

# Socialist ORGANISER

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## Swing Labour behind miners' strike

# MOBILISE!

"The time has come to say to other unions: Yes, we want your support, but not only financial contributions. When we're faced with Thatcher, MacGregor, the CBI, the Institute of Directors, we're entitled to say to colleagues in other unions: join us, come out with us in dispute".

Arthur Scargill



## Strike with the miners on May 9!



The Socialist Organiser editorial board put out the following statement after the Labour Party National Executive decision to ask for a levy on party members to support the miners.

Labour Party chair Eric Heffer told us: "I welcome this statement, in line with what the Party have decided. I hope the Party membership will do what the NEC are urging".

## Swing Labour Party behind the miners

THE LABOUR Party executive decided last week to throw the weight of the Party behind the miners' strike.

The time is past for general talk about 'supporting' the miners and 'wishing them well'. This is the time when only deeds in support of the miners count for anything.

Already the miners have been out on strike eight weeks -- longer than at any time since 1926. It may be a long and bitter strike.

Solidarity with the miners -- active, practical support on the picket lines and with financial and other material help -- is now the plain duty of everyone in the labour movement. Everybody who believes in the basic principle of the labour movement -- working class solidarity against the entrenched lords of money and power -- must rally to support the miners.

The miners are in the front line against the Tory vandals who have run rampage through our society for the last five years and who now propose to decimate the mining communities as they decimated the steel communities. If the miners were to go down to defeat, that would be a tremendous blow to the entire labour movement and a tremendous boost to the Tories in their class war to break and beat down the labour movement.

The entire labour movement must say with one voice: we will not let the miners be defeated. We will not let the miners be isolated. We will throw everything we have got into this vital struggle which the Tories have provoked.

The Labour Party executive has decided to back the miners actively and to ask each party member to donate 50p a week to the miners' strike fund. It is now up to the members of the party to translate the executive's decision into action -- urgent immediate action.

Many local Labour Parties have already been making collections for the miners, leafleting in support, offering accommodation to flying pickets, sending Party members to support them on the picket lines. We must step up and intensify these acts of solidarity, and spread them throughout the entire Labour Party.

Party members in every area should form miners' support committees, or miners' strike task forces, to ensure that the miners' case is put to every party member, to collect the 50p levy, and to plan other ways of throwing the Labour Party's weight into the battle -- door-to-door leafleting and collections, for example. Every section of the local labour movement -- the Labour Parties, Trades Councils, trade union branches -- should be united and banded together to help the miners.

General talk and sentiment in support of the miners is no longer enough. The Labour Party Executive's decision is a signal for us to turn the widespread sympathy that exists in the Labour Party into the active practical support that will count for something in the miners' hard struggle for justice.

Every member of the Labour Party must now say: the miners can win and I'm going to do my bit to help them. Victory to the miners!

## Who's dangerous?

WE HAVE been told a great deal lately about the subversive actions of Libya's so-called 'diplomats' -- intimidating and even murdering opponents of Gaddafi in Britain. The same could be said of other embassies and 'diplomats' (such as the Iraqi), though they are not quite so blatant.

But the actions of Libyan 'diplomats' in Britain are small beer in comparison to the overseas operations of the big imperialist powers under 'diplomatic' cover.

It was US 'diplomats' in Chile in 1973 who helped organise, or even masterminded, the Pinochet coup which led to the death of Salvador Allende and thousands of workers.

The US has organised undercover operations in countless countries, against governments not to its liking. Right now it is funding the anti-Sandinista 'contras' in and around Nicaragua. The main centre of the operation (which is not denied by the White House) is the US Embassy in Honduras. CIA agents in Costa Rica liaising with the 'contras' there also use diplomatic cover.

In some of the small Central American states the US embassy has effectively been the centre of government.

Throughout Latin America, the Middle East, and Asia, coups have been organised and governments overthrown by CIA operations, usually using diplomatic cover.

The British ruling class's recent covert actions have not been as extensive as those of the CIA. But brutal military intervention in other countries did not end with the Empire. The invasion of Egypt in 1956, the occupation of the north of Ireland, and the war in the south Atlantic, are some recent examples.

Is Gaddafi an eccentric and dangerous dictator? Maybe. But the much more powerful, and not at all eccentric, democratic governments of the West have much more blood on their hands.

# Notts says "It's official"

This letter, dated April 26, has been sent by the NUM Notts area to NUM branch officers in the area.

"At the special conference held at Berry Hill [ NUM area HQ] on Wednesday April 25 the national President confirmed that the strike is OFFICIAL as determined by the governing body of the National Union of Mineworkers, which is the special national delegate conference.

The area executive committee instructs ALL branch officials and committee members to abide by the special national conference decision of April 19, not to cross picket lines, and further instructs branch officials and committee members not to canvass against that special conference decision.

It is incumbent on all branch officials to give all facilities to members who are on picket lines, for example, official picket cards, liaison with the police, and all facilities necessary when picketing is taking place.

Yours faithfully,  
TH Richardson, general secretary

## Picket power stations

DESPITE THE growing strength of the strike, it is still far too weak in one aspect -- picketing of power stations.

Big power stations in London, like the Brimsdown site, are not being picketed. Nor are the power stations around Manchester.

A number of important power stations in the Trent Valley, not far from the Yorkshire coalfield, have not been picketed either.

The difficulties of getting all the miners out, and the heavy police harassment of pickets, are among the reasons.

But a concerted move on the power stations will be necessary to win the strike.

MASS picket at West Drayton coal depot, 7am to 7pm, Tuesday May 15. Called by Kent area NUM, supported by South East Region TUC. Contact Rob McNulty, 0895 442234.

Support rally in Stoke on Trent, 11am, Saturday May 5. Assemble Hanley Forest Park. Speakers include Dennis Skinner MP.

May Day march in support of miners in Oxford, 12.15pm, Monday May 7. Assemble The Plain.

May Day march in support of miners in Manchester, 11am, Monday May 7. Assemble 11am, Strangeways.

'The Miners' Video Tapes'. Independent video and film makers throughout the country have got together to produce a series of videos putting the case for the miners. The tapes will be available free to labour movement organisations. money is needed now to complete the work. Cheques to 'Miners Campaign Tape Project', 13 Tankerton House, Tankerton St, London WC1H 8HW.

National march against the Police Bill. Saturday May 19, 12 noon from Speakers Corner, London.

'Muhammad Idrish must stay!' Demonstration Wednesday May 9, 11am from Temple Place, London.



Scots NUM president Mick McGahey at the London May Day rally

## Support committees

AS THE miners' strike moves towards its third month, new support committees are still being set up.

Within the last week or so committees have been started in Birmingham, Brent (North-West London), Cardiff, Edinburgh, and Oxford.

In some of these areas, a lot of support activity had already been done before the committee was set up.

In Brent accommodation for pickets from Kent has been organised by the Trades Council. Local trade unionists have supported the picket lines at the Charringtons coal depot and at West Drayton.

Some Labour Party members have done door-to-door collections of food for the strikers, and there have been collections of money in workplaces and outside supermarkets. Stonebridge Park rail depot has a regular levy.

In Birmingham accommodation for pickets from Kent and other activity had been organised by the Trades Council and the Trade Union Resources Centre. The new support committee will be producing a bulletin and organising factory gate meetings. It has 'adopted' Birch Coppice colliery.

Oxford Trades Council had organised activities in liaison with a delegation from the South Wales area NUM executive who have recently been in the town. South Wales miners are picketing the nearby Didcot power station.

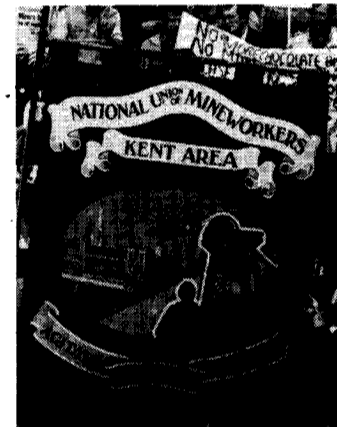
Successful factory gate meetings have been held at the BL Cowley plants. The support committee includes representation from the local Labour Parties, and plans to organise collection of the 50p levy on Party members.

The banner of Maerdy NUM (South Wales) will lead the local May Day march on March 7.

In Edinburgh the Trades Council set up a support committee from its meeting on May 1. Glasgow, however, still lacks a support committee.

In Cardiff the initiative for a support committee was taken by Cardiff Central CLP. After the Wales TUC demo on April 28, the support committee collected nearly £600 outside Cardiff Arms Park rugby ground.

The Cardiff branch of the National Union of Seamen has put out a special bulletin on soli-



On London's May Day march

arity with the miners. "The East cost collier trade has been brought to a complete standstill" by NUS action, it reports.

In several other places the initiative for support committees came from Labour Parties. In South London there is a support committee with representation from Labour Parties from Kingston right across to Bromley. It organised a packed public meeting with Tony Benn at Lambeth Town Hall on April 25 at which £2250 was collected.

The main force behind the East London support group for the Kent miners has been the Hackney Labour Parties. Ten coaches went to Kent on April 14 on a solidarity/social visit, and there was a 'return visit' by Kent women to Hackney on the 29th. They attended a showing of a film about the 1974 strike and an all-women solidarity meeting.

In Islington solidarity has been organised by the Labour Parties' Trade Union Liaison Committee -- street leafleting and collections, and organising to collect the 50p levy from Labour Party members. Islington NALGO has agreed on a regular levy.

AUEW North London district delegates on a French steelworkers' demonstration recently managed to collect £700 there for the Kent miners.

In Manchester the City Labour Party has sponsored a support committee and some ward Labour Parties have leafleted in support of the miners as part of their campaigning for the council elections.

The support committee set up by Basingstoke Trades Council and Labour Party shows what can

be done even in areas with no direct contact with the coalfields.

It has 'adopted' Snowdown colliery (Kent), and so far collected £200, with workplace collections at the psychiatric hospital and the Sainsburys depot. The support committee is producing special leaflet to use for taking collections on pay queues. A benefit is planned, and the committee is also organising for a demonstration in Southampton on May 5.

Another pit, Cortonwood in Yorkshire, was 'adopted' by River Don steelworkers in the second week of the strike, and since then the steelworkers have been sending £100 worth of food each week to the strikers' families.

## Rail support

SIGNALMEN at Sherwood box in Nottinghamshire have gone back to normal working after British Rail threatened disciplinary action against them for blocking coal trains.

BR also threatened to cut out the signal box and run trains straight through whatever the signalmen did.

The effect of this setback has however been limited. Only one extra train has been running as a result.

All six boxes at Workop are now refusing to handle coal trains and the guard at Workop are also refusing to work on coal trains.

Support for the boycott of coal trains has also come from NUR members at Nottingham depot, Toten marshalling yard and Coalville.



Join the Labour Party.  
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Subscription is £7 per year, £2 unwaged, 50p OAPs.

# Day of Action: May 9

IT IS up to the rank and file of the labour and trade union movement to make the May 9 Day of Action called by the Scottish TUC in support of the miners a mobilisation of general strike proportions, rather than just another one-off display of opposition to Tory rule.

The STUC General Council was unanimous at its April 25 meeting in backing the decision to call the day of action, following on from the emergency resolution passed at the STUC Congress the previous week.

But the STUC circular sent out to affiliates has been careful to avoid any mention of a general strike, or even strike action of any kind. It urges affiliated organisations to: "do all in your power to win your membership to the maximum possible support for the day of action to defend jobs in the mining industry and safeguard the future of our energy resources."

In many unions, though, the leaders will pass the buck down the line. In NALGO, for example, and the Educational Institute of Scotland, (Scottish equivalent of the NUT), following on past form, no instructions for the day of action will be sent out. At best, various forms of action will merely be advised.

In other places, union leaders will be even more backward in calling for support. It is difficult to envisage leaders of the steel union, ISTC, like Clive Lewis, calling their members out on strike when they spend most of their time attacking miners for trying to organise effective picketing and blacking of the Ravenscraig steel works.

While the STUC General Council oppose openly calling for a general strike, and union

leaders merely offer advice, the burden of organisation for May 9 falls on rank and file activists in the workplace.

This means producing leaflets explaining the miners case and the necessity of all-out strike action on May 9; holding workplace meetings with miners invited to speak; taking votes for strike action at workplaces with clear recommendations to vote in favour; and planning for effective picketing on the day of action itself.

The ranks of the unemployed must also be mobilised in supporting the demonstrations and rallies being held. Ignoring what effectively amounts to a ban on political activity by the Manpower Services Commission which funds them, unemployed workers groups should be out leafleting unemployment benefit offices in the days leading up to May 9, pointing out that the miners' fight is a fight for everybody's jobs and appealing for support for local demonstrations.

Support for the day of action must be built south of the border as well. Though called by the Scottish TUC and not by the TUC itself, (why not?), solidarity strike action should also be organised wherever possible, throughout the country to make it a national day of action.

The Tories have been having things their own way for five years too long already. A serious mobilisation for May 9 culminating in a 24-hour general strike, with the leading role in the organisation of it played by local committees of rank and file militants, could turn the tide and open up possibilities for extended general strike action to defeat the Tory offensive on jobs and trade union rights.



## A miner's son meets the police

This morning I was at home when Brian Green telephoned to say he had been arrested and asked for Dad to get a Solicitor. An hour or so later he telephoned back to say they had dropped the charges.

I walked into Ollerton. I found Dad at The Plough. I was on the car park. He came out and we sat talking to Bob Munroe, Billy Gray and others including two men who asked my Dad something about food. My Dad said "We'll go to the Welfare". It was about 12.30.

On the way, 700 yards from The Plough, round about the Co-op, a Police minibus pulled in front of us; four or five got out, two came to my side and the rest went round to Dad's side.

"Mr Dixon, you are under arrest" one of them said. "Will you get out of the car". My Dad said "No way, because I haven't done anything wrong. I have been to The Plough for a drink and I have had a pint. is there a law against that?"

The Police opened the car

Darrel Dixon is 16. This is his account of how he was arrested in Ollerton, Notts, on April 26, with his father, miner Colin Dixon.

Colin Dixon was held by the police for 24 hours and then released without charge. He was taken to hospital where his arm was found to be badly bruised, not broken.

door and said "Get out, you are under arrest". They dragged him out of the car. He had his seat belt on which was now round his neck and the Policemen were just pulling him.

Then I opened the car door and some Policemen pulled me out and I was pushed behind the car, arms pulled against my back and was arrested. I was handcuffed.

The Police took all the leaflets, green sheets of paper and NUM stickers out of the car. We were bundled off into the Police Van.

My Dad was laid on the floor where he had been thrown and I could not see if they were hitting him because Policemen were all standing in the way.

A car pulled up in front and lads who were on strike tried to look inside to see what was happening and my Dad was shouting to tell everyone what was happening. "They have arrested a school kid".

We were driven off to the rear entrance of the Pit, through the Pit yard, past the Plough car park, lots of people still there, and taken to

Mansfield Police Station.

We had the handcuffs taken off us and I said "Those handcuffs were tight weren't they?". A Policeman said. "They are only tight when they bleed". I showed him my arm which was bleeding. The Policeman said nothing.

We were put in a cell with six others. I was photographed with the arresting officer and so was my Dad. An officer came and took us out of the cell and took us to an office desk. I was taken to a side office where I was asked my name, address, where I was born, date of birth, which school I went to and I was told to empty my pockets which I did. Another one went through my pockets again and searched me.

I was taken outside and sat in another office. My Dad was taken into the room I had just been in and through the open door I watched as the same thing was done to him.

The Inspector cautioned me and gave me a lecture about being a good lad and I was taken outside where my Mum was and she got hold of me by the wrist and I said "Watch my wrists, they are hurting". My Mum collapsed when I told her my Dad's arm was bust.

I took her back inside. She was laid on a bench where the Inspector brought a cup of water. I had asked at the desk for water but they didn't want to know.

Then Ray Chadburn took Mum home. I waited until Granddad came back. They took Granddad back for his car to the Courthouse.



# ORGANISE FOR A GENERAL STRIKE!

# Notts is on the way out

THE Notts coalfield is on its way out. The Notts Miners Rank and File Strike Committee estimate that between 15,000 and 17,000 Notts miners are out, and more are joining the strike every day.

The strike is biting hardest in the North of the county, where estimates range from 70 to 90% out at some pits, like Blidworth, Ollerton, Bevercoates, Clipstone and Welbeck.

At Ollerton and Clipstone the nightshift has been cancelled by management, proving the strike is having an effect. Production is well down at most pits, but the NCB continues to claim all Notts pits are working normally.

This is a blatant lie. The NCB are obviously worried about the snowball effect once they start admitting just how many Notts miners are out.

The Sunday 29 April branch meetings produced varied responses to the strike. At Welbeck, a clear majority voted to support the strike and there seems to be respect for this decision.

However at Mansfield pit a motion of censure on Ray Chadburn was passed and one of confidence in Ian MacGregor was also passed.

Picketing is heavy every morning at North Notts pits, mainly by striking Notts miners and they are usually joined by any Yorkshire miners who manage to evade

the road blocks set up on almost every road leading to the pits.

As the scabs are marched in to work by the police they are sometimes trapped and the pickets shout "Maggie and Ian are proud of you".

Pro-strike pressure has been kept up constantly during the last week with Scargill addressing a mass rally at Ollerton and then leading a march to the picket on Friday 27 April. Next day, 1500 marched through Worksop in support of the strike.

The reception on the streets was excellent with a lot of money being collected, and women workers from a hospital coming out to applaud the march.

At the rally which followed, Henry Richardson was well received when he said he was proud to represent the strikers in Notts. But the biggest cheers were reserved for Dennis Skinner who, in his own special way outlined the tasks facing the movement in the present period.

On Sunday night Scargill was again in Notts to speak to a rally of over 2,000 Notts strikers, where he urged all strikers to be on the picket lines and all working miners to stop and get into line.

With another big demonstration planned for Notts in the next week or so, it surely can only be a matter of time until a majority of Notts men stop work and pits start grinding to a halt.

# The strike spreads

What support does the strike now have in the Notts area?

At Ollerton we have 750 men out on strike and it's growing every day. There's a hard core remaining determined and defiant, going into work.

There are a number of other pits like Ollerton with a substantial majority of men out on strike. How do you account for their strength in comparison with other Notts pits?

Well, it's the leadership, of course. Our union officials have toed the national line and put the case of the NUM, and the members have responded.

Other union officials have not and are prepared to lead their members across picket lines. They're not interested in the national union. They're self-centred and are looking at the June union elections. They are looking as well at the redundancy terms. If you look at the age of the officials - especially in South Notts - they are all old men.

What proportion do you estimate are out in Notts?

I would say 17,000. Probably getting on for 50% of the Notts membership are on strike. Production in Ollerton is reduced. The day shift has only one face at work out of three. The night shift is not working at all.

How has support from other unions developed?

It's been tremendous. At the beginning of the dispute I don't think anyone would have anticipated the response from other unions. They are prepared to help in any way they can.

Mick McGinty, treasurer of the Notts rank and file strike committee and a member of Ollerton NUM branch committee, spoke to Socialist Organiser

How have the police changed over the past few weeks?

The situation in Ollerton is unbelievable. If I went into the individual cases they wouldn't be believed. We have had lads arrested driving up the main street in their cars, chaps attacked by the police in the morning just coming to the picket line and we had two chaps tonight picked up at Ollerton roundabout, walking to Thoresby Colliery.

How do you view the silence of Labour councillors at this police activity?

We have had our county councillor here at Ollerton on the picket line and the attitude of the police does improve when they are here. The police stay away from us when these people are around.

How do you expect the strike to develop? Do you expect a gradual erosion of right wing support?

Yes, I think so. People are coming to their senses and realise what is happening. These chaps who still refuse to toe the union line will suffer the consequences at a later stage. They haven't put any case forward and the ordinary rank and file are waking up to them. No miner in Nottinghamshire wants to be part of a break-away union which they are advocating.

What do you think of Scargill's call for a mass demonstration lasting several days in the area?

Well, I wholeheartedly support that because something has to be done.

It was said at the beginning of the dispute about Ollerton in particular, that the presence of outside miners antagonised the Notts miners. Was this true?

I don't think it was true. Notts miners are now seeing that their own colleagues are being abused by the police on the picket lines and they're adopting the same attitudes.

Many people calling for a national ballot have said of the ballot that if it goes in favour of the union they will still go into work.

As treasurer of the Notts strike committee, what do you see as its major tasks?

To help the hardship cases. More so now than ever, not just the single lads but also the married men with kids because the Social Security is not interested. I believe it's part of a plan to hold the money back and force the men to return to work.

You have a soup kitchen in Ollerton which management are trying to close.

That's right. The chair of the welfare, a representative of the Coal Board, is under pressure from management to close the soup kitchen. They argue that as the village is split 50-50, the welfare should keep out of it.

We have a special management committee this week to decide whether it stays open. I'm sure we'll be successful in keeping it open. Are any approaches planned to other unions through the

strike committee?

We're obviously prepared to go anywhere at any time. At the moment we have no plans. We're busy concentrating on our own membership and our own collieries.

# Notts women organise

By Ann Crowder

DURING the past fortnight miners' wives support committees have sprung up all over Nottinghamshire. The work they have done so far has been tremendous and is growing at a fantastic rate.

On Monday, 30th, they managed to organise over 150 women picketing at Thoresby Colliery. It was the first attempt, and a very successful one, at getting Notts miners' wives, women trade unionists and women activists out picketing together, showing the great solidarity that is growing.

The idea came from a meeting of different Notts miners' wives support committees and women activists only last Thursday.

They felt it necessary to organise a women's picket to fight against the image that women are strike-breakers, to fight against the image that they are just fund raisers, and to fight against being kept in the background, quietly working away.

We also have to fight against the sexism of some of our brothers. The slogan "Maggie Thatcher's got one, MacGregor is one" has been widely used during this dispute. But we challenged the miners and at the picket the men present dropped the use of it.

Almost as soon as we got to the picket line, we were shoved behind the police lines across the road from the pit entrance. However, we managed to break through and stand across the road next to the entrance. We were

physically jabbed back by the police who seemed shocked that we were fighting back.

Minibus loads of police who seemed to be of a different type were quickly moved in.

The second breakthrough we made, again to wild cheers of "The workers united will never be defeated", from the rest of the pickets was dealt with much more brutally.

These were not just the "local Bobbies" (if they exist anymore in Nottinghamshire). It is strongly rumoured that given the ill-fitting uniforms some of them are wearing now, many of these are in fact paratroopers in heavy disguise!

Women showed that they have a lot to teach the miners on the picket lines. For instance, when the snatch squads moved in the women present quickly linked arms with whoever they were next to, but the men seemed almost alarmed at this. Yet it could prevent the snatch squads from being so successful in dividing and frightening everyone.

The feeling of solidarity amongst the women was tremendous because of this. The solidarity seemed to shake some of the men and take them by surprise - it certainly shook the police!

From this picketing, the police will now decide how they are going to treat women on the picket line. We can be sure we will not be dealt with so "lightly" again.

But we won't be deterred. The solidarity amongst the women is too strong. This dispute is too important for us all. We will be back!



At a miners' support rally in Greenwich, South London

STEFANO CAGNONI (IFL)

Join the Labour Party

**Socialist ORGANISER**

Scargill gets it right

**BREAK LINKS WITH TORIES!**

By Harry

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## Frontline Nottingham

# Police support the scabs

Paul Whetton, secretary of the Notts miners rank and file strike committee, spoke to Socialist Organiser about the anti-strike demonstration in Nottingham on Tuesday 1st

The fact that the press continues to ignore is that from day one large numbers of Notts miners have been out. A fortnight ago there were 10,000 out. It's probably something like 15,000 now

This anti-strike demonstration was an attempt by certain branch officials - and, I suspect, some area officials - to try to cover up the extent of support for the strike in Nottinghamshire.

They organised buses from within and outside the Notts coalfield.

Many Notts miners who are on strike also turned up to defend their union and to defend their class interests.

The police once again carried out a massive clamp-down. Anyone who looked like a picket or a Notts miner on strike was stopped, turned back, or arrested on any trumped-up charge.

On the other side of the coin, the scabs were not only allowed to travel but in some cases escorted by the police. It must be the first time for at least seven weeks that a busload of miners has been able to travel from one part of this county to another without being harassed.

It is probably true that the scabs outnumbered those who were in favour of the strike - but only just, 60-40 or something like that, certainly nothing like seven to one. But all of those there in support of their union were Notts miners and a large number of the scabs were from outside Notts - Lancashire, Warwickshire, and Staffordshire.

At Berry Hill itself the police took all their action against those in support of the union. The speeches didn't go over well because, obviously, nobody from either side would let anybody get their message home. But Chadburn and Richardson said what they have been saying for the last two or three weeks. That we are fighting not for Welsh pits or Kent pits or Yorkshire pits but for British pits - and among those British pits are Notts pits.

Link and Prendergast played their usual 'we want a ballot' line. They were obviously the folk heroes of the day.

One thing that is throwing a spanner in the works in Notts is that all the branch officials come up for re-election in June, and a lot of them are thinking about their future via the ballot box rather than the future of the industry. They are appealing to the scabs.

But we've had pits in the last few days run that low on manpower that they have had to take the night shift off.

I think Arthur Scargill's call for a mass national demonstration in Nottinghamshire is an excellent idea. It could bring the issues home to Nottinghamshire, and perhaps it would bring home to the other coalfields that Nottinghamshire isn't a scab county. The numbers on strike in Nottinghamshire are bigger than some of the entire coalfields elsewhere.

"There are now 160,000 miners on strike. But it's not good enough just to be on strike. I want to see every miner on the picket lines, demonstrating solidarity. I want to see a national demonstration by the union in Nottingham. If the police say we can't go in, then we'll walk in... If this means we've got to be arrested, then so be it. We've got to be prepared".

Arthur Scargill

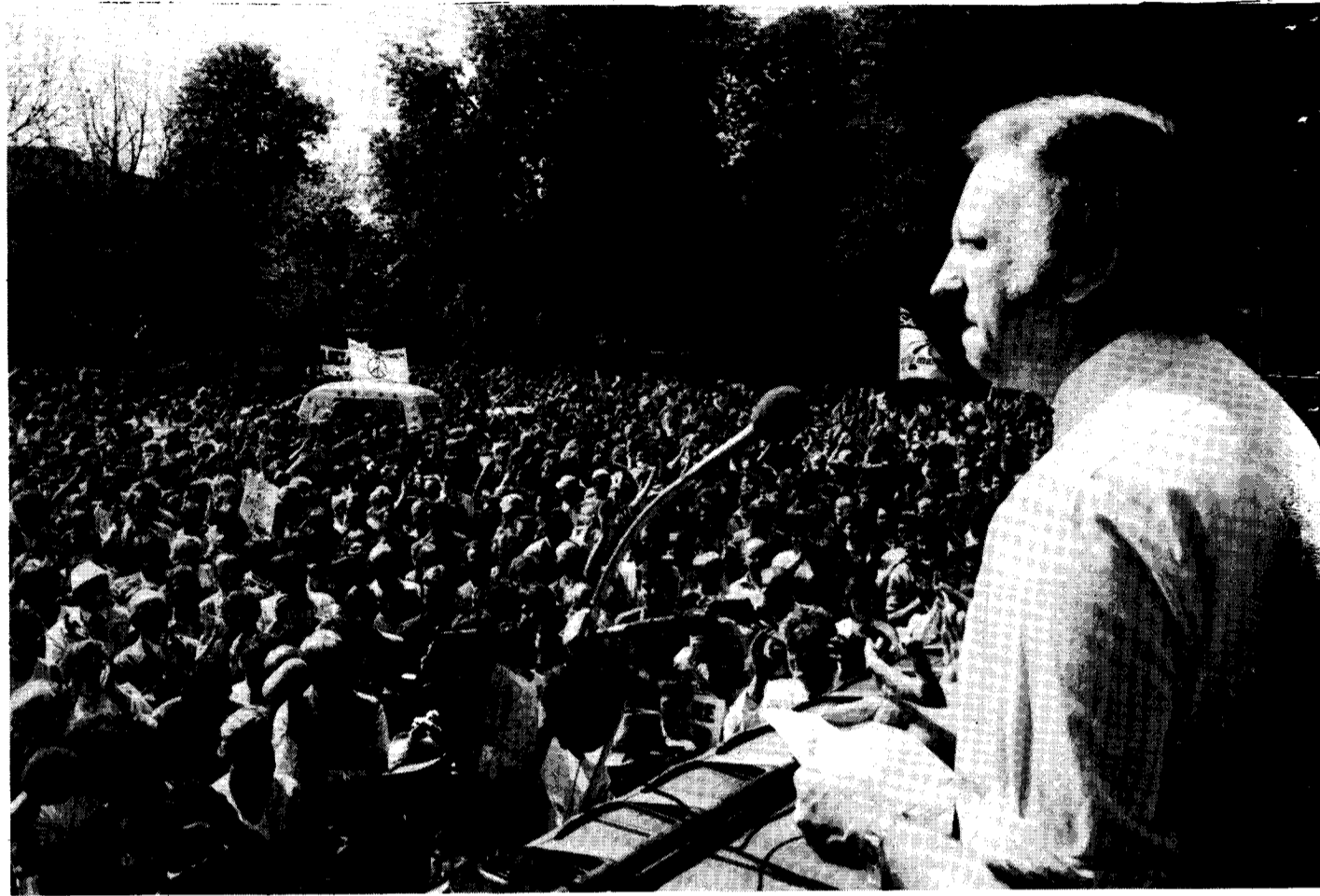
Every day the Notts rank and file strike committee is getting asked for support by lads who are on strike but not getting cooperation from their own branch officials, and we're pulling them in.

The committee is getting stronger. But now the next stage is taking over. First we all needed to come together and identify with one another, to find that we weren't isolated, now each individual pit is setting up its own rank and file strike committee.

Many of those involved are young lads who have no previous experience, but they understand the political implications of the dispute, they understand what it is all about.

Again, with the wives' support groups that have been springing up all over the place - some of them have experience from '72 and '74, but many of the younger wives have never seen anything like it, and they're going out and forming support groups.

## Scargill calls for a new Saltley



Arthur Scargill at the Cardiff miners' rally on the 28th

## How the rank and file organised

THE extension of the strike in the Nottinghamshire area is a tribute to the work of the Notts Miners' Rank and File Strike Committee.

In the early stages of the strike the lack of an organised left in the NUM outside the official bodies of the union presented

Notts strikers with many problems.

The right wing of the Notts area NUM based themselves on the parochialism resulting from the productivity scheme. They had control of most branches in the Notts area, and held sway over the area executive and area council.

Those refusing to cross picket

lines at the beginning of the dispute often found themselves supported neither by their branch, nor the area executive, nor the area council. Some also had no contact with strikers in neighbouring pits.

With Yorkshire and other pickets unable to reach every pit because of the police, many miners were forced back to work.

When a North Notts (later Notts) Rank and File Strike Committee was formed, it was a turning point. Experienced branch officials on strike in the more militant North Notts pits organised a meeting on April 10 at Ollerton Miners' Welfare.

About 100 miners from four pits attended. They decided to join forces and organise their own flying pickets.

Before that the only coordination of the left had been the Notts Miners' Forum, a small though influential grouping primarily designed to mobilise the left vote in union elections. It had produced a leaflet early on in the strike, but it was clearly inadequate.

The second meeting of the Strike Committee, on April 17, attracted 500 striking miners including representatives from 17 of the 25 Notts pits. For the first time strikers from pits such as Hucknall and Cotgrave saw the possibility of a planned campaign to stop the Notts coalfield.

### Leaders

The Strike Committee was also an important pressure on area leaders Ray Chadburn and Henry Richardson, counteracting the right-wing majority in the NUM branches. Chadburn and Richardson came out in favour of the strike.

The Strike Committee has also spurred on miners in the weaker pits and encouraged them to form strike committees and strengthen their picketing.

It has not been able to give much attention yet to the task of building links with other unions. Those unions are now making sympathetic noises, though the wider union membership is undoubtedly still taken in by the press campaign against the Notts strikers, and local union leaders have generally (though there are some exceptions) shied away from tackling this.

The Notts Rank and File Strike Committee urgently requires funds. Money should be sent to:

Paul Whetton, 10 Nicholas Place, Tuxford, Newark, Notts NG22 0HU.



RICK MATTHEWS (IFL)

Wills Tobacco workers donate £300 worth of food to Polmaise colliery strikers' wives

# The women's batt

MUCH OF the romance that attaches to miners as the shock battalions of the working class seems to be tied in with basic notions of masculinity. It is a male industry. And in previous strikes, there was a very macho stamp to all the supporting activity. But what is very noticeable about this strike is the speed and extent of women's involvement.

Women from the mining communities have set up their own support groups in Kent, Yorkshire, Notts, the Midlands and Wales (that's just the ones we know about!) New groups are springing up every week in villages and areas round the strike. And having got moving, women have very soon outpaced the men in terms of the militancy and originality of their actions.

There were "wives support groups" in the earlier miners' strikes, but they were small, isolated in their own areas and had a very different idea of their role, as Kay Sutcliffe from Kent describes:

"During the 1972 and '74 strikes we had a very small committee. Basically all we did was sort out donations of food, make them up into food parcels and distributed them to the needy in the village, amongst the striking families. We were really in the background, played a very quiet role, we weren't very active at all."

## BY GERRY BYRNE

But "when it came to this strike the basis of that committee was still there . . . It feels as though the women have got involved this time because the 1972 and 1974 strikes started something off and even though the women were very quiet, they all thought about it."

"Everyone joined in the marches. There were no solely women's marches at that time, but the women got involved in other ways . . . we'd have mainly been in the background but when your husband's quite active, you do listen and find out what's going on and you learn more."

How have the men reacted?

"They were glad to see us. There were only a handful of pickets at Herworth and then we turned up surrounded by a hundred policemen. We managed to turn about five lorries away from the pit. Actually the worst harassment we got was from the police, not the pickets."

Sheila Jow, Thurnscoe, South Yorks

I think the NUM would give us support. I mean it's our fight as well, isn't it? We all live off coal — we're all involved . . . It was because of the way the police behaved that we decided we must do something."

Sheila Jow

"We go to a lot of the strike meetings in the morning. My sister goes a lot because she's only got to go up and say we would like to do such and such, and they say, make your plans, let us know . . . They've had several inquiries about people going to meetings and passed it on to us and asked us if we would like to go. In fact, there's never been a private union committee meeting, they've been quite willing to have us in their meetings and talk to us about things."

Kay Sutcliffe

The Kent women said they'd met no opposition from the men worth considering:

"My husband wouldn't turn round and say 'No, you're not going to do that . . . You shouldn't do this or do that'."

Rosemary Sharpe

"If there has been any opposition it has been very backhanded, and it's been from men who don't attend the meetings . . . and you know they've got no right to say that. If they can't attend the meetings themselves, they've got no right to condemn us women for doing it."

Kay Sutcliffe

"We disagree with what's happening [over pit closures] so we're showing in our own way we disagree with it. Not because the men say 'do this, do that'. We've taken our own decisions."

But they thought it might be different in other areas.

"You know the Yorkshire miners, when it was on TV last week, it came over that women's place is in the home. You know: 'Do you talk about the strike? No, that's nothing to do with my wife'."

"But of course it's something to do with their wife; it involves both of you. It's the wife that suffers at the end of the day if there's no wage coming in. It's the wife that has to put up with the fact that she can't go out and do the shopping"

Rosemary Sharpe

If that was the attitude of the men in other areas, they have had to change their tune. A woman from Blidworth (Notts) described how she had tried to get involved in the strike from the start, but was stopped by her husband until they had a huge row.

"I had done nothing for five weeks. But then I said that I don't care what he says, I'm going anyway. I got my neighbour and we marched down to the picket line."

"Things have snowballed from there. The men at the picket line were pleased to have us, so my husband has had to eat his words"

After the women's action at Thoresby (described elsewhere in the paper), one miner in the Ollerton miners' welfare commented: "If the women had been there from the beginning the strike would have been solid by now"

The women's involvement has also injected an extra ele-

ment of imaginative tactics into the dispute. It was the Kent women, very early in the strike, who hit on the idea of a women's march through Leicestershire to counteract the press propaganda about wives opposing the strike, but they're quite modest about their achievements.

"We've more or less done our own thing. Unless we've been approached. It's mainly around support for the miners. We've never actually done anything to promote the fact that we're a women's group fighting. We've just been doing this to support the industrial action that's been taken."

"Just as a back-up, really. Not anything to say that the women can do it better, or the women can be as good. It's just the fact that we find we've had the support. We've been able to show it in our own actions in our own way"

That Leicestershire march led to another, in Mansfield, for which they contacted miners' wives in other areas.

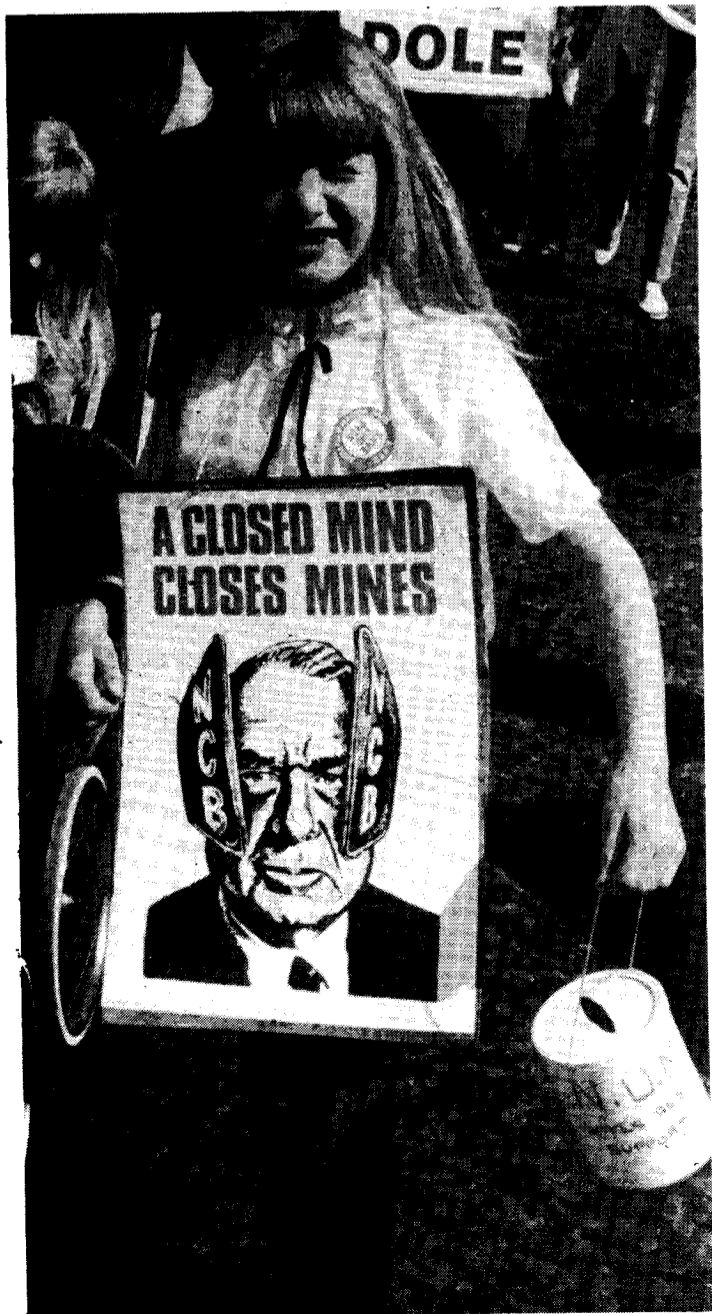
"It was great . . . the support from people lining the streets and the money that was coming in. It was unbelievable that we were in an area



that disagreed with the strike. You'd never have believed it"

Women from Thurnscoe village in South Yorkshire who were coming down to set

up a soup kitchen in Ollerton, Notts, were harassed and held by police for two hours, and threatened with arrest if they got off the bus (even to use the service station toilet!)



# alion



ing pickets. We had only been trying to set up a soup kitchen! So we walked to Herworth pit, three miles away".

And they haven't stopped at picketing the pits.

"We're thinking of picketing electricity boards because they are being really heavy about non-payment of bills... One thing we want to do is to go and sit down in front of a pit. Just sit down and refuse to move. What would the police do then?"

Both these plans have now been operated. Women formed a picket round houses whose electricity was due to be cut off and turned away the workers who came to cut them off - the workers wouldn't cross the picket.

The sit-down is described in this paper. One thing that is clear is that the women have drawn conclusions about the police involvement, and about how the police have been used in other struggles.

"Eddie Shah has broken the law three times. No-one has been knocking on his door and dragging him down to prison. It's one law for them and one law for us. It's class. It's class law."

"What the women are doing at Greenham is fantastic, and they deserve a medal.

ally:

"After a couple of hours of this, we decided that if we were going to be treated by the police like flying pickets then we might as well be fly-



If I didn't have kids I would have been down there myself".

The tactics of the Greenham women obviously served as an inspiration for the sit-down picket!

One of the barriers, very often, to women's involvement in disputes is the problem of who will mind the children.

"We've had three meetings so far. If it's during the day

we taken the kids with us. But the last one we had was at night so our husbands looked after them at home. All of the husbands seemed to see it as important. We haven't had any hassle over it yet".

Sheila Jow

"There's no-one yet had any problems. There are so many people with family and friends in the village, if someone wanted to go to a meeting and they were worried about baby-sitters, we'd find someone to have the children the whole day and the whole night. There are no problems whatsoever.

A major task facing the women is developing coordination between different areas.

"What we really need is contact with other wives' committees. We don't know of any others, or what they're doing, except some women in Edlington village. We need coordination between women's groups.

"Also, of course, money and food. We can't afford petrol to get down to Ollerton again. We've been out for seven weeks now with no money. Some families are starving".

Sheila Jow

"We will win. We won't go back until we've won... I think it should be a general strike. Other workers should be supporting us.

"Why are T&G drivers still crossing the picket line? Their union hasn't been doing its job properly. I would never cross a picket line".

Sheila Jow

"They're certainly not starving our men back. We all have to take a stand. I came from Durham originally. We came down to Yorkshire after the pits closed there, and we were promised jobs for our families. We must stand firm now because there is nowhere else to run.

"The fight is for everybody - the youth of today as well. I've got a family. All my children have to look forward to is a job scheme. £25 a week - or £5 off the dole if they refuse. There's no work, no money, nothing for them.

"We must make the stand now. If we don't she'll have us on our knees. But I just hope and pray that we'll have her on her knees".

Ronnie, Yorkshire Miners' Wives Action Committee, Edlington

**"The women's involvement has also injected an extra element of imaginative tactics into the dispute... The tactics of the Greenham women obviously served as an inspiration..."**

"You just go ahead and organise it and you know you're going to get your neighbours there because the kids are all catered for".

One some of the broader political issues, the women are very vocal. On the national ballot idea.

"The national ballot call is all wrong. It's like I said to one of the drivers going into Herworth. If you've got two ships in the middle of the Mediterranean, each with 300 people on board, and one was sinking, would you wait for the other ship to have a vote on whether to save it?"

Sheila Jow

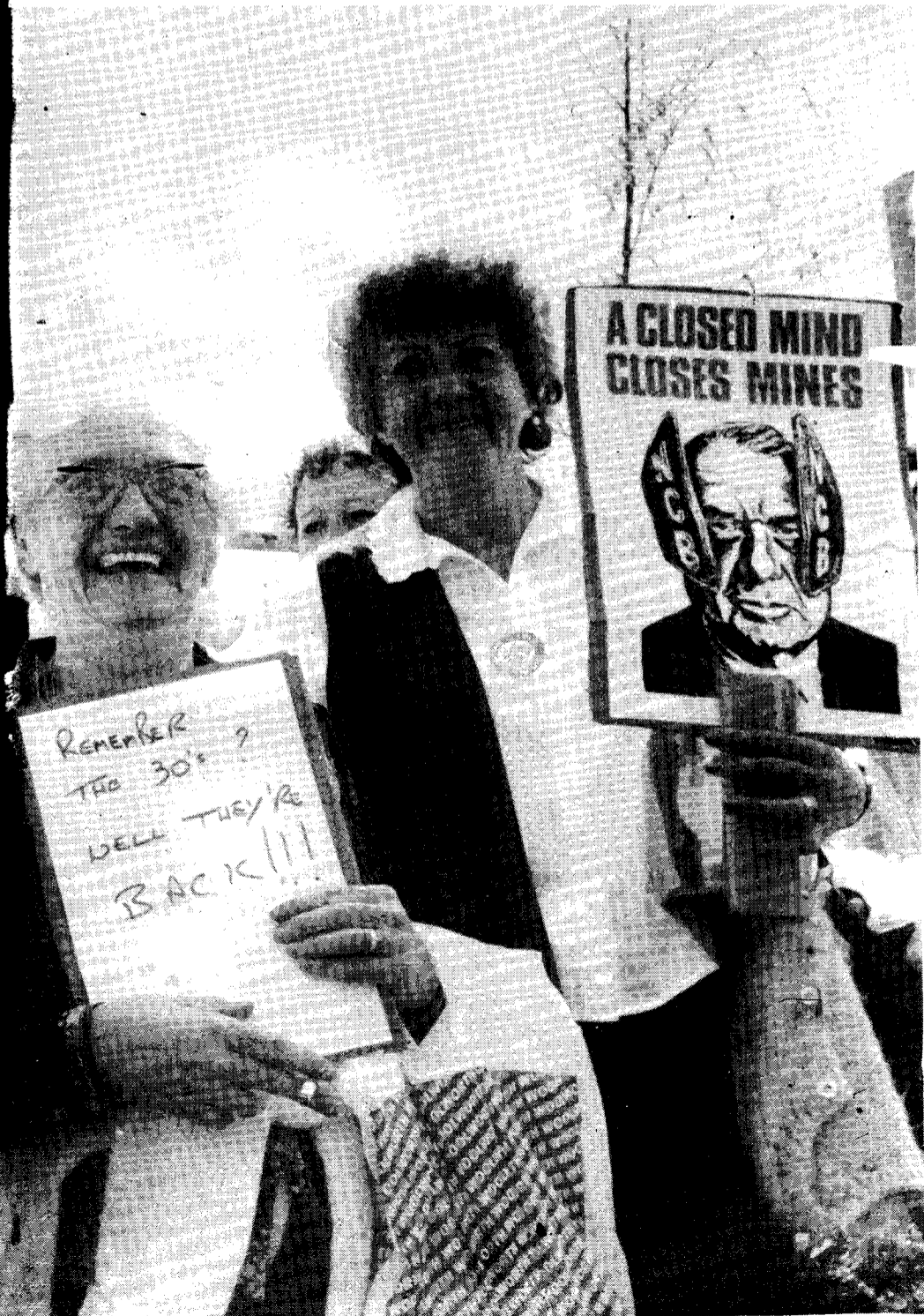
"If the Tories are so concerned about democracy, why don't they have a national ballot about whether we have cruise missiles in the country? They didn't think about democracy over GCHQ, did they, nor the met county councils?"

And if the government sent in troops to move coal.

"I think they'd have a hard job if they tried it. They'd be willing to try anything to win. I wouldn't put it past them at all.

"I think this is when the rest of the country would rally round. We could even envisage a general strike if that happened - if they did bring troops in".

Kay Sutcliffe



But the women think that the prospects for the strike are good.



# What makes Gaddafi run



## BRIEF

BETWEEN 1,000 and 2,000 Chinese troops are said to have been involved in an incursion into northern Vietnam last week. China claims to have killed 43 Vietnamese soldiers and lost none of its own, but the Vietnamese government disputes this, claiming that the Chinese suffered heavy casualties.

One motive for the Chinese invasion is to reassert China's regional strength. Vietnam is courting Thailand, Indonesia and Australia for a solution to the Kampuchean question (the continued occupation of Kampuchea by Vietnam) that would exclude China. Rapping Vietnamese knuckles would be a way of demonstrating the extent to which China cannot be excluded.

It is also a little coincidental that Reagan visited Peking shortly afterwards. Perhaps the Chinese invasion was also intended as a gesture to the US of China's ability to act as a regional watchdog in the future.

THE editor of the Observer and Tiny Rowlands, head of Lonrho and financial force behind the Observer, have settled their differences, it seems. But the realities of repression in Zimbabwe go on.

Southern Matabeleland has been sealed off for over two months by government troops searching for 'dissenters' — that is, Ndebele supporters of Joshua Nkomo, or sections of the Zimbabwean people less than total in their support for the Shona-based government in Harare.

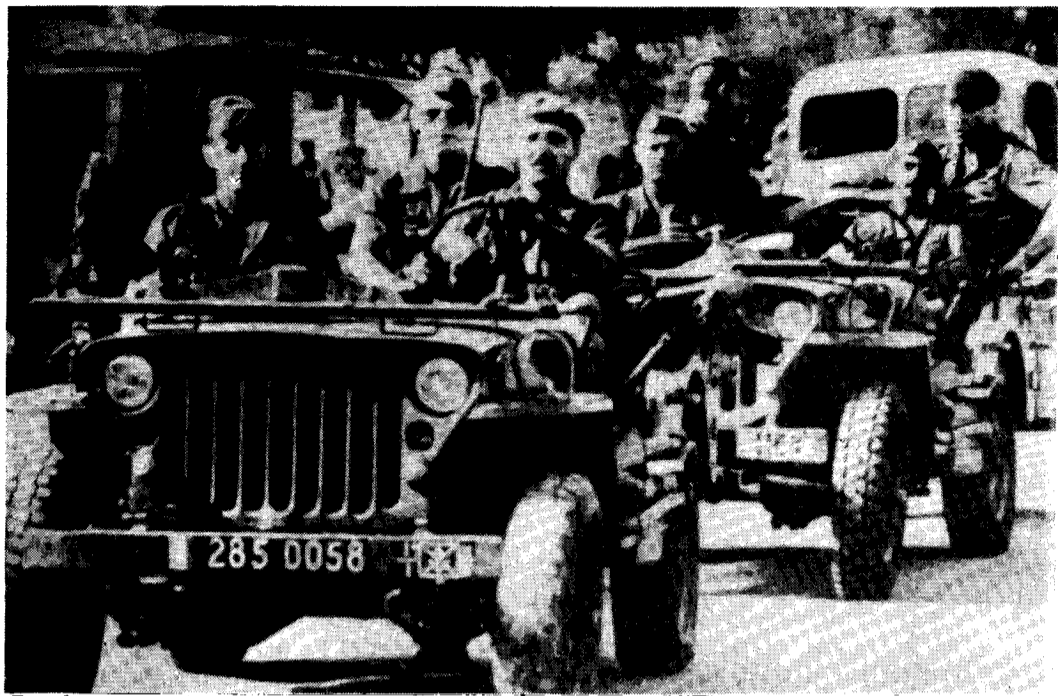
Details of what is going on are hard to come by. But reports speak of random detentions, killings and attempts to starve many of the 420,000 trapped in the area.

Last year 2-3,000 people were killed in government attacks in northern Matabeleland. No one knows exactly how many casualties have resulted from Mugabe's present action. Hundreds of people have been arrested and sent to camps (where there are reports of torture). And distress and death from starvation is said to be widespread.

OVER the Easter weekend about 500,000 people were involved in peace actions throughout West Germany. One of the largest events was a three-day march through the Ruhr valley from Duisburg to Dortmund. Peace activists and trade unionists from Leeds were invited by Dortmund, its twinned city, and I was sent as the NALGO delegate.

The march was well attended — 30,000 on the first day, building up to 60,000 for the final rally.

There is no central body comparable to CND, so it is left to local groups and parties to organise and coordinate activity. The Moscow-line Communist Party, the DKP, with its vast experience of popular fronts, has more or less taken over the running of this annual event. The Greens had little involvement. True to name they complained of the DKP making it too 'political' (I didn't notice), and this made the attendance smaller than last year.



French troops in Chad

By Clive Bradley

LIBYA has a population of about three million people, living in fairly small parts of a country that is mostly desert. Colonel Muammar Gaddafi seized power in a military coup in 1969, overthrowing the pro-Italian monarchy of King Idris.

The economy is overwhelmingly based on oil production. The Gaddafi regime largely led the way among Arab states in terms of nationalising oil fields and increasing oil prices. More recently, Libya has disregarded OPEC production quotas.

As a result of the importance of oil — and of large financial receipts from oil exports — the state in Libya is extremely large, employing vast numbers of service workers, many of whom have migrated from poorer Arab states (especially Egypt).

Vehement condemnation of Arab failure to aid the Palestinians during the Israeli invasion of Lebanon (not that Gaddafi did any more), and strained relations with other oil producers, have pushed Libya into closer alliance with the USSR.

Nevertheless, the overwhelming bulk of Libya's economic relations remain with the West. Even the US — according to rhetoric the main enemy of the regime — accounts for over 30% of exports. The largest single importer is Italy (30.7%).

Britain is not a major trading partner, although the volume of trade is still large (Britain exported over £260 million worth to Libya in 1982, and imported over £340 million worth. This balance, incidentally, was a reversal of previous trends).

Gaddafi has made erratic 'anti-imperialism' his mainstay. The Libyan regime rejects communism and all notions of internal class struggle, and consciously tries to model itself on the regime of Nasser in Egypt, before 1970.

While on the face of it, Gaddafi has consistently supported progressive, or at least rebellious, forces in many parts of the world, in reality he and his regime have acted out of self-interest.

Recently, for example, Gaddafi sided with Syria (its main Arab ally) in the siege of Tripoli in Lebanon, which aimed to destroy the PLO as an independent organisation.

And earlier last year, the Libyan regime — not for the first time — took to large scale interference in neighbouring Chad. Libya has been angling for control of a materially valuable area of northern Chad for some time, and backed one side in the civil war to its own advantage.

Nevertheless, Libya has backed opposition movements such as Polisario in Morocco; and it has given money to opposition movements elsewhere.

For this reason, Gaddafi is much hated in imperialist circles, especially the US, which has periodically made false allegations about the extent of Libyan involvement abroad, and has 'buzzed' Libyan planes — largely to take the heat off difficult situations internally in the US.

Gaddafi is not progressive, and deserves no support from socialists. But his erratic foreign policy has thrown spanners in the works of imperialist ambitions from time to time.



Gaddafi

# Irish Forum flops

BY Wednesday May 2 the report of the New Ireland Forum will have been published and Ireland's 'constitutional' nationalist parties both sides of the border will be looking to Britain for a positive response to their proposals.

The reputations of all the major parties in Southern Ireland are at stake but most importantly, the future of the constitutional Northern Ireland Catholic party, the Social and Democratic Labour Party depends on the success of the Forum.

As early as 1978 the SDLP suggested that the serious and moderate Irish parties get together and back some common initiatives on the national question.

Events in the North between 1978 and 1982 forced these political parties into a position where they had to develop some coherent strategy. The British government had continually failed to erode the Unionists' intransigence, offered no reforms even within the Northern Ireland state and had launched yet another Assembly to pacify public opinion in Britain.

But, more significantly, the fight for political status in the six county prisons had launched Sinn Fein on the road to elec-

toral success. Sinn Fein are seen by the nationalist community to have a positive alternative to the bankruptcy and stagnation of the Northern Ireland state: the abolition of that state and a united Ireland. The SDLP desperately needed to find an equally positive response if they are to stem the growing tide of support for the republican movement.

For these reasons the SDLP refused to take their seats in the Northern Ireland Assembly in 1981.

Instead they set up the New Ireland Forum in 1982 with the three major Southern parties, Fianna Fail, Fine Gael and the Labour Party.

The support of Fine Gael and Labour, who are in coalition in the government of the Irish republic, give the Forum considerable status in Anglo-Irish politics. It was hoped that other moderate Northern parties would participate but the Official Unionists were never interested and even the middle class Alliance Party refused to make any submissions to the Forum. Like the Unionists, the Alliance Party sees the Forum as a platform for Irish nationalists which will refuse to challenge any of the traditional nationalist attitudes to the status of Northern Ireland.

By Patrick Murphy

Sinn Fein was deliberately excluded from participation, just as they are excluded from access to the Southern television station RTE. The fear of the Irish government at the rise of Sinn Fein is so great that government ministers and officials are refusing to meet any delegation of local councillors which includes Sinn Fein councillors.

The participants in the Forum hope that Sinn Fein will be outflanked by the unity of constitutional nationalism, that moderate opinion in the North will respond favourably and that the British government will begin talks on the future of Northern Ireland based on the Forum report.

None of these hopes are well-founded. British government policy on the future of Northern Ireland is without a local political dimension but is still bound hand and foot to the will of the Unionist population in the North. The Unionists are wholeheartedly opposed to the very idea of the Forum. They are outraged that Southern Irish politicians should presume to demand to request anything of Northern Ireland. They will forcefully oppose whatever the Forum proposes and the present British government will do little to challenge that opposition.

Even worse, so-called moderate nationalism has changed very little over the last fifteen years, to judge by the Forum's discussions. In a lengthy submission by the Catholic bishops the main church refused to even consider any loosening of their hold on the social conscience of the state.

Divorce, contraception, abortion and pre-marital sex are all to remain illegal and sinful. There can be no concessions to Protestant religious teaching.

Apart from a few individual 'progressive' Unionists, like the Belfast solicitor Robert McCartney, the Forum has just been a platform for the traditional bourgeois nationalists in Ireland.

What will they have to offer? It is likely that they will accept partition as the future of Ireland for the time being. It seems that they will suggest some form of joint sovereignty over Northern Ireland involving both the London and Dublin governments with guaranteed safeguards and

rights for both Catholic and Protestant communities. The British government will unreservedly refuse any concessions on sovereignty but will offer talks on better Anglo-Irish relations. The form this is most likely to take is an Anglo-Irish parliamentary tier, involving politicians from both governments. This suggestion was made in 1981 at a summit between Dr Garret Fitzgerald, the Irish Prime Minister, and Mrs Thatcher.

If the British government are to make these concessions, take the political risks and the loyalist flak, then they will have demands to make of the nationalists. They will want more cross-border cooperation in economics and trade, but the crunch will probably be their desire for more cooperation on security and the campaign against 'terrorism'. Given the coalition Irish government's tough stance on republican resistance this should present no problems.

The point is that for the Northern Republicans and their supporters in the South the New Ireland Forum will mean increased repression and tighter border security.

The most important immediate aim held by both Irish and British governments and the SDLP is the defeat of the campaign of resistance by the Republican movement to the rule of Britain and Unionism in the North.

The report of the New Ireland Forum should represent finally the abandonment of the Northern Catholics by the SDLP in favour of international politics and diplomacy.

The struggle against the Northern Ireland state will continue and, indeed, the demise of the SDLP may clarify the situation. If there is a danger in any of this to Sinn Fein it is that they will see themselves as the rightful heirs of the nationalism that the SDLP and Fianna Fail leave behind rather than a more radical, non-sectarian working class force in Irish politics. The events of recent years mark the failure of capitalism, British and Irish, to offer any solutions to the Northern Irish war.

The onus will increasingly fall on republicans and socialists to develop a strategy that can defeat the forces of reaction in Ireland, British, Irish and Unionist.

## High diplomacy

HAVE you ever wondered what they say to each other, those Prime Ministers and Heads of State, in between smiling for the cameras, trying to look grave, serious, triumphant, angry, historic, etc? How does Hectoring Maggie get on with 'socialist' President of France, Francois Mitterrand? Does she say 'Ya Boo' and tell him he has had to adopt her policies?

The West German news magazine Der Spiegel eavesdropped on a dinner conversation between the EEC heads of state at the summit in mid March. You will remember that there was talk then of the EEC collapsing and Mrs Thatcher was threatening to pull out if she didn't get her way.

This is some of what Der Spiegel reported in its March 26 issue.

Belgium's Prime Minister Wilfried Martens and Greece's Andreas Papandreu begged the British Prime Minister not to go.

"If the Greeks argued so egotistically they would be called street pedlars — by Mrs Thatcher in the first instance," said Papandreu. Mrs Thatcher replied that if things were going badly for some countries, that was because of Socialist mismanagement.

"You would like to dictate to our voters whether they should vote right or left", snapped Papandreu.

"That would be a very good idea", replied Thatcher.

Then President Mitterrand asked her whether England still had any interest in working together in the EEC. She got very angry. "We are not withdrawing," she said. Who, she wanted to know had held out during the last war? The British, "when you on the continent had already collapsed."

Mitterrand now got angry and snapped back. "You are going to... Madame."



Basil Davidson's 'Africa' series: Channel 4 TV, Mondays 9pm

# A tale agreed upon

By John O'Mahony

"What is history but a tale agreed upon?" asked Napoleon Bonaparte.

And that's exactly what much popular 'history' in fact is.

The 'history' of Black Africa has for centuries been a tale agreed upon by those who robbed, despoiled, pillaged, exploited and enslaved the black people of Africa.

They treated black people as sub-human cattle, so they developed a powerful interest in believing that the blacks of Africa were by nature sub-human cattle, not too far above the beasts of the jungle.

The widespread description of blacks as 'jungle bunnies' isn't just a piece of casual recent British working class racist language. It is the distilled essence of the attitude to blacks and their history developed by bourgeois civilisation since the Renaissance.

The German philosopher Friedrich Hegel talked of the blacks as 'childish' and as not having reached the level of human self-awareness. Africa, he said, was no historical part of the world - it had contributed nothing to the great flood-stream of history.

The relatively enlightened Victorian explorer and translator Sir Richard Burton said that the African negroes were not just savages. Savages could be civilised; civilised people had been savages. The Negro, by contrast, was a degenerate, incapable of rising above the level of permanent childishness. Another Victorian explorer said that the black African was

'human nature in its crudest state'.

In his eight-part Channel 4 TV series 'Africa', the Marxist writer Basil Davidson sets out to clean away the encrusted lies and myths generated by the post-Renaissance slave trader's-eye view of Black Africa and its people.

In place of the popularly believed myth that all Africans were "still up in the trees"

he is presenting an account based on archeological and other scientific evidence of African civilisations over 4000 or more years.

And it is often a startling story that he tells: rock-paintings made by negroes seven or eight thousand years ago in the then verdant Sahara; ancient Egypt; the black kingdom of Meroe, 1000 miles south of the Egyptian frontier; a medieval Christian kingdom in what is now the southern Sudan (it was overrun by Saladin's Muslims during the Crusades).

Basil Davidson demonstrates that African blacks were very much a part of what we consider the mainstream of history.

Using Egyptian tomb-paintings of black Pharaohs, a medieval statue of the black crusading knight Saint Maurice, and early Renaissance paintings, he shows that the equality of the different



The black man's burden - Mozambique in the 1930s

## Does nature move in leaps?

By Les Hearn

I WANT to share with readers the pleasure I got from a book I read on holiday recently - 'Ever Since Darwin', a book of essays on natural history by American palaeontologist Stephen Jay Gould.

Gould is that rare creature, a socialist scientist, in a discipline where too frequently practitioners allow their political and social outlook to pass for scientific insight. But this book is not a political tract. It is a fascinating collection of glimpses at evolution, as a selection of topics shows.

For instance, why does one species of bamboo flower once every 120 years and then die?

Why do cicada larvae live underground for 17 (or 13) years before emerging as adults, mating, laying eggs, and dying within a few weeks?

Why does one species of fly develop as a larva inside its mother, eating her body away, to emerge from the empty shell with her own daughter already eating her?

Why are human babies so helpless at birth? Gould believes human babies are still embryos at birth. By comparison with our closest relatives, we would expect birth after some 18 months gestation. Gould points out that this would be physically impossible without a drastic redesign of the female pelvis.

A useful consequence is that more of the development of the human brain takes place outside, increasing the possibility of learning in what is essentially a learning species.

### Engels

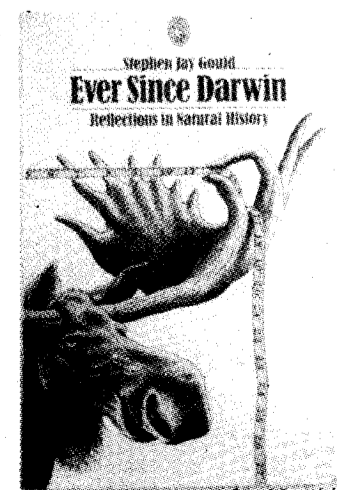
What was the decisive step in human evolution - the development of a large brain or of upright posture?

With Engels, whom he quotes approvingly, Gould believes that upright posture freed the hands for the sort of manipulative labour that distinguishes human societies from all others. Those who claim that a large brain was of prime importance are merely reflecting the 'anti-labour' prejudices of our society.

Gould also suggests that the course of evolution may not always be gradual, but may be marked by (revolutionary) periods where new species are rapidly formed. For this some have accused Gould and co-thinkers of 'Marxism'.

True or not, Gould also takes a long look at the interaction of science and politics, particularly in the debate over race and IQ and 'human nature'.

This is a thoroughly readable, enjoyable and worthwhile book. \* Penguin £1.95.



Martin Thomas reviews 'The Poverty Brokers: the IMF and Latin America', by Martin Honeywell and others. Latin America Bureau £3.25.

"IN TWO squatter settlements... 88 per cent of those who had drunk milk regularly in 1972 no longer did so by 1978. Evaporated milk, once the mainstay for weaning small children, had become a luxury and instead mothers resorted to weak tea.

"By 1978, Nicovita, a chicken feed containing a number of toxic substances but costing less than 9p a kilo, was being eaten by squatter dwellers and peasants alike...

"Under-employment rose to include 50 per cent of the economically active population. The number of street hawkers swelled in the city centre, jamming the pavements...

"On the main highways in the city, the number of small children selling magazines and sweets, and cleaning car windcreens in the few seconds before the traffic lights changed, rose alarmingly. Petty crime escalated..."

That was Peru after two years of treatment from the IMF. The same suffering is being spread throughout Latin America now, in the wake of the general debt crisis that opened with Mexico's default in August 1982.

Imports to the seven largest borrowing countries in Latin America last year were 42% below their 1981 level. That means industry cut back, un-

employment rising, food prices increased. Welfare services (such as they are) have also been decimated.

The IMF is the police officer for the international banks. Since the 1960s - and especially since the early 1970s, with the vast international flows of funds arising from the oil price increases - Latin American states have become more and more dependent on borrowing from commercial banks.

In 1965, 12% of Latin America's debt was owed to commercial banks. By 1980 56% of a vastly increased total debt was to the banks.

With the world recession after 1979, Latin America fell more and more into borrowing to pay off old debts, rather than for expansion. Then in 1982 credit dried up.

In 1983 the outward flow of interest and capital repayments from Latin America exceeded the new loans coming in by about \$30 billion.

One after another, the states of Latin America have been forced to seek special arrangements with the banks.

The banks have agreed - on two conditions. First, over-the-odds interest rates. Second, IMF-supervised government austerity plans.

The IMF's plans are resolutely Thatcherite, using the cold winds of free-market economics to chastise the over-indulgent borrowers. Or, more precisely - not so much to chastise the capitalists who borrowed the money in the first place, as the workers and peasants of the borrowing countries.

# Organising poverty



The Brandt Commission has proposed that the IMF be more flexible and generous about lending. There would be good capitalist reasons for such a policy: easier credit gives trade better possibilities of expansion.

Martin Honeywell points out that reforms of this sort "could lead to some growth in the LDCs (Less Developed Countries) in the context of a growing world economy. However, such growth would be bought at the cost of further maladministration of the countries' resources in the hands of a small elite".

Also, it would ease the smaller crises - but probably at the cost of even more dramatic crises later. The present

debt crisis is, after all, the sequel to a period of extremely easy credit from the international banks in the '70s.

Winston James's chapter on Jamaica also argues that the real villain is not just the IMF, but the system that it expresses and administers.

"The social and economic crises of contemporary Jamaica cannot be simply 'blamed' on the IMF as many have tended to do... Unviable economic measures were prescribed by the IMF, but were not executed by it. The measures were put into effect by the indigenous Jamaican ruling class, albeit not under circumstances totally within its control".

... races was taken for granted in Europe, after the late 15th century, started to turn Africa into a "warren for the commercial marketing of black skins", as Karl Marx put it.

Black people were seen as inferior and sub-human only when the opening-up of America made black slavery one of the most profitable activities then open to unscrupulous individuals and to states like that of England's Queen Elizabeth I.

Soon even the memory of African civilisation was sited over. Where a Saint Maurice could not be erased as a name from the Pantheon of the Church, he was erased as a black man and came to be regarded as white (though the statue in Magdeburg cathedral is plainly that of a negro).

When 19th century explorers came upon impressive ruins in Black Africa, they explained them with fantasies about refugees from higher civilisations. The blacks could not have had anything to do with it, they insisted.

Even the famous Dr Albert Schweitzer, who spent much of his life doing Christian good works in African jungles, could talk in the middle of the 20th century of the African being his brother in Christ, but his 'younger brother'.

Davidson's series is opening up the history of an entire segment of humanity long hidden by our self-complacent ignorance and by the encrusted prejudices secreted and petrified by our civilisation over four centuries. Don't miss the rest of it.

The Manley government in Jamaica had declared that it would defy the IMF. But eventually the logic of capitalist economics pushed it to the IMF regardless. 'Capitalism in one country' is not a real alternative to IMF imperialism.

The IMF and the system it represents need to be fought both from within the richer capitalist states and from within the Third World.

Here, we need to fight to replace the power of the bankers and bosses by working-class control over the economy, and to substitute massive aid and reparations to the Third World for the banks' blood-squeezing usury. And the working class in Latin America and the Third World needs to fight to oust their local capitalists, to break down the borders which divide them into small, weak country units, and to create a power which can face down the banks.

### Labour Movement Conference on Palestine

Saturday May 19. County Hall, London SE1.

Speakers include Moshe Machover, Uri Davis, Jeremy Corbyn MP, Colin Talbot (POEU), PLO representative, and Peter Tatchell.

Two delegates per labour movement organisation: credentials £2 from Andrew Hornung, 28 Carlton Mansions, Holmleigh Rd, London N16.

# Support Liverpool

ON APRIL 25 Liverpool City Council's Labour group again presented a budget to the full council.

As predicted, the budget, based on a nine per cent rate increase and a refusal to cut jobs or services, was defeated by the six Labour right-wingers who had already voted with the Liberals and Tories at the first budget meeting.

The election on May 3 will be a major test for the Labour Party in Liverpool. Labour only needs to gain as few as four or five seats to guarantee a majority immune to the right-wing scabs.

Although nobody in the local Labour Party would count any chickens before they hatch, the prospects of a working majority for Labour has been enough to send our opponents into a flurry of activity.

The Sunday Times has already reported that the government plans to overturn an elected Labour council and replace it with appointed commissioners. The government would also bankrupt Labour councillors and bar them from office.

The local Liberals, always keen to keep well in with the government, have produced their own pea-shooter to imitate the Tory big guns. In the week running up to the elections, the Liberals published their own threat to issue writs

By Kevin Feintuck



Derek Hatton

against leading Labour councillors John Hamilton, Derek Hatton, and Hugh Dalton.

If these writs, charging wilful misconduct, came to fruition, they would also result in bankruptcy and being barred from office.

In the face of these threats the councillors and the District Labour Party are standing firm in defence of jobs and services. This principled stand has still not received support from those who are elected to lead the Labour Party.

Neil Kinnock, after months of avoiding meeting leaders of the council, has repeated his call for the council to make cuts kindly and to try to blame the government for forcing it to do so. Likewise, the Labour Party Nat-

ional Executive is dominated by those whose verbal opposition to the Tories is not matched by a commitment to support Liverpool council, who have been forced into the front line.

Although the local government sub-committee of the National Executive has passed a motion formally supporting the council, the full National Executive could not find time to discuss the item at their most recent meeting.

Doubtless, if Labour were to lose their majority to the Tory/Liberals in Liverpool, it would save the Kinnockite National Executive a lot of embarrassment. But the labour movement in the city is determined that the National Executive will not be let off the hook.

The coming months will raise many problems for Labour in Liverpool. Any move to disband the council must be met by total non-cooperation. Fines and bans from office must be met by direct action and by building for on-going strike action involving both council and non-council workers.

Only direct action involving the whole working class community will be able to win the battle which the council has led. The labour movement in the rest of the country must be involved in this struggle.

In particular, Neil Kin-



Liverpool Democracy Day demonstration

nock, Dennis Healey, and the rest, must be forced to support Liverpool or make way for those who will.

## Witch-hunt still on

ON Wednesday 25th the Labour Party National Executive (NEC) voted unanimously for a 50p levy to support the miners. But another decision shows that the right-wing NEC majority's witch-hunt of the Left is still very much alive.

By 14 to 12 they voted to confirm the expulsion of six Militant supporters in Blackburn.

The star witness against the six was one Michael Gregory. But just days before the NEC Gregory had resigned the Labour whip on Blackburn council and voted with the Tories. He is reported to be ready to join the Liberals or stand as an independent.

Neil Kinnock supported the expulsions.

The six expelled members now have the right to appeal to this year's Labour Party conference. A model resolution is being circulated by Labour Against the Witch-hunt.

This Conference fully recognises the need for unity against the Tories and strongly reaffirms its opposition to witch-hunts. In the face of the country's growing crisis, we need to build up our Party's organisation and maximise our Party's membership.

Conference is therefore deeply concerned that the expulsion of the five Militant editors, and the exclusion of Tariq Ali, are now being followed by restrictions on other Party members and the expulsion of six Party members in Blackburn.

Conference now calls for an end to such victimisations, a general amnesty for all those who support Labour in public elections, and the immediate reinstatement of the Blackburn six.

## EEC Elections

# A campaign that the left can't sit out

AS the EEC elections draw near, the Labour left faces a dilemma. There is a deep-rooted hostility to the EEC running through the entire Left which spills over into the elections. There is now widespread left-wing hostility to the idea of a vigorous campaign — or any campaign at all — around the EEC

elections. It is a hostility consistent with the mainstream left wing view that the EEC should be opposed and Britain should get out of it.

Yet it is of the utmost importance that Labour does fight the EEC election in June and we at least stop the Tories gaining the sort of victory that would boost

Thatcher.

A big win for Thatcher would reinforce and strengthen the authority of the government against the miners and other workers. A bad Labour defeat would boost not only the Tories but probably also give a new lease of life to the anti-union SDP/Liberal Alliance.

Socialist United States of Europe.

The EEC elections present the Left with an opportunity to campaign for international solutions to the problems that workers face on an international level. To ignore, or downplay, the election is to miss that opportunity. To campaign for 'Britain out' is to waste the opportunity by indulging in nationalist propaganda that is quite the opposite of what will serve our interests and what we should be fighting for.

It is often argued that the EEC takes power away from the British Parliament, that because of the EEC, British people have less control over their own lives.

But in reality, the working class has little control over their own lives anyway. Real power lies with the bosses (of

whatever nationality). Even a majority of radical socialists in Parliament could not implement socialism simply by virtue of that majority. They would be resisted — violently if they felt it necessary — by the ruling class. Remember what they did when the GLC brought in a piddling little reform that lowered fares on the London underground. They got the High Court judges to say it was illegal. Think what they'd do if we really threatened their interests.

And the resistance would come primarily from the British ruling class and the British state machine.

Being 'independent' of Europe would not make socialism any easier to achieve in Britain.

And socialism, properly speaking, could not be

## By Clive Bradley

achieved in Britain in isolation. In the first place there can be no British economic solution. Industries like steel need to be planned on — at least — a Europe-wide basis.

Of course the success of a working class government in Britain would depend upon the solidarity of workers overseas — especially in Europe — and their ability to take on their own bosses in the same way.

To guarantee such solidarity we have to build international links with workers in Europe and elsewhere, in the here and now. Anything which impedes building those links damages the chances of success in the fight for socialism in the future. The bosses have their own Europe-wide links. They have Europe-wide strategies for controlling the working class. The only answer to the unity of the bosses of Europe is unity of the workers of Europe.

It is also argued that the EEC has caused a deterioration of the living standards of British workers.

This is partially true: but it

is misleading. Part of the purpose of organising capitalism on an explicitly European basis is to level out food prices across Europe. So high food prices — which is the feature of the EEC that is most talked about — exist across the EEC. And a socialist solution to that is for a Europe-wide sliding scale of wages, and a socialist agricultural policy across Europe. An independent capitalist Britain could win neither.

In any case, the crisis of capitalism is an international one, which can only be modified by the policies of particular capitalist states, or groups of states. So long as capitalism is in crisis it will attack the living standards of workers; our response has to be a working class response. To blame it all on foreigners misses the basic point.

The argument that the EEC is a free-trade agreement which socialists automatically oppose, is worse. Certainly socialists are not 'in favour' of free trade: we are in favour of international socialist planning.

But we are definitely not in favour of trade-war protectionism, which is the capitalist alternative to free trade. In fact, one of the problems now faced by the EEC is that it is degenerating into protection-

ist scrambles between its member states. But this kind of collapse — whilst no doubt inevitable — is not the form of collapse socialists should favour.

It is further argued that the EEC is a rich men's club in relation to the Third World. It is, of course. But so is Britain.

It is true that it might weaken British capitalism if it withdrew from the EEC. But a socialist strategy cannot be based on those kinds of considerations. And the protectionist policies that would go with withdrawal would be a disaster for the working class.

The final argument against participating in the Euro-elections is that the Brussels Parliament has no power.

Socialists do not boycott elections unless there is a serious alternative. At the moment there is not. By campaigning for an international working class answer to the capitalist crisis, we can begin to create that alternative. By abstaining, we cannot.

We must meet the Tories and go all-out to beat them on every front of the class struggle — from the picket lines of Nottinghamshire to the EEC elections. The elections on June 14 are a very important part of the class struggle.

# Industrial digest



## Rig sit-in

THE sit-in strike staged by construction workers on the British Gas platform BD100 being built in the North Sea threatens to spread to a second with official union recognition now being given at the weekend to the dispute.

About 320 of the 440 workers employed by 20 contractors are maintaining the sit-in begun almost three weeks ago (on April 14) on the platform situated in Eastington Rough, 17 miles off the Humber, over a pay and conditions dispute. Only essential safety work is now being carried out on the rig.

Workers say that they are not being paid recognised hourly rates for the job for North Sea rigs, and the unions involved have stated that the only way to resolve the dispute will be negotiation of a pay and conditions agreement for the southern sector of the North Sea and the Irish Sea.

## Nuclear pay

A ONE-DAY pay strike of five Civil Service unions representing about 7,000 workers employed by British Nuclear Fuels Ltd is taking place this Wednesday. This means that nuclear energy plants in Britain, some that produce weapons-grade plutonium, will be closed down for the day.

Unions have rejected a 4.5% pay offer and are seeking a substantial improvement on last year's pay rise of 5% stating that British Nuclear Fuels increased its profits by 58% last year.

## Teachers

TEACHERS have started industrial action over pay.

On Monday April 30 all the teachers' unions rejected a final offer of 4.5 per cent. The biggest union, the NUT, will have a one-day strike on May 9, and is already refusing to cover for absent staff or do lunch-time or out-of-school work.

The second biggest union, the NAS-UWT, called a half day strike last term and is likely to call action similar to the NUT's.

Local NUT associations are due to hold meetings on May 9 to discuss further action. In some areas activists will be suggesting ballots on further strike action.

## Carousel

THE CAROUSEL Wafers strikers in the East End of Glasgow have finally been forced to abandon their 8½-month fight for union recognition, reinstatement, and better working conditions.

They conceded defeat on Monday April 16. Next week's Socialist Organiser will carry a full analysis of the dispute.



What they are and

what they must become

Socialist Organiser 35p

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## Steel and coal

### solidarity!

IN WESTERN Scotland the centre of attention in the miners' strike is now the giant Ravenscraig steelworks at Motherwell, where successive cutbacks have already been inflicted on the workforce, now down to 4,000, and the plant's future remains uncertain.

But the Iron and Steel Trades Confederation (ISTC) leadership at Scottish, national, and plant level are dedicated to opposing a link-up between the steel jobs fight and the miners' battle.

Instead, they want to keep production going at Ravenscraig despite the miners' strike.

Until last weekend, April 29, Ravenscraig had been granted dispensation for coal by the miners so that it could stay in operation. But the Scottish Executive of the NUM has now decided that only one trainload of coal a day will be allowed to enter Ravenscraig.

This is enough to prevent damage to the coke ovens and blast furnaces, through cooling off, but will not enable steel production to be maintained at the plant.

Tommy Brennan, the convenor at the plant, who had already instructed his members to cross miners' picket lines, reacted to the decision by a fresh attack on the NUM and its attitude to Ravenscraig.

"The steel industry cannot withstand the action now being taken by the Scottish miners," he declared and demanded that the quantity of coal supplied to Ravenscraig be doubled.

But Brennan's attack was overshadowed by an even more vicious attack by the Labour MP for Motherwell, arch right-winger Jeremy Bray, who described the NUM decision as meaning: "committing industrial suicide in Scotland" and warned that "we shall have to consider what further steps are needed to ensure the future of Ravenscraig" without explaining what he meant by "further steps".

Both Brennan and Bray like ISTC leader Bill Sirs, and ISTC Scottish organiser Clive Lewis before them, claimed that the miners were playing into the government's hands by providing it with a pretext to shut down Ravenscraig.

In fact it is Brennan, Bray, Sirs and Lewis who are playing into the hands of the government and the NCB by whipping up hostility amongst steel workers to the miners' strike and thereby weakening the steel workers' own position.

If Ravenscraig were to remain in operation throughout the miners' strike, it would do nothing to guarantee its future. But it would certainly weaken the miners' fight.

ISTC militants should continue to argue for solidarity action in support of the miners' strike amongst steelworkers, and the left in Jeremy Bray's constituency should start to organise now to replace him with another candidate when the time for reselection comes.

## EETPU scraps members' rights

By Bryan Edmands

RIGHT wing union leaders and in the first place the leaders of the EETPU, are now negotiating away the right to strike of their members employed by foreign firms with factories in Britain.

The EETPU is launching a national campaign to recruit up to 30,000 new members by making appeals to management! It is offering management a "total approach to unionisation" centred upon a no-strike agreement, together with the organisation of all levels of workers at a workplace into one union. This will maximise the union's control over the workforce in order to attempt to minimise "industrial relations problems". In other words, they are offering to police workers.

The national recruiting drive is to be based at first on the "sunrise industries" in the

Thames Valley, with a further campaign beginning in Scotland.

The EETPU's leaders are the pioneers. Theirs is the first union to comply with Japanese companies' demands for no-strike deals with British unions.

First came the agreement with Toshiba at Plymouth, and then agreements with Sanyo at Lowestoft, and with AB Electronics.

Now the right wing leaders of the AUEW are following where the scab leaders of the EETPU have led.

The AUEW already has a number of single union deals with both foreign and British companies. Now it seems set to gain sector recognition rights at Nissan's planned £50 million car assembly plant at

Washington New Town, Tyne and Wear.

AUEW President Duffy said last weekend that he is willing to make over his members' rights. He said: "We can give agreements which obviate the need for strikes". But Duffy isn't sure he can deliver. He added: "In a democratic society it cannot remove someone's right to withdraw their labour."

Yes, indeed. But of course the sell-out deals made by Duffy, Chapple and their ilk who undertake to police their members on behalf of the bosses mean that to actually strike will become that much more of a problem. It also means that these leaders are preparing to set new records for open sabotage and strike-breaking against those of their members who do strike in defiance of their deals.

## Longbridge speed-up

THE METRO trim shop at BL's Longbridge plant in Birmingham walked out on the Monday night shift April 30.

The following day, workers on the Mini line voted to join the strike, bringing all car production at the plant to a standstill.

The strike is over new manning levels for headlight/droplight workers on the Metrc line. Three weeks ago there was a dispute on the same issue when management took two workers out of a gang of 12 without any corresponding track speed reduction. The latest dispute was provoked by management calling a number of workers into the office and warning them that they were not considered to be working hard enough.

The dispute reflects a revival of militancy after a couple of years of relative demoralisation. A number of small disputes have been fought and won recently.

Further action will be considered at a mass meeting on Thursday 3rd. Pressure must be put on the TGWU to make this strike official: if the company get away with it here, they will be pressing for more de-manning and speed-ups on other lines.

## Dimbleby

THE CONTINUING six month long strike by eight journalists at David Dimbleby's Richmond and Twickenham Times group of newspapers in South London, begun after a dispute between Dimbleby and the NGA led to him closing his printing works and to the transference of printing to TBF Printers of Nottingham — a non-union firm associated with T. Bailey Forman, publishers of the Nottingham Post with which the NUJ and the NGA have been in dispute since 1979 — took a new turn last week with the executive of the NUJ defying a High Court order requiring it to withdraw official support for its striking members.

The court order — the second sought by Dimbleby — won two weeks ago required the NUJ within seven days to instruct its members not to strike, and to provide evidence by last Friday (April 27) that official backing had been withdrawn.

The original High Court ruling that the NUJ was involved in an illegal secondary action by supporting the sacked NGA members at Dimbleby's closed down print works was at first obeyed by the NUJ executive but then after coming under sustained pressure from its members and the local labour movement restored official backing for the dispute three months later on March 30.

The NUJ is hoping that Dimbleby will negotiate redundancy terms with the sacked NGA members and move the printing of his paper to a unionised firm in order to end the strike. However, the possibility is there for Dimbleby to resort to the courts yet again to begin contempt proceedings which could result in fines and seizure of the NUJ's funds.

### Second national meeting for Labour Party workplace branches

"WORKPLACE BRANCHES AND THE UNIONS"

Saturday May 12, Meeting Room, St Pancras Library (Shaw Theatre), Euston Road, London NW1.

Open to Labour Party members in workplace branches or who want to find out more about setting them up

Details from Nik Barstow, 165 Liverpool Road, London N1, or Geoff Dixon, 1 Pelham Court, 44 Hatherley Road, Sidcup, Kent



STEFANO CAGNONI (IFL)

## Islington nursery workers stand firm

ISLINGTON council day nursery workers marched to the Town Hall on Monday April 30 to lobby the Labour Council.

They are in their third week of a strike demanding more staff and

more pay. The claim has been outstanding since October 1983.

Parents who support the strikers lobbied councillors earlier in the day.

The strikers have also stepped up picketing to include the town hall and other council offices. The aim to disrupt council business by preventing meetings taking place and stopping the cash flow.

## Graham hopes for a sop from Tories

By Mike Grayson

THE COUNCIL of Civil Service Unions (CoCSU) has rejected a government offer of three per cent for the 1984 pay settlement. The unions had claimed a seven per cent increase, with an underpinning minimum of £7 per week.

This figure was based on the results of a survey carried out by the Office of Manpower Economics (OME) on recent private sector settlements.

The largest CoCSU union, the

CPSA, had been mandated by its 1983 annual conference to hold a special conference to discuss the 1984 claim and campaign strategy. The right wing leadership cynically ignored this, preferring to let the OME survey show that civil servants 'deserved' more than three per cent.

Alistair Graham (CPSA's gen-

eral secretary), in a union circular dated April 18, talks not about a fight for a decent pay increase, but a "fight for the right to go to arbitration" if the government makes poor offers!

With a determined leadership that respected conference mandates, civil servants might now be on strike at the same time as the miners. But that scenario doubtless fills the right wing with as much horror as it does the Tories.

# Socialist Organiser

## Fund

Donations from Mark Starr (£20) and Kate Williams (£5) have opened our May fund. We need a special effort from every reader this month, to finance our extra activity round the miners' strike – petrol, fares, phone bills, costs for leaflets, etc.

What about £5 from each employed reader and £1 from each unemployed? That would enable us to forge ahead with the work without having to stop at every step and count the pennies.

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

# Akzo Chemie: stand firm and win

THE THREE week old strike at Akzo Chemie, Littleborough, against the victimisation of TGWU branch secretary Tom Hart, is under heavy fire.

As stewards left for Holland this Monday, 30th, to seek support from workers in the Dutch parent company, management were keeping up a steady bombardment.

Having initially miscalculated and completely underestimated the response from the workers to the almost casual victimisation, Adolph Butler, Akzo's UK controller, swiftly regrouped.

Attempts to entice Tom Hart with financial offers failed miserably. Butler therefore acted unilaterally. Tom Hart was sent a letter reinstating him, compensating him for

lost wages, and asking for the return of his P45. But there was one small hitch. Tom was not to come anywhere near the premises until the issue could be resolved at the NJIC or at an industrial tribunal.

The poison was then pumped into the members' homes. While the strikers were on their uppers, the man they were giving their all for was in the cabbage.

Of course, the money was immediately turned over to the strike treasurer and not a farthing was touched. The strike committee correctly pointed out to the membership that an industrial tribunal has no power to reinstate, and that the NJIC panel consists of two members of management and two trade union nominees, so that manage-

**By Mark Starr**  
ment could create a deadlock. Once the pressure was off and production was rolling again, that was exactly what they would do.



Despite their arguments that if management were serious they could simply apply status quo and fully reinstate Tom whilst the com-

plaints against him were taken up, there was a weakening. One section, with little experience of management dirty tricks, and little leadership from their stewards, returned to work.

While this broke the united front of the workforce, it did little to help management. At a continuous process five-shift chemical plant their losses are enormous while the process workers hold out.

It is, of course, the eternal question: which side will crack first? As usual management hold the initiative. Last Saturday another poison-pen letter was sent to members, raising for the first time the question of dismissals and claiming again that Tom would not lose a penny if the

strikers returned while the matter was going through procedure.

After a meeting with Butler TGWU national chemical industry officer John Miller thought he had a deal. If the NJIC was deadlocked the matter would go finally to the government arbitration service ACAS. But within hours Butler had reneged.

The manoeuvres are confusing, but the strikers have to keep a clear objective in view – reinstatement. The dispute is hitting the company more than the members. To hold fast now will bring the membership one crucial inch further. To return now with Tom Hart outside would squander three weeks' marvellous efforts.

But John Miller is not

giving very much of an example. He would better employed coming to Littleborough and building the strike, rather than doing deals in hotel corridors in Kings Cross without the strike committee present.

Although on paper Tom Hart's case is an excellent one, ACAS, headed by former BL hatchet-man Pat Lowry, is not impartial or independent, and it certainly cannot be trusted.

There is one way to win the reinstatement of Tom Hart: heads down, stick it out, and wait for the bosses to crack.

Messages of support and donations to Bro. S. Hughes, 16 Welbeck Ave, Littleborough, nr Rochdale, Lancs. Cheques to TGWU 6/704.



STEFANO CAGNONI (IFL)

London trade unionists showed their support for the 90 cleaners at Barking Hospital on May Day – and their opposition to the effects of privatisation in the NHS.

More than 300 pickets turned out to confront an unusually large number of scabs; and three pickets were arrested as they slowed down the scabs' coach. Later, 400 people marched to a rally at Barking Town Hall. The determination of the strikers is worrying Redbridge District Health Authority, and with continued support the battle against Crothalls will be won.

Support the strike: Monday morning mass pickets from 6.30am at Barking Hospital, Upney Lane. Messages and donations to AUEW House, 588 Rainham Rd, South Dagenham, Essex RM10 7RA. Cheques payable to Barking & Dagenham Health Emergency. 24 hour strike line: 01-595 4252.