in practice is a humane local government administrator of the existing system who seriously champions radical liberal causes like gay rights, racial equality, Irish self-determination and so on.

A champion of radical causes is not a bad thing to be, in a labour movement polluted by backwardness on these questions. But it is a lot less than the Red Ken image.

Given his choice to be an administrator of the local state under capitalism who attempts to work the system within the guidelines laid down by the Tory government there isn't much scope for his socialist politics except as spice for ceremonial and sentimental speeches. So he is a good radical and a fit vice-chair for the Young Liberals.

John Carvel's book explains many of the contradictions in Ken Livingstone. He had Liv-

ingstone's full collaboration, and it is the 'official biography', so to speak. The author manages to present a sharp outline of Ken Livingstone nonetheless, and the book is very valuable for that reason.

There is a long passage (in the chapter 'Trotsky and the Apes') in direct speech from Ken Livingstone which really should be read by people who take their socialism seriously.

In it Ken Livingstone expounds the view that humankind fell from grace 20,000 years ago when we discovered agriculture, and nothing has ever been right since.

You can identify some of his probable sources — Frederick Engels, Bertrand Russell — but as a whole it is Ken Livingstone's own version of 'historical materialism', and pretty weird!

It could, with a little twist here and there, be the voice of Peter Cook's A L Wisty, the raincoated man on the park bench who is leader and membership of the 'World Domination League'.

Socialist Organiser features strongly in the book — as the non-sectarian hard-left alternative to 'Livingstonism'. That's only telling it how it is! But some of the things said about Socialist Organiser will be the subject of articles in SO in the next few weeks.

Coriolanus on BBC2



Mick Ackersley reviews BBC2's production of Shakespeare's 'Coriolanus'

"A SWEATY fascist thug" was how a reviewer of a stage production of Shakespeare's play once memorably described the hero of 'Coriolanus'.

That's a possible description, of course, but not a very useful one for a play written at the beginning of the 17th century, about events that took place 300 years or so before Christ.

Yet 'Coriolanus' does deal with the class struggle in ancient Rome, between the aristocratic patricians and the plebs.

Caius Marcus Coriolanus is a semi-mythical figure from the early years of the Roman city state, around 300 BC, when Rome was still struggling for supremacy with the neighbouring Italian cities. Plutarch recounted the half-legendary story about 100 AD, and Shakespeare took it from North's late 16th century translation into English.

Destroyer

The patrician Caius Marcus is a great Roman soldier, the doer of splendid heroic deeds for Rome on the battlefield. As the destroyer of the rival city of Corioli, he is called Coriolanus.

Shakespeare's 'Coriolanus' tells how Caius Marcus is banished from Rome because he incurs the animosity of the plebs' leaders, the tribunes of the people, and goes into service with Rome's enemies, the Volscians.

As general of the Volscians he defeats the Roman army and marches on Rome, which is now helpless to resist.

Then out from Rome to meet the advancing Volscian army come his mother Volturnia, his wife Virgilia, and their son.

His mother pleads with him for Rome and finally prevails upon him. He turns the army round and retreats from Rome. Soon afterwards he is assassinated by the Volscians.

The play divides into two halves separated by his banishment from Rome. In the first part the plebs are in revolt because of starvation caused by famine and against leeching money-lenders who feed off them. Marcus loathes the plebs with a class loathing learned from his mother, who has shaped and reared him to be what he is. He is personally contemptuous of them: the play depicts them as cowards in battle.

Caius Marcus has a strict concern for his own honour, for what is becoming to it and what demeaning. He is more concerned with this than with anything else. He is petulant, arrogant, unbending in character, harshly moralistic and rude in his relations with his 'inferiors'.

He has pride of caste and pride in what he himself is. A bad leader in every way, except for the example he can set in battle and the terror he can inspire.

In every arena but the battlefield he is an overgrown lad who rubs everybody up the wrong way except his friends and family. His strength of family feel-

ing is central to the story. and he is nakedly dependent on his mother's approval.

This is the man who must win the plebs' vote to become consul (one of two chief executives of the state). In a democratic procedure which he resents as patrician, he must beg votes from people he despises. He must go through political rituals — like showing his wounds to the people in the public square — which, he feels, demean him. He is almost, bashful calling his wounds, when they are mentioned, scratches, and refusing "to hear my nothing-mastered".

But his real attitudes show through in mockery, irony and angry words. The tribunes of the plebs bait him, and he explodes in ungoverned self-destructive anger. Finally he is banished as an "enemy of the people".

The character Shakespeare makes of Coriolanus is certainly heroic one: he follows his own lights. He is consistent with himself. He refuses to play a game of politics which he finds demeaning and dirty for his own class and personal reasons.

Shakespeare's own political attitude, that of the Elizabethan and Jacobean aristocratic establishment, is central to the play.

The patrician Coriolanus honestly expresses the attitude of his class in terms of a sincerely felt and lived conception of personal honour and integrity. "Know, good mother, I had rather be their servant in my way than sway them in theirs". Resisting pressure, he says:

Petulant

"I will not do it
Lest I surcease to honour mine own truth

And by my body's actions
teach my mind

A most inherent baseness".

Living as we do in a culture where mass democratic politics is debased in the leading country of bourgeois democracy into nearly being a branch of international business, it is not necessary to be against democracy to have some fellow-feeling with Coriolanus' hatred of electoral corruption-bo-jumbo, if not with his patrician starting point. In a sense the attitude of Marxists to the opportunist, personalised accommodationist, and sometimes show-biz politics around in the labour movement — which does not scruple to exploit vulgar nationalism, for example — is a sort of 'Coriolanus complex'. That is a necessary part of serious Marxist politics.

Alan Howard's Coriolanus was much praised on the stage and to go by the TV production the praise is well deserved. He made him, in turn, stentorian-voiced and fronted as with brass, and then again a drawing-voiced, unsure, petulant-mouthed overgrown boy.

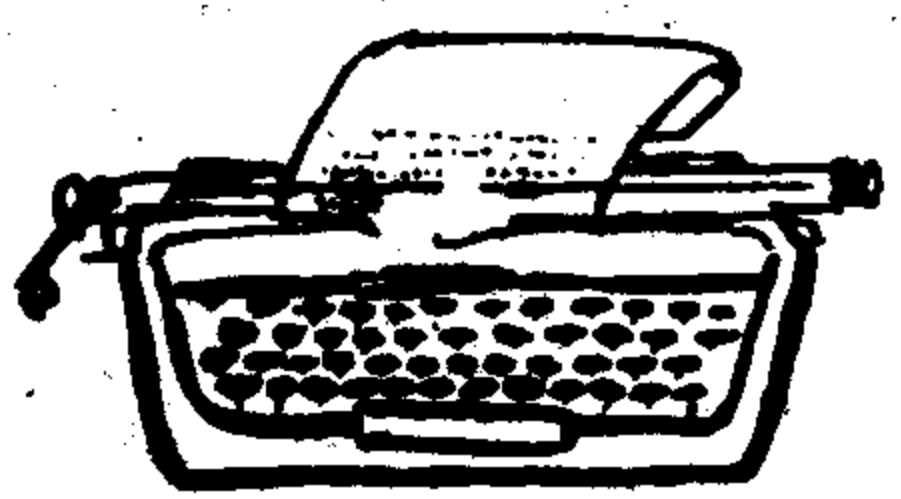


The adult Tarzan



State of Irish solidarity: 2

Writeback



Send letters to Socialist Organiser, 28 Middle Lane, London N8. No longer than 400 words please. Longer letters are liable to be cut.

IN HIS highly inaccurate and misleading report on a public meeting recently held by Southampton Irish Solidarity Committee ('The State of Irish Solidarity', SO 169), Tony Twine asserts that "SISC implicitly counterposed IRA-style militarism to revolutionary self activity of the Irish working class".

He went on to claim that "the silence was deafening" when he raised the allegedly "none-too-popular" question that "a fight for unity with the Protestant working class must surely be intrinsic in any struggle for Irish self-determination".

Obviously unity with the Protestant working class in "any" struggle for Irish self-determination is only possible insofar as Protestant workers break with the racist, neo-fascist and class-collaborationist position of Unionism and the Orange Order, abandoning their increasingly marginal privileges over their class brothers in favour of a united working class struggle for a socialist republic of Ireland, Sinn Fein's declared aim.

As Tony Twine well knows, SISC's position, as explained at the public meeting, a position which is indeed "justified by copious quotations taken from Marx and Lenin", is that the question of the national democratic revolution is

the central political question facing the working class of Ireland, in common with the progressive classes of all oppressed nations.

The defeat of British imperialism in Ireland is the vital, essential prerequisite for the revolutionary struggle for socialism in Ireland, and in Britain. It was, of course, Karl Marx who concluded that, "The English working class will never accomplish anything until it has got rid of Ireland (Marx's emphasis).

Marx defended the right of the Irish republicans to take up arms against their British oppressors and campaigned for a political amnesty for Fenian prisoners in British jails. Lenin criticised those on the 'Left', such as Trotsky, who denigrated the 1916 Easter uprising as taking place "under an archaic banner", remarking that "whoever expects a 'pure' social revolution will never live to see one".

SISC is not, as Tony Twine alleges, an "ultra-left sect": we stand firmly in the tradition of Marxism-Leninism, which holds that the revolutionary struggle for national liberation cannot be spurned "for the sake of" the socialist revolution, but is a historically necessary stage of the world revolutionary process. The Irish national democratic revolution is the first stage in the struggle for the overthrow of capitalism in Ireland, just as it is the "lever", as Marx put it, of the socialist revolution in Britain itself.

The national democratic revolution in Ireland will doubtless take place amid mass defections of the formerly privileged upper layers of the working class (the Protestants, in Tony Twine's) from

the camp of the class enemy, or least their neutralisation in terms of class struggle. This process will take place in connection with the continuing and rapid progressive political development of the Irish republican movement in the direction of scientific socialism. It is our task here in Britain, Marx believed, "everywhere to put the conflict between England and Ireland in the foreground, and everywhere to side openly with Ireland".

We recognise the mass, defensive character of the armed struggle led by the republican movement against the British army occupation of the Six Counties and its local collaborators following the crushing of the 1969 uprising.

Perhaps Tony Twine might care to give "scientific" substantiation to his characterisation of "IRA-style militarism" by extending to denigrate "PLO-style militarism", "ANC-style militarism", and "FMLN-style militarism"? And what, indeed, is "militarism"? Is it like "terrorism"?

We would be most interested to observe such a theoretical exploit à la Militant, although we very much doubt whether it will assist the creative development of Marxism, that is, scientific socialism.

Tony Twine's inability to comprehend the principled class position on the Irish national question is further reflected in the concessions he makes — we trust unconsciously — to the spurious "religious war" theory by his repeated references to the nationalist people as the "Catholic community" and to the Unionist guarantee as the "Protestant veto".

TANIA JOHNSON, for SISC.

Build local BLOC Committees

YOUR report of the Broad Left Organising Committee conference on March 24 was correct factually but rather weak on analysis.

I suspect most activists present were well aware that BLOC is a Militant 'front' organisation enjoying the same relationship as the SWP with Rank and File. Your question 'conference or rally?' was unnecessary.

We were quite clearly at a Militant-inspired rally, with debate on the motion in hand kept very loose, as was the 'voting' (if you'd blinked you'd have missed it!)

The question activists should apply themselves to is not so much, 'do the Militant dominate BLOC?', but how we should react to it. The intended BLOC plan

for regional conferences as a follow-up seems merely to be an additional layer of bureaucracy.

If the Broad Lefts are to be of any use they should be looking down, to the bottom of the union structure, and not upwards to create committees and conferences which mean little in reality.

The old CP-dominated Broad Lefts quickly became election machines unconcerned with the day-to-day aspects of trade union activities. This will be a major problem for the new wave as well.

To avoid this BLOC should make it quite clear that organisation should be at a grass roots level, based on workplaces or local trade groups. Regular meetings should be held, not to dis-

cuss the machinations of union committees and sub-committees, but how we can best develop the awareness of the wider membership.

To achieve this the Militant will have to abandon their sectarian attitude of old and be prepared to allow an 'open' organisation.

To this end the Sheffield conference represents a step in the right direction. BLOC's confident outlook contrast remarkably with the sectarian, bleating misery of the SWP. Let us hope it does indeed develop into a rank and file based activists' movement.

IRSF member, West Midlands. [Name and address supplied].

Left gains in NUT

By Ann Duggan

THE National Union of Teachers conference has shown an increase in the strength of the Left.

For many years the Left has campaigned for a flat-rate pay claim, rather than the percentage formula which increases the already large salary differentials among teachers.

The great majority of teachers are on the lower pay scales, but the pay claims are always designed to give more benefit to head teachers and others on higher scales. This reflects the dominant role of head teachers in the union leadership.

This year, for the first time ever, the Left won the vote to go for a flat-rate claim.

There was a big majority on a show of hands. Then the Executive tried to get a card vote to reverse the decision. There was still a majority.

The Executive got the decision reversed only at the second attempt, getting a

motion passed to reject the entire 1985 pay policy, flat rate amendment and all.

The demagogic argument was used that the flat-rate amendment would mean a claim equivalent to only a 15% increase, instead of 31% under the unamended formula. Teachers are currently being offered 3% this year!

A vote to invite a striking miner to address the conference was also won, but the Executive got out of that one because the majority was not the two-thirds needed to overturn standing orders.

A striking miner did speak at a Socialist Teachers Alliance fringe meeting, and over £1000 has been collected for the miners at the conference.

The Executive failed to stop the conference discussing nuclear disarmament, and that debate will take place on Wednesday 25th.

Barking action day on May 1

By Jenny Fisher

THE BARKING Hospital picket line is getting more successful as the dispute continues, and as the strikers spread their action beyond the hospital gates.

Crothalls, a subsidiary of Pritchards, won a renewal of their contract to clean the hospital with a tender which included cutting the cleaning hours by nearly half, and reducing the cleaners' wages and conditions to match. But the company just can't keep up an adequate standard of cleaning with the low numbers of scabs getting through the picket line — even when the scabs are supplemented by Crothalls 'neanderthal men' (managers) and their wives.

The pickets are being effective in turning back women who have been recruited as scabs. Many turn up not realising what the dispute is about, and they either walk out again when the pickets explain, or don't turn up again.

So Crothalls are dealing daily with scabs who are largely untrained and don't know how to do the job.

A reduced police presence on Monday 23rd meant a police escort could not be provided for the scabs, and they refused to attempt to enter. There was no afternoon shift of cleaners at all.

LUTTE OUVRIERE FETE

A weekend of revolutionary politics with amusements, music, food, drink, etc.

Friday June 8 to Monday June 11, near Paris.

A contingent of Socialist Organiser supporters will be going over. If you want to come, contact Ellen Taylor, 532 Abbeydale Rd, Sheffield 7.

— and this shift has jobs like preparing the patients' afternoon tea.

The scabs and managers have done a nice job of polishing the front entrance lobby, but behind the scenes things are different. Toilets are not cleaned regularly, and last week, for example, the main kitchen drains were completely blocked up.

As the pickets have also been successful in keeping the amount of supplies reaching the hospital to a very low level, how management is keeping the hospital open is little short of a miracle, and certainly involves putting patients at risk.

Critical report

A critical report on the hospital from an Environmental Health Officer was submitted to the April meeting of Redbridge District Health Authority, and resulted in three panicked DHA members, including the Chair, meeting six of the strikers for an hour.

This is the first move by the DHA to show any concern over what is happening to the patients whose standard of care they are supposed to ensure.

A management/union meeting with ACAS on Tuesday 17th got nowhere in solving the dispute.

The negative aspect of the dispute at the moment is the lack of support from other workers at the hospital. Despite further meetings, none of them will take industrial action to support the cleaners, and efforts will now have to be continued on a section by section basis.

Opportunity

However, there will be an opportunity for the labour movement to show its solidarity with the strikers on May 1, when London Region NUPE has declared a London-wide day of action. There will be a mass picket at the hospital all day, a march to Barking Town Hall, and a rally.

For latest details of the strike please phone 01-595 4252 (24 hours), or 01-592 5038. Messages of support and donations to: AUEW House, 588 Rainham Rd, South Dagenham, Essex RM10 7RA. Cheques payable to Barking & Dagenham Health Emergency.



Unions fined

TWO PRINT unions — the National Graphical Association and the Society of Graphic and Allied Trades — were each fined £75,000 in the High Court last Thursday (April 19) after injunctions were obtained the previous Friday under the Trespass Acts and the Employment Act 1980 by the British Printing and Communications Corporation, owned by Robert Maxwell.

Legal action was sought by Maxwell after an occupation of part of the BPCC head office in East London began on April 11 by members of the NGA and SOGAT 82 employed by Waterlow Securities Printers, a BPCC subsidiary.

Waterlow Securities Printers faces closure with the loss of 87 jobs, and workers there are fighting for negotiations to safeguard jobs and/or for redundancy money.

On Wednesday of this week, April 25, when the deadline for payment of the fines is reached, the unions could face seizure of their assets if they refuse to settle the contempt fines.

SOGAT 82 has a clear policy of non-cooperation with the Employment Acts, and with Maxwell threatening to go back to the High Court this week if the occupation is not ended, non-payment of the fines would be certain to provoke confrontation over the Tory anti-union legislation.

At present the unions' stated position is that they are prepared to negotiate with Maxwell any time, anywhere, provided that the injunctions are first withdrawn.

Perkins

MANAGEMENT of the Perkins diesel engine plant in Peterborough, where a dispute over a pay claim has stopped all production since April 13, have sent a letter to each of the 3500 shop-floor workers there urging them to vote in favour of the latest and 'final' pay offer at a mass meeting to be held this week, Tuesday April 24.

Shop stewards are advising the workforce to reject the 5.25 per cent offer and to continue the strike win the 5.5% claim demanded by the AUEW.

Ordnance strike

A NATIONAL day of action has been called for this Friday, April 27, by workers at Royal Ordnance Factories in protest at the government's privatisation plans.

About 21,000 workers will be taking part in local strikes and protest demonstrations up and down the country against the threatened sale and likely cut-backs at their workplaces.



What they are and

what they must become

Socialist Organiser 35p

35p plus postage from Socialist Organiser, c/o 214 Sickert Court London N1 2SY.

Women organise in North Staffs

By Jill Mountford

ON Easter Monday 30 or so women attended a meeting at Hem Heath social club, near Stoke on Trent, to discuss organising solidarity with the miners' strike.

The atmosphere was optimistic, and detailed plans for action were made.

The North Staffs picket lines have been divided among committees, each made up solely of women. The women are responsible for the collection, distribution and organisation of food and fund-raising.

The meeting was — to my dismay, although at this stage in the strike perhaps inevitably — chaired by a male NUM branch official, who appeared to be speaking on behalf of the NUM membership to the women.

Fund-raising is vitally important if this strike is to be won. As this strike enters its seventh week, the finances of these families are in a dire state. Basic food items are becoming a luxury.

The women themselves have organised marches, picketing, collections, leaflets and posters.

After the chair had called the meeting to a close, a group of women stayed behind, and decided to picket on Wednesday April 25.

One woman suggested that a march should converge on Florence colliery, for the afternoon shift.

This suggestion was greeted enthusiastically, particularly as it would be the first day back after the Easter break, and more scabs were expected.

Other women spoke about how all they got from the local DHSS offices was blank looks when they inquired about supplementary benefit and free school meals for their children.

A demonstration at the Social Security offices was immediately proposed, and a suggestion to occupy the offices followed.

Other women took on the responsibility of contacting union reps in the local schools to sort out free school meals until the Social Security takes on its responsibilities.

Florence originally voted by a very slim majority (one) not to join the strike.

However, as a result of the Midlands area directive not to cross picket lines, a mass meeting was held at Florence to work out what were the best methods of picketing the pit.

There were one or two dissenting voices, but the directive was accepted without a vote.

Stoke demo

NORTH Staffs Trades Council has set up a support committee for the miners, and a demonstration and rally is planned in Stoke on Saturday May 5. This demonstration should counter a gradual drift back to work by some miners despite strike votes at all the pits.

It is also an opportunity to demonstrate opposition to the leading right-winger in the union, Roy Ottey, whose Power Group offices are in Stoke.

Stop the coal trains



Nottinghamshire miners at the rally outside the Sheffield conference

Scots set up strike committees

MINERS in the areas surrounding Edinburgh and Dalkeith have set up strike committees which are organising pickets, delegations to other unions, collection sheets, and also soup kitchens.

Coal supplies to Cockenzie power station have been stopped at source, and the power station is now dependent on its dwindling stockpiles.

Pickets have successfully prevented the delivery of oil and new coal which are required for igniting the stockpiled coal. And miners report that inside the power station "they are

building doughnuts" — huge walls of coal concealing empty centres to hide the fact that the stockpiles are dwindling.

Coal merchants sneakily tried to take advantage of the good will of the miners at Monktonhall pit by claiming that they were delivering to old age pensioners. But one coal merchant's lorry claimed to have delivered seven tons of coal to Glasgow OAPs, over 60 miles away, in a half-hour journey!

Pickets are now travelling on suspect lorries. Phone-tapping on picket organisers is suspected.

Edinburgh Trades Council is considering a proposal for a miners' support committee from a POEU branch.

KEITH Pritchard (Florence NUM, Stoke, in personal capacity) spoke to Socialist Organiser.

The picketing began with a delegation from South Wales, but after this meeting we organised picketing ourselves. The majority of picketing has been carried out by Florence men with some help from [nearby] Hem Heath.

Since picketing began, police tactics have been characterised by force and sheer numbers. These tactics resulted in my own arrest early this month.

These were the events leading up to that.

Monday (morning shift). About 60 or 70 scabs gathered at the roundabout about 200 yards away from the pit head. Shortly after they had gathered, vanloads of police arrived. They formed a single line in front of us at the pit entrance.

Two vanloads of police then arrived at where the scabs were standing and formed a line around them. The police then marched the scabs through the line of pickets. I couldn't believe that men who I was working with were now pushing their way through a picket line.

Tuesday (morning shift). We had asked for support from Hem Heath, but when we saw the police we knew something was about to happen.

There were horses, riot gear, the lot. Police numbers had doubled.

They rode the horses into the pickets to push them back.

Ironically, a policeman had his foot trampled by a horse. The news that evening said that a policeman had been injured, but of course

By Rob Dawber

WIDESPREAD publicity has been given to the decision by Shirebrook guards to refuse to carry out the National Union of Railwaymen's (NUR's) instructions about not handling coal trains.

But in fact most coal movements in North Nottinghamshire have been stopped or disrupted through action by signalmen at key points.

The action began on Monday 16th, when the day signalman at Thoresby box decided to stick his neck out and refused to let the coal trains through.

This stopped coal out of five collieries, Thoresby, Bilsthorpe, Clipstone, Rufford and Blidworth.

On Monday morning this one signalman was on his own, but the afternoon signalmen continued the action (though not the night shift).

After a couple of days, support came from all three signalmen at Shirebrook box. That stopped all coal traffic to Worksop yard and, most importantly, into Cottam and West Burton power stations.

Support also came from all three signalmen at Sherwood box. This blocks a marshalling yard and therefore traffic to Didcot and Northfleet power stations.

'How can anyone remain neutral

did not say how.

Later on we went to speak to the scabs, but the manager came up to me and said abruptly: 'Get off these premises'.

Wednesday. We went to speak to the scabs at the roundabout before the police had forced them through the picket. They asked us not to jeer or call them names. If we didn't they would stay away from work as from Thursday.

They passed through the picket line in total silence with all our backs turned on them.

Thursday. These scabs are not all honourable men. All but three of them turned up again. Even the police superintendent made a comment on them.

Friday. There was now a full force of men on the line — 200 to 250 pickets. Police numbers had doubled, and there were now four horses.

For the first time there was a line of police formed behind the pickets as well as in front. The scabs went through the line escorted by a ring of police.

After they had gone through some pushing and shoving started, and a group of us were pushed towards a

Sherwood and Shirebrook signal boxes between the north and south rail exits from the North Notts coalfield.

One other signalman at Cresswell box also stopped coal traffic, bringing the total to eight by Easter weekend.

This reduced the 80 coal trains per day from Shirebrook depot to about 20. Management rescheduled some trains into High Narnham power station, taking advantage of the lack of support from the third (night) signalman at Thoresby box.

High Narnham is not, however, a large power station compared to Cottam or West Burton.

Sheffield power box, controlling signalling for up to 10 miles round Sheffield, refused to let coal through since day one of the strike, support for the miners.

Tinsley marshalling yard refused to handle coal since day one of the strike itself.

This has cut off supply to British Steel's Orgreave coking plant and therefore coke to the British Steel Scunthorpe plant.

So far management has held back from carrying out any threats of discipline for fear of inflaming the situation.

A whole group of scabs tripped over, police arrested miners together.

Suddenly I felt a policeman's arm around my neck, dragging me out of the march. I was later charged at Linton police station with assaulting an unknown policeman.

The number of the arresting policeman on the charge sheet was not the number of the policeman who dragged me out of the crowd.

The charge was later reduced to breach of the peace, I am pleading not guilty.

A front page article in the Evening Sentinel [the paper] this week reported that certain Labour council members were not prepared to take a stand in support of the strike, and wanted to remain neutral. I find it difficult to understand how one can remain neutral in a strike.

One councillor, Bob [famous for school and college closures] has gone so far as to say that he is fed up with people criticising the pickets. If he would like to come to the picket line with us, he can see things for himself.

We'll make him a cup of tea and make him welcome.

NOTTS MINERS RANK AND FILE STRIKE COMMITTEE
It is vital that we organise in order to bring the entire Nottinghamshire coalfield to a complete standstill. The struggle has now gone beyond that of opposing pit closures, and is a fight for the survival of the union movement.

At a meeting on Monday April 16 1984, 500 rank and file members representing 17 Nottinghamshire pits decided to organise and lead a fight at the very point of attack — i.e. inside the Nottinghamshire coalfield. We need every kind of assistance that we can possibly get.

May I on behalf of the Notts Miners Rank and File Strike Committee appeal to you to help us in this fight to consolidate the unity of the National Union of Mineworkers, defeat MacGregor and deal a staggering blow to Thatcherism.

Any help you can give, financial or otherwise, will be greatly appreciated. Cheques should be made payable to the Notts Miners' Forum and sent to the address below.

PAUL WHETTON

10 Nicholas Place, Tuxford, Newark, Notts NG22 0



Remember Blair Peach!

FIVE years ago Blair Peach was coshed to death by a policeman during a demonstration in Southall against the National Front. Last week socialists, trade unionists and members of the Asian community in Southall marched to commemorate Blair Peach.

Socialist Organiser

Fund

£337 is the final total for April — but we'll need a lot more in May!

Activity in support of the miners' strike is costing us a lot of money petrol, fares, expenses for leaflets, phone bills... When you're collecting for the miners' strike fund, make a point of collecting for your paper, and its work to support the miners, too!

Send money to 214 Sickert Court, London N1 2SY.

VICTIMISED!

IN THIS month's issue of Personnel Management magazine Mr Roland Long of International Harvester urges private industry to follow Thatcher's union-busting at GCHQ.

It's already happening. On Thursday 11 April, Tom

Hart, TGWU 6/704 branch secretary was sacked on the spot by the management at Akzo Chemie, Littleborough, near Rochdale.

It's what TGWU District Secretary Bert Pealing described as "the purest case of victimisation I've ever seen."

Akzo's UK Gaulleiter Adolph Butler thought he was onto a

By Mark Starr

winner. The site has never known a complete shutdown in its history.

Butler was shaken to the soles of his jackboots. In a magnificent display of principled solidarity, TGWU, AUEW and EETPU members walked out through the gates

leaving the wretched Butler to answer for the consequences of his incompetence to J C P van Oosterom, boss of the Dutch multinational.

Tom Hart is a TGWU District Committee member and a local Labour councillor. He has more than a decade's service in Akzo Chemie and in the local labour

movement.

In a three-page letter of dismissal, management make not one single mention of his work record. They are quite open about why he is being dismissed. Tom is being sacked for his trade union activities carried out in the interests of and with the endorsement of his members.

Tom Hart is being sacked for: passing on a letter to management drafted by another branch official as instructed by his branch meeting, questioning management's policy of concentrating investment at the modern Belgian site, rather than in Britain; transferring branch meetings off-site after a branch decision to that effect, calling a meeting during the 1982 NHS dispute in pursuance of an official TGWU circular to discuss participation in a day of action; and for challenging management's refusal to discuss the introduction of a medical register.

For these mortal sins committed not on his own individual behalf, but acting at all times as the agent of and under the supervision of his members, Tom is being awarded a lifetime UB40.

But that's not quite all. Mr Butler believes that if you're going to tell lies, make them big ones.

Tom Hart, he claims, was responsible for the high turnover of stewards on the site.

Three of the people Mr Butler names (out of ten) are still stewards.

All stewards named deny without reservation the turnover was in anyway connected with Tom Hart or his activities. They deny even more emphatically Butler's other suggestion, insulting both to the stewards and the workforce, that because of Tom's Machiavellian influence, they were "afraid to negotiate with the management". But Butler takes some beating. Having accused Tom Hart of using the workforce to further his own political ambitions, this reptile then goes on to state that he couldn't let company plans go ahead, without throwing Tom on the dole queue, because, get this, "to do so would neglect my own career". Just whose personal ambition is involved here?

Management is already attempting to weaken the stoppage by proffering "generous pay offs" and suggesting that the workers return and put the issue before the NJIC panel.

The response of the strikers is summed up by David Uttley "There is one demand in this strike: reinstatement. We're not going back without Tommy."

The workers know that if the bosses can get away with this kind of flagrant injustice, nobody's job is safe.

As Brother Kovacks commented, "I came to this country from Hungary in 1956. Now I see the same things happening in Littleborough. There comes a time when you have to stand up to injustice, and victimisation at work for trade union activities and political views. And that's what this is all about."

Messages of support and donations should be sent urgently to Brother S. Hughes, 16 Welbeck Avenue, Littleborough, Nr. Rochdale, Lancs. Cheques should be made payable to TGWU 6/704 Strike Fund.



Qaddafi

The embassy shooting

By Andrew Hornung

THE Government has given the Libyans besieged in their 'People's Bureau' in St James's Square until Sunday to leave, and has broken off diplomatic relations with the Qaddafi regime.

According to the British media, Colonel Qaddafi is a mad dictator and he instructed his representatives in London to gun down Libyan exile oppositionists as they protested outside the office of the 'People's Bureau'.

The US says that an instruction was 'picked up' by a US spy-satellite and was reported to the British authorities. The British authorities, however, deny this. They simply confirm that two Libyan diplomats gained an emergency night-time interview with the Home Secretary at which they demanded the banning of the protest demonstration.

Out in force

Brittan, who has been doing his best to cripple the miners' picketing, hypocritically but correctly refused.

The police, however, took the Libyan warnings seriously and were out in force the following

morning. Within minutes of the demonstration starting, the marchers were raked by machine-gun fire coming from the Bureau building. Several protesters were injured and a police-woman killed.

Hunted down

The shooting at the Embassy is entirely in keeping with Qaddafi's insistence that exile oppositionists must return to Libya or be hunted down by the agents of 'revolutionary justice'. In Libya itself, a number of students were publicly hanged on Monday 16th for opposition to the regime.

It is not a matter of taking what the Tory ministers or the CIA say for good coin. They have a vested interest in discrediting anyone in opposition to them and creating a public mood which would tolerate military intervention against Libya if that were needed.

And the US in particular has been at pains to vilify and provoke, weaken and undermine the Libyan regime. In August 1981, for instance, US warplanes 'on a military exercise' shot down two Libyan jets over the Gulf of Sirte on Libya's northern coastline.

Buzzed

The following year a Libyan passenger airline was buzzed by American fighters. Last year the US were loud in their condemnations of an alleged Libyan attack on the Sudanese capital, Khartoum, although it is certain that no such attack ever occurred.

The US has also given its backing to Libyan opposition groups. These groups, whose political methods are no more gentle than those of Qaddafi, have a big base in Britain, where two of the opposition's newspapers are published.

Real case

The Libyan Committee for Human Rights is a front organisation for these conservative and royalist factions, but recent events like the hangings have given these people a very real case to publicise.

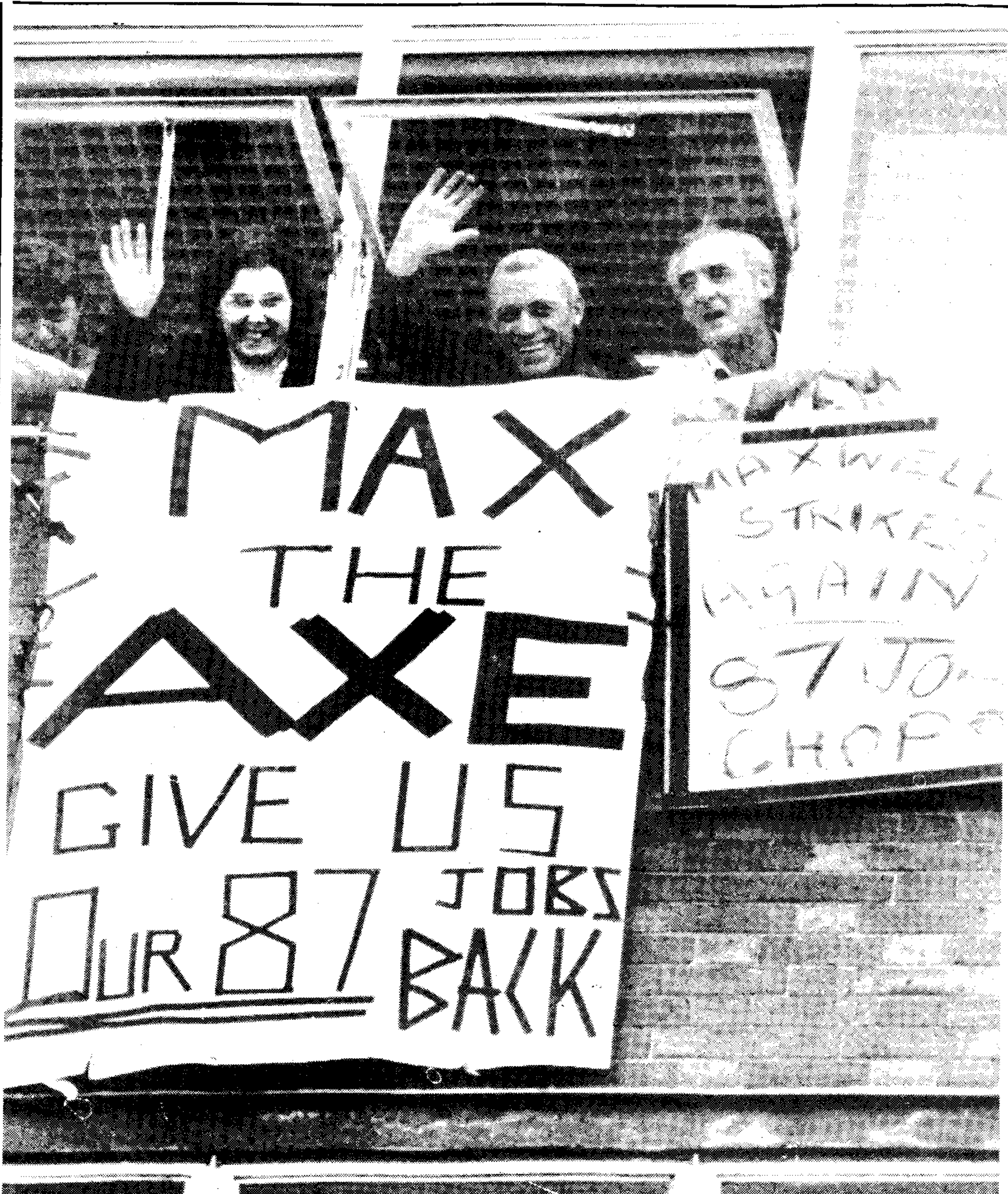
It is not Qaddafi's state terror that rouses the hatred of the British and US governments, though it deserves the condemnation of every worker and

democrat. Many western governments maintain the closest economic links with Libya.

What angers these governments is Qaddafi's erratic nationalist/expansionist policies — support for opposition movements in Tunisia, Morocco, etc. and for the recent coup in

Upper Volta; invasion of Chad; aggressive role in Middle East diplomacy; high oil-price policy — and his role as a (maverick) ally of the USSR in Africa.

In other words, that he is an obstacle in their drive to keep the world orderly and docile for their profit-making.



ANDREW WIARD (REPORT)

Two print unions at risk from Tory laws

LAST week the High Court fined the print unions SOGAT and the NGA £75,000 each because both unions refused to tell their members to end their occupations of BPC headquaters, Maxwell House. The occupation is in opposition to the sacking of 87 printers when Maxwell's Waterlow plant is closed down. The trade unions were given until today to end the sit-in. Maxwell says he will go back to the High Court if it is not ended.

Despite using the courts against two trade unions, Maxwell is still a member of Oxford Labour Party. They should throw the dirty scoundrel out.



Tom Hart

Signed articles do not necessarily reflect the views of the SOA.

Solidarity betrayed

LESSONS OF THE BASINGSTOKE POST OFFICE WORKERS STRIKE

25p

This pamphlet tells the story of the victimisation of Socialist Organiser supporter Alan Fraser and how the fight to defend him was sold out by the union officials. 25p plus postage from 75 Free-mantle Close, Basingstoke.