

A Socialist ACTION

Stop the scabbing!



... NUM pickets invade south London?

THE TORY inspired campaign over Libya this week exposed the true face of Neil Kinnock's leadership of the Labour Party.

Kinnock's attacks on the NUM's contacts with Libya were a calculated blow aimed at the Scargill leadership of the mineworkers union. Their aim was to weaken and isolate the main obstacle to a NACODS-type settlement of the miners's strike. Their effect is to try to make it more difficult for militants to raise support for the miners.

None of that is an accident. Basnett and Willis have no stomach for the fight which is needed to secure a victory for the NUM. Kinnock has sided with the right wing in the dispute from the beginning.

It is this weakness that the Tories are now trying to exploit. Thatcher's hopes for victory are still pinned on the leadership of the TUC backing down from support for the miners.

That is why David Basnett, who was last week described as 'weak and ineffectual', was suddenly hailed this week by the press as the 'TUC's elder statesman' after he had attacked Roger Windsor's meeting with Gadaffi. The whole hysterical witch hunt at the beginning of the week was simply used as a cover for the NCB's hardening position on the talks with the NUM — and the government decision to break them off. This government toughening of position is going hand in hand with stepping up the use of the courts.

Last week's sequestration of NUM funds is inevitably going to be followed by further legal attacks against both the miners and unions supporting them. By escalating their attacks the Tories hope to send the TUC running for cover.

Instead the TUC, and left-led unions, must now turn to dealing with the threat mounted by the courts and stepping up the solidarity action.

The General Council must declare its intention to meet the legal attacks with industrial action. Any weakness will encourage further attacks against not only the NUM but also the rest of the trade union movement as well.

The breakdown of the talks should be met with a rapid stepping up of the solidarity action. The main targets are the power stations. A blockade of coal and oil is still the first priority and the TUC, in addition to individual unions, should throw its full weight openly behind this campaign.

Also now there is urgent need of money. The legal attacks will inevitably increase the hardship in the coalfields. The trade union movement should ensure that there is no question of the miners being starved back.

There must be no repeat of the scabbing seen last week. The NUM's courageous refusal to make any concessions to the closure programme must be backed.

VICTORY TO THE MINERS!

MINEWORKERS' Defence Committee conference now confirmed for 2 December in Camden Town Hall, London. Scargill, Benn, Skinner to speak plus workshops.

Details from the campaign c/o Ken Livingstone at County Hall or phone 01-981 3289. Publicity available now.



Build the action!

- Stop the coal — stop the oil
- Keep the money coming ● For a 24-hour general strike
- For a national Labour Party demonstration
- For a national solidarity conference

Socialist ACTION

Super-Scab

AFTER WEEKS of intensive research, based on secret Labour Party press hand outs, Socialist Action is able to reveal the full horrifying truth. Neil Kinnock, leader of the sinister so-called 'Shadow Cabinet' as recently as February this year made a secret trip to meet with the world's number one terrorist leader. The revelations will shortly not be appearing in the Sun.

Accompanied only by several hundred press photographers, Neil 'the Democrat' Kinnock met with the world's number one killer at a carefully guarded location in Washington. The man who has organised more terrorist raids, and more personal assassinations, than any other thug in the world admitted that even now thousands of his armed killers were roaming remote areas of Central America — armed with secret manuals on political assassinations.

Inflamed by his incredible oil wealth Ronald 'Star Wars' Reagan was openly contemptuous of his minor rivals.

'Who is this Gadaffi creep anyway?' Reagan is reported to have asked Kinnock. 'Show me his pad on a map. I'll turn it into a parking lot. Shoot down a few more of his aircraft, maybe.'

Urged on by his fanatical religious advisers, and twitching nervously as he eyed up the globe, 'Star Wars' explained his plan for springing into action.

'The basic trouble with this Gadaffi jerk is that he thinks small. He seems to pay his killers out of his personal bank account. We in the US of A think big everytime. I have 150,000 people in my personal hit squad (known to my enemies as the CIA).

'I don't go for the small guy stuff. Think big, young Neil, if you want to make it to the top. My outfit's victims go from Presidents to peasants.

'Remember that Allende guy? Well, tricky Dicky (remember, the one who got caught?) did for him. And we've had no less than thirty goes at getting rid of Castro. But that poisoned cigar crap never did work. Pity.'

When hearing of Kinnock's visit to this international outlaw a stunned and astonished Arthur Scargill called an immediate press conference. To avoid world opinion condemning the labour movement Scargill went ahead without even bothering to contact Labour Party headquarters.

'I cannot believe that Mr Kinnock would enter knowingly into relations with this odious regime' the president of the NUM declared to applause. In an evidently barbed but veiled attack on the right wing of the Labour Party, Scargill announced, 'It is obviously out of the question that anyone should take money from the 'Star Wars' empire. It would be contrary to all the principles of the labour movement'. Embarrassed noises were heard coming from the direction of various organisations supported by Denis Healey.

Unfortunately, Neil 'Super-Scab' Kinnock would give no such assurances. 'I condemn all small-time violence', he said, 'whether it be the miners or the crackpot murderer in Tripoli. But I'm always willing to meet a really big time killer. Otherwise, how could I get Roy Hattersley to vote for me?'

Meanwhile the bishop of Durham preached a sermon, widely reported in *Marxism Today*, regarding morality in politics.

● PS There is a moral in all this. Many people knew we'd got a rat in the new leader of the Labour Party. Now we know we got a skunk as well.

● PPS Our only regret is that Gadaffi didn't give the miners £5 million.

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Willis heads for cover

THE RELISH with which labour and trade union leaders joined the vicious anti-NUM campaign over the Libya question will have sickened every militant in Britain. But it would be too easy simply to dismiss the reaction of Neil Kinnock and Norman Willis as yet another example of craven surrender to chauvinist hysteria. There is a far more serious threat behind the trade union leaders' reaction.

David Basnett's statement that 'Roger Windsor's free flight to Libya could prove to be the most expensive and counter-productive trip by a trade union representative for a very long time,' was not a mere expression of an opinion. It could also read as a statement of intent.

Basnett, Willis and the rest of the centre and right of the TUC have found that the decisions of the TUC Congress to support the miners have landed them in the middle of a fight for which they do not have the slightest stomach.

The hope of the TUC was that a slow tightening grip on the power stations would finally force the government to make some compromise on a major issue and then the TUC leadership would impose a compromise settlement on the NUM.

By Pat Hickey

Not only has the leadership of the NUM refused any sell out deal but the government has dramatically upped the stakes. It has launched an immediate and massive legal attack on the NUM. Walker has already announced the government and NCB refuse to shift from the terms of the NACODS settlement — a settlement that would continue the pit closure programme. Scargill and the NUM executive, rightly, have completely thrown out the NACODS deal.

But the prospect of an escalating struggle lasting into the new year horrifies the TUC. Thatcher has openly shown her determination to constantly step up the stakes in the struggle. The sequestration of the NUM's funds will be followed by further court action in all the NUM areas. The financial noose which the Tories are trying to draw around the NUM will be inexorably tightened all the more quickly because of the lack of response by the TUC to the sequestration — a lack of response which will inevitably give rise to increasing demands that the TUC should act.

Worse still other unions are going to be drawn into the maelstrom. If the government cannot break the NUM rapidly then huge pressure will grow up for legal attacks against the power workers unions — the AUEW, TGWU, GMBATU — and against the NUR, ASLEF, and NUS that are operating the boycott on the movement of coal. Delivering TUC Congress decisions, let alone anything else, would involve a central confrontation with the law.

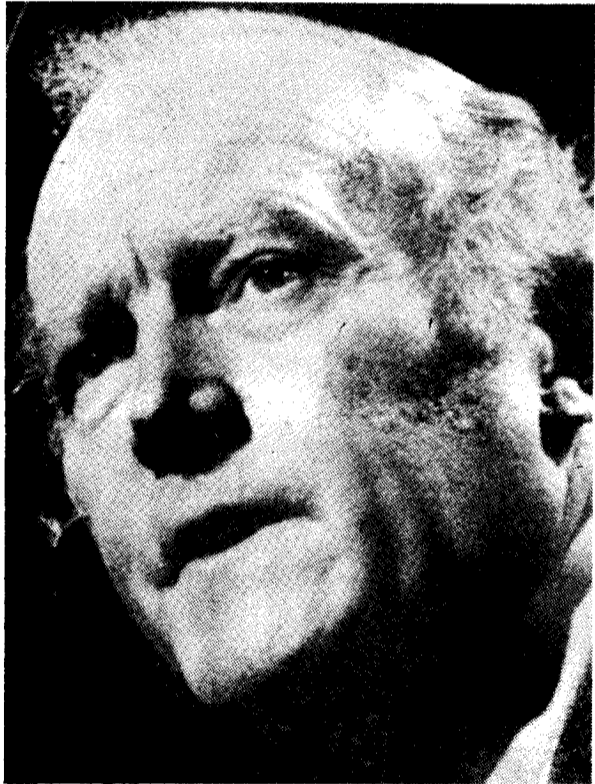
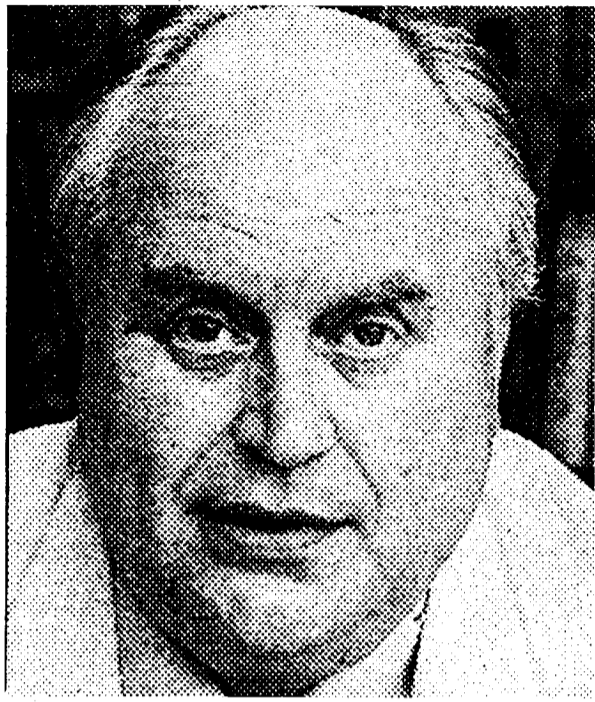
The courts have already ruled, in the case of Ilford films, that even an overtime ban without a ballot is illegal. It won't take the Freedom Association long, if necessary, to find a 'moderate' power worker to take the TGWU, or GMBATU, to court over their coal boycott policy in the power stations. The TUC is faced with a head on confrontation with the law and the government for which Basnett, Willis and co are absolutely not prepared. And Thatcher knows that they are not prepared for it — which is why she is upping the stakes constantly.

Congress

The only way out for the TUC right and centre is to force a deal on the NUM which the General Council would claim is a compromise, but which in reality would be a victory for Thatcher.

This is the policy which Willis, Basnett and co are considering behind closed doors at Congress House. Getting Arthur Scargill isolated is a crucial part of that plan — which is why Kinnock, Willis and Basnett jumped in so rapidly to join in Thatcher's nauseating attack on the NUM.

For if the TUC were to continue to implement resolutely the policies it decided at Congress then the outcome will be very different. The latest and most authoritative study shows that the government's claim on coal stocks are not true.



Willis and Basnett

Even with coal deliveries continuing at their present rate, and with the maximum possible substitution of oil burn for coal, stocks at the power stations will be completely exhausted by late February/early March. Power cuts, or a massive movement of coal by road, will be posed before that point is reached. A concerted drive by the TUC to deliver on its pledges at the power stations would radically alter that picture more rapidly in favour of

the miners. If power workers boycott the oil now being delivered to substitute for coal, and refuse to handle new coal supplies, victory for the NUM is guaranteed. Failure to campaign for such action, and failure to give full support to the NUM is actually to give aid and comfort to the enemy. The enemy the TUC should be fighting is Thatcher, not Gadaffi.

But instead the statements of Basnett and

Willis will encourage the government to harden their attitude still further. So will the types of TUC policy being openly discussed in the press — for example that the TUC should draw up its own draft agreement over the heads of the miners leaders. Refusal by the NUM to accept such a deal would then be used as an excuse for the TUC to withdraw support.

The TUC leadership do not want the miners to secure an outright victory over Thatcher, nor are they prepared for the confrontation such a victory would require. Not only would such a victory mean a huge increase in militancy in the working class. It would also mean that the Scargill wing of the trade union leadership would be strengthened — a prospect which would be even more frightening for the TUC leadership than it would for Margaret Thatcher.

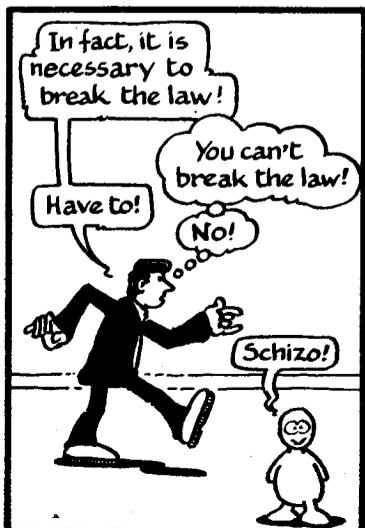
Careerists

Leaders like Basnett and Willis, who have reached their positions through the career ladders of the trade union bureaucracies, and not through experience of class struggle, cannot tolerate the class struggle leadership of the Scargill wing of the NUM — a leadership which emerged not out of the corridors of Congress House, but out of the miners' strikes of 1969, 1972, and 1974 and which still rests on the militants of the NUM.

The left wing in the trade union movement must fight the right wing's treachery to the death. They must clearly expose any retreat from Congress decisions and fight for them to be totally delivered. The TUC as a body should appeal to the power workers to carry out its decisions. Full financial backing must be delivered to the NUM. Any court attacks must be met with industrial action.

Any stab in the back to sell out the voted decisions of the TUC Congress must not be met with diplomatic silence in the interest of a spurious unity. Traitors should be exposed to the hatred of the whole movement. That is the way now to hold the line firm and deliver the victory that is still within the grasp of the NUM and the entire trade union movement.

A PIECE OF THE ACTION



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Thatcher's total war

THE ARTICLE which appeared in the *Sunday Times* on NUM executive officer Roger Windsor's trip to Libya was set up with the British police or intelligence service. Included in the article were details of telephone taps of phone calls made from Paris. No British newspaper could have done this. It came directly from the state.

In fact the entire carefully orchestrated campaign on the 'Libyan connection' should dispell any illusions anyone might have in just how utterly determined the Thatcher government is to win this strike and the ruthlessness of its methods. Thatcher's government has never had one idea of 'compromise' in its head since it provoked the strike in March.

It was confirmed again in the House of Commons on Monday when Peter Walker announced that 'not one inch' would be given by the government. Now everyone from the *Daily Mirror* to David Owen (if that's any distance!) is demanding that the government does not move from the NACODS settlement — a deal that leaves in place the government's pit closure programme.

If Thatcher loses this strike her government would be finished as a credible political force. Its sole aim is to smash the miners. It is using, and will use, every single weapon available for that. Cynical distortion of the law, police violence, starvation and hardship are all just grist to Thatcher's mill.

This cynical person, whose morality is shown in its full glory by the fact she murdered in cold blood more than three hundred Argentinian sailors on the *Belgrano*, and then lied over that event, is perfectly happy to use any weapon that comes to hand against the miners.

But the Libyan scare campaign is only the latest proof of the total war the Thatcher government is waging against the NUM. Its tactics in that war have been simple. At all costs to

try to isolate the NUM from the rest of the labour movement. To try to smash the miners themselves by sheer police repression, court action, and grinding hardship. These policies are totally linked.

By John Ross

This happened during the first docks strike and again with the threat of the NACODS walk out. Each time Thatcher has been able to relatively isolate the NUM, the government has gained confidence and taken the offensive — as it is doing viciously since the NACODS sell out.

Now the aim of the government is clear. It is trying to use the courts, and press hysteria, to break the miners' strength. Firstly to try to crush the resolve of the miners before the power cuts come. Secondly to try to so

discredit the NUM that if the government tries to move coal from the pit-head stocks workers in the power stations will handle it.

Confronted with this onslaught the policy of the TUC leadership of trying to reach a 'compromise' is a certain road to disaster. When Thatcher is determined to win, and the TUC to compromise, then Thatcher can always outbid the TUC. Only Arthur Scargill's policy of a relentless struggle for all out victory can win the strike.

Exactly because Thatcher's tactics are 'divide and rule' each time that the miners' strike has threatened to spread beyond the NUM, something approaching panic has gripped major sections of the ruling class.

Voted

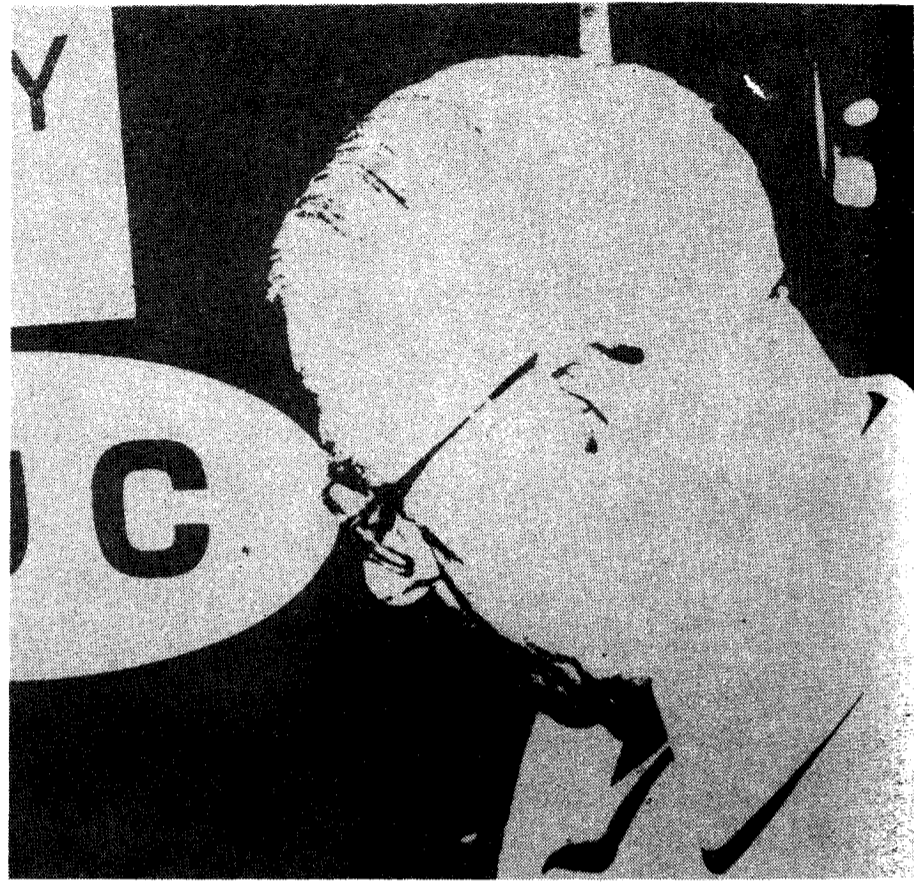
The role of the NUM leadership in keeping the strike together has been superlative. It was shown once again after the NACODS executive voted not to strike. Arthur

Scargill appearing on the television with the simple message of 'no compromise' was just what was needed to keep the strike together after one of the most cynical sell outs in the history of British trade unionism. But the task now is to smash this government's drive to isolate the NUM. This is task of the entire trade union movement and not just the NUM.

Bridges

The bridges to rebuild up support around the NUM has to be both political and material. A huge political campaign to gain respect and support for the miners. A massive financial campaign to alleviate the hardship. A huge campaign of material industrial support to win the strike and break up the legal attacks on it.

The first step is to campaign to get huge financial aid to the NUM. There should be no illusions. With threatening court actions against every area of the union the government



Thatcher awarding prizes for free enterprise to Eddie Shah and Goldsmith

aims to cripple the union's ability to win the strike. Large donations, very large interest free loans offered by the other unions and the TUC are the number one priority.

Secondly the TUC Congress decisions on the boycott of coal must be strengthened. Coal stocks at the power stations are rapidly running down in Yorkshire, Scotland and Wales — where there is also effective boycott action. The beginning of an effective boycott on oil was achieved at Stanwell on Monday by NUM pickets and TGWU oil delivery drivers. This has to be stepped up.

What is needed is for the TUC itself to appeal directly to workers for the implementation of Congress decisions. This would be the way to gain the maximum support for the coal and oil boycott

and to reinforce those workers around the country already operating the TUC policy.

Thirdly the key political move is to get a total identification between the labour movement and the miners. The best step in that would be a national Labour Party/TUC demonstration in support of the miners.

Money

The NUM leadership has reportedly opposed such a move — apparently on the grounds of money. That is a mistake. The total identification of the labour movement with the miners is the key to delivering material support. Now, particularly after the smear campaign on Libya, a massive Labour Party/TUC demonstration in London in

support of the miners would help gain that support. The Labour Party NEC, and the TUC, should urgently decide on calling such a demonstration.

Fourthly there needs to be a national solidarity conference sponsored by the NUM. There are a whole series of effective local conferences taking place but these need to be pulled together at a national level.

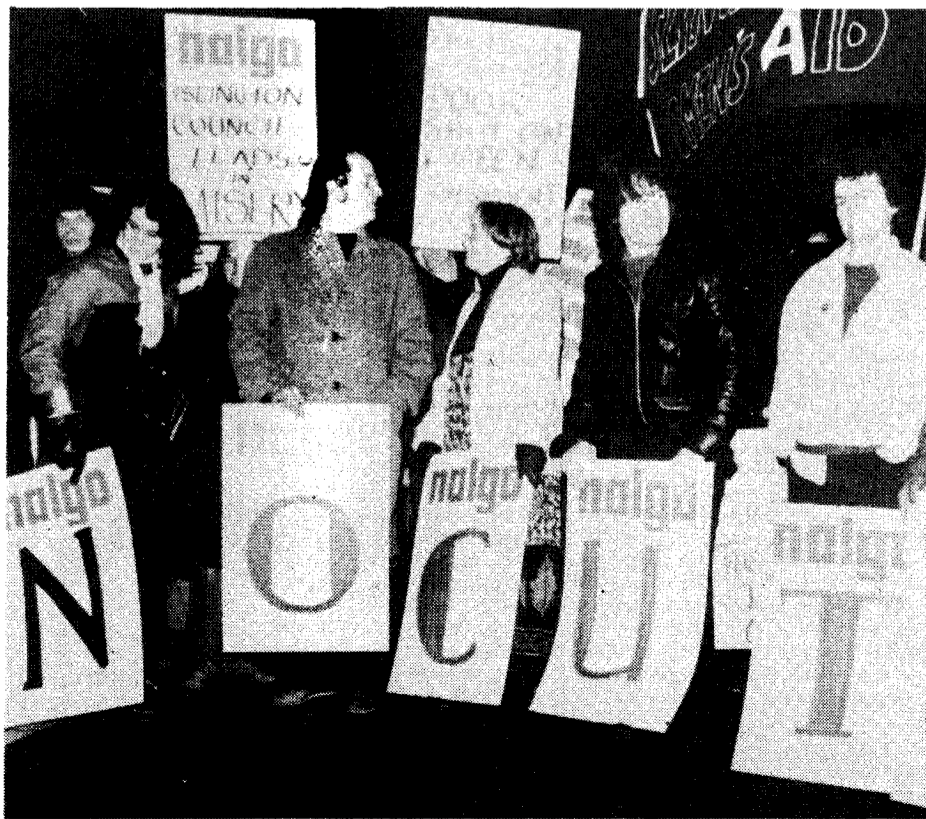
Fifthly there must be industrial action prepared by the TUC against the court attacks on the NUM — attacks which are now spilling over to other unions. This means a 24 hour general strike against the legal attacks on the NUM — and further general strike action if this is not enough to force the courts to back off.

If these steps are taken the NUM is going to win.

Local government workers: ALL OUT 7 NOVEMBER!

THE PUBLIC Sector Alliance, which comprises Democracy for London Campaign (the GLC and ILEA unions), the Save ILEA Campaign (unions, parents and SERTUC), and the London Bridge Committee (the joint unions of the London Boroughs) has been formed recently and has called for a 7 November day of action against the Tory's plans to smash local government.

All local government unions in London are asked to take strike action on the day, and join the march through south London to a rally at County Hall. Assemble: 11am in Burgess Park, Camberwell Green, SE5 (nearest tube Elephant and Castle). The rally will begin at 2pm, Jubilee Gardens, County Hall, SE1 (nearest tubes Waterloo or Westminster).



Defend the miners! Defend the political levy!

THE conference called by the Labour Coordinating Committee (LCC) on 1 December in defence of the political levy is to be linked to support for the miners' strike.

Jean McCrindle, treasurer of Women Against Pit Closures, will be joining the platform of speakers who include Ron Todd, Ken Livingstone, Tom Sawyer and Robin Cook. The one-day conference will be held in Central Hall, London.

The aim will be to integrate the lessons of support for the miners' strike into the campaign to de-

fend union political funds and Labour Party affiliation.

Arthur Scargill is one of the sponsors of the campaign and there will be NUM sponsors at the conference.

Early registrations for the conference include the Bakers' Union; Kings Cross NUR; Cardiff Trades Council; ASTMS No. 3 Divisional Council; and Putney, Surbiton and Ryedales Labour Parties.

● Trade union and Labour Party delegates are invited to register (£3 each) with the LCC, 9 Poland Street, London W1V 3DG (01-439 3749).

Support Coalville railworkers

COAL STOCKS at the Trent Valley power stations are reaching critical levels as the cold weather arrives. This spells trouble for British Rail management in Coalville, Leicestershire, where almost all the 2500 miners are working.

The Coal Board and British Rail are putting on more pressure to get rail workers to shift coal to the power stations. But rail workers continue to resist.

There is no lack of coal to shift. As Roy Butlin explained to a massive rally organised by Waltham forest miners' support group in East London last week:

'We have backed our union's policy to stop all coal movement for seven months. The management have tried to cope by using round-the-clock convoys of lorries to move the coal.

'But lorries can't match trains. Of the 123,000 tonnes of coal we shift weekly in normal conditions, lorries can handle 60-70,000 tonnes. The rest is being stockpiled.

'This is becoming a major problem for the NCB. Scab coal has filled to capacity the pithead stocking grounds. Now the NCB has started to rent or lease new ground from local farmers to stock the excess. Everywhere in Coalville mountains of coal are

'Or it could use the army to operate the freight side of the railways. There is railway training in the armed forces. They are prepared for any eventuality. But this option would be too explosive to use today.'

Finally a decision could be made to break the rail workers' secondary action and get the coal back on the trains. In Butlin's view this is what is happening.

We are having pressure applied daily, but it is nothing to what we will see when the power stations are starved of coal.'

The decision by NACODS to call off their strike disappointed those who are supporting the strike. But its impact will not be disastrous. Local railworkers were skeptical about whether NACODS would take strike action.

'For us, the NACODS' decision means that stockpiling will continue, and the pressure to move coal will increase,' says Butlin. Local rail leaders — who work closely with the striking miners — are doing all in their power to withstand the mounting pressure.

'We've had a closure

threat, homes raided by transport police, and three trade unionists sacked. Now rumours are flying about that some local track will be lifted. We've caused management so much pain that they are starting to chip away at the depot.'

Over the last few weeks, Coalville rail leaders have been taking their case to as wide as possible an audience in the labour movement. At every meeting the message has been the same:

'We are being victimised for backing the miners and backing our union. Our members need your support. And when the miners win, we want guarantees that the coal returns to rail, and that our sacked members are reinstated.'

Butlin will be especially pleased to address a meeting called by Agecroft miners' strike committee, to discuss how to implement TUC policy. For the first time he will be sharing a platform with Jimmy Knapp, NUR general secretary.

At this meeting Butlin will extend an invitation to Knapp to attend a meeting called by Coalville rail

workers on Sunday 4 November. The meeting is open to all in rail who support Coalville, and will discuss practical support.

Two coaches have already been booked in London, and supporters in other areas are asking if they can come along as well. An invitation has been extended to NUR-sponsored MPs.

The response to the Coalville members' case has been tremendous in the rank and file of the union. If the NEC took its responsibility seriously, and put the resources of the union behind the efforts of local rail leaders, our union would be enormously strengthened.

The Coalville men are determined to see that Coalville doesn't become doleville. If the union leadership matches that determination, there is no way that the BR Board will come back for the Coalville members once the dispute is settled and the miners have won.

● Messages of support, and details of the open meeting from: Roy Butlin, 23 Capston Street, Ibstock, Leicestershire, LE5 1LD.



Photo: MIKE WONGSAM

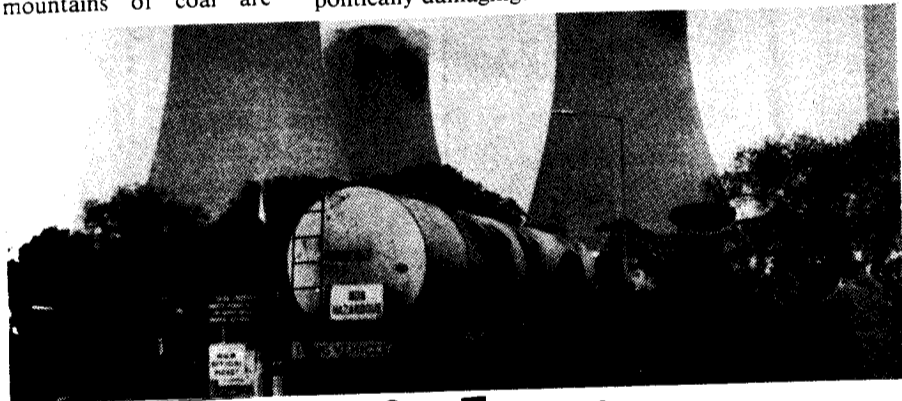
Roy Butlin

By Doreen Wepler, NUR

'The other two stations — Drakelow and Rugeley — are trying to manage on smaller amounts of coal transported by lorries. But danger points are being reached rapidly.'

According to Butlin, the crunch point is arriving, and the NCB has only limited ways of shifting these mountains of coal:

'It can bring in the army to drive lorries in military style, making the operation a bit more efficient. But it would be politically damaging.'



Mass picket at Didcot

ON WEDNESDAY 24 October 250 pickets blockaded Didcot power station in an attempt to stop oil supplies. The picket was called by South Wales NUM, SERTUC, and Oxford groups.

Support groups from Islington, Hackney and Camden joined miners from Merthyr Vale and local trade unionists and students, to picket the scab oil lorries.

Despite the tremendous spirit of the Merthyr miners, and the sizeable turn-out from Oxford, there was not enough serious mobilisation from elsewhere to achieve the necessary solidarity.

To be fair, a handful of pickets were allowed to approach workers entering the power station without too much interference from the police, and this was one aspect of the affair that could be considered successful.

However, after a couple of hours anticipating the arrival of oil deliveries by scab lorries, Alan Thornett, president of Oxford trades council which played a key role in getting SERTUC involved, ex-

plained to the picket that a tactical victory had been won in delaying deliveries.

By Terry Luke, Islington support committee

But as if to emphasise their unwillingness to take positive action, a SERTUC official told those pickets left that it was unwise to alienate anybody. This, despite the fact that he had previously stressed the call for picketing was implementation of the TUC congress decisions.

It became clear that there was a convoy of 40 lorries waiting to deliver oil. These arrived periodically in threes and

fours, and despite the attempts of the pickets to halt them, they got through.

Interestingly, a comrade from the Camden support committee tried to bring to the attention of the police that the lorries were not legally marked. Such respect for the law fell on deaf ears.

Although it was a peaceful picket four people were arrested, and later released without charge.

The Didcot picket was mainly intended to give support to the workers inside the plant who are prepared to boycott oil deliveries. But the need for mass picketing to support the NUM will increase.

It is crucial that all labour movement bodies, including the support committees, should not only express support through rallies, collections and so on, but should also get involved where the fight can be won — on the picket lines.

South Wales women rally for the miners

THE women's support groups in the South Wales coalfields are holding a mass women's rally in Cardiff on 8 December.

The aim of the rally is to give recognition to the role that women are playing in the miners' strike.

By Petra Hughes, Cardiff Women Against Pit Closures

This rally will provide an opportunity for women everywhere in South Wales to express solidarity with women involved in the battle against pit closures and put pressure on the area executive to provide a stronger lead in mass action over the next few weeks and months.

Those of us not directly involved in the battle against pit closures, not facing the hardship and struggle of those living in the pit communities, have a duty to show our support in a concrete way. Food parcels alone will not win this strike. Active support from every section of the labour movement is vital:

● Organise delegations of women to attend the rally. This rally is aimed at women and children. The speeches will be short and we hope to provide food and entertainments.

● Women in the mining communities desperately need money for transport, so that they can attend the rally. Can your Labour Party, trade union or women's group sponsor a mini-bus, provide cars.

● Men can arrange creches, raise funds and come and watch on the day.

The steering committee for the rally can be contacted at 16 Glamorgan St, Cardiff.

Defend the NUM

Thursday 15 November 7.30pm Chapel Allerton School, Harrogate Rd, Leeds

Speakers: Ken Capstick, Yorks NUM executive Pat Thomas, women's support group Atmar Singh, campaign against the police bill Ledston Luck colliery speaker

Labour movement conference in support of the miners

Sunday 11 November Hounslow Civic Centre, Lampton Rd, Hounslow

Workshops, creche, food, parking Admission free

Organised by West London miners' support committees Phone: 01-572 3764

Manchester women meet to support the miners

ON SATURDAY 17 November a unique conference is to be held in Manchester Town Hall. It has been called by the Bold and Walkden miners' wives support groups and Manchester women support the miners group.

It aims to bring together all the women in the North-west who have been mobilised in support of the miners' strike, from the miners' wives themselves to the women from Labour Parties, trade unions and the peace movement, together with hundreds of women for whom support for the miners is their first political act.

There is a great need for women to get together and discuss not only the things they are doing, to swap ideas and problems, but also to look at the way forward both in the dispute and afterwards.

During the day conference there will be workshops on policing, mines not missiles, building solidarity through the

Labour Party and trade unions, and why women-only organisation, with the afternoon session concentrating on the way forward in the dispute and for the women's organisation.

By Cath Potter, Manchester women support the miners committee

Speakers so far confirmed are Lorraine Bowler from Barnsley women against pit closures, Lorraine Johnson from Bold miners' wives support group, Lesley Boulton and Cllr Helen Johnson on policing, plus women from Greenham, trades unions and the Labour Party.

The conference has attracted widespread sponsorship from local labour movement and women's organisations.

Kent women visit Germany

THE MINERS' strike is having an impact in the workers movement across Europe, demonstrated by the enthusiastic response received by the many miners who have been on solidarity tours.

However the biggest response has been reserved for the women from the mining communities whose heroic struggle is inspiring women and men alike.

KAY SUTCLIFFE recently went on a tour of Germany, together with women from the Greenham movement. She describes her impressions and her response.

Our first meeting was in Cologne on the Saturday, we spoke at a march and rally against racism. The speakers seemed to go on for a long time and I didn't understand a word.

I didn't realise that I was to be the last speaker. And I couldn't believe it, people were cheering and clapping as soon as I was announced to speak — before I'd even got to the platform.

There was a really good feeling in the crowd, and I was given a bouquet. Afterwards loads of peo-

ple came up and asked what they could do to help. They were genuinely interested and really wanted to get something going.

We travelled around and visited a different town every day for a week. Every meeting we spoke at was packed and everyone wanted information about the strike.

The same questions came up at most meetings. We were asked about the national ballot. But people were most interested in the situation around strike pay.

They couldn't believe the NUM didn't give out strike pay, because they all get it in Germany. They were appalled to hear the way the government was cutting back our social security payment. Again they found it unbelievable.

They were also interested in the NUM's demand for a four-day-week, particularly after the campaign that had been waged for the 35-hour week in Germany.

From women we had a particularly great response around what the women are doing in the strike, the way we are organising and how we are getting the women together. Many of the women's groups we spoke to decided to 'twin' with women's groups in the miners' strike. Our pit, Aylesham, is twinning with Cologne.

One thing that struck me was the response when

I talked about ideas like socialism or capitalism. A big cheer went up whenever I said it, I don't think they could believe that a miners' wife would say such things.

I was told that people weren't used to people using words like that in Germany, so I thought perhaps I should change my speech and stop using those ideas. But I was told not to, because it was having such a good impact.

The unions in Germany seem to be very identified with management — it's not the same as here. They have what they call 'workers' participation' which means the unions work with management on things affecting the workforce. But the rank and file get left out, they're not involved in the discussions, and it's not based on what they want.

The collections were good in every meeting, and we brought back 16,000DMs, which is well over £4000. And more money will come out of it through the twinning, and because some of the union groups wanted to pay direct to the NUM.

We clearly had a big impact because last week a film crew came over to Aylesham from Germany. We've also made a lot of friends, so hopefully there will be follow up visits. And some of them will be visiting us.

Money for the Aylesham group should be sent to: Aylesham miners' wives support group, c/o Miners' Welfare Club, Dorman Ave Sth, Aylesham, Kent. Donations preferably in cash, or kind.



Twenty-five thousand demonstrators invaded Barrow-in-Furness last Saturday to surround the Vickers' shipyard and protest against the building of Britain's Trident submarine. The encirclement was followed by a die-in and a firework display which simulated a nuclear explosion.

which followed was addressed by Joan Rud-dock, Bruce Kent, Tricia Benzie from the Anti-Trident Campaign, AUEW-TASS convenor Danny Pearson, and others.

PEACE DIARY DATES:

● Saturday November 10 10.30 till 5pm, County Hall, London SE1. Labour CND's NATO day school Speakers include Pat Arrowsmith, Günter Minnerup, Ben Lowe and others. Registration £2 (£1 unwaged). Contact: Kate Edwards, Sec LCND, 6 Endsleigh St., London WC1 or phone 01-388 1628.

● Saturday/Sunday 3/4 November National Women's Peace Weekend, West Bridgford Day Centre, West Bridgford, Nottingham. Theme of the weekend: making links. Suggested workshops include: links with women against pit closures, black women and the peace movement, Greenham's future and relations between local groups and others. Contact: Susie on 0602 473145.

● Sunday 9 December fifth anniversary of the announcement of cruise deployment in Britain — Greenham peace camp have called a women-only event: Blanket Greenham. More details in future issues.



IRELAND UNFREE

Briefing wrong

THE RESPONSE from ruling circles to the Brighton bombings has been a predictable 'business as usual' — anti-terrorist chief Commander Bill Hucklesby even took time out of the press conference to crack an anti-Irish joke (to the titters of the assembled journalists).

The most staggering reaction from the left however was that of Labour Briefing who devoted the front of the national supplement to a page of vitriolic chauvinism.

'It is important,' they said, 'at a time like this to attempt to harness the murderous conflicts which we find all around us as creatively as we can, in the service of a political solution. By this we mean the election of a Labour government.'

By tying such nonsense and racist abuse to the token call to

get 'Thatcher's terrorists troops' out of Ireland makes little qualification to the rampant tirade. Equally, the claim 'we do not aim to parrot the ritual condemnation of "violence"' makes little impact in an article which has the flier 'Only one way to stop more, worse outrages'.

By Martin Collins

Briefing, which thinks it is appropriate to flash 'Labour — take power' across the front page of every issue, tells us about the political effects of the Brighton bomb (apart from their absurd prediction that cabinet deaths would have led to a military government).

'The bomb,' they say, will 'strengthen the state' ... it will 'stiffen the government's moral resolve' ... it will fuel 'popular sympathy' for the government ... and may even lead to the defeat of the miners' strike.

Luckily, such frenzied panic can be calmed by a glance at the real world. Speaking for the Labour Party (or English patriots in general), Briefing claims 'few of us can have been unimpressed by the personal courage of those involv-

ed — including, yes, the composure and resoluteness of the prime minister herself'.

Perhaps the patronising and obviously male writer might have remembered Thatcher's off-microphone 'composure' after the Harrod's bomb when she asked the press: 'How do you want me to play this gentlemen, shall I link it all in with Christmas?' Certainly I would find Norman Tebbit's decision to quit politics to be an altogether more rational response from a Tory Minister.

Briefing then turned to the issue of violence. 'We are people,' it said, 'who by our whole upbringing, and through all our traditions abhor and are incapable of the use of violence as a substitute for rational argument and political debate.'

This white, middle class pacifism is a betrayal of everything the working class has had to fight for. We defend unconditionally the right of the Irish or any oppressed people to use the most extreme violence, if necessary, to rid themselves of their oppressors.

Of course, some actions are more politically effective than others, but

that is for discussion amongst anti-imperialists, not the theme of homilies delivered by Labour pacifists.

The full Briefing editorial board has, we understand, disclaimed responsibility for its front page article and will be printing an explanation and retraction in its next issue; local Briefing groups in many parts of the country have issued their own inserts as disclaimers. But the affront to the Irish in Britain and the disappointment of the left will take more than retractions to overcome.

The troops in Ireland are not simply 'Thatcher's terrorists', they were sent and performed their most brutal repression under a Labour government. They are imperialist troops propping up partition of Ireland for the interests of international capitalism.

Briefing must explain that socialism is unobtainable in Britain without a socialist republic already won in Ireland. To all Irish fighters for freedom it must say — our fight is your fight!

Miners tour Holland

FROM THE 7 to 14 October NIGEL BEVAN from Penrhwi-ceiber NUM and HAZEL JONES from Mountain Ash women's support group toured Holland seeking support for the battle against pit closures.

The tour was a big success. By the time they returned to South Wales the Dutch TUC (FNV) had committed itself to launch an official solidarity campaign. Nigel Bevan reports on the trip.

The really crucial meeting was held in Eindhoven. Over 200 people came along to the first official FNV meeting to be held in that town in support of our strike.

Here, as at the meeting in Best, they sent a letter to the Dutch TUC and the transport union in Rotterdam calling on them to stop all coal to Britain.

At every meeting we attended there was a decision taken to set up a permanent support committee and there was intense interest everywhere in the women's involvement in the strike.

On the Monday we went to Duerne and spoke with trade unionists and a woman from the industrial workers' union.

A miner from the province of Linberg also told us about the struggles to defend the mines in Holland in 1965-75. There were 90,000 people working in the mines then, now there are no mines left.

The government promised them pension payments of £100 a week, but when they closed the mines they only gave them £25 a week. The miners organised a mass campaign and eventually won a pension of £70 a week.

We had discussions with many different groups, for example with the union of the unemployed which is producing a paper for the unemployed.

Another was with the

Turkish solidarity movement in Holland (TIGD). This organisation exists to protect civil rights of immigrant workers in Holland.

MARTIN BEERIS, from the Dutch Labour Party (PVDA) helped to organise the tour. He describes its impact.

'The tour that Nigel and Hazel did and the meeting in Eindhoven, as seen from the reaction of union officials and executives, gave us a good start to go on with our fight to set up an official solidarity campaign in Holland.'

'Eindhoven was the first place that the official union was drawn in. Activists in the union have now pushed the Amsterdam headquarters of the Dutch TUC (FNV) into setting up a bank account and £100,000 has now been placed in it.'

DATE there has been little discussion of Labour's new defence policy. Only now, after reference has overwhelmingly accepted it, is that debate beginning. Socialist Action has consistently campaigned against its adoption. We will continue to oppose the policy because of its commitment to NATO and to developing conventional forces in Europe — a subject which fits neatly into NATO's own plans for rejigging its European strategy. TONY BENN, prominent campaigner for lateral nuclear disarmament, asked for the document. JOHN DASS asked him why.

The first thing I wanted to ask was why you voted for the Labour Party defence document?

Like the curate's egg. It was patchy. I'd say clearly that we would go non-nuclear, that is cancel Trident, send the cruise and decommission Polaris. I did give some attention to what was meant by non-nuclear defence — which was full of defence thinking of a kind I've never been very interested in. But there was one aspect I thought quite wrong: saying we couldn't bring our defence spending down to the same percentage of Gross National Product as our European allies. This has been a party commitment for a long time.

We tried to get an amendment on to the national executive, but failed. That told us something about Labour's economic policy. After all, percentages of GNP aren't just about defence. If you increase the percentage of defence you decrease it in other fields.

However, I did put forward an alternative Foreword that brought out the open question that is really relevant in the defence field: namely, are we under threat from the Soviet Union? That Foreword makes the case that we don't believe in the Soviet threat theory — it also reminded people of the Soviet contribution to the war with 20 million dead. It gave a completely different political flavour to the defence document.

A second amendment was moved at the NEC which made it easier for me to accept the document: that it wasn't the word, it was open for discussion. I would like to see the argument taken forward now into the political arena.

Are we going to have any defence policy — whether bows and arrows, or tridents, or home guards or guerrillas — which accepts uncritically that there is a Soviet threat to attack Western Europe? I believe that a policy prepared on this basis is really designed for another purpose: to use the foreign enemy argument in order to repress domestic opinion.

That is the area of argument we should move into now, the details about non-nuclear defence are very secondary arguments.

I agree very much on one thing: the whole NATO defence strategy is based on an alleged Soviet threat. But I think the reality of the whole document is much more serious than you think. There's been a major debate inside NATO itself, calling for the type of policy that the Labour Party is now adopting. That is, a big build-up of conventional weapons in Western Europe. This is outlined by Kissinger, General Rogers and others.

The defence document does reflect, in a watered-down form, the thinking of those who believe the bomb is now too dangerous to use. The nuclear winter argument has made people feel that a nuclear war of any kind would be terminal for civilisation, therefore we've got to go back to a souped-up conventional force. There is a danger that the Labour Party could get drawn in quite the wrong direction.

But the central question remains an assessment of the motivation and character of the superpowers, and where we stand in relation to them. We need to develop a policy that allows us



Photos: ILONA ARANOVSKY

The politics of the

to throw our weight, such as it is, in the direction of detente, disarmament and development. The document is defective in that respect.

But the document goes out of its way to stress complete commitment to British membership of NATO. From what you've said, the sole rationale for NATO is to defend us against this (non-existent) threat. This is another fundamental flaw in the document. What do you think is the purpose of NATO?



Well, it's a good question. NATO grew up after the war, at a time when it was thought the Soviet Union might extend its frontiers. It was part of the desire by Western European leaders to commit the United States to Europe and avoid a return to isolationism. The Labour Party policy remains the dissolution of NATO and the Warsaw Pact.

What is dangerous about the way the argument is developing is that those in the party who point to a conference commitment to NATO then say that there is a contradiction between that and our decision not to be nuclear. And they say that this had to be reconciled — a readiness to stay nuclear by putting nuclear weapons into negotiations.

But then Britain isn't even in any negotiations, we play no part in them. So the argument that the bomb gives you a seat at the table isn't even true.

The peace movement and Labour Party view of nuclear weapons is a strong one. If that was the choice you would get a very different result on NATO membership.

The other thing that has to be taken into account is that if Reagan is reelected (which seems very likely at the moment) the fall-off in his popularity and of confidence in the American government — which has already begun — will become much sharper.

But the first priority is our assess-

ment of the motives and position of the superpowers. If we can get people to think straight about that, a lot of other things will follow. If the main emphasis is on NATO withdrawal, without people understanding the nature of that discussion, we are not likely to succeed.

The main priority is to base yourself on party policy to dissolve NATO and the Warsaw Pact. Taking that as a starting point, we should discuss international relations — indeed, go beyond the peace question.



I think the peace movement has pretty well come to the fullest development it's capable of. Now it's got to be redefined as a political movement with much broader objectives.

Perhaps you could explain what you mean by that?

I've been to a lot of peace conferences in the last few years. What's clear is that the agenda begins with the horrors of nuclear war, but immediately people begin raising women's rights, racism, unemployment, monetarism.

The peace movement is not a new and narrow movement, brought into being by nuclear weapons and confined to the objective of removing them. It's absorbed with all the causes that are really associated with socialism and democracy.

We ought to recognise that the peace movement and the progressive forces in the United States, Western Europe and the non-aligned countries, the liberation movements around the world, are coming together with a clutch of demands that go far beyond the abolition of nuclear weapons or nuclear-free zones. A new international political movement is in the process of being born.

Well, I certainly agree with that. Take

the Greens in West Germany. For obvious reasons, they have developed a politics which is extremely clear on such things as NATO and the presence of foreign military forces. What is your attitude to these types of development in Europe?

Every country's politics reflect its own history and traditions. The Green movement is interesting, a way in which socialism can express itself in the context of West Germany. Mind you, a non-political green movement can be very reactionary. But in West Germany it's a reflection of the failure of the SPD to take on board the idealism of young people and the passion for peace.

France however is still reliving the shame of the 1940 defeat. I'm not saying I support it, but you can understand France wanting the *force de frappe* if you look at it that way.

And in Italy, where the Italian Communist Party is the main instrument of the working class movement, you have a different situation. And the same is true for Britain and America.

If you examine the politics of different countries, you find they reflect their histories. To understand the language of politics, and therefore know the alliances to build, needs a clear view of what's happening. There are elements everywhere we would, and should, ally ourselves to.

Perhaps I can put the question a bit more clearly. After 1945 not only was Europe divided, but the labour movement was almost exclusively divided into forces who aligned with the United States and forces who aligned with Moscow.

Since then there's been a dramatic decline in the pro-American forces, and a decline in the attractive power of what might be called the strictly stalinist, pro-Moscow, communist parties. This has created a much bigger political space for the European socialist parties to operate in.

But two directions can be followed.

One, extremely dangerous, is what I think you referred to: the idea of a third superpower based on Europe. That's a trend you can see rather clearly in the politics of Mitterrand — what I'd call Euro-socialist.

The other thing emerging is what might be termed a Euro-left — the left of the Labour Party, the Greens, and various other currents — who are opposed to European nuclear weapons as well as American. They are opposed to the idea of economic sacrifices to rearm Europe just as much as they oppose any sacrifices to aid the Americans.

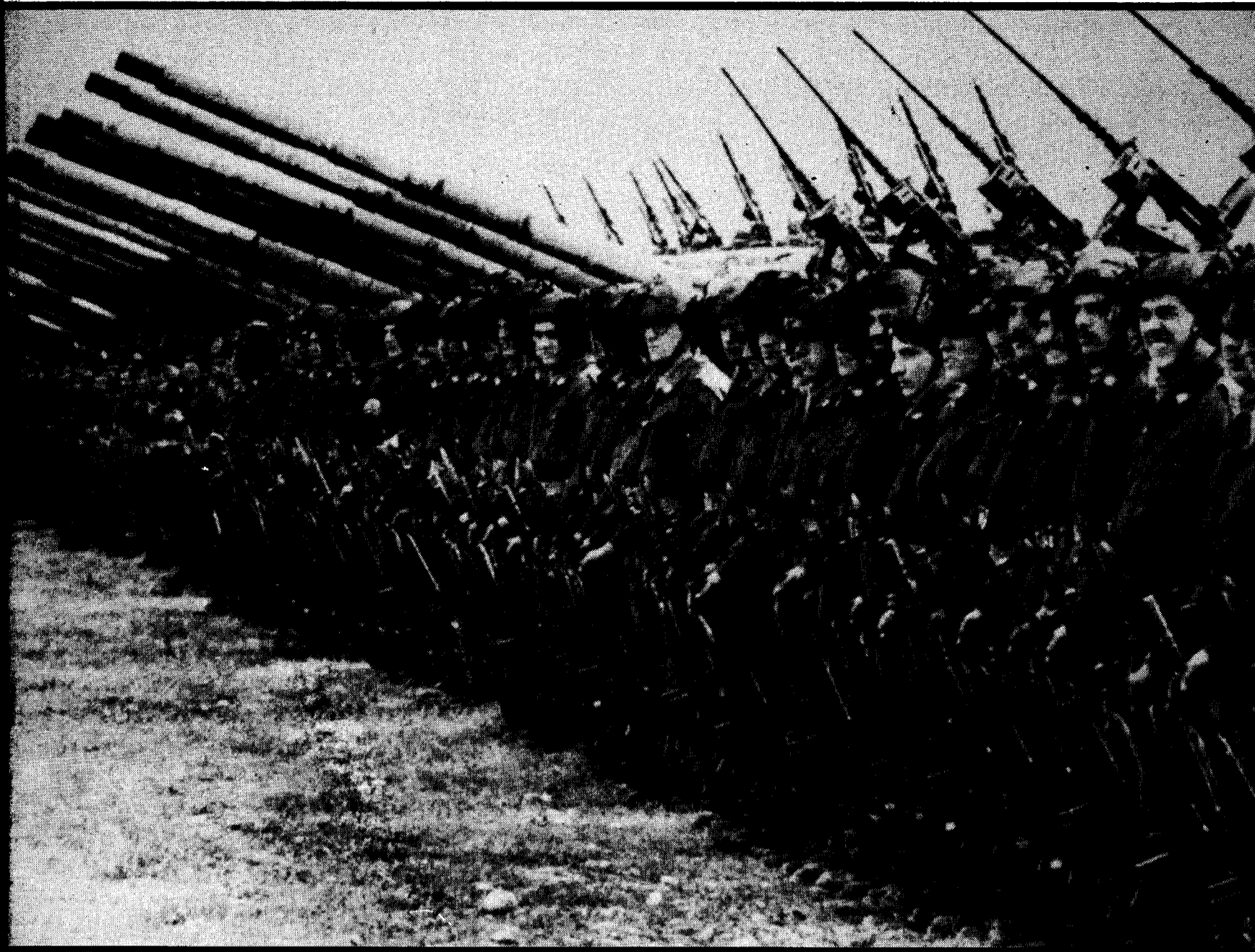
The European third force idea was the one that created the West European Union. It was very much a Western establishment idea. It's the idea that American economic policy is dangerous and American foreign policy is adventurous under Reagan. You can't be absolutely sure that the Americans will stay forever, and therefore you have to rearm, you have to have a European deterrent.

I suppose the French would like the *force de frappe* to be the core around which that is built, although they might accept that Britain under Mrs Thatcher might contribute something. Although our weapons can't be used without the American international system. They're just toys unless they're linked into the American satellites.

I don't know whether you would call that Euro-socialist. It would really be the Brussels gang trying to recreate the old European Defence Community, like in the mid-50s, when there was an attempt to supplement the Treaties of Paris and Rome with a treaty for a multinational force.

That attempt failed then, now they're trying to bring it back.

And I also think that the Paris-Bonn axis, as *The Times* openly calls it, is based on the idea that the Germans would provide industrial strength and the French their diplomatic strength and the bomb — the core around which Western Europe and the EEC could be built.



Meanwhile, the same debate has surfaced within the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament, in two complementary ways. First, the fifth anniversary of the decision to deploy cruise missiles in this country will be on 12 December. Instead of the traditional mass action at Greenham Common to protest at this decision, CND national council has decided to call for a lobby of the 'Warsaw Pact' embassies on 8 December.

They follow this up with resolutions to CND annual conference calling for a CND campaign against Russian missiles. It seems to have escaped their attention that there are no Russian missiles in this country!

At the same time, calls for CND to campaign more strongly and more openly on the question of British withdrawal from NATO have been pushed off the 1984 agenda by the campaign leadership. There is a clear move away from the anti-NATO side of the campaign's aims, which goes hand in hand with a shifting emphasis towards non-nuclear defence.

Defence

A resolution calling for a 'National Defence Charter' — a 'declaration on the main principles which should guide future British defence and foreign policy' — failed to reach the final agenda. But the theme recurs in the form of a report to conference from the Forward Planning Committee.

A draft of this was presented to CND's national council in October. No vote was taken on the report, which now goes — in whatever form the forward planning group wants to put it! — to November annual conference. This group are sneaking in a completely new perspective for the campaign by the side door.

They say: 'Our overriding goal is to convince the majority of the public by the next general election of the case for complete nuclear disarmament by Britain, and the adoption of a credible defence policy which does not rely on nuclear weapons.' (our emphasis).

Working out defence policy is not, and never has been, a concern of CND — the biggest popular movement that Britain has ever seen. From its birth, CND has been committed to two specific ends: getting rid of all nuclear weapons from British territory, and withdrawal from the NATO Atlantic nuclear alliance.

Nukes

These straightforward and limited aims of the campaign — scrapping the nukes — goes a long way towards explaining its success.

For obvious reasons, millions of people fear the terrible consequences of the use of nuclear weapons, by accident or design. That fear unites millions of people of vastly different political persuasions.

The 'single-issue' nature of the peace movement has always been the key to its success. From the early days of Aldermaston to the present Greenham Common Peace Camp, people have got together in their determination to prevent nuclear annihilation.

The attempt to change the aims of CND — from disarmament to advising government on defence policy — represents a fundamental attack on the unity of the movement. Pacifists will not unite with communists on the issue of 'what defence for Britain'. Because their view of society is fundamentally different. To force the campaign in that direction will quickly break it up.

Any old non-nuclear defence policy is not an answer to the unilateralist's dilemma: how do we win before it's too late? The answer to that lies in developing a socialist foreign policy. Part of the pressure to devise it will come from a continually successful peace movement which understands the need to keep nuclear disarmament at the top of its agenda, by the national mass actions for which the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament has rightly become so renowned.

peace movement

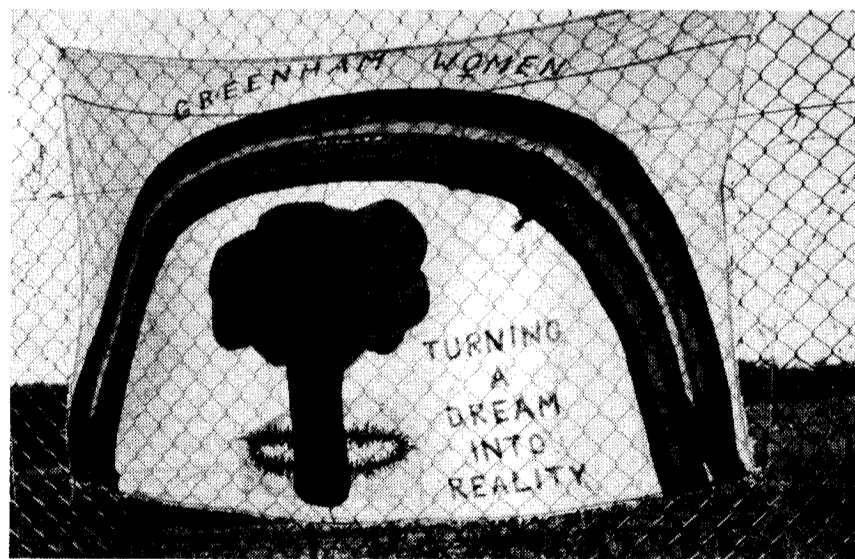
I don't know that that's really socialist. I think really it is a sort of West European SDP or Alliance. The fact that Mitterrand's part of it and some individual members of the British Labour Party are attracted by it doesn't make it fair to call it Euro-socialist.

I presume what you mean by the Euro-left is the Italian Communist Party, and the bulk of the constituencies in Britain, and a lot of other green and environmental groups, and the peace movements — a force that is capable of developing a new Europe, free from the great of the superpowers and the occupation of the superpowers.

The peace question is too narrowly framed in terms of the nuclear weapons. It's got to be a very much broader movement, and it's got to have direct allies in the non-aligned countries. I've been trying to persuade some non-aligned leaders to come round Western Europe under the auspices of the United Nations, and have seminars on disarmament and development which would allow them to participate in the political life of the countries where the UN commissions go. I would prefer to call that Euro-socialist — perhaps just socialist.

That is where we should be going. If you go back to the post-war years, there was a third force movement in the Labour Party which Nye Bevan was associated with. What the Bevanites were saying in the years when I was first elected to parliament until the Cold War began, was that they wanted Britain to be, in a sense, non-aligned. They wanted Britain to be playing its part in a different way, and not tied to the Americans.

And I think all that history and impetus and aspiration and desire is repressing itself now in the whole of Europe, East and West. That is the thing we should be part of, not obviously part of Mitterrand's dream of the glory of France, buttressed by the power of Germany and inspired by the shame of past defeats. That is not a future which would attract the British peace movement.



SINCE LABOUR lost the 1983 general election a debate on defence policy has broken out. Many people believe that the peace movement, and with it the Labour Party, lost the argument on nuclear disarmament. Labour's defeat is often attributed to its profoundly unpopular commitment to unilateralism, a policy — it is argued — which the majority of the electorate felt would leave Britain defenceless.

The debate in the Labour Party now, increasingly echoed in the peace movement, is about 'defence without nuclear weapons'. To win support for unilateralism, it is argued, we must answer the question: can Britain defend itself without the bomb?

But this view of Mrs Thatcher's victory leaves two things out of account. First, the overwhelming success of the Tory Party is not explained by the

popularity of its policies. The undemocratic peculiarities of the British electoral system gave a whopping parliamentary majority to a party which received only 43 per cent of the total vote, and whose popularity (as statistics show) is in long-term decline.

It is not, and never has been, the case that Mrs Thatcher has a majority mandate for her nuclear war-fighting strategies.

Second, it is often conveniently forgotten that many of Labour's leading figures — most notably ex-prime minister Callaghan — fought the 1983 election publicly opposed to Labour's promise to get rid of all nuclear weapons from Britain. No wonder voters lacked confidence in Labour — they were openly encouraged by its own parliamentary leaders!

Labour's downfall does not mean that Tory nuclear policy is popular, but it has highlighted contradictions within the labour and peace movement about defence. The women of Greenham

Common have won the case against the new generation of nuclear missiles for the whole of Britain's peace movement, as one opinion poll after another shows. The job of unilateralists everywhere is to build on the Greenham gains.

This won't happen if CND or the Labour Party go hook line and sinker over to Mrs Thatcher framework for defence. Strange as it might sound, this is just what is beginning to happen.

Since the election, those very same leaders who cost Labour its victory, aided and abetted now by many with a genuine adherence to unilateralism, have gained much ground within the party. And that same current of opinion is creeping into CND.

By Carol Turner

Labour's new defence policy, whilst repeating unilateralist commitments, argues for so-called non-nuclear defence policy placed firmly in the context of 'full support' for NATO. A Labour government, it says, will argue from the inside for NATO to become a non-nuclear alliance, starting with a no-first-use agreement.

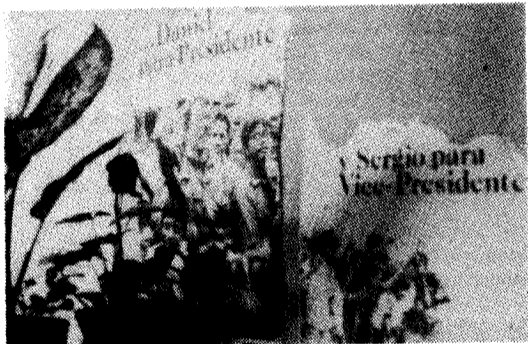
Such an agreement is as far away today as it has always been. Even Labour's leaders are forced to admit it will take some doing. Meanwhile, Labour commits itself to increase conventional forces, abandoning its longstanding pledge to reduce arms spending.

Despite all this, Labour's new defence policy was accepted at this year's party conference by a huge five-to-one majority. *Defence and Security for Britain* has been welcomed by right and left alike.

Messrs Healey and Shore glowed over Labour's firmest commitment yet to stay with the NATO alliance. Unilateralists in the party were content that promises to scrap Trident, get rid of cruise, and 'decommission' Polaris were up-front.

THE FSLN's daily newspaper, *Barricada*, has been the vehicle for a lively debate on the coming elections, publishing the opinions of different sections of Nicaraguan society, those of organisations as well as those of individuals. Here are a few of them.

- a worker: 'I don't want elections. We're perfectly alright as we are.'
- another worker: 'I think the elections are a way of strengthening the revolution even more. We workers will give the bourgeoisie their answer by supporting the Sandinista Front.'
- a militia member, in response to the right wing opposition's demand that the armed forces not be given the vote (as happens in most of Latin America): 'I've been in the reserves for 3 years, not counting the liberation war. How can we not have the right to vote, when we're the ones who made the revolution, when we are the people?'
- a local trade union leader, on the bourgeoisie's demand for international supervision of the elections: 'Foreign supervision is an offence to a people who have carried out a revolution.'
- the Sandinista Youth organisation's slogan for lowering the voting age to 16: 'We're building this country, we want to vote.'
- General Secretary of the Sandinista Trade Union Congress (CST): 'With these elections we're going to give institutional form to the workers' power... We're going to make sure not a single factory is taken out of the people's hands, not a single company, not a single bank, not a single inch of land. We're going to make sure the bourgeoisie never return to power.'
- secretary of the Council of State, in reply to a question whether the mass organisations and other political parties would be included in the ideological debate: 'Yes, of course. We in the Sandinista Front believe that our positions are correct, so we should confront the people with them and let them decide if they think they are correct. Our organisations should use this opportunity to increase its numbers of members and militants, but also to grow ideologically.'



Nicaraguan election posters



19 July 1979: Sandinistas celebrate the overthrow of Somoza

Nicaraguan elections The right's blind terror

THE INTERNATIONAL campaign to discredit Nicaragua's 4 November elections struck a fresh blow last week. The biggest bourgeois party still running, the Independent Liberal Party (PLI), announced its decision to pull out.

The party's presidential candidate, Dr Virgilio Godoy, explained that their aim was to force the Sandinistas to open a dialogue with 'all political sectors of the country'.

The decisions taken in this 'national dialogue' would then be ratified by the newly-elected National Assembly, leading to a new constitution and fresh elections within two years. 'The 4 November elections', he admitted, 'are still legitimate, but now irrelevant'.

The rhetoric here is wafer-thin. The PLI know they have no hope of winning more than a small percentage of votes. So they aim to go over the head of the democratically

elected 90 person National Assembly and wring concessions out of some spurious 'dialogue'.

By Stuart Piper

They attempt to face the Sandinistas with a stark choice: either you resign yourselves to us making the elections look in the eyes of the world like a farcical one-horse race, or you by-pass your commitment to democratic procedures and negotiate concessions to us directly.

In this they follow close on the heels of the more right wing parties in Arturo Cruz's Democratic Coordinator (CDN), which refused to register in July this year unless the

government agreed to negotiate with the CIA-backed *contras*, something the Sandinistas have always vowed not to do.

Behind this latest move lies the clear print of Washington's sleight of hand, with its attempts to force a bogus parallel between the need for negotiations with the Nicaraguan 'freedom fighters' and President Duarte's negotiations with the FMLN/FDR in El Salvador.

One thing stands out above all else in this sordid story of manoeuvring: the bourgeoisie's blind terror of democracy when it is not strictly controlled by them to defend their own interests.

The Thatcher government's behaviour over the metropolitan councils or the NACOD's strike vote, after all its wailing about ballots in the NUM, is just

the most recent blatant example.

The Labour Party has a special duty here, and so far the leadership's response has fallen woefully short of the mark. The Thatcher government was one among very few that lent credibility to the really fraudulent elections in El Salvador this spring by sending official observers.

Labour Party conference passed an excellent motion this year which included a call for a high level NEC delegation to observe the Nicaraguan elections, made up if possible of the party leader and the spokespersons on foreign affairs and women.

The outcome has been a decision to send Alf Dubbs. Whatever his merits, that is not quite the same thing. Kinnock's own promised to visit to Nicaragua has been post-

poned. Despite the glowing invitation repeated from the conference platform by FSLN representative, Carlos Nunez, nobody seems to know when it might eventually come off.

For all these reasons we have to defend at every opportunity the democratic character of Nicaragua's first ever sovereign elections, and explain the immense importance of these first ever post-revolutionary elections for socialists everywhere.

A good start is to distribute as widely as possible the leaflet from the Nicaragua Solidarity Campaign explaining these elections. But above all, we need to organise in our local parties and trade unions to put pressure on our leaderships.

We want them to put all those fine words into deeds. And fast.

South Africa The struggle continues

SOUTH Africa's apartheid government is running scared. The invasion of three townships, Sebokong, Sharpeville and Bopatong by 7000 armed soldiers and police was not in response to what has been happening in the Vaal triangle in the im-

mediate past, but a pre-emptive bid by the Botha regime to try and ward off trouble to come.

This is the first time that members of the South Africa Defence (sic) Force have been used in actual police operations. In the past they have only played a 'stand-by' role.

The period since the mid-1970's and particularly since the access to the premiership of PW Botha in 1978, has seen a rapid and extensive militarisation of the state.

Top military commanders are strongly represented on the State Security Council, which replaced BOSS as the principal security apparatus of

the state. They play an increasingly important role, not only over the narrowly defined security policy, but over the total strategy of the state.

By Charlie Van Gelderen

The Nkomati Agreement, between South Africa and Mozambique, was the first positive achievement of the new set-up. Having, allegedly, secured their borders against any infiltration from without, the Botha government is now turning its attention to the real enemy — the masses fighting against apartheid and all it stands for within the country.

The derisive vote in the elections for the so-called Coloured and Indian chambers of the new tricameral parliament showed that the white ruling class had failed miserably in its attempt to split these sections of the black community from the officially designated black majority.

It became clear to the

regime that the spurious reforms were fooling nobody. That left brute force as the only alternative. Hence the combined military-police operation last week.

Although this was ostensibly a police operation, the Afrikaans-language newspaper *Beeld*, which is closely associated with the Botha 'verlister' wing of the ruling Nationalist Party, estimates the number of troops in the 7000 strong task force at 5000.

But raids did not have the intimidating effect which the regime expected. Although there were over 350 arrests, no political figures seemed to be among the arrested. Most of these seemed to be for petty offences such as possession of marijuana, failure to produce a pass or being in an urban area without permission.

Nor has it halted the wave of active resistance to apartheid rule which is sweeping South Africa. On the contrary! Since the massive raids, there has been renewed outbreaks of violence in Sebokeng and it has spread to the in-

dustrialised centres in the Eastern Cape around Port Elizabeth.

At Zwedi, police gassed a crowd of 1000 and at Kwazeekele, also in the Eastern Cape, some 2000 youths surrounded police when they went to investigate a car crash.

In the past three months more than 80 people have died in riots in black townships. There is a growing revolt against life under apartheid, against rent rises, bad schooling and the indignities of the pass laws and influx control.

Up to now most of these struggles have been spontaneous in character but there is no doubt that out of it a new leadership, spearheaded by the black working class, will arise which will lead the way to victory.



Police attack crowd in Sharpeville



THE CONTINUED strength of nationalism poses problems for socialists, and among them are some of the most controversial for the Marxist and would-be Marxist left.

Of course, Thatcherite chauvinism and Reaganite imperialist nationalism hardly pose any great analytical problems. But what of the Irish national struggle, the fight of the Basque people against the Spanish state, Scottish nationalism and the enduring demand for German reunification?

Arguments among Marxists about nationalism generally go something like this. Lenin said that Marxists regard the nationalism of the oppressed against the imperialist oppressor nation as progressive.

But in any concrete case this immediately poses the question: but is Scotland / the Basque Country / Ireland / Wales an oppressed nation? (Generally the question goes in two parts: 'is it a nation?' and 'is it oppressed?')

Reviewed by Phil Hearse

Jenkins and Minnerup, in a rather audacious move, attempt to cut through all this by asserting that Lenin was rather indifferent to definitions of what did, or did not, constitute a nation. Rather he assigned the question of national self-determination, 'wholly and exclusively to the sphere of political democracy', rather than to the sphere of abstract definitions. As our authors put it:

'Unlike Stalin he needed no scholastic yardstick by which to measure the claims of a community to



The Irish freedom struggle: 'progressive, irrespective of definitions of nationality'

nationhood. The primacy of the political struggle for democracy and equality turned the oppressed national minorities into allies of the proletariat in the overthrow of the autocracy, and the proletarian revolution into the condition for the liberation of the nationalities ... the

right to national self determination on the part of the working class was a precondition for its own unity.' (pp. 51-2)

In the light of viewing nationalist sentiment in this fashion, our questioning about national movements has to be reposed in a rather different way: do

they genuinely articulate the demands and democratic aspirations of oppressed groups in an imperialist world? To the extent that they do they are progressive, irrespective of definitions of nationality.

The second crucial theoretical point that Jenkins and Minnerup

make is in relation to what they describe as the resurgence of 'neonationalism'. Put simply, their thesis is that the nationalisms such as exist in Scotland, Wales, Catalonia, Quebec and the Basque country are different from the nationalism which grew up with

the rising revolutionary bourgeoisie.

A form of petty-bourgeois, democratic nationalism has been able to articulate the democratic aspirations of the masses in a way which the dominant forces in the labour movement have not.

The consequence is that socialists have to confront the democratic themes raised by these new nationalist movements by championing their democratic demands, and not by denouncing them, in dogmatic fashion, as a 'diversion'.

Underlying these views is an assessment of the nation state which will perhaps be startling to many socialists. Jenkins and Minnerup conclude:

'Far from being the dark source of most modern evil, the nation state actually represents the pinnacle of human achievement in the field of political emancipation.' (p. 145)

Liberal

They reject the view that the nation state is 'out-moded' as a fantasy of liberal cosmopolitanism. One aspect of the argument for this appears straightforward: 'Conflicts between states are in reality not conflicts between states at all, but conflicts between specific social and class interests using those states for their purposes.'

But the second is more sharply posed: 'The problem is not that our political organisation has lagged behind our social and economic progress, but that our social and economic organisations has remained behind our political progress.'

This is certainly a rather paradoxical way to pose things, and embodies a rather different emphasis to the traditional Marxist argument that the growth of the productive forces has 'outgrown' capitalist social relations, and with that, the fetters of the capitalist state. But it does highlight that well after any socialist transition, even in wide sectors of the

world, the nation state will survive as the only rational unit of social organisation.

The second major focus of the book, attempting to apply the more general theoretical points, is a sustained argument about the British state, nationalism in the British Isles and the Labour Party and the British state. Inevitably this turns into an argument about the whole character of British politics today.

The key to the argument is that conceptions of socialism in the Labour Party (including until recently the bulk of the Labour left) have been constrained within a fundamental respect for the parameters of the British state — both its territorial extent and its institutional forms.

Further, that within that framework, internationally traditional Labourist capitulations to Atlantic imperialism; and even its most radical domestic projects ('nationalise the 200 monopolies!') have tended to accommodate to statist and authoritarian models. Fortunately, and this has been vividly confirmed by recent events, there is an increasing body of the 'new' Labour left which rejects these accommodations.

Socialism

Ultimately, the logic of the Jenkins/Minnerup argument comes down to this. The programme of socialism cannot avoid incorporating, as part of its very essence, political democracy and the democratic aspirations of oppressed groups, of which nationalism is one of the many manifestations.

Engagement with democracy is not an 'added extra' but crucial to both assembling a viable alliance for socialist change and a socialist reality which will look different to the bureaucratic monstrosities in Eastern Europe.

It is only from this point of view that we can look at the nationalism of the oppressed. The case is put most eloquently in defending the national struggle in Ireland, but excellently sums up the theme of the book:

'The only "marxist socialism" which can hesitate over the problem of taking sides in such a situation is one that has lost its democratic and emancipatory instincts somewhere along the road, or buried them beneath a heap of economic determinism.'

'Socialism is not the subjection of humanity to economics, it is the subjection of economics to humanity. Its aim is political, and politics rather than either nationality or class must be the supreme criterion in judgement of conflicting forces — in Ireland as much as anywhere else.'

Citizens and Comrades, Brian Jenkins and Gunter Minnerup, Pluto Press, £4.95.

Socialists and nationalists

Only the rivers run free

THIS BOOK recounts the experiences of women of different ages, beliefs and political commitments in Northern Ireland. Interspersed with these accounts are facts and analysis in the voices of the authors themselves.

It is, above all else, a very moving book, and as such is accessible and compelling.

The opening chapters: 'When you're in the ghetto nobody cares' and 'My son is dying on the blanket', reveal the harsh reality of poverty and politics in the North, and the way the two are bound together.

The women's recollections of internment, imprisonment, army harassment and brutality, of the injuries and deaths of their children, family and friends dispel any notion that the war in Ireland is the property of a handful of 'mindless terrorists'.

The following interviews are about the way Catholicism affects women's lives. Included in a long list is a sense of shame about their own bodies, innumerable pregnancies, guilt about sexual pleasure, rape within marriage, sexual and physical brutality.

Some of the women recall countless self-induced abortions, yet refuse to countenance a legal and, therefore con-

sciously planned termination.

One woman, Cathy, argues vehemently against 'taking sides' insisting that women's interests as women come first and last. Others describe how their activity in the nationalist struggle has made them stronger and more aware of their needs as women.

Reviewed by Sheila Healy, Brent Labour Party

Clearly to be on one side of the political divide is no guarantee of women's needs and interests being met: '... almost all these women had tirelessly battled for other causes, rallying behind their imprisoned men through street protests, protecting their areas with their bare hands, defying the security forces, the law and their own anti-IRA church to hide rioters, weapons and men on the run. To be so rebellious and unafraid in these ways, yet dissent so furtively over their own needs, seemed sad indeed.'

Yet it is obvious, both from the women who have 'done time' in Armagh jail and from women paramilitaries that it is amongst these pro-republican women that the relationship between nationalism and feminism is most thoroughly and positively debated.

They have experienced

at first hand the discrimination, harassment, raids of their homes and in particular reject the attempt to break the women in an exclusively female way through the humiliating and degrading strip searches.

But it is also these women who are fighting against the traditionally supportive role of women in the national struggle. There is a recognition that 'we should be fighting for our own rights as well because if we don't no one else will do it for us.'

After reading this, I found the section on 'Protestant women in Belfast' a somewhat depressing one. What emerges is a terrible sense of isolation, sometimes a real bigotry and even an ignorance of the facts of events surrounding them. Despite certain common experiences as women — domestic drudgery, second class status, male violence, childcare and employment difficulties — there remains a partition of the mind between these and the women on 'the other side'.

As one woman (from that 'other side') put it: 'The immediate issues that women have defined as being important ones to struggle against are, in a sense, issues that have been forced upon them by the occupation of their community, streets and homes by British soldiers

Eileen Fairweather, Roisin McDonough and Melanie McFadyean

ONLY THE RIVERS RUN FREE

NORTHERN IRELAND: THE WOMEN'S WAR



....you've got to start from where women are at and by that I don't mean the lowest common denominator.'

The history of the British presence in Ireland continued today by the military, political and economic propping up of an unjust and discriminatory state cannot be ignored: 'The effects of partition have structured women's oppression in this country in a way they haven't in Britain. They also make the practical experience of women in the South of Ireland different from those in the North.'

'We have to understand those differences and

work to get rid of them, not just ignore them. I wouldn't want to be any more part of the South as a woman, the way it stands at the minute, than Paisley would. But that doesn't stop me saying I'm a Republican as well as a socialist and a feminist.'

If people reading this book begin to understand this relationship — between republicanism and feminism — it will have taught them a great deal.

Only the rivers run free: Northern Ireland, the women's war
Eileen Fairweather, Roisin McDonough and Melanie McFadyean
Pluto Press

Socialist ACTION STUDENTS

Ultra vires — students, the miners and the law

By Polly Vittorini, London School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS)

ALL OVER the country, local students' unions are coming up against the law. In attempting to make payments, popularly known as ultra vires payments, to other unions and political groups, they are running up against the Tories' redefinition of legislation regulating such donations.

The problem arises when students, eager to donate money to the miners, the Greenham women or other such subversive causes, vote to do just that out of their union funds. Instances of this have been increasingly numerous since the beginning of the miners' strike.

So far Thames Polytechnic, Manchester, Cardiff, Essex and Sussex universities have, or are trying to, donate money to the miners. Some of these are now being 'investigated' as the government has deemed that student union funds are to be used purely for education or welfare purposes.

Of course, supporting our class allies in struggle is not part of their definition of 'welfare'. Union officers are told that they will be breaking the law and personally liable for any ultra vires payments. This results in many unions having to overcome the obstacle of a president or sabbatical officer who will not sign their cheques, even before facing the possibility of massive fines from the courts.

One example is SOAS, which has twinned with Grimethorpe Women's Support Group in Yorkshire. Being the most underfunded student union per head in Britain, the decision made last week to donate £500 to the miners was important and unprecedented.

After wrangles and protracted battles over buying 'education packs' from the NUM at a hugely inflated price (since, as yet, there are no laws against selling at a huge profit!) the money was eventually sent off. We have also decided to raise money through socials, a special 1p price increase on all drinks in the coffee bar, as well as following the advice in the current *National Student* to donate the profits from our games machines.

However, it is impossible to support the miners without breaking the law. The use of the law during this strike has made it clear that laws are created specifically to crush certain developments in the class struggle.

Local student unions on their own cannot stop these laws without the maximum support from all students and youth. It is vital that the NUS takes a stand condemning the use of ultra vires rulings and organise a national campaign in support of student unions faced with court actions for making such payments.

If NUS fails to lead, then the students unions committed to making these payments must organise to defend themselves. This will also mean challenging the current leadership of the NUS on how to defeat this type of attack.

The issue of ultra vires payments will be crucial this year. It is our chance to show the Tories that we will not be stopped from supporting the miners.

- National CND Conference, Sheffield, 23/24/25 November. Deadline for delegates is 5 Nov. Don't delay, make sure your college sends its full delegation.

- NUS Women's Conference, Birmingham University, 10 November. All women supporters to attend.

- London Socialist Action Forums: City London Poly: 'Women in the miners' strike', 14 November
- LSE: 'Ireland and the struggle for socialism', 21 November.

- No Nazis in our colleges! Picket NF member Harrington at North London Polytechnic, Holloway Road Extension Site. Every Friday, 8.30am. Book transport and pass resolutions of support for PNL's stand against the NF!

Want to advertise meetings or events in the activists' diary? Write to *Activists Diary*, 328 Upper Street, London N1 2XP.

Labour's true parliamentary colours revealed

THE RESULTS OF the shadow cabinet elections revealed the fact that the parliamentary party is way to the right of the party as a whole. The split among left MPs, the Campaign Group and the Tribune Group, wasn't particularly helpful of course. It meant that Tony Benn and myself weren't elected.

We received the support of the majority of the Campaign Group, but, clearly, lots of Tribune MPs didn't vote for either of us. Instead they voted for others who weren't such staunch supporters of the party's socialist programme.

The Tribune Group were influenced not to vote for us because we've been on the side of the miners all along. Tony especially has been publically critical of the lack of support for the NUM that the parliamentary party should have offered right from the word go.

There have been many arguments inside the shadow cabinet last year: about Liverpool, about the miners' strike, and about the role of the Campaign Strategy committee of the national executive, and many other things. Now there is widespread reporting in the press that Neil Kinnock is pleased by these results.

Many party members consider this year's annual conference was the best for years. First, and contrary to press reports, because it was a very well behaved conference; but more importantly because it took some good, solid decisions on policy.

The vote for Tony Benn, Dennis Skinner and myself on the NEC was high. The party will consider that the moves made against us by the parliamentary party are totally out of line with the mood of conference and the policies of the party.

There's going to be a strong feeling in the constituencies that the MPs who support party policy aren't represented in the shadow cabinet.

But I must stress the role of the Solidarity Group in the shadow cabinet elections. They put forward a complete slate of 15 candidates. They didn't want their members to vote for anyone else. And they got 10 of those 15 seats.

The only Campaign Group member elected was Michael Meacher. The party will not consider this representative of those whose voices have consistently been raised in support of the miners, Liverpool, and against the class laws that have been increasingly used by the Thatcher government.

Interestingly too, Robin Cook, who opposed the Evans amendments on reselection, only just scraped onto the shadow cabinet. That is very significant indeed. It reveals the true situation inside the parliamentary party.

If anybody's moving towards taking control of the party and usurping the role of conference, it's the Solidarity Group. And remember what happened to the Manifesto Group: a large section of it joined the SDP!

Those on the left in the parliamentary party have a job of work to do this year. First, the left has to begin to act cohesively. And second, it's got to fight for the socialist policies of the Labour Party, in parliament and the country as a whole.



By Eric Heffer, MP



Photo: LAURIE SPARHAM (IPL)

Sheffield: what about the workers?

FOR NEARLY two months 689 NALGO members in Sheffield have been on strike, and another 165 look like joining them next week.

Last Wednesday saw all 7000 Sheffield NALGO members on strike for the day. And the strike appears to be hardening, with another day stoppage this week following the suspension of more NALGO members for carrying out union policy.

By Paul Davidson, UCATT shop steward, personal capacity

At the heart of the dispute lies the decision of management to tear up the existing new technology agreement previously negotiated with the unions. This has resulted in new technology being introduced without any agreement with the union being reached.

For most socialists it is very disturbing that this dispute should be going on at all in a city led by the likes of David Blunkett.



The Sheffield District Labour Party and the Labour group have been leading the campaign against rate-capping for months. All the unions in the authority have committed themselves to this fight, none more than NALGO.

If Labour councils are to succeed in fighting off the Tory attacks on their

budgets, then it is vitally important that they forge alliances with council workforces. As Liverpool has already shown, with such an alliance the Tories can be beaten.

The sooner Sheffield council resolves this dispute to the satisfaction of the workforce, the sooner we can get on with fighting the Tories.

Top town

NOORAY in Rugby!

The Tory council has scrapped a guarantee that it will not discriminate against homosexuals seeking jobs.

Farmer Gordon Collett declares robustly: "We're not having men turn up for work in dresses and earrings."

Dead right!

The Sun has nothing against homosexuals. What they do in private is their own affair. But they have no right to make their closet problems our problems.

Preference

For years we have had to endure a campaign to cast homosexuals first as martyrs and then as heroes. Some employers have actually been bullied into giving them preference for jobs.

Local authorities — notably the GLC — have rushed to hand out public money to any group on the sole qualification that it is part of a sexual minority.

The homosexuals have been led to believe that they are superior, healthy and normal while the rest of the community are out of step.

A society which swallows that kind of sick nonsense is in danger of destroying itself.

Let's ALL follow Rugby in fighting back!

Rugby — more than a game

By Frank Elvy, Labour Campaign for Gay Rights

IN SEPTEMBER, the Tory controlled Rugby council decided by 20 votes to 19 not to include the term 'sexual orientation' in its equal opportunities policy.

In subsequent statements the council's leader, and others, have made it clear that this means they will discriminate against lesbians or gay men working or wanting to work for the council. In short, they want to ban all gay people from the town hall.

This is motivated by equal opportunities policy.

The local NALGO branch, which was responsible for forcing the council to implement an equal opportunities policy, have also condemned the decision to delete the words 'sexual orientation'. Nationally NALGO have pledged their support to our campaign.

It appears as though the people of Rugby oppose the ban. In a telephone poll by a local radio station (which attracted more than 2000 callers) 72 per cent said the council was wrong and lesbian and gay men should enjoy the same rights as heterosexuals.

And this is precisely the issue — equal rights for gay people. As the law presently stands gay men are legal second class citizens and lesbians are legal nonentities. We only demand the same rights that heterosexuals have, nothing more, nothing less.

This Tory government is not even content with the status quo. They and their cohorts in Rugby want to banish gay people — to throw us back into the closet. Just as much as they want to smash the NUM. And like the NUM, lesbians and gays are fighting back, and we're going public in Rugby on the 10 November.

But the demo in Rugby is not just another gay rights march, for this march has been organised by the labour movement. A notable first. Make sure you are there.

Stop the lesbian and gay ban! demonstration: Saturday 10 November, 11am, Cattle Market, Rugby. Rally: 12.30, Benn Memorial Hall, Newbold Road.

On Saturday 20 October they convened a meeting which was attended by representatives from the Labour Campaign for Gay Rights, NALGO and the National Union of Students.

This meeting decided to set up a national campaign called 'Stop the lesbian and gay ban', and to organise a demonstration in Rugby on Saturday 10 November. Probably the first ever demo in Rugby.

The next council meeting is on 13 November, three days later and the Labour Group intend to press for the inclusion of the term sexual orientation in Rugby's

CARS HEAD FOR COLLISION



Massive majority for strike at Jaguar

AS WE GO to press, 7000 Jaguar workers will be completing their final shift before taking all-out action in support of the '84 wage claim. The strike decision came at mass meetings held last week at the three Jaguar plants in Coventry and Birmingham.

A massive 81 per cent of the membership voted to support the shop stewards recommendation to reject management's final offer and strike from November.

The Jaguar claim is for £25, sick pay from the first day, and for negotiations on the grading structure. In the final round of talks, management offered a 50p increase, on terms that were unanimously rejected the previous week.

The 50p was a calculated insult. It was accompanied by a flood of management leaflets, which declared that there was 'no more money'.

They said that management would not be moved by strike action, and warned 'Do not be misled'.

boosted Jaguar profits by £40 million more than the 1984 budget forecast. To meet the claim in full would cost one-tenth of this year's profits.

The battle is clearly over whether management alone decides how to dispose of the fruits of Jaguar's recent success, or whether the workers who have created it are entitled to demand their fair share.



Photo: JOHN HARRIS



Cowley walk out in 1983

By a Jaguar Shop Steward

In fact management are trying desperately to mislead everybody. Their talk of a 'very generous offer worth 22 per cent' is utterly false. Even the local papers — no friend of the workers — calculated that for an average production worker the 'new weekly earnings would be £151.93, a rise in actual earnings of 6 per cent'.

When Jaguar was sold earlier this year management assured us that the hand-out of shares to every worker would not figure in wage bargaining. Every management statement in the last few weeks appeals to the workforce to count shares held in our names as part of the 'benefits of working for Jaguar'.

On their ability to pay, management's deception is most blatant. The fall in the dollar exchange rate over the past year has

Militant mood at Cowley

AS A RESULT of the decisive vote at a mass meeting last week, Austin Rover Group (ARG) workers are set on confrontation over their pay claim, which is due on 1 November.

MIKE PICKEN spoke to a TGWU senior shop steward at Cowley.

What happened at Cowley mass meeting?

The Joint Negotiating Committee (JNC) resolution rejecting the company pay offer was put to mass meetings of the night shift on Wednesday, and the day shift on Thursday.

Out of a total of 8000 in Assembly and Body Plants only 40 vote against strike action. The overtime ban, started last month,

will be continued, until final settlement.

The plans were picketed at the weekend. The ban has been so effective that supervisors and non-union managers have been brought from Longbridge and other plants to try to cover.

What is the level of militancy at Cowley?

Militancy is incredibly

high. Workers are prepared to fight until the pay claim is settled in full. They are determined not to be sold out.

The wage offer is a derisory four and half per cent — for the average Grade 3 worker it would mean an extra £3.20 in the wage packet. Workers are taking home £8.00 a week less than in 1981, despite a work effort being up by 130 per cent.

In the world war industry only Japan has a higher rate of exploitation. In Cowley assembly there have been 168 disputes since January, related to the slave labour conditions.

At the last pay review, after the washing-up dispute, we were guaranteed by management that we would get £25 a week bonus, rising to £30 with further efficiency improvements. Despite suffering speed-up, bonus at Cowley assembly has dropped to £4.00 weekly.

What is the attitude of national leaders to the claim?

The JNC resolution calls for ARG workers to take 'any action necessary' to win the claim.

Cowley have great reservations of the national leadership, and have constantly called for the date for strike action to be set. We feel the resolution is weak, and gives too much control to the JNC.

What is necessary to win?

An all-out strike. ARG workers are learning from the miners and realise that an all-out confrontation is necessary to win.

We hope that Ron Todd will give the lead that has been sadly lacking in the past, and won't sell us down the river.

Ford gives you less

FORD MANAGEMENT have offered six per cent and sweet nothing in response to the annual wages and conditions claim of its 41,500 manual workers. The trade unions are demanding 14 per cent for all grades, a special payment for assembly line workers, improved pensions, and parity with staff on sick pay.

The shop floor is not getting agitated about a boring predictable first offer. But if Ford workers want the company to give them more this year two things are central.

First, we will have to fight for it. Second, we will need eyes in the back of our heads to watch the antics of some of our union officials and convenors.

Recent history shows why. This year's claim was drawn up more democratically than any claim since '78. In different plants the shop floor was sounded out via questionnaires, section meetings, and shop stewards meetings.

This culminated in a national shop stewards conference in Coventry,

Victory at Vauxhall

VAUXHALL workers at Ellesmere Port and Luton have ended their two-week strike with a substantially improved offer.

The deal is worth about 13 per cent for the main semi-skilled grade. This is a substantial improvement on the company's original offer of between six and eight per cent, tied to productivity strings.

One such string was Vauxhall's demand that the rise they had offered was to be based on 'merit'.

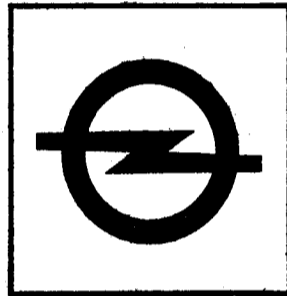
By Pat Hickey

Mick Whitley, TGWU deputy convenor at Ellesmere Port told Socialist Action that the result was 'a victory' for the unions.

While the deal involves major restructuring of the grade system, and 'self-inspection', the unions are confident that they will be able to deal with these issues at a local level.

Mick explained that a major factor in the success achieved by the unions was the picketing of the ports (Bristol, Sheerness and Hartlepool).

The picketing at Hartlepool, the main port for Vauxhall, had been '100 per cent successful', and this was due to the 'sterling work' of local Labour Party members and trade unionists, who had provided the Vauxhall workers with accommoda-



tion, contacts, and so on.

The Vauxhall deal coming at the very beginning of the pay round in the car industry sets a high level for other car workers.

With Austin Rover, Ford, and Jaguar workers now waiting for answers from their employers, the example of determined action from Vauxhall will be the one to follow.



In future, mass meetings in the plants will decide by majority vote which way their total vote will be cast, and these will then be totted up nationally.

Negotiations

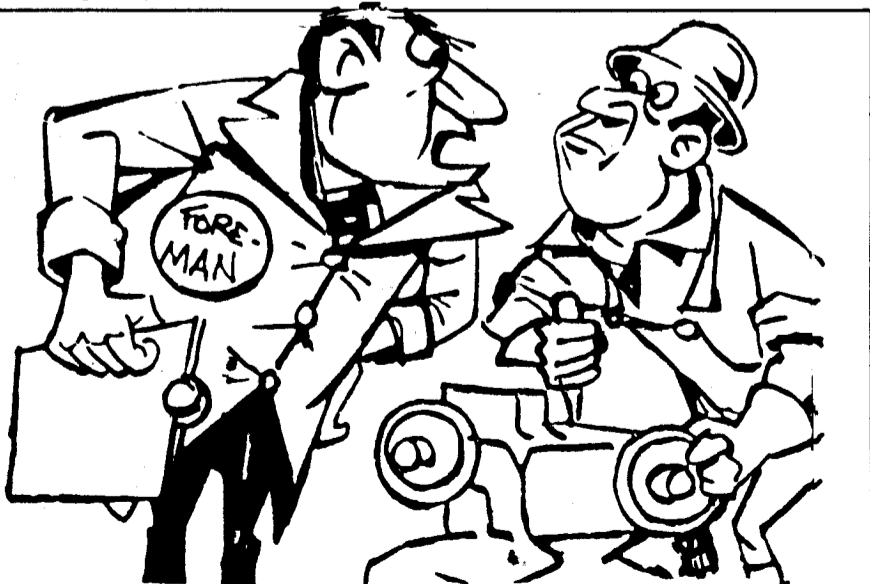
Now the trade union side of the Ford National Joint Negotiating Committee, over half of its members full-time officials, is having a special meeting on 2 November 'to rediscuss' this voting plan. This date was originally set for further negotiations with management, who are now 'too busy' to meet the trade unions.

In reality the company has every interest in disenfranchising the bigger and traditionally more militant plants. Ford workers have the power to take on the company and win this year. But they will have to fight hard and watch their backs to do it.

By Mick Drake, TGWU Dagenham

The shop stewards wanted to renegotiate the new technology agreement, to protect jobs — 13,000 have gone in the last three years. Ron Todd's submission to the company did not mention this.

Finally, the shop stewards decided to end the undemocratic system whereby all plants — whether 200 or 4000 — had one vote each at national level.



"Yes, we do have an incentive plan here . . . work faster or get fired!"

A Socialist ACTION

THE PICTURES of hunger and despair in the Ethiopian famine have shocked tens of millions of people. They remind us only too forcefully why we are socialists — because this society is so disgusting, so inhumane and so immoral.

The news reports have cleverly counterposed images of a woman grovelling in the dust for individual grains of wheat with the food mountains in Europe.

But they haven't explained why these food mountains can exist while millions starve — around 25 million a year dying of starvation or malnutrition on lowest estimates.

By Jude Woodward

Nor do they explain that when Thatcher wrings her hands and makes a pretence of rushing aid to Ethiopia it is the dirtiest hypocrisy. Not only does the blame for the famine lie at the door of the US and British governments, but they are now using it as an opportunity to destabilise the Ethiopian regime.

The rapidly worsening food situation across much of the 'Third World' has to be laid most directly at the door of the US government, with the EEC in a supporting role.

Since the Second World War the United States has been able to establish a world market in food which it totally dominates. In 1979 it provided 55 per cent of total world grain exports.

Over the last 40 years this domination of the world market has been used to manipulate food prices — undermining self-sufficiency in food in many countries from Iran and Nigeria, through to Japan.

Cheap grain, backed by US subsidies, makes developing home food production more expensive than importing, or else forces superspecialisation in agricultural production — creating 'banana' dictatorships, or pineapple ones, like parts of the Philippines.

While subsidising its own exports, the US refuses to provide aid to build up the agriculture of the countries dependent upon it.

The explosion in food prices and US food exports after 1973, meant that many marginal states were simply unable to compete with US agribusiness. Simultaneously there was a collapse of the agricultural economy in state like Bangladesh, or in Central Africa. Regions which Kissinger has described as 'expendable'!

The US uses its dominance in the world food market as a major political weapon. It cuts off and allocates food aid according to who it agrees with. The slogan for its policy can be summed up as 'Support the US and live, oppose the US and starve'.

A typical example was around the Camp David accords when Egypt was 'rewarded' for recognising Israel by large scale US food aid. In the case of Ethiopia, hostility to the Mengistu regime has meant a virtual complete cut off of US aid. The famine which Western governments now bemoan was created by them.

Eritrea

The Mengistu regime itself has made the situation still worse by pumping enormous sums of money into arms to wage its reactionary war against the people of Eritrea rather than prioritising food production.

But withdrawal of the West's aid has nothing to do with defending the Eritrean people, and everything to do with attempting to change the Mengistu regime's international alignment with Moscow.

No imperialist country has ever given aid without strings. This is why there has been no direct request to the Western govern-

ments for aid, though Mengistu has appealed to the voluntary agencies aid. The Ethiopian government has not been willing to accept the compromises that would be demanded in return.

Airlift

The machinations of the Tory government in relation to Ethiopia became clearer when its only offer of aid was made dependent on Ethiopia accepting an RAF airlift and RAF officers to oversee its distribution.

The offer was initially rejected, and the *Financial Times* reported Mr Dawit, an Ethiopian spokesperson, as saying in explanation: 'It serves the interests of politics here, the publicity aspect. We don't want this situation to be exploited by politicians.'

In the absence of any alternative offers the Ethiopians have been forced to accept the RAF airlift, even though at a cost of £2000 an hour, it is a particularly expensive and ineffective method of giving aid.

Thatcher

Thatcher's real position is clear — aid will go to Ethiopia only when the Ethiopian government is ready to accede to the political demands of Britain and the US. As soon as that happens all the obstacles to aid will disappear. Meanwhile the imperialists have a gun at the Ethiopians' heads. That gun is called starvation.

Socialists in Britain should make it clear it is Reagan and Thatcher who have created the famine in Ethiopia. They should demand the unconditional sending of any aid demanded by the Ethiopian government, in any form that it decides.

Aid without strings, not crocodile tears, is what should be demanded from Thatcher's government.

Ethiopia

Thatcher feeds on famine

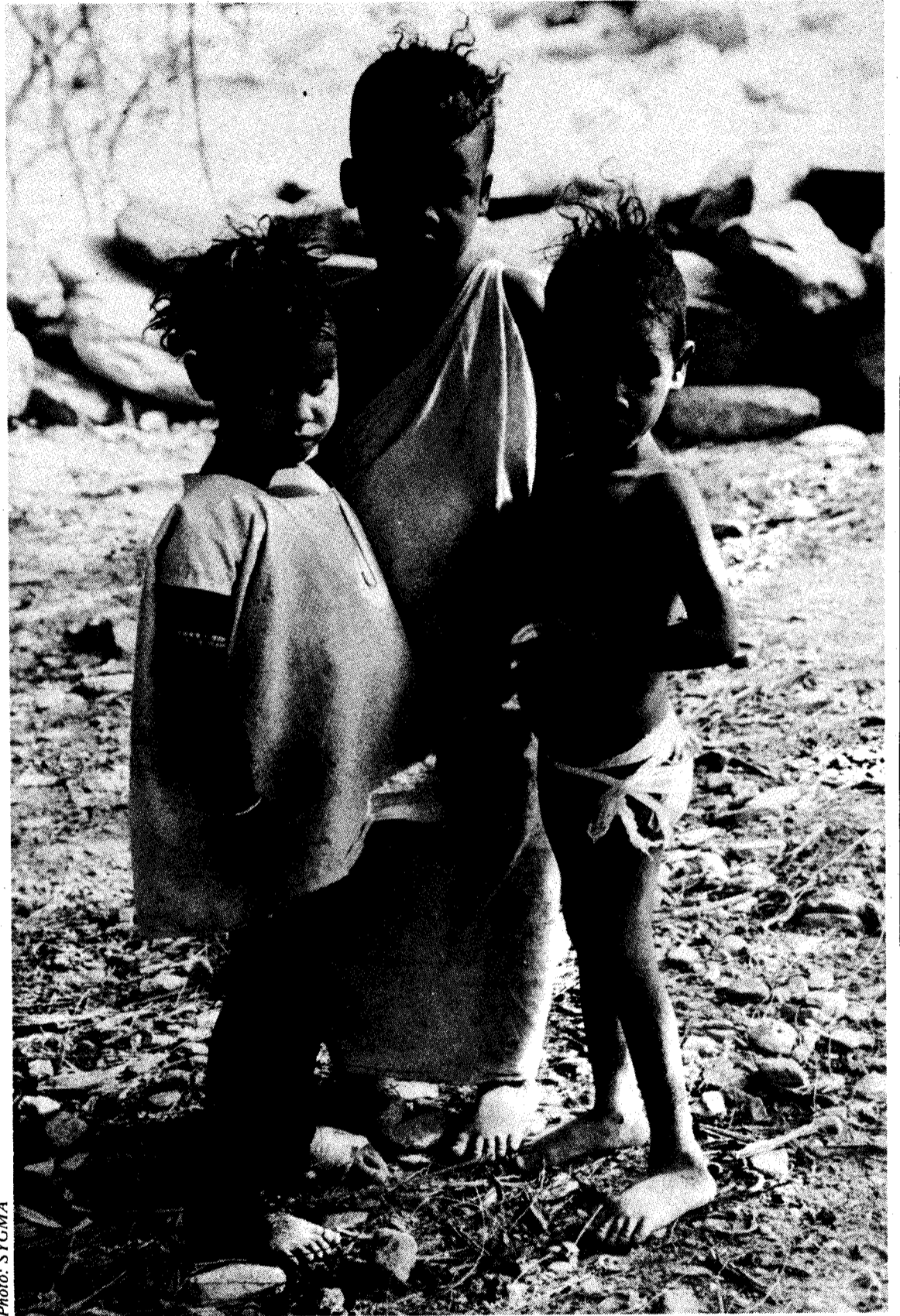


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God's American heads for victory

IN ONE of the most cynically manipulated elections of all time Ronald Reagan is heading for electoral victory in the US presidential elections on Sunday.

The entire election campaign from beginning to end has been as pre-ordained and artificial as a script out of the Hollywood B movies Reagan used to star in.

First there was the 'good black guy' Jess Jackson — who ran for Democratic candidate for president to ensure no-one thought of breaking with the Democrats. The aim of

that whole operation came with Jackson's 'moving reconciliation' with the white liberal faker Mondale at the Democratic Party convention.

By John Ross

Then Reagan looked like he was going to win by so much people might again think of breaking with the Democrats as 'no hopers'. So Mondale's campaign had to be given new life by adding to it the 'plain average millionairess Geraldine Ferraro.

However much of the American press was so bigotted they tried to knife

even a female representative of capitalism. So Mondale then had to be given another chance to close the gap a bit with his 'last minute' dash after the first TV debate with Reagan.

Finally, on Sunday, the whole rotten show will reach the appointed end of the road — which is that Reagan should win massively but with Mondale doing sufficiently well to persuade people that next time, if they work 'just that little bit harder', they can get a Democrat into the White House.

Only one good thing will come out of the whole affair — apart from the



small vote that will go to the Socialist candidate Mel Mason. This is that, hopefully, and probably, the turn out to vote will be the lowest in American history.

If anyone ever wants to know why democracy is not reducible to the right to vote once every four or five years just study that election in the United States. The whole thing stinks to high heaven.