

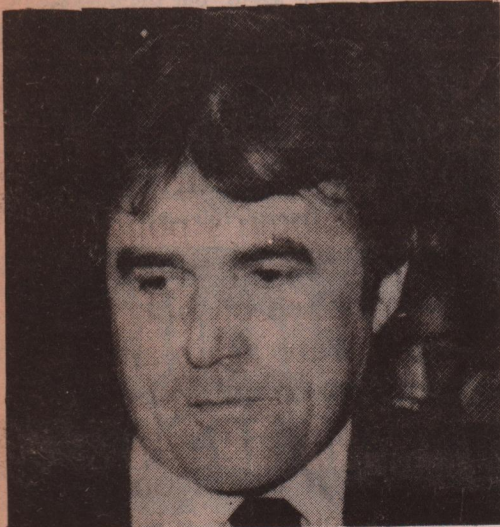
Socialist Organiser

Tory court set to seize miners' funds

STRIKE

BACK!

JUDAS!



NACODS secretary Peter McNestry:

AS we go to press the courts seem set to grab the assets of the miners' union, because the NUM has refused to pay a £200,000 fine.

And the strike by the pit deputies' union NACODS, set for 6 am on Thursday, 25th, has been called off. Had the supervisors come out, they would have closed all the coalfields, shortened the miners' strike and brought victory over the Tories much closer.

The details of the settlement are still secret but it is unlikely that NACODS have got any reliable guarantees against pit closures.

For the leaders of NACODS to settle on their own like this, after 80% of supervisors voted for strike action, is the dirtiest piece of shameless treachery seen in the British labour movement for a very long time.

McNestry is nothing but a working class Judas!

Striking miners will be bitterly disappointed and very angry.

But many of them expected a stab in the back. Notts rank and file leader Paul Whetton explains the spirit in which militant miners watched the manoeuvres between

NACODS leaders and the Coal Board:

"We've told as many of our lads as possible not to build their hopes on a NACODS strike, to believe it when they see it. The man who expects nothing is never disappointed." (See page 2).

Hardened by eight months on strike, miners and their families are unlikely to let disappointment lead to despair. The strike will go on. Over 140,000 miners and their families will continue the fight because they know they have no alternative except surrender.

Arthur Scargill says that the only deal the NUM will accept is one in which the Coal Board withdraws its closure plans, agrees to keep open pits marked for closure and produces "a definition of pit exhaustion that does not contain the economic connotation that the Coal Board has been seeking to include since the beginning of March this year."

That principle - that people come before economics - makes the miners' strike a fight on behalf of the whole working

Continued on back page

Class law on the picket line



Rossington, Yorkshire: This picket was knocked over by a police horsebox and then run over by a police transit van.
Photo: John Harris

ORGANISE FOR A GENERAL STRIKE



Back the miners

"WE'VE GOT AN ALLY IN THE WINTER"

Paul Whetton's diary

Our talks with rank and file NACODS members showed that they are all prepared and ready to strike and have given us an assurance that they'll be on the picket line on Thursday morning. The only danger is that they may be sold out by their leadership, or bought off.

It's quite obvious that there is a great deal of pressure on the NACODS leaders. Whether or not they can resist that and stand firm I don't know. The press statement we put out last week urging NACODS to join us still holds good.

We think they ought to be out with us now instead of waiting for the outcome of these negotiations.

I'm sure that the rank and file will respond and will join us on Thursday.

We have promised that any NACODS member who comes out on the picket line will be given the fullest co-operation in information, legal advice, anything we've got and can offer our comrades in NACODS.

There will be a separate NACODS picket line and the NUM will instruct all its members not to cross, or to do the work of NACODS members.

The scabs now are beginning to panic. They think they will be able to turn up to work and the Coal Board will employ them because of their loyalty. The Coal Board doesn't reward loyalty. They never have done and they never will. It may well be that in the early days they might attempt to get the scabs to continue going in. But after a while the Coal Board will just cut and run.

The exclusion of the NUM from the ACAS talks this week shows that they want to isolate NACODS from the NUM. They want to divide the unions within the mining industry. I think there will be strong pressure to buy off NACODS but I would hope that they'll stand firm.

We've told as many of our lads as possible not to build their hopes on a NACODS strike, to believe it when they see it. The man who expects nothing is never disappointed. If it does come off it will be a tremendous boost, but don't build your hopes up, only to see them dashed down again.

One thing this dispute must have demonstrated to other trade unionists is that if they want to make any real gains against this government now is the time to go. It's a pity that other disputes like those emerging in the car industry - Vauxhalls, Fords, British Leyland - are running in parallel with the miners rather than linking up with us in a joint effort to get through the hole in the wall that the NUM are going to knock through.

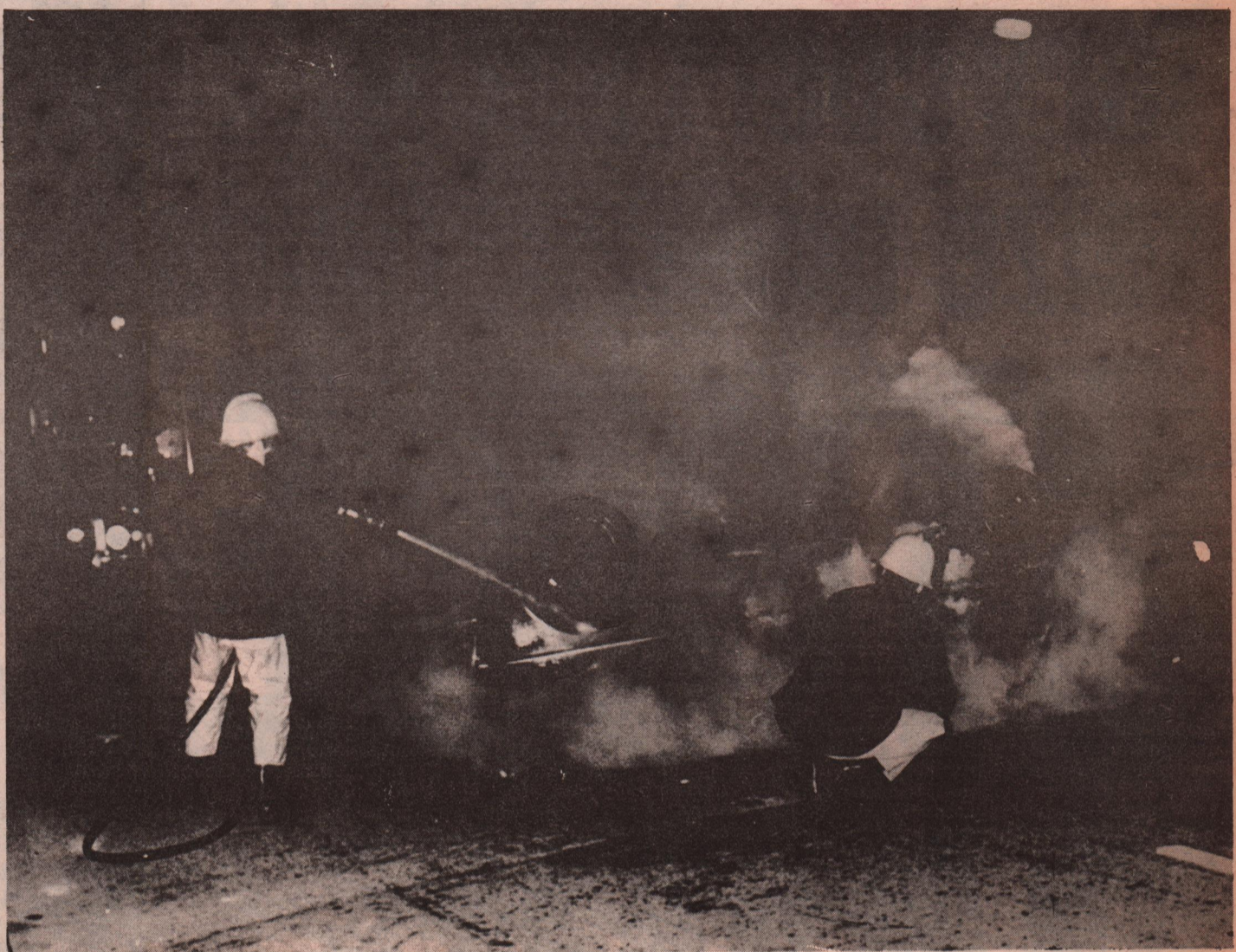
Union-busting

The appointment of Eaton highlights what we've been saying since the start of this dispute - MacGregor was brought in with his American-style strike-breaking and union-busting, and this time he's bitten off more than he can chew.

MacGregor's media image has been disastrous for the Coal Board and the government. The Tories have realised this and they've thrown him to the dogs.

They'll keep him on in name only for the duration of the strike. There's no doubt that we're going to win this dispute and when that happens he'll just simply be paid off. But it's the British tax payer who'll be doing the paying off.

It's an attempt by the government to put a reasonable face on their side of the argument. But it's come too late. After seven months, every single member of this trade union that's out on strike recognises the issues and any veneer that the Coal Board tries to put on it, will be immediately seen through.



Grimethorpe, Yorkshire, last week: firemen put out a burning car set ablaze as the mining community fought back against police on the rampage

There's nobody on the Coal Board who could be put in that seat and repair the damage that's been done. Employers are employers. It doesn't matter whether they've got an acceptable face or not.

Panicking

Peter Walker's appeal to Kinnock to use his good offices to try and help achieve a settlement was a useless gesture. The government are panicking and turning in all different directions - a new spokesperson at the Coal Board, calling in the Labour Party - to me it shows panic measures.

The problem for them is that they want the dispute solved, but not in a way that makes it appear a victory for the NUM or Arthur Scargill.

As for the meeting between Kinnock and Scargill I hope Scargill told him, either you back us or we cut you off. I would hope that Kinnock has realised that he's got to come out on the side of the working class and the rank and file miners.

But I'm afraid that going on his past history, Kinnock will no doubt have been doing some clever shadow boxing, trying to get out of such a commitment at all costs.

Less than half the EETPU members in the power stations who voted in the EETPU's ballot on the miners' strike, voted to back the miners.

We didn't expect anything from the EETPU. The disturbing aspect of it is that we've

argued consistently since the start of the dispute that no man's got the right to ballot on another man's job. That's why there has been a strong reaction against the ballot in the NUM.



The ugly face of capitalism: does the appointment of Michael Eaton as the NCB's "public face" mean that MacGregor is on the way out?

So I think it's a cheek and an audacity for another union to hold a ballot to decide on that, when it's got nothing to do with those members. The way the ballot was conducted is open to question. It does show, however, that there is some support among the rank and file of the EETPU for the miners, despite the opposition of the leadership and the fact that they held the ballot across the whole union, instead of just the power workers.

It reveals a gulf between the rank and file and the leadership. Surely even the leadership can see that this is no longer an argument that just affects mine workers, it's about whether or not we have a trade union movement that

is allowed to function in this country.

If the mine workers go down, where does that leave the EETPU? It leaves them high and dry.

They may well believe that they are untouchable, but a good number of unions have already found out to their cost that that no longer applies to anybody. If the mine workers go down then everybody goes down.

Most of the Nottinghamshire stocks have been depleted anyway. If they go for the coal that's lying on the floor in Yorkshire, who's going to load it? Is the government prepared to take the gamble of bringing the army in? I think that would be a very dangerous gamble. It could cause such a reaction from the rest of the trade union movement, but it's something the government is probably prepared to do.

I don't swallow the story that the power stations can last through the winter.

We are at a critical time in this dispute. After seven months we are coming up to Christmas, coming up to winter, and that's an important time for us. We've got a great ally in the winter, but it's also going to be a very difficult time. Our members realise that.

There was a so-called riot at Ollerton on Thursday night. The lads were on the picket line and there was nothing more than a little bit of aggro, but the police have blown it out of all proportion in order to justify their response to anything like that - bunches of coppers running through the village with truncheons drawn and so on.

They have to justify their actions so they call a minor fracas a full-scale riot.

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Socialist Organiser

From Derby, Geoff Ward has told us about another new estate sale for Socialist Organiser.

Six papers were sold the first time round. Not spectacular - except that Derby is a new area for Socialist Organiser, and Geoff was doing this sale on his own.

The new regular sales in London continue, with 21 sold last week at Holborn tube, 14 at Highbury Corner, 12 on Islington's estate sale and 10 on Southwark's.

Manchester comrades report that they are selling 30 papers a week regularly at the University there.



Left: In Grimethorpe, the police seized a 13 year old, kneed him, and beat his head against a wall. Below. Miners set fire to a barricade to keep police away from their picket line at Rossington colliery. Photos: John Harris.



Pit villages besieged; seven people hospitalised

Belfast in Yorkshire

IF you live in a Yorkshire pit village these days, you can watch the brutal thuggery and licensed violence of the South African "security forces" or the RUC in Northern Ireland on Breakfast TV and then walk out into the streets of your village and see something pretty close to it re-enacted before your very eyes.

Policing of the Yorkshire mining communities by the enforcers of "law and order" is now reduced to a daily round of shouting filthy abuse at women and children and clubbing and beating up pickets and onlookers.

At Brodsworth, police charged a mass picket and then went on

the rampage through the housing estates in pursuit of striking miners. All around them, mothers were taking their children to school.

Local people opened their doors to the pickets and hid them in their houses until the police had gone by - a response to the forces of "law and order" common among residents in the nationalist areas of Northern Ireland.

In Rossington, where there is only one road in and out of the village, police drivers swerved their vehicles from left to right across the road, trying to run people down. One man was hit by

a horsebox and then by a transit van (see photo on front page). Although he fell, he fortunately did not go under the wheels of the van or the miners would have suffered another fatality in this strike.

After the police unleashed this mayhem it took 40 minutes to get an ambulance from Doncaster - a mere seven miles away - or from the police station a mile away where ambulances are kept on standby.

This so angered the 2,000 pickets that they began building barricades against the police. When it was all over six people had been hospitalised by police

vehicles.

Grimethorpe is now under police occupation after residents responded angrily to mass arrests of miners and their families collecting coal from local tips. Contrary to press reports this was not high grade coal but low grade slag. And, anyway, as the members of the mining community point out, the coal may be owned by the Coal Board, but who dug it, who suffered injuries, illness and even death to get this coal from underground?

Police took over the town on Tuesday night, Belfast style. Local youths responded with a

hail of stones before retreating - Belfast style. Riot cops - pictured above - seized one 13-year old, clubbed him and kneed him.

Nobody in Grimethorpe is safe from these uniformed thugs.

They congregate outside the pubs and harass people coming out. They charge around the place, taking no care that women and children are about.

More and more frequently "the gladiators" make an appearance. These are the riot cops in "NATO helmets", boiler suits and carrying small round shields. Their job is not to snatch people but to go in and beat hell out of

them. As a result, the rate of arrests is falling and the local community is paying a heavy price in cracked bones and bloody faces.

The police are anxious that their brutal methods should go unreported. They can rely on the mass media to keep quiet about the way they terrorise the pit villages, but not so the left press. One freelance photographer says he believes there are special police squads whose job it is to get journalists.

An incident at Brodsworth summed it up: a copper shouted to his men "Get ready to charge, but watch out for the Left press."

POLICE OUT OF THE COALFIELDS

Back the miners



How I was arrested

I was peacefully picketing at my own colliery, Easington, together with about three to four hundred pickets from other collieries in the East Durham area. When the only scab — Paul Wilkinson — went in to work the pickets suddenly surged forward and I was pushed towards the police lines. A policeman grabbed me by the neck, put a hand over my face and pulled me through the police lines. When I asked him why he grabbed me as he did, he just laughed.

I was then taken to the nearest police station at Peterlee and then handcuffed and taken to Durham City, twelve miles from Peterlee, and then brought back to Peterlee again. In all, I was held in police custody for about ten hours. During that time I was fingerprinted and had my photograph taken twice, once in the pit yard and once in Peterlee police station.

I appeared in court along with 26 other pickets and we were all refused legal aid. I was given bail conditions which stated that I was "to refrain from picketing at Easington colliery" for the following reason "to ensure no offences are committed".

I live only twenty yards from the picket line which means that if there was a picket line or a police line there and I was going to my Aunt who lives 100 yards from the picket line I would risk being arrested again.

The people in Easington are coping alright. It's a struggle but we will never give in to Thatcher and her cronies Brittan, MacGregor or to any of their kind. The prospects for the north east are good because we are all out and determined to win. It makes me feel proud that I am one of the north east miners who will win a famous victory.

Edwin Liddle,
Easington NUM

Charges dropped

CHARGES have been dropped against three hospital workers from North Manchester General Hospital who were arrested last July on a picket line at the hospital on a day of action in support of the miners.

A large picket formed outside the Magistrates Court where hospital workers were joined by others from the Town Hall, the Post Office, NALGO, the Trades Council, ACTSS, and miners from local pits.

The police decided to drop charges of assault on a police officer and obstruction if the three accused agreed to be

bound over the keep the peace (which would probably have happened even if they had been found not guilty) and the secretary of the shop stewards committee agreed to recommend that they drop the complaint against police conduct. However the joint shop stewards committee are unlikely to agree.

In fact, the action of the police in arresting these three workers has strengthened support for the miners and increased the militancy of hospital workers. This makes the task of organising against cuts and privatisation easier.



Miners gathered outside Ravenscraig steelworks last week to distribute leaflets to steelworkers' homes. Photo: Rick Matthews (IFL).

Police in Ollerton

By Stan Crawford

WE organised a larger picket than usual at Ollerton colliery — there were about 150 people there — and at first we were just milling about at the entrance to the pit.

The police herded us into the Plough car park, which is the normal thing.

Last time we had a large picket at Ollerton the police picked out a group of about 40 men, surrounded them with police five or six deep.

When the night shift goes in we leave about 11.15pm and on that last occasion the police kept the men there till 12.15 am. The tactic is that the police hold the men, don't say anything if someone says they want to go home, and then hope that one of the pickets will try and push through the police lines to go home. Then the police will lift the lot of them.

Well, the last time, it didn't work. We just stood there quite sullenly and let them get on with it.

They tried to do the same again last Thursday. We said we're not having it. We're



not going to stand around till a quarter to one in the morning, penned in by 500 police.

So you got a situation where men ended up being chased all over the village by police. That is what sparked the whole thing off.

The first incident I saw of drawn truncheons was when a group of police came from the colliery into the cemetery with torches and truncheons.

We went from the Plough back towards the village away from the colliery. The police spread right across the main road, with similar lines of police coming down other streets towards the cross-roads.

So you ended up at the cross-roads with four lines of police converging, with the pickets in the middle.

Sporadic

They were obviously planning to hem us in and do what they wanted with us.

Then the truncheons came out. The lads said we're not going to get caught in this box again and spread out all through the gardens. The police gave chase, used their truncheons and the pickets retaliated with stones, though most of the stones were directed at the scab coal lorries on the main road.

Anyway, the total frustration of these incidents resulted in a van being turned over.

There were then sporadic incidents for another three to four hours.

Some shop windows got put in when the stones aimed at lorries missed. Liptons had its windows put in and there were 20 pickets standing outside the shop stopping it from being looted.

The one community policeman was standing, with his hat off, talking to the pickets and a squad of Hampshire police came marching up, and the Inspector turns to the community police officer and asks whether these lads are giving him any bother. The community cop says no, they aren't.

The Inspector says, we've had a belly full of this lot tonight, just give us the nod and we'll lift the lot of them. The community cop, to give him his due, stood up for the lads that were there. So the other cops marched away again.

Back at the Plough the police had managed to surround about 20 pickets and kept some of the lads there until about midnight.

Anyone who walks around now on their own at night gets stopped by the police who ask them where they were last Thursday night.

Traitors' letter

Below is the text of a letter sent by working miners at Manton Colliery, Yorks, to every striker from there.

"Dear Colleagues,
You are asking why we have returned to work. These are our reasons:

We believe that the democratic foundations of our union have not been upheld by the leadership, so we decided to seek further advice on the legality of the strike call. The High Court of the land, after hearing evidence from members of the NUM, ruled under the ancient Law of Contract and not "Thatcher's Law" that the strike was unofficial and picket lines illegal. After hearing this, we decided to return to work.

We believe that the only way to unite our union and bring back democracy and

dignity would be for the leadership to call a national ballot of the whole membership. It is not our intention to create any divisions in the NUM — this has already been done by our dictatorial leaders.

So we urge every man to return to work until the rules of the NUM are observed regarding a national strike call and if a national ballot authorises a strike we will abide by that decision.

Yours sincerely,
Robert Taylor
Kenneth Foustone
and Manton working miners"

See through

Do these traitors think us stupid, do they think we can't see through them? They speak of only wishing to unite the union but their actions say different.

I say to them, How will your working bring unity? How will sequestration of our funds (funds not belonging to us but to our forefathers) bring unity? How will voting another man out of a job bring unity?

Boot-lickers

I say to them also, your actions, as MacGregor and Thatcher's boot lickers are treacherous, not only to your fellow workers but to the whole working class movement.

Your actions make me feel ashamed to admit to being a Manton miner. If you really want to bring unity to our union then stop scabbing and desist from this stupid, damaging court action.

Victory to the miners!
BOB SMAILES
MANTON NUM

Bronski gig

The Lesbians and Gays Support the Miners group who have raised well over £2,000 for the strikers and their families, are organising a benefit concert in aid of the miners to take place in London at the Electric Ballroom in Camden on December 10. Headlining the gig will be Bronski Beat — voted band of the year by readers of the London events magazine City Limits — who will be donating gold and silver discs awarded for sales of their new album and last single as prizes in a raffle to raise money for the strike.

Council

GLASGOW'S Labour controlled council donated £20,000 to the miners at a rally in the city last weekend. Labour Party members should continue pressing their local councils — particularly if Labour controlled — to give practical support to the miners in their fight.

WORKERS Socialist REVIEW

Advertisement

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Back the miners GENERAL STRIKE!



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When women worked down the pit

"Never with your leave or by your leave, they tell'd us all to go; They've took the bread clean out on oor mooths, aye, every mother and maid, An all for to pleasure the menfolk, as wants to steal our trade! Well, if it's hard an mucky, who knows that better nor me? But I liked it, an it was my living - an so it had to be. Surely, a wench can choose her work!"

'Boompin Nell', 1887

THIS book is an attempt to rediscover the history of women colliery workers in Britain. They were the 'pit-brow lasses' - surface workers doing hard, manual jobs.

Those jobs varied from pit to pit, but generally included unloading trams or tubs of coal from the cage; moving trams and railway wagons around the pit-top; unloading coal onto sorting belts; picking out muck and dirt from the coal; and trimming or levelling down the coal in the wagons.

One third of the pit-brow women worked in the Wigan area, though they could be found in Scotland, the North East, Wales and Staffordshire.

Many of them were the daughters and grand-daughters of women miners who had worked in the pits until 1842. In that year the Mines and Collieries Act excluded them from underground work along with young children.

The British middle class was shocked rigid when it was

Martin Barclay reviews Angela John's new book, 'By the Sweat of Their Brow: Women Workers at Victorian Coal Mines' (Routledge and Kegan Paul, £4.95)

revealed that not only children but women worked underground. In fact women had worked in coal mines for centuries - wives and daughters helped husbands and brothers in the shallow mines and levels.

By 1841 there were probably five or six thousand women and girls working in the pits and they provided a vital part of the family income. They were generally employed in hauling trams of coal from the face and also winding them up the shaft.

What was different by the 1840s was the level of exploitation of women workers. As the demand for coal increased so they were driven to work harder. 120 lb might be carried on a single journey with up to 24 journeys in a shift.

But what really got up Victorian noses was not that they had to work so hard - it was that these women were failing to live up to the 'Dresden China' image of the typical housewife.

In the heat they worked half-dressed. Worst of all, some wore trousers! Some drew the tubs with a leather belt or rope around the waist or shoulder. A connecting chain passed between the legs and hooked on to the tub.

These partly-clad men and women working alongside each other gave rise to lurid

tales of debauchery and incest - mostly from male journalists who had never been near a pit in their lives.

Those who did visit the pits compared the subterranean surroundings to hell or to 'dismal dungeons'. The colliers who worked there were described as a wild and violent race.

The women themselves complained about the long hours and harsh conditions, but the middle class reformers preferred to ban them from underground work rather than shorten the working day.

Even this didn't work - in the whole of the nineteenth century only one man was appointed to enforce the law:

"He not only never went underground, but he always gave notice of an impending colliery visit." (p.55).

Hundreds of women continued to work underground long after the Act was passed.

The attitude of male trade unionists was predictable. The Chartist newspaper, the Northern Star urged:

"Keep them at home to look after their families; decrease the pressure on the labour market and there is then some chance of a higher rate of wages being enforced." (p.57)

The Miners' Advocate newspaper put the same argument. But, as Angela

John argues, this attitude did not come from the same source as middle-class attitudes. It came from the popular idea that "a working man should earn a family wage, enough to keep his wife and children."

Even so, the results were much the same - women miners were pushed out from underground. There were exceptions, especially in the Wigan area, where some miners defended the women's right to work underground.

Reformers

The sound and the fury quickly died away - until the 1880s. Once again the middle class reformers turned to the 'pit brow lasses' as a worthy cause. But this time, the main argument came from the mining unions.

Both Alexander MacDonald and Thomas Burt of the National Miners Unions campaigned for men to replace women at the pit-head - the last remaining mining job where women could be found.

Even the more militant Amalgamated Association of Miners joined in. The women were doing the work at half the rate for men and the unions wanted them out.

The bare-faced cheek of this can be seen from the fact that these unions banned women from membership and refused to fight for higher wages and better conditions for them.

Once again they argued that a woman's place was in the house, making the old



Disaster at the Troedyrhiw Colliery, 1877. Scene at the pithead.

man's dinner. They chose to ignore the double shift done by working women when they came home to the housework and cooking.

This time though, the women were not without supporters, even if they did form an unholy alliance.

Middle class campaigners for women's right to vote saw clearly that if women were excluded from pit work they would soon be excluded from other work and pushed back to the kitchen sink. It would have been even harder to get the vote in those circumstances.

Amazons

Other allies were patronising middle-class men like AJ Munby, who had interviewed and written about pit women over forty years. Munby idealised pit-women as strong, healthy Amazons, compared to pale, weedy mill girls!

A few Tory MPs also supported the pit women - they were also coalowners who were in favour of the 'right' of women to work at half a man's wage.

There were also honourable exceptions in the labour movement. Stephen Walsh, for example, who became Vice-President of the Miners Federation, campaigned for them. He married Ann Adamson, a pit-brow girl from Ashton. Miners in Tredegar, South Wales, also supported their right to work.

Eventually the attempt to exclude the women failed in 1887. Ironically the number of pit-brow women increased in the years afterwards, especially in World War One.

Their numbers rose from 6,500 in 1914 to 11,300 in 1918. By then their cause was firmly linked to the suffragette movement. In 1911 21 pit-brow women were present

on the platform in Wigan Co-op Hall underneath the slogans 'We claim the right to sell our labour even as our brothers' and 'Working women need to vote in order to protect themselves in the industrial world'.

The Lancashire and Cheshire Miners Federation had even agreed to take women as members, though they still weren't paid as much as the men working alongside them.

It was eventually the development of power-operated machinery and gravity washing methods that put paid to women in the pits. The pit closures in the 1960s dealt the final blow and the last two women surface workers were made redundant in 1972, 130 years after they had been banned from underground.

They were helped towards extinction by the NUM which did a deal with the NCB in 1953 to replace retiring women with disabled underground workers. Wherever possible the women were pushed into canteen, cleaning or switchboard work.

Angela John's book is written from an academic standpoint, but it's still quite readable. The drawback is the price - so it's best to order it from a public library. What she has done is to show that mining wasn't always a man-only industry.

We no longer have to look to the USA or the USSR for examples of a woman's right to work in the pits - it's in our own history.

Her book leaves you with the impression that if the women in mining communities today had the right to work alongside their menfolk, MacGregor would not have had to wait until 1984 for his downfall.



'Completely changed'

Ann Jones from Hirwaun Support Group, spoke to Mary Ireson.

How did you get going?

We were the first group in the valley to get food parcels going. We first met together as a support group, men and women. We then met the Cardiff support group and decided to set up a Women

Against Pit Closures group.

The area meetings were then organised and we got together with other women from all over the coalfield. Because it's so difficult to travel around the field, we are having meetings in different areas. The next one is in Ammanford which is 60 miles from here.

How have you been active

in the strike?

We've been all over the country, speaking and picketing. We don't want to be on food parcels for ever. Men and women have got to fight together to win the strike.

How's the feeling among the women about the strike?

People are more adamant than ever to stay out. We'll be out one week longer than

the NCB!

It's completely changed us. I never used to think about what went on outside my own little house. I never read newspapers. Now I'm really interested in politics, CND and everything. I think the most important thing is to get women onto the picket lines. Maggie is out to get the NUM but we'll fight her every inch of the way.

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The Tories can be defeated!

FROM the beginning of the miners' strike in March, when it was confined to Yorkshire and Scotland, it was clear that the Tory government saw it as make or break contest with the whole labour movement.

They had planned for this strike.

MacGregor deliberately sparked it with the sudden announcement of the pit closure programme that the Coal Board had spent the last three years denying existed. They moved immediately to implement their plans. Brutal, heavy, saturation-level policing was central to these plans.

Police-state type operations to prevent miners leaving their own areas to picket was a feature of the strike from the beginning. Picketing in Notts did nevertheless bring out a layer of working miners. But the police and the hesitant area leadership helped guarantee that a majority of the Notts miners did not join the strike. A hard core of resolute scabs in the Notts coalfields was consolidated.

The issue of the ballot was a test for the NUM leadership. Escalation of the strike through area action and picketing out was — in the circumstances — clearly a better way to mobilise the NUM membership than the calling of a national ballot. The NUM leaders passed that test. Then they used the opportunity of the delegate conference in mid-April to assume control of

Clive Bradley sums up the story of 32 weeks on strike.

the strike. They made it an official national strike. That was the right decision and it placed Arthur Scargill in conflict with area leaderships — with Jack Taylor in Yorkshire over the continuation of picketing at Orgreave; and with Emryn Williams in South Wales over picketing out the steel plants.

For the first time in recent working class history a national union leadership proved determined to actually lead, and to win.

By April the strike was absolutely solid outside of a few areas. 80% of miners were out. The NCB was forced to the negotiating table. But the talks broke down because the NUM refused to accept that pits could be closed on "economic" grounds.

The NUM took its stand four square on the principle that social and human criteria were more important than economic ones. Thereby they issued a fundamental challenge to the vicious social philosophy of Thatcher and her government.

That challenge transformed the miners' strike from a fight for sectional interests into a fight for the entire working class.

The bosses' hue and cry about the ballot no doubt had some

effect on public opinion. But attempts to organise a back-to-work movement floundered and sank. By late August or early September they were a resounding failure.

But the strike had failed to halt all coal movements, to close all pits or to bring out the crucially important steel and power workers. Solidarity action by other workers now became the decisive question.

Important, though inadequate acts of solidarity did develop. The TGWU, the National Union of Seamen, and the rail unions agreed not to move coal. The transport unions agreed to blockade steel and on May 9 there was a successful Day of Action in Scotland.

The Tories, however, carefully bought off other workers to prevent simultaneous action by the miners and any other powerful union. So, for example, they bought off the railworkers.

But the first docks' strike threatened seriously to blow a hole in Tory strategy. Sparked by the miners' strike, the closing down of the docks put two of the most powerful sections of the working class in head-on confrontation with the government. There was talk of declaring a state of emergency.



'Women have organised themselves and are playing a full and equal part in the strike'. Marching in Birmingham. (Photo: Rick Matthews, IFL)

Tory fears of the prospects of such a united front — which posed a real possibility of escalation to general strike action — led them to find a quick solution. The dockers won an agreement from the employers not to break the National Dock Labour Scheme — an agreement that is not worth the paper it is written on: the port employers and the government are biding their time. If they beat the miners they will come back to settle accounts with the dockers.

The decision to return to work in the docks left the miners isolated again, and the government heaved a sigh of relief.

Liverpool City Council, too, was bought off by the Tories with a compromise agreement. Instead of confronting the government, refusing a compromise and linking up with the miners, the Council — in which

Militant is quite influential — demobilised the Liverpool labour movement and left the miners to fight on alone.

It was then that the first serious use of the Tory anti-union laws against the NUM took place in South Wales. At the request of a small haulage firm the courts seized the funds of the South Wales NUM.

The labour movement should have responded to this with all-out industrial action — but it did not. Meetings of left wing union leaders produced large amounts of rhetoric but led to no action.

The second docks' strike in September was weaker than the first, but stronger than the media tried to make out. Like the July strike, it was sparked by a dispute — at Hunterston — directly resulting from the miners' strike.

This time the TGWU leadership failed utterly to fight to make the links with the miners' strike. The final deal was not a good one for the dockers.

September

TUC Congress at the beginning of September was a major watershed. Congress delegates were overwhelmingly behind the miners. Congress pledged the TUC's financial support to the miners, undertook to refuse to handle coal or coke (or oil used as a substitute for them) across NUM picket lines.

This was grossly inadequate: the TUC should have declared a one-day general strike to prepare the ground for an all-out strike if the Tories refused to back down.

And not only was it grossly inadequate, but the union leaders have still to deliver what the TUC promised 6 weeks ago

Labour Party conference was — despite Neil Kinnock — solidly behind the miners. It refused to equate police violence with the self-defence of the pickets. The police were firmly condemned.

The miners' strike has, in eight months, led to big changes in the labour movement and raised many important issues.

Labour Left

The overall mood in the labour movement has changed enormously since this time last year. Layers of militants — and, notably, significant sections of the Labour left — who had been dispirited and demoralised by years of Tory successes and their re-election in 1983, have been revitalised and have thrown their weight behind the miners.

Support committees in many areas are quite strong and have raised significant amounts of money.

On the other side, the Tory government is shaken. The image of the Iron Lady who will never back down has been severely dented. It is clear that she may have to back down or get run over. One small indication of this is the government's current frantic attempt to appear 'concerned' about the question of unemployment.

They can't disguise their panic at the prospect that a NACODS strike will close the scab pits.

THERE has been a massive four-conserve coal stocks, since the strike and the government. According to a NACODS strike, coal stocks estimates, but it seems likely that be at the critical level by the end of the strike. It would need 50,000 lorry trucks to deliver what the TUC promised 6 weeks ago



NUM pickets at the Hunterston terminal (Photo: Rick Matthews, IFL)

s' strike



Solidarity

TUC Regional Days of Action

Scottish TUC - 9 May

More than 30,000 take part in marches and rallies. Strikes at Scott Lithgow, Kincaid shipyards, Rolls Royce, all rail services and Daily Record.

Yorkshire and Humberside - 21 May

Strikes in rail, docks, and bus services, and in local government. Emergency cover only in most hospitals.

Wales TUC - 12 June

Estimated 250,000 workers take action in Cardiff. Most hospitals out. Strikes in schools in West Glamorgan, engineers in Port Talbot, dockers at Barry and Cardiff, Hoover plant at Merthyr Tydfil, local government workers in Mid-Glamorgan.

NE TUC - 15 June

Shipyards workers walk out to join march in Newcastle. Emergency cover only in many hospitals. GMBATU workers stop work in almost 20 firms.

SERTUC - 27 June

50,000 march in London. Sun, Financial Times, and Daily Mirror do not appear. Half day strike at Ford Dagenham. Strikes of port workers, teachers, hospital and local government workers.

NW TUC - 13 July

20,000 at rally in Manchester. Thousands on strike, including railworkers, teachers, engineers, local council workers. 15,000 march in Liverpool.

National Unions donations to NUM hardship fund.

Union	Amount (£)
APEX	2,000
ASLEF	60,000
ASTMS	5,000
AUEW	3,000
AUEW-TASS	10,000
BFAWU	3,000
COHSE	10,000
CPSA	25,500
CSU	250
EEPTU	500
FBU	6,000
GMBATU	5,000

(plus £1,000 a day for food for duration)

IRSF	1,000
ISTC	20,000
NALGO	32,000
NGA	12,000
NUPE	50,000
NUS	5,500
POEU	4,000
SOGAT '82	12,500
STE	13,000
TGWU	30,000
TWU	750
UCW	10,000
USDAW	3,500

Source: Labour Research

(John Harris).

Among rank and file miners themselves there has been a tremendous growth of determination and militancy. In South Yorkshire there is — as a result of the heavy-handed police operation — something like a semi-surrectionary mood.

This has been the most radicalising strike in recent memory. Most obviously, harsh lessons about the real nature of the state have been learned. But miners have drawn other conclusions, too.

The attitude of many miners to the Brighton bombing — that the Tories partly deserved it, and that the Irish people have got a point — is one of the clearest examples.

But the single most important and potentially the most revolutionary change brought about by the miners' strike is the organisation of the women of the mining communities. The women have organised themselves and are playing a full and equal part in the strike. The determination to join the picket lines has shown the real strength of working class women. After this strike things will never again be the same in the mining communities.

Women

A real basis is being laid for the building of a working class women's movement. The forthcoming conference of Women

Against Pit Closures is a tremendous step in that direction.

The women's organisations have built links with the Greenham women who have contributed to the greater understanding amongst miners, and militants in the traditional labour movement generally, of the position of black people and of lesbians and gay men.

'Marginal'

Direct links with a whole series of struggles previously regarded as 'marginal' or freakish by the predominantly white, male working class have been made. And that is a permanent gain for the whole labour movement.

But the strike has suffered from serious weaknesses. The single most dangerous of these is the appalling feebleness of the trade union leaders, with the magnificent exception of the national leadership of the NUM.

Limited solidarity with the miners has been built. But sympathetic strike action has — so far — not been forthcoming. It is this that could quickly tip the scales against the Tories.

TUC Congress did not even want to discuss the motion from FTAT calling for a 24 hour general strike. Days of action have been kept to a regional level, minimising their effect.

At crucial moments — the docks' strikes, the rail unions'

pay claims — deals have been accepted that have taken other unions out of the fight.

There were loud protests by left wing union leaders about the sequestration of South Wales NUM funds but no action.

The Labour Party leaders, too, have miserably failed to fight for the class they are supposed to represent. Kinnock and Orme are more concerned with securing a compromise than in leading a fight. And Kinnock's equivocation on the question of 'violence' is now notorious.

There is no doubt that the strength of rank and file organisation is less now than it was in 1972 and 1974. Orgreave was not Salfley.

Ranks

In Notts, rank and file organisation is very strong, and effectively controls the strike. But outside of one or two other areas, it seems that rank and file organisation in the rest of the country has not been as successful.

The main weakness of the NUM leadership has been a refusal to push the idea of solidarity strike action (for example at the TUC) and its willingness to negotiate in private with the Coal Board. But there is no doubt that the NUM leaders — who have stood firm against all the court decisions — are the most militant trade union leaders in Britain right now and they are a shining example to the labour movement and stand out in damning contrast to the other union leaders.

Right now the prospects for success remain extremely good. The Tories, despite their bluster, are on the defensive, as the withdrawal of MacGregor from the front line indicates. They can be beaten.



South Wales miners occupy their HQ following a £50,000 court fine. (Photo: John Harris).

and increase in the use of oil as a substitute for coal stocks in order to be started. Nevertheless, the coal stocks situation is very bad for the NCB. Labour Research (October 1984), by the start of December, even without power stations will fall below the required amount. Figures are only without reductions in output — like the three-day week — coal stocks will be moved. By December, assuming an average capacity of 20 tonnes per week to make up the shortfall.

Letters

Sandinistas and diplomacy

WHILE I agree with Martin Thomas's assessment of the class nature of the Nicaraguan regime and believe that revolution rather than diplomacy is the only answer to Central America's problems, I strongly disagree with his evaluation of the Contadora process.

In condemning Nicaragua for signing the treaty which stipulates that no regime will export arms to another country, he seems to advocate military adventurism by the FSLN.

If the FSLN are not Marxist internationalists in the tradition of Lenin and Trotsky, this isn't because they don't export arms (the FMLN don't need them anyway) but because they have not attempted to build an international party.

Internationalists don't reject diplomacy with bourgeois states (what about the treaty the Bolsheviks signed with imperialist Germany in 1918?) They do attempt to build an international revolutionary organisation, like the early Communist International.

Crucial to the victory of the Salvadorean revolution is the action of workers in solidarity

with it around the world, especially workers blacking the movement of arms from America, Britain and states like Brazil.

This is true internationalism. As Marxists we recognise that revolution is not fomented by a few foreign backed fanatics but is the product of deep social contradictions. If we were to argue that the export of Nicaraguan arms to Salvadorean guerrillas would make a crucial difference then we would essentially be endorsing the US State Department's view of El Salvador.

By signing the treaty Nicaragua has called Reagan's bluff. The treaty calls for the withdrawal of all foreign advisors from Central America. While the FSLN regime is popularly based, the Salvadorean regime relies heavily on US support and the removal of US advisors would be a serious blow to it. If Reagan refuses to remove troops from Central America, as is likely, his hypocrisy will have been exposed.

Yours comradely,
PAUL MUDDLE
Manchester

Thanks SO!

THANK you for the very fine review of "Two Steps Back" in Socialist Organiser no. 198.

We are giving a 50% discount of the shop retail price to working class organisations if ten copies are bought and paid for within 30 days of receipt. We

would negotiate a bigger discount for a larger quantity.

Orders and enquiries should be sent to Socialist Platform at BCM Box 7646, London WC1N 3XX

Yours fraternally,
Ruth Jamieson

CND's nationalism

I object to some of Joy Hurcombe's comments in SO 199 about the US presence in Britain. While it is true that there are over 100 bases in Britain staffed by US troops, this clearly is not an "army of occupation". When were you last stopped at an American road block? When did you last see US tanks on British roads? There is no army of occupation.

Secondly, the slogan "No US bases" is inescapably nationalist. Of course I want to see US bases shut, but the point is that British bases serve roughly the same interests. The British Stations are not "better" than American ones; the working class has about as much control over "our" bases as we do over those of the United States.

We should demand the closure of all bases and not create an artificial divide.

Thirdly, it is not true to say, in the manner of so much CND propaganda, that "US rules UK". The American presence comes with the approval of our ruling class. We are not domin-

ated by America, the American state is simply more powerful.

It is very important for the labour movement to fight anti-Americanism. We must be internationalists and seek links with our allies, or potential allies in the US working class.

I saw the practical results of the "No US bases" slogan on Youth CND's Bases tour, which adopted this demand. Some comrades denied that this was the thin end of the nationalist wedge. It was ironic that two days later, outside Upper Heyford, the Socialist Action comrades took up the chant "Go Home, Yankies". No doubt they felt that this was a good Sandinista slogan and therefore (!) alright for Britain! — but it is not good enough for thought-out socialists. I am reminded of the Irish nationalist slogan "Brits out of Ireland". We use "troops out" simply because we don't want to see British people out of Ireland, we want troops out.

Comradely,
MARK OSBORN
York

Workers' cinema

Platform Films, the socialist film group which produced the *Miners Campaign Tapes*, are making a four part documentary film history of the British working class movement from 1919 to the present day. A major theme within the films will be the question of internationalism and the labour movement.

Platform are currently researching for interviewees to appear in the films.

All contacts will be welcome — suffragettes, Council of Action members, General Strike veterans, CPers, ILPers, Bevan-

ites, victimised trade unionists, ex-soldiers, anti-fascists, supporters of MacDonald and Gaitskill, ex-colonial residents in Britain, International Brigaders, Unemployed Workers Movement activists, labour movement activists of the left, right and centre, etc.

If you are one of the above or know of someone who is, and would like to help, please contact Platform Films, 13 Tankerton House, Tankerton Street, London WC1. Telephone 01-278 8394.

SHELLEY CHARLESWORTH

Labour's economic policy



Ditching Clause 4

PAULA WATSON
Westminster South CLP

BY its unequivocal support for the miners' strike the 1984 Labour Party conference committed itself wholeheartedly to the class struggle. It seems extremely odd, therefore, that the conference did not follow this up with an equally firm commitment to socialise the economy. Not only did conference fail to do this, but the resolutions on common ownership and workers' cooperatives, composites 10 and 48, were not even discussed.

Composite 48, recognising the failure of capitalist production for profit and of 'post-war nationalisation under management boards consisting predominantly of directors of capitalistic undertakings', called on the National Executive Committee to set up a working party of NEC and TUC members to produce detailed proposals to present to the 1985 conference on ways of implementing Clause 4 of the Party's constitution.

Nationalise

In particular it called for plans to nationalise the merchant and clearing banks, insurance companies, pension funds and capital markets, to bring industry into common ownership under workers' control and for the extension of municipal enterprises.

It stressed the need for consultation with local parties, trade unions and communities on the local implications of such plans.

Composite 10 urged the NEC to draw up plans for the conversion of private companies into workers' co-operatives.

Both these composites contain sensible practical and badly needed suggestions. The weakest part of the 1983 election manifesto was the section on the economy. The electorate, quite rightly, did not believe that a Labour government could cure unemployment by a massive reflation of the economy alone, without causing rapid inflation. This is inevitable in an economy still dominated by private capital, in which the most important factor is the relationship between investment and profit.

Mr Hattersley is being honest when he says that expansion without inflation in a mixed, i.e. market economy, can only be achieved with an incomes policy. The only way to avoid the twin evils of unemployment and inflation is through the rapid socialisation of the economy and

we must start now to plan the way in which this can be done.

The NEC appears to agree with at least part of this analysis. In its document, 'A Future that Works', which was debated and accepted by conference, it promises to undertake 'a major study of public and common ownership'. Fine. But in that case, if the NEC is serious, why did it not encourage conference to debate composites 10 and 48? These would have provided a framework within which the study could take place and a deadline for proposals be presented.

Could it be that the NEC and the Arrangements Committee were afraid that had composites 10 and 48 been put to conference these resolutions would have been passed, thereby committing the NEC to producing plans for making Clause 4 a reality? Maybe the NEC does not want guidance from conference that would limit its own freedom to rewrite party policy?

After all, a 'major study' can take years and years and years and in the end who knows what conclusions will be reached? A study undertaken without any

terms of reference or a deadline for producing proposals does not commit anyone to anything.

The NEC fooled conference with a clever conjuring trick on words. Their document is an example of the fine old political art of appearing to say one thing while meaning something quite different. In this case a promise to study common ownership is hiding a commitment to preserving the status quo.

Depressing

All this is particularly depressing at a time when the miners, with astonishing courage and self-sacrifice, are fighting for the principle that people and their needs should have precedence over the free play of capitalist market forces.

Urge comrades in the coming year to fight in the Constituency Labour Parties, in their unions and on their councils to undo the damage. We must insist that the Labour Party is committed to a rapid and complete socialisation of the economy and demand that the NEC lays detailed plans to this effect before the 1985 conference. Particularly, make sure that we have a practical programme for the nationalisation of the banks and financial institutions. Without control of capital all the rest of Labour's plans are so much scrap paper.

Science by Les Hearn

Why AIDS is not the 'Gay plague'

AIDS is continuing to spread and the statistics are frightening.

Out of some 6350 cases in the USA, about 3000 have died while 36 of the 81 cases in Britain have died.

And, depressingly, attempts to revitalise the immune defences of AIDS sufferers have not worked.

On the hopeful side, though, knowledge about AIDS is growing — and knowledge is power.

The virus that causes AIDS (HTLV-III or Human T-cell Leukaemia Virus-III) is becoming better known, and infection with it seems to be quite widespread.

Antibodies to HTLV-III have been detected in about 30% of healthy homosexual men in Germany while a large percentage of haemophiliacs also have the antibody. This means that infection with HTLV-III is some 30 to 50 times more common than AIDS.

Over 90% of those encounter-

ing the virus will therefore not develop AIDS. Research should therefore look at how these people are able to resist the virus as well as trying to produce a vaccine against it.

On the minus side, the virus seems to be mutating as it spreads (though not as much as

the 'flu virus) which may make vaccines less effective. The news that it can be transmitted via saliva is also worrying.

Virus

Taking a sanguine view though, it may be that AIDS virus becomes less harmful in

the future if only because the most vulnerable people will have died out.

Attention is still caught by talk of the "gay plague" etc., but in the other main centre of AIDS — Central Africa — it is a disease of heterosexual men and women, in the ratio of 60:40.

CEGB's acid rain evasions

THE Central Electricity Generating Board now has even less excuse for not tackling pollution that causes acid rain.

It has claimed that sulphur emissions are less important in causing acid rain than oxides of nitrogen (NOX). But power stations produce 45% of NOX in Britain, which turns into nitric acid in the wet.

Now a new technology has been devised to reduce NOX

emissions from coal-fired stations. Called "staged combustion", it consists in a two-stage burning of the fuel. The first stage is poor in oxygen, so the carbon in the fuel grabs all the oxygen, while the nitrogen is converted to nitrogen gas. In stage two, the carbon is completely burnt, providing the maximum energy, but the nitrogen gas, being a very inert substance, is unchanged.

The CEGB says it would cost £90 million to introduce staged combustion, and add £9 million to electricity bills because of reduced efficiency.

However, this is chicken feed compared with the cost of damage from acid rain and the £2000 million the government has spent to try and smash the coal miners.

Information: New Scientist.

Orwell's vision of a bleak future

By Edward Ellis

A film version of George Orwell's famous novel '1984' — published in 1949 and predicting a bleak, totalitarian future society — is showing at the Odeon Haymarket. It is written and directed by Michael Radford and produced by Simon Perry.

IT is not surprising that someone decided to make a film of George Orwell's classic novel in the year of its title. What is, perhaps surprising is that they have made a good job of it.

Orwell's Oceania is conjured up brilliantly: it is indeed a depressing place. The hysterical meetings of the party faithful; the permanent face of Big Brother everywhere; or the voices monotonously announcing mythical statistics — production increases, a growth in the proletarian literacy rate, a fall in the infant mortality rate; or announcing mythical or semi-mythical battles in the war with Eurasia or Eastasia as times change; the film captures well the omnipresence of the state.

The complete lack of any items of luxury; the disgusting food ("It looks like meat — but there's no meat in it at all!" rejoices a loyal party worker); the dereliction of the buildings in the blitzed city constantly lit up by bomb blasts; Radford and his film crew have managed to recreate Orwell's vision of an utterly devastated, utterly inhuman, semi-barbaric totalitarian hell-on-earth.

Working class

Without undue gore the film also captures the genuine horror of Orwell's vision and the hopelessness of Winston Smith's predicament. The physical and psychological torture of Smith after his capture by the Thought Police is handled with great skill. What could so easily have degenerated into cheap horror, is instead a tragedy: Smith's struggle against the breaking of his will is futile, pathetic.

John Hurt's performance as Winston Smith at this

point is remarkable. He is entirely broken physically; and as he emerges from the notorious room 101 we can believe that he is entirely broken spiritually. And Richard Burton gives a convincing portrayal of Smith's torturer.

What is particularly impressive about this production is that it has avoided glib high-tech impressions of the future. True to Orwell's intentions, the imagery — the technology, the appearance of people — is closer to the 1940s than it is to an imagined future.

Inhuman

And, especially notable — given that it could have been so easy to turn this into a Cold War film — the style, the uniforms, the youth movement — are more reminiscent of Nazi Germany than anything else.

Its major shortcoming is Orwell's fault — a profound pessimism. Watching from his window a proletarian woman singing, Winston comments "The future is hers". "If there is any hope," he writes in his diary, "it lies with the proles." But O'Brien, his tormentor, tells him that the proles will never rise up.

There is nothing in Orwell's book, or in this film which — commendably — sticks so religiously to Orwell's text, to contradict this.

But events in the Stalinist states since poor Orwell's time — like the magnificent uprising of the Polish workers who created Solidarnosc in 1980 — prove that no totalitarian system is all powerful.

We have good reason to believe that the Stalinist rulers in the Kremlin will find that out in the not too distant future.



Winston Smith and another victim of Big Brother on their way to Room 101

ENGELS described the US political system as dominated by "two great gangs of political speculators, who alternately take possession of the state power and exploit it by the most corrupt means..." The most successful of the gangsters — party bosses skilled in delivering the votes of the living and the dead in their city, ward or precinct — have become legendary figures.

Since World War 2, the US has seen the rise of a new kind of operator, the "election consultant", who specialises in putting together a package of Madison Avenue advertising techniques and image manipulation, press and media management, and "dirty tricks".

Now, these political gun-for-hire have added a new weapon to their armouries: computer based political information systems which monitor and record the fears, anxieties and prejudices of finely-balanced samples of the electorate.

We are all familiar with newspaper polls — 24% would vote SDP, 64% oppose the miners' strike, and so on. But for the election consultants, such "horse race" polls are of little value. What they require is detailed knowledge about how the voters are responding to issues and personalities — and about changes in these responses — even before the election campaign begins. This knowledge enables them to measure the impact that their clients are making, and to advise them as to how best to improve that impact.

Most important, it allows them to identify which sections of the population are "solid", which are wavering, and which are not even worth trying for.

Telephone

These computer-based systems can reach startling levels of sophistication and complexity. PINS (Political Information Systems) on which Ronald Reagan's 1980 campaign was based, conducted constant telephone surveying of thousands of voters on their attitudes

Computerising the bosses fight against socialism



Gerry Ben-Noah reviews 'The Programming of the President: The Hidden Power of the Computer in World Politics Today' by Roland Perry, published by Aurum at £7.95.

to religious issues, their beliefs about their own personal prospects and their assessments of the strengths and weaknesses of the candidates.

Perry's book is an account of the world of the political programmers, and their involvement in Democratic and Republican campaigns since 1976.

It describes in detail the interactions between the candidates and the consultants. Thus we learn that Wirthlin, Reagan's favourite operator, is a Mormon, drinks only fruit juice and gets on well with Nancy; and that Patrick Caddell, the Democrats' programmer, tends to put on weight and tell dirty jokes.

If you want the "dramatic inside story", as the book-cover proclaims, this is the book for you.

Sometimes the details are fascinating; often they are plain boring. Even more unfortunate — despite this grinding attention to detail, we actually learn little about how the computer-based systems actually work. (A

single page extract from it, which appeared in the Sunday Times on April 29, contained all the useful information in the book). This is a shame, because it makes it easy to dismiss Perry's claims for the effectiveness of these systems as so much hype — as socialists are often keen to dismiss all opinion surveys as "fixed" by the capitalist media.

Moreover, the book concentrates on US politics, where questions of technique, image and personalities tend to obscure what we would consider the real politics. We learn a lot about how the Reagan campaign was run, but not much about why, or who paid for it.

This is not Perry's fault — the computer based systems have hardly been used in Britain as yet — but it does make for an overwhelming emphasis on the nuts and bolts of campaigns, with little about what they are fought for.

There is only one chapter on Britain, which describes how the Tories made use of the new

technology both in their campaign against CND (a special computerised direct mail unit known as DS19 was set up in the Ministry of Defence) and in their election campaign of 1983.

For me, this was the most interesting part of the book. It showed how the techniques developed in America — the use of image-marketing skills and opinion research, and the coordinated recombination of the political "audience" — could really work to marginalise socialist politics.

Batons

And Perry's book is invaluable in one respect: it illustrates that, in a developed capitalist democracy, the apparatus of class domination does not consist of police batons alone. A revolutionary socialism which fails to recognise this, and which refuses to recognise that the political strategy of the bourgeoisie is also the subject of a continuous transformation, is doomed to become as irrelevant tomorrow as the Jacobins are today.

A response is needed; but a response which merely seeks to improve the marketing and organisation of "our side" will not halt this process — it will accelerate it. A slickly-packaged, image-conscious Labour Party which seeks only to improve its "market share" and its brand profile will lead to the elimination, not the victory, of socialism.

Conference to defend the levy

A MAJOR conference of labour movement activists will be held on Saturday December 1 in Central Hall, Westminster, to fight the Tory government's attack on union political funds.

The conference is being organised by the left wing Party pressure group, the Labour Co-ordinating Committee, and will be addressed by Ron Todd, Ken Livingstone, Tom Sawyer and Robin Cook MP.

It is intended to prepare a campaign to resist Section 3 of the 1984 Trade Union Act under which union political funds and affiliation to Labour will be made illegal if unions have not won a membership vote in favour by March 1986.

Already, national union officials have agreed to set up a central co-ordinating unit to plan a campaign jointly with Labour's National Executive.

But the Labour Co-ordinating Committee Vice-Chair, Peter Hain, said that this should be complemented by campaigning at workplace and neighbourhood level. "The conference will discuss how best to do this," he said, "We are hoping for delegates from all over the country."

Delegates from local Labour Parties and trade unions are invited to register (£3 each) from the Labour Co-ordinating Committee, 9 Poland Street, London W1V 3DG, phone 01-439 3749.



Chilwell Mass Trespass, July 1984. (Photo: Andrew Ward, Report)

Scrapping the Bomb

How can we get rid of the bomb?
We need a government that will scrap it.

There are real problems with that though. The Labour Party — the existing real alternative to the Tories — has a commitment to unilateral nuclear disarmament — but it is a commitment the Labour leaders are always fudging.

Only a political infant would rely on them to carry out that commitment.

And this year's Labour Party conference maintained its commitment to NATO — as if scrapping the bomb was possible whilst remaining in NATO!

In reality, the bosses and the military chiefs in Britain and the US would fight very hard to stop Britain from disarming.

Only a government prepared to fight them would be capable of carrying through its policy. And that would have to be a government based upon working class rank-and-file organisations and relying on the strength of working class action.

Shouldn't we just focus on direct action, then?

We obviously do need to start now with demonstrations, peace camps, action like that of the Greenham women. And we need political strikes against the bomb — and more action like that of the Rolls Royce workers who blacked parts for Trident.

But only enormous mass action of general strike proportions could hope to actually defeat the centralised state machine. But 'general strike to scrap the bomb' is not a very 'plausible' slogan. And if the

Judith Bonner (a member of CND council, writing in a personal capacity) looks at some questions

labour movement had the degree of self-consciousness, confidence and strength to call a general strike over such an issue, it would be strong enough to just get on with the job of seizing power completely.

We need to combine direct action with a political fight in the labour movement, and particularly in the Labour Party, to change its policies and change its way of operating so that the working class is able to take on capital.

But do we really need to get rid of capitalism in order to scrap the bomb? What about countries like Norway which are still capitalist, still in NATO, and don't have nuclear weapons?

Countries like Norway are, in military terms, small-fry for NATO compared to the might of imperialist Britain. It's only because the more powerful NATO countries are jam-packed with nuclear weapons that the less powerful countries can get by without them.

Britain is probably the strongest military power in the West apart from the US. Disarmament by Britain would threaten to break up the whole power structure of NATO.

Of course, it is possible for a government to disarm without having first overthrown capital-

ism. But in order to defeat the resistance to such a measure from the ruling class and from NATO's armies it would need to go on to challenge their power, and overthrow their system.

A non-nuclear NATO — as advocated by the Labour Party — is a non-starter. It is not accidental that NATO has nuclear weapons! The nuclear 'defence' system (and for NATO, 'first strike' policies and a whole series of strategies to secure victory in 'theatre nuclear warfare') is central to NATO, to its whole policy of defending imperialist interests.

Insofar as it is prepared to de-prioritise nuclear weapons, it wants to replace them with new 'conventional' weapons that are just as destructive. The image of a peaceful NATO is a myth: its whole purpose is to defend capitalism — and that always means violence, and where necessary war.

NATO forces threatened to intervene in Portugal to undo the Revolution in 1975. And in Turkey, a member of NATO, a brutal military dictatorship was installed in 1980 to crush the working class.

But we will still need some sort of weapons to defend ourselves, won't we? Surely we need to call for conventional defence as a realistic alternative to the bomb?

First of all who is this 'we'? Right now defence is defence of the bosses and their system by their own military machine — a machine that can be turned against the working class and is now, for example, poised for use in the miners' strike.

And who are we defending ourselves against? The conventional forces of the British army have been continuously at war since 1945 — defending British imperialism against liberation struggles.

Many of its commanders see the army's main future role as 'counter-insurgency' — defending the British state against rebellion in this country. And former army chief Michael Carver has admitted that 'some

fairly senior officers' were talking about a military takeover in 1974.

We would need defence if a government scrapped the bomb: defence against the army; against our own bosses and their state forces.

'Realistically' we would have to organise some sort of labour movement/community militias — against the present state, the basis for our own kind of workers' state.

When the bosses — or the Labour leaders — talk about 'defence', they mean the defence of their interests, not the interests of ordinary workers. And there is, as we have seen, nothing 'defensive' or 'peaceful' in what they do to protect their interests.

But don't we need to have some defence against, for example, the USSR?

There is much more to be afraid of from the British ruling class and army and their allies in NATO than there is from the USSR. In NATO we have real oppression now, not a hypothetical oppressor in the future.

And the Soviet bureaucrats are far too busy oppressing their own working class and helping their stooges in countries like Poland, to risk taking on the working class of Western Europe as well.

But in the event of any invasion of Britain that threatened the lives or liberties of workers — be it from the USSR or the US — we would need to rely on our own strength to defend ourselves. Military forces tied to the ruling class would be no defence at all — we'd probably be fighting them too.

We would need a people's militia, democratically controlled by the labour movement and local communities and based on universal military training.

Isn't that conscription?

In the sense that a picket rota, or a closed shop is conscription — yes. But it's different from conscription to professional armies of strike-breakers and uniformed thugs. And it's different from proposals like Peter Tatchell's which advocate a 'citizens' army'. He proposes just reforming the existing state machine, to make it more democratic. What we need is to take on and defeat the existing state machine and to replace it with a new one.

Our history Workers' revolt in Brazil

Clive Bradley looks at the rebirth of independent working class politics in Brazil.

IN April 1980 the vicious military dictatorship in Brazil arrested 16 workers' leaders. The arrests provoked a wave of militant mass opposition.

The Brazilian workers' movement had lived through years of harsh repression since the military seized power in 1964. Industrial action was difficult to organise and very rare. Then in May 1978, a wave of strikes developed — especially in the industrial heartland around Sao Paulo. A new layer of militant rank and file leaders emerged, in opposition to the official trade union apparatus which is very closely tied in to the state.

Prominent among the new leaders is Luis Inacio da Silva, popularly known as 'Lula', who later went on to become the leader of Brazil's first real independent working class party, the Partido dos Trabalhadores (PT).

In the area around Sao Paulo there are a number of industrial districts, generally known as 'ABC' (Santo Andre, Sao Bernardo and Sao Caetano). This is the heart of Brazil's big car industry; and includes some 200,000 metalworkers.

The metalworkers, from whom Lula emerged as a new-type of leader in the mid-seventies, were at the forefront of the strike wave in 1978-9.

In 1980, the metalworkers embarked on a wage campaign. They demanded a real wage increase of 15% on top of automatic adjustments for inflation that had already been won. They also demanded recognition of shop stewards — i.e. of new unofficial rank and file structures — and 12 months' job security.

Illegal

On April 1, the workers struck, with solid support in ABC and another 80,000 in six other towns. Some of the official unions were forced to support the strike — although the right wing 'Communist' Party opposed it.

The strike was taken before a labour tribunal, but because of its strength and determination, the judges refused to declare it illegal (which it was under Brazilian law). But they did not concede the workers' demands, proposing a wage increase of 6-7% and ignoring the other demands.

The strikers turned down the judges' proposal. Huge mass meetings agreed to continue the action, and a wages committee with 400 representatives of workers from all the large companies was elected.

After two weeks of the strike, the tribunal reversed its decision and declared the strike illegal. A mass meeting of 60,000 metalworkers voted to continue the action and risk the inevitable confrontation with the security forces.

The army moved in to ABC to crush the strike. Lula and 15 other union leaders were arrested.

Popular resistance was colossal. A further mass meeting voted to continue the strike, adding the release of the arrested union leaders to their demands.

Organised solidarity networks sprang up. 480,000 tonnes of foodstuffs were collected for the strike, and the equivalent of US\$3.4 million was raised for the strike fund.

The army and various 'internal security' forces were unable to crush the workers. Further arrests were made.

An illegal rally of 120,000 in Sao Bernardo on May 1 proved impossible to suppress. And the police and the army were completely withdrawn from the town.

Eventually, hunger and lack of funds — despite the tremendous solidarity shown — forced the strikers back to work. In the short term they did not win their demands.

But they had proved to themselves what could be achieved if the working class dared to fight. The defeat was not a major one. Following the strike, and after Lula's eventual release, the PT was set up. And the new militant opposition has gone from strength to strength in the unions.

It is a brilliant and heroic example of how a serious fight, even if it does not win in the short term, can do an enormous amount to strengthen working class organisation and confidence, and shake up the labour movement in preparation for future victories.

The Partido dos Trabalhadores (PT), set up in 1980, is itself a clear indication of the development of the workers' movement beyond both limited trade union militancy and the traditional nationalist-Stalinist-populist framework that has dominated so many workers' movements in Latin America and elsewhere.

Membership grew rapidly in 1981, and now stands at something approaching half a million. It has regular meetings and discussions — the only party in Brazil to do so — and there is a big debate on the importance of the use of elections as a way to get over their ideas.

The PT stood candidates in the general election in November 1982 — including Lula in Sao Paulo — but suffered due to election rigging. They stood on an extremely radical programme, ranging from the overthrow of the dictatorship by general strike action, through to land reform, inflation-protected wage increases, a shorter working week, nationalisation of the financial institutions, workers' control, and equal rights for the black and Indian population, gays and women. It also called for international solidarity, including with the Polish workers.

It is sharply opposed by the Communist Party (PCB) who have lined up with the old trade union hierarchy against the new militant workers.





Lula, leader of the Workers Party

DEMONSTRATE

Oct 27

National demonstration in Barrow-in-Furness (Cumbria). Assemble: Trident Dock, 1 p.m.

TU CND

Trade Union CND day-of-action, Wednesday October 24. Workers are urged to "leaflet their place of work, organise lunchtime meetings, and initiate symbolic and token protests at work."

Pay battles Comeback for car militancy

By Jim Denham

MIDLAND car workers could be going into battle again after years of defeat and betrayal.

28,000 Austin Rover workers are holding mass meetings to discuss their response to the company's pay offer — 9.4% over two years plus very minimal improvements in conditions. The claim is for £22 across the board over 12 months, plus extensive improvements in lay-off pay, sick pay and bonus scheme.

The company's offer would be worth only £5 a week in new money for a grade 3 track worker.

The company's miserly offer has angered the workers. Over the last six years they have seen their numbers halved and their earning power slashed, while productivity has shot up (by 130% at Longbridge, for instance) and the company has moved dramatically into profit.

In 1982 when the company last negotiated a pay rise, it lost £101 million. In the first six months of this year, it made an operating profit of £300,000.

As one Longbridge steward told us:

Viability

"The viability of the company shouldn't affect the willingness of the rank and file to fight, in my opinion. But, inevitably, it does. The members feel that they have sacrificed so much in terms of wages, conditions and down-right self-respect in the years when Edwardes was threatening to close the whole shebang every other week.

"Now we want to get our own back, and we feel confident enough to do it, given the new profitable situation."

Senior stewards representing all Austin Rover plants met at Coventry last Tuesday and voted to recommend rejection of the company's offer to mass meetings, and to seek a mandate for "action".

However, some union officials clearly want to stall any strike, in the hope of squeezing a little more out of the company in continued negotiations. AUEW Midland organiser, Bill Jordan, for

instance, has told the press "We are not convinced that the company has yet begun to negotiate. We are fairly sure the company can make significant improvements on its original offer."

Rank and file activists, however, are calling for an all-out strike from the settlement date of November 1.

They think it unlikely that the company will offer any worthwhile improvement in its offer as a result of further negotiations, and point to Longbridge management's withdrawal of facilities from Colin Willets, a long-standing AUEW senior steward and works committee member, as an example of management's determination to continue with the Edwardes style hard line.

It is clear that only an all-out strike will secure the full £22 claim.

Jaguar

Meanwhile, the 7,000 hourly paid workers at Jaguar are also meeting to discuss action over their £25 across the board pay claim. Jaguar's final offer is a two-year package deal, worth only around 7% per year in new money — much of the highly publicised 21% offer is in fact bonus money already being earned.

The fact that the company is now highly profitable has boosted the workforce's confidence and stewards from both the Jaguar plants in Coventry are "optimistic" about the prospects for a strike.

In 1983 Jaguars made £55 million and in the first six months of this year, the operating profit was £40 million.

Although the Vauxhall strike appears to have ended Ford workers have rejected their company's pay offer and the prospect of three major groups of car workers coming out alongside the miners is now a real possibility.

Militants at Longbridge have outlined the kind of tactics that will be needed to win:

*Stewards to organise picketing rotas now.

*Picket plants and stop movement of finished cars.

*Prepare for picketing of secondary targets, for instance, the car depots.

*Elect strike committees from the rank and file.

Sheffield

Helen Rigby reports

AT the end of last year the City Council tore up the new technology agreement that had been in operation for two years.

Then, on September 1, the Council imposed their document 'Responding to Change' which effectively took away the union's right to negotiate changes in working conditions.

The strike was sparked off when members of the rent control unit were suspended for refusing to use new technology. In doing this they were following union policy.

The next step was the suspension of area managers who refused to handle scab rent slips. The collectors then came out in support, followed by the cashiers. As a result, the

Council is getting no revenue from rent.

At the beginning we held a ballot to get people out on £22.50 strike pay and we won. But the branch officers wanted to secure us full NALGO strike pay, which is 60% of gross pay.

However, the result of this is that control of the dispute has been given to NALGO head office (a condition of receiving the 60% strike pay) and the full time officials are very wary indeed about escalating the action to cover the whole of Sheffield NALGO.

We also need to put pressure on the Council from the wider labour movement. So far, the District Labour Party has shown 'concern' about the dispute, rather than clear support for the workers.

Stewards conference against rate-capping

By Michael O'Sullivan

ABOUT two months ago the South East Region of the TUC held a briefing conference for full-timers and activists on rate capping attended by between 30 and 40 people. Not surprisingly we were treated to the miserable sight of the platform rubbing their hands and whining in despair. 'What can we do?' 'We can't get anyone interested' and so they moaned on.

Last Wednesday, 17th, — over 300 shop stewards from the London boroughs hit-listed for rate-capping by the Tories attended the launch rally of London Bridge, jointly organised with and chaired by the Democracy for London Campaign, at the Queen Elizabeth Hall, to talk about how we are going to defeat rate-capping.

Ken Livingstone and Ted Knight pledged total support to the struggle in hand and declared a willingness to do their part in defeating the government.

Jenny Weber, a member of the NUPE National Committee, hammered home the point that it was no good us talking in jargon to the workforce. The job of the stewards is to get our message over in everyday language which explains what the effect of rate-capping will be.

Unfortunately our speaker from Liverpool, though he raised some important issues on how to organise a campaign, was more intent on defending Militant's record in that city than on the task at hand.



'Working class opposition to rate-capping'

The keynote speeches were made by Tommy Douras who moved the London Bridge steering committee resolution and by a miner's wife, Janet Smith from a village near Swansea. Janet's speech earned her a standing ovation.

From the floor speakers continually emphasised the need to organise the shop floor — it is no good us being generals without an army.

They reported that there is a widespread distrust of Labour councils. On both these issues the resolution provides guidelines around which the membership can be mobilised and states unequivocally what our demands on the Labour councils

are.

The London Bridge rally was the first step in building a working class opposition to rate capping. For the first time in living memory local authority workers from different boroughs and the different unions have sat down and after debating the issues agreed on the way forward.

This unity will be a massive counter-weight to the inertia and backsliding of Labour councils, full time officials and the TUC.

It also provides a real rallying point for the shop floor who will see the unions united. It opens the door to an attempt to mobilise the tenants in the struggle against rate-capping.

The stewards' resolution

IN RESPONSE to rate-capping our policy is:

We pledge ourselves to fight against all cuts in jobs and services, and if any councillor, council officer, or any other agency attempts to carry out the government's policy of cuts in local government services we call for:

1. Total non-cooperation,
2. All-out strike action, sit-ins and occupations.
3. Solidarity action with any borough which is attacked in isolation.

4. The immediate approval of these measures from the official structures of the trade union movement.

We call on all rate-capped Labour councils to join with the unions by carrying out the following policy:

1. Not to make cuts in jobs and services and not to comply with rate-capping legislation.
2. To prepare a budget based on the needs of the ordinary people of the borough in order to highlight the difference between real needs and the government's

attack on the local communities.

3. Not to set a rate or raise the rate.
4. Not to raise council house rents.

While we recognise the shortcomings of present services, which have been starved of finance by central government, we call for maximum unity of all the organisations of ordinary working people, including trade unions, community groups, councils and tenants' associations, to unite behind this programme in defence of jobs, the communities of London, and services.

Organising to fight racism

By Lal Chanda

"WE have to become as organised as the miners are". This necessity underlies the conference held last Sunday by the East London Campaign Against Racist Attacks and Police Harassment. The theme of the conference was "Fighting Racism: Building a Mass Movement".

The campaign was formed by monitoring groups such as CAPA in Tower Hamlets, Newham Monitoring Project and Greenwich Action Group Against Racist Attacks, in response to increasing levels of racial violence in East London.

This has ranged from harassment of Turkish immigrants in Hackney, to the stabbing of Mukith Miah during his lunch hour in Tower Hamlets, to the well-publicised case of the Newham 7.

Hundreds of cases go unreported — dozens more are documented. For example, in Newham alone 200 cases so far this year.

labour movement bodies.

The conference also recognised the need to broaden its campaigning activities in the following fields:

- *Exposing home and neighbourhood watch schemes.
- *Pressurising councils to make anti-racist stands.
- *Organising black tenants.
- *Setting up community

defence squads in cases of immediate physical threats. Initially this would comprise existing activists.

*Dealing with problems in schools like attacks on black pupils and more generally how the curriculum can take into account anti-racist policies.

Working parties on some of the above issues were set up.

Glasgow Socialist Organiser Day School

Sunday November 4 from 10.30 am to 4.45 pm.

Sessions on: Miners' strike in Scotland, and Miners' Wives Support Committees; Building Socialist Organiser Alliance. Workshops on: Basic Marxist philosophy; Lenin and the Revolutionary Party; Trotsky and the Fourth International; Nuclear weapons/nuclear energy; Workers' struggles in East Europe; Ireland.

Speakers (in personal capacity) include: Hillel Ticktin, Critique Editorial Board, Martin Meteyard, Assistant Secretary, Scottish CND, and Jane Ashworth, Socialist Organiser Editorial Board.

Further details from: Stan Drake, 82 Dixon Avenue, Glasgow G4C.

On
line
cas

STEVE Battlemuch (SC) argues that to win the New castle/Washington dispute, CPSA members in the DHSS should cut off all giro payments to claimants.

This, it seems to me, is a narrow trade-unionist rather than socialist attitude.

I can understand why DHSS trade unionists want to strike just like any other trade unionist. But think about it.

Are CPSA members then going to try to make sure that no other trade unionist does their work? Are they going to organise pickets and so on to try to stop anyone giving any relief to claimants?

Counterproductive

That would be barbaric and counterproductive. In fact, when DHSS militants argue for all-out action, they do so on the unspoken assumption that members of another union — NALGO — will 'scab' and provide some cover through council social services departments.

This is no way to build unity between CPSA and NALGO and, of course, no way to build unity between employed and unemployed workers.

Either CPSA seriously wants to stop all relief to claimants — on the calculation that claimants' suffering will shift the Tories before it will shift the union? — or it doesn't. If it doesn't, then it should fight for union control over what relief is provided.

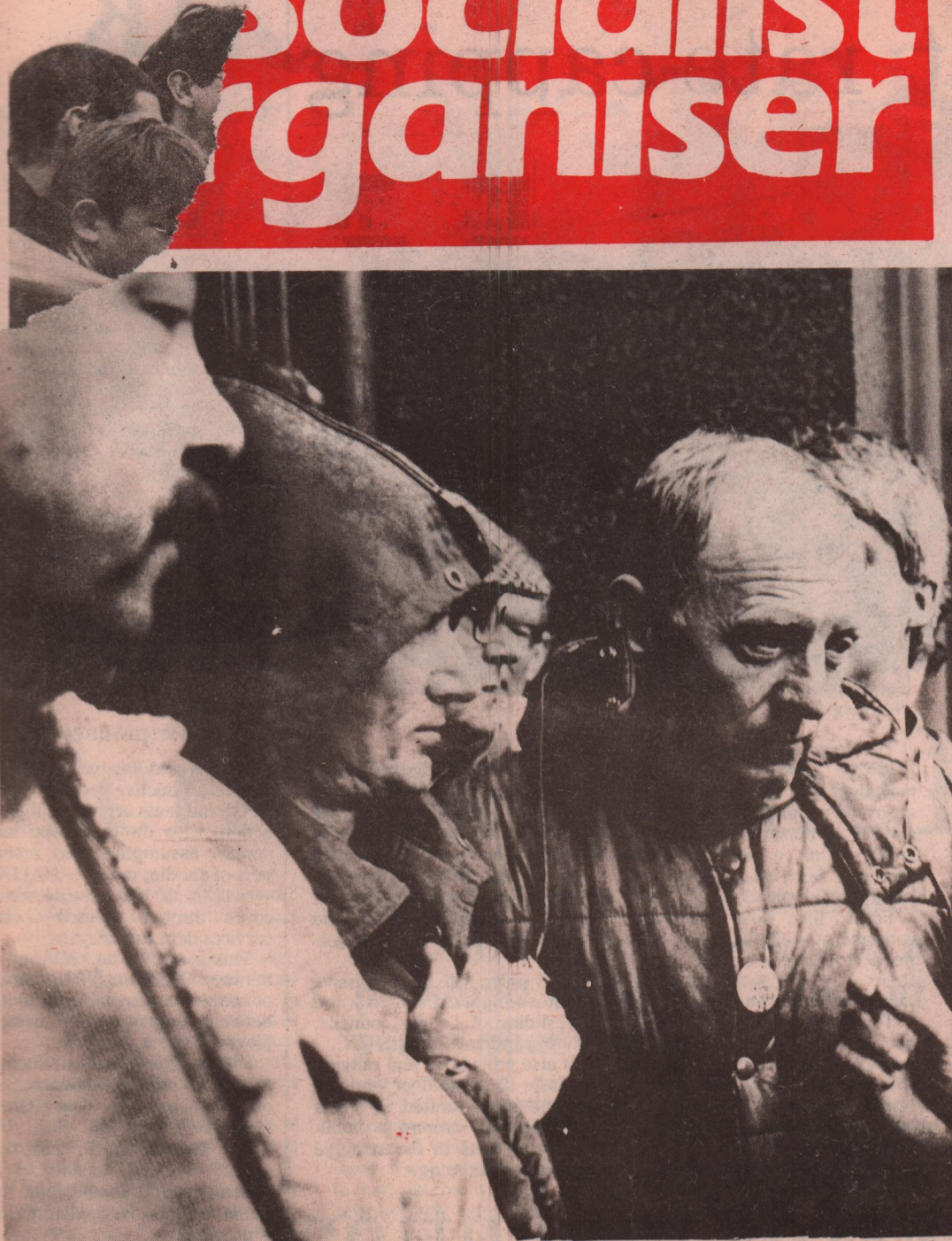
I don't know exactly what tactics DHSS workers could use to hit the government while minimising the effect on claimants. I cannot believe that there is no tactic worth trying.

Even to try would make a huge difference politically. If such a tactic resulted in CPSA members being suspended or locked out, then they could approach NALGO members and claimants on a completely different basis than if they simply walk out and drop NALGO members and claimants in the position of being 'civilian casualties' in the CPSA's battle.

MARTIN THOMAS, Islington

Socialist Organiser

Defend Nicaragua!



Picket line last Wednesday, 17th: 9000 GMBU members in the City Council struck to support the jailed 37. (Photo: John Smith, IFL)

THE MAIN capitalist opposition to the ruling Sandinistas in the forthcoming Nicaraguan elections — the Independent Liberal Party (PLI) — has pulled out of the contest set for November 3. The PLI claims that the elec-

tions will not be fairly conducted.

A representative of the Democratic Conservative Party has said that he expects his party to follow the PLI's lead.

The Sandinistas have plausibly suggested that there was CIA interference at the PLI's conference which made this decision. The PLI's leaders were in favour of staying in the election campaign; but the party voted — in a break with its traditional behaviour — against them.

A Sandinista source is quoted in the Guardian (October 23): "Votes were not only bought with CIA money, but delegates were threatened... The CIA [has already] admitted to the New York Times... that it pressurised [another conservative party] to abstain three months ago".

The PLI's decision is obviously intended to rob the elections of international credibility by depriving the Sandinistas of the chance to face and trounce the main legal opposition party.

The Sandinistas now say that they may hold a referendum "to ask the country if it wants an election at this stage".

Whatever happens, there is no doubt that the Sandinista government has overwhelming support among the Nicaraguan people and will win any election or referendum.

Right now they are under threat of invasion from the United States, who have backed the counter-revolutionary 'contras' waging war against them.

The labour movement should defend the Nicaraguan revolution. It is an immensely popular regime based on a mass mobilisation of the Nicaraguan people and the overthrow of the US-backed Somoza dictatorship in 1979.

It is not a socialist country. Private property is still intact — despite important nationalisations. The Sandinistas believe that a more drastic economic programme would alienate foreign support from the EEC, Mexico, etc. and make American invasion easier.

And the working class — which had no right to strike until last year — does not own and control the economy, and it does not rule. Socialists should not lose sight of our overall goals, and become blind to the fact that those goals have not been reached in Nicaragua and are very unlikely to be realised by the Sandinistas.

But we should give the Sandinistas every support against the threat of imperialist intervention.

Class war prisoner calls for support

IT WAS pretty horrible being in prison, but the attitude of the other prisoners was brilliant.

Everywhere we went, they shouted out, 'You're the lads from Lairds and we're with you'.

The conditions are disgusting. The food is horrible. We were locked up in the cells 22 or 23 hours a day. We ate in the cells, we went to the toilet in the cells, in a bucket in the corner. There's damp and there's shit on the walls.

But we did get hundreds of letters and messages of support. That was a real boost. And, as I've said, the majority of the other prisoners seemed to support us.



Unfortunately the attitude of our union leaders has not been so good.

I think the local and national officials failed abysmally to mobilise any support for us. They have got a national

Lol Duffy, secretary of the Lairds occupation committee and one of the 37 workers who recently completed a sentence in Walton Jail for 'contempt of court' spoke to Socialist Organiser.

policy of opposing enforced redundancies. They should have argued from day one of our sit-in — never mind day one of the jailing — for other people to come out in support.

There was a one-day token strike by GMBU council workers. That's good, as far as it goes, but it didn't achieve anything. The officials should have done more.

We have a real problem at the yard now, thanks to the lack of leadership both during our struggle and previously.

There was an unofficial mass meeting of GMBU members yesterday. According to various reports it was either unanimous or an overwhelming majority that they didn't want us reinstated at the yard.

An official mass meeting has been called outside the yard for Wednesday. The reason it hasn't been called inside the yard is because we are not allowed into the yard. But that means that the only people likely to attend the official mass meeting are the people who are out supporting us anyway.

Tyneside

We need a lot more people on the mass pickets outside the yard. The people there are just walking in and thinking that there's not a lot of support for us.

But the most important thing coming up is on Tyneside. 2000 redundancies have been announced at Swan Hunter, and British Shipbuilders have also said that two yards could be shut down.

The Tyne stewards have called a meeting for all ship-

yards a week on Thursday (November 1) to discuss closures and redundancies. So we've got to try to get our case brought up at that meeting and get the rest of the yards out against enforced redundancies.

Fund

OUR drive for an emergency £800 — to get our budget back in balance and enable us to start putting money aside again for the premises fund — is still going too slowly.

Thanks to: Peter Kenway £5, John Douglas £10, Nick Hayward £10, Mark Osborn £16.70 — but that makes only £41.70 last week, and £398.70 total so far towards the £800.

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

Miners

Continued from page 1

class.

Right now the labour movement must help the miners resist the attacks of Thatcher's judges.

If the courts get away with seizing the NUM's funds, then further fines and legal actions will follow, trying to bleed the miners dry.

There must be immediate solidarity action against the seizure. And workers must implement the TUC pledge not to cross miners' picket lines or use scab coal or substitutes.

Victory to the miners!

Horror in Ethiopia

Eight million people in Ethiopia today face death by starvation as the continuing drought threatens yet another catastrophe for these long-suffering people.

The worst affected areas are Eritrea and Tigre in northern Eritrea — both areas where a war of national liberation is being waged against the Ethiopian government.

Already one person is dying of starvation every 20 minutes and as villagers move in their thousands to the towns in the hope that the relief agencies might be able to provide food, the relief workers themselves are able to help only a small percentage.

And yet in Europe and Amer-

ica huge surpluses of food are stored, a fraction of which would be more than enough to solve the famine crisis in Ethiopia and the other African countries affected by the drought.

As soon as the crisis was publicised in Britain there was a tremendous response from ordinary people anxious to give something to stop people from starving.

In contrast, it was not until Wednesday that the government, which has been well aware of the developing crisis for some time, took any action at all. Then, Tory Foreign Minister Geoffrey Howe, responding to widespread

concern at the existence of huge food surpluses in the West, highlighted in a TV programme, promised to provide a further £5 million in aid to Ethiopia and to raise the question of aid with other EEC countries.

But this falls far short of what is needed and what could be provided tomorrow if the will was there. Howe also referred to the problems of getting aid to the area, given the military situation.

The Tories must not be allowed to use the civil war as an excuse for holding back on aid. Those eight million must not be allowed to die. If the will is there the supplies can be got through.

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