

Socialist Organiser

Miners' solidarity conference Dec 2

At Camden Town Hall, London NW1, 11.30 - 4.30.

Speakers include Arthur Scargill, Tony Benn, Betty Heathfield, Kay Sutcliffe, Paul Whetton.

The Conference will be divided between plenary sessions and workshops on: trade unions; Labour Party; Solidarity Committees; Women Against Pit Closures, Black Solidarity; Lesbian and Gay Solidarity; Youth; Students. There is also a workshop on the police and the dispute.

Requests for delegacies should be sent off as soon as possible. Almost 400 have already been received: write to Jane Stockton, 31 Cranwich Rd., London N16, or phone 01-981 3289.

Fee: £2 for first delegate, £1 for further delegates and for observers.

MINERS DEMAND SOLIDARITY

"We have to translate resolution into action. I am not going to appeal to the barons of the TUC — I want to ask the ordinary men and women of this country to give industrial action support to this union.

"How much longer can you stand to one side and see this union battered? We are asking you to come out now and stop scab coal being delivered into power stations."

That was Arthur Scargill's message to the rally in Birmingham (November 14). The same week, in Aberafan a symbolic noose was lowered in front of TUC general secretary Norman Willis.

He — and the rest of the 'TUC barons' — deserve it. After Willis' Kinnock-type speech, putting an equals sign over police thuggery and picket line self-defence, trade union leaders started to crawl out of the woodwork to tell the press how much they agree with him.

Now, as before, they want control

of the strike. Without that, they will do next to nothing to make sure the decisions of TUC Congress are implemented.

Power workers in Yorkshire and the London area have agreed not to accept new supplies of coal — making power cuts likely by January.

A meeting of transport and power unions at the TUC has taken place. They have reaffirmed the decisions of TUC Congress.

But Arthur Scargill is right. The power to implement these decisions lies with the rank and file.



INSIDE

Miners' strike —
Standing Firm
Pages 4-5

Labour Party
workplace
branches
Page 2

South African
workers fight
apartheid
Page 10

Poverty
and
exploitation
in the Third
World
Centre pages

Workplace meeting

By Nik Barstow

The Labour Party has finally called a national meeting for Labour Party Workplace Branches.

It will be on Saturday December 8 at 11 a.m. at the AUEW Hall in Birmingham. Branches — or groups planning to form branches — are entitled to send two delegates each.

To get more information

contact the National Agent, Labour Party, 150 Walworth Road, London SE17.

The late notice for the meeting and the fact that information was only sent out a few days ago will make it difficult for branches to organise. But a good turn-out and discussion of what precisely we want off the party will be vital if the officials aren't to be able to say "nobody is really interested".

Political funds

THE link between the miners' strike and the campaign to defend trade union freedom will be strengthened by the appearance on the platform of Anne Scargill at a London conference next Saturday week, December 1.

The conference, in Central Hall, Westminster, has been called by the Labour Co-ordinating Committee to plan rank and file involvement in next

year's campaign to prevent the 1984 Trade Union Act from breaking the historic links between the Labour party and the unions.

Also speaking will be Jean McCrindle, Treasurer of Women Against Pit Closures.

Registration is £3 to Labour Co-ordinating Committee, 9 Poland Street, London W1 3DG.

Student demo on 28th

By Jane Ashworth

ALL over the country student unions are taking action against government proposals to do away with the minimum grant and to levy tuition fees.

The National Union of Students has called for a national shut-down of all colleges on Wednesday, 21st, and the response has been tremendous. Some colleges will be occupying, and in some areas rallies and demonstrations are being organised.

The national demonstration in London on Wednesday week, the 28th, is expected to be the largest student mobilisation for over a decade.

NUS have now worked out the full implications of the cuts and estimate that over 183,000 students will be affected. As things stood before this

increase, over half the students who depend on parental contribution do not get the full amount. Now some of those students will have to find the extra for tuition fees themselves or be refused admission to college.

While the demonstrations and rallies are going ahead, a campaign for 'non-implementation' needs to be launched.

Labour controlled councils who pay the grant should refuse to implement the cut, and guarantee their students the minimum grant. College authorities should be forced into not collecting the tuition fees.

That campaign will have to be fought on two fronts — directly against the college to stop them charging the tuition fees; and inside the labour movement to commit the County Councils to carry on paying the minimum grant.

LSE court case?

AS the Attorney General increases the pressure on students unions to stop them giving money or food to the miners, the Labour Club at London School of Economics has won an election on that very issue.

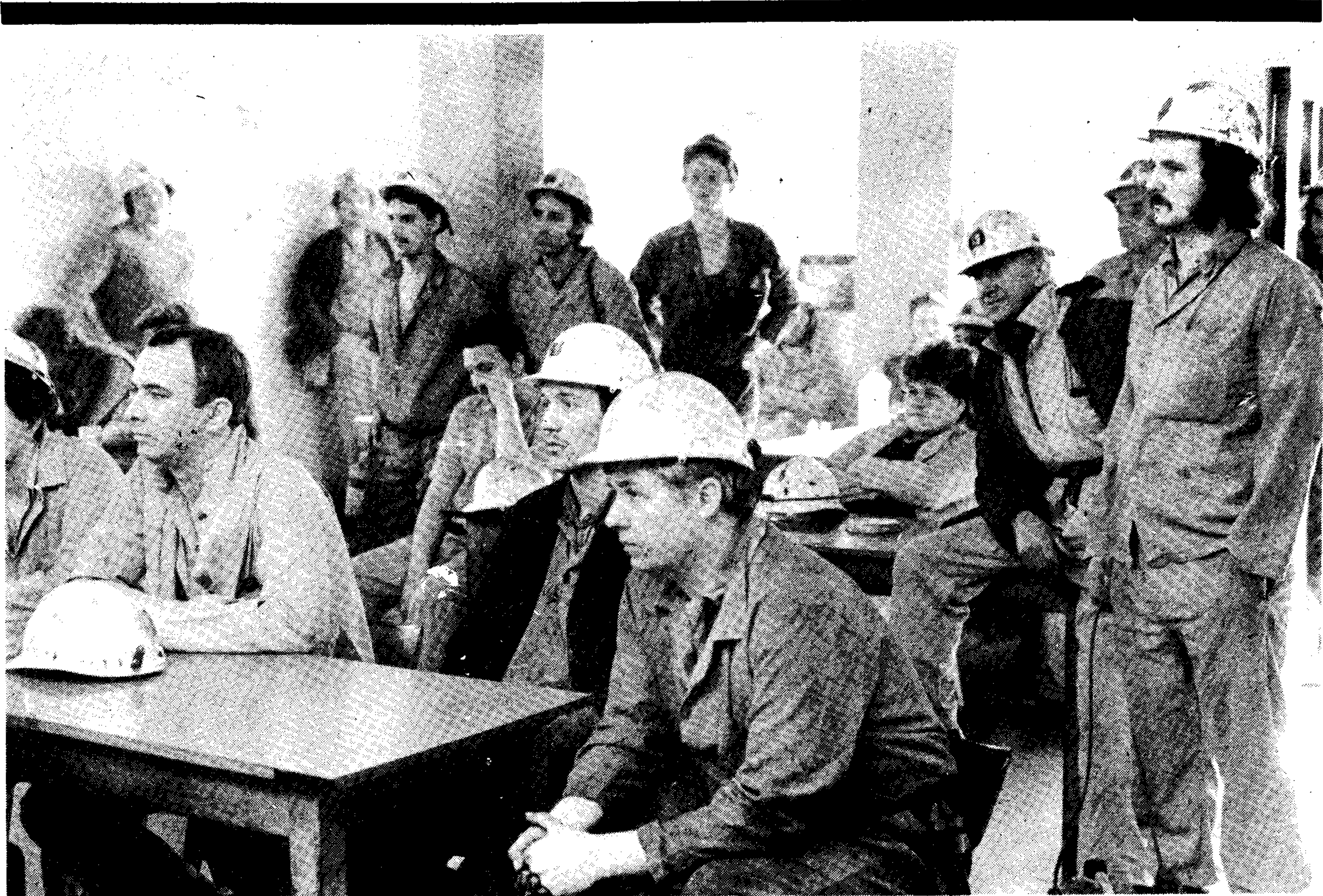
The student union general meeting decided to pay £4,000 to the miners, and the general secretary resigned. He refused to sign the cheque which would almost certainly have involved him in a court case.

The election for the new general secretary was won by the Labour Club. The union officers now have a clear mandate to pay over the money.

But still the treasurer is refus-



ing to sign. The money is earmarked for Ollerton and Bevercotes NUM and with Christmas coming up fast, they need it.



Discussion of socialist politics needs to be taken into the workplace. Photo: John Harris

The Labour Party in the workplace

Geoff Dixon describes the growth of Labour's workplace branches

often lack the confidence to take a leading political role at work. The traditional Labour Party structures don't encourage new members either.

A rapid development of new members is needed if workplace branches are to fulfill their potential.

Second, a workplace branch should be engaged in spreading the message of socialism to the workforce. Most branches run a newsletter for the whole workforce and hold open discussion meetings on every kind of topic. The formal "members only" meetings are recognised as largely irrelevant in the workplace.

Some formal meetings are needed but they are generally short, as workplace branches have no policy-making role within the existing structure, and little or no correspondence comes our way.

Two other practical functions are very important.

Crucial

Firstly, the defence of political objectives and the political levy in the trade unions. The next 18 months are crucial, and workplace branches are ideally placed to supplement the trade union campaigns and to draw in members as a result of those campaigns. Every trade union at national level should be encouraging party branches at work to give the party a higher profile, to encourage inter-union co-operation on political matters, to extend the message of socialism and to encourage political thought and debate at work.

This activity will do more than any other to put Labour on the offensive. The proposed rolling campaign of the TUC will turn the next 18 months into a grass roots General Election campaign leading up to Borough and Dis-

trict elections in 1986.

The results in the unions and in local elections will set the battleground for the General Election proper in 1987/8.

The Labour Party NEC and the General Council of the TUC must initiate a positive programme linking workplace branches and the political ballots. The existing workplace branches can and will provide any assistance based on practical experience.

Second, the longer term function of workplace branches will be to turn their attention to their industry or company and apply socialist principles to how Labour will organise the economy when we are in power.

Benefit

We will have the benefit of the collective view of the shop floor being brought to bear on solving the industrial problems of society. Factories, offices, hospitals, local government, nationalised and private industries will be analysed by socialists at the grass roots who can then support a Labour government in the implementation of a socialist economic strategy.

These plans will be local and within the experience of working people and will be something concrete and relevant to their lives.

These then are the "four pillars": recruitment, debate, campaigning and research. The lack of formalities aids these functions by sweeping away the need to become embroiled within the party bureaucracy.

At each stage workplace branches will need to enlist the Constituency Labour Parties and trade unions to propose and translate their efforts into policy. Workplace branches provide the bond between the two wings of the movement to

forge them into one fighting unit.

The next stage in the development of workplace branches is twofold. The NEC have now instructed Regional Offices to write to CLPs encouraging them to set up workplace branches in their area. The existing workplace branches have formed a Federation of Labour Party Workplace Branches to promote and encourage new branches based on experience.

Regional Conferences must debate this issue in 1985. Regional Executives should be required to set up sub-committees with co-opted members from existing workplace branches. Every Region should establish a systematic campaign with the trade unions to form as many branches as possible over the coming months.

The trade unions should also be debating the issue at all levels and encouraging new branches through trade union journals, branch meetings, conferences and shop stewards meetings.

The Federation of Labour Party Workplace Branches hopes to publish a pamphlet in the New Year and is actively engaged in placing the subject on the agenda for the whole Labour and trade union movement.

Conference

This is a tall order for a mere 100 branches, so we are inviting all socialists to help in this process by raising the issue for debate at all levels and as often as possible. The National Executive Committee have called a conference for all workplace branches on December 8 in Birmingham so there are signs that we are taken seriously now.

We can provide information and contacts for speakers as well as advice on setting up branches in workplaces.

Please write to: Geoff Dixon, 1 Pelham Court, 44 Hatherley Road, Sidcup, Kent or phone 01-302 7983.

Strategy

The problem lies in working out a continuing strategy to recruit, activate and maintain membership. Most branches are based on active trade unionists with political experience, and their leading trade union role often forces the Labour Party at work down the agenda.

The current climate, both economically and politically, is placing enormous burdens on shop stewards, convenors and branch secretaries, simply to defend their trade union on the industrial front. New members

Subscribe!

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

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

Name

Address

Please send me months' sub, I enclose £

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

The strike is still strong

By John Bloxam

We are now three weeks into the latest Coal Board-Government offensive, using a hard-faced refusal to negotiate plus the payment of accrued bonuses before Christmas to push miners into strike-breaking.

Thanks to the pressures of over eight months on strike, the offensive has had some success. But it is still a matter of limited bleeding rather than a cut at the jugular of the strike.

Significantly, some of the largest return-to-work figures have been on the edges of the Notts coalfield, where there has been large-scale scabbing throughout the strike. The Coal Board has not qualitatively shifted the balance between scab pits and striking pits on a national scale.

The point of the offensive was to break the strike — or to go a significant way towards that — and in that it has clearly failed. Even using the NCB's own figures, their campaign has scarcely dented the main strike-bound areas. The number working is still only 0.4% in South Wales and a claimed 3% in Yorkshire.

And it has begun to slow down. On Monday, 19th, they were claiming a record number of new starts — 2282 — but on Tuesday, 20th, the figure had slumped to 900.

One of the main ingredients in the latest offensive — the offer of accrued bonuses, etc., before Christmas — finishes by the end of the week. The Coal Board could possibly extend their deadline a second time, but to do so would undermine their present confident, arrogant face.

The NUM points out that the Coal Board's figures massively overstate the number scabbing — overall, the NUM puts the figure at around 51,000. 140,000 miners are solidly on strike.

One miner pointed out to socialist Organiser that TV pictures of coal on a conveyor belt, supposedly just mined by a colliery now working, had been in fact taken off a stockpile.

Closer look

Even in the individual pits where the NCB has had some success, a closer look reveals the continued strength of the NUM. At Ellington colliery (Northumberland), where on Sunday, 18th, branch secretary John Cunningham made a much-publicised announcement that he would be scabbing on Monday, less than 200 crossed the picket line.

At the two pits which come under the South Yorkshire NUM but are geographically in Nottinghamshire — Manton and Shireoaks — significant scabbing started last week.

About 300 have gone back at Manton, 400 at Shireoaks. But this is just 25% and 40% of the workforces.

The refusal of NACODS members at Manton last week to abide by branch decisions and respect picket lines, creates the possibility of coal produc-



Miners applauding Scargill at last week's Birmingham rally. Photo: Mark Salmon

"The NCB should realise that there is no flood back to work by the miners.

"The government's attempt to starve them back did not succeed. Then the plan to frighten them back by scare stories of lost seams and pits in danger failed as well.

"The latest scheme of bribery, which is particularly cruel with family pressure as Christmas approaches, is also not succeeding."

George Foulkes, Labour MP (Carrick, Tunmooch and Doon Valley)

tion there — but the state of the pit makes it unlikely for a number of weeks. At Shireoaks, the deputies have been respecting picket lines so far.

In other areas, the deputies are not crossing and underground production is still impossible. Indeed, an attempt by the NCB to force deputies to cross picket lines in Scotland last week came close to provoking a new clash with NACODS. Taken as a whole, most new scabs are not the coal-producing face-workers.

In fact, the value of the scabs to the NCB over the last three weeks has been for propaganda only.

Possibly, at a later date, they could facilitate an attempt to try to use and move coal stocks at strike-bound pits. At Kiveton Park it is reported that the 26 scabs are being trained to use the washeries at the pit, which the stock-piled coal will have to go through before it is useable in power stations.

With the rapid winding down and failure of the latest offensive, and the continued strength of the strike, the pressure will shift back to the NCB and the government.

With 'General Winter' now arrived, there are already reports of massively reduced coal stocks and action by work-

ers at power stations having an effect.

The POEU reports that generators have been bought in by British Telecom because of reduced power. 'Energy conservation' is the name given by the Generating Board to the reduction of power elsewhere.

A number of trade union leaders would clearly like to try to force the NUM into a sell-out — but they do not feel strong enough to make a move. TUC general secretary Norman Willis condemns pickets' violence, right-wingers Alan Tuffin and Tony Christopher say the NUM must make concessions — but the transport unions and major electricity supply unions are still officially giving support, and met on Monday, 19th, to coordinate solidarity action. Even Neil Kinnock felt forced to attend a miners' meeting in his own constituency to explain his disgraceful role.

The NUM Executive last Thursday decided to move in two directions — a series of pit village rallies up until Christmas, aimed to keep the strike strong; and approaches to organisations that have supported the strike. Among others,



Willis and Kinnock plant a tree for the Tolpuddle Martyrs. Breaking the law is fine as long as it's 150 years ago.

STEFANO CAGNONI (I/F/L)

the NUM is approaching the bishops — a move which some rank and file miners see as a sign of weakness.

But other strikers reckon that the NUM is right to use any backing it can get as long as that does not mean weakening the rank and file struggle — and the NUM leaders' main call has certainly been to the rank and file of other unions to take action.

The situation at Austin Rover underlines the urgency of that appeal.

The Tories are out to break the arms and legs of effective trade unionism. The open treachery of right-wing union leaders like the EETPU's Eric Hammond and the AUEW's Terry Duffy, and the inaction of supposed left-wingers like Moss Evans and Ron Todd of the TGWU, is allowing them to do that.

When the Tories deployed their anti-union laws against the Austin-Rover workers, the AUEW and EETPU leaders actively sided with the Tories — while the TGWU sat silent, saying no evil, hearing no evil, seeing no evil...taking no action.

They let the strike be sabotaged — and they will not necessarily have saved themselves from legal action.

Now — according to the well-informed Financial Times — "senior trade union leaders... feel the time may be approaching for the TUC to reconsider its blanket refusal to comply with the government's labour laws rather than constantly see union finances threatened by legal action".

Let the miners go down to defeat, and the 'New Realism' — open collaboration with the Tories — will be in full flower.

But the miners haven't gone down, and they aren't going down!

So the TUC leaders can't rush openly into the arms of the Tories. They can't avoid giving the rank and file a limited opening for action by verbal support for the NUM.

Potential

And despite the terrible defeat at Austin Rover, the potential for spreading the struggle is still there. Council workers in London are organising against the cuts as never before. Ford women workers are on strike, in a repeat of their historic dispute of 1967.

Talk of a general strike seems light-years away now. But that remains the logical response by the labour movement to the Tory offensive. The situation still has explosive potential. The arguments still need to be pushed. The political preparation for future crises still needs to be done.

Stand firm, fight for solidarity, and the miners will win!

"We'll go to the ranks"

Back the miners



Paul Whetton's strike diary

Paul Whetton is secretary of the Notts miners' rank and file strike committee, writing in a personal capacity.



KEN LIVINGSTONE coming up to the miners' welfare was quite a boost for us.

It was obvious that the police were prepared for him — they were so nice and so polite on the picket line.

But then Ken Livingstone addressed quite a crowd in the welfare. He spoke briefly, but it was very much to the point. When we asked for questions and comments at the end, there was only one, and that was a sound condemnation of Kinnock for refusing to address the rallies or to come down fair and square on the miners' side.

I've seen Kinnock has been claiming that he has supported the miners from day one. I suppose he may be correct in a certain sense. He has said, 'I support the miners'. But his actions have declared exactly the opposite.

I don't think the rope at the Aberafan rally was so much a noose meant for Norman Willis, as for the trade union leaders generally. Unless they pull their fingers out and come up with the promises that were made at the TUC conference, then the leadership of the TUC might as well go and hang themselves.

And we'll go to the rank and file. In fact, we're doing that already, even in power stations and places where we wouldn't expect 100 per cent support. The attempts are bearing fruit.

We've started picketing the power stations regularly in Notts, but it's too early as yet to give any definite results.

I think over the next week or two the Coal Board attempt to persuade the public that there is a mass return to work is going to be shown up for what it is.

I don't think a general strike will come before Christmas. But the state of the pound, and the balance of payments and so on, could well move into crisis. Big business is going to start to get the shakes.

Also, we're looking forward to the first snow. Let's see them shift coal when there's a couple of feet of snow on the ground.

I think possibly around Christmas time or the New Year it could all come together.

The Church of England has been called the Tory party at prayer. When they start coming forward, it just shows you how serious things have got.

But I would urge everybody not to tie great hopes to the Church coming across with anything. I'm not looking for any miracles.

Rallies and meetings in every pit village are very important now. The fat has been stripped off the strike, and all we've got is the hard core out. We ought to go out to show that we're not ashamed of being on strike. We're not apologising. We're out, and we're out till we win.

At the weekend I was down in London for a demonstration in Hackney. It was well-attended, and there was a speaker from the car workers.

Some people took exception to my remarks in the column last week about twinning.

At the start of the dispute we tried to dissuade people from twinning, because we saw problems that some pits were going to get well looked after and others weren't. But at the same time, twinning is important insofar as people actually meet people — people who would otherwise never have come together — are starting to do that, and I think that's the positive side of twinning.

It's also made sure that the finances to keep the dispute going are not affected by all the Christmas stuff being bandied about — plum puddings and turkeys. We can't put turkeys in petrol tanks to get people to the picket lines.

It is important that families get that sort of thing for Christmas, but it is vital that communities that at any other time have no common ground are coming together now. That's part of the class consciousness that's coming out of the dispute.

So I think twinning is important. But twinning and support work can go hand in hand.

I've heard that some of the new scabs have been getting into fights with the old scabs. That's an indication of the depth of feeling. Most of these scabs who have just gone in have literally been forced back and were quite aware that if the other scabs had come out in the first place the dispute might be over and won by now.

The fighting also points to the great difficulties we're going to have when we go back.

Coal stocks in the Notts coalfield have virtually gone now, and the only stuff they're taking out now is current production. Our information is that the current production is down by as much as a third.

But we haven't got accurate information on the stocks at the power stations.

WOMEN AGAINST PIT CLOSURES RALLY
In Cardiff, December 8
March from Cardiff Museum, Civic Centre, at noon to rally in Sophia Gardens. Speakers include Anne Scargill; speakers from Barking Hospital and Greenham Peace Camp also invited.
The event is primarily for women but not women-only

Back the miners



By Jim Kearns

DISCOUNTING the plain-clothes policemen masquerading as the Clydeside Anarchists, there was a turn-out of 150 pickets last Monday morning at the Killoch pit in Ayrshire to oppose any strike-breakers tempted back by the Coal Board's Christmas 'bonus'.

At first pickets outnumbered police and, as the first bus carrying scabs into the pit arrived, the police lines broke under pressure.

But the bus did not even slow down, despite the danger of hitting pickets.

Police reinforcements quickly arrived on the scene and soon police outnumbered the pickets by 5-1. While police cars escorted in the buses carrying scabs, rows of police hemmed in the pickets, who were unable to get through to the scabs a second time.

Some sixty scabs at most went into work. This is only a fraction of the 1,800 workforce in Killoch, the biggest pit in Ayrshire.

At the same time, though, only a small proportion of the strikers themselves had turned out for the picketing.

Pickets stressed that Killoch miners still out on strike — the overwhelming

Pickets: small isn't beautiful

majority — would be staying out until victory.

But the Coal Board's threat to sack anyone arrested on the picket lines during the dispute has clearly been a factor in limiting the mobilisation for the picket.

This could be countered by the NUM stressing more forcefully its position that there will be no return to work until all those sacked during the dispute are reinstated.

In addition support for the picket lines must be mobilised outside of the NUM as well.

But when Scottish NUM leader Eric Clarke was questioned on this point at a meeting of the Glasgow Miners' Support Committee, he opposed the idea on the grounds of the alleged danger of "the rent-a-mob crowd" and "agents-provocateurs" turning up.

Irrespective of the reticence of their leadership, many miners are already looking to the ranks of the labour movement to swell their picket lines. Activists should respond to their appeals, ignoring the "small is beautiful" picketing strategy of the Scottish NUM leadership.

NUPE protest at police

By Ellen Taylor

ROAD gritters in South Yorkshire are refusing to go out and grit because of police harassment. A NUPE union official said: "Our members are objecting to the imposition of a police state in South Yorkshire."

The drivers are repeatedly being stopped as they go about their normal work which often involves them going out very early in the morning to grit icy roads.

They objected very strongly to the suggestion that they should have identity pass cards.

Teams of road clearers will no longer respond to police calls for help after abusive treatment by police

when they were clearing up after pickets and police at Cortonwood.

Any requests for help must now come from a senior council official.

Bad feeling was exacerbated last week when police picked up and badly beat up a roadsweeper, close to retirement, and known throughout the community, leaving him with a broken collar bone and in a wrecked mental state.

With actions like this and the smashing up of miners' welfare, and rampages through quiet pit villages, the police have done a good job convincing even the sceptical and distantly involved, that a police state does exist in South Yorkshire.

What's your view of the strike now, after eight months?

I'm a bit concerned about the effect the returns to work are having on some of my colleagues. There are a lot of rumours going round — there's 20 going to go back here and 50 going to go back there — and it's panicking some of them.

But I'm not too worried. I think it will level out at the end of this week or the end of next week and we'll have a hard core still out.

We're on the edge of a circle that takes in all the pits where there has been a return to work by miners, but the numbers here have been surprisingly low. In the last eleven weeks there's been four letters from the Coal Board and a letter from the first group of seven to go back to work.

After all that effort they've managed to reach the grand total of 26 NUM members.

Those who are accepting the Coal Board's bribe haven't looked at it in the long term. They are just looking at the short-term gain, with Christmas approaching, as though one Christmas is worth everything you've been on strike for.

The rest of the membership are entitled to that money anyway.

When I went to talk to a chap who was going to go in, I told him that we'd get that money when we go back, and he said, yes, but you won't get it for Christmas.

We told our members at our last meeting that we would all have a better Christmas than last year, because of the community spirit that has been generated by the strike.

We have made a pledge that every child of a striking miner will get a substantial toy.

We've got hundreds of toys in now and we've got 1,000 children altogether to supply.

What sort of people are going back to work?

Well, it's the weak ones. None of them are people who attend union meetings or get involved with the union, though some of them would come into the union office every week with some minor complaint and expect and get the union to sort that complaint out.

None of them are face workers either. There are six electricians, and people who work on the pit top.

Three-quarters of them are near redundancy age and they've obviously gone in so that they can take their money and get out.

Often, the bulk of those going back in belong to COSA, they are pit top supervisors, but because COSA is affiliated to the NUM the Coal Board claims them as returning NUM members.

Unfortunately, the South Yorkshire Panel is just a talking shop, it hasn't got any power, except to caucus around an agreed policy and

Kiveton Park, South Yorkshire, is one of the places where the Coal Board and the police have applied the most intense pressure to get miners back to work. Albert Bowns from Kiveton Park NUM spoke to John Bloxam.

try to win support for it at the Yorkshire Area Council. So it hasn't been able to organise a response locally to the problems created by the Coal Board's attempts to bribe miners back to work.

It's left more up to the individual branches. We all stressed the importance of a good turn-out for the Sheffield rally, which was attended by over 5,000.

Each branch has tried to step up its communication with people, tried to talk to them.

Has the drift back had any effect on outside support?

I think it might do in the next week or so, but it hasn't done so yet.

For example, we went to an engineering firm in Sheffield because they had been collecting a £1 a week levy and they were worried that with people going back to work, they might have difficulty in maintaining it. He wanted us down to try and reinforce that support.

But ASLEF in South Yorkshire, where the ties have been very strong, are continuing to support us.

I was asked at the Sheffield AUEW meeting about our feelings towards our fellow workers who were going back after nine months and I told them that there was hatred for them in the pit villages.

The reaction from the bloke who put the question was that such a response was

wrong. After all, they had suffered hardship too, and it had got beyond them so they went back to work and there should be some compassion.

I had to explain that if these people had come to us, we could probably have alleviated that hardship. We've suffered hardship for nine months, and we are prepared to carry on suffering that hardship, but these people have played Judas. And there's hatred for them.

Is a general strike possible?

We talked earlier on in the strike about the desirability and possibility of a general strike. How do you see that now?

I think a general strike is less likely at the moment than it has been in the past. There's one glimmer of hope that might bring it about and that is if the government brings the troops in to move coal, which I believe they will do in the next two or three weeks.

If that happens, I hope it will regenerate the interest in

our strike and regenerate the support. It might be pie-in-the-sky but it's the only hope I can see of a general strike developing.

The pickets will confront the soldiers just as they have confronted the police. Just because it's the army it won't make any difference.

The whole media attack on Arthur Scargill is part of a plot to undermine his position. The government is concerned that the courts might have to jail the leadership of the NUM and so this attack on him could be to weaken his position, to isolate him within the wider union movement — we've seen attacks on him by TUC leaders like Basnett.

He's always been publicised as the bogeyman, but it's even worse now, likening him to leading IRA-type groups and now this Libyan incident, and there's a lot of trade union leaders who wouldn't care if he was jailed.

Do you have any idea how long it might be before the government uses troops to move coal. There is a view that they will try and use civilian convoys of lorries first.

They've got hundreds of lorries lined up ready for use at the moment.

But I heard through someone with a relative in the army in Germany, that they have been put on stand-by to return to Britain. He thinks that is a move to get involved directly with this strike.

That's also why there's so much pressure to get people back to work. You'd need a hundred or so at each pit to wash the coal and so on.

At this particular colliery we've had no indications yet that they are going to move, coal. The scabs who are working are doing electrical work. The rest are sitting around, twiddling their thumbs.

I don't think they could get the army to use the washeries. It would take them



Police escort scabs at Silverwood, Yorks. Photo. John Harris

Get ORGANISED!

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

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

Name

Address

Send to: Socialist Organiser, 28 Middle Lane, London-N8 6PL.



Yorkshire

firm



Albert Bowns

Back the miners



ed, if they can't see the 2,000 in hospital, and the police violence that has been perpetrated against us, if they can't recognise all this legislation, setting out to totally destroy trade unions, and they are the figurehead of the trade unions - if they can't recognise all that and support us, just what is going to motivate them?

Is there any point arguing for a recall TUC congress on the basis that the TUC resolution on the miners has not been implemented?

Who will reconvene Basnett, Jenkins, Willy Lyons, Sirs. If they reconvened it we'd get less support than we did before.

I can't see the IS rank and file coming out in support of us, and I can't see the power workers coming out, and the TGWU who we really need, and nothing more than a clearing house for subscriptions.

The rank and file lorries drivers don't have a branch, they don't have a community, they don't have this identity, and they are just individuals, who please themselves what they do.

As for the Labour Party leadership, particularly N. Kinnock, many of our leaders who weren't even very political prior to this strike, are totally disgusted with Kinnock's position.

Some of them are saying they won't vote for the Labour Party while he is leader, but that's just anger.

We have to point out that Kinnock isn't the Labour Party, and that just as he has been elected, he can be un-

There's been some incredulity that here we have the son of a miner, from the mining community in Wales who has sided with Margaret Thatcher.

He's forming his opinion from the media, not from the rank and file.



Gascoigne Wood Yorkshire. police with helmets and riot shields. Photo: John Harris

some weeks to train them to use the washeries. They still need certain qualified people who are on strike - COSA members, electricians, fitters - to keep the washery system going.

There is a glimmer of hope with the pit deputies, because in Scotland they have refused to pay them this 'non-working payment' they get for not crossing picket lines. These pits are asking their executive to review the situation on taking strike action.

But without NACODS being at work, they can't get coal out from underground, though they could work the washeries without them.

The legal system is twisted

How have the police responded to the increasing confrontation with pickets over the last week or so?

We used to have one from our village going in to work, but now there are five. So the police have to guard those five houses now.

At Dinnington, where a lot of damage was done, the police reaction was to flood the village with coppers.

The impression I get is that the police are very uptight at the moment - they are very stretched and they must be feeling the pressure themselves.

They are running about from one pit to another. They might go to five different pits in a particular morning. They stagger the starting time of the scabs at the different pits.

They come in at Kiveton Park between 2am and 3am. Then the police move on to Brookhouse, then to Maltby and then Dinnington. Now they've two more pits to cover as well.

It must also be a strain to be in the villages because the police are patrolling them 24 hours a day.

We've seen quite a lot of harassment out on the green where a new scab lives. The police walk up neighbours paths shining torches into their windows.

The more scabs who start working the worse it will get for the police because there'll be that many more houses to protect.

We haven't had any really bad cases of police violence here in the last couple of weeks - just police arrogance is on the increase.

They see themselves surrounded, they see everyone in the village as their enemy.

The army would meet the same response if they were brought in. We've seen the British army as there to protect the country from the outside, not the inside. I know Thatcher calls us the enemy within, but that's not how we see ourselves.

The arrests and court appearances have had quite an intimidating effect on people. You reported earlier in the strike the case of three young women who were arrested outside Norman

Haywood's house.

I went to court with them, and they were in tears and their mother was outraged because when they got to court they found that another charge had been added to the sheet which was threatening behaviour.

To me it was no surprise because it had happened to us regularly. In 80% of our cases, when the lads got to court an additional charge had been added, on the basis that if you put two charges on, then you've got a chance of winning on one of them.

In some cases there have been three charges. The first one is usually breach of the peace but then they add threatening behaviour and using abusive language.

The mothers of these girls were outraged because they'd never experienced anything like it before. They said, 'Look they can't put another charge on'. I had to tell them that the police were in their legal rights to do it. They could charge them within anything. Of course they'd have to prove it.

The mothers said that the magistrates believe everything the police say as true, and that's what happens, which just shows how twisted our legal system actually is.

Meanwhile, we're still waiting to hear the result of our case, brought in the High Court back in April, to have the police road blocks declared illegal.

Lord Justice Lane has now stood down from the case because it was suggested that he would be prejudiced, having already exonerated the police in

Nottinghamshire for their actions.

There are only two judges hearing the case now, but it seems to me that all the judges are pretty much the same.

We need national mass pickets

I was hoping for more from the national delegate meeting than these rallies. I was hoping for something more concrete in terms of stepping up action on the picket lines.

I was hoping for, perhaps, a national mass picket on particular collieries or particular areas. We are in a do or die situation. As far as I know we've never yet stopped a scab going in to work.

Now, we're just sticking to our own collieries and it's making us weaker. If you can't stop the scabs at your own pit with the numbers you can assemble, you might as well all go to another pit en masse and actually stop some scabs going in.

Rallies aren't a new phenomena. I know they had to do something to try and regenerate interest in the dispute. But I don't think that's the way to do it. Those who

go to the rallies are mostly hard-line supporters of the strike, not the people who are thinking of going back to work.

And as for asking for the support of the Church, I thought it was stupid. How could they help us if they wanted to? The Tories have ignored the couple of bishops who have given us muted support.

Demanding a recall TUC?

I think it might have even damaged our cause by suggesting that we are so desperate that we have to clutch at these kind of straws.

We all hoped that we would get a good reaction from the TUC when its congress met. We hoped that they would get everyone out alongside us.

Since that hasn't happened, I just can't see anything happening through the TUC.

I think it is a very weak organisation and I can't see them coming out with a call for a general strike unless something really inhuman happened like pickets being killed or being shot or something like that.

If they can't recognise all the hardship we've suffer-

HERE WE GO
A BENEFIT FOR WOMEN IN MINING COMMUNITIES

INCLUDING:
 PECGY SEEGER, JANE LAPOTAIKE, HARRIET WALTER
 ROSY GIBB, CAROL GRIMES AND THE IGUANAS, MAGGIE STEED
 MIRIAM KARLIN, MITZI WILDERBEST, CHARLOTTE CORNWELL
 THE WIDOWS - ANNE MITCHELL, FIONA HENDLEY, MAUREEN O'PARRELL, KATE WILLIAMS, ANNA CARTARET, DIANA QUICK
 PRUNELLA SCALES, JULIET STEVENSON, BRID DOOLEY, JULIE WALTERS
 THE ANNIE WHITEHEAD BAND, BEV BRILEY
 PAULINE BLAX

SUNDAY 25 NOVEMBER - 7.30 PM
 TICKETS - £5. CONCESSIONS £2

OPICCADILLY THEATRE
 DENMAN STREET, LONDON W1 - BOX OFFICE 437 4506
 BRING MONEY FOR THE COLLECTION + A CHRISTMAS TUN!

Behind famine, the drive for profits

The greatest plague of all

We know about famine in Ethiopia. But 45,000 have also died, and millions are threatened, in north-east Brazil. The greatest plague of all is not drought but exploitation, argues Clive Bradley

Valley suffered even more. Since the early 1960s, the valley has increasingly been turned over to the commercial production of cotton and rice. Whilst the Afar's feudal overlord and various international companies were sold concessions to farm the land, the Afar nomads got nothing.

They were forced into the less fertile areas, which could not support all their cattle. So when drought came in 1972, the cattle starved — and so did the Afar.

It was a similar story elsewhere, where peasants forced off their land turned to less fertile areas in order to survive. The land was overworked, and serious erosion of the soil took place — until it was impossible to grow any more food. This contributed to the famine.

Simple techniques to conserve water from the wet season were not developed.

The Derg introduced a land reform — from above — when they came to power in 1974. But it left a lot of the problems untouched. Transport is not efficient, so food cannot easily be distributed, and too little money has been spent on improving agricultural techniques.

Also, the Derg is a dictatorship, which has brutally repressed opposition. In a country with about 40 million people but

a poor economy, it is not surprising that the military rulers will cream off resources for themselves, contributing to the poverty of the masses.

The situation in the north — where most of the publicity has been concentrated — is aggravated by guerilla war. A war of independence in Eritrea began in 1962. With Soviet and Cuban backing, the Derg has continued Haile Selassie's war against Eritrea; and, since 1975, against the people of Tigray too.

Eritrea

These wars produce thousands of refugees, hinder food distribution and aggravate all the causes of famine. Granting the peoples of Eritrea and Tigray their right to self-determination would help the poor enormously.

The wars have added to all the social problems inherited from the past to produce the terrible scenes we have seen on TV of people dying in Korea.

Famine rages in the south, too, partly as a result of a huge influx of refugees from Tigray.

Soil erosion has also hit cattle-herders. If they are forced to sell badly-fed livestock, they get a low price, and cannot buy the grain they need to eat, because grain is in short supply and its price has soared.

Again, it is poverty — lack of



Bosses stuff their faces while millions starve

is 150% — unofficially it is nearer 200%. During 1983, rice and beans — the staple diet of Brazil's poor — rose in price by 188% and 769% respectively. Coffee rose by 200%. Wages have lagged far behind.

The poor are forced to buy elementary foods like cooking-oil by the spoonful from local shops at marked-up prices.

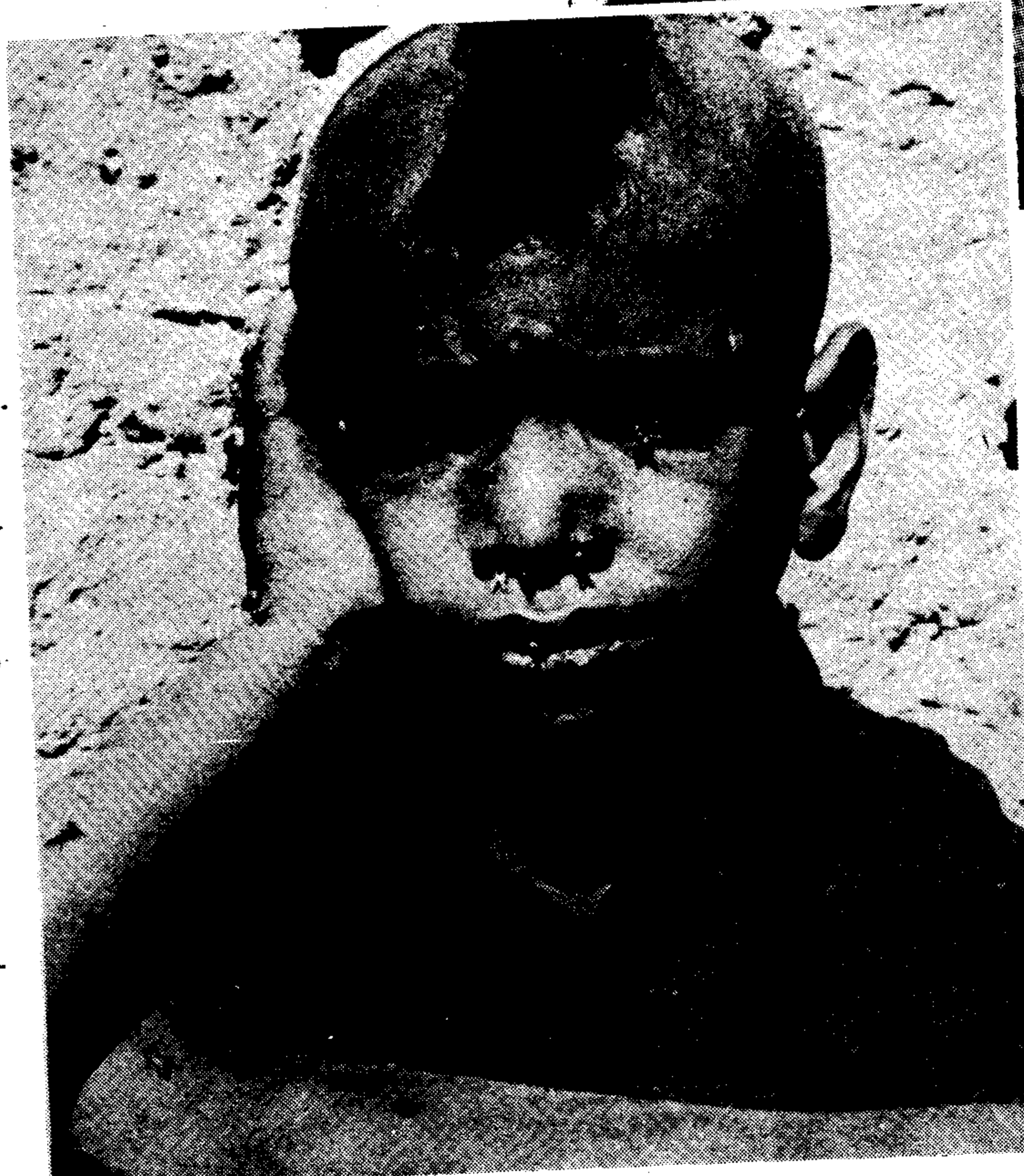
Some 40 million people live in conditions of extreme poverty. Conditions are worst in the least-developed North-East.

Famine has forced thousands of people to flee to the coastal cities in search of work. But there is very little work there. 12 million are officially unemployed, but real unemployment is vastly greater.

The north-east, nicknamed the 'Drought Polygon' by Brazil's dictator Getulio Vargas in the 1930s, has been hit by drought and famine many times before. In 1877-9, half a million people died of starvation.

The drought today is afflicting an ever wider area of Brazil. According to the Brazilian government, over 15 million people are currently suffering directly from hunger and thirst. In the state of Pernambuco, 45,000 have already died as the result of the drought. Disease and malnutrition are widespread.

35 million people live in Brazil's North-East. 45,000, according to official figures, have already died from the famine, and 15 million are suffering directly from hunger and thirst.



buying-power, in a world where the very basics of life are a matter of buying and selling — that leads to famine. Food is there, but the poor cannot afford it.

Added to all this is the lack of overseas food aid from the West because Ethiopia is an ally of the USSR.

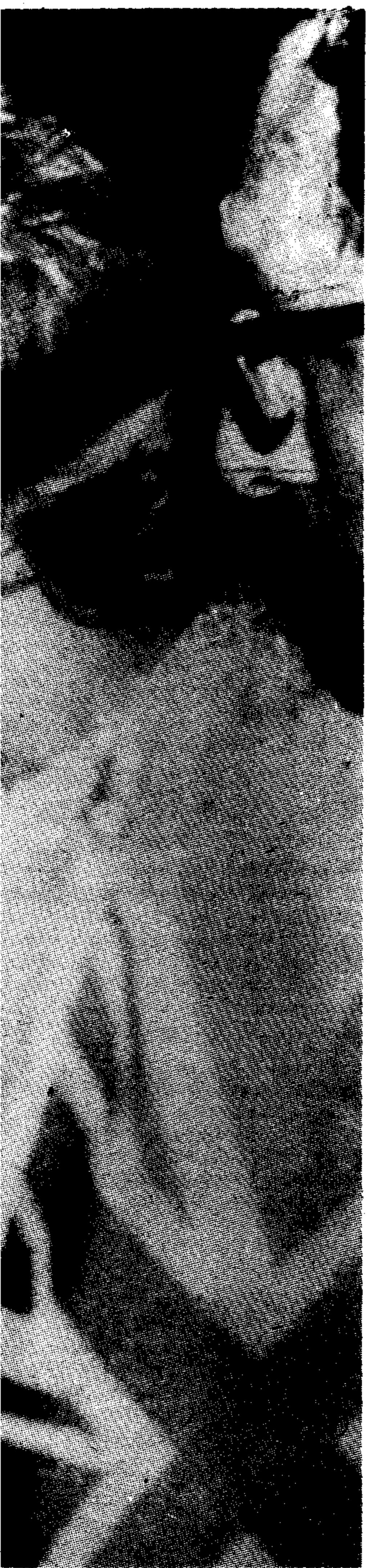
So one of the characteristic causes of famine in Ethiopia — and elsewhere — is the legacy of pre-capitalist society, given a particular tragic twist by elements of capitalist development.

The ruination of pre-capitalist peasant economy by the spread of capitalist relations in the countryside is a common trend in the Third World. It is a fundamental factor in causing famine right across the world. The detailed social background, however, varies widely in different parts of the Third World.

In Brazil there is also a terrible famine. But there it results not so much from feudal relations being maintained as from the brutal fashion in which capitalism is sweeping away those relations and pushing ahead its own development.

Brazil is the biggest indus-

How Britain ruined India



extremely rich. 9 per cent of landowners possess nearly 82% of the land in the north-east, and 15 landowners own as much acreage as the 363,776 smallholders put together.

From the beginning of colonisation by the Portuguese in the 16th century, agriculture in the north east has been geared to the export market. Slaves were imported from Africa when the local population would not be forced to do the work — and slavery was not abolished until 1888.

From the 19th century, the semi-arid interior in the north-east, known as the 'sertao', was cultivated for cotton exports. Producing for export did little to meet the needs of the thousands of workers who migrated to the sertao.

The drought now is further shifting the balance in favour of capital-intensive agriculture. Thousands of smallholders have been forced off their lands and forced to migrate to the cities — or die.

Speculation

Government policy has worsened the situation. Funds for agricultural credit have been used to help the big landlords in agribusiness (who often have used the money for non-agricultural or speculative investment).

Irrigation schemes have most benefited those least affected by the drought cycle.

The Emergency Work Fronts in practice viciously exploit the victims of drought. One EWF labourer commented, "At the end of the drought, the landowners will have dams and fences that we've built and we will have nothing".

The landlords, on the other hands, are enormously grateful for the 'help' provided for them by the EWFs.

So, while the famine in Africa is in no small part the fault of economic backwardness — made worse by the international capitalist system — poverty and famine in north-east Brazil is the social cost of dynamic capitalist development. The end result is much the same — and it shows that today capitalist 'civilisation' can only bring the old horrors back in new forms for the peoples of the Third World. But there is a difference.

'It is poverty that leads to famine. The food is there, but the poor cannot afford it.'

World Bank — will go to provide credit for the agro-export businesses, and do nothing for the starving and impoverished.

The government has set up schemes to employ those migrating to the now vastly overpopulated towns. Most of these migrants live in squalid shanty towns with no amenities.

By February this year, two and a half million people were employed in the so-called Emergency Work Fronts. An Oxfam Special Report quotes a typical example:

Margarida Nascimento, mother of five ("there were seven, but two died") has lost her husband, and works heaving rocks on a dam-fortification scheme. She earns £8 a month. If she is late, after walking for two hours to work at 6am, she loses two days' pay.

"When I leave home, I have a bit of coffee with manioc flour. That's all. Hunger pangs begin by about 10am, but you have to put up with them.

"I've seen lots of women collapse on the rocks. We earn next to nothing, but the Front is the only thing between us and death".

Yet the rich in Brazil are

In Pernambuco in north-east Brazil, the Governor reported 43 raids by the poor on food warehouses, supermarkets and small stores in 1983, and 42 in the first two months of 1984.

Moves to close down the EWFs at the first sign of rain have met strong resistance from the workers, who have no other source of income.

Because of the different causes of extreme poverty in Brazil, there is a social force that can organise a fight back.

The EWF workers cannot very easily go on strike. But in Brazil there is a growing, increasingly militant workers' movement which has rocked the dictatorship many times since the late '70s. In that workers' movement lies a real, tangible hope for the starving in Brazil.

I have drawn heavily on two reports by the Oxfam Public Affairs Unit: 'Lessons to be learned — drought and famine in Ethiopia', and 'An unnatural disaster — drought in north-east Brazil'. Both available, price £1, from Oxfam Publications Dept, 274 Banbury Road, Oxford OX2 7DZ.

WHEN black Africa was put under colonial rule by Britain in the late 19th century, it had already been shattered and devastated by four centuries of the slave trade. But the India conquered by the British from the mid-18th century was a great and splendid empire.

European trading bases had existed in India since the early 16th century, but they had exported manufactured goods — for India "had an industrial sector producing luxury goods which Europe could not match."*

But Britain imposed restrictions on textile imports from India, and promoted exports from the new cotton mills of Lancashire. "The handicraft industries were destroyed — the same which had supplied the eastern trade of more than a thousand years and had provided Greek and Roman, Arab and Venetian, English and Portuguese traders with their wealth. "The bones of the weavers" — and an English Governor-General said it [in 1834-5] — were 'bleaching the plains of India'."**

Elite

The Mughal Empire — the regime before the British conquest — had not been a progressive system. A tiny elite, mostly alien in origin (Persian or Afghan) and in religion (Muslim), lived in luxury through extremely heavy taxation of the peasants.

But the British continued many of the evils of the old regime and added some new ones.

Under Mughal rule, all land had been owned by the Emperor. The peasants were guaranteed the hereditary use of their plots, but could not sell, buy or sub-let land. Members of the ruling class would be allocated districts where they held sway as tax-collectors for the

In the first two articles of this series on the causes of Third World poverty, Martin Thomas argued that those causes are not natural, but rooted in the history of capitalism; and he examined the history of colonialism in Africa. This third article is about British rule in India.

Emperor: these positions were not hereditary.

The British half-transformed this set-up. In Bengal and some other areas, the Mughal tax-collectors were given a status which was half landlord, half tax-collector. This landlord/tax-collector class rapidly expanded under British rule, generating a sub-class of middlemen.

In southern India the British worked differently. There, the higher-caste peasants were given quasi-smallholder status, but with the colonial government as overlord.

Karl Marx commented: "In Bengal we have a combination of English landlordism, of the Irish middlemen system, of the Austrian system, transforming the landlord into the tax-gatherer, and of the Asiatic system making the State the real landlord."

"In Madras and Bombay we have a French peasant proprietor who is at the same time a serf and a metayer [share-cropper] of the State."

"The drawbacks of all these various systems accumulate upon him [the peasant] without his enjoying any of their redeeming features."

The peasants had no access to resources to improve their agriculture. And if by chance they should get access, the benefit of any improvement would immediately be confiscated by the landlord or middlemen.

Marx

According to all modern research, Marx was mistaken in his belief that the British had also allowed the decay of irri-

gation works established under the Mughals: the Mughals' irrigation works were slight, and were in fact expanded in certain districts by the British. Overall, however, agricultural productivity increased barely at all, or maybe even decreased, during two centuries of British rule.

Above the relentless peasant poverty, the British replaced the Mughals, with the same vast luxury, display, and armies of servants. By the 1930s, maybe one-tenth of India's whole national income was flowing to Britain, and another slice was being consumed by the British administration in India itself.

The maintenance, in modified form, of the old social structures in the countryside also enabled cheaper and easier rule. Britain's land reform, wrote the Governor-General in 1829, "though a failure in many other respects and in most important essentials, has this great advantage at least, of having created a vast body of rich landed proprietors deeply interested in the continuance of the British dominion and having complete command over the mass of the people".

But there was after all a difference between Britain and the Mughals. The Mughals' wealth was just luxury and display. The wealth of the British was capital.

Sizeable amounts of capital were invested in India. A big railway-building programme was undertaken in the 1850s: In 1870, 21% of all Britain's overseas capital investment was in India.

Karl Marx wrote: "I know that the English millocracy intend to endow India with railways with the exclusive view of extracting at diminished expense the cotton and other raw materials for their manufactures. But...you cannot maintain a net of railways over an immense country without introducing all those industrial processes necessary to meet the immediate and current wants of railway locomotion...The railway system will therefore become, in India, truly the fore-runner of modern industry".

Progress

Marx qualified this prediction: "All the English bourgeoisie may be forced to do will neither emancipate nor materially mend the social condition of the mass of the people, depending not only on the development of the productive powers, but on their appropriation by the people. But what they will not fail to do is lay down the material premises for both."

"Has the bourgeoisie ever done more? Has it ever effected a progress without dragging individuals and peoples through blood and dirt, through misery

and degradation? "The Indians will not reap the fruits of the new elements of society scattered among them by the British bourgeoisie, till in Great Britain itself the now ruling classes shall have been supplanted by the industrial proletariat, or till the Hindus themselves shall have grown strong enough to throw off the



English yoke altogether." In any case the growth of factory production in India was very slow. There was a spurt of industrialisation around the First World War, and steel production was started then, much earlier than in most Third World countries. The Indian capitalist class, by the time of independence, was far stronger than any capitalist class in black Africa.

But from the 1920s to independence in 1947 the industrial percentage of India's workforce actually declined.

The stark poverty of the peasantry limited the home market. The British in India, and the Indian elite, preferred imported goods.

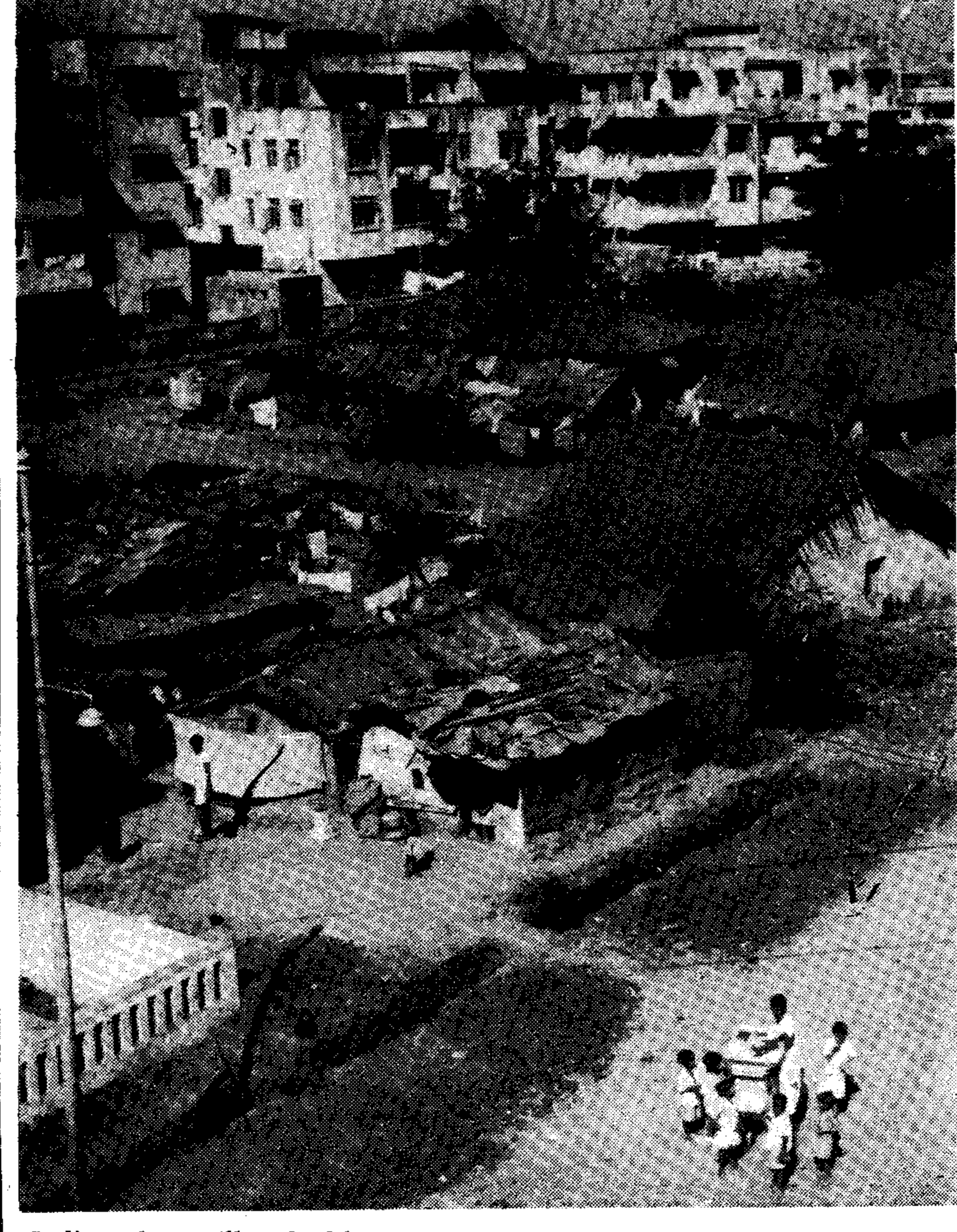
And, perhaps crucially, Indian industry lacked the state protection and sponsorship which has been crucial to every infant industrial capitalism.

For a short period after World War I the British did adopt a policy of helping Indian industry. But it was quickly ditched, especially when the great world slump after 1929 left British industry clamouring for the Empire to be made its protected market.

The French writer Claude Levi-Strauss aptly describes India as the British left it: it was "as if history and economics had managed to establish, indeed superimpose, their most tragic phases of development on these wretched victims: the shortages and epidemics of medieval times, frenzied exploitation as in the early years of the industrial revolution, and the unemployment and speculation of modern capitalism".

*Angus Maddison, 'Class structure and economic growth: India and Pakistan since the Moghuls'.

**Michael Barratt Brown, 'After Imperialism'.



India today, still racked by poverty

Review



How racism broke Billie

Jim Denham looks at BBC2's documentary on the jazz singer Billie Holliday

"THE Long Night of Lady Day", BBC2's recent 'Arena' documentary on singer Billie Holliday, made pretty depressing viewing.

At the age of ten, Billie was raped by a 40 year old man. For this, she was punished and sent away to a Catholic borstal.

34 years later, as she lay dying in a hospital bed, New York's finest burst in and arrested her on a narcotics charge.

In between, she suffered more than her fair share of misery at the hands of cops, prison warders, pimps, pushers and red-necks — not to mention the various chancers and inadequates she had affairs with.

Despite (or perhaps because of) all that, she was beyond question the finest jazz singer of her time — and probably, the finest of any time. And it was the singing that provided the moments of joy in the 'Arena' documentary.

Young Billie, with her voice somehow innocent and worldly-wise at the same time, singing "I'll Never Be the Same", with Lester Young making the tenor sax sing along with her every step of the way. Middle-aged Billie, haggard beyond her years, singing "Fine and Mellow" and shaking her head wistfully as the same Lester Young stepped unsteadily from the ranks of the "All Star" studio band to take a slightly out of tune, but beautifully constructed, solo.

Her voice, by then, was cracked and brittle, but "Fine and Mellow" was the best moment of the film — for a few minutes the pain subsided into the background and the music was all that mattered. Within a couple of years of the 1957 TV special, both Lester Young and Billie were dead.

In many ways Billie was a pathetic figure. She was bitterly resentful of the oppression she experienced both as a negro and as a woman. But somehow she seemed to accept that oppression as inevitable — as the way things had to be and the way they always would be. Her 'escape' was heroin.

Billie was not, however, the most pathetic figure in the film. Artie Shaw achieved that distinction. The wealthy bandleader appeared in a present-day interview, describing how he agreed to ask Billie to use the freight elevator in a New York Hotel, so that the white guests

would not be upset. "It's up to you, Billie...it's your decision... I don't like it any more than you do", he bleated.

Shaw had hired Billie for his otherwise all-white big band because he wanted the best singer available as part of his bid to oust Benny Goodman as 'King of Swing'. He recognised Billie's worth as a singer, and he knew about racism: he has written books about his own experiences of anti-semitism. But Shaw went along with segregation.

Maybe he hoped to break down race barriers by stealth. Maybe he was only interested in a fast buck. Either way, he made Billie sit out of sight, backstage, between numbers.

When the band toured the Jim Crow southern states, Shaw's timidity was excusable. To have Billie shout "Mother-fucker" at red-necks in the audience would have been to invite a riot. But in New York, by the 1940s, some brave souls like critic John Hammond and record producer Milt Gabler (both featured in the film) were taking on segregation and promoting jazz events where black musicians and audiences mixed on equal terms with whites.

We can only conclude that Artie Shaw lacked guts.

Perhaps it is unfair to seize on Shaw as the villain of the piece. His contribution to the film was particularly cowardly, but he wasn't responsible for the racism, the heroin, the prison term or any of the other manifestations of the Great American Dream that finally broke Billie.

If you missed the 'Arena' film, make sure you catch it when the inevitable repeat comes round, or chase up your wealthy friends with videos. To find out more about Billie Holliday and the jazz world of the '30s and '40s, read John Chilton's definitive biography, "Billie's Blues".

To hear Billie at her best get hold of the classic '30s recordings with Lester Young and Teddy Wilson (available on the CBS albums 'God Bless the Child' and 'Billie Holliday Story') and the Commodore recordings from the '40s (on the German albums 'I'll be Seeing you' and 'Fine and Mellow').

Together with the 'Arena' film, these will tell you a lot — not just about a great singer, but also about how institutionalised racism can crush the brightest talent and the bravest spirit.

Lenin today

Continuing our 'Socialist Bookshelf' series on Marxist classics, Colin Foster looks at Lenin's 'What is to be Done?'

LENIN'S pamphlet 'What is to be Done?' has had a strange fate.

All the declared enemies of Leninism cite it as proof of Lenin's 'dictatorial' politics. The pamphlet, they say, advocates a militarily-organised elite which will control and substitute for the struggle of the working class: the horrors of Stalinism are only the logical unfolding of that programme.

Meanwhile Stalinists interpret the pamphlet similarly but with a different valuation. The struggle for socialism, they say, requires rigid ultra-centralised discipline, and in 'What is to be Done?' Lenin lays out the arguments to prove this.

Many would-be Trotskyists, unfortunately, have had much the same view as the Stalinists.

To read the pamphlet after hearing all these polemics is a puzzling experience. True, there are odd sentences which can be cited to give a shine of plausibility to the conventional interpretations: but the bulk of the argument is clearly about something else altogether.

Far from being a tract against loose, liberal Menshevik concepts of organisation, 'What is to be Done?' was written (in 1901-2) before Bolshevism and Menshevism emerged (in 1903). The future Mensheviks supported 'What is to be Done?' — only in the heat of later polemics did they discover 'dictatorial' tendencies in it.

Rosa Luxemburg

When Rosa Luxemburg joined in these accusations that Lenin was 'dictatorial', Lenin merely replied that she did not understand the actual situation in Russia. And indeed, Lenin's Bolshevik party was never the dissent-suppressing monolith of Stalinist and hostile legend.

A look at the circumstances in which 'What is to be Done?' was written sheds light on its real meaning and its real relevance for today.

From the middle of the 19th century, masses of student youth in Russia had been in rebellion against the Tsarist system.

For decades, however, there was no substantial revolutionary social force to which they could attach themselves. They tried to go to the peasantry. They tried to 'electrify' the masses by assassinations of leading Tsarist figures.

Then in the 1890s the Russian working class came onto the scene as an independent force. Revolutionaries — Lenin among



Тов. Ленин очищает землю от нечисти.

Early Communist poster shows Lenin sweeping kings, emperors, capitalists and priests from the earth.

them — threw themselves into supporting strikes and writing factory leaflets.

So far, so good. But towards the end of the 1890s, so Lenin thought, many would-be Marxists went overboard and did nothing but agitation on economic issues.

The political agitation and theoretical debate which used to be the staple of Russian revolutionaries were pushed aside. Politics and theory would grow out of the economic struggle in due course, said these 'Economists'.

Formally all the Russian Marxists operated under the banner of the Russian Social Democratic Labour Party, founded in 1898. In fact the 1898 Congress had done little more than adopt a declaration of principles before all the delegates were arrested, and no centralised party structure existed. Nor would it exist for some time, if the Economists' exclusive focus on day-to-day local factory agitation were allowed to dominate.

Trade unionism

Lenin freely agreed that the local trade union work was immensely valuable. But, he insisted, it was not enough to build a socialist movement.

Militant trade unionism could be integrated with socialist politics. But it could also be integrated with varieties of capitalist politics, as the Liberal trade unions in Britain at the time, or the Catholic unions in Germany, showed.

And, given the resources and strength of the capitalist class, capitalist politics would dominate trade unionism — unless the socialists organised a hard

potential would be dissipated; spontaneity would not be transformed into consciousness.

To weld together a coherent, conscious working class offensive, capable of victory, something was needed from "outside" the immediate spontaneous struggle. That something from outside was the effort, by a minority of socialists organised in advance of the entry into revolutionary struggle of the mass of the class, to develop a consistent revolutionary theory and give it organised expression.

Lenin quoted Engels: "Socialism, since it has become a science, demands that it be pursued as a science, i.e. that it be studied". And he added: "Without a revolutionary theory there can be no revolutionary movement. This thought cannot be insisted upon too strongly at a time when the fashionable preaching of opportunism goes hand in hand with an infatuation for the narrowest forms of practical activity."

This emphasis won Lenin, throughout his life, accusations of being a doctrinaire hairsplitter, a fanatical dogmatist, someone who pursued intricate theoretical arguments at the expense of the real practical work.

But Lenin told the Economists that the world of politics and the battle of ideas would not disappear just because the Economists ignored them. If socialists did not take up the class struggle on the political and ideological fronts, then they would just leave the battlefield open to the capitalist class, its media, and all its agents.

Relevance

The central practical proposal defended in 'What is to be Done?' is thus the publication of an all-Russian socialist newspaper, giving political agitation and theoretical debate equal weight with economic issues, and preparing the groundwork for a real party.

Today, paradoxically, Lenin's arguments are most relevant both against the 'anti-party' non-aligned socialists, who believe that the movement would somehow turn out all right if only the Left would suspend theoretical arguments; and against the formally 'pro-party' socialists of the Socialist Workers' Party, whose attitude to the Labour Party comes down to saying: "Let Labour take care of the parliamentary politics. The SWP takes care of the rest."

Socialist Organiser

We had a very welcome boost this week with a cheque from the Nottingham Socialist Organiser group which included £47 for extra paper sales and small donations from readers.

Many readers will give £1 or 50p for their paper, rather than 25p — especially if they're asked.

Basingstoke SO has also recently sent in money for extra sales — £6.25 from their street sales, and £4.50 from sales at a public meeting where NUM general secretary Peter Heathfield was speaking. And we've received about £18 for sales above the usual quote over the last five weeks from two comrades in Islington.

SCIENCE

Drugs and health

By Les Hearn

MODERN capitalist society is marked by high levels of addiction to drugs such as nicotine and alcohol (and less frequently opiates). Therefore, any discovery shedding light on the mechanism of addiction is welcome.

The drug Clonidine, used for tackling high blood pressure, has also been used for reducing opiate withdrawal symptoms. But rather than replacing the missing drug, it acts to inhibit a nerve system in the brain that depends on noradrenaline (NAd) to transmit messages.

This fact implies that opiates also have this effect.

New York researchers wondered if the NAd system could be involved in other addictive behaviours. Accordingly, they gave Clonidine to patients trying to give up smoking and found that it reduced the familiar withdrawal symptoms of anxiety, irritability, restlessness and tension.

But the most common withdrawal symptom is *craving* the drug in question and this usually appears *before* the other symptoms. Clonidine also affects this symptom in addicts of all three drugs and quite successfully too.

The researchers speculate that the NAd system may be responsible for the craving common to all addicts.

Drug addiction is a partly physical, partly psychological condition. Habitual users of alcohol, tobacco and opiates learn to relieve tension and stress by taking their particular drug. Later they learn that *not* taking it *brings on* those feelings. But before they actually experience those feelings, an increase in the activity of the NAd system (as the drug wears off) may cause small signals to the addict, which he or she *learns* to interpret as a need for more of the drug that keeps tension and stress away. This is the feeling that we call "craving".

This may explain why ex-addicts, who are free of any of the physical effects of drug use, often revert to their drug during times of increased stress. This leads to an increase in the activity of the NAd system, which the ex-addict previously learnt to be a signal of need for some of their

drug. The primary problem then is the *tension and stress* caused regularly by this society, with drug use merely being one of the ways (though a very individualistic one) that people learn to tackle these feelings.

(Info: New Scientist).

Virtue is not just its own reward — in certain cases at least seems to prolong life as well.

In 1965 Dr Takeshi Hirayama undertook a mammoth 16 year study of health among 122,000 Japanese men aged 40 plus. He divided them into 16 groups according to whether they drank, smoked, ate meat or green vegetables daily. By 1981 some 30,000 had died, including 8000 of cancer.

As you might expect, drinking, meat-eaters who did not eat greens fared worst, with 100 per thousand dying, while non-smoking, non-drinking, non-meat-eating greens-eaters had less than half this proportion — a bit over 3 per thousand. (Prizes for guessing which category your smug and satisfied Science Correspondent belongs to!).

Smoking presented the biggest health risk, with non-smokers having less than half the death rate of smokers. However, smoking, drinking and meat-eaters could reduce their death rate by as much as a third if they ate their greens.

Hirayama speculates that fibre, Vitamin C and carotene in greens could play a role in reducing cancer risks. This would tend to support Linus Pauling's theories about Vitamin C and cancer, which have generally been scorned. Other factors may also be important in reducing health risks, though.

Eating more fresh green would probably reduce the intake of food additives from processed foods (see last week's column). Or it may be that people who make a point of eating greens are just more concerned with their health in general. It would have been interesting to have seen figures for women's health, but in Japan in Britain, the medical profession seems less interested.

(Info: New Scientist).



ANDREW WIARD (REPORT)

Inner-city blues

TOWER blocks of family accommodation were the inevitable result of the way the state has developed its housing policy, especially in that period when the Labour Party was holding one of the reins.

In the sixties, when most of these stacks of 'dwelling units' were put up, the name of the game was numbers, and paternalistic politicians, busily eradicating the slums of terraced houses, lapped up the professionals' advice. You can bet your last raffled miner's lamp that the input from the working class, especially from women, at any level in the design, bureaucratic and construction stages of building those monstrosities was less than 2%.

The result today is that the Tories can point to these disasters and say, 'look, that's the result of state housing provision', we're for freedom of choice. Buy a council house'.

Of course the tenants in the tower blocks aren't buying flats, but campaigning to get out and demolish the blocks.

Failure

No-one doubts that the tower block is a failure in social terms — with the isolation from street activity, the sky only views, the lift access problems, (ever tried to find an address on the 18th floor in a power cut?); and the noise transmission problems of having neighbours on four sides.

Tenants end up worrying whether their kids in the next room are about to fall out of the window, worrying how they are going to call the older children in for a meal; trying to locate the leak from the flat six stories above; trying to fix a shelf to a granite aggregate concrete wall; trying to stop the toddler leaning against the urinated lift wall when they're piled up with shopping; starting yet another campaign to get the neighbours to stop dropping bottles down the refuse chute in the middle of the night and wondering if they'll have to stand upright in their coffin when they're carried out.

The architects would tell you the blocks were designed as 'machines for living in'. And of course putting all these people up in the air freed the ground level for wonderful parkland.

Technically, alongside school buildings, tower blocks are the most obvious examples of

Bari Maneko asks why tower blocks have been a housing disaster

attempts to apply industrialised methods to the building industry. The argument was that the workforce was becoming de-skilled, and factory production would produce higher quality components, easier planning and higher production. Good for capitalism; bad for UCATT.

Unfortunately, the powers-that-be did not correctly analyse the market, or the composition of the industry, and virtually all industrialised building systems have failed, through too small a scale of production and too much experimentation.

Most office blocks are open-plan forms and frame construction. However the cell form of our homes, the fire regulations and noise insulation requirements led some of the systems firms to adopt precast concrete slab forms of construction.

The particular system for Ronan Point was Scandinavian in origin, but was never used much there for buildings over six stories. It basically stacks up like playing cards, the precast floor slabs resting on precast wall slabs, and relying on weight transmitted through 50mm wide grouted joints and friction to hold the whole structure together. (God help the tenants if there were an earthquake tremor).

Unfortunately, it seems that the building regulations were not necessarily correctly applied in terms of assessing wind levels, or properly proving details required to prevent spread of fire between flats.

Disaster

In Ronan Point, the biggest disaster to date occurred when a gas joint leaked, which caused an explosion on the 18th floor. It brought down the five stories above. And because of the nature of the structure, it progressively collapsed the 17 floors below in that corner of the block. Gas supplies were subsequently removed, and ducted gas is banned from similar blocks over four stories!

Planning controls and building regulations, together with British Standards Institute and like bodies, have gone a long way to prevent probably the worst excesses of cowboy

contractors, and most of those controls have developed out of a state and local authority funded building projects.

Everybody hears the stories of individuals getting ripped off by the cowboy outfits, and even the self-regulating complaint mechanism of devaluing your own property hasn't stopped the stories getting out about the rubbish building in the detached box precast developments.

Tories

However, in the drive to privatisation the Tories are now introducing the concept of self-certification which means developers and contractors can hire their own 'professionals' to certify that buildings are constructed in accordance with regulations.

The most immediate task for those Labour authorities in whose areas most of the tower blocks exist, must be to organise a campaign to get the government to recognise its obligation to pay for demolishing the structures and for rehousing the unfortunate tenants.

It seems unlikely with all the buck passing going on between contractors, engineers, architects and bureaucrats, that the real culprits will be held to account.

Chances are that it will all be blamed on sloppy work by the 'men at site', but it is quite evident that central government, with additional subsidies and expert quango advice, was forcing the pace, and therefore should cough up to pay the bill.

The Tories are already pushing the line that any cash available is likely to be on terms which further privatise local authority housing, with land cleared being hived off to private developers.

A further dilemma for the Labour Party is, of course, that its best housing stock is being sold off, leaving these less desirable forms increasingly as a larger proportion of its stock. This, of course, means that those tenants remaining in council housing will become increasingly the poorer, last-choice citizen.

Already current is the argument that the tower blocks, although not suitable for 'real

families', could be adopted for the single parent families, old age pensioners and singles who conveniently form a larger percentage of the waiting lists these days.

The Tories have sliced away the housing capital in the last five years and proportionally more and more of the Labour controlled authority budget is spent on grants for owner-occupiers. We've probably passed the peak in terms of rehabilitating older properties and the renovation of interwar estates is in full swing. The Tories will now provide funding through the Housing Corporation to encourage authorities with land banks to use Housing Associations to develop New Build housing schemes.

Direct Labour Organisations will be cut back through the Planning and Land Act to provide maintenance programmes only, and even these will be further threatened through the Tenants Charter and legislation to enable tenants to organise their own maintenance programmes.

Local authorities will be forced to enter into package deals with developers for their future housing needs on lease and nomination rights, and will in the process secure some housing, but at the same time continue mortgaging local authority finance to the City.

Nationalisation

The Labour Party's housing plans must include nationalising the building industry, a state takeover of the High Street Building Societies, wiping out the local authority debts to the City, first option buying of all property coming onto the market for local authorities, compulsory purchase of all second homes, establishing a national housing worker-controlled combine for the development of ex-US bases and the redundant stately homes and strengthening planning and construction regulations.

However in order to avoid a repeat of Ronan Point, we must ensure that the building of homes includes in the process the consultation with the users at all design stages, the development of a skilled workforce in design and build format, the adherence to regulations formulated to ensure high environmental standards and the use of good, safe materials and technology.

Smoking to relieve tension and stress — nicotine addiction — presents one of the biggest risks to health



Nicaragua

US in disarray

By Nathan Jones

THREATS of a US invasion increase. The US has admitted its claims on the eve of the election result that a Soviet ship heading for Nicaragua was laden with MiG fighter planes, were false.

But the new administration has maintained its hysteria about the 'Nicaraguan threat' in Central America. Claims of an arms build-up are still being used as a justification for US backing of the 'contras' and are laying the political basis for the invasion threats.

The US was clearly thrown into disarray by Nicaragua's decision to accept the peace proposal of the Contadora group of Latin American countries.

Its main central American allies — El Salvador, Costa Rica and Honduras — are consequently pushing for amendments to the peace plan

intended to make Nicaraguan agreement impossible.

The new proposals remove prohibitions on international military manoeuvres (in practice meaning by the US) from the agreement.

However, US strategy has run into some problems. Negotiations in El Salvador between the government and opposition guerrillas have got nowhere. And Honduras is demanding a commitment to the removal of US-backed Nicaraguan counter-revolutionaries from the country if they run out of funds or are defeated.

Honduras has also banned the further training of El Salvadorean troops in the country.

But the threat to the Sandinista government in Nicaragua — recently given a massive vote of confidence in the elections — is a real one. The labour movement must be committed to opposing any invasion.

Chile

Dawn raids

CHILE has been under a state of siege since November 6.

Dawn raids on oppositionists living in shanty towns surrounding Santiago have resulted in thousands of arrests. Detainees — about 5,000 of them, according to the opposition — are being held in Santiago stadium, scene of massacres after the 1973 coup that overthrew the Allende government and brought General Pinochet to power.

The state of siege and the wave of arrests follow an attempted general strike against the dictatorship at the end of October. Organised by the National Labour Command and the Democratic Popular Movement (grouping

together various opposition forces, including bourgeois parties), this was the first concerted attempt at a general strike since 1973.

The regime claimed the strike was a flop. Certainly it was not a complete success. But public transport was brought to a halt, and the strike was strong with widespread support in the cities.

The fact of any open popular resistance is significant. And the heavy-handed response of the junta shows that they have been worried by it. Suggestions that some parties might be legalised have been put back.

The dawn raids are the latest attempt to intimidate the opposition.

Northern Ireland

Supergrass courts

TWO delegates from Birmingham Trades Council who recently visited Belfast have concluded

*That 'supergrass' evidence is unreliable because it is motivated by fear and greed.

*Such evidence should never be accepted without corroborating evidence that can be evaluated by a jury.

*Supergrass Raymond Gilmour in particular is unreliable because of the psychological pressures that he has been subjected to during two years in police custody.

*And, finally, that the British cannot administer justice in Northern Ireland because the nationalist population don't trust them after decades of British misrule.

The two delegates — Dave Brooks (Association of Scientific, Technical and Managerial Staffs) and Allan Thomas (National Union of Miners) were in Belfast from November 3 to 10 to observe the cross-examination of Gilmour in the 'supergrass' trial implicating 35 Derry men and women.

Dave Brooks said: 'The place was more like an army or police

barracks than a court.'

The defendants seemed determined not to despair, and relatives and friends of the accused also appeared surprisingly cheerful. Allan Thomas felt 'that the family support was vital to the prisoners just as it is to the striking miners in their struggle.'

Dave Brooks said: 'Gilmour seemed shifty and unreliable to us. From day one he was put on the spot by Desmond Boal QC concerning his ability to change his sworn statements. First he admits to taking part in a robbery, then he denies it, then he returns to his initial admission.'

It was difficult for the delegates to know what to make of much of Gilmour's evidence. He claimed to have informed 'the police of potential assassinations of Irish Gardai, British Army or even RUC men without them acting on the information received.'

Either, on this evidence, the police are playing a deep and devious game — including allowing a British soldier to be killed — or Gilmour is lying.

Rising role for unions

Black workers have been taking on the apartheid South African state. Bob Fine looks at the recent wave of protests and at the role of the independent non-racial trade unions.



South African army patrol black townships

IN THE industrial and commercial heartland of South Africa, well over half a million black workers took part in a highly successful two-day 'stay-at-home' on November 5 and 6.

All the major factories were closed: even the centre of Johannesburg, which is a commercial, not industrial, area, was empty like on a Sunday afternoon.

A 'stay-at-home' is a form of protest with a long history in South Africa.

A call went out to black workers to stay within their townships by a huge ad-hoc stay-away committee consisting of all the major unions, radical community groups and political activists from the United Democratic Front (UDF).

Usually there is little love lost between these groupings and numerous accusations and counter-accusations of attempting to hijack the movement. This time — for the duration of the protest at least — they came together to make a united call.

Township

The organisation of a stay-at-home is in the township rather than the factory. Given the nature of black separation in the urban areas, it is possible to picket the transport outlets from the townships rather than the factory gates.

The police attempted to harass the pickets, but the support for the stay-at-home was such that there was little they could do.

The same form of protest was used in Soweto in 1976, but this time it was even more successful.

In 1976 the buses still ran and many black workers attempted to ride them into work. They were only stopped by students throwing stones and generally seeking to persuade or compel them not to go.

This time, the buses didn't run. The workers, often unionised, were four-square behind the protest. The students didn't need to throw stones.

What was the stay-at-home about, and why was there such solid support for it among workers as well as students?

The background lay in the yearly commemoration of the June 16, 1976 Soweto uprising. Police came in with tear-gas and truncheons to clear black residents and students from the streets.

The police were enforcing the ban on all outdoor meetings which has been operative since 1976.

The black workers and students were protesting against substantial rent rises, the local council elections and tax reforms as well as making the usual protest against the whole racist system of education.

The government had instituted local council elections in the townships with stooge black 'representatives'. There had been a very successful boycott of these elections.

Stooge councils

The government's plan was to shift the burden of taxation and looking after the townships to these councils.

This led to rent rises instituted by the local councils themselves; anger developed not directly against the central state but rather against the black stooges, with a number of violent incidents in which black councillors were killed or had their homes burnt down.

The issue of tax reforms was more complicated and I don't fully understand it. The govern-

ment introduced one single tax system for blacks and whites alike.

Previously there had been a dual system, one for blacks and one for whites, which systematically discriminated against blacks. A poor white worker and a poor black worker on the same wage — not a common occurrence — would pay different taxes: the white worker nothing and the black worker a considerable portion of his or her wage.

Making the tax system uniform would seem to have benefited blacks in material terms. However, the scrapping of the old forms of taxation and its replacement by a new one put the issue of why and for what blacks were paying taxes on the agenda. Why pay tax to a white, racist state?

In essence, the call went out for no taxation without representation, though I don't think this actual slogan was used.

Repression

The police broke up these protests but they did it this time not through shooting (as they did in 1976) but through riot-control devices like tear-gas and truncheons. Their methods were less draconian than before, but they meant that protests rolled on much longer than in the past.

A further difference was that in 1976 the state often left the townships to their own devices.

When, for example, Zulu migrant workers attacked students in the course of the Soweto uprising, the police basically kept out of the way.

Now the presence of state-backed black stooge councillors meant that the state had to keep a constant pressure within the townships to protect these unpopular figures.

It was continued violence against these councillors that, as far as I can tell, led the state to send seven to eight thousand troops into a number of townships, especially Sebokeng. There were armed troops every ten yards on the pavements; probably 90% of the residents' houses were searched.

It was an occupation army making a great show of force.

The community's reaction to the army's presence was apparently mixed at first. The army arrested about 300 people, all on common criminal charges. They came in under the slogan of restoring law and order.

The truth is that crime in the townships is a real problem. Large groups of lumpenproletarian gangs make a lot of trouble for the black residents and have been used by the stooge councillors for their own nefarious political purposes. When there is political ferment, these criminal gangs tend to make hay while the sun shines.

Thus the state's propaganda about law and order was by no means empty.

However, the level of intimidation by the troops was such that it led to massive popular demands for their withdrawal. The problem of crime was real, but the white troops offered no solution.

Other methods of crime control would have to be found.

It was anger at the presence of these troops that led to the formation of the ad-hoc stay-away committee, whose central demand was troops out of the townships.

The UDF and the unions also demanded that the black councillors should resign. In addition the unions called for opposition to increases in the General Sales Tax; and they campaigned — successfully — for the rehiring of workers sacked for striking at a company called Simbaquix.

Rhetoric

Rhetoric took over from reality when a member of the Free Mandela Committee (Mandela is the imprisoned leader of the African National Congress) declared the townships liberated zones after the withdrawal of the troops. He called for state recognition of these now liberated areas!

The individual who issued this statement on behalf of the ad-hoc committee did so without authorisation. He was a 25-year old man with no political experience to speak of.

What was more important, though, was that he could speak

in this fashion because he belonged to a group that purported to represent the community but had in fact no democratic organisation, no representative structures, no accountability to a membership. It is this kind of 'community representation' that particularly alienates the unions with their strong traditions of democratic accountability and grass-roots organisation.

We can only surmise at the significance of this statement, but it would appear to be the last straw that broke the state's reluctance to arrest people on political charges.

Arrests

What followed the next morning was a wave of arrests that is still going on. These detentions include the general secretaries of the two largest trade union federations (Chris Dlamini of FOSATU and Piroshaw Camay of CUSA).

The entire membership of the stay-away committee has been arrested, including Moses Mayekizo, general secretary of MAWU, the largest trade union in South Africa. Kate Philips, president of the National Union of South African Students, has also been arrested.

On the whole previously the black leaders of such unions had not been directly subject to arrest and detention. Their detentions were followed by widespread protests, not only from international trade union bodies but even from the Chamber of Industries in South Africa.

They don't want politics to rock the boat of industrial stability and fear the power of trade unions if they tie their industrial muscle to political demands.

What do these events add up to? The great success of the stay-at-home marks, in my view, a major step forward for the struggle against apartheid as a whole. But we shouldn't rush into illusions that South Africa is yet on the brink of an all-out general strike or major shake-up.

Mass protest

The events of the last few weeks have demonstrated the force of mass protest from below. The unions had little choice but to participate given the anger of their members against the military occupation of their towns.

At SASOL (the South African Oil Company), where 5000 black workers are organised by FOSATU's Chemical Workers' Union, the management threatened the entire workforce with dismissal and with deportation to the 'homelands'. They were all 'migrant' workers.

The union recommended to the workers that they return to work for the second day of the protest but the workers refused the union's advice and stayed away. SASOL management duly fired the lot of them, the government deported them to the homelands and the outcome in terms of recruitment of a new labour force is still in doubt. This episode reveals the dangerous problems that beset the movement and in particular the dilemmas which face the trade unions.

All avenues should be used — through the trade unions and the Labour Party — for the release of the political prisoners detained in the aftermath of the stay-at-home. Letters of solidarity can be sent to FOSATU at 2 Goodhope Street, Bellevill South, 7530 Cape, South Africa.

Liverpool race job

Black Caucus speaks out

THE Black Caucus was organised around 1979 to 1980. It came out of long debates with the City Council, before 1979 about the need for the Council to adopt an equal opportunities policy and to take on board some positive action programmes.

The Black Caucus members were elected through meetings in the community, people coming forward representing various organisations — like the Charles Wootton Centre, the Community Relations Council, the Chinese Pagoda Centre, Liverpool 8 Law Centre, South Liverpool Personnel and others. Over the years we've had four or five public meetings where different people have been elected onto the Committee.

We don't claim to speak on behalf of the whole community — what we do is speak on behalf of community groups that are involved in the race relations field.

Over the years we've put forward a lot of projects and initiatives that we feel the Council should have taken up and provided funding for. The Race Unit was the latest one.

We were concerned that the people in the Unit were experienced in their knowledge of the Black Community in Liverpool and also in their knowledge of the local authority, so that they would be able to negotiate with whatever party is in power and with the unions.

For us, Sampson Bond wasn't the candidate for that. Mr Bond possesses the same qualities and background in race relations as most of the black people out on the street. He hasn't any great expertise in management or in all the other areas such as education, housing and employment.

The embarrassment in the situation is that, on the day of the appointment, the Labour Party turned round and said they would appoint someone who 'toes the Party line'. We all know the Labour Party has got a policy statement, but that's about all.

Qualities

For the job to be done properly you need someone in there who is dynamic, who is fresh blood. Derek has been saying that Mr Bond is dynamic and so on, but he doesn't possess any of the qualities and he doesn't understand any of the problems that have hit Liverpool for such a long time.

We're not objecting because he's from outside Liverpool — we're objecting because he hasn't got the qualities to perform that job.

I was very disappointed that at the start of interviewing Derek (deputy council leader Derek Hatton) stressed that they were looking for someone to toe the Party line. What he then did was to positively discriminate and take on someone who is not qualified to do the job.

We are against positive discrimination — it is in fact illegal under the 1976 Race Relations Act.

There has been great controversy in Liverpool over the Labour-controlled City Council's appointment of Sampson Bond as head of its Race Relations Unit.

The local Black Caucus has mounted protests, and NALGO is boycotting the appointment. They say that Bond is not qualified and has been given the job because of his sympathy with the views of 'Millitant' who are influential in the council.

Steve French, a member of the Black Caucus, explained in an interview with Kevin Feintuck. We reprint excerpts of the interview from Mersey Labour Briefing.

Take the example of last October-November when they were taking on 1000 new workers: out of those less than 30 black people were taken on. If the Council was in any way in favour of positive action programmes this was one way in which they could have taken black people into the Council services.

Most of the black community vote Labour anyway and we support Labour to a certain extent. It is now that the Labour Party have got to start realising our needs.

I don't think the Conservatives or Liberals would do any different than what Labour are doing. Although the Labour Party are looking at things more positively, they are still not coming out and doing it.

All they keep on about is the threat of a white backlash.

THE Tory press outdid itself in hypocrisy last week. When it screeched in outrage about the £90,000 'golden handshakes' to sacked Labour members of the London Transport board, any reader would have got the impression that the money had been paid by the Labour GLC out of the rates. (The Standard headline was 'Thank you, comrades').

Not so! The money was paid by central government, as a central government decision, under a law put through by the Tories (against GLC opposition) to take London Transport away from GLC control! But this still didn't stop Thatcher citing the pay-out as yet another reason to abolish the GLC.

What the Labour LT board members should do is pay over the compensation money to the miners.



Black caucuses can support working class

NALGO strike

By Helen Rigby

NALGO's dispute with Sheffield City Council is now in its eleventh week. The number on indefinite strike has now reached 750. 50 members of the Treasury Department, 20 members of Family and Community Services, and 25 members of the Employment Department have been brought out at various stages over the last few weeks.

As has been the case throughout the dispute, NALGO's NEC have been prepared to back small-scale industrial action, but has refused requests such as that made by FCS for a ballot on all-out strike action.

It seems the NEC are more concerned about the consequences of paying 60% strike pay than they are in endorsing a strategy for victory in the dispute.

Negotiations have been continuing and some concessions have been dragged from the council. They are now prepared to concede that the introduction of new technology must be done by agreement, but there are still inadequate safeguards should both sides fail to agree.

This week was essentially crunch time for the dispute. The council negotiators have made it quite clear that they are unprepared to budge any further on the status quo issue and refuse to negotiate on questions of health and safety and redeployment of staff until NALGO accept

their terms on status quo.

In response to this stand by the council, NALGO negotiators have requested that they be given a degree of flexibility in negotiations — a request we should be wary of because it could mean that NALGO can advance no further on the status quo issue and that negotiations should be addressed to the questions of health and safety, redeployment and regrading, where they feel large gains could be made.

Activists argue that NALGO had complete status quo in the old agreements and that this could be won again if NALGO were prepared to increase pressure on the council.

To some degree this was agreed by the branch at a special meeting of all branch members, held on Monday, 19th. A motion to return to work, proposed by the Education management, and one calling for flexibility in negotiations were heavily defeated and two resolutions from the strikers, one reiterating our main demand of including status quo until agreement is reached, and the other proposing a shopping list of escalation should talks break down, were both passed.

This vote of confidence from the rest of the branch was a boost for those of us who have been out on strike since September. We must make sure that, unlike the support the TUC has given to the miners, our members turn their support into action.

Reinstate the Lairds 43!

By Lol Duffy

CAMELL Lairds strike committee met last Saturday for the first time since being released from Walton Prison, and decided to step up the fight to win back the jobs of the 43 workers, sacked for fighting for the right to work.

A mass picket of the yard was called for Wednesday November 21, the date of a tide high enough to launch the gas accommodation rig.

Overtime is being worked by the scabs in the yard. There is very little chance of the rig or the naval frigate being removed from the yard without the cooperation of the tug-boat workers.

There has been a picket on the gate at Lairds every day

since the jailings, but it has to be said that the support has been minimal and the scabs continue to go into work.

The strike committee also decided to contact the shop stewards committees in all British Shipbuilders yards to ask that they call mass meetings of their members to allow us to address them and call for support in the form of action in line with national lay delegate conference and union decisions to oppose enforced redundancies with strike action and occupations.

There is no doubt that we have been let down by the scabs in Cammell Lairds, but what is even worse is that we are being let down by the rest

of the shipyards by their inaction.

We are now going to attempt to reverse their attitude in our 21st week of action.

The strike committee was due to meet again on Thursday, 22nd, to assess the response to the previous day's mass picket and the response from other yards.

It's up to the rest of the labour movement to get their fingers out and give support to the sacked Lairds workers.

Messages of support and donations to: Lol Duffy, Cammell Laird Strike Committee, 3 St James Court, Victoria Road, Wallasey.

PROFITS AND POVERTY

Seeds of class war

America's economy seems very strong at the moment. But trouble is in store.

Budget deficits are likely to reach 200 billion plus in the next few years.

Last year, interest payments on the national debt were \$111 billion. The deficit was \$172 billion and has grown by \$100 billion over the last few months. By

1989, annual interest payments alone will be \$200 billion.

Whilst in general American liberals have opted for 'growth first and distribution second' policies, some are growing concerned about the probable social consequences of this situation. One columnist wrote 'I think we may be sowing the seeds of class war.'

Third World in US

More than two million people in the US are destitute — without homes, without incomes, without anything. In the capital, Washington, for example, around 5,000 to 10,000 people are homeless.

According to the conservative Financial Times (October 25), 'the poor just keep on getting

poorer'.

'Crossing from a white area into an Indian reservation in Montana, for example, is like moving from the First to the Third World in a few seconds.'

'Parts of Appalachia look like backward developing countries — only the population is predominantly white.'

35 million poor

A right-wing columnist in the US recently claimed that 'American capitalism is the most efficient anti-poverty machine in the world'.

He was contesting recent claims by US bishops that poverty is widespread in the country.

The facts support the bishops. 35 million people or 15.2% of the population, are officially categorised as poor in the US. One-third of blacks in the US are officially poor. Some experts put the total

figure in poverty closer to 40 million.

A report in the Observer (November 18) describes a scene in America's big cities.

'You cannot walk a block in a major city centre without being approached by a beggar. One sits on the ground with the sign, legend 'I'm hungry' scrawled on a board tied round his neck; another shoves a dirty plastic cup under your nose; a third calls for money from a heated grate where he lies

Perks for bosses

A RECENT report from Labour Research (summarised in SO 204) showed that top managers' salaries are rising much faster than average wages.

Their fringe benefits are increasing fast, too. A recent survey (summarised in the Financial Times, October 11) shows that 29% of managers have share option schemes. It was only 4% in 1974.

78% get free use of a company car, 63% get subsidised lunches and 32% get free telephone or free private medical insurance — only 30% did in 1974.

Other perks — life assurance schemes, bonuses, low interest loans, etc — have also become more common.

Advertisement

WORKERS Socialist REVIEW

No. 4, out now, includes articles on Afghanistan, on the Northern Ireland Protestants and on the theory of imperialism in the light of the South Atlantic war.

Back the miners

GENERAL STRIKE!



75p plus postage from PO Box 13 London N1

Labour Against the Witch-hunt AGM 1984

Saturday December 8: registration from 11.30am at County Hall, London SE1

The meeting will review the year's work, consider future activities, and elect a Secretariat for the coming year. Make sure your Labour Party or trade union organisation is represented

Contact: Keith Lichman, LAW secretary, 11 Wilderton Rd, London N16.

Socialist Organiser

Unions unite with claimants

By Steve Battlemuch, CPSA, DHSS South Notts

MONDAY November 26 is Social Security Action Day. On that day benefits are

updated for Britain's claimants. The day will see, however, a major rally in London

and local activities to protest at the continuing attacks on the social security system.

Since the Tories were first elected in 1979 there have been cuts of over £6 billion in social security benefits.

Cuts are in the pipeline and it is widely expected that Norman Fowler's "reviews" into the social security system will produce even more cutbacks on service to claimants and staffing levels.

The ratio of staff to claimants on supplementary benefit sections has altered from 1:91 in 1979 to 1:131 in 1983.

The fight against these cuts is growing. DHSS trade unions (CPSA and SCPS) have been active for a long time, not only in opposition to job cuts but also in opposition to attacks on claimants.

Successes

There has been successful industrial action in many local offices against cuts, understaffing and against fraud snoopers.

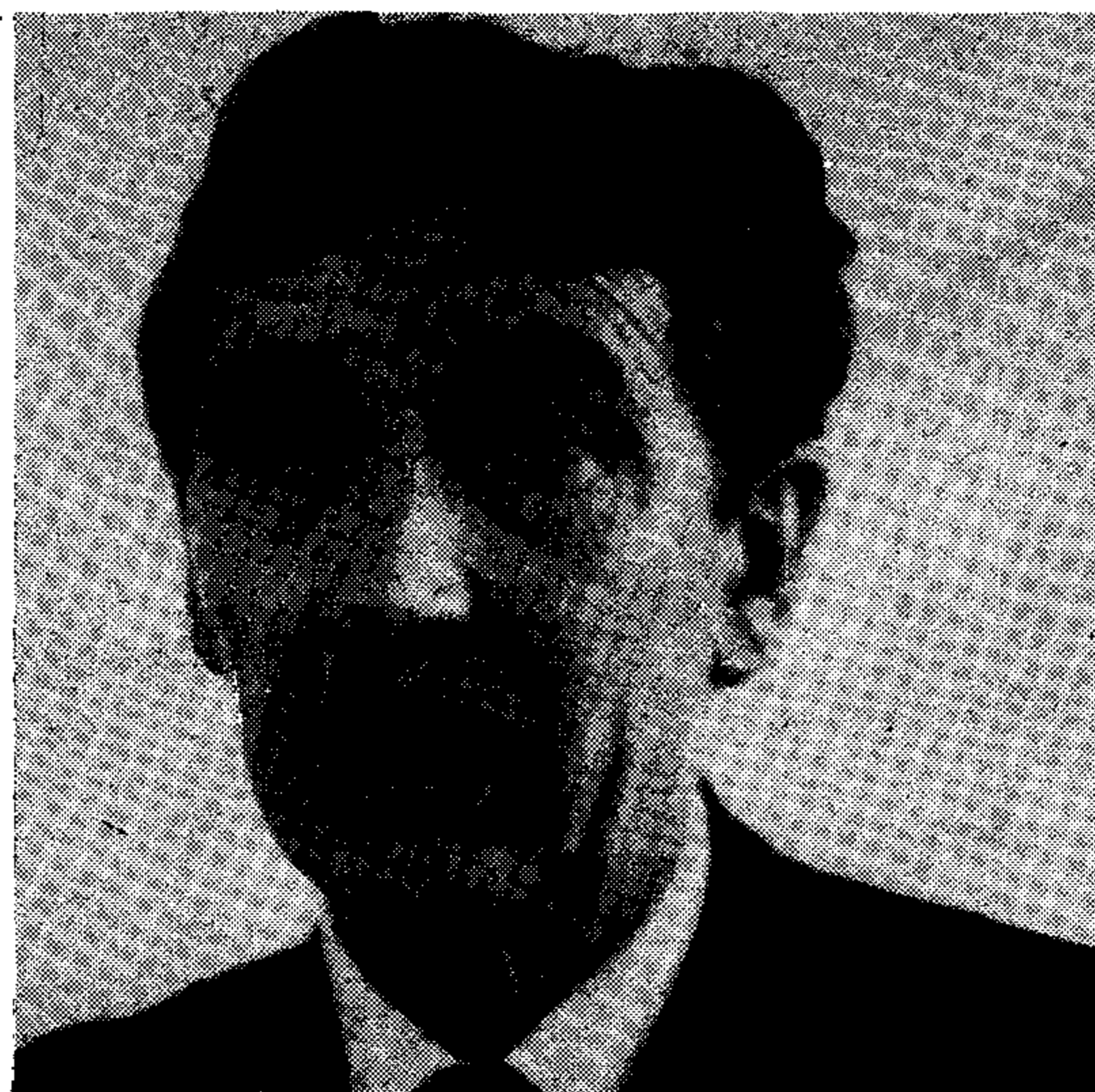
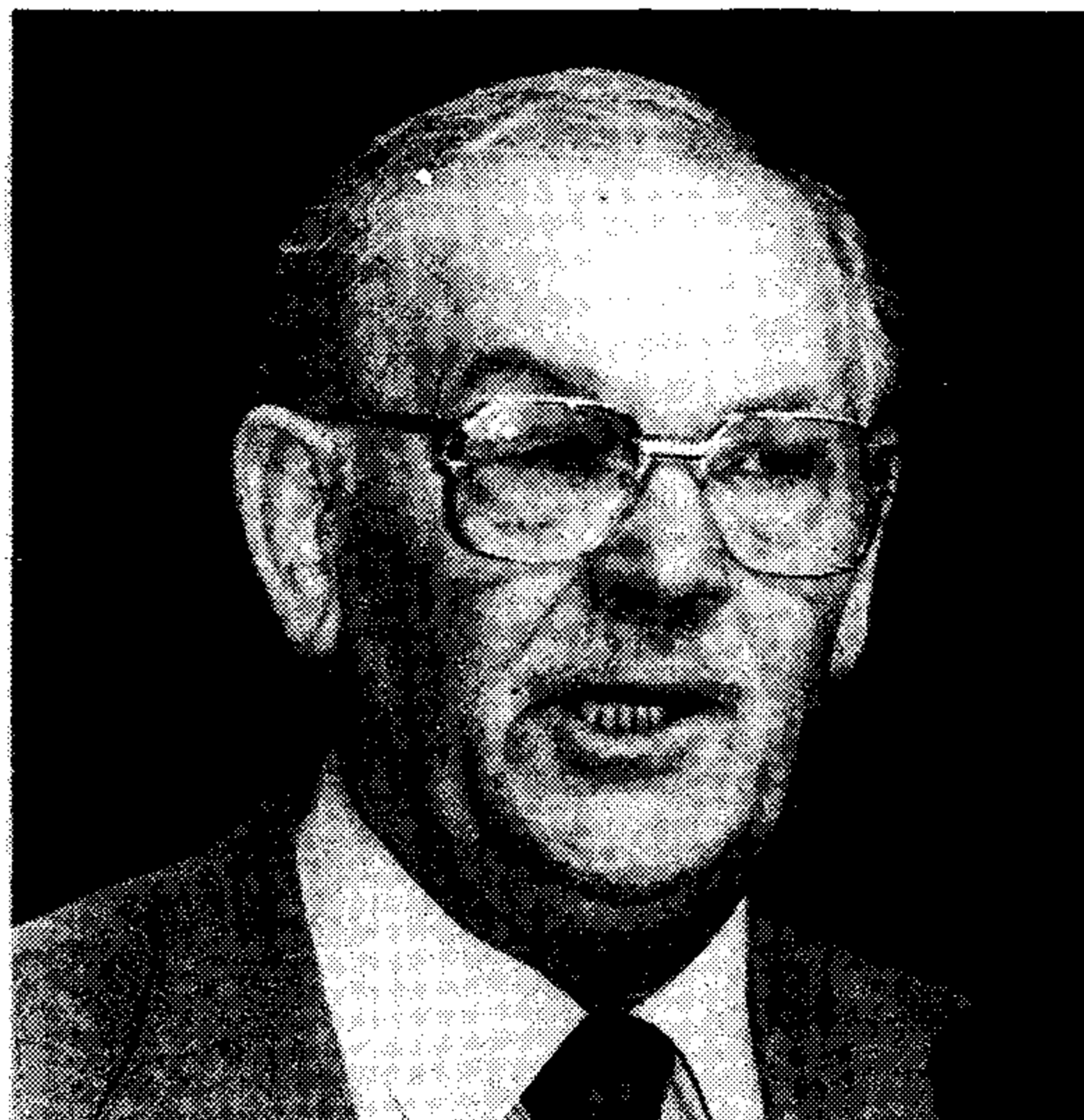
CPSA and SCPS have also helped establish a campaign called Action for Benefits along with many claimants organisations, the best of which appears to be the National Campaign Against Social Security Cuts.

At a time when the Tories continue to turn the screw on claimants and staff alike a serious joint campaign has every possibility of being built.

Claimants and unions have decided to unite and fight. The rally is at Central Hall, Westminster at 12.30 p.m. on November 26, with Michael Meacher MP, Rodney Bickerstaffe, NUPE, and a representative from the NUM Women's Support Group among the speakers.

The National Campaign Against Social Security Cuts can be contacted c/o Ivan Fears, 2 Jesmond Road, Newcastle-upon-Tyne NE2 4TQ, tel 0632-812242.

Action for Benefits can be contacted c/o SCPS, 124-130 Southwark Street, London SE1 0TU, tel 01-928 9671.



Three architects of defeat: (from left to right) Duffy, AUEW; Hawley and Evans (both TGWU)

Architects of defeat

By Jim Denham

THE Austin-Rover pay strike appears to have ended after two weeks and it looks as though the company has succeeded in imposing their "10% over two years" package.

Tuesday's mass meetings at the Cowley Body and Assembly Plants effectively killed the strike. It is now almost a foregone conclusion that the Longbridge workers will decide to return now that the other large plant has gone back.

But the strike need not have failed. Longbridge and Cowley, which comprise the overwhelming majority of Austin Rover workers, were solid for the first week and could have carried the day, even without support from the small plants. And, in fact, all the signs were that the small plants would have supported the action given a clear, united lead from the officials.

Within the first few days of the strike workers at Swindon, Llanelli, Castle Bromwich and elsewhere joined the strike, only to return, once the divisions at the top of their unions became apparent.

The blame for the collapse of the action must therefore be laid squarely at the feet of the union leaderships. Even before the action began, AUEW officials like Ken Cure were recommending acceptance and attacking the strike as "a

waste of time".

When the company obtained its High Court injunction against the strike the AUEW lost no time in repudiating the action, while the EETPU went so far as to officially instruct its members back to work.

Militancy

Despite the demoralisation and confusion that the AUEW and EETPU caused, the level of militancy in the two big plants remained remarkably high.

Electricians at Longbridge and Cowley voted to defy the return to work instructions and honoured picket lines until Monday. But with the

shop stewards organisation at both Longbridge and Cowley still relatively weak and ramshackle after years of defeat and betrayal under the Michael Edwardes regime, the treachery of the officials was bound to seriously undermine rank and file solidarity.

The TGWU, AUEW-TASS, and the other unions who refused to comply with the High Court, and repudiate the strike, nevertheless failed to give a clear and unambiguous statement of official support for the action. In this situation it was almost inevitable that the strike would collapse, despite the vote to stay out, taken by delegates from the plants at the Joint Nego-

tiating Committee meeting last weekend.

The lessons of the strike are clear. A major fight now needs to be launched to get rid of the traitors who lead the AUEW and the EETPU. AUEW members at Longbridge who were drawn into activity on the picket line are now planning a systematic intervention into the branches, as part of a campaign to oust their right wing leaders at local and national level.

Shop-floor

Perhaps more important are the tasks that need to be taken up at shop floor level. Picketing was very badly organised and there was virtually no preparation before the start of the action. At Longbridge, this meant that picketing the numerous plant gates was left to a few

hundred activists and the organisation of flying pickets to depots and the smaller plants was more-or-less out of the question.

It was also noticeable that many of the pickets were not from the 250-strong Joint Shop Stewards Committee, but were young militants with no previous experience of trade union activity.

The "stay-at-home" stewards (not to mention a few who scabbed), must be replaced by the activists who proved their worth during the strike.

Despite the failure of the action, and the inevitable temporary demoralisation that will follow, the strike could provide the basis to rebuild an effective shop floor organisation in the plants that will provide the basis for future victories.

Inside the scab pits

By John Bloxam

AT Warsop Main (North Derbyshire), scabs arrived ten minutes early at the end of their shift at the bottom of the shaft. They were told that if they did it again they would be "back on the picket lines".

Any objections? If so, they were mockingly told that they could see "the union".

Sacked for little reason, and 'the union' has just shrugged its shoulders.

More and more, the strike is not just about jobs but the survival of effective trade-unionism.

There have been persistent rumours that some new scabs are being forced to sign written undertakings renouncing further trade union activity, and even accepting less concessionary coal.

In pits where scabs are a majority, NUM officials have worked with management in trying to recruit new scabs. In Lee Hall (Staffs) they have also openly organised to get scabs to withdraw from the political levy.

In the Notts coalfield, 3000 are now reported to have done this.

Frustration has spilled over into fighting between the new and old scabs.

40 were sacked at Shirebrook for fighting underground. Ambulances had to be called for those injured in similar circumstances in Bolsover. Scabs fought on the bus crossing the picket line at Warsop Main.

But much more common has

been violence by scabs against strikers — unreported in the media and with minimal police response.

Just one incident last week — a minor one compared to many. After some miners from the village of Rhodensia started scabbing at Shireoaks pit, striker Paul Sherwood was attacked in the street and had his nose broken.

Company unionism, Tory politics, violence against trade unionists — it's a world many American workers already face. It's the price of defeat, and it exists now, at least temporarily, where there has been scabbing.

Pit managers are now beginning to say that existing gas and dust safety levels are "too tough".

These facts have shaken up some of those who had decided

to start strike-breaking. Ignored in the NCB's propaganda and shunned by the media, a number of miners have come back out on strike.

They are a plus to the strike and a blow to the Coal Board.

The NUM leadership rightly want to see this movement increase. Arthur Scargill put it very clearly on Friday night, at the rally in Wrexham, North Wales:

"I appeal to every single miner at Bersham and Point of Ayr, even at this late hour, to come out on strike with us. We will be poor and there will be hardships, but those who scab on this union will be stained until the end of time.

"If you come out now, this movement will forgive you, but if you continue to work there will be no forgiveness at the end."

FUND


A much better response this week to our appeal for funds.

Nottingham SO sent a cheque for £82 — £5 from Mark Cheesbrough, £30 from Mark's flea-market stall, and £47 from extra paper sales and small donations. The covering note says that they divided up the money from the flea market stall, £25 going to the South Notts miners' strike committee.

Bev Wood, a regular contributor to our fund effort sent another £1. Thanks also to Patrick Blandford, £7.50; Sarah Cotterill, £5; Richard Bayley, £3; Patrick Murphy, £10.

But we're still £197.32 short of our special interim £800 target to get our regular budget back in balance before we can start building up our premises fund again.

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


Join the Labour Party.
Write to: The Labour Party, 150 Walworth Road, London SE17 1JT.
Subscription is £7 per year, £2 unwaged, 50p OAPs.