

Socialist ORGANISER

Paper of the Socialist Organiser Alliance No.186 July 5 1984 25p Claimants and strikers 10p

Stop the
coal trucks

BLOCKADE!

“To those unions with members in the power stations I say — tell them not to handle coal.

Demonstrations are important, but there is one thing that is more important, and that is participation on the picket lines. Irrespective of legislation, I want to see all workers joining our picket lines.

We're on the way to victory. But do not underestimate the forces of the state.

I want to see in every town and village in Britain miners' support committees set up — to support the miners in their fight for jobs”.

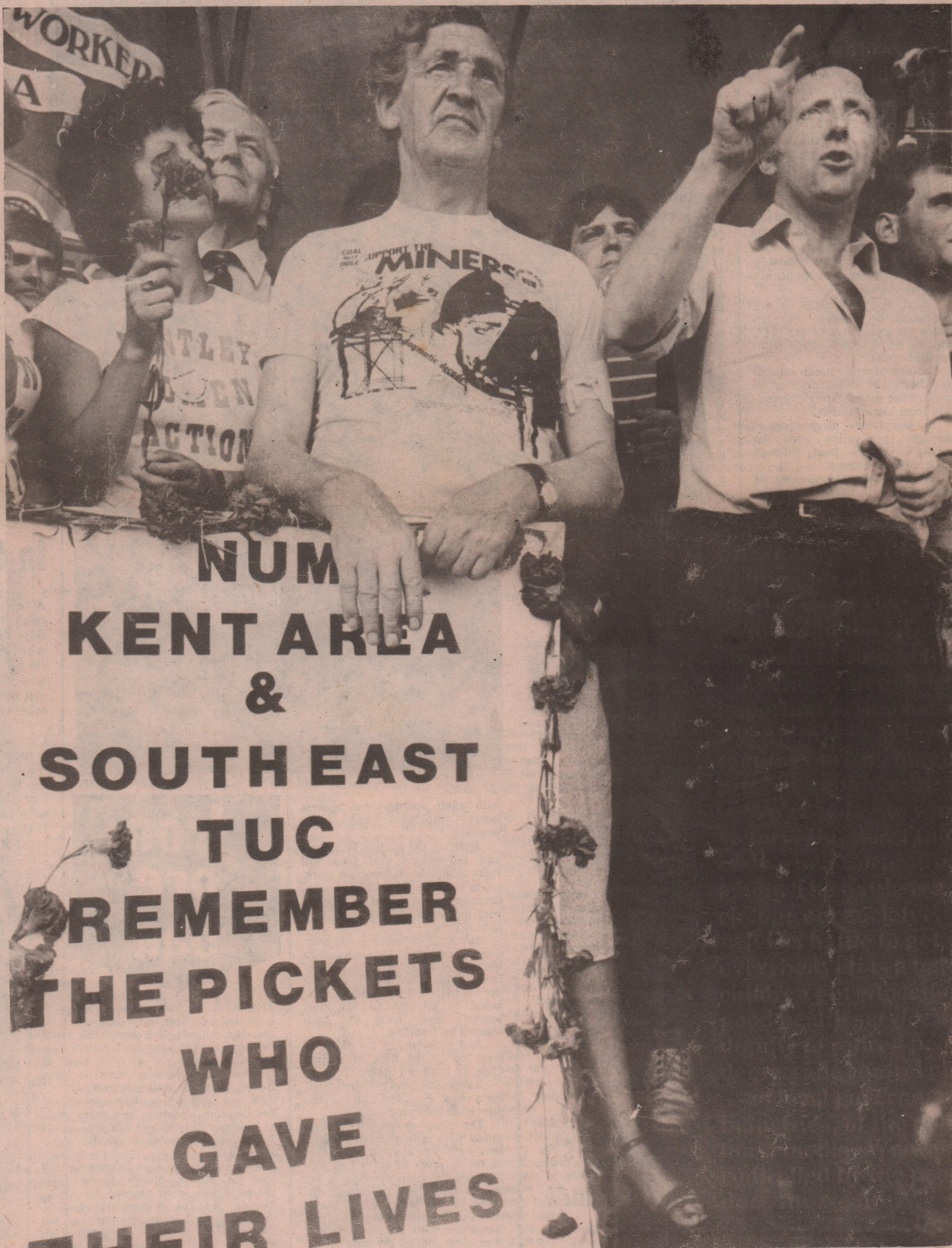
Arthur Scargill

“If we say that the miners are fighting for all of us, then it is up to all of us to give support in our own way to the NUM. I've personally paid tribute to the transport workers... but politically the most important action has been and is when workers in Fleet Street say that they are no longer prepared to print lies about miners.

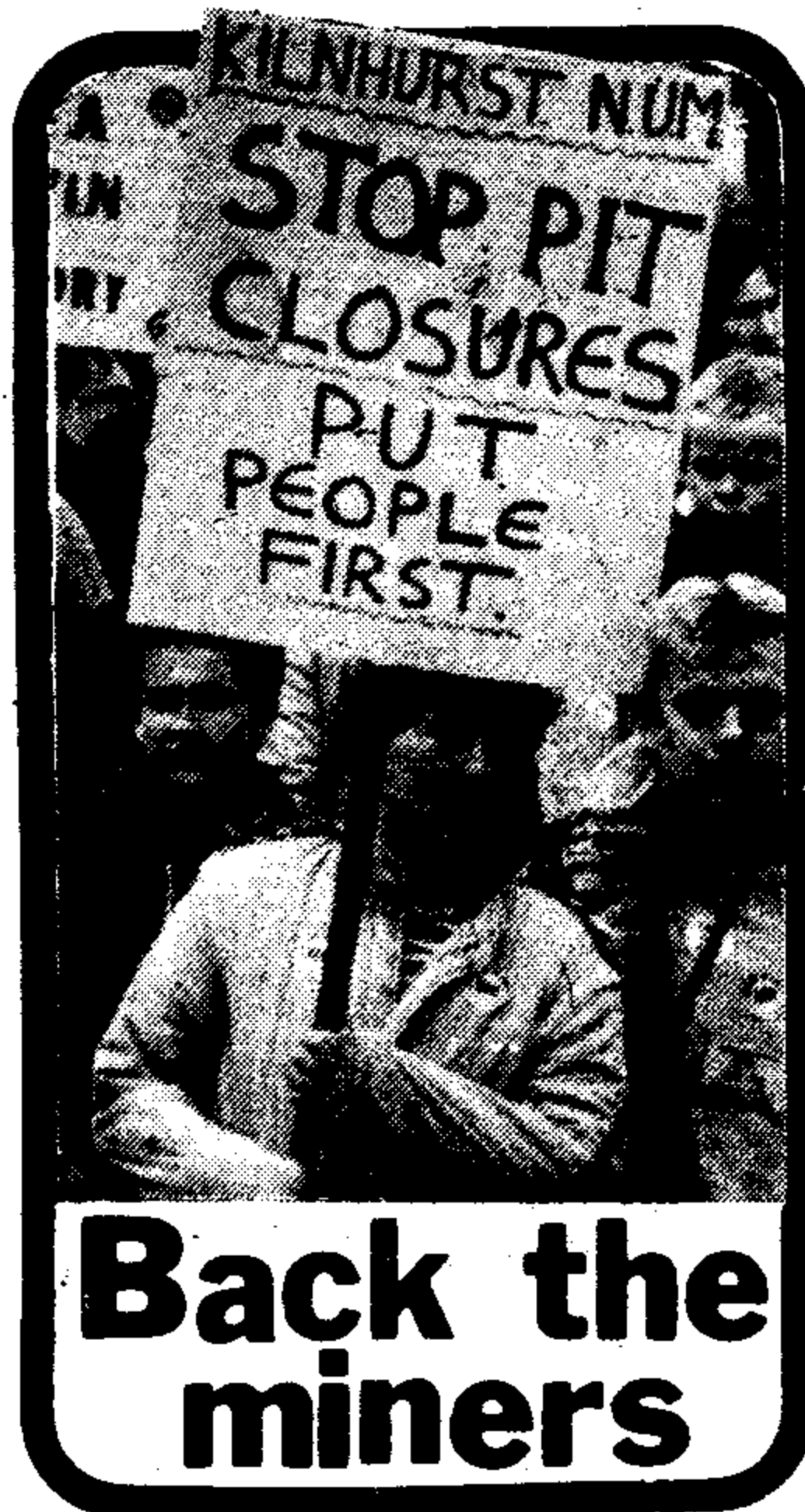
We're going to win a great victory. But don't think the battle ends when Cortonwood opens again. The battle is a real battle to change our society.

It is a battle to get work for everybody. It is a battle to see our children get education... for a good health service... to give dignity to retired people... for the democratic control of our society — of local government, of our industries, of the police, of the mass media. We want a country controlled by the people who produce the wealth.”

Tony Benn



Arthur Scargill in London, Wednesday June 27



Back the miners

Sirs sides with BSC

By Bryan Edmands

AFTER a meeting of all 14 unions in British Steel on Monday July 2, ISTC general secretary Bill Sirs announced that they had decided that: "It would not be practicable to accede to the NUM's request [for cooperation in stopping steel production]... The [steel] unions have to accept that this policy would be damaging to the industry and completely unacceptable to their members".

There had previously been a discussion on Friday 29th between the executives of the ISTC and the NUM, which ended without agreement.

Instead of trade union solidarity, Sirs made it his priority to protect the British Steel Corporation from loss of orders.

He sees the way to save jobs as through cooperation with the employer rather than through trade union solidarity.

However, on the evening of Monday July 2, the leaders of the transport unions - NUR, ASLEF, TGWU, NUS - met to discuss with the NUM, and reaffirmed their ban on coal and iron ore shipments to steel plants.

The Tories and the Coal Board responded by seeking to widen the rift between coal and steel unions. They contradicted claims by Scargill that miners had made sacrifices for steelworkers during the 1980 steel strike, they applauded the steel unions' decision, and they mounted a wave of personal attack on Arthur Scargill, labelling him as a political militant condoning violence.

**Friday July 13
North-West TUC
Day of Action to
support the miners.
Demonstration 1.30pm
from the Mancunian
Way.
Rally 2.30 pm at the
Free Trade Hall**

Notts strikers need money

Send money or invitations for fund-raising visits to the Notts Miners Rank and File Strike Committees.
North Notts. Strike Centre, Ollerton Miners' Welfare, Ollerton, Notts.
South Notts. Miners' Strike Centre, c/o AUEW, 218 Mansfield Road, Nottingham.

Railworkers' lead

By Stan Crooke

ON Thursday June 28 ASLEF members at the Motherwell and Polmadie (Gorbals, Glasgow) rail depots started boycotting all supplies of iron ore to the Ravenscraig steel plant in Motherwell.

Willie O'Brien, secretary of the ASLEF Local Departmental Committee (LDC) at the Polmadie depot, told SO.

"Our position is that the Annual Assembly of Delegates took a decision that members were not to work any trains taking oil or other fuel into power stations, and were also to refuse to work trains carrying coal or coke into steelworks. This is in addition to previous Executive Committee instructions to completely black all coal and not to cross any NUM picket lines.

"We had been hoping for an amicable agreement between the NUM and ISTC. In the absence of

any such agreement, we had no alternative but to refuse to pass picket lines, irrespective of what the load is.

"There is a round-the-clock picket at Hunterston and Ravenscraig, and no driver will pass those picket lines.

"The blacking of the iron ore supplies came into effect last Thursday at noon. A decision had been taken by a meeting of the District Council delegates the previous day, and, as we merely implementing Executive Committee instructions, no mass meetings were necessary.

"There was the usual response from management, but there was no aggro. We told them of the decision, and they responded by sending home any driver who refused to drive a train.

"We will look after our lads who are sent home all right. The blacking decision and the management's response affect three driv-

ers at Polmadie each day.

"It should be emphasised that these are the same drivers that supported Ravenscraig when it was under threat, and will support Ravenscraig again when it is under threat in the future.

"There is no question of any antagonism.

"We can understand the desire of steelworkers to ensure that the future of their plant is safeguarded. But there have been one or two wild statements by various people at Ravenscraig reported in the media, though I have not heard any personally, and these are obviously disturbing us.

"I hope that an amicable agreement will be reached at today's talks (July 2), between the miners and the steel union. We don't want to see cowboys running coke or coal into Ravenscraig any more than we want to see any danger to the future of Ravenscraig.

"But the blacking continues until such time as our Executive Committee decides otherwise."

... but steel union backs bosses

"WE WILL work with coal, iron ore, or coke brought into this plant by any means to ensure the long-term survival and future of these works".

When Ravenscraig convenor Tommy Brennan said this, in response to the boycott on iron ore by ASLEF, he was merely demonstrating how well he had learned the lesson taught to him in recent years by the Scottish TUC.

Brennan has openly declared his readiness to ally himself with British Steel management, and thus with the Tories "as well, against other sections of the trade union movement. But such a workers'-bosses' alliance is no new invention of Brennan's. The STUC, with leading Communist Party members to the fore, have continuously advocated such a strategy, to combat 'de-industrialisation' and job losses.

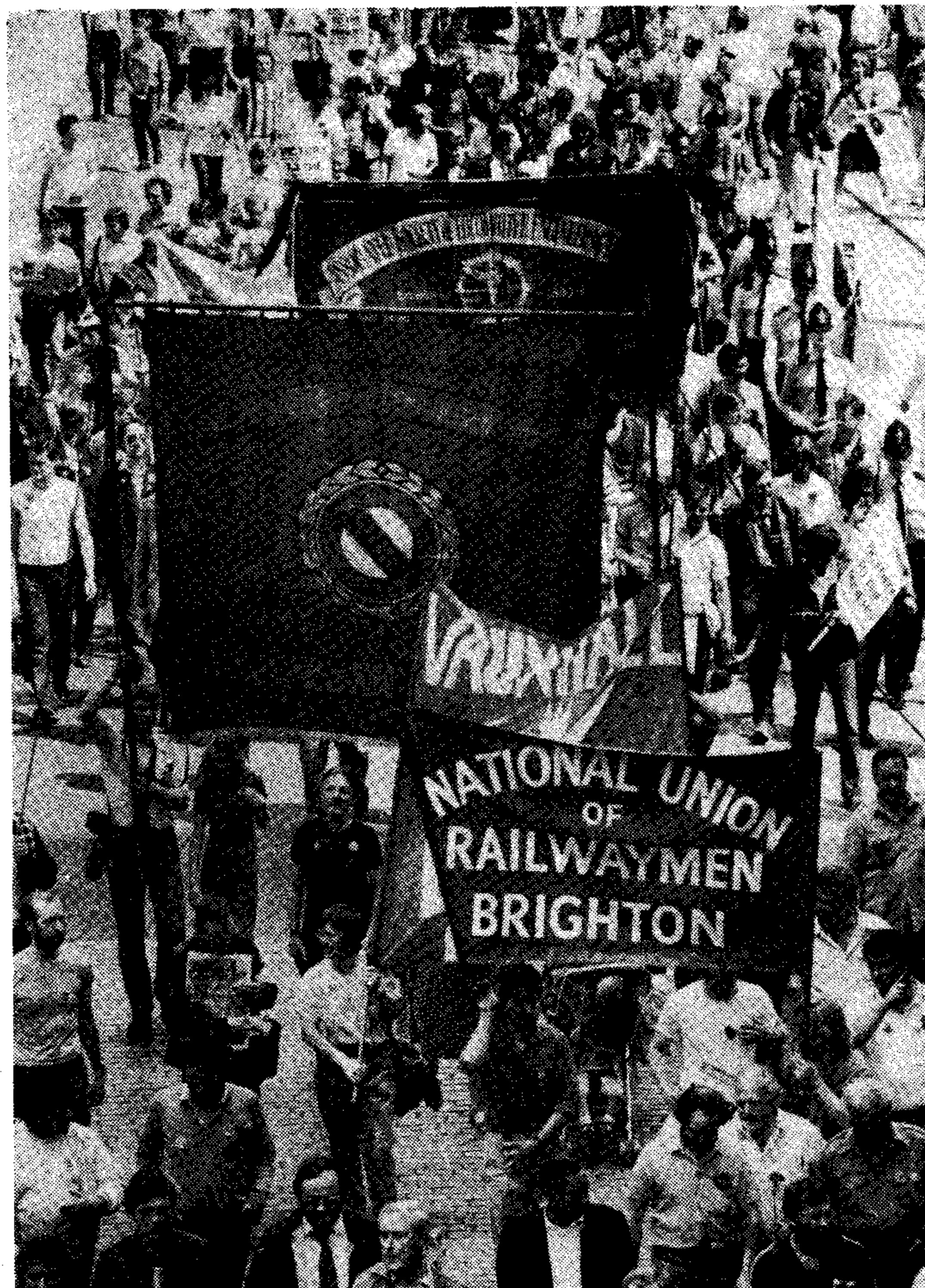
Instead of fighting for working class action to defend jobs, the STUC has formed a propaganda alliance with Chambers of Commerce, the CBI, Tories and the churches. BL Bathgate now, and Scott Lithgow earlier in the year, are examples.

The same approach was used at Ravenscraig two years ago. The Scottish Tory chairperson Michael Ancram was given a rapturous reception at an STUC rally. "A historic reunification of the Scottish people" was how the Communist Party's newspaper described the rally.

But the undercurrent of the rally, and of the campaign as a whole, was: 'Shut Llanwern, keep Ravenscraig'.

The STUC has preached class collaboration as being more practical, realistic and likely to get results than working class solidarity. Now the chickens have come home to roost.

But Brennan is a teacher as well as a pupil. Taught by the STUC, he has passed on the lesson to the workforce, encouraging them to see a common interest



South East TUC Day of Action in support of the NUM last Wednesday, 27 June.

with their management against other employers and other workers.

Ignoring the pledges by miners and railworkers that they will fight alongside Ravenscraig workers to save the plant from closure, Brennan has said that an alliance with management is the only way to save jobs.

But little or nothing has been done to counteract his message to the Ravenscraig workers. Apart from some statements through the media, miners' leaders have failed to attempt to win steel workers away from the path charted by Brennan.

And picketing at the plant, at least up to the time of writing (July 2), has been token.

Ravenscraig has prepared itself for a siege. Coal and iron ore supplies have been stockpiled.

The labour movement must respond with mass picketing, maintenance of the boycott, extension of the boycott to cover fuel supplies for the firms involved in the scab convoys, and a campaign directed at the steelworkers themselves to win them away from collaboration with British Steel and over to the side of the miners.

Iron ore ban

THE RAIL blockade of iron ore is having an effect, even despite the road convoys. The chances of British Steel bringing in the law are still very high.

According to the press reports, British Steel are getting between 2000 and 4000 tonnes of iron ore per day into Llanwern, at a cost of between £50,000 and £70,000. The normal demand is 10,000 tonnes a day.

All ore deliveries from Immingham to British Steel's Scunthorpe works were stopped on Tuesday 3rd. The press estimates that for normal production Scunthorpe would need 1125 lorries making a day.

Defend Arthur Scargill

TORY politicians and the press have put Arthur Scargill in the dock.

He is charged with:

* Being stiff-necked and stubborn in his dispute with the Coal Board

* Going for confrontation rather than conciliation

* Being out to defeat the government by industrial action.

The plea is: guilty on all counts - and proud of it.

Yes, Arthur Scargill has stuck to the simple, clear demand - no pit closures, no job loss - while most trade union leaders think

that juggling with compromise formulas is their main job from day one of any dispute.

He has even made the demands bolder and clearer, calling for a four day week.

Yes, Arthur Scargill has led from the front, rather than trailing at the back, being a ball and chain on the ankles of the members like so many other trade union leaders.

He has even made a direct appeal to the rank and file in rail, steel, and the power stations.

Yes, Arthur Scargill preaches militant struggle of the whole working class and says the goal must be a Labour government committed to the cause of the working class.

The Fleet Street editors always like to portray workers' struggles as being engineered by a few conspirators. They seem to find it difficult to understand they could be anything else.

But it's not usual for them to be able to pick on official trade union leaders as the 'agitator' responsible. It would have been pretty difficult for them to say Bill Sirs was the firebrand behind the 1980 steel strike, or that the 1982 NHS pay dispute was due to Albert Spenswick whipping up militancy!

You didn't see Sirs or Spenswick getting clubbed by police on the picket lines.

Here at last - and they're furious about it - Fleet Street have found an official trade union leader who is a militant.

What they still won't understand, however, is that the miners' strike is so strong not because of one Arthur Scargill, but because of hundreds of thousands of 'Arthur Scargills' - men and women fired by the spirit of class struggle.

The dispute started with a spontaneous walk-out over closures in South Yorkshire. Arthur Scargill did not create the movement. What he did was to put himself at the head of it, rather than trying to subdue it, as most union leaders would have done.

And Fleet Street doesn't understand one other thing. This dispute is bringing closer the day when those hundreds of thousands of militants will organise to clear out the time-servers who infest the hierarchies of the labour movement, and to replace them all with women and men who, like Arthur Scargill, are prepared to develop the strength of our movement rather than stifle it.

In the crowd

A voice in the crowd - why can't he be heard?

Blue uniforms stifle every word,

He fights a just cause, that's why he is there

But men pass him by without even a care.

Can't they see that this battle is fought for them all

Why don't they join in with the Union's call,

For it is their duty to help with this fight

If they are to win then they must all unite.

They say they must work on because they're in need,

But all that they can show is malice and greed,

The voice in the crowd utters a cry -

Please join us and don't let the industry die.

If the battle is lost at the end of the day,

Will they really be pleased with redundancy pay,

Will they hold their heads high when they hear the word 'coal'?

Or hang them in shame for the men on the dole.

The voice in the crowd can stand up with pride

For he knows that his feelings he never will hide.

Kay Sutcliffe
Kent miner's wife

Left MPs call for solidarity

THE Campaign Group of Labour MPs appeals to all active trade unionists to work through their own unions to provide increased financial and practical support for the NUM; and to consider an extension of industrial action

into their own industries and services which would provide real support for the miners who are now fighting for the whole trade union and labour movement.

Joan Maynard MP
Chair

'Industrial action'

AS members of the Campaign Group of Labour MPs, we have participated in many meetings and rallies on behalf of the NUM.

At every one of the meetings, attended by members of all trade unions, we constantly hear references to the "miners' victory being a victory for all workers and for the broad trade union and labour movement." That statement rings true today even more than it did at the beginning of the strike because now the miners, by their tremendous fighting spirit and sacrifice are in sight of the winning post.

Yet, as all trade unionists know, the establishment, facing defeat, will use the police, judges and every means of vile propaganda in order to attack the NUM and their families.

Therefore it is important that all trade union executives should now consider not only how much more money they are prepared to contribute to the NUM Fighting Fund, but also what other steps, including industrial action, they are now ready to take in order to clinch victory in the next few weeks.

In 1972-3 the trade union movement, in its fight against the Industrial Relations Act, served notice on the government in several ways, including taking industrial action to

remove the five dockers from Pentonville Gaol and put the Act in cold storage. That kind of collective action is absolutely necessary now.

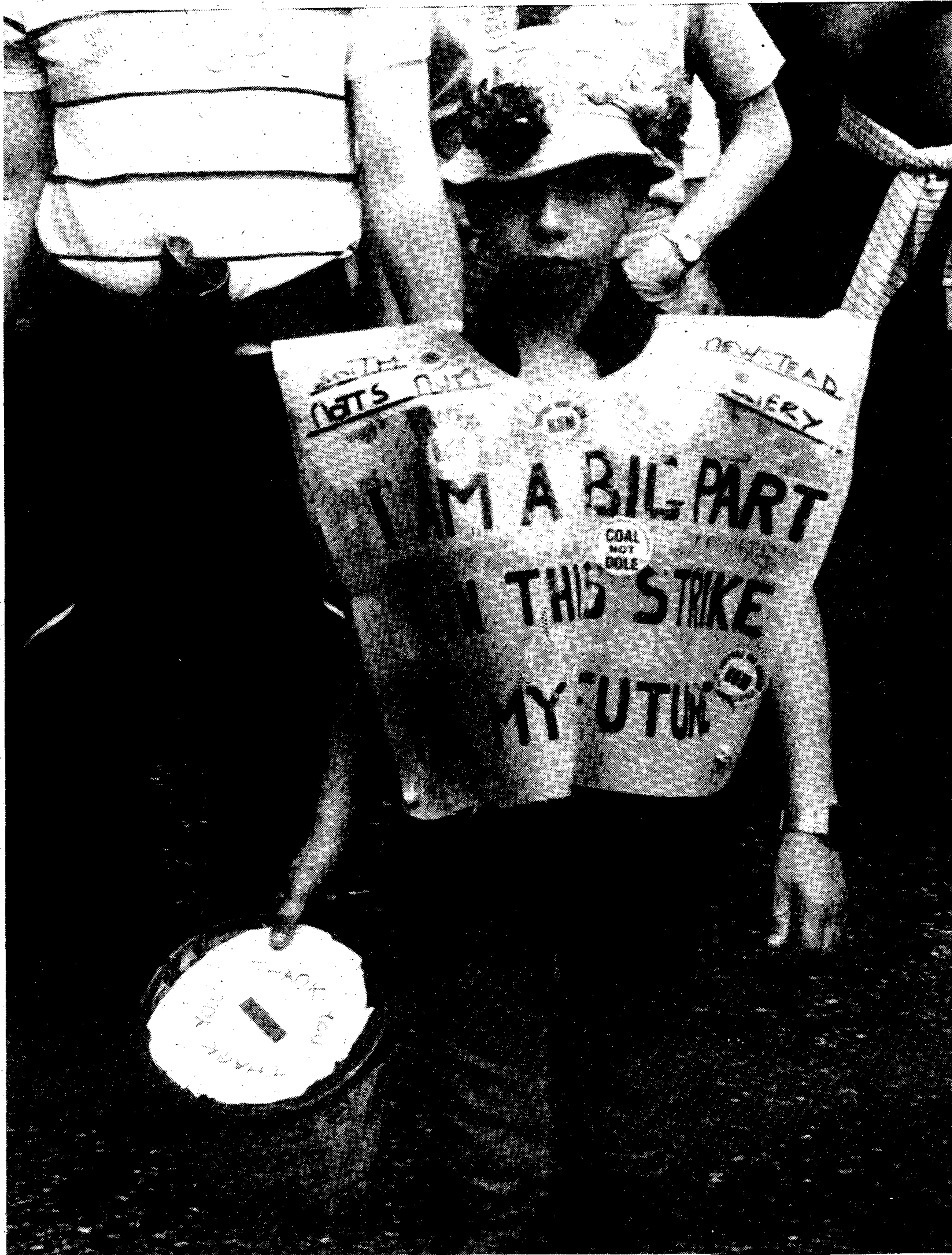
We ask you to place this letter before your Executive Committee and urge you to now join with the NUM in a more effective way and turn financial and moral support into broader industrial action.

We look forward to an urgent response to our plea on behalf of the miners who we all recognise are, with the help of some railway and other workers, carrying on the industrial side of the battle single-handed.

What is your trade union prepared to do in order to broaden the action and build on the support already given?

Yours sincerely,
Joan Maynard
Chair

Joan Maynard, Michael Meacher, Bob Wareing, Derek Fatchett, Willie McKelvey, Tony Banks, Margaret Beckett, Clare Short, Stuart Holland, Terry Fields, Jim Lamond, Eric Heffer, Bill Michie, Alan Meale, Kevin Barron, Allan Roberts, Bob McTaggart, Dennis Skinner, Brian Sedgemore, Martin Flannery, Harry Cohen, Jeremy Corbyn, Bob Litherland, Steve Morgan, Tony Benn, Ron Brown, Bob Clay, Gerry Bermingham, Mark Fisher, Dennis Canavan, Jo Richardson, Ernie Roberts, Eddie Loyden, Bob Parry, Frank Cook, Max Madden, Dave Nellist, Audrey Wise, Tam Dalyell.



On the London demonstration, June 27. (Photo: Paul Mattsson)

-The police in Notts-

'Like military rule'

ON Tuesday 3rd, Socialist Organiser spoke to JOHN CORK, President of Holditch Colliery NUM branch (North Staffs), at the Ollerton Miners' Welfare, Notts. John was in Ollerton with two other members from his branch, staying with strikers for a few days to help picket and observe conditions in the Notts coalfield. It was during the fortnight's holiday in the Staffordshire coalfield.

"We came down to Ollerton to see an old friend of mine, Pat Crow. 10-15 minutes from Mansfield two policemen, a sergeant and a constable, were standing beside the road. They waved me down.

I was asked where I had come from and where I was going. Pat said we were going to Ollerton as he lived there. He is a local councillor.

They wanted to know all our details. The sergeant asked me the same questions as the constable. He wanted to know what I was doing in the area. I explained again that I had come down to see Pat because he was a friend of mine. We had no money because of the dispute and he had kindly offered me a week in this area to see how things were, particularly the policing.

The sergeant told me: 'I

advise you, sir, to turn the car round and go back out of the county'. He didn't directly threaten me but I got the clear impression that if I didn't do it I would be arrested.

I turned the car round because I was frightened - I was expecting to be snatched out of the car.

We then came through the back ways and were fortunate not to be stopped on the way to Ollerton itself.

We came into Ollerton town - and there were something like 30 police in a matter of 200 yards, in twos.

Since we've been here we've had a look around the area - and I feel that, even now, I'm frightened to move my car out of Ollerton until I go back home. I'm assuming now that I'll be stopped by the police.

They don't let any more than one or two on the picket line. In our area, the pickets are allowed to approach those going in - we are not harassed by police like they are in Nottingham.

I wasn't surprised about what was going on, I was frightened. The police might as well be putting a curfew on us. If you're a striking miner you might as well be in the house at 7 o'clock and out again at 7 o'clock the following morning.

The intimidation hasn't had any effect on the strikers here.

Those that are out are more solid than anywhere I've been. I've been to Cannock Chase area and all the pits in North Staffs and the organisation here is better.

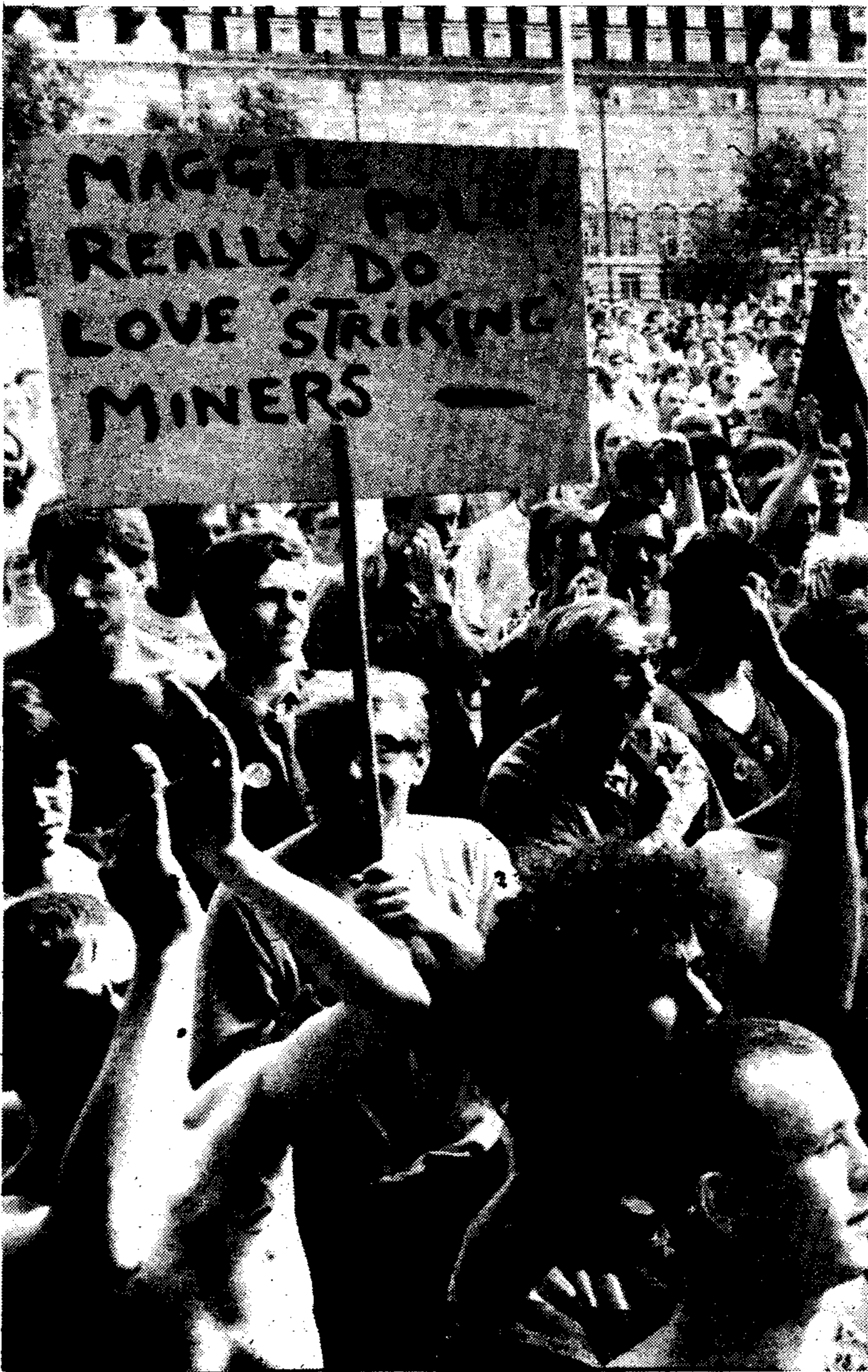
These lads here are holding all our areas up, by what I've seen. If we were like these, this strike would have been over in a fortnight or a month.

In our own area we estimate there's about 60% out, and 40% working. There's been a bit of a move back there. The Coal Board tried to entice people back with the promise of holiday pay if they worked four days.

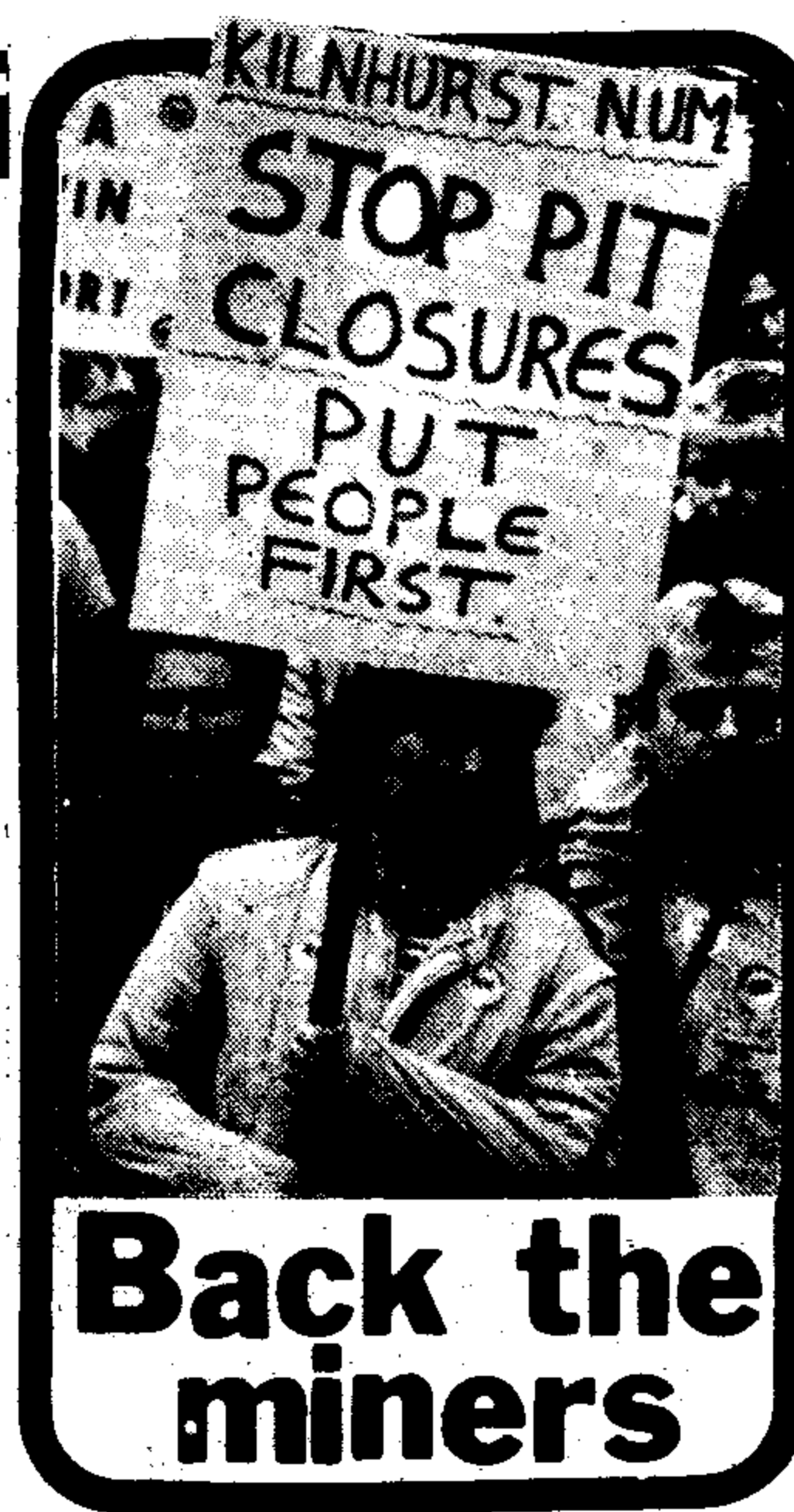
The press - all the Tory papers - are trying to say different. But we know we're on a winner, and we won't go back to work until we win.

I would like to tell the North Staffs miners to get up off their backsides and come up to Nottingham and have a look at what would happen if we were beaten - what could happen in the future regarding civil rights and freedom to walk up and down the streets. This, to my mind, is not a police state - it's a fashion of military rule whereby you're told where to go and you come back when they tell you to come back.

I'm 46 years of age and I'm frightened. I never thought I would see this."



Miners in Jubilee Gardens, London, on June 27



Strike diary

Monday July 2. NUM meets transport unions - NUR, ASLEF, TGWU, NUS - and reaffirms blockade on coal and iron ore movements to steel plants. But steel unions say no: they want to maintain 50% to 80% production. The Financial Times comments: "Mr Sirs (general secretary of the main steel union, ISTC) sounds almost like a British Steel spokesman".

John Hoskyns, chief of the Institute of Directors, repeats David Owen's call to use the Tory anti-union laws against the NUM.

Saturday June 30. Tory ministers Peter Walker and Leon Brittan make speeches trying to say that the miners' strike is all the fault of one person - Arthur Scargill!

Friday June 29. A Manchester police anti-picket unit is sent home from the Midlands, charged with drunken and rowdy behaviour.

British Steel begins running huge convoys of trucks with iron ore from Port Talbot to Llanwern.

Thursday June 28. Rail deliveries of iron ore cut off from Ravenscraig.

SDP leader David Owen calls for the nationalised industries to take the NUM to court.

Wednesday June 27. Day of action in London to support the miners: 20,000 demonstrate and thousands more strike.

Ian MacGregor says he wants a fight to the finish: "too early a resumption of work" would be bad.

Llanwern steelworks joint trade union committee chair Peter McKim takes the same line as the ISTC leadership and Ravenscraig convenor Tommy Brennan: "However material comes into this plant, we will use it". Rail deliveries of iron ore to Llanwern were halted on Monday 25th.

Notts scabs

By Tim Anderson

SCABBING miners in Notts may be close to breaking with the NUM and forming an independent 'union'.

On Friday 29th the last of 31 Notts NUM annual branch elections completed a clean sweep for the 'Working Miners' Group'.

Posters carrying the names of Working Miners' Group candidates appeared at most collieries, apparently produced on Coal Board printing facilities.

The Group has reportedly taken legal advice about forming a breakaway organisation provisionally named 'Notts '84'. A Group members at Mansfield colliery has been quoted in the press as saying that the Group had management blessing "for 'union-within-a-union' activities".

The forthcoming NUM delegate conference will have rule-change proposals before it to make it easier for the union to discipline scabs.

However, John Blessington, secretary of the Notts Working Miners' Group, dismissed the idea of a breakaway organisation as 'utter rubbish'.



Visit to the camp

ON Tuesday 26 June Carla Jamison and Angela Fraser took three striking Notts miners to visit the Greenham Women.

The Greenham Women welcomed the miners into their camp. Two women were just returning after having been arrested during the night.

Kathren is 20 and has been at the camp since April. She told us how in the night a woman from the Orange Gate Camp had woken them up with the cry 'Convoy leaving'. The women, having changed their tactics, no longer sit and watch. They grabbed their bolt cutters and proceeded to cut down nine sections of fencing to get to the silos.

Thirty soldiers and three Ministry of Defence men surrounded the women and with much verbal abuse took them away for interrogation. They were then taken to Newbury police station and charged with criminal damage - to appear in court on June 26.

The convoy that left the base consisted of five lorries but only three returned. One of the theories as to where the others have gone is that Cruise is no longer being kept at Greenham but up the road at Bramley.

Kathren said that she wasn't really sure about that but there had been a noticeable lack of security of late. At one time you couldn't walk 25 yards into the woods without a soldier following.

In September, Greenham Women are calling on all women to go on a ten-day strike, and are hoping that 10 million women will get involved.

Afterwards Angela spoke to two of the miners, Tony from Ollerton and Gary from Thoresby.



Different tactics against the police: Greenham (left) and the miners (right). Photos: John Harris.

Miners visit Greenham

Why did you ask me to take you to Greenham?

Tony: To see what it was like up there, to see how they were living, to see what the women were like.

Gary: To see how the women were struggling. It was an experience. I was really frightened, but I enjoyed the visit.

Why were you frightened?

Gary: Because of what the media have said about them. They are not really like that.

Tony: Well it's like the miners. Everybody's expecting the miners to start trouble and it's the same as the women there. They are made out to be right freaks.

Do you see any link between the miners' strike and the Greenham Women's struggle?

Tony: There's a link. They are fighting for what they believe in, aren't they? They have been fighting it for three years now - we've only been doing it for 17 weeks. They feel 100% against the nuclear bombs like we feel 100% against pit closures.

Gary: If they're fighting against nuclear power then they are fighting for us as well because if more nuclear power stations are built they are not going to want coal. So I think in a way they are fighting for us as well.

Tony: They're fighting for loads of things, aren't they? They're fighting for equal rights for women. We're supposed to have that now. Well what can I say? It is supposed to be equal rights for women but it's always been the same - men always

seem to be the most dominant. I think they're fighting to do something on their own. They need to keep men out of it because of that.

Did you discuss police tactics with the women?

Tony: Yes we did. Their tactics are completely different from ours. They said that if all the police come to move them off they sit down and start singing: when the coppers come to move us off we all start pushing them - fighting back. One woman said she had her arm right up her back, literally breaking her arm. All she said was 'let go of my arm, I'm not struggling', and he did.

If we had said that after the fighting and pushing and God knows what else - if we said 'we are not struggling' they would probably keep on doing it.

I think they've got a lot more guts than us - they're just not bothered about being arrested. I mean, I'm shit scared of being arrested. Some of the women have been locked up three or four times. If we do that we end up being put in prison for civil offences. I can remember when some of them were put away for so many days.

What did you feel like when you went into the camp?

Tony: Scared.

Gary: Yeah - I had butterflies.

Tony: Not terrified - just funny - I felt out of place because it was their camp and I felt like an intruder.

Why? Because it was all

WOMEN'S FIGHTBACK are producing a bulletin around the miners' strike. The second issue came out last week and hopefully it will be fortnightly from now on.

Each issue will feature one of the support groups (the last one was on the Rhodesia group in North Notts) and carry interviews and comments from women all over the country who are involved in the dispute.

Please send in articles, line drawings, interviews and comments to Women's Fightback, c/o Flat 2, 56 Forest Road, Nottingham.

women?

Bny: Yes. Especially because of that woman with nowt on. I couldn't get used to that. She sat there and she didn't bother. It's the first time I've experienced that, to sit there with a woman with no clothes on, who you've never seen in your life - you don't expect to see women walk around with no tops on.

There's been a lot of criticism about it being only women at Greenham - how do you feel about that?

Tony: I thought it was wrong at first. Everybody's got this thing about men, macho men, image that they can do it better and all the rest of it. Those women seem to be doing a good job - I think they're proving that.

Gary: Yeah and if they had men there they'd be saying they were prostitutes instead of lesbians.

Do you see any way that the trade union movement could form links with the Greenham Women?

Tony: I think the trade unions can help them, financially and practically. But I don't think that you'd get many ordinary families helping them because of the image people have got of them. I think that the trade unions can help them though.

I'll tell you what I was most fascinated by - how many people just drive in and out of the place, that really amazed me. Soldiers, I suppose, they must have been staff. And the size of the place! It's supposed to be a nuclear base and yet they've got people just riding in. You know, to me that's just stupid. If they're going to have a nuclear bomb in this country it should be better protected than I saw yesterday.

It makes you wonder if it's really there. We said between ourselves that we didn't think

women, I did. I mean they really believe in what they are fighting for and they don't seem to be getting anywhere.

Why do you feel sorry for them?

Tony: Well, they're living like in the Middle Ages, aren't they? They've got it all through the year. They've given everything up - kids, houses, husbands...

Gary: I mean most of them have had divorces. They've left their family for what they believe in.

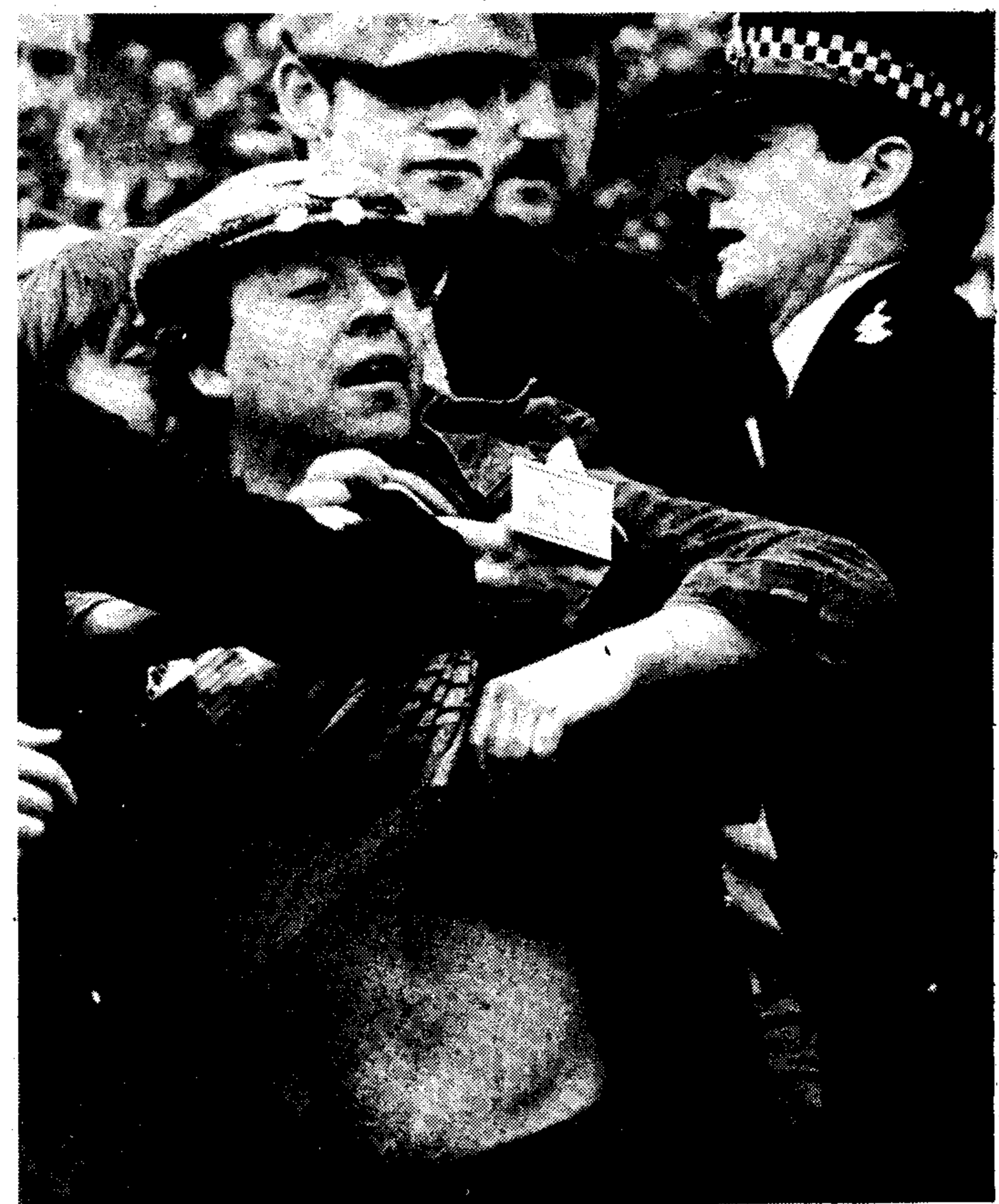
Tony: I thought they'd all be freaks, all drugged up and sat around a fire. But the women we spoke to were really intelligent. But there's no way they should hate men.

When you go back home will you tell people what it was really like at Greenham and will you encourage women to go and stay at Greenham?

Tony & Gary: Yes, of course we'll tell people what it was like.

But will you encourage women to go there?

Tony: I don't really know - I'm not too sure.



Mansfield colliery, Notts: Police grab a picket

Women against pit closures

Dalkeith, c/o Dalkeith Miners' Welfare, Dalkeith, Lothian.

Fish Cross, c/o Fish Cross Miners' Welfare, Fish Cross, Clackmannanshire.

Durham, c/o Heather Wood, 18 Halffield Drive, Easington Village, Peterlee, Co. Durham.

Kent, Kay Sutcliffe, c/o Aylesham Miners' Welfare, Aylesham, Kent.

Thurnscoe: Sheila Jow, 105, Lidget Lane, Thurnscoe, Near Rotherham.

Blidworth. Doreen Humber, 50, Thorney Abbey Road, Blidworth, Mansfield, Notts.

Edlington: Veronica Balderson,

62, Blowhall Cres., Edlington, Doncaster.

Maesteg: Teresa Parry, 13 Charles Row, Maesteg, West Glamorgan. (Tel: 738825).

Birch Coppice wives' group, Wendy Coxson, Tamworth 896069

Barnsley. Ann Hunter, 5 Packhorse Gn, Silkstone, near Barnsley phone 791187.

Maerdy Wives Support Committee, c/o Maerdy Strike Centre, Ferndale 755 301.

Oakdale, Gwent: 82 Markham Cres., Oakdale, Blackwood, Gwent. 0495 220158.

Celyen North, Gwent. c/o

Dorothy Phillips, 13 Thorn Ave., Newbridge, Gwent. 0495 245000.

Rugeley, Staffs: Mrs Jackson, 9 Woodlands, Handsacre, Rugeley, Staffs. Mrs Southwell, Rugeley 6179.

Littleton, Staffs: 6 Tower Road, High Green, Hednesford. Linda Platen, Hednesford 76614.

Merton, Durham. Hetton-le-Hall 267641.

Sheffield Women Against Pit Closures. Kath Mackey, Sheffield 381594 or 454163.

North Staffs wives' committee: Brenda Proctor, 153 Broadway, Meir, Stoke on Trent. 0782 332151.

Socialists and the strike: How we've organised

Probably the most productive work has been in Nottingham. Steve Battlemuch reports: "We started off with very few contacts, and a situation where I could not even get a seconder on the Trades Council executive for a proposal to set up a miners' support committee."

Our activity took off on the issue of the police. We called an ad hoc meeting and got 80 people there. Within ten days we had a 5,000-strong demonstration in Nottingham on the slogan, 'Police out of the coalfields'.

We made contact with some miners, and helped set up the Notts Miners Rank and File Strike Committee. Separate North Notts and South Notts strike committees have now been formed.

Our main contacts have been in North Notts - partly thanks to the consistency of our work. We have kept at it, while other groups have come in, tried to sell a few papers, and disappeared again. We have had two Socialist Organiser meetings in Ollerton, one with 200 people present, the other with 70, and a number of miners and miners' wives have become Socialist Organiser supporters.

Fund-raising trips by Notts miners elsewhere have been very useful in showing them that Socialist Organiser is a nationally organised force.

We've also done work with

Since March, Socialist Organiser groups, like the paper, have made the miners' strike central to their work. Martin Thomas surveys what the groups outside London have been doing.

the women's committees. There's a tremendous problem of sexism among miners but some progress has been made. For example, the South Notts strike committee recently voted to oppose sexist slogans.

It's an unprecedented movement - and it gives new life to the slogan that we have been arguing for ages, of a mass working class based women's movement".

Sheffield

Rob Dawber reports from Sheffield: "A lot of our work has been around North Notts, since we're as near as Nottingham is. We've got problems with transport, but we've decided to concentrate our work round three miners' welfare."

In Sheffield itself we've been active in support work, and have successfully turned ward Labour Parties to door-to-door campaigning.

Since some of us are in the NUR, that's been a major area of work, too. The possibility is being discussed of an NUR picket on railworkers scabbing at Shirebrook."

Basingstoke

The Basingstoke group has probably given the best

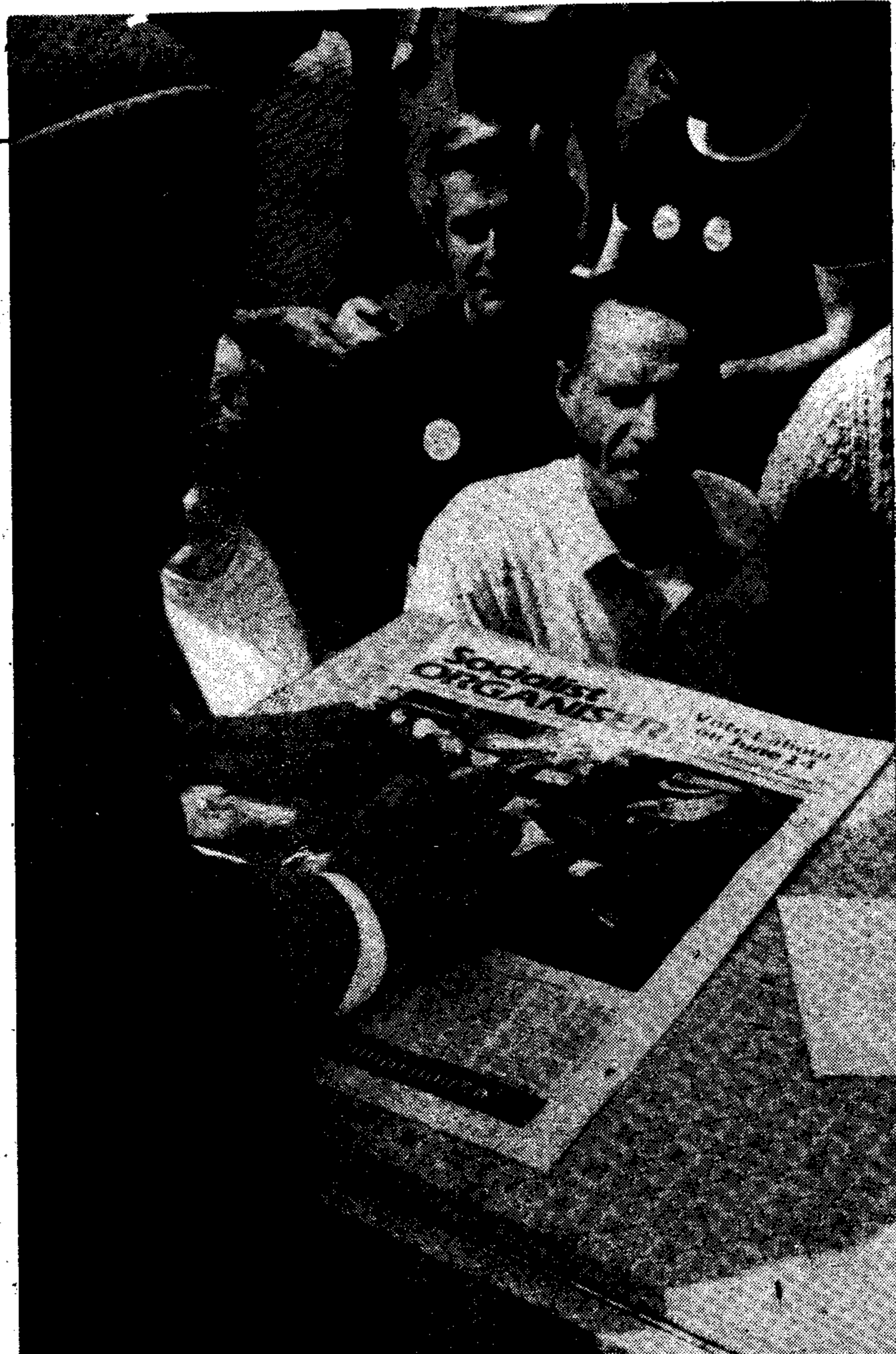
indication of what can be done in areas outside the coalfields. Alasdair Jamison reports: "We've had two very successful fund-raising visits by Notts miners to Basingstoke, and we've also organised a couple of return trips. The next thing we're building for is a 'families weekend', when miners' families will be invited down to Basingstoke for a break."

The support campaign is sponsored by the constituency Labour Party and the Trades Council, and has been very active. It's a glaring contrast with Southampton, where the Hampshire Support Committee is dominated by full-time union officials (Communist Party members). We went down with Notts miners to a meeting in Southampton, and had to sit and listen to these full-timers making speeches about how difficult any support activity was.

The activity round the miners' strike has also created the beginnings of a regional Socialist Organiser structure, linking Basingstoke with comrades in Southampton and Salisbury."

Stoke

Arthur Bough reports



Arthur Scargill signing copies of Socialist Organiser for miners in Notts.

from Stoke: "There are five pits in North Staffordshire. Initially they voted 73% against a strike, but also not to cross picket lines. Very soon all five pits had been picketed out."

We've had problems with the Labour Party 'soft left' on the support committee. Initially they dismissed the miners' strike as "a mirage" and said the Labour Party should concentrate on electioneering instead. Now, in combination with Militant, they have launched a political attack on us within the support committee and voted me out as convenor.

But we held a successful Socialist Organiser meeting with 30 to 40 miners present, and we've produced Socialist Organiser miners' strike bulletins which have been well received. There is now a small circle of miners around us interested in establishing a rank and file caucus."

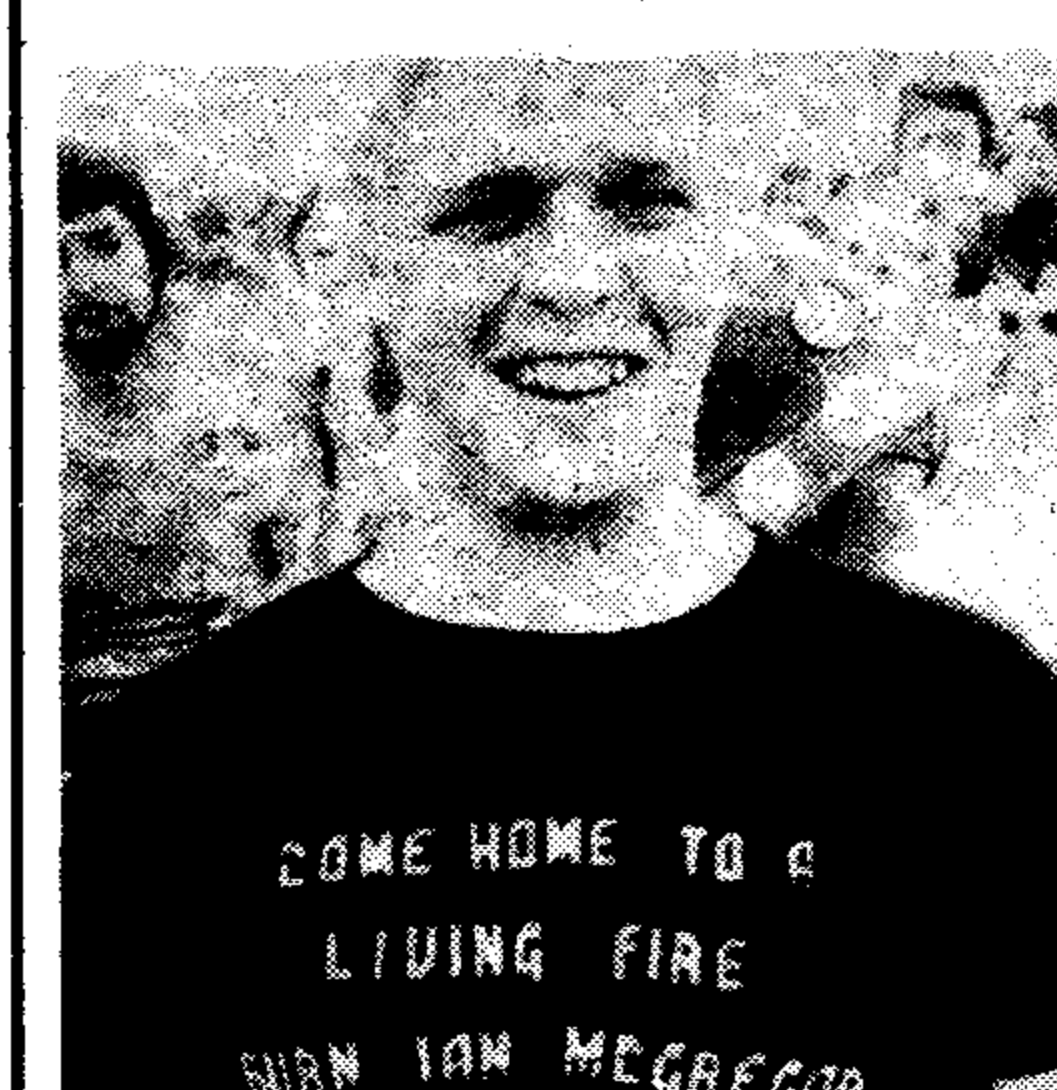
Jill Mountford adds: "Women's Fightback in Stoke has been doing a lot of work with the miners' wives' committee, and we've found a very good response."

Durham

Tony Serjeant and Gary Scott report from Durham: "This has been a traditionally moderate area, but the strike is very strong. There is a large number of support groups, each covering a small area, and they have been raising food and money to keep the strike going."

Scotland

From Scotland, Ricky Houston reports: "Socialist Organiser had a problem in not having comrades in the mining areas and not having our own transport. Also, ini-



Back the miners

Party and their co-thinkers the Labour Party.

We had made links with Nottinghamshire, but they moved to cut off the links and insist that our support activity be directed only to the Leicestershire strikers. They rejected a compromise proposal that was made, for a 50/50 division between Notts and Leicestershire."

Leicester

Though Notts, with maybe 10,000 miners out, has greater needs than Leicestershire with 35 to 40, more from outside is needed. Leicestershire, reports Clive Goodwin. "The miners' support committee, set through the Trades Council runs quite well. A lot of workplace levies have been started. Railworkers have now imposed a 100% boycott on coal movements. There are regular women's pickets."

Support has been surprisingly strong. My NAL branch last week voted support the miners, reversing a decision not to support taken nearer the start of the dispute. But the strikers are so few and so isolated that they need a lot of support and not much money has been coming in to Leicestershire from outside."

Cardiff

Geoff Williams reports from Cardiff: "The SO group has put a lot of work into support committee. The problem has been the Walsley TUC: they called a day of action, but, with all their resources, put less work into it than we did. The crucial issue now is Llanwern: will it be another Orgrave?"

York

York, reports Mary Morrison, has no pits very near the nearest is Selby. "And regional day of action was a complete flop here. But there is a miners' support committee, and regular collections have been started at some factories."

Manchester

In Manchester, reports Tony Dale, unlike many other places, "the Labour Party has had a very poor record on the strike. There is a support committee. The main contacts have been with Bold, the most militant of the Lancashire pits. We think there is a possibility of a campaign around the issue of the police focusing on the role of Manchester's Chief Constable James Anderton."

tially it was difficult to get the Edinburgh labour movement to set up a support committee. Eventually, however, the Trades Council established one on a motion from my POEU branch.

It has established links with the pits closest to Edinburgh, like Monktonhall. We have also made contact with some miners in Fife through the Socialist Organiser fringe meeting at the NUM special conference in Sheffield."

Coventry

Jean Lane and Julia Redman report from Coventry: "The work has been mainly round the Keresley pit, just outside Coventry. There is a strike support committee in Coventry, but Trades Council control has been something of a dead hand on it."

Birmingham

Jim Denham from Birmingham reports similar problems with the official trade union structure being a hindrance to solidarity activity. "Nevertheless, there has been a lot of activity in Birmingham right from the start of the strike. The city has been used as a convenient base for picketing in the Midlands by miners from Kent, South Wales, etc., and we've been busy arranging accommodation and support for them. What we can do here is basically limited only by the small size of the SO group."

Northampton

In Northampton, Dave Green reports, "A support committee was set up after the Kent miners came through the town on their march to the Midlands. There's been a good attendance, and lots of activity, but we've had political problems with the Communist

Support committees

- Cardiff: c/o Room 219, Transport House, 1 Cathedral Road.
- Birmingham: c/o Trade Union Resources Centre, 7 Frederick St., B1 3HE.
- South London: c/o Joan Twelves, 1 Alverstone House, Kennington Park Estate, SE11.
- Manchester: c/o FTAT, 37 Anson Road, Victoria Park, M14.
- Brent Miners' Solidarity Committee, c/o Local Economic Resource Unit, 389 White High Road, NW10. Ken En 459 6221.
- Maesteg Trade Union and Labour Party Support Group: c/o Isaac, 10 Bridge St., Maesteg (Tel: 738321).



By Martin Thomas

Last week I argued that the state machine is not neutral, but a powerful material force acting in the interests of the capitalist class. I posed the question: why does the overwhelming majority, the working class, allow this minority rule?

Two factors are involved: coercion and consent.

Through their existing hold on the state machine and its monopoly of legal violence the capitalist class physically beats down challenges to its rule, as at Orgrave.

But it also relies on consent. Through the media and in a thousand other ways, it convinces workers that the capitalist form of society is the only one possible and that their offerings are unavoidable.

The two factors are interlinked. Fear of 'getting into trouble' if they fight back is often rationalised by people as consent to the status quo. And even the most brutal dictatorship cannot rule without some measure of at least passive, sullen consent.

But there is a qualitative difference between a parliament-

Class rule

ary system resting mainly on consent and a dictatorship resting mainly on coercion.

It is only a difference of form - but it is an important difference for the working class, because it is the difference between some (even if restricted) legal possibility of trade union and political organisation, or none at all.

Even the most democratic of capitalist democracies uses violence against the working class. But there is still a difference between that and a full-fledged police state.

(And it's politically dangerous to blur the differences and to say, for example, that Britain today is a police state. Between battering pickets at Orgrave and making all trade unions illegal there is qualitative difference. And if we say that Britain is already a police state, then if and when our rulers do move towards a real police state we will be left like the little boy who cried wolf too often.)

If a parliamentary system rests mainly on consent, then can't it be changed simply by educating people and eventually voting a socialist majority into Parliament that will steer the state in a different direction?

No - and not only because 'socialist' MPs so often cease to be socialists when they become MPs. Even a socialist party with full democratic control over its representatives could not overthrow the power of the top five per cent as easily as that.

As Karl Marx put it, "the working class cannot simply lay hold of the ready-made state machinery, and wield it for its own purposes"

The existing state machine is fashioned as a tool for the rule of a minority over the majority. A completely different structure is required for the self-rule of the majority by the majority.

Marx and Engels identified three key features of working class power, from the example of the Paris Commune of 1871.

The standing army and the police were replaced by a workers' militia directly based on the working-class community. And:

"In the first place, it filled all [official] posts by election on the basis of universal suffrage of all concerned, subject to the right of recall at any time by the same electors. And, in the second place, all officials, high or low, were paid only the wages received by other workers".

The soviets (workers' councils) in revolutionary Russia, before the Stalinist counter-revolution, were a more developed model of these principles.

So the state machine would need to be completely broken up and restructured. Neither the chiefs of big business, nor the top people of the state machine themselves, would allow that to happen peacefully.

A parliamentary government trying to carry out socialist measures - or even radical reforms far short of socialism - would probably meet the same sort of response as the Allende government in Chile got from the Chilean army.

It is foolish to imagine that Britain is different and it could not happen here. There are probably quite a few miners with sore heads today who thought Orgrave could never happen here.

Lord Carver, former chief of the British army, has revealed that in 1974, "fairly senior officers" were talking about a military coup in Britain.

In 1914 a Liberal government in Britain, trying to introduce not socialism but only Home Rule for Ireland, faced direct revolt from the officers of the British Army.

The state machine will have to be defeated and broken up in struggle. It's a daunting prospect. But it can be done.

What it needs from the working class is numbers, organisation, determination, willingness to use any means necessary, and a clear-headed leadership.

In 1968 France's notorious riot police, the CRS, started refusing to go out on the streets. What had done that was the determination of just a few thousand students. If the working class really mobilises, it can crack and splinter the state machine.

How to beat police th

"THEY can only kill me, and there are thousands to come after". It is not often that a trade union leader says a thing like that, and less often still that he would mean it. But Jim Larkin, General Secretary of the Irish Transport and General Workers' Union, said it, during the Dublin general lock-out of 1913-14 — and he meant it, too.

"They" had already killed two workers, and were conducting a reign of terror against the workers of Dublin. "They" were the brutal Royal Irish Constabulary and the Dublin Metropolitan Police, bully-boys of the British government beating up workers on behalf of the Dublin capitalists. These bloodsuckers had declared war on the Irish Transport and General Workers' Union, and had vowed to destroy it, refusing employment to any of its members.

The experience of Dublin's workers in 1913 offers some vital lessons for British miners today. Of course, no two situations are ever exactly the same. But what the miners today have in common with the Dublin workers of 70 years ago is that they too are faced with an attempt to use overwhelming police violence to beat them down and crush their resistance.

For 8 months Dublin was convulsed by a bitter 'labour war' in the course of which the workers successfully resisted the power of the state. In order to resist they had to develop a special force for self-defence — the Irish Citizen Army.

The story that Paddy Dollard briefly re-tells here is one of the great heroic episodes in international working class history.

THE IRISH economy at the turn of the century was a backward appendage of Britain's. The working class was unorganised and therefore savagely exploited.

The minimum working day was 12 hours, wages from £1 to as low as 10 shillings, 20,000 families lived in one-room tenements. Of 5000 tenement blocks, 1500 were officially condemned as unfit for human occupation. The death rate was higher than in disease ridden Calcutta.

Into this situation Jim Larkin came. Sent by the Liverpool-based National Union of Dock Labourers to organise Belfast for that union, he eventually moved south, founding an Irish-based independent union. He set out to organise Dublin's workers.

And in a small number of years wonders had, truly, been worked in Dublin. In those days attempts at moving in organised groups of blacklegs, usually imported from another area, were very common. They relied on working class disunity and the sheer physical force of the police, and, often,

the army.

The Dublin 'unskilled', led by Larkin, soon found an answer to this sort of thing — rigorous solidarity, blacking, and sympathetic action.

The motto of the Irish Transport and General Workers' Union was "A blow against one is a blow against all". And they weren't empty or unheeded words.

When craftsmen, non-T&G, went on strike, the ITGWU stepped in, recruited their non-unionised labourers, and put them on immediate strike pay (to which they weren't 'entitled') to prevent scabbing. Dublin dockers struck for the right of seamen to organise.

Slowly Dublin workers gained a view of themselves as a class, not a ramshackle collection of people doing different jobs. The wage rates were pushed up — 40% increase in a couple of years.

This was, frankly and openly, revolutionary trade unionism. When in 1911 the revolutionary socialist and Republican James Connolly began to work as an organiser for the ITGWU, he explained that he did so "having in mind that its



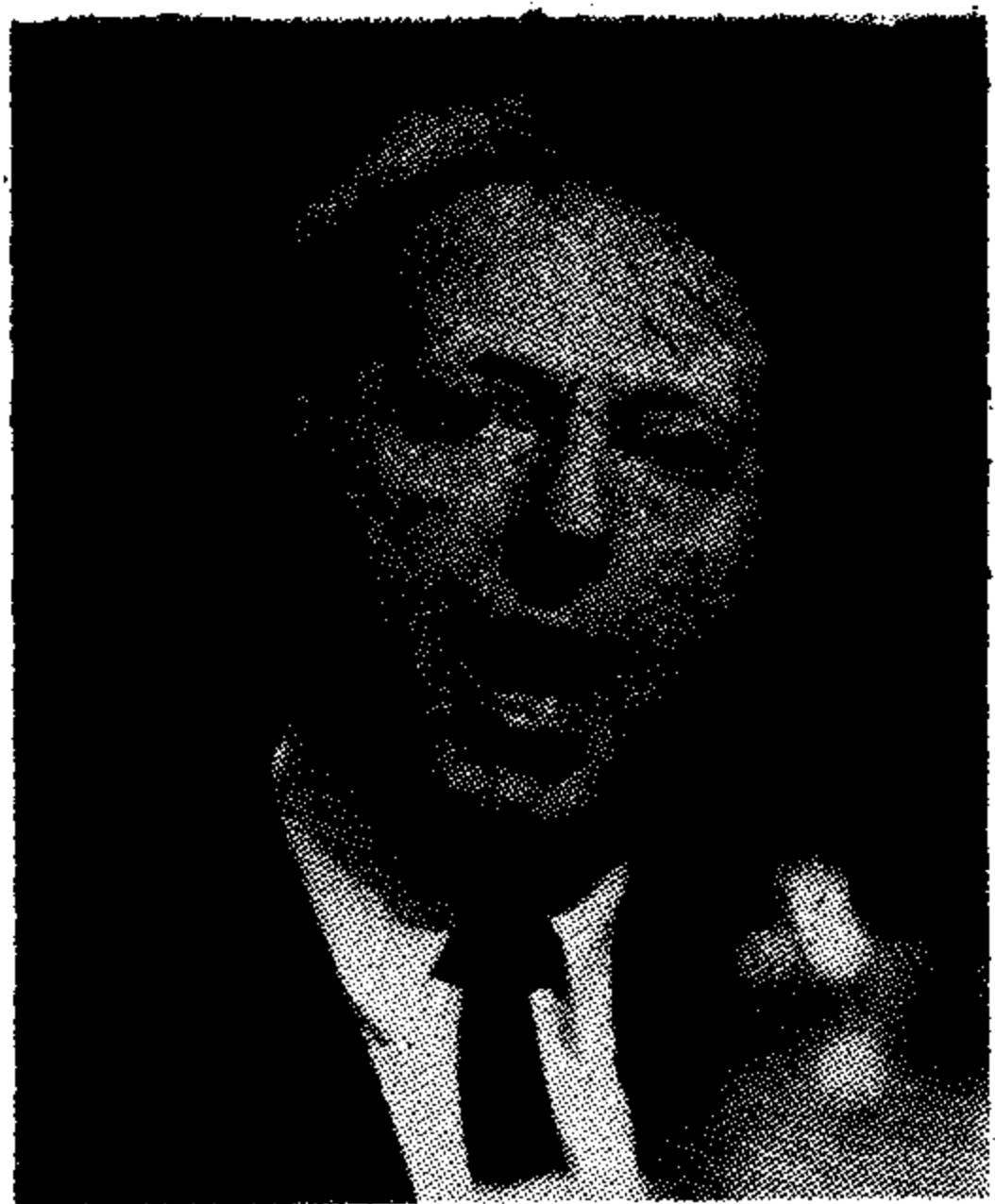
JOHN HARRIS

Vicious mounted policeman tries to baton a woman from Sheffield who tried to get help for a wounded miner during the battle of Orgreave last month.

mission is not to make slavery tolerable but to overthrow it, and replace it by a free and independent workers' republic".

The hatred for Larkin and 'Larkinism' felt by the Irish bosses was on the same scale as the achievements of the ITGWU — immense. By comparison the gutter Fleet

Street press today is polite and respectful to the nearest approach the British labour movement has to a Larkin, Arthur Scargill.



JOHN HARRIS

Arthur Scargill

The bosses used the power of the state against the union when they could and as much as they dared. In 1911 there was an attempt at a general lock-out in Wexford during which the police obligingly battered one man to death.

The showdown came in 1913. The dispatch workers at the Irish Independent newspaper were given an ultimatum by Murphy, its proprietor: 'Leave the union if you want your jobs'. Work for Murphy was immediately boycotted by the union.

Murphy also owned the Dublin tramways: so on August 26, 700 T&G tramway workers stepped onto the

street, leaving the trams wherever they happened to be at that moment.

The employers had organised a federation in 1911, and had been preparing for the showdown. They decided that this was it. They would break Larkin and root out 'Larkinism'.

On September 3 1913 400 bosses agreed to a lockout of their workers, and each one deposited a sum of money as surety that he would never make a separate peace until the union was smashed. Soon 25,000 workers were locked out.

The State moved to back up the bosses. The police in Ireland was not like the British police force then or — so far — now. Ireland was in fact a British colony, ruled



This is what the Citizen Army must have looked like during the 1913 lock-out here carrying hurleys were part of a Catholic defence force in Belfast.

"The locked-out worker who attempted to speak to a scab in order to persuade him or her not to betray the class they belonged to, was mercilessly set upon by uniformed bullies, and hauled off to prison, until the prison was full of overflowing with helpless members of our class."

often by brute force. The police force was also an army of occupation.

Its barracks, dotted round the country, were small occupation forts. It was an armed police force trained for systematic brutality and hardened to the use of force against the people.

Constables were never allowed to police their native districts, lest any fellow feeling or sympathy should hold them back.

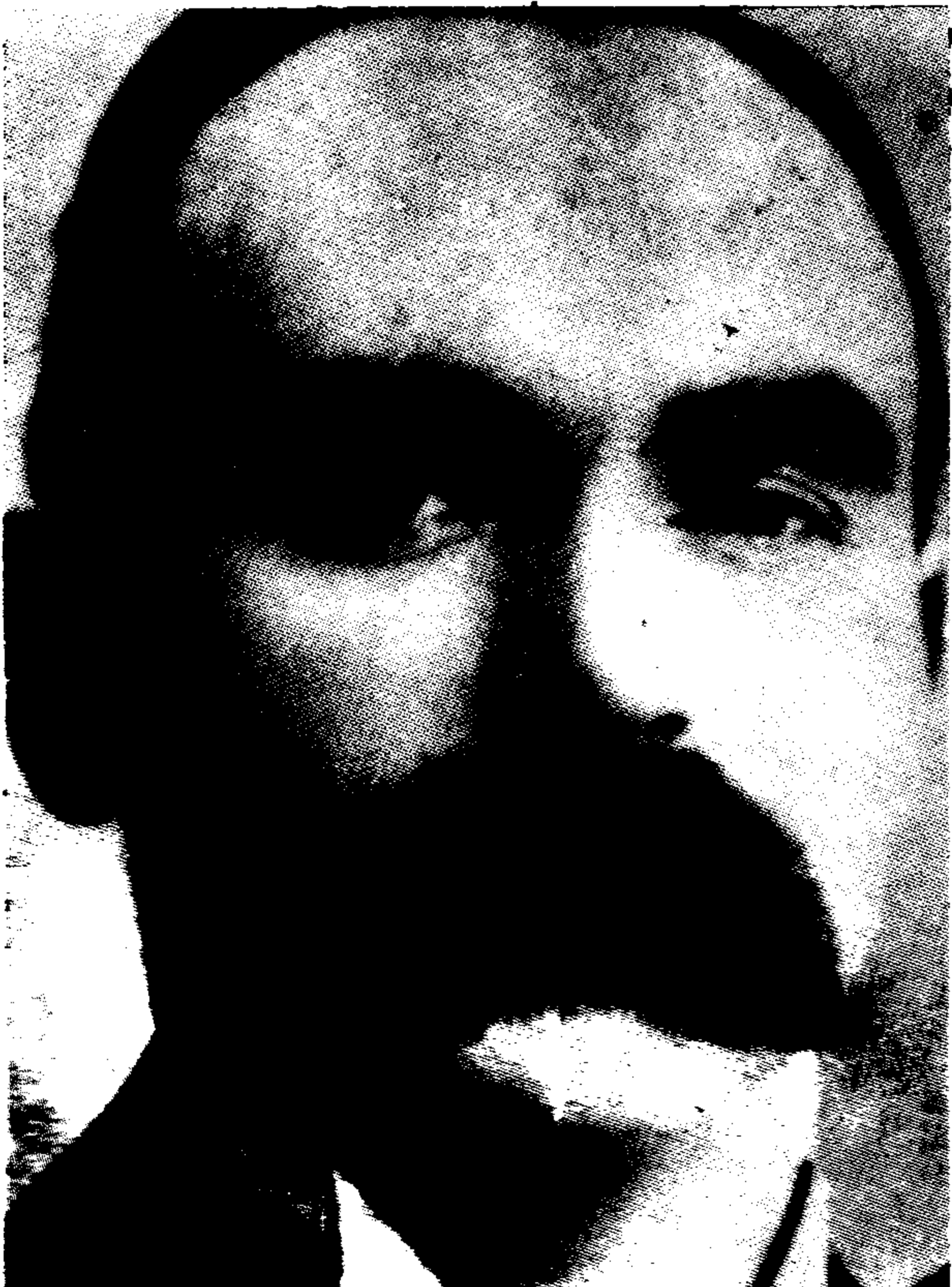
They were savage mercenaries unloosed against the strikers. James Connolly wrote: "The locked-out worker who attempted to speak to a scab in order to persuade him or her not to betray the class they belonged to, was mercilessly set upon by uniformed bullies, and hauled off to prison, until the prison was full of overflowing with helpless members of our class."

"Women and young girls by the score; good, virtuous, beautiful Irish girls and women were clubbed and insulted, and thrown into prison by policemen and magistrates, not one of whom were fit enough to clean the shoes of the least of these, our sisters".

At the end of August, the police attacked a workers' meeting.

"Our right of public meeting was ruthlessly suppressed in the streets of our city, the whole press of the country was shamelessly engaged in poisoning the minds of the people against us, every scoundrel who chose was armed to shoot and murder the workers who stood by their Union."

"Two men, James Nolan



James Connolly

James Connolly, who became an organiser for the ITGWU in 1911, explained the work of the union like this: "... it... found a class in whom seven centuries of social outlawry had added fresh degradations upon the burden it bore as the members of a nation suffering from the cumulative effects of seven centuries of national bondage and out of this class, the degraded slaves of slaves more degraded still — for what degradation is more abysmal than that of those who prostitute their manhood on the altar of profit-mongering? — out of this class of slaves, the labourers of Dublin, the Irish Transport and General Workers' Union has created an army of intelligent self-reliant men, abhorring the old arts of the toady, the lickspittle and the crawler, and trusting alone to the disciplined use of the power to labour or to withdraw their labour to assert and maintain their right as men".

New sorts of energy

Third of a series of articles by Les Hearn on socialist energy policy.

gas). There is plenty of scope for using some of the 99% of the sun's energy that radiates away into space.

Wind, waves, water.

Wind turbines have replaced the wind mill and have received a lot of attention in the US, West Germany and Holland (and a little in Britain).

This has resulted in new rotor designs and falls in costs, so wind power is rapidly becoming competitive.

One problem is the variability of the wind — supplying too much power or not enough. Combining wind with solar power could help, as one is usually high when the other is low. Surplus wind power could also be saved in a pumped-storage system. Here water is pumped up-hill. When energy is needed, the water runs downhill, through turbines which generate electricity.

One curious result of oil price rises has been a revival of the concept of the sailing ship.

Water power in the form of hydro-electric dams often has serious effects on the environment. Wave power is likely to have less effect, but is still not competitive.

Geo-thermal power.

Hot rocks in Cornwall at a depth of 2 km are already supplying super-heated water at 250°C. This should be capable of driving turbines to generate electricity. Geo-thermal power stations with combined heat and power schemes are thought capable of supplying 1% of Britain's energy needs.

New Technology.

Already, the small sums spent on research into alternative energy have resulted in many novel designs for wind turbines, solar cells, fuel cells (which convert energy in fuels directly into electricity) as well as coming up with the concept of the heat pump.

The heat pump is a sort of refrigerator in reverse. A fridge uses power to create a temperature difference while a heat pump uses a temperature difference to create power. Suitable temperature differences occur in tropical seas, where surface waters are about 20°C warmer than deep waters, or between the surface of the land and warm rocks below.

Conservation.

Factories, power stations and homes lose vast amounts of heat to the atmosphere. Unfortunately efficient insulation often increases damp and air pollution inside buildings. This is where heat exchangers can come in, using warmth from outgoing gases to warm up incoming air.

Waste heat from power stations can be used to provide hot water and air for nearby homes (as Battersea Power Station did for decades).

Summing up.

Despite the lack of research into alternative energy (compared with nuclear power), we can see that there are vast possibilities for providing the energy our future socialist society will need to take the technological foundations of capitalism further.

Therefore the Utopian schemes of the Green movement, which are certainly unrealisable in the short term, will not be necessary. However, a future socialist society may find it desirable to adopt certain aspects of the Green low energy, dispersed communism together with a transformed industrialism.

A SOCIALIST society will undoubtedly be able to reduce the horrific waste of energy resources that capitalism perpetrates, but, contrary to the hopes of the Greens, a workers' economy will still require a lot of energy. In fact, satisfying the needs of the world working class may actually require more energy than is currently being used.

We will definitely need to shift away from fossil fuels towards renewable energy sources, keeping coal, oil and gas for emergencies, but primarily for feeding into the chemical industry.

In developing new sources, we need to consider the safety of workers and consumers, the preservation of the environment, as well as reducing labour time. These factors will transform the economics of energy, since at present capitalism takes little account, if any, of our needs.

So, what are the resources available to us? Most of the energy available originates with the sun. About 1% of sunlight is trapped in energy-rich chemicals by plants. Fossil fuels represent the world's nest-egg of saved sunlight, deposited over millions of years and used up in a few hundred.

Some of the sun's heat warms the sea (causing temperature gradients between surface and deep waters) and land. This contributes to causing wind and waves through convection currents. Also, water evaporates from the sea, to fall as rain over the mountains, providing a source of water power.

The earth also possesses energy of rotation which is translated into the prevailing winds. The moon's energy of movement and gravitational pull results in the tides.

Finally, the Earth possesses a core of molten iron and lava whose heat arises from the decay of radioactive elements. In other words, we are living on the outside of a gigantic nuclear reactor. This heat causes the movement of the continents (and volcanoes and earthquakes) and appears usefully as hot springs.

A more remote possibility (despite the vast sums spent on it) is energy from nuclear fusion, the same source as the sun's energy.

Let's have a closer look at the possibilities of exploiting these resources.

Solar energy.

Turning sunlight into electricity could be competitive with fossil fuels by the end of the decade, thanks to the large amounts spent on research (mainly due to defence and space flight needs).

Already, arrays of solar cells power satellites, and are being set up on Earth (e.g. in California). You can also get solar-powered calculators!

Alternatively, the sun's heat can be used to heat water in rooftop absorbers, even in Britain. The temperature difference between surface and deep waters in tropical seas can also be tapped, using heat pumps.

Crops can be grown directly for energy (like sugar-cane for alcohol in Brazil) or natural processes of decay can be harnessed to provide fuel gas (bio-



Jim Larkin speaks in what is now O'Connell Street, Dublin. A statue modelled on Larkin in this photo was erected in O'Connell Street in the early '70s.

ings

out worker
ed to speak
rder to per-
her not to
class they
was merci-
n by unifor-
and hauled
n, until the
ull to over-
h helpless
ur class.”
es Connolly

and John Byrne, were clubbed to death in the street” — and 400 were injured on this 'Bloody Sunday'.

To the economic blackmail of the bosses, trying to starve the workers of Dublin into submission, was now, clearly, to be added unrestrained use of police violence. But Dublin's workers had indeed, as Connolly put it, learned self-reliance in the great school of Larkin. They were not going to “crawl back into our slums, abase our hearts, bow our knees, and crawl once more to lick the hand that would smite us”.

They organised a trade union militia to defend themselves. When the police had let it be known that they would smash the musical instruments of the band of the Aungier St ITGWU branch (which had dared to play a popular tune, 'The Peeler and the Goat', which mocked the Royal Irish Constabulary), the branch decided it wasn't going to let them break their instruments.

Next time they paraded the band was flanked by lines of pickets swinging hurleys — clubs somewhat like hockey sticks used in the Irish national sport. After Bloody Sunday the idea caught on and spread.

Here was a test for the union leadership. Were they going to continue to fight back, escalating the struggle, and the means of struggle where necessary? Larkin had meant it when he said that they could do no more than kill him — and if they did, others would replace him.

So in September 1913, the



13 lock-out. The men shown in 1971.

union formally organised its own militia, calling it 'The Irish Citizen Army'. It soon taught the police to respect the union's meetings and demonstrations. No longer faced with an unorganised crowd, the police were less anxious to break heads — because they weren't anxious to get their own heads broken.

The strike dragged on for many months of miserable starvation. These were also months of glorious heroism of the working class.

The great-hearted Dublin workers were as unwilling to be beaten down and cowed by the brute force of the bosses' police thugs as by the economic brute force of the Dublin bosses who had locked them out.

That great spirit allowed them to win incidental victories for the union. James Connolly, ITGWU Belfast organiser, was recalled to Dublin when Larkin was arrested. Arrested, and given three months in jail, he refused to recognise the court. As a British court, he said, it had no jurisdiction in Ireland. He went on hunger strike. After eight days he was released.

In October Larkin was jailed for seven months. A mass campaign, which was especially powerful in Britain, forced the government to release him after 17 days. Mass picketing on the quays stopped the importation of scabs.

But there was stalemate in Dublin. Only the industrial power of the British working class could tip the balance. Militants began to agitate in Britain for a general strike to support Dublin. But British union leaders refused to take action to defend the ITGWU. Many of them hated Larkin the way their present-day equivalents hate Arthur Scargill. They feared him too — as the TUC time-servers of

today fear Scargill.

The TUC refused to take strike action in support of Dublin. Shiploads of food from British workers did sail up the Liffey to help the starving workers of Dublin. That helped them to survive. To win they needed industrial action.

Isolated now in their war of attrition with the Irish capitalists, the Dublin workers stuck it out grimly. Eventually the strike ended in a sort of 'draw' early in 1914. The union was not smashed. It survived. Without the Citizen Army it might have been crushed.

But its ability henceforth to use its full weight in solidarity action was markedly weakened.

And the Citizen Army? In those years the Orange Unionists in the North of

Ireland and the Home Rule capitalists in the South (the leader of the Dublin bosses, Murphy, was a prominent nationalist) had their own armed and uniformed militias, the Ulster Volunteers and the Irish Volunteers.

The Citizen Army, too, armed itself, and uniformed itself, and was maintained after the strike ended. In 1916, under Connolly's leadership (Larkin was in the US), it formed about one quarter of the handful of men and women who rose in 'Rebellion' against British rule in Ireland. Connolly died before a British Army firing squad.

It did not thus cease to be a trade union militia. It acted from the conviction that it was in the interests of the working class of Ireland to overthrow British rule in Ireland. But that is another story.



Larkin in disguise is arrested on 'Bloody Sunday' 1913, the day the police ran riot in Dublin. Larkin had vowed to speak to the strikers despite a police ban. To avoid arrest he moved through the assembled crowd of workers disguised as a bent and bearded old man. He made his way to the balcony of the hotel overlooking the crowd and then the bent 'old man' straightened himself up and started to speak. A great roar of triumph went up from the workers below. Then the police baton-charged...

Policewatch

- Sheffield Police watch: 73, West Street, Sheffield S1 4EQ.
- Kent police monitoring group: Richard De Friend or Ian Grieg Spall, 0227 66822.
- Nottingham Co-ordinating Committee Against the Police Presence: c/o Ivan Wels, 11, Osborne St., Sherwood, Nottingham.
- Ollerton strike HQ is collecting statements about police behaviour: Pete, Mansfield 862790.

RICK MATHEW



Workers occupied the Timex plant in Dundee over forced redundancies.

Build workplace branches!

OVER THE last two years workplace branches of the Labour Party have been springing up around the country.

There are now believed to be about 90 branches in operation. All of them were set up singly and in isolation from each other, responding to a need for bringing socialist politics into the workplace and for drawing the links between the Labour Party and trade unions, especially at a time when both are under attack from the policies of the anti-working-class Tory government.

As a result of two fringe meetings at the 1983 Labour Party conference — one organised by the Institute of Workers Control and the other by Socialist Organiser — a national seminar of

Nearly all miners are dissatisfied with the Labour Party leadership's performance in the dispute. And a good few are thinking of doing something about it, by joining the Labour Party and fighting for a new leadership. Pit workplace branches are a good way to do this. This circular, from Jean Lane on behalf of the national coordinating committee of Labour Party workplace branches, explains what is happening with workplace branches.

Contact the coordinating committee c/o Geoff Dixon, 1 Pelham Court, 44 Hatherley Road, Sidcup, Kent, or Nik Barstow, 165 Liverpool Road, London N1.

Workplace Branches was held in January 1984 to draw the branches together. It was a great success.

It brought the isolated branches together to pool experiences and discuss problems. It showed that many of the problems, for example of getting set up and of being recognised by the Labour Party, were shared by all the branches.

The seminar showed that this most important role

was being played in the absence of guidance or assistance from the Labour Party at national, regional and local levels. It was decided that:

a) The national Labour Party should compile and distribute a national directory of workplace branches.

b) A national committee should be established to coordinate the development of workplace branches.

c) Regional committees should be set up to encourage and assist the setting up of workplace branches and to compile a regional speakers' list.

d) That the constitution of workplace branches be altered to ensure liaison between workplace branches and local Labour Parties.

The overwhelming feeling at the seminar was that there is a widespread enthusiasm for the setting up of workplace branches that they have an important role to play in the winning back of support and the winning of new support to the ideas of socialism.

We are planning to hold a fringe meeting at Labour Party conference 1984 in October on workplace branches

Council discredited

ISLINGTON Labour Council's mis-handling of the nursery workers' dispute is bringing discredit on the Labour Party in the borough and beyond it. The Party Wards and the two General Management Committees have severely criticised the conduct of the Council in this matter.

Councillors should heed this criticism instead of resenting it. The previous Labour Council resented rank and file criticism and finally deserted the Party. Unless they are very careful a number of present councillors are going to end up the same way.

Socialists who are in positions of public office within all the difficulties of the capitalist state structure must continually re-study the fundamentals of socialist theory and apply self-criticism to their own work. They would do well to remember the words of Rosa Luxemburg: "far more important than what is written in a programme is the way in which that programme is interpreted in action".

CECIL SHARPLEY,
Chair, Barnsbury Ward,
Islington South Labour Party



Pat Longman: moved a motion to pay the nursery workers

'No longer left'

By Nik Barstow

ISLINGTON Labour councillors have as good as declared that they are no longer part of the 'local government left'.

At a Labour group meeting on July 2 they voted to boycott a meeting on strategies to fight rate-capping called by London Labour Briefing and Hackney and Lewisham Labour Lefts on July 13 (10am at Lewisham Labour Club, Limes Grove, London SE13).

Why? Because the meeting "support a 'three Nos' policy" of fighting the government — no cuts, no rate rises, no ren-rises.

That most of the councillors aren't very 'left' isn't news to Islington's nursery workers. They have been on strike since April, after getting a minimal offer on their claims for improved staffing and pay in the council's day centres.

Nor is it news to the NALGO members in the Social Services, Computer and Housing Transfer departments, who struck on July 3 to support the nursery workers because the council has been trying to 'sit out' the strike.

But the council is under real pressure from the 'left' it now so dislikes. As the strike has continued and spread, the local Labour parties have supported the nursery workers.

At the Labour group meeting the vote was only 16 to 12 to reject discussing an emergency motion from councillor Pat Longman (an SO supporter) which called for the negotiators to meet within a few days and make 'a substantial increase to the offer'.

And after growing pressure the Labour group have at last fixed a joint meeting with the Labour Party on July 13 to decide a policy.

Though the pressure has made some councillors think again, it has made others even more entrenched. They have started witch-hunting and vicious attacks on NALGO — "its local leadership is out of control" — and on Labour Party members, who are portrayed as trying to push the council 'over the edge' into a confrontation with the government.

The reality is that it is the Labour Party members and NALGO who are trying to stop the council destroying any chances we might have of building a united fight against the rate-capping threat.

And if we lose, it will be the council leadership who have prepared the way for defeat.

Letter: Changing the LPYS

READING the articles in SO 180 concerning the future of the Labour Party Young Socialists, I noticed some sad truths and some rather odd ideas.

Jane Ashworth and Clive Bradley assert that within the LPYS the "Bennite current... barely exists". I hardly need tell anyone that the number of delegates at LPYS conference is highly unrepresentative of the number of Labour Party members under 26 who may represent a certain part of the party.

The article says, "The Labour Party is a broad, comparatively open party, but the YS is different," and, "It's not surprising that a big reformist current has not grown in the YS." Both very true,

but the actual membership of the party under 26 is as broad as the party itself. The fact is that the Bennite left (and the old right) do exist among the young membership — they just don't want to go to LPYS meetings. The membership of the LPYS stands at 5000 yet the young party members must number 30,000.

There seems to be a disagreement over whether the task facing us is to build revolutionary politics, as Jane and Clive seem to believe, or, to organise, as Dominic Johnson says, "the hundreds of new activists... who are not yet convinced of the need for a full revolutionary Marxist pro-

gramme" i.e. a broad Non-Militant Front.

The real problems facing this growing front is that the LPYS itself is small, opinionated and repelling to the vast majority of young Labour Party members. Most of us, consequently, have better things to do on YS night.

So, given these problems, how do we defeat the Militant?

It is Militant's tactics that have helped them establish a stranglehold on the LPYS.

I certainly think that no-one outside Militant could consider these organisational and recruitment tactics. Although picking off and holding certain branches is useful, it really shouldn't be necessary.

Winning through our own policies whether 'revolutionary' or not would be the preferable method. However, the opposition to Militant is very broad and could not unite around policies or candidates.

Also Militant are not explicitly a revolutionary organisation. Their 'transitional programme' (35 hours, £100, nationalise the top 200 monopolies) is just a list of reforms that working people can identify with. Their activity, (fly-posting, leafleting, meetings and "secret meetings/caucuses") is not revolutionary — they are not the ones organising the Miners Support Committees. No, Militant are very clever, they tell people what they want to hear, and can grasp, and they don't talk down to them — they compromise politics in order to keep in control.

We could overcome this practice, because our (non-Militant) politics are better. However,

it would involve a long sustained fight in almost every branch — I don't believe many of us can be bothered to start from scratch in some branches, as I said before we can do good somewhere else on YS night.

The third way to defeat Militant is to turn the LPYS outwards and involve the mass of the young membership and the young trade unionists. This would require constitutional change; to allow Union representation at Youth Section Conference, and, perhaps, to force all young members into a Youth Section — especially those who at the moment are involved at Ward and Constituency level. Once the young membership of the party is involved in the Youth Section it can be turned into a democratic, campaigning, mass movement.

Furthermore, I would suggest that the age limits for Youth Sections should be changed to 13-21 (especially compulsory youth sections) to allow more experienced members to participate fully in the Wards and not feel tied to the Youth Section.

As I said before, we have the majority of members behind us and could take over the LPYS tomorrow if we had the organisation and if we could be bothered. (One lost AGM and non-Militant attendance dropped to one or two). I think all of us should decide whether we want to make the LPYS a priority — and if we don't then we should let the budget be cut until there is no LPYS.

BEN GRIGG
Ex-secretary, Brentford and
Isleworth LPYS
(Still an independent)

A woman for NEC

From WAC

Labour Women's Action Committee — is promoting and supporting the first black woman to stand as a candidate for the Party's National Executive Committee. She is Ms Diane Abbott, the first black woman to be elected to Westminster Council, where she represents a Paddington ward. Labour WAC has — after wide consultation among women — prepared a feminist slate for the Women's Section of the NEC.

Supporting the slate, the WAC secretary, Anne Pettifor, said "Members of the Women's Section of the Labour Party's NEC are meant to represent the women of our movement. Under the present system, women in that section represent the interests of the men who elect them — the big union leaders."

"WAC is proud to be supporting women who believe in advancing women's rights and who are outstanding and courageous in their struggles on behalf of black people, low-paid agricultural workers, the Irish people and, in the case of Frances Morrell, the educational needs of London's disadvantaged children.

"We are also proud to be combining with Diane Abbott a leader of the struggle for black rights both within the Labour Party and outside it. Together women and blacks are determined to challenge the white, male, monopoly of the labour movement's political power".

The full list of the women WAC is supporting is as follows: Joan Maynard MP, Margaret Beckett MP, Clare Short MP, Frances Morrell, leader of the Inner London Education Authority, and Diane Abbot, Westminster City Councillor.

Asked why she had chosen to run, Diane Abbot said: "I want to run and I'm keen to run because it's part of a wider move by black people like me who are in the Labour Party and are loyal socialists, to get the Party to face up to its own racism and sexism."

"The racism is shown not only by the Party's support in the past for racist immigration measures, but also by the bad deal black people get from too many Labour local authorities in areas like housing and social services. White men have to learn that it's not enough to say how sorry you are for black people. We want real political power at all levels."

Two pamphlets summing up the ideas of Socialist Organiser. 'Where We Stand' 20p plus 16p postage. 'How to fight the Tories' - 10p plus 16p postage. Or the two together for 45p including postage. From Socialist Organiser, 28 Middle Lane, London N8



From a docker's wife to a miner's wife June 9th:
10p plus postage from: 8 Aubyn Square, London SW15.

Behind the Sikh revolt

Colin Foster looks at the conflict in the Punjab.

THE Indian Army is still rounding up Sikhs by the hundred in Punjab, and some 4,000 are being held in detention. About 100 are reported to have been killed in scattered clashes since the seizure by the Army of the Sikhs' holy places in Amritsar on June 6, when over 1000 were killed.

The Army is still occupying the holy places.

Up to 5,000 Sikhs in the Army have mutinied or deserted, and one Hindu general was killed by his Sikh troops in early June. Meanwhile Sikhs overseas have declared an 'independent Sikh state' of Khalistan in Punjab.

Communal strife, and conflicts between the central government and local administrations, have been common in India ever since independence. With a population one-and-a-half-times the whole of Europe, and a huge variety of languages and ethnic groups, India would be difficult to keep unified under the best of conditions.

The terrible poverty of the mass of the population and the huge inequalities between rich and poor; the cynical use of communal or religious rallying-cries by capitalist politicians; the bureaucratism and corruption of the Indian state; and the inadequacy of the parties based on the working class, have fuelled the fires of communalism.

Although India is officially a secular state, assertion of Indian national identity is often mixed up with assertion of the Hindu majority religion.



Sikhs demonstrating in Punjab

The two main parties based in the working class — the Moscow-line Communist Party of India and the breakaway Communist Party of India (Marxist) — have generally tailed the capitalist parties, the CPI lining up behind the ruling Congress (I) and the CPI(M) behind the Janata opposition.

The Congress (I) government has tried to blame the Sikh agitation on foreign, specifically Pakistani, agents. All the evidence is, however, that the Sikh communalist agitation had a genuine mass base.

It is not a simple issue of an oppressed minority up against a bureaucratic central government.

There are about 12 million Sikhs in India. Two-thirds of them live in Punjab, where they are just over half the population. They are distinguished from the Punjabi Hindus not ethnically or by language, but only by their religion, a 16th century break-away from Hinduism incorporating elements from Islam.

Punjab is the wealthiest (or least poor) state in the Indian federation, and Sikhs generally are better off than the average in India. Many leading positions in the national life of India are held by Sikhs, and they are between 10% and 15% of the Army (as against only 2% of the general population).

Many of the Sikh communalists' demands are demands for privileges rather than against oppression. For example, they demand that the proportion of Sikhs in the Indian Army — which has been steadily and deliberately reduced from 27% at independence — should be maintained.

The 45 demands of the Sikh communalists — originally formulated in 1973, but heavily campaigned for only over the last two or three years — also include:

- * Autonomy for Punjab.
- * Making the city of Chandigarh, at present the common capital of Punjab and of Haryana, the capital of Punjab alone.
- * A single all-India administration for the Sikh temples. (At present Sikh temples outside Punjab are often controlled by Congress supporters. The revenues of the temples are very large).
- * Reallocation of the water supply in the region in favour of Punjab as against other states.
- * A new law of inheritance for Sikhs, so that only the elder son can inherit and land does not get divided up.
- * Revision of the clause in the Indian constitution which defines Sikhs as a sub-category of Hindus.
- * Radio transmissions of the Sikh sacred texts.

The central government has made concessions on many of these demands. But all of them correspond to the interests of the Sikh propertied classes rather than the workers and the smallest farmers.

It is difficult to see a socialist or democratic case for the demand for a separate Sikh state. Given that Punjab combines Sikhs and non-Sikhs in almost equal numbers, the demand would surely mean either Sikh oppression of the Hindus (and Muslims) in Punjab, and/or huge population movements.

According to an article by Harish Puri in the Bombay Economic and Political Weekly, the roots of the problem go back to the last century.

When Indian soldiers mutinied against the British colonial commanders in 1857, the Sikh troops remained loyal. After 1857, the British followed a deliberate policy of fostering a separate Sikh identity, and recruiting their Indian Army mainly from the Sikhs and other so-called 'martial races' rather than the population in general.

Even as late as the 1880s "the Sikhs regarded themselves and were regarded by everybody else as an integral part of the Hindus". But eventually the British policy had its effect.

Separate denominational education, and later separate electorates, were established for



Bhindranwale, a reactionary movement.

Sikhs, Hindus, and Muslims in Punjab. "The foundations of partition politics were laid precisely in Punjab in the 1920s."

After independence the Indian bourgeoisie continued on the sordid path blazed by the British. "Hindus of virtually all political hues stoked the fire of communalism . . . The Congress Party in its game of power politics made unprincipled compromises, and instead of fighting communalism, it in fact strengthened the latent communalism in both communities."

Despite all this, conflicts between Sikhs and Hindus remained slight compared to those between Hindus and Muslims. In 1966 Punjab was separated off, as a state within the Indian federation, from neighbouring Haryana — but the new Punjabi state was defined on the basis of language and culture, not religion.

When questioned about the demand for a 'Sikh homeland', the leader of the main Sikh party at the time replied: "The demand will die for good. It was a useless demand and has practically fizzled out".

Two factors, however, revived Sikh separatism.

The first was cynical manipulation by the Congress party. The main Sikh party, the Akali Dal, had "a leadership and support based among farmers who were threatened by the Congress policy of land reforms". During the mid and late 1970s it allied with the anti-Congress opposition on an all-India level. Congress responded by covertly fostering and aiding the more extreme Sikh communalists against the Akali Dal.

The second and more fundamental was economic development.

Punjab after 1966 was the centre of the 'Green Revolution' in India — a rapid increase in agricultural productivity. This made quite a few people rich — but many more stayed poor.

"The ratio of landless workers in the total agricultural workforce rose from 17.3% in 1961 to 32.1% in 1971 . . . 24% of the small farmers and 31% of the marginal farmers lived according to a recent study below the poverty line".

In the absence of an adequate working class party, communalism became the way in which the tensions arising from this economic turmoil were expressed.

One "clash of economic interests" is "spelled out in terms of a clash between Hindu trader and Sikh farmer".

Also: "In the urban areas the trading castes among Sikhs operate at a lower level as compared with Hindu traders . . . The Sikh trading castes . . . find in religious symbols the only way of defending their own trade interests . . . The (moderate Sikh) leadership appeared to them to be a champion of the cause of the agricultural castes which was little bothered about the urban Sikh's plight".

For both Sikh propertied classes, farmers and traders, communalism was also a way of diverting the growing Sikh proletariat from class politics.

But India today has an industrial working class 18 million strong. Dockers, jute workers, and textile workers have recently had huge strikes.

Class politics show the only way out. Given the tradition of relatively harmonious relations, it seems likely that a programme of limited religious rights — without supporting demands for Sikh privilege or a separate Sikh state — could be a basis for reconciling Sikh and Hindu workers and peasants within a common class struggle.

But opposition to Sikh communalism cannot mean support for the current repression by the central government. The Congress (I) has a large part in the responsibility for the rise of communal divisions, and the repression is very likely to make those divisions deeper and more embittered.



USSR soldier in Afghanistan

-Afghanistan- Dissent in the ranks

THE USSR offensive which began in late April against Afghan rebel forces in the Panjshir valley, in north-east Afghanistan, seems to have been no great success.

The USSR forces are occupying about one third of the Panjshir valley area, but there was never any doubt about their ability to do that.

Reports indicate that the USSR offensive did not succeed in crushing the rebel forces based in the area — which retreated without offering battle. Their chances of maintaining control of the area for any length of time are therefore small. An occupying force in such terrain is extremely vulnerable to guerilla harassment.

An interview published last month in the Paris daily Le Monde gives some picture of conditions in the USSR army of occupation.

Five deserters and one prisoner from the USSR army, aged between 19 and 21, spoke to a journalist from a US government financed radio station. The source of the interview makes it possible that it has been painted up, but the substance of it is in line with independent reports.

It is quite common, the soldiers said, for conscripts to ask to be sent to Afghanistan. The newspapers in the USSR describe the occupying army as building houses, nurseries and schools, and occasionally helping the Afghan army put down 'bandits'. "So why not? They think that maybe they will bring back some medals, and be able to buy stuff that they can't get at home".

The reality is different. Casualties are heavy. And. "You are not very well fed in Afghanistan... The veterans take all the butter and bread from the rookies, and besides it's very bad quality bread.

The soldiers live 30 or 40 to a tent. You don't have any underwear, the bedding is never changed, and it is practically impossible to get a wash. The young soldiers are constantly dirty and hungry.

Their pay is confiscated by the veterans, too.

As for the officers, they live in cottages, three or four to a room. They are better fed, with their own special canteen. They also have their own baths".

Divisions between nationalities are consciously manipulated by the military hierarchy.

"For example, the commander will first take some Russians, and

then in the next contingent some Turcomans. The Russian veterans rule the roost and the Turcomans are their victims.

One year later, the Russians are demobbed and the commander chooses a new company of Russians. The new recruits become the victims of the Turcomans who are now veterans and who have been 'educated' by the treatment they received from the previous draft...

That way, there is no cohesion among the soldiers, it is everyone for himself, and so there are no collective demands or protests...

As for the officers, the soldiers hate them all, with only rare exceptions".

To improve their miserable conditions, the soldiers steal both food from the Afghan people and equipment and arms from the army — which they sell for food or for hashish and cocaine.

The brutality of the USSR army towards the Afghan people also sickened these soldiers. Vladimir Naumov describes an Afghan prisoner being strapped over a cannon mouth and blown to bits, in a repetition of what the British Army did to captured rebels in the Indian Mutiny of 1857.

Igor Rykov says: "We don't take any prisoners of war. Generally the prisoners are killed on the spot..."

One day we arrived in a village where there were only women, old men, and children... [The officer] gave the order to put them in one room and throw grenades at them".

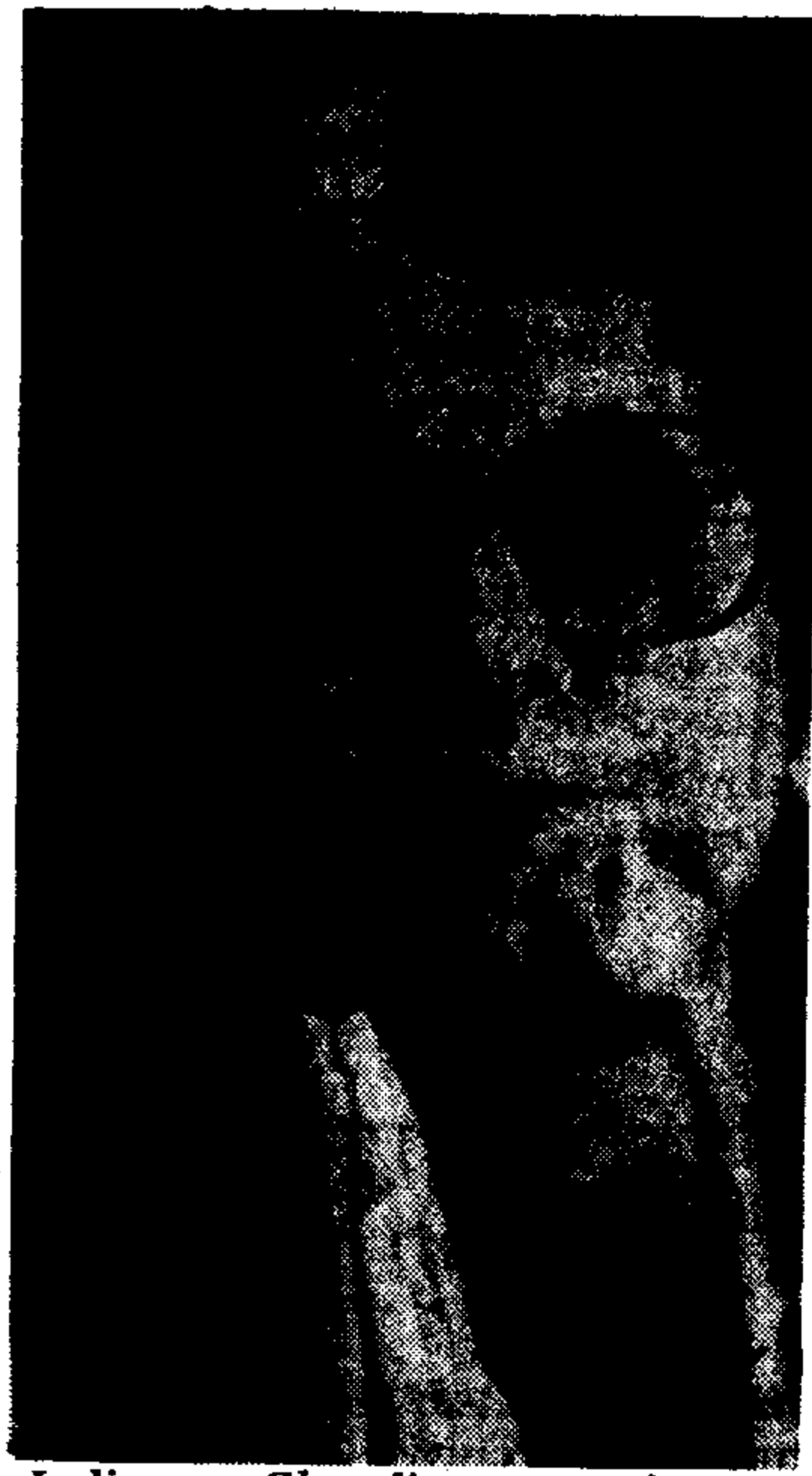
Vladimir Naumov again. "Everyone knows the 'scorched earth' tactic. That's what we use in Afghanistan, with the aid of technology.

Our principal weapon is the air force, especially the Mi-8 and Mi-24 helicopters..."

Napalm is used a lot in Afghanistan. The artillery shells are mainly of the fragmentation type. Aerial bombs, each of which contains 30 or 40 little bombs, are also used a lot. That sort of bomb kills everyone within a radius of one kilometre".

Much of the story is horribly familiar. The casual brutality towards the local population, the acute demoralisation in the ranks, the blundering, ponderous way in which everything is done, all recall the US in Vietnam.

And, all qualifications granted, there is a real parallel. A modern, high-technology war machine is venting its destructive force on an oppressed people — and learning that technology alone is not enough to win a war.



Indira Gandhi, reactionary repression.

Letter from a reader

I'm one of your regular readers and also I sell your paper. I was actually shocked to read your comments on Sikhs demonstrating in London (No. 183, June 14, p.8). Whoever has written the comments under the photo must be very ill-informed and completely ignorant of Punjab politics.

"Against repression of Sikhs in India" — this is totally untrue. There is no Sikh repression in India. Sikhs enjoy more than their fair share in every walk of life.

Also, it is not true that the central government has sent in the army to repress the 'Sikh movement'. There is no Sikh movement as such. Most of the extremists are inspired by foreign powers. They were known criminals and other anti social elements who have taken refuge in a holy place and exploited the innocent

people in the name of religion, murdered their own people, and murdered the communists and all progressive forces.

There were about 100 people, most of them innocent, murdered each day over the past 1 1/2 years. Shops and banks were robbed. It has to be stopped. The extremists have more weapons than the police.

By the way, I'm against Congress and Indira Gandhi.

I'm shocked if you can publish a lie in one field. It is possible most of your stories are not checked before being published. I'm sorry, I will not read or sell your paper any more.

H.C.CHOPRA,
New Barnet, Herts.

• The caption was hastily written and unbalanced. But we stick by our opposition to the Indian government operation

■ Debate

Uniting the Scottish people?

OVER 74,000 battle-hardened campaigners flocked into Glasgow recently, scene of the latest Campaign for a Scottish Assembly (CSA) conference on how to achieve the "birth of Scottish democracy".

Unfortunately for the CSA, 74,000 of them chose to watch the Scotland-England game at Hampden Park. Only 50 of them opted for being the potential political midwives of the future. Apart from being slightly smaller, the attendance at the CSA conference was also somewhat different in its class composition from the crowd at Hampden.

But the CSA, as it points out in its own literature, is "not an organisation of the establishment, but of the people." Which people? Well, all people - irrespective of their political affiliations, religious beliefs, class position in society, etc., etc.

The result is an utterly inchoate campaign, attempting to draw together around the diversionary demand for a Scottish Assembly utterly contradictory elements in society. "We must strive for harmony between the political parties. We must build support at the grassroots and also win support from other pressure groups: the churches, trade unions and big business," declared the closing platform speaker at the conference.

The historical precedents for such a convention are legion. Readers will doubtless recall, as the CSA pamphlet does, the Scottish National Convention of 1689 or the even more recent Philadelphia Convention of 1786, which drew up the present constitution of the USA.

But let no-one wrongly regard the CSA as a collection of hot-blooded firebrands. Quite the contrary: they are the most mealy-mouthed prim and proper constitutionalists since the members of the Frankfurt Parliament screwed up the German bourgeois revolution of 1848.

To quote again from the CSA pamphlet on a SCC: it claims that the great merit of setting up a SCC is that it "would break our impasse in a perfectly constitutional and democratic (pip, pip!) manner and would command the respect of the international community."

"We're in the business of building bridges. (Where to? A

By Stan Crooke

time warp?). A new discipline is needed, we need to stop our bickering and get together in the common pursuit of a Scottish Assembly," declared the Communist Party member masquerading as a tribune of the people who chaired this non-event.

The question confronting the conference was how to achieve a SCC. The CSA pamphlet had put forward three options for its establishment, each one as useless and impossible as the other.

No more light was shed on the question at the conference either.

There was also the tricky question of a thing called "power". As Labour MP John Maxton pointed out, a SCC's decisions would only be implemented if it had the power to get them implemented. But would he police and civil service accept the authority of a SCC? He might also have raised the question of the army.

But even before the first whiff of grapeshot drifted under their tender noses, the prim and proper constitutional democrats of the CSA turned away from pursuit of this line of thought. Smashing up the state machinery was okay for Lenin, but not for them. Heaven forbid - what of the "respect of the international community"?

Despite the nonsense being peddled at this conference, the Labour Party Scottish Council is backing the idea of local Labour Parties affiliating to this gang of muddle-headed class collaborationists.

Wot about the workers? That's what I say.

The Scottish region of the historically progressive British nation state can have all the parliaments, constituent assemblies, constitutional conventions, senates, Scottish Assemblies, Houses of Representatives, drop-in centres and other forms of doss houses it wants. At the end of the day, though, as Lenin said, they're all just different ways of duping the masses.

Labour movement bodies should not spend a penny of money nor a moment of time on the irrelevant body of the CSA.

The labour movement in Scotland should get on with the job of waging the class struggle.

By Lal Chanta

On 7 April a series of racist attacks were made on Asian people in the Upton Park and Forest Gate areas of Newham. The attacks came from white racist thugs, in a silver Ford car. All the assaults were vicious.

One attack was particularly horrendous. They partially disabled a 16 year old Asian youth who was dragged into a car, taken to Wanstead Flats, and beaten with a hammer.

Another incident involved white youths attacking an Asian couple and their child, whilst shopping, punching the man, throwing the shopping around and kicking the child.

More attacks followed, orchestrated by white racists drinking in the Duke of Edinburgh.

Later on in the day a handful of Asian youth met in the Wimpy Bar opposite the pub. The Wimpy is a common hangout for many youth. Five Asian youth were in a Mercedes outside, when about 15-20 racists from the same pub attacked their car.

Its windows were smashed, billiard balls were thrown at them and the cues used to hit the youths.

The Asians youths - about ten of them - fought back in self-defence. The police, on arriving, arrested one of the Asian youths, Khan, who was to spend the next two months in custody.

And the white racists? One was arrested and released immediately.

Over the next few weeks six more Asian youths were picked up. One - Parvaiz - was one of the original Newham 8. Two were released on bail, five spent several weeks on remand, the police maintaining that their case was being prepared. It took a further eight weeks to arrest any of the white youths responsible for the attack.

The seven youths now face affray and conspiracy charges. Their crime? Defending themselves and their community from racist attacks. And the racists in the car which has been identified by many victims of attacks? They have not been arrested.

This is the background to a meeting called by the Newham Youth Movement at Newham North East Labour Party rooms on July 3. Jaspir from the Newham Monitoring Project chaired



The Black community rallied round the Newham 8. Photo: John Harris

the meeting, calling for a coordinated campaign against racism and racist attacks.

Speakers at the meeting were Khan Bahadur, a defendant, who explained the background to the Newham 7. Melvyn Sinclair spoke from the Boycott the Queen's Pub Campaign. He's worked at the pub for seven years. Several months ago, a new manager appeared. Proud to be an ex-police officer and military man, he proved to be a racist, banning over 70 black people.

Members of the black community began to complain about his racist attitude. After being approached and asked to change his attitude, and stop the bans he refused. From this a campaign arose to get rid of him. Newham Council were lobbied, and its leader took a delegation to the brewery to lobby with the complaints against the manager.

The response? "If all black people behaved themselves, there'd be no trouble."

So Newham Race Relations were approached, but they merely offered weak-kneed verbal sup-

port for only some of the boycott's demands.

Most black people support the boycott, but there is little more support. Newham Monitoring Project is doing most of the work.

As Melvyn said: "He's still banning. No-one in authority will do anything. It's no wonder we take things into our own hands. Unless we are willing to get together as a community, to support those getting attacked and arrested, all of us, whether black or white, will have to walk looking behind our backs."

Talking of attacks at other pubs in the area he said: "I feel a fear that what is happening will get bigger. The time has come to get together and form a movement to fight these fascists."

Wednesday 4 July sees Muhammad Idrish appeal against deportation at the High Court in the Strand. Accordingly, Nihat Khan from Muhammad's campaign, spoke about his case and deportation in general.

Over 250 black people are deported monthly by the British state. Muhammad's case is no different. The state's immigration laws are used as a political weapon against black people and

should be fought as such.

Nihat urged people not to wait for the next person to take action against deportation. "There are no special cases, only racist laws. We say everyone threatened with deportation must be allowed to stay." WHAT YOU SHOULD BE DOING.

1. Invite a speaker from the Campaign.

2. Set up a Newham 7 support group.

3. Mobilise for the September 14 picket of Newham Magistrates Court, Stratford, East London.

4. Organise solidarity action through your LPYS, Labour Party or trade union branch, women's group, etc.

5. Priorities anti-racist work. Contacts: Newham 7 Defence Campaign, c/o Newham Monitoring Project, tel: 01-555 8151.

Muhammad Idrish Defence Campaign, 021-523 8923, c/o B. Lovejoy, 30 Antrobus Road, Birmingham 21.

If you live in Newham, boycott the Queen's pub in Upton Park or why not contact Peckham LPYS as well to find out how to set up your own Newham 7 Support Group, c/o 83 Peckham High Street, London SE15.

'It's police revenge'

KHAN BAHADUR spoke to Socialist Organiser.

"I was not arrested on the first day. Only one of us was arrested then.

I was arrested coming down from the public gallery of the court room.

A policeman came up to me and said he wanted to talk to me. Then I was locked up in a cell and later told I was arrested.

They've got 15 pictures of us, only pictures of Asian kids, not the white kids.

Why are there only 15 pictures out of a whole film? And why only of us?

The police were saying there were 50 Asians at the incident but only about ten were in the picture.

One prosecution witness was saying that we were attacking

people at 11.30 at night, when the incidents were happening in the afternoon.

We've left the organisation of the campaign to the Newham Monitoring Group, who built up the Newham 8 Campaign, and we've got confidence in them.

I spent two months in Wormwood Scrubs without being charged. Three white youths who were arrested got immediate bail conditions.

My dad had to put down £1,000 and I have to be on good behaviour and sign on every day at the cop shop.

Most of the white youths involved still haven't been arrested. They still drink in the Duke of Edinburgh. We know who they are but the police do nothing.

We believe they are just taking it out on us because of the Newham 8 trial."

OCCUPATION

South London Women's Hospital has been occupied to stop closure. The occupation urgently needs support this coming weekend - July 7-8 - when management are expected to try to move equipment out. Please join the occupation or the picket line at the hospital, Clapham Common South Side, London SW4.



Jeremy Corbyn MP addresses the weekly Friday anti-apartheid picket on the steps of St. Martin-in-the-Fields (London), held there since police banned all demonstrations from taking place outside the South African Embassy shortly after Botha's visit.

PAUL MATTHEWSON

International

Debt squeeze

By Colin Foster

MORE children will starve in the Third World to keep Western bankers' balance-sheets healthy. That's the gist of the two summit meetings last month — of the rich nations in London, and of Latin American debtor nations in Cartagena, Colombia.

The strict rules of business will apply, and hundreds of million will be squeezed out of the poorest to meet interest payments for the richest.

No wonder radicals are demanding the cancellation of the huge debts owed by the poorest countries to the Western banks. The most elementary humanitarianism dictates some such measure.

But the fundamental issues here are not just nation versus nation, or debtor versus creditor, but rather class against class. A one-off cancellation of debts would only modify or postpone the crisis, and there is no sense in demanding that capitalism runs on a non-capitalist basis, with free credit. (Such a demand was preached by some pre-Marxian socialists in the last century, but it is as utopian now as it was then).

The debt crisis means something rather different for the capitalist classes of Latin America than it does for the workers and peasants.

At the same time as the capitalist classes of Latin America are squeezing the workers and peasants of their countries to pay those countries' foreign debts, they are reaping rich profits from their own foreign assets.

Mexican capitalists, for example, are estimated to own about \$25 billion worth of property in the US, and to have about \$20 billion in US banks.

It has been calculated that over one third of the \$252 billion increase in the debt of Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Mexico and Venezuela between 1974 and 1982 went into buying assets overseas or building up foreign bank accounts.

For some countries, the official figures may underestimate the situation. For example, they do not include assets built up through the proceeds of the illegal cocaine and marijuana trade — maybe the biggest export industries of Bolivia and Colombia.

Also, the competitive conflicts between the various debtor states are not much less than those between debtor and creditor.

The Cartagena summit failed to produce a serious debtors' united front. The reason was that stronger states like Brazil and Mexico

had no wish to tie their fate to that of desperate cases like Bolivia.

"The Mexican delegation", reports the Financial Times, "was privately highly critical of Argentina's refusal to accept the austerity programme being proposed by the International Monetary Fund".

Last year the Mexican bourgeoisie succeeded in cutting real wages by 20% (and that in a country where the majority of children suffer from malnutrition). As a result they have restored their standing with the banks. They would not rejoice at all if Argentina's long-drawn-out exercise in brinkmanship resulted in it getting better terms.

On the other side, not all bankers favour a hard line with the debtors. Fritz Leutwiler, president of the Bank for International Settlements, said recently that commercial banks should continue to cooperate with Argentina despite its failure to agree with the IMF.

The banks, he said, "are very cooperative with Argentina, and could be prepared to go quite a long way. That's a good thing".

Not generosity but hard calculations motivate such an attitude. Tightening up on credit means a terrible slump in the debtor countries, and a reduction in the total amount of loot available to share round various capitalist interests.

An easier policy on credit can keep trade and industry going better and make for higher profits in the medium term.

Moreover, the bankers and the debtor states have a common interest in avoiding a breakdown of relations — i.e. in reaching agreements on the backs of the workers and peasants.

For the debtor states a breakdown would mean economic isolation and consequent damage to their industrial development. For the bankers, it would mean terrible damage to their balance-sheets if they had to write off billions as bad debts.

It would not be easy for them to seize assets to make good the damage. The Financial Times on June 25 discussed this question and concluded that "bankers could probably administer no more than 'pinpricks'".

They could do more only if they could persuade Western governments to act. But: "the risks would be enormous. As one Brazilian political commentator puts it, 'If you take a single bag of our coffee, we will simply take Volkswagen, General Motors and Ford'" (all of which have major plants in Brazil).

To identify the Western banks as the only villains of the piece is no more sensible than seeing finance capital (as distinct from industrial capital) as the only, or main, evil element within capitalism generally. Just as finance and industrial capital generally are inseparable parts of an integrated system of exploitation, so too are creditor capitalists and debtor capitalists internationally.

Working class struggle against all the segments of Capital is the only way to end that system of exploitation — or even to get a real united front of the underdeveloped countries against the banks of New York and London.

LAIRDS SIT-IN

Workers at Cammell Lairds shipyard, Merseyside, have occupied a rig and a destroyer due to be taken out of the yard.

They are holding the vessels as part of a fight to save jobs. Lairds have recently announced large-scale redundancies, and if the two vessels had been let out of the yard, then there would have been no vessels left there at all.



Lairds shop steward Lol Duffy

Numbers down

FIGURES presented to the General Council of the TUC on June 27 show that 22 unions have more than 100,000 members and will therefore be entitled to automatic representation on the General Council for 1984-5.

Thirty three seats (one fewer than last year) will be allocated automatically to the larger unions

with the Transport and General Workers Union entitled to five seats, the AUEW (Engineering Section); General, Municipal, Boilermakers and Allied Trades Union; and the National and Local Government Officers' Association three each, the National Union of Public Employees two seats and the remaining 17 one each.

The 76 unions with less than 100,000 members can put forward nominations for the 11 seats reserved for smaller unions and a ballot of these organisations will be held at Congress in September.

A further six General Council seats are reserved for women workers and all unions with women members will be entitled to nominate and vote in this section. Overall membership of the General Council following Congress will therefore be 50 plus the General Secretary, one fewer than last year.

Total TUC membership shown in these figures is 10,076,173 — a fall of 433,984 on last year's figures. The decrease is, however, smaller than in the last four years during which time membership has dropped by two million.

CPSA

OVER 80% of the members of the main civil service union CPSA have voted in workplace meetings to reject the government's pay offer. Other civil service unions have also voted to reject.

The offer was 5% for those already on the maximum of their pay scales and 4% for everybody else.

The CPSA leadership had however stressed that rejection of the offer did not necessarily mean industrial action. In a circular, CPSA general secretary Alistair Graham has said that his next step will be to press for new pay talks and may be arbitration.

NUPE strike over sacking

By Tony Twine

OVER 300 NUPE members at Southampton General Hospital are now into the third week of a bitter protest strike against the sacking of shop steward Steve Ferris.

Their determination to win the critical fight for re-instatement was shown last Wednesday when a mass meeting of both COHSE and NUPE members voted to continue the stoppage.

In addition to the striking porters, telephonists and ancillary workers, all 40 members of the theatre sterile supplies unit were locked out after they refused to provide any service beyond emergency cover. The normal level and quality of service remains greatly disrupted (despite contrary claims by management) with hospital wards left uncleaned and both lifts and switchboard unusable, while the blood transfusion unit has also been badly hit.

The dispute was sparked originally by clumsy management restrictions on shop stewards. NUPE hospitals secretary, Steve Ferris, was sacked for refusing to accept a new work schedule that

breached a long-standing agreement and precluded carrying out effective trade union activity. The employers were clearly determined to break the strong sectional links that unions had developed at the hospital during the long NHS struggles of 1982.

For some weeks before the strike, management showed they were intent on provoking a showdown, in that they systematically 'bugged' union meetings so as to gauge the extent of members' opposition to their union-bashing plans. In the event, most workers recognised that Steve Ferris was victimised to enable management to smooth the way for widescale privatisation.

Severe financial hardship, constant harassment of pickets (many of whom are women) by security thugs, and the typical scurrilous misinformation campaign waged by TV South, have not weakened the resolve of these workers. The Joint Shop Stewards Committee has called for a negotiated settlement, plus the immediate reinstatement of their member. So far no reply has been received from management.

Donations should be sent to the SGH Strike Committee, c/o 93 Leigh Road, Eastleigh, Hants.

Newcastle pay strike

By Alan Johnson

NUPE workers at Newcastle University have taken industrial action in support of their wage claim. From June 7 an overtime ban and work to rule began as well as rotating selective strikes involving key workers like switchboard operators and post sorters.

Nationally and locally, NUPE is arguing for a £7 per week increase across the board and various changes in working conditions.

At present Grade B workers, like porters, get £52 take home pay for a full week. Grade A workers like cleaners get even less. Nationally NUPE has been offered £3.40 but locally lower grades, which most workers are on, have only been offered £2.73. Management refuses to negotiate on changes in working conditions. The workers find manage-

ment's argument that 'the money isn't there' laughable. When management didn't like the colour of the brand new wall-to-wall carpeting in the medical school they just put another brand new carpet in... straight on top of the first one!

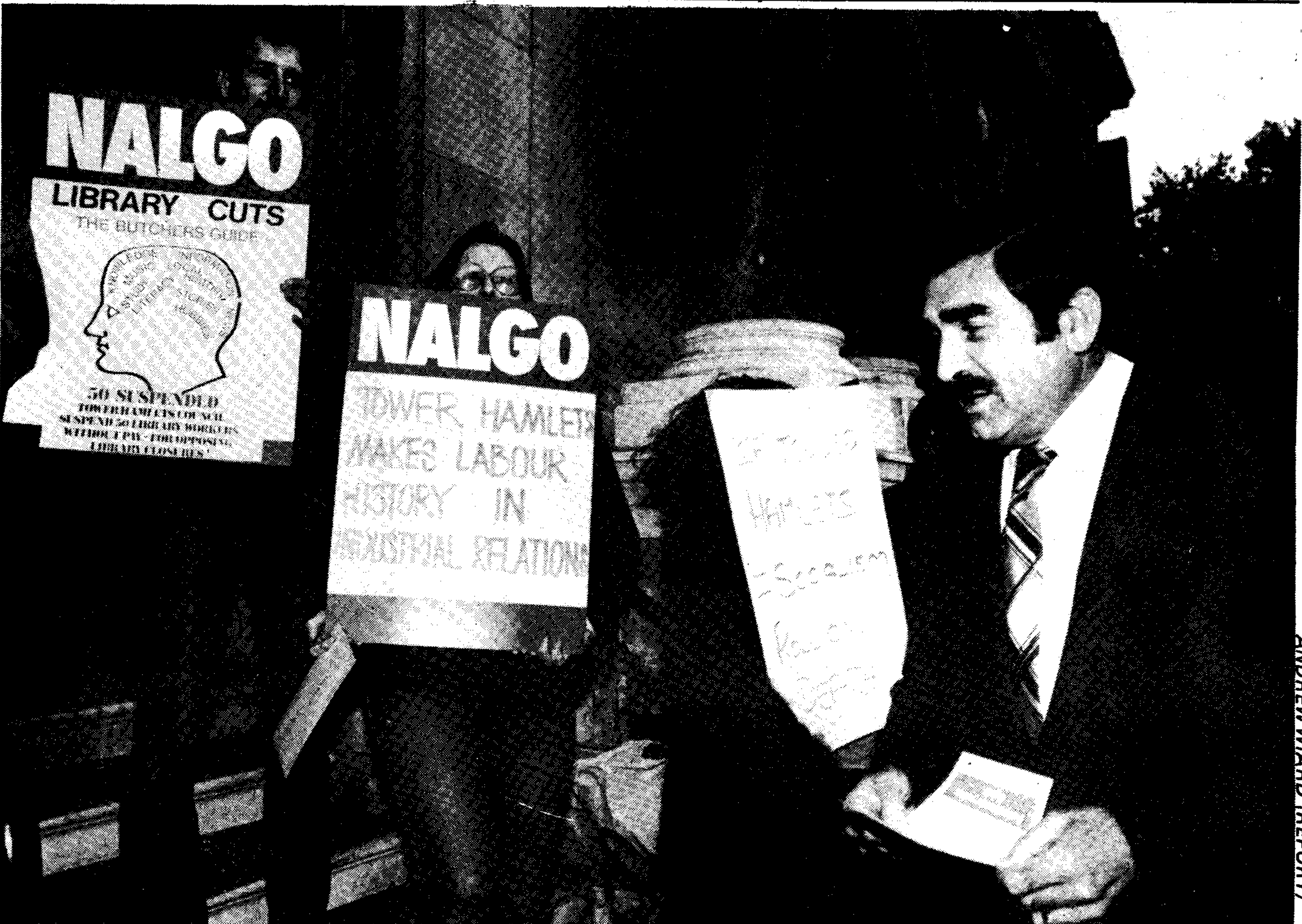
Yet with management and some AUT members doing cover work, the strikers must start considering whether selective action alone can bring their employer to heel.

The mood is defiant. Gloria Wyke, shop steward, summed up the attitude of many: "We are sick of being downtrodden, the women are adamant we're going to stick this one out".

Financial support is urgently needed. Messages of support and donations should be sent to Joe Holland, NUPE Branch Secretary, Ancillary Services, University of Newcastle.



A Volkswagen worker in Brazil



NALGO MEMBERS in Tower Hamlets (above: at the Labour History museum) have decided to go back to work. The dispute began over plans by the Labour Council to close two libraries, and became a fight for trade union rights when the council locked out librarians who took limited industrial action by refusing to collect fines. A compromise deal on the library closures was worked out, but NALGO members outside the libraries joined the action over the union rights issue. There has been no agreement on that basic issue, and the return to work is on the basis of 'no victimisation by either side' (i.e. including no union action against scabs). The strike committee recommendation to go back to work was carried by 530 votes to 310.

Socialist Organiser

Notts scabs organise

THE FOLLOWING letter from the new NUM branch secretary at Bolsover gives a graphic illustration of the attitudes of the 'Working Miners' Group', who made a clean sweep in the recent Notts area election. It looks like they are going for a Notts-scale break-away union.

Dear Member,
If you are one of the 358 members who elected me for the position of Branch Secretary of the Bolsover Colliery NUM Branch in the ballot held recently at the Assembly Hall, Bolsover,

my thanks to you one and all. Having been democratically elected along with my fellow officials and committee, I am asking for your support for our Branch for 1984/5.

I realise there are different points of view with regard to the present dispute, but my hope is that it will be resolved amicably in the near future for the good of all our members. I wish to make it quite clear to each and everyone of our branch members that in order to be successful, we all, and I mean all our members, must

work together to make our Branch and the Colliery a good, safe and successful place to work.

In order to achieve this, it is essential we all get back to normal work as soon as possible. Therefore, for those amongst you who are not working, I am obliged to remind you that the Nottinghamshire Area is not on strike and neither are the pickets official. In your best interests, I ask you to start work as soon as possible.

Yours faithfully,
D. Taylor, Secretary Elect,
Bolsover Colliery.

Blockade!

"WE shall do all that is necessary to intensify the blockade of steel, power and industry generally", declared miners' president Arthur Scargill this Monday.

The rail unions have given the labour movement a magnificent example with their decision to blockade steelworks for the NUM. Other unions should follow the railworkers and step up the action.

Most of the lorry drivers crossing the picket lines at, for example, Llanwern, are TGWU members. It is a scandal that the TGWU is only now beginning to talk about disciplining these members.

Mass pickets have stopped for now the deliveries of coke from Orgreave depot — de-

John Bloxam assesses the current situation in the miners' strike

spite unprecedented police violence.

With sufficient numbers and sufficient organisation, they can stop the road convoys into Ravenscraig and Llanwern steelworks, too. The problem is that the South Wales NUM leaders are resisting the policy of mass pickets. In Scotland, area NUM president Mick McGahey is quoted as saying: "We will try to tighten the blockade on coal and ore, and attempt to blockade the end product as well". But there has not been mass picketing yet in Scotland at Ravenscraig or Hunterston.

If the struggle is spread to shut down steel and power, then the Tories can be defeated. Their plans to decimate basic industry can be knocked back, and demands like the shorter working week can be won, to provide a serious protection for jobs.

But if the Tories can divide, they can hope to rule. The steel unions' attitude is short-sighted. If, by keeping steel production rolling, they enable the Tories to beat the miners, then they will be next in line for further attacks on jobs and conditions.

Two weeks ago the government seemed to be giving signals for employers to use the anti-union laws against the NUM — a move it had resisted before, for fear of explosive consequences.

In fact they have continued to hold back on that front — provoking protests from David Owen of the SDP and from the Institute of Directors. Instead they have concentrated on trying to promote a 'back-to-work' movement.

The Coal Board has put daily adverts in the press, and organised massive police protection for strikebreaking at carefully selected pits with a strong right wing, like Shirebrook in North Derbyshire.

They are also sending out selective sacking letters — to miners who have occupied pits and to others who they decide have been guilty of 'gross industrial misconduct'.

A miner at Bevercotes, Notts, received a summary dismissal notice on Tuesday 3rd on the grounds that he had attacked a scab — though on

the same day stiff bail conditions were lifted from him in court over the case, which has yet to be tried.

Yet the back-to-work movement has been so small as to have no serious effect. With summer holidays coming up in many pits, even the limited movement so far may well be short-lived.

The Coal Board have also tried to 'drive wedges between miner and steelworker (with some success, thanks to Bill Sirs), and between miner and miner (by presenting the strike as mainly the work of the politically motivated Red Devil Arthur Scargill).

On Monday 3rd, NUM general secretary Peter Heathfield angrily denounced a newspaper article at the weekend as misquoting him about a 'formula for shutting "uneconomic" pits'. Arthur Scargill said flatly: "There can be no discussion with the NCB about the closure of so-called uneconomic pits". Again on Tuesday he said: "We are not prepared to call off the dispute on the basis of some fudged compromise".

On Tuesday 3rd new talks between the Coal Board and the NUM were announced, to take place later this week. The Coal Board had asked for them.

Despite all the propaganda, the evidence is that the strike is still having an effect on the economy. ITV on Tuesday night confirmed Arthur Scargill's estimate of 15 million tonnes of coal stocks at power stations — a lower figure than when the Heath government brought in the three-day week in 1974.

But socialists should argue against the negotiations being secret. The previous secret negotiations had some demobilising effect. The first NUM report-back to the membership on those negotiations has only just been published in the June 30 issue of *The Miner* although details came out two weeks earlier in the Financial Times.

The turn-out for the London day of action last Wednesday, 27th, showed that solidarity is still spreading.

Two things are now vital.

General strike

The whole force of the NUM, and maximum support from other trade unionists, must be mobilised to respond to Arthur Scargill's call "to intensify the blockade of steel, power and industry generally".

And the movement must be ready to respond if an effective blockade pushes British Steel or the Coal Board to take the NUM to court — as it probably will — or if the police mobilise with even greater violence than at Orgreave.

The growing solidarity can be turned into a general strike — and our job as socialists is to argue and organise to try to make sure that it is.



Join the Labour Party.
Write to: The Labour Party, 150 Walworth Road, London SE17 1JT.
Subscription is £7 per year, £2 unwaged, 50p OAPs.



"The heirs of Tolpuddle": TUC and Labour leaders in their Saville Row suits planting a sycamore tree to commemorate the ragged pioneers of trade unionism who were transported to Australia for organising 150 years ago.

And what is the TUC, or the Parliamentary Labour leadership, doing to help the people who are continuing the real fight for trade unionism today — the miners?



Army confront demonstrators in a 'mass trespass' by nuclear disarmament protesters at Chilwell. (Photo: Andrew Ward, Report).

Fund

BETTER NEWS this week on the fund. The total is £645.19: thanks to Oxford supporter, £52; Stan Crooke, £50.80; Gerry Byrne, Bob Fine, £50 each; Steve Battlemuch £40; Cheung Siu Ming, Chris Goodwin, £35 each; Richard Bayley £26; Will Adams £25.50; Tom Cashman £15; Sarah Bryant £13; Clive Bradley, Paul Gamble, Sarah Cotterill, Jeff Slee, Nick Driscoll & Cath Larrisey, Peter Kenway, Dave Green, Lol Duffy, Oxford supporter, Penny Campbell, John Douglas, Dave Spencer, £10 each, Paul Cooper £8; Terry Connolly £6; Mick Woods, Jim Denham, Andrew Hornung, Nik Barstow, Les Hearn, Pete Keenlyside, Mark Sapsford, Dan Duncan, Debbi Hindson, £5 each; Arthur Bough, £4; Walter Leser, £3; Lynn Ferguson, Andy Barrett, Godfrey Webster, Sally Page, £2 each; Bryan Edmands, Brian Prince, £1 each; others, £56.89.

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

SALTLEY GATE DEMONSTRATION

MARCH WITH THE MINERS

Saturday July 7. Assemble 10am at Saltley Gate, Birmingham. March 11am to rally in Chamberlain Square. Speakers will include Arthur Scargill.