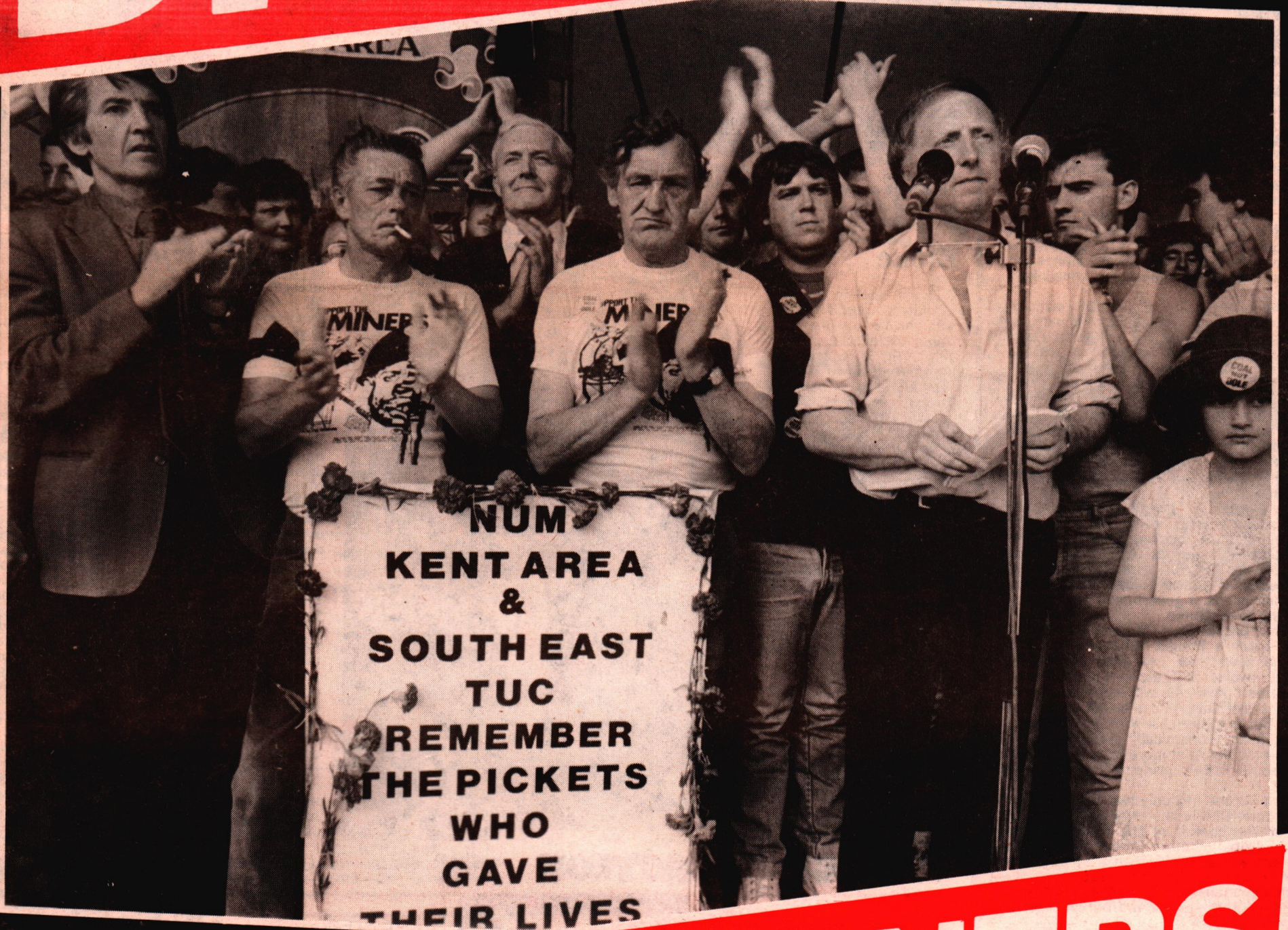


ON **A** *Socialist* **ACTION** **A** *Soc*

DIG DEEP



FOR THE MINERS

Socialist ACTION

Another EEC flop

LAST WEEK'S Fontainebleau meeting of the EEC heads of government completes the round of summits of the western capitalist states. The economic and political agreements reached at these meetings are evident.

Above all the last four years have emphatically confirmed the unchallengeable supremacy of the United States within the 'Western Alliance'.

From the point of view of the interests of the West European allies the economic policies of the United States become more scandalous everyday. Yet another twist was given last week when a joint committee of the US Congress voted to lift the 30 per cent tax paid by foreign investors in US bonds.

Even the *Financial Times* referred to this as a 'blatant' attempt to increase still further the flow of foreign capital into the United States.

The best estimates are that by 1985 or early 1986 the United States, for the first time since the First World War, will become a net debtor nation. The richest state on earth is now becoming a net importer of capital even from third world countries!

For the West European states the consequences are clear — and formed the backdrop to the summit. The highest estimate of economic growth for Western Europe for the next two years, made by the OECD, are 2.3 per cent per year. The US economy is growing at more than twice that rate — largely due to capital inflows from abroad.

The much discussed EEC Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) which formed the crux of the budget compromise is also not able to take the strain of the heightening farm price war with the United States. The soaring costs of the CAP are due to the fact that in competition on foreign markets the productivity of US agriculture allows it to undersell its EEC rivals. Hence the soaring European butter mountains, wine lakes, etc.

And what is the policy of the EEC heads of state — those to whom Neil Kinnock and increasing sections of the Labour left look for a 'Euro-reflationary' economic package to break the links with the United States? Their policy was summed up in the Conservative government's document 'Europe — the Future' — which reportedly received a strong welcome from Kohl and Mitterrand. This stated simply 'The US will remain central to European security and the management of East-West relations, and no less so in the management of the problems of world economy and trade.'

In other words if Reagan decides to sit on us we will grin and bear it. For, as the paper also concludes, 'influence does not last if not backed by the necessary resources.' As it is the United States which has the real power the EEC countries fall obediently into place like the tame poodles their heads of government are increasingly coming to resemble.

With that background the detailed negotiations on Britain's budget rebate which captivated the newspaper headlines here really don't matter two hoots. Thatcher's two thirds refund on British payments will look 'good' if the extravagances of the CAP can be cut back, 'bad' if it can't. But in either case Western Europe is going to remain economically stagnant — and that means the figure of more than four million unemployed in Britain grinding remorselessly upwards.

Western Europe has only two choices in the years to come. One is austerity and militarisation under the banner of the United States, 'Western Europe' or more probably both. The other is actually embarking on a struggle for socialism in Europe as a whole — a social revolution against capitalism in Western Europe and a political revolution against the bureaucracy in the East.

That wasn't exactly on the agenda of the EEC summit. But it should form the agenda of the European workers movement in the years ahead.

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Needed — a national Labour march for the NUM

MACGREGOR and Thatcher's campaign to create a 'drift back to work' by the miners after the NCB- NUM negotiations broke down has failed. There is no significant increase in the number of miners working.

REDMOND O'NEILL looks at the new tactics the government is following after its failure to break the solidarity of the NUM.

The break up of the negotiations with the NUM by MacGregor and Thatcher has produced a new wave of solidarity action with the miners and removed many hesitations in the labour movement. The rail unions at last have a really effective boycott operated by their members around the Ravenscraig, Llanwern and increasingly round the power stations.

The message has begun to sink in: this will be a long and bitter struggle which neither side can afford to lose. Only in this framework is it possible to deal with the manoeuvres and tactics of the Coal Board and government.

Their response to the new wave of solidarity from rail workers, regional TUCs and the Labour Party has been to start raising the flag of 'negotiations' again — negotiations not to end the pit closure programme but in a new effort to confuse and demobilise solidarity.

where the government can attempt to duplicate the divide between strikers and scabs in the NUM in the trade union movement as a whole, thereby fundamentally dividing the labour movement.

This is of immense significance for the Tories' tactics, because a really fundamental division in the labour movement is precisely the necessary precondition for any serious talk of using the anti-union laws against the NUM.

These laws have not been used so far because taking the NUM to court was more likely to galvanise even working miners into support for their union and its funds. The division in the TUC and the hardening out of the scabbing minority in the NUM makes such a response less likely.

In fact it is already clear that Len Murray and company are being offered an excuse for treachery to the miners by reference to



defence of jobs in steel.

The coming weeks are going to see an escalation of the stakes in this struggle and not movement by the Tories or NCB towards any kind of compromise. 'Negotiations' are tactics in the war — not a plan for ending it.

It is for this reason that a national response by the labour movement has

become more and more vital. The TUC is standing aside, and through the steel committee is now scabbing on the miners. These 'new realists' must be brought to account at the TUC congress in September.

But, in the meantime, initiatives to draw together the immense movement of solidarity with the miners in a national show of strength is the best possible response to the manoeuvres of the government and the continued repression by the police.

The Labour Party's decision to organise a national campaign to support the miners, although belated, is to be welcomed. But Benn's call for a national Labour Party demonstration was not put to the vote at the National Executive Committee. Instead the NEC called for a campaign of local rallies, demonstrations and so on.

This is not good enough. Regional TUCs have already carried through a successful series of local actions. What is needed is not a repeat of these, on a lower level, but a national action which can draw together and demonstrate all of the enormous solidarity which has built up behind the miners' struggle over the past four months.

This would deal a terrific blow to Thatcher's efforts to isolate the NUM and split the labour move-

ment. It would force the TUC leadership to reveal where it stands in the struggle. It would help create the head of steam necessary to fight for this year's TUC congress to reverse Murray's scabbing. And it would be a clear cut reply to the efforts to isolate and slander Arthur Scargill.

Local activities are no substitute for this — and the Labour Party NEC knows it. The only explanation for their refusal to call such action is that Neil Kinnock is terrified of having to lead a militant mass demonstration with Arthur Scargill at his side.

Nutshell

Labour's campaign to support the miners should be supported and used to build up the constituencies' links with the unions, to win young miners to the Young Socialists and to mobilise the women's sections around the women's support movement.

But most importantly, it must be used as a springboard to redouble the campaign through every body of the unions and party for Labour to call the first national demonstration of support for the miners.

The next edition of the paper will appear on 27 July.

Bloke

Even though it was MacGregor and Thatcher who broke up the last round of talks, a central aim of the latest calls for negotiations is to isolate Scargill. The *Financial Times* explained: 'The government and the National Coal Board are now, almost publicly, attempting to peel Mr Arthur Scargill away from his colleagues on the NUM executive.'

We are even told that James Curran, deputy chairman of the Coal Board, admires Mick McGahey so much that he wanted to write his biography!

The Tories' divide and rule tactic is not limited to the NUM, it extends to the labour movement as a whole. Its most important support is the right wing of the TUC, and Bill Sirs in particular.

The decision of the TUC Steel Committee to refuse any serious agreement with the NUM has created the conditions



A PIECE OF THE ACTION

GORMAC

WHY THE NUM FIGHTS FOR STEEL



A STRIKE can be tragic and glorious, bitter and beautiful. A strike can bring out the qualities of courage and fear, love and hate, that lie buried deep in a person's soul. Such a strike is the miners strike.

The hate is for the system and government which threaten the jobs of miners, steel workers, rail workers and their families. Also for the police who implement the Tory anti-picket laws with unrestrained violence.

There is also the hate for our general secretary Bill Sirs as he continues to scab on the Triple Alliance agreement, and refuses to build for any support for the miners.

The courage is contained in the three Hazell lorry drivers in South Wales who were sacked because they would not drive coal lorries through Llanwern picket line, for those small groups of steel workers who take their jobs in their hands every day of every week by publishing the *Steel Sheet* calling for a ban on handling of scab coal and building support for the miners struggle.

There's the courage in the miners and their wives who make up the picket lines, go short of food and withstand police violence to defend all our futures.

The miners' fight is your fight. Without coal the need for steel, gas and electricity will disappear. Unemployment will blight our steel, rail and power industries.

Government funding of mass country wide police action against the

By Ray Davies
ISTC Llanwern

Steel + coal = jobs

miners could have secured the future of coal and steel if it had been invested instead.

The huge £17 billion arms bill is crippling our country. If half of the sum was redirected into steel, coal, health and social services, our troubles would soon be over.

Closure of coking coal pits in Scotland and South Wales is inextricably linked to closure plans for Llanwern and Ravenscraig.

Llanwern steel furnaces have been running longer than ever before,

ON MONDAY the steel unions rejected the NUM's call to stop steel production. Bill Sirs, general secretary of the ISTC, said the miners' demand was 'not practical'. It would be damaging to the industry and 'unacceptable' to his members.

But the truth is that the NUM has defended the jobs of steelworkers far more than Bill Sirs ever has. The mining and steel industries are inseparable.

On the morning Sirs was making his declaration *South Wales Steel Sheet*, produced by South Wales steel workers, was spelling out at Llanwern why ISTC members should support the NUM.

We are reprinting the article by RAY DAVIES, ISTC Llanwern, which replied to British Steel and Bill Sir's case.

CAROL TURNER looks at how Bill Sirs sold his members down the river, and the support the NUM gave in the 1980 steel strike, and how Sirs can be defeated.



Man of jelly

WHEN BILL SIRs announced on Monday that the ISTC was going to accept scab coal and iron ore into the steel plants he said, 'We will protect the jobs of miners and steelworkers by ensuring the continuity of the supply of materials.'

Given Sirs' record the idea that he defends anyone's job is one of the sickest jokes around. He is the union leader with the unique record of selling more than half the jobs in his industry.

The road to disaster started on 3 December 1979 when the ISTC submitted a 20 per cent pay claim. British Steel replied with an insult — a two per cent offer conditional on productivity strings.

Less than a week later BSC followed it up with an announcement 52,000 jobs were to be cut. On 2 January 1980 there was an almost total walkout by steelworkers. The battle for steelworkers' jobs was on.

In contrast to the ISTC's role today, the miners, and Arthur Scargill in particular, were the defence of the steelworkers.

At the end of January Scargill took the stage at the ISTC's rally in Sheffield to declare, 'I've been accused of interfering in the steel strike. I plead guilty.' The applause was deafening.

He went on, 'They say refrain from secondary picketing. What they mean is refrain from effective picketing.'

'They can introduce whatever laws they like but we'll picket whatever targets are necessary to



win this strike. If steel workers win against the Tories it's a victory for all of us. You can count on the support of the Yorkshire miners.'

They weren't just words. All steel was boycotted from being bought into the pits. In Kent and other coalfields miners lost wages as work was held back.

Then Bill Sirs followed Scargill onto the platform. His 'let's get round the negotiating table' call was drowned out by the audience.

Two days later, on 26 January, Lord Denning ruled that secondary picketing was illegal. Nonetheless two days later 200,000 Welsh workers struck in defence of jobs in steel, mining and rail, bringing Wales to a halt.

South Wales was fighting for its survival with 11,000 jobs immediately on the line at Port Talbot and Llanwern. The miners voted to go on indefinite strike. There were moves to a rail strike. The direct threat of a general strike in Wales to defend jobs existed.

Then the TUC stepped in with Sirs' support — halting the strike action

and instead calling for a day of action for 14 May — months away. The solidarity moves collapsed.

By Easter 1980 Sirs' misleadership of the strike and the TUC's lack of solidarity, had brought the steel workers to defeat. The strike lasted for 13 weeks. By 1981 the MacGregor Corporate Plan for Steel was in place — the forerunner for MacGregor's new run down proposals for the mines.

By 1982 BSC employed just over 100,000 workers — 60 per cent down on a decade earlier. By 1983 half the jobs had gone in the industry. The ISTC under Sirs put up no fight.

And this is the union leader who now claims to be giving advice to the NUM on how to save jobs!

The real way forward for the steel workers was being spelt out by the militants in South Wales last week. Continuing the struggle which Bill Sirs and the TUC broke up in 1980.

Mass picketing must be mounted at Llanwern and the other steel plants.

The TGWU must be made to hold to its Monday promise to block road support. It has the power

to boycott the scab firms whose lorries make the steel run, and set up pickets at other places they deliver to, to make sure the actions a success. But in doing that remember that it was George Wright, TGWU regional secretary in Wales, who played a key role in the 1980 sell out.

There is support for the miners in the South Wales steel plants — the militants there confirm it. But officials are blocking mass meetings. Fighting for mass meetings in the plants is a way to begin to get over solidarity even if it is a minority view at first.

The steel blockade is beginning to bite. Even the 109 lorries BSC was using in its South Wales convoys on Tuesday could still only move less than half the steel plants' needs for iron ore.

It is the steel workers combined with the NUM who will defend the steel plants — not the BSC management. If the steel workers support the miners the defeat of 1980 can be undone.

For the future not only of the NUM but of the steel workers.

**SOLIDARITY WITH THE NUM!
STOP ALL STEEL!**

NORTH WEST TUC

Day of Action for the Miners Friday 13 July

demonstration starts from Mancunian Way
assemble 12.30 — march begins 1.30

Free Trade Hall Rally starts 2.30
speakers include Tony Benn
and Arthur Scargill

Kent women - "we're not giving in"

AS THE miners' strike enters its seventeenth week the hardship being faced by the miners and their families is deepening. In many areas it is the organisation of women around the strike that is doing most to alleviate this, and ensure that the strike continues.

JUDE WOODWARD spoke to **KAY SUTCLIFFE**, from the Aylesham support group in Kent, about how the organisation of women in Kent has helped the strike.

IN AYLESHAM the hardship is not nearly as bad as we have been hearing about elsewhere. Maybe that is because people are keeping it to themselves, but I think it is because we are such a close community and the women's group is working so well.

ding it so easy. There are small groups in places like Canterbury and Dover where they have just not been able to get so well organised.

On the Dover march we had delegations of women from South Wales, Doncaster and Nottingham. Last Sunday I met some women from Staffs, and we found out that they were not working in the same way as us and not really doing so well.

The Staffs women explained that there were 1300 men on strike at their pit, but they could only get six women to come to their meetings. It seems unbelievable.

I think it may be because they are not getting so much help from the NUM as we are. We are still working very closely with the NUM locally. They support us, because

they know that what we do helps them.

In Staffs they have been finding it very hard to get money. The NUM does not help them out with transport for example.

Down here, when we go to meetings we bring back good collections. The NUM know that, so they help us out with the transport. But it seems that this isn't the same everywhere, and the level of organisation varies a lot from place to place.

Perhaps it is to do with attitudes. I think up north men are still inclined to think that women should stay at home, and so they don't encourage the women so much. Down here it is generally accepted that this is what we do, and the men help us do it. I've never heard any man in this village say that women should stay at home.

We are going to try to coordinate things a bit more in this area, because it doesn't seem very fair that we are getting so much as we are a well-organised group, and other groups get much less because there are so few women. Up to now the

groups in Kent have worked individually, but we need to coordinate more. In Aylesham we don't even know what women in Deal or Ramsgate are doing, even though they are so close.

Perhaps that's because we are so busy. We need to do more to bring women in from other areas. It is easier for us because it's a close community and there is always someone to help with child care or whatever.

We also need more national coordination. But that would have to come through the NUM. It is exceedingly difficult to coordinate just in this area, let alone more than that. But if the NUM set up a national office, and organised things from Sheffield then I think we would work towards more national coordination. Then we'd learn from the ways different groups of women are doing things.

We will need to organise, because the strike is going to go on. After sixteen weeks you don't suddenly give up and decide to go back to work. Our morale is high. We're not giving in.

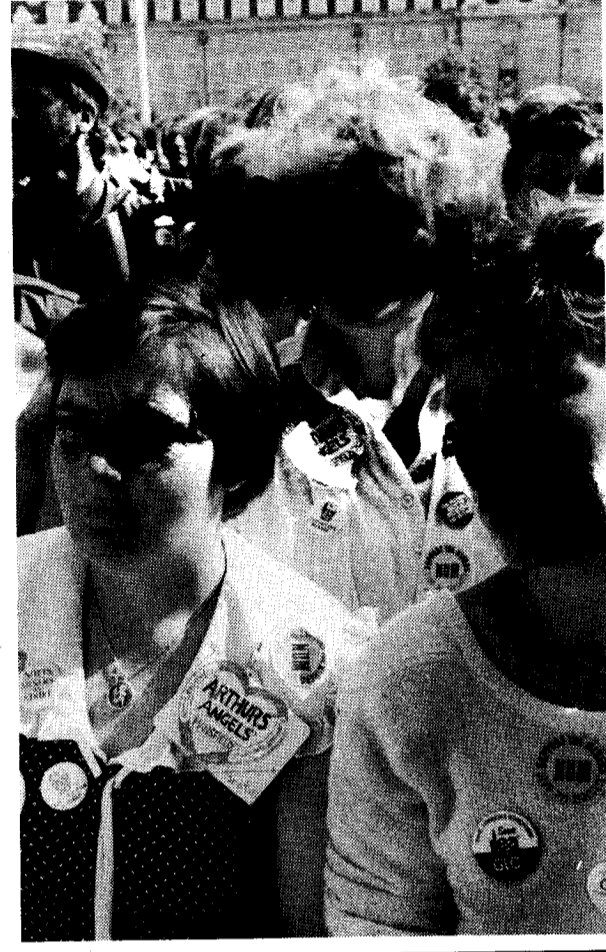


Photo: GM COOKSON

Miners' Support Committee

Leicester
56 St Stephens Rd.
Tel: Leics 552386

Coventry
Donations to: D Jones, 11 De Compton Close, Keresley, Coventry.

Bristol
c/o TGWU, Transport House, Room 1, Victoria St, Bristol BS1

Manchester
c/o FTAT, 37 Anson Rd, Victoria Park, Manchester 14

Preston
c/o John Parkinson, Trade Union Centre, St Mary's St North, Preston

Huddersfield
c/o Friendly and Trades Club, Northumberland St, Huddersfield

Vauxhall
c/o Joan Twelves/Greg Tucker, 1 Alverston Hse, Kennington Park Estate, London SE11

Southall
c/o 14 Featherstone Rd, Southall, Middx.

Birmingham
c/o Trade Union Resource Centre, 7 Frederick St, Hockley

Ealing
c/o West London Trade Union Club, 33 Action High St, London W3

Southampton
c/o NUPE District Office, 93 Leigh Rd, Eastleigh, Hants

Cardiff
Room 219, Transport House, 1 Cathedral Rd, Cardiff. Tel: 0222 31176

Hounslow
c/o Ian MacDonald, 220 Wellington Road South, Hounslow, Middx. Tel: 01-577 3429

Medway
c/o Vince Drongin, Medway Towns Trades Union Council, 19 Randall Rd, Chatham, Kent.

Bury
c/o Brian Marden, 061-764 9648

Oxford
c/o Claimants Union, Princes St, Oxford

Leeds
c/o District Labour Party, 9 Queens Sq, Leeds 2

Lewisham
c/o Labour and Trade Union Club, Limes Grove, Lewisham, London

Haringey
c/o Unemployed Workers' Centre, 28 High Rd, Tottenham, London N17. Tel: 801 5629

York
c/o Terry, 3 Scaife St, York. Tel: 0904 25223.

Brent
375 Willesden High Road, London NW10

Birkenhead
Trade Union & Unemployed Resources Centre, Argyle St South (next to Central Stn), Birkenhead. Tel: 051-647 3904.

Leamington
Meets Sunday 7.30pm, Stoneleigh Arms, Clement St.

Militant against black sections

SINCE the national black section conference a few weeks ago **Bob Lee** has taken up a lot of space in the *Militant* newspaper denouncing the idea of the black section of the Labour Party.

In this article, **MIKE WONGSAM**, a member of the black section steering committee from Manchester, takes up some of the *Militant's* arguments.

IN TRYING to unleash a scathing criticism of the movement to set up black sections, Bob Lee in fact ties himself into the most amazing logical contortions. Instead of applying the Marxist method of contradictions (and he claims to be a Marxist), he instead uses a contradictory method.

Deep-rooted

He starts by identifying black people as the victims of a deep-rooted and specific type of oppression (double oppression, as he calls it), and then proceeds to transform the victim into the criminal simply for daring to do something about that oppression.

For make no mistake, Bob Lee never once concedes that black people have actually to struggle inside the party in order to make it responsive to the needs and concerns of the black community. An example of Bob Lee's reasoning is when he

says: 'Many of the filthy prejudices that thrive in the cess-pool of capitalism — constantly played up and reinforced by a powerful media — must inevitably rub off on some workers. The labour movement, however, by its very nature, does not base itself on these prejudices, but stands implacably opposed to them.'

Loyalty

And yet earlier he has admitted: 'But the loyalty of black workers has not been returned in kind by the Labour leadership. The right wing of the party have always demonstrated a disgraceful complacency in regard to the special needs of black workers and their lack of involvement in the movement.'

And a little later: 'Labour's 1968 Immigration Act was actually more discriminatory than the previous laws passed by the Tories ... It has been this fundamental failure of Labour governments to combat the rising tide of racism, along with all the other problems that has created tremendous discontent among blacks.'

Why didn't the labour movement, which 'by its very nature' is 'implacably opposed' to racial prejudice call its leaders to account? Why didn't white workers complain of the 'lack of involvement of black people in the labour movement' despite the loyalty of black workers? Our eminent Marxist is at a loss for answers to

these questions. Indeed, all that he is able to offer black people is the all too familiar *Militant* tendency phrasemongering: 'The basic solution to the problems faced by the blacks therefore lies in the labour movement being committed to implement socialist policies.'

Presumably our victims of 'double oppression' must endure philosophically until such time as the benevolent *Militant* tendency gains the leadership of the Labour Party, and in the meantime 'restless natives' who actually constructively challenge the existing status quo must be subjected to searing criticism and violently denounced. For we are treated to the following:

Traditions

'The advocates of this idea (black sections) openly flout the traditions of class unity by demanding the right for blacks to have self-determination within the party ... Marxists, however, must be implacably opposed to the proposal for the establishment of a national organisation of special black sections.'

But he adds: 'As a down-trodden, double-oppressed section of the working class, black workers who have been forced to struggle, even during the boom period of the fifties and sixties, have developed a much higher level of class consciousness than other sections of the workers.'

Black sections: the socialist answer

THE LATEST constitutional debate to break out inside the Labour Party has been around the proposal for the establishment of black sections, open only to the black Afro-Caribbean or Asian descent.

By Bob Lee

It is 1972 to be exact. The Labour Party is in a state of confusion. The black sections are being set up. The party is divided. The black sections are being set up. The party is divided. The black sections are being set up. The party is divided.

Black youth unemployment

Black youth unemployment is a major problem. The black sections are being set up. The party is divided. The black sections are being set up. The party is divided.

Police racialist talk

Police racialist talk is a major problem. The black sections are being set up. The party is divided. The black sections are being set up. The party is divided.

Family divided

Family divided is a major problem. The black sections are being set up. The party is divided. The black sections are being set up. The party is divided.

Special needs ignored

Special needs ignored is a major problem. The black sections are being set up. The party is divided. The black sections are being set up. The party is divided.

Unity is paramount

Unity is paramount is a major problem. The black sections are being set up. The party is divided. The black sections are being set up. The party is divided.

Labour Party Young Socialists ASIAN YOUTH CONFERENCE

Bradford Town Hall, Saturday July 14, Starts 10am.

If this is the case how can a movement of class conscious workers seek to divide and weaken the working class? Simple! cries Bob Lee — they are 'mainly among middle class blacks'.

One must therefore assume that in the current situation of deepening class polarisation, that the black sections movement as presently constituted would have an affinity for the right wing of the labour movement. And furthermore that the right wing would recognise the utility of the black sections as a means of derailing the black movement!

But to all interested observers it seems that on this question it is our eminent Marxist who has an open affinity for the right wing. The problem for Bob Lee, as for the whole bunch, the *Militant*, is their theoretical poverty.

Despite their rhetoric, and their huffing and puffing, they downgrade the struggle for black liberation to the status of a side issue — not realising that especially for the class struggle in Britain, black liberation is an absolutely central aspect.

Unity

The question of class unity is not reducible to organisational homogeneity and socialist policies, but consists of forging that unity through creating the necessary alliances between the different sectors of the oppressed and exploited masses. Contrary to Bob Lee's pronouncements, the actual situation is that as long as black people remain unorganised in the structures of the labour movement there will be

persistent class dis-unity. The self-organisation and self-activity of oppressed sectors of society is a question of absolute principle for the working class. It is the only guarantee that the labour movement can ever be made the political representative of all the oppressed.

In other words, the struggle against racism will only be adopted as a major concern of the labour movement in a meaningful way by black people organising to make it so. If comrade Lee continues to pit himself against the real dynamic of struggle unfolding in the labour movement then the *Militant* will find that they will increasingly come in handy as a tool of the right wing to be used to smash up the forces accumulating on the left — including in the black section.

IRELAND UNFREE



Irish trade unionists for Irish unity

IN THE UNIONS the Loyalist veto is echoed by the refusal of leaders to allow Ireland to be discussed. This year in NALGO, NUPE and ASTMS Irish motions were shuttled away from the conference floor.

But with the publication of a statement by leading Irish trade unionists calling for 'Unity and Independence', there is a chance of turning this situation around.

The Labour Committee on Ireland is producing copies of this statement and, in collaboration with its authors, will be using it as a campaign issue at the TUC and Labour conference. We reprint the declaration here in full.

THE ORGANISATION Trade Unionists for Irish Unity and Independence has been formed by a group of Irish trade unionists, who are committed to work towards the attainment of a united Ireland. As active trade unionists involved on a daily basis in protecting and furthering the interests of Irish workers, we consider that the formation of the group complements our trade union work. We would go further and assert, like James Connolly, that the Irish workers are the incorruptible inheritors of the struggle for Irish freedom.

We are only too aware of the accuracy of Connolly's prediction that partition would destroy the unity of the Irish labour movement. Although it is not always now realised, the Irish Trade Union Congress and Labour Party in 1914 voted almost unanimously to oppose partition, which vote included many Northern delegates.

While recognising the importance of the united Irish Congress of Trade Unions, which we now possess, we believe that the political division of the working class has been disastrous and has been a major impediment to achieving working class goals north and south.

A united working class in a 32 county Ireland could become a dynamic political force, resulting ultimately in the formation of a government pledged to uphold working class interests.

The converse is true. As long as partition remains, the Irish working class will be divided and politically frustrated. The achievement of a united Ireland will therefore contribute to the progress of Irish workers, north and south.

We are also aware of the economic damage inflicted on Ireland by partition and the conflicts that have flowed therefrom. Instead of complementing each other, both parts of Ireland have had their economies distorted, suffered a drain on their resources and economic growth and development has been retarded.

At no time, but especially during a period of recession, should the island of Ireland carry these burdens, as the result has been permanent high unemployment north and south and frequent periods of mass emigration.

We believe that Britain is responsible for the partition of Ireland and its maintenance, including conferring on the Unionists a veto on any constitutional change, thereby resulting in political deadlock.

A change in British policy is needed, and the demand must be made on Britain to declare its intention to disengage from Ireland and hand over sovereignty to the Irish government, while ensuring that all legitimate safeguards are provided for the rights of the Unionists as a minority. They would naturally be involved in discussing the constitutional, political and financial arrangements for a new All-Ireland state.

Having asserted our belief that working towards Irish unity is a logical objective for trade unionists, we have set up 'Trade Unionists for Irish Unity and Independence' to win further support in the Irish trade union and labour movement for our position, to work with those in the British and international trade union and labour movements who are committed to Irish unity and independence, and to seek to increase their numbers.

The group's intention would be to especially ensure a solid and substantial trade union and working class involvement in Ireland in the movement to end partition, thereby contributing to the form that a new united Ireland will take.

Boost for Greens and SPD left

ON THE SURFACE — and when do bourgeois election commentators ever go much deeper in their analysis? — the only winners in the West German Euro-elections were the Greens.

Both the major parties — the Christian Democrats (CDU) and the Social Democrats (SPD) lost several percentage points in comparison to last year's general elections. The Liberal FDP, the junior partner in the right-of-centre West German coalition government, even failed to score the 5 per cent of the popular vote needed to gain representation in the EEC parliament.

The low poll of 55 per cent constitutes a setback for the 'European spirit' and shows that even in West Germany enthusiasm for the EEC is not what it used to be only a few years ago.

By contrast the Greens pushed up their share of the vote from just over 5 per cent in 1983 to just over 8 per cent, thus replacing the FDP as West Germany's third party.

West German politics fundamentally on their own. What is very much at stake, however, is the future of the Bonn government and the future of the SPD, the West German socialist party.

Some press analysts have explained the low SPD vote of 37 per cent as a popular rejection of the

SPD's support for the metalworkers' and printers' campaign for the 35 hour week. That may be good bourgeois propaganda, but is blatant nonsense given the Greens' support for the strike and the general apathy of working-class voters towards the Euro-elections.

In the big cities most affected by the strikes, moreover, the SPD and the Greens generally did better than on average. This was true, for instance, in Frankfurt which is both the headquarters of the IG Metall and was deprived of its two biggest newspapers by the action of the printworkers.

The most significant pointer to West Germany's political future is

not to be found in the Euro poll but in the Saarland — a predominantly Catholic region badly affected by the decline of the mining and steel industries and which has had uninterrupted Christian Democratic government since 1949.

German Benn

In the Saarland the Euro-elections were combined with local elections, thus producing a somewhat higher turn out, and here the local SPD is led by a political figure fast acquiring a reputation as the 'German Tony Benn'. This is Oskar Lafontaine, mayor of the regional capital of Saarbrücken and a member of the SPD's national executive.

Lafontaine is well known as an opponent of the deployment of cruise and Pershing missiles in Europe and was the first leading West German politician to raise the issues of a general strike against missile deployment and the Federal Republic's continued membership of NATO.

In the Saarland the SPD overtook the CDU in the popular vote in the Euro-elections for the first time in post-war history and held the Green vote down to around 5 per cent. This greatly strengthens the hand of those on the left of the SPD who argue, like Lafontaine, that the only road to a return to power in Bonn is that of shifting the SPD determinedly to the left: towards the unions, the peace movement, and the ecology and women's movements.

This will either make the Greens superfluous and rally the millions of disaffected behind a rejuvenated and radicalised SPD, or at least open the door to a 'red-green

alliance' which — even on the evidence of the Euro-poll — has good chances of sweeping the Christian Democrats from power if the demise of FDP liberal coalition partner continues.

The political climate in West Germany is rapidly polarising, cutting away the middle ground on which the broad ideological consensus between the liberal wing of the CDU, the power broking FDP, and the right wing of the SPD has been resting for so long. The much vaunted 'social partnership' between employers, government and unions will not recover from the industrial confrontation over the 35 hour week, even if the mediator's compromise formula of a cut to 38½ hours is accepted as a temporary truce in the class war.

Edifice

The apathy towards the Euro-elections is also an expression of an increasing disaffection with the entire edifice of European-Atlantic integration which has cemented the division of Germany, turned the Federal Republic into a dumping ground for Reagan's missiles, and, as it now turns out, can no longer preserve the prosperity which for so long underpinned West Germany's social peace and political stability.

The FDP is only the first victim of this polarisation. The second victim will be the present leadership of the SPD and its vain attempt to combine hanging on to the programme and images of its previous right wing Schmidt period with trying to appeal to the base of the Greens and the increasingly militant unions. The third victim might well be the Kohl government.

By Günter Minnerup

The real issue in West German politics, however, is not the size of the Green vote — indicative as it is of the size and depth of the disaffection of young voters from 'established party politics'. There is absolutely no prospect of the Green Party rising inexorably from their modest beginnings to governmental power in Bonn.

The press commentators are certainly right when they explain the Greens' good showing by their greater success in motivating and mobilising their political base — so that on a lower overall poll they were bound to do well. Since real political power was not at stake in these elections some SPD voters may also have taken the opportunity to register a protest vote.

The Greens are there as a force to be reckoned with, but they have now pretty much exhausted their growth potential and will not change the face of



38½ hour week!

WEST Germany's bitter metal workers' strike for the 35 hour week ended last week. The official arbitrator, Georg Leber, presented a report recommending reduction of the working week from 40 to 38.5 hours. The report has been accepted by the union leadership of IG Metall and by the employers. It is expected to be accepted in a ballot of metal workers.

The reduction of the basic work week from 40 hours is a success for the metal workers' union given that the employers originally attempted strongly to prevent any reduction of weekly work-

ing time. But a number of features of the deal make it very dangerous for the unions over the long term.

By John Ross

Firstly the 38.5 hours refers only to the average working week in the factory. This means that the bosses can cut the working week for some sections of workers, for example skilled workers, but maintain others on a longer working week. This will have powerful effects in dividing groups of workers.

Secondly the wage increases agreed in the deal — three per cent up to next March and two per cent for the year after that — are not sufficient to keep up with inflation.

Thirdly the union

leadership has conceded that in future reductions in the working week will have to be accompanied by wage cuts. The deal states that any further shortening of working time, which will come up for review in 1986, will have to include 25 per cent of any cuts in hours being financed by wage reductions.

West Germany's most important post-war industrial struggle has therefore gained some ground on paper. But it has left the employers in a powerful position to launch attacks on the workers and union organisation in the factories.

The result is likely to be a further break up of the 'social peace' which has reigned in West Germany since the 1950s.



COUNCILS AGAINST T

THE RECALL Labour local government conference takes place this weekend in Sheffield. It is less than six months to go before Thatcher's budget axe hits the big majority of Labour controlled councils.

The most urgent task of the conference is to organise support for Liverpool council in its confrontation with the government.

But for the larger number of Labour councils that are going to face the government's rate capping next year two basic strategies are being put forward.

The first is Neil Kinnock's declared policy: that Labour councils should do the Tories' dirty work for them by staying within the law and 'humanely' administering the cuts.

The second is that Labour councils must defy the law and refuse to administer the cutbacks.

Within the left a number of tactics for defying the law are being discussed. One of the most widely canvassed is put forward, in a personal capacity, by the leaders of Greenwich, Lambeth, Lewisham and Southwark councils, and by

the deputy leader of the GLC, John McDonnell. This is refusing to set a rate.

Socialist Action asked KEN LIVINGSTONE, leader of the GLC, for his assessment of how many Labour councils are likely to defy the law and why he is opposed to any strategy based on 'majority opposition' — that is Labour councils abandoning office and simply voting down Tory proposals.

CAROL TURNER asked TED KNIGHT, leader of the Lambeth council, to explain his proposals.

'You've got to stay there and fight line by line'

FIRST THERE are those Labour councils which have got a majority of three, four or seven even.

These are almost impossible to mobilise for a vote for an illegal budget because of the scale of penalties against councillors.

In many ways these penalties are worse than those for manslaughter. They are a very powerful deterrent because they hit at your family and they are financial.

A lot of councillors who will go to prison on a point of principle fear that the surcharge penalty under the law will hit at their families and that is what makes them vulnerable.

So the chances of a narrow majority getting a budget through which is illegal are absolutely negligible unless massive public pressure begins to build up.

What you're likely to get is a whole range of councils where, because of Labour defections, rate capped budgets are passed, and then the council leadership have to fight a line by line opposition to any of the cuts which would flow from that budget.

Labour councillors should not in any sense surrender their chairs or leadership positions and go into majority opposition. You should stay as far as you can in control of the council and work with the trade unions to actually block the cuts being made by officers and the Tories.

Surcharges

Because while it will be very easy for the government, with the threat of surcharges, to force rate capped budgets through councils. When it comes to administering the council, devising all the necessary cuts to give expression to that reduced level of expenditure, it is a lot more difficult than it looks.

Those councils like Lambeth, the GLC, Sheffield and so on where the councils have got a real degree of administrative experience about how the building works, and don't just assume it all works because a committee passes a vote, are in a position where I think they can prevent most of the cuts being carried through.

You must stay in there and fight line by line. You work with the trade unions to make certain that if any commissioners are sent in they don't get any cooperation. You try to prevent them entering the building and so on. And you mobilise all the support you can.

Out of that sort of position you cannot foresee the conclusion. There is still

a risk councillors will be surcharged for not having voted for the cuts but it will be a very chaotic period. It would only take a couple of miscalculations by Jenkin and you could have a tremendous reaction.

There are some councils where the Labour majority is so enormous that they should be able to mobilise a vote for refusing a rate capped budget. But that's very few.

By Ken Livingstone

In London you can think of the possibility of that in the ILEA, or in Hackney, or in Southwark or Islington. But these are the only cases I think where the actual chances of getting a majority for an illegal budget deficit. In almost all the others — Haringey, Camden and so on — the majorities just aren't enough.

When we had the vote in January 1982 on whether or not to comply with the House of Lords decision on our fares policy I proposed to the group that we should refuse to increase the fares. We won in the Labour Group by 23 votes to 22. By a near miracle we almost won the vote in the council — because the Tories abstained. We eventually lost by 24 votes to 27.

But whatever the outcome in individual councils I think it's going to accelerate the process of change inside the party. I think you might very well find a large number of people drop out.

Several people I know on the right of the party have made it quite clear that they would never vote for anything that ran a surcharge risk. They are now taking the view that if the government wants to run councils in that way then they don't want to stand for election or will resign when rate capping comes in.

When bitter disputes have occurred in the party in the past, when councils had to take decisions on the Housing Finance Act for example, the split has been between those saying 'this is it, we shall stand and fight', and those saying 'well, there are other things we can do which make it worthwhile to stay within the law and do the best we can.'

In one sense the Rate Capping Bill makes that argument redundant. It's not a question of 'we'll give in on fares', or 'we'll give in on this or that'. The government has got complete control of your total expenditure.

You either stay there and fight or you simply administer cuts. Within that situation there isn't really a role for a Labour right wing perspective. There's nothing for them there at all. So I would think that in many instances the right would ease itself out where you've

got a left wing majority.

In those councils where you've got a right wing majority, and a left wing minority, that's where you will get the bitterness. Because right wing councils may well decide to stay in office and operate the cuts. Then the Labour left wingers will be forced into voting against them. There will be expulsions from Labour groups and local parties will tend to support the Labour rebels.

In areas where the Labour leadership give a lead, as certainly I intend to do at the GLC, and I know that Ted Knight does in Lambeth, to say we won't comply with the rate cap budget, we will stay and we'll fight against them. There I think there isn't much of a role for the right wing to play except moving their activities into other spheres of influence.

We musn't allow the argument to become one that counterposes complying with the law and majority opposition. Both of these would be devastating for the party's popular support.

Simply to say we're obeying the law, however bad, would be doing the government's dirty work. It would be to totally alienate public support. And it would be a wrong decision in principle — you can't give a government a blank cheque and say we'll obey all its laws. That's a ridiculous position.

No one would have expected that type of blank cheque to be applied in Hitler's Germany. We awarded people who fought in Germany against Hitler's laws with decorations.

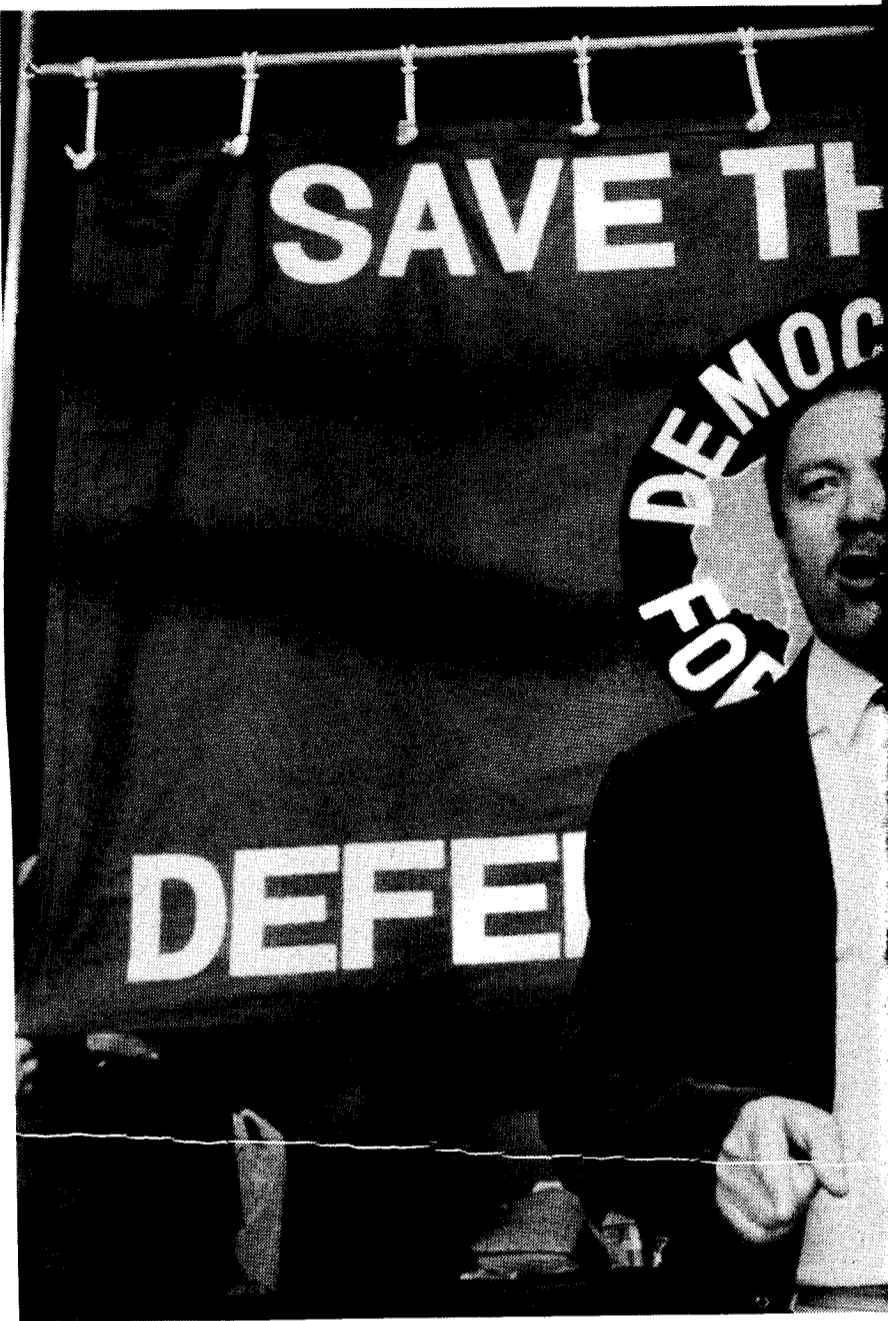
No socialist can ever give a blank cheque to any government. To say that whatever it does will be complied with. Because there are principles which override whatever the temporary government demands of the day may be.

But I think it would be very dangerous if, perhaps in a reaction of despair, we adopted a policy of opting out now, we go into majority opposition or something like that.

For trade unionists fighting the cuts that would follow Labour opting out, or for local people, they would never understand why Labour councils had shut up shop and walked away. You have got to be in there and fight everything line by line.

You've got to try and fight to bring in the trade unions and community groups into that struggle. We have got to be out there on the picket lines or defying the law, or whatever is needed.

So the options of obeying the law, or opting out are each in their own way equally damaging to traditional Labour support.



'We must have a uni

Why are you putting forward the strategy of refusing to fix a rate, and what are its main advantages?

Every Labour council, certainly in the stress areas, is facing a situation where they can no longer carry out their obligations. They must be looking at how to overcome that. If we're not prepared to make cuts then, frankly, we're in confrontation with the government.

So we are trying to propose a strategy which will unite Labour authorities at a particular point in the year — and that appears to us to be at the time of levying a rate or a precept. At any other stage in the year, Labour councils are in different financial situations.

What advantage has your strategy over deficit budgeting? Are they alternatives, or could they be complementary?

Deficit budgeting is when a council prepares a budget of the spending necessary for its particular needs, but will not have enough money in a full year to cover the cost of that budget. Therefore, whilst it may be levying a modest rate increase or one imposed by the Tory government, at some point in the year that council is unlikely to have sufficient income to meet expenditure.

But councils wouldn't run out of money at the same time. So, as a strategy for uniting them, it just isn't on.

The advantage of not levying a rate or a precept is that councils would be taking the same decision at the same time. Income to councils would be restricted to rents and charges, and so the period of financial solvency is therefore limited and identifiable. Councillors and trade unionists would have a clear timetable of events and

Interview with Ted Knight



Photo: TED STORMER

That's right. We would have no authority to do so.

THE LAW



Photo: GM COOKSON

'Unified approach'

As I understand it, there's no legal obligation on a council to set a yearly rate, only from time to time. Although that doesn't apply to precepting authorities. If this option isn't an illegal one — at least for rating if not precepting authorities — I would guess it will attract those councils who are uncertain about stepping beyond the boundaries of the law.

Perhaps you'll pull more people in behind you because of that. But what's to stop Thatcher introducing legislation or taking administrative measures to make what you're proposing illegal?

Whilst it isn't illegal not to set a rate, there is a requirement on us to balance our books. So, in fact, councils who adopt this strategy are stepping outside the law. Our lawyer's advice is that there are risks to the councils involved in this strategy. But the risk of surcharge and so on is an uncharted area.

Can the government change the law? The government can do all sorts of things. But it is exceptionally difficult, as we have seen, for them to introduce new local government legislation in the House of Commons, or even the other chamber. It would not find it easy to introduce such legislation.

Can you estimate how much support your proposal's going to get?

I think there is a genuine feeling that we have to have a unified approach. We are not saying, come what may this option must be adopted by everybody. But we feel that it has an advantage which other tactics that have been proposed don't have.

Whilst one can speculate about what to do at the end of the financial year, councils must begin now to gear the town hall trade unions and other trade unionists, the labour Parties and

constituency activists, and the community at large for that fight. I believe we have unity on the need to wage the fight. That's the most important thing.

As we proceed through the next few months I believe ours is the most likely tactic to be adopted by a substantial number of authorities. That doesn't mean we won't fight alongside other authorities who prefer to adopt other tactics.

We're after posing a problem for the government that it can't duck. If there are a substantial number of authorities who may run out of money and default on their debt charges, the government will have to take stock of that. It will have to decide what to do.

Your statement points out that you can't have a united campaign without the rest of the labour movement behind you. Has the statement been discussed with the local government unions? If you run out of money, doesn't that imply you couldn't pay their wages? Surely that can't be a popular strategy with them?

First of all, there has been a great deal of discussion between trade unions and Labour groups throughout London and in the major Labour authorities outside the capital. There is a general understanding among town hall trade unions that they are facing a crunch.

In as far as there was no rate capping legislation, the choice facing them was the loss of tens of thousands of jobs. In my own authority, Lambeth, we are talking about approximately 2000 jobs. Unions know that for a council just to accept the government terms means job losses and the total destruction of services.

In general they don't want to lose their wages, and they don't want to lose their jobs. We believe, together, we can present a united front.

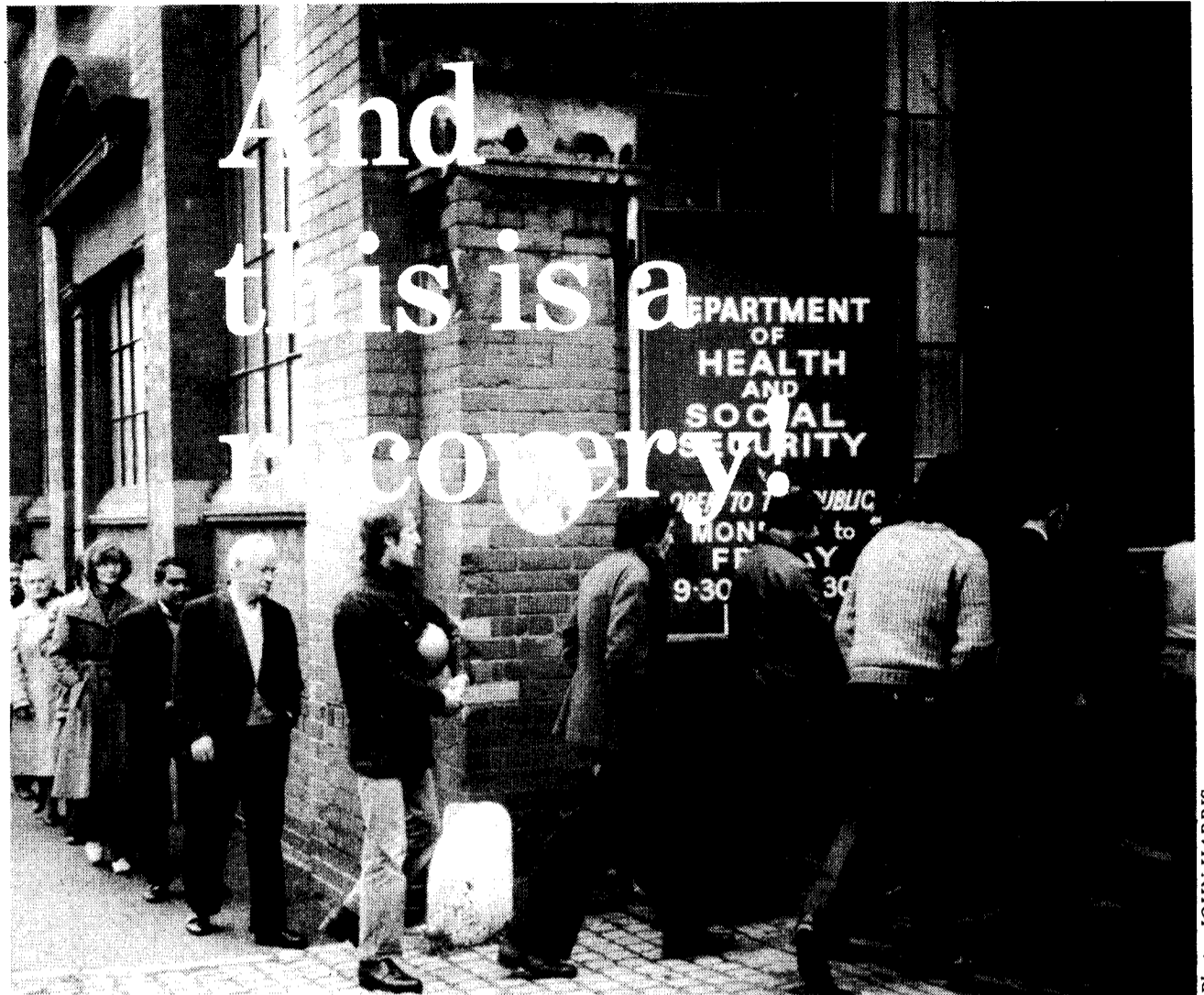


Photo: JOHN HARRIS

TORY ministers are promoting the UK's recent economic performance as the dawn of a new age. Yet on the Monday after the London Summit the UK's best-known establishment economic commentator, Samuel Brittan, predicted slump within 18 months.

JOHN HARRISON and BOB MORGAN unravel the latest economic developments in the UK.

The economic crash of the first two years of the Thatcher government bottomed out in the summer of 1981 as companies began running down their stocks more slowly. Modest improvement continued into 1982 and 1983. Higher consumer spending provided the main boost. Total consumer expenditure rose by 6.7 per cent between mid-1981 and the end of 1983. Purchases of cars and other consumer durables shot up over the same period by 29 per cent.

Investment also grew. House building was buoyant as falling interest rates cheapened mortgages. Investment in services also rose in 1982/83, following two years a modest fall over the previous two years. But, in manufacturing, hit most severely by the crash, investment remained at a very depressed level. Nevertheless, by the end of 1983 output was up almost 6 per cent on its mid-1981 level. Treasury ministers began to perk up. But, the table shows, things could hardly have gone on getting worse for much longer. The scale of collapse during the Tories' first two years in office had suggested that they wanted Victorian standards of living to accompany Victorian values.

Unemployment had jumped by over a million. Manufacturing industry had declined at a rate which would cause it to disappear in a decade or so. Even the Treasury and Civil Service Committee, with a Tory majority, concluded that Government policy was responsible for over half the new recruits to the dole queues.

So the economy has merely been inching its way back from the worst recession since the 1930s. The upturn has also been very unbalanced. The crash had centered on manufacturing. Tory tight money had pushed the exchange rate through the roof. Companies had

tried desperately to come to terms with a decline in competitiveness of nearly a third between 1979 and early 1981. Many had failed. The service sector which was less exposed to international competition had fared far better.

Higher spending has so far provided little respite for manufacturing, as consumers have increasingly looked abroad for their new TVs and videos. Imports satisfied about half the increase in home demand over the recovery period. Building new supermarkets to sell Japanese VTRs is no basis for a sustained recovery. The squeeze on manufacturing is reflected by the replacement of a 'traditional' surplus on UK manufactured trade with a deficit. Between 1979 and 1983 imports of manufactured goods increased by 20 per cent. The balance on manufactured trade fell from a surplus of £1.2 billion to a deficit of £5 billion. Had it not been for the North Sea oil revenues this emerging deficit on manufacturing trade would have posed severe problems. The Bank of England have estimated that about 25 per cent of the growth in output over the last two years is attributable to North Sea production.

The higher spending also owed more to lower saving than to higher incomes, and people cannot run down their savings indefinitely.

The core of the Tory optimists' case is productivity (output per worker). In manufacturing this has leapt up by a phenomenal 17.5 per cent since mid-1981. The crash compelled companies to restructure to survive. Unemployment made it easier to do so by weakening union opposition. Workers were sacked and speed-up imposed. Far fewer workers now produce only slightly fewer goods.

The growth of labour costs per item produced has been slashed to only 2.3 per cent in 1983. Profits jumped by a quarter in that year.

Higher profits, and the incentive provided by Lawson's Budget to start investment projects before generous tax allowances are abolished in April 1986, led the Chancellor and others to expect a surge in investment. And with world trade forecast to grow modestly this year, international debt crisis apart, and UK firms increasingly competitive, exports could provide a fur-

ther boost.

But productivity growth is unlikely to maintain momentum. Even the Treasury's propaganda sheet, *Economic Progress Report* admits that: 'Some of the gains were probably one-off responses to the severe cost pressures on manufacturers during 1980 and 1981, leading to the closure of some of the least efficient units... this pressure has now eased and the forecasts assume that... productivity growth will be slower than in the past three years.' (March/April 1984). Much plant and equipment is antiquated. In 1980 for example, numerically controlled machine tools accounted for only 14 per cent of UK machine tool production, compared to the 50 per cent of Japan's and West Germany's.

UK capital could only compete effectively if it invested on a huge scale. But as the *Economist* noted, when faced with a 25 per cent increase in their profits in 1983 companies: 'could find little better to do with their money than store it in bank deposits and other short term financial assets'. Whilst total investment has risen by 16.5 per cent since mid-1981 it remains well below the average of the years 1973-79.

The story in manufacturing is even more dismal. There scrapping has exceeded investment for the last three years, although figures for late 1983 and 1984 show some improvement. The UK probably has less manufacturing plant and machinery today than at the lowest point of the crash. Capitalists are reluctant to invest because they cannot see any money in it. Since the early 1960s the pre-tax rate of profits outside the North Sea has declined by some ten percentage points. In 1980-81 it stood at little more than four per cent. Even after the marked jump in 1983, the rate has only inched up to six per cent.

Anyone fancying a flutter on the UK's short-term economic prospects would do better backing Brittan's judgement than Lawson's. But it would be a gamble. Forecasting is dicey at the best of times, and never more so than at present.

Minor upswings, based largely on stockbuilding and consumer and housing credit, are in any case almost irrelevant. Real recovery would consist of re-establishing the kind of conditions for profitable production which existed in the '50s and '60s. Thatcher is nowhere near to achieving that.

But, that is not to say she won't carry on trying. With unemployment likely to remain above three million for many years, management will continue to press for major changes in the working conditions. The 'new realism', public relations jargon for the fear that high levels of unemployment engender, is not going to be given up lightly. As one centrist union leader put it to the *Economist*: 'If Arthur Scargill loses, ... we are heading for a new pattern. But if he wins, all bets are off'.

Thatcher's economic record

% changes	1979 2nd quarter -1981 2nd quarter	1981 2nd quarter -1983 4th quarter
GDP (output)	-6.9	+5.8
Industrial Production	-12.6	+7.7
Manufacturing Production	-17.4	+4.7
Private Sector Investment	-13.8	+16.5
Manufacturing Investment	-34.0	-7.8
Unemployment	+80.8	+24.5
Output/Worker (Whole Economy)	-3.3	+8.4
Output/Worker (Manufacturing)	-4.7	+17.5

Source: Economic Trends (April 1984)

France

Mitterrand
against the
immigrants

THE ELEVEN per cent vote in the Euro-elections for Jean-Marie Le Pen's fascist National Front in France shocked people throughout Europe.

But Le Pen's victories weren't prepared simply through the austerity policies pursued by Francois Mitterrand's socialist government. They were also directly aided by the racist policies pursued by the Socialist and Communist Parties themselves.

JUDE ARKWRIGHT, reporting from Paris, looks at the bitter lessons of Mitterrand's government.

Immigrants aren't allowed to work in France. Nevertheless when Francois Mitterrand was elected President of France on 10 May 1981 thousands of immigrants were on the streets celebrating the victory of the Socialists and Communists. Under a government of the left, blacks in France expected to get their rights. It took only a few months to dash their hopes.

In France there are 4.5 million immigrant workers and their families. That is eight per cent of the population. There are a further 300,000 to 400,000 illegal immigrants — many of them employed in the underworld slave trade of small sweatshops.

The majority of black workers in France come from the former French Caribbean colonies and North and West Africa. Nearly 70 per cent have liv-

ed in France for more than ten years. Despite this very few are entitled to French citizenship even among the generation who were born there.

Many black workers have to renew their residence permit every year. This places them under constant threat of deportation as the permit is not issued unless the applicant has a job at that time — and unemployment among blacks is extremely high. Under stringent laws passed in the 1930s the right to vote and the right to organise are also denied to immigrant workers.

Small wonder that this section of the French population had such high hopes in a government which claimed to represent the oppressed. Before winning the elections of 1981 the Socialist party/Communist party election platform had promised im-



migrants the right to vote, the right to organise, the abolition of the stringent laws on deportation, an amnesty for illegal immigrants and the introduction of a ten year automatically renewable resident permit.

Shortly after it came to power the new government duly granted an amnesty for 100,000 illegal immigrants and the most stringent laws were abolished. The right to organise was established through the abolition of a decree of 1939.

In October, controls

were introduced supposedly to protect immigrants from so called slave trade employers. But this was where the honeymoon ended.

To this day immigrants do not have the right to vote. Nor do they have the ten-year residence permits — although Mitterrand claims he has 'not forgotten' this promise. But in reality not only have these promises been forgotten but they have been totally reversed.

By the time of the municipal elections in March 1983 the Socialist

and Communist Parties had been instrumental in whipping up a massive hate campaign against immigrants. Gaston Deferre, campaigning in Marseilles, boasted that as Socialist Party Minister of the Interior he had expelled more immigrants than the right wing. In Vitry the Communist controlled local authority bulldozed a block of residences occupied by immigrants. Pierre Mauroy, the Prime Minister, accused striking workers in Renault and Citroen of being taken over by Islamic fundamen-

talists. All this served to create an atmosphere for the introduction in August 1983 of the Dufoix decrees. Border controls were stepped up to stop illegal immigrants and wives and children from entering the country. Massive raids were carried out in the small factories and workshops to flush out — not the unscrupulous employers — but the illegal immigrant workers who were then promptly deported. 7,000 were expelled in 1983 alone.

Under the decrees, immigrants were also offered 4,000 Francs, and a promise of training, to return home — usually to countries who had nothing for them.

The government were carrying out a vendetta against the immigrant population. Many immigrants had been in the forefront of the fight against the government's austerity measures.

In attacking immigrants the government was trying to cover up for their policies of creating mass unemployment. By expelling immigrants they could pretend they were trying to do something about the problem.

Georgina Dufoix, the Secretary of State responsible explained this openly, 'We are at war against

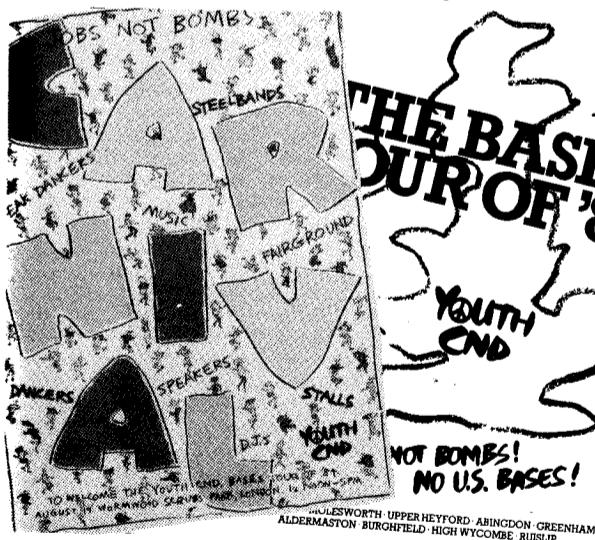
unemployment'. She stated: 'Our measures (the anti-immigrant decrees — ed) are visible and effective.'

The campaign by the so-called government of the left has allowed an atmosphere of xenophobia and racism to be whipped up to the advantage of the extreme right of Jean-Marie Le Pen.

But the immigrant population are not taking this lying down. Amongst young second and third generation and immigrants in particular, feeling is running very high. In December last they organised a march across France to protest at these racist policies. 100,000 marched with them when they arrived in Paris and the main trade unions (CFT and CFTD) were forced to back them — even though they supported government policy.

Mitterrand himself was forced to meet the marchers and listen to their demands. The organisations set up to support the march are continuing and are beginning to coordinate nationally.

By organising together against racist policies, the immigrant population are showing they can fight to turn the tide against this reactionary government and can draw in other workers to defeat all its right wing policies.



THIS SUMMER Youth CND will be holding a two week long peace march protesting at US nuclear bases in Britain. TRACY DOYLE, a member of YCND National Committee, writing in a personal capacity, looks at the aims and slogans of the march.

While the enthusiasm of demonstrators on last October's CND march was frustrated by the slogans put forward by the right wing: 'Nuclear defence is no defence', 'Freeze the nuclear arms race', the opposite was true on the massive anti-Reagan march of 9 June.

Face to face with US imperialism, and in the midst of the miners' strike, demonstrators filled the gap left by the political slogans of the right ('Return to Sender') with obvious themes showing how CND can build itself in action.

The youth contingent in particular, carrying a

series of banners — 'No Cruise, No Trident', 'No US bases', 'Britain out of NATO', and 'For a Nuclear Free Europe' — gave a lead to the rest of the march. These slogans were passed virtually unanimously at an emergency YCND conference in February.

For youth there is no 'middle ground'. While

the CND leadership tries watering down the fundamental demands of CND to draw in the Liberals, SDP and Tory wets, YCND is faced instead with the thousands of youth suffering from unemployment, cheap labour YTS schemes, cuts in education and increasing police harassment.

So it is not difficult to win demands for mass action. And the activities of Youth CND would put CND to shame. They prove just what CND could achieve if it began to build itself among those sections of the population who are suffering every day under the Thatcher government.

If the leadership of CND really have no idea of what they are doing they should take a leaf out of YCND's book. The forthcoming 'Bases tour of '84' shows exactly how CND can and should be built. It is a two week, 200 mile long march around nine military and nuclear installations ending with a multi-cultural 'Jobs not bombs' carnival in Lon-

don.

The slogans of the march 'Youth demand a future — No US bases — Jobs not bombs' are key demands.

'No US bases' hits right at the heart of NATO since the alliance is dominated by the US, and the stationing of cruise and Pershing missiles in Europe is a vital plank of NATO policy. The right wing of CND claim that the slogan is anti-American — just as they opposed a demonstration against Reagan for the same reason!

Obviously there is a great deal of 'anti-Americanism' all across Europe, but this is something CND should take up, explaining exactly which Americans it is that are bringing the missiles to Europe. It's certainly not the American workers — more and more of whom are becoming involved in the US peace movement.

We can also take up the question of those other 'Americans' — the people of Central America facing

increased intervention and aggression from US troops. For them the west European peace movement is a vital ally — Nicaraguan women for instance visiting Britain went first of all to Greenham.

Obviously we're not interested in the 'anti-Americanism' of Denis Healey — for which we can read 'pro-European capitalism'. We're not interested in weakening the US presence in Europe for it to be replaced by a 'Euro-defence bloc'. Neither are we interested in a reduction in nuclear weapons from the US in exchange for an increase in money spent on conventional arms from the other European countries. CND will not be built through orienting towards those who advocate 'non-nuclear defence' and 'Euro-defence'.

The fight against US bases is an international one. And our own march should reflect this. We've invited youth from other European peace movements to join us. Hopeful-

ly this will bring us one step closer to our proposed 'International Youth March'.

And we haven't forgotten the most well-known base of all. Hopefully the young women of our march will stay overnight at Greenham and give vital support to the women there. Support that will continue when the march is over and as long as the women are there acting as a focus for the rest of the peace movement.

It seems hardly necessary to point out the significance of 'Jobs not Bombs' — particularly in the midst of a miners' strike. YCND has approached the NUM asking for help in building the march and will probably visit a miners' picket line en route.

Young miners have already agreed to come on the march and we should have young women from the mining communities too. The YCND march looks like being a part of solidarity with the miners.

We hope the carnival at the end in particular will bring together young blacks and asians, young miners, young unemployed and young women in a massive call for 'Jobs not Bombs'.

It is vital that this march is a success. We must prove there is an alternative to the plans of the CND leadership. We must build links between the peace movement and the labour movement. We must mobilise the thousands of youth suffering under the Tories.

We need £17,000 to finance the march, 200 people to take part, and thousands to welcome us in London.

Bring it up in your trade union or Labour Party branch, LPYS or women's section. Discuss it in your CND group.

Publicity, registration forms and sponsorship forms are available from YCND, 11 Goodwin St., London N4 (01-263 0977).

● The march is taking place from 6-19 August.

Here we go again

BEA CAMPBELL continues our discussion started by Tony Benn's 'Labour's alliance for socialism'.

IS THIS debate in Socialist Action about politics now, or is it not? And is it really a debate about new alignments around some fairly unreconstructed habits and assumptions on some parts of the left?

I suspect it is the latter. And that makes it difficult to take seriously.

If the content of the debate isn't serious — and I think that much of it isn't — then what makes it interesting, insofar as it is? The only thing seems to be that there is a new alignment on the left taking place across some surprising boundaries.

What seems to unite the protagonists along one side of the trench is that the traditional notions of class struggle and the processes which described the struggle for socialism are untouched by anything that has happened in recent life, in particular the trauma of the last five years since the Thatcher regime was elected.

All those who dare to suggest that Thatcherism is a specific phenomena, on the one hand, and that the left itself is in a bit of a state, not to say a crisis of purpose and practise, are banished to the swamp of Gaitskellites, reformists, revisionists and whatever, lending aid and comfort to the demoralisers and defeatists, if they aren't actually the demoralisers and defeatists themselves.

Cheer up, says Tony Benn. Socialism! says Socialist Action, all is well really, there's nothing new under the sun. Thank God for the GLC and Sheffield and Liverpool and the miners, they all go to show that the left is alive and well and definitely not in crisis. Eight million people voted for the Labour Party, which means socialism, so we weren't really defeated at the last election at all.

Winner

The great divide in the debate seems to be that there are those who, like Eric Heffer, think that the structural struggle within the Labour Party is complete, and therefore — since the party is correct — the people stand corrected and we're on to a winner if we can only hold on to our nerve.

The re-alignment between some left social democrats, come Communists and some Trotskyists isn't surprising — they've always shared similar assumptions. So maybe their historic compromise is historically inevitable.

But many others, I suspect most of the left, don't share their complacency, nor do they share the party chauvinisms of some of the debaters. It is among them that the bold questions are being asked, and among them that we find political ingenuity.

While not sharing some of Eric Hobsbawm's arguments I find it astonishing, and boring, that he should be represented by anyone as the new Gaitskell.

Whether some of the protagonists share the Thatcherism thesis — that Thatcher represents a break with post-war Tory consensus and that, more important, she has captured popular support for authoritarian populism — or not, what is manifest surely to anyone with eyes to see is that a re-alignment has taken place in British politics which can't solely be explained as the predictable betrayal of raggy, wimpish social democratic bureaucrats.



Photo: CITY LIMITS

Thatcherism has appealed to something — and that something has to be understood.

Tony Benn's answer to Hobsbawm's concern about Thatcherism and his suggestion that the recent structural battles within the Labour Party do not describe recent structural changes within the working class or the progressive movement is hardly adequate. Indeed, it doesn't touch the body of Hobsbawm's worries.

What Hobsbawm is trying to get at is the enduring crisis of the Labour Party's inner life as a party, and the problem of its awful relationship to the people, a relationship which has often pacified and disempowered the people. To ask the question isn't defeatist, it is simply the question that must be asked.

Healthy

Tony Benn doesn't ask any of these questions. As Jon Bloomfield pointed out in Socialist Action, there is a glib assumption being made that the labour movement is generally in a healthy state, healthy enough to support a socialist alternative to the capitalist crisis, and whether there is an agreed, given socialist solution. But these assumptions can't be supported.

It is by no means clear that there is agreement within the party as to what this socialist programme might look like and whether it could be implemented. There is even less evidence that the movement's relationship to the people is healed enough to be called healthy, and whether even if the relationship between some of the peo-

ple and the party is sufficient to win the next election. I think the answer to all those questions is negative, and that amounts to a crisis.

Benn is right to remind us of the long historic shift to the right in Labourist consensus and he is certainly right to remind us of the disastrous consequences of the Labour leaders' support for the Falklands invasion. But his notion that eight million people supported a radical programme for socialism is unsupported.

What is surely true is that Labour enjoys the enduring support of eight million people who voted for it in the last election, and that this probably describes a core of class allegiance to Labour in its old fortifications. But that isn't the same thing.

Hobsbawm is not saying: repudiate the left. More likely he is suggesting that the left hasn't changed enough, hasn't recognised the depth of the current political crisis and too often confuses two distinct things — the party and the people. What he's worried about is the isolation of the left and the Labour Party from many of the popular movements and fissures within popular culture.

Changes

Maybe that doesn't worry the left of the Labour Party. That is a characteristic of both the big party chauvinists and the little sect chauvinists who've moved in on Labourism. What I find worrying is the way the left isolationists seem not to have noticed those changes in popular culture which have moved both rightward and leftward, independently of the organised tradi-

tional left. Nor have they noticed how men and women and whites are easily able to forfeit their class loyalty or interest for sexual and racial privilege authenticated by the party of their class enemy.

Benn attempts to register some of these shifts in the party but they just don't manage to address — the mismatch I'm describing. Things in the party have changed, he says, take for example the powerful movement for women's rights.

What powerful movement? Where? Sure, it's there among women, and some people on the left seem to have noticed it. Himself included. But that 'support' doesn't amount to a powerful campaign.

Demands

What is obvious, is that the powerful movement for women's rights has blossomed outside the political parties. Kinnock genuflects in their direction by saying the Labour Party puts women and children first. And at the same time he opposes the demands of the women's movement within his own party.

Benn mentions Northern Ireland — but it is by no means clear how Labour will solve its own problem about Northern Ireland — will it get out? The groundwork for such a dramatic initiative has barely begun, if at all. Benn, with typical courage, has not shrunk from the responsibility, but has his party?

Finally, Benn undermines all his own generous acknowledgements of popular forces outside the Labour Party with his proposal for their af-

filiation to it. He sees the Labour Party itself as 'the true alliance of progress'.

The point about the debate about alliances which has taken place among socialists outside the Labour Party for the last couple of decades is that something quite different is imagined. The rehabilitation of traditional notions of class struggle is incompatible with such an alliance, if it is to be an alliance between equals. Why?

Let's start with feminism. In its assertion that the relationship between men and women is not reducible to class oppression, the women's movement has shown that there is no automatic unity between men and women. Indeed, within the working class, women are subordinate and have been subordinated by the men of their own class. Much of men's class struggle has been exercised at the expense of women, and although women have remained resilient fighters on their own behalf within the working class, we have constantly faced what William Thompson has called the 'sexual Toryism' of the working class men's movement.

The far left and the men on the left in the Labour Party have consistently tried to suppress this fact. The autonomous women's movement cannot be affiliated to the Labour Party. It is the height of Labourist chauvinism to suggest it. Feminists engage with the Labour Party — actually, they fight for women in the face of the men's movement's organised resistance, a resistance which has been organised within the Labour Party itself.

Problem

The Labour Party is certainly an arena in which women fight for allies. It is a party feminism should like to transform, but the party is also part of feminism's problem. The implications of that cannot be understood by the kind of position which asserts that men and women are united when they manifestly are not. Sure, they should be — but the men's movement is culpable for the division between the sexes. That's what some feminists within the Labour Party themselves are saying — it hardly takes me to say it.

The condition of the renewal of women's offensive is the autonomy of the feminist movement outside the left. The collapse of autonomous feminism has historically always been matched by the collapse of feminism as a force within the Labour Party itself. Autonomy is not a sometime thing, nor is it a matter of convenience — the survival of feminist energy to fight within the left is contingent on the renewal of autonomous feminism itself.

The energy of Greenham Common didn't come from socialist feminists — but it has clearly energised the spirit of those fighting within the left for the left's transformation. There's a lesson in that somewhere. One of the difficulties for left men seems to be that they can't see themselves and their movement as a problem. It's typical, I suppose, of a white, metropolitan, male experience in the oldest labour movement in the world created in the oldest capitalism in the world — it carries with it the egotism and smugness and sense of superiority which British imperialism exported throughout the world. It thinks it doesn't have anything to learn from anyone.

Well, when the oldest labour movement in the world loses two general elections to one of the most brilliantly primitive right wing governments in the world maybe it ought to learn that it's time it learned something from someone else.

“The bottom of the heap”

DIANE ABBOT is standing for the women's section of the Labour Party national executive at the October conference this year. She is standing as part of a slate put forward by the Labour Women's Action Committee (WAC), whose demands for constitutional change to give women more power in the Party have won majority support at the last two women's conferences.

Diane is the first black woman to stand for Labour's national executive. Socialist Action is supporting the whole WAC slate, and will join with WAC in campaigning for it. As a first step JUDE WOODWARD asked Diane about the issues involved.

What made you decide to stand for election to the NEC as part of the WAC slate?

The main reason I am standing for the women's section of the NEC is to make the point that women should select and elect the women's section, rather than it being decided by male union leaders in smoke-filled rooms as has happened in the past.

Secondly, as a black woman, I want the campaign to focus on the issue of racism in the Party and to support the arguments for the black section.

We want to have a very up front campaign, with plenty of press coverage. But we will also be doing meetings all over the country, hopefully with the whole of the WAC slate.

The aim is to project black and white women united in the struggle against the white, male establishment in the Party, and arguing the case for left policies.

What impact do you think the campaign will have on black people? And on the Party establishment?

I think the fact that I am standing will have an enormous impact on black people both within and outside the Labour Party. Already people I know have been ringing up or coming up to me in the street about it.

It will make people sit up and notice the fact that the Labour Party is white-dominated. From this point of view the campaign has a symbolic importance for black people and women in the Party whether we win or lose.

I don't know what the Party establishment is thinking about it. I suspect

they think they can ignore WAC's slate, and that they'll be able to stitch the elections up with the trade union delegations the night before conference — as usual. But maybe it won't be that easy this time ...

The Campaign group haven't said where they stand on the whole situation as yet. It is a big problem for them. They were quite keen on Judith Hart. But at the same time they claim to be committed to feminism and anti-racism, so they should support WAC's slate.

Do you support WAC's demands?

I support all of WAC's demands. I've been a supporter of WAC for years. I think it is outrageous that the women's conference has no power. It should have power, including the right to elect the women members of the NEC.

This, together with the black section, is vitally important for black women in particular. Through the black section the Party can give a sign to black people that it will acknowledge their presence in a positive way instead of the passive acceptance we've had in the past.

Black women are at the bottom of the heap, a fact that our male, white leadership often loses sight of. In the context of the recession black women are being forced to pay an incredibly high price. If you take privatisation in the health service you'll find it is the cleaning, catering and laundry work that is going. In other words, the lower paid which are in very large proportion women from ethnic minorities.

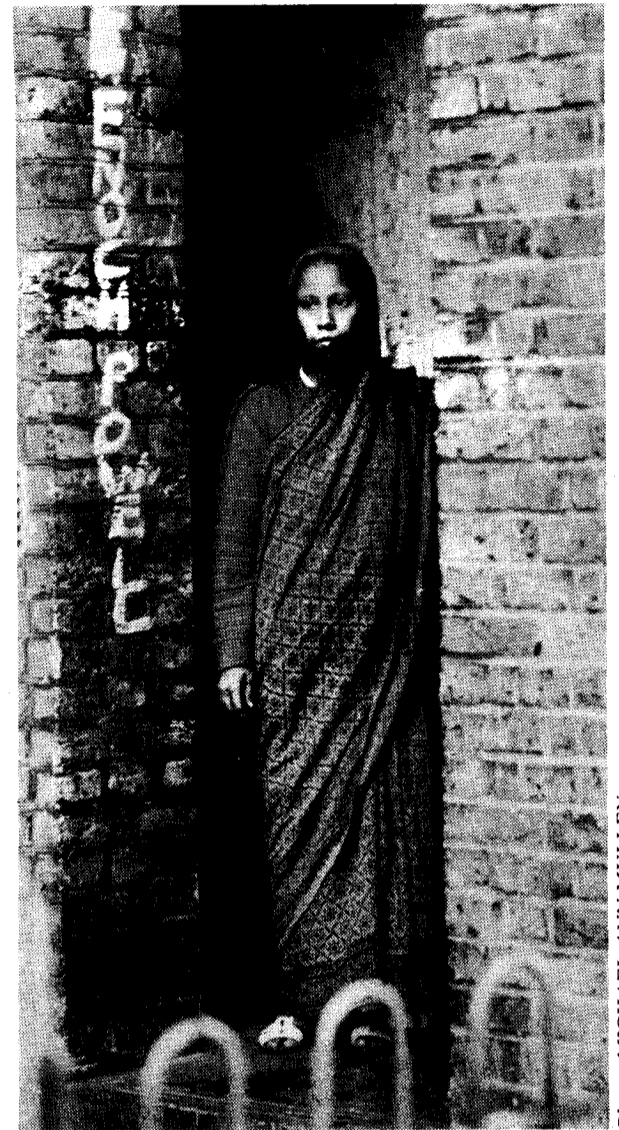


Photo: MICHAEL ANN MULLEN

These women should be at the centre of the fightback. From the present leadership of the labour movement you wouldn't know that these hundreds of thousands of black women existed. That is the importance of the black section, to build up their confidence, and make the issues more visible.

Do the other people on the WAC slate support the black section? And does the black section support you being part of the slate?

Clare Short and Frances Morrell, who are also on the WAC slate, support the black section. I don't know where Joan Maynard and Margaret Beckett stand as I haven't

been able to ask them as yet.

Before I agreed to stand I discussed informally with many members of the black section steering committee and they agreed to it. Hopefully at the next meeting they will formally support me.

How do you see the campaign going forward?

WAC is planning a major meeting with the women on the slate at the TUC in September. I will be there as a delegate from my union, ACTT, and through this we hope to build up support from the union block votes. Building up support in the unions is particularly important if WAC is to win its demands.



Photo: PETE GRANT

TWO amendments have been introduced to the Trade Union Bill which is now passing through the Lords. The first means compulsory postal ballots for elections to the principal executive committees of a union.

This amendment is introduced by a strange alliance of Tory right wingers, SDP and Liberal peers and, sadly, some Labour peers, all led by Lord Beloff of the *Economist*. As the bill stood originally, it was possible to have a workplace ballot, although I would argue it wasn't possible to have a branch ballot.

The government's position is unclear: they have neither welcomed it nor said they will write this amendment out of the bill.

That's the first change. The second is that the government itself is introducing an amendment in the Lords to deal with industrial action.

In the original, a union in the context of an official strike had to hold a ballot in order to be protected by the immunities granted under the 1906 Trades Disputes legislation. Holding the ballot is sufficient, the result doesn't matter!

In the context of the miners' strike, and under pressure from its own back benchers and from the Alliance, the government is attempting to strengthen the bill so that immunities only apply to official strikes called after a majority of members participating in the ballot have voted in favour of industrial action.

Originally, the government was trying to force unions into a ballot in the belief that a majority of members would vote against industrial action. They felt that was sufficient.

The NUM's struggle

The view from Westminster

started and continues as an area strike. The decision of Yorkshire to go on strike, for example, was taken in 1981-82 when there was a ballot that said if Yorkshire pits were closed for reasons other than geological ones, industrial action would be taken.

This current strike is not a national strike in the sense that it has come from the areas — it is a federal strike, rather than one that has been called by the national executive.

By Derek Fatchett, MP for Leeds Central

Despite the Tories' desire to have a go at the NUM, I wonder if in fact that loophole will be closed? Even if the Lords' amendment is passed, no union is forced into a national ballot.

Legal immunities are very narrowly defined anyway, since the 1980 and 1982 Employment Acts, which tightened up on secondary action. So, regardless of ballots, all that the NUM has been doing during its dispute isn't covered by immunities because of these acts.

If a union like the NUM can drive a coach and horses through earlier legislation, this new piece of legislation doesn't make one iota of difference. If you've got the industrial muscle, if you've got the leadership, if you've got the conviction, then the law doesn't matter.

The government are in difficulties because the miners' strike has shown that the '80 and '82 legislation doesn't work.

It's clear that the government have stopped the national industries and, I presume, private employers from

taking legal action against the NUM. There must be literally hundreds of law suits that could be pursued. Not one has been.

The legislation is impotent against a powerful union that has mass support. By the amendment the Tories want to show their back benchers and the public that there will never be another NUM. But I think this is a lot of empty rhetoric.

They said in 1982 that there would never be another winter of discontent, but now one group of trade unionists after another are moving into action. The government have used the police because their employment legislation has failed. The police are the Employment Acts of 1980 and 1982 in the flesh. They are the last resort: a thick blue line drawn against the trade unions.

The bill will soon be back in the Commons. The government are likely to want to get it through before the end of this session, but they might wait till the beginning of the autumn, the tidying up process that takes place before the new session begins. Either way, it only draws attention to the fact that their previous legislation has failed.

The Parliamentary Labour Party should argue against the summer recess. This would show the movement that we are prepared to carry on harassing the government during the dispute, and not deserting the miners for the beaches of France or elsewhere.

The government is under pressure, it's our job to highlight the fact that legislation doesn't matter if the union is determined enough.

Hammersmith against privatisation

ONE HUNDRED and seventy domestic staff from Hammersmith Hospital in West London have been on strike for over three weeks now, protesting against the privatisation of their jobs. They'll be out at least until 18 July, when the District Health Authority will make a further decision on their fate.

Six tenders have been received from private cleaning companies, together with one from the hospital's own management.

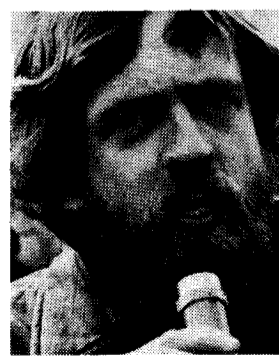
Management's offer is

the 'best'. It would mean 159 staff employed as domestics instead of the present 197. And total domestic hours per week would be reduced from 6170 to 3410.

By Jeremy Corbyn MP

If privatisation goes through, it means a 44 per cent cut in earnings, perhaps more. Domestics would be employed by a private cleaning company instead of the District Health Authority, and many conditions of work would disappear.

There would be no long term guarantee that even NHS wage rates



JEREMY CORBYN MP

would be paid — never mind sick or holiday pay, maternity leave or any such conditions.

This dispute is similar to the one at Barking Hospital, where employees of Crowthalls Cleaning Company — who have tendered for the Hammersmith contract — have had wages cut by 44 per cent through reductions in hours and deteriorated conditions.

The workers at Hammersmith have expressed their solidarity with Barking strikers. They don't want to be put into the same position.

● There are pickets mounted every day at Hammersmith Hospital, Duane Road, Hammersmith. All expressions of support and solidarity are welcome.

Thatcher grabs London Transport

LONDON Transport workers have a new boss: the Tory government. This week the London Regional Transport Bill went through Parliament.

Immediately, LT's chair, one Dr Bright, went to press:

- fares will go up later this year
- competition will be introduced on profitable routes, or they will simply be sold off
- closures and job losses will follow.

Transport Minister, Nicholas Ridley, is also busy preparing massive cuts. At least 7,000 jobs will go over the next few years. In ten years time they want 100 per cent one-person operation of buses — no more smiling bus conductors! Wages will be forced down — the current 4.5 per cent on offer will seem generous by comparison.

LT workers are increasingly seeing the

parallel between their fight and the miners' strike. This led quite a few of them to strike on the South East Region TUC miners' day of action on 27 June. Many workplaces are taking regular collections and organising sponsored events for the miners. Stamford Hill had a football match that raised £450.

By Richard Rozanski, Stamford Hill Bus Garage

We are also preparing for the fight to save jobs and services. On Monday 2 July many workers distributed thousands of leaflets to the public explaining the consequences of the London Transport Bill. Winning the support of the public will be crucial if any industrial action is to succeed.

Many workers now agree that the only way to win will be through an all-out strike. It is up to the union leadership to tap



this potential.

The next meeting of the London Bus Conference will discuss, and hopefully carry, a motion calling an immediate all-out strike as soon as any cuts are attempted. But the campaign cannot let it rest at that. Special meetings should be held in every garage, tube depot and LT workplace.

The real problems of organising any strike must be discussed: organising flying pickets to stop

garages who worked on the GLC day of action; raising money to ensure we aren't starved back to work; building solidarity in the rest of the labour movement; stopping coach companies from providing services during the strike.

All these problems can be overcome if they are openly discussed and confronted. The London Bus Conference must begin the fight now. Our new bosses are doing just that.

NUR in militant mood

RAILWORKERS are in a militant mood. Hard hitting solidarity with the miners is growing in the industry. Railworkers joined miners at the front of last Wednesday's 50,000-strong solidarity march with the NUM.

DOREEN WEPPLER, a Stratford guard, looks at this year's NUR conference.

This year's conference was in a politically militant mood on such issues as calling for the release of Nelson Mandela and campaigning against nuclear weapons.

On the urgent issues facing the rail industry itself, delegates voted against the wishes of NUR general secretary Jimmy Knapp, to reaffirm union policy 'not to enter into any further talks on productivity and this to certainly include any proposals to extend driver-only operation of trains.'

As long as the membership remains determined, this could tie the hands of the union leadership in the productivity exercises which British Rail wants to impose — particularly now that a pay deal without strings has been concluded.

But this year's pay deal of a measly 4.9 to 5.6 per cent was hopeless. And delegates knew it. They decided to go for a whopping 33 per cent increase next time round. And, as delegate after delegate explained, this necessary increase will involve a fight.

Delegates to conference gave a big boost to solidarity with the miners when they agreed to change union rules so any member suspended for refusing to move coal trains will be paid. The movement by train of iron ore to Llanwern and Ravenscraig steelworks has now been effectively blockaded.

These and other decisions taken by conference will give confidence to the next group of railworkers about to take industrial action: the workshop employees who build and maintain the trains.

Shopworkers have been hard hit by closures and Tory plans to hive off profitable areas to private firms. The Shildon works have just closed after a two year battle. Now 5,500 further jobs are up for the chop by the end of 1987. Glasgow and Swindon shops will provide the bulk of the victims if management and the Tories get their way.

This massacre of the workshops is being answered by a policy of non-cooperation with management and a refusal

to handle one particular type of train (Class 142 DMU) which has been contracted out to the private sector. This action will culminate in a national 24-hour stoppage of shopworkers on 10 August, coinciding with a massive demonstration in Derby that day.

Shopworkers have a hard fight ahead in fending off the threatened closures. But virtually every group of workers on the railway has a battle looming. Whatever the union's stance, management will undoubtedly be looking for ways to continue their attacks on jobs and working conditions. Management will want to push ahead to impose driver-only operation of trains in Kings Cross and the Strathclyde region.

Remain

While the miners remain on strike railworkers have all the cards in their hands. The British Rail Board's insistence that we'd get no pay rise without productivity strings melted when the government decided to avoid at all costs united action between miners and railworkers.

It's in the interest of every railworker to support the shopworkers in the fight against closures. A campaign to force the Federation of the Drivers' Union and the NUR to call for a national stoppage of all union members could build on the growing determination among railworkers which has been evident on every regional

day of action held to date. A united stand on this issue would be a massive step in overcoming the sectional divisions that management and union leaders have fostered, to the detriment of the rail unions.

Gain

But above all, every railworker will gain if the fight against job loss and productivity on the railway is seen as part of the fight of the working class as a whole. The time is right to link up the fight to keep railway jobs with the miners' strike.

In light of Jimmy Knapp's revelations at Llandudno that British Rail and the NCB have hatched a secret deal to close a number of rail links between pits and power stations, such united action is urgently needed.

As many railworkers said the day after the London march, 'We weren't well organised this time round, but just give us another chance. We'll have all of London totally shut down just like Kings Cross'. But that extra chance is there for the taking!

A national 24-hour strike call in defence of jobs would unite all sections of the rail industry — from the workshops to the guards — with the miners and with workers in virtually every other industry who are suffering from Thatcher's policies.

Would such an almighty display of solidarity be a political challenge to the government? Certainly it would. But anyone who continues to insist that unions shouldn't be political is conceding the struggle to defend our jobs against Thatcher's policies before the fight has even begun.

A slim victory for the left



RON TODD'S VICTORY in the elections for general secretary of the Transport and General Workers' Union is a serious blow to the new realists' hopes of extending their hold on the TUC. Had victory gone to Todd's main opponent, George Wright, the balance on the TUC would have gone decisively in favour of the right.

The election was a measure of the divisions in the trade unions today. Todd's 40,000 majority was, in TGWU terms, wafer thin. It was the most closely fought campaign since Bevin established the

present structure in 1921.

In 1956, Cousins won by 503,000 to 80,000; in '69 Jones won by 334,000 to 28,000 and in '77 Evans won by 350,000 to 119,000.

The result shows the

recovery of the right in the union, since its defeat in the early '60s.

Cousins, Jones and Evans had their base in the trade groups and the shop stewards organisations. Unemployment and the attacks on the stewards particularly in the car industry, has weakened this base.

By Pat Hickey

The union's membership has fallen from 2.25 million in '79 to about 1.5 million today. A high proportion of this decline has been in manufacturing.

A key question for Todd will be whether he can stop the advance of the right in the union. This will be closely tied to the policies the TGWU follows in the TUC and the Labour Party.

George Wright stood on a platform — carefully hedged — of support for incomes policy and watering down of unilateralism. He was opposed to Tony Benn, and would not have supported the NGA. His defeat is welcome.

However, the close result and Bright's statement that the gloves are off with the hard left shows that the battle in the TGWU is not over.

The task for Todd now will be to throw his weight behind the left in the unions, the Labour Party and CND.

In September, the TUC conference will have the opportunity to call the general council to account

for its sell-out of the NGA, and its failure to support the miners. The 'new realist' course can and must be reversed.

In the Labour Party the fight around policies will continue, and the TGWU vote will be crucial.

In CND the right will continue its efforts to ditch unilateralism. Todd's record on this issue is a good one but the TGWU's influence has not been placed clearly behind the left in CND.

Under Moss Evans the union has frequently tried to straddle the left and the right. A much firmer left course is needed if the advance of the right is to be halted. This applies also inside the union.

Decline

The decline in membership and the weakening of the shop stewards has been, in no small measure due to the union's failure to give full support to its members when they have gone into struggle. This has eroded confidence and reinforced the drift to the right. Todd's own record on these issues is much less than perfect — as Ford workers would be the first to point out.

As the largest union in the country the influence of the TGWU could be decisive in the coming battles. The left in the TGWU must ensure that the opportunity is not wasted.

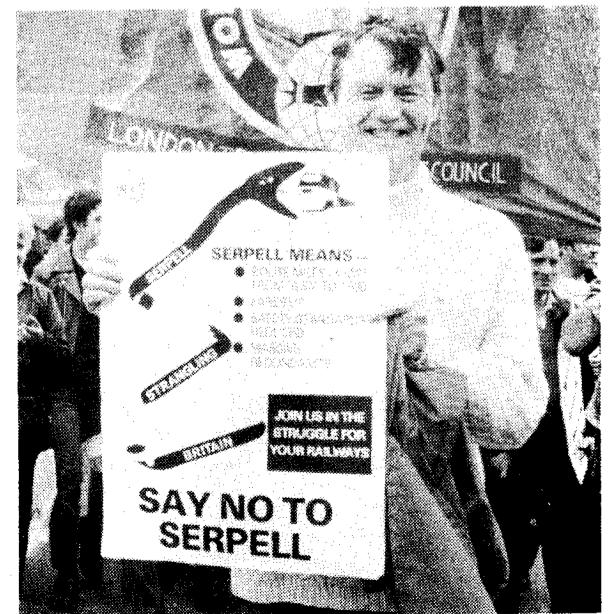


Photo: JOHN HARRIS

A Socialist ACTION

Fund drive: \$50,000
15 thousand lovely pounds

THIS WEEK WE took a gigantic stride towards getting a new, better, and cheaper building. After last week's bonanza of £5000 came another cheque, not for five but for £15 lovely thousand.

This now makes sure we can leave our present address and get shot of an onerous financial burden. It also leaves us only £5000 short of the half way mark. Now, dear

readers, get cracking in the readers' groups, talk to our friends and supporters and go all out to raise that next £5000 by the end of July.

Already we are eyeing over other premises so every penny you scrape together from now on will get us nearer to the kind of building we need and can afford.

Watch this space for details of cash raised and news on a building.

Bob Pennington for Mole's Eye on a Lambeth Trot



GRAHAM — the Red Trotter — scorched the streets of Lambeth last Sunday when his sponsored run clocked up one hour 50 minutes for the 13-mile half-marathon. Media reactions differed to the flying mole.



The *Sun* headlined it as 'Reds run amok in Lambeth'. The *Next Step* screamed: 'Socialist Action runs for Knight'.

When asked the reason for his success Graham said: 'It's down to my red document'. A smiling correspondent of the *Peking Daily News* asked: 'You mean chairman Mao's little red book?' 'No, no, I mean chairperson Ken's little red bus pass, and if that bloody 37 had come earlier I would have done an even better time!'

His trainer, Colin S, is himself an experienced marathon person — he once entered a local hostelry at 5.30 and didn't leave until 2.00am, a feat which so impressed the local constabulary that they gave him a free room for the night. He says he has more like Graham in his stables.

Watching every yard of the running together (well, the first 20 yards anyhow) from the Brockwell Tavern, he told me: 'I shall probably enter the editorial board in the three-day non-stop London to Glasgow run.' Saying Graham's run had raised over £100, he was quietly confident that an editorial-run marathon would evoke a real mass response among the readers. He would not be

drawn on who would be the most sponsored runner.

So there you are. Your cash can get us nearer the building we need and get the editorial board on the road.

Labour must back Liverpool



TWO OPTIONS FACE Labour's recall local government conference when it meets in Sheffield this weekend. It can either refuse to cut jobs and services, which means defying the law, or adopt Neil Kinnock's policy of cuts with a human face.

This in effect means doing Thatcher's job for her. No matter how the decisions are dressed up and no matter what rhetoric is used to present them, at the day's end there will be the choice of either standing out against the government or caving in.

The first test for the Labour Party and the Labour authorities will be whether or not to defend Liverpool. It is on Merseyside that the first and the most decisive battle will take place. Liverpool has a Labour council that has refused to set a legal budget.

Moreover it is a council that went to the polls in May asking the electors for a mandate to defy the government and got just that. If Jenkin can crush Liverpool with its popular mass support the resolve

of Sheffield, Lambeth or the GLC can't win on their own nor can Liverpool.

Thatcher and her cabinet are out to pick the councils off one by one, doing what one old Hungarian 'communist' leader described as a salami tactic. One option Jenkin is deliberating about is using the first year of rate capping in as mild a way as possible — to create conditions to 'divide and rule'.

He would demand minimal cuts in services and jobs, thus tempting the councils into cooperating, then the next year the screw would be tightened. Meanwhile the 'worst of the spenders' would be taken on separately — with Liverpool of course coming top for hitting. Such a policy would give Neil Kinnock's policy of 'staying within the law' a life line and

could if successful break up a united Labour resistance.

Labour

This is why the labour movement must back Liverpool but also why a 'heroic' go-it alone policy from Liverpool won't do. The way to defeat rate capping and the destruction of jobs and services that will follow in its wake, is by united action. David Blunkett is right when he says 'We don't want martyrdom — we want victory.' A victory can and must be won.

But it must start by all-out backing for Liverpool's policy of not setting a legal budget and it can be guaranteed by the other threatened administrations taking the same 'illegal' road. With united backing from the labour movement Liverpool can win.

By Bob Pennington

Terry Harrison, vice president of the Liverpool district Labour Party summed it up when he told the recent fightback conference: 'If you want to make the struggle national then follow Liverpool's example locally.' This is OK as far as it goes but just

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