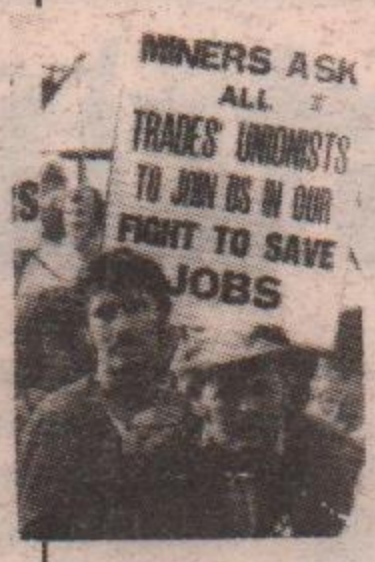


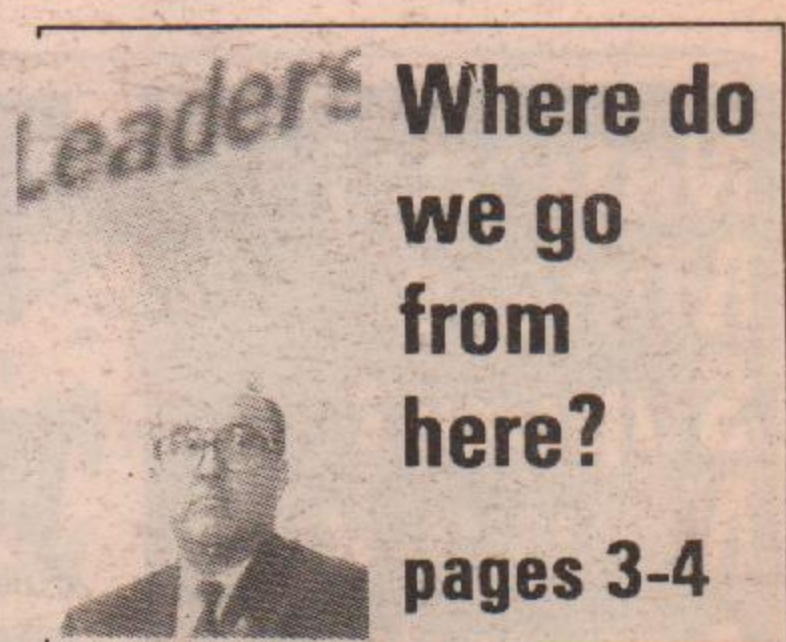
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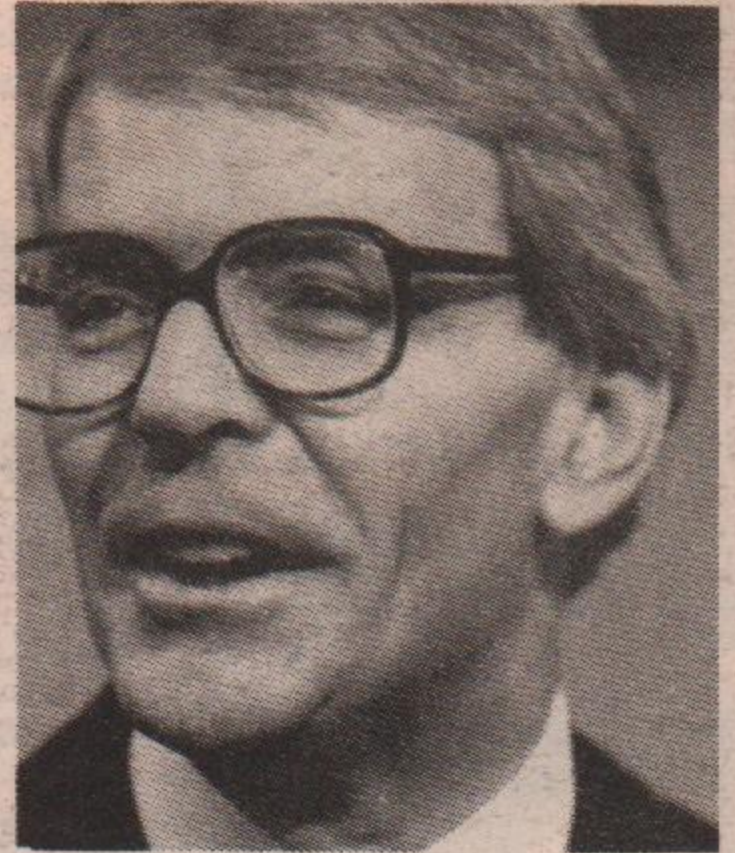
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# SOCIALIST

**ORGANISER**

*Unite the left!*

**Labour: use Maastricht to bring down the Tories!**



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# SCARGILL IS RIGHT!

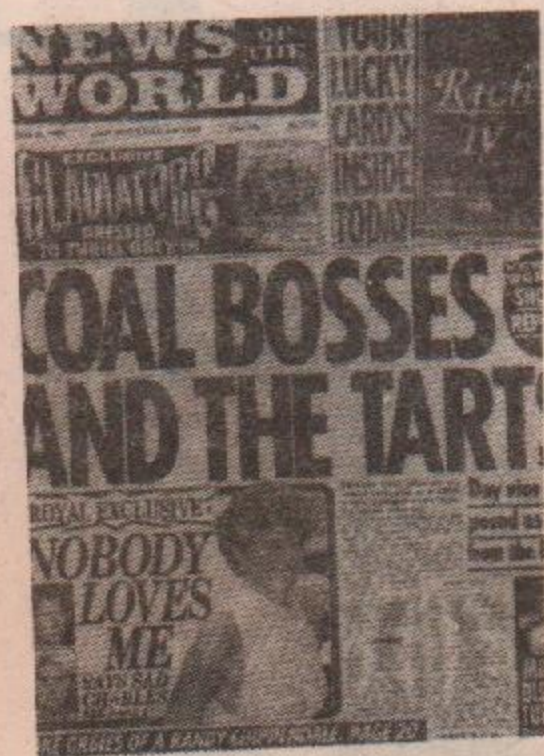
**TUC should set a day for strikes to back the miners**

Turn to page 2

## National Miners' Support Network

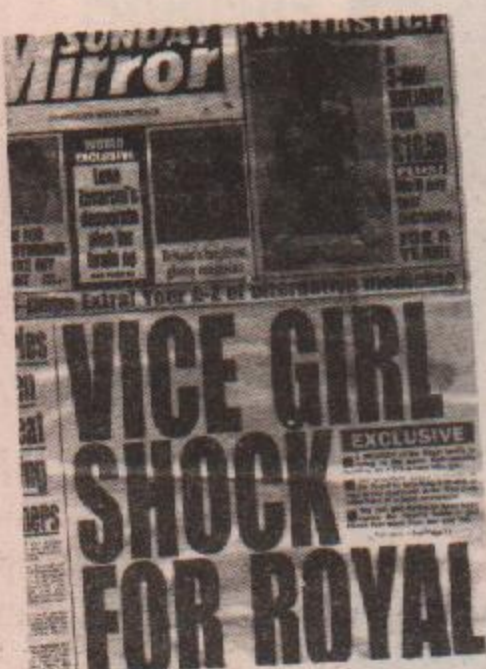
A much needed national miners support network has been launched. It is backed by the Socialist Campaign Group of MPs, Women Against Pit Closures and the NUM itself. The network can be contacted by writing to the Secretary, Jeremy Corbyn MP, 129 Seven Sisters Road, London N7 7QG. Tel 071 263 9450, Fax 071 281 5720.

## The lie machine



The News of the World marks, in its own inimitable way, the strange turn of the tide: Tory tabloids against the Tories!

"Coal Board bosses and the tarts"! There, they've done their bit for the miners. Miners and other workers would be foolish to place any trust in these, their strange new friends.



The Sunday Mirror exposed Government plans to delay a report on compensation for miners suffering from bronchitis and emphysema - so that more of the miners would die and be unable to claim the compensation! But otherwise it was pretty much business as usual.

Its front page lead: Princess Margaret's son lives "just doors away" from a prostitute. It is his safety which worries the Sunday Mirror, of course...

# Time to unite the struggles!

What a wonderful week! At last the tide is turning against the Tories. Hundreds of thousands of people have taken to the streets. What started as a protest against pit closures has turned into a great wave of anti-Tory anger.

We have made them retreat — but only for now. The war is only just beginning. Already, they are coming back with more attacks. They are set to close several London hospitals and to destroy 20,000 health service jobs.

So the question is, what do we do now? How do we organise the fightback?

It is vital to focus people's opposition to the Tories, to find ways of beginning to organise the millions of people who hate the Tories. This has to be done now, or we will lose the momen-

tum. **Build local committees against the Tories!**

Trades Councils and local Labour Parties should call together all the trade union branches, stewards' committees, health workers' and users' groups, anti-cuts campaigns, unemployed groups, student unions, black and women's groups in the area, with the aim of forming powerful and broad-based, local committees that can unify the struggles against the Tories.

If we can get committees like this off the ground, it will provide a much-needed focal point for all those who have moved into action over the past few weeks. If we do not act now we could lose the initiative.

Such committees could provide a framework for all the

concerns which have found a focus in the miners' battle against the Tories. Such committees could give support to workers in struggle. They could take the initiative, organise occupations against hospital closures, and fight to defend jobs and public services. But, most importantly, they could provide a rallying point for grass-roots rebellion that is springing up against the Tories.

Workers should not be left to fight alone against health cuts and closures, redundancies, wage cuts, contracting out and privatisation. We need to unify the fightback now!

**Do not let the leaders off the hook! The TUC should name the day!**

We need a national, TUC-called day of action and strikes against the Tory attacks. We

need a new Triple Alliance of miners, energy and powerworkers and railworkers to defend jobs, and a mass campaign of action to force a general election.

But we will be in a lot stronger position to push for these things if we can organise and unify the

current struggles. The TUC are much more likely to act and name the day for protest and strikes if we have a force which links the struggles from below.

Building local anti-Tory campaign committees is the most important thing that you can do now.

## Manchester Solidarity Rally

# Thanks to the power workers

Several hundred people attended a rally against pit closures in Manchester. The rally was held on the same day as Parkside — the last remaining pit in Lancashire — was closed.

The highlight of the meeting was a speech by Billy Pye of Parkside NUM, the youngest member of the NUM National Executive. Here is part of that speech:

"The press lied about the demonstration on Wednesday. They said there were 30,000 people. For people who weren't there I'd like to tell you there were a quarter of a million people. I was delighted to see so many people supporting us. But most of all I want to thank the 1000 power workers who walked out to support us.

"Some people are calling for

Norman Willis to get off his knees and call a general strike. To get up off his knees he would have to once have been standing up. The TUC General Council will not call a general strike and if they did, after a few days the Tories would announce some concession and the General Council would call it off. We need a general strike, but we need to build it from the bottom up.

"Some miners from Yorkshire delivered some free coal to Michael Heseltine. They spoke to his head gardener and asked what he thought Heseltine would do with the coal. The gardener told them he would probably distribute it to the local frail and elderly. What about the coal stockpiled at the power stations? Is he going to distribute that to the frail and elderly?"

# Scargill is right

Arthur Scargill summed up the kind of mass campaign against the Tories that millions of working class people want when he spoke at this Sunday's TUC march in London.

"This is not the end, this is just the beginning. We want big demonstrations like this in every town and every city..."

"The TUC should take on board the miners' call for a day of action."

Scargill's call for a TUC day of action is right. A national TUC protest on a weekday would provide a focus for solidarity strike action for the miners. It would provide a way of organising what could effectively amount to a one-day general strike.

The TUC, timid and cowardly as they are, do not look likely to call an official one day general strike. Everything we knew about Willis and friends' contemptible performance over the last dozen or more years says they will say that such action is illegal under the Tory anti-union laws and use that as an excuse to block solidarity.

So right now it's better to demand that they call a "legal" day of action and then fight to get an "illegal" one day general strike from that call.

Building up that kind of momentum is a much better way of forcing the TUC to act than to call on them to do what they have refused to do since the Tories came to power.

A national day of action and strikes would also provide a

focus for groups like the 20,000 London NHS workers who lack industrial muscle but still face the sack as a result of Tory policies.

A day of action and strikes is not all that is needed.

As argued elsewhere on this page we need to set up anti-Tory action committees in the localities that can mobilise for the miners and unify their fight with that of other groups of workers and service users.

Immediately, the miners need to develop and strengthen links with energy and railworkers with the aim of organising co-ordinated industrial action in defence of jobs when the Tories come for the miners again in January.

In short we need a new triple alliance to defend pit, rail and power jobs.

Other groups of workers who may not have any direct link with the miners should seize the moment to pursue their own demands. Now is the time to fight.

Postal workers need to fight over pay and privatisation. While local government workers need co-ordinated action against the Tory cuts and the labour councils that carry them out. The same goes for civil servants who face having their jobs contracted out and the terms, conditions and pension rights destroyed as a result of Tory policy.

Tubeworkers should ballot for strike action to stop 5,000 redundancies and on terms and

conditions under London Underground management's "Company Plan" which could be forced in before Christmas.

Many other groups of public sector workers — teachers, NHS workers, college staff etc will also have to fight over wages if they are not to bear the brunt for Tory cuts in public spending.

# Turn sympathy to solidarity

## WHETTON'S WEEK

Miners can fight and they will fight, but after the experience of last time, they need to know that they are not going to fight alone.

So last week's two big demonstrations did a lot to help morale.

But miners are going to need to see more than public sympathy — by which I mean solidarity strike action — before they really start to prepare for battle with the Tories themselves.

Scargill's call for a TUC day of action backed up by strikes has got to be supported because it's only by fighting together that we can win.

There's plenty of grounds for tying in other workers with the miners. There are the 70,000 rail, power and ancillary jobs that are on the line, for a start. And it's not just miners who suffer from rigged markets — 20,000 London healthworkers face the sack as well!

With the recession getting worse and a 2% public sector pay freeze on the way, things aren't going to get any better

for working class people. We've never had a better time to stand and fight.

I've got a simple message for John Smith.

In 1984-5, the Labour leadership missed a great opportunity to rally support behind the miners, and drive out the Tories.

The opportunity must not be missed this time. We need 100% support for the miners. John Smith should remember from which class Labour draws most of its support.

Paul Whetton was secretary of Notts Miners' Rank and File Strike Committee in 1984-5.

# Chinese Stalinists go for market

Kentucky Fried Chicken in Shanghai; the Congress of the Chinese Communist Party which ended last week in Beijing agreed to pursue its drive for private-profit economics while keeping a harsh Stalinist political regime. Half China's industrial output, and almost all its agricultural output, now comes from enterprises not owned by the central government; direct investment by foreign capitalists this year is likely to reach \$20 billion.

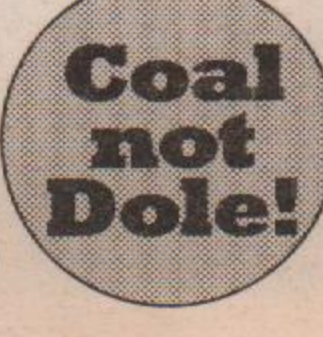


# Badges

Now available — Socialist Organiser "Coal not Dole" and "Support the Miners" badges 40p each or 10 for £3.

Also available Left Unity "Students support the miners" and plain "Coal not Dole" and "Support the miners!" badges.

All available from PO Box 823, London SE15 4NA. Cheques payable to "Socialist Organiser".



**Socialists and the revival of the labour movement**

**Where do we go from here?**

Last week the labour movement began to rise up off its knees!

Wiseacres have been telling us for years that it would never rise again, but it is rising before our eyes!

Last Wednesday, 21st, 100,000, and last Sunday, 25th, upwards of 200,000 trade unionists and their sympathisers marched through the streets of London, stung to outrage and then to action by the Tory decision to put 30,000 miners on the dole.

They marched to defend the miners, but the message they sent to the Government - enough is enough! - concerned more than the immediate fate of 30,000 miners and their families. It concerned the running of Britain. It was a protest against the philosophy according to which the Tories have been running Britain for 13 years.

Those who marched represented millions who do not want Britain any longer to be governed according to the savage laws of profit and the blind laws of the market as interpreted by Capital's Tory high priests.

By marching they told the Tories that they are no longer prepared quietly to tolerate such social atrocities as the closing down of most of Britain's mines.

Both demonstrations presented something not seen for a very long time in Britain - a great mustering of the ranks of labour. Wave after wave of the women and men who make up the labour movement marched behind their banners. Engineers, firefighters, civil ser-

vants, transport workers, seafarers, post office workers and many others carried their union banners, shop stewards' banners, and district committee banners as if

**"Though the rain came down in drenching bucketfuls, last week we had a sense of the sun rising after the long cold Arctic night. The whole political climate is changing"**

attending a great initial roll-call of the labour movement.

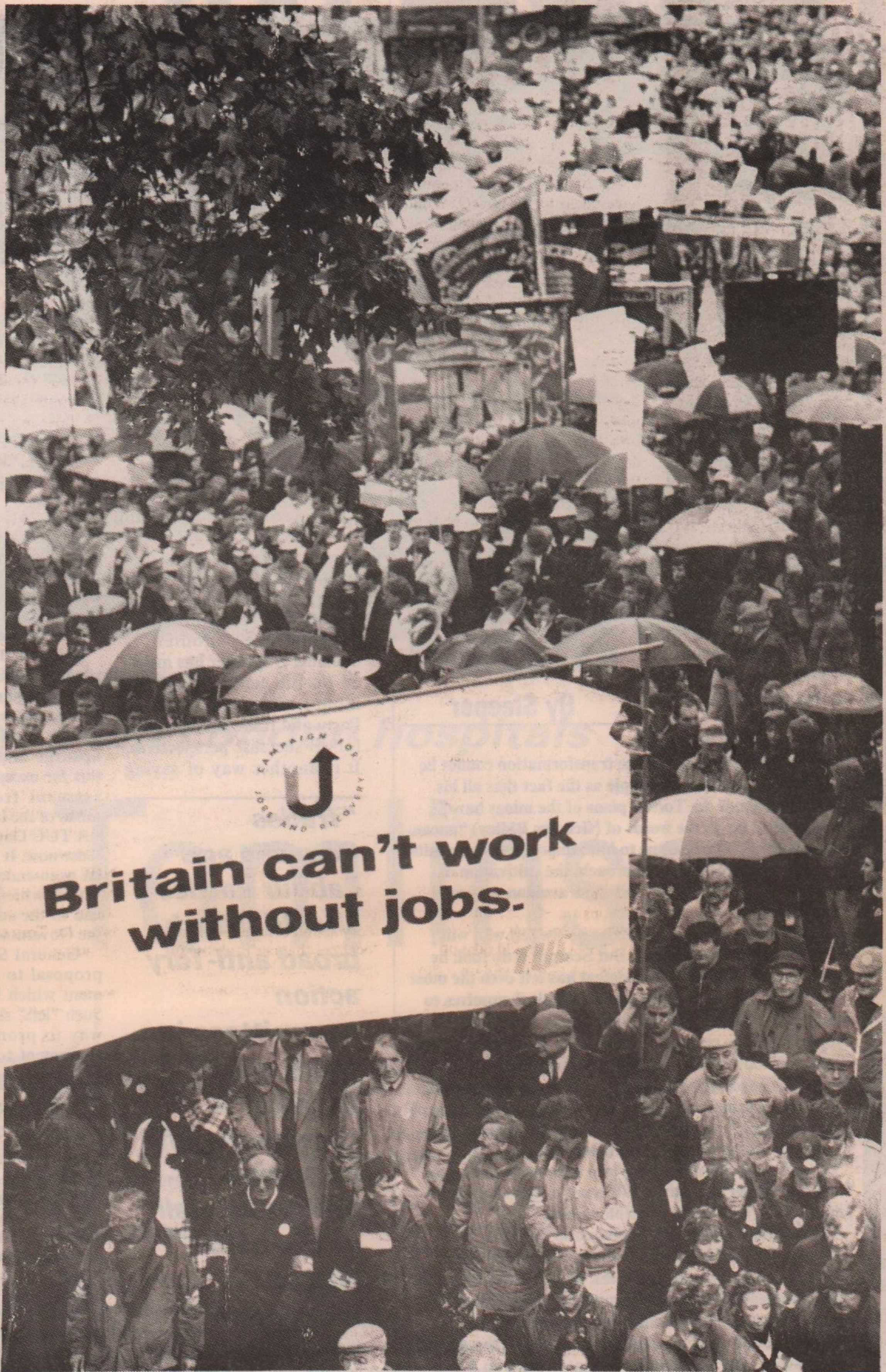
The tribes of the left were there, a small component in big working-class demonstrations.

The Labour Party was there, with banners and recruiting leaflets.

So was Labour Party leader John Smith. He made a miserable, spiritless, "statesmanlike" speech on Sunday. The presence of the Labour Party leader at that demonstration, side by side with Arthur Scargill, was far more significant than anything he said there.

It signifies that there is still a labour movement in Britain, a great powerful mass movement of eight and a half million workers, with a political wing in Parliament.

The old trade union movement has been cut, bled, shrunk, and disoriented in the 1980s. Much of "growth industry" remains un-unionised. Unions are slimmer and weaker, their leaders less self-confi-



Sunday 25 October: "a great muster of the ranks of labour". Photo: John Harris

dent.

Poor Norman Willis, looking like he expects to be kicked but would be grateful, nevertheless, for the attention, is now the public face of the TUC.

But the labour movement exists still, massive, powerful, and aware of itself as a movement. When that movement stirs, it can do great things. Driven to outrage it has already begun to change the political climate in Britain.

Thus, though on Wednesday the weather was cold, and on Sunday the rain came down in drenching bucketfuls, last week it was possible to have a sense of the sun rising after the long cold Arctic night through which the labour movement has come! The whole political climate is changing!

With better leaders, the labour movement could now do great things, quickly. We have the leaders we have. And, it is important to

remember, we have a movement only beginning to raise itself up out of a long prostration.

The belief that the labour movement is dead as a socially coherent force has taken a deep hold in recent years on sections of the left - twisting and warping them into strange sectarian shapes and postures. That always happens when the labour movement is at an ebb

Continued on page 4

**Advisory Editorial Board**

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- Vladimir Derer
- Terry Eagleton
- Jatin Haria (Labour Party Black Sections)
- Dorothy Macedo
- Joe Marino
- John McIlroy
- John Nicholson
- Peter Tatchell

Members of the Advisory Committee are drawn from a broad cross section of the left who are opposed to the Labour Party's witch-hunt against *Socialist Organiser*. Views expressed in articles are the responsibility of the authors and not of the Advisory Editorial Board.

**Labour should use Maastricht to bring down the Tories!**

Labour's pro-Maastricht leaders are now talking about voting against the Tories in the House of Commons vote on Maastricht, on 4 November.

Good! The labour movement must demand of every Labour MP nothing less than that he or she votes to defeat this government. Many anti-Maastricht Tories say they too will vote against the government, and if they do then Major can be defeated.

Major has said that if he is defeated,

he will call a General Election.

This newspaper is not anti-European. We are in favour of European unity, even under the bourgeoisie. Against undemocratic bourgeois arrangements such as those embodied in the Maastricht Treaty, we advocate European working-class unity to fight for democracy and socialism.

Whatever your attitude to Europe in general, the number one issue before the working class is to bring down this

Tory government by any means possible.

For Labour now to let "the issue" of Maastricht, or even European unity, sway their vote, would be a criminal act. Every vote should be regarded as a vote for or against the continuation of this government.

Labour should act as an implacable opposition. If Major then reneges on his promise-threat to "go to the country", then he will further discredit himself.

*"The emancipation of the working class is also the emancipation of all human beings without distinction of sex or race."*

Karl Marx  
Socialist Organiser  
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# Where do we go from here?



Arthur Scargill with supporters. Photo: John Harris

## So far, so good, Arthur

The rehabilitation of Arthur Scargill has been little short of miraculous. During the 1984/85 strike he was a national bogey man, a threat to democracy and civilisation as we know it. After the strike's defeat he became a figure of fun, his class war rhetoric held up for ridicule as the rantings of an irrelevant dinosaur.

Now, Scargill's back in the role of national folk-hero. The transformation cannot be explained by anything as simple as the fact that all his predictions about the Tories' plans of the mines have turned out to be (in the words of Nicholas Ridley) "uncannily accurate". What seems to have impressed the pundits is a new "statesman-like" approach, the cultivation of "public opinion" and (especially) the avoidance of calls for precipitate strike action.

Undoubtedly, there will be those on the left who will accuse Scargill of going soft. But Scargill is no fool: he surely knows that the 1984/5 defeat has left even the most loyal NUM stalwarts reluctant to commit themselves to all-out strike action without some pretty firm pledges of support from the rest of the movement. And given the present precarious state of the government, the idea of forcing a U-turn without the threat of immediate strike action is not completely ridiculous (last week's promise of a "moratorium" was far from a U-turn but it did demonstrate how vulnerable the government is).

To take these considerations into account before gambling everything on a strike call is not a sign of Scargill going soft — it is simply sensible tactics.

The wisdom of Scargill's approach so far has been shown by the change in mood amongst rank and file NUM members over the last week or so: miners who had been resigned to closure and tempted by "generous" redundancy pay are now changing their minds. At Parkside colliery in Lancashire (one of the 10 threatened with closure after the 90 days "moratorium") an NUM branch meeting last Saturday voted to reverse its previous position and to resist redundancies using "any means possible".

But, of course there are dangers: at the emergency meeting of the TUC General Council on Saturday 17 October Scargill was more or less blackmailed into ruling out industrial action for the foreseeable future, in exchange for official TUC backing for a "hearts and minds" campaign in support of the miners. The grandees of New Realism — notably Bill Jordan of the AEEU and John Edmonds of the GMB — proposed a "Jobs and Recovery Campaign", concentrating on a call for "urgent discussion with the government and CBI about a programme for national recovery". The emphasis of the campaign is to be lobbying members of all parties in the Commons and Lords, buttering up church-people and the CBI and supporting legal moves to block pit closures. Even last Wednesday's lobby was considered a bit too militant (it was on a weekday, so might be construed as encouraging solidarity action) and so it had to be played down and the march on Sunday 25 was emphasised instead.

Of course, the TUC's miserable "Jobs and Recovery Campaign" is not going to be enough to reverse the pit closures, let alone force a fundamental change in the government's economic policy. But it should not be simply dismissed out of hand: the idea of generalising the miners' campaign into a campaign against the Tories is not a bad one in principle. And anything that helps build the miners' confidence in preparation for eventual industrial action is to be welcomed. So far, Scargill has played his hand cleverly and has certainly gained more from playing along with the TUC than he has had to sacrifice.

This phony war situation can't last indefinitely, but so far so good: the time for criticising Scargill hasn't arrived yet.

### INSIDE THE UNIONS



By Sleeper

From page 3

and the class struggle, by whose rhythms and tempos socialists must regulate their activity, seems scarcely to exist. That too can begin to change.

Against the widespread retreat of the left from the labour movement — and it is a retreat, no matter what "militant", "socialist", and righteously anti-reformist slogans are shouted — Socialist Organiser has insisted on the centrality of the labour movement, Labour Party and trade unions alike, for all socialist perspectives. It is another way of saying

**"Trades Councils and Labour Parties should launch broad anti-Tory action committees in every area, drawing in community and campaign groups as well as the usual labour movement affiliates."**

that the working class is central to all socialist perspectives. There is no longer any reason to doubt who was right in this dispute.

Where do we go from here? The immediate focus of the movement must be defence of the miners. The Tories continue with closures: there will most likely be a new attempt at widespread shutdowns in the New Year. Against closures, the miners should seize control of the threatened pits and then conduct a tremendous political campaign around such occupations, building political support and solidarity strikes.

Last week's demonstrations proved that a TUC-called Day of Action on a working day would bring millions of workers out in support of the miners — and in protest at the long chain of past and present Tory atrocities, the latest of which is the proposal to close ten London hospitals. Trade unions and Labour Parties should demand that the TUC take up Arthur Scargill's proposal, and call such a Day of Action.

Trades Councils and Labour Parties should launch broad anti-Tory action committees in every area, drawing in commu-

nity and campaign groups as well as the usual labour movement affiliates. These action committees, organising rallies, demonstrations, leafletting, petitions, and meetings, will provide a framework for thousands of people who want to remain active after last week's marches.

Even after last week's demonstration, the call for "General Strike Now" still makes no sense. If by a miracle the TUC were "now" to declare a General Strike, it would probably be a flop.

The ground has not been prepared. The labour movement is only beginning to feel a limited confidence in itself and in what it might do. The present upsurge might not have got this far except for the encouragement from outside the ranks of the labour movement.

A TUC Day of Action makes sense now. It is not the same as an open-ended all-out General Strike which would have to end in the surrender of either the Government or the TUC.

"General Strike Now" is a proposal to abort the movement which began last week! Such "left" shouting is not the way to promote the labour movement towards a general industrial confrontation with the Tories. It is a way to brand the left as toytown and irresponsible.

Were revolutionary socialists in the Marx-Engels-Lenin-Trotsky tradition to find themselves, in the present situation in Britain, with a majority on the TUC, they would not call an all-out General Strike now. They would suspect anyone in their own ranks who made such a proposal of being a police

agent, if they did not already know him to be an unteachable blockhead!

Starting from the situation now, a revolutionary TUC would proceed by way of days of action, mass demonstrations, and encouraging other groups of workers — railworkers, Tube workers, health workers, and so on — to bring their own disputes forward.

It would undertake the political work of agitation and propaganda needed to raise up the as yet untouched millions of the labour movement and of the unorganised to an understanding of the need to fight.

It would recall the words of Frederick Engels: "the political strike must either prove victorious immediately by the threat alone... or it must end in a colossal fiasco, or, finally, lead directly to the barricades".

A revolutionary Marxist TUC would know that a general strike is a serious business, and that an open-ended general strike "now" — should they even get enough millions of workers to answer their instruction "now" — would be the short road to outright political defeat of the movement just starting.

They would know that the only TUC which would play this game would be one like that which used a nine-day general strike in 1926 to betray and behead the mass working-class movement.

The General Strike slogan was artificially prominent on last week's demonstrations because it was raised by the Socialist Workers' Party (a determined opponent of the call for a general strike during the 1984-5 miners' strike, when it did make sense, and it was the duty of socialists to argue for a general labour mobilisa-

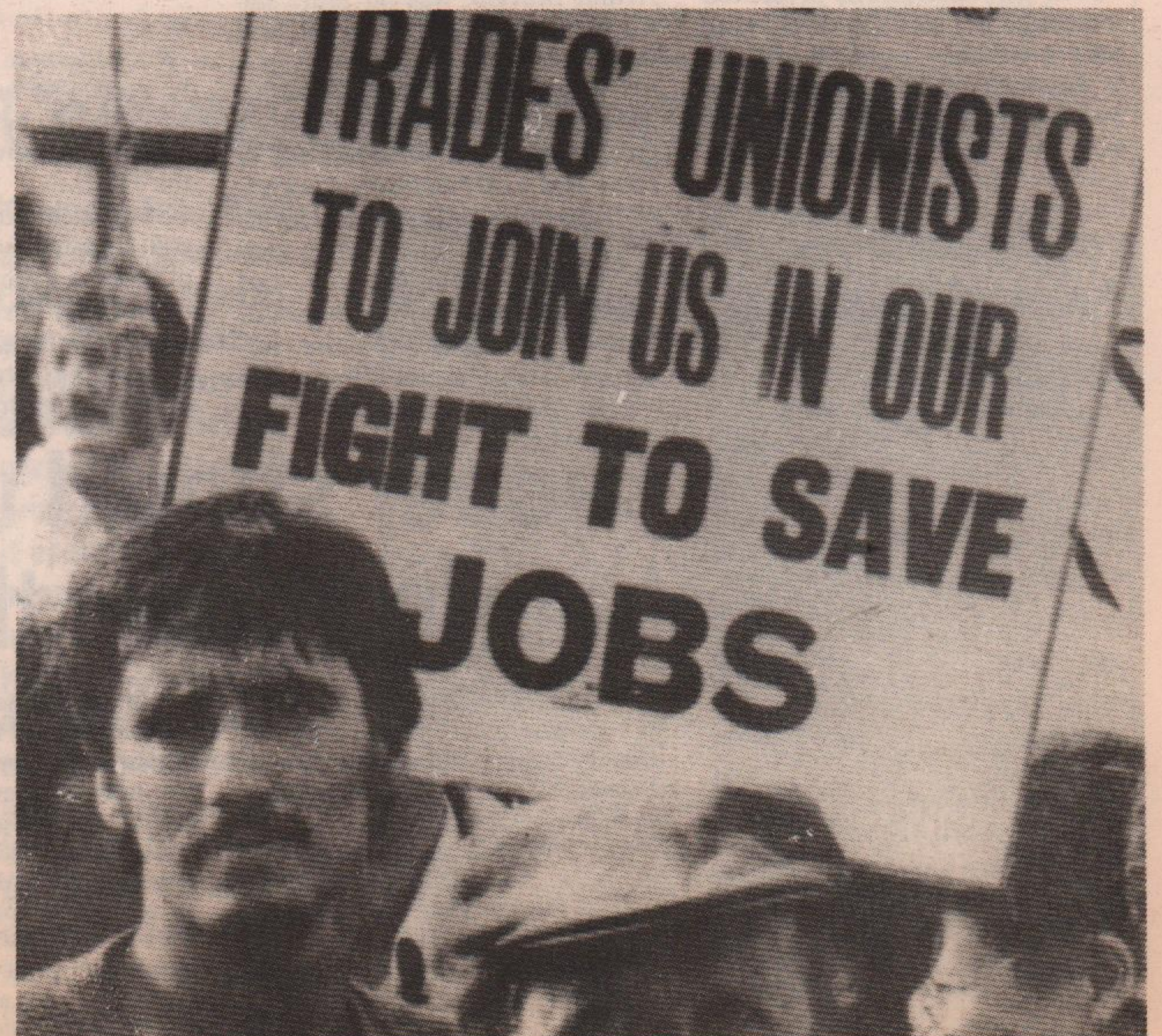
tion to back the embattled miners), which is a big pres-

**"General Strike Now' is a proposal to abort the movement which began last week. Such 'left' shouting is not the way to promote a general industrial confrontation with the Tories. It is a way to brand the left as toytown and irresponsible".**

ence in the shrunken left, and because the SWP is rich enough to spend thousands of pounds saturating demonstrations with its placards.

It is not serious politics! Cut off from the rhythms and logic of the class struggle now just as crippling as they were during the great miners' strike of 1984-5, when they did not dare promote a general strike, these sectarians jump in at the first stage of the labour movement's revival with the most advanced of all slogans (short of "Revolution Now!")

It makes no sense unless you remember that they are not in fact really proposing slogans



Miners lobby the TUC demanding solidarity, September 1984



Health workers can win wide support. Photo: John Harris

**Report threatens ten London hospitals**

# Stop Tomlinson!

**A**fter the pits, the Tory axe is now set to fall on London's hospitals.

The Tomlinson Report into the future of the health service in the capital, backed by Health Secretary Virginia Bottomley, has just been published.

It means that 10 famous hospitals face closure and 20,000 health workers could lose their jobs.

The report includes the following recommendations:

- Barts to close as a hospital

**We need a one day London NHS strike!**

**W**hen not normally militant GP's are responding to the closure of four main London teaching hospitals with remarks like "we need one more not four less!" the insanity of the Tomlinson proposals should be clear to everyone.

However, Tomlinson will not be stopped without concerted action from the health unions.

This summer's strike a Charing Cross was a start.

What's needed now is the London wide one-day NHS strike with emergency cover. It would provide a focus for activity and open up the possibility of solidarity strikes from other workers.

with accident and emergency facilities. Instead there is to be a day time only health care centre on part of the site.

- Either Guy's or St Thomas's will close, almost certainly the latter.
- The Middlesex Hospital site will close.
- Two weeks after Princess Di opened a new multi-million pound clinical block, the Royal Marsden faces closure. Some facilities will be transferred to the Charing Cross site.
- The Royal Brompton will be sold.
- St Mary's faces big cuts and will be partly sold off.
- The Royal National Ear, Nose and Throat hospital and the London Hospital for Tropical Diseases will close.
- Queen Charlotte's maternity hospital will be axed.
- The Queen Elizabeth Hospital for Children will also close, putting a big question mark over the future of Great Ormond Street Children's hospital.
- London's children are missing out on crucial vaccinations and women on vital cervical smear tests as a result of a shortage of GPs.
- 150,000 Londoners are on hospital waiting lists.
- Over 10% of all operations are cancelled because of lack of staff or facilities.
- 28 London hospitals had to close at one time or another last year because there were no beds left.
- 18% of patients have to wait

over 2 years for treatment.

- London has 65% of the bed capacity per person of Paris and 50% that of New York.

The final result of the implementation of the Tomlinson report is that 250,000 people will be denied hospital treatment of one kind or another each year.

While useful caring jobs are slashed, the introduction of the market and Trusts into the NHS has only lead to a big increase in the number of managers who are needed to attempt to run the rigged and bureaucratic market for health care.

Just like the miners, health workers are very popular amongst wide layers of workers and beyond. Labour and the unions should take up the battle to defend and extend the NHS and stop the creeping privatisation of health care.

## The economics of the madhouse

The Tomlinson report follows hot on the heels of another enquiry by the Kings Fund Institute, which argued for a similar hospital shutdown. The rationale behind both reports is that NHS resources in London need to be switched from hospitals to "primary care" services — GPs and healthcentres.

There is no doubt that these services are massively under resourced in London — but the Tomlinson proposals won't change that. The government is not pledged to any extra expenditure

on healthcare in the capital and the immediate savings will be clawed back by existing hospitals in London via the "internal market". The proposals could only work if the hospital sites could be sold off — in the middle of a property slump! Anyhow, the waiting list figures for inner Londoners just don't add up with the report. The assumption is that people will have to travel further and further to the fringes of London to get treated. The NHS unions and healthcare user groups need to have their own

campaign, separate from the inevitable lobbying that will take place by consultants. The doctors' campaign will hinge on protecting the specialist medical functions in the hospitals and can probably be bought off, even if every outpatients' department and casualty department in inner London is closed down. We cannot defend the NHS in London simply by saying what wonderful institutions they are — the target should be the Tories' NHS "market" which has brought the crisis.

or activity for the millions of the labour movement, but slogans and activity to "build the party" by recruiting young people who want to fight and have had no chance of learn to understand how to fight, or how to relate to the labour movement.

**F**or the SWP, "General Strike!" is also an alternative - on paper, not in life - to the necessary political focus and slogans dictated by the situation the labour movement is in: the need to fight for a Labour government.

Yet, the Labour Party remains the labour movement's only alternative to the Tories, and, short of an immediate socialist revolution, there is no way other than by a Labour government to break this Tory Government of big business. Even a general strike would not immediately change that: in 1918, the traitor right wing of the German Social Democracy was, even after soviets had been created, the working-class "party of government".

Denial that there is this necessary political dimension to the labour movement - through the Labour Party, for now - is usually no more than a way of abandoning politics to the right wing.

In fact, the SWP's call for a General Strike to kick out the Tories must translate into either a call for revolution now, or a call for a General Strike to force the Tories to call a General Election! This, we repeat, is not serious politics. It is trifling and slogan-mongering to "build the revolutionary party". It will not build a revolutionary party, but a stupid and irresponsible sect.

The Labour Left is in bad shape? Yes. One reason for that is the decline of trade union confidence and militancy in the 1980s. The revival of that militancy opens up the prospect of a revival of the Labour Left too.

In any case the movement must — if it is to develop, and not be a mere splutter of indignation — be a two-pronged movement: escalating trade union action and solidarity around defence of the miners and on such questions as hospital closures, combined with a political campaign against the Tories, and within the labour movement against the right wing.

Last week's march of the labour movement in serried ranks through London's streets was a physical illustration of the processes that will now go on, or can be made to go on throughout the country. Socialists must go into the labour movement and help it towards that self-realisation we saw the beginning of last week.

- Support the miners!
- Demand that the TUC calls a day of action on a workday: try to get a strike in your workplace in support of it.

- Bring forward your own disputes to link up with the miners. Now is the time to fight!

- Through local Trades Councils and Labour Parties, form broad anti-Tory campaign committees, to agitate and organise against all the closures and cuts.

- Demand that the Labour and TUC leaders lead a mass protest movement to force a new General Election.

- Drive out the Tories! Fight for a Labour government!

# No choice on 3 November

## GRAFFITI

As Bill Clinton keeps saying, Americans are working harder than they did ten years ago for less reward.

As he doesn't say, Clinton will do very little to change that. He'll also do little to deal with the growth of poverty in the US — 36 million people below the official poverty line, including one in four of six-year olds.

35 million Americans have no health insurance at all, and infant mortality and life expectancy in New York are worse than in Shanghai.

Clinton's most radical proposals? Cutting off all, absolutely all, welfare benefits for jobless people still unemployed after two years, and cutting 100,000 federal government jobs.

After more media coverage, political campaigning and spending of money than any other election in the world, the US presidential contest will motivate only about half of the electorate enough for them to bother to vote.

Voter turn-outs among the well-off in the US are comparable to Europe — 80% or so — but the mass of the working class and the poor don't vote, or don't even get on the electoral register.

"ABC", so they say, is the choice of many American voters — "anything but Bush or Clinton".

The problem about actually getting a wider choice is the vast expenditure necessary to get into elected office in the US — mayor, House of Representatives, Senate, Governor, let alone President.

66% of big company bosses, according to a poll in June, back Bush, with 20% supporting maverick billionaire, Ross Perot, and only 5% backing Clinton.

While industrialists are overwhelmingly Republicans, some key sectors of the capitalist class give crucial support to the Democrats — investment banking, real estate and insurance.

Since the 1930s, American trade unions have mostly backed the Democrats.

Clinton, a supporter of harsh anti-union laws as Governor of Arkansas, has thrown even fewer sops to the trade unions than previous Democratic candidates, and support for an independent Labour Party based on the trade unions is increasing especially around "Labor Party Advocates", a group led by Tony Mazzocchi, an official of the Oil, Chemical and Allied

## Workers' Union.

LPA is, however, still very far from being able to run a labour candidate for President. According to the San Francisco-based monthly *Socialist Action*, turnout for rallies on a speaking tour by Mazzocchi has been mediocre, indicating that the campaign is still at an early stage.

The main independent left voice in the presidential contest has been Ron Daniels.

Daniels was Jesse Jackson's deputy campaign manager in 1988, but has now broken with Jackson and the Democrats.

His "Campaign for a New Tomorrow" has oriented mostly to African-Americans, but with a clear anti-capitalist impulse. Daniels is a member of "Labor Party Advocates".

His platform includes: full employment; free and adequate public education; affordable housing for all; a 50% cut in the military budget, complete nuclear disarmament and withdrawal of all US troops from abroad; "workers' rights to organise and retain unions"; abortion rights; and rights for Native Americans.

Daniels has also called for a one-day General Strike in the US to promote these demands.

George Bush's campaign has had to retreat from the bluster and noise about "family values" which dominated the Republican Party convention this summer.

It alarmed American voters — especially women, who give Clinton a 20% lead over Bush while it is relatively level-pegging among men — and Bush has toned down the message.

But Hillary Clinton has still felt obliged to smile sweetly and offer cookie recipes — "If the wife comes through as being too strong and too intelligent," commented Richard Nixon, "it makes the husband look like a wimp".

Wimp? When George Bush was asked if he had ever, in his life, disagreed with his father, he replied: "It never occurred to me to differ".



Clinton: conservative Democrat

# The pack still bays for blood

## PRESS GANG



By Jim Denham

The extraordinary spectacle of the Tory press in full cry against John Major's government shows no sign of abating.

At the head of the baying pack, the *Sun* is now as rabidly anti-government as it was anti-Labour at the last election. Major, Lamont and Heseltine are now routinely abused in the kind of language previously reserved for Neil Kinnock and "loonie left" councils. Last Tuesday, for instance, the *Sun* ran a blank front page representing "everything that Michael Heseltine knows about the working people of Britain". Its enthusiasm for the miners' campaign has rivalled the *Mirror's*, while columnists like the neanderthal Garry Bushell and the only marginally less poisonous Richard Littlejohn prattle on about the "nobility", "dignity" etc., of the miners. Even the old enemy, Arthur Scargill, has been compared favourably to John Major (this from the paper that in 1984 described the NUM as "scum of the earth").

The reasoning behind this *volte face* is not hard to fathom: the editor, Kelvin Mackenzie, knows a sinking ship when he sees one and

he's damned if he's going to let Major's plummeting popularity rating take the *Sun's* circulation down with it (though there are signs that this is happening anyway: evidently, plenty of readers remember the paper's post-election boast "IT WAS THE SUN WOT WON IT").

**"At the head of the pack, the *Sun* is as rabidly anti-government as it was anti-Labour at the last election."**

Finally, there is the fact that Kelvin and the boys never really liked Major anyway and have not forgiven him, Heseltine or Lamont for their High Treason of two years ago.

The *Daily Telegraph's* anti-government vituperation is scarcely less shrill than the *Sun's*, though motivated by slightly different considerations. The *Telegraph's* Max Hastings was unique among Tory editors in neither liking nor fearing Margaret Thatcher. He is also, by all accounts, a genuine believer in the principle of editorial independence. He now believes that the government's economic failure is such a fiasco that, at the very least, Norman Lamont's head must roll. The similarity with Kelvin Mackenzie at the *Sun* is that both editors have a natural empathy with their respective readerships: Mackenzie with the angry working class Tory voters of the South East and the Midlands; Hastings with the

disillusioned middle classes of the Home Counties.

The third and potentially most powerful element of the anti-Major Tory press pack, is the *Sunday Telegraph* under its new editor, Charles Moore. Unlike Hastings at the daily paper, Moore is an unreconstructed Thatcherite and a personal favourite of *Telegraph* owner Conrad Black. Moore has never attempted to hide his dislike of — and contempt for — John Major. Although the *Sunday Telegraph* has a much smaller circulation than the daily paper, it is, if anything, more influential in the inner sanctum of the Tory Party. It has close links with the *Spectator* magazine (also owned by the sinister Black) where Moore's cronies, Frank Johnson and Simon Heffer, keep up a constant baying against Major. The Black/Moore/Johnson/Heffer axis has made it clear that anything less than the overthrow of the present Tory leadership and the return of the one they call "The Prime Minister in Exile", will satisfy them.

Meanwhile, over at Britain's only consistently pro-Labour paper, everything ought to be going just swimmingly. The old monster Maxwell is gone, the Tories and their press are in disarray, and the *Mirror's* circulation is on the up. Under editor Richard Stott, the paper has lately regained much of its old flair. Its coverage of the miners' campaign has been exemplary.

But last Friday, the staff of the *Mirror* very nearly halted

production, and leading journalists (including political editor Joe Haines, star columnist Paul Foot and Stott himself) were on the verge of resignation. The cause was one man: David Montgomery, appointed chief executive of Mirror Group Newspapers by the National Westminster Bank, who now control the majority of MGN stock.

**"There was something prima donna-ish about those *Mirror* hacks getting worked up over Montgomery's appointment."**

Montgomery is a former editor of the *News of the World* and *Today* and a long-time Murdoch functionary. He is also, on all the evidence, a singularly unlikeable character. But there was something distinctly prima donna-ish about the reaction of all those *Mirror* hacks getting so worked up about his appointment. After all, wasn't Joe Haines the hagiographer and toady-in-chief to Robert Maxwell? Didn't Paul Foot repeatedly justify his willingness to work under the Maxwell regime? So why all this fuss about David Montgomery — especially after he signed a document promising no sackings and no change in the *Mirror's* political line? Paul Foot apparently declared: "it's the Maxwell situation all over again". But it isn't, and Paul Foot knows it isn't. Bad conscience is the only explanation.

# Women need answers!

## WOMEN'S EYE

By Sigrid Fisher

Perhaps Belinda Weaver (*SO* 537) read a different *Women's Eye* to the one I wrote (*SO* 536). She certainly missed the point I was making, and her response — to go to great lengths into why smacking children is wrong and how there are no excuses for such actions — does nothing to help women facing daily, incessant stress, hardship and isolation.

Socialism is supposed to offer people answers. When someone suffers injustice, discrimination or oppression in this capitalist society it is our job to provide some sort of political analysis as to why this is happening, and to take that further by arguing that under socialism things would be different, would be better. The point of my article was exactly that — that women/carers have a raw deal in our society. What women need — more money; access to affordable/free childcare; the opportunity to have time and resources to do something for ourselves; jobs — these things are denied us.

What we do get is constant pressure to be a financial magi-

cian/nursery teacher/earth mother/head chef/domestic and Superwoman, at least. And to be happy doing it.

These jobs have become ours because this government's policies place women firmly in the home with their children, and so they have cut all community facilities that could make women's lives manageable and rewarding. This is capitalism.

**"Under socialism, those doing the important job of raising children would not have to do it all day, every day, on their own."**

Socialist politics do not believe a woman's place is in the home: socialism offers women that equality in society. Socialism recognises that while it is the women who have the babies, child-rearing is not enough to provide women with life-satisfaction. The image of a woman happily talking baby-talk, pushing pushchairs,

changing nappies, baking bread etc. is a myth and an insult and no-one should expect a woman to be happy with that lot.

Women who do immerse themselves completely in the motherhood rôle are making the best of a bad job; they accept the basic agenda set by the right wing/moral majority and establish goals within it in order to get some sense of achievement and importance from this work. They have to do this because there are no alternatives offered to them — to leave your child for even a short period to pursue your own activity is still seen as selfish and neglectful. The guilt is hard to reason with.

Under socialism, those doing the undeniably important job of raising children would not have to do it all day, every day. They would not do it on their own, unsupported. They would not do it for nothing. And they would not have to do it at the cost of their own self-esteem and self-activity. They would not be silenced, denigrated, neglected or ignored and so their energies given to children would be positive as they would stem from choice, rather than being continuously enforced.

This would reduce violence against children, as this would relieve stress, resentment and poverty. Without these political

changes in society, we turn our backs on women, leaving them to struggle on their own. And this was the point of my article.

**"Socialism is supposed to offer answers. When someone suffers injustice in this society it is our job to provide analysis as to why."**

I do not and never have excused violence against children in any form, for any reason. However, I live in the real world and recognise that unless we do something to help women to change women's position in society, violence against children will continue. As long as our answer is to single-mindedly condemn women who aren't superhuman, who don't have endless patience and constant control when faced with intolerable circumstances, we — as Belinda does — miss the point and fail women whom society has failed for long enough.

# Rail, mine and power workers must unite!

The Tories' pit closure plans won't just affect the miners and their communities.

5,500 railworkers' jobs and eight depots could go too. The toll could be even worse for workers in the power stations, already 8,000 jobs have gone in the last two years, now the National Grid Company expects 60% over-capacity in the power industry in five years' time. Imagine the scale of the job losses.

United, the miners, rail and power workers have tremendous strength. Now is the time to use it.

A triple alliance of railworkers, powerworkers and miners must be built. If they fight together they can pull the plug on Major.



Railway rank and file respected miners' pickets in 1984-85. A united fight today is vital

## "We've got 90 days to prepare"

By a RMT member

No less than any other workers, rail workers need to be concerned about the government's attacks on the mining industry. The effects of the Tories' pit closure programme have been spelt out in the mass media linking the loss of 30,000 mining jobs to a further 70,000 other jobs.

Many of these are railway jobs. Almost every pit has a rail link of Merry-Go-Round trains to take coal to the power stations. Despite BR's attempts to divide its finances into different sectors for separate pieces of the railway, they are nonetheless interlinked. Take out a large part of the coal collection and

the "Train Load Freight" sector could collapse. Gone then is this payment to help keep going the relevant parts of the railway operation. The cost of these is then wholly borne by other sectors or they are axed. And so it goes on touching almost every part of BR.

At the moment BR has not been wholly exposed to the cruelties of the market and so the market does not work its remorseless logic... yet. But that prospect hangs in the air and we are constantly reminded of it by talk of competing and profit margins: cheered occasionally by a free "sector" tie or news of a "sector" table tennis competition.

It is because of the drive to divide BR that the attack has been made on our national conditions of service

so far tolerated by the national union. New working patterns have been imposed on one department (Signals and Telecom) and threatened for others. In Manchester the four union representatives have been sacked for standing up for local and national agreements.

**"No less than any other workers, railworkers need to take industrial action alongside the miners and to encourage the miners to fight again."**

No less than any other workers, railworkers need to take industrial action alongside the miners and to encourage the miners to fight again. Our record from 1984-85 is a chequered one. From the ground up a movement arose to refuse to handle coal during the dispute which was endorsed by our leadership; but that same leadership twice choked a fight over pay during the miners' dispute which could have opened up a new

front in all our interests.

We need now to play as strong a part as possible in encouraging a campaign to unite all workers threatened by redundancies, closures, the logic of the "market" and in defence of public services. The mounting burden of expectations is being placed on the miners in the hope that, once again, they will rise up and fight for all of us as they did in 1984-85. But they were defeated then and memories are not that short. They are also fewer and weaker now and yet more coal is stockpiled at the power stations.

Railworkers have not been defeated. Indeed the last time we were out, along with the tubeworkers, we scored a great victory in 1989. The only retreat since then has had Jimmy Knapp's signature on it.

Despite their intentions, the Tories have now given us 90 days' notice of their plans. They want to use that time to prepare; and so must we. We must build the campaign against all closures, united in defence of all workers, giving encouragement to the miners and confidence to ourselves to draw a line that they shall not pass.

## Railworkers should strike alongside the miners

By a train freight guard, ASLEF West of Scotland

The rail unions should do everything they can to get a co-ordinated legal strike in defence of jobs alongside the miners. 5,500 jobs are on the line.

If Rail Freight management won't give a cast-iron guarantee that there will be no compulsory redundancies and that the

Promotion Transfer and Redundancy agreement will be honoured, then the rail unions have got an official dispute. For sure management will duck and weave but it shouldn't be beyond Knapp and Fullick's negotiating skills to pin them down.

If that approach fails the only option left is an unofficial fight.

Whatever happens, railworkers must strike with the miners, otherwise the whole freight sector could be finished.

## Power workers strike for the miners

Well over 1,000 power station workers struck last Wednesday (21 October) in support of the miners.

The strikes, mainly by engineering construction workers at Drax and Ratcliffe-On-Soar, gave a glimpse of the kind of united action that could beat back the Tories' pit closure plans.

Many of the strikers were involved in work on de-sulphurisation plants of the coal-fired power stations. If 31 pits shut then that kind of work will no longer be on offer. The case for solidarity action is clear — the miners' fight is their fight.

The crucial thing now is to use last week's strikes as a springboard for building towards co-ordinated strike action by power workers, miners and railworkers to defend jobs.

Already there are signs of movement in this direction. The industrial unions at British Nuclear Fuels have called on the TUC energy committee to convene an emergency conference of all energy workers in the coal, gas, oil and nuclear industries. They fear that by the second decade of the next century there will be only one nuclear power station left. Nuclear power will account for just 1% of energy needs as opposed to the current 20%.

It seems that even the right-wing officials who lead the BNFL unions can now see the need for unity with other energy workers like the miners. They have called for the formation of action committees of coal, nuclear and power station workers. They are right, but with one qualification, rail and other transport workers should be invited too.

## Support the Piccadilly 4

In August, four rail guards at Manchester Piccadilly were sacked for standing up against a management who continuously broke agreements. Immediately the guards staged a 24-hour stoppage. A ballot in favour of strike action was held but a judge ruled that it would now be illegal for the guards' union, the RMT, to take any action in defence of the four, or even to ballot for it.

Paul Walker and Tony Crowther, two of the sacked four, spoke to Socialist Organiser.

We are trying for a Special General Meeting of the union to discuss the sackings and the new machinery of negotiation that has just been signed by the union. All four of us are travelling around to meetings arguing for it.

We want the machinery changed, and we also want to look at the question of breaking the law. We believe the union should be prepared to defy the law because the courts have made it clear

that we can't be re-instated within the law. After taking such a decision, the union would have to have a campaign, leading up to a ballot. In the present climate, with the anti-trade union laws, resistance is the only way forward.

The union is concerned with protecting the funds from sequestrators rather than protecting the members who give the funds.

The union should use us as the focal point of a campaign to:

1. get our jobs back;
2. defend all conditions of service under threat from the imposition of the new Machinery;
3. go on to fight privatisation.

# Magnificent miners: t

We continue from last week our story of the greatest strike in modern British history.

The forward-movement phase of the strike ended on August 1, when the High Court ordered the seizure of the South Wales NUM's funds. The union had defied an injunction against picketing granted to two haulage firms.

The Tories were upping the stakes. The seizure of a trade union's funds was a matter for the whole labour movement, not for that trade union alone. It was an attack on the whole labour movement — and only the whole labour movement could hope to convince and beat the government that stood behind the courts.

Miners occupied the area NUM headquarters and demonstrators gathered outside to hear area president Emyln Williams explain what the labour movement needed to do:

"We hope trade unions will show solidarity with the miners, and as of today throughout the country there will be a general strike" (SO 190).

Arthur Scargill called on the TUC for "physical support". But nothing happened.

As *Socialist Organiser* commented: "The strange thing about the savage fine on the South Wales NUM is that the other unions haven't come to their defence. The cry for a general strike should have rung through the labour movement at every level. Instead we have a numb silence at the top" (SO 191).

After all the clamour and the uproar of the summer, suddenly there was numb silence. Some days later, Ron Todd of the TGWU did start talking about plans for a 'big bang' of trade union solidarity, but nothing came of that. The same numb silence would happen again, and more damagingly, in November, after the central NUM funds were sequestered, and in December after a Tory lawyer was declared 'receiver' of the NUM's finances.

Why?

Just a week before the seizure of the South Wales funds, Notts striker Paul Whetton had observed this "numb silence" in microcosm. He told an SO meeting in Ollerton:

"I spoke with Dennis Skinner in Basingstoke, and of course everyone was clapping and cheering everything Dennis Skinner said.

**"When something has already happened and is now history, it seems in retrospect to have happened inevitably. But there was nothing inevitable about the isolation of the miners."**

"Dennis Skinner made the point that we were begging not only for money and for food, but for solidarity action. He said there is nothing to stop you taking action now. (And the applause stopped).

"People were taken right up to the edge of it, and when it was put point-blank to them, they hesitated and drew back. That's a natural reluctance. They fear the machinery of the state, they fear the machinery of the employ-



Scab lorries at Ravenscraig

ers and all the rest of it" (SO 189).

So, by failing to respond to the seizure of funds, the movement went into retreat, and the miners began a new phase of their war of attrition with the government — the phase in which the balance, inch by painful inch, was turned against them.

When something has already happened and is now history, then it naturally seems in retrospect to have happened inevitably — and that all the pieces fell into place as they had to in the circumstances. But that is to substitute hindsight for an examination of the actual course of events. There was nothing inevitable about the isolation of the miners.

At a number of points dotted across the middle of 1984, great possibilities for broadening the struggle came into existence, before vanishing unrealised. The most important of these were the two dock strikes, but there were others. The leaders of the NUM tried again and again to link up with other workers and broaden the struggle. Again and again they appealed for solidarity, to the broad labour movement or to particular groups of workers.

On May 9 Arthur Scargill appealed to railworkers, then due to start an overtime ban on May 30: "If ever there was a time to join with this union, to come out on strike... now is the time".

In the event the NUR and ASLEF settled for a miserable 4.9% rise. Paul Foot later printed documents in the *Daily Mirror* showing that Thatcher had instructed the British Rail bosses to make whatever concessions were necessary to avoid a 'second front' with the railworkers.

July-August:

## Solidarity

The most dramatic point in the struggle to broaden the front came in July, when the dockers came out on strike on July 9. Mrs Thatcher must have remembered the fate of Edward Heath.

Dockers struck against the use of non-dockers to unload iron ore for Scunthorpe steelworks at Immingham. The fire had jumped from the miners to the dockers.

On the docks, as in the mines, the basic issue was jobs. Here were ready-made fellow-fighters for the miners. And dockers had the power to close down Britain very quickly. Within weeks of a solid docks strike the Tories would either have to surrender or use troops — and that would have escalated the conflict further.

Competent leadership could have welded the dockers to the miners in a common fight for jobs. The dockers' leaders, whatever good intentions they may have had, bungled it.

The TGWU did not even formulate clear demands for the strike. The basic

demand should have been extension of the National Dock Labour Scheme to the new, unregistered ports.

**"Competent leadership could have welded the dockers to the miners in a common-fight for jobs. The dockers' leaders, whatever good intentions they may have had, bungled it."**

When the strike was on, *Socialist Organiser* called for the creation of joint action committees of dockers and miners. But the NUM did not make much initiative to link up with the dockers. It was difficult for the NUM. The leaders of the TGWU were protesting that their



# the great strike 1984-5



Conference condemned police violence and defied Kinnock's request to condemn pickets' violence.

But what most people saw, courtesy of TV, was the public weaseling of Kinnock, Hattersley and others. We should not underestimate the role played by this in dampening the spirits of the labour movement.

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***"The Labour Party rank-and-file were with the miners. Conference condemned police violence and defied Kinnock's request to condemn pickets' violence."***

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To rally around the miners and against Thatcher, the movement had to have the feeling of being a movement, the feeling that it could win, that its leaders wanted to win and would fight. It had to have its leaders saying, with political boldness to match the boldness of the NUM's industrial challenge to Thatcher: 'There is an alternative to Thatcher'. The leaders had to say it, mean it and fight for it, and in the first place back those already engaged in the fight against Thatcher.

A politically confident movement could have boosted the industrial solidarity by countering the fears, depression and hopelessness that held back many workers from acting who sympathised with the miners. Kinnock and his team played a fatal role here: instead of creating a movement against the Tories around the miners, they made the emergence of such a movement impossible. They acted like acid corroding the links and sinews of the movement.

The leadership could have swayed it. A leadership which puts the issues squarely and is visibly prepared to fight to the end can rally the faint-hearted. In the charged atmosphere of summer 1984, there was a lot of potential militancy that could be rallied.

And the way the TGWU leadership ran the docks strike was a disaster.

In July, and again in August-September, when there was a second docks strike, the TGWU did not even put forward any precise demands for the strike. It argued that the disputes had nothing at all to do with the miners. Nobody believed them, least of all the dockers whose solidarity with the miners had triggered the dispute. Many other dockers — men who could have been won to a fight which linked their own threatened jobs to the miners' fight for jobs — felt they were being manipulated.

For their failure to unite with miners, four years after the end of the miners' strike, the Tories went after the dockers, scrapping the National Dock Labour Scheme.

At the start of the strike (editorial of March 29) *Socialist Organiser* had said bluntly: "The strike cannot be won in the pits". Solidarity was irreplaceable. And on April 4 John McIlroy wrote: "It would be self-deluding to pretend that today's miners' strike is anything but an uphill struggle. The miners are divided. The price is now being paid for the weaknesses of the past period. Conditions are very different from those prevailing in the victorious struggles of the early '70s".

But Arthur Scargill, in an interview on June 15, made it clear that he had a lucid view of the odds.

"Faced with the Coal Board's closure plan, the progressive elements in the NUM discussed two options. One, you accept the plan and allow pits to close. Alternatively you fight it. If you fight and you have lost, at least you fought it..."

It is this combination of realism with willingness to stand on the line which raises Scargill — and the other NUM left-wingers — head and shoulders above the other leaders of the trade union movement. And Scargill consistently did what was necessary in the situation.

"If I am the last person left rejecting the closure plan, then that will be my position. If I am right, I'll stick there. I don't know how some people can fudge and compromise on... a principle" (*Financial Times*, June 15).

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***"The Labour leadership could have swayed it. A leadership which puts the issues squarely and is visibly prepared to fight to the end can rally the faint-hearted. In the charged atmosphere of summer 1984, there was a lot of potential militancy that could be rallied."***

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And right from April 14 onwards Arthur Scargill appealed repeatedly and urgently for other workers to strike — both through their union leaders and over their heads.

He was not able to do more than make appeals. Scargill's great predecessor as NUM leader in the 1920s, A J Cook, was a leading figure in a cross-union rank-and-file movement, the so-called 'Minority Movement', as well as being the miners' president. He thus had an organisation to campaign for solidarity in other unions. Scargill had no such organisation: one major lesson from the strike must be the need to build a new Minority Movement.

## fails

dispute was quite separate from the miners', and would not have welcomed any such initiative.

On July 19 anti-strike lorry drivers threatened violence against dockers in Dover, where the strike was shaky anyway, and the dispute collapsed. The press that had been screaming against 'violent' miners either gloried in the threats against the strikers or reported this in a matter-of-fact way: the police had no comment! Instead of organising flying pickets, the mighty TGWU crumpled.

As we have seen, solidarity also failed in the steel industry. The steel unions had been unresponsive from the start. When the NUM and the rail unions applied their blockade in June, Tommy Brennan, convenor at Ravenscraig, said he would work with scab deliveries of coal and iron ore. Peter McKim in Llanwern said the same. ISTC general secretary Bill Sirs, according to the *Financial Times* (July 2), "sounded almost like a British Steel spokesman".

From late June British Steel started

running huge convoys of scab lorries into Ravenscraig and, especially, from Port Talbot to Llanwern. Miners' picketing in Port Talbot soon tailed off, and was token at Ravenscraig. The steelworks kept running at full, indeed increased, production.

Having seen the miners on strike for four months, railworkers, dockers and steelworkers knew what was involved in a serious battle with the government — the risk of months of deprivation, legal threats, police violence. The prospect was especially daunting in the steelworks, where the workforce was a shattered remnant, reduced in numbers by a half since 1980.

In addition to all this there was the deadening effect of the Labour Party's role in the strike. The Party rank-and-file were with the miners. Labour Party activists, premises and equipment were involved in the miners' strike to a degree probably not seen in any dispute since the 1920s. The National Executive Committee backed the miners and called for a levy to support them.

# The tide begins to turn



TUC Congress: Scargill receives a standing ovation but that's all he got from the labour movement's leaders

The lack of such a rank and file movement was the basic reason for the failure to stop steel. By late June all the major steelworks were fully supplied, and set to stay that way.

From early August, as we have seen, the balance began to shift. The government had used its legal bludgeon on a section of the labour movement and discovered that it could get away with it without the TUC responding on behalf of the whole movement. Now it could confidently wait its time to use the bludgeon again.

The shift in the balance was, however, slow and unstable. The miners put up a fierce resistance. They were still solid, and would remain fundamentally solid until November.

For example, at Florence colliery, North Staffs, the first women's picket in the Midlands took place as late as October 11. "150 women descended on the picket line armed with song sheets, candles, streamers, and

bags of enthusiasm. The all-male police presence were at first slightly bemused, but soon called in a couple of dozen women PCs.

**"The longer the miners stuck out, the more likely was a 'second front' which would put the screws on the Tories."**

"The non-stop singing and jeering turned three scabs back, but much more than that, the whole atmosphere generated vast quantities of energy, confidence and determination.

"As a grand finale, the 150 women joined together to form 'The Miners' Strike Conga', and danced and sang around the main road to the pit. The

police found this 'intimidating'..." (SO 201).

Meanwhile, the longer the miners stuck out, the more likely was a 'second front' which would put the screws on the Tories. (The second docks strike, for example, ran from August 24 to September 18).

From June, and more intensely from August, the Tories and the NCB mounted an offensive to break the strike. Backed by all the propaganda the tabloid press could put out — backed up none too subtly, though less crudely, by TV — they launched a back-to-work drive. Scargill-baiting and NUM-bashing became the obsession of the press, in a campaign of unbridled hatred against the miners' leader they could not cow.

To match and balance their demonology against the best leader any section of the labour movement has had in decades, the press in 1984 (in August, especially) discovered the representative working-class hero of

Mrs Thatcher's new Britain — the scab.

**"Instant glorification, if not on-the-spot canonisation, awaited the man who would step forward to 'testify' for Thatcher and for strikebreaking."**

An atmosphere of hysterical pressure was built up in the country, resembling almost the atmosphere in the big marquee during an evangelical revival meeting when the call goes out for sinners to get up and 'testify for Jesus'. Instant glorification, if not on-the-spot canonisation, awaited the man who would step forward to 'testify' for Thatcher and for strikebreaking. He would be dubbed with some would-be glamorising name like 'Silver Birch', or the 'Dockers' Silver Birch'.

The back-to-work drive had little success in June. Then from July North Derbyshire NCB area director Ken Moses started a campaign of unprecedented ruthlessness. Miners living outside the main pit villages were singled out. They were written to, phoned, visited, systematically pressurised.

Moses' effort produced few results until November. But in late August a 'National Working Miners' Committee' was set up under the wing of Thatcherite whizzkid David Hart. A Notts 'Working Miners' Committee' had existed since the end of May.

Ominously, towards the end of August a few scabs appeared in South Yorkshire. Huge numbers of police descended not

only on the picket lines but also on the pit villages, which in the following months were transformed into mini police states.

Sue Carlyle penned this picture of life in Kiveton Park, where it sometimes seemed as if the entire might of the British state were being mobilised to ensure that seven scabs would get to work:

"To support and defend their right to scab, and help the Coal Board break the strike, the village has been turned into a mini police state.

"The scabs now have police guards back and front of their houses, or hiding in their garages and back gardens. After each shift the scabs are taken home in convoys consisting of from three to five transit vans loaded with police.

"As you look through the guarded windows at them speeding past, the scabs hold their heads down..."

**"Ominously, towards the end of August, a few scabs appeared in South Yorkshire."**

"Every morning in the early hours, between 2,000 and 3,000 police drive in to barricade the pit from pickets. The picket line is physically pushed every morning from the pit entrance into a country road away from the village. The police make charges through the old people's estate and parade horses and riot gear through the main street, endangering local people, young and old".

From late August, a second wave of mass picketing was mounted by striking miners — not to spread the strike but to stop scabs at their own pits, where, as soon as one single scab could be found, the government would send hundreds of police to bully and intimidate the community.

## The scab as hero

The typical hero of Mrs Thatcher's brave new Britain is the scab. No-one in Britain today is more honourable or respectable, the mass circulation newspapers tell us, than the "men who take their courage in their hands and, braving the violent savagery of crazy left-wing-led pickets"...crawl on their bellies to lick their bosses' boots and help

them defeat and beat down their fellow workers.

No trade is more honoured than that of the scab-herder, no force more highly praised than the militarised ranks of police thugs who protect them.

No, the working class heroes are still the men and women who dare to take on this vicious government despite the pressures of slump and mass unemployment.

They are the dockers who fight for their own concerns, but also want to help the miners.

They are the millions of loyal trade unionists who resist the pressure and the hysteria with the grim determination of people who know what the capitalists and their government are trying to do in Britain right now.

*Socialist Organiser,*  
August 30, 1984

# The failure of the leaders

This was the situation when, six months into the miners' strike, the TUC congress opened at Brighton on September 3. The NUM had put down an amendment calling for "industrial action involving all trade unions". The furniture union FTAT called for a 24-hour general strike. But, under pressure from the TUC leaders, these were withdrawn in favour of a near-unanimous resolution recommending — conditional on the agreement of each individual union concerned — a boycott of coal, coke or substitute oil moved across NUM picket lines.

The resolution was passed with great enthusiasm from the floor. SO commented: "Either this TUC congress will mark the beginning of a new rallying of the working class around the miners. Or it will go down in history as one of the worst examples of vile left-talking fakery in the history of the labour movement.

"The reflex of every militant with an ounce of sense will be to regard the almost unanimous vote as mainly an exercise in left-fakery by the leaders of the TUC...

"But the TUC decision is a lever which miners can use to gain solidarity. For it to be effective, rank-and-file militants should start organising to use it now" (SO 195).

Vile left-talking fakery it was. The railworkers and seafarers had already been giving such support for months. Some power stations like-

wise. A few more power stations did start boycott action, but, as it turned out not enough to be decisive. Arthur Scargill complained in mid-January: "I did ask the leaders of the major power unions if they would arrange meetings of shop stewards in the major power stations. Although there was no rejection of this idea, it has not been put into operation" (SO 212). The TUC resolution strengthened NUM appeals for solidarity, and was thus something to build on. But it wasn't much.

The first week after the TUC was occupied by talks between the NCB and the NUM — shifting to and fro between Edinburgh, Selby, Doncaster and London. Many rank-and-file strikers were bewildered and disturbed. Then, once more, the prospect opened up of other workers decisively tilting the balance in favour of the NUM. The pit deputies' (overseers') union NACODS decided on September 12 to ballot its members for strike action over the two issues of pit closures and pay being stopped for deputies who refused to cross picket lines. If NACODS struck, every pit in Britain would stop.

The result of the ballot — 82.5% for a strike — was announced on September 28. The same day the High Court declared the whole NUM strike 'unlawful' because there had not been a national ballot.

The Labour Party conference opened at Blackpool on October 1.

Labour Party conference is less tightly sewn-up than the TUC, and it overturned and overruled the platform line on the miners' strike.

Arthur Scargill got a tremendous reception. Neil Kinnock had given the impression for six months of slinking around on the edge of the great working class battle, waiting for a good chance to savage Arthur Scargill; but now the Labour Party conference rejected his 'statesmanlike' evenhanded condemnation of violence, by which primarily he meant pickets' violence.

**"Kinnock had slunk around the battle, waiting to savage Scargill; Labour Party conference rejected his 'statesmanlike' condemnation of violence, by which he meant pickets' violence."**

Conference condemned police violence, called for police to be removed from the coalfields, and thus implicitly sided with the pickets. (SO supporters originated the crucial clauses).

Albert Bowns (Kiveton Park NUM) commented: "We got the support we wanted from the rank-and-file, but we certainly didn't get

the support we wanted from the leadership, particularly Kinnock".

Two scab miners had applied for a High Court declaration that it was unlawful for the NUM to run a national strike because its rulebook required a national ballot for a national strike.

On October 1 the NUM leaders were served with a court order, as they sat in the Labour Party conference, declaring that they were in 'contempt of court' for continuing to call the strike official. They responded by insisting that the strike was official according to the rules of the NUM, and that they would not let the court dictate to the union. On October 10 the court fined the NUM £200,000. When the union would not pay, it ordered the seizure of the NUM's entire funds, on October 25. The day before, October 24, NACODS had called off strike plans with a miserable compromise, slinking away while the miners fought for jobs.

Now, for the NUM, blow followed blow. Police violence in the Yorkshire pit villages was stepped up dramatically. The screaming, spitting gutter press was now witch-hunting and agitating about an NUM when official's fund-raising visit to Libya (although many British firms, and even the NCB itself, have links with Libya). The TUC leaders did nothing to help the NUM.

In October the strike was still around 80% solid.

# Onto the defensive

With the start of November, the strike went decidedly onto the defensive. After months of chipping away, the Coal Board finally claimed a breakthrough with scabbing in North Derbyshire. The NCB offered a massive Christmas bribe to miners — who had not had a wage packet for eight months, and were now suffering serious hardship — if they returned to work. By November 19 the NCB was claiming a record 2,282 miners returning to work on a Monday.

The NUM was organising a series of regional strikers' rallies. These showed the tremendous continuing determination of the hard core of

the strike, but also their bitterness about the official leaders of labour. At Aberafan on November 13 a symbolic noose was dangled in front of TUC general secretary Norman Willis; 'Ramsey MacKinnock' was pilloried for refusing to speak at the rallies.

Now there was a growing note of anguish in Scargill's appeals: "We have to translate resolution into action. I am not going to appeal to the barons of the TUC — I want to ask the ordinary men and women of this country to give industrial action support to this union.

"How much longer can you stand to one side and see this union battered? We are asking you to come out now and stop scab coal being delivered into power stations" (Birmingham, November 14: SO 206).

The labour movement was shamelessly leaving the NUM to its fate in the struggle against the government. So the Tories pressed relentlessly on.

On November 30 the Tories delivered what they hoped was a knock-out punch. Tory lawyer Herbert Brewer was appointed by the High Court as receiver of the NUM's finances. Brewer declared, "I am the NUM".

Legally, he was the NUM. But there was another NUM, not the notional legal entity now embodied by the High Court in the unlikely figure of the former Tory councillor, but the 140,000 striking miners and their families. And that NUM

refused to go down under the new blow. They refused to surrender the union's money, which they had moved overseas.

**"There was growing anguish in Scargill's appeals: 'I am not going to appeal to the barons of the TUC — I want to ask the ordinary men and women to give industrial action support to this union'."**

Four days previously, on November 26, the High Court had fined the TGWU £200,000 (to be paid by December 10) for supporting the Austin Rover strike without a ballot in Tory-prescribed form. But the TGWU would not pay the fine.

Unfortunately, it would not do anything positive either. The meeting of its executive in early December decided to take no action against the threat to the union. If passive endurance could beat the

Tories, then the TGWU would have done the workers of Britain a great service in 1984. But passivity — even defiant passivity — is not enough.

Now Arthur Scargill's efforts to rouse the labour movement and to make it aware of what was happening reached a new peak of desperate urgency. Again and again he appealed for industrial action to back the miners: "There must be the most massive mobilisation of industrial action our movement has ever known, and we must have it now.

"There is no other way to stop the court's attempt to destroy the NUM" (SO 209).

Other voices on the left augmented and supplemented Scargill's. Tony Benn (reportedly on the private urging of Scargill and Heathfield) called for a general strike. So did Dennis Skinner.

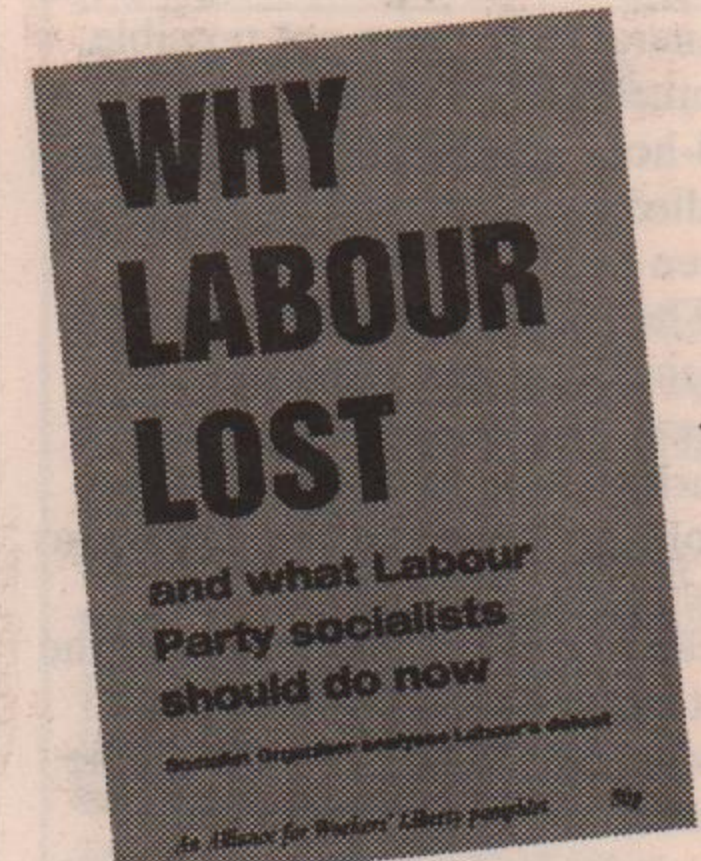
But the TUC leaders did nothing. Faced with jeering, baiting demands from Mrs Thatcher and her press that he do so, Neil Kinnock denounced pickets' 'violence'.

Things were going badly for the miners, but, despite all the miners' difficulties, the Tories were still scared of a second front. That was shown very clearly by the careful way the courts handled the TGWU, using an official called the 'Queen's Remembrancer' to take £200,000 rather than seizing the union's whole funds. Despite everything,

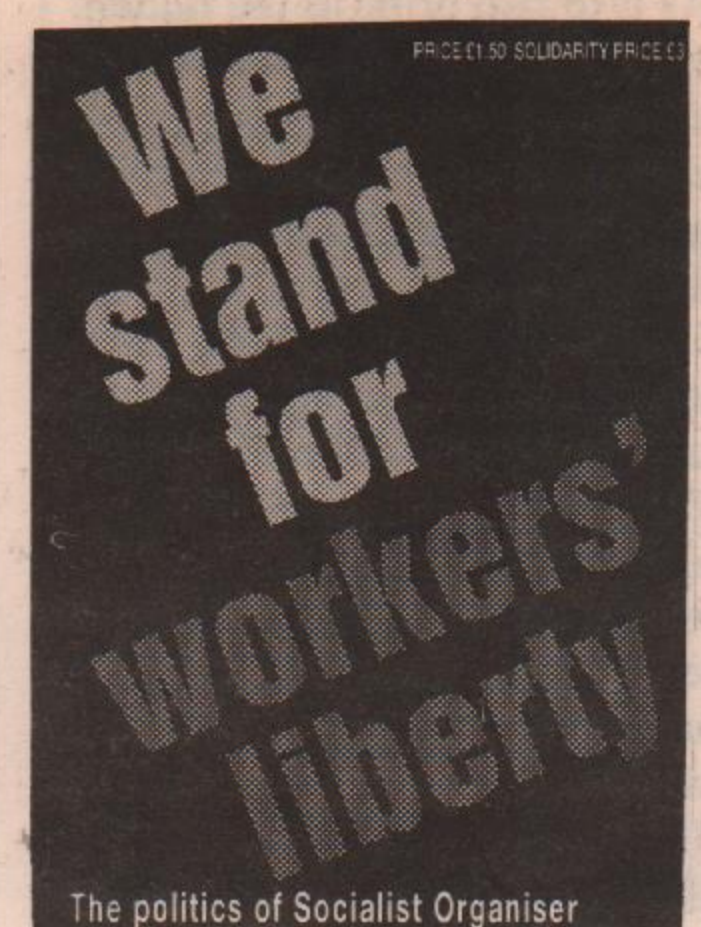


'Ramsay MacKinnock' sat on the fence throughout the strike

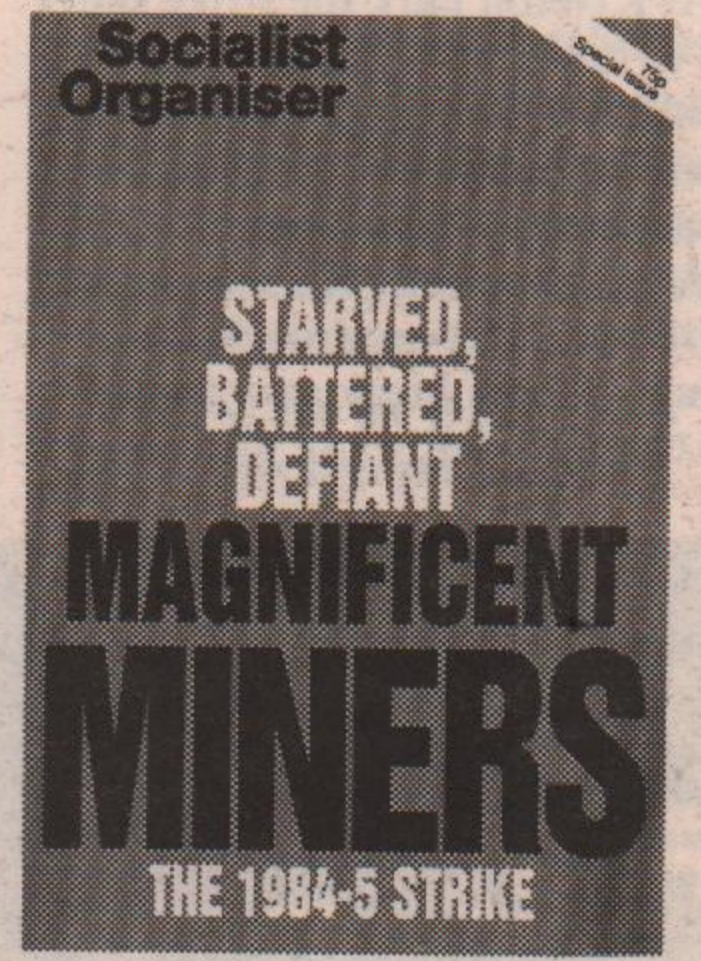
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## Onto the defensive

From page 11

even a limited initiative from other unions could have swung the balance against the government.

*Socialist Organiser* proposed a campaign for a recall TUC, which might call the leaders to account for their failure to implement the decisions of September. A campaign for a recall TUC could be used to focus discussion of the miners' strike in the trade union branches. We argued that, if a full general strike were not possible immediately, then as a first step a 24-hour general strike should be called by the pro-NUM unions or even by the NUM itself.

The NUM leaders followed up their November rallies with a speaking tour in the pit villages during December. The back-to-work drive tapered off, collections increased as Christmas came nearer, and at Christmas itself the pit communities celebrated with defiant solidarity. Despite all the hardships, many strikers and many strikers' wives insisted that it was their best Christmas ever, because of the warmth and comradeship. Instead of isolated families each slumped in front of their television, whole communities came together to support each other and celebrate.

But the turn of the year brought back the grimness.

As if to rub brine in the miners' wounds, the Tories marked New Year's Day by giving peerages to Len Murray and former electricians' leader Frank Chapple — the symbols and representatives of everything in the labour movement that had combined with the slump and effects of mass unemployment to allow the Tories to impose the sufferings of a ten-month strike on the miners and their families, and would ultimately allow them to win the strike.

The steady dribble back to work was now usually to be measured in hundreds per day. Neil Kinnock decided that the strike had gone near enough to defeat for him to visit a picket line (by chauffeur-driven car) in the same way that he might attend commemorations for the Tolpuddle Martyrs.

But the miners were very much alive. The indomitable spirit of defiance of capitalist 'normality' was still strong.

At Kiveton Park the strike started to break up seriously from January 21, after 10 months out and five months of heavy police occupation of the village.

When people set out together on a difficult, testing struggle, and some of them break and give up or change sides, those who con-

tinue to fight are forced to think hard and define for themselves and others just what they think they are doing. Albert Bowns did that when Reg Moss, a branch official at Kiveton Park, started scabbing in late January and allowed the *Daily Express* to proclaim the fact and use him against the strikers. Albert Bowns published an open letter to Moss — and to others who had given up the strike — in *Socialist Organiser*:

Reg Moss had said he wanted to return to 'normal life'. But: "What is normal about having to accept mass redundancies? What is normal about having to accept pit closures on economic grounds (possibly Kiveton Park)?"

"What is normal about craftsmen being de-skilled...? In effect, what is normal about running to accept every crumb which the management might condescend to offer us?"

"That is the normality" which you will have to return to if the rest of us follow your example.

**"But the miners were very much alive. The indomitable spirit of defiance of capitalist 'normality' was still strong."**

"The Kiveton Park NUM was directed to fight against this kind of 'normality' and will continue to do so until the final outcome" (SO 214).

*Socialist Organiser* tried to present an accurate picture of the stages the strike went through as it unfolded. We refused to voice any of the pessimism or defeatism rampant in sections of the left (in *Socialist Worker*, for example). Even so, by February 6 we had to admit: "Whatever the exact number of new scabs, it is true that a steady stream of strikers seem to be giving up and letting themselves be driven back to work. Inevitably this drift back puts pressure on the strikers and encourages Thatcher's belief that her lust for the NUM's blood can be satisfied" (SO 215).

In this adverse situation, South Wales NUM official Kim Howells floated the idea of a return-to-work without an agreement (February 6).

The NUM executive did not even discuss the idea and Kim Howells was removed from his job as area NUM spokesperson. But the damage had been done. And then the TUC stepped in with its final blow.

# The fight goes on

On February 19 seven TUC leaders scurried to Downing Street, not even bothering to conceal their glee that they were back in contact with the people who had just sent Len and Frank to the House of Lords. They eagerly took on the job of acting as messenger boys to the NUM. The message from Thatcher said, in essence: 'Surrender, or else. No negotiations no concessions: surrender!'

When the NUM rejected this document, the TUC let it be known that they were washing their hands of the miners, and retired to let Thatcher urge her surrender terms under the title of 'the TUC document'.

Few things in the strike were more sickening than the cat-and-mouse games played by the government from November to the end. First they offered the Christmas bribe to needy miners, and howled with indecent glee when some miners deserted the strike. They were showing their displeasure with Scargill's undemocratic methods, said the press, as the broken men slunk back to work.

Then the Tories played the game of the on-off negotiations, raising the hopes of the miners and then, having softened up a few, slamming the door and waiting for more miners to give in. Having said for months that the NACODS deal was on offer to the NUM, they withdrew it at the point, at the end of the strike, when Arthur Scargill said he would accept it.

The Tories now did not want a settlement. They wanted to shred the NUM.

Commenting on the great Dublin lockout of 1913, the employers' leader in that struggle, William Martin Murphy, cynically identified the fundamental disadvantage for labour in any long industrial war of attrition. The workers, he pointed out, soon have difficulties getting enough to eat; the employers rarely have that problem. By March 1985 Britain's glorious miners had that problem.

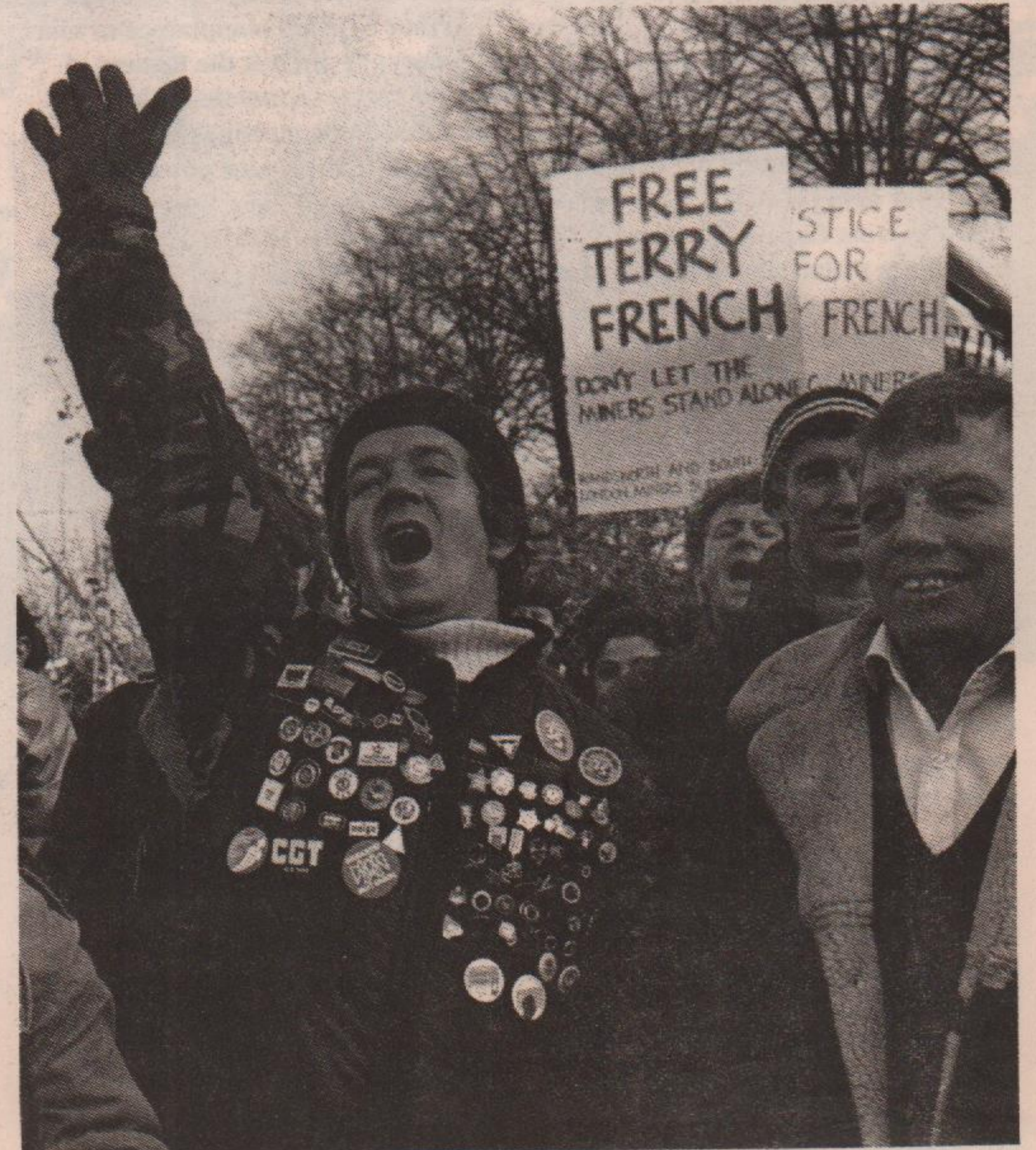
The Tories had all the resources of the ruling class at their disposal. The miners, some 2 per cent of the labour movement, had to fight 100% of that centralised ruling class power with insufficient support and sometimes downright sabotage from the leaders of the other 98%. That was the cause of the defeat.

On March 3 the eighth NUM conference since the strike began met to decide what to do. South Wales proposed a return-to-work without an agreement. Arthur Scargill opposed the return to work, and so did the executive. They argued instead that, with over 50 per cent of miners still out, the strike should continue until 700 sacked strikers got their jobs back.

The majority of delegates felt that there was a danger that a big acceleration of scabbing would further erode the union's bargaining power on the 700 (and everything else), and result, ultimately, in a return to work with the union in tatters. They decided to stop that happening.

Starved, battered, but still defiant, they voted by 98 to 91 to return to work without a settlement, but as a still-intact union.

To go back without the 700, and fight for their reinstatement in local negotiations, was a bitter and agonising decision to have to take. In the circumstances the conference had little viable alternative. This



Although the strike was over, the campaign to free jailed miners continued

was confirmed a few days later when the first wave of Labour councils failed to deliver on their promises of opening up a second front, and instead collapsed ignominiously.

Once the decision was taken, Scargill and the left-wingers on the executive urged a united return to work, and most areas went back on Tuesday 5th.

Kent, and a few pits elsewhere, stayed out for a week after the national return to work. Polmaise, in Scotland, the first pit out in 1984, did not go back until Tuesday March 12, after one year and four weeks on strike.

**"The greatest strike in British history was over. But the miners' strike was one battle in a war, and the war is far from over."**

The greatest strike in British history was over. But the miners' strike was one battle in a war, and the war is far from over. "The fight goes on", said Arthur Scargill after the decision to return had been taken. The NUM has been forced to retreat to 'guerrilla' struggle — "like the Resistance in World War 2", as Scargill put it.

It was a defeat; and what we said during the dispute about the heavy implications of a defeat for the whole labour movement was true. But it was not just a defeat; nor was the struggle in vain. As SO (219-220) said:

"The 1984-5 miners' strike will inspire not only future generations but this one. The miners have shaken Britain and remodelled the political landscape. Class conflict, class bitterness and class hatred on

a level not seen here for a very long time have been brought into the centre of British politics. The ruling class starved men, women and children for a year, and now Mrs Thatcher gloats in public over her triumph. But the miners' strike has stored up memories and hatreds — not only among miners and their families — that the ruling class and the Tories will live to regret.

"Tens of thousands have learned that capitalism is a soulless system that sacrifices people for profit; tens of thousands of new militants have learned to hate capitalism and those who run it.

"Coming out of jail after a week of being locked up simply because she insisted on picketing, despite police 'cautions' and despite bail conditions, Nottinghamshire striking miner's wife Brenda Greenwood spoke the language and expressed the feelings that live in thousands who have gone through the miners' strike:

"This is not, as the editorial writers fondly believe, the language of the past, or of a stage in the history of the labour movement which the miners' strike has brought to an end. It is the language of the future.

"The shattering experience of being sent to prison will be etched on my memory for as long as I live. But I am in no way deterred, nor has my spirit been broken.

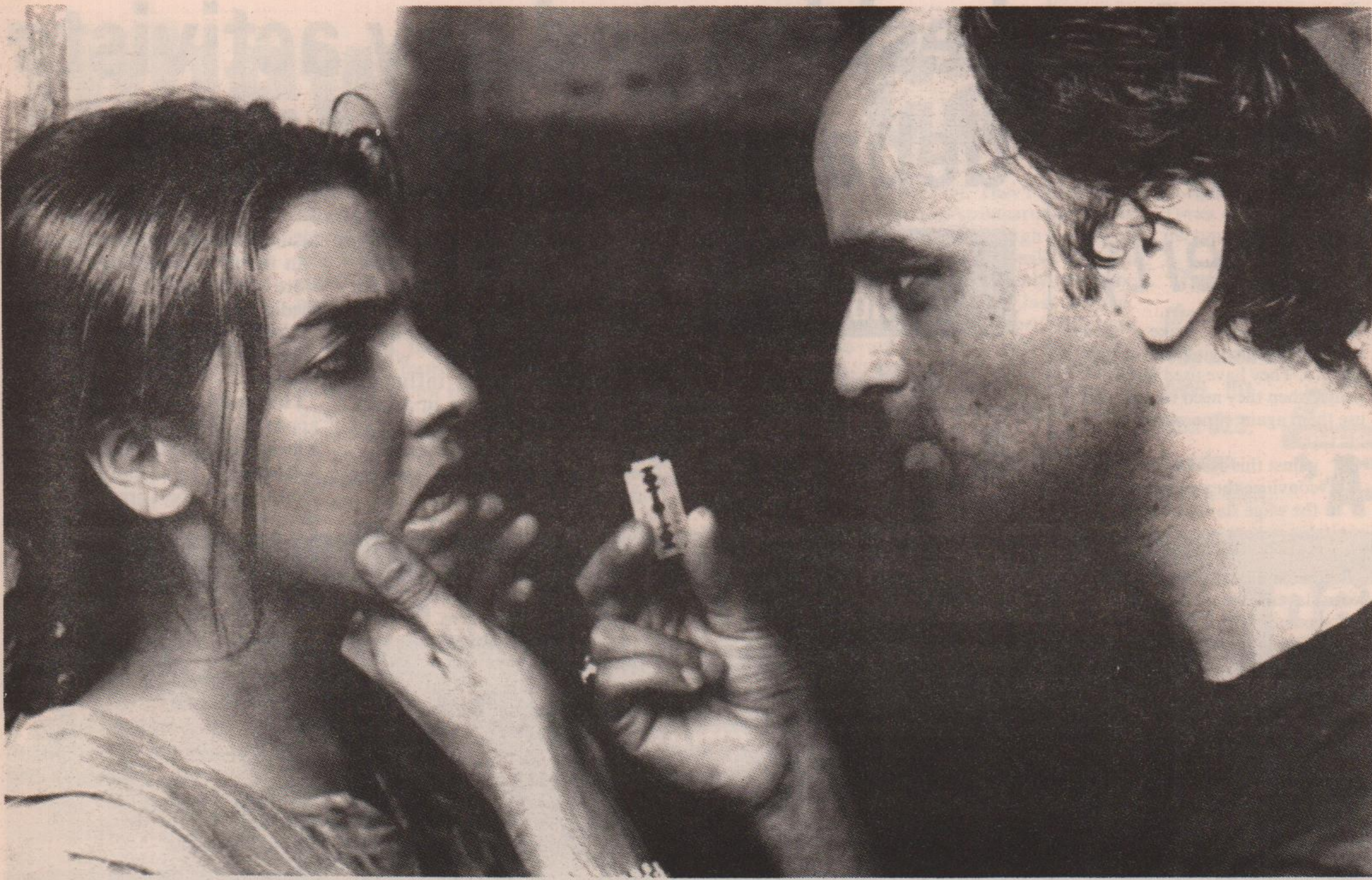
"The time has come for the working class of the 1980s to stand up and be counted. We must not be afraid to face the machinery of the state head-on in defence of our rights.

"We must fight on every front in defence of all the rights and standards that have been won for us in blood, sweat and tears by the working class of the past.

"It is our duty to defend, protect and uphold all these rights and standards, and it is our proud heritage to hold them in trust for future generations of our class."



Picketing to the end: mass picket, Frickley, Yorkshire, February '85



# Syrup and mush in Calcutta

## Cinema

Belinda Weaver reviews *City of Joy*

**C**ity of Joy, a story of martyrdom in the Calcutta slums, is a caring, sharing 1990s movie.

It's made by the same man, Roland Joffe, who made *The Mission* and *The Killing Fields*, both of which had martyr heroes. Joffe obviously has a thing about martyrdom.

The film is adapted from

Dominique Lapierre's book of the same name, but a lot has been changed. The Polish priest character was dropped, probably for box-office reasons, and replaced at centre stage by a minor character, the American doctor, Max.

We're meant to sympathise with Max, who has fled from hi-tech American medicine to India in search of the meaning of life. He eventually finds it in selfless work at a free clinic in the Calcutta slums.

To get to that point, Max has to be converted, and the film is

about that — how Max comes to see that the best of life is there, in the slums, with the downtrodden, the poor-but-honest, the outcasts and the lepers.

Yes, it's one of those movies. It glorifies the slums, it glorifies human suffering, as a school in which people learn to forget themselves and their problems, and to make life bearable by working together as one big communal family.

The flaw in this jewel is gangsterism. Most of the slumdwellers are prey to a corrupt Godfather who dictates their lives — who will work, who will have a roof over his head. His tentacles are everywhere.

Max, as the American in the white hat, chastises the Indians for their fatalism in succumbing to the Godfather, and urges them to fight. He's condescending, and rude to them, and ignorant as well. His methods lead to disaster. It's not Max's aggression that changes things, but luck and solidarity. Yet part of the film's message is that the slumdwellers needed a Max to get them going.

If Max was looking for martyrdom as a way of assuaging his existing sense of guilt and hopelessness, he certainly found it in the script of *City of Joy*, which shows him up as an ass.

The film's other main character, the rickshaw puller, Hasari Pal, is meant to represent the values Joffe admires — family loyalty, integrity, and the acceptance of a lowly lot with dignity and patience.

**"It's nauseating watching a Western film-maker go mushy about the triumph of the human spirit over adversity when his own spirit never has to know suffering."**

He's the "ideal" peasant, a perfect martyr. Joffe would have no sympathy with a grumbling slumdweller, or a dishonest one — they wouldn't match his condescending view of the "greatness" of "little" people.

*City of Joy* is a sickly movie, preaching a lot of sanctimonious claptrap. It's nauseating watching a Western film-maker go all mushy about the triumph of the human spirit over adversity when his own Western spirit never has to know want, or hunger, or suffering.

If Joffe wants a hair shirt, there are monasteries to accommodate him. He should keep his reactionary garbage to himself.

## Less bloody than Macbeth

### Television

Derek Morris reviews *London's Burning*, Sunday 8.45, ITV

**A**fter the revolution... less domestic violence, fewer road accidents and definitely *no* desperate businessmen setting light to warehouses for the insurance. But what of human beings' taste for "entertainment" based on these things? Perhaps ghoulishness goes too deep to be "cured". Anyway, why not be interested in death, heroism, tragedy, sympathy? They're part of living.

**"There are socialistic messages about bosses jeopardising safety for profit, and downright anti-Tory propaganda".**

So to *London's Burning*. Not a very highbrow treatment of the above themes, perhaps, but it isn't just ghoulish. You don't get those close-ups of bloody injury there are in *Casualty*. Instead, exciting accident locations with people rushing around, efficient or hysterical, depending on whether they are emergency services or members of the public. And lots of socialistic messages about bosses jeopardising safety for profit, and downright anti-Tory propaganda.

Currently, Blue Watch are campaigning against merger with another station, because they know it's about cutting costs, not about better service for workers or public.

"What are we going to do about this merger business, sub?" asks one firefighter. Sub: (indicating staff notice-board) "We'll have to get the *Union* onto this. Of course, we usually only bother with them at the *annual pay review*, but..." etc.

Another good thing is the actors whom it would be hard to imagine in any other role. But, if you see them on a demo in the coming weeks, (as you are apt to, them being such right-on people) don't be disappointed not to find them in big, blue overcoats, darling. They're only actors, after all.

## Periscope

*Justice for All*, Channel 4 TV, Tuesday 3 November, 8pm

**T**he days are long gone when TV and movies could present stories in which "justice" was equated with police action.

Life is not fair and the police are not just! They lie routinely and systematically in court, with the certain connivance of lawyers, magistrates and judges. Vast numbers of innocent people have been press-ganged to longer or short-

er periods in one of Britain's hell-hole jails by complaisant law courts acting on the say-so of licensed police liars. Some have served life sentences.

After the exposure in the courts of a long series of police frameups of Irish people in connection with IRA bombings, the credibility of the police is at its lowest ebb in over a century.

Channel 4's *Justice for All* will not improve the police image. It tells the story of Stefan Kiszko, who was railroaded to jail for 17 years for a crime he could not have committed.

# The politics of the Alliance for Workers' Liberty

**W**e live in a capitalist world. Production is social; ownership of the social means of production is private.

Ownership by a state which serves those who own most of the means of production is also essentially "private".

Those who own the means of production buy the labour power of those who own nothing but their labour-power and set them to work. At work they produce more than the equivalent of their wages. The difference (today in Britain it may be more than £20,000 a year per worker) is taken by the capitalist. This is exploitation of wage-labour by capital, and it is the basic cell of capitalist society, its very heart-beat.

Everything else flows from that. The relentless drive for profit and accumulation decrees the judgment of all things in existence by their relationship of productivity and profitability.

From that come such things as the savage exploitation of Brazilian goldminers, whose life expectancy is now less than 40 years; the working to death — it is officially admitted by the government! — of its employees by advanced Japanese capitalism; and also the economic neglect and virtual abandonment to ruin and starvation of "unprofitable" areas like Bangladesh and parts of Africa.

**F**rom that comes the cultural blight and barbarism of a society force-fed on profitable pap.

From it come products with "built-in obsolescence" and a society orientated to the grossly wasteful production and reproduction of shoddy goods, not to the development of leisure and culture.

From it come mass unemployment, the development of a vast and growing underclass, living in ghettos, and the recreation in some American cities of the worst Third World conditions.

From it comes the unfolding ecological disaster of a world crying out for planning and the rational use of resources, but which is, tragically, organised by the ruling classes around the principles of anarchy and the barbarous worship of blind and humanly irrational market forces.

From it come wars and genocides; twice this century capitalist gangs possessing worldwide power have fallen on each other in quarrels over the division of the spoils, and wrecked the world economy, killing many tens of millions. From it come racism, imperialism, and fascism.

The capitalist cult of icy egotism and the "cash nexus" as the decisive social tie produce societies like Britain now where vast numbers of young people are condemned to live in the streets, and societies like that of Brazil, where homeless children are hunted and killed on the streets like rodents.

From the exploitation of wage-labour comes our society in which the rich, who with their servants and agents hold state power, fight a relentless class struggle to maintain the people in a condition to accept their own exploitation and abuse, and to prevent real democratic self-control developing with the forms of what they call democracy. They use tabloid propaganda or — as in

the 1984-85 miners' strike — savage and illegal police violence, as they need to. They have used fascist gangs when they need to, and will use them again, if necessary.

**A**gainst this system we seek to convince the working class — the wage slaves of the capitalist system — to fight for socialism.

Socialism means the abolition of wage slavery, the taking of the social economy out of private ownership into common cooperative ownership. It means the realisation of the old demands for liberty, equality, and fraternity.

Under socialism the economy will be run and planned deliberately and democratically: market mechanisms will cease to be our master, and will be cut down and re-shaped to serve broadly sketched-out and planned, rational, social goals.

We want public ownership of the major enterprises and a planned economy under workers' control.

The working class can win reforms within capitalism, but we can only win socialism by overthrowing capitalism and by breaking the state power — that is, the monopoly of violence and reserve violence — now held by the capitalist class. We want a democracy much fuller than the present Westminster system — a workers' democracy, with elected representatives recallable at any time, and an end to bureaucrats' and managers' privileges.

Socialism can never be built in one country alone. The workers in every country have more in common with workers in other countries than with their own capitalist or Stalinist rulers. We support national liberation struggles and workers' struggles worldwide, including the struggles of workers and oppressed nationalities in the ex-Stalinist states of Eastern Europe and in still-Stalinist China.

What are the alternatives now? We may face new wars as European and Japanese capitalism confront the US. Fascism is rising. Poverty, inequality and misery are growing.

Face the bitter truth: either we build a new, decent, sane, democratic world or, finally, the capitalists will ruin us all — we will be dragged down by the fascist barbarians or new massive wars. Civilisation will be eclipsed by a new dark age. The choice is socialism or barbarism.

Socialists work in the trade unions and the Labour Party to win the existing labour movement to socialism. We work with presently unorganised workers and youth.

To do that work the Marxists organise themselves in a democratic association, the Alliance for Workers' Liberty.

**To join the Alliance for Workers' Liberty, write to:**  
**PO Box 823,**  
**London SE15**  
**4NA.**

## ORGANISING

# Lesbian and gay activists debate way forward

### THE POLITICAL FRONT

By Maria Exall

**A** debate between "Stonewall", "Outrage", and the Lesbian and Gay Rights Coalition, in London on 18 October, reviewed different approaches to fighting for lesbian and gay rights.

For Outrage, Graham Knight explained that they do not see themselves as a political organisation, but as a group of lesbians, gay men, bisexuals and queers fighting homophobia through civil disobedience and non-violent direct action.

Their meetings are open to all who turn up, and all present have voting rights.

The important issues are sexual freedom, choice and self-determination. Outrage have staged actions against the Catholic Church, against the policing in Hyde Park, against the homophobic reggae record "Boom-Boom Bye-Bye", against harassment of lesbians at Venus Rising, and against the homophobic Peruvian organisation "Shining Path".

They design their actions to get media attention, as the most effective way of reaching the heterosexual world.

Outrage want to transform attitudes. They believe that ultimately we will need no labels for our sexuality, and they are working for people to accept sexual diversity.

For Stonewall, Angela Mason explained that they have a committee of ten lesbians and ten gay men, a Board, paid staff, and a director.

They see themselves as a professional organisation which is working to influence Establishment opinion in all the political parties, the media, and academic and legal institutions. They see their priority as speaking to the opinion-formers.

Stonewall tries to work on key common objectives for all lesbians and gays. At the moment they are working on the age of consent, the review of adoption law, bigotted reporting in the press, and discrimination in employment.

For the Lesbian and Gay Rights Coalition, Rachel McLeod said that she saw the recent attack on miners' jobs as part of the long-term Tory plan of defeating the trade unions and weakening society, part of the same drive as the attacks on local government and "Clause 28".

The visible part of the lesbian and gay community is strong enough to withstand these attacks and still preserve its own identity, but there are "invisible" lesbians and gays, in a weaker position, who suffer disproportionately. The Coalition seeks to link up with those parts of the lesbian and gay community, especially those who are disabled and black lesbians and gay men.

The Coalition also thinks it is important to make links with trade unions. United action including teaching unions would have been more effective, for example, than the media-oriented Outrage action

against homophobia in schools.

In the floor discussion, Outrage were challenged on whether their media stunts were the best way of making links with the straights who would work with us for change.

They said that they saw their approach as just one among others which may also be valid.

Stonewall were challenged on working with the Tories, and asked to explain how paper policies could be put into action if they only worked with opinion-formers.

A speaker from the Labour Campaign for Lesbian and Gay Rights said that whilst the different pressure groups are casting around for a way to fight injustice, the labour movement — the movement of the working class — is already working for the rights of ordinary people, lesbian, gay, and straight, now. Lesbian and gay activists should work with the labour movement.

**Demonstrate for lesbian and gay rights!**

**Saturday 31 October**

**Assemble: 12.00 Hyde Park; rally: 2.00 Trafalgar Square.**

**Organised by the Lesbian and Gay Rights Coalition**

# AWL meetings

### Thursday 29 October

Newcastle AWL meeting: "How to fight pit closures". 7.30, Rossetti Studio, Leazes Lane.

### Friday 30 October

Lancaster University AWL meeting: "Lessons of the 1984-85 miners' strike". 7.30, Priory Hall, Lancaster.

Hull University AWL meeting: "Lessons of 1984-85". 1.15.

### Thursday 5 November

University of Central England AWL meeting: "How to fight pit closures". 1pm, Student Union.

### Back the miners!

#### Thursday 29 October

Women Against Pit Closures Meeting. 7.30, Women's Centre, Wild Court, Holborn, London.

Birmingham Miners' Support Committee meeting. 7.30, TURC, Frederick Street.

#### Saturday 31 October

Demonstration against pit closures in Mansfield.

### Tuesday 3 November

Lesbians and Gays Support the Miners meeting. 7.30, Lesbian and Gay Centre, 67-69 Cowcross Street, Farringdon, London.

Rally to back the miners. 7.30, Freedom Hall, Tottenham Leisure Centre. Speakers include: Tony Benn, Frank Cave, Bernie Grant and Dennis Skinner. Organised by Haringey Miners' Support Network.

### Also coming up...

#### Saturday 28 November

Burnsall Strikers Support March. Assemble: 10.30, Fenton Street, Smethwick. Called by GMBU.

#### Wednesday 4 November

Stop the Health Cuts! Picket of South Birmingham Health Authority. From 12.30, Cotteridge Church Centre, Pershore Road.

### Fighting Racism

#### Saturday 31 October

Demonstrate against racism and fascism. Assemble: 12.30

King George's Park, Bloxwich. Organised by Walsall TUC.

### Saturday 7 November

March against the racist murder of Rohit Duggal. Assemble: 11.30, recreation ground, Eltham, London SE9.

### Sunday 8 November

Stop the National Front! Remembrance Sunday counter-demonstration. Assemble: 1.00, Westminster City Hall, London SW1.

### Saturday 21 November

National demonstration against the Asylum Bill. Assemble: 12.00, Hyde Park, London.

### Students

#### Wednesday 4 November

Demonstrate against student debt. Assemble: 12.30, All Saints, Manchester. Organised by MANUS.

#### Saturday 7 - Sunday 8 November

Alliance for Workers' Liberty student school. Manchester Town Hall. Details from Jill 071-639 7965.

# Tubeworkers can win!

Time has run out for the "negotiations" over LUL management's Company Plan. The plan, which means the loss of 5,000 plus jobs, massive increases in the workloads and attacks on the job security of those who remain, is now set for implementation on 23 November.

Management never had any intention of genuinely negotiating. The whole process has been a farce with management changing nothing of substance

from the original position. Management walked out of the ACAS talks last Thursday with a parting shot of further small increases for some grades, notably another £500 for drivers to take their salary to £23,000. However, this is not much more than most drivers earn now (indeed it's a wage cut for some) and any increases are more than paid for by productivity changes. Management are now going to try and bypass the unions and

pressurise workers into signing new contracts. On 1 November, management will be posting new contracts to all tubeworkers' home addresses. Managers will then interview everyone individually twice before 23 November to try and intimidate people into signing new contracts. If you haven't signed by then, management will give you 12 weeks' notice of the sack unless you sign. Tube bosses know that the money isn't enough to buy

anyone off. They're estimating that their strongarm antics will intimidate enough people to undermine any strike or strike ballot. Fortunately, the tube unions are at last united. RMT, ASLEF and TSSA have all said they will ballot for action. This unity is belated but extremely welcome. A united front against the plan is essential.

The attacks on the miners have brought home to many Tubeworkers not only the need

to fight back but also that the Tories are in deep trouble and the time to fight is now!

**"Tubeworkers support the miners" badges**

40p each from:

AWL, PO

Box 823,

London

SE15 4NA.



## 4 November: London strikes show need for national councilworkers' fight back

On Wednesday 4 November white collar workers across London will take part in a day of action over local council cuts and redundancies.

The day of action is a response to a series of disputes across London where councils have announced compulsory redundancies. Newham, Greenwich and Islington are the main councils where NALGO has fought back through strikes. The Newham and Greenwich disputes have been woefully mishandled by the national leadership.

At present, the Islington strike is the main battleground between the employers and NALGO over compulsory redundancies.

Hundreds of Islington NALGO members are involved in an indefinite strike. The branch is requesting a strike ballot of the entire Islington NALGO membership in response to threatened victimisation of strikers.

It is vital that local disputes like Islington receive 100% backing. But the cuts offensive by the employers should not just be fought by local disputes. Cuts and redundancies are national issues. Many councils are waiting for the outcome of these disputes before they decide whether to press ahead with redundancies. It is a national fight which needs a national response.

NALGO has a national anti-cuts strategy — this needs to be turned from fine words on paper into a real national campaign based on strikes and demonstrations.

The fact that the day of action is taking place at all is a step forward. The Met District NALGO should be applauded for calling the day of action. But, since agreeing the date, the Met District have done little to build it. The first Met District leaflet appeared only a week before the day.

Islington and Lambeth will be striking on 4 November. Other branches, e.g. Hammersmith, are due to decide. Many other branches will attend the lunchtime rally.

4 November will be a start. It could have been better. Lukewarm support at a District and National level did not help.

The next step is a national day of action against cuts and redundancies. It should be a real day of action where branches are encouraged to take strike action.

The employers have a national cuts campaign, we need a national fightback.

## Postalworkers must fight over pay

Post Office workers look like being one of the first groups to come into the firing line of the Tories' campaign against public sector pay. Uniform grades in the Letters business have been offered 2.2% and admin. grades just 2%. And this is a business where productivity has

increased and profits are still high.

**"Action on pay can bust a big hole in any pay freeze and the Government itself".**

The National Negotiating

Committee have rejected this offer and further meetings are to be held with management.

The feeling is that the offer will be upped to 3% and that this will be recommended for acceptance. According to some 'left' members of the NEC, the Negotiating Committee will argue

that nothing more can be got and better to accept the 3% before a total wage freeze is imposed.

This is a crazy way to proceed.

Instead of rushing to accept lousy wage deals, the UCW leadership should be getting together with other public sector unions to fight this

latest attempt to make the low-paid carry the can for the economic crisis.

The Tories are tottering at the moment. Joint action on pay at both national and local level can not only bust a very big hole in any pay freeze but the Government itself.

### Civil servants strike over McGregor's hit list

By a CPSA DoE/DTP member

4,000 civil servants are set to strike this Friday at the Vehicle Licensing Centre in Swansea in protest at plans to 'contract out' the whole of the DVLC.

A leaked document shows that only 275 jobs will be left out of a workforce of 5,000. The work that is presently done by civil servants will be contracted out, resulting in lower pay, worse conditions and the loss of pension rights.

This attack is just part of Transport Minister McGregor's hit list for the department as a whole. Over half of the existing 80,000 jobs could go.

### British Telecom: Contractors forced to retreat

Contractors, brought in by British Telecom management to do fault reception work in the Private Services Division at Ilford, have been withdrawn by their agency, Manpower UK. NCU members who worked alongside them were instructed by their branches not to train any contracting staff, as the area of work was one traditionally done by permanent staff. This resulted in the five Manpower employees being unable to do the job they were contracted to do, and, after two withdrew voluntarily, the company agreed to cease the contract.

This problem will inevitably recur, as Manpower UK has recruited several ex-BT staff and has a special communications section.

## Lyons Maid occupation builds up support

Workers in occupation at the Lyons Maid factory in Kirkby near Liverpool are stepping up their fight for jobs after a fruitless meeting with the receivers last Friday, 23 October.

The occupation began a fortnight ago, after the receivers, who had been called in a few days earlier, suddenly announced that virtually the entire workforce was to be sacked — despite the fact that over 30 firms had already expressed an interest in buying the plant.

Steve Alcock, TGWU convenor at Lyons Maid, summed up the workers' feelings about last Friday's meeting:

"The receivers were not interested in anything we had to say. They said that the decision to sack us was a commercial decision, but refused to explain the reasons for the decision.

"When we asked them questions, they had no answers. The meeting was a total waste of time. The only good thing about it was that it gave us the opportunity to tell the receivers that we're stepping up pressure on them and the bank."

The workers are now demanding an inquiry by the Department of Trade and Industry into the American asset-stripper Henry Clarke, who bought the factory last year from Allied Lyons.

The North West TUC backed the demand for an inquiry at its meeting last Saturday, 24 October, and is also calling on the TUC to put pressure on the Department of Trade and Industry for an inquiry.

MPs at both local and national level are to be lobbied in support of the workers' fight for jobs and 67 applications alleging unfair dismissal are to be lodged with an industrial tribunal.

In addition, apart from organising bucket collections in Kirkby

and preparing to organise a demonstration, the workers are demanding that the National Westminster Bank (which employs the receivers) instruct the receivers to reverse their decision about the sackings.

If the National Westminster fails to do so, then the workers will be calling for a labour movement boycott of the bank and for labour movement organisations to withdraw their accounts from the bank.

The workforce at Kirkby is also stepping up its efforts to build

links with the workforces in Clarke's other factories in this country, in Telford and Stourbridge.

Both factories have already been leafleted twice in order to encourage workers at them to join the TGWU. (At present the two factories are not unionised). A third leaflet is currently being prepared, focussing on the threat to pension funds.

Whilst the Kirkby workers organise to step up their fight, support for their occupation continues to flood in.

### Massive ballot vote to fight victimisation

## Bury NALGO to strike on 4 November

1,600 white collar Bury council workers will be taking part in a NALGO branch-wide, one-day strike on Wednesday 4 November in support of victimised Branch Secretary Rob McLaughlin and against threatened cuts and redundancies.

The branch are requesting NALGO sanction a ballot for indefinite strike action by over 100 key workers in the Council's income sections. Plans are being made to also ballot for a series of escalating one-day, two-day and three-day, branch-wide strikes.

A recent Industrial Tribunal hearing effectively called for Rob McLaughlin to be reinstated. At the preliminary hearing on Rob's unfair dismissal claim, the Tribunal ruled that Rob's

unfair dismissal claim was so strong that Bury Council were ordered to put him back on the payroll. Despite this ruling, the Council have refused to drop the victimisation and have not reinstated Rob.

The victimisation started in early summer when Rob was suspended. His crime was to be Branch Secretary of a NALGO Branch running an anti-cuts campaign. After the branch refused to withdraw a series of satirical and very witty posters, Rob was suspended. Following a stitched-up disciplinary hearing he was sacked.

Since then a packed branch meeting gave full backing to the campaign against the victimisation. The Annual General Meeting re-elected Rob as

Over 50 union branches, the local council and the local Unemployed Centre and theatre group have already provided support, whilst new invitations for speakers and messages of support continue to arrive on a daily basis.

Messages of support/financial donations to: Steve Alcock, TGWU 6/556 branch, c/o 2 Melrose Road, Melling Mount, Kirkby, Merseyside. Cheques payable to: TGWU 6/556 branch.

Branch Secretary. In a ballot members voted overwhelmingly for the one-day strike as a start of the campaign of industrial action.

Bury NALGO are calling for the North West and North Wales District NALGO to turn the rally in Bury on 4 November into a district rally against cuts and redundancies. In line with the London-wide day of action, the 4 November should also be turned into a North-West day of action centred on Bury.

Bury Council want to victimise Rob because they want to break NALGO's resistance to £14 million cuts.

It is vital NALGO campaigns to defend jobs and services but, in order to do this, activists must be protected from victimisation.

# SOCIALIST ORGANISER

## Help us organise against the Tories!

### MINERS SHOW THE WAY

# Students: now is the time to fight!

By Paul Williams,  
Manchester Area NUS  
Convenor

**L**orna Fitzsimmons, President of the National Union of Students, says demonstrations are "old-fashioned". Try telling that to Arthur Scargill and the NUM!

The student movement needs to campaign against the Tories just like the miners. The Tories are threatening to cripple student unions and NUS, and plan to cut back on grants too. That's why Manchester Area NUS has organised a national student demonstration for 4 November.

The demo is just the start of the national campaign needed to force the Tories back. And now, with the Tories on the rocks and the labour movement starting to revive, is the best time to fight.

Students must link demands for increased grants and funding, and in defence of NUS, to the miners' cause

and the wider fight for jobs. From the Manchester demo, students must go back to their colleges and organise rank and file students to mount a campaign of pickets, occupations and local demonstrations.

And we must keep up the support for the miners in the colleges, and continue to build support groups.

Students must call the NUS leaders and local student union leaders to order. Lorna Fitzsimmons, the right wingers who run NUS, and their lackeys in student unions have tried to sabotage the demo. They hate ordinary students getting involved in protesting against the Tories.

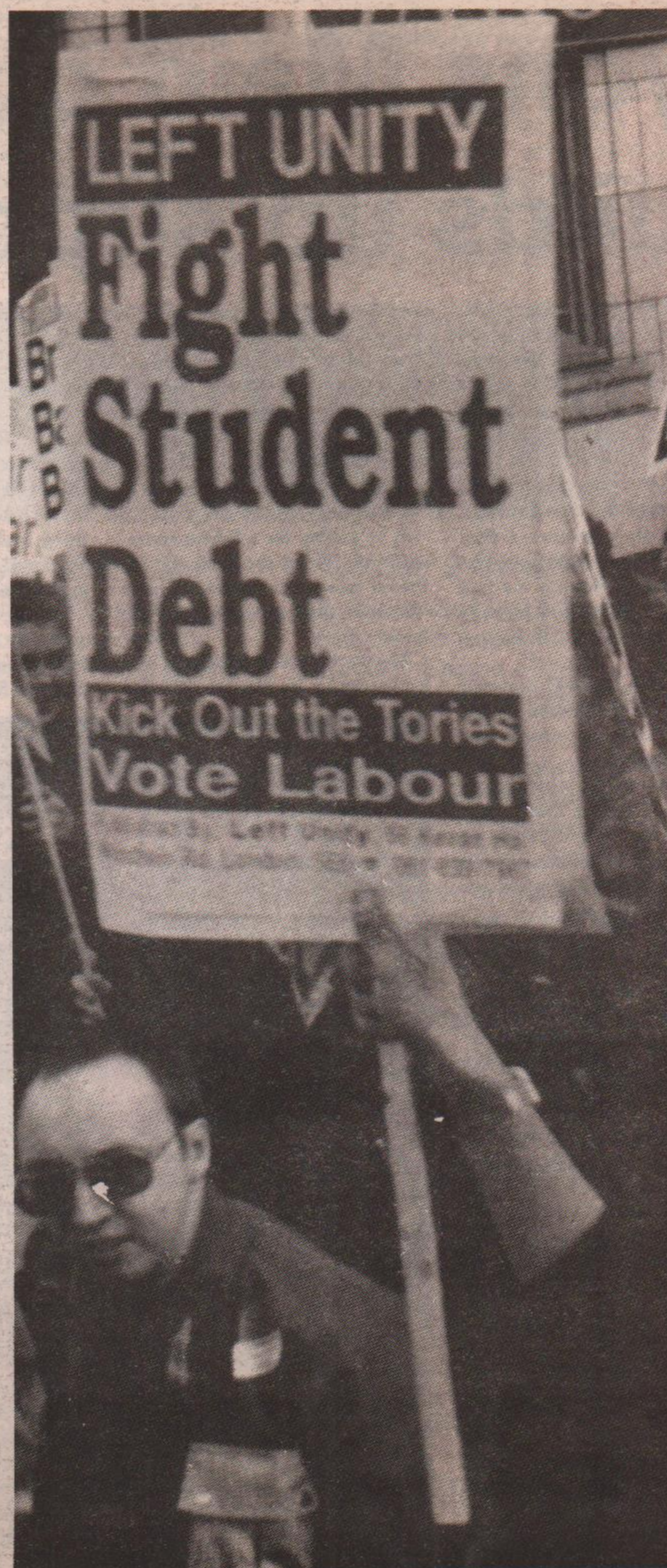
We need to start the fight back!

**End student debt! Defeat  
voluntary membership!**

**Wednesday 4 November**

*Demo meets at 12.30,  
All Saints, Manchester*

Details from:  
MANUS, 061-272 8483



**S**ocialist Organiser is raising extra funds to back our expansion plans. We aim to raise £5,000 by the end of January 1993. Our total so far stands at £1,649.80.

The next few weeks will be particularly important. The British labour movement is gearing up.

The miners have brought workers onto the streets in their hundreds of thousands. The Tory government looks fragile and vulnerable. We could be witnessing the beginning of John Major's political fall.

In this situation it is particularly important that a strong, clear, rational voice for socialism is heard inside the unions and the Labour Party.

*Socialist Organiser* raises and agitates for, policies that can beat the Tories and win socialism. Our politics are not decked out with gimmicks — "General strike yesterday, forever". We concentrate on providing real working class solutions to the capitalist crisis.

You can help us by sending us a donation. Cheques/POs (to "Socialist Organiser") to: SO, PO Box 823, London SE15 4NA.

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Our 200 Club is a monthly draw for £100. Entries are made by paying £1, £2 or £5 into the 200 Club. For each extra £1, you stand an extra chance of winning the £100 prize.

Entry forms are available from your *Socialist Organiser* seller or from: 200 Club, PO Box 823, London SE15 4NA.

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