

Socialist ORGANISER

Paper of the Socialist Organiser Alliance No.190 August 2 1984 25p Claimants and strikers 10p

GENERAL STRIKE!

HIGH COURT SEIZES MINERS' FUNDS

AS WE go to press, court officials are due to seize the assets of the South Wales area of the miners' union.

The High Court issued the order to seize the assets because the South Wales NUM refused to pay a fine imposed on it as a result of a case brought under the Tory anti-union laws by two haulage firms.

The labour movement should answer the seizure of the miners' assets with a general strike.

The full force of the law is now poised to come down heavily on the miners if they continue to use the methods of struggle which they need for

victory — flying pickets, trade union boycotts, solidarity action, all of them unlawful under the Tory anti-union laws.

The heroic miners say that they will continue to use those methods.

So now either the laws will strike down working class solidarity — or solidarity will strike down the laws. Either the NUM will be defeated by crippling blows from the bosses' courts, to bankrupt the union — or the labour movement will rally round the miners and escalate the struggle against the Tory government.

When the courts jailed five dockers under a previous Tory anti-union law in 1972, 250,000 workers struck immediately without waiting for the union leaders. This spreading strike movement pushed the TUC into calling a one-day general strike.

The Tories caved in and freed the dockers, and the Tory law was in tatters. The Labour government scrapped it in 1974.

Mass strike action now to back the miners can do the same to the anti-union laws and to the government as we did in 1972.

Already railworkers and some other transport workers have boycotted coal and iron ore movements, and faced up to reprisals from their employers, in solidarity with the miners.

The dockers struck last

month in a dispute closely connected to and parallel with the miners' strike. Hundreds of thousands of other trade unionists have joined one-day strikes to back the miners or have given food and money to help them.

Workers in many smaller disputes have been boosted and encouraged by the miners' stand.

21 weeks of the miners' strike have stirred up the labour movement, and roused it to the point where a general strike is possible.

Immediate rank and file action, spreading across the country, can do now what it did in 1972. But we must also demand that the official leadership acts.

Two TUC leaders appeared on TV on Monday 30th. Alan Sapper of ACTT called for 'a generality of strikes' in support of the miners. Alan Tuffin of the UCW said that the situation was heading towards a general strike, and a special conference of the TUC should be called to avoid it.

The TUC should be calling a general strike in support of the miners and to smash the anti-union laws — pledging itself to continue the action until the miners are satisfied. The NUM has already put down a resolution for the September TUC congress calling on all trade unionists not to cross NUM picket lines.

Now is the time for every trade unionist with an outstanding claim, demand or grievance to act to help themselves, the miners, and the whole working class.

Merseyside County Council workers are striking on August 7 in protest against the Tories' attacks on local gover-

nment, and Greater Manchester NALGO members on August 9. These action should be tied in with the test of strength between the miners and the State.

A general strike could not only force the courts to back off the miners, but also wipe the anti-union laws off the statute book.

Indeed it could go much further. It could make the country ungovernable for the Tories, and even for the whole capitalist state machine.

Such a prospect frightens the TUC leaders, and if a general strike gets underway

continued on back page



MARTIN SHAKESHAFT (IFL)

SMASH ANTI-UNION LAWS!



Back the miners

Scotland: an offensive needed

By Stan Crooke

BILSTON Glen colliery, near Edinburgh, along with Monktonhall pit and the privately-owned Blinkbonny mine near Gorebridge, were the main places for picketing last week in Scotland.

Bilston Glen reopened on Monday July 23 after its three weeks holiday period, and there has been heavy picketing ever since. 158 pickets were arrested last week.

The Coal Board hoped for a

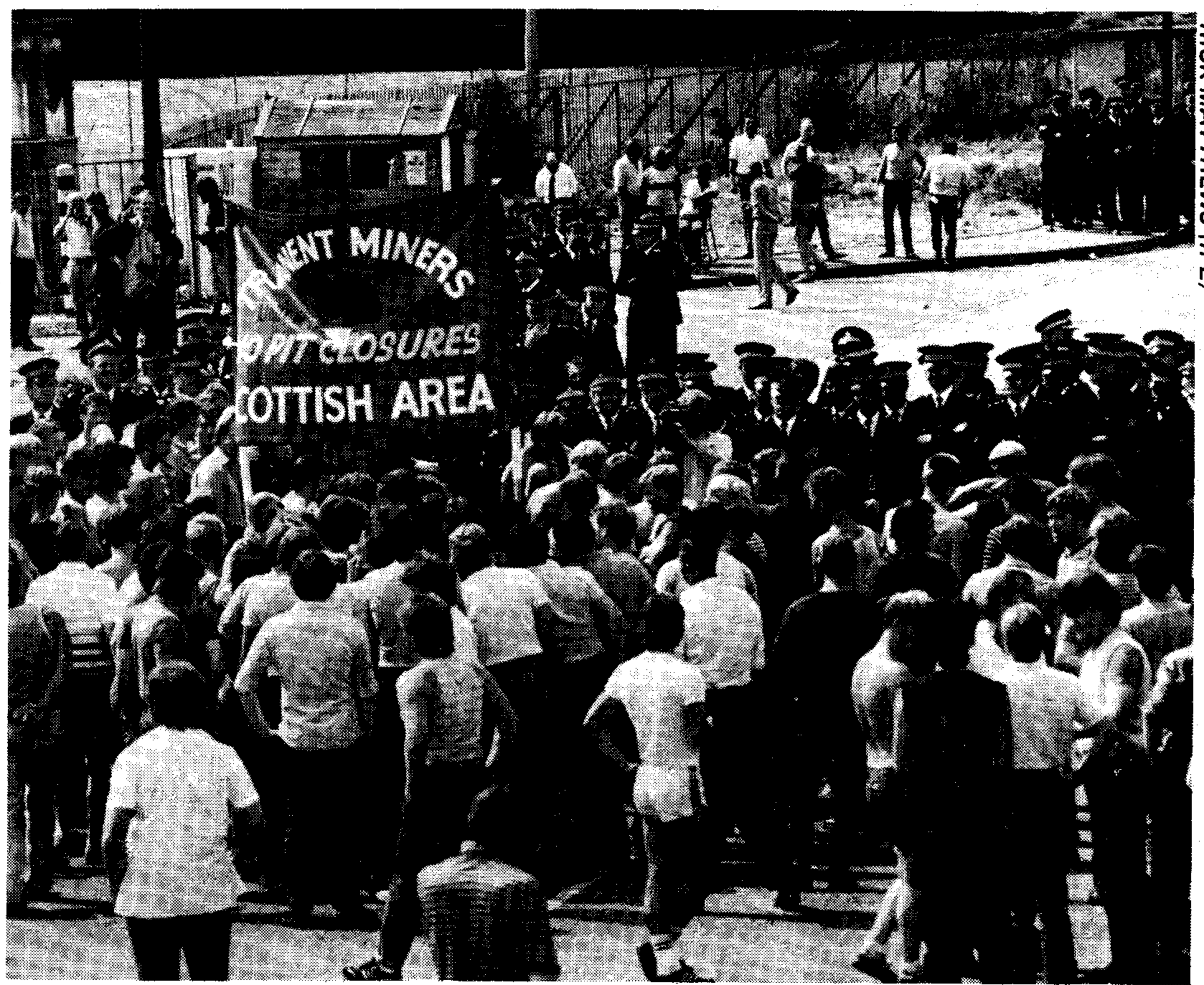
mass return to work, but only six or seven men have been taken through the picket lines by police each day. (The Coal Board claimed 24). There was some of the worst police violence since Hunterston and Ravenscraig in early May.

At the Monktonhall colliery, two miners turned up for work on the Tuesday, July 24, but a 200-strong picket the following day stopped them from continuing. Pickets have also been out at Blinkbonny, though action has been at a much lower level than the previous week, when barricades were built across the access roads to the pit.

The Coal Board is now attempting to force a return to work at the Killoch and Barony pits in Ayrshire by claiming that there is a threat to the collieries' future, and laying on special buses for anyone wanting to desert the strike.

Their chances seem slight. But there is no room for complacency. The large-scale picketing last week was a rearguard action against scabs, not an offensive to spread the impact of the strike by stopping steel and the power stations.

And strikes, like wars, are won by offensives, not defensive action.



Massed ranks of police at Bilston Glen

IN BRIEF

26 lorries leave London on Thursday this week (2nd), laden with food to go to the NUM headquarters in Barnsley.

The convoy, carrying food valued at £100,000, has been organised by the print union SOGAT together with the FBU, TGWU, TASS and USDAW. It is to be distributed by the NUM around the country to those areas most in need.

An emergency motion passed at the north-west TUC meeting last Saturday, July 28, calls on the TUC general council: "as a matter of urgency, to call for a national day of action in support of the NUM".

Striking miners from Ollerton colliery in North Notts led a march of around 2000 people in Leeds last Saturday, 28th.

The march was called by the Leeds Trades Council, Leeds Labour Party, and the Yorkshire NUM. Speakers at the rally included Brenda Greenwood of the Ollerton Women's Action Group (who received £500 from Leeds Labour Party for distribution to strikers' families in Notts), Derek Fatchett MP, and Yorkshire miners' president Jack Taylor.

Across the country police have been harassing people taking street collections for the miners.

In Birkenhead last Saturday, 28th, four Labour councillors and another half a dozen Labour Party members were arrested. They are to appear in court on August 14 charged with obstructing the highway.

There are special problems in London because the authority responsible for giving licences for street collections is not an elected local council but the Metropolitan Police.

Street collections or house-to-house collections without a

licence are offences carrying a fine of £50 (streets), or £100 (door to door).

It appears that collections taken at a street meeting with speakers do not need a licence. However, since no powers of arrest are attached to the offences of street collection or house-to-house collection, the police generally use charges of 'obstruction of the highway' or 'obstructing the police in the execution of their duty'.

These can equally be used against street meetings.

Local Labour councils may be able to help by giving collectors a patch of their property to operate on.

A cassette featuring six new songs by folk singers Peggy Seeger and Ewan MacColl, and interviews with miners and their families, has just been released. The title is, 'Daddy, What Did You Do In The Strike?', and all proceeds from sales go to the strikers.

Available for £2.50, including post and packing, from NUM, St James's House, Vicar Lane, Sheffield S1 2EX.

Trade unionists from the Lombardy region in Northern Italy (around Milan) donated 7 million lira (about £3,500) last week to the NUM.

The Australian Committee for International Trade Unity sent a donation of A\$100,000 (about £63,000) to the NUM.

Derbyshire County Council have agreed to allocate £250,000 to feed children of striking miners' families in the county during the summer holidays; and Sheffield City Council donated £100,000 in food vouchers to miners' families last Friday, 27th.

These examples should be generalised, with miners and their supporters pressing other Labour-controlled councils to follow suit.

Black support

Black and Asian activists have called a public meeting in Nottingham, at the Green Centre, Gregory Boulevard, on Monday August 13, to set up a Miners' Strike Black Support Group.

Speakers will include striking black miners, members of the local women's support group, and a representative from the black South African miners' union.

In a letter explaining their initiative, the Notts Miners' Black Support Group write:

"Already, 60% of black youth are on the dole, and half of all Notts employers discriminate against our community's right to work. If the miners lose, it will get worse; but if the miners win, with a four day week, it would mean more jobs.

The miners are faced with increasing police brutality. They are banned from leaving home, talking to other miners, and travelling round the country. The Police Bill will legalise the powers and extend State control and State racism to attack the miners today and the black communities tomorrow.

The Government has begun to use the house arrest and controls here that they help finance against our people in South Africa.

If the miners... can be beaten and starved into submission, imagine what they will try to do to the black communities in the future. The government is attacking the rights of all workers, but in particular those in the black communities.

The cutbacks in health, education, housing, social services, and increased immigration controls and pass laws in the DHSS and NHS are examples of this.

We should remember also that the miners have supported the Afro-Caribbean and Asian communities in our struggles. In 1977, it was the Yorkshire miners, led by Arthur Scargill, that came to help support the Asian women on strike at Grunwick... Only by developing solidarity between black and white workers can we win."

The group can be contacted at the South Notts strike centre, Room 1, AUEW, 218 Mansfield Rd, Nottingham.

Don't forget 4 day week

THE TORY propagandists will soon be saying that coal stocks will last until 1990.

But even that won't be enough to keep their spirits up. They were forced to admit last week that British Rail is losing £4 to £5 million and the Coal Board £30 million a week because of the strike.

This is the background to the NUM special delegate conference on August 10, called to 'tighten the knot' of the strike.

But while hitting the bosses in the pocket hurts them, the fact is that the Tories are prepared to spend millions on beating the NUM. It is a 'worthwhile investment', as Chancellor Nigel Lawson put it.

What frightens the Tories most is other workers taking action with the NUM.

One immediate way to tighten the knot is for the call to go out from Sheffield on August 10 to the NUR for them to implement their own conference policy to call a one-day solidarity strike if so requested.

The TUC should also be put on the spot.

The September TUC congress should pass a resolution that no affiliated member should cross a picket line.

Also, it should lend its authority to strike action in support of the NUM - on condition that the initiative and control stays with the NUM and the rank and file.

A few 'Silver Birches' also need to be chopped down. The issue of Rule 51 and the new disciplinary procedure is due to come up again before this dele-

By John Bloxam

gate conference. Whether judges will be satisfied by a 'proper' re-run vote remains to be seen. In any case there is the issue of action against the scabbing officials, who are now openly organising to break the strike.

The conference should also discuss giving more prominence to the other demands of the strike besides withdrawal of the pit closure programme - especially the four day week and consolidation of the incentive scheme.

The Coal Board always has the option of withdrawing the closure programme announced in March, and just waiting for a better time to reimpose it. That is essentially what they did when they were forced to back down on closures by strike action in February 1981.

After 21 weeks on strike the miners need more lasting gains than that. The four day week is crucial.

With new technology, and pit closures because of exhaustion, the four day week is essential to keep jobs. Now is the time to win it, if ever, and now is the time to get rid of the incentive scheme.

Rail support

By Rob Dawber

BRITISH RAIL management are trying to put pressure on Shirebrook, the only depot moving any coal at all since Westthorpe depot, just south of Chesterfield, joined the action on July 30.

The vast majority of guards and drivers at Shirebrook are supporting the action - only 10 out of about 150 regular trains are running.

British Rail management obviously see Shirebrook as the weak link in the rail unions' support for the NUM, and so are not allowing guards to sign on before they are sent home for refusing to handle coal.

This means the loss of a further £20 signing-on money and is effectively a lock-out.

While ASLEF pays full wages to those sent home, the NUR pays no more than £55 a week.

The loss of signing-on money is meant to undermine guards' support. Management have said so much to local NUR representatives.

Moves are afoot to break the isolation of Shirebrook. Already support from the Sheffield Power Box for a signalman at Thoresby has stopped British Rail management locking him out.

Such solidarity, plus pressure on the NUR and ASLEF nationally to take action, could soon totally block all coal movements by rail.

NUR demo

NUR members in British Rail workshops are now taking action in their own right - overtime bans and work to rules, building up to a one-day national workshop strike on August 10 against closures, privatisation and use of contractors.

The NUR has no plans for action after August 10, claiming problems with the Confed members in the workshops.

A successful day could make them do more.

A national demonstration that day starts at 1pm behind Derby railway station. It would be good to get a large NUM turnout to build rank and file links.

Women's anti-nuclear march for miners

The march to link pit closures with nuclear power is to start on Friday, August 17 at Capenhurst, a uranium enrichment plant, and end four days later at a pit in Mansfield. There will be transport inbetween towns but the women will be marching through Chester, Crewe and Stoke. There will be rallies and get-togethers on the way, as well as a rally to begin and end with. At the same time there will be similar marches in Scotland, from Welsh pits to Bristol and from Snowdon to Dungess. If you are interested in the march ring Adena on Leicester 702585.

Get ORGANISED!

Become a supporter of the Socialist Organiser Alliance - groups are established in most large towns. We ask £1.50 a month minimum (20p unwaged) contribution from supporters.

I want to become a Socialist Organiser supporter/ I want more information.

Name

Address

.....

Send to Socialist Organiser, 28 Middle Lane, London N8 8PL.

Scargill: 'physical support'

Excerpts from Arthur Scargill speaking on LBC radio, Tuesday July 31.

I CERTAINLY support mine-workers or any other workers who oppose or refuse to accept anti trade union legislation with the object of emasculating the trade union movement.

What is lawful today, could be made unlawful tomorrow simply by Act of Parliament. The law of this country is not made by God — it's made by men and women in an Act of Parliament.

It's not unusual for Acts of Parliament to be wrong. For example, the fact that we've got women voting today is because the suffragettes fought for the right to vote.

They got the right to vote as a result of pressure and defying the law.

The trade union movement was established as a result of the defiance of existing law. In Poland the trade union Solidarity opposes the law and is supported by this government and the media in general in Britain.

We want to campaign and to continue to operate as we



JOHN HARRIS

have done for over 100 years. And the fact that the government introduces laws which prevent normal picketing and prevent the normal activities of a trade union is something which in my view should be opposed.

It could mean strike

action, that's absolutely true. And the fact that the [TUC] Wembley conference said that they would come to the assistance of any union that was threatened under the government's anti trade union legislation is now something that must be at the forefront

of their [the TUC's] minds as well as mine.

We envisaged a position where the trade union movement under the obligations of that conference have to give moral and financial support to the NUM, but also now physical support.

One of the measures they could adopt immediately is to instruct all their members in power stations and steel works and other industries:

(a) not to accept deliveries of coal or coke or any other fuel that is delivered by non-union labour; and

(b) to instruct all their members not to cross a picket line.

Also, to decide in concert with the NUM what kind of physical support could be taken as a result of an attack upon our union.

It's either the TUC coming to the aid of the NUM and saying that, yes, we're now prepared to put up, or quite frankly they'll have to shut up. There can be no argument about this at this stage.

You can't sequestrate an idea nor imprison a belief. Even if our funds did run out and we didn't have any finance, we would only be in the

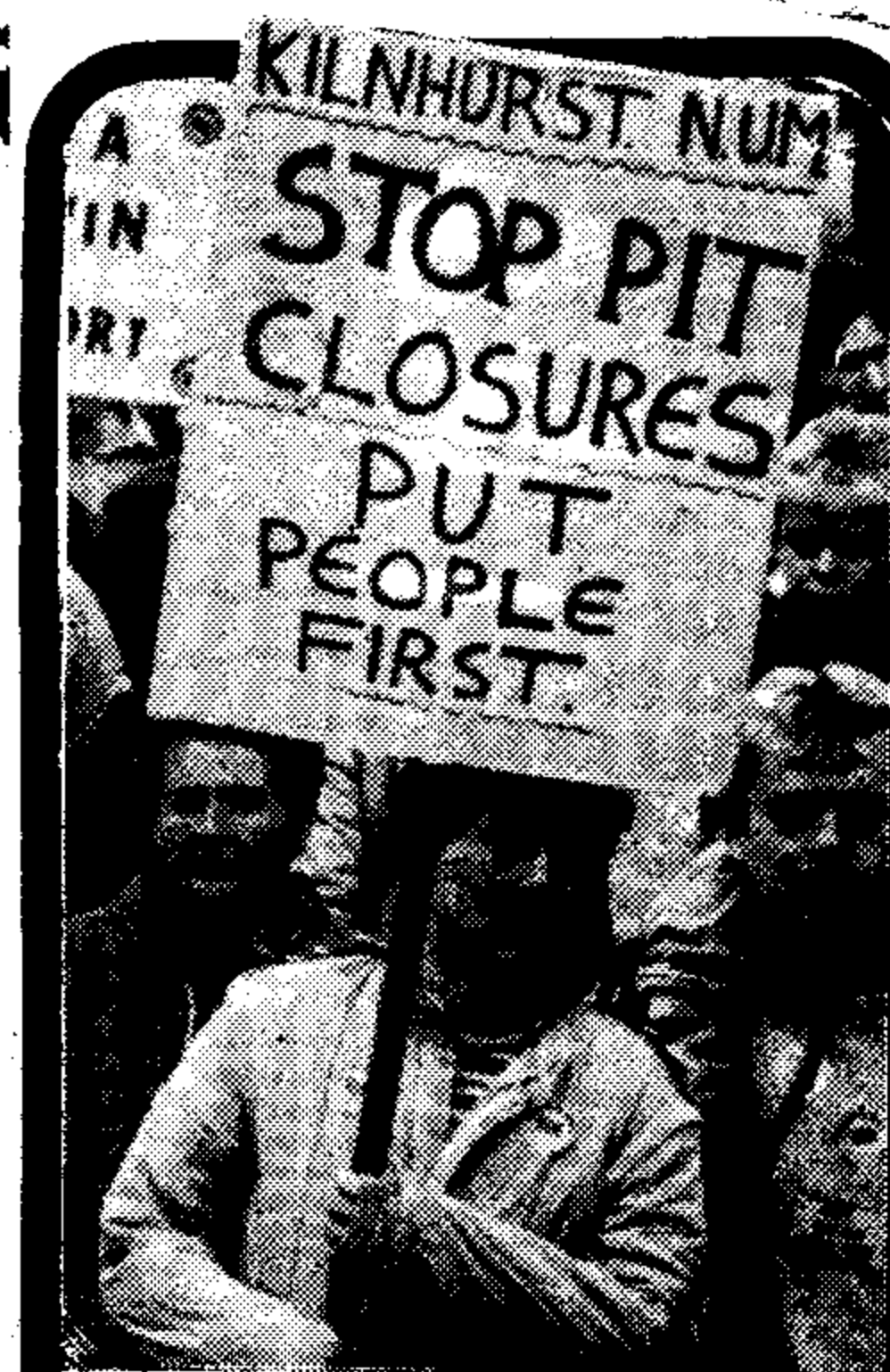
same position as our forefathers who built this trade union movement.

I suspect that the more attacks we get, the more people will see that we are no longer facing an issue with the National Coal Board about the right to work and to save pits, but the paranoia and the apparent obsession of Mrs Thatcher and the Tory government, who are determined to smash the NUM.

If we don't accept the anti trade union laws — and in that we are in line with Trades Union Congress policy — then we have no alternative but to fight against them. I think we are now going to face a conflict as a result of the decision in South Wales. That will come to a head probably this week.

The National Union of Mineworkers are now facing an attack, not only on their policy, but on their whole existence, and in those circumstances the trade union movement, in my view, has no alternative but to come to the assistance of the NUM.

To do any otherwise would be regarded as a gross betrayal of the principles of trade unionism.



Back the miners

Eric Heffer



If you've got legislation of this kind then it's quite clear that workers are bound to come up against those laws. They're bad laws, they're class laws.

Whether the Labour Party thinks they ought to come out against those laws or not, the workers are going to do so. And when workers are in struggle against bad laws, it is my feeling that the Labour Party has got to support those workers, while at the same time pressing for a change in those laws.

The Tolpuddle Martyrs — the people for whom we march around with banner saying how marvellous they were — they broke the law. We have a trade union movement in this country because people were prepared to stand up against bad laws and break them.

We had a situation with the Heath Industrial Relations Act where dockers were prepared to go to jail, and the entire trade union movement said that wasn't on and threatened a general strike.

This is a government which is trying to depress the living standards of working people. It's them and us. We're back in that situation.

The NGA was one situation. The miners are something different. I think the government is building up to a crunch situation. I don't know the outcome of it, but I think there is going to be a much more vigorous response to this than possibly there was at the time of the NGA dispute.

Excerpts from Eric Heffer speaking on TV-am, Wednesday August 1.



Terry Thomas, vice-president of the South Wales miners, speaking at a rally at Abertillery last week. On the platform: Michael Foot, Jo Richardson, Glenys Kinnock

S WALES UNIONISTS SUPPORT MINERS

Sarah Cotterill reports from Pontypridd, August 1.

AS IT was announced that

the writ for sequestration would be served within an hour, Emyln Williams, president of the South Wales NUM, said:

"We hope trade unions

will show solidarity with the miners, and as of today throughout the country there will be a general strike".

Both the offices of the NUM in Pontypridd, and the

Cymric Press Federation premises in Cardiff and Swansea owned by the NUM, have been occupied and fortified.

The NGA members who work on the NUM presses in Cardiff and Swansea are calling on the NGA nationally to call a national strike.

Throughout South Wales unions have given strong support to the miners. This support will have to be stepped up after the sequestration decision.

TGWU dockers at Newport have boycotted the export of steel coil from Llanwern which was carried by scab haulage firms.

2,000 people turned up today for a mass picket and march outside the South Wales NUM offices in Pontypridd, which have been occupied by 200 miners from

South Wales and Kent.

There were speakers from NUPE, NUR, ASLEF, and the National Union of Seamen. The South Wales NUM is calling for a picket every day from now on, to stop the bailiffs getting in.

Women against pit closures

- Dalkeith, c/o Dalkeith Miners' Welfare, Dalkeith, Lothian.
- Fish Cross, c/o Fish Cross Miners' Welfare, Fish Cross, Clackmannanshire.
- Durham, c/o Heather Wood, 18 Hallfield Drive, Easington Village, Peterlee, Co. Durham.
- Kent, Kay Sutcliffe, c/o Aylesham Miners' Welfare, Aylesham, Kent.
- Thurnscoe, Sheila Jow, 105, Lidget Lane, Thurnscoe, near Rotherham.
- Blidworth, Doreen Humber 50 Thorney Abbey Road, Blidworth, Mansfield, Notts.

- Edlington, Veronica Balderson, 62, Blowhall Cres., Edlington, Doncaster.
- Maesteg, Teresa Parry, 13 Charles Row, Maesteg, West Glamorgan. (Tel 738825).
- Birch Coppice, Wendy Coxson, Tamworth 896069.
- Barnsley, Ann Hunter, 5 Packhorse Gt, Silkstone, near Barnsley, Tel. 791187.
- Maerdy, c/o Maerdy Strike Centre, Ferndale 755 301.
- Oakdale, Gwent, 82 Markham Cres., Oakdale, Blackwood, Gwent. 0495 220158.
- Calyen North, Gwent, c/o

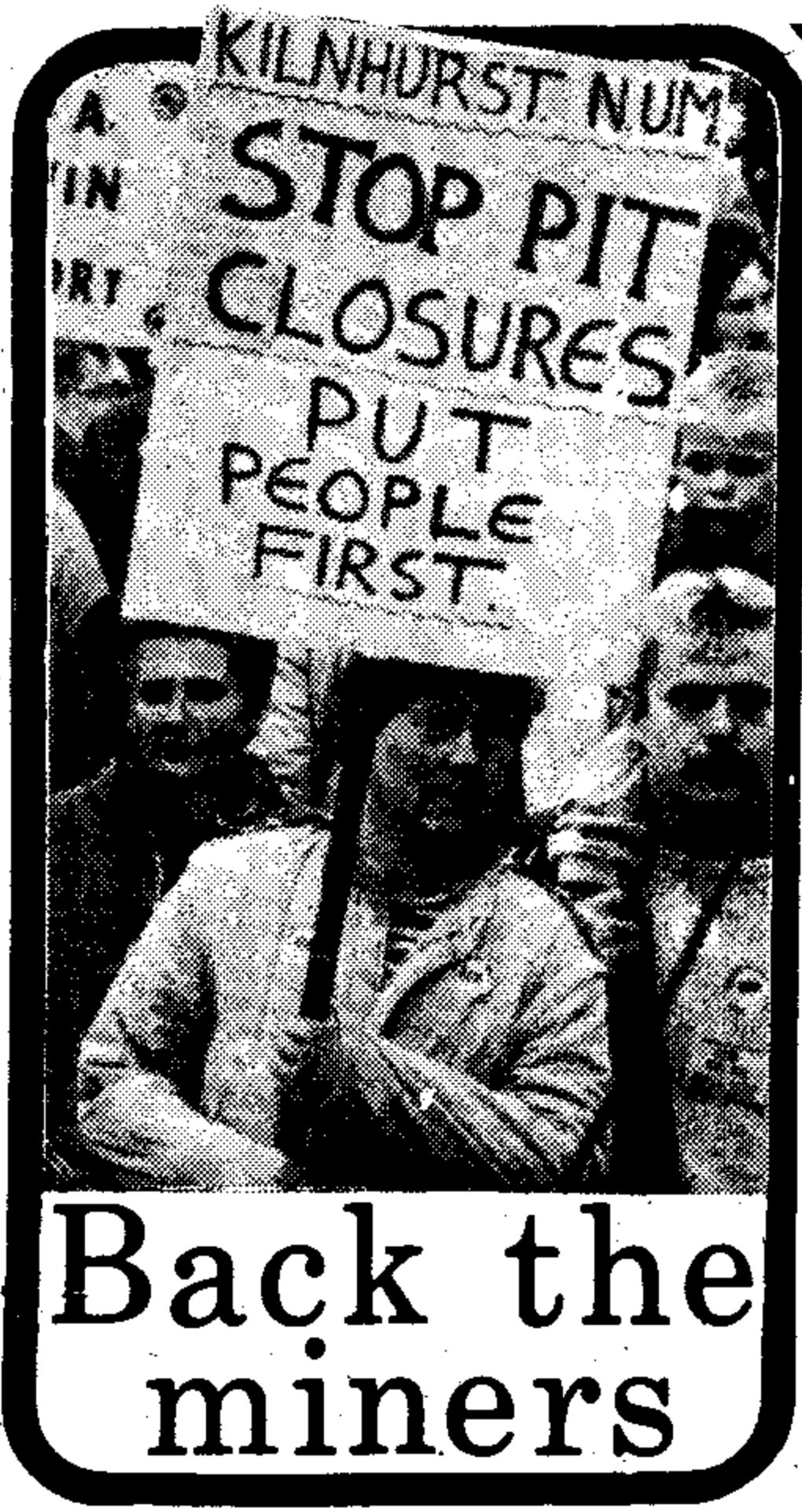
- Dorothy Phillips, 13 Thorn Ave., Newbridge, Gwent 0495 245000.
- Rugeley, Staffs. Mrs Jackson, 9 Woodlands, Handsacre, Rugeley, Staffs. Mrs Southwell, Rugeley 6179.
- Littleton, Staffs. 6 Tower Road, High Green, Hednesford. Linda Platen, Hednesford 76614.
- Merton, Durnam. Hetton-le-Hall 267641.
- Sheffield, Kath Mackey, Sheffield 381594 or 454163.
- North Staffs, Brenda Proctor, 153 Broadway, Meir, Stoke-on-Trent. 0782 332151.

SOCIALIST ORGANISER WEEKEND SCHOOL

August 25-27, in London

Plenary sessions on THE MINERS' STRIKE and THE POLICE AND THE STATE. Workshops: workers in South Africa; workers in Poland; general strikes — France 1968, Britain 1926 debate on 'alternative defence'; forum on the Labour Left today; the politics of Ken Livingstone; working class women's movements in history and today; series on labour history; series on basic Marxism; Middle East: Cuba; Central America; the Marxist theory of imperialism and capitalism in the Third World, should boxing be banned; and more...

For details and registration (£4 waged, £1.50 unwaged), write to SO, 214 Sickert Court, London N1.



Back the miners

Police against the miners

Power against the people

By Bob Fine

THE official view of the police is that they serve the interests to the community as a whole.

In both theory and practice, however, democratic accountability of the police is restricted in the extreme. The general rule is that the more democratic the body to which the police are accountable, the fewer powers that body has.

To put the matter bluntly, real power over the police is kept well away from ordinary citizens or their elected representatives.

Democracy and the police are at opposite poles of social life.

In Britain mechanisms of accountability exist at local and national levels. Locally they take the form of Police Committees who are considered 'responsible' for insuring the existence of an 'efficient' police force but whose powers are insignificant.

They may call for reports from Chief Constables, but the police may refuse to provide

information if they consider it unwise in the 'public interest'. They may advise on 'policy' matters but have no say on 'operational' matters. It is the police who determine what counts as 'operational'.

They may appoint a chief constable, but only from a list approved by the Home Office and with the approval of the Home Office. They may fire a Chief Constable for dereliction of duty, but only with the consent of the Home Office.

They may set a budget for the police, but if they fail to do so they may be overruled by the police, the Home Office and even perhaps — depending on the outcome of a recent case — the law.

The representativeness of Police Committees is also weak. They consist of two-thirds councillors and one-third unelected magistrates — to maintain 'balance'. The rules governing committees are set by the Home Office and not the local authority.

Authorities

The councils which appoint representatives to the Police Authorities have no further power over them except to question their representatives. Many Police Authorities are comprised of representatives from a number of different local authorities, making accountability all the more remote.

In the case of the largest Police Authority in Britain, the 'Met' in London, there is no local accountability at all. Since Londoners still have to pay for 'their' force it is taxation without representation.

According to the law, the police are under the sole 'direction and control' of their Chief Constables. Police Authorities may give their Chief Constables advice but they have no authority to tell them what to do. This relationship is the reverse of that between other local government committees and their Chief Officers.

The general idea is that the police must 'preserve their impartiality' (i.e. their bureaucratic independence from democratic bodies) while being subjected to a small amount of 'external supervision'. Real power at the local level lies with the Chief Con-

stable and not the Police Committee.

Whatever powers the Police Committee possesses are hemmed in on the one side by the discretion of the Chief Constable and on the other by the overarching supervision of the Home Office.

The main function of Police Authorities is not to represent the people to the police but rather to represent the police to the people. Police committees are intended to be means for winning the consent of the community to decisions already taken outside them either by the police itself or by the Home Office.

Rubber stamp

This legitimising role is written into statute — and it is put into practice by most Police Committees, which serve as little more than rubber stamps for marking public approval.

Cases like this, when local Police Authorities stand up for the people they are meant to represent, have led many members of the police force to campaign for their abolition.

Even a tiny amount of democratic accountability is too much for these people.

As yet the government has not directly taken this step, though its Bill to abolish the Metropolitan counties will have the effect of doing away with those Authorities that have been most critical of the police. They still consider Police Authorities too useful a means of winning public approval for police practice to legislate them entirely out of existence.

Plastic bullets

Most Police Authorities do not in any way challenge the authority of the police. Some do not even let the public into their meetings and most do not encourage the public to come in. Most leave financial expenditure almost entirely to the discretion of the Chief Constable.

More than half of the Police Authorities who replied to an NCCL questionnaire on plastic bullets refused to supply the information requested, arguing for example that 'it would be inappropriate . . . to discuss in public the level and use of operational practices and equipment.'

Many do not report back to their respective councils. Many leave the agenda of meetings up to the police. Many do not even call for reports from the police about controversial aspects of police behaviour.

The Authority has been forced — under threat of a court order — to withdraw its block on police funds. Lord Justice Watkins endorsed the independent powers of the police: 'I want to make sure that the Chief Constable is free to take whatever steps are necessary to maintain law and order'. In other words, the freedom of one man, the police chief, is affirmed at the expense of the unfreedom of all the rest.

Calls for the retirement of Chief Constables have been few and far between.

Where the political will exists — witness the recent case of the South Yorkshire Police Authority rejecting the police budget during the miners' strike, a budget over which the public representatives were not even consulted — local forms of accountability can be used to good effect. We should, however, harbour no illusions about their limitations.

Bypass

The policing of the miners' strike has shown how the police, Home Office bureaucracy and the judiciary, actively supported by the government, can bypass them, but it also shows how they can be used.

But in the past even militant Labour-dominated Police Authorities have tended to cave in under pressure; it requires a countervailing force of the labour movement to stop this happening again.

At the same time, sections of the labour movement have been campaigning for constitutional reform of the police to defend and increase the democratic component within it. The Labour Party is committed to such reform: to grant far greater powers to local Police Authorities, to establish a Police Authority for London, and to make their composition far more democratic. We must make sure that this formal commitment is translated both into active mobilisation in the present and into Labour Government policy in the future.



A mounted policeman tries to baton Lesley Boulton, a woman who tried to get help for an injured miner during the 'battle of Orgreave' in June

JOHN HARRIS

Scots labour movement debates police controls

"FUNDAMENTAL freedoms have been under attack day in and day out in this miners' dispute", claimed William McKinlay of the National Union of Mineworkers.

Speaking at the Stirling Trades Council Forum on Police Accountability on July 19 he gave the following examples:

- 1) Freedom of movement

Report from Stirling

being stopped. From the floor of the meeting, striking Pol-maise miners explained how 300 miners from Central Region had been arrested when their buses were stopped at Steppes, just outside Glasgow.

- 2) Private cars have been

stopped on motorways, their windows smashed and occupants arrested.

3) In Nottinghamshire where 12,000 miners are on strike, police have raided the homes of the striking miners in the middle of the night, evicting Yorkshire miners who were staying with them.

4) At Orgreave, 50 mounted police went berserk, hitting everyone in sight with their truncheons.

"Police should be truly accountable to the people through local authorities, and steps towards a national police force should be abandoned", argued Mr McKinlay.

Councillor Norman McEwan, speaking as an official of the Scottish Council for Civil Liberties, expressed similar fears. "The SCCL are very

worried about the issue of police accountability. It is going by default in Scotland. We are not happy either on procedures for complaints against police.

"The Chief Constable and the police are public servants, and in theory should be answerable to the public. However, the machinery for making this work is not very good", said Norman.

Walter Douglas, Chairman of the Protective Services Committee of Central Regional Council, which is responsible for the police force in Central Region, gave more background.

"The Chief Constable decides. He is accountable to the Police Authority for expenditure, but in reality is more accountable to the Home

Secretary. The ratepayers of Central Region pay 50% of the Police Budget, and Central Government, i.e. the taxpayer, pays the other 50%."

The Police Authority is responsible for appointing Senior Officers of the Police, but subject to Home Office ratification. Also subject to Home Office ratification is their responsibility for requiring regular reports from the police.

Norman McEwan stated that the Scottish Council for Civil Liberties felt that this requirement for reports is much underused by local councillors on police authorities.

"There appears to be nothing in the legislation governing police that prevents a local authority from laying down

standing orders requiring reports about intended action.

"Before a Chief Constable takes unusual steps he should report to the police authority. More reports should also be required on the general running of the police."

Over 70 people attended the Forum and there were many contributions from the floor of the meeting. David McGeogh and Robert Stephenson were also present as part of the panel of five speakers.

Chairing the meeting, Rowland Sheret, chairperson of Stirling and District Trades Council, explained that it was their intention to hold a further Forum after the completion of the miners' dispute, and again invite the Chief Constable, Ian Oliver, who had refused to come this time.

Policewatch

Sheffield Police watch: 73, West Street, Sheffield S1 4EQ.

Kent police monitoring group: Richard De Friend or Ian Grieg Spall, 0227 66822.

Nottingham Co-ordinating Committee Against the Police Presence: c/o Ivan Wels, 11, Osborne St., Sherwood, Nottingham.

Ollerton strike HQ is collecting statements about police behaviour: Mansfield 862790.

Police against the miners

'A systematic attempt to bully and degrade'

IT WAS a lovely sunny evening, and we gathered on the pavement in a jovial mood, sang a few songs, shouted a few slogans, and joked with the half-dozen police officers present. Most of the women had no experience of picketing and went partly out of curiosity, partly out of a desire to show our menfolk our support.

The atmosphere was relaxed and jovial until police reinforcements arrived. They at once surrounded the picket and told the women to move to a different part of the pavement. Women who questioned this or who resisted being pushed were arrested. Women who intervened when their friends were arrested got arrested too.

Having surrounded us and got us where they wanted us, the police started to tighten the circle, pushing us into a smaller and smaller space. At this point, quite a few of the women panicked, and tried to stop themselves from being herded together. They were arrested too.

Many women did not know why they were being arrested: "Why me?" yelled one young miner's wife as she was being dragged away. "I've fancied you all evening," the arresting officer told her. Another woman, charged with using foul and abusive language, was told by a police officer: "Call yourself a woman — I wouldn't even piss on you."

Brutality

The women were dragged to the police van with a brutality quite out of proportion to their size of any resistance they were offering. One woman in her mid-forties who offered no resistance was dragged by two officers, one of whom had his arm around her throat.

This is a letter sent by a group of miners' wives to Alec Woodhall, Labour MP for Hemsworth, describing their treatment at the hands of the police in Notts.

"Let her walk" said one of the officers. "No, let's drag her", said the other. They did drag her, face downwards, so her knees and the tops of her feet in open sandals were all battered and grazed. She blacked out, and had to be taken to hospital.

All the time the police taunted us with jibes about Arthur Scargill, about the massive overtime they were being paid (this to families who have been living well below the official breadline for four months now) and provocations such as "Go on, hit me then" (chin aggressively thrust forward) and no end of 'tarts' and 'slags'.

All the women arrested were photographed with a polaroid camera. There was no application to a magistrate. Those who refused simply had their heads yanked up by their hair.

They were locked in individual wire cages in a tall windowless van of the type normally used for transporting dangerous criminals. They were held here for up to two hours. Some women requested to go to the toilet — there was one in the adjacent building. They were told: "Shut up or I'll shut you up". Eventually they were offered a milk bottle.

At about 11 pm the police van left Calverton for Hucknall Police Station. It was quite

dark inside and the women locked in their individual cages were shaken and bruised as the van raced at high speed down the winding country roads, swerving and braking sharply. By now they were very frightened and confused.

At Hucknall Police Station things did not get better.

Women were at last allowed to go to the toilet. But they were escorted by male police officers — this made it very difficult for some women to take advantage of the relief offered. Besides which the toilet, which was in an open corridor, was filthy, apparently did not flush, and was caked with excrement.

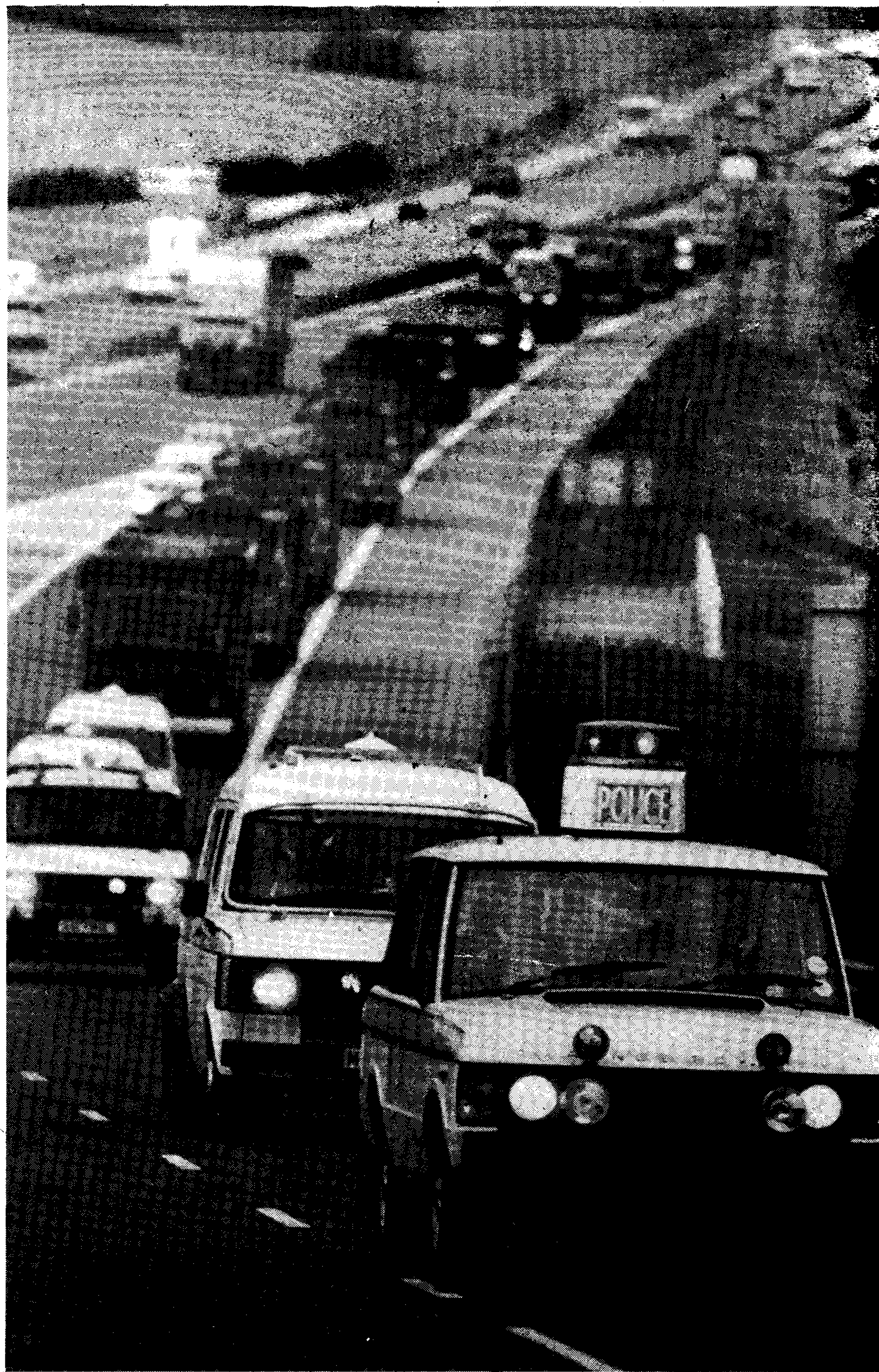
At the police station, a number of the women asked to make a phone call, which they believed to be their right. They were refused.

Distressing

In some cases, the police did in fact contact the woman's husband, but they did not tell the women that husbands had been contacted; nor were women told that husbands and friends had contacted the station to enquire after them. This was very distressing, especially for the women with children, who did not know what arrangements if any had been made for their children to be looked after.

One woman who had a sixteen-week old baby said: "I've always thought the police were supposed to care about people, but when I told them I wanted to speak to my husband because I was worried about my baby, they just laughed and said if I really cared about the baby I wouldn't have gone on the picket line."

By 11.30, the NUM had con-



Police escort a lorry convoy coming from Orgreave

tacted a solicitor, who contacted Hucknall Police Station. The police, however, would not let her see the detained women, or even let her know their names.

Questioning

The women were taken one by one for questioning. In addition to the usual questions they were asked very detailed questions about their family circumstances, HP and mortgage commitments and their 'attitudes'.

Interspersed with the questions were all sorts of 'humorous' remarks, such as "Did you know Arthur Scargill's just had three tons of coal delivered to his house?" "What do think of this new Jaguar Arthur Scargill's just bought himself" and "We're hoping this strike is going to go on — the overtime's great — we'll be having two holidays abroad this year."

By about 2 am most of the women had been interviewed and were locked up in individual cells. These are the cells that are normally kept for drunks and vagrants, and were filthy, with mattresses and blankets stinking of urine, and some with traces of excrement.

They were given a cup of tea — their first refreshment during this ordeal.

Some women were fingerprinted (without a warrant) during their interview. Others were woken up periodically

through the night to ask them whether they had 'changed their minds' and would consent to being fingerprinted.

At 6 am they were woken up and offered breakfast — it had obviously been kept hot under a grill or in an oven, and was so dried out that some women could not bring themselves to eat it.

They were told they would appear in court at 10 am. Then it was changed to 2 pm. Then to 4 pm. Then to 5 pm. Finally at 4.40, they were allowed to see a solicitor.

In court, before a single magistrate, the usual notorious bail conditions were imposed, and at last the weary bewildered women were allowed to go home.

From all the catalogue of horrors they experienced, perhaps the most horrific thing

was that these were not isolated incidents where individual policemen overstepped the mark, and where it would be appropriate to make a complaint. Every encounter with every officer, from the rough handling, to the constant taunts about 'overtime', to the disregard for privacy, comfort or basic legal rights — all these seemed part of a total pattern, a systematic attempt to bully and degrade.

These are 'respectable' women, whose respect for the law had been unquestioning. Their faith in our system of justice has been totally shattered.

Do the rulers of the country or the comfortable middle classes realise the trauma inflicted on the fabric of our society through this kind of policing? Do they care?



The organised violence of the bosses' state: riot police at Orgreave

JOHN HARRIS

Advertisement

A collection of articles on the history and theory of the general strike.

Available from PO Box 135, London N1 0DD, price 20p plus postage.

Why we need a General Strike



'Americanising' the Labour Party

New moves on reselection aim to protect MPs

NEIL Kinnock's supporters argue that their proposed change in Labour Party procedures for selection of parliamentary candidates will extend democracy.

They propose that constituency Labour Parties should have the choice of the present method — selection through the General Committee of delegates from ward Labour Parties, trade union branches and other affiliated groups — or another. Under the alternative method, members would vote in their ward meetings and the ward votes would be totted up.

The proposals are a shift towards the 'one member one vote' postal ballot system which the present leaders of the SDP pushed for before their departure from the Labour Party.

They are a limited shift. Many of the limitations have been introduced in response to criticisms made of the original SDP scheme

* The vote will be either at ward meetings, or at a constituency aggregate meeting, or by postal ballot — "if a General Committee so decides, ballot papers could be distributed to each individual member of the CLP entitled to cast a vote for return by a specified date and time, and at a specified place".

Colin Foster and John O'Mahony look at the issues

*To have a vote in the parliamentary selection, members must have attended at least one ward meeting in the previous 12 months.

*The individual ballot is not a full replacement for the present procedure of votes at the General Committee, but only an optional alternative to it.

*The alternative will — quite illogically — be available only in constituencies with a sitting Labour MP.

For all that, the Labour Party right wing clearly see these proposals as the thin end of the wedge. The 15-12

vote on the Labour Party National Executive for the proposals was a straight right-left split.

Motive

The immediate motive for the proposals — as newspapers like the Daily Mirror have made very clear — is to help out some sitting Labour MPs in danger of de-selection by their local Labour Party activists. People like Frank Field in Birkenhead and Peter Shore in Bethnal Green and Stepney have aroused anger among local Labour Party activists by their disregard for local and national Labour policy. But they obviously hope that under the individual ballot scheme they can wheel out sufficient inactive and relatively conservative members to vote for them.

Far from the motive of the proposals being to extend democracy, it is to protect the established elite.

There are other strong reasons for rejecting the proposals at Labour Party conference in early October.

The proposals would make the selection procedures extremely complex and quite illogical (if individual ballot is better, then why not have it for all constituencies, and why not make it a replacement for selection by General Committee rather than an alternative?). They would thus increase the scope for manoeuvres and tactical jiggery-pokery.

Also, the proposals would completely exclude trade union delegates from the selection procedure.

Despite all this, there is undoubtedly some rank and file support in the Labour Party for the notion of deciding by individual ballot. Many constituency Labour Parties decided to use individual ballots in the party leadership contest last year.

There is a serious political argument at stake — over and above the details of the current proposals.

Activists

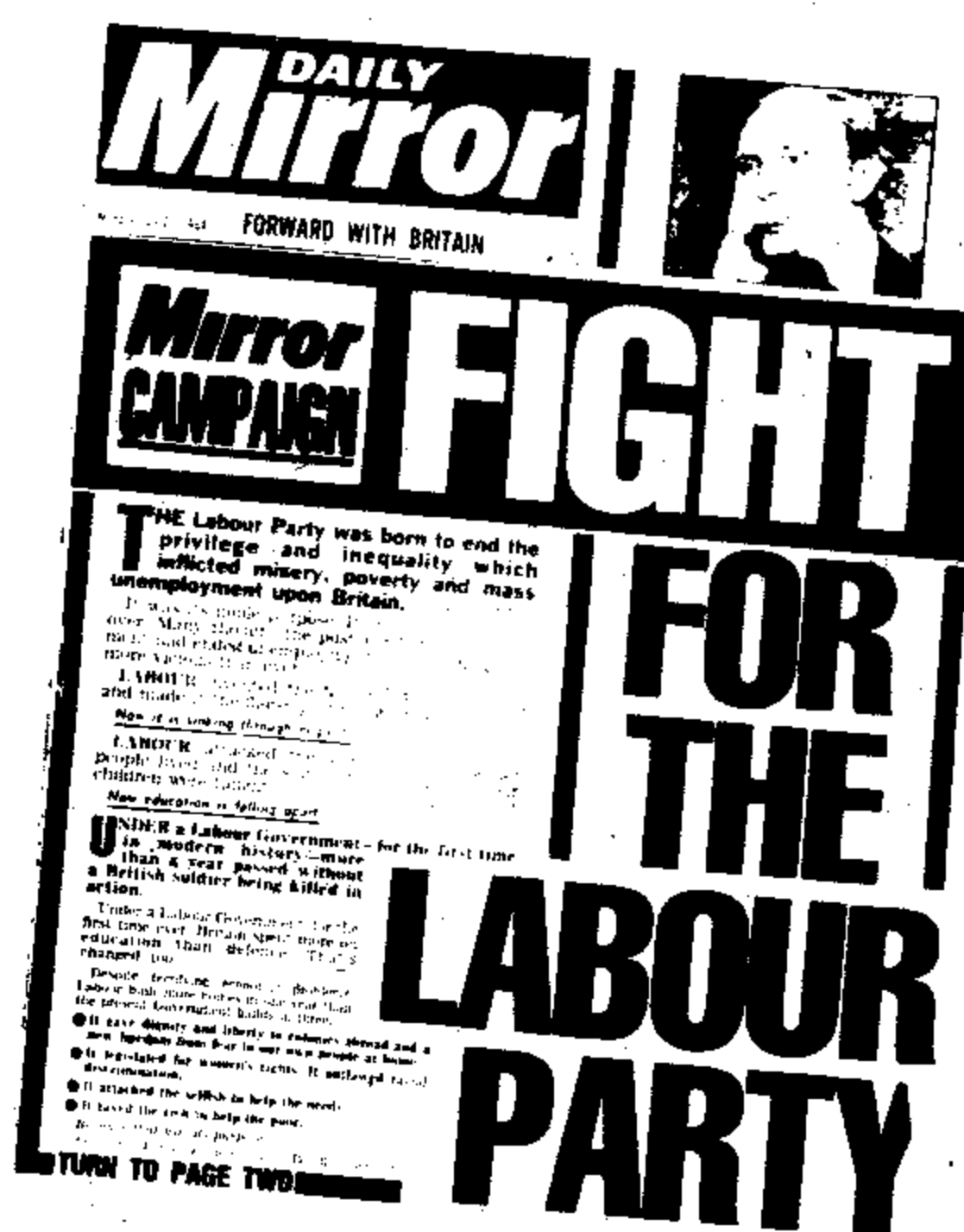
Every Labour Party activist knows the problems of the present set-up. Most party members rarely or never attend meetings. Quite often members will be wheeled out once a year to vote for GC delegates, and never attend otherwise.

Purpose: stop socialist policies

The purpose of this campaign is all too clear. The Parliamentary Labour Party, if left to itself, can be relied upon to uphold the capitalist status quo. The record of Labour governments of 1964-70 and 1974-79 should leave little doubt on that score.

Those who control the media are well aware that the 'danger' of a Labour government introducing socialist policies depends on the extent of the political influence of Labour Party activists. This is why 'unrepresentative activists' are the target of the media's campaign of vilification and slander.

(Excerpt from Campaign for Labour Party Democracy circular).



Maxwell's Daily Mirror denouncing socialist activists

So what is the fundamental argument against the 'individual ballot' proposals?

The issue is posed differently in the unions and in the Labour Party. The unions should, and in some sectors do, include all workers in an industry or trade. They are not meant to be selective bodies of activists. Moreover, in the unions, though workplace meetings, there is a real chance of gathering all the members to take part in an all-inclusive democratic process.

A political party — even a broad federal party like the Labour Party — has to be different. The whole purpose of a political party is to be a selection of more committed, more politically-minded, more active people.

Reason

Actually the fundamental reason why no scheme or procedure in the present-day Labour Party can ever be properly democratic is the low general level of activity. So long as that low general level of activity continues, there will be a choice between schemes where activists represent members who have little notion of what is done in their name, or systems where any real accountability is impossible because decision-making is in the hands of those who are un-involved, un-informed, and thus easy prey to demagogues and media influence.

No constitutional system

will change that grim choice — only an increased level of activity can. But not all constitutional systems are equally bad, and not all have the same implications for the prospects of increasing the level of activity.

The essence of the various individual ballot schemes is that the established Parliamentary leaders try to find a way to rally the passive membership behind them and bypass the activists. They provide no real democracy, and no chance of building a more active party.

The delegate structure can, however, be linked with a drive for accountability, for regular report-backs and mandating and right of recall of delegates, and for building large, active, lively ward branches. It can be linked with an effort to establish close relations with trade unionists through trade union branch and Labour Party workplace branch delegates who regularly report back and seek mandates.

The delegate structure gives every member a vote, too — all they have to do is turn up to their branch meetings and help elect and mandate the delegates. What is special about the individual ballot schemes is that they cut out all the dimensions of democracy except voting. And by doing so they cut against the possibility of developing the Labour Party into a fighting socialist party.

Democracy is much more than voting. And the right-wing proposal would tend to reduce democracy to votes and no more.

Voting, of course, is essential to democracy. But it is not sufficient.

Karl Marx wrote of the Paris Commune, when the workers seized power in Paris in 1871: "Instead of deciding once in three or six years which member of the ruling class was to misrepresent the people in Parliament, universal suffrage was to serve the people..."

Tower Hamlets Shore faces more criticism

By Terry Connolly

PETER Shore in Bethnal Green and Stepney is one of the Labour MPs most keenly defended by the Fleet Street press against his local Labour Party activists.

Shore has come under criticism as membership has grown. Betanals are beginning to put the party and the party has become more active — especially now in collecting food and cash for the miners.

Shore's public attacks on the NUM and its leadership have further deepened the divide between him and majority opinion in the party.

Local party members criticise not only Shore's right-wing views — like his support for a wages squeeze, and his out-

dated and bankrupt Keynesian economics — but also his poor record as a constituency MP.

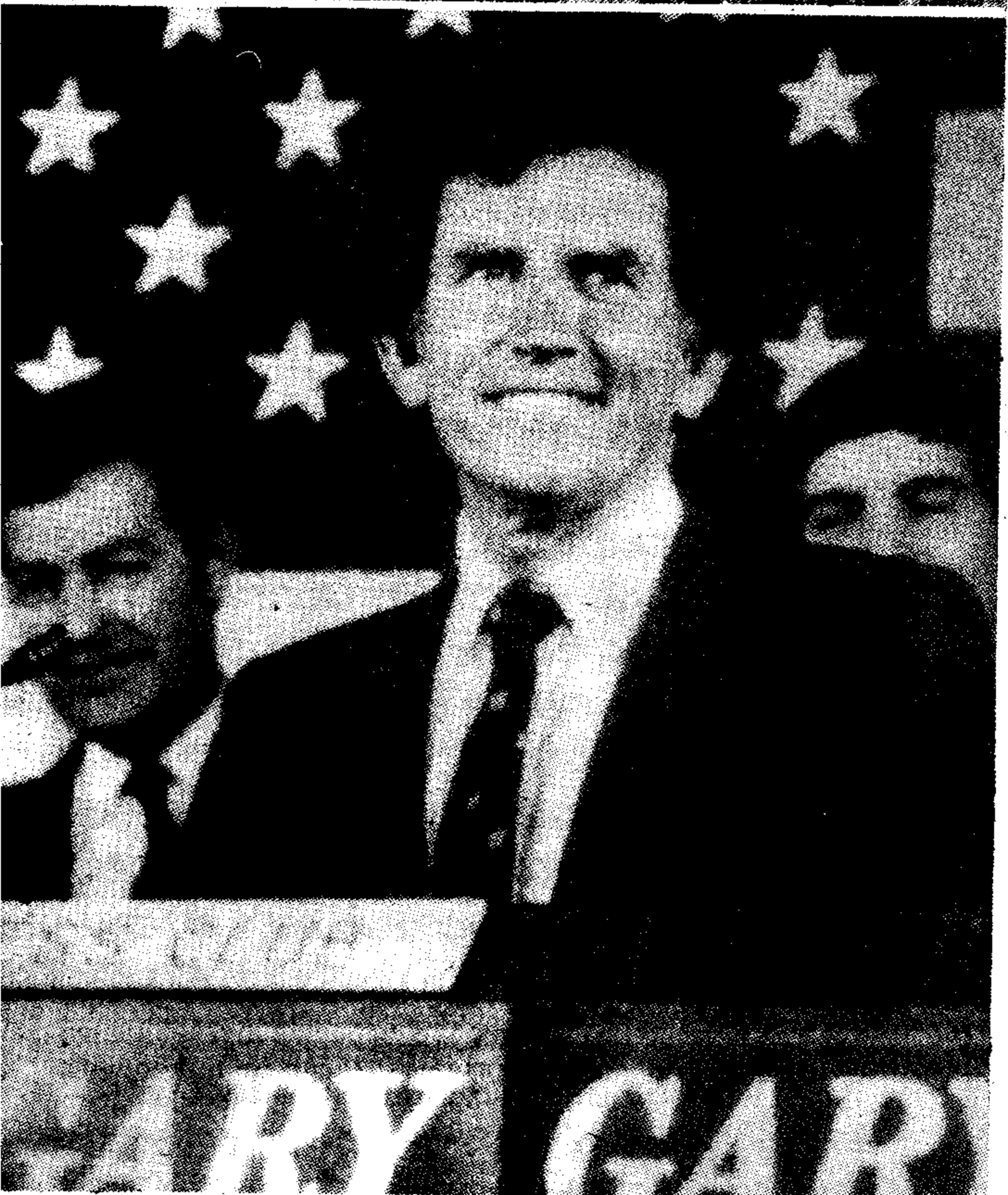
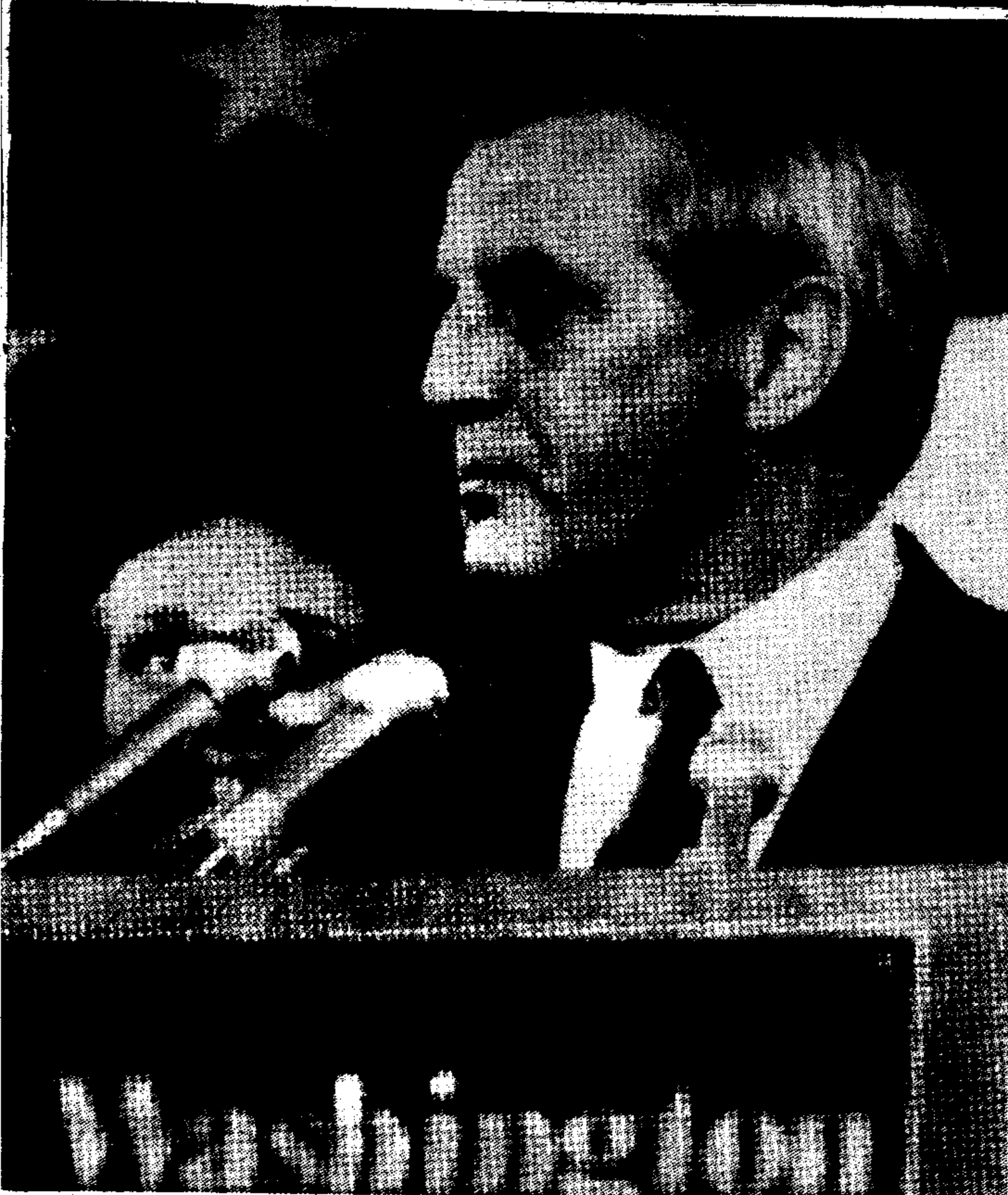
Shore's only hope is to divert attention from these issues, and to create a climate in which the soft left will opt for him for 'electoral' reasons or to 'save face' for the national Labour Party leadership.

Shore has suddenly discovered the terrible housing conditions in his constituency, but many party members see this as pure opportunism. He has also begun sharply to criticise his critics of disciplinary

Shore stands on a different side of the road from the vast majority of the Party activists.

The Left has a duty to organise, not to allow Shore to dictate the issues, and to raise the central political questions clearly.

With his showbiz style, and now the move towards something like 'primarisation' of Parliamentary candidates, Neil Kinnock is trying to 'Americanise' the Labour Party — the model of militant US workers' meetings, the US bosses' 'left wing', the Demo-



Democracy requires, in addition to voting, some real day-to-day control by the voters over their elected representatives; and a real informed choice, with a chance for voters to hear all the alternatives. Otherwise it just decides which individual is to misrepresent us.

Even where real choice exists, together with freedom of expression and without serious political repression, political democracy is incomplete and limited if the rulers in use their vast resources of wealth, their press, TV and pulpits, to gain a major advantage.

It is only half-democracy if elected representatives can then defy all accountability for several years.

This is a problem with present-day parliamentary democracy. It is also a problem with democracy in the Labour Party if MPs can reduce accountability to a referendum once every five years.

To reproduce parliamentary-type democracy inside the

**proposal to
ies' for selec-
Kinnock is
Party — not on
vements, but
ratic Party**

Labour Party is not enough for socialists.

Indeed, it would actually destroy the very possibility of self-controlling democracy in the party.

The present system of multi-dimensional participatory democracy means that the participants have some possibility to think things through as a result of interacting and discussing with their comrades. It allows and demands some preliminary closing of ranks by people committed to the party and to what it stands for or could be made to stand for, against the pressures of the enemies of the party — who are entrenched and immensely strong in the society in which the party exists, and which it exists to change.

The isolated parliamentary 'stars' of the right hope the media will be their intermediary with the passive party supporters. Having lost the active part of the party, they want to substitute for it the inactive part: in fact the parliamentary 'head' is demanding a body transplant!

To downgrade Labour Party democracy would also mean degrading the general level of democracy in society.

Insofar as labour movement democracy exists now, it is a higher form of democracy than that in the society around us. The labour movement can therefore be a precious base for a renewal, a deepening and

a qualitative transformation of democracy in society, despite the admittedly inadequate, incomplete and unsatisfactory nature of its own participatory democracy.

The right would snuff out all that, and destroy the great potential that exists. The party they want would internalise the one-dimensional democracy around it and thereby render itself incapable of transforming it.

If the Labour Party were to follow their advice, Britain would have taken a giant step towards US-style 'democratic politics'.

Terry Coleman in the Guardian reported on the recent US Democratic Party convention:

"In four days I did not hear more than a couple of hours of real debate."

Razzamatuzz, TV spectacle, and personality-trading push out debate and discussion.

Walter Mondale battled across the country to defeat Gary Hart for the nomination — then finished off the process by accepting Hart's proposals for the Democratic Party platform.

No wonder more than 50% of the US electorate will probably not bother to vote in the presidential election.

Politics and personalities have been got up as a commercial product to seek power: trimmed, designed, coloured, flavoured and packaged to sell, via the media, to a passive electorate and initially to passive party voters in primaries.

Politics has become emptied of real political content, personalised, and almost a branch of show business.

Inevitably, little fundamen-

tal is actually decided in the elections: all the important decisions are left for the top people to make behind the scenes.

Neil Kinnock has already begun to take the Labour Party on this road, with his showbiz methods of projecting himself and the party. But it is the wrong road for socialists or serious democrats.

The Labour Party today is still a force against reducing British politics to the US level, because the party exists to an extent outside of the contamination of consensus politics and direct manipulation by the media.

Broad church

This is precisely because it has a certain initial narrowness of focus, before going to the electorate — that is, because it remains a political party in a meaningful sense. It may be a broad church, but it is not diffuse and amorphous to the point of having no distinct political identity and no purpose other than to win elections.

The fact that the individual ballot schemes would cut Labour's links with the trade unions is connected with this.

The union vote represents collectively worked out social and political aspirations. The right would abolish this, reducing union participation to the atomised votes of individuals.

There is nothing to idealise about the block vote system. But trade union democracy can be improved, the same as Labour democracy. To cut the links with the unions has nothing to do with democracy. Just like introducing one-

member-one-vote in the party itself, it has nothing to do with democracy and everything to do with the working class character of the Labour Party and with the fact that the right find this increasingly unpalatable.

We should not idealise the fact that only a small proportion of the party's members attend its meetings and take part in its activity and deliberations.

But in no way does the right want to improve that situation in the only meaningful way — the involvement of the party in class and community struggles, in the movement for women's rights, in the fight against racism and gay oppression; and by the active and lively involvement of

those engaging in those struggles in the participatory democracy of the Labour Party.

The right could even less live comfortably with such a mass participating membership than it can with the limited number of activists we have now. In the last analysis it was the anger of the activists, and of the trade unions, with the last Labour government that fuelled the big drive for democracy.

The right does not want a mass membership which has real democratic rights.

Essentially, as soon as the party turned in the direction of a party of committed activists, pushing for democracy and accountability, they just didn't want the party as it now exists.

MODEL AMENDMENT

LABOUR Against the Witch-hunt is circulating the following model amendment on selection of Parliamentary candidates:

Add at end of resolution no. 58 from Bristol South:

"Conference is further concerned that the proposed changes would encourage the media to orchestrate witch-hunts against candidates and parties favouring the present system.

Conference rejects suggestions that the present system is undemocratic and would remind the Party's critics that every individual Party member is already welcome to attend and vote at his/her ward meeting.

Conference defends the central role in the selection process played by the elected delegates on each Constituency Party's General Committee. By threatening this central role, the proposed changes would seriously reduce the influence of Trade Union delegates and thereby remove one

of the strongest incentives for Trade Union branches to become active affiliates of the Party at constituency level.

In addition, the General Committee has the advantage of meeting at regular intervals throughout the year. It thus has the opportunity at all time to hold its MP accountable for the proper implementation of our Party's policies.

The General Committee is in fact the only body in a position to take responsibility for this vital task. Its rights of reselection should accordingly be retained."

A similar amendment is being circulated by the Campaign for Labour Party Democracy (10 Park Drive, London NW11).

It is important that as many amendments as possible, similar in substance but different in wording, are submitted on this question. The closing date for amendments is August 17.

The proposals would move Labour away from functioning as a political party with some process of debate and internal accountability, towards being a vehicle for personalities. Above: 1983 Labour Party conference (photo: John Harris). Left: Walter Mondale and Gary Hart.

International

Cuba: telling the whole truth



RICK MATTHEWS (IFL)



THE ITV documentary series 'Cuba — 25 years of Revolution' (Thursdays, 9.30pm) will anger both those who see Cuba as a 'Caribbean Gulag' and those on the Left who tend to go starry-eyed at the sight of all that olive-green. Both views, the six-part series will tell us, are off the mark.

The viewer is told of massive improvements in health care and education, and the rigid state censorship of what is taught and read. Of how the shackles of US imperialism have been broken, but total dependence on the Russian economy has replaced them.

The programme is tossed from side to side by this. One minute we are told, "people respect themselves now, know why they are doing what they are doing", and a minute later that "no opportunity is ever given to any voice of dissent".

This only reflects the real contradictions of Cuba's development since the revolution.

Pre-revolutionary Cuba was completely subordinated to the needs of the US economy. 83% of cultivated land was under sugar, and most of the sugar was sold to the US. A small landowning class owned 70% of the land, in league with an even smaller class of bosses

Alan Johnson examines the arguments about Cuba

reliant on US capital.

Cuba was more urban than rural. The majority in the countryside were not small peasants but a rural working class — suffering massive unemployment, low wages, and atrocious conditions.

There was a revolutionary nationalist tradition from which Castro started. In 1933, following an uprising, the constitutional democrat Grau San Martin held office for 100 days before a military coup led by Batista (and backed by the US) toppled him. This lesson was not lost on Castro.

Politically the July 26 Movement, the movement Castro built to fight Batista, was nationalist, not socialist (though some of its leading members were socialists). Castro declared in 1956, "Foreign investment will always be welcome and secure here". But at the same time he was employing revolutionary armed struggle to overthrow the dictatorship.

The July 26 Movement contained both people like Che Guevara who looked to over-

throwing capitalism, and vicious anti-communists like Matos and Perez.

After two years of civil war, Batista was overthrown in January 1959. Nationalist bosses and revolutionaries alike cheered, so hated was the dictatorship and so narrow its support in Cuba. The old state machine — always rickety and corrupt — was smashed and replaced by the revolutionary forces.

The battle for control of the revolution began straight away. The left wing of the July 26 Movement began granting the demands of the workers and peasants. In February 1959 22,500 peasants were awarded 67 acre plots. The right wing held up reform.

Castro tried to hold a balance. He denounced strikes for higher wages and encouragement of land seizures as 'anti-revolutionary'.

Reform

But he could not sit in the middle for long. When the US and Cuban bosses attacked his moderate capitalist land reform, he had to move against them or renounce the whole social programme of the revolution. The organised expression of the demands of the

armed working class and peasants, the internal sabotage of the Cuban bosses and the economic blockade launched by the US, forced Castro to choose. He chose to break with capitalism — and he could do so because the old state machine had been smashed and replaced by a new power based on armed workers and peasants.

However, the direct power of the working class was not established. The July 26 Movement was a military force, not a democratic political movement. And from the early '60s, progressively, USSR influence worked to push Cuba towards a political structure similar to the USSR's.

Cuba today is ruled not by the workers and peasants but by a bureaucracy, undoubtedly popular, but standing above and against any expression of workers' self-activity.

Unions

In 1961, the trade unions were reorganised from above to ensure cooperation in fulfilling government production goals. In 1962 identity cards were introduced for workers, and stringent laws on labour discipline. In 1964-5 a law was introduced which, in the words of Martinez Sanchez, Minister of Labour, would: "strengthen labour discipline and increase production and productivity. It will be applied to the kind of worker who is a residue of exploiting society..."

"We still find workers who have not taken the revolutionary step and tend to discuss and protest any measure coming from the administration".

All this was done, not as an effort of self-discipline by the workers, but by an elite from above.

The process of bureaucratisation got worse from the late 1960s, as Cuba abandoned its attempts to spread revolution throughout Latin America and dropped its limited criticisms of the USSR bureaucracy. The Soviet Union has been increasingly adopted as the 'model' for Cuba.

Some on the Left still argue that Cuba is a healthy workers' democracy. They point to three things: the mass organisations, the institutions of 'popular power', and the 'revolutionary leadership' of Castro.

But the official Cuban trade unions are not genuine self-acting organisations controlled by the workers. Their function is to manage the workers, not represent them.

In 1971 Raul Castro proclaimed that "the principal tasks of the trade unions are increased productivity and work discipline..." The Confederation of Cuban Workers (CTC) was reorganised in 1970 to run parallel to central government ministries, furthering the incorporation of the unions into the state.

Participation

Participation of workers in management is strictly limited, and management can ignore the views of the 'participation assembly'. Castro and the bureaucrats set the time, agenda and pre-conference discussion of the CTC national congress.

Attempts to form independent trade unions are stamped on. In 1983 reports reached Amnesty International that

workers fighting to set up a Solidarnosc-type union in Cuba had been jailed.

The US war threat has indeed led to a strengthening of the Committees for the Defence of the Revolution (CDRs) and the militia. Two million women volunteered for service in the militia in 1982 alone. Cuba claims a six million strong 'fighting machine' from a population of ten million.

However, control lies with the bureaucracy and not the workers. The leadership of the CDRs is appointed through the central bureaucracy of the Communist Party. They have no powers to formulate policies. Their function is to defend the revolution and to report on any working-class opposition to the regime.

CDR membership is often a necessity to get an appointment, a better job, or scarce commodities. Cuba's most popular TV programme, Parabailar (For Dancing), is open only to those who participate in voluntary labour and the CDRs!

Many on the left point to the institutions of 'Popular Power' established in the late 1970s as evidence that the Castro regime is a socialist democracy. In theory they are open, elected, legislative bodies at national, provincial and municipal levels.

Parties

The practice is somewhat different, however. At no level is there the right to form alternative political parties. No comprehensive alternative to the Cuban Communist Party policy can be presented.

Only municipal representatives are elected. At this level no candidate is allowed to campaign or to put forward legislative proposals to the electorate. When elected, they cannot discuss national or provincial matters. Their job is to enact the decisions of the higher assemblies.

The provincial assembly is elected from a slate drawn up by the CP-controlled election committee. It meets for four days a year to rubber-stamp the national assembly.

The national assembly meets for a few days each year and devolves its power onto a 37-member Council of State which in turn delegates power to a 8-person Executive Committee which appoints the Council of Ministers. The core members in all these top committees are the same people in each case — the Cuban Communist Party Politburo. The CP itself, taken over by the Castroites by 1965, has had two congresses since 1959!

On the international front, since the late 1960s Castro has consistently supported the Communist Parties of the region in their strategy of alignment with the national bourgeoisie in a 'two-stage revolution' (first 'national-democratic', second socialist). He has even promoted the fiction that Cuba itself passed through these two stages after January 1959.

Cuba has been a force for pushing the El Salvadorean revolutionaries into an alliance with the liberal bourgeoisie. It has a friendly attitude to the ruling party of the most powerful bourgeoisie in the area, Mexico's PRI.

Solidarnosc

Most recently Castro supported the crackdown on Solidarnosc in Poland.

Judging from the first programme, the TV series will have an approach of 'on the one hand, on the other hand'. Socialists cannot afford this approach.

A bureaucracy rules in Cuba, denying the working class its right to organise and control its life. We must fight both to defend the Cuban revolution (its post-capitalist economy, its massive gains in health and education, its marginal improvements in women's rights) from US attack, and also solidarise with the workers and peasants of Cuba against the bureaucracy which stands above them usurping their power.

These two tasks go hand in hand. Trotsky had nothing but contempt for those 'Friends of the USSR' who cheered the latest pig-iron production figures but fell silent when the workers were attacked by the bureaucrats and their police. The same goes for the 'Friends of Cuba'.

Labour's silence on Hong Kong

By Chan Ying

to weaken the control of the colonial government between now and 1997.

Among Hong Kong people there is an overwhelming anti-British sentiment. This is however coupled with the fear that they may have no control over their future under Peking's rule.

At present Hong Kong does not have even the semblance of representative self-government, not even as much as other British colonial territories like Gibraltar, which has its own Parliament. The recently published Hong Kong Green Paper reflects the pressure for universal voting rights, but it comes nowhere near the mark. It serves merely as a figleaf for continued British control over the transition years.

The Labour Party should realise that Britain has no progressive role to play at all, except to get out now, not in 1997. Hong Kong taxes are paying for a British garrison whose role is entirely to back up the repressive Royal Hong Kong Police in controlling the local population. These troops should be withdrawn immediately and anti-Chinese racism has to be tackled head-on. This

means arguing that those who are British Dependent Territories citizens should be offered the choice of full British citizenship. It also means debunking the myth that Hong Kong people prefer colonial rule, and are "not ready" for full local democracy.

The Tory talk of a 'Marxist' government depriving Hong Kong people of representative local government is laughable, considering what they propose to do with the Greater London Council — and have done with Hong Kong for decades.

The future of Hong Kong is a matter to be decided between Peking and democratically elected representatives of the Hong Kong people, who may have to struggle against Peking for local autonomy.

As socialists, our support for any such struggle has to be within the context of fighting to get the British out as soon as possible, and opposing racism towards the Chinese in Hong Kong as well as the Chinese population who are already settled here.

Labour Parties interested in speakers, or wishing to send emergency motions to Labour Party conference, should contact Hong Kong Working Group, c/o 152 Shaftesbury Ave, London WC2

GEOFFREY Howe flies out to Peking. Front page articles appear in national dailies and the Sunday press. But the Labour Party's silence is positively deafening!

China has said that it will impose its own solution of a Special Administrative Zone run along capitalist lines if no agreement is reached by this September.

Britain has already conceded sovereignty and administration, and now wants desperately to get out of the colony. It wants to wash its hands of the messy problem of what will happen to the 5.5 million Chinese in the colony, of whom over a million are British Dependent Territories citizens.

Its only concern is to get China to agree to a detailed written agreement safeguarding capitalist interests. This includes resisting all attempts

24 HOUR PICKET
organised by the City of London Anti-Apartheid group, starting 5.30pm Friday August 3 at Duncan Square, Trafalgar Square in protest at the continuing presence of apartheid ambassadors at the South African Embassy.

IRELAND
1969—1984
15 YEARS TOO LONG

DEMONSTRATE FOR WITHDRAWAL

SATURDAY
18th AUGUST
London
1pm Speakers Corner
to Jubilee Gardens

Self Determination For The Irish People As A Whole

SPOTLIGHT



Eldorado in reverse

Andrew Hornung reviews the film 'El Norte'

THE NORTH is a dreamland, a land in the geography of hope: "In the North, even the poor have toilets that flush".

The godmother knows because she has seen it in the magazines passed to her by a neighbour whose relative works as a cook in a rich person's house. She is not stunned at the wealth of the super-rich of the North % their clones in her native Guatemala, in Central America, know how to spend money — but at the good life of the poor.

If she connects the North depicted in these magazines with the North that equips and trains the troops who murder her friends, she does not say... But she saves, saves for that trip that one day she will take to the North.

Unable to endure their slavery without resisting, the coffee plantation workers of a Guatemalan village gather secretly to discuss how to fight back. Betrayed by a fellow worker, they are all killed by the troops.

Almost the whole village is arrested and taken away, but brother and sister, Enrique and Rosalita, escape, and decide that the only road to freedom leads to the North.

The film's second part deals with the coyotes, the people who specialise in getting people across the US-Mexican border into the North, who fleece them, rob and murder them.

People are smuggled through the mountains — an easier trip, but more easily spotted by the immigration police patrols — or through the disused sewers, a nightmare journey, but safer.

The third part deals with life in the 'wetback' barrios of San Diego and Los Angeles. Here the dreams of freedom fade, though the toilets of the poor still flush.

"All that the rich see in a campesino", Enrique's father told him before he died, "are two strong arms for working".

Now, in the dusty space at the edge of the barrio, Enrique answers the call for day labourers, "Who has strong arms for working?", with his shout, "I have two strong arms".

His two fists are raised in the un-revolutionary salute of the worker to the master, two raised arms to prove strength for the day's hired labour.

What is technically most striking about the film is its imagery. Its gestures are big, direct and luminous, more than compensating for a somewhat weak dialogue.

Film-makers Gregory Nava and Anna Thomas are happy to have the film called 'political', insisting, however, that it does not talk of politics at all. Of course, it is political — in the sense that it presents you with social realities — and all the better for not being politically didactic.

This is one of the films that shows that political film-making in the North is not synonymous with sentimentousness and dullness. *El Norte* is in turns horrific, humorous, exciting, moving and visually stunning; its characters are simply drawn but not caricatured. Its 'message' lies in the qualities of humanity and inhumanity it shows, certainly not in any implied political strategy and programme.

Even the Daily Mail raved about the film. London's 'What's On' guide says: "Deserves the fullest attention and the fullest houses possible".

Quite right: but it is currently showing at the out-of-the-way Electric Screen Cinema Club (membership at the door) in Portobello Road. On the hot afternoon that I was there, not more than fifty people were in the cinema, and there was no queue as I left.

So here we are in the North, in a land of opportunity where every kind of film may be shown and even spoken highly of in the bourgeois press... but challenging and courageous ideas are limited to the cultural 'barrios' of the small-time cinema houses and the small circulation press.

SCIENCE

By Les Hearn

Green bans

A FEW weeks ago in my discussion of the hazards of nuclear power, I pointed out that Britain is not immune to earthquakes.

Lo and behold! The epicentre of the recent earthquake, which was the largest this century, was only 20km from Trawsfynydd nuclear power station in North Wales.

Luckily, there was no damage... this time!

CONTINUING my report on the SERA/Green CND conference on July 21.

Pete Carter, national industrial organiser of the Communist Party and former leading member of Building Workers' Charter, addressed a workshop on the Green Bans move-

ment of Australian building workers in the early 1970s.

The movement started with a plan to "develop" Kelly's Bush, 12 acres of bushland in Sidney. Local residents fought the plan without success until they appealed to the New South Wales Labour Council (like a regional TUC).

The Builders' Labourers' Federation (BLF) was a member of this council, and they decided to threaten all projects of the same developer in Sidney. The result was a decision to preserve Kelly's Bush.

This success started a three year campaign by the BLF against destruction in the environment and to defend local communities. At one stage, 42 projects worth some £2 billion were held up.

The BLF's actions ranged from refusing to dig up the front of Sidney Opera House to build an underground car park (but destroying many trees) to refusing to build a nuclear power station in Queensland.

The BLF even stopped work on university extensions to force the admission of a gay student in one case and to force inclusion of a women's studies course in another.

Other unions were affected by environmental arguments and there were refusals to mine and transport uranium, while oil workers refused to prospect for oil within the highly vulnerable eco-system of the Great Barrier Reef.

After a while there was a campaign against the Green Ban movement, during which the sympathetic Environment Minister was sacked, and the movement was defeated in 1974.

However, there was an echo in Britain, when Jack Mundy of the BLF and the Communist Party of Australia (not a Moscow-line party: Moscow's party is the 'Socialist Party of Australia') visited Birmingham and addressed a Building Workers' Charter meeting on Green Bans.

The practical result was a move by building workers to defend the Victorian Post Office building in Victoria Square, then under threat of replacement by a ten-storey, £10 million office block. All efforts by conservation groups had failed but the trade union campaign was to be more successful.

As usual in such situations some workers argued that the issue was nothing to do with trade unions, that jobs were

being lost, etc. In reply, it was shown that there was no need for yet another empty office block, that the same money spent on building houses could create six times as many jobs. Meanwhile, radical architects came up with an alternative plan to turn the post office into a leisure centre.

While there is no Green Bans movement as such, environmentalism has made a lasting impact on the trade union and labour movement.

In Australia, there has been a campaign against the destruction of the unique environment of Tasmania with a huge hydroelectric dam halted by the incoming Labour government, as well as the campaign against smoking.

In Britain, we have seen the coalition of the four transport unions to stop sea-dumping of radioactive waste.

THIS week's science column comes to you from our roving science reporter, at present en route from Land's End to John O'Groats.

It is still not too late to sponsor him for this 900-mile cycle ride. Proceeds to SO.

JOBS NOT BOMBS CARNIVAL to welcome the Youth CND bases tour of '84.

August 19, Wormwood Scrubs Park, London. 12 noon to 5pm.

Between August 5 and 19 the Youth Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament will be marching around many of the military and nuclear bases in Britain. The march will end at the carnival in London on the 19th.

Details: 01-263 0977.

Cycling for socialism

Socialist Organiser supporter Les Hearn is cycling from Lands End to John O'Groats, beginning at the end of this month. Sponsor him — 1p a mile if you're hard up, 5p a mile from the better off — and the proceeds will go to the Socialist Organiser fund drive. Fill in this form, cut it out and send to Les Hearn, c/o 214 Sickert Court, London N1 2SY.

Name.....
 Address.....
 Phone.....
 Amount of sponsorship..... p per mile.

STOP THE CRIMINALISATION AND DEPORTATION OF BLACK YOUTH!

NATIONAL DEMONSTRATION!
SAT, AUG, 4th, 1984.
Birmingham

ASSEMBLE: HANDSWORTH PARK (HOLLY ROAD). 1:00p.m.
 RALLY: CHAMBERLAIN SQUARE (Nr B'HAM LIBRARY) 3:30p.m.

BLACK PEOPLE HERE TO STAY HERE TO FIGHT!

STOP THE DEPORTATION OF KARAMJIT SINGH NOW!

Trade unions and socialism

This week Martin Thomas picks up the thread from his article in no.188 on the economics of capitalism.

The rich get richer, and the state machine serves their interests.

But why does the working class put up with it? Brute repression is only part of the reason.

THE reason most often cited for the ideological power of the ruling class is the bias of the media.

This is half the truth. But it is dangerous to take it for the whole truth.

Doing so leads either to hopelessness or elitism. If the media are all-powerful, then how can we hope even to change the media, let alone the whole of society? And if the mass of the working class is totally befuddled by the media, then the minority of socialists who unaccountably have escaped that befuddlement are left with no choice but to manipulate and manoeuvre the majority, rather than hopelessly trying to convince them.

In fact workers are perfectly able to disagree with what they read in the press or see on TV. If they were not, we would never have had a Labour government.

Also, it is just not true that the media totally deny workers access to alternative points of view. Yes: all the press and TV assume that a strike is bad news and a sell-out settlement is good news. You would expect them to, given the class position of the people who control them.

But the system is not leak-proof. A very large number of workers have heard or read socialist and trade union points of view. And a lot of information does get through the official media: the pictures of the police at Orgreave, or Paul Foot's expose of the government's strategic planning of its battle against the miners, made many people think.

The ideological hold of the ruling class in capitalist society has something in common with pre-capitalist societies — the role of the family as a conservative influence, the education system and so on. But it is more complicated.

In those older societies most people knew little about the world outside their village. They could not read. Their only source of general ideas about the world was usually organised religion, which was



STEFANO CAGNONI (JFL)

"Full-time trade union officials, even if they start out militant, are generally swayed by their social position, which is middle class rather than working class..." TUC leaders at the Tolpuddle Martyrs Anniversary.



closely tied to the status quo.

All that did not stop them hating the landlords. It did stop them developing any coherent idea of an alternative society, and it meant that their struggles were usually wild, spasmodic revolts, with little precise programme or continuous organisation.

The modern working class is different. It is literate and relatively educated. It is concentrated in large industrial units, where it is involved in a daily struggle over pay and conditions. From that daily struggle have sprung powerful

permanent organisations, most of which are officially committed to an alternative society — socialism.

So why does the majority of the working class continue in practice to accept capitalism?

Last week's article mentioned a special feature of capitalist exploitation: that it arises from economic relations which are formally quite free and equal. All labour appears to be paid for. Workers appear to get "a fair day's wage for a fair day's work" — and, as Marx explained, it is fair by the standards of the system.

"What is 'a fair distribution'?", Marx asked socialists who put forward this slogan. "Do not the bourgeois assert that the present-day distribution is 'fair'? And is it not, in fact, the only 'fair' distribution on the basis of the present-day mode of production?..."

The capitalist system does allow for a good deal of leeway and haggling in fixing the exact 'fair' level of wages — and trade unions can carry on the most militant struggles within that leeway without in the least challenging the system itself. For that reason Marx described "a fair day's wage" as a *conservative* slogan.

Beyond a certain level of trade union struggle that conservatism tends to break down. When a struggle like the present miners' strike becomes a political confrontation with the government and spreads out to involve other sections of workers, then

it undermines the individualism on which the ideology of capitalism rests.

As long as workers see themselves as individuals, or sectional groups, selling their labour power at the going rate, the system appears fair. When a struggle becomes a general class confrontation, and workers identify themselves as part of one class counterposed to another, the appearance of fairness disappears.

In that sense the working class spontaneously moves towards socialism. It does not, however, automatically arrive at effective socialist conclusions. That depends on the struggle between the various worked-out ideological systems, moulded by previous struggles, which workers will find at hand to give shape to their instinctive class militancy.

The ideological system which has mostly won out until today, in Britain at least, is bit-by-bit reformist socialism, which promises workers socialism some day (through good work in Parliament) but gives them no guide for their own action except to continue the trade union struggle.

It has won out because it is the ideology that corresponds to the social position of trade union officialdom. Full-time trade union officials, even if they start out militant, are generally swayed, to one extent or another, by their social position, which is middle class rather than work-

ing class, and which pushes them towards elitist, compromise-mongering politics.

And they have a tremendous influence on the working class because they are the people most closely tied to the working class who have the opportunity and disposition to develop and promote general theories.

The full time trade union officials can and do use their position to limit, disperse, and betray struggles, so that they demoralise workers rather than inspiring them. And even when they lead struggles militantly, the general political perspective they tie them into is an inadequate one.

This is true even of the miners' leaders in the current strike. They have been prosecuting the class struggle and defying the state in practice: but they still say they are defending a 'national interest' supposed common to all classes, and they still promote the 'Alternative Economic Strategy', a nationalist scheme for bit-by-bit socialism by way of rejigging capitalism.

What is to be done about it? Next week's article will discuss that.

Briefing's way forward

By Nik Barstow

AS A step in launching the journal as a national organisation, the second National Briefing conference on July 28 was a rather stumbling one.

The 40-odd Briefing supporters there were generally in favour of turning the network of local newsletters in the Labour Party into some sort of loose national organisation, but what sort was left unclear.

Socialist Action supporters who made up almost half the meeting had a blueprint for Briefing becoming the centre of a broad current linking left-wing campaign groups of all sorts.

It was portrayed as the one organisation to which Labour Party based bodies like the Women's Action Committee, the black sections steering committee, the Labour Committee on Ireland, the Lesbian and Gay YS, etc. would all turn.

Most Briefing supporters at the conference saw this whole approach as rather naive and dangerous.

The Brighton Briefing group argued for a 'harder' national network on definite politics rather than merging Briefing into an unclear-left alliance.

All the grand ideas from Socialist Action came down in the end to an unsuccessful attempt to get the conference to endorse their open letter on youth: they wanted to organise an opposition in the Labour Party Young Socialists on the basis of attacking Militant for not being activist enough (rather than counterposing a comprehensive set of politics to them), and appeal to the rest of the Left to pitch into the LPYS against Militant.

The big gap between the success of the various local Briefings as newsletters in the Labour Party and becoming an effective national body isn't likely to be bridged by such plans. Briefing needs to strengthen its stand on the issues which have given it most success: the fight for accountability and against cuts in local government, and organisation for the reselection battles in the Labour Party.

At present Briefing has no clear policy or organising role in the local government fight. When it gets one and starts to argue for it, the steps to a real national movement will be less faltering.

Labour conference amendments: the miners' strike

Proposed amendment for Labour Party conference to resolution no.295, Newark CLP.

In para 1, line 2, delete 'are increasingly being', and insert the words: "continue to be used".

In line 3, insert after 'increasing use of', the words: "a national police force".

Para 2, part (b). Add at end: "including the refusal to pay for such use".

Para 2, part (d). Add at end: "and immediately to disband the police National Reporting Centre".

Para 2, part (e). Insert after 'armed forces', the words: "and police".

Para 2, part (g). Delete in lines 2-3 the words 'per se'. Add after 'a report' in line 3 the

words, "and proposals".

Proposed amendment for Labour Party conference to resolution no.255, National Union of Mineworkers.

Add at end of line 5 the words, "... and condemns those inside the movement who have either refused to support or equivocated on supporting the NUM".

Insert after the word 'coal' in line 14 the words, "... the immediate settlement of outstanding claims as affirmed in the key resolution of the Extraordinary Annual Conference of the NUM, reaffirming previous decisions of the NUM Special Delegate Conference of 19th April 1984".

Add at end of line 15 the words: "... controlled by workers in the industry".



Massed police at Orgreave

Labour conference amendments: local councils

Proposed amendment for Labour Party conference to resolution no.104, Sheffield Hillsborough.

In para 2, line 2, delete 'and'; add at end of para the words, "and by industrial action by council workers and other trade unionists to resist any cuts in council jobs or services".

In para 3, point (a), insert after 'councils' the words: "and local authority trade unionists".

In para 3, point (b), add at end the words: "By the implementation of illegal, unbalanced budgets, refusal to pay interest charges to the banks and other financial institutions, refusal to pay police precepts, or other measures taken to enforce no cuts and no increases in rents, rates or charges".

In para 3, point (c), add a new sentence at the end: "Urge local authority trade unions jointly to prepare plans for strike action in any authority where councillors are surcharged or penalised for

resisting the government, where commissioners are sent in, or where cuts in jobs and services take place".

In para 4, point (i), add a new sentence at the end: "To refuse to enter, even collectively, any secret negotiations with the Department of the Environment. All negotiations to be fully reported on to local authority trade unions".

In para 4, point (ii), insert after 'authorities' the words: "and council trade unions". Add a new sentence at the end: "To centre the campaign against the government's aim to press through cuts in jobs and services, and not on the right of local authorities further to increase rate levels".

In para 4, point (iii), delete all and insert the words: "To refuse collectively to make any budgets in 1985-6 which would result in cuts in jobs, services or living standards, and to seek the support of council trade unions at all levels for this approach".

Industrial

Health cutters suspend trade unionists

100 LOCAL people, ranging from pensioners to babes in arms, lobbied the City and Hackney District Health Authority this Monday, 30th, just two days before the planned closure of St Leonard's Hospital in Hackney.

It was the last meeting for the DHA chair, Sir Louis Freedman — he's been advised by his doctor to resign because of high blood pressure he has contracted since last September.

The four Labour and trade union DHA members put resolutions demanding that the disgraceful methods of moving patients out in minicabs stop, and that the plans for closure be put back until the administrators find a safe way of transporting old and sick people. The ambulance drivers have refused to move the patients.

Protests were made about the victimisation of two union representatives, Geoff Craig, the NUPE steward at St Leonards, and Andrea Campbell, chair of the joint shop stewards' committee and Hackney CoHSE branch.

Both have been suspended. Andrea was suspended on the day after the DHA meeting.

By Jo Thwaites

The occupation of the hospital was supported by hundreds of local people, the hospital workers, the patients and their relatives, the local MPs, the Borough Council, and most GPs, yet the DHA picks out two health workers carrying out their union duties and deprives them of their livelihood.

The majority of DHA members, including regional T&G official Ted Sheehan, couldn't care less, and voted against the resolution demanding that the suspensions be dropped.

Securicare, the security company employed to 'guard' St Leonards against local people, was exposed at the DHA as not having filed accounts for the past two years and therefore in breach of the Companies Act. This company gets £900 a day for 'guarding' the hospital.

There are 14 patients left in St Leonards and they are due to be moved out this week. The DHA have ridden roughshod over local people, patients, and staff to close this hospital, and they plan to close three more in Hackney. Next time they must not get away with it.



South London hospital for women is still occupied to prevent closure. Above: Pat Williams, Mayoress of Lambeth, and Lambeth council leader Ted Knight visit the hospital. Photo: Stefano Cagnoni, IFL.

Graham threatens East Kilbride strike

STRIKERS at the Crown Agents Pensions Division at East Kilbride, near Glasgow, voted overwhelmingly at their most recent mass meeting to continue with their action.

The 150 strikers, who belong to the three civil service unions CPSA, SCPS, and CSU, began their action on April 4. They are demanding no privatisation of the pensions division, full incorporation of the pensions division into the civil service, and full civil service status for its employees.

The most recent offer of the Crown Agents management, which was discussed at last week's mass meeting, involved:

By Stan Crooke

* A guarantee of current terms and conditions of employment until the end of 1985 (when a decision will be taken on privatisation);

* Any new staff taken on in the meantime to share the same terms and conditions;

* A guarantee that the trade unions would be consulted before a final decision on privatisation.

The offer thus contained no specific commitments or concrete gains, and the strike committee recommended a vote against acceptance.

It was a different story, though, from the full-time union officials present at the mass meeting, particularly Reg Williams from the CPSA.

They called for acceptance of the offer on the grounds that, as far as they were concerned, the strikers had no chance of winning; and added weight to this call by pointing out that strike pay, which the strikers are currently receiving, 'does not last for ever'.

Given half a chance, the union full-timers will certainly make sure that the strikers do not win. CPSA general secretary Alistair Graham has already openly declared that he would have prevented the strike being made official if he could.

Officials have given the go-ahead to employees at the Overseas Development Administration, who share the offices in East Kilbride with the Pensions Division, to make 'hardship payments' to pensioners affected by the strike. (The Pensions Division deals with pensions for ex-colonial civil servants).

Union full-timers have also been taking their message that the strike cannot be won to other parts of the country, thereby weakening potential solidarity.

The Broad Left dominated National Executive Committee of CPSA must organise support for the strikers.

Support from the local labour movement also needs to be stepped up.

The East Kilbride Constituency Labour Party has apparently been too busy preventing LPYS members collecting money for the miners in the town centre to be able to help the Pensions Division strikers. East Kilbride Trades Council has only sent a message of support and had a token presence on one of the mass pickets.

Donations and messages of support to the Strike Committee, c/o The Queensway Motel, Eaglesham Rd, East Kilbride. Phone East Kilbride 32435.

Lairds plan for mass picketing

Workers at Cammell Lairds shipyard on Merseyside have been occupying a gas rig and a frigate for over four weeks now in an attempt to fight job cuts and the threat of closure of the yard.

Lol Duffy, one of the GMBU shop stewards in the occupation, told Socialist Organiser.

THE yard is on holiday at present, but it is possible that the management will make an

attempt to evict us next week.

If they do, we'll call for a mass picket at the yard.

The local Trades Council is organising a list of phone numbers for people who are going to be available for a mass picket if they try to get rid of us. Liverpool is doing the same through the unemployed centre.

We've had messages of support from many shipyards saying that they hope that the [union] Shipbuilding Negotiating Committee doesn't do what it has usually done and leave us in the lurch.

We've sent delegations to Clydeside, to Tyneside, and

to Barrow. Many yards are calling for the SNC to call a national lay delegate conference or for a national meeting of all shop stewards.

We've had support from Ford and Vauxhall, too.

Donations and messages to: Lol Duffy, Cammell Lairds Occupation Committee, 3 St James Court, Victoria Rd, Wallasey, Merseyside L45 9LD. Phone 051 638 2310/647 2122.

Mick Cashman adds:

FRANK Field's attitude to the Lairds sit-in has been part of the reason for the feeling in Birkenhead Labour Party against reselecting him as MP.

At a meeting with Tory minister Michael Heseltine, Field said that those occupying the vessels were a tiny minority of hotheads and Heseltine should

ignore them.

The discontent with Field started when he joined with a SDPer to set up a 'Rainbow Circle' to press for a pact between Labour and the Alliance.

Six resolutions were sent in from the six branches in the constituency attacking Field. They were all passed, and the Labour Party put out a statement saying that they were opposed to any form of coalition.

A Constituency Labour Party meeting on Friday 27th grilled Field on his intentions if he is de-selected, and failed to get a satisfactory answer. There have been reports that Field would stand as an independent candidate against Labour.

There is a bigger and bigger body of opinion in the CLP pushing to replace Field. He disagrees with every major aspect of Labour Party policy. He is in favour of council house sales, he is opposed to unilateral nuclear disarmament, he is in favour of wage restraint.

BNP in Glasgow

By Stan Crooke

I'VE HEARD of 'peaceful co-existence' — but this is ridiculous! For several weeks now in Glasgow, the Socialist Workers Party (SWP) and Communist Party (CP) have been selling their papers outside Central Station — alongside the fascists of the British National Party (BNP) selling their filth.

Such a situation, inconceivable five years ago, is excused by the SWP on the grounds that supporting the miners is their priority and that they are opposing the BNP by presenting a socialist alternative.

Fortunately, supporters of the various Irish solidarity campaigns in Glasgow have not been prepared to go along with this do-nothing attitude. Ignoring protests from Socialist Action supporters that it was 'ultra-leftist' and we should all 'wait for the labour movement to act', they organised a picket for last Saturday, July 28.

The fascists were cleared off the streets — in the end, by the police, who decided that the sellers plus the pickets constituted an obstruction and gave everyone their marching orders. Unfortunately the police made the SWP and CP sellers 'move along' as well.

The fascists have been humbled. But no doubt they will be back this week in larger numbers. So the campaign to clear them off the streets must now get into full swing.

This means consistent mobilisations for the Saturday morning pickets to stop them selling, which can only be achieved by taking up the political arguments in the Labour Party and trade unions.

SELF-DEFENCE IS NO OFFENCE!

Mass picket in support of the Newham 7: West Ham Magistrates' Court, West Ham Lane, Stratford, London E15, from 10am on Friday September 14.

The Newham 7 are seven Asian youths arrested on April 7 and the few days following for defending themselves and their community against racist attacks. They face charges ranging from possessing offensive weapons to criminal damage, plus affray and conspiracy to cause criminal damage.

Newham 7 Defence Campaign: PO Box 273, Forest Gate, London E7 9JN. (01-555 8151 day, 01-534 1640 evenings).

Socialist ORGANISER If they use anti union laws general strike **Socialist ORGANISER** Vote for

STOP STEEL Police and courts help the

JOIN THE PICKETS Help the miners win

Subscribe!

Get SOCIALIST ORGANISER each week delivered to your door by post!

RATES: £5 for 3 months; £8.50 for 6 months; and £16 for a year.

Name

Address

Please send me months' sub, I enclose £

To: Socialist Organiser, 28, Middle Lane, London N8 8PL.

Kewal Bros.

By Jim Denham

TGWU members at Kewal Bros in West Bromwich have been on strike since May 16.

The strike began because three T&G members were dismissed without good cause in an attempt to break trade union organisation at this clothing factory.

Other workers then struck demanding their reinstatement and recognition of the union — which the employer has been refusing for the past 12 months.

The workers are all Asian, and mainly women. Some of them are paid £1 per hour, and conditions are appalling. A successful campaign against sweatshop conditions and for the right to join a union by these workers would be a step forward not only for trade unionism but for the fight against racism and sexism.

The strike has now been made official by the TGWU.

Messages and donations to: Kewal Bros Strike Support Committee, 346 Soho Rd, Handsworth, Birmingham B21 9QL. Tel: 021-551 2258.

BARKING MASS PICKET

NUPE cleaners at Barking Hospital have been on strike for 20 weeks, since the private contractors, Crothalls, attempted to impose cuts in wages and conditions.

They have called for a mass picket at the hospital from 6.30am on Tuesday August 7.

Socialist Organiser

Rate-cap could mean huge cuts

Kinnock's scheme: 'All power to PLP'

By Reg Race

NEIL KINNOCK's attempt to undermine the principles of mandatory reselection is an act of folly.

It will reopen major conflicts in the Labour Party, it will ensure that trade unionists are treated as second-class citizens within the party; it will reassert the primacy of the Parliamentary Labour Party over the rank and file, and it will lead to the vilification in the press of individuals and constituency parties who seek to use the present system of selection.

Some people argue that Kinnock has blundered into a row that could have been avoided, and have criticised him for unthinkingly raising difficult internal questions just when Labour was doing better in the polls.

This criticism is wide of the mark. The proposed rule changes have been introduced as a deliberate attempt to shift power back to the Parliamentary Labour Party.

This is not my view alone. Kinnock's closest political allies in the Leader's office and on the front bench, many of whom disagree with his proposals, are convinced that the 'one person one vote' scheme has been introduced in order to discredit the whole principle of reselection.

By implementing these changes, they argue, sitting MPs, however dreadful their record in the constituency, would be able to bank on the unthinking support of inactive members and the vociferous support of the local and national press, thus making their position virtually unassailable.

Unassailable MPs would then be able to perform one important task: selecting Labour's policy proposals that they were prepared to support, and rejecting those they were not prepared to endorse.

The primacy of the PLP in deciding which policies would be implemented by a Labour government would hence be safeguarded — and the stage would be set for a re-run of the disastrous policies of the Callaghan government. Only this time there would be even less of an industrial base on which to structure the minimal social concessions that could be offered.

There is no doubt at all that Kinnock has been orchestrating this tune. John Evans — the Labour MP who moved the proposals on the NEC — is acting as the Leader's mouthpiece, and the press briefing supporting the Evans proposals were in fact produced in and distributed from Kinnock's private office.

The proposals themselves are based on a number of deliberate misconceptions. The first is that in the Labour Party we do not have one person, one vote, and that this is a principle which must be established.

This is absurd, all party members can come to party branch meetings and cast their vote.

The second reason to oppose the scheme is that it is a transparent attempt to protect sitting MPs: for the proposals apply only to the 209 constituencies which have Labour MPs at present. The remaining 424 would be able to use the existing system.

The real truth is that this is the latest variant of a long line of 'moderate' proposals designed to protect MPs from the full rigours of reselection: first we had 'optional' reselection, then the 'short list of one', and now we have 'one person one vote'.

The third principal reason why the proposals should be resisted is that it is the General Management

Committee of a party which has the task of monitoring the performance of an MP: party branches cannot do it, and MPs cannot possibly attend all the branches in the constituency on a regular basis. It must therefore fall to GMC delegates to probe and question their MPs on a face-to-face basis, and ultimately to have the task of determining whether to select them again as a candidate.

The fourth solid reason for defeating the Evans/Kinnock proposals is that these proposals will give the media a field day. Labour MPs thought to be in some danger of reselection will no doubt receive the support of Rupert Murdoch and Robert Maxwell — and their support may well be worth scores of votes from party members.

Finally the scheme undermin-

es the role of trade unions in the party, and affiliated trade union members will not have a right to vote as individuals under the proposed rules — while ordinary party members will have the right to do so.

The purpose of Kinnock's plan is crystal clear. It has been put forward not because of a burning desire to extend democracy, but to restrict it and to concentrate effective power into the hands of the PLP.

If Neil Kinnock were interested in extending real democracy, then he would support the demands of the Women's Action Committee to give women real power in the party; and he would support the call to give black sections real power.

But of course he wants none of this. Our Leader wants a Parliamentary Party dominated by white, middle-class right-wingers because he feels safe with them — and they, no doubt, feel the same way too.



If the courts get their way against the South Wales NUM, dozens of haulage firms could start taking the miners to court

General strike!

from page one

they will try to end it as quickly as they can, as in 1926. For that reason local action committees should be set up linking miners, railworkers and other groups taking industrial action.

We should start campaigning now.

The government has held back until now on using the anti-union laws against the miners — despite appeals from the ex-Labour renegades in the SDP! — for fear of the explosive consequences. They have tried instead, but with minimal success, to promote back-to-work movements. Now is the time to prove their fears justified.

The stakes are high.

If the courts and the employers get away with their attack on the South Wales NUM, then dozens of haulage firms across the country that have been moving coal through picket lines can follow it up. British Rail, British Steel, and the Coal Board itself can also use the Tory laws.

The miners' union and its area organisations could be cut up, bit by bit. As the recent new £125,000 fine imposed by Eddie Shah on the print union NGA shows, once unions get caught by the courts they can be penalised again and again.

Nothing less than the life of effective trade unionism is at stake.

Fight for a general strike to back the miners and to smash the Tories' anti-union laws!

By Gerry Bates

THE BUDGET limits imposed on councils by the Tory Government's 'rate-capping' could mean much bigger cuts than at first appeared.

Hackney council reckons the cuts demanded at an impossible 28 per cent, and other councils say they are being asked to cut by 10 per cent or more.

18 local authorities have been instructed to spend next year no more than (or in three cases, 1½% less than) this year's cash total. Any rate rise above the level corresponding to that budget will be illegal.

On the face of it this means a cut of 4% or 5% — about the same as the rate of inflation. Even 4% or 5% would be a much deeper cut than at first appears, given that a lot of council spending is tied up in items like debt charges which cannot be cut at will.

But in fact many of the 'rate-capped' councils used various accounting tricks to ease their budgets this year which cannot be repeated next year. Some ran down their reserves; some, in London, diverted spending to the Greater London Council, which, because it received no central government grant anyway, would not face central government penalties for that spending. Next year the GLC itself is 'rate-capped'.

The cash total for this year which the government is using as a base for its demands is thus a misleading figure.

Islington council estimates that it is in fact being asked to cut about 9%. This would mean, for example:

- 20% off day to day housing repairs, and
- Closure of a youth training workshop, and
- 20% off refuse collection, and
- 20% off street cleaning, and
- 10% off public health inspection, and
- 20% off housing caretaking and cleaning, and
- Closure of 3 swimming baths, and
- Closure of 6 libraries, and



Cuts chief Patrick Jenkin

Closure of two old people's homes, and

Closure of 6 children's day nurseries, and

Closure of all day centres for the elderly, and

20% cut in home helps, and 50% cut in meals on wheels, and

Closure of all day centres for the mentally ill and handicapped.

750 jobs would go. Alternatively, Islington could meet the government's demands by raising rents by £3.75.

Sheffield reckons that the government is demanding a 10% cut from it. This would mean:

In housing: 360 jobs cut; improvement grants, modernisation, and maintenance cut.

In social services: four old people's homes, 100 home helps, and 60 places in centres for the mentally handicapped would go.

In education: 1400 teachers' jobs cut.

Haringey reckons that it would have to cut by 13%. This would mean 1200 jobs lost and a corresponding range of service cuts.

Leicester would face similar problems, with a 12½% cut demanded.

The front-line councils have said that they will defy the government. To be effective, this defiance will have to be enforced by direct action by council unions and by tenants.

Thanks for information for this article to the Local Government Campaign Unit.

FUND

Help us move in

We are now finalising the details of the lease, and estimates for repair and decoration work, for proper premises for Socialist Organiser.

August is not a good time to start fund-raising, and especially not an August that

comes after 21 weeks of a miners' strike. But the job of fighting for socialist ideas remains central — and that job can't be done without the necessary equipment.

We need £2000 by the end of September. Please discuss fund-raising now in your local group.

Get donations from all the local supporters — £100 or £1, whatever they can afford.

Draw up a list of better-off readers in your area, and approach them systematically.

Start now on planning jumble sales and other fund-raising events for September.

But don't forget our regular monthly fund.

Send to: Socialist Organiser, 214 Sickert Court, London N1 2SY.



Join the Labour Party. Write to: The Labour Party, 150 Walworth Road, London SE17 1JT.

Subscription is £7 per year, £2 unwaged, 50p OAPs.

NATIONAL WOMEN'S DEMONSTRATION AND GALA



SATURDAY 11 AUGUST IN LONDON

ASSEMBLE 12 noon, Temple Tube, London WC2
MARCH via Trafalgar Square & DHSS Headquarters, Elephant & Castle
GALA 3pm, Burgess Park, Camberwell Rd, SE5
with stalls, refreshments, children's entertainment
Further information: 0742 700388 / 01-582 0987