

Socialist

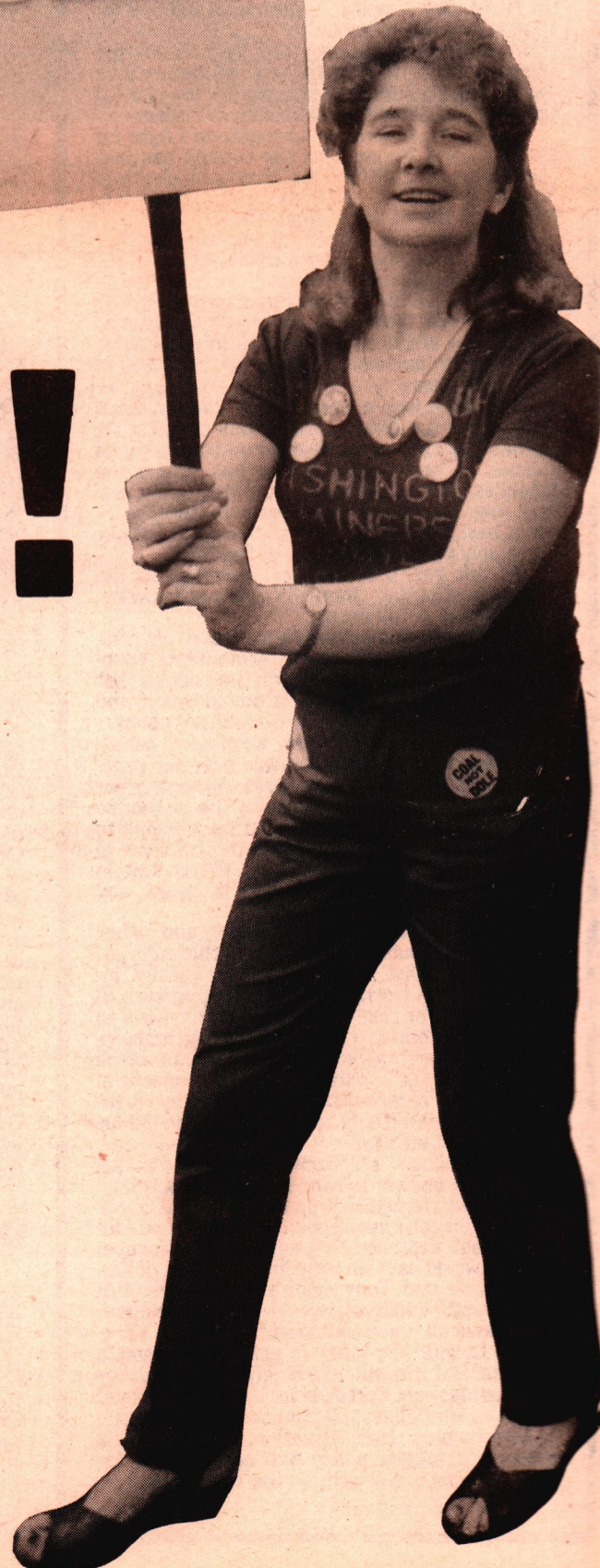
ACTION

Miners, Power stations

TUC MUST

ACT NOW!

ARTHUR
SCARGILL
CAN
EAT
THREE
SHREDDED
WHEAT.



THIS WEEK the government spelt out with total clarity its final policy for trying to defeat the NUM.

Six months of police brutality, an unparalleled campaign of press hysteria, financial attacks, legal threats and assaults, have failed to break the miners. The 'back to work movement' is a pathetic trickle which has no hope of defeating the strike.

The real situation of coal stocks at the power stations is now being regularly exposed not simply by left wing papers but by BBC TV programmes such as *Newsnight*, the publications of the prestigious National Institute for Economic and Social Research, and the serious Fleet Street press. The government *does not* have the coal stocks within the power stations to last the winter.

There is in fact nothing which the government can do itself which can defeat the miners. As the *Guardian* put it last week the moment the first light goes out the government has lost the strike.

And that is why the government and MacGregor have turned to the one trump card they still have to play — the role of the TUC and its leadership.

MacGregor, the man who six months ago openly scorned the unions and asserted 'management's right' to manage declared on Sunday he wants to talk to the TUC.

Peter Walker, the Energy Secretary who is part of the government that spat in the face of the trade union movement over GCHQ and the NGA, declared on Saturday he is prepared to talk to the TUC. The professional machinery of sell-outs, ACAS, is being rolled into place.

Every tin-pot industrial dictator, every Thatcherite union basher, David Owen of the SDP, David Steel of the Liberals, all demand that the government and MacGregor talk to the TUC.

And over what? The government's and MacGregor's case is not even formally about economics anymore. As Arthur Scargill has said the National Coal Board plans to produce 497 million tons of coal in the next five years. Even if not one single pit were closed it could only produce 480 million tons after the losses in this strike. It is sheer madness to close a single mine today.

This strike has been revealed openly and brutally for what it has always been. A political

attempt by the Thatcher government, planned for six years, to attempt to smash the National Union of Mineworkers into the ground. And now that she has been decisively and brutally defeated in her own open attempt to achieve that, Thatcher now demands that the TUC steps in to do her dirty work for her.

What the NUM demands of the TUC is no more and no less than the policy that scored victory in 1972 and 1974. That no new coal brought into the power stations be used, that no coal be taken through NUM picket lines, and that no power stations be switched to fuel other than coal. Simply that there be no organised scabbing on the strike. If that is delivered then this strike will win — and the government knows it.

Two unions, the TGWU and GMBATU, have by themselves the power to enforce that policy.

The TGWU and GMBATU, with or without other unions, must start to implement TUC Congress decisions *now*. They must be backed up and supported by all out financial backing of the TUC to the NUM and a national Labour Party-TUC demonstration in support of the miners. Local conferences are needed

to plan implementing TUC Congress decisions.

MacGregor and the government should be told only one voice speaks and negotiates for the miners. That is the leadership of the National Union of Mineworkers. Its elected president is Arthur Scargill. All negotiations and talks on settling the dispute take place there and there only.

But above all the delays in implementing TUC policy must be ended now. Congress has voted its policy. The discussion is on how rapidly to carry it out. Not on how the right wing can defeat it. The labour movement must fight for:

- No TUC talks with the government or NCB on the miners' strike!
- All unions to implement TUC Congress decisions on the miners' strike now!
- Full TUC financial backing for the miners!
- Organise local labour movement conferences to discuss implementing TUC Congress decisions and extending solidarity with the miners!
- For a national Labour Party-TUC demonstration in support of the miners!
- For a 24 hour general strike in support of the NUM!

Photo: G.M. COOKSON

Socialist ACTION

All signals right

Labour's catastrophic fall in support in June 1983, contrary to the views of the press, was not a loss of votes to the Tory Party. Thatcher's support actually fell at the last election. The huge decline in the Labour vote, down to 28 per cent, was due to the Alliance's gains.

That fact has determined the whole prospect for rebuilding Labour's support since. There were only two real choices.

The first, shown by Arthur Scargill, Ken Livingstone, the GLC, and Liverpool council, was to rebuild Labour by fighting for the interests of its supporters. That, needless to say, is the only way to rebuild Labour's support on a long term basis. The results, contrary to the expectations and propaganda of the right, have been spectacularly successful.

Despite an unparalleled campaign of police violence, lies, physical hardship, and media smears, Arthur Scargill has kept the NUM solid and on course for victory. The only forces able to deny the miners a victory now are Neil Kinnock's closest backers in the TUC.

Despite continual press hysteria to the contrary there is no sign of even the frenzied campaign of the media being able to reduce Labour's support as a result of the miners strike. And if the NUM wins it is the beginning of the end for Maggie — and she knows it.

In Liverpool a council led by Militant not merely became the first city to win a victory over the Thatcher government but on the way it secured a major electoral victory for Labour.

Finally in London Ken Livingstone's fight for the GLC, and the policies the council has pursued, have established the strongest electoral position Labour has had in the capital, relative to the rest of the country, since 1945.

In short the argument that 'left wing policies' — that is ones that defend rather than attack Labour's supporters — would lose votes is no longer a discussion. It has been disproved by the events of real life. The Labour left has scored spectacular electoral victories — in addition to still more important victories on the field of mass struggles.

But there was a second way Labour could respond to the Alliance. This was to 'steal its clothes', by moving to the right and adopting its policies. In fact Labour really has stolen the Alliance's policy clothes. The key step in the process was started at last year's conference — when Neil Kinnock secured a change in Labour Party policy on membership of the EEC.

At this year's conference, however, all the implications of that change in policy are now being spelt out in full detail.

The NEC's defence document, based on a major build up of conventional armaments spending, is in complete accord with the policies that have come out of the West European Union, and the EEC/NATO 'think tanks' on military policy.

The new economic policy document, which abandons most major proposals even for renationalisation of privatised assets, not only gives up any real proposal to reverse the economic changes made by Thatcher, but also begins to bring Labour fully into line with the type of economic policies, pursued by Mitterrand in France, Craxi in Italy, Gonzales in Spain, and Soares in Portugal.

In fact Kinnock is very ambitiously and rather consciously rebuilding Labour as a thorough going 'Eurosocialist' Party. One drastically influenced by Mitterrand and his supporters in Europe. And for that type of party, the move to the right, although rapidly gathering momentum, is only just beginning. And its results will be the same as Mitterrand's — electoral catastrophe, demoralisation, and finally abandonment of everything socialism and the labour movement stands for.

What Labour still lacks however is a real 'Euroleft' in answer to Kinnock's 'Eurosocialism' — opposition to cruise, opposition to NATO, opposition to austerity, opposition to the whole international capitalist organisation of Europe. Such views do have an echo in the politics of Ken Livingstone and Tony Benn's supporters. But they are still relatively weak, underdeveloped, and, above all, unorganised in the party.

The Labour left today is getting stronger in struggle. But it is still extremely weak on policy and organisation. Certainly far too weak to stand up to the kind of assault Kinnock is mounting.

Overcoming that situation, developing a coherent struggle, policy and organisation for the left is the top priority in the coming year.

Dr Death and the Labour Right

Last week the SDP conference voted to accept David Owen's policy of a 'social market' economy — 'Thatcherism with a human face' as it has been aptly dubbed. It was a policy so right wing that even some of the faint hearts amongst the ranks of the SDP expressed their unease.

On Thursday Roy Hattersley unveiled the new Labour NEC economic policy statement *A Future that Works*. JOHN ROSS looks at the connection between the two policies.

When the SDP was formed in March 1981 its nature gave rise to a rather heated debate on the left. A popular idea existed, which was eagerly put forward in the Fleet Street press, and believed in some wide sections of the labour movement, that the SDP was a 'middle class party'. Politically the SDP was supposed to represent the 'moderate centre' — a sort of hankering for Gaitskell and the type of 'Keynesian' economic policies pursued in Britain in the 1950s and 1960s.

chief claim to fame is as architect of Edward Heath's Industrial Relations Act and who then went on to become chairperson of Prudential Assurance).

In short the SDP was no 'middle class party'. It was, and is, a party of *big capital*, which rests on a middle class, and at present to some degree working class, electorate. Once that nature is understood then the evolution of the SDP's policies under David Owen, the reasons for the tensions with the

produced by the SDP's economic advisers is explicitly recognised as an important step in economic and political policy even by Thatcher's most convinced supporters. For example Samuel Brittan, the chief populariser of monetarism in Britain, has kept up a regular dialogue with Meade through his influential weekly articles in the *Financial Times*. David Owen has contributed directly to the Thatcherite Institute for Economic Affairs.

Agreement

Inevitably, given the nature of the forces involved, agreement on the most fundamental framework of economic policy has been reached between the SDP's theorists and the Thatcherites. This agreement is recognised in the rash of glowing editorials praising Owen and the SDP not merely for their opposition to the miners strike but also for their overall economic policy stand.

The framework which is agreed is precisely that which Owen stated last week as his 'social market' economic policy. Under this all of the fundamental structural shifts introduced into the economy by Thatcher will be retained — in particular none of the sectors denationalised will be renationalised. The restrictive laws against the trade unions will be retained and gradually strengthened still further. Within that framework of course various differences of emphasis and policy are regarded as legitimate.

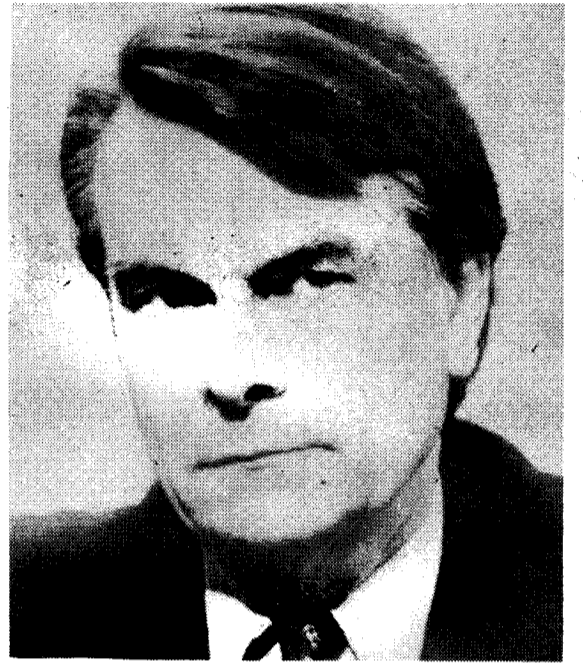
Europe

The SDP and Tories, as ruling class parties, therefore have not merely a short term agreement on the need to confront the unions. They have an agreed overall economic framework.

Within that basic framework the differences which exist between the SDP and Thatcher reflect the differences which exist within British capital itself. They relate to two main areas of policy.

Firstly in all major West European countries today there is a significant difference, reflected in the existence of different political parties, between sections of capital looking relatively directly to the EEC for economic and political solutions, and those seeking more narrow 'national' solutions and policies.

This difference is seen in France in divisions between the followers of ex-president Giscard d'Estaing on the one side and the Gaullists on the other. In West Germany the difference exists between the



Christian Democrats under Kohl, and Free Democrats under Genscher, on the one side and the Christian Social Union under Franz Joseph Strauss on the other.

Pro-EEC

In Britain the most fundamental base of the SDP/Liberal Alliance is that it is the explicitly 'pro-EEC party'. The Liberals supported EEC membership even during the 1950s when the Conservative Party opposed it. Roy Jenkins was the supporter of EEC membership within the Labour Party. The Alliance attacked Thatcher for being excessively intransigent during the negotiations on the EEC budget earlier this year.

Secondly there are significant differences on internal economic policy between different sections of capital. The Confederation of British Industry (CBI) has been strongly urging on the government for some time now the necessity of a programme of £1-2 billion public investment to build up the infrastructure of the economy and improve efficiency. This policy was already championed at the last election by the Alliance. There have also been significant differences within the ruling class over questions such as whether to increase competition in areas denationalised by the government.

Legitimate

In short within the overall structural shifts in the economy brought about by Thatcher there are a variety of issues on which British capital regards debate as quite legitimate and on which it has differences. Owen, in contrast, is simply staking out a specific position

within this framework. One which is distinctly more pro-EEC, more in favour of infrastructural economic investment, and more orientated to limited economic deflation, lowering of the exchange rate, more collaboration with the trade union bureaucracy, and increased competition than is Thatcher's position.

All this has nothing to do with the 'middle classes'. It is simply big capital spelling out the framework of debate it considers acceptable. The differences are not class ones, but they are differences within the capitalist class sufficient to create two parties. Both involve an all out assault on the working class.

Labour

And what is the relation of all this to Roy Hattersley's new economic policy statement for Labour? Well, rather quietly, *A Future that Works* announces a fundamental policy change for the Labour Party. Apart from British Telecom it makes no pledge to renationalise the privatised sectors of the economy. Hattersley, and Kinnock now propose an economic policy which leaves in place the fundamental structural shifts made by Thatcher.

If this economic policy document is adopted then there will be no major British political party pledged to undo the fundamental economic shifts made by Thatcher. It is scarcely possible to imagine a more satisfactory state for British capital. Perhaps Hattersley will entitle his policy the 'social market Labour economy'.

Anyway don't say you haven't been warned. This economic policy document must be totally thrown out by the labour movement at next week's party conference.



Photo: JOHN HARRIS

This idea was rather ridiculous even in the first place. In an advanced capitalist country such as Britain, the 'middle classes' simply do not have the power to carry out such actions as creating a split from the Labour party or building a political party with the electoral support of the SDP.

Secondly such a view of the SDP was not factually true. The groups and individuals which financed and backed the SDP included the chiefs of firms such as ICI, the computer group ICL, donations and representatives from Sainsbury's, Thorn-EMI, Marks and Spencer and so on.

Big business

Not directly members of the SDP, but backing the various 'electoral reform' groupings which are its political allies, were the National Westminster Bank, and the so called 'City Committee for Electoral Reform' — a long standing group of company directors whose head is ex-Tory Cabinet Minister Lord Carr (whose

Liberals, and the overall political strategy it mapped out at last week's conference become clear.

No section of the British ruling class has any interest whatever in the type of economic policies pursued in Britain during the 1950s and 1960s. The idea that the SDP was ever fundamentally wedded to these policies was to confuse rhetoric with reality.

Important

The key economic advisers to the SDP, notably Nobel prize winner for economics James Meade, have for a long period quite explicitly rejected traditional 'Keynesian' policies on both practical and theoretical grounds. In his major books *Wage-Fixing* and *Demand Management*, which are the basis of David Owen's recent economic policy statements, Meade has been attempting to arrive at a new economic synthesis which combines monetarism with a major measure of state intervention in the economy.

The type of material

The TUC decision on the miners: An important step forward

AS SOCIALIST ACTION goes to press, the dockers look set to return to work and the issue of how much coal is supplied to Scotland's Ravensraig steel works appears to be resolved in management's favour. But Mrs Thatcher and her government are in no position to win the dispute against the miners as things stand.

As winter approaches, the big question — will the government get pithead coal stocks moving? — has yet to be answered. No cracks are appearing in the miners' determination to win. JACK COLLINS, secretary of the Kent miners, gave CAROL TURNER a sober assessment of the situation in his area.

What do you have to say about the TUC?

Many anticipated that there'd be no support for the miners at the TUC, that there would be a sense of frustration and disappointment that would have the effect of destroying the fight of the miners. But of course it never went that way. The TUC did agree to support the miners.

To what degree they will support us I don't know, but nevertheless that is the official policy of the TUC. And it will enable individuals to organise support in an official manner in their various unions.

With the exception of a couple of white collar unions, the unions in the power stations will, I feel, give some support to the miners. The manual unions there have declared for the miners. If they support us, the technicians — the people who throw the switches — will not have too much influence on the strike anyhow. If there's no coal handled, if there's no ash taken away, if there's nobody to discharge the oil — then the manual workers' role will be more important than the technicians.

Does that mean you're hopeful about what came out of congress? Is it your impression that it was a favourable response to your strike?

Of course, I would like to see every worker in the country standing in support of the miners. I don't deny that I'm for the massive weight of the working class to be used in order to support the miners — that's no secret! But — given the present situation, given the type of leadership in some unions — the TUC's decisions were an important step forward.

To be quite honest, I don't hold too many hopes for the miners being supported by large sections of the working class in the sense that they will walk out of their jobs. But the tremendous financial support that we're getting, together with the moral support, together with the food donations we're receiving are very very important. They will enable the miners to continue their strike.

With everybody out with us we'd conclude the strike quicker. But with the support we have, the miners can win the strike. And we're going to win.

What role do you think the four-person TUC committee will play? The talks have broken down and there's speculation about whether ACAS will be called in. Are those four people going to be calling for a negotiated settlement?

Our national union will never allow anybody to take over the negotiations. As a working miner for some 30 years, I don't want somebody who has never seen a coal mine discussing my future. It would be important to the miners to allow



Photo: MARK SALMON

Photo: GIM COOKSON

anyone from outside to take over the negotiations and our national union would not allow that.

The committee will examine all the documents and listen to all the arguments, and they might try to influence the NUM leadership. But Scargill and the national leaders know the case inside out. They will not be persuaded to give way.

The TV reports I watched last night were suggesting Scargill has now said a third party might be brought in. But the way I read it, once again the media are trying to push the movement in a certain direction.

So, what about the docks and the power stations?

The situation in our Dover docks is as it's always been. Dover is not a traditional dock in the sense, say, the port of London is. It is comparatively new with no dock traditions. There's no dock-working community in Dover as such. And there's a lot of part-time working I believe. So we would expect the people in Dover, with no experience and background, to do exactly what they're doing — that is, break their national strike.

... and the power stations?

Richborough power station was built to burn Kent coal. Now it's burning oil. I understand that the type of oil they're burning is of an inferior quality, and that is causing pollution problems. There is a yard near the power station that stores imported Italian cars. Apparently they have been damaged as a result of the polluted atmosphere from the power station.

The power stations in the northern part of the county are having problems too. There's little maintenance going on and they're having a hard time. And I understand the situation is the same in Dungeness, the atomic power station. It's working flat out without much maintenance being done.

As you know, our position on the question of electricity generated by nuclear energy is that we think it dangerous, and unnecessary. We understand that the workers are concerned about their jobs. But the argument is quite simple: you can generate electricity in stations powered by coal

it's not a question of putting anyone out of work.

How will you attempt to get other unions in your area to implement the TUC policy?

Trade unionists in this area are making a big financial contribution. And there are a number of unions refusing to handle coal and allied fuels: the rail workers, the seamen, and of course, some transport and general workers. So we've already had quite a lot of physical support.

It's a question of developing that, and we're trying to do that *all* the time, at *all* levels.

What came out of the TUC wasn't everything the miners might have wanted, but it wasn't a victory for the extreme right wing. The tactical assessment of your national leadership was obviously that it was the best they could get and something they could build on. What do you think the Tories and the Coal Board will do as a result of that decision? Are they changing their strategy?

I know the government have already worked out how to move the stocks of coal from the pitheads. That will be tried. No expense will be spared to make a successful operation.

The men in the territorial army — the drivers — have already been approached to ascertain whether they would be prepared to drive trucks 'in the event of things going wrong'. And we certainly know what 'things go wrong' means. That is being proposed to men in Kent and elsewhere.

But I understand that we'll get a favourable response from those part-time soldiers. Many of them live in the communities where our people live. I don't think they'll want to be seen as people deliberately breaking the strike.

Do you mean you think the Tories plan to use the territorials quickly?

There are indications it will be done within the next eight weeks. They can't bring them in yet — because they're away playing football on the continent. But that's their next move.

They've tried everything else. They've laid on free transport for

scabs, they bribed people to work. Every attempt has failed. The miners' aren't going to be broken.

It's obvious that the sentiment for the strike inside the NUM hasn't changed at all, that's very clear to everyone. But it must have been difficult through the summer. Now that people are back from the summer break, are you still getting a good response financially?

Yes. We're certainly getting a good response from our own countrymen. But now we're getting a tremendous amount of support from abroad too.

Just a few examples. The French miners' unions have organised a campaign and made a tremendous collection. Already they're in Yorkshire to see the situation so they can report back with a view to raising money and food for us. The Belgian working class are extending their solidarity to the British miners. In Holland, the Dutch socialist party are sending food convoys into Kent and so is the small Dutch Communist Party. We know now that people in other countries are doing the same, including the Soviet Union who are now collecting funds.

In that sense we are receiving more financial support than before. Money is not the question.

At the beginning of the strike, the government's tactic was to take on the miners in the spring time. They assumed they would break the miners very quickly. We're told that leading government figures thought the strike would last a month.

The spring has gone, and it's not broken the miners. The summer's gone, and it's not broken the miners. The season is now on the side of the miners. The miners know that — they know we're past the worst period. As the days get shorter and the nights get colder, everything is in our favour.

We're about to go into Labour Party conference. Neil Kinnock was less than helpful in his speech to the TUC. He did what he's done in all his public speeches: he said the miners had a just case. Not only did he not support them in any positive way, but by talking about violence he implied that the violence was caused by the miners. The media had a field day. That's the way he's said it ever since the strike began, and I presume it's the line he'll

take at conference. What would you like to see coming out of conference, what commitment to support the strike?

Well, about Neil Kinnock's attitude to the miners. I don't know of him ever being on a miners' picket line. I don't know of him being in any of the villages occupied by the police. Where is he getting his information from? Where is he getting all this nonsense about violence? He's being sucked in by those people who oppress the miners.

I would like to publicly invite Neil Kinnock into this coal field, not as Neil Kinnock, but anonymously. Let him go into the pit villages and see where the violence is. There's no violence being created by the miners.

When we sent six pickets onto the line, they were confronted by thousands of police — with horses and dogs and truncheons. We are now seven months into our strike and not one striking miner has been charged and proven guilty of a physical assault on a scab.

Neil Kinnock gets his information from the ruling class. He ought to be ashamed of himself.

The Archbishop of Canterbury has taken the same line. He's never seen a picket line from the day he was born. He too is talking about the problems society is facing from the pickets. When is he going to show some Christian charity and send a bit of food in for the kids, instead of pontificating about the strike?

People who don't stop what's taking place are guilty of supporting it. I'd say to Kinnock, and the Archbishop, the police and the scabs — all those who line up with Thatcher — that, without the national and international solidarity of the working class, they are supporting a policy which could lead to our children starving.

And what about the Labour Party conference?

I'd like to see the Labour Party coming out of its conference much stronger and much more determined to establish a socialist society. The first step along that road would be to declare for that section of the working class that is in struggle against the ruling class.

Power stations

Stop all coal!



DESPITE the delay in the power unions decision on solidarity with the miners strike, at a local level the NUM in many areas has taken the initiative in discussing action.

And many power station workers are certainly not dragging their feet in implementing solidarity.

By Jude Woodward

In South Wales the main power station, Aberthaw, has run out of coal and is not handling scab supplies. There is a 24-hour NUM picket on the plant and no scab coal has crossed.

In the North-west, Fiddlers Ferry in Merseyside is the largest power station. Workers there have decided to refuse to move coal. Shop stewards from the power station in collaboration with Bold NUM, have also now persuaded the smaller Bold power station

to refuse to handle scab coal.

Miners in the North west are looking to similar success this week when they meet with workers from the Westwood power station in Wigan.

On Monday, 100 miners' pickets visited Carrington power station near Manchester and a mass meeting this week will decide on future action there. On Tuesday morning 150 miners picketed Padiham power station, again near Manchester.

It is this kind of organisation at the local

and regional level, building direct links between the striking pits and the shop stewards in the power stations, that can overcome the shilly-shallying of the leaderships.

The government knows that once power cuts start it will suffer a tremendous moral defeat in the strike. And all commentators agree the lights will start to go out within the next 2 to 3 months.

In a number of areas electricity supplies are almost entirely being channelled in from other sections of the national grid. If power cuts are to be avoided, coal will have to be moved. The attitude of power station workers to this scab coal will be key.

Trying to reach agreement with unions like the EETPU that openly de-

fend scabbing in the miners' strike could take months — if it is possible at all. So unions and plant leaderships that do support the miners should get moving now without waiting for the national agreement.

And that includes workers in the EETPU who are fed up with the scab reputation of the own union. With the TUC resolution behind them, there is no reason why Hammond's words at the TUC attacking the NUM should be the only policy pursued in the union.

The experience at Didcot power station in Oxford shows that power station workers locally will organise to support the miners. This should be the priority aim of local solidarity work over the next weeks.

Fly sparks

LABOUR PARTY secretaries all over Britain will have been surprised and gratified to receive the letter from Eric Hammond, general secretary of the EETPU, preparing to launch a campaign to retain political funds in the upcoming ballots on the political levy. No doubt the union's intention of relying on the efforts of members who are supporters of the Labour Party seem entirely praiseworthy. But then there is the sting in the tail. The letter takes the opportunity to advise of a change in procedure.

By P. McDermott

From now on, all affiliations of the EETPU branches to CLPs will have to go through the EETPU's head office. This change is a clear attack on the rights of the union's branches to affiliate individually to their local parties, and is designed to further tighten head office control of EETPU members in the Labour Party.

general secretary Frank Chapple made tremendous efforts to get right wingers delegated to Labour Parties at the time when Tony Benn was running for deputy leader. The point was to stop the left where friends of Chapple were under threat.

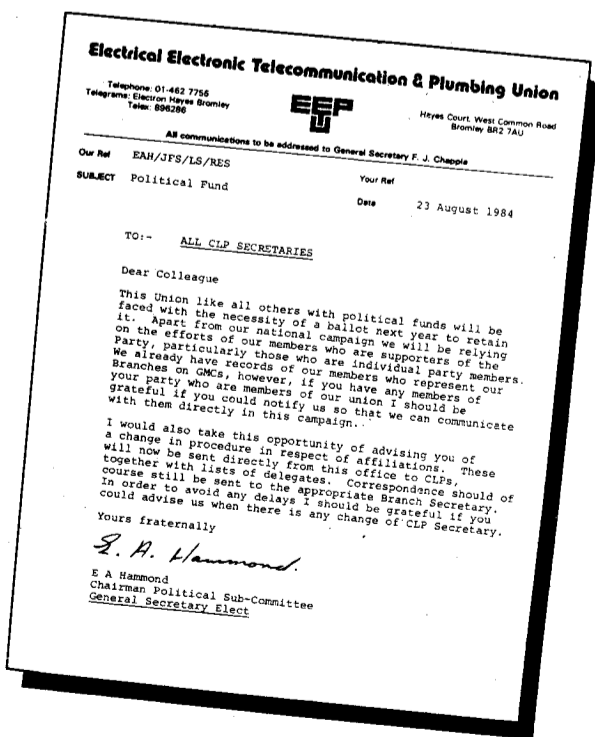
The new move by the EETPU will obviously make it much more difficult for the left to get delegates. The union's computerised information system will enable the leadership to put plenty of obstacles in the way of left

branches trying to affiliate and give it the ability to veto candidates.

Hammond's efforts to influence the Labour Party will of course be aided by the new editor of the union journal, SDP member John Grant. As one unnamed senior official of the union told the *Financial Times* recently: 'We're not a moderate union. We're a right wing union'

The complete centralisation of the EETPU around its right wing leadership, with the shutting down of branches and the constant harassment of all opposition makes it certain that the new procedures will be used against the left, both in the union and the party.

The EETPU already stood out at the TUC with its recent drive for 'no-strike' deals with ma-



For companies. These have won it the praise of Mr Parry Rogers, personnel director of Plessey's, who called it 'the best union we deal with'.

If Hammond gets his way in the Labour Party as well the union, he may yet earn praise from Dr Owen as 'the best coalition partner we deal with'.

Why steel must join the fight

THE WORD 'steelworker' is being dragged through the industrial mud at every trade union meeting in the country, and the main architect of our degradation is the contemptuous actions of our general secretary Bill Sirs in the current miners' strike.

By Ray Davies, ISTC Llanwrn (personal capacity)

He has backstabbed the rail and transport workers and dock workers who gave us magnificent support during our own steel strike.

He has broken every rule in the trade union handbook by condoning the use of thug scab lorry drivers to move boycotted material across picket lines.

He tore up the triple alliance of coal, steel and rail before the ink was dry and, as is the way with all scabs and traitors, he ended up by attacking his own comrade-in-fudge and co-partner in stitching up the Welsh and national steel strike in 1980, Len Murray.

His treacherous actions of the last few months have proved a bit too

much even for our own TUC congress delegation. They disowned his reckless attack on the miners and fellow trades unionists but this cautious step away from scabbing is nowhere near enough.

Bill Sirs himself has no doubt done enough in the Tories' eyes to win his place in the house of treachery (Lords) alongside his co-partner Joe Gormley.

However, if the ISTC really wants to make amends, if they really want to cleanse their soul, it can only be done by putting our part of the triple alliance into effect — that is, refuse to handle scab lorries and material and call on every ISTC member to come out on the picket lines.

Anything less than that will condemn our union to a place of shame in the industrial history books.

Photo: TERRY HEMMAN

Photo: GM COOKSON

A defeat in the docks

AS WE GO to press it is almost certain that the national dock strike will be called off. Only a revolt against the leadership at the national delegate conference will prevent surrender by the TGWU.

The terms of the return to work give BSC most of what they wanted. The strike started over the corporation's refusal — with the backing of the ISTC — to accept a quota of 18,000 tons of coal a week. The TGWU, having started from 12,000 tons — enough to keep Ravenscraig ticking over — ended up offering the 18,000 tons. The BSC held out for 22,500 tons. This is what they have now got.

The 'phased return' from 18,000 to 22,500 tons over four weeks in the agreement is merely a face-saver for the union. The deal means that Ravenscraig will get scab coal in sufficient quantities to maintain production at current levels.

By Pat Hickey

This docks deal will undoubtedly encourage the right bureaucracy who campaigned actively to break the strike. The ISTC have scabbed on the dockers from the beginning of the strike, and it was their opposition to any cuts in coal supplies that enabled the BSC to hold out for the full 22,500 tons it had demanded.

Despite the role of the right, over 8,000 of the 14,000 registered dockers were on strike and there was no serious return to work. The fact that the strike was clearly in support of the miners makes this a considerable achievement. Even without the strike spreading its effects would have started to be felt in the next two to three weeks. Around one third of the country's import/export business would have been hit.

The key question in the dispute was first the preparation of the TGWU leadership and secondly the working ports. A more vigorous campaign by the national leadership to picket working ports would have increased the impact of the strike — even if, as was likely, the strike never became 100 per cent effective.

The rail unions had given clear undertakings about respecting dockers

picket lines. But Ronn Todd's appearance at Immingham in the middle of the strike, excellent though that was, was not enough.

The initiative on picketing was left to local level and not organised at a national level by the TGWU. Merseyside dockers had considerable success when they picketed some of the smaller ports. At Bristol, the pickets stopped a return to work move.

The majority of striking dockers had already shown that they would resist the strike-breaking activities of Medlock Bibby and his like. This strength should have been built on.

The last national docks strike ended messily, with the union appearing to give way to blockading lorry drivers.

Failure to confront the pressure of the right, whether blockading lorry drivers, Bill Sims, or working dockers, will inevitably store up problems for the future.

The future for dockers is still going to be an attack on the Dock Labour Scheme. The division into registered and non registered ports is a fundamental weakness in the union organisation of the docks. A fight to extend the Dock Labour Scheme to all dockers will be essential if that attack is to be defeated.

The dockers have sufficient power to win almost any demand. If they are united. Uniting them will demand better preparation and better leadership than was forthcoming in this struggle.

Glasgow demo: A golden opportunity missed

AROUND 7000 people marched through Glasgow city centre last Saturday in solidarity with the miners. Almost every important West of Scotland workplace or union, and most of its Labour Parties, were represented. Unfortunately this wasn't a mass demonstration — each delegation numbered in dozens rather than hundreds.

Tony Southall, Hillhead Labour Party

That was in marked contrast to the work-day of action backing the miners on 9 May. Then

large numbers of rank and file unionists, who had been through a political debate and concluded that solidarity was vital, made up a demonstration of more than 20,000.

Speakers on Saturday were Mick McGahey, Donald Dewar (Labour's Scottish spokesperson), Jimmy Milne (secretary of the STUC), and two women's support committee representatives who got the best reception of all.

Unfortunately none of these dealt with following up the decisions of the TUC by extending solidarity action. In particular, coals supplied to Ravenscraig and the docks action in response to scab labour at Hunterston went unmentioned.

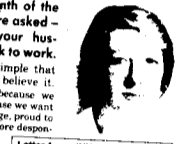


WOMEN WITH GUTS



We stand by our men

ENTERING THE sixth month of the miners' strike, we wives are asked — why are you backing your husbands, they should go back to work. The answer is simple, so simple that people will not, or refuse, to believe it. We back our husbands not because we want a big pay increase, but because we want to see our children receiving a wage, proud to be independent and not getting more dependent as month after month goes by, they can't find a job. We are suffering most certainly, but we know that in the end the sacrifices made now will be repaid. When MacGregor chopped up British Leyland and slaughtered British Steel for Thatcher she thought the time was right to finally vent her anger for unions and sheer hatred for the miners. Wrong, her timing will never be right.



Letter from JUNE CLARK of the Birch Coppice Miners' Wives Support Group. Back at school the talk will be of and on the street, but who's uncomfortable now? We walk with our heads high and our kids are proud of their mums. Our next problem is when the kids go back to school.

SCHOOL

The scab's kids will be parading their brand new uniforms, our kids will be going back in last hand-me-downs. In 1984 I hope this country is proud! Back at school the talk will be of holidays and how much was spent. What will our kids talk about? If it wasn't for our good friends of the...

WOMEN

It is we women who sit at home wondering what to do for dinner, we women who usually get the bills first and worry and we no to our kids and feel awful. At Birch Coppice our striking families are in the minority. I first came to the strike to make us feel uncomfortable in our village shops.

COAL not done! We will win! Popular slogans, but underneath the slogans, away from the steady eyes of men and the rhetoric, are the soft and gentle eyes of wives and children, people who have found themselves at the centre of the longest single national strike since the 1926 coal strike.

Thumbs up from the kids

Women and children who do not accept faith with respectful indifference, but with a single-minded determination which leaves the outsider unable to comprehend. We have arrived at the village of Birch Coppice, near Tamworth in Staffordshire. A colliery village employing 800 miners, 200 of them on strike. A tight village and community where children are harassed at school, where shopkeepers are reluctant to serve them, where police surveillance has become a way of life. This is Birch Coppice.

By JOHN GREEN, Deputy FOC News of the World Commentator. Our introduction to the Birch Coppice mine. Travelling from London our journey was interrupted by the standard 'stop and search'. Our truck was carrying £1,500 worth of foodstuffs for their beleaguered village. Having related themselves, we were allowed to proceed. Our arrival was not greeted with pomp and ceremony, but with a general sense of relief.

Why we adopted Birch Coppice CENTRE PAGES Message from Scargill PAGE TWO

Sun and News of the World print worker have produced a special newspaper which has sold 10,000 copies to date.

West Midlands action called

THE WEST Midlands Regional TUC has called a week of action in support of the miners from 8 to 15 October. In Birmingham, the trades council Miners' Support Committee plans to use the week to publicise the miners' case and raise some money. It will also campaign for action in response to the TUC General Council's statement of support.

On Tuesday 9 October a workplace delegates meeting will discuss how best to do this, in particular raising regular financial support through workplace levies and boycotts of scab coal, coke and oil. A hundred key workplaces have been targeted

and the support committee will be trying to ensure that at the minimum these are represented. The meeting will also discuss plans for solidarity action to be taken on Thursday 11 October. This will range from workplace meetings to work stoppages. How successful such plans will be depends on what real resources the regional TUC will commit to them. To date they have restricted themselves to issuing calls for solidarity rather than organising it.

Their last regional day of action was the only one called on a Saturday and was limited to a march commemorating the victory at Saltley Gates in the 1972 strike. Today there are justifiable fears that the support committee will be left to change fine words into some form of action. For details of the events planned contact Birmingham Trades Council Miners' Support Committee, c/o TURC, 7 Frederick St, Birmingham B1 3HE. Tel: 236 8323.

Notts pits to close

IAN MACGREGOR is fulfilling his promise to remember the 'loyal' Notts miners who have refused to join the strike in an unexpected way.

By Rick Simon, East Nottingham Labour Party

Moorgreen pit has just been scheduled for closure before the end of the year, despite having enough mineable reserves for another 15 years.

But Moorgreen is just the thin end of the wedge. In South Notts only three out of eleven pits — Cotgrave, Calverton and Gedling — have a long term future.

To reinforce the point that you can only stop the NCB's closure programme by joining the national strike a march and rally are being organised in Eastwood.

If the Notts coalfield had been solid from the beginning the strike would have been won weeks ago and Moorgreen pit would still be producing coal in 1985.



Photo: MORNING STAR

Black Sections: A challenge to the v

THE DEBATE AROUND black sections of the Labour Party looks like being the most explosive, and the most exciting at this year's conference.

The Party is faced with both a challenge and a tremendous opportunity. The emergence of the movement towards black sections is a vital step in the direction of a unified black movement linked to the labour movement.

Socialist Action discussed the black sections movement with **MARC WADSWORTH** of Vauxhall Labour Party, **RUSSELL PROFITT** Lewisham GLC councillor, and **DIANE ABBOT**, Westminster Councillor and candidate for Labour's NEC. They are all on the steering committee of the black section.

As they explain, black people in Britain constitute one of the most loyal sections of the Labour vote, are more likely than white workers to be in a trade union, and remain loyal to the organisations of the

labour movement. This is despite the fact that the record of the British labour movement on black rights is close to despicable.

Black people have begun to organise to demand that this record is changed — not least by ensuring that black people's loyalty to the labour movement is reflected in their involvement at every level, and in a struggle for policies that meet their needs.

If Labour responds to this challenge, by ratifying the black section, it can both ensure this support from black people continues — strengthening the labour movement in all its battles; and build new confidence that the struggle for socialism is a struggle for equality and justice for the whole of the working class, not just a part of it.

The demands of the black section must be met! All socialists should get involved in the campaign into and beyond this Party conference.

Socialist Action: Perhaps you could start by saying why the movement around black sections has only started comparatively recently. The women's section has been going now for decades, and there has been a youth section for a long time. Why have black sections only begun to develop in the last period?

Diane Abbott: I think three things have converged. There is a mood for change in the Labour Party of greater potential than there has been since 1945.

Then there is a whole generation of second generation immigrants in this country. My parents' generation still relate to the politics of the countries they came from, in some ways they still talk with more energy about the politics of Jamaica. The new generation see themselves as based here.

The third thing is that people thought in the past that if they were nice enough then white people would make them MPs. That has proved to be untrue — white people are not going to give up power.

To me what the black sections are all about is black people within the party organising to take power and not waiting to be given power.

Marc Wadsworth: Black caucuses have existed for some time — for decades. It is only now, with the changes in the party that Diane has talked about, that we can institutionalise the position and get the best benefits. No longer is it good enough for us to organise in a caucus that is smiled on benevolently by the party but doesn't have any teeth.

They have a caucus in Battersea for instance, that has existed for ages, but they don't have any voting rights. It didn't occur to them to demand delegate status with voting rights on the GMC or on the EC.

They discovered they were horribly wrong when Russell Profitt was selected then deselected faster than anybody else has been in the party.

The margin of Russell Profitt's defeat was so huge that it told there was something very wrong structurally with the Labour Party. It is that sort of watershed that has given us a mood of part defiance and part confidence that we can move forward as an organised group within the party, fighting for our rights with a common voice rather than being a supplicant going round with our begging bowl.

There is also a black caucus in Brent that was loosely gathered around the Labour Party. They had some initial success in getting 13 black councillors into the Town Hall. But because it was a largely single-issue, apolitical caucus, the whole thing went sour, with the defection of Ambrozine Niel to the Tories in a row over black people in education.

This experience shows the need for black sections formally linked into the Labour Party, in a clear political framework.

You mentioned those left wingers that might be seen as our natural allies in this fight but you have to remember that many of those people have grown fat on race and that we are proposing to take their platform away from them.

No more do we want surrogate black people speaking on our own behalf. That is the great challenge to them and a great challenge to the movement — to the socialist family that a member of the family now feels strong enough and politically mature enough to stand on his or her own feet.



MARC WADSWORTH, chin in hand, at the press conference before the first national conference.

DA: The fact is that the Labour Party in the inner city areas that I know has ridden on black votes. They are the only reliable set of votes coming out for the Labour Party now and I speak as one who has canvassed for myself in these areas.

The traditional white working class vote has eroded and left the black vote as the only reliable vote.

MW: Talking about the loyalty of those votes, we just had a by-election in Vauxhall for Lambeth council and our prediction was that we were probably 70 votes ahead of a very strong Alliance candidate. Yet we won by more than 550 votes, and this was because of the black turnout.

People were telling me that you could tell the Alliance voters because as they lined up they were white and only a trickle and the Labour line was longer and much blacker. The candidate was black and was backed by the black section.

This is an indication of times to come. You will see black candidates emerging from the ranks of the black sections and they will have a credible constituency. They won't depend on white patronage though that will be an element.

They will gain their main strength from actually representing the black community and in 37 ethnic marginals around the country I think that is a very significant step forward.

It is quite legitimate to say that there should be a candidate to represent black people as well as representing white people. People fear being labelled single issue.

It just seems hypocritical that if your strong issue is being black, and understanding the black issue, that is seen as a handicap and if you are good on the economy then you are seen as a future cabinet minister.

What do you think of the objections that have been made by the party leadership for example, which has objected that this is not the way to ensure that black people are integrated into the Labour Party. And then there is the more dogmatic Militant type of position that this is a divisive move?

Russell Profitt: It was interesting that the leadership sought to head off the move towards black sections by rejecting them on the very day that the first working party meeting was to be held. It was seen by the leadership as a major threat and one which they should try to stamp out at an early stage.

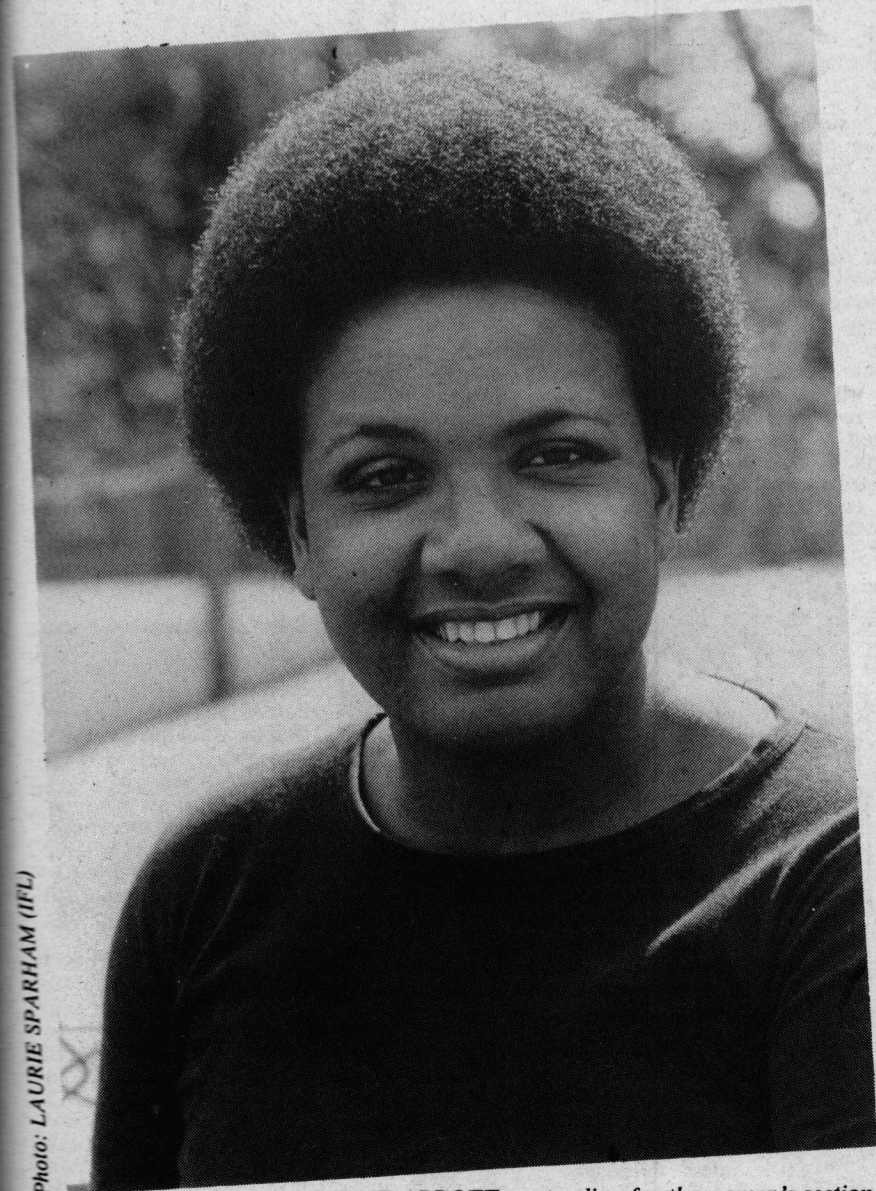
As far as I am concerned that is indicative of the racism that there is in the party. It is in a sense calling for sole rights to decide what matters as progress on race.

We are not accepting that. We take as our starting point that as the people who experience racism we are the ones who are best able to define a way in which we can make progress.

That is the debate and the argument that the leadership must accept. Since the initial move we are growing. There are more black sections being formed every week and the campaign continues. They will have to accept it, and if they are not on our side, in the words of Stokely Carmichael, 'they are part of the problem'.

MW: Talking about the institutionalised racism in the Labour Party, it is a vast omission that Kinnock doesn't have a black advisor nor does anybody in the leadership.

I heard that when they were trying to put together some propaganda on race quite recently they couldn't find a photograph of any black people in Walworth Road — and that is the Labour Party headquarters. They had



DIANE ABBOTT — standing for the women's section of the NEC, supported by the Labour Women's Action Committee

whole movement



Meeting of the black section

to draw pictures and shade in the characters.

This tells you what their approach to race is, one of vote gathering and the formation of an ethnic minorities committee at election time made up of worthies mainly white.

I think that they fear that black sections will shine a torch on their own lack of performance on race and that is just what they don't want.

RP: I think *Militant's* response is symptomatic of their general lack of understanding of institutional disadvantage within our community. They have a very suspect line on responding to women's issues and whole sections of the disadvantaged within our community.

They cannot take on board the fact that you must move away from colour blind approaches. We are not all the same. If you continue to think of the working class as being all the same and hoping that by running up a flag they will all come running behind you they are sadly mistaken.

I am very disappointed that some comrades who are black go along with the *Militant* line because it seems to me that in so doing they are falling into this trap of thinking that we are all the same. We are not all the same. For generations nobody has treated us as though we are all the same, so why the hell we should start believing we are all the same now is absolutely beyond me.

Of course there are communalities between the struggles for justice and the struggles for equality with the black and the white communities, but there are many ways in which they are different.

DA: On the *Militant* — the *Militant* is a right wing group and it is not surprising that it is not responsive to black peoples' needs. In a sense the *Militant's*

response to black people is coming out of the same racism and the same almost colonialist attitude to black people, as Kinnock's.

And it has its roots in that very patronising attitude to black people which is that 'we white people can tell you black people what you really want'.

We don't need to be told by Kinnock or Ted Grant what strategies we should put forward.

Having said that I have always fought against the expulsion of the *Militant* and would fight again because I think they are entitled to play their part in the Labour Party. But their attitude on black sections reflects the white control of *Militant* and the very rigid doctrinal attitude that *Militant* often has.

One thing I would add to what Russell said is that I think that one of the things that black people are moving away from is this whole shopping list attitude to people who aren't white, male, and middle class. I for one am fed up with a shopping list of resolutions which groups together gays, black people, disabled, etc because I think when you group together it diminishes from and overlooks what is specific to different issues.

I want to keep my eye on that goal and I don't want to be deflected by being told I am one of many minorities.

MW: I must say that I am very disappointed with the *Militant* because they have certainly widened the debate in the Labour Party which is long overdue.

But they seem to be hell bent on infiltrating black sections in the same way as they have with the YS and not to a good cause. Down in Vauxhall we have an example of this — they have come in, they have taken posts and offered to do leaflets.

Then you discover what they have been up to behind the back of the black section. They have spoken at a Greater London Labour Party conference against black sections — one of our delegates who was there from the YS, who we had fought very hard to get on the GC. And there she was denouncing us. So what are they playing at?

If they are to be honest and to be taken seriously then this is no way to carry on and that is the message that I would pass on to them — we are not against you because we certainly don't support the expulsion of *Militant* — but frankly they are acting like rather malicious children at the moment and not playing it straight. If they really want our genuine support they they should start acting as if they deserve our support.

DA: Well the *Militant* are playing it straight in a way, but they are just like the rest of the far left. *Militant* are into using black people.

The far left has notoriously coopted people and used black people and tried to construct out of black people some kind of shock troops a vanguard. I for one am tired of that — black people are tired of being used by white people both on the far left and in other areas of the party, we are going to determine our own strategies now.

How do you see the role of black sections once there is a national network set up? Do you see it as similar to the women's sections — having a national conference and that type of input to the party?

DA: I think that there are three main roles for black sections. The first is there are lots of black members of the Labour Party who never come to meetings, who feel intimidated by the bureaucracy and the fact that they are white dominated. One very simple role for black sections is to provide a forum where black people can speak out and not feel intimidated and in that way draw in black Labour Party members who haven't been active before.

The second role for black section is in the forming of policies relating to black people — where they can be hammered out and brought back into the party as a whole.

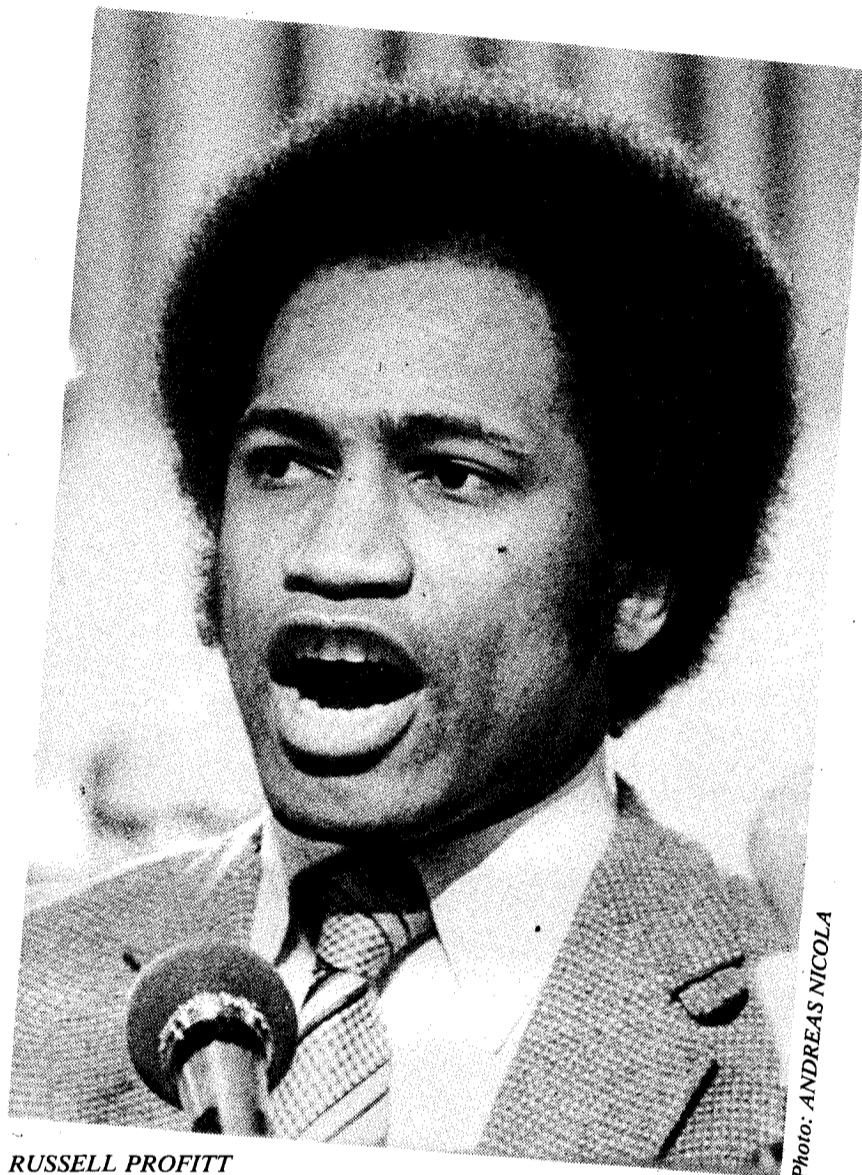
The third role is in organising so there can be more black representatives at every level in the party. One of the criticisms levelled against black sections is that they are segregationist, but one of the results I have seen is that they have maximised black involvement and a black input in the party.

Would you see similar type of structural arrangements with the women's section of the party?

RP: If you are going to move up from the grassroots position that the black section is at the moment to the positions where power is actually exercised you have got to have parallel structures.

It also takes us to the need to fight the issue within the trade union movement as well. We know we have got a battle to win within the trade union movement. It is perhaps the battle which the Labour leadership never fought. They never took on the trade union movement to confront racism and to create equal opportunities.

DA: I ought to say that personally I don't see that fighting for black representatives on the NEC is our immediate priority — my immediate priority is to build strong grassroots black sections because I think that only by doing this do you have a position of power from which to move to have black councillors and MPs.



RUSSELL PROFITT

But certainly we want more people at every level in the power structure of the party and the unions because what you have got at the moment is a whole union leadership — the Scargills, Bickerstaffes, Ken Gills, and Alan Sappers — who came out of the trade union movement a decade ago. Since then the growth in the trade unions has been among women and black people. The present trade union leadership does not reflect that at all.

MW: A very interesting statistic shows that black workers are more likely to belong to a trade union than white workers. And yet if you look at trade union officers you hardly see a black face among them. If you take that to full time official level you can count on a couple of hands. That is something that the trade union movement should be addressing itself to as a matter of urgency.

I was just going to ask if there is any link up between the people involved in the black sections and the unions. There is some black self help in some unions particularly in NALGO in London and there is the BTUSM — is there a clear link?

MW: There is a very definite link. Our convenor is a full time trade union officer. We see it as a huge priority, not just given the amount of votes that they wield at conference, but because of the situation of near disenfranchisement that black trade unionists find themselves in.

A separate organisation has been formed because certain black trade unionists have felt that things won't move forward unless there is that separate pressure of a black trade unionists solidarity group working to agitate for the sort of things that we have been calling for here.

How long do you think it will be before black sections are formally agreed?

RP: The campaign is to have them established as quickly as possible. It is only within the last year that the issue has taken off and there has been a phenomenal growth. We never anticipated that we would be at the stage we are at now in terms of having so many black sections forming not just in London but outside London as well.

But we are not a movement that has the financial wherewithal to support the growth that has taken place. We would welcome any contributions that anyone cares to make to the movement. But in answer to when we do see it as happening, I don't think that we would want to start saying that it is going to be within two to three years. I recognise that it will take time.

All I can say is that the challenge is very squarely in the lap of the movement and the longer they pussyfoot on this issue the more difficult it will be for the movement to speak with any degree of credibility within the eyes of the black community.

MW: The pace of delivery is very much up to people out of our immediate net like the leadership of the party who ignore our demands at their peril.

If you look at the Greater London Labour Party annual conference the most passionate debate was on black sections and I think that is an indicator of what is likely to happen at conference.

DA: It took the people campaigning for constitutional reforms seven or eight years from start to finish.

I would see black sections coming in less than that time not least because the party doesn't have that long. If it doesn't meet the demands of black people it is going to have serious problems when it comes to a general election.

South Africa

Apartheid regime in crisis

THE PRESENCE in the British Consulate in Durban of six refugees from South Africa 'justice' is an additional headache for the apartheid authorities — who are already facing escalating struggles in the townships and rising militancy in the trade unions.

It might seem strange that these potential victims of apartheid should be seeking the help of Margaret Thatcher who, despite her verbal disapproval of the system has always shown in action where her real sympathies lie. She demonstrated it again earlier this year by receiving Prime Minister Botha and by her support for South Africa at the United Nations.

by Charlie van Gelderen

Those six men and women had originally been detained because of their participation in the boycott campaign which led to the pathetic participation in the elections to Botha's new tri-cameral parliament — a parliament which gives the vote to 1.5 million 'coloureds' and three-quarters of a million 'Indians' but not the 20 million blacks who form the vast majority of the population. Real power, of course, is retained by the five million 'whites', reinforced by the increased powers of the executive president.

The South African courts declared the detention of the six fugitives unlawful and they were

released from gaol. But the minister of law and order, Mr Louis Le Grange, immediately issued new orders under one of the many draconian laws of the apartheid regime. By that time, these six people had disappeared until they turned up to the embarrassed British Consulate.

By one of those ironies of history, Botha was being installed as the first executive president under the new constitution at the very time when the six were seeking refuge in the consulate.

Botha and his supporters maintain that the new constitution is an important step toward democracy in South

Africa. One of the main features of even bourgeois democracy is the right to demonstrate and protest. But it was precisely for protesting against the farcical constitution, and calling for a boycott of the elections, that these six people and hundreds of others were arrested.

Botha's comment when the results of the 'coloured' elections came in was that it showed that these people still 'had little interest in the exercise of their democratic rights'. In fact, of course, it illustrated the high development of consciousness and the real democratic expression of the people's will.

Similarly, Botha claims, in reply to critics, that the black people could exercise their democratic rights in their 'own homelands'.

These so-called 'homelands' have been set up by arbitrary decision of the whites only parliament. The black people were never consulted about whether they wanted them or not (just as the 'coloured' and 'Indian' people were never consulted about the tri-cameral parliament). Only the white minority could vote in the referendum



Sharpeville, 1960

which ratified the new constitution. Only the whites voted for the parliament that set up the 'homelands'.

By a stroke of the legislative pen, millions of blacks, some of whom had not lived in the 'homelands' for three of four generations, were deprived of their South African citizenship. The

children of Xosa-speaking parents born in 'white' South Africa are considered to be citizens of either the Transkei or Ciskei; children of Zulu parentage of Kwa-Zulu and so on. This is the sort of democracy of which Hitler would not have disapproved.

The overwhelmingly successful boycott cam-

paign was a powerful demonstration of solidarity by the comparatively privileged 'coloured' and 'Indian' communities with their black brothers. It was plainly telling the apartheid regime 'We are all black together' and that they were not accepting a constitution about which they had not been consulted and which only sought to entrench the

racial divisions.

Oppressive laws may have been effective in the past in suppressing the struggles of the oppressed people in South Africa but, as the well-known South African novelist Nadine Gordimer put it: 'Some perfectly ordinary day, for sure, black South Africans will free themselves and rule themselves'.

Abortion: back on the world agenda

ABORTION HAS EMERGED as a key issue in the American presidential elections and in US politics generally. Reagan opened his campaign way back in February when he addressed a Right-to-Life meeting and promised that abortion would feature strongly in the campaign.

This promise was kept when the administration sent a team to the World Conference on Population in Mexico City in August, headed by James Buckley — the president of Radio Free Europe and a prominent Roman Catholic.

The team generally were not 'population experts' — their whole purpose was more determined by the needs of the Republicans to keep the Moral Majority back home happy than to look at the real needs of the world's poor. They went brandishing their main weapon — the fact that they are the main funders of aid to family planning programmes round the world.

The Americans threatened to withdraw funding from any programme which included abortion as a method of family planning. Because of opposition — not least from American legislators and others — this was later modified so that non-governmental agencies would lose 'abortion funding' (the *International Planned*

By Leonora Lloyd, National Abortion Campaign member

Parenthood Federation will lose £8.5 million, a quarter of its budget), whilst governments permitting abortion would have to put any US aid into 'segregated accounts'. This was to ensure the money is not used 'in a manner contrary to the dictates of our national conscience'.

This is despite the fact, as a bipartisan group of American politicians pointed out during the conference, that abortion remains legal in the States!

However, the outcome of the American presidential elections could well signal the start of a major onslaught on abortion rights there. A national

pro-abortion campaign (which recently had its New York headquarters fire-bombed!) sent out a circular calling on its supporters to support Ferraro and Mondale, but got back a disquieting proportion of letters saying that, whilst Reagan and Bush stank on abortion rights, 'America needed Reagan right now'.

Certainly that is the view of the Catholic church in the US. Many Roman Catholic church leaders are openly supporting Reagan's campaign. In fact the church in the US has rarely made such a concerted intervention into an election.

The main focus for this intervention is the abortion issue. Archbishop John O'Connor of New York has attacked Geraldine Ferraro by name on abortion. While Archbishop Bernard Law of Boston has called on voters to make abortion 'the critical issue in this campaign'.

At the population conference only the Vatican supported the American delegation, but the final resolution read: 'Governments are urged to take appropriate steps to help women avoid abortion, which in no case should be promoted as a method of

family planning, and whenever possible provide for the humane treatment and counselling of women who have had recourse to abortion.' This was supported by all the nations at the conference except Sweden.

Now this proposal could be read in two ways. Either it could be seen as encouragement for countries like those in Eastern Europe to start promoting better methods of and access to contraception, plus improved facilities and more sympathetic treatment of women seeking abortion — or it could be seen as anti-abortion.

Anti-abortionists in this country have no doubt as to how it should be interpreted. *The Universe* of Friday 24 August, says that 'this recommendation clearly conflicts with the clause in the 1967 Act which allows abortion for risk to the physical or mental health of the mother or her previous children.'

They quote John Smeaton, the general secretary of the anti-abortion organisation SPUC, as saying 'The honest and consistent response to the recommendation from Britain would be a major revision of the 1967 Act... (which) allows abortion as a means of family planning.' SPUC sees it as the green light to their campaign 'for a major revision of the law'.

Those of us who have struggled to keep the National Abortion Campaign

and other pro-choice organisations going have done so in the certain knowledge that more attacks would take place, and that without us being here, this time they could succeed.

On 29-30 September NAC will be holding its 1984 conference, to plan how to counteract further attacks, and how to increase support for pro-choice policies amongst ethnic minority women, in the labour movement and among young women. From there we will be going to the Labour Party conference, to launch a new scheme for joint membership of LARC and NAC (for Labour Party members and groups only) at a fringe meeting on Wednesday 3 October.

It is very important that we do not wait until the next attack to support NAC, which, as ever, is experiencing severe financial problems. Unless it becomes again an issue taken up by all sections of the labour movement, not only will the anti-abortionists be left with a clear field, but there will be no NAC left to defend our rights when the time comes.

● NAC has a range of literature and leaflets for those who want to find out more about the campaign. For more details of this and for information about forthcoming NAC conference (in Birmingham) write to: 75 Kingsway, London WC2 6TJ (01-993 2071 or 01-405 4081).

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Stalinist regime and Soviet State

LAST WEEK Socialist Action carried an article by ZBIGNIEW KOWALEWSKI on the left's attitude to the USSR. This week OLIVER MACDONALD, editor of *Labour Focus on Eastern Europe*, replies to some of the issues Kowalewski raised.

THERE ARE, undoubtedly, some fairly flabby formulations in my article on the left and the Soviet Union, but I can't go along with Kowalewski's efforts to completely break the back of the argument in it. We have basically different lines for the Western left's policy towards the USSR.

My policy really boiled down to two tasks: oppose NATO's economic and military pressure on the USSR, and wage an ideological struggle against the authoritarian bureaucratic political regime there. I see these two tasks as in essence a single, united course of action for aiding the working people's struggle for their political rights in the USSR and Eastern Europe. Thus, we don't oppose NATO *in spite* of our support for the rights of people in Eastern Europe: we do so *because* of our support for them.

At first it seems that comrade Kowalewski agrees with these two tasks but simply disagrees over priorities — which is the more important. He thinks resisting NATO pressure is the secondary task of the Western Left. I would agree if it was priorities for socialists in Eastern Europe: combat the enemy at home, at hand, weighing on the backs of the working people there. But here, for the same reason of fighting the enemy at home it is NATO that is our main target, while never relinquishing our ideological struggle against the Stalinist regime.

But comrade Kowalewski doesn't simply disagree with my order of priorities; he violently opposes them, saying I go over to the Soviet camp with an action programme whose only use 'is to invite people to join yet another USSR Friendship society'.

Now if we strip this vivid phrase of its polemical innuendo — that I want to turn people into Kremlin parrots like the cockatoos in the actually existing Soviet Friendship Societies — Kowalewski's charge has a good deal of truth in it. After all, if you call for US troops to leave Europe and for the unilateral dissolution of NATO, you are giving the USSR a huge military advantage in Europe. And I am calling for these things so that makes me rather — I would say *very* — friendly to the USSR's security interests. So, in that sense Kowalewski is right: I'm more or less — let's say more — in the Soviet camp.

But *which* Soviet camp? That of the Soviet people or that of the Stalinist regime? He doesn't even distinguish between the two — its incredible, but true. He falls for the oldest trick in the book of both the Kremlin's and the White House's ideology.

So why then does Comrade Kowalewski verbally support the task of combatting Western pressure against the USSR? The answer he gives is that this combat will have a valuable *ideological* impact in the West, albeit rather an obscure one: namely it will weaken the 'extremism' theory which — and I quote 'leads to the rejection of the theory (sic) of the last stage of capitalism'.

No wonder Kowalewski doesn't stress much the importance of fighting capitalist pressure on the USSR if all that this fight will achieve is to defend his own — I suspect bogus — 'theory of the last stage of capitalism'!!

But will the weakening of NATO's militarism strengthen the opportunities for popular movements against the political regimes in Eastern Europe? Well, the reduction of East-West tensions did so in Hungary and Poland (1956), did so again in Czechoslovakia in the middle to late 1960s, and played an enormously important role in the maturing of conditions for Solidarity's rise in Poland.

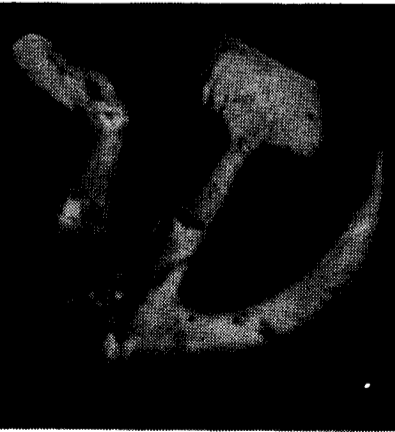
We also have ample proof that the Soviet leadership fears the internal impact of detente: they were worried sick about it during the high noon of East-West relaxation in the early 1970s. And the mainstream strategists of the US (as opposed to the propagandists) also agree about this.

Yet Kowalewski doesn't understand this dialectic at all. For him easing pressure on the USSR equals freeing the hands of the Kremlin to lash out at the peoples of Eastern Europe and the USSR.

And this error over policy is compounded with an error of analysis. He doesn't think that external pressure is of any great importance to Soviet internal development. He says 'the Stalin gang created the theory that the Soviet Union was a besieged fortress'. Hold on. The Soviet Union was besieged, wasn't it? And who was it who said this isolation didn't matter: you could still build a socialist paradise in one isolated country? Wasn't it Uncle Jo?

Kowalewski makes the same theoretical error — from a very different political standpoint, of course — as Stalin. He discounts external pressure and says the overriding determinant is the internal force of the Stalinist bureaucracy itself. Indeed, he seems to fear that any stress on external pressures somehow lets the Soviet bureaucracy off the hook. Unless you blame it for everything, you basically back it — is that the idea?

The real point is that this Stalinist bureaucracy feeds off this external pressure like a starving wolf. Can't Kowalewski see Jaruzelski guzzling every morsel of Reaganite pressure and of the CDU leaders' calls for another look at the 1937 frontiers of Germany?



How nice if that pressure didn't exist. My top priority task was to fight to remove it. Kowalewski takes an easier road: he simply says it doesn't exist. Hey presto: no need for any struggle!

Some facts: 1977 GNP of the US, Japan, FRG, France and Britain combined equalled 3712 billion dollars; GNP of the USSR was 645 — less than that of Japan alone. Look at average productivity, technological

leads, total military budgets of the USSR and the main capitalist allies — the USSR is much weaker all along the line. The conventional balance of power in Europe is roughly equal according to the Institute of Strategic Studies; everywhere else it is heavily against the USSR. Look at the ring of over 300 US bases around the periphery of the USSR. No pressure? Huh!

But this leads on to a more basic difference still with Kowalewski. He can discount all this Western muscle simply by failing to see any reason why the capitalist states should want to flex it against the Soviet Union. He can't see this because he can't see much difference between the USSR and capitalism — some, like full employment and nationalisation — but not much: these are vestiges, residues: there's no different organising principle of economic life. After all, in his view atop the nationalised industry you can and do have ferocious exploitation of the workers. He sees no sharp and pressing conflict between the social basis of the state and the Stalinist regime. He thinks the workers have no more social weight in the USSR than in the West (perhaps they have less?), and he even thinks it's ABC that the workers can gain nothing economically or socially unless they conquer power.

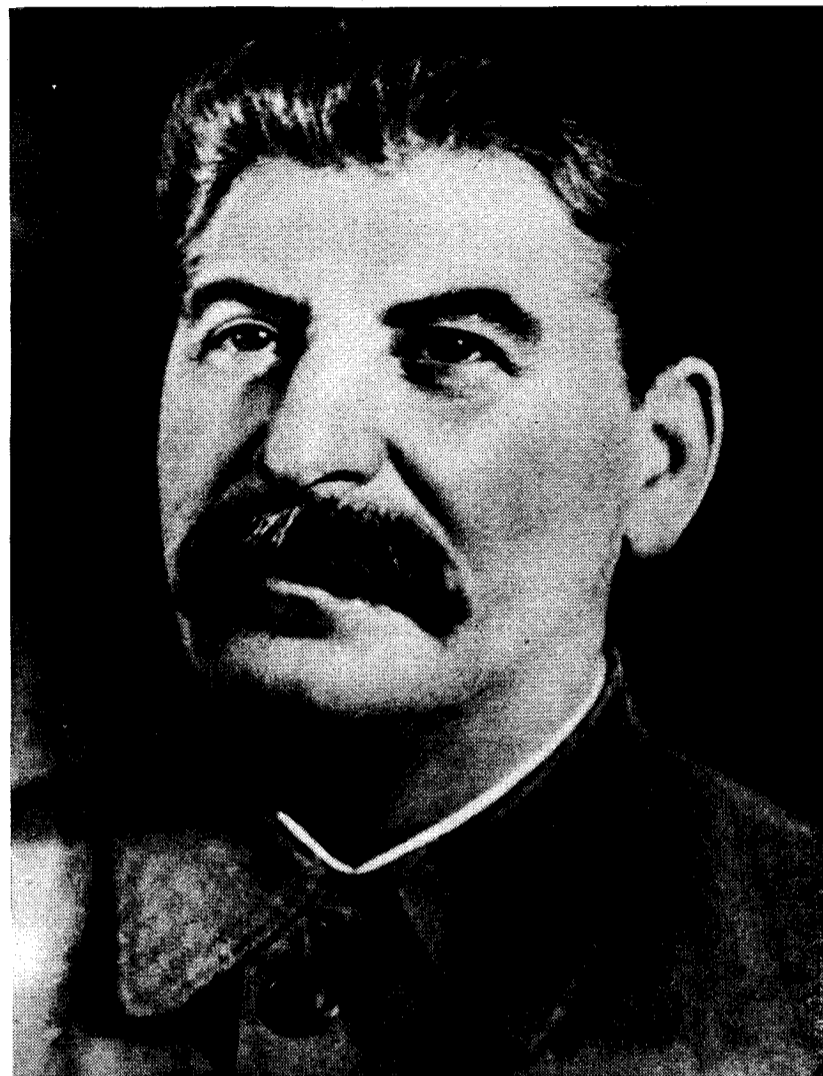
In my article there was a clear view of the source of this conflict: it lay not in the ITT or General Motors or GEC bosses' loathing of the dictatorial methods of the Stalinist regime, but in their loathing of the USSR's principle of *social* organisation: nationalised property and the planned economy.

There are people on the Marxist left who recognise all this but say that such nationalisation can be profoundly hostile to working class interests. Shachtman, the American Trotskyist, for example, took this view at the end of the 1930s, saying that nationalisation had in the Soviet case fitted well with a ferociously oppressive and exploitative new bureaucratic class which turned the Soviet workers into little better than slaves.

The strength of Shachtman's analysis, from a theoretical point of view, was that he laid down — in his early development of the theory — very clear criteria for testing his position. He said that it was based on two empirical tests: first, that the trend away from social egalitarianism evident in the 1930s would continue to deepen. And secondly, that the terroristic method of rule by the Stalin gang would continue and deepen.

On the other side, I think that Trotskyists who hold that the USSR is a bureaucratically degenerated workers' state must argue that the characterisation workers' state means something very fundamental about the position of the working class in Soviet society (although not necessarily about the shape of the political system). In particular, we must argue and seek to prove that egalitarian pressures must grow, that the social rights of the workers must be enhanced and that the terroristic violence against the working class must decline. All of this is another way of saying that the bureaucratic layer increasingly tends to lose its capacity to bully and oppress the workers and is increasingly enfeebled in the face of the domestic working class, unless developments in the capitalist world give the bureaucracy some historical breathing space.

I think the balance sheet of the last 40 years since Shachtman wrote proves him wrong and orthodox Trotskyists right on the basic issue. The terroristic regime of Stalin was dismantled and replaced by an authoritarian bureaucratic dictatorship which seeks to hold on to power



with very different methods from those of Stalin. Secondly, the growing inequalities of the Stalin period were put into reverse in the Krushchev-Brezhnev period, with massive — though not insurmountable in some international conditions — social barriers arising against any possibility of the bureaucracy re-introducing the capitalist market: numerically and culturally the increasingly powerful urban working class coming to insist as of right on the security of full employment, massive subsidies to keep its essential goods and services available at largely stable prices — eg food, rents, transport, gas and electricity — expecting big housing programmes, wide educational opportunities and so on.

Kowalewski rejects all this — he even calls it ridiculous. He doesn't consider there is any basically positive organising principle in Soviet society, he sees the 'totalitarian regime' as fitting very snugly onto nationalised property since he thinks its ferociously exploiting the workers. He thinks it is even ABC to insist that the Soviet working class cannot have been strengthened in any way economically or socially for the, to him, elementary reason that it hasn't taken political power. In short, no change between 1934 and 1984.

He even gets himself ensnarled in the bourgeois demagoguery of showing how much less American workers need to work to fill their stomachs as if this proved anything about anything. And he ends up by seeming to compare the lot of Russian workers in 1913 under the Tsar favourably with their lot in 1960: otherwise what does this ludicrous piece of Hoover Institute nonsense about wage levels signify for him?

The questions I want to ask Kowalewski would be the following: does he really believe the Polish workers exerted no pressure on the regime to improve their lot in the early 1970s? What about 1976? Was it all pointless because they didn't seize power? And is he really saying that the rise of Solidarnosc had nothing to do with the increased cultural level, economic and social strength achieved by the Polish workers in the post-war decades? And where did the

Polish workers get their ideas from concerning their right to frozen prices and rationing rather than market forces, if not from the planned economy? Where did they get their fierce egalitarianism against social privileges from if not from the planned economy? Or does he think they came from the inequalities in Poland being so much greater than those between the big bourgeoisie and workers in the West — the Polish bureaucrats were piffing little third rate petty bourgeois next to the big capitalist and landowners of the West, yet somehow the workers here don't seem to feel so strongly as the Polish workers. Has this nothing to do with commodity fetishism in the capitalist world?

And how come the 'ferocious oppressor and exploiter' Gierek couldn't lash into the August strikes the way Thatcher lashes into 6 months of miners' strikes? Was it because the Polish workers had stronger unions in August than the British miners, or perhaps they were blessed with an independent party like the Labour Party? It couldn't have anything to do with the principle of social organisation and its ideological reflection in Poland, you don't think? And does Kowalewski really see Mr. Chernenko as some kind of Stalin figure, herding ten million off to Siberia?

It is a great joy for me to be able to have a no holds barred debate with my comrade Kowalewski because I think we share so much in common and because it has been so very difficult to find a common framework for debate between the Western left and leaders of the Polish working class in exile on the subject of policy towards the USSR. Furthermore, I had known what he was going to say and I would have written my original article a lot more strongly if my remarks were in my own name weak and, as we say euphemistically here 'bad formulations'. But on what I consider to be the key issue of policy — the Western left's objectives vis a vis NATO's economic and military Cold War against the USSR. I stick by what I said and I think Zbigniew needs to spell out an alternative policy on this question and not try to brush it aside as secondary.

God's great white President

THE US PRESIDENTIAL campaign has moved into top gear. The fundamental issues in the United States are the US war in Central America, its military build up, and the attacks on American workers' living standards. But these are the issues the Republican and Democratic Party candidates do not intend to express any serious differences on. ALAN FREEMAN looks at the causes the candidates do claim to champion.

PRESIDENT REAGAN has announced that for 1984 he has a new campaign manager — the Lord God Almighty. According to Reagan, speaking in Dallas, he is now one of the line of US presidents who were 'leaders under God's authority'.

It appears that at present God is particularly instructing Reagan to concentrate his campaign on the deep south of the United States. Long a Democratic Party stronghold, the Southern states have recently been combining traditional strong religious sentiments with the new breed of 'high-tech', non-unionised, industry Reagan has been pinning his hopes on for the revival of the US economy.

Personally appointed to interpret God's word for Reagan are figures such as the Reverend Jerry Falwell — a television tub thumper famous as head of the 'Moral Majority' movement. Among other things Falwell successfully fought to get opposition to abortion, rabid anti-communism, and compulsory school prayers into the Republican Party programme this year.

With the direct aid of the Almighty, Reagan holds an 11 per cent lead over Democratic candidate, Mondale, in the opinion polls. By all leading calculations — including Soviet foreign minister Gromyko who is visiting Washington shortly — Reagan is heading for electoral victory. All is well in 'God's country' apparently.

One problem which has developed in the campaign however is that God is showing his usual distinct preference for white faces. Statistics show America's blacks continue to register as eighty eight per cent for the Democrats and only five per cent for the Republicans. With only 11 million blacks registered to vote, out of 18 million eligible to do so, the Democrats think this could be decisive. In as many as 11 states the number of unregistered blacks is bigger than Reagan's margin of victory in 1980. Hence, a Democratic Party campaign that is attempting, rather desperately, to gain votes from blacks, women, and Latinos.

The single biggest section of the vote the Democrats hope to tap however is women. Fifty per cent of registered women voters call themselves Democrats as against twenty per cent Republicans. There are seven million more women voters than men.

Choosing Geraldine Ferraro as Democratic Party Vice Presidential candidate has to some extent stimulated a response from women. Uni-

leaders report that trade unions like the Food and Commercial, with many low paid women workers in its ranks, are doing much better registering members to vote than other unions in the 13 million strong pro-Democratic AFL-CIO — America's TUC.

But Ferraro scarcely leads the life of an average US woman. Her family is worth four million dollars. And some of the image of her as a representative of ordinary women is rubbing off amid revelations on her taxes.

Other signs of discontent for the Democrats have developed over the wheeling and dealing between Democratic Presidential candidate Mondale and the black contender in the primaries, Jesse Jackson. Mondale has refused to support any economic policies that can help blacks and rejected appeals for state funds to make jobs for America's black unemployed. That's why some more radical black forces are supporting Johnnie Walls of Mississippi — who is running as a black independent on a list of 17 distinct demands.

Alongside the main parties the US Communist Party is running an energetic campaign to back Mondale against Reagan. The only independent socialist candidate running clearly on a ticket of supporting independent working class political action, and the only candidate worth voting for, is the black socialist Mel Mason who is running for the Socialist Workers Party.

But the main product of the campaign is rising cynicism about the whole party process in the United States. In 1974 72 per cent of the electorate voted in the presidential elections. In 1980 it was 56 per cent. Reagan was elected by just 26 per cent of America's electorate.

If this year's result is no different, it is because the other 74 per cent at the moment have no mass voice to speak for them.

Greenham Women say no to NATO

GETTING RID of cruise, polaris, and cancelling Trident in Britain would split the NATO alliance wide open and give a terrific boost to the anti-missiles movement across Europe. This is the logic of unilateral nuclear disarmament.

The 10 million women 10 day mobilisation to protest against the NATO exercises is therefore the obvious way forward for the mass campaign and the mobilisation will be very big.

Why haven't CND taken up the issue of NATO in its campaigning as it should have and pulled out all stops to support and build this action — despite its official policy against NATO?

more limited objectives taken up with broad alliances.

The 10 days also highlight the contradictions of Labour Party policy — for unilateral nuclear disarmament and staying in NATO.

By Hona Aronovsky, London Region CND, (personal capacity)

It is excellent that women in the Party are fully supporting the Greenham action. The London Labour Party is doing a leaflet to support the action and is calling on women's sections to go down on Sunday 23 September with Jo Richardson and the Labour Party campaign bus. (Phone 701 4760, women's committee, for details of transport and leaflets).

In addition the GLC and Derbyshire are releasing women workers to go down and through NALGO and other local government unions we should be pressing all nuclear free zone councils to do the same.

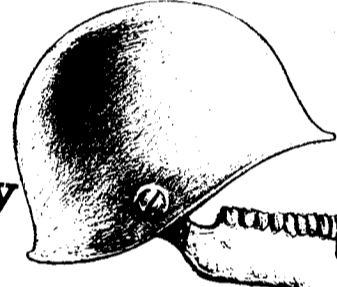
Women against pit closures groups are supporting the action. London region CND is donating money for Kent women's transport and more money will need to be raised. London Region CND (388 1628) is coordinating information about transport and the last day, the 30 September will culminate the protest in a big way.

It's because the view of the leadership of CND is that campaigning openly against NATO is too unpopular and CND can win

This contradiction must be fought by the left, by firmly linking itself with the mass campaign against the aim of the Kinnock leadership and the right — to stay in NATO and therefore slide away from unilateral nuclear disarmament.

- London Transport details:
 Tooting 20/23 Linda 672 2341
 Muswell Hill 20/22 883 4816/1309
 Lambeth 20/23 Mandy 673 0025 Hilary 675 1173
 Richmond 21/23 Jennifer 940 2639
 Wood Green 22/23 Janet 444 5597
 Loughton 22 502 2396/508 1624
 Putney 23 874 3401 (days) 874 6760 (eves)
 Southwark 29 732 0932
 Deptford Sun 30 Sonia 639 4790
 Tower Hamlets Sun 30 791 0826
 W. Hampstead Sun 30 794 8657
 Hackney Sun 30 340 7752
 W. London Sun 30 381 0061
 Uxbridge Sun 30 Ux. 58911
 Women healthworkers 29 226 3396

The money required to provide adequate food, water, education, health and housing for everyone in the world has been estimated at \$17 billion a year. It is a huge sum of money ... about as much as the world spends on arms every two weeks.



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Labour says:
 Peace, Jobs, Freedom

speakers include:
 Bob Cryer MEP • Gavin Strang MP
 Allan Roberts MP • Audrey Wise NEC member

Labour's defence document launched

Defend unilateralism

LAST SATURDAY, in Birmingham's Digbeth Civic Hall, Labour's Defence and Security for Britain document was given its first public airing. Around 100 party members gathered to hear Robin Cook MP — one of the document's main architects — explain Labour's new strategy.

By Carol Turner

Ron Huzzard, speaking for Labour Action for Peace, criticised the document's emphasis on NATO and, specifically, its reservations about reducing defence spending. 'Ah, but,' replied Mr Cook, 'you can't alter just one paragraph — the document is a coherent whole.' And that is precisely the problem.

It is coherently committed to maintaining NATO membership and devising a non-nuclear strategy for Britain which

was able even to hint at how this would be done.

Reservations expressed in the morning proved well-founded in the afternoon, when Labour's defence spokesperson Denzil Davies outlined the leadership's discussion on the document.

'Successive party conferences,' he said, 'showed substantial support for remaining in NATO. And this accords with the view of the general public. There is no question that we should stay in NATO.'

Joan Ruddock, speaking for the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament, was the only one to draw attention to the need to put nuclear disarmament policies within the overall framework of foreign policy, and the only platform speaker to

point out that NATO is 'quite clearly a nuclear alliance' dominated by the United States who are 'currently engaged in imperialist wars throughout the world'.

The effect of this was somewhat spoiled by her continual insistence that not everyone in CND agreed with its policies!

The question of NATO clearly emerged as the

achilles heel of the Labour left. Many at the conference had reservations about the document, few appreciated the importance of Mr Cook's opening remarks about its coherent approach to defence. In the months to come, all will learn.

Placing any defence policy of the Labour Party in the context of a socialist foreign policy, free of the overriding commitment to NATO will be a central debate. Without this debate the document will be used by Labour's right and centre to draw back on unilateralism.

As Robin Cook said, five years ago we were a nuclear party — if the left don't stand guard over disarmament policies, we will be so again.



GLC set for victory

'THE MOST odious man in Britain.' That was how the *Sun* described Ken Livingstone in a famous front page article three years ago. Today the *Sun's* chickens are coming home to roost. The latest opinion poll in Ken Livingstone's Paddington GLC by-election seat shows 84 per cent supporting Ken and 14 per cent for his Alliance opponent. The Tories didn't even dare to stand.

Probably the opinion poll exaggerates a bit, and we go to press before Thursday's GLC by-election results come through, but there is no doubt that Livingstone is heading for electoral triumph in Paddington. And that is vital because Ken Livingstone's name by itself makes the Paddington result a referendum on the GLC, its existence, and its policies.

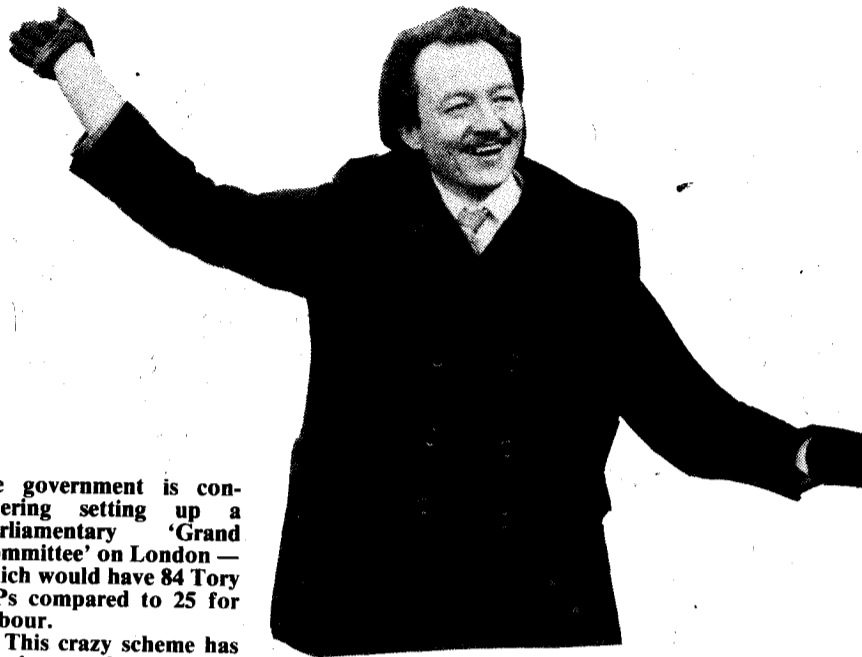
In the constituencies other than Livingstone's there was some initial confusion caused by the Tories hiding behind the 'pro-GLC' Alliance. But

Elsewhere in London, the Tories, aided by the Alliance and the press, have done everything possible to obscure the real issues at stake in the campaign. For such important by-elections, whose results will be given huge TV analysis, press coverage of the campaign has been minimal.

The reason for this is that the Tories precisely want the campaign to be about anything but the GLC. The desperate lengths to which Thatcher is prepared to go to cover over what her real intentions are was shown in last week's *Sunday Times*. Here it was 'leaked' that

the government is considering setting up a Parliamentary 'Grand Committee' on London — which would have 84 Tory MPs compared to 25 for Labour.

This crazy scheme has no chance of getting off the ground but it shows



the real issues of the campaign seem now to be getting through.

Even in Hayes and Harlington, which was considered the most difficult of the seats for Labour, the latest poll shows GLC Deputy Leader John McDonnell leading his Alliance opponent by 61 per cent to 32 per cent. This is despite strong and open backing given to the Alliance by local Tories.

But there is no room for complacency. There is still going to be a big effort from the Tories and Alliance to win in the last

days of the campaign. Labour only needs to lose two seats to lose overall control of the GLC and various dirty tricks can be anticipated towards polling day.

Labour activists in London have to go all out for the final days of the campaign.

just how embarrassing the government is finding it to propose that London should be the only major city in Europe without an elected council. The whole issue of the existence of the GLC has become an electoral disaster for the Tories.



Belgrano — Thatcher's Watergate?

THERE ARE two skeletons rattling round in the closets of the Thatcher and Reagan administrations. One is the real story of the Korean spy plane, the truth of which has yet to come out, and the other is the sinking of the *Belgrano*.

Tam Dalyell has waged one of the most magnificent backbench campaigns in history to get the truth about the *Belgrano* out into the light of day, despite constant media abuse denouncing him as every kind of nutter with a one-track mind.

When the *General Belgrano* went down several hundred Argentinian sailors lost their lives. The gutter press's response to this will be remembered for a very long time — 'Gotcha!', 'Wallop!' and so on — turning the stomachs even of many ardent supporters of Thatcher's war effort in the Falklands.

But a win — that created a surge of enthusiasm that helped carry her successfully through the last General Election. And it asserted British imperialist power against a semi-colonial state — a good lesson to teach the others.

By Jude Woodward

But the whole nationalistic frenzy that was whipped up at the time will now be remembered with even more horror as the truth comes out. The *General Belgrano* had been steaming steadily away from the British task force and the 'total exclusion zone' for a good five hours when the order to attack was sent from London, and for at least 13 hours by the time the cruiser was sunk.

The order was sent by Thatcher's 'war cabinet' in order to scupper continued attempts at a negotiated settlement.

The war in the Falklands was a war Thatcher knew she could win — particularly with the military backing she received from the United States. Despite the semi-arctic conditions, and the existence of the Exocet missile on the Argentinians' side, it was clear from the outset that Britain — which remains one of the top four military powers in the world — would have to make a whole series of catastrophic mistakes to lose.

And that is what guided the Thatcher government's thinking in sinking the *Belgrano*. With a general election in their sights, the sudden escalation of the Falklands issue presented a golden opportunity.

It's a sad fact that the old phrase, 'The world loves a winner', contains more than a germ of truth. To lose a war would have been the end for Thatcher — who by then was shown in the polls as the most unpopular prime minister in post-war history.

The sinking of the *Belgrano* is not the first time that cynical political decisions costing innumerable lives have been made for similar motives. Perhaps the classic case is when the USA dropped the atom bomb on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The war in the Pacific had already been well and truly won. Japan was even seeking peace. The purpose was simply to demonstrate the superior military capability of the United States and give a lesson to the Soviet Union.

Moreover, precisely because it was a 'successful' bombing, it did not lead to a generalised outcry against the use of nuclear weapons — CND was not born on a tide of horror. Again, it is rather a sad fact that the anti-nuclear movements in the West only really developed after the USSR had also got the bomb — when it appeared that in a nuclear war we might all lose, and not just the other side!

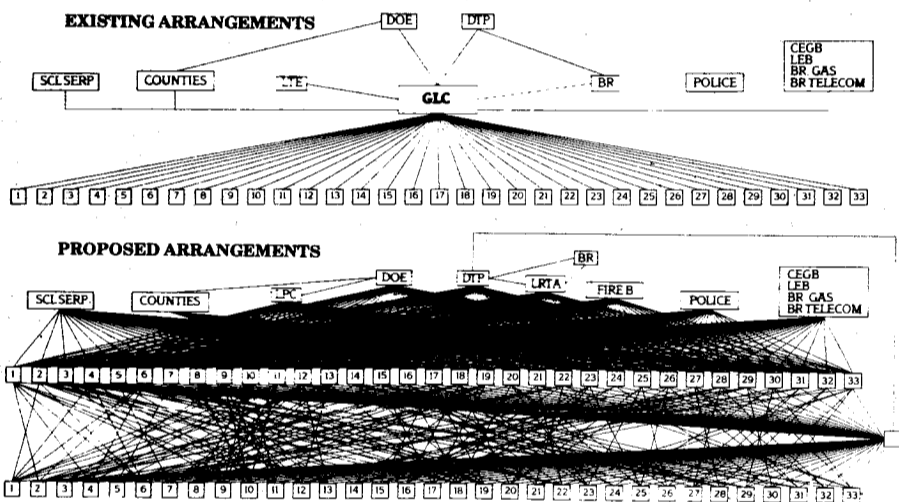
Similarly in the Falklands, the real outcry came when 'our' *Sheffield* went down, not over the *Belgrano*.

Perhaps now the labour movement will realise that to have made a clear statement against the Falklands war would have brought its reward in the long term. It was a Labour backbencher, not the Labour leadership, that has brought out the truth on the *Belgrano*.

Now, even when the facts are out and undeniable, it looks like Owen and the SDP will steal a march on Labour by demanding the truth.

That's where a bad conscience and nauseating politics gets you! The revelations coming out now must be the occasion for a total reversal of Labour's policy on the Falklands.

From simplicity to chaos — how the Govt. intends to "streamline" planning arrangements in London.



Salmonella deaths — cuts kill

THE OUTBREAK of salmonella poisoning at Wakefield Stanley Royd Hospital, has highlighted the dangers of cuts in superficially unnecessary resources in the NHS.

Twenty seven people died and many more were put at risk, because of low staffing levels, and the recent closure of an isolation hospital in the city.

'This ghastly episode has shown once and for all that the health service is walking a tight-rope, with safety margins eroded by cut after cut in staffing levels and vital resources,'

said a NUPE press statement.

By Peter Hirst

By contrast, Mr Jack Smart, Labour leader of

the area health authority and the metropolitan council, astounded local people by appearing on television claiming that there were no shortages of staff, equipment, or resources within Wakefield AHA.

Worse, he advocated the early recommencement of admissions and return to work by staff.

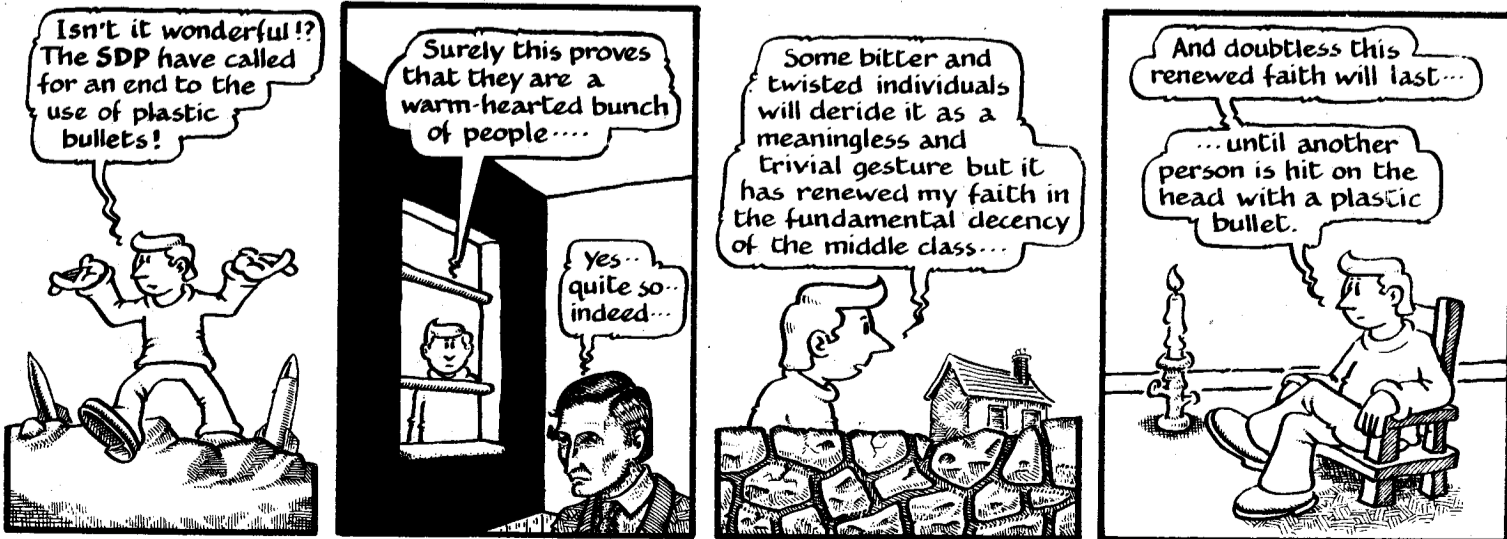
There has been consistent efforts to shift blame

for low resources to the hospital workers, with stories of neglect and bad food preparation. But the local union's constant work to discover the truth has forced all parties to agree that a public enquiry is the only way to reveal the truth.

Betty Rhodes, NUPE shop steward at Stanley Royd, who pointed out

that not all the deaths could be attributed to salmonella, told Socialist Action: 'This tragic episode shows the need for an isolation hospital in the Wakefield area, as the unions have maintained since the AHA shut Snapethorpe Hospital. If Snapethorpe were still open, it seems very likely that this outbreak could have been contained far sooner'.

A PIECE OF THE ACTION



A Socialist ACTION

Lock-out at Cowley

WORKERS at BL's Cowley plant face their biggest challenge since the days of Michael Edwardes. Management have locked out the assembly plant workforce in an attempt to crush the growing militancy of the workforce.

In the past 12 months there have been 160 disputes. The latest battle is over the incentive bonus scheme introduced by Edwardes to force up productivity.

Despite working to gruelling schedules, workers have been getting only £5 a week from a scheme which is supposed to yield £30. The assembly plant imposed an overtime ban to force management to increase the payments. A similar action by the body plant had succeeded in getting the bonus up from £5 to £20.

BL claims its response is due to the action of workers in the paint shop, who are refusing to carry out essential cleaning outside the normal working hours. This would cost half an hour's production a day.

By Pat Hickey

In fact, the plant has been losing 600 cars a week for some time now because of an overtime ban in the Body plant. The real reason for the action is management's attempts to win back Edwardes style discipline.

Over the past two years the workforce has been getting back its confidence and rebuilding its organisation. The bonus scheme and the killing work-rates on the tracks have been long-running sources of grievance for the workers.

This year's wage negotiation will centre on the issue of the bonus scheme. The Assembly plant has adopted a claim for consolidation of the bonus.

Bonus

The main object will be to get rid of the bonus scheme altogether. If this were achieved it would be the biggest victory for BL workers for many years.

Management no doubt see the lock-out as part of their preparation for the coming wage struggles as one BL executive said: 'It is about our right to manage'.

For the workers it is an opportunity to roll back the defeats of the Edwardes' years. The need now is to turn the lock-out into a campaign to rid all BL workers of the bonus scheme which is the root of the issue.

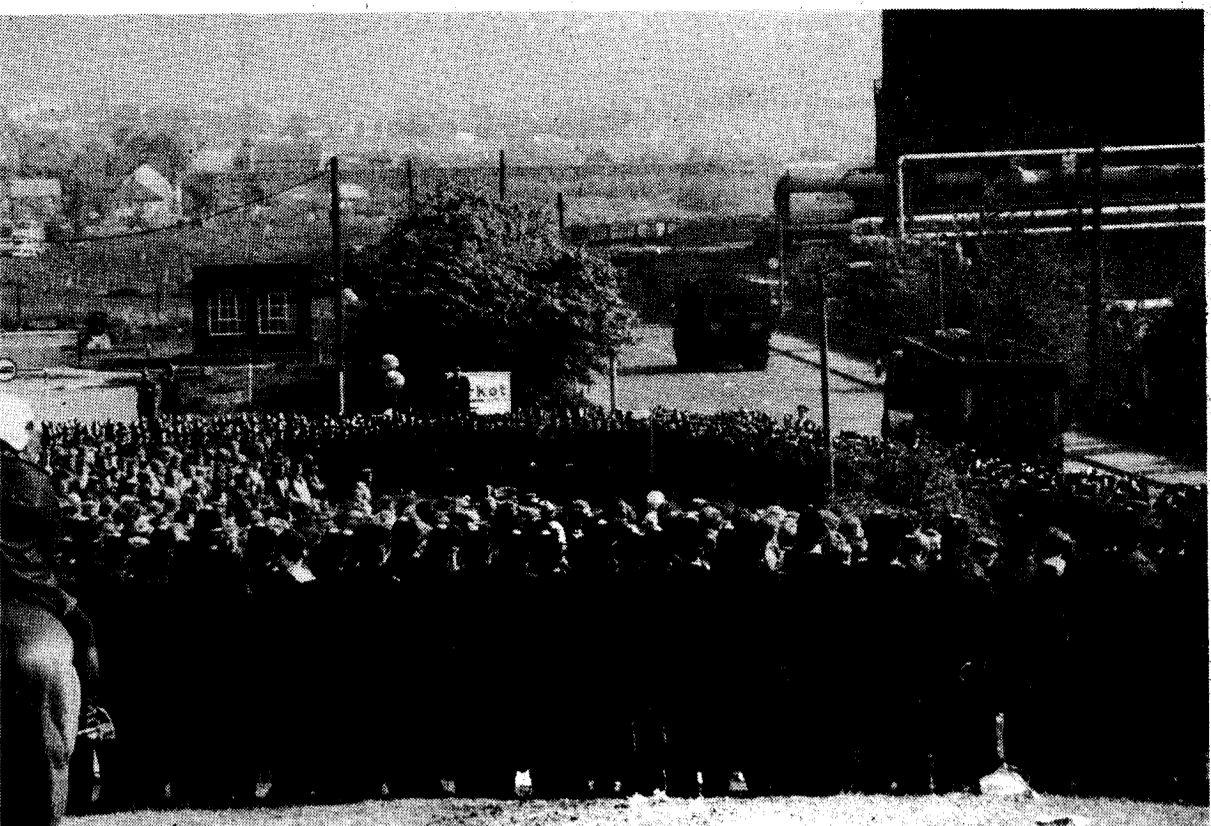


Photo: JOHN HARRIS

Power stations' action: Todd and Basnett must give a lead

THE FAILURE of the Electricity Supply Trade Union Council (ESTUC) on Monday to reach agreement on what action to take in support of the NUM was a foregone conclusion. Hammond and Lyons, of the EETPU and the Engineers and Managers Association, voted against the resolution at the TUC congress, and have openly declared their intention to continue normal working. Their determination to continue scabbing should not be doubted.

The formula which the meeting arrived at postpones any action and any decisions. All that could be agreed was that 'if approached by the NUM' the unions would 'consult about cooperation' on action to stop coal.

Such hesitation at the top will only strengthen the right wing. The situation demands decisive leadership from the unions which voted for the TUC resolution.

By Pat Hickey

It is quite clear that the key to the miners strike is power stations. With autumn here, and 'General Winter' waiting in the wings, the decisive phase of the struggle has opened up.

Nobody, including Fleet Street, now believes energy minister Peter Walker's claim that power stocks at the power stations are sufficient to last

well into 1985. The *Guardian*, among others, has concluded that 'we are on course for power stations running out (of coal) at the end of November, with supplies exhausted by December.' The critical level is likely to be reached when stocks reach six million tonnes at the power stations. City analysts estimate that stocks will be down to four to five million tonnes by the end of December.

All this means that the bargaining position of the NUM is getting stronger with every day that passes. By October the pressure on the government to try to start moving the 22

million tonnes of stocks at the pit heads is going to begin to get almost overwhelming. This operation, with the rail unions continuing their boycott, would mean 700,000 lorry loads of coal!

The support of the power workers is now crucial and the responsibility of the TUC is enormous. They can provide the lead which will guarantee victory for the miners. Or they can participate in the greatest scabbing operation in history.

It would be foolish to pretend that there are no problems. The dock strike showed the movement was split from top to bottom. But in the dock strike decisive leadership to spread the action was lacking, and the call to strike had nothing like the authority of a decision of the TUC to back it.

The real weight of the decision to be taken lies with the TGWU and GMBATU. Despite their scabbing declarations the EETPU and Engineers and Managers Association

do not handle the coal and do not have the ability to keep the power stations running. If the 18,000 members of the TGWU and GMBATU boycott scab coal then the lights will go out anyway.

Ron Todd and David Basnett should not wait for the ESTUC. They should act on the TUC policy of support now. Hammond and Lyons may claim that their position is in line with the TUC's resolution's 'consultation and agreement' clause. But the reality is that to await their agreement is to hide behind scabs.

The action needed now is a boycott of fresh supplies of coal which cross miners lines, a boycott of movement of coal between power stations, and a refusal to cooperate with any further switch to oil firing. Such action would destroy, before it started, any attempt to move pit head stocks.

The fight for action now should be taken to the members immediately. Meanwhile, the miners can take their case directly to the power station workers, with the help of activists in the power unions.



Photo: JOHN HARRIS

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Miners' school planned!

OUR SEARCH for a new building is going well and we're currently looking at one set of premises which suits our needs very well. In order to move to this or any other building we'll need an injection of money at short notice from our supporters.

So over the next few weeks we're organising to get a number of large loans and donations which we hope will help us on our way.

As well as that we're organising a number of national fund raising events between now and Christmas, to give the fund drive some focus and complement the fund raising that's being done locally. Most of these will take place in London and include socials and the like as part of the events.

In October we're organising a school on the miners' strike, probably in Manchester, where we're hoping to get striking

miners, their wives and other support groups as well as miners from Europe. We'll organise a big social on the night with all proceeds going to the fund drive.

We're also producing a pamphlet for Labour Party conference on black sections, the profits of which will again go to the fund drive.

In November we're hoping to hold a school on international politics with top name speakers again

combined with a social event, and finally a big Xmas/New Year party to top it all off.

If we can achieve all that — and we think we can — we'd have gone a long way to breaking the back of the fund drive target by the end of the year. At the moment we've got £22,000 — we'll need at least that much again by the end of the year — so we appeal to all our readers to pull out all the stops and take part in the events that we organise.

This week we've been inspired by a donation of £46 from Alex in Leicester — that represents £1 for every year he's been active in revolutionary politics —

he started in 1938. His letter says it's to 'help us to participate in the intensifying class struggle'.

Also this week we've had £30 from a reader in Haringey as part of their target, £10 from Des Stevens in Croydon and £16 from Paul in Manchester as advance payment on his sponsored bike ride to LP conference.

Many readers locally are starting to organise their own events and we're starting to get a more regular flow of money. Make sure you follow their example.

Now is the time for the big push — get your money rolling in!