

Join the  
Labour  
Party

# Socialist Organiser

Against all bans and proscriptions!

Support  
the miners!

In this week's paper:  
Back page, and four-page special feature  
inside: Miners fight for jobs.  
Pages 2-3: Why Labour lost Bermondsey;  
CLPs defy NEC orders to expel Militant.  
Page 11: Balance sheet on the water  
workers' strike.  
Page 12: Labour movement conference  
discusses British Army's role in Ireland.  
Page 6: Women's TUC preview.

\* To make space for coverage of the miners' dispute,  
we've had to cut two pages of letters, debate, and  
reviews. We'll be back with those features next week!

by John Bloxam,  
Chris Knight, and  
John O'Mahony

Thatcher's Tory government is the most hated British government since World War 2.

It has presided over the growth of unemployment to a real figure of over 4 million. It has allowed whole communities to be devastated by the slump and by its own policies. It has watched complacently as a whole generation of working class youth is thrown on the scrapheap at the very beginning of their adult lives.

It has thrown hundreds of thousands of women back into the crippling limitations and confinement of the home. It is an obscenely racist government.

It is devastating and dismantling the welfare state.

It has brought in waves of anti-union legislation aimed to hamstring and cripple the trade unions as fighting organisations of the working class. If Thatcher wins the coming election, the Tories will outlaw strikes in certain industries, and legislate to sever the existing links between the trade unions and the Labour Party, trying to drive the unions out of politics.

Yet the opinion polls consistently show a strong Tory lead. Almost unbelievably, there is a serious chance that Thatcher will win the next election! A general election in June or October could see the reinstatement for a second term of this, the most savage, relentless, and callous government of the rich over the poor for two generations, with a new mandate from its victims to continue running rampage through the lives and prospects of millions of British workers!

The very thought of it should galvanise the entire labour movement into action. The prediction of the opinion polls must ring out in the labour movement like a bugle call to action. This vicious government *cannot* be allowed a second term!

We need immediately to mount a tremendous campaign of education and agitation in every corner of British life against the Tories and in favour of the return of a Labour government. The overwhelming majority of the working people of Britain can and must be roused out of despair, passivity, and resignation, and organised to fight back!

*There are hundreds of thousands of Labour Party supporters, trade unionists, black militants, unemployed youth, angry women, and CNDers, who can and must be organised to mount and spearhead such a campaign, and to rouse the labour movement and its natural allies against a second term for Thatcher.*

This is properly the work of the official Labour Party — the political wing of the labour movement. But Labour isn't doing it, and the reason why the Tories are now poised for an election victory is because Labour hasn't been doing it.

Michael Foot's promise when he was elected leader to mount a crusade that would unleash a "storm of protest and opposition" in the streets of every city in Britain has long been forgotten. The dominant NEC right wing is too busy fighting socialists in the Labour Party to seriously fight the Tories.

During the Bermondsey by-election some of the right wing colluded with the press to sabotage Peter Tatchell's campaign.

*We must make every effort to get the best possible official Labour manifesto. But it is only too probable that the official manifesto will contain no more than a feeble reflection of the wide range of socialist and radical measures which are official Labour Party policy.*

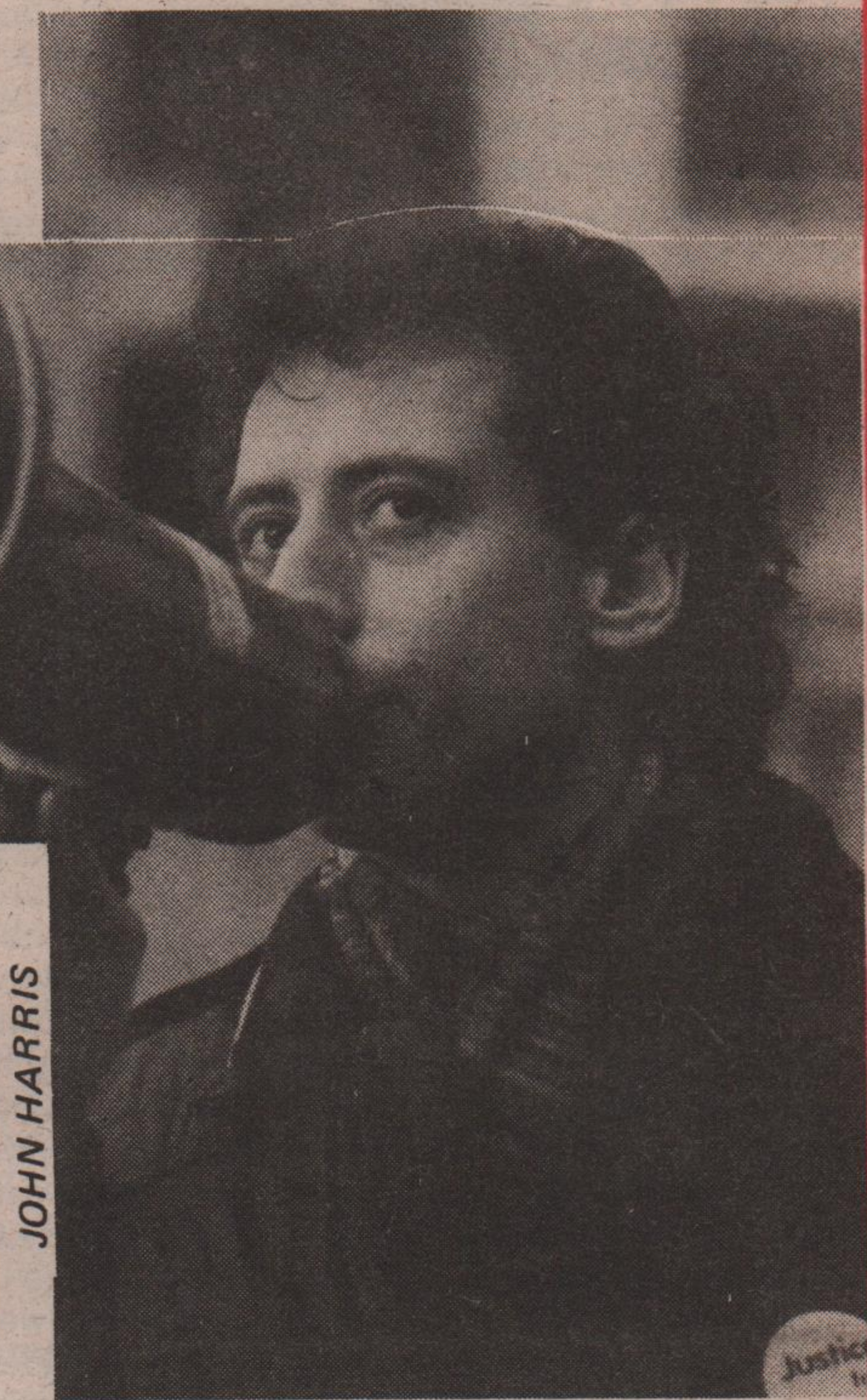
The Labour Party and trade union leaders have arranged a meeting — a re-run of Bishops Stortford — for this spring. Already there have been secret dinners to get incomes policy into the manifesto.

*Neither in its will to mobilise the labour movement to fight the Tories, nor in the policies it will most likely propose*

## After Bermondsey

# DON'T MOURN: ORGANISE!

JOHN HARRIS



### Build a socialist campaign to defeat Tories!

Sub-groups should be organised to campaign in every area of British society, from individual trade unions faced with Tebbit's laws through all the vast range instead of Thatcherism, will the official Labour Party campaign be capable of generating the energy, conviction, élan, combativity and dynamism that the election campaign will need if we are to have any hope of stopping the Tories.

What they did during the Bermondsey by-election suggests that some of the right wing do not want to beat the Tories, but would prefer a defeat which they can blame on the Left and use to justify a full-scale purge.

Before we can hope to stop the Tories we must put a stop to the right-wing saboteurs. If the established leaders are irresponsible, defeatist and even, some of them, treacherous, and will neither lead the fight nor organise it, then the rank and file must do all these things and do them urgently — the rank and file of the unions, of the Labour Party, and of the Parliamentary Labour Party.

We must now launch the anti-Tory crusade Michael Foot promised but never mounted.

Peter Tatchell said what needed to be said after the Bermondsey result: "Don't mourn this loss, organise for a win in the general election".

We need to establish a campaign representing and uniting broad segments of the labour movement, the women's movement, blacks, youth, and gays. It might perhaps be called 'Anti-Tory League and Labour Victory Campaign', or 'Socialist Campaign for a Labour Victory 83'.

of groups and areas of life being devastated or threatened by the capitalist slump and the Tory government which worsens its effects like a plague following famine.

We can link up especially with CND activists to fight for Labour conference policy of unilateral nuclear disarmament. Dennis Healey has already made it plain that he expects this policy to be watered down in the official manifesto.

The campaign would produce literature against the Tories, for Labour conference policies and for Clause Four — leaflets, posters, broadsheets.

We would seek the affiliation of Labour Parties, trade unions, campaign groups, ethnic associations, etc. Local campaigns would be set up to galvanise the local labour movement. No-one who wanted to fight the Tories and to rouse the labour movement, or to campaign for aspects of Labour Party conference policy, would be excluded.

In this way the campaign could in many areas enable the local Labour Party to bind together bigger forces for the general election campaign than it could otherwise hope to.

The campaign would organise meetings and rallies throughout the country for national and local speakers who represent Labour Party conference policy or important aspects of it. The enthusiastic mass meetings for Tony Benn organised by the Rank and File Mobilising Committee for Labour Democracy would be the model.

*This time such meetings would be the starting point for a turn by the militants and the activists into the working class communities, on an anti-Tory crusade.*

In short, it would be a distinct left wing activist campaign *within* the official Labour Party campaign — with a distinct voice, but also, of course, boosting and strengthening the official effort to maximise the Labour vote.

The campaign would build on the experience of the Socialist Campaign for a Labour Victory, which mounted an independent left wing campaign within the Labour campaign in the 1979 general election. What the SCLV did then, can now be done on a vastly expanded scale, reflecting the growth of the Left since 1979 and in response to the mass hatred now of the incumbent Tory government.

The new campaign would combine the experience of the SCLV with the way the Anti-Nazi League mobilised hundreds of thousands in 1977-8.

This is how to stop the right wing losing us the next election. It is the way to release, organise and focus the energy and enthusiasm needed to avert the nightmare prospect of a second Thatcher government which, according to the opinion polls, looms ahead of us if we don't act now to avert it.

It is the way to organise those alienated and repelled by John Golding's version of the Labour Party, so that they become a force now in the fight to kick out the Tories.

In this way a powerful labour movement drive against the Tories can be achieved and the unity of the Labour and trade union left restored — unity in the first place and immediately against the Tory enemy, but also unity around Lab-

our's left wing policies which would imply a commitment to fight for them even against a new Labour government.

By organising around Labour conference policies, we will not only be fighting the Tories now, but also preparing, educating, and organising the forces to resist the inevitable negative aspects of a new right wing led Labour government, and to continue the fight for policies and for democracy and accountability in the labour movement.

## Give us £1

The only science column on the Left was two years old last week! If you have enjoyed reading it, then why not give the paper which brings it to you a small birthday present.

Give us a pound for your paper — 75p extra — or as much as you can afford. Or send a donation to SO, marked 'Science'.

# KANGAROO COURT CONVICTS MILITANT

## Seats in doubt

by John Bloxam

LAST week's NEC also discussed the forthcoming boundary changes, which will affect over 550 Parliamentary seats.

The right wing and the leadership appeared interested in two things — not to tell anybody who had forked out the £70,000 for the lost court cases against the changes, and, more importantly, to prevent as many CLPs as possible exercising their right to hold full selection conferences, as allowed for by a 1981 Conference decision.

With a general election so near, it is unlikely that many CLPs would have exercised the right. But some would have, and that clearly threatened right wingers and careerists in the Party.

The NEC used an obscure and entirely inappropriate constitutional provision to override this general right, and have instead issued a detailed set of guidelines for six different categories of new Constituency Labour Parties.

The NEC expects there to be selection contests in 70 to 100 CLPs, but the great majority of these will simply be between already selected candidates.

Full selection conferences will only be permitted in ten to 20 cases — areas where either there are no selected candidates, or the already selected candidate(s) only cover a minority of the voters in a new seat.

As with the 'shortlist of one', this is a manoeuvre to obstruct or prevent the rank and file using the mechanism of mandatory reselection to get real representatives of labour into Parliament.

John Bloxam

MILITANT got it right when they pointed out to Labour Party general secretary Jim Mortimer before last week's National Executive Committee meeting that it would "be a 'show trial' put on in a bureaucratic attempt to legitimise a pre-determined decision to expel five socialists from the Party".

Elementary rights were consistently denied to the five members of the Militant editorial board. They were found guilty and then the charges were developed according to what the right wing thought they could get away with.

The fig-leaf of the register was rapidly dropped in favour of a wholesale proscription of Militant, in defiance of Conference decisions. NEC members could only ask questions of the accused at the final kangaroo court. Mortimer bluntly refused to circulate material from Tony Benn, breaking a long-established practice on the NEC.

And the five accused were never allowed to see any of the 'evidence' against them, although Mortimer had spoken at last year's Labour Party conference of "a great mass of evidence... available in a huge trunk in Walworth Road".

Audrey Wise exposed what was in this 'huge trunk' in last week's Tribune... gossip, hearsay and lies cobbled together by the right wing's network of official spies and marks. It would make most police states blush. And now they say they might publish those parts of the evidence that aren't 'libellous' — i.e. lies!

The right of the rank and file and socialist groups to organise in the Party is in any case a principle that has to be defended. But last Wednesday's 'trial' was a kangaroo court, in which a 19-9 majority for the right wing substituted



ANDREW WIARD (REPORT)

for any evidence or argument.

The first proposal was to stop the witch-hunt, and for the NEC to finish at lunchtime and go and help in Bermondsey — defeated 9 to 19. Then Eric Heffer proposed the expulsion be put off until Party officers had met the Militant EB to see if it was possible to persuade them to make changes — defeated 9 to 19. Then Golding moved that they should be expelled 'forthwith' — carried 19 to 9.

During the meeting one of the trade union bureaucrats was heard to say that they had been 'dilly-dallying around too long'. John Golding said they couldn't afford to be 'frightened of the CLPs'. And Alex Kitson voted throughout like Foot and Kinnock, saying that he was there not to represent TGWU policy but those who had elected him.

It is unlikely that this solid witch-hunting block will change when it comes to voting on the two resolutions deferred to the next meeting of the NEC. Jo Richardson's resolution says there should be no more expulsions of supporters or readers of Militant; Dennis Howell has put down a resolution barring



JOHN HARRIS

At this weekend's London Labour Party conference, Militant editorial board member Keith Dickinson is an accredited delegate. Despite Golding (above), he must have his full delegate's rights.

any 'facilities to Militant on Labour Party occasions' from CLP level upwards.

Just before the NEC Mortimer wrote to Bermondsey saying that a majority of officers had decided to go ahead with the expulsions on Wednesday because it would help Labour's election chances!

And four days afterwards he said on TV, with a straight face, that "we are not conducting a witch-hunt". "I am not going to condemn them [the Militant PPCs] in advance without listening to what they have to say".

Roy Hattersley has remained silent about his prediction last year that a purge would give Labour a million more votes.

On Friday, the three London CLPs where the Militant EB are members (Islington Central, Hammersmith North, Norwood) received a letter from Mortimer informing them of the NEC's decision, and telling them to

delete the names from their membership lists. By Monday morning Mortimer had Islington Central's reply:

"Thank you for your letter of 24th February, informing me of the decision taken by the NEC last Wednesday to exclude from membership of the Labour Party the five members of the Militant editorial board.

In reply to your letter, the officers of this CLP have instructed me to draw to your attention the various motions passed on this issue by our General Committee over the past several months (copies of which have been sent to you periodically), and to inform you that, in accordance with the policy set out in those resolutions, and in accordance also with policy set out in an advertisement we have sponsored in Tribune this week, we do not recognise the expulsion of Peter Taaffe and Ted Grant from the Labour Party; and that we will continue to regard them as full members of this CLP.

Consequently we are unable to accede to your request that the names of these two comrades be deleted from our membership records.

We shall be conveying this correspondence to members of the General Committee".

Hammersmith North sent back a reply which asked under what rule the NEC had expelled members directly, going over the heads of the CLP. As with Islington Central, they have a clear policy that they will not expel or recognise the expulsion of socialists from the Party and, together with at least 40 other CLPs, and 150 individuals, have signed the Labour Against the Witch-hunt advert in Tribune this week.

At the LAW press conference on Monday afternoon Reg Race said, "The NEC need CLPs to agree to expulsions. What is clear is that the CLPs involved do not agree". He also pointed out that CLPs "have got considerable bargaining strength vis-a-vis the NEC", not least because it is election year.

And he pointed to the example of Hornsey. At one point the NEC threatened to disband Hornsey

CLP by December 31 last year unless they toed the line and excluded Tariq Ali, but they stood firm and the NEC has done nothing. Indeed, last Wednesday's NEC, which expelled the five Militant supporters, also agree to defer the case of Hornsey again.

But on Tuesday night Norwood, which has one of the best records of fighting witch-hunts in the Party, turned and ran before the battle was even begun.

An EC motion reaffirming opposition to expulsions and the register and declaring the intention of Norwood Labour Party to campaign to overturn the decision to expel was carried by a large majority but an amendment calling on Norwood to refuse to recognise the expulsions was lost by 29-21 votes.

Last October Ted Knight argued against Militant when they proposed a policy of compliance with expulsions. But at Norwood GMC the tables were turned. Militant EB member Clare Doyle, invited to address the GMC, expressed the hope that the GMC would refuse to recognise the expulsions.

Ted Knight, however, argued that Mortimer's letter should be 'noted', i.e. the expelled comrades should have their names removed from membership lists. He opposed what he described as a 'gesture' in favour of an ongoing political fight against the right wing.

The previous day, before the GMC decision, Ted Knight had undercut Islington Central and Hammersmith North by declaring, as he sat beside them at the LAW press conference, that he would argue for Norwood not to defy the NEC.

An essential ingredient in Hornsey's stand, as also in Bermondsey's, was the solidarity they received from other labour movement organisations. It is urgent that a campaign is mounted now, including:

- Resolutions to trade union and regional Labour Party conferences condemning the expulsions, supporting the CLPs' resistance, and calling for immediate reinstatement.
- Messages of support to those CLPs resisting, with copies to LAW, to Mortimer, and to the NEC.
- Getting CLPs (and MPs, councillors, trade unionists, etc.) who did not sign the first LAW advertisement to sign the second one, due out at Easter.

The NEC's decision to try to expel the five members of the Militant EB will now put to a test all the fine speeches over the last six months about refusing to expel socialists from the Party. If the right wing succeed with the five, the fight will certainly not be over, but it will be a major defeat.

The right wing will have won an important round. They will have the wind in their sails.

# Students fight back

by Andy Chapman

LAST Wednesday, February 23, saw the largest student protests for some years.

NUS's call for nationwide 24 hour occupations of colleges received a militant response from over 100 colleges. This action was part of the NUS Grants Cuts Campaign, and is to be followed up by a national demonstration on March 9.

The response was particularly strong in London, not usually the most militant area. Over 20 London colleges occupied, and 100 students from all over London occupied Senate House at the University of London; administration offices

Princess Anne was forced to cancel a visit to Queen Mary College by one of the strongest occupations, where the principle of NUS's 'Education Alliance' was put into practice at grass roots level. About 150 students occupied the administration area overnight, and in the morning 100 pickets were put on the college steps.

Effective picketing swelled the numbers of students on the picket lines and in the occupation. The main success, however, was that commercial deliveries were turned away, some lectures were cancelled when a number of lecturers joined the picket, and the library staff walked out on strike in

support of the students.

These students learned the most important lesson of their college lives, how to mount a picket!

Successful picketing at Sussex turned away bus drivers who remembered the £300 donation the Students' Union made to their strike fund. But at Thames Poly 200 right-wing students smashed up the occupation.

Although the day was quite successful, with many student unions discussing further occupations, most unions will be charged the 'cost' of the occupation. At Sussex a day's occupation now costs £1500, and there is no chance of not paying it as the college

management can deduct at source.

Occupations are fine, a good rallying technique, and particularly effective when the demands are on the college authorities. But they have limitations: a long occupation could bankrupt a student union, since SUs are not now financially autonomous.

For Student Unions to win the grants campaign and win back autonomy, the student movement needs to link up with the trade unions, and, most urgently, move into the political sphere.

Thames Poly's motion to NUS conference calls for NUS to campaign for a Labour victory. NUS and

student unions need to be working with Labour to kick out the Tories — who promise loans instead of grants, course closures, privatisation, and continued shackling of student unions to college management.

But there are problems with Labour, too. Neil Kinnock will dismantle a loans system only if it hasn't gone too far, and we can't be sure that Labour's promise of grants for Further Education students will be in the manifesto.

Students need to organise alongside Labour Party members fighting for Labour policies in the general election, whatever Foot, Healey and Kinnock do.

# Media witch-hunt defeats Tatchell

## We say:

BITTER, unjust, infuriating, and a serious setback as it is, the Labour defeat in Bermondsey may yet do some good to the labour movement.

For it was an avoidable defeat. It was even a self inflicted defeat. We can learn vital lessons from it.

It was Labour Party leader Michael Foot himself who struck the keynote in the House of Commons 15 months ago for the vile, outrageous and despicable treatment that Peter Tatchell suffered at the hands of the press, the Liberals/SDP and Bob Mellish's spoiling candidate, John O'Grady.

True, when he acted then as prosecutor, juror and judge to commit and condemn Peter Tatchell without a hearing or right of appeal, Michael Foot did not gay-bait him. But he gave the signal: anything goes. The Sun and the Mail, the O'Grady's, the Alliance, and the graffiti artists and producers of anonymous leaflets, each in their own way, filled in the details.

Foot denounced Tatchell under threat from Mellish to provoke an embarrassing by-election. Bending to the blackmailer only led, a year later, to the threatened by-election happening — and being made ten times worse for Labour by Foot's repudiation of Tatchell.

Foot in the House of Commons acted like an autocratic pope with summary power to condemn and exclude; in Bermondsey, campaigner Foot found that he did not have the power to undo what he had done. The press and the rival candidates would not let him. Nor would the right-wingers of the Parliamentary Labour Party and the NEC, who fed the rabid press with titbits that helped convince sections of the electorate that the Labour Party was on the point of disintegration.

Labour lost:

- Because of a 15 month long media campaign against Tatchell, unprecedented in its intensity. It was triggered by Michael Foot's House of Commons repudiation.
- O'Grady and the Alliance built on Foot's denunciation.

- Labour in the area is greatly discredited by the former regime of Mellish and O'Grady. There has not been time to undo this.
- The local Party was long rotten, inept and ramshackle. It is only now being rebuilt after the exit of the Mellishites, under difficult conditions.
- For all these reasons, Tatchell's policies were virtually impossible to get across.

Peter Tatchell's speech when the result was announced on Thursday night showed where the moral victory lay in the Bermondsey by-election — and pointed the way forward for the Left.

"Don't mourn", he said. "Organise for the general election". The lesson of Bermondsey is that the Left must organise its own campaign — a Socialist Campaign for a Labour Victory, only this time on a vastly larger scale than the SCLV that Socialist Organiser organised in 1979.

### Kevin Flack\* examines the reasons for Labour's disastrous performance in the Bermondsey by-election

\*Secretary/Agent, East Lewisham Labour Party, writing in a personal capacity.

IT wasn't the Liberals that won at Bermondsey; it was the media.

Fake opinion polls — like the one in a South London newspaper which put the Liberals ahead whilst admitting that in doing so it had ignored both Tatchell's and O'Grady's strongest wards, or the Sun's phone-call opinion poll in an area where nearly half of the Labour votes are without phones — contributed greatly.

Those with a vested interest in destroying Tatchell and the radical socialism put forward by Bermondsey Labour Party were faced with the problem of a split opposition. The need was to find the one candidate voters believed could beat Tatchell, and then mobilise the anti-Labour vote behind that candidate.

Thus, the first opinion poll that gave the Liberals a chance had a 'knock-on' effect which made people believe that the Liberal was the only candidate who could beat Tatchell.

The campaign was by far the most vicious and personal that any Labour activist could remember. Tatchell had been harangued for over a year for his support for gay rights and for the heinous crime of being born Australian. Thousands of anonymous and illegal anti-gay leaflets were distributed during the campaign.

The Liberals ran the dirtiest campaign of all,



Right: Victor Simon Hughes — "The Liberals ran the dirtiest campaign of all". Left: 'Raving Loony' candidate Sutch got more votes than the 'Communist Party' and 'Revolutionary Communist Party' put together.

putting out a leaflet which consisted entirely of attacks on Tatchell and not stating anywhere that it was a Liberal leaflet! They exploited the press headlines in their leaflets and were involved in whispering campaigns on the doorstep designed to smear Tatchell.

O'Grady's team were just as personal in their attacks.

#### Gutter

The by-election dived further into the gutter when a Daily Mail reporter infiltrated one of the ward's canvassing teams. The lies and deceptions that this objectionable individual used to put together his page two article are presumably regarded as legitimate in the world of the media.

The response to the election from the left, and indeed from the party as a whole, was magnificent. Over 500 were estimated to have campaigned for Tatchell on the last Sunday of the campaign, and as many must have been present on polling day.

The Bermondsey campaign material was impressive in style, and much of the content was politically refreshing, combining important national issues with vital local ones (such as opposition to the land speculators of the LDDC: in relation to this, O'Grady's much publicised comment that "We need these luxury flats for the business managers to live in" only strengthened our case).

Canvass results and doorstep reactions gave no indication of the size of the Labour defeat. There were

of course, hostile comments (all picked up from the media smears) — i.e. anti-Australian, anti-gay, anti-draft dodging. But Labour's campaign stuck to issues, and where people were prepared to listen and where people actually met Peter Tatchell, there were a number of converts.

In particular, the vote amongst the ethnic minorities held up well.

But the smear campaign and the doubt in the minds of a large section of the electorate were fuelled by the actions of the Labour leadership. No amount of support from Michael Foot (and where was the rest of the Shadow Cabinet?) in the last few weeks could outweigh the unprecedented and totally unjustified denunciation of Tatchell he made in the House of Commons in

1981.

Bermondsey Labour Party had followed all the rules in their selection of Tatchell and yet were attacked by the party leadership. Hostility from the NEC continued right into the election campaign with the impounding of the leaflets printed at Cambridge Heath Press. The NEC locked up the leaflets that had been printed at the press associated with the Militant tendency, ostensibly to avoid 'adverse press publicity'.

Presumably as part of a 'punishment', Tatchell's first press conference was cancelled. The other candidates had thus launched their campaigns, while the Party powers that be appeared to be doing all they could to sabotage Tatchell's. The £400 spent on the impounded leaflets came out of the very limited election expenses, and that put Labour even further behind.

#### Peckham

In Bermondsey there was no evidence of the Trade Unions for a Labour Victory (TULV) support which had been so apparent in the Peckham by-election last October.

The legacy left by Mellish and O'Grady was also a factor in Labour's defeat. On the run-down estates of much of Bermondsey people have little to thank a Labour council for. It will take a lot of hard work from the new Southwark Council and the Party itself to win back the support which has been lost

over the years.

So where does the left go from here? The defeat of Tatchell is indeed a battle lost. But the most persecuted man in the country showed us the way ahead with his fighting speech at the election count.

The left must stop talking about 'turning the Party outwards into the community' and actually do so. Workplace branches must be built to consolidate our industrial base and regain it where it has been lost. We need to campaign alongside the unemployed, who have little reason to trust the Labour Party and many of whom did not vote in Bermondsey.

Bermondsey above all showed the need to stop paying lip-service to the necessity of a popular Labour daily paper; we must demand that those with the money and the power in the labour movement make this a priority. We need to return to the most rudimentary forms of political education and cannot allow the lies of the Sun and the Mail to go unchallenged any longer.

Many of us have made sacrifices and suffered for the cause we believe in. Very few of us have suffered as much as Peter Tatchell — if individuals are to be able to stand up for their beliefs, it is important that we continue to stand by him.

**Join LABOUR AGAINST THE WITCHHUNT**  
Membership open to Constituency Labour Parties, trade union organisations, Labour Party affiliates, and individuals.  
Fee. CLPs and unions £10, wards £5, individuals and other organisations £3. Write to LAW, 11 Wilderton Road, London N16.

**London Regional Labour Party conference**  
**Joint London Labour Briefing/Labour against the Witch-hunt/Labour Steering Committee**  
**Against the Witch-hunt public meeting**  
**STOP THE WITCH-HUNT: DEFEND SOCIALIST POLICIES**

**Speakers: Ken Livingstone, Jane Stockton, Reg Race, Bob Labi. 12.30, Saturday March 5, Camden Council Chamber.**



JOHN HARRIS

None of us must let ourselves be demoralised by the result on Thursday. We've got to redouble our efforts to build a mass membership, campaigning Labour Party, which can counteract the filth and smears of Fleet Street and the opposition parties.

In Bermondsey, already, last weekend we were out on the streets again, campaigning for a Labour victory at the General Election.

Our opponents were absolutely terrified of discussing the issues and Labour's policies. They knew the only way they could attack and undermine us was through a campaign of lies and smears, particularly of a personal nature.

That is an important lesson which we must all bear in mind for the General Election to follow. Labour's policies do have widespread support: our enemies know that, and that is why they've sought to both denigrate myself and now Michael Foot as a way of sabotaging Labour's election prospects.

Don't mourn this loss, organise to get the Tories out and win a socialist Labour government.

## In Brief

# French carworkers victimised

Colin Foster reports on a bosses' backlash

THE left wing PASOK government in Greece is denying that sections of the Greek armed forces attempted a coup last weekend. But it has suddenly retired 14 generals and two air vice marshals. There are reports that PASOK and the Communist Party have called on their members to be prepared to resist any attempt to impose a new military regime on the country.

In 1967 the Greek army coup put in power the colonels' regime that repressed the Left. It lasted until July 1974, when it was toppled after an attempt to organise the takeover of Cyprus triggered a Turkish invasion of the island and brought Greece and Turkey to the brink of war.

ACCORDING to the senior US military adviser in El Salvador, the ruling junta cannot defeat the left wing FMLN guerrillas. Worse for Reagan, the junta is reportedly almost out of ammunition, requiring an urgent transfusion of £40 million in aid to sustain its war effort: this means new political problems in Congress.

AUSTRALIA goes to the polls on March 5. The Australian Labour Party looks set to defeat Malcolm Fraser's Thatcherite Liberals — but on the basis of a platform including incomes policy.

The Australian monthly Socialist Fight headlines its latest issue, 'Vote Labour — but fight Hawke's freeze'. (Bob Hawke is the new leader of the ALP).

"The majority of workers will rightly want to vote Labour, not because of Labour's record, but in order to deny the bosses a victory in Parliament.

The State Labour governments' records are a disgrace... [The last federal Labour prime minister] Whitlam introduced wage indexation as the first step in the reduction in real wages over the past eight years. And it was Hayden, as Treasurer, who first cut \$1000 million from social spending in the 1975 budget.

The ALP has never challenged capitalism, it has managed capitalism in the interests of the rich and powerful. The wishes of ALP conferences and affiliated unions are passed over by the politicians.

Socialist Fight calls on every worker, not only to vote Labour, but to campaign for a Labour victory. The fight must be kept up after the election to push the ALP leaders to break with the bosses and the bankers.

Firstly this will mean resuming the ACTU campaign of industrial action against the wage freeze. We need leaders who will fight for and with the working class in government and out. And we need a labour movement capable of calling the leaders to account.

The fight will not finish because Labour wins the election. The power to run society does not lie in parliament, but with the ownership of industry, the media, and the organisation of the army, police and state bureaucracy".

AFTER victories for French car workers in their recent wave of strikes for higher wages, the employers have hit back with sackings. And they have done so with the encouragement of the Socialist Party-led government.

The strikes started in the paintshop at Renault Flins on January 6, and spread to other Renault factories, to Citroen, to Chausson, to Peugeot, to Fiat and to Talbot. Increases were won, and according to reports in the French revolutionary press the strikers went back feeling strong and confident.

On the return to work at Chausson Gennevilliers on February 16, for example, the weekly Lutte Ouvriere reports, "We have shown our strength, and it's a solid gain for the future". Rouge concurs: "The general atmosphere is one of satisfaction with a well-

conducted strike".

At Citroen Aulnay, however, there had been a scuffle in the factory on February 2 between CGT demonstrators and members of the CSL — a semi-fascist organisation which serves as a company union in Citroen.

Labour Minister Jean Auroux denounced the CGT as responsible for the clash, and called for the "exclusion from the labour community of those who use terrorist methods". Citroen's notoriously hard-line management followed up Auroux's statement by suspending a number of workers and sacking eight, including Akka Ghazi, the leader of the CGT in the factory, and three other CGT delegates.

Under French labour law union delegates (roughly equivalent to shop stewards) cannot be sacked

without a lengthy legal procedure. The Citroen bosses had first to go to the Works Committee — where the trade union majority rejected the sacking — and now to the Labour Inspectorate.

700 workers from Aulnay attended a CGT meeting in Paris on February 12 to call for strike action against the sackings. The CGT leadership (dominated by the Communist Party) has however stuck to cautious tactics. They have protested against the sackings by having the sacked workers continue to arrive at their jobs.

### Citroen

The Citroen management has made no attempt to exclude them from the factory — but the foremen and supervisors, no doubt on management prompting, have issued statements

threatening "appropriate action" if the sacked workers continue to turn up.

### Renault

Management in nationalised Renault followed Citroen's example. At Flins they are seeking the dismissal of three delegates of the Socialist-leaning CFDT. There too, the sacking has been rejected by the Works Committee and has gone to the Labour Inspectorate.

The local CFDT branch was in favour of indefinite strike action, but local CFDT leaders have managed to restrict the response to short protest strikes.

The union leaders' muted response to the employers' counter-offensive is determined by their political ties to the government. Abandoning much of



Sacked by Citroen: CGT union leader Akka Ghazi

its election promises, the left government has gone for policies very similar to what the previous right wing government called 'austerity'. Only Mitterrand and Mauroy have a new name for it: 'rigour'. The CFDT has dissented slightly, calling for 'selective rigour'.

At the municipal elections on March 6, these policies will be challenged

by joint slates of Lutte Ouvriere and the Ligue Communiste Revolutionnaire, under the slogan, "The Workers' Voice Against Austerity". Under France's electoral law, voting takes place in two rounds, and if eliminated in the first round the revolutionaries will be calling on their voters to vote for the Socialist Party or Communist Party in the second round.

# Quebec showdown

by Martin Thomas

QUEBEC could see a rerun of its 1972 general strike. Louis Laberge of the FTQ union federation has called for all-out action from March 14 if the teachers are still in dispute with the provincial government.

Noting the provincial government's draconian new anti-strike laws, and his experience of being jailed for leading strike action in 1972, Laberge said that he was prepared to face prison again. The CSN federation has also called for strike action.

The conflict started with decrees passed by the provincial government last year, cutting public service wages and then freezing them, and imposing increased workloads and job cuts.

200,000 public service workers struck in January and early February, and teachers stayed out until February 20, when they suspended their strike for three weeks to allow negotiations.

### College

Talks have taken place between school teachers' representatives and the government; but college teachers have had no talks, the provincial government says it will negotiate about details but not the overall figure of \$244 million it plans to cut from its bill for teachers' wages, and the first of 24,000 public service workers charged under the ferocious anti-strike laws are due to come up in court on March 7.

Most of the teachers are in a separate union federation, the CEQ. The CEQ, FTQ, and CSN together form the Common Front which led the 1972 general strike.

That started with a strike of public service workers over wages and conditions, and spread through solidarity action, especially after 50 union leaders were jailed. In the small industrial town of Sept-Iles, the local labour movement effectively installed workers' power. The action ended with a partial victory and the freeing of the union leaders.

### Duplessis

The provincial government in 1972 was Liberal. For decades until the late '50s, Quebec politics had been dominated by the conservative, inward-looking, French-Canadian nationalist — and extremely corrupt — Union Nationale of Maurice Duplessis. When the Union Nationale was eclipsed, after

Duplessis's death, in a welter of scandals, the Liberals gained power and pushed through the so-called 'quiet revolution' (or 'noisy evolution', as sceptics called it).

Quebec society was modernised, the status of the French language boosted, the provincial public sector expanded.

The opening-up of provincial politics led to an explosion of national self-assertion by the Quebecois, long the 'white niggers of North America'.

Rene Levesque broke from the Liberals to form the separatist Parti Quebecois, which grew rapidly during the 1970s and now completely dominates provincial politics — though referendums have shown a majority against

separation of Quebec from Canada. (The Liberals still sweep Quebec in federal elections — and indeed without Quebec they would be reduced to a rump in all-Canada politics).

In contrast to the clericalism and very right-wing social policies of previous separatist movements, the Parti Quebecois promotes a social-democratic image and is applying to join the Socialist International. The strong support of the provincial union federations has been crucial to its rise.

But that story could be coming to an end. The unions and the PQ have come into head-on conflict. Quebec trade unionists will have to start thinking about an independent workers' party.



Quebec unions have supported the PQ. But for how much longer?

# Grim choice for German workers

by Jenny Fisher

THE choice that will be facing the West German electorate this Sunday is summed up by reading the election spread in the International Marxist Group's Paper 'Was Tun', followed by the coverage in the 'Economist'.

'Was Tun' doesn't even mention the 'Conservative' Parties — the CDU & CSU — and dismisses the Ecology Party ('The Greens') because, despite their concern for the environment and changing the present social order, they do not base themselves on the working class.

'Was Tun' acknowledges that most workers still look to the SPD ('Labour Party') as their Party, and announces support for it in the election, whilst calling on it to implement real socialist measures, in particular nationalisation of industries declaring redundancies, a 35 hour week with no loss of pay, full equality for women and immigrants, an end to support for US imperialism, disarmament, and no US bases in Germany.

The bosses' weekly, the Economist, makes its position quite clear too. Its greatest fear is that the 'Conservatives' will lose control. An SPD government — with or without the support of the Greens — is seen as the

most dangerous thing imaginable.

The reason? They will defer deployment of US missiles, so the Russians will have no incentive to disarm, and the political split between America and Germany could destroy NATO!

The economic consequences of an SPD government are also feared. It would 'stop growth-promoting capital projects such as the nuclear-power construction programme', and this would lead to 'a panic on financial markets'.

The answer, says the Economist, is for the CDU's leader Helmut Kohl to win the election, but to need the support of the tiny 'Liberal' party, the FDP. In this way, Kohl could keep out of power the 'erratic' (read: extreme right) CSU leader Franz Josef Strauss.

Only in this way will the CDU be able to maintain the consensus politics necessary to ensure that Pershing-2 missiles can be sited in West Germany!

Unfortunately, faced with the record of SPD governments over the last 13 years which, especially recently, have allowed the effects of recession to fall exclusively on the working class, the West German electorate may well return the 'Conservatives' to power.

# The defeat that shaped Japan's labour relations

The first article of this series described how the US set about helping the remilitarisation of Japan after the start of the Cold War. Militant trade unions were repressed, pro-employer organisations encouraged.

THE historic struggle against the new USA/Japan security treaty broke out in 1960. The architect of this treaty was Kishi Nobuska — the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) Prime Minister. He was a member of the Jojo Cabinet which launched the Pacific war in 1941. He was held as a war criminal but later released by the Americans and became leader of the LDP.

When Eisenhower was due to visit Japan to sign the treaty, millions took to the streets demanding the resignation of Kishi and his Cabinet and demanding that the treaty be not signed.

Sohyo (the major progressive trade union federation in Japan) staged strikes and students held mass demonstrations in what was the most important political struggle which had taken place since the war.

Such was the ferocity of the demonstrations that Kishi was forced to resign and Eisenhower's visit cancelled (although of course the treaty was still ratified by the Diet).

## High point

The demonstrations were the highpoint of the mass political movement in Japan which had opposed the relentless drive towards remilitarisation and the integration of Japan into the US military system since independence in 1952.

1960 was also a turning point for the trade union movement.

That year saw one of the most important disputes in post-war Japan, the bitter struggle at the Miike pit of the Mitsui coal mining company. The Miike pit was highly organised and the dispute was over rationalisation, redundancy, the power of the union, and the determination of the management to reestablish control.

The union was defeated and 1,200 workers victimised.

It was a very strategic victory for Japanese capitalism. It not only strengthened the employers, but led to a very significant change in the attitude of the independent unions.

The leaders of those unions used the defeat to argue that strikes and a class struggle line on the shop floor were now impossible and far too dangerous, and that grievances must

By  
Bill  
Peters

be channelled even more through consultation and procedures.

After that, from 1955 to 1970, Japan achieved an incredibly high rate of economic growth, easily the highest in the world. Wages of workers doubled, trebled and almost quadrupled in the ten years from 1960 to 1970 — although the rate of exploitation was very high and the standard of living still below Western Europe and North America.

Such conditions compounded the retreat of the leaders, worsened the conditions for the progressive unions, and gradually undermined the anti-war movement.

Some unions, however, were still militant and management set out to split them and create yellow unions in their place. Most unions split by the employers faded out. Some were intimidated into becoming right wing unions in order to survive.

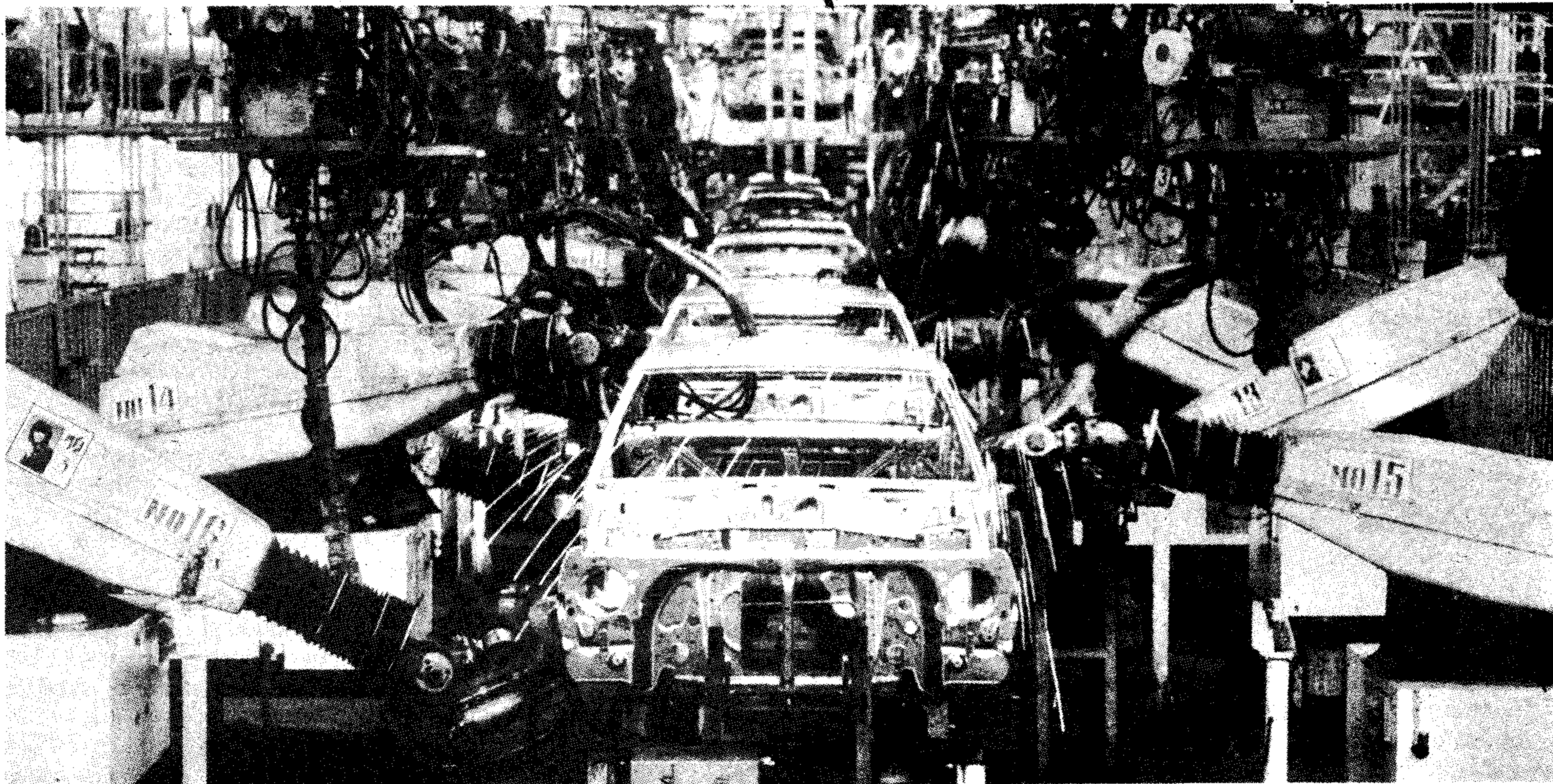
Even the Spring offensive, the Shunto, although remaining the main expression of a class struggle line, was contained to a great extent.

Each year the directors from the ten biggest companies would get together to discuss what would be a "reasonable" offer and coordinate their response to the Shunto. The successes of the Shunto in that period were largely due to the economic growth itself.

## Shunto

The scope of the Shunto however developed considerably until it became the main vehicle for negotiating wages in Japan. Even Domei negotiated during the spring from 1960, although not strictly as part of the Shunto.

At the time Sohyo and the smaller independent Federation churitsuroren — which stands politically midway between Sohyo and Domei — campaigned on the basis of "parity with Europe".



Strong control over the shop floor has enabled Japanese management to modernise rapidly

A right wing development in that period was the establishment of the International Metalworkers Federation: Japan Council (IMF:JC), which included both Sohyo and Domei unions from that sector and turned into a vehicle to undermine Sohyo and strengthen the Domei line — which was fully developed class collaboration.

They denounced all "shop floor struggle" and advocated consultation on all problems. They argued that management prerogatives on such questions as manning, allocation of work, movement of labour, etc., should be respected. They argued that all wage claims should be "realistic" and consistent with the "national interest".

Although these policies became dominant in the big production industries of the private sector, a progressive line was maintained by Sohyo in parts of the public sector, for example, on the Japanese National Railways and postal services where they retained some control of working conditions.

Overall, however, the 1960s were the most important period in which the employers shaped the class relationships which exist today.

They established a very strong ideological control over the labour force. They established unassailable productivity levels alongside the domination of the trade union movement by the yellow and right wing unions.

In that period Sohyo gradually lost out to Domei, which with the JC unions came to dominate steel, shipbuilding, electrical manufacture and car production. The most important sections of Sohyo membership were left in the public sector where strikes remained illegal\*.

These factors alone, however, do not adequately

explain the ideological control of Japanese capital over the workers and the situation where strikes are more or less unknown.

One major factor is certainly the enormous strength of Japanese capital in that period and the success of the war against the unions by the Japanese employers. The other factor however is the sophisticated labour relations policies developed by the Japanese employers as a whole.

From a European viewpoint, where historical development has made workers think more readily in class terms this is not easy to understand. The main components of it are:

A). Workers' Participation. By this system, even where independent unions exist, negotiations are channelled towards a consultation system which suits the needs of the employer and discusses things on the employers' terms.

## Acceptance

The starting point of consultation is acceptance of management prerogative, and that everything is subordinated to the requirements of production.

B). Paternalism. This is an ideology which projects "guaranteed employment", company houses,

company loans and company sports and cultural facilities.

"Guaranteed employment" is in reality a fraud. In the late 1970s hundreds of thousands of workers assumed to be protected were thrown out of their jobs.

Whilst many of the big companies still stick to it to some extent for their direct employees, contract labour — a huge part of the labour force — can be thrown out at will.

Many ways are found by big companies to reduce the workforce — such as letting workers out on loan, dismissal of part-timers, dismissal of temporary workers, voluntary and compulsory redundancy and victimisation of militants.

The most large scale of these is sending workers on compulsory loan.

At Masda for example, over 8,000 regular employees were transferred to Masda dealers for three years between 1975 and 1977.

Nippon Steel transferred hundreds of their steel workers to the Isuzu Motor Company to work on the assembly lines for three months as temporary workers.

Japanese companies seem to have little problem in reducing the labour force when they want to. Masda for example reduced its workforce by 25% between 1974 and 1981 (although its production increased by 60% in the same period).

Yet despite all this the "jobs for life" propaganda is still a part of the paternalistic ideology of most of the big companies.

An even more effective part of paternalism is company home loans.

A worker in a big private company can take a loan to buy a house under an agreement which requires him or her (him in reality) to repay the loan from

severance pay when s/he retires at the age of 55.

This ties the worker completely to the fate of the company. It becomes almost impossible to resign from the company since severance pay would be drastically reduced, and repayment impossible. Dismissal becomes a more frightening weapon for the same reason.

Paternalism, which utilises the hierarchical Japanese structure to the advantage of the employer, is at the same time a subtle and effective form of intimidation.

C). The age and merit wage system. (Nen-ko Chingiu).

This has two elements, firstly, wages rise continuously as a result of length of service. This again has the effect of making it difficult for workers to leave their job, and makes sacking particularly harsh since it means going back to the bottom of the seniority pay ladder after possibly many years service.

The second, wages given for merit, is even more pernicious. Under this, a very large proportion of a worker's wage, varying from company to company, but in some cases as much as 50%, is determined by a performance assessment by management.

## Loyalty

The results of this are obvious. The wages of a worker are determined to a large degree by his or her relationship with the foreman, who is the key to the assessment process. The biggest single factor in the assessment is company loyalty.

The worker is forced to display company loyalty in every circumstance in order to advance or retain his or her rate of pay.

D). Small group activity, or QC circles.

By this system, workers, particularly in the big com-

panies are organised into small groups (of between six and twenty workers) in order to discuss quality and productivity and efficiency levels. They are generally held outside of working hours every two weeks or so and are effectively compulsory — at least if they are not in all cases formally compulsory, then it is very difficult for a worker to refuse to participate.

It is very difficult for anyone in Britain who has witnessed the generally unsuccessful or partially successful attempts by British employers to use this system to understand its scale or significance in Japan.

## Circles

According to a 1976 survey by the Japan Productivity Centre, 71% of Japanese enterprises had QC circles. Among big enterprises with 10,000 or more workers the figure was 91%. In the steel industry, 30,000 QC circles are operating in 169 mills, factories and offices, involving 230,000 workers.

The small groups make workers think on behalf of the employers in both a practical and an ideological way. They breed competition between workers for the highest productivity. They divide worker from worker and give each a relationship with management.

On top of this the rate of pay is again involved, since a performance assessment for merit payment will be heavily based on the performance of a worker in the QC circle.

They are responsible to an important degree for the phenomenal productivity levels which exist, which require not only coercion but also the active cooperation which is achieved through the small groups.

# Women in struggle

# Women's '83 TUC MUZZLING THE RANK AND FILE

Jenny Fisher reports

THE 53rd TUC Women's Conference in Scarborough in the middle of March should be a good talking shop for many issues that affect women in and out of work. But how the conference will actually shape the work of the TUC in the course of 1983 is a different matter.

To start with, there's the structure and nature of the conference itself. Most delegations are heavily dominated by union full-time officials. Even in unions where rank and file members are delegates, they are generally chosen by national executive committees from nominations sent in by branches. The CPSA is the only union I could find which elects its delegates direct from its conference.

As well as being a bad way of proceeding in terms of general union democracy, this tends to mean that women who do become delegates have usually had to spend years competing in their unions on men's terms: they are either the determined, persistent, politically conscious feminists, or have been sucked into the bureaucracy themselves.

## Report back

Delegates chosen in this way tend not to feel very accountable to the members, and under no compulsion to report back to branches. Add to this the fact that within most unions it is also the national executive committee that chooses which motions to send, and you hardly have a recipe for rank and file women trade unionists to feel involved, to participate or even identify with their own national conference.

So once these delegates are collected together, what can and do they do?

One look at the conference resolutions shows you



It's a long, long way to Scarborough from the picket lines

that, beyond nodding their heads enthusiastically at the principles of some of the motions, delegates won't actually be able to do very much.

The ASTMS resolution on the "Right to Work" is typical: after reaffirming women's right to work and condemning job segregation it ends with a call to all unions to "redouble their activities (. . .) to ensure that they (women) are not especially victimised". Given present levels of activity on this issue, it should not be too hard for most of them.

At least NUPE notes the growing number of unemployed young women, and calls for full support for the TUC March for Jobs — although even then it doesn't make the connec-

tion and call for women to be involved in the planning of the march to ensure full participation by women. And it is left to BIFU to call for support for local campaigns like the Greenwich Signing On Campaign.

The emptiest motion on this subject, though, comes from APEX — under the heading of "Trade Union Unity". It builds up to calling on the TUC to denounce — publicly! — new Tory attacks. Well, that should make us all feel better. We couldn't go so far as to try and stop the attacks, after all!

Things look up a little under "support for Working Women". Here the NUT has a comprehensive motion calling on the TUC to initiate action (though leaving it up to the TUC to decide what "action" is, may not be wise) on child care, maternity and paternity provision, training and job protection.

The TGWU chips in with a call for a campaign based on a Working Parents' Charter to ensure that parents' needs are seen as central in negotiations. It calls for the campaign to be at all levels of the trade union movement: the nearest the agenda ever comes to talking about union members.

## Low paid

Women at work are also dealt with in sections on 'Low Pay' and 'Training'.

It is good to see that most unions now accept that "low paid workers" and women workers are the same thing. While the CSU and ASTMS both call for campaigns on the basis that the government won't do anything spontaneously, and the CSU, SCPS and NUPE call for a national minimum wage, it is only NUPE that also calls for opposition to any form of wage restraint, and only GMBATU which calls specifically for the TUC to pay attention to actually organising the low paid women

workers themselves.

And the unions are equally vague about what the government's training schemes mean. On the one hand the EETPU looks to the Tory Youth Training Scheme as a way of providing "opportunities for girls to gain experience of non-traditional jobs". A nice idea, but if the Tories view of the scheme is that it's a good way of artificially keeping down unemployment figures, why should they train women when they've thought of a much "better" way of keeping women out of the statistics?

The EETPU misses the point that the scheme has very little to do with training other than being named after it. And what's the point of training people for jobs that don't exist?

## NHS dispute

The most striking omission from the agenda is that of any mention of the NHS dispute, which must have directly affected more working class women than any other single factor in the whole of last year. It's missing from the long list of motions on the Health Service, which call for improved maternity care and rights, governmental responsibility for vaccine damage, more cancer screening, non-discriminatory invalidity benefits, and the banning of clitoridectomy.

There are a few passing references to "this government's underfunding of the NHS", but no indication of how we're going to reverse this. And there's absolutely no reference to the Tory drive to privatise the NHS and what that will mean for NHS workers and users.

The only mention of privatisation is where the ISTC encourages all unions to try and preserve women's "negotiated rights at work" following "contracting out of services in industry to private contractors"!

Other points in the agenda worth mentioning are:

\*An encouragingly good resolution from the TGWU, linking sexist portrayals of women in the media with violence against women and calling for an end to sexist material in union journals;

\*UCATT and the TGWU bring Greenham women into the agenda: they use the peace camps as the basis for calling for opposition to Cruise and Trident, and UCATT calls for unilateral nuclear disarmament. They also call for support for Greenham from unions (TGWU) and all women unionists (UCATT), and one wonders whether these motions would have been included had Greenham not made the issue topical again.

\*Condemnation from the IPCS of sexual discrimination in nationality and immigration laws. Unfortunately, it doesn't call for abolition of these laws, but merely "equality (. . .) in this and other spheres"!

Other striking omissions are any mention of gay rights (in or out of work) and fighting racism (in or out of work).

## Corrie

So, is there any point? Especially when the Women's TUC can't do anything in its own right: it has to be approved by the TUC General Council.

At least the Women's TUC Conference is a forum for women's interests to be brought into the TUC. Several of the resolutions, although not going far enough, do take certain aspects of women's rights for granted in a way which the TUC, if left to itself, would never do.

Women trade unionists I have spoken to all pointed to the days of the Corrie Bill when the pressure coming from the Women's TUC was vital in pushing the TUC to call its anti-Corrie demonstration.

Annual Congress as of right: "Although many trade unions have adopted equal opportunities policies they rarely give them sufficient priority to put forward to the TUC motions which are of particular interest to women members." (AUT).

It also seems that the most controversial issue at this year's conference could well be the motions calling for a bookstall to be provided to allow women delegates access to literature on trade union and women's issues.

Full time officials in the TUC and in unions are blowing veritable volcanic eruptions on this. It seems that they are determined to prevent at all costs any women unionists from having access to material which might encourage them to think for themselves — it might, after all, threaten their control.

It's this very force of rank and file militant trade union women which the bureaucrats fear which has the possibility to change the conference. But it can't all be done in Scarborough: women in each union have got to organise to win the right to send motions decided at and delegates elected from their own union women's conference.

# YOUNG WOMEN



Calling all young women: fight back against the Tories! A day conference open to all young women, organised by CLASS FIGHTER

Saturday March 12, 10.30 to 5.30, Wolverhampton Polytechnic Students Union.

Registration £2, unwaged 50p. Workshops on: images of women, women's unemployment, state racism, the family, women in the labour movement, women's sexuality, women and the Bomb, violence against women, women and education, and a practical session on self-defence.

More information: phone Jane, (01-) 609 3071.

# March to DEFEND



# S. London Hospital!

PICNICK: March 8, 7am to 10am, South London Hospital, Clapham Common South Side. March and rally: March 19, 11am from St Benedict's Hospital, Church Lane, SW17.

# Socialist Organiser

# INDUSTRIAL SPECIAL

5p if sold  
separately

## "We're out solid: it's up to the rest to follow"

Haydn Evans, vice-chair of Penrhiwceibr Lodge in the Cynon Valley, told us.

"We have sent delegations to Yorkshire and Nottinghamshire. In Barnsley, it has been agreed that they will be allowed to address the leadership there before they take a decision about supporting us. If we had wanted, we could have sent coachloads of pickets to the

pits direct, but it was decided to approach the area leaderships first.

"We're out solid and it's up to the rest to follow. We're not just fighting for the mining industry, but for others, like steel, as well.

"We had a phone call from Kinneil in Scotland on Saturday, and they are pledging their full support. That

area has had problems, so has Kent, but that should not prevent them supporting.

"Arthur Scargill is right when he says it could spread like wildfire.

"I was a delegate to the union's conference in 1979 when we unanimously adopted a policy for national industrial action in support of

Haydn Evans: "Everybody here is ready to stay out for good" jobs. The National Executive has now no alternative but to support us.

"People who question the ballot figure being only slightly above the 55% needed, should remember that in 1972 the national percentage was not much more than the amount required, and it was similar in 1974. Besides, a lot of people weren't able to

vote, as they were already on strike and did not know about the ballot.

"How long it goes on depends on our success this week in other areas. It might be short and sweet, but everybody here is ready to stay out for good. They know that Lewis Merthyr is only the first of 16 pits for closure in South Wales.

"We've already had pledges of support from the Seaman's Union and the Triple Alliance, and the Triple Alliance is still in being.

"We are organised into strike committees, covering groups of the pits on strike.

Our pit is linked with Tower and Abercynon, plus the mechanics and Phurnacite. The last place, which makes smokeless fuel, is still working at the moment, but on Wednesday they will have a mass meeting, and the strike committee will be recommending they come out."

Trevor Bell, who has opposed our action, represents white collar staff who in the main do not know what it is like to work underground. What these people should realise is that we're on strike for their jobs too.

## Forcing the pace

SHORTLY after 7 am on Monday, over 300 miners invaded the National Coal Board's South Wales Area offices in Cardiff. They rapidly took over the building, and demanded the COSA and APEX staff union members join their action.

The strikers' occupation went on until meetings were held. Though these decided against coming out on strike, the strikers felt the point had been made - that they meant business.

Workers from the Tower and Trelewis Drift pits expressed that attitude of the strikers.

Articles in the previous day's Sunday Mirror, exposing management malpractices and how private suppliers were charging excessive prices from the National Coal Board for components, were given as examples of how profits were being made by private industry, putting the coal industry into debt. Several referred to the need for opening of the books of the Coal Board, and complained bitterly that the union had been demanding such information for a long time, with no response.

The strikers were unanimous that even if support was not received from other areas, South Wales was prepared to go it alone indefinitely.

When asked how much they thought it was a fight against the Tory government back came the resounding reply: "Totally!"



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"We are organised into strike committees, covering groups of the pits on strike.

## Yorks the key

Ron Williams and Dennis Westwood spoke to SO in the British Legion Club, directly opposite the threatened Lewis Merthyr Colliery, which has been requisitioned as the strikers headquarters.

"LEWIS Merthyr is now amalgamated with Tymawr, a surface-only unit a short distance away. There are 450 or so jobs at Lewis Merthyr, and about 600 in both together.

"We are part of a joint strike committee with Maerdy, Nantgarw and Ynysbwl, which is made up of lodge officials from these pits.

"This has been building up for a long time. In the past we have been promised a lot, but have got nothing.

"We must have support in other areas, because what is happening here is happening throughout the In Scotland and Kent it seems the men have been afraid to stand up and be counted. If we all were, we would end up like the steel workers.

"Gettting Yorkshire out

with us is the key. Arthur Scargill promised us all the support if we got our area out. Well, we're out solid and now it's up to the rest. Everyone here can see what will happen within 5 to 10 years, especially with MacGregor set to take over, but he'll get a bigger fight than he did at British Steel.

"In Lewis Merthyr, despite what is being said, we have not all been guaranteed immediate jobs elsewhere. This will only happen when vacancies come up as other people leave. The way management have changed their tune over the last couple of years can be seen from what has happened here.

"Eighteen months ago, men were transferred from Tymawr to here and promised between 8 to 15 years work. Today they are faced with no jobs.

"Personally, I'm all in favour of sending pickets to pits in other areas. Anti union laws? We don't recognise any laws against effective picketing."



JOHN HARRIS

# TORIES TARGET

AT stake in the strike by South Wales miners is far more than the few hundred jobs at the threatened Lewis Merthyr colliery.

The struggle could prove a decisive test of strength between the NUM and the Tory government which in turn could decide the fate of dozens more pits and tens of thousands of miners' jobs.

After decimating the workforce and laying waste trade union organisation in British Leyland and British Steel, the Thatcher government has set its sights on a wholesale attack on jobs, conditions and trade union organisation in the coal industry.

The NUM is under Tory fire for three related reasons. Firstly, the Tory policy of imposing rigid cash limits and maximising exploitation throughout the public sector demands an end to operating grants to the coal industry — which can only be achieved by massive increases in productivity, pit closures, and curtailing investment.

Secondly, the recession precipitated by Tory policies in the context of the world wide economic crisis has brought a heavy slump in production in manufacturing industry. Coal, as a basic raw material for other industries, has suffered a corresponding slump in demand.

Unsold stocks have risen — and the cost of maintaining such stocks has also risen: under such conditions, the eyes of government and management turn to ways and means of cutting back on the least profitable production.

## Smarting

And thirdly, the Tory government has not forgotten the smarting defeats inflicted by the miners on the Heath government in the national strikes of 1972 and 1974.

With those struggles the miners re-emerged from many years of relative quiescence as the recognised vanguard of the working class.

Though there has been no repetition of these stormy events since 1974, the residual militancy among the miners was shown by the February 1981 strike wave against closures, by Scargill's landslide election victory in the ballot for President and by the powerful support from the NUM for last year's NHS pay battle.

To inflict a defeat on the NUM would be a major

## By Harry Sloan

boost for the Thatcher government — particularly if it could be followed through with long-term plans to further cut back the numbers of miners and reduce Britain's dependence upon coal.

Indeed, as Scargill has pointed out, this aim of circumventing the NUM is a prime factor in the determined Tory moves towards nuclear power.

In this context the issue of pit closures and job losses has been gathering pace within the NUM over the last two years. In late 1980 and early 1981 the Coal Board vigorously denied that they had any 'hit list' for pit closures.

Yet in February, 1981 they announced the closure of 23 pits — which had been on a hit list. Faced by determined resistance they withdrew proposals for closure and instead reverted to consultative procedures.

In fact over 22,000 jobs have been axed by the NCB over the last 18 months without a fight by the NUM, while the Tory/NCB plans for speed-up and closures have become ever more ambitious.

Last autumn Arthur Scargill attempted to link the campaign for a strike



South Wales miners struck in solidarity with the NHS workers

vote over the 8% wage offer with a campaign for action against further pit closures.

In the event, miners' reluctance to embark on a long and bitter strike on the wage offer, in the hopes of a marginal improvement, resulted in a vote against action. Even right wingers were quick to point out that this did not signify a vote to accept closures.

With NCB management increasingly arrogant about their intentions, and the press revealing information plainly held back during the ballot, Scargill immediately resumed the struggle to alert the NUM to the danger on jobs.

He revealed NCB documents in which projected closures of loss-making pits are discussed.

The documents were

admitted to be genuine by NCB Chairman Norman Siddall. They talk in terms of 75 pits classified as "short life", meaning (according to Siddall) a life of less than ten years. And they include a list of 30 top "loss-making" pits — among them 20 designated as "long life" pits.

According to the NCB, these "top" (or bottom?) 30 pits accounted for £228 million out of a total of £253 million losses by the NCB's 200 pits.

In a submission to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission, the NCB also spelled out its central targets in cutting costs, in which speed-up of production is linked to the closure of "uneconomic" collieries:

"111. Wages and wage charges, although they now form a reducing proportion of the Board's colliery operating costs as capital intensiveness increases in the industry, still account for nearly 47% of costs. Areas are therefore charged with seeking out

capital investment schemes which will enable reductions to be made in manpower. A simple formula has been devised which assists management to take a broad view on the break-even points for capital expenditure which results in the saving of a man; the amounts to be used in the assessment vary depending on whether the man works at the face, elsewhere underground or on the surface.

112. Examples of typical manpower savings schemes [in some cases combining with other improvement schemes], which have been introduced over the years are:

- a) mechanisation at the face and in drivages to eliminate hand filling;
- b) double/treble shifting at high productivity faces to reduce the number of faces;
- c) elimination of men at transfer points;
- d) remote control of pumping and ventilation;
- e) elimination or reduction of hand picking in coal preparation;
- f) more automation in washeries;
- g) centralisation of coal preparation facilities and closing old washeries;
- h) elimination of coal fired boilers by introducing electrification of winders;
- i) schemes for rapid loading of wagons;
- j) combining/merging collieries, concentrating output, men and materials at fewer shafts and eliminating certain surface works.

113. One of the most significant contributions to improving the efficiency of utilisation of production resources, including manpower, is the closure of high cost, uneconomic collieries. The arrangements and special problems associated with colliery closures are dealt with in a separate paper. Closures provide not only the obvious savings of reducing wages and related payments to men made redundant but they also enable

highly trained men to be transferred to other profitable, continuing pits with savings in training costs."

## Laments

Later in the same document the NCB laments the fact that:

"the Board [was] unable to close the full numbers of high cost pits that had been included in their original plans for 1981/2."

Under the heading "Reduction of capacity", an annex to this same document argues:

"A major contribution to cost savings is the elimination of highly uneconomic capacity. In times when coal is being put to stock, the benefit to cash flow is at its greatest."

## Premature

The text then examines the costs and the benefits of "premature closure (i.e. earlier than natural exhaustion)". And it includes a table which it admits "deals with a very sensitive area and is not for publication."

The table illustrates the financial effect of "closing certain uneconomic collieries" over the period 1982-1991. The very specific figures included in this "sensitive" table shows that the NCB planners are

indeed talking about certain, known pits, on an existing list.

From this information Scargill correctly pointed out that NCB planning is looking towards the elimination in at least the next ten years of 95 pits, including the 75 "short life" and 20 of the 30 most "uneconomic" pits. The cost in mining jobs, he estimated, could be between 70,000 and 100,000.

## Uneconomic

He challenged Siddall to give an assurance that no further pits would be closed other than on grounds of natural exhaustion.

But while Siddall vigorously (and predictably!) denied that any "hit list" existed, the NCB insisted that:

"the Board cannot make a clear cut distinction between 'exhaustion' and 'economic' closures."

## Remodel

Siddall himself was already on record as declaring that:

"I'm not here to cut the industry back. But I do have to remodel it, for example, by closing the older, uneconomic pits." (Sunday Times, 10/10/82)

In the North East and in South Wales collieries have been hard hit by the huge cutback in steel production from 20m tonnes in 1978 to 8m in 1983.



South Wales miners listen to NUM leaders campaigning for a vote in last year's ballot for strike action on wages and closures

... Kent m

"The Coal Industry Act which became law in August 1980 has as its central feature the elimination of all operating grants to the industry by the end of the financial year 1982/3... Neither the unions nor the NCB itself believed these targets could be met at a time of industrial recession without some combination of huge price increases, unprecedented productivity increases, closure of collieries, investment delays, recruitment cuts and buying into new markets with cut-price exports." (NUM submission to Commons Energy Committee).



# T MINERS' JOBS



...ers marched to support them...



... Now at Lewis Merthyr they're fighting for jobs

JOHN HARRIS

Miners will draw their own conclusions about Siddall's professed good intentions: but nobody could be in any doubt about the intentions of the Tory government. They have offered the NCB chairmanship after Siddall's contract expires in June to Ian MacGregor — the man who was forced through the devastation of the steel industry in repeated rounds of cutbacks and closures since he took over in July 1980.

When MacGregor assumed control of BSC it had a workforce of 166,000, though already scheduled to fall to 129,000 within six months.

## Survival

He prepared a "survival plan" to cut this back to 108,000 by March 1982, and contemptuously brushed aside Bill Sirs and the right wing leaders of the steel unions, whose half-hearted talk of resistance was no match for MacGregor's combination of determination and redundancy payments.

With the cuts in manning came an assault on working conditions, destroying demarcation lines and imposing levels of exploitation equivalent to those elsewhere in Europe.

But as the market for steel continued to collapse, MacGregor pursued the war on the workforce. One after another, small plants were closed — to cut the payroll to 90,000 by December 1982.

Held back by government intervention from his planned closure of the Ravenscraig strip mill, MacGregor has nevertheless published a new manpower target of 75,000, while hinting that his real aim is 60,000, with the closure of two of the three British strip mills.

There is no doubt that the Tory leaders would dearly love to see a similar

"The stated desire of the NCB to discuss what they term "technological unemployment" with the Union is an indication that this is an immediate threat, and a research team under Dr. Alan Burns at the University of Bradford . . . (concludes) that without an increase in production levels, between 55% and 74% of existing jobs in the mining industry are at risk." (NUM submission to Commons Energy Committee).

onslaught on jobs in the coal industry — already begun by Siddall and his back-room planners, and to be completed, they hope, by MacGregor, the mad axeman.

Ironically, it is the particular impact of MacGregor's ruinous activities in cutting back steel production which has precipitated the crisis in the South Wales coalfields.

Out of 36 pits in South Wales, only three currently make a profit — while no less than 20 have been hard hit by the cut in steel production, and forced to sell their output at depressed prices to power stations and other outlets.

On top of this the impact of the Tory straitjacket on NCB investment has been a factor in the failure to implement a modernisation

programme at the Aberaman phurnacite plant.

As a result of this 850 jobs at the plant — and a further 5,500 mining jobs in the pits that supply it — stand in jeopardy.

A similar pattern of chaos can be traced throughout the industry. Investment over recent years has geared pit production to vanishing markets in the steel industry, other manufacturing industries, or increasingly cost-conscious power stations.

The combination of this dislocation with the rigorous Tory cash limits has been to expose the economic weakness of the NCB.

Unlike almost any other industry, an astounding 98% of the NCB's assets are financed by interest-bearing loans.

"(MacGregor) displayed a fundamentalist belief in the virtues of the market economy; and his view of the importance of communicating directly with his workforce, without the unions "filtering" his views, neatly coincided with (Thatcher's) desire to remove the unions from political power in Britain. In this respect he had already proved his credentials. For while on the board of British Leyland, he had persistently urged Michael Edwardes to sack Alan Thornett — "the Cowley mole" ". Sunday Times, February 6, 1983.

The result is that the burden of interest payments is massive — the equivalent of £2.78 per tonne of coal produced.

Since 1974/5 interest charges have risen by 642% to a total of £341 million. One reason for these high interest payments is that the government loans — which account for 73% of NCB borrowing — are charged at an average of 13.8% — some 4% higher than loans from other sources.

The NCB will — for instance — be paying interest of 16.3% until 1997 on one £120 million government loan. The beneficiaries of this are of course the Tories' friends and backers in the banks and in big business who cream off profits and reduced taxation from the sweat of miners in the "nationalised" coal industry.

On top of this, the NCB following government guidelines calculates its depreciation payments on an exaggerated scale which amounts to a further £2.13 for every tonne of coal produced. And at the same time the Board's stocks of unsold coal have been consciously undervalued by £155 million in an effort to show an economic case for speed-up, reduced pay settlements and pit closures.

In reality, with a lower level of open and concealed subsidy than any equivalent coal industry in Europe, the NCB produces far and away the cheapest coal.

So under tight monetary restraints from the Tory government, facing a crippling debt burden, and faced by a slump in demand and in prices produced by the recession, the NCB is looking to cut back production, junking previous plans for expansion and preparing for a spate of closures.

Among the major new coalfield projects delayed or abandoned are those in the Vale of Belvoir and East Leicestershire, Park in

Staffordshire, South West Coventry, Margam in South Wales and Musselburgh in Scotland, with reserves totalling 780 million tons.

Even the giant Selby coalfield development has been delayed — though the type of operation planned there (in which a mere 4,000 miners will produce 10 million tonnes of coal, compared to an equivalent 18,000 miners in a conventional coalfield) is plainly the type of highly mechanised, highly exploitative venture the Tories wish to see in the future.

There are no grounds therefore to believe that the threat to jobs in the pits is restricted to one or two

"short life" or "uneconomic" pits. The closures are merely the thin end of a management wedge designed to smash the hard won conditions in the pits which remain open, and to decimate the mining workforce.

Under particular threat are pits in the so-called "peripheral areas" — Scotland, South Wales and Kent. But among the NCB's "hit list" of 95 are also pits in Yorkshire and Nottinghamshire.

Now is the time to stop the rot. Already, thanks to an abdication of leadership by the Communist Party-led Scottish area NUM, the NCB has notched up a victory with the

closure of Kinneil colliery; and in Kent the CP-led area leadership has failed to prevent acceptance of 135 redundancies at the threatened Snowdon colliery. The stand by the miners at Lewis Merthyr is vital to provide a rallying point against the Tory attack.

The South Wales miners have reason to reject the promises that miners will be simply transferred to other pits or given generous redundancy pay-offs.

The closure of Deep Duffry in 1979 saw 300 transferred to nearby collieries — lengthening the waiting list for jobs in those pits, and further depressing employment levels in the area as a whole. Particular problems were felt by older workers, long-term unemployed and school leavers as unemployment climbed to nearly double the average for Great Britain.

If this pattern were repeated elsewhere in the South Wales coalfields the prospects for the working class would become even more bleak than they are at present. Jobs outside the coal industry itself would also be axed as transport and a host of related industries were cut back: and the jobs once lost would never return.

The case is clear. Jobs must be defended across the board in the mining industry wherever reserves of coal remain to be mined. If capacity is in excess of demand, then hours of work should be cut back with no loss of pay to the miners who are already heavily exploited in a tough and hazardous job.

The phony figures and fraudulent arguments of Siddall and his Tory backers, and the looming threat of MacGregor hanging over the coalfields must be explained throughout the NUM and the wider labour movement in the fight to defend Lewis Merthyr colliery and drive back the bosses' offensive.



MacGregor will try to do to the pits what has been done to steel

NCB Expenditure on Interest

	£m	% increase on previous year
1974/75	36.2	12.4
1975/76	50.0	38.1
1976/77	78.0	56.0
1977/78	87.0	11.5
1978/79	138.0	58.6
1979/80	184.7	33.8
1980/81	256.2	38.7
1981/82	341.0	33.1

# HOW THE STRUGGLE BEGAN



Lewis Merthyr: if it closes it will be the first of 16 pits to go

JOHN HARRIS

## Yorks support

DAVE Douglass, Yorkshire NUM Executive member and delegate at the Hatfield Main Colliery, near Doncaster, was present at Monday's Yorkshire Area Council meeting, which took the decision to strike on Sunday night.

He told Socialist Organiser:

'The meeting went well. A delegation from South Wales addressed the meeting, and there were only two votes against — and one of those was because he wanted strike action immediately.'

'Because of shift working this would have been difficult to organise. We now have report-back meetings to branches on Saturday.'

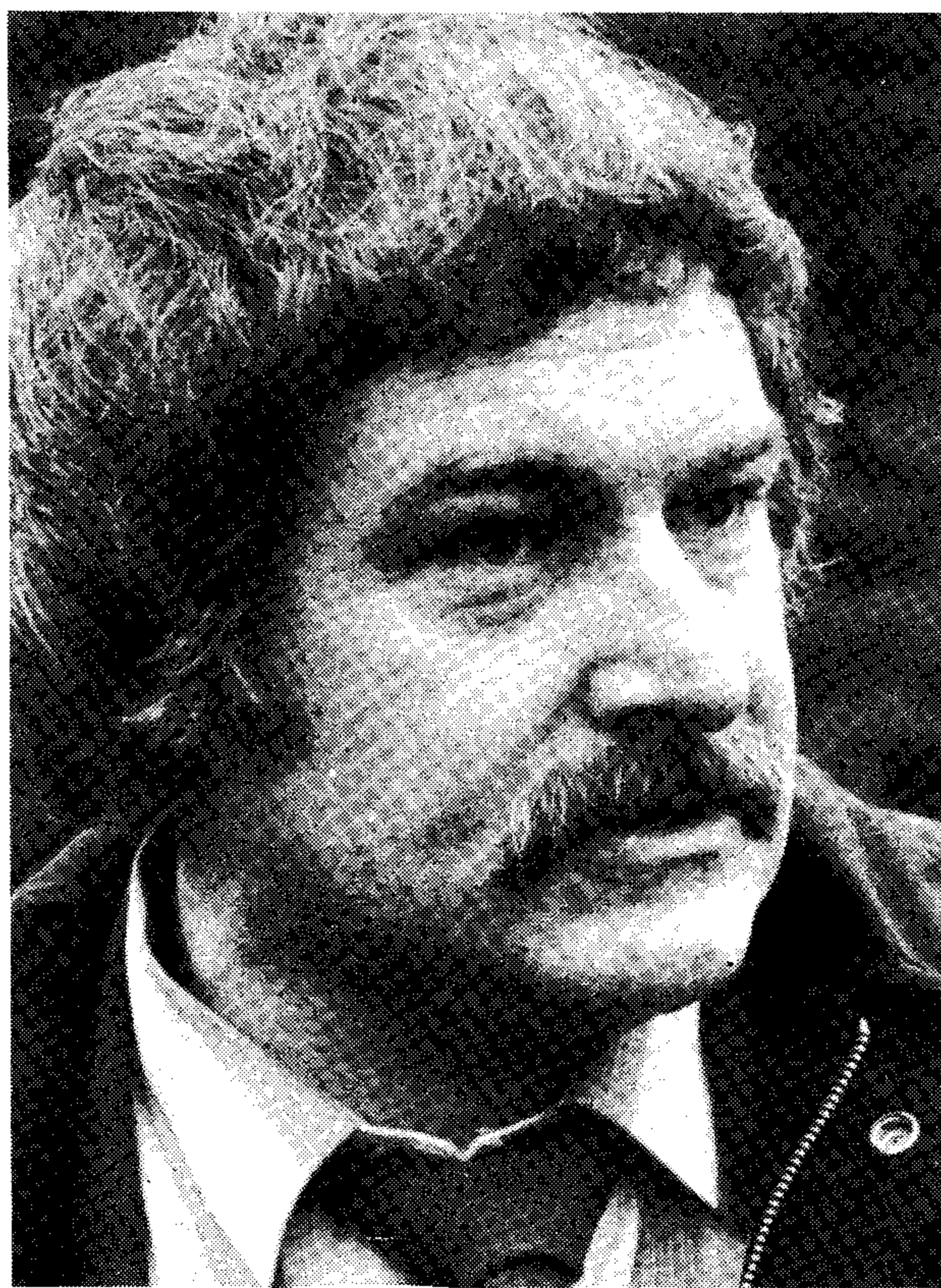
'No doubt some people there will argue for a ballot first, especially after the pay/closures ballot result a few months ago.'

'No one wants a strike. But as far as I am concerned, the policy against closures already exists; we have a mandate to take action, and that should be enough.'

'Nottingham's call for a national ballot is a diversion, and just passing the buck. They're hoping the 28,000 staff members will overturn a strike vote.'

'It is possible the National Executive will go for a national ballot, but by then, South Wales and Yorkshire — at least — will be out.'

'On Monday there will not be any need for us to picket Yorkshire pits, but if Nottinghamshire is not out, we will consider sending flying pickets down there.'



JOHN HARRIS

Des Dutfield: started a sit-down

The absolute figures were — 9,714 in favour of the action, 7,817 against. Just as significant, 5,862 of the ballot papers were returned unused.

Even the blatantly anti-union paper 'The Western Mail' acknowledges that if these men had voted the majority would have been greater, since they had already decided to take strike action on a pit-by-pit basis before the ballot.

There is no doubt that many of them saw Thursday's ballot as at best an irrelevance, and at worst a diversion.

The 'marginal result' to the paper vote thus does not reflect the level of militancy in the coalfield, and the official Area-wide strike which began on Monday morning is of course completely solid.

### Official

The official announcement of the NCB's intention to close Ty Mawr-Lewis Merthyr in July was made by Area Director Philip Weekes on Tuesday of last week — the day after the action began at the threatened pit, and the day before the NUM South Wales delegates' conference.

Weekes does not argue that there are no reserves at TM-LM, but claims that, because of the unfavourable geological conditions, the reserves are 'technically unworkable'.

The miners there say that the reserves can be worked, and are demanding the investment necessary for the

opening of a new face. Weekes argues that this new drive would be undermined at the outset by two existing seams.

### Technology

The workers argue that this can be overcome by the introduction of new technology, in particular the new 'support shields'. The only answer Weekes can give to this argument is that the introduction of these would cost £3½-4 million and that, if he had this money to invest, he 'would not be prepared to invest it at Lewis Merthyr.'

This investment starvation is the central issue throughout the South Wales coalfield, and it is recognised by the miners that if TM-LM is not saved, it will place up to 8 other pits in the Area under threat of immediate closure, with several more not far behind.

TM-LM is therefore the focal point in the struggle for the future of the whole coalfield — a struggle which is almost certain to be decisive for the future of the coal industry nationally.

### Unions

By the weekend South Wales NUM had declarations of support from all the main unions involved in the transportation of coal — the seaman's union, the T&G and the rail unions — and NUM officials were confidently



Emlyn Williams: under pressure from rank and file

predicting that all movements of coal in the region will have been frozen within a week.

Nonetheless, it is essential that the action is not confined to South Wales. Scargill's only nationally re-

ported contribution has been his observation that 'the action could spread like wild-fire'. Apparently he has forgotten that he is President of the NUM. Despite this, Yorkshire will be out in support as from Sunday.

## By Dewi Lewis

which they mean, that even though this is a clear majority it is only 0.41% above the 55% required for strike action by the NUM Constitu-

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WHATEVER differences there may be over the details of the waterworkers settlement, there should be no doubt about one thing; the Tory government's 'resolute approach' in trying to smash this section of the trade union movement has come badly unstuck.

Thatcher's decision to intervene and try to impose a 4% 'norm' on the water workers pay negotiations, and dare the unions to challenge it, has not just been exposed as a bad error of judgement. It has resulted in a breakthrough against her policies which has given confidence to the working class and has potentially far reaching effects for her final year in office.

So few have been the reverses for the Tories in these kind of industrial confrontations that it is hard to remember when their hard-line, take-it-or-leave-it attitude was last dealt such a blow. What makes the waterworkers' achievement all the more remarkable is that the workers responsible for it went into battle with no tradition of struggle and with a pitifully weak pre-strike level of organisation and national leadership.

Thatcher's calculation that she could defeat the strike was not an unreasonable assumption in light of the experiences over the past year in particular. One after another, similar large-scale actions mounted against the government's policies have been defeated whether on pay or jobs.

One result of this has been the monotonous climb of unemployment with each successive month, strengthening the employers' hand. The Tory propaganda, heard throughout the NHS pay fight last year, about the 'state of the jobs market' was again produced as justification for holding out against the waterworkers' demands.

## Left out

But several factors were left out of the Tories' calculations. The long history of deep class collaboration to which the water industry had been accustomed, produced some paradoxical results. If an advantage of this for the Tories was a hardly-disguised lack of appetite for the strike from the national union officials, many of the National Water Council representatives showed almost equal distaste at being cast as strikebreakers in the front line of the government's offensive.

An indication of the atmosphere which had existed between the trade union leaders and the employers can be gauged from the background of two of the leading National Water Council figures. Chief negotiator Len Hill is a former ASLEF member, while industrial relations boss Jim Dickens is a former Labour MP.

Though, as we saw last year with similarly 'soft' management in the public sector with Barker and the Rail Board, the transformation can be made, time after time DoE minister King had to embarrassingly intervene to prop the employers up.

The other, and far more decisive, omission from Thatcher's equation was an appreciation of the deter-

# What did the water strike achieve?

Pat Lally makes an assessment

mination of the waterworkers themselves.

In surveying the debris of her 'achievements', which have included defeating substantial groups of industrial workers, Thatcher failed to take account of one highly significant feature common to all those struggles — with scarcely an exception the workers involved in those battles have remained absolutely solid throughout.

In the case of the ASLEF strike last summer, even under the most intense pressure from the employers and the media. Their defeats have in no case been due to a lack of willingness to fight among the workers. On the contrary, had the membership's resolve been even half-way matched by that of the trade union leaders the fate of the Tory government would have been settled long ago.

In this case, however, it is true to say that few could have anticipated the

remarkable tenacity and commitment to the strike that was shown by the waterworkers in their first-ever strike. The overwhelming rejection in the first week of the employers' first offer almost trebled the 3-1 initial vote for strike action, showing the strike had actually grown stronger once it had begun.

And, despite the strike's widespread effects on the community which government ministers and media exploited to whip up reaction against the strikers, there was little evidence of animosity towards them from the working class, reflecting broad support for what was seen generally as an anti-Tory fight. A few middle-class cranks did respond to Lord Denning's free legal advice on do-it-yourself strikebreaking.

After a few days it became apparent that the Tories and the employers had done their homework before the strike began. For a whole period, going back

many months, there were preparations made to confront a strike if it became necessary.

The result was one of the most thorough, systematic and coordinated strike-breaking operations seen since 1926. Shamefully, the TUC-affiliated staff union, NALGO, representing a large proportion of the white-collar workers, was at the centre of it.

Circulars from the union leadership calling on NALGO members to do only their 'normal work' did nothing to prevent the most blatant collaboration with the bosses.

In the absence of firm and principled leadership from the union at national and local level, a combination of bribery through lucrative payments for those working around the clock and threats about job security and promotion got a predictable response.

It therefore proved unnecessary to call upon the special arrangements

for the use of troops and technicians.

Allusions to 1926, the year of the last General Strike in Britain, are far less far-fetched than it might appear. Such an all-out clash between the capitalists and the trade unions must be regarded by Thatcher as by no means an impossibility, since her declared strategic aim is to break the power of organised labour once and for all. In fact, in view of the lengths to which she is prepared to go in her attacks on the unions, such a confrontation may well be seen by her as inevitable.

Before the strike, in industrial terms, the waterworkers were an unknown quantity whose muscle had never been put to the test and few people had expected the strike to be resisted as effectively as it was. Such experience will be put to good effect when it is next needed.

But if the bosses learnt something, so did the

workers. With the workforce divided fairly arbitrarily into three different unions and lacking any semblance of independent organisation even within regions, the national officers of the unions and the full-time officials began the strike with virtual dictatorial powers over the way it was run.

The National Joint Negotiating Committee (with the exception of one member) was made up entirely of full-time officials. As if this were not enough, by far the dominant union is the GMBU, itself hardly a model of democratic, rank and file involvement.

This GMBU domination, personified by the unelected, unaccountable right-wing career bureaucrat Eddie Newall, had been responsible often in recent years for heading off attempts from below to get action, leading to sharp clashes as a result.

On this occasion, when no amount of manoeuvring by the bureaucrats was able to stop the strike, it was clear that Newall and the national negotiators had no intention of waging an all-out fight. As a response to this the rank and file began to get themselves organised.

## Pickets

The basis for this organisation emerged naturally around the requirements of the strike, such as the practical problems of organising pickets, fundraising and overseeing the provision of emergency cover. This last point proved to be a flash-point in many areas, with management not content to settle for mass scabbing, trying to pass off as emergencies virtually every breakdown that occurred.

Strike committees quickly began to wake up to this and started increasing-

ly to use their own judgement and/or withdraw emergency cover completely.

Despite these local and area advances, the feeling rightly persisted among the activists that at national level the membership were helpless at the hands of the bureaucrats.

## Unity

Starting from scratch, and fuelled by this strong and growing sentiment for unity between the strikers, some primitive, but independent, organisation began to emerge.

In London, moves were made to establish an all-London strike committee. Similar coordination took place in other areas such as Yorkshire and telephone contact began to be established across regions.

In the main, the union full-time officials were marginalised by these initiatives, some relating to them positively, all of them powerless to prevent them arising.

The growing authority and ability to mobilise of these bodies reached its height in the lobby of the ACAS Inquiry on the final weekend of the strike. The result was a large and militant demonstration drawn from many of the main strike areas which threw the Inquiry into disarray and almost certainly, had a material effect on its findings when at long last they appeared. The lobbyists' target was the national union leadership, and pressure was applied in no uncertain terms.

But, if a decisive change in the conduct of the strike was to take place, more than pressure was needed. An alternative political basis for the strike was necessary, one based on the needs of the workers and, therefore, directly under their control — one capable of turning the struggle outwards for unity with the power and gas workers and other sections of the labour movement against the Tory government.

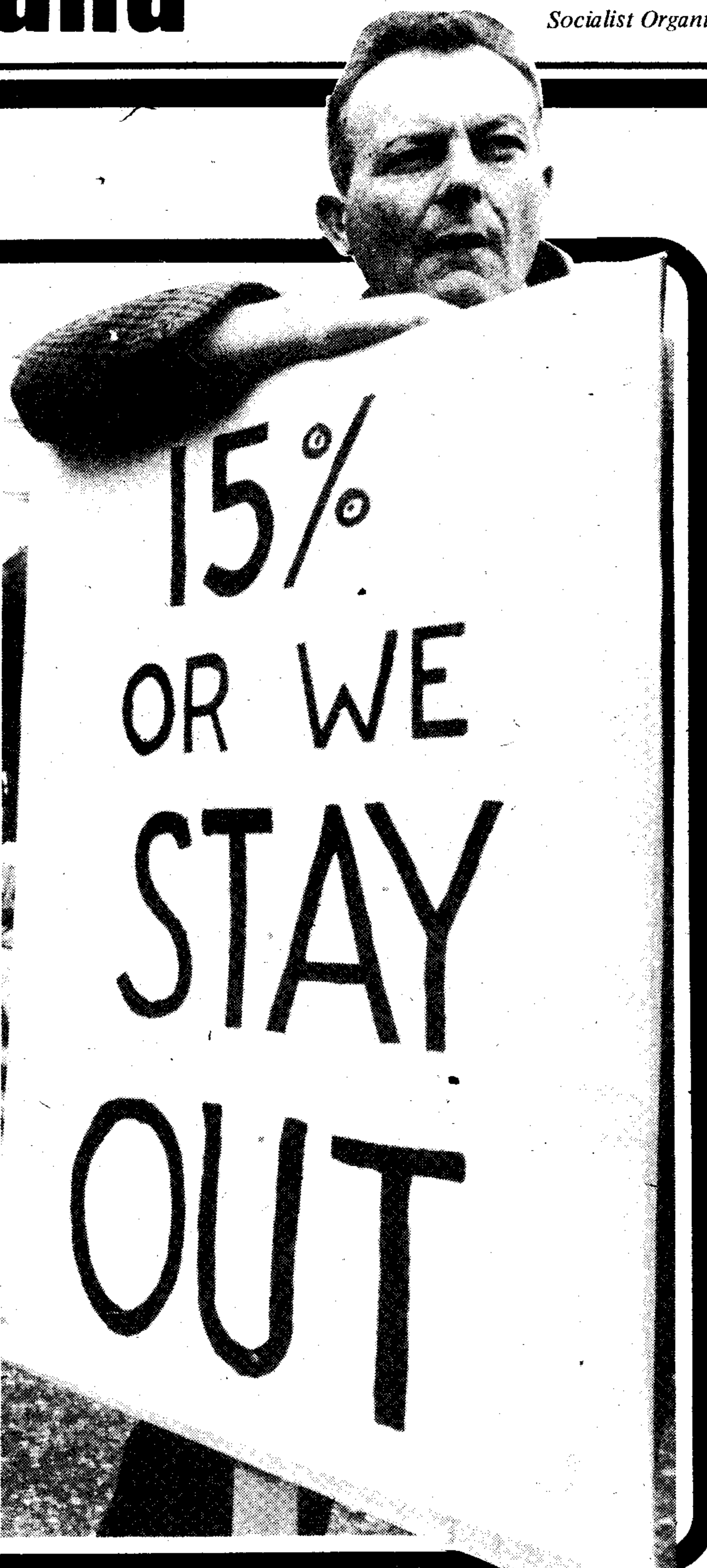
## Fear

It was, in part, fear of this kind of development that forced the bosses to cut their losses and make the concessions they did to get a return to work, though even then the bureaucrats did not feel confident enough of getting it carried to allow the membership the right to a vote.

So, on the industrial front, the year has begun badly for the Tories. Thatcher's strident talk of banning strikes in such essential industries, however serious the longer-term implications, look at this point little more than a mixture of sour grapes and wishful thinking.

For the rank and file in the waterworkers' unions, much has been learnt. The strike has brought home to activists the chronic lack of democracy in their organisations and the lack of any independent structures.

If the 'Boys from the Wet Stuff' put the same energy and commitment into tackling this as they did into the strike, there is a real basis for these obstacles to be overcome.



ANDREW WIARD (REPORT)



ANDREW WIARD (REPORT)

# Plastic bullets: labour movement

## must act!

Patrick Murphy reports

DELEGATES and observers to the 'Ban Plastic Bullets' conference in Manchester last Saturday were welcomed by a prospective Labour parliamentary candidate and his friends, who distributed leaflets condemning the conference, particularly the decision to invite Owen Carron.

Sean Rodgers, PPC for Hale, had spent the previous week attacking the conference and pleading with prominent sponsors to pull out.

His limited success, with the withdrawal of Doug Hoyle, Alf Dubs and others, led to some anxiety among the organisers. But the conference itself proved all these worries to be unfounded.

300 labour movement activists attended. About 200 were delegates and the rest observers. Of the delegates, some 124 were from CLPs and Labour Party branches, while 82 were from trade unions.

After the first session there was a feeling in the conference that this success was not being exploited, that the conference was limited too narrowly to the plastic bullets issue.

The interest of the delegates in broadening the discussion was indicated by the large attendance at a fringe meeting at lunch-time to discuss the need for a socialist solution to the Irish question. The meeting was addressed by John McNulty, People's Democracy councillor in Belfast, and was sponsored by Socialist Challenge, Socialist Organiser and Revolutionary Youth.

John McNulty outlined the problems of orientating the anti-imperialist movement in Ireland towards the struggle of workers North and South for better conditions and against the austerity which has accompanied the crisis in the Irish economy. Godfrey Webster of Socialist Organiser catalogued some of our Irish work and welcomed the recent debates on Ireland in the paper.

There was considerable interest in these debates from the meeting. John McNulty suggested that the debate on the role of the Protestant working class should involve the Irish left who have experienced the problem at first hand.

In the afternoon the



Sinn Féin MP Owen Carron (right) got a standing ovation for his denunciation of the British Army

Conference livened up considerably.

Speakers included an ex-soldier, C. Desmond Greaves of the Connolly Association, Rosemary Sales of Hackney North CLP and the Labour Committee on Ireland and Richard Balfe, Labour European MP.

A message was read from Clive Soley, Labour deputy spokesperson on Northern Ireland. He said that he opposed the use of plastic bullets in Northern Ireland, but he recognised that they would have to be replaced by more humane methods of repression. Soley supported Irish unity but only by consent, by which he meant a majority in the Northern Ireland unit.

There was obvious anger around the hall when this message was read.

The main speaker, Owen Carron, Sinn Féin MP for Fermanagh-South Tyrone, received a standing ovation.

He guaranteed that the Republican struggle would continue for as long as British imperialism retained a presence in Ireland. He explained the developments within Sinn Féin in recent years, the move to the left and the growth of working class support and he stressed that this class approach had to be carried much further and that there were many arguments still to be 'hammered out' within the Republican movement.

The British labour movement, he said, needed to build a broad-based solidarity movement with limited demands. These demands should be 'troops out and self determination for the Irish people'. Carron stressed that they need a solidarity movement, not a faction of the left or a purist sect.

The first delegate to speak, from Vauxhall CLP, expanded on this last theme and attacked the sectarian and destruc-

tive intervention of the Revolutionary Communist Party, who had attacked the conference each time they spoke and had stood against Peter Tatchell who had actually spoken out on Ireland.

He was the first of many delegates to congratulate the Labour Committee on Ireland initiative and support the call for a broad-based Irish solidarity movement.

A delegate from Troops Out reported that they were continuing to request funds from the GLC for a survey of the Prevention of Terrorism Act. They asked for support and claimed to have the backing of two London Labour MPs.

Anna Lunts (NUPE) reported that her union branch had submitted a comprehensive resolution on Ireland to NUPE conference for the second successive year, and called on NUPE activists to canvass support for it.

It was hoped that a LCI

fringe meeting would be arranged for the conference.

Peter Conlan from the National Executive of the Communist Party welcomed the conference, but stressed his party's belief that the struggle for democratic rights within the Northern Ireland framework would be the basis for workers' unity.

He opposed the republican struggle which, he claimed, polarised the communities and alienated the working class.

Other delegates argued that democratic rights were impossible to achieve in Northern Ireland, a state which is inherently anti-democratic and sustained only by severe repression and coercion. The union leadership had to throw off the idea that an 'agreed' solution could be built on the Northern Ireland trade unions, which are dominated by Loyalist workers.

The conference heard

from Brent East CLP who hope to select Ken Livingstone and want support from the pro-Republican left.

A gay delegate from the TGWU South London unfortunately had to make a protest about the insulting attitude of some delegates to gay comrades during the break. The fact that they face violence and intimidation daily, he pointed out, helped many gay people to understand the angry resistance of the nationalist community to British oppression.

If the conference was as successful as it seemed to be, then many trade union and Labour Party branches should be receiving detailed reports and the LCI should follow up with practical solidarity campaigns. The repeal of the Prevention of Terrorism Act, the banning of plastic bullets and a commitment to a united Ireland and British withdrawal are all practical measures which

we can campaign for in the labour movement immediately.

The witch-hunt in the press, aided and abetted by some Labour figures in the North West, failed to affect the success of the conference — which was in fact in support of Labour Party policy. Owen Carron was well-received and the need to oppose all forms of repression in Ireland, above all British rule and partition, was effectively drawn out by speakers and delegates.

At a time when every leading labour movement figure speaking out on Ireland is attacked from within as well as outside of the movement, this conference was a reminder that solidarity can be built on a large scale throughout the movement, if the work is consistently done.

The LCI and the local organisers have shown the way. Hopefully it won't end there.

PATRICK MURPHY

## Labour CND 'no' to register

OVER 360 people, many representing CLPs, attended Labour CND's AGM on February 19, which had to be shifted to the Conference Hall in County Hall.

The meeting was dominated by mounting concern that there was a strong possibility that Labour's commitment to close all nuclear weapons and to refuse the deployment of nuclear weapons in or by this country would be fudged.

CLPs were urged to write to Michael Foot and to circulate every single member of the executive.

The meeting decided that if the Campaign Statement is unsatisfactory we shall appeal to CLPs and affili-

ated organisations to demand a recall Labour Party Conference.

But the consensus was that the time for speedy action was now before the Campaign Document was finalised.

### Nuclear

It was also agreed that in this election year Constituency Parties themselves should campaign publicly for Labour's disarmament policies to link the image of the Labour Party to nuclear disarmament.

The meeting was lively, controversial, committed and determined. By a majority of nearly two to

one, the meeting decided not to apply for inclusion in the Labour Party Register of non-affiliated organisations.

Members of the 1983/4 Executive elected at this meeting are: Pat Arrow-smith, June Berry, Allan Brett, Jim Coutts, Andrew Dismore, Liz Freuthal, Mike Gapes, Bill Hodgson, Joy Hurcombe, Adelaide Leslie, Pat McIntyre, Sue McCreadie, Joyce Murray, Mo O'Toole, Mike Picken, Peter Smith, Tony Southall, Glenys Thornton, Carol Turner, Dick Widdecombe, Cliff Williamson, Nigel Williamson, Jane Wirren, Walter Wolfgang, Edna Woodhead.

WALTER WOLFGANG

# SCRAP THE PTA!

THE title of the Prevention of Terrorism (temporary provisions) Act is a doubly sick joke. Few of those ever arrested under it are ever convicted of any offence, let alone terrorism. It has become so temporary that this 'draconian legislation', as its proposer Roy Jenkins termed it, will soon be coming up to its 9th birthday.

Usually it is renewed each year with little debate and only a handful of MPs attending. The official Labour policy has either been support for the PTA, or last year, abstention pending a 'review' set up by the government. No more than 50 Labour MPs have ever attended to vote against a major attack on the rights of the Irish population in Britain.

This year Lord Jellicoe has finished his review of the Act and concluded that it should stay and in some ways be extended. The Shadow Cabinet has decided to call on MPs to oppose the PTA renewal this year, and given this the sanction of a two-line whip.

There are only 3 problems with what would otherwise be a major step forward.

Firstly, a two-line whip does not compel MPs to attend and vote. This was deliberately chosen to avoid 'embarrassing' MPs such as Merlyn Rees, Roy Mason and Don Concannon who had supported the PTA in the past.

Secondly, it is vital that the PTA is not replaced with another law of the same type, in the same spirit that Don Concannon said that he'd be against plastic bullets if an equally effective replacement could be found.

Thirdly, this follows a number of occasions when, under pressure from the press and Tories, the Labour leadership has restricted the freedom of the GLC, in particular, and other Party members to take action over issues connected with Ireland.

The most recent example concerns the PTA and the proposal from the GLC Police Committee to make a grant to the Troops Out Movement to research into the effects of the PTA in London, something which is needed as of the 1,200 people arrested under the PTA in London only 2% were ever charged with anything.

Michael Foot states that the policy of the Troops Out Movement is not that of Labour Party Conference on the withdrawal of troops. That is true, but many other organisations funded by Labour authorities have policies different from Labour's, and the grant would not have been to further TOM's position on withdrawal.

With the witchhunt in full swing in the Party and an election coming up, it is, in Ken Livingstone's words, 'almost impossible to have a rational discussion on Ireland' where the press and the Labour leadership are concerned. Yet at the same time, as the many delegates from CLPs and Party branches to the Plastic Bullets conference shows, it is increasingly possible to put the arguments to the rank and file in the Party. We must build on this.

\*From the latest 'Labour and Ireland', bulletin of the Labour Committee on Ireland.



by Patrick Spilling

**PRESS GANG**

AFTER "JAWS", it took months before the film moguls were ready with their gory follow-up... "Just when you thought it was safe to go back in the water..."

After the Tatchell massacre, the team that organised his assassination were back in production before the blood was dry on the cobbles.

This time, they were in Ireland, hot on the heels of their favourite quarry, - Red Ken Livingstone, the man they say wants us all underground.

Livingstone's visit has the makings of a media disaster. The press had no advance leak. They failed to work up a reception committee, and they had to trail around West Belfast, waiting for the press conference before they could photograph and listen to the GLC leader.

But these were battle-hardened veterans. They had just completed their biggest kill in years and confidence was sky-high. They went in questions loaded, angles slanted, and epithets charged.

We should remember how much was against them. It used to be the case that the Provos represented nobody at all in Northern Ireland. A visit to West Belfast in their company should have been a midnight flit over garden fences while the hostile population closed their doors and glowered from behind curtains.

### Popularity

So Livingstone's apparent popularity on his visit should have been hard to explain. But since that story was blown, it has been replaced by another official version - this time, one of racism. It is a picture of West Belfast and other Republican areas as havens of degenerate and possibly genetically perverted maniacs.

The Sun began promisingly enough, with its headline based on Foot's attack on Livingstone - The Falls Guy. (In general the press coverage owes a fair bit to Michael Foot for sanctioning and leading the attack).

But the Sun seemed a little jaded, and even its editorial line lacked its usual sparkle. "Maybe Red Ken might even consider calling an international conference of the enemies of Britain."

It is to the Daily Mail that the laurels should go. The paper ran the future of Foot and Livingstone's visit side by side under a generic strapline, headlined "Defiance of Foot... and the shame of Red Ken".

Livingstone also had a headline all to himself - Only the IRA's Best for GLC Boss? - and as an accolade to himself the writer John Edwards had a little picture published alongside his name.

He deserves his little picture. He should cut it out and stick it in his album to commemorate a piece of creative writing with no equals on the day.

Take the beginning "The old black taxi banged through the holes on the Falls Road and Ken Livingstone leaned forward in the back seat waving to his new friends. The IRA put people

everywhere to shake his hand."

That really was a nice touch. No doubt it was the IRA who created the Catholic ghettos in the first place and peopled them with simple folk prepared to wait for centuries to pass so they could shake the hand of this strange man from London.

In one revealing slip, Edwards refers to West Belfast as "the IRA side of Belfast" - a phrase which almost seems to imply they are the legitimate voice of the Catholic people.

### Mirror

So much for that visit. Now let's get back to the Daily Mirror. The front page within one respect much like the others. A large headline read "Condemned: Foot and GLC slam Red Ken's IRA visit".

But the top of the page advertised an embarrassing serial which the Mirror launched on the same day called "Contact - A soldier's story".

The series had been advertised in advance so presumably could not be cancelled. It filled three pages in the middle of the paper and was written by a former officer with the Parachute Regiment called A.F.N. Clarke. The paper advertised it as "Raw, violent, terrifying... from the streets of Ulster".

The officer, whose book is published this week, did not set out to attack the Army. He claimed "Nobody realises the waste and sheer stupidity of war more keenly than the British soldier".

But inside these three pages were I'm afraid many more of these fantasies so deplored by the Daily Mail. How about this to start with:

"Suddenly, 30 doors in the Old Park district of Belfast splinter and burst open under the onslaught of army fury and boots. More than 100 people - the elderly, the infirm, the young, the tired and the lonely - are turfed out of bed.

"Screams and yells and thuds shatter the morning stillness. 'Filthy English pigs. Para bastards. I've got a heart condition, she's got epilepsy. You've broke down my door.'

Still further down this tale of unlikely adventures this so-called soldier writes "Experience has taught me to have my own 'Heavy' with me during on-the-street questioning - any negative replies warrant a thump and threatening behaviour an immediate arrest and a trip to HQ.

"The hate is still in their eyes but nobody dares to air his feelings."

There is also an account of a teenager being shot by a rubber bullet with what the army refer to candidly as a "dick gun" (the bullet catches him between the legs).

The report also alleges that the Army help themselves freely to material from vehicles they have stopped for checks. It outlines how his patrol had helped themselves to extension phones from what they described as "a nervous type" of telephone engineer in a van they had just stopped.

The fantasy continues with an account of an observation centre. "Dirty magazines by the dozen are stacked on the floor... a pile of sad fantasies gathering dust.

"Most of the best pages have been ripped out and now adorn the walls. These go unnoticed, except by newcomers. Sightless eyes stare at oversized nipples, spread thighs, beckoning tongues, dreaming of the girl at home." This account also gives the reaction of the soldiers when an army sniper kills a gunman. "The first time our sniper missed the gunman, but made sure the second time with the perfect shot in the centre of the target. Everyone cheered, of course."

There is more in the same vein, but since this is all fantasy it is probably improper to repeat it in a responsible paper like Socialist Organiser.

Reading the Daily Mirror we can now see Livingstone's mistake clearly. He was wrong to go and visit the Sinn Fein representatives. He should simply have asked the army's public relations department to allow him a candid trip around Belfast in the company of the Paras. It would have shown him all he needed to know. It would have made a lovely fantasy in khaki.

# Science for the people

LAST week your roving science correspondent visited a fascinating institution - the Universeit van Amsterdam Wetenschaps Winkel (UvAWW) or, in English, Science shop.

The UvAWW is one of a number of "Science shops" in Holland, and in fact is the most firmly established. Originally set up by a group of socialist science students, angry at the way science was directed towards serving the needs of big business and the rich, and ignoring or acting against the needs of working class and oppressed people, the UvAWW is now accepted by and partly funded by the University of Amsterdam.

Any individual or group can become a client of a science shop if they have no commercial aims; if they are unable to pay for the research themselves; and if they will use the results in some practical way.

Most clients fall into the categories of trade unions, environmental groups, women's groups and third world groups and so far the UvAWW has dealt with over a thousand questions from these and other sources.

To ensure that the UvAWW is responsive to the needs of its clients, they are represented on the advisory committee which runs it. The shop members and supporters are subdivided into subject areas (e.g. a biology group, a chemistry group, etc) and into interest areas (e.g. a trade union group, a women's group, a pollution group, etc.).

How does a group get its question answered, or its problem dealt with? Firstly, it takes its proposal to the science shop, where a summary of the question is put up on a notice board. The science shop then advertises the question in the weekly paper of the

university. Students and/or staff members may volunteer to work on the question, but usually the science shop has to actually find someone to do the research.

Next, a letter accepting the proposal and signed by the board of the university is issued. The guts of the process are the research which now takes place. This may be a survey, a search of the scientific literature for relevant facts, or actual experiments.

Alternatively, it may be simply necessary to find an expert to provide advice.

Provisional results will be discussed with the clients, while final results may be published or made the subject of a public meeting.

The range of questions dealt with may be illustrated with this selection from the current UvAWW noticeboard:

- a) a request for information on the effects of dumping radioactive waste at sea.
- b) legal advice on noise pollution in the town of Weesp.
- c) a request for information on cancer deaths in part of a city.



# SCIENCE

d) the consequences of a town plan on the female population.

e) research into dioxin pollution in the mud of land reclaimed from the sea.

Past questions dealt with include the following:

a) Researchers carried Ames' tests (a simple test to see if something causes mutations of bacteria - if it does, it is likely to cause cancer in humans) on chemicals used by workers - a disinfectant and a chemical in the waste from a chemical factory. These tests were negative, fortunately.

b) Workers in a plastics factory were given information about styrene, a substance which evaporates from the resin used to make polystyrene. Styrene causes cancer and this information resulted in a trade union campaign for better health and safety provisions for the workers.

c) Printworkers using a new process suffered skin and eye irritation. Despite official statements, the Chemistry Department at UvA found that the chemicals used in the process were potentially dangerous to workers' health. As a result working conditions were modified.

d) Advice was given on an air conditioning system in a women's prison which helped the case of the prisoners against the government.

And so on!

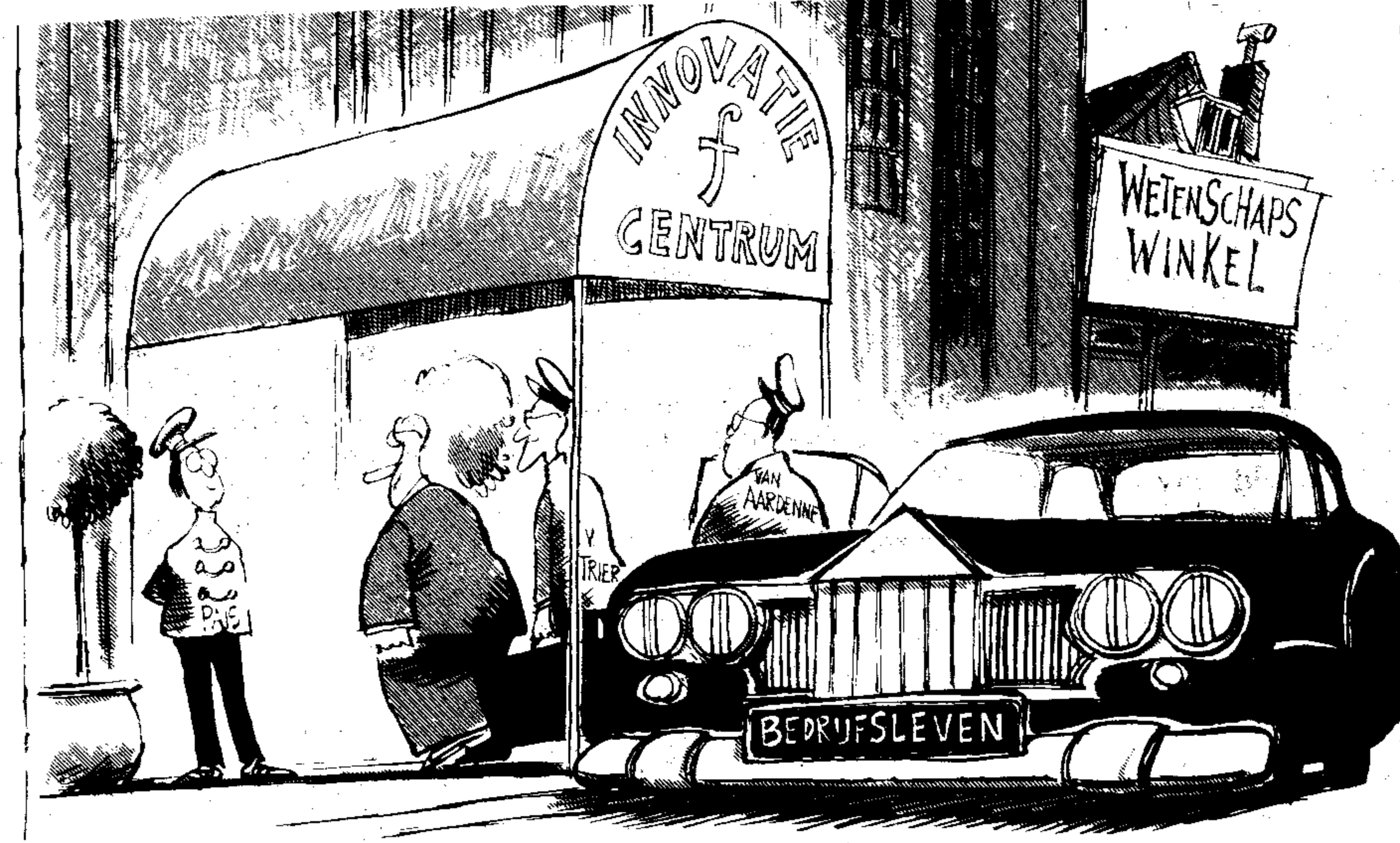
Next week, I'll say a bit more about this unique (as far as I know) attempt to bring science to the people and provide science for the people. I'll try and discuss the strengths and weakness of the science shops as well, and say why I think we should be trying to get science shops set up in Britain.

### Science Column Birthday Appeal.

Every SO seller should manage to get a couple of small presents from their clients - 25p or 75p (or more!). It's quite easy - you say "did you know that the SO science column is two years old this week?"

They you say "do you enjoy reading it?" To this, the answer should be "yes" (at least, that's what they say to me!) Then you raise the question of a little extra cash this week. I've raised £1.75 from three people so far, and there are lots more to ask!

Please let me know what you raise, so I can announce it here.



March	7	14	21	28
Monday	1	8	15	22
Tuesday	2	9	16	23
Wednesday	3	10	17	24
Thursday	4	11	18	25
Friday	5	12	19	26
Saturday	6	13	20	27
Sunday				

# WHAT'S ON

PAID ads 5p per word, £4 per column inch. Send copy to Socialist Organiser, 28 Middle Lane, London N8, to arrive by Saturday for inclusion in the following week's paper.

**WOMEN, Immigration and Nationality:** meeting to discuss our future as a campaign. **Sunday March 13, 1.30 to 4.30pm, County Hall, London SE1. All women welcome. Creche on premises.**

**LABOUR Committee on Ireland:** annual general meeting 1983 will be on **April 23. Resolutions to be in by March 19.**

**CRITIQUE conference:** 'Marx after Stalin'. Speakers include Hillel Tickin, Nigel Harris, Chris Arthur, Scott Meikle, Jonathan Ree, David H Ruben, Norman Geras, Roy Edgley, Simon Clarke, Bob Sutcliffe, Mike Davies, Baruch Hirson, Neil Harding, David Law, Paddy O'Donnell, Sandy Smith,

and Kate Marshall.  
**Friday March 4/Saturday March 5, from 7.30 on Friday and from 10am on Saturday, at University of London Union, Malet St, London WC1. To register send £5 waged (£2 students, free for claimants) to Critique, 31 Clevedon Rd, Glasgow G12 0PH.**

**'HOW to Fight for a Labour Victory':** "The call for a national meeting of CLPs, unions and campaigning groups came from a conference of Briefing groups on February 5, in view of the threats posed by growing speculation that unilateralism will not be in the manifesto, and continued attempts to expel members of the Party". **Monday March 7, 7.30, House of Commons. LABOUR democracy and**

**local government: day conference for District Labour Parties, Saturday March 26, 10.30 to 4.30, at Manchester Poly Students' Union. Sponsored by Sheffield, Leeds and Manchester DLPs. Contact: Frances Done, Manchester City Labour Party, Hulme Labour Club, 1 Stoneylow Close, Manchester M15.**

**SOUTHWARK Trades Council meeting on YTS. Thursday March 3, 7.30 at Walworth Town Hall. Speaker: Clare Short.**

**EL SALVADOR Solidarity Campaign:** Labour Movement conference, **Saturday May 14, 10am to 5pm, County Hall, London SE1. Credentials £2 from ESSC, 29 Islington Park St, London N1.**

**SHEFFIELD Labour movement conference on Ireland**

— **Saturday March 19, Sheffield University Students' Union, 9.30 to 4.30. Sponsored by Sheffield Trades Council, Sheffield District Labour Party, and Sheffield LCI.**

**WAR in the Third World and the Third World War:** a conference, **Saturday March 12, Friends' Centre, Ship St, Brighton, 10am to 6pm. Speakers include Fred Halliday, Uri Davis, Adrian Crewe, Salvador Moncada, Jenny Pearce. Tickets £1.50. Information: Clare (0273) 771284, Indra 739022, Bryn 698111.**

**RELEASE political prisoners in Kenya. Picket J.M. Solidarity Day, March 2 1983, Kenya High Commission, 45 Portland Place, W1, 12 noon to 2pm.**

**LABOUR Campaign for Gay Rights public meeting:**

**'Gay Liberation and the labour movement'. Friday March 18, 7.30 at County Hall, London SE1. Speakers include Andy Harris (GLC) and Tom Sawyer (Assistant General Secretary NUPE).**

**CALDERDALE March for Jobs. Organised by Sowerby LPYS: Assemblé Cornholme 8.45am. Rallies at Todmorden 10am, at Hebden Bridge 12.15pm, at Sowerby Bridge 3.30pm, at Halifax Town Hall 5pm.**

**LABOUR Committee on Ireland, London Region: annual general meeting 1983. Sunday March 13, 1.30pm, at Caxton House, St John's Way, London N19**

**INTERNATIONAL Women's Day demonstration: Sunday March 5, 11.30am from Jubilee Gardens, near County Hall.**

# Building new leadership in

Concluding John McIlroy's series on the state of the industrial struggle

## the unions

ing to bridge what is and what is required: in struggle, not prating from the sidelines.

Nor can this struggle somehow go round the present leaders of the unions, it has to be based on confronting them. The issues we fight on should not merely be wage slips and asbestos but union democracy and the creation of a new leadership.

If we look at the situation purely in terms of fear and lack of confidence restraining militancy then when the upturn comes we will get militancy again. We shall, at best, repeat the experience of 1974. At worst, and most probably, Thatcher will exploit the ideological weakness of trade unionism to impose a lasting defeat on the working class. The crucial test is not in the upturn, the crucial test is now.

And it is a massive test. We mentioned earlier the greater organisational strength compared with 1920. To that we could add a weaker political position. Then, of course, we had the Russian revolution, a generalised national liberation struggle in Ireland and a small cadre of experienced militants rooted in industry immensely influential relative to their descendants today. The betrayals of Labourism and Stalinism were yet to be experienced. Or take another obvious distinction: we tend to forget today: "Workers Weekly"

could compete with Fleet Street with at least the same technology and no four television channels, with cable TV coming over the hill, pumping out capitalist ideas. There is a long, long haul ahead.

If we accept that we need a movement of militants in the unions to organise a fightback and stop the retreat, a movement which will attempt, on the basis of strong roots in the workplace, to fight for the organisation and generalisation of action against the Tories in the context of fighting for socialist policies in the unions and Labour Party and the creation of a new leadership, what do we do?

We have to first of all accept that such a new minority movement, essential as it is, cannot be declared overnight. The SWP sponsored Rank and File groups have now been dissolved having in most cases degenerated into fronts for the Cliff group crippled by its politics. The Liaison Committee for the Defence of Trade Unions has not since the early '70s been a movement for even limited controlled action. There is no way forward based on these conceptions.

The NHS dispute provides a good example of how to proceed. Health Workers for the Full Claim were able to group together a caucus of the militant minority who did sustained work throughout the struggle.



A caucus of the militant minority: Health Workers for the Full Claim lobbies the TUC Health Service Committee

We need to develop permanent caucuses in all the unions based on fighting the Tories, building workplace organisation and transforming the union, realising any real attainments of the latter depends on the former. In some cases as with the Socialist Teachers Alliance in the NUT such groupings can constitute a pole for the left. In most cases it will mean working within the Broad Left on the model of the socialist caucus within the CPSA.

If socialist caucuses at the moment will organise a minority of the minority, so too Broad Lefts will be miles away from a rank and file movement in terms of ability to influence action and in terms of programme. Nevertheless, even if in some cases they

represent a huddling together of militants, the huddling together can be the beginning for action and a framework in which we can fight for more developed politics.

The Broad Left which have emerged in unions such as the NUR, COHSE and USDAW are less bureaucratized, more open, more left, less geared to electoralism than the old style AUEW model. In other unions such as the TGWU there is a need to open up the Broad Left, whilst at the other extreme in APEX the hard left have the task of building it up from tiny beginnings.

The initiative of the Broad Left Organising Committee in calling a conference in February was particularly useful in relation to this project. It has

put the emphasis on the vital questions of union and Labour Party democracy and can be a useful springboard for the development and deepening of Broad Lefts in all unions.

If this should be the main focus always in the context of sustained and patient work in the workplaces we need to initiate and relate to other developments. The new Tebbit Green Paper, for example, raises concretely basic questions of union democracy such as elections, strike ballots and links with the Labour Party. We should use this to attempt to develop and broaden the Mobilising Committee in Defence of Trade Union Rights.

Conferences such as that called by Socialist Organiser and London Labour Briefing can be useful in

providing a forum for discussing experiences and developing strategy.

During the next 12 months in the context of the General Election it will be vital to raise three issues within the unions. The reversal of the TUC General Council decision on the People's March provides a possible focus for agitation over the issue of unemployment. We should fight to build the march, open it to rank and file control, use it to build unemployed workers' groups and crucially link the issue of the march to the struggle against redundancy actually going on against the Tories.

It is clear that nuclear disarmament and particularly the issue of the missiles will be central to the election campaign. This issue must be taken up in the unions, a task we have seriously neglected thus far. We need to raise these issues in the context of a rank and file trade union campaign posed against such groups as Trade Unions for a Labour Victory.

### Education

A campaign of the union Rank and File for A Labour Victory would be able to link the questions of democracy in both unions and party and the witch-hunt to the manifesto and programme of a Labour government. It would constitute a preparation for a right wing Labour government attacking the unions and an education against coalitionism.

But if such initiatives are to have any real success we need to root them in what will be the life blood of the class struggle in the next period; a fight back on the industrial front, an end to the retreat in the unions.

# Reinstate Stan Crooke!

ON Wednesday 23 February the Labour Party National Executive Committee endorsed a decision of the NEC organisation sub-committee to reject Stan Crooke's appeal against expulsion from Queen's Park CLP (Glasgow) of October last year and to confirm that expulsion. The purpose of this statement to the labour movement press is to clarify the political background and motives of the expulsion.

1) Contrary to numerous reports which have appeared in the Scottish press, the expulsion was unconnected with so-called "allegations of corruption" in the article. The CLP chairperson. When setting in action the expulsion, stated that Queen's Park CLP was concerned only with those sections of the article relating to Queen's Park CLP itself and its elected representatives, whilst the so-called "allegations of corruption" fell outwith the competence of the CLP.

2) The driving force for the expulsion was that the

## The case for reversing the Labour Party NEC witch-hunters' decision

[This statement has been slightly abridged].

article, which dealt with the history and lessons of the Gorbals Anti-Dampness Campaign (GADC) of the late seventies, had provided an accurate outline of the role played by the Labour Party right wing and then MP Frank McElhone in opposition to the work of the GADC, e.g.

a) attempting through the Labour Party to set up an "alternative" "anti-dampness campaign" to undermine the support of the GADC,

b) attempting on two separate occasions to shut

down two local information centres which were operating bases for the GADC (1977 and 1978),

c) attempting to undermine the credibility of the campaign.

3) Such behaviour on the part of the Right was exemplary of its general record in its years in control of the CLP e.g.:

a) Regional Councillor Tom Murphy and Frank McElhone MP were delegated as CLP representatives to a campaign of 1981 against the closure of two nursery schools in the Gorbals; their delegation was then used as an excuse to withdraw the delegates' credentials of two left-wingers who had been delegated by one of the branches in the CLP. Having blocked any active involvement by the CLP in the campaign, Murphy and McElhone then proceeded to fail to attend a single meeting of the nursery campaign.

b) at the time of his death Murphy and McElhone were involved in attempting to undermine

the present campaign against the privatisation of the Hutchesontown 'E' scheme in the Gorbals, again through the notion of an "alternative" Labour Party campaign which would make the real one superfluous.

c) as with the nursery campaign of 1981, the present campaign against the closure of the Adelphi School in the Gorbals has been ignored by Regional Councillor Murphy, who has not even turned up to meetings of the Labour Group at which the future of the school was on the agenda, and in spite of the fact that he is a member of the Region's Education Committee.

4) Such examples illustrate the Right's lack of concern for the interests and needs of local working people. Indicative of the Right's lack of concern for the Labour Party (and of the hypocrisy of Stan Crooke's expulsion) is the fact that the CLP is not even currently a paid-up affiliate of the Labour Party, being some £2,000

behind in its affiliation fees, a sum of money which the Labour Party will soon have to write off since Queen's Park CLP will cease to exist at the time of boundary reorganisation.

5) Events subsequent to the death of Frank McElhone have served only to underline how justified the critical line of the article of controversy was. Apart from attempting to block any new intake of membership into the CLP before this year's AGMs (by calling a GMC meeting for Christmas Eve to try to ensure that it was inquorate) the Right has also foisted upon the CLP a PPC (elected in the by-election to be MP) who:

a) had failed to attend a single meeting of her Labour Party branch for several years prior to selection.

b) had never held any position of responsibility within the Labour Party.

c) admitted at the Crosshill-Prospecthill branch selection meeting that she had joined a trade union only after the death of her

husband, although her "biographical details" submitted to the final selection meeting of the CLP claimed that she had been a member of a union for 11 years.

d) is completely ignorant of politics in general, and of Labour Party policy in particular, an inevitable result of her lack of involvement in the Labour and trade union movement.

6) By way of contrast to the right wing's record of sabotaging local working class campaigns and using the Party as a means for the advancement of their careerist aspirations, Stan Crooke's two-year record in the CLP has included: getting his branch affiliated to the Glasgow Cuts Campaign, Stop the Sale Campaign, Parents Against Nursery Education Cuts and Turkish Solidarity Campaign; organising a branch public meeting on a "women's Right to Work"; organising leafletting of a local housing estate with NUPE leaflets during last year's NHS dispute; volunteering to go on a fund

raising committee (which never actually met) set up to help pay off the CLP debt to the Labour Party; getting the two-month summer break ended so that the branch had a continuous existence throughout the year.

At the hearing of Stan Crooke's appeal by a Labour Party Scottish Council sub-committee, Murphy, one of the two CLP representatives, referred to Stan Crooke having put an average of two motions per branch meeting as a criticism of his record in the Labour Party.

7) Stan Crooke will obviously be campaigning for reinstatement, in conjunction with Labour Party anti-witch-hunt campaigns. His expulsion was a straight left-right clash. It was carried through by the right wing in Queen's Park CLP, and supported by the right wing on the NEC organisation sub-committee, with the opposition coming from the Left.

## Trade union News

THE Tory Council in Bury, Lancashire, has spent the past 12 months considering privatising the refuse collection service. The unions have been put off their intention to fight this move by the Council agreeing to discussions.

Last Monday, the unions came up with 2 ways of saving money with minimal redundancies, but the Tories announced they would be discussing inviting private tenders for the service at a meeting on March 2.

NALGO and AUEW have called a strike against privatisation for March 2, and will be lobbying the Council.

People in Bury believe the Council is hell-bent on privatising the service - even though it will probably cost them more - because of their Tory philosophy and pressure from Tory Central Office.

Sue Arnall

WITH mass unemployment and an extensive blacklist at work, the Lump is once again rife in the building industry.

Over a number of years branch activists have been putting pressure on UCATT to start a campaign to unionise the sites.

The London region now supports such a campaign, which has at its centre direct action to unionise one of the major jobs in London.

However, the Executive Committee of UCATT has failed to give its support to such a campaign.

Last Friday saw the opening shot, with London UCATT members attempting to get the leadership to take action, with the lobby of an E.C. meeting.

Whether the E.C. do grace the membership with support in demanding basic trade union rights or not, the campaign against the Lump has begun.

Mick O'Sullivan

IT'S still irresistible force versus immovable object at Arlington House in Camden, North London.

The TGWU hostel workers, on strike for higher wages and then against sackings since September last year, are determined to hold out until the local Labour Council forces the hostel's owners, Rowtons, into selling.

The council's Environmental Health officers are working in the hostel as part of an effort legally to force Rowtons to make expensive improvements - or to sell.

The strikers are getting only the most minimal help from their union, and need donations from the labour movement to help them stick out. Send to: Arlington House, Strike Committee, c/o 8 Camden Road, London NW1.

*The report last week that the 28 miners sitting in at Lewis Merthyr had been sacked was misleading, though strictly speaking correct. The Coal Board dismissed them to avoid legal responsibility in case of accidents, but reinstated them immediately they ended the sit-in.*

# Labour to axe Gay Centre?

THE ruling Labour Group on Manchester City Council decided at their Budget fixing meeting last night to reverse all the proposed cuts to Voluntary projects in the City except the cut to Manchester Gay Information Centre. They agreed to continue to fund 20 Social Services projects which the Department of the Environment has agreed to support for a further four years.

Of the three remaining projects they agreed to fund directly from the rate the Commonword Writers' Co-operative and the Neil Pearson Day Nursery. This leaves the Gay Information Centre as the only project which will be cut.

Paul Fairweather, the Centre's Liaison Officer, said after the meeting:

"We are shocked by the blatant discrimination shown by the decision. The Labour Group is prepared to fund from the rates every project which the Department of the Environment will not continue to support except ours."

Last year the three phone lines, Gay Infor-

mation, Lesbian Link and Friend, had over 10,000 calls from people desperate to have someone to talk to about being gay. The Centre has been a highly successful project which has received a great deal of national and local publicity for its work. The cost of continuing the service will be around £11,000 over the next financial year: one of the cheapest projects funded by the Council.

"We challenge the Council leadership to tell us why the Gay Centre is the only project they do not propose to refund. (It is a total red herring to say that helping gay women and men is a luxury when old people are suffering. This Council have been prepared to close Old Peoples' Homes and make massive social service cuts over the past three years.) Their decision is based on nothing but blind prejudice."

The Centre is resting its hopes on a Special Meeting of the Social Services Estimates Sub-Committee which Councillors who supported the Gay Centre

managed to persuade the labour Group to hold. This meeting will consider whether to reverse the decision to cut the Centre's grant.

Support has already come from Manchester Central MP Bob Litherland in whose constituency the Gay Centre is based. He says in a statement:

"To decide not to continue would deprive gay people of an essential service. Their application should be considered with the same priority that is given to other minority groups in the City of Manchester."

The final decision will be taken at the Council's budget-fixing meeting on Wednesday March 16. Manchester Gay Centre is calling on Labour and trade union activists to help by letters, resolutions, or phone calls to Cllr William Egerton, Leader Manchester City Council, Town Hall, Albert Square, Manchester 60 - 061-236 3377 (Leader's office). Send copies to Manchester Gay Centre, 61A Bloom St., Manchester 1 (phone Paul Fairweather 061-226 2443).

# Block on cash to Hackney cops

THE campaign against police racism in Hackney is continuing in the wake of the death of Colin Roach, found shot dead outside Stoke Newington police station on January 12.

Hackney Labour councillor Brynley Heaven told us: "The council has decided as a matter of intention to withhold the police precept [the money the council has

to pay from the rates towards financing the police].

"This was the result of pressure on us from practically every local group except the Chamber of Commerce - from Hackney Community Action, the CRE, the Black People's Alliance, the Trades Council, the Labour Parties.

"It is an expression of dissatisfaction at the state of policing in Hackney and the refusal of the Home Office to call an inquiry into the death of Colin Roach and policing in Hackney. We have passed a vote of no confidence in the Stoke Newington police.

"The decision to withhold the police precept is to be integrated into the budget-making process. Our legal advice is likely to be that paying over the police precept is an obligation, so Sir Kenneth Newman or someone on his behalf may then go to the courts to force us to pay up.

"We're also establishing a police monitoring unit at the Town Hall, and in April there will be a borough consultation, with public meetings, on the Greater London Council's police accountability proposals".

★ Demonstration: "For an Independent Public Inquiry". Saturday March 12, 1pm from Hackney Town Hall, Mare Street.

**DEMONSTRATE**  
**Sunday 27**  
**March**

**12 noon**  
**Assemble**  
**Jubilee**  
**Gardens**  
**near**  
**Waterloo**  
**Station**

**CAMPAIGN AGAINST RACIST LAWS**  
 ■ Repeal the Immigration and Nationality Acts  
 ■ Stop race checks ■ Stop racist deportations  
 ■ Unite the divided families now



# Where to find us

THERE ARE Socialist Organiser groups in most major towns and cities. See below for details of your area - and if you want more details, or if there is no group listed for your area, fill in and return the 'Get Organised' form.

### • SCOTLAND

Glasgow. For details of meetings contact paper sellers or Stan Crooke, 114 Dixon Avenue, Glasgow G42. SO is sold at Maryhill (Tuesday mornings) and Rutherglen shopping arcade (Friday lunchtime).

Edinburgh. For details of meetings ring Dave, 229 4591. SO is sold at Muirhouse (Saturday 10.30-12) and the First of May bookshop, Candlemaker Row.

### • NORTH-WEST

Liverpool. Contact 733 6663. SO is sold at Progressive Books, Berry St, and at News from Nowhere, Whitechapel.

Wirral. Contact Colin Johnstone, 1, Wellington Road, Wallasey. Next meeting: March 10, 8 pm, The Labour Club, Church Road, Seacombe: 'The History of the organised unemployed'.

Liverpool. Contact 733 6663. SO is sold at Progressive Books, Berry St, and at News from Nowhere, Whitechapel.

Manchester. Public meeting, Thursday March 24, 7.30 at the Millstone pub: 'Workers' Democracy or Tebbit's Democracy?' - Speaker: John McLroy. Business/Educational meeting: March 17, 7.40 pm, UMIST - Students Union.

Next Socialist Organiser delegate meeting: Saturday March 5, 11am to 5.30pm, Co-op rooms, 57 Micklegate, York. (Phone 0904 425739 for accommodation or creche). Please make plans to choose and mandate your group's delegates now.

Topic: 'Social Democracy in the British Labour Party'.

Stockport. Contact c/o 38 Broadhurst St. Meetings every Sunday, 7.30pm: phone 429 6359 for details. SO is sold at Stockport market every Saturday, 11 to 12.30.

Rochdale. Meets on the 2nd Monday of the month, at the Castle Inn. March 14th, 8 pm: Public meeting: 'What future for Palestine?'

Hyndburn. Contact Accrington 39573. Meetings weekly - see SO sellers for day, time and venue. SO is sold at Broadway, Accrington, every Saturday from 11.30 to 1pm.

Stoke. Contact Arthur Bough, 23 Russell road, Sandyford (84170).

### • YORKSHIRE AND NORTH-EAST

Durham. Meets every Tuesday, 6.30pm. Students Union bar, Durham university. SO is sold at the Community Co-op, New Elvet.

York. Contact: 425739. SO is sold at Coney St on Saturday mornings, at the community Bookshop, outside the dole office most mornings, and at the University on Friday mornings.

Leeds. Contact Garth Frankland, 623322. SO is sold at Books and Corner Books, Woodhouse Lane.

Bradford. Contact Barry Turner, 636994. SO is sold at the Starry Plough bookshop.

Sheffield. Meets every other Wednesday, 7.30pm at the Brown Cow, The Wickler. SO is sold outside Boot's, Foregate (Saturday 12 to 1), and at the Independent Bookshop, Glossop Road. Contact: Rob, 589307

Hull. Meets every Wednesday, 8pm: details from SO sellers. Childcare available: SO is sold at the Prospect Centre (Saturday 11-12). March 10, 7.30 pm, Trades & Labour Club, Beverley Rd.: Hull Labour Co-ordinating/Hull SO public meeting: 'Support the Miners'. Speaker from Dinnington colliery.

Halifax. Contact 52156. SO is sold at Halifax Wholesaler, Gibbet St, and at Tower Books, Hebden Bridge.

### • WALES

Cardiff. Contact 492988.

### • MIDLANDS

Birmingham. Meets alternate Fridays, 7.30, the Labour Club, Bristol St. Next meeting Friday March 3; Discussion on Bermondsey.

SO is sold at the Other Bookshop, Digbeth High St

Coventry. Contact Keith White, 75623. SO is sold at the Wedge Co-Op, High St. Meets on first and last Thursday of each month, 7.30 at 'The Queen', Primrose Hill St, Hillfields.

Leicester. Contact Phil, 857908. SO is sold outside Supasave (Friday 4.30 to 6), the Co-op, Narborough Rd (Saturday 11-12.30), and at Blackthorne Books, High Street.

Northampton. Meets alternate Mondays. Next meeting March 7. For details contact 713606.

Nottingham. Meets every Friday, 7.30pm at the International Community Centre, 61B Mansfield Rd. SO is sold outside the Victoria Centre (Saturday 11 to 1) and at the Mushroom Bookshop, Heathcote St.

### • SOUTH

Oxford. SO is sold at the Cornmarket (Saturday 11am to 1pm) and outside Tesco, Cowley Rd (Friday 5pm-7pm). Also at EOA Books, Cowley Rd.

Basingstoke. Business meeting March 11. Public meeting, March 10: 'Is Marxism obsolete?' All meetings 7.30pm, Chute House.

### • LONDON

North-West London. Readers' meetings first Sunday of month. Phone Mick, 624 1931, for details. SO is sold at Kilburn Books.

Islington. Next meeting Sunday March 13, 3pm at Thornhill Neighbourhood Project, Orkney House, Caledonian Rd/Copenhagen St: 'The coming struggles in Zimbabwe'. For childcare phone Nik, 278 1341.

Haringey Contact 802 0771 or 348 5941. Meets every other Thursday, 7.30 pm, Trade Union Centre, Brabant Rd. Next meeting March 10.

Tower Hamlets. Contact 247 1328. Meets fortnightly on Fridays, 6.30 to 8.30pm. Next meeting March 10.

Southwark/Lambeth meets every other Wednesday, Lansbury House, 41 Camberwell Grove, SE5. Business meeting 7.30pm. Open Forum discussion at 8.30pm. Next meeting: Wednesday 16 March on 'Can Labour win the next Election?' Speaker: Tom Rigby, Peckham LPYS.

Socialist Organiser is sold at Brixton Tube every Thursday, 5-6pm, at Peckham Labour Club, Monday and Friday evenings.

New Southwark SO bulletin, 'The Spark', now out, free (donations welcome) from SO sellers.

Hounslow. Meets fortnightly on Sundays, 8pm. For details phone 898 6961.

Hackney. Contact c/o Andrew Hornung, 28 Carlton Mansions, Holmleigh Rd, N16.

SO is sold at the following London bookshops: Collets, Central Books, The Other Bookshop, Bookmarks, Bookplace (Peckham Rd, SE15), and Reading Matters (Wood Green Shopping City).

# YS for YCND

YS for YCND is a new campaign set up to help organise YS branches and YS members who want to build YCND.

The YS officially supports YCND but in practice does no more than give out leaflets which preach about the need to nationalise the arms industry.

YS for YCND recognises the need to convince YCND that its policies will only be carried out by the labour movement but we don't think this will be done just by preaching leaflets. Only by getting actively involved with YCND will we be able to draw the YS and YCND closer together.

YS for YCND is concentrating on organising for the Rock the Bomb festival on May 7. There will be a YS campaign contingent on the march to Brockwell Park, and groups will be working with local YCND to organise events to get people to the festival.

As well as the Festival there are the blockades of Greenham Common (women only) and Burghfield (mixed) from 31 March to 1 April. And on April 1 a human chain will link the two blockades via the Aldermaston research centre.

Publicity for Brockwell Park (postage cost only) and for the chain and blockade (cost price) is available from YCND, 227 Seven Sisters Road, London N4.

Contact YS for YCND at 13 Buxton Road, London N19.

Join the  
Labour  
Party

# Socialist Organiser

Against all bans and proscriptions!

## FUND

We start working towards our March target with a challenge from Sheffield. Socialist Organiser supporters there have taken a decision to raise money to clear their paper debt, and they're challenging other groups to do the same.

How about your SO group? Many groups have collected debts by not paying regularly for debts in 1982. Why not take up Sheffield's challenge?

And with only £67 so far, we need groups to set themselves a fund-raising target for March. If the fund hasn't reached £250 by next week, we'll be seriously behind.

Don't just read this and think other people will send money in. Raising £183 in the next week depends on YOU.

Send money to: The Treasurer, 214 Sickert Court, London N1 2SY.

Thanks to: Chris Hickey £5, SO supporters in Preston £5, Jeff Evans £1, Cheung Siu Ming £20, Ann McKinley £1, Bruce Robinson £20, Kevin Feintuck £10, Ann Duggan £5.

# MINERS CALL TO BATTLE

ENCOURAGED by the defeat inflicted on the Thatcher government by the water workers, and determined to stop the Tory rot that has destroyed jobs by the thousand, miners across the country have responded to the lead given by South Wales NUM.

By next week the union could be in its first national strike for nearly 10 years — with the prospect of a hard and bitter fight to turn back the Tory offensive.

Even as Welsh miners fanned out into other mining areas, arguing their case and pressing for supporting strike action, the NCB underlined the scale of its latest attack on jobs by announcing the closure of the Coedely coking plant near Tonyrefail.

The first task has correctly been seen as to mobilise and consolidate the strongest possible action across the NUM. This means ensuring that the promises of solidarity already given in Yorkshire, Kent, Scotland and elsewhere are translated into strike action next week, and that the maximum campaign is waged to ensure that ballots in other areas produce a resounding vote for action.

As the strike has gathered momentum, even right wing NUM leaders such as Sid Vincent have come out openly recommending a vote for action.

The result is that while Arthur Scargill has dodged the limelight and the witch-hunters of the Tory press by his low profile, a firmly-footed strike is now under way, built upon rank and file militancy, and thus capable of withstanding the inevitable lies and abuse that will be hurled at the strikers by the media. Scargill has now called an Executive meeting, recommending national strike action without the formalities of a national ballot.

The strike has shown that last October's failure to secure a mandate for action on the combined issue of

by Harry  
Sloan

pay and jobs foundered in part because the wage offer then was seen as good by current standards, and the threat of closures was a more abstract issue for the future. Now that a concrete, immediate closure is posed, and the miners on the spot have been prepared to give a lead (in the new climate after the water workers' strike) the rank and file response is there.

In South Wales, at least, it appears also that the strike has won an immediate response from the transport unions — who also stand to lose jobs through the NCB closures.

This must be built upon in every area, and the hitherto toothless 'Triple Alliance' of miners, rail unions and steel workers should be invoked.

Steelworkers — themselves fighting to secure a national pay increase this year — must seize this chance to deal a blow to the Tory job-slashers before the next inevitable round of redundancies is upon them.

And power workers — fighting Tory pay limits — must lend their active sup-

port to the miners against the common enemy.

For the labour movement as a whole, the miners' strike gives a chance to continue the offensive begun with the water workers. Every trade union branch and stewards' committee should meet to discuss the possibility of boycott action, supporting strikes and mobilising mass pickets of key coal-using plants — most obviously power stations.

Labour Parties too should mobilise in solidarity action, publicising the miners' case, raising funds to support what could be a lengthy strike, and demanding MPs and union leaders take action to back the strike. One key demand should be that the Labour leadership pledge a future Labour government to implement the NUM demand of no pit closures except on grounds of exhausted coal seams.

The fight at Lewis Mer-

thyr pit and throughout the coal industry highlights the destructive attitude of NCB management — wilfully abandoning seams of coal in 'uneconomic' pits — and it raises wider issues, such as who profits from the supply of overpriced mining equipment by private firms, and who pockets the huge sums in interest paid each year by the NCB from the sweat of working miners.

While the City sharks become even sleeker and

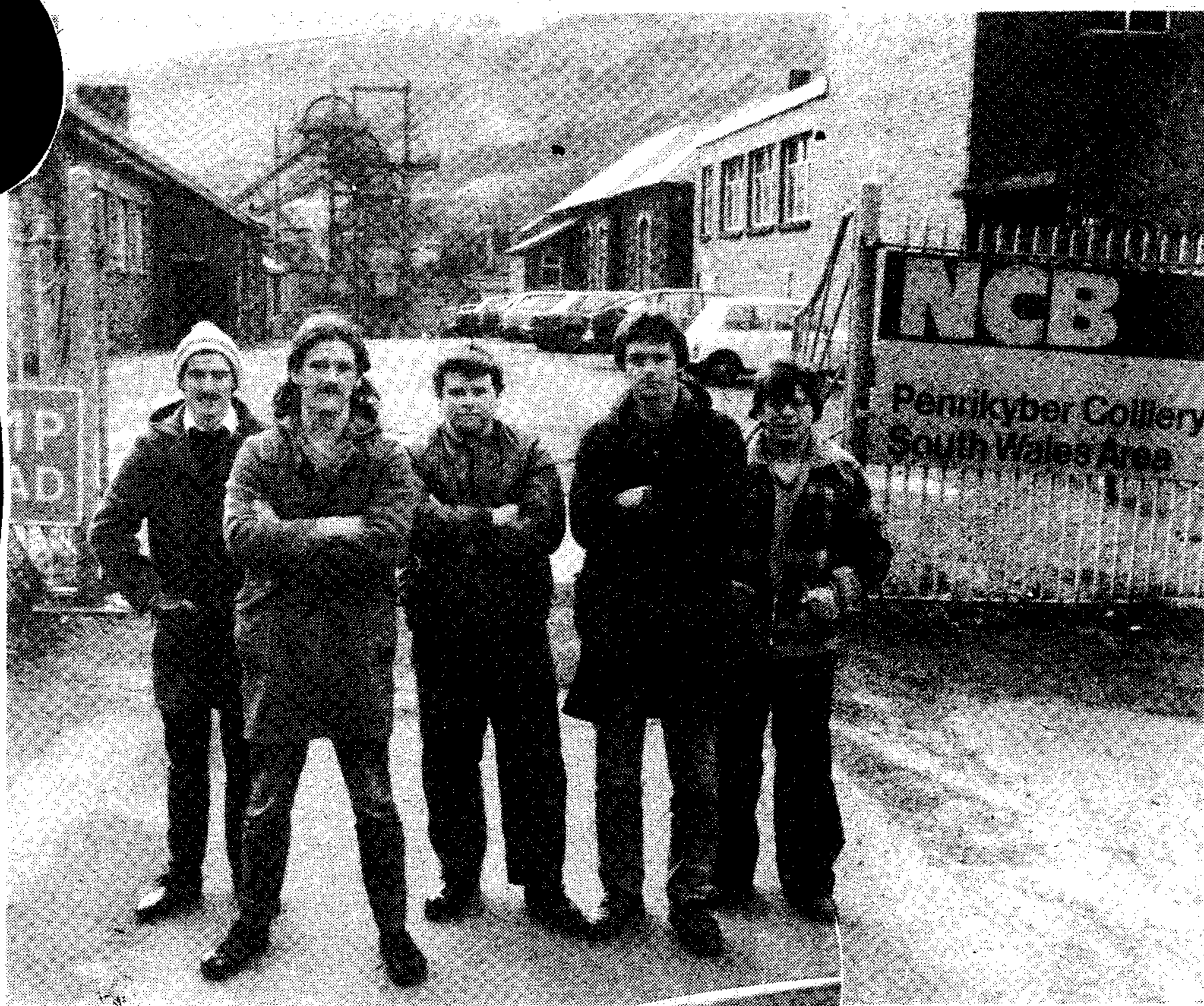
fatter, whole basic industries are being jettisoned. Cars, steel, the railways, and the mines are following each other down a spiral of devastation. As long as the profiteers still make profits, they are not worried by whole areas laid waste and millions jobless. The future will be continuing decline — unless capitalist chaos can be replaced by rational planning, common ownership, and workers' control.

Trade unions and Labour Parties should take up the demand for the complete opening of the books of the NCB to elected trade union committees to probe the Tory profiteers who grow fat on the mining industry.

The facts revealed would explode countless NCB lies, but also lay the basis for workers' control of the nationalised mining industry, nationalisation of the supplying firms, and the development of a coherent workers' plan for energy production.

In the short term, however, the demands are clear and well-developed. No pits should close unless coal is exhausted. Any current surplus capacity in the industry, caused by Thatcher's policies of slump and redundancy, should be dealt with by a shorter working week across the mining industry, without loss of pay.

Miners have acted to stop the rot on jobs. They could once again spearhead the fight to stop the Tory government. The labour movement must give them every backing.



JOHN HARRIS



JOHN HARRIS