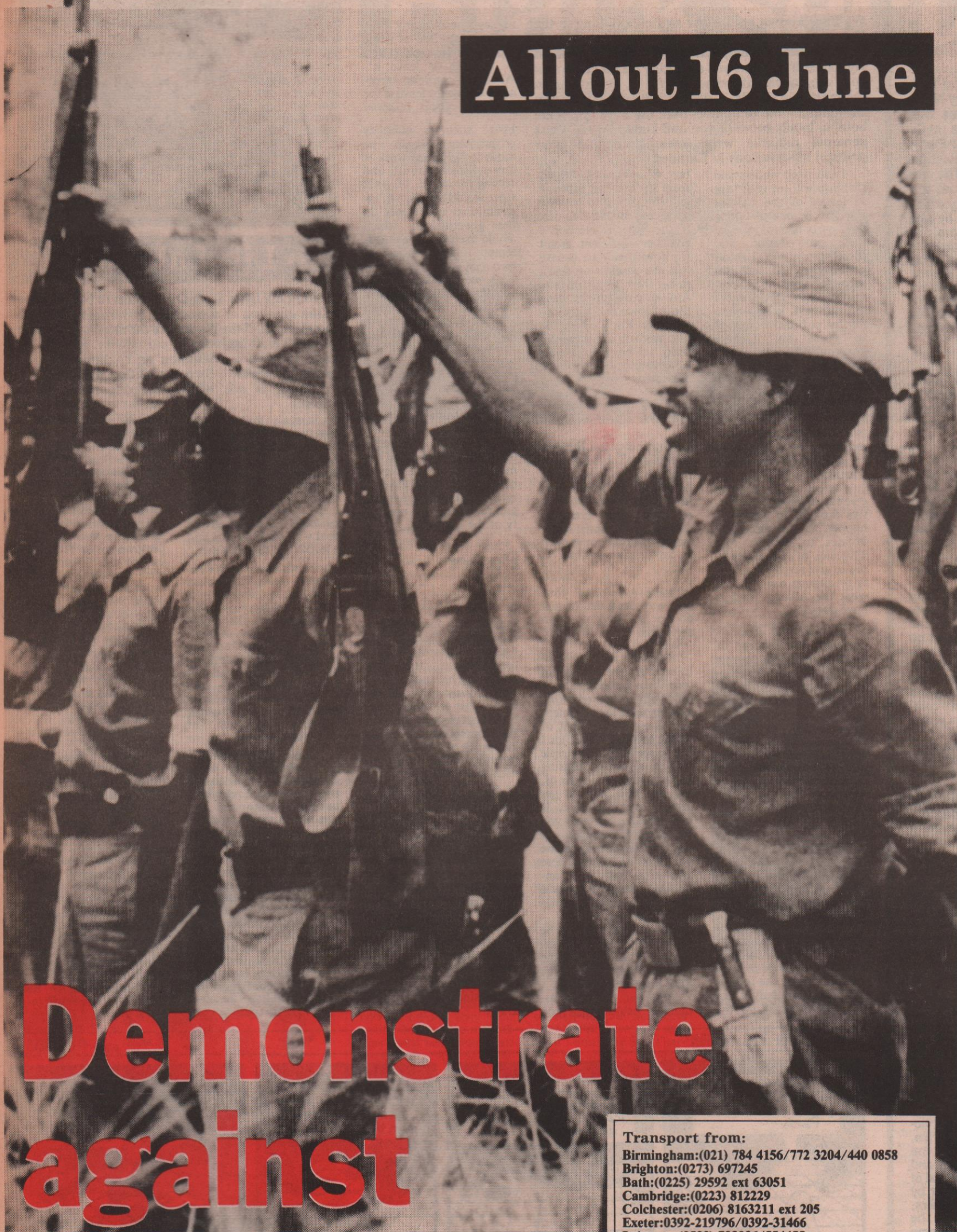


A Socialist ACTION

Anti Apartheid calls national demonstration

The Anti Apartheid Movement's national committee has decided on a programme of action, ending in a national demonstration on Sunday 16 June. The theme will be an end to the police killings and a demand for the British government to act against the apartheid regime.

All out 16 June



Demonstrate against apartheid

THE RACIST regime in South Africa continues to terrorise the black population as each day passes. Against a background of the growing economic and political crisis the full legal and military apparatus of the regime is being used to curb the growing opposition of the black population.

The latest attack on the determination of the black masses to fight back comes this week with the jailing of an African National Congress member, Jabu Ngobese for 15 years for treason. Ngobese was accused of bringing weapons into South Africa.

Two black trade unionists Meriman Nduna and Zane Mapela who were accused of helping Ngobese, were each sentenced to five years. A further 27 people are still awaiting trial for treason, including the 14 United Democratic Front members scheduled to appear in the National Supreme Court in July.

With the continued police and military operations in the townships, the repeated killings and use of the courts to suppress the black rebellion, we must redouble our efforts and show the real international solidarity that exists for the fight against apartheid. Only this week South Africa had to admit to its continued presence in Angola despite repeated public denials.

There can be no compromise with such a murderous regime. The full weight of the labour and trade union movement world-wide must be brought to bear on the racist state. The best way we can do this immediately in Britain is to support the national demonstration called by the Anti Apartheid Movement on 16 June.

Britain is involved up to its neck in support for the apartheid regime both politically and militarily. Historically, Britain has a disgraceful record in maintaining apartheid. Thatcher is only the latest, if the most enthusiastic, example of this. Her refusal to allow the 'Durban 4' asylum in the British embassy and Botha's visit here last year show this clearly.

The 16 June demonstration has wide and important sponsorship across the labour movement including the Labour Party. The Liberal Party, SDP and Communist Party are also supporting the demonstration. The TUC has sponsored the demonstration along with the following trade unions: APEX, AUEW TASS, BASWU, CPSA, FBU, IRSF, NALGO, National Union of Students, SCPC, TGWU, UCATT, UCW, COHSE, NUM, ACTT and ASTMS. In addition, Edinburgh district council Labour group, the British Youth Council and the British Defence Aid Fund have sponsored the march. The main speakers at the rally so far are Neil Kinnock and Bishop Trevor Huddleston.

All labour movement activists and those who want to see the end of the racist, apartheid state should step up solidarity immediately and move resolutions of support for the demonstration. Turn June 16 into a massive show of solidarity against apartheid.

Stop the Massacres
All Out on 16 June

Transport from:

Birmingham:(021) 784 4156/772 3204/440 0858

Brighton:(0273) 697245

Bath:(0225) 29592 ext 63051

Cambridge:(0223) 812229

Colchester:(0206) 8163211 ext 205

Exeter:0392-219796/0392-31466

Leicester:(0533) 703036/554455

Merseyside:(051) 647 4214

Oxford:(0865) 53035/249087; Polytechnic: 250180;

University: 511773

Sheffield:(0742) 24076 ext.200/862588

Stroud:(04536) 70531

Leeds:University SU (0532) 439071

Nottingham:(0602) 472440

Coventry:(0203) 417220

Socialist ACTION

A significant step forward

THE DOCUMENT by Tony Benn and Eric Heffer presented to the Labour Party NEC, which we print on our centre pages this week, is the most extensive critique made of the present direction of the Labour Party by leaders of its left wing since the election of Neil Kinnock in October 1983. The national executive has refused to discuss it.

It is a searing indictment of the party's present course — and the leadership given by Kinnock. As Tony Benn has written elsewhere, the present course of the Labour Party is a distancing from those in struggle, a shift to the right, and blocking those who want to fight against Thatcher. By these means Kinnock is also objectively preparing the way for a coalition government with the Alliance. It is to carry out this course that the leadership is forced increasingly to attack democracy in the party.

While it is not necessary to agree with every part of the document, and we have differences with it, it does outline correctly important parts of the direction to go forward in the fight against Thatcher — and the fight against the party leadership which is blocking the struggle against Thatcher.

The Benn-Heffer document is a correct alternative view to the positions of those who, mistakenly, think that the way forward today is for Tony Benn, or a similar figure, to run against Neil Kinnock for leader of the party. The real way forward for the left is *not* such a campaign — which would actually understate the support of the left and thereby seriously weaken it. The way forward is three priorities.

The first, as correctly outlined by Tony Benn and Eric Heffer, is support for those in struggle. Despite the defeat suffered by the NUM, the continuing assaults made by Thatcher leaves no choice but for sections of the working class to fight back against them. The number one priority for the Labour Party, and Labour left, must be support for all those engaged in such struggles — support of the type which the solidarity committees of the miners, and the Campaign group of MPs, gained during the miners' strike.

This support must also be given internationally. Particularly urgent is building solidarity against the US blockade of Nicaragua, support for those fighting missiles and weapons in Europe, the black struggle in South Africa, and the fight of the Irish people for independence.

The second key task is to fight to transform the Labour Party into a real 'party of labour' — a party adequate to the real composition of the working class and its allies. This means winning the fight on the political levy, the creation of black sections, winning the demands of the Women's Action Committee, total commitment to British withdrawal from Ireland, taking a debate a clear party policy in favour of gay liberation. The perspective of a party of labour corresponds in practice to Tony Benn and Eric Heffer's call for a refounding conference of the Labour Party.

The third crucial question is opening up the fight on policies within the party — not policies primarily which a Labour government might implement, but policies which can be fought for by the mass action of the labour movement. Here Tony Benn, Eric Heffer and the Campaign group of MPs have also taken the initiative. Some of their proposals — full amnesty for those victimised and arrested in the miners' strike, withdrawal from NATO, nationalisation of the land — we endorse. The issue of amnesty and withdrawal from NATO, linked to the removal of all US bases, can readily be campaigned for by the mass movement. Other proposals of theirs, such as the belief that the police can be democratised, we do not support but welcome opening up a debate on all these key issues.

But on these three key priorities — support for those in struggle, fighting for a real party of labour, opening up the issue of policy linked to the mass struggle — we consider the Benn-Heffer document is a real step forward for the left.

Steel's open letter to Neil Kinnock

Dear Neil,

We have known each other sufficiently long in the House for you not to resent my asking you directly to give further thought to the stance you took in your speech last weekend attacking David Owen and your subsequent interview on *TVAM*. My interest in the matter is simple. I do not relish spending any substantial time in politics over the next few years holding hands between you and David Owen. Your personal remarks were intemperate and your political observations ill founded.

I can well understand that you will see your task as leader of the Labour Party to be one of taking your party to a majority at the next election and therefore into a Labour government. (It will not surprise you that correspondingly David and I see our task as trying to muster sufficient support to form an Alliance government). It must therefore, I well understand, have come as a shock to see your party drop 124 seats in the county elections and decline in the two opinion polls since published.

In those circumstances whether you like it or not you owe it to the public to give rather more constructive thought to what will happen if the electorate decides to deprive Mrs Thatcher of her majority but to give no clear majority to anyone else. That is what the Alliance leaders have done.

The national crisis — especially the scourge of unemployment — surely demands that if the electorate so decides politicians of different parties should at least attempt to agree a priority package of reform and provide a sufficiently stable government to see it through. The public will not lightly forgive those who refuse to join in such an approach but who prefer instead to inflict another general election on them in the hope of securing a different result.

Rule

We can rule out our mutual friend Margaret Thatcher from such considerations. As she told us repeatedly 'the lady is not for turning' even in the

face of increasing despair from her natural allies in industry or within her own party and indeed Cabinet. If she lost the election I give her sufficient credit for consistency to believe that she would step down rather than 'turn' too late. Any discussions between the Alliance and the Conservative Party after the next election are therefore likely to be with a new leadership as yet unknown.

Fool

But that is not the case with you, unless you foolishly allow yourself to be driven by the militants in your party into a corner of your own creation, repeating dogmatic statements of non-cooperation in any circumstances. If Labour has no majority you have no right to expect to have *everything* your own way. As a democrat I do not see how you can deny this.

Indeed if the last Labour government could turn to an agreement, as it did, with me representing a dozen seats in parliament and about 10 per cent of public opinion at the time I fail to see how in principle you could justify refusing to do so with the leader of, say 100 MPs and 10 per cent of the electorate. If because the Liberals are the larger of our two parties that leader were me you must understand here and now that your antipathy towards David Owen cannot be allowed to separate us.

I would not be prepared to enter discussions on behalf of the Liberal Party alone. The SDP must be included.

It would not be a sustainable position for you

to say 'here is my programme sanitised of items such as renationalisation — take it or leave it'. Without a coalition agreement we would leave it for two very good reasons.

First, such a minority government would be liable to fall in any week at any unforeseen hurdle, and second because of that there would be a lack of international confidence in the government, which would itself damage the attempt at industrial recovery.

I would just remind you that although Labour had to sacrifice some of its policies during the Lib-Lab pact, in the 18 months' duration inflation was brought down from 20 per cent to nine per cent with only a ½ per cent increase in unemployment.

The same vigorous determination is now needed to combat unemployment. That is more likely to be achieved by a broadly based government, secure in parliament and representing a majority of the electorate.

Power

If you are not prepared to contemplate power sharing and dusting down the Labour Party's pre-war commitment to electoral reform, then you must not be surprised if the Conservative Party moves fast in these directions post election and you find yourself continuing as leader of our official opposition, while we get on with the job of restoring the nation's economy and social harmony.

Naturally I do not expect to read any reply to this open letter. Your party would doubtless not allow you to respond positively. Instead of further negative arguments, what I am suggesting to you is a period of constructive silence and contemplation on these serious issues.

Yours sincerely,
David



Photomontage: CATH TATE

No Lib-Lab pacts

THE OPEN letter from David Steel to Neil Kinnock on the question of a coalition government after the next election, if the Tories are defeated and no party has an overall majority in parliament, is a clear attempt to open a discussion on coalitionism. Steel openly threatens to form a coalition with the Tories if Labour is not willing to play ball with the Alliance.

Steel also makes it clear that the price for an agreement with the Alliance will not simply be a Labour programme 'sanitised' of policies such as nationalisation, but agreement on a 'priority package' of proposals to deal with the economy and a legislative programme.

To make the point absolutely clear, Steel refers back to the Lib-Lab pact with Wilson and Callaghan in the 74-79 Labour government. Then, in return for support from the Liberals — and, it should be added, Ulster Unionists — the Labour government introduced a swingeing 'priority package' of austerity measures.

These measures reduced working class living standards by 10 per cent in two years and doubled unemployment. It led directly to the 'winter of discontent', Labour defeat at the polls in 79, and Thatcherism.

The Lib-Lab pact and the austerity programme was ushered in by the sterling crisis of 1975, and the IMF intervention that followed. Steel reminds Kinnock that a minority Labour government would have to face 'a lack of international confidence i.e., a capitalist-inspired economic crisis. The

British ruling class are preparing for a possible defeat for the Tories at the next election. For the ruling class the issue is not Thatcher, but Thatcherism.

If the Tories fail at the general election they want to ensure that the basic programme of Thatcher is carried on. Even a right wing Labour government is not an acceptable instrument for this. The left wing is too strong. The Alliance is therefore vital in holding the balance of power, and using it to force Labour on to a course that will help to weaken and demoralise the working class — and prepare the way for an even more virulent form of Thatcherism.

Labour's answer to this proposal must be the firmest possible rejection. This means not simply a formal reply repudiating coalitions with the Alliance, but a clear programme of socialist policies that makes any such agreement impossible. The left in the party and in the unions must fight to stop the drift to the right in party policy and to refound the party as a real party of labour which defends the interests of the working class in the way suggested by Benn and Heffer elsewhere in these pages.

A PIECE OF THE ACTION

#100 6/85 ©GORMAC



Kinnock's basic values

'I AM ADAMANTLY against black sections. The overwhelming majority of the NEC are against them. I would be against any development which constitutionally gave separate status on the basis of colour of skin or ethnic origins. I would not give a damn if the whole Labour Party was against me on this. This is not the case, but it is a matter of basic values.'

That's what Labour Party leader Neil Kinnock told a *Times* reporter at the end of last week, after the positive discrimination working party's substantial support for black sections had been extensively leaked in the press. The working party will meet this Thursday to consider a draft report, based on proposals from its members and submissions from a variety of groups and interests within the labour movement.

By Annie Brady

It will be putting together a final draft for the national executive's organisation sub-committee to consider on 10 June. From that meeting, the report will be submitted to the NEC at the end of June along with the comments of the sub-committee. So, 10 June is a vital date in the battle for black sections.

The final report of the positive action working party will take up many of the arguments against black sections — and answer them in the affirmative. For instance, the accusation of apartheid.

It is an utter travesty to claim that the demand for black self-organisation bears any relationship whatsoever to a system whereby a white minority enforces by law its separation from the black majority and completely suppresses black people's rights. Those opponents who so accuse black sections wouldn't dare say such a thing to black community groups.

The fact that Kinnock's statement plays on such sentiments shows he's prepared to use the lowest level of racist arguments to reinforce the institu-

tionalised racism of the Labour Party.

Marc Wadsworth, who is a member of the positive action working party and on the national committee of black sections, described Mr Kinnock's outburst as 'irritating but irrelevant'. 'Neil Kinnock isn't the Labour Party,' he said.

'It is a mass movement not just one individual. There is more support than ever for black sections. There are more than 30 already established: that's more than there are workplace branches. That attests to the success and support for black sections at rank and file level in the party.'

'Kinnock, this anti-democrat, is trying to preempt our report going to the NEC. I place my emphasis on the rank and file of the party. Once they stir on an issue they're convinced of, then he's got problems.'

'Once party members understand what is admittedly a complicated issue, they will support us. I've spoken to union and party branches from Glasgow to Brighton, and that support's coming in.'

'People like Kinnock talk about playing by the rules, but they're prepared to deviate when it suits them. There are disaffected black groups up and down the country who are talking about withdrawing the black vote from the Labour Party — and Kinnock's arguments will fuel moves for black independence.'

'We call on the NEC to support their working party's report, and to present it to national party conference with a recommendation for conference to support it. That's democracy.'

The case for Black sections



'Black sections are a danger to racists'

BRENT SOUTH Labour Party looks set to select a black candidate to stand in this safe Labour seat at the next general election. But it's decided to go ahead with the selection process without the involvement of its own black section. One of the three short-listed candidates, **SHARON ATKIN**, chair of the black section national committee, doesn't agree. She told **CAROL TURNER** why not, and explained her view of black sections' role in the party.

You've been short-listed for parliamentary candidate by Brent South. Can you explain what's the situation in that party and what your view of the selection is?

In Brent South something like 46 per cent of the community are black. That's the biggest percentage in London. The party has a black section there and they're committed to having a black MP. But they've not actually got black section representation on the GC.

My view is that, because Brent is one of the strongest parties in London — it's likely to have a black candidate, and it's likely to return a Labour MP — it should stand firm with other constituencies who are going through the process of selection with black section delegates involved. I think they were wrong not to have realised they could have played an important part in that strategy.

If they didn't want to defer selection till after national party conference, then they should have suspended the process to permit a rule-change to go through allowing black section participation. In that way they would have been in a better position to support other constituencies.

They could have a position where they would have had to negotiate with us about the role of black sections. That's why I feel they should have actually gone for what was agreed at black section national committee.

The Brent GC is already frozen to ensure

continuity in the selection process — that's normal practice. They could have moved for a deferment until October, unfreezing their GC and allowing black section delegates to participate.

Although the black section is established, it has no representation on the GC at this time. Brent's decision was taken with the support of the black section — who thought it better to go for representation after selection process. And they will get it.

So, what's your position if they go ahead?

I think they are likely to go ahead, but it's due to be discussed at their GC. They'll move to select a candidate in June.

My position is that I will take the opportunity to explain the problems facing black sections and what I think the Brent party's responsibility should be.

What do you think black sections' role in the Labour Party actually is? Are they the danger the leadership fears?

They're a danger to racists in the party. They are a danger to people who aren't in favour of equal opportunities or equal status. They're not a danger to any other element in the party.

If you have a multi-racial society and don't have a multi-racial party, there's something clearly wrong. So black sections would go to recruit to the party, and to highlight the serious problems facing black people in Britain

today.

In some areas race attacks would be an issue; in other areas housing or unemployment. The national perspective of black sections would be to link in all these local campaigns, to have an overview, and ensure that we get some kind of redress through policy formation at every level.



Sharon Atkin

Black people are among the most solid Labour voters but their interests are not at all represented by Labour. What do you think the effect of having active black participation in the Labour Party would be?

If you exclude certain sections of the community then you're not going to get a very representative party, committed to good socialist principles and policies. Ultimately that party, and a Labour government, is going to fall short of the needs and aspirations of people as a whole.

If you have major black involvement in the party then you're likely to get a fairer society. The party needs to rethink its strategy.

There is a document floating round the

Parliamentary Labour Party from Peter Shore, that says ditch the working class, ditch black people. These people will lose Labour votes at the next election.

The party was founded to represent working class interests. It relies on black people to elect councillors and MPs.

But if Labour aims to win the election next time round then they have to find a place and a base and a recognition. It is a way of saying yes we want you in the party, you are welcome, we are interested in your ideas — on a whole range of issues, not just race.

That idea fits into a more general discussion about how and on what basis Labour will win the next election. The arguments you mention are about appealing to 'middle ground'. That means: drop any policy that might be contentious. The demand for black sections slots right into the middle of that.

Labour can do that. It can move away from the very people who look to the Labour Party to provide an alternative way of life. It can become the party of the middle classes and outdo the SDP.

But if you are in the Labour Party to change society, then that outlook of finding the middle ground is not the way forward. It can only lead to a further split in the party.

People who think the Labour Party is moving in that nebulous direction will just move out. We'll see a situation where the Labour Party is never elected as the government. The leadership has to rethink.

There are more and more people in the working class who do want a radical change in society. In most areas of the country at the last election there was hostility to the party, and I think it's because

they didn't put forward socialist policies.

People are looking for some alternative to Thatcher, some alternative to the status quo. They won't stay with Labour if people like Kinnock continue to duck the issue, to run away — as he did during the miners' strike, as he did over rate-capping.

And what role do you think black sections have in this?

Our function is twofold. It's recognising that a large number of black people who vote, vote Labour; and making sure that they don't just vote at election time but that they have a voice in the party and how it's run.

Black sections can do two things very well: not only recruit to the party, but actually change policy.

For example in my own black section in Streatham we had a recent discussion about rate-capping and the effects on black people. How it would affect jobs — by and large black people are the lowest paid workers. How it would affect services to the black community, housing and social services, and so on.

There is a great deal of support for the campaign against rate-capping in Lambeth among black people. Through black sections we're able to express active role in supporting that strike. The links have not been lost — they're there for life.

The miners' strike was another example. There are 3000 black miners. Black people played a very active role in supporting that strike. The links have not been lost — they're there for life.

So, black sections can influence policy locally and nationally. And we can help build a mass party committed to change.

Given the constitutional changes we want, they'll play an ever greater role in the future.



Black people are among the lowest paid workers

Photo: MICHAEL ANN MULLEN

Photo: JOHN CHAPMAN

LCLGR model resolution

This conference opposes all discrimination on the grounds of sexuality and notes that existing Labour party policy with regard to Lesbians and Gays (L&Gs) fails to meet the legitimate demands of L&Gs, and that a consistent and principled campaign conducted over a number of years is necessary to reverse that failure.

Conference welcomes the progress made by some Labour authorities and looks for an end to the institutionalised oppression of L&Gs.

It therefore:

- a) Instructs the NEC to draw up a L&G rights bill, which should specifically:
 - i) declare that L&G acts and relationships are not contrary to the public policy of the law;
 - ii) prohibit discrimination by the courts against L&G in child custody and in unfair dismissal on grounds in any way connected with sexuality or lifestyle;
 - iii) abolish criminal laws that discriminate against L&Gs;
 - iv) make discrimination on grounds of sexuality an actionable civil offence and invalidate all discriminatory regulations and by-laws;
 - v) prevent police harassment & discrimination against L&Gs and calls upon the PLP to introduce such a bill & support bills to reform the law in this direction with a three-line whip;

- b) Calls upon all Labour local authorities, district and county Labour Parties to adopt practices and policy to prevent discrimination against L&Gs, and in particular to:
 - i) adopt and enforce equal opportunities policies in relation to sexual orientation along the lines of Islington...
 - ii) end discrimination against single people & L&Gs in housing policies;
 - iii) provide funds for L&G switchboards & centres;
 - iv) publicise the anti-discriminatory policies listed above;

- c) instructs the NEC to:
 - i) organise a campaign of education amongst the membership of the party on the oppression of L&Gs in conjunction with the LCLGR;
 - ii) place adverts. in the L&G media and produce leaflets using the slogan 'The Labour party supports L&G rights — join the LP.'

- d) Instructs the NEC to set up a sub-committee in collaboration with the LCLGR to organise the implementation of this policy.

NB Please remember that resolutions count as one unless the wording is at least slightly different.



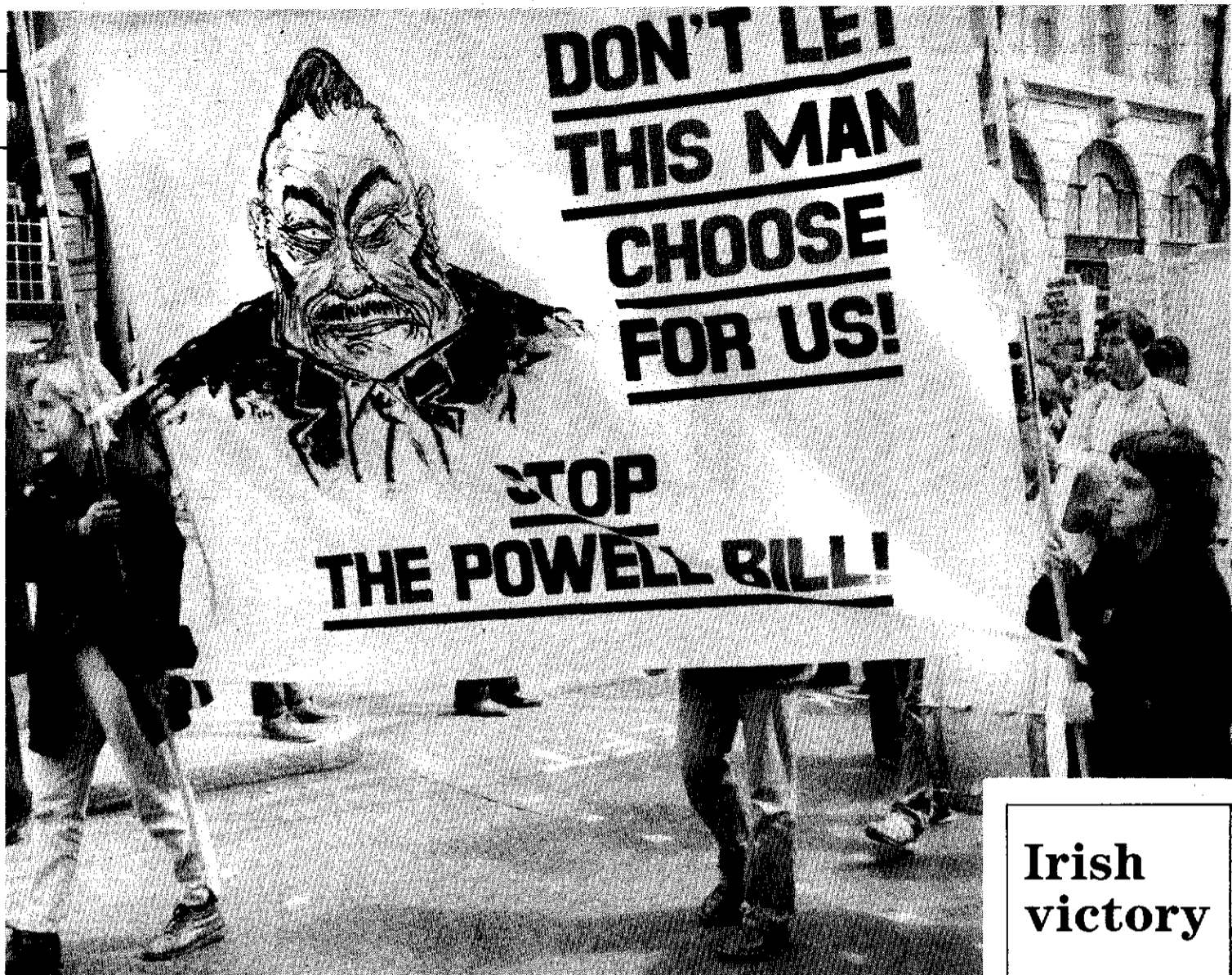
Islington Socialist Action Forum

'Gay Liberation in the Eighties'

'A discussion around the book which describes the origins and the forms of gay oppression. Reaction to gays in the communist countries is compared to that in the West and a programme for change is elaborated that will ensure that gay people and heterosexuals are no longer separate and opposed groups.'

The discussion will be led by Jamie Gough, a one of the authors of the book.

Sunday 2 June, 7.45pm Queens Arms, Queensland Rd N17.



Scotland against Powell & Gillick

ON SATURDAY 18 May, women in Edinburgh made clear their total opposition to Powell and Gillick. An open conference had been organised by a joint meeting of Edinburgh Labour Women's Sections, and was chaired by Val Woodward, an Edinburgh district councillor and member of the council women's committee.

Alan Templeton, who works at the Edinburgh University Centre for Reproductive Biology Research, stressed his total opposition to the Powell Bill. 'It would be a disaster for reproductive research in this country if this Bill went through.'

He outlined the many areas of research which would be stopped, highlighting the work being done on infertility, and all conditions like Downs

Syndrome. He also pointed out a contradiction in the views of those supporting the Powell Bill — at the mo-

By Ann Henderson

ment 50 per cent of human embryos just peter out, and only research will allow us to find out why that happens.

It would surely be of concern to those claiming to be interested in preserv-

ing human life.

Anne McClery, speaking for Scottish NAC, drew out the links between the Powell Bill and the Gillick ruling. Whilst the Gillick ruling does not apply in Scottish law, figures released by the Brooke advisory centre in Edinburgh already show a drop in attendance of under-16's.

The conference said that more work should be done to explain that under-16s should go forward for contraceptive advice in Scotland. Women agreed to attend the demonstration in London against Gillick on 23 June, and to try to involve LPYS branches in this campaign.

Warnock

Yvonne Strachan, the newly appointed Women's Officer for the TGWU in Scotland, and Rosina McCrea of the Scottish Labour Women's Committee both referred to the experience of the mobilisation of the labour movement in the Corrie Bill campaign.

While the Powell Bill and the finding of the Warnock Report appeared to raise more complicated issues it was vital that the labour movement responded once again.

Rosina McCrea explained Labour women's total opposition to the free vote among MPs on this issue. All MPs in Scotland have been approached by the Scottish Labour Women's Committee to vote against the Powell Bill.

The conference of over 40 women agreed to take information on Powell and Gillick back to their various organisations.

More women joined the Scottish Abortion Campaign and it seems likely a new group will be set up in Edinburgh now.

It was recognised that the Warnock report also needs fuller discussion and the meeting agreed to circulate resolutions on under-16 contraceptive availability and on abortion rights.

Attack

Just one week after the conference in Edinburgh the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland launched another attack on women's rights. A heated debate on abortion produced the position, by 400 to 100 votes, that abortion should only be supported where a birth would put a woman's life at risk. The foetus was given full rights by the general assembly.

This position represents a real step backwards for the Church of Scotland, and has produced an outcry amongst many ministers, the medical profession and in the press.

The *Scottish Daily Express* describes the decision as 'a return to the dark ages' and points out that less than 0.25 per cent of abortions occur because a woman's life is at risk. Diane Munday of the Brooke Advisory Centre was also quick to condemn the decision saying that it would not lower abortion rates but simply add to women's emotional stress.

This decision, in addition to the threat posed by Powell and Gillick, shows how vital it is to build a mass campaign to defend women's abortion rights in Scotland.

Irish victory

LABOUR WOMEN for Ireland scored an important victory last week at the Labour Party national executive committee.

David Hughes, the national agent, had referred a resolution on discussion on Ireland passed at the Greater London Labour Party conference to the NEC. This was an attempt to prevent its implementation and stop discussion.

The resolution simply calls for 'open and wide ranging debate and discussion throughout the labour movement on the matter of British withdrawal.' It says the basis for discussion should be Tony Benn's Withdrawal Bill published last summer.

Hughes reported on the resolution but was immediately taken up by Tony Benn. If the NEC working group could meet all sorts of people during its deliberations, why couldn't the rank and file? Obviously there's one law for the leadership and another for the membership.

The only objection raised by Hughes was that the intentions of the movers of the resolution were unclear. All that was decided was that the London executive committee should be asked for clarification of 'intentions'.

This has now been relegated to the minutes of the NEC organising committee and at this stage no further action is proposed. In other words progress has been made.

It is clear that David Hughes in particular was taken by surprise at the amount of opposition to his original letter freezing the resolution. Most important it shows the need to get resolutions through women's sections, general committees and so on and the weight they can have.

More information from: Labour Women for Ireland, c/o Feminist Library, Hungerford House, Victoria Embankment, London WC2.

Wales Congress at crossroads

THE DEMAND that a future Labour government grant a pardon will be a key issue at this Saturday's All Wales Conference of the Wales Congress in Support of Mining Communities. The conference is being held at Maesteg Town Hall in the Llynfi valley near St John's colliery which the NCB has announced is to close. GRAHAM ATWELL reports.

The aim of the conference, the Congress states, is to develop a united programme of resistance and action for the future.

But whilst the Congress undoubtedly will act as a focus for the support groups still active in South Wales, it is unlikely to succeed in its aims.

The Congress was set up last year by supporters of the Communist Party with the backing of the South Wales NUM. It drew in Plaid Cymru and Welsh Labour MPs as well as the backing of many trade union officials.

During the strike the Congress organised little activity but provided a 'think tank' for the rapidly rightward-moving South Wales NUM leadership. They stressed the need to win over public opinion and criticised Scargill's support for Orgreave and refusal to condemn violence.

Following the end of the strike, the unholy alliance behind the Congress has shown signs of cracking. *Radical Wales*, Plaid Cymru's monthly journal, has warned that 'the Wales Congress faces its own extinction through the sectarian sabotage of

an increasingly irrelevant Labour Party.' They criticise the Labour Party 'for failure of its MPs, many of whom were members of the steering committee, to turn up to meetings, let alone make serious constructive solutions to the miners' struggle.'

But in an article entitled 'Congress at the crossroads' they come up with new ideas on the way forward. Besides fund raising, they propose turning the congress into a 'back up team for the miners in Wales', undertaking social audits, helping the NUM research department dig up facts and arguments in favour of coal.

Meanwhile the Communist Party sees the Congress as an 'anti-Thatcher broad alliance' bringing together all sections of Welsh society to defend local communities. They want the Congress to start taking up local community issues.

Neither offers any hopes for the miners' jobs under threat, or the miners facing trial for offences in the strike. St John's colliery will not be saved by a social audit of the Llynfi valley.



Photo: PAUL HIGHFIELD

The campaign of the last week in solidarity with Shankland and Hancock has shown a way forward. Thousands of supporters, demonstrating their support, together with the walk-outs at Merthyr Vale and Oakdale, have forced the South Wales NUM leaders and the Labour Party into action.

As many as 18 pits in South Wales are under threat of closure today. And in three weeks time the trials begin of seventy miners for the occupation of the cranes at BSC at Port Talbot.

The miners need the organised support of the solidarity movement in South Wales. At the end of the day only mass action, including strikes and demonstrations in their support can save South Wales jobs from the ravages of MacGregor and Thatcher.

Kinnock

HUGO YOUNG pointed out in Tuesday's *Guardian* that while Michael Foot MP (Ebbw Vale) and Ted Rowlands (Merthyr) had expressed outrage at the murder verdict on Dean Hancock and Russell Shankland, Neil Kinnock's advice to the two miners was that the best thing they could do was go to the appeal court.

What brilliant advice from the Bedwelly MP! Ray Davies, one of the organisers of the two demonstrations that have taken place in South Wales pointed out that despite the legal irregularities in the case the establishment will never reverse this charge of murder.

'What Neil Kinnock should be doing is arguing for an independent review so that the next Labour

government Home Secretary can release these boys.

'If he'd come up to the Rhymney Valley the Sunday before last, when he visited his constituency as he does every weekend, he would have seen the judgement of the people in the Welsh valleys who marched in their thousands to say that Dean and Russell were not guilty of murder.

'Neil Kinnock gave no lead during the miners' strike and we cannot expect him to give a lead in fighting for justice for these class war prisoners.'

Ray urged all labour movement activists to 'blaze the trail to TUC and LP conferences' winning public opinion behind the demand that the next Labour government release these miners.



By Valerie Coultas

TOWARDS THE end of the miners strike Ian MacGregor promised the NUM that 'people would now discover the price of insurrection and insubordination'.

That promise is now being made to come true with MacGregor's statement to the parliamentary employment committee last Wednesday that the Coal Board would not reinstate those 670 miners who have been sacked as a result of their activities in support of union policy during the coal strike.

Arthur Scargill and other leaders of the NUM denounced these measures as 'vindictive justice', pointing out that Kent and Scotland had been singled out for particularly vicious punishment.

While 79 per cent of miners have been reinstated in South Wales not one had been given his job back in Scotland or Kent. The punishment in these areas is unrelated to the crimes committed. It corresponds instead to the objectives of the Coal Board. It is these two areas that pits have already been designated for closure and more are planned.

The high number of NUM branch committee members among those sacked proves that the NCB wants to cleanse the pits of militants, who will lead a fightback.

Three cases of injustice were highlighted by miners' leaders during the inquiry to prove that victimisation had occurred. Arthur Scargill reported how a Kent miner had gone into the Betteshanger colliery with management to persuade the miners inside to end their occupation. He had been sacked.

Peter Heathfield told of a Scottish picket who was allowed on a bus to try and convince scab miners not to go to work. When he asked to get off the bus management refused and then proceeded to sack him for trespassing.

He also mentioned the case of another Scottish miner who was sacked for placing his foot on a white line illegally drawn by a colliery manager on a public highway.

The pattern of revenge in Scotland showed that the Coal Board had no intention of showing any justice towards the miners there.

Eric Clarke pointed out that 71 per cent of those sacked in Scotland were branch committee members. This included miners who had been found not guilty in court and those who had never been brought to trial.

Going over the heads of the NUM and refusing to talk threatened safety in the pits. Already two miners have died in Scottish pits since the end of the strike and six have suffered serious accidents because of dangerous working conditions.

MacGregor was adamantly opposed to the miners leaders demand of a general amnesty. He argued that all miners should go to the industrial tribunal set up to deal with unfair dismissals and there should be no special procedures to deal with the 670 by the NCB.

It is rarely the case that sacked workers receive anything more than compensation from such bodies and MacGregor obviously hopes that he can wish goodbye to these men forever.

The 670 miners, living in areas where work is hard to find outside the pits, deprived of social security by the DHSS who assumed they were still in dispute to punish them further are among the best fighters for jobs and the defence of trade unions anywhere in this country or in any other in Europe.

It is our responsibility as labour movement activists to support any initiatives taken by the NUM or other labour movement body to fight for these men to get their jobs back.

The Campaign Group of MPs has launched an appeal for a general amnesty. Activists should make it a top priority at their next trade union branch or Labour party meeting to pass a resolution calling for a National Amnesty Campaign demanding the Labour Party reinstates all miners sacked when it comes to power and donating a regular amount of money to the NUM Solidarity Fund.

The Miners Solidarity Fund is the official fund. The account no. 30000009 is at the Co-op Bank plc, West Street, Sheffield.

During the year long dispute between the NCB and the National Union of Mineworkers, 10,000 miners and their supporters were arrested. Usually the government used every weapon it could to aid the NCB and criminalise the miners, from a national para-military police force to an army of compliant magistrates. Finally the government used the threat of imprisonment against those who fought for their jobs. There are now nearly 700 miners and their supporters in prison serving sentences of between six months and five years. They have been sentenced for resisting government policies which threaten us all.

NOM PAS MARCH

SATURDAY JUNE 8th LONDON

ASSEMBLY HYDE PARK CORNER 2.30 pm
ASSEMBLY HYDE PARK CORNER 2.30 pm

FREE THE PRISONERS
REINSTATE THE SACKED MEN
STOP THE VICTIMISATION

The National Organisation of Miners in Prison and Supporters, was set up just before the end of the strike. Its committee consists of NUM members and women from the coalfields. It is mounting a campaign to free those imprisoned as a direct result of government policies in the mining industry. RELEASE THE POLITICAL PRISONERS - REINSTATE THE 700 SACKED MEN.

Demonstration
Women Against Victimisation
(Co-ordinated by South Wales Women's Support Groups)

Assemble Swansea Crown Court
10am Tuesday 18 June

This is a silent demonstration to support the 102 Welsh miners charged with riotous assembly for the occupation of the cranes at Port Talbot

Contact: Barbara Edwards, Hirwaun 814576 or Margaret Watkins, Mountain Ash 472951

Black delegation policing conference

THE TWELVE MONTHS of the miners' strike and the new public order proposals put forward by the Tory government, have clearly indicated that the Tories are prepared and willing to use the total force of the state to crush the working class struggle.

During the strike, the miners received tremendous support from the black communities and black militants have organised as the 'Black Delegation to the Mining Communities' to try to make visible the support from the black communities.

The support organised by the Black Delegation has been very successful. During last year's Notting Hill carnival, the Black Delegation and the Noits miners were able to collect over £2,500 within two days.

Since the end of the strike, the Black Delegation has been organising a conference to discuss in greater depth the changing strategy of policing and its effect on the future struggle of the oppressed.

The conference hopes to highlight the experiences of three communities: from Ireland, the mining communities and the black communities all of which have much experience of facing the brunt of police repression during their struggle.

The conference will be on the 1st June at 10.30am in County Hall.

BLACK DELEGATION TO THE MINING COMMUNITIES CONFERENCE ON POLICING... BLACK, IRISH AND MINING COMMUNITIES.

10.30 AM SAT 1 JUNE COUNTY HALL

AT LAST week's meeting of the Labour Party National Executive Committee Tony Benn and Eric Heffer presented a major paper dated May day, summarising the development of the party under Neil Kinnock and presenting an alternative. It is undoubtedly the most important criticism of the present course of the party produced by leaders of the left wing of the party since Kinnock's election.

Socialist Action's view on the issues Tony Benn and Eric Heffer raise is in this week's editorial on page 2.

A Memorandum by Tony Benn and Eric Heffer

Introduction

This memorandum is submitted to the NEC for its consideration. It begins with the election defeat of 1983, and the various reasons given for it, goes on to list the changes that have been made inside the party since then, some of which have been put to conference, and concludes with a series of recommendations designed to assist the party prepare itself now for victory at the next election.

Everyone in the party is determined to work unremittingly for the defeat of the present government. There is no one in the party who is secretly hoping that we shall lose, in the interests of some suppose 'shift to the left' after another election defeat, and suggestions that this view is held are both untrue and deeply damaging.

We are, all, equally united in our resolve to secure the election of a Labour government, with a large working majority, at the next election, in the interests of the people whom we represent who are, now, suffering real hardships at the hands of the Tories. The real question that we have to discuss, and decide, in a spirit entirely free from personal animosity, is how best that desire for victory may be realised in practice and we must also accept that there will be genuine and sincere differences of opinion about it.

The aftermath of the electoral defeat

The very serious electoral defeat suffered by the party in the 1983 general election has, quite properly, led to an examination of the weaknesses in party organisation. Some of this examination has involved a political analysis, and the organisational aspects have been undertaken by the 'Review of Reviews' committee, whose official task it was to re-examine the organisational recommendations made by earlier committees of inquiry, to see what lessons might still be drawn from them.

This 'review' committee was made up of members of the NEC, the PLP and trade union representatives, and will report to the NEC for decisions. Inevitably its work extended far beyond the problems of administration and, as the minutes submitted to the NEC have shown, it has discussed a whole range of subjects including finances, and even the need for a change in the NEC sub-committee structure.

Differing views as to why Labour lost

Many different reasons for our defeat in 1983 have been offered depending upon the view point of the people concerned:

The consensus or liberal view

The consensus, and liberal media explanation of our defeat may be summarised as follows:

- The party, and especially the NEC, fell into the hands of the extreme left.
- Under the influence of this NEC, conference was persuaded to adopt a whole range of detailed policies, many of which were unrealistic, irrelevant and unacceptable to the electorate.
- The 1979-81 campaign for greater democracy in the party was divisive, unnecessary and electorally damaging.

d. These events forced a lot of decent moderates to leave the party and form the SDP.

e. This, in its turn, split the Labour vote, led to mass defections by Labour voters and lost us the election.

f. Therefore the party should now return to a more middle-of-the-road position, leaving key decisions to the more moderate PLP, which is more likely to win public support.

Another explanation for our defeat

There is however another, and quite different view, widely held within the party, which attributes our defeat to very different factors:

- Mistakes made by earlier Labour governments, which lost us the support of working people and, in particular, the trade unions.
- The defection, to the SDP, of 10 per cent of the PLP, including two former deputy leaders and other former cabinet ministers, people who owed everything to the labour movement,



but who were hostile to the role of conference and to socialism, and then, with full media support, launched a vitriolic attack upon the party.

c. The apparently unqualified support initially given by the Falklands war which damaged the party's credibility as a peace party.

d. The fact that many Labour MPs, including a number of its most senior members, amongst them the two previous party leaders, had spoken out strongly against conference decisions and the manifesto before, and during, the election campaign.

e. The attacks upon the left, from within the party, as at Bermondsey, which gave the public the idea that the party leadership itself actually believed that the party had been taken over by wild extremists.

It is necessary to recall this background if we are to understand what has happened inside the party over the last 18 months and look ahead to the future.

Planning for a Labour victory

What has happened since 1983

The new NEC, elected after the general election, has reached a number of very important decisions about the party, which have now been implemented. This quiet revolution is still in progress, but so far, its effect may be summarised by listing the decisions that have been taken:

1. Removal of policy making from the NEC.

Basic policy-making is no longer undertaken by the NEC, through its sub-committees, many of which have been wound up, but by joint committees composed of selected NEC, PLP and TU members, who are charged with the task of drafting these new statements, subject to the technical right of the NEC to change them at the last stage.

2. A shift of power from the NEC to the PLP.

The role and authority of the PLP and especially the parliamentary committee has, as a result, been immensely strengthened, as compared to the NEC and is, increasingly, separately financed through:

- continuing with the allocation of all the — extra — government (or short) money to the PLP, some of which is used to finance research assistants, working personally for front bench spokespersons, who are not paid trade union rates, are not answerable to the NEC, or conference, and do not have security of employment;
- continuing with the principle that trade unions directly finance some PLP spokespersons with money that does not go through the central funds of the party.

3. A shift of power from the NEC to the Trade Unions for a Labour Victory. The TULV, made up of trade union leaders, or their deputies, who are not elected by the Labour conference, have been given a more influential role in managing the party. This has been achieved by the NEC adopting the practice of applying to the TULV for money for specific purposes, which then has to be justified, to the TULV, case by case, rather than by using the TULV as a collective fundraiser, leaving decisions as to expenditure to the NEC itself, subject to conference.

4. A downgrading of CLP members on the NEC.

With, one exception, NEC members elected by the constituency section, have been removed from chairmanships of all the main NEC committees thus eliminating them from their ex-officio membership of other committees. In addition a new campaign strategy committee, including some NEC, PLP and trade union members, has been set up, from which other NEC members are excluded, which has been justified by reference to a wrong interpretation of a conference decision. This committee has established its own sub-committees still further distancing the NEC itself from real power.

5. Changes in party policy. The party's policies have been altered in a number of key respects, some of

which have gone to conference.

a. The 'Alternative Economic Strategy' has effectively been replaced by a more general 'Jobs and Industry' campaign, from which some of the clear socialist commitments on public ownership, economic planning and exchange control have been omitted.

b. The commitment that Britain would withdraw from the Common Market has been replaced by a reference to 'an option to withdraw' the exercising of which, has been left deliberately vague.

c. The commitment to reduce Britain's defence expenditure to the same percentage of the GNP as our European allies in NATO, has been explicitly dropped and in its place we have a commitment that such a change could not be made during the lifetime of the first Labour government, and indeed, there is a new pledge actually to increase expenditure on conventional weapons as British nuclear weapons are phased out.

d. Other policies that had been in *Labour Programme 1982*, and in the 1983 manifesto, have either not been

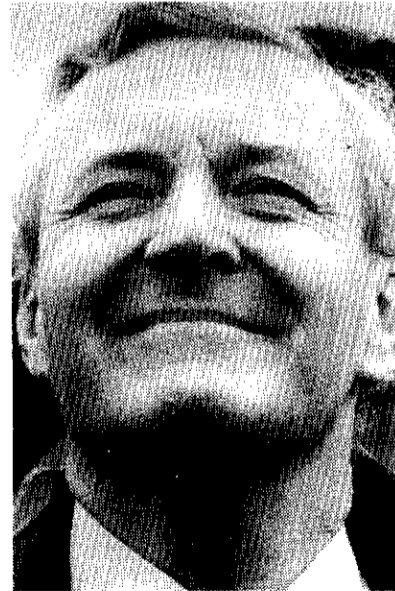


Photo: GM COOKSON

referred to, or appear to have been replaced by 'Charters' which are more vague, illustrative and general.

6. A purge of the Left.

Despite solemn assurances given to conference that there would be no witch-hunt based upon the opinions of party members, the attack upon some of the left has been stepped up.

An appeals and mediation committee has been set up, with only one CLP representative on it, and its main work has been to carry out this purge. Some of the key decisions made by this committee, and confirmed by the NEC, include:

- The expulsion of one party member for selling *Militant* in another constituency from the one in which he lives.
- The refusal of a transfer of a membership to a party member who was alleged to have sold *Socialist Action*.
- The expulsion of members of another party, mainly on the evidence of a Labour councillor, who then left

the party and joined the Liberals.

d. Non-registered organisations are to be denied a listing in the conference diary, whereas all-party groups may be included.

This may be contrasted with the confirmation, after a recorded vote on the NEC, of Frank Chapple's continued membership of the party, despite his refusal to take the Labour whip in the House of Lords, and his consistent attacks upon the party in his column in the *Daily Mail*.

This purge is, presumably, designed to fend off attacks from the media, which has run, and is still running, a campaign designed to denigrate socialist ideas and those who hold, or advocate them.

7. Distancing the party from struggle. A stand has been taken, by some in the PLP, against any suggestion that non-compliance with Tory laws could ever be justified; and strong criticisms have been voiced, within the PLP, about the conduct of industrial disputes, notably during the miners' strike, which appeared to distance the party from certain aspects of that momentous struggle.

8. Re-organisation to support these changes.

Though apparently limited to the task of dealing with the efficiency of the party HQ and its staff, the thinking behind the 'review of reviews' committee seems to be that there must be a further, re-shaping of the party's organisation to support the major changes outlined above.

Conclusions and recommendations

The changes described above are all of fundamental importance; represent a far bigger change in the party's constitution than occurred in the 1979-81 period; take us back to the structure that existed pre-war, and post-war, when the PLP and the general secretaries of some major unions effectively ran the party and the NEC was weak and ineffective; and though some of these changes have been to conference, others have been carried out without the party, as a whole, really realising what has been happening.

It is essential that any report, on party organisation issued by the NEC to the 1985 conference should make absolutely clear what is happening, and what is now planned, so that the party may know precisely what is going on, before it makes its own decisions.

The recommendations given below were drafted to help secure that victory. 1. Campaigning around real struggles. To win the next election the party must be seen to be giving whole-hearted support to all those who are in struggle against the government, and that all party campaigns should centre around those struggles, as well as during all by-elections, local elections and the TU ballots, and all must be used for basic socialist education.

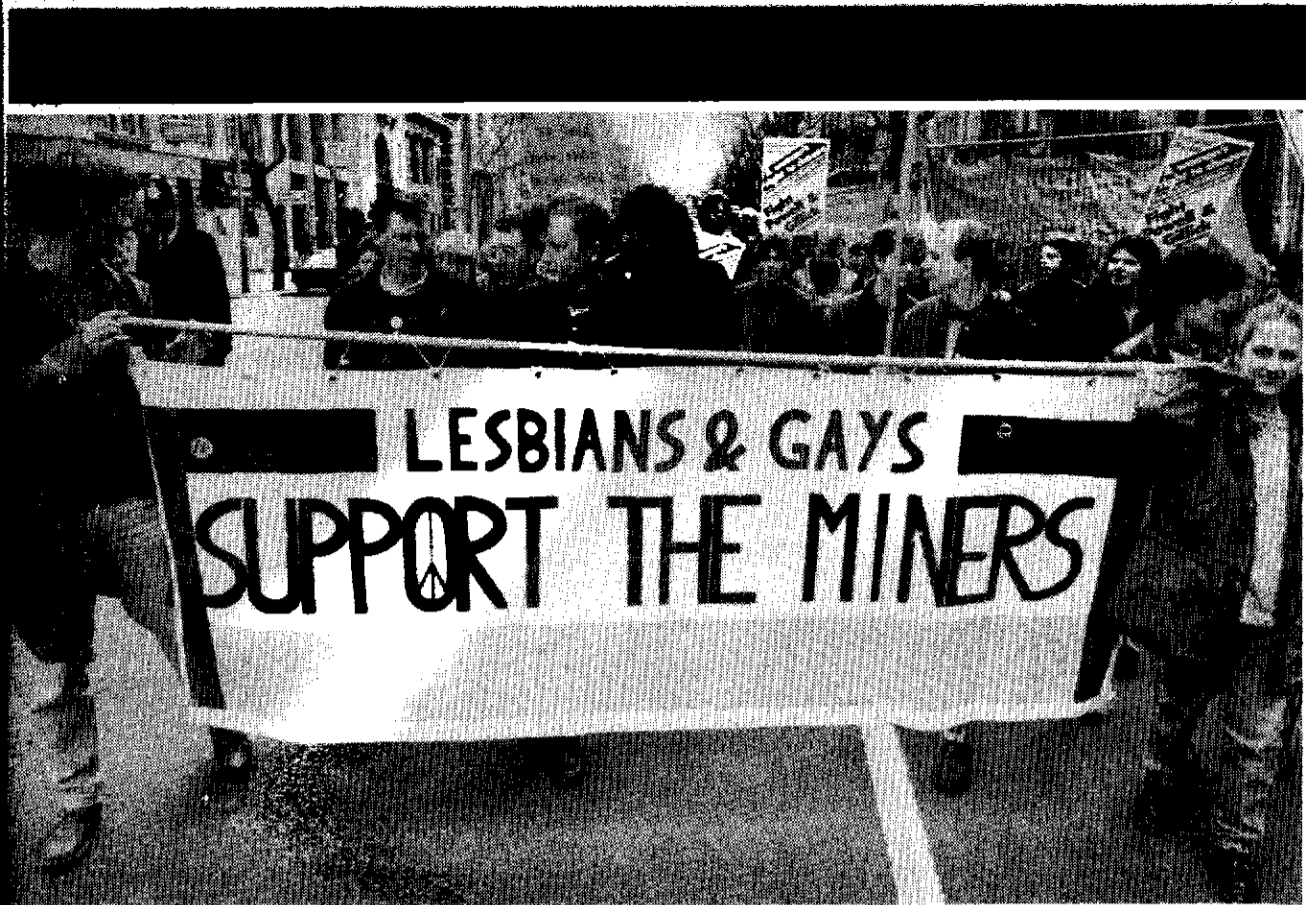


Photo: GM COOKSON



Photo: GM COOKSON



Photo: JOHN HARRIS

2. The NEC and conference must run the party.

The central direction of the party, its policy and administration, must, under its own constitution, remain with the NEC which is elected by, and accountable to, conference, since conference is the only link that the membership have with political decision-making.

3. The PLP must be integrated into the party.

The PLP must be brought closer to the party, the NEC and conference;

a. by integrating PLP standing orders into the party constitution.

b. by channelling all PLP finances through the NEC, including all government funds (which would then be used by the NEC for PLP work); and all TU funds (leaving the unions with the right to earmark their own money, if they wished to do so, for certain purposes — including the support of the PLP).

c. by providing greater accountability of the parliamentary committees, and the cabinet (when Labour is in office) to conference, perhaps through annual election by the same electoral college as now elects the leader and deputy leader.

4. The need for Socialist policies to win.

Policy-making has a major role to play in the present deepening crisis, where the government has the initiative. Labour must be able to respond with a considered socialist alternative that has been discussed, agreed and, put to conference for decision as soon as possible.

The 1983 policies, far from being too radical, are likely to prove quite inadequate to deal the situation that the next Labour government will inherit, which will be so critical that we shall almost certainly be forced to consider the development of stronger policies to deal with it. We therefore intend to submit another paper to the NEC which will concentrate on future policy.

6. A socialist dialogue instead of a purge.

The Labour Party is the principal political instrument for working people in Britain, having been established by the trade unions for that purpose, and having consciously adopted socialism as its objective. Here and world-wide, the socialist debate is rich in variety and experience of successes and failures and we must be able to learn from both, and then build our own brand of socialism, based upon social morality and a deep commitment to democracy and human rights.

There are a number of different schools of socialist thought in this country, many organised around their own newspapers or magazines, and attracting a following of a few hundred or a few thousands. None of these groups are capable either of taking over, or of replacing, the Labour Party, and their contribution should be seen as a part of the on-going discussion about socialism. Nor is there any evidence to suggest that any of them are actually planning the overthrow of democracy in Britain, or are engaged in the preparation of violence.

Most of them, are made up of decent and serious people who work hard for the labour movement and whose arguments deserve serious consideration. If such people, or organisations, put up candidates against the Labour Party then they are ineligible to join us, but that should be the sole criterion by which they are judged to be eligible to join the party.

Any policy by the NEC of seeking out, and then expelling them, or more generally of attempting to isolate what the media choose to call the 'hard left' — whatever that may be — is a mistake because:

a. it suggests to our opponents — quite falsely — that the party is deeply penetrated by a whole lot of violent revolutionaries whose secret objective is to destroy Britain's democratic institutions — which we all know is rubbish.

b. it diverts the party, locally and nationally, from its central task of defeating the Tories and the SDP.

c. it gives the impression that we are frightened of socialist ideas, but are unable to answer them and prefer to eliminate them by organisational means.

7. Extending affiliations to the party.

The NEC should recognise that a whole new range of political issues, and organisations, have emerged since the party was founded in 1918. More recently the women's movement, the ethnic communities, the peace movement and a mass of other special interest groups have come into existence, as evidenced by the long list of registered groups within the party itself and by the campaigns for greater rights for women and blacks within the party.

Many of the most active people in these new movements and organisations are socialists, or Labour supporters, much as they are in the trade unions. The issues and policies that the party takes up are designed to meet the needs of many of these groups, including, of course, women and the ethnic community and we should seriously consider opening up affiliation to allow those that wish to do so to join, on the same basis as the unions and the socialist societies did in the past.

This would broaden the range of party membership, help us to escape the — largely legitimate — charge that the party is dominated by white males, and help to make us the instrument for all working people in this generation, as we were in the past. There is, therefore a strong case for establishing a committee to examine this possibility, to report to the NEC in time for the 1986 conference.

If these proposals were acceptable there would be, later, a major constitutional conference, like the 1918 conference, to which all appropriate and acceptable movements and groups would be invited, with a view to their affiliation to the party, on the same basis as the trade unions and socialist societies are now affiliated.

8. Organising for victory

All the organisational changes that the party now makes should be geared to support this alternative view of our future. We believe that this would also offer the best possible prospect of winning the next election, by showing ourselves to be sensitive to the new situation, the new issues and the new organisational structures which are emerging in the politics of Britain in the eighties and nineties leading on to the next century.

The time has come for the Labour Party to look to the future, dare to have a vision of 'Socialism in our time', and have the courage to re-shape itself so that it can discharge, for this generation, the historic task that the founders of the movement dreamed of so many years ago.

Conclusion

The national executive is invited:

- to note this memorandum, and;
- to refer it to the appropriate committees, and
- to consider it again when they report back to the NEC.

Tony Benn
Eric Heffer
May Day 1985

Palestinians sacrificed in Lebanon

IT WOULD be difficult to imagine a more bitter and tragic irony than the events since 19 May in Lebanon. The Syrian-backed and Muslim Amal militia are carrying out an attack on the Palestinian camps at Sabra and Chatila that is at least equal in scale and ferocity to the massacres in those camps carried out by Israeli-backed Christian militia in September 1982.

By Pat Hickey

The attacks mark another stage in the collapse of the Lebanese central government in the wake of Israeli withdrawal. It is another step by the Syrian regime of president Assad in its attempts to win control of Lebanon.

It shows yet again the cynical disregard of the Arab bourgeois regimes for Palestinian interests. Although the Shiite militias fought the Israelis, this attack on the Palestinians demonstrates that they are not a revolutionary or anti-imperialist force. Nabih Berri, the Amal leader and Lebanon justice minister represents bourgeois nationalist interests. The Palestinians are being attacked, as they were previously utilised, in the interests of Assad's role in a future Middle East settlement.

When the Israelis invaded Lebanon they had two aims. First, to break the strength of the PLO. Second to establish a Christian-Phalangist pro-Israeli state. The first was achievable, the second was not.

A Christian state no longer corresponds to the political, military or demographic balance of forces. The main political factor now in Lebanon is Syria.

The Israeli 'withdrawal' to the Awali river — which in reality leaves them in control up to the Litani river — has opened the battle for control of Lebanon. This struggle, given the decisive weakening of the Christian forces, is concentrated on the issue of who controls West Beirut which is mainly Muslim. The Shiite Amal has pushed back the Sunni Muslims. The Palestinians however have been building up their forces in Lebanon over the past few months.

They represented a threat to the Amal forces, hence the attack on the camps. The Assad regime has an interest in ensuring that no section in Lebanon assumes dominance. It wants a divided client state, that will ensure Syria's place amongst the Arab bourgeoisie in future negotiations. The crisis in Lebanon, with shifting alliances by Syria between Shiites, Druze and Maronite Christian militias will continue.

The losers in all this are the Palestinians. Arafat's policy of relying on Arab bourgeoisie for the advancement of the Palestinian cause has ensured that the PLO has once again entered a blind alley. It is surely the crowning irony of the situation that the anti-Arafat Palestinians around Abu Musu, whose alternative was the alliance with the Syrian regime, have been as much under attack as the pro-Arafat wing in the camps.

Syria's Shiite clients have their own interests as well. The result has been that the pro-Syrian faction has also been forced to fight for its life. The conclusion must be that the choice of alliances between bourgeois Arab regimes is no choice. For the Palestinians, unless their fundamental interests are placed above those of the ruling groups in those regimes, there will be no victory.



Nicaragua

More support from Labour needed

LAST WEEK Socialist Action published the appeal for the Sandinista trade union federation, the CST, for aid for Nicaragua following US president Reagan's economic blockade. STUART HOLLAND, Labour shadow minister for overseas development and cooperation, told CAROL TURNER how Labour could be doing more to support the popular government of Nicaragua from the American threat.

AMERICA'S economic blockade of Nicaragua is scandalous. It demonstrates the double standards the US is applying to one of the weakest and poorest countries in the world, allegedly on the basis that Nicaragua is threatening America's security.

At the very time that president Reagan, at the Bonn summit, is arguing for a liberalisation of trade to offer markets to American exports, he is simultaneously seeking to impose unilaterally sanctions on Nicaragua. Labour's position is well illustrated by my statement in the House of Commons challenging this.

We demanded of Timothy Raison, minister of overseas development, that he dissociate himself from support for sanctions given by Geoffrey Howe and Margaret Thatcher. Unsurprisingly, we got no such commitment from him. Britain's position is especially interesting. Not only is the government coat-tailing the Americans wherever they go on Nicaragua, it has also invented technical reasons for not supporting the British aid programme to Nicaragua.

I first took this up when I was in Nicaragua in November 1983. I followed it up again in the summer of 1984, when I asked the finance minister for the details of the aid project submissions made to the World Bank.

They were first class. The Nicaraguan National Centre for Economic and Social Research (CRIES) is headed by Xavier

Gorstiaga, a Jesuit and a Cambridge-trained economist. He is one of the most outstanding economists in Latin America, who was the minister of planning in the first Sandinista government.

Aid

Nicaragua utilises people like Jorje Sol, El Salvador's ex-executive director on the International Monetary Fund. These are people of world-class standard. Their submissions are as good as any.

There are no technical grounds whatsoever for blocking aid programmes. That recently emerged in a report by the *Observer*. Following that report, it now appears that an official of the Overseas Development Aid is under investigation. This is comparable to the Ponting case but with a far less public profile.

In claiming 'technical' grounds for blocking aid, at best Timothy Raison has been seeking to mislead the House of Commons, at worst he's been lying.

We've begun to take this up in the Commons, challenging Raison to come clean and deploring the investigation. But the scope for putting pressure on ministers is relatively limited. Actions outside are important.

It's crucial a campaign is launched and opposition spokespeople have a certain nuisance value, but mass major public protest can be very effective.

There's been a relatively high profile for a few weeks on the trade em-

bargo, but the aid embargo is going almost unmentioned. It's important that the national secretary of the Sandinista trade union federation, the CST, has made the statement he has, showing both the cost of the war to Nicaragua — running at over \$500 million — and the cost to projects in Nicaragua from aid cuts.

The reality is that the United States has been leaning on both the World Bank and the Inter-American Development Bank to cancel lending to Nicaragua. In 1980 the World Bank committed \$57 million to Nicaragua, in 1981 just under \$50 million. In 1982, '83 and '84 it committed nothing at all.

The Inter-American Development Bank granted over \$100 million in 1979, \$8 million in 1981, and \$1 million in 1983. Now nothing at all.

The Reagan administration claim this shows a willingness to support Nicaragua aid programmes. That is untrue. This money is for programmes already agreed by the Carter administration.

People who argue Labour should leave the World Bank have a very strong point. It is dominated by the US. At a minimum we should not increase our quotas to the Bank while it's behaving like this.

These issues should be fully considered by the Labour Party. My own inclination is to say that were we in government, instead of increasing our contribution to the Bank we should make bilateral contributions to such countries.

Party policy is against tied aid. But even if you don't tie the aid, 85 per cent of the orders generated are likely to benefit first world countries. Our aid to Nicaragua should not be tied. But the problem isn't solved simply by untying the aid.

What is desperately needed in countries like Nicaragua is support for their basic needs programme: housing, education, social services, food. Such programmes don't even qualify for World Bank lending. Party policy debate should focus on giving sizeable aid to countries such as Nicaragua for non-economic as well as economic projects.

Support

Another area where it's important the party conference takes a position is on the scale by which a future Labour government would be committed to increase its aid programme. The party is already aiming at one per cent, which would actually double the aid programme, from around £1 billion to £2 billion a year in current prices.

And what countries like Nicaragua desperately need is not just aid for non-economic program-

mes, but also credit lines. The point is that countries like Nicaragua are now in such a chronic balance of payments situation that they literally can't afford to buy essentials.

In the immediate term it's important that the statement of the CST gains the maximum possible support within the party. I'll be doing the best I can to help gain that.

We have our own difficulties here — with anti-trade union legislation, with rate-capping, with other acts by which the Thatcher government is trying to roll back the frontiers of the organised working class — but these pressures are insignificant in terms of what Nicaragua is facing. One of the most effective acts of solidarity which could come from the labour movement includes financial contributions for projects and development work and the assistance of trade union activists in Nicaragua.

NCU supports Nicaragua

TELECOMMUNICATIONS is an international industry. It's time the horizon of our union went beyond Britain.

By Ian Grant, NCU, Met North West Branch

That's why two National Communications Union branches have tabled resolutions to this week's annual conference proposing affiliation to the Nicaragua Solidarity Campaign. To allow a full debate, the NSC will be holding a meeting in Blackpool during conference.

Last December a group of TELECOR (the Nicaraguan telecoms company) workers were ambushed by US-backed contras and killed.

They were erecting poles in a province bordering Honduras in the north of Nicaragua. Their vehicle was riddled by gunfire and set on fire — with no survivors.

Reagan's trade embargo, backed by Thatcher, is the latest blow aimed against the popular Sandinista government there.

Trade union solidarity is urgent. The NCU's affiliation to the Nicaragua Solidarity Campaign would be just a first step.





COALVILLE

New threat at Coalville

THE LESSON we learnt at Coalville during the miners' strike was that nothing is inevitable. You don't have to accept anything that is against the interests of railworkers. We stayed solid right through the strike, and that spirit is continuing now. The depot is more united than it's ever been before.

We've had a significant success since the end of the strike. We've stalled the implementation of a scheme to reduce eleven posts at the depot even though our sectional council, the London Midland Region negotiating committee, agreed to the loss. We did it by threatening industrial action, an overtime ban and a work-to-rule. The latter would have been particularly effective because we now move more coal than we did before the miners' strike.

We've proved the lie that was put about by management during the strike that our support of the miners would mean loss of coal tonnage permanently. Not only have we out-stripped their most optimistic predictions, the fact that we're moving so much more coal has embarrassed them.

Threat

Management tried to divide ASLEF and the NUR a tactic that worked during the early days of the strike. They convened separate meetings believing that the drivers would capitulate, but the drivers have been hardened up by the struggle to support the miners.

They immediately called a Federation meeting in Coalville, which apart from the open meeting on 4 November 84, was the first time such a meeting had taken place. NUR and ASLEF have never worked closer than we do now, and this is a direct result of the miners' strike.

We're under no illusions that management will stop trying to reduce jobs at Coalville and continue their plan to close the depot. But the most immediate threat to us now is the introduction of driver-only operation and single manning on freight trains.

By Roy Butlin

As *Rail News*, management's paper said, now that the 4.89 pay claim has been agreed, they want the 'outstanding productivity measures' which affect only one fifth of the staff, the train crews, to be implemented.

The workshop day of action showed what could be done by completely closing down the Scottish region. One of the main problems we are going to have to tackle this year is the crisis of leadership in ASLEF and the NUR.

I agree with Arthur Scargill when he said at the AUEW/TASS conference that we are now entering a decisive phase in industrial relations in general, and that the fight is not over for the miners or anyone else.

'We were involved in a fundamental and principled struggle with the ruling class' and 'you either take your stand with the class to which you belong, or by your inactivity you give aid to those who oppose it' he said.

I think the rail leaders should take heed of these words. We want a fighting union, not a union that says it is against produc-

tivity and then cave in at the first opportunity.

Productivity measures are designed to make us pay for the modernisation of the railway system with our jobs, and with reduced wages, which is what a pay settlement below the rate of inflation really is.

BR management, instructed by the Tories, are using their tried and tested tactic of divide and rule. They are paying a bonus to drivers, power box signalmen and traffic supervisors to agree to driver-only trains.

We all know how the bonus system destroyed the unity of the NUM, and how Arthur Scargill always took a principled stand against it. We want to see the Federation of ASLEF/NUR take a similar stand against such tactics, because if it doesn't it will be destroyed.

There is no alternative work for guards and secondmen either at Coalville depot, or in the Leicestershire area.

So for us this is a life and death struggle we can't afford to lose.

Plan

Our experience is not unique in the North and Midlands, and like the miners it's either put up a fight or go on the dole.

Productivity is a national question for the rail unions, not local to Coalville, and that's how it must be fought. Instead of NEC members describing at meetings what union policy on productivity is, we need a plan of action. The NEC needs to give local Departmental Committees explicit instructions about how to stop

management forcing productivity on us through the use of Clause 80, a clause which management use to assume negotiations have taken place.

We need a national strategy to fight productivity deals, otherwise depots and workshops will be picked off one by one. If productivity deals seem to affect only one grade or one sector then the workers become isolated and vulnerable.

This is what happened last week with the dispute in London Transport and the union leadership failed to overcome the problem.

The NUR sent out a circular this week saying that BR had confirmed that they would be introducing DOO on the Eastern Region in October and in the Strathclyde area at the end of the year.

Kings Cross and Hitchin depots already know that they are to lose one hundred guards jobs. The circular says, 'be alert to what management are doing and keep Unity House informed.' But that's not enough.

We want a national campaign throughout the Federation against productivity. We want this campaign to be taken into the Labour Party. A reconvened Guards and Shunters Conference is necessary.

We need national tours of railworkers from depots and workshops immediately under threat. The lobbies of the NUR and ASLEF conferences being put forward by Kings Cross No 1 branch NUR at the Guards and Shunters Conference this week should also be backed.

This is what we need if we are to get the industrial action that is necessary to save railworkers jobs.

Rebuilding on LT

FOLLOWING THE defeat suffered by the rail unions on both British Rail and London Transport in 1982 the NUR London Transport District Council attempted to assess the reasons for that defeat and map out a way forward to prevent repetitions in the future.

The recent defeat of the union when the vast majority of the membership ignored its call for an all out indefinite strike against management's imposition of OPO on the East London, District and Metropolitan lines, makes it essential to go back to the drawing board once again.

The post 1982 discussion correctly identified the nub of the problem. All currents of opinion were agreed that a large and very dangerous gap had opened up between the activists in the union and the vast majority of the rank and file. It was decided to campaign for an overall policy of opposition to all job loss and to establish a shop stewards network and a regular District Council bulletin to fight for that position.

The policy of No Job Loss was reasonably quickly established on the District Council against the position of those who only wanted to fight compulsory redundancies. It was pointed out that management does not call for compulsory redundancies nowadays. Instead they need 'job loss' or 'reduction of unit costs'. These only become compulsory redundancies if the union fights for every job.

However the fight for a shop stewards system and a regular bulletin never got off the ground. A major opportunity to launch this work was missed during the miners' strike. There

was a lot of excellent solidarity work done at the level of the District Council itself. A lot of money was raised and many militants were central to their local miners support groups. However with a few exceptions no consistent work was done at the workplace.

It was ruled out that the 40 or so activists could have conjured up a shop stewards network from 15000 members even over the 12 months of the miners' epic struggle.

Patrick Sikorski NUR
(Personal capacity)

Within this framework the leaders of the rail unions also failed. While they and Slater of the National Union of Seamen did order the non-movement of coal, massive opportunities to go onto the offensive in support of the NUM were deliberately avoided. These were around the pay claims and the victimisation of the Coalville railworkers. But while these obstacles were always going to determine the overall outcome of the solidarity battle on rail more could have been done on LT.

The eventual outcome of the miners' strike reinforced all the tendencies the District Council had identified previously. The corrosive effect of 4 years of mass unemployment and the defeat of the strongest section of the British working class

widened the gap between the activists and the ranks.

The numbers of workers who mistakenly believe that they are safe and demand a ballot as an excuse not to struggle became larger. When the strike call came it was they and not the activists who led the middle ground.

Firstly the majority of sectional council representatives and some branch officials argued against the District Council policy over a period of several months. Over the years the Sectional Council system has rotted the union from within. It must be discarded. If a shop stewards system is going to be built on LT the activists will have to campaign from now on for their branches to refuse to have anything to do with this system of collaboration with management.

Secondly major concessions in the campaign were made to the leadership of ASLEF in order to maintain unity in the Federation for as long as possible. This was a wrong approach. Its starting point was not the development of unity from the ranks upwards coupled with demands for unity in struggle on the leaders of both the NUR and ASLEF; but was an attempt to have unity between those who were going to fight — the District Council and NEC representative of the NUR and those who weren't — the ASLEF District Council and their NEC representative.

The problem of the Sectional Councils and the Federation can only be overcome by getting down to the task identified three years ago of building a shop stewards system on LT.

Why railworkers must vote Yes

IT'S CARDS on the table time for railworkers. The Tory Trade Union Act of 1984 says our union must have a vote by all members as to whether or not we keep our custom of supporting the Labour Party. NUR and ASLEF policy is to ask all members to vote 'yes'. Why is a 'yes' vote right?

First we must know a little history. In 1899, a fighting railworker from Doncaster, Tom Steel, a member of the Amalgamated Society of Railway Servants (ASRS) later named the NUR, put down a resolution for the 1899 TUC Conference. From this, the Labour Representation Committee was set up which eventually became the Labour Party.

The first Labour MP was ASRS leader Richard Bell in Derby. The rich capitalists were against this. Twice with the help of friendly judges they took our union to court. In 1900 in the Taff Vale case and 1909 with the Osborne Judgement. They were like someone trying to turn back the waves from a beach. Our union used its industrial and political muscle to defeat these attacks.

Today once again our enemies are trying to tighten their grip on what we can and cannot do as union members. The Tory government is a government of the rich. It lives

off our labour and has no right to order us how to run our union. We decide what we want to do at our union branch and at annual conference.

By Dave Russell, NUR
(personal capacity)

This law is part and parcel of a crop of anti-union laws which at the stroke of a judge's pen attack the right to strike and right to picket. The union is being set up for the kill. It is necessary and possible to defeat these plans.

The NUR and ASLEF are organising a campaign for a 'yes' vote on the political fund. Posters and leaflets have been produced for branches to use at work. The problem with this propaganda is that there is too much about what our 11 MPs are doing. Of course they are important and the union must protect them. A 'no' vote would cut their link to the union. However what

is missing is leaflets and posters on what union members are doing day by day to defend jobs.

Pay

This years pay claim had a demand 'as agreed by the 1984 conference' for £100 minimum basic wage aimed at cutting the massive overtime worked in the industry. That claim was sold out for a miserable 4.85 per cent. MPs words do not count for much when outside parliament our union is not backing them with industrial action.

Our leaders are not helping rank and file fighters to get the message to all railworkers that politics is not just about Labour MPs in parliament. Real politics is the NUR organising national industrial action to fight for our demands. It's about taking that strike action to members of the Labour Party getting them on our picket lines and to their meetings. Taking our fight to the masses in general and industrial workers in particular.

In doing this we would bend and shape the Labour Party to our will and our need for more pay, jobs and investment.

Hackney agrees to set a rate

ANGER ERUPTED last Tuesday when Hackney Council decided to set a rate. Local trade unionists and activists occupied the council chamber and, despite appeals from council leader Hilda Kean, refused to leave. When the meeting was reconvened the following day, there was no doubt that the unholy alliance of right-wing Labour with the Liberals and Tories would pass a cuts budget.

The spending plans outlined by Labour 'moderate' Tony Millwood involve £5 million in 'negative contingency' — ie unallocated cuts — and rely on as yet unpromised money from the GLC and the District Health authority, together with the sale of commercial property to finance current expenditure.

As a result local people will have to pay an average £1.63 every week in rates for the 'privilege' of lousy services.

The worst crime of the Labour right is their attack on the living standards of those who voted them into office, but they have also let down the other councils like Liverpool and Lambeth who looked to Hackney as an example. It is also a slap in the face for Labour activists who, just over a week before, had reaffirmed the no-rate position at an Annual Borough Conference. Not one of the right-wing

councillors had argued their position, indeed they voted to re-elect the council leadership. Wednesday's vote was truly a negation of both democracy and accountability. Ruth Gee — Deputy Leader of ILEA — attempted to argue,

By Jeanette Findlay and Chris Bertram

following the sell-out, that councillors were only bound by a four-year old manifesto and by a commitment to 'the electorate'. Where have you heard those arguments before?

The council leadership has resigned. It is a correct decision. Hilda Kean and the other left-wing councillors — a majority of Labour group — have declared that they will fight the implementation of a cuts budget. It is good

that they have done so. But while the left is united in its condemnation of the scabs, many activists feel nervous about a public breach in Labour's unity. But it is the scabs who have breached that unity. If Labour is not to pay the price it must publicly break with the right and fight in an unconditional alliance with the trade unions and community groups to prevent the implementation of cuts. In this respect, Hilda Kean's condemnation of Tuesday's occupation gave the wrong signal. Yes, we will also replace the scabs, but it would be both wrong and counterproductive to subordinate the struggle against cuts to the internal battles of the party.

Many will ask: what went wrong? In the end only cross-borough industrial action could have defeated rate-capping. That it did not occur is not the fault of either local trade unionists or the left councillors all of whom fought bravely and at considerable personal risk. The left councillors did lead the campaign in the boroughs, but it is the national Labour Party and trade unions that should have taken on the responsibility. By refusing to



Photo: GIM COOKSON

fight, Kinnock and Willis gave a green light to the new and newer realists in Hackney and elsewhere. It is Labour voters who will pay the price.

The Broad strategy

THE GOVERNMENT'S intention to privatise BT brought a response from the then POEU membership who elected a Broad Left leadership in 1983. That new leadership led the union into the fight over privatisation. The selective industrial action crumbled after the NEC failed to stand firm against a court injunction ordering the union to stop industrial action against the private Telecoms company Mercury.

At the time the infamous job security agreement (JSA) was upheld by the courts and the GEC as the saviour of the Telecom workers. Since that action the JSA has shown itself to be no more than a redundancy agreement camouflaged as a redeployment agreement. Unfortunately while the membership now recognise the JSA for what it is, the GEC (Engineering Group Executive Council) still clings to its remains.

Since the failure of the privatisation campaign the NEC has responded to management's provocations by producing the 'Broad Strategy'. This document is well researched and comprehensive but it has no strategy for saving jobs NOW. The strategy gives the union's response to every aspect of the new profit orientated BT. Its main trusts are the negotiation of the 32 hour 4 day week spread over 6 days and the re-nationalisation of BT.

This strategy is shown to be inadequate at best and misleading at worst. While BT and the PO take on branches individually the GEC had advised branches not to take industrial action but instead to wait for the negotiation of the Broad Strategy. The membership in numerous branches have ignored this advice and launched overtime bans and strike action.

The longer the leadership of the union wait, the more jobs will be lost. The opportunity at the first annual conference of the NCU to lay out the fight for all jobs must not be missed.

A national strike to save jobs

THE THREAT to jobs hangs like a cloud over BT and PO workers. The NCU conference will be dominated by the debate on how to fight to save jobs. Until now the Union has put its faith in the so called Job Security Agreement, and the Broad Strategy. The merit in the latter lies in its demands. However it lacks the means to achieve them.

The NEC campaign on the Broad Strategy has so far failed to mobilise the membership for a fight against the job losses implicit in the introduction of new technology the profit drive and competition. British Telecom trying to avoid a national confrontation has cleverly used the uneven nature of profit centres etc to carry out its strategy of shedding jobs area by area taking on Branches piecemeal.

Ian Willer
Watford Branch NCU

This could leave the membership demoralised where the union does not fight, without achieving any concessions to the Broad Strategy. The National Executive Council is in danger of leading the Union into the same trap as was seen with the privatisation campaign,

Error

TWO CORRECTIONS to interview with Di Parkin in last week's issue. Rent increases of 18 per cent were not included in the budget proposed and then passed by the right-wing. Savings will be made in the staffing budget but it is not proposed to make 'immediate cuts of two million in staff.'

● The Socialist Caucus will shortly be holding a national conference of its supporters, for further information and a copy of the Caucus Newsletter write to the Secretary, 15A Crescent Road, London E13 0LU.

Civil and Public Services Association Conference 85 — halt the drift to the right

THIS YEARS CPSA conference took place amidst a major and perhaps irreversible split in the forces of the left. The dynamics of the split can be traced back to the '84 conference when the Stalinists and the Broad Left Labour Group refused to take on Alistair Graham, 'new realist' General Secretary of the CPSA after the debacle over GCHQ.

Many rank and file activists were dismayed when at last November's Broad Left conference there was a major walk out staged by the Communist Party and a section of the Labour lefts. Their flimsy excuse for this divisive action was that the Broad Left had become dominated by the Militant. Rather than fight some of the incorrect policies of Militant politically, they chose in true stalinist fashion to try and isolate Militant bureaucratically. Such a strategy in a finely balanced union like the CPSA was doomed to failure from the start. The CPSA has the largest and best organised right wing of any union in the country, and the only way the left has been able to challenge the "moderates" was through unity.

Unity moves were undertaken to try and reverse the split, but the crunch for the hard left came over this years pay fiasco. The Broad Left '84 group (as the splitters had reconstituted themselves) voted with the right wing to obey the Tory anti-trade union laws. As a result of the actions of these wretched individuals the pay fight collapsed, and

thousands of low-paid civil servants were forced to accept a paltry pay rise of under five per cent.

Conference 85 saw the two factions of the left take on clearly different

Howard Fuller CPSA
(Personal Capacity)

perspectives. Within the Official Broad Left, the Militant has quite clearly been forced to the left, and will probably continue to do so under pressure from supporter of the "Socialist Caucus" (an alliance of the hard left containing Socialist Action and Socialist Organiser supporters, but mainly consisting of otherwise non-aligned activists.) and the Socialist Workers Party who have now turned back to the labour movement.

The Broad Left 84 group took a sharp turn to the right, presenting a quite clear defeatist outlook, refusing to even attempt to mobilise the membership against Tory attacks. Indeed most of their energy was spent in witch-hunting Militant, paralleling the disgraceful actions of the Labour Coordinating Committee

inside the Labour Party. Indeed BL 84 supporters ended up voting with the right wing on a number of occasions, including saving Graham's neck for the second year running.

Many of the BL 84 leaders are ex revolutionaries themselves, Micky Duggan (ex SWP) and Stewart McLellan (ex IMG) have fallen into the trap of becoming entrenched in the unions bureaucracy and isolated from the rank and file. The most obvious sign of their political degeneration was their attempt to force through the merger with the Supervisors union — the Society of Civil and Public Servants (SCPS). Fortunately conference had the sense to throw out this bureaucratic manoeuvre which otherwise would have had detrimental effects on the lower civil service grades represented by the CPSA. The card vote at conference rejected the terms of the merger 86,000 to 58,000. Had the issue gone to the rank and file membership, the merger would have been even more overwhelmingly defeated.

This year's election results show quite clearly the effects of the split. With the left vote divided approximately 50-50, the right wing regained control of the NEC. Fortunately the largest single section of the union — the DHSS — remained firmly

in the control of the real Broad Left, with the BL 84 hanging on to the Scottish region seats only. The way forward for the socialists in the CPSA in the coming period as a result of the electoral setbacks, is to build a fightback at branch level. Militancy, particularly in the DHSS has been on the increase. The victories in the West End N10 and Westminster ILO disputes show that all is far from lost.

Now is the time for the hard left in the CPSA to re-organise, and take advantage of the state of flux in the CPSA. The "Socialist Caucus" is best placed to undertake this task, and was the only group to come out of these events unscathed. The strategy of building amongst rank and file activists must be continued and an alliance with the SWP sought in order to challenge the new right emerging in BL 84 and tackle some of the idiosyncratic positions of Militant whilst defending their right to organise in the face of the current witch-hunt.

those branches in the front line.

This solidarity must be expressed in terms of financial support and also in terms of action. This will undoubtedly mean an overtime ban. But the membership must not be fed any illusions that anything other than a national strike will defend those branches that are fighting not only for their own jobs but everyone's.

The NEC must build for the national strike that will be necessary to defend those branches that are fighting now for jobs. A decisive fight now will lay the basis for defending all jobs in the future.

Conference tackles the fight for jobs

THIS YEARS National Communications Union (NCU) conference is being held under the shadow of the newly Privatised British Telecoms and vicious government preparations for the privatisation of Postal services.

The BT board announced last year that the first phase of their job cutting exercise was completed: 30,000 workers had left the industry since 1982. In the next years they wish to accelerate this wastage.

BT management have announced their intention to cut exchange staff by 90 per cent by 1990 and postal engineers by 50 per cent in the next two years. In many areas management have declared surplus staff to meet the budget requirements. Since the end of the miners' strike management have stepped up their attacks on the workforce to test the

strength of the union. This has included naming surplus workers and changing long established work practices without consulting the union. Where the local union has responded with industrial action management has climbed down but the situation is fast coming to a head.

Strikes and overtime bans in Swansea, Cwmcarn factories, Bournemouth, British Telecom International and Glasgow have shown the membership is prepared to fight over job losses. What is needed is a national leadership capable and prepared to lead that fight.

Socialist ACTION



Newham 7 on trial

Parvaiz Khan, him a warrior
Everywhere you go, you hear them say,
Parvaiz Khan, him a warrior, warrior!

THE TRIAL of the Newham 7 finally began on 21 May, over a week late, and will be a key battle for the black community. Already two demonstrations in Newham have resulted in over 40 arrests and an Orgreave style clearance of Plashet Park by the police. Four pickets outside the Old Bailey have been arrested, something which never happened in the six week Newham 8 trial. Is this a result of policing the pits? Or is the state so ashamed of this case that it must suppress the protests?

In fact ten people not seven stand in the dock. Three whites are also charged to give an appearance of balance and to make the police seem neutral. But the details show up this farce.

The whites are accused of attacking a car full of Asians. The charge is common assault, the very lowest offence possible. Two are also accused of affray but only in terms of going on the offensive when attacked. Clearly the police expect this charge to be thrown out early.

The three whites do however disrupt the unity of the defence. Even the prosecution agreed to have some black people on the jury, but a racist barrier 'challenged' three black jurors. Usually defence challenges are done as a team; here it was impossible.

The real villains of 7 April 1984 are not on trial at all as it took the police a

whole year to arrest them. In Newham on that afternoon two white men and a white woman carried out a whole series of attacks on Asians amounting to an orgy of psychopathic violence.

The Newham 7 are accused for their response to this murderous threat to them and their community. The charges are affray, possession of an offensive weapon, actual bodily harm, criminal damage and conspiracy.

This time the prosecution have to admit that racist attacks took place. The jury has heard how one of the attackers brought a hammer that afternoon to use on the victims. The case is rather that the Asians should have waited for police to catch those responsible.

Already the police bias is clear. Two whites were arrested carrying poles, yet

released the same evening and not charged for three weeks. Any Asian arrested was automatically treated as a suspect and kept overnight. Can such police be trusted to protect the Asian community?

Even in court the repression continues. On day two, defendant Parvaiz Khan refused to eat a pork pie for lunch for religious reasons and asked for vegetables instead. All he got from the prison officers was head injuries so severe he could not attend court for two days. Defence lawyers were not told about this until he appeared in open court half an hour later.

It seems as though the state is keen to provoke incidents at every stage of this complicated trial to cover up this one sided prosecution and further criminalise the black community.

What is clear however is that the Newham 7 defence inside and outside court will put up maximum resistance.

● *A mass picket took place of the Old Bailey on Wednesday 29 May. It is proposed to hold such pickets every Monday after that at 9.30 am. The next one will be Monday 3 June at the Old Bailey. Nearest tube St Pauls.*

FREE HANCOCK AND SHANKLAND!



MORE THAN 3000 people marched through Cardiff last Saturday in a show of solidarity against life sentences for the killing of taxi driver David Wilkie.

Family and friends of Dean Hancock and Russell Shankland were joined by Welsh MPs, miners' leaders, and pit workers and miners' wives from all over the country.

The march to the Welsh Office was headed by a huge banner which declared 'We are fighting for justice' while other banners called for 'Justice with compassion' and stated 'Found guilty before their trial'.

At the demonstration outside the Welsh Office a letter was handed over for delivery to Mrs Thatcher.

In the letter, president of the South Wales NUM, Mr Emyln Williams, said the sentences had left them 'stunned and dismayed at what is overwhelmingly viewed as a gross miscarriage of justice.'

The rally was addressed by Bedwas councillor Mr Ray Davies, Rhondda MP Ted Rowlands, national NUM women's organiser Betty Heathfield, and South Wales NUM president Emyln Williams.

Councillor Ray Davies called the rally, the march had only been organised a week ago. He drew massive cheers when he declared 'Our boys are not murderers.'

The two boys who were jailed were involved

in a struggle for jobs and to build their communities to provide jobs for the next generation, but Thatcher's picketing laws put an obstruction in their way', Mr Davies said.

By Graham Atwell

He said the police denied pickets their liberties by refusing them permission to talk to the working miners.

'Out of these incidents grew frustration and the incident at Rhymney Bridge was a direct result of that frustration. And what happened to Dean and Russell could have happened to me and any two of you', he told the crowd to great applause.

'If Thatcher and the police think that after this demonstration we will go away and keep our mouths shut they will have another think coming, because there will be two campaigns. One through the courts, and the second to mount a nationwide campaign to have Dean and Russell freed. If our campaign through the courts

fails we want the next Labour government to grant the boys a pardon.'

The campaign to free the Rhymney miners, and last week's demonstration and rally, have provided an immense boost for the miners and the solidarity movement in South Wales.

The campaign was initiated by the Rhymney

Valley miners' support committee. The rapid growth in support, and the spontaneous walk-outs, at Merthyr Vale and Oakdale collieries, have forced the NUM and Labour Party leaderships off the fence. This week the South Wales NUM added their support and Ebbw Vale MP Michael Foot called for a retrial.

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RAILWORKERS AND MINERS

The Story of Coalville during the 1984/5 miners' strike
United against the Tories

Socialist Action supporters in rail have produced a pamphlet called 'Railworkers and Miners', the story of Coalville during the 1984/5 miners' strike. It costs 50 pence per copy and is available from Socialist Action, PO Box 50, London N1 2XP.