

Socialist ORGANISER

Paper of the Socialist Organiser Alliance. No. 189 July 26 1984 25p Claimants and strikers 10p

Lobby the TUC

LOBBY THE TUC
Monday September 3
1984
8.30 onwards at Confer-
ence Centre, Brighton
Called by Broad Left

Organising Committee
Join the Socialist
Organiser contingent
*Full support for the
miners!
*For a general strike!



OUR ENEMY WITHIN

THE Tories know the facts of the class struggle. However much they use phrases about 'national interest' for public consumption, they are not fooled themselves.

They know that there is no common national interest between workers and bosses. Workers have a common class interest with workers of other nations, bosses have a common class interest internationally and indeed organise through bodies like the EEC and NATO to enforce it.

Last weekend the Tories denounced Arthur Scargill and the miners as 'the enemy within', and compared the coal dispute with the Falklands war.

From their point of view they are quite right: the miners are a much deadlier enemy to the interests, power and privilege of the British ruling class than the Argentine government could ever be.

What we need is for the leaders of the labour movement to see the class war in equally clear terms, and to advance the interests of our class as vigorously as the Tories advance the interests of theirs.

The Tories' fury reflects increasing anxiety on their part about the effects of the strike and the failure of their attempts to sponsor a drift back to work.

An important sign of the mood of the capitalist class was the Times editorial of July 20 - "There is a war on" - and, even more so, on Monday 23rd by Samuel Brittan - brother of Tory minister Leon Brittan, and one of the most serious and influential economic journalists of the ruling class.

Brittan considers himself an enlightened

By Gerry Bates

liberal. But his article is undiluted class fury.

Conciliators in the Coal Board management should be cleared out, he says. "There can be no excuse for tolerating . . . 'sources within the board' who brief the media towards appeasement".

The government "should permit the free import of coal, now and for ever". It should start closing "uneconomic" pits immediately. And "the green light needs to be given to any concern, nationalised or other, which wants to take any union to court for secondary picketing".

"Nor should legal action be confined to the civil side". If the law does not permit jailing Arthur Scargill for 'violent picketing', then too bad for the law. "If there is no way of bringing to trial the instigators of violence at the highest level there is something wrong either with the criminal code, or more probably with those who advise on its enforcement".

The other plank of Brittan's programme is: "not to 'cease from mental strife' to ensure that Labour as now constituted, should never again form the government of Britain".

So the capitalist class is clearing the decks and rallying its ranks for battle. It's about time the labour movement did the same, instead of having our Labour and TUC leaders dithering in the middle and posing as compromise brokers.

Victory to the miners! Organise for a general strike!

HELP MINERS FIGHT TORIES

Councils face the crunch

STRUGGLE or surrender: mobilise direct action against the Tory government or become executors for Tory cuts.

That alternative is now facing Labour councils very starkly and immediately.

Three authorities - the Greater London Council, the Inner London Education Authority, and Greenwich -

have been told to cut their budgets by 6% in real terms. 15 others have been told to cut by 4½%.

Those 18 have no choice within Tory law: bigger rate rises are banned. Other councils would need huge rate rises.

Several Labour councils have already said that they will set a budget according to what is needed in their areas,

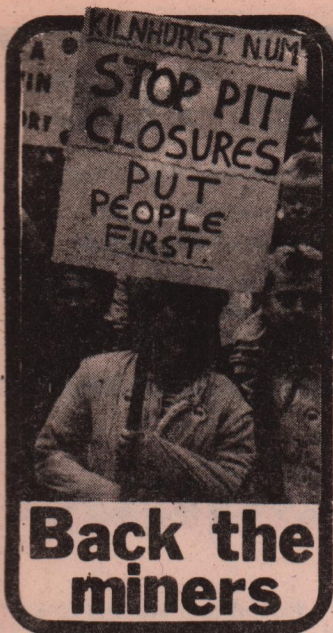
and refuse to set a rate.

This is a step towards a struggle. But the council leaders seem to see their tactic in terms of brinkmanship with the government - a gambit to strengthen their hand at the negotiating table.

More will be needed than tough negotiating. The Tories will be defeated only by direct action from council

workers, other workers and tenants.

Labour councils can play a big role in leading that action - but only if they take a clear stand now, supporting the council workers' unions rather than confronting them as so many left councils have done, and pledging that they will not impose rate rises above the rate of inflation.



IN Basingstoke, support for the miners continues to grow. Two more successful events have been organised in the last week by the Trades Council and Labour Party Joint Support Group.

Helping the Notts miners

The first event, a public meeting held on July 17, had Dennis Skinner as guest speaker and attracted 200 people. The platform also included Paul Whetton, Secretary of the Notts Rank and File Strike Committee, Ida Hackett from the Miners' Families' Support Group, a local speaker and Rebecca Johnson from Greenham Common.

Rebecca had been invited at the request of the Notts miners' delegation who are permanently based in Basingstoke, the contact having been made when two previous delegations of Notts miners visited the camp. From those visits the Greenham Women

Angela and Alan Fraser report on activity in Basingstoke in support of the Notts strikers

have sent delegations to Ollerton in Nottinghamshire and have stood on the picket lines alongside the miners.

The meeting was a great success and £158 was collected.

The second event organised was a 'Miners' Families' Weekend' with over 20 families from Notts being invited to spend the weekend in Basingstoke. Labour party and Trades Council members were at the Labour Club to meet the

families when they arrived on Saturday July 21.

In the afternoon a children's party with plenty to eat and a disco (to make sure that they brought it all up again) was organised at the Labour Club. The evening saw a 'Miners' Benefit' at the Caribbean Club which proved to be highly successful. Near the end of the evening the DJ played 'The Blackleg Miner' and a loud chorus of 'We Will Win' followed.

Sunday morning: a picnic in the local park with kids in the paddling pool, and SO supporter Gordon Pointer getting a birthday ducking from the miners.

At about 3 o'clock the

miners and their families boarded their coach for the journey home. It had proved to be a truly momentous weekend, and many people openly wept. A weekend that labour movement activists in Basingstoke will never forget.

But it has not all been plain sailing — there have been problems. Local area full time union officials (hell bent on furthering their own careers, no doubt) have set up a separate support committee which has caused a certain amount of confusion. However their efforts to undermine the work have failed abysmally.

The official support group continues to organise and help raise finance. Over £5,000

has been raised along with 140 boxes of food which has been sent to Ollerton. Not bad for Tory Basingstoke!

On the Labour Party front we have now established a regular miners' support bulletin which is distributed to every Labour Party member. Local ward organisers are also collecting the 50p levy on a regular basis. Food collections are also established and running successfully.

Future events are now being planned and it is hoped that a delegation from Basingstoke will be making a return visit to Ollerton in the near future.

Finally, the local SO group will continue to work flat out around the strike.

The battle continues in the law courts

The Tories and the Coal Board are using the police and courts as allies in their fight against the miners. But their use of the law can and should be challenged. Bob Fine reports.

THE legal aspect of the miners' strike is only an adjunct. Nonetheless it is vital.

When individual miners put themselves on the line for the union, the the union must do everything possible for them if the law is wielded against them.

So far, over four and a half thousand miners have been brought before the courts.

Taking the fight into the courtroom, to challenge the charade of justice there, is crucial for the morale of the strikers. Victories can be won in that arena too — as well as on the picket line — and the trial provides an occasion for publicity and propaganda which the miners should not miss.

This was the basic message coming out of a joint meeting held in Sheffield between the Haldane Society of Socialist Lawyers and the NUM.

The state is using and abusing the law in its determination to crush the miners. Among the most notorious measures it has taken are the 'intercept' policy of the police.

The police set up roadblocks and turn back anyone suspected of being a picket or strike supporter. Four men in a single car have no chance.

On one day in Nottingham, police turned back 1900 miners in 475 cars.

If people refuse they are arrested on charges like threatening to breach the peace or obstructing the police in the course of their duty.

The legality of this operation

is, to say the least, dubious. The police turn people back far from the site of any picket line without any reasonable suspicion that they will breach the peace. They invoke the civil law about secondary picketing which is irrelevant.

This abuse of legal powers — which adds up in effect to a denial of freedom of movement or the right to travel to a demonstration — is not only supported by the government, it was instigated by the Home Secretary. So much for their refrain about the rule of law.

We even heard a case of a miner and his wife being stopped and arrested for trying to travel to their holiday home.

This abuse of powers is being challenged in court by the NUM — with the assistance of socialist lawyers — both individual cases in the lower courts and through test cases taken to the higher courts.

The second notorious measure taken by the state is the magistrates' use of bail conditions. When striking miners are remanded on bail highly restrictive conditions are set without regard to the individual in question, the circumstances of his or her arrest, the effect of these conditions on the individual and so forth.

The magistrates simply dole out what are now known as the 'usual conditions'. These state that the accused are 'not to visit any premises or place for the purpose of picketing or demonstrating in



Miners, miners' wives, and Greenham women picket in Port Talbot. Photo: Martin Shakeshaft (IFL).

connection with the current trade dispute between the NUM and the NCB other than peacefully to picket or demonstrate at his usual place of employment."

This imposes on its victims something like what in South Africa is called 'a banning order'. The procedure is legally as dubious as the 'operation intercept'.

Magistrates are obliged to grant bail on the basis of discretion with respect to an individual case. One has a fundamental right to bail in law and can only be refused bail or have conditions imposed in definite, legally defined circumstances.

A legal challenge to this procedure, backed up by publicity, propaganda and demonstrations is now underway, partly thanks to the intervention in the Notts courts of socialist lawyers.

Other gross abuses have also become normal practice, for instance, arresting miners and detaining them without any reasonable suspicion. Fighting these cases in court

is not only of practical value to the miners; it is also a way of ensuring that we do not simply accept the intensification of legal repression as the norm.

As Tony Gifford said, we are witnessing a new kind of policing that the labour movement has not yet got to grips with.

It would seem — not surprisingly — that the NUM was not at first prepared for the legal onslaught against their members. They were thinking mainly in terms of the use of the civil law (through cases brought under the Tory Employment Acts) and not the criminal law. Their solicitors, so it seems, did not sufficiently challenge the abuse of legal powers by the police and the magistrates.

This is now changing. The Haldane Society, for instance, has set up a rota of lawyers to be on hand in Nottingham, with their centre at Ollerton. The meeting as a whole endorsed a resolution calling for more national coordination by the NUM of its legal resources.

There was considerable discussion about the techniques of fighting cases in court: the importance of knowing the names of those arrested, of collecting witnesses, of photographs and so forth. There was also discussion not only of how to defend miners against the law, but also of how to use the law offensively against the police.

Complaints against the police are useless, as are private criminal prosecutions (Bringing charges of riot against the police cavalry?).

But civil actions against the police have a much better success rate. They are easy to initiate, and the civil law provides plenty of grounds — wrongful imprisonment, assault, malicious prosecution, trespass and wrongful interference with goods.

Legal aid should be available and successful cases are rewarded with much needed financial damages.

The law is an instrument for the ruling class, but it also imposes inhibition on the ruling class which they flagrantly

violate whenever they are pressed to do so. The law is a weapon against workers, but it also provides us with resources in the pursuit of our struggles. The important thing is to know how to use these resources well.

One of the difficulties we face is the lack of a collective memory concerning how legal forms of struggle have been used in the past — for example, after the uprisings of 1981. It is important both to draw the legal lessons from this dispute and to retain them for future struggles.

Finally, a clear message came both from the miners and the lawyers that the Labour Party ought to get its finger out at the leadership level and actively campaign around the gross violations of democratic rights that are now taking place on a daily basis.

For example, the clerk of the court dealing with Ollerton cases — and handing out the peremptory bail orders — is a right wing Labour Party member. With friends like that, who needs enemies?

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 Economy Resource Unit, 389 Willesden High Road, NW10. Ken Evans, 459 6221.

Maesteg Trade Union and Labour Party Support Group: Idwal Isaac, 10 Bridge St., Maesteg. (Tel: 738321).

Turn to the power stations

Since negotiations between the miners and the Coal Board broke down last Wednesday night, 18th, Tory ministers have been boasting more and more loudly that they are confident of success against the miners.

But the Financial Times (inset) had a more sober view. And share prices are still tumbling.

The Tories are not winning the war of attrition: and the possibility of escalation towards a general strike is still there.

Two haulage firms have started court proceedings against leaders of the South Wales NUM which could lead to them being imprisoned, or the area union's funds being seized.

What happened in the talks with the Coal Board? With the NUM leaders continuing to run the talks in secret, and inadequate report-backs to the NUM rank and file, a detailed verdict is not possible. But it is clear that talk about MacGregor making 'big concessions' is nonsense.

Withdrawing the March 6 announcement that this year's coal production would be cut by four million tonnes is a non-issue now, because more than four times that amount of production has been lost in the strike.

Polmaise

The Coal Board said they would relieve the five immediately threatened pits, Polmaise, Cortonwood, Bullcliffe Wood, Herrington and Snowdon - on condition that the NUM agreed to closure of uneconomic pits!

The Coal Board insists on closing pits where operation is not 'beneficial'. As Arthur Scargill put it after the talks, the word 'beneficial' is "like the word death before sentence..."

The Times said: "... we should not be deluded into thinking that a settlement was so close that only one word - 'beneficially' - divided the parties. It is not an innocent word.

"It symbolises the division between two philosophies" - one which puts jobs first, and the other which puts profits first.

Paul Whetton, secretary of the Notts rank and file strike committee, commented: "The 'concessions' are meaningless... They'll keep open those pits and shut some others. The basic principle is the question of 'economic' closures".

The Coal Board is trying

By John Bloxam

to increase the pressure. Last week the North Derbyshire Coal Board cut off the free concessionary coal which had continued to operate with voluntary NUM labour during the strike. One of the people put at risk by this was a nine year old child with cancer.

On Monday morning at the nearby Notts pit of Welbeck, the police threatened that women coming onto the picket line would be arrested and their children put into care.

In Ollerton, a striker from Bevercotes pit received an eviction notice.

But all this, and the continued scab-herding at selected pits, has failed to produce a significant back-to-work move outside the Notts coal-field.

On the Coal Board's own estimate, "a total of 384 former strikers returned to work" in the first two weeks of July - 0.24% of the workforce.

A number of the scabs went to work in Notts during the holiday period, in defiance of the overtime ban which they say they are continuing to respect. On the Monday day shift, 120 went to work at the Bevercotes pit, 70 of whom were NUM members.

For Paul Whetton and many other Notts strikers, "the biggest thing we've got on now is what's going to be done with the scabs".

Already a number of rank and file miners have started to initiate the new Rule 51 procedure against the scabs. But the disciplinary committee has still to be elected. This will take place "probably within the next six weeks".

Power stations

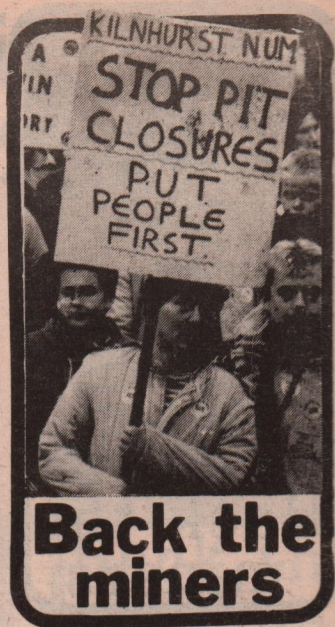
Picketing continues to turn to the power stations. A national directive to this effect is reported to have been sent out from the strike coordinating committee.

North Notts pickets have

found that "certain oil tankers won't cross, nor will British Oxygen", but a number of scab lorries are going in.

Transport unions are due to meet with the NUM over the next week to review the solidarity action, and reports are that it is continuing to bite. The TGWU is this week sending out a directive to its areas to discipline members who are crossing picket lines.

In North Notts, an attempt to break the rail solidarity action has been beaten off. On Monday 23rd, the six signalmen refusing to move coal trains also started to stop associated traffic (e.g.



Back the miners

moving light engines). On Tuesday management suspended them until they called off their action. They were reinstated on Wednesday night, with no loss of earnings, after the Sheffield power box (controlling the main line) threatened to strike immediately.



Police out in strength against pickets at Port Talbot steelworks.

Photo: Martin Shakeshaft (IFL)

"The City's response to peace in the docks has been decidedly subdued: and considering how far prices fell - and how far interest rates rose - during the strike this must be pretty disappointing to ministers.

"It should not be too surprising, though: they must by now be aware that their deliberately cautious approach to the central issue, the miners' strike, is not an easy one to put over either to the voting or to the investing public..."

"The City does not see much to celebrate..." (FT editorial, 21.7.84)

How the dock strike ended

By Martin Thomas

THE dock strike reached a settlement early on Friday morning, 20th.

On Thursday evening the strike had collapsed in Dover under threat of violence from strike-bound lorry drivers.

Les Sharp, chair of the shop stewards' committee, said: "The situation became intolerable, with threats being made to my members and the port installations by drivers. We were informed that they would smash the port".

Nobody disputed his account. In fact the port management joined with the shop stewards committee in stating: "The tensions and eruptions of today have brought us to a point which is intolerable... The shop stewards committee has now concluded that the threat of serious injuries within the port complex means that it can no longer wait for the conclusion of talks..."

The Tories and the press who have been so furious about violence by picketing miners were very quiet and matter-of-fact about this threat of violence. The police chiefs who have sent hundreds of police to charge the miners' picket lines did not send forces to clear away the drivers who were making threats.

But such is their code. Violence by police and strike-breakers is all right. Self-defence by pickets and strikers is not.

For all that, the dockers won a victory. The port employers agreed to procedures against future breaches of the job-protecting National Dock Labour Scheme. The Tories had been forced to declare that they had no plans to alter or scrap the Scheme.

It is a great pity that the dockers settled for such minor gains. Now was the time, if ever, to fight for the extension of the Scheme to ports presently not covered by it - like Dover. Such a demand would also have given the Dover dockers a more direct interest in standing firm.

A continuing fight by the dockers would also have helped the miners win a speedier and more complete victory.

A Tory MP was quoted in the Sunday Times as saying that it had been 10 points to Scargill when the dockers came out, but it was 100 points against him when they went back. This is not true.

If the dockers had been soundly defeated, that would indeed have set the miners back. But they were not defeated. Their experience will not deter other workers from striking - if anything

the contrary.

A chance for a broader working class front against the government has tragically been missed. But the possibility of further such chances has not been destroyed.

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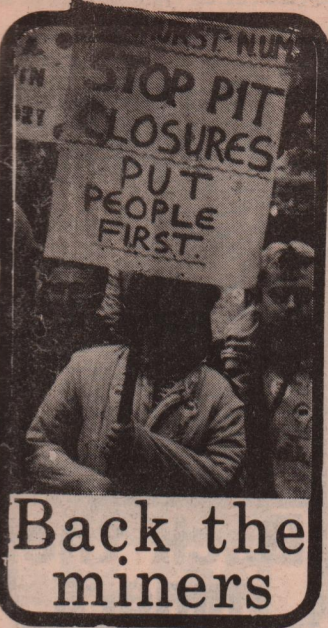
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Back the miners

Women's march

THE WOMEN'S march to link pit closures with nuclear power is to start on Friday August 17 at Capenhurst uranium enrichment plant, and end four days later in Mansfield.

There will be transport between towns, but the women will be marching through Chester, Crewe, and Stoke. There will be rallies and get-togethers on the way, as well as at the end.

At the same time there will be similar marches in Scotland, from Welsh pits to Bristol, and from Dover to Dungeness. If you are interested in the march, ring Andrea at 0533 702585.

Euro-MPs' call

THE EEC parliament's 132-strong Socialist group of MPs has called on trade unions throughout Europe to give cash support to the NUM; and all European governments to stop coal exports to Britain.

Abertillery march

WOMEN from the mining village of Abertillery, between Newport and Ebbw Vale, in South Wales have organised a women's march against pit closures due to take place this Friday, July 27, with a rally in Abertillery Park.

Anti-nuclear

ABOUT 20 anti-nuclear campaigners occupied the London headquarters of the Central Electricity Generating Board for about half-an-hour last Friday (July 20) in support of the miners' strike with a banner calling for 'miners' power not nuclear power'. One woman protester was hurt as police and security personnel smashed their way into the occupied office to end the sit-in.



Port Talbot - miners, women's support group and Greenham women picket the steel works. Blockading the road by sitting down, they were removed and each time replaced by another body. There were about 20 arrests. Photo: Martin Shakeshaft (IFL)

'Sticking it out till the end'

Thora, Maggie and Blodwyn, miners' wives in Ollerton, Notts, spoke to Jean Lane.

Thora: I've got my husband and my two sons out on strike. They've been out 19 weeks and all we're living on is my wages. £20 a week. Out of that I've got £3 a week to pay to my electric bill. I've had a lot of help from the kitchen food parcels and from my friends, both other strikers and friends that don't work down the pit.

But what really hurts is to see them that's going to work. I've lived here for 23 years and this is breaking families up.

Blodwyn: Nottingham is

considered a scab county. They are producing coal here — not as much as before but if they were all out, it would all be over by now.

I don't understand everything, but I know what we're going through. I didn't even know what being a miner's wife would be like. I know now. The wages aren't there. I used to think they were rich.

Thora: They put in the papers that these miners are earning £180 a week. It's rubbish, they don't. They go on about how we've all got cars. Well, I haven't got a car.

Blodwyn: I have, but I gave up my mobility allowance for

it. I've been disabled for ten years and I only just got the allowance — nobody told me I was entitled to it. If I'd known the strike was coming I wouldn't have given it up.

Social Security won't give me anything because I get £20 invalidity pension, and that's what we have to live on. My rent is £19.30 a week.

Rent

Thora: I owe £400 in rent. They were going to take us to court. The NUM got onto that one for me and the court proceedings were dropped.

Blodwyn: In Derbyshire the police called at my brother-in-law's house and take him into work. It's all wrong. I

mean you've got to pay for all this, you know.

They stopped Jeff three times. He was only taking his car to the garage. They wouldn't let him back down till he'd proved where he lived. It's happening to everybody, they just pick on people at random now.

The social security bloke said to me "We take £15 a week off you for the strike pay you're supposedly getting. The government's doing it to make you want to go back to work".

It's getting really bad in the village, with marriages breaking up and people committing suicide.

Thora: The media tell lies about a lot of stuff, like the intimidation by the police.

Blodwyn: But that picture they put on the news of the copper beating hell out of the miner at Orgreave — they made a mistake showing that one, didn't they?

Bonus scheme

The worst thing that happened was that bonus scheme. It should never have been brought in. They should all get the same wage.

Some pits will get about £70 bonus and some will only get about £20. That's caused a lot of trouble in Notts.

Someone at Thorsby was bringing home £180 to £200 a week, and Jeff brings home £87.

Thora: When you go to bed, and your husband's on night shift, if you hear a knock at the door your heart goes into your mouth. An accident is the first

thing that comes into your head.

Blodwyn: They came for me at 4 o'clock in the morning. I wouldn't answer the door because I was frightened and they called "We're from the pit". They'd got Jeff in the hospital with his leg.

Thora: The shops have been gret round here. They've all brought their prices down.

Bill, the fish man, comes all the way from Grimsby and he sells fish really cheap to help us out. He won't sell it to scabs. He refuses them.

But he gets hassled for helping the strikers, and he's getting too scared to come now.

America

Jean: Things would have been even harder if MacGregor had got away with shutting the pits.

Thora: What right has he got to meddle with our lives? He should have retired long ago. What is he, 70? They make miners retire at 60.

And when he's sorted all these pits out Maggie will say "right, I've finished with you, you can go back to America now". He's just doing a job for her.

Thora: He should be out. And she, she wants shooting. When I was a young lass you could go for a job and if you didn't like it you could leave it and go for another one just like that. But she's changed all that.

This dispute will last till after Christmas. I've had some heartaches through it. But I'd never let my husband and sons go back. I'll stick by them till the end.

'A law for them and a law for us'

WE'VE all got to stay together, even after the strike — keep all the contacts we've made with other workers in other areas. It's the only way you will beat Thatcher, because if she can get away with sending the miners back, she will pick on somebody else.

She's not really after the miners, she's after all the big unions. And god help them.

My first husband died when he was 27, because there was no union. He was a miner in Wales. I was left with three young children and I had nothing. I had a baby of 13 weeks old.

I was given 17 shillings every two weeks compensation when my husband was ill. I used to walk three miles there

Mrs Hood, from Keresley near Coventry, spoke to Jean Lane.

and back to fetch it. Then a doctor appointed by the pit owners pronounced him fit for work. I knew he wasn't fit for work — but there was no more compensation, and he had to go to work.

He went for a month and then he couldn't any more — he was too frightened to go. And then he died — a piece of coal fell and hit him in his face and the next piece knocked him into a moving machine.

That's what she wants again. That's the bitterness — I've had it there always. I'm

having my bang out now, well and truly. That's what makes you fight.

What do you think should be done about the scabs?

I think they should all be put on the dole. They are union-breakers, aren't they? They thought these men would be starved back. They wave their pound notes at the bus windows and throw their pennies out.

The police stand by and laugh as well. They think it's a big joke.

Well, I've come to this now, there's definitely a law for them and a law for us. And the law for us changes very, very often.

But they know we're winning. We didn't shout scab

last night, we shouted rule 51. Oh, and they hated it.

Can you describe your day?

I get up at 4. I make their coffee and cut their sandwiches. And I go out of the house for 5.10. I run back here at 6.30, get on the bus for 6.45 and go to work.

I come back and have our meal — then out at 6pm to picket. Then cut the sandwiches and go up at 9pm and get home at 10.30. I'll be in bed by about 11.30.

My husband does a lot and I make the children get involved because I think one day they'll have to be like us. I'm putting enough into their heads now to know they've got to fight. Otherwise it'll all be lost.

'A wave of strikes'

Paul Whetton, secretary of the Notts miners' rank and file strike committee, was speaking last Sunday, 22nd, at the Socialist Organiser meeting at Ollerton, Notts.

THE action of the dockers was a tremendous boost to the miners, and you could see by the government's efforts to get the dockers' strike solved that they were quite perturbed.

That was one the media could not ignore and keep quiet.

Throughout docks, shipyards and factories, there is a wave of strikes taking place, and the upsetting thing about it is that we are not coming together.

We ought to be using the umbrella of the TUC, but everybody is reluctant to go to the TUC because of what has happened in the past. So these strikes are taking place in isolation.

I think it's important that rank and file workers in shipyards, in docks, in pits, and in factories come together. It would be one of the best things that could happen if we could organise a rank and file meeting for people to realise that now, if ever, is the time to go toward.

I spoke with Dennis Skinner in the heart of Tory country, in Basingstoke, and of course everybody was clapping and cheering everything Dennis Skinner said.

Dennis Skinner made the point that we were begging not only for money and for food,



Dowds Wharf: Dockers and miners picket the unloading of coal at this private wharf where coal is loaded on lorries and driven to Llanwern.

but for solidarity action. He said: there is nothing to stop

People were taken right up to the edge of it, and when it was put point-blank to them, they hesitated and drew back.

That's a natural reluctance. They fear the machinery of the state, they fear the machinery of the employers and all the rest of it.

But I think that it's something we've got to take forward. The shop stewards' organisation has been the

backbone of the people's fight in this country, and the government recognised this. So they got rid of Derek Robinson — and, incidentally, it wasn't Michael Edwardes who got rid of Derek Robinson [the convenor at the BL Longbridge car factory]. It was another guy on the board who said that Derek Robinson had to go, and his name was Ian MacGregor.

What happened after Robinson went was that managements throughout the country

picked out certain individuals and got rid of them. The government's attempt to smash the shop stewards has had a good deal of success. The workers have now got to redress that.

And the way that the workers can redress that is by pulling together.

So when you go out — by all means beg for food, and beg for money. But tell people: now is the time for them to take action.

We are, without a doubt, going to win this fight. I think the government is bluffing.

According to Central Electricity Generating Board, and the figures of the government itself, there is now less coal on the ground than there was in 1974 when they declared a state of emergency.

Very shortly, power cuts are going to take place, and troops may be brought in to move the few existing stocks of coal that we've got.

Over these next two weeks, a lot of pits will be on holiday, and it may well be that the Coal Board will make an attempt to move the stocks. I don't know. But it's vital that we picket the power stations and places like that.

And remember this: when we go to the power stations, we're not just picketing to stop

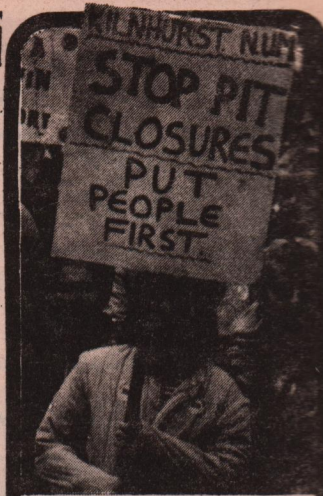
coal, but also oil, oxygen, and all the other bits and bobs without which a power station can't run.

When this strike is over, I would hope that things aren't going to go back down to their original level. That what we do then is to take the fight on — because this is not going to bring down capitalism. It may, or it may not, mean a change of government: but if so, all it will mean is that you take the first team out and you put the second eleven in.

The fight has got to go on after this dispute is over, and it is vitally important that we get ties between rank and file members, from the pits to the docks to the railways and into the factories, and organise so that we can come together to the aid of one another.

The Triple Alliance [between miners, rail and steel unions] fell flat on its face because it had been organised by and conducted by full-time officials, and the rank and file did not get involved.

I would hope that after this strike is over, we try to organise rank and file members in the pits, docks and factories, and take the arguments about a workers' government and workers' control and all that sort of thing forward, and not let it rest again.



Back the miners

Scotland

Police have been out in force at Bilston Glen pit, in Scotland, to get a handful of scabs through the picket line.

But until the mobilisation at Bilston Glen, the strike was being run at a low key. Stan Crooke reports.

"The meat-pie strike" is what some Scottish miners are now calling their strike — all that they have to do is collect money and go and buy a pie with it.

Mick McGahey seems to have forgotten his promises that the "necessary action" would be taken to stop the coal and iron ore getting into Ravenscraig.

There are token pickets at Ravenscraig, token pickets at Hunterston, token pickets at the power stations, token pickets at most open-cast sites, except Blinkbonny.

Result: a low level of involvement by the NUM membership.

Another problem, at least in certain parts of Scotland, is the lack of meetings and/or bulletins to keep members informed.

Two other factors have undermined the strike's momentum. One is the attitude that "the strike will be won or lost in Nottinghamshire, so there's not much we can do up here".

The other, more important one, was the miners' view that it would only be a matter of time before the dispute was settled. In fact the talks between the NUM and the Coal Board have collapsed.

Neither mass picketing nor trade union boycotts nor solidarity strike action can be achieved at the drop of a hat. They have to be campaigned for. But the NUM Scottish Executive is failing to campaign.

But for a rapid and complete victory the strike must become more active.

NATIONAL WOMEN'S DEMONSTRATION AND GALA



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 with stalls, refreshments, children's entertainment
 Further information: 0742 700388 / 01-582 0987

NORWICH HELPS NOTTS

Graham Morrey, secretary of Norwich Trades Council, spoke to Socialist Organiser.

We had various groups of miners from Yorkshire and Durham and Kent coming to Norwich, and it was the Kent lads who ran the strike centre in the Labour Club.

But Kent were being looked after well by London at the time, so they said: why don't you go to Ollerton? They made the contact for us.

The support committee is made up of Trades Council and Labour Party members. The first week we came up here to Notts, I did it all on my own — I got some friends together, mostly Labour Party people, and we came up. When we got back, they were so taken by what they had seen that we put a motion to the Norwich Constituency Labour Party to adopt Ollerton and Bevercotes. All the food comes up here now.

We've got donations off trade union branches, Labour Party branches, and levy. Some Labour councillors have given up a day's attendance money each month. We just had a one-day strike at the university, and the lecturers'

pay wasn't docked, so I got some money out of them.

We have a stall in the market every Saturday which raises between £50 and £150. We've had raffles and we've had a disco — anything we can think of to raise money.

Advertisement

A collection of articles on the history and theory of the general strike.

Available from PO Box 135, London SE1 0DD, price 25p plus postage.

Why we need a General Strike



Steelworkers' protest in the hard-hit region of Lorraine

Troops in Chad and Lebanon

THE Left government came to power committed not only to cut unemployment but also to reform France's political system.

The current constitution — the 'Fifth Republic' — was introduced by De Gaulle after he came to power on the basis of a military coup in 1958. It gives the president huge powers, which De Gaulle used to use by shutting down parliament for several months at a time.

Soon after its victory, the Left government came up against the constitution, when the 'Council of State' — a body stacked with aged Gaullist worthies — ruled its nationalisation decree unconstitutional, and had to be placated by improving the compensation terms.

But it has not changed the constitution. Indeed, Mitterrand's current referendum

gambit is a classic 'Fifth Republic' move.

The government has, to its credit, abolished the death penalty. But the schools reform which led to the current government reshuffle was a big retreat on what the Left had promised in 1981.

The government has continued France's nuclear weapons programme — with full support from both the Socialist Party and the Communist Party — and sent French troops to Chad and Lebanon. And Mitterrand has been a strong ally for Reagan in Europe.

Fascists gain

PART of the price paid for the failure of the Mitterrand regime has been the horrifying rise of the far right in France.

In the EEC elections on June 17 the National Front won 11% of the vote — as much as the Communist Party.

Not everyone, by a long way, who votes National Front

is a fascist, and the NF still only has a small activist hard core. But its programme and its leaders are classically fascist.

They have strong-arm squads, they are virulently anti-socialist and anti-communist, and they are anti-semitic. The core of their agitation is directed against North African immigrant workers in France.

The Communist Party and the Socialist Party have not fought this racism. On the contrary: they officially agree that there are "too many" North African immigrants in France.

In 1978 the CP launched a campaign on the theme that there were "too many" immigrants in CP-run municipalities, and one CP mayor even led a gang which smashed up an African workers' hostel.

The Left government has offered money to encourage immigrants to return to Africa, and has made it easier to deport 'illegal' immigrants — they now cannot appeal unless they can pay their fare back after being deported to attend the appeal.



Steelworkers protest at job cuts. The banner says: 'Mitterrand sold out to capital'

The Mitterra

ONE policy that the new French government under Laurent Fabius will carry over from Pierre Mauroy's administration is a plan for job cuts in the coal industry more ruthless than Ian MacGregor ever dreamed of.

The supposedly socialist government announced 4,000 job cuts in January this year. It plans to cut the 56,000 jobs in the French coal industry by half by 1988, while reducing coal production from 18½ million tonnes in 1983 to about 11 million in 1988.

It has similar plans for steel. In April this year president Mitterrand announced 8,000 immediate job cuts, with between 12,000 and 19,000 more to come.

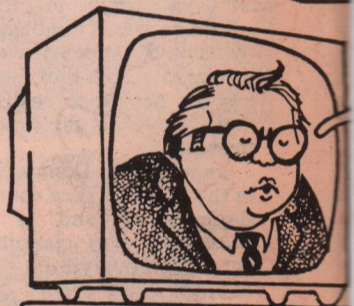
Unemployment now stands officially at around 2.2 million — 500,000 more than in 1981. The Socialist Party had promised to increase coal production by 30 million tonnes by 1990, and the CP promised 45 million tonnes.

In his early days in office, Mauroy declared: "Every morning when I arrive at the Hotel Matignon [France's equivalent of 10 Downing Street], I ask myself: What can be done to reduce unemployment?" And again: "I consider myself as a war chief in the struggle against unemployment."

On July 3 this year he said that rising unemployment was "the price that had to be paid" for getting the economy straight.

If there was ever a chance to achieve socialism through the sort of policy advocated in Britain under the name of the 'Alternative Economic Strategy', this was it. In 1981 the left-wing Labour Party paper Tribune headlined its report of the Left election victory in France, "A chance to make socialism work", and wrote:

"Never in French history has the Left been more powerful... The Socialist Party and the President which carried it to office has a coherent Left-wing strategy, a solid parliamentary base and a socialist programme of reforms..."



Former right wing prime minister Mauroy's message

But the 'Left-wing strategy' for socialism nor a sound message. The government ran into difficulties with capitalism — trade deficit against the franc. It has reacted against the class pay the cost. G socialist pretensions have collapsed.

The blame cannot be shrugged off. Only when capitalism likely to get the chance to trade that we must first bring crisis health, then proceed to socialism indefinitely.

The truth is that tinkering work. A Labour government out the 'Alternative Economic Strategy' same fate as the French left labour movement with effect abstract quarrel about doctrine.

THREE YEARS OF RU

May 10 1981: Francois Mitterrand wins in the second round of the presidential elections.

June 14 and 21: Parliamentary elections give the Socialist Party (38% of the vote) and the Communist Party (16% of the vote) a clear majority of the popular vote and in Parliament.

Initial measures of the government: 10% rise in the minimum wage; working week to be reduced from 40 hours to 39 without loss of pay; 150,000 extra jobs to be created in the public services; the banks and 11 big industrial corporations to be nationalised; 23% rise in government spending between 1981 and 1982.

November 29: Jacques Delors, Socialist Party right-winger, then minister of finance and now president of the EEC commission, calls for a "pause" in the government's reforming activity.

November 30: Prime minister

Pierre Mauroy replies that reforms will proceed in "a permanent and continuous manner".

January 1982: The 39 hour week decree comes into force, and is followed by a wave of strikes as workers resist claw-backs by the bosses.

June 1982: The Left government is in deep trouble. A huge trade deficit is opening up. Inflation is escalating. The best that can be said about unemployment is that the rate of increase is slowing down.

The government devalues the franc, freezes wages for

4½ months, cuts social spending and gives tax concessions to business.

The Communist Party says it opposes the wage freeze, but its ministers remain in the government.

September 1982: Mitterrand declares that another 18 months of 'rigour' (a word coined by the government to avoid speaking of 'austerity', which they condemned when it was implemented by the previous right-wing government) will be necessary.

In the same month, French troops arrive in the Lebanon as

This was the best chance ever to achieve the sort of policy advocated under the name of the 'Alternative Economic Strategy'. And it failed because the system does not work.

CE SONT LES
PRIX ?

NON !
LES SONDAGES !



Prime minister Mauroy: 'This is prices?' France minister Delors: 'No, opinion polls.' Cartoons by Plantu, Le Monde.



Right: Talbot Poissy — the fight against job cuts. Immigrant workers have been in the forefront of the struggle.

and fiasco

TRAVAIL...
CONFIANCE...
DIGNITEUR...
EFFORT...



Raymond Barre beams at Left: 'Work, trust, rigour, effort'.

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...e, but an urgent need.

The decline of the Communist Party

IN THE EEC elections last month the French CP got 11% — its lowest share of the vote since 1932.

From 1945 through to 1979, it consistently got over 20% of the vote.

The experience of the Mitterrand government has been a disaster for the CP. Now, by withdrawing from the government and probably adopting a more militant tone, it hopes to regain ground. It is not certain that it can do it.

The Communist Party has one asset that the SP lacks — a core of dedicated working class activists, many of whom still believe that the CP is a revolutionary party.

But it long ago lost the ability and the will to develop that asset. For decades its sights have been fixed on piecemeal gains within the present system. Its militant base is used only as a sabre to rattle in negotiations or bargaining for position.

The CP's actual politics today are not very different from the Socialist Party's. It supports

French nuclear weapons. It has said it will accept NATO. It preaches bit-by-bit reform of the system.

Generally the CP has distinguished itself from the SP by low-grade verbal sparring — there was a big dispute in the late '70s about exactly how many nationalisations the joint programme of the Left should promise — and, shamefully, by a more strident nationalism. 'No to a German Europe' was a CP poster a few years ago.

The other asset the CP used

to have and the SP lacked was links with the USSR — socialism in practice, or so millions thought. But that asset is now a liability. Only 35% of CP voters, according to a recent poll, have a positive opinion of the USSR.

'Eurocommunism' was an attempt to escape from that liability by distancing the CP from the USSR. But it made the CP appear as no more than a second rate Socialist Party.

The CP's current troubles are not temporary, but part of a long-term decline.

The Socialist Party

THE French Socialist Party is similar to the British Labour Party on policies (except on nuclear weapons, which it supports), but not otherwise.

It has no strong links with the unions and it does not even have a particularly strong concentration of voters in the working class.

There are a few pockets where the SP has a traditional working class base, but for the most part the membership is overwhelmingly middle class (even more so than the Labour Party's).

It has an apparently democratic structure, with institutionalised semi-permanent factions. In fact the party is run by the dominant Mitterrand faction balancing and trimming between the Rocard faction on the right and the Chevenement faction on the left.

The make-up of the Socialist Party is explained by its history.

Thus it practically disappeared during World War 2, while the CP played a leading role in the Resistance. After a brief growth in the 1940s, the SP degenerated into a cabal of careerists. By 1953 fully 70% of its membership were municipal councillors.

The low point was 1969, when the SP candidate for president got less than 5% of the vote.

The SP was refounded in 1971, by a fusion of the old SP with a number of small groupings. Many of those groupings — and the new leader, Francois Mitterrand, who came from one of them — had never previously made much pretence to be socialist.

During the '70s the SP grew massively in electoral support and to a certain extent in membership. As the Gaullist regime decayed, it had an appeal something like Harold Wilson's Labour leadership had in 1963-4: bright, modern, technocratic, radical without too much taint of class politics.

A strategy to win

THE 'Alternative Economic Strategy' (AES) is the British equivalent to the sort of programme which has guided the Left government in France.

In various different versions, it is the official policy of the TUC, the Labour Party, and the Communist Party.

Through planning agreements, through increased social spending, and through new nationalised industry, investment will be jacked up, so the argument runs. The increased investment will boost demand in the economy both directly and indirectly. It will thus pull the whole economy out of slump into expansion.

The import controls ensure that the increased demand does not just pull in more imports. And the price controls make sure it does not just lead to inflation. The other AES measures make sure the expansion benefits the working class.

Depending on the emphasis and on which other measures they add, versions of the AES can range from mild reformism to sweeping radicalism. But all the versions share some key problems.

The policy of the capitalist state spending its way out of a crisis is at the heart of the AES. It is not a particularly socialist idea: it was first theorised by the Liberal economist J. M. Keynes in the 1930s.

It has been abandoned by the leading sections of the capitalist class because in today's conditions it leads not to expansion but to inflation, uncontrollable state deficits, and balance-of-payments problems. France confirms that judgement.

Would tighter import controls solve the trade deficit problem? Yes — at a cost! The cost can be seen in countries like Brazil which have cut right down on imports in order to get trade surpluses and pay off their foreign debt — a huge slump in industry and rise in unemployment.

Moreover, tighter import controls all round — and that is the way the capitalist world is going today — means less international trade, more slump, higher prices, and stricter barriers between nations.

Capitalism today is so much an international system that any programme for revived capitalism, let alone socialism, 'in one country', is nonsense. There can be no working-class economic policy for France, or for Britain, but only for an arena on the scale of Europe.

When AES-type policies run into economic difficulties, a government has two options. It can do as the French government has done, and try to make the working class pay the cost.

Alternatively, it is possible that such a government could try to make the bosses pay. But then there is another problem.

How would a radical version of the AES be enforced? Would the capitalists just grin and put up with it? Or wouldn't the



capitalists and army chiefs follow the example of their equivalents in Chile?

Some versions of the AES mention mass pressure and mass involvement. But it is very vague: 'keen trade union pressure', 'the toughest possible trade union lobby', 'the negotiated and bargained support of the trade union movement' — all suggesting tough talk across the negotiating tables, rather than any action on the picket lines or on the streets.

The AES is not only socialism, or semi-socialism, 'in one country'; it is semi-socialism from above.

But the strength of the labour movement lies in the rank and file. The existing state machine cannot be used as a neutral technical instrument for transforming the economy.

What is the alternative to the AES? Workers should take over their factories and offices and run them through workers' councils. Those workers' councils should link up in each town or district to run the area.

Delegates to these councils should be subject to regular re-election and recall at any time: the councils can thus create a democracy far broader, more flexible, and more accessible than vote-every-five-years parliamentary democracy.

The workers' councils should come together at national level — to bring the bulk of industry and finance under common ownership. In conjunction with the workers of other countries, they should formulate a socialist economic plan, based on need not profit.

The existing army and police should be disbanded and replaced by militias and patrols directly based on the working class communities.

A parliamentary government can play a big role in implementing this alternative — by being willing to attack the capitalists' wealth and power and to mobilise the working class. But it is an alternative which cannot come solely 'from above'.

WINNING CAPITALISM

part of the imperialist 'multi-national peacekeeping force'.
March 1983: The government's economic difficulties are worse. 190,000 jobs will be lost in 1983 — the worst year for job losses for decades. The trade deficit reaches record levels; France's foreign debt soars (by July 1984 it had reached 466 billion francs, as against 123 billion at the end of 1980); speculation against the franc goes wild.

The government devalues the franc again and introduces a more sweeping austerity plan: social spending cuts, tax increases.

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The same month — elections in West Germany. Mitterrand helps scupper the Social Democrats — who had been pushed into some sort of opposition to Cruise and Pershing missiles — by vocally supporting the missiles on a visit to Germany.

August 1983: As factional conflict escalates in the former French African colony of Chad, the government sends in French troops — eventually 3,000, making it the biggest French overseas military operation since the Algerian war.

December 1983: Workers at the Talbot Poissy car plant occupy the factory to fight against 1905 redundancies officially approved by the government. The CGT union federation — dominated by the Communist Party — takes a cautious, non-militant line.

Early 1984: The government begins a programme of drastic job cuts in state-owned

heavy industry, particularly coal and steel.

April 1984: Steelworkers' protest march against job cuts: Communist Party leader George Marchais joins it but the CP ministers remain in the government.

May 1984: Occupation against redundancies at the Citroen Aulnay car plant — energetically supported by the CGT.

June 17: EEC elections. Heavy defeat for Left. SP gets 21% of vote, CP 11%.

June 24: Over a million people join a demonstration against the government's (very limited) plans to cut back on the privileged position of private schools.

July 12: Mitterrand announces plans for a referendum on the schools reform.

July 17: After the resignation of prime minister Pierre Mauroy, Mitterrand appoints a new government under technocrat Laurent Fabius.



International



Victims of the profit drive

YOU'VE probably seen Frank Bough, Sue Lawley and others on TV appealing for our help for the thousands of people affected by the drought and famine in the Sahel in Africa. Film of dying and severely undernourished adults and children has been very moving.

But the famine is not, as the TV appeals would have us believe, just an unfortunate freak of nature.

In the first place, the EEC and the US have food surpluses big enough to meet Africa's food shortage many times over — if only the governments would do something to make reparations for their pillage of Africa over the centuries, rather than having the problem off to individual charity.

And the food shortage itself is not just a fact of nature.

The Sahel (which consists of parts of Cape Verde, Mauritania, Senegal, Gambia, Upper Volta, Mali, Niger and Chad) has had droughts before. In fact its pre-capitalist economy, based on wandering people tending cattle, was well adapted to cope with them.

What has made droughts cause serious famine is the

By Nathan Jones

development of capitalism. Food production has been shifted towards exports rather than domestic consumption. And, as an Oxfam pamphlet comments, "While the north of Upper Volta had almost no harvest in 1983 because of drought, in parts of the South, barns were overflowing with millet after a bumper harvest: farmers were worried about the low price they would receive for their crop".

Flour made available by the state grain agency at low prices was bought up by private traders to be sold at higher prices. The poor in the area simply cannot afford to buy food at the traders' prices.

It was the same story in 1982: soybean oil donated by Saudi Arabia was bought up by private traders and sold at high prices.

Also, as land cultivation has developed, the poor peasants have been forced onto the worst land. To feed their families, they have to exhaust the land: drought wreaks havoc with their livelihoods.

And governments in the Sahel

worsen the situation by restricting the sale of subsidised food to the towns: the badly affected rural areas hardly benefit at all.

But Western governments and financial institutions also bear a big responsibility.

The debt burden on countries throughout the Third World and in the Sahel is so great that new loans are now only paying off old ones. Since the world price of food commodities is falling, it means that the money to aid the starving in the Sahel is simply drying up.

And the US and its allies have cut their contributions to the aid provided by the International Development Association. In 1984 \$16 billion was needed to keep IDA aid at its existing levels. Only \$9 billion was provided.

And the 1983 programme of the International Fund for Agricultural Development was cut back by almost 30%; actual payments from Western governments were consistently lower than their pledges.

So the Sahel famine is not a natural disaster. It is a result of the irrational organisation of a world economy based on the thirst for profit.

Likud vs Labour: what does it mean?

By Clive Bradley

OUR Labour Party has a long history of support for the existence and actions of the Israeli state. Part of the reason for this is the myth of Israel as a socialist state, beleaguered by Arab tyrannies.

Labour Zionism, in many respects the dominant wing of the Zionist movement, has historically quite close connections with the Labour Party, and often particularly with its left.

The pamphlet, produced by the Labour Movement Campaign for Palestine, is a critique of Labour Zionism, examining its ideas and — more importantly — its history and practice.

The early Labour Zionists at the beginning of this century believed that the creation of a Jewish state would redress the balance of the 'inverted pyramid' of Jewish society in Europe. In a Jewish state, a 'real' Jewish proletariat could be formed that could then commence its revolutionary struggle against the Jewish bourgeoisie. So Zionism was necessary for socialism, they argued.

Theory

What this theory overlooked was the Arab population in Palestine. The reality behind the socialist claims of the Labour Zionists was that they were a colonising movement which could only establish its state by displacing the original inhabitants.

The colonial logic behind Labour Zionism — however sincere as socialists its theorists may have been — meant that the Jews were pitted against the Arabs. And despite the 'anti-colonial' rhetoric of some of the Labour Zionists, the needs of the embryonic Zionist state in British-ruled Palestine in 1920-48 led Labour Zionists to look to colonial-imperialist powers (principally Britain) for support. Their ends could best be served if they convinced the imperialists that the Jewish state could protect their interests against Arab nationalist revolt.

The pamphlet demonstrates clearly that the reactionary core to Labour Zionism has always predominated. A statement from one Labour Zionist leader gives some indication of this.

Rothschild

David Hacohen, former Managing Director of Sollel Boneh (the building company of the trade union federation, the Histadrut) commented on the early colonial period:

"I had to fight my friends on the issue of Jewish socialism to defend the fact that I would not accept Arabs in my trade union . . . to defend the fact that we stood guard at orchards to prevent Arab workers from getting jobs there, to attack Jewish housewives in the markets and smash Arab eggs they had bought . . . to take Rothschild, the incarnation of capitalism, as a socialist and to name him the 'benefactor' — to do all this was not easy." But nevertheless they did it.

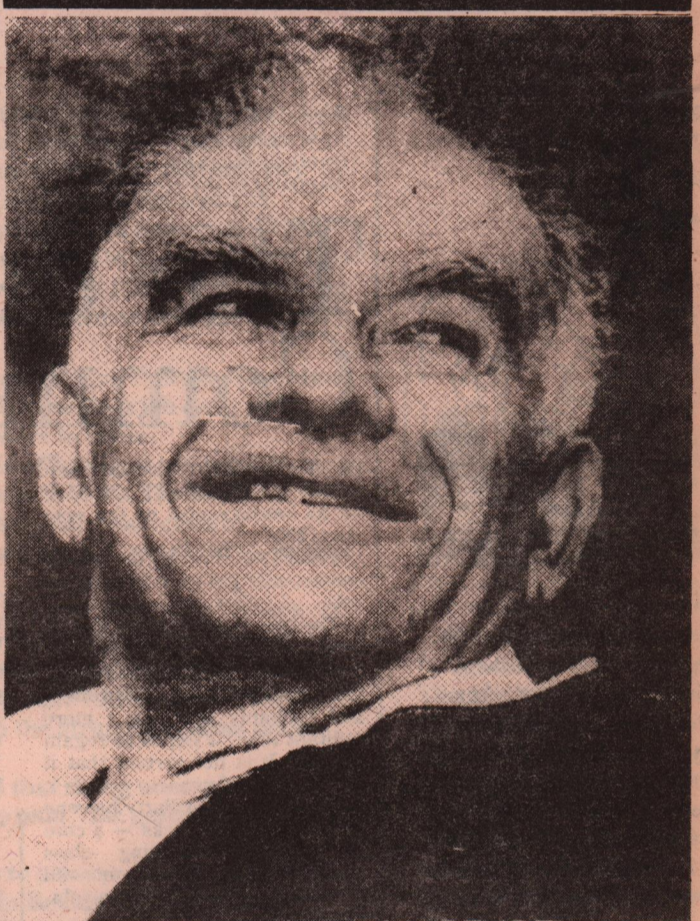
AS we go to press, it is still unclear who is going to form the next government in Israel, although some form of Labour-Likud 'national unity' government seems likely. The latest figures give Labour 45 seats, and Likud 41, in the 120-seat parliament.

Labour has certainly not got the majority it had hoped for. Many people internationally will be disappointed too. The US quite openly favoured a Labour government that would be more responsive to its proposals.

Many people on the left also felt that a Labour victory would be in the interests of peace. The British Labour Party has always had links with its Israeli 'counterpart' and Poale Zion, an element in the Israeli Labour alignment, is affiliated to the British Labour Party.

But the Israeli Labour Party is not a socialist or a working class party. Clive Bradley reviews a pamphlet on the history of Labour Zionism that shows its real nature.

'Labour Zionism: socialist or colonialist?' — 35p plus postage from the Labour Movement Campaign for Palestine, 28 Carlton Mansions, Holmleigh Rd., London N16.



Likud leader Yitzhak Shamir

During the war that created the Israeli state in 1948, the Labour Zionists were not as overt and brutal as Begin's right wing forces; but they shared the essential strategy. According to Harry Sacher, a prominent British Labour Zionist, "For strategic purposes the Jews began to blow up the Arab villages which they had occupied . . . The massacre of Deir Yassin by the Irgun (Begin's group) was a turning point. It became the rule that, when the Jewish forces advanced, the Arab inhabitants . . . fled; nor was the flight always without stimulation and encouragement from the Jews."

The pamphlet shows how two of the central myths of post-1948 Labour Zionism are false. The kibbutzim are in reality both an effective form for a colonisation process, and are based upon the exploitation of Arab labour. "Calling the kibbutzim 'socialist' . . . is like justifying a landlord throwing his tenants into the street because he says he wants to rent the house to a commune."

The trade union federation, the Histadrut, with which the Labour Party has links, is not, the pamphlet shows quite clearly, a genuine trade union: it is "after the State itself, the largest employer in Israel . . .

(And) working for a Histadrut owned company is no different from working for a capitalist enterprise."

Finally, the pamphlet deals with the history of the relationship between Zionism and the Labour Party. It shows for example, how a 1945 Labour Party policy argued that "the Arabs should be encouraged to move out of Palestine as the Jews move in".

And it traces the development of this general policy of support for the Zionist state, until the successful passing of the pro-Palestinian motion at the 1982 Party Conference.

This pamphlet will be very useful to activists campaigning in the labour movement for the rights of the Palestinians. It is tightly argued, and provides a coherent and logical critique of Labour Zionism that avoids the demonology of much that is written on the subject.

I have one criticism: it is not the stated purpose of the pamphlet, but I feel a more extensive treatment of the policies of Labour Zionist governments up to 1977 would have been useful — to show that their hypocrisy did not end with the creation of the Israeli state.

That aside, this is an important and informative pamphlet which should have a wide circulation.

Problems of Iran solidarity

THE Iranian organisation which has done most to develop any degree of international solidarity work is the Mojahedin. They were first off the mark in Britain in building a solidarity movement, by launching "Iran Solidarity" (IS).

The Mojahedin were careful not to force their politics upon it — although they themselves backed the National Council of Resistance as the alternative to the Khomeini regime, they did not make support for this a condition of involvement in the IS — and IS was a relatively healthy movement.

Through their work in IS, the

Stan Crooke concludes his article on the Iranian Left.

Mojahedin gained access to Labour Party and trade union branches and leading figures. But having gained such openings, the Mojahedin then placed increasing emphasis on winning support for the National Council of Resistance at the cost of general solidarity work. They allowed IS to collapse but succeeded in winning many contacts made through IS to support for the National Council of Resistance.

This was reflected in the agenda of last year's Labour Party conference. The two resolutions and most of the thirteen amendments endorsed support for the

National Council of Resistance — and so did the composite resolution eventually adopted.

As IS declined in late 1982, supporters of the Organisation of Iranian People's Fedaii Guerrillas (OIPFG) created the "International Solidarity Front for the Defence of Democratic Rights in Iran (ISF)".

There was scarcely any difference between the platforms of ISF and IS, but a serious labour movement orientation for the ISF was precluded by the OIPFG supporters' own sectarianism. The existing labour movement in Britain is reformist in outlook, and therefore the OIPFG supporters refused to dirty their hands with it.

As regards supporters abroad of other Iranian leftist organisations, limited numbers and more fundamentally, their ultra-sectarianism hinder solidarity work.

Thus, the Communist Party of Iran has established the "Organisation of the Supporters of the CPI Abroad" (OSCPIA). Its task is not to build a broad-based solidarity movement but merely to propagandise on behalf of the CPI.

In the labour movement the field has been left open to supporters of the Tudeh Party. Through their links with the Communist Party and its co-thinkers, especially those in the Labour Party, they were able to build the Committee for the Defence of the Iranian Revolution (CDIR), during the period of the Tudeh Party's support for the regime.

Now that the Tudeh Party has fallen victim itself to the regime's repression, the CDIR campaigns against that repression.

The situation is sad. Paralysed by their own sectarianism, some organisations, (like the Communist Party of Iran) refuse to commit themselves to genuine solidarity work, while others (like OIPFG) are apparently incapable of it.

Those organisations which have achieved any degree of success in solidarity work are either far from radical (Mojahedin) or downright reactionary (Tudeh Party).

A major precondition for the development of Iranian solidarity work is thus an ideological restructuring of the Iranian Left itself.

IRELAND

1969—1984

15 YEARS TOO LONG

DEMONSTRATE FOR WITHDRAWAL



SATURDAY
18th AUGUST
London
1pm Speakers Corner
to Jubilee Gardens

Self Determination For The Irish
People As A Whole

NOT A SPY STORY

SPIES are in the news these days. In fact one of the things that never ceases to amaze me is that despite the annual discovery of yet another Soviet agent in some high-placed position in the British state, the fabric of our civilisation resolutely fails to collapse. Nevertheless, the psychology behind the decision of a well-placed upper-class Englishman to become a Russian spy is an interesting issue.

Another Country is ostensibly about such a background. It opens with Guy 'Bennett' being interviewed in Moscow about his youth, and his decision to betray his class.

His youth was that of most bourgeois/aristocratic boys in the 1920s: in a public school.

The actual plot of the film in fact deals much more with male sexuality in the school than it does with espionage — were it not for the prologue and epilogue, this theme would in fact be invisible.

Tension

The film deals with the repression of sexuality — both the internalised repression (it is not until the end of the film that Guy acknowledges that it is more than a passing phase for him), and the external repression: the school hierarchy, and especially the 'gods' (the elite of the prefects) take steps to repress and hide the extent of homosexual activity in the school, following

Edward Ellis reviews the film, 'Another Country', which was inspired by the story of the spy Guy Burgess

the suicide of a boy found in the act in a changing room.

There are grades and nuances amongst the hierarchy, ranging from the confused disillusionment of the current head boy, Menzies, to the sadism and proto-fascism of his likely successor, Fowler.

Rebellion

And there are two figures of rebellion: Judd, who spends his days and nights reading *Das Kapital*; and Guy Bennett himself, who has no political commitment, but deals with authority with a witty aristocratic anarchism.

The relationship between Judd and Bennett is one of the most interesting themes of the film. Judd is a stereotypical Communist — talks of nothing else, criticises "sentimentality", is cold and hard. He refuses to be a prefect so as not to "participate in the institutions of repression".

One of the most powerful moments in the film is Bennett's response to Judd's dismissal of his claim that "I am never going to love women". Bennett tells Judd that despite his belief in revolution and equality, he's the

same as the rest: "You still believe some people are superior to others just because of the way they make love".

Judd, true to the stereotype (and it's probably a valid one) is about the only person in the school who has never 'indulged'.

Nevertheless, Judd is also a powerful figure. We know that most of what he says is true, and contrasts sharply with the idiocy, prejudice and sadism of his peers. There is a tension between his position — his relative puritanism and his insistent heterosexuality, which implies criticism of homosexuality as an aspect of the bourgeois degeneracy of it all — and the lived experience of violence and oppression of Bennett. Bennett's predicament ultimately adds to Judd's critique, although Judd is slow to realise it.

Sexuality

The film is also extremely funny, and at times very touching. To persuade Judd to become a prefect (and thus manoeuvre against the terrifying Fowler), Bennett deliberately attends a school military presentation dressed very badly, and so loses the competition for his school 'house'. To prevent the prefects birching him, he threatens to tell the headmaster exactly who he's had sex with...

And throughout, Bennett develops a touching love affair



Rupert Everett as Guy Bennett and Colin Firth as Tommy Judd

with a boy from another 'house'. They meet at night on a boat and just cuddle each other. In the end, it's his refusal to betray his lover that causes him to submit to the

violence of the prefects, convinces him of his own sexuality and — the connection with his future as a spy — loses for him the possibility of fulfilling his ambitions.

It's beautifully filmed, beautifully scripted and convincingly acted. Don't take any notice of the adverts — this is not a spy film: it's much more interesting than that.

SCIENCE

By Les Hearn

Green and red

LAST weekend, the Socialist Environment and Resources Association and Green CND held their second joint conference, this time with the theme of linking up the environmental and trade union movements.

Out of about 150 attending, there were few trade unionists who were not already involved in the environmental movement. Nevertheless, there were some very valuable workshop discussions on issues where trade unions and environmentalists have cooperated and on issues where they should and will cooperate.

Examples include campaigns against nuclear waste transport and dumping, against the sale of useless and dangerous medicines in the Third World, against multinationals like RTZ, against dampness in council housing and for bans on development in conservation areas.

Nuclear waste

Pete Wilkinson, Director of Greenpeace, addressed a workshop on the campaign

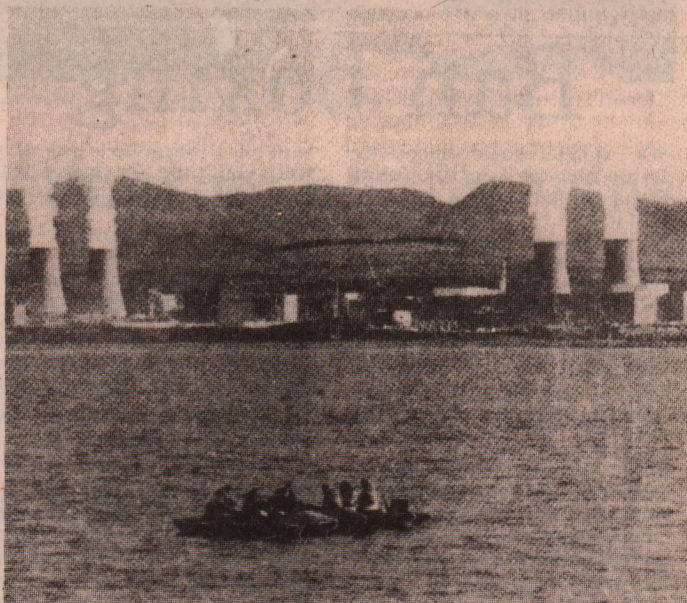
against sea-dumping of nuclear waste.

Greenpeace started by carrying out research into what actually happens to radioactive substances in the sea. Government policies were based on calculations literally made on the back of an envelope. Greenpeace was able to show that far from being safely diluted in the vast volume of sea water, radioactive elements were being concentrated on the sea bed, where they could enter food chains.

Then followed direct action and propaganda. The direct action (obstructing dumping by sailing rubber dinghies up to dumping ships) gained much publicity. Information directed at Spain (the nearest country to the dumping site) led Spain to oppose sea-dumping at the London Dumping Convention.

When the LDC voted 19-6 to cease dumping, the UK government refused to abide by the decision.

Greenpeace had been speaking to seafarers union branches and gaining support



Greenpeace protesters off Sellafield

for their campaign, and were therefore in a good position to go over the heads of government for a union ban on dumping, supported by the four transport unions.

Greenpeace is repeating the process over the discharge of radioactive waste from Sellafield into the Irish Sea. They have looked at the scientific evidence on effects of waste in the Irish Sea, they have carried out a highly publicised and popular direct action campaign and are also gaining union interest and support.

The UK government have been unable to oppose calls for stopping discharge of waste, but are doing their

best to get round them. They have agreed to "minimise" discharges and say this will be achieved within ten years, meanwhile some three deaths per year at least are due to this radioactive pollution, according to government sources, and Pete Wilkinson expects this to be the start of an epidemic of cancers around Sellafield.

Greenpeace is arguing that discharges must be minimised now, using the "best available technology", namely the "totally closed circuit" being installed at Hanford in the USA.

Waiting ten years to "minimise" discharges would

be a hollow gesture, since the type of nuclear power station causing the problems will be obsolete in ten years. Pete Wilkinson described the waste problem as the Achilles Heel of the nuclear power industry and said he felt confident that nuclear power was on the way out. The recent spectacular but largely irrelevant crash test of a waste container was a

desperate attempt to revive a flagging confidence.

Miners

At a workshop on the miners' strike, the majority of participants felt that a victory for the miners was essential not only for the miners but also for those campaigning for safe energy and against nuclear power.

STOP THE CRIMINALISATION AND DEPORTATION OF BLACK YOUTH!

**NATIONAL DEMONSTRATION!
SAT, AUG, 4th, 1984.
Birmingham**

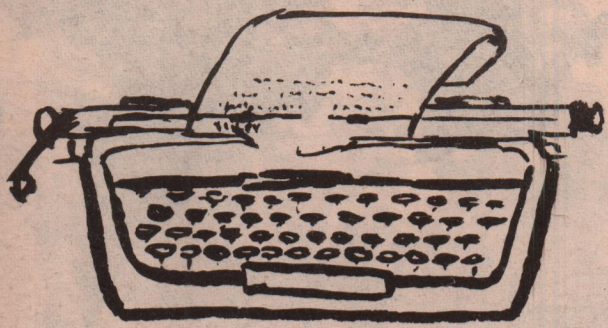
ASSEMBLE: HANDSWORTH PARK (HOLLY ROAD). 1:00p.m.
RALLY: CHAMBERLAIN SQUARE (Nr B'HAM LIBRARY) 3:30p.m.

**BLACK PEOPLE HERE TO STAY
HERE TO FIGHT!**

**STOP THE DEPORTATION OF
KARAMJIT SINGH NOW!**

P&P Campaign Against Criminalisation and Deportation of Black Youth
c/o 101, VILLA ROAD, HANDSWORTH, BIRMINGHAM.

Writeback



Send letters to Socialist Organiser, 28 Middle Lane, London N8. No longer than 400 words please: longer letters are liable to be cut.

Anti-semitism

I THINK Clive Bradley (SO 188) overdid his praise for Steve Cohen's book, "That's funny, you don't look anti-semitic".

I agree with Cohen's basic point: that the Left tends to refer to anti-semitism only in order to say (truly) that anti-Zionism does not imply anti-semitism, rather than considering anti-semitism worthy of attention in its own right.

But Cohen swathes that thesis in some dubious arguments. Abram Leon's Marxist classic, "The Jewish Question" argued that the Jews retained a distinct identity because they became a 'people-class', specialising in trading and money-lending.

Cohen objects on several counts. In fact, he claims, Jews were not economically specialised in that way: on this I am not competent to judge. But he also seems to argue that any theory which explains anti-semitism from what Jews do or have done is necessarily blaming Jews for anti-semitism.

Not so: and Cohen's argument leads him to a very mystical view of anti-semitism. Polemicising against 'rigid determinism', he seems to end up opposing any attempt to root an explanation of anti-semitism in the social and economic situation of Jews. Anti-semitism becomes an eternal fact.

Cohen also argues against Leon that no special argument at all is needed to explain the persistence of a Jewish identity outside Palestine. Other nations — the Irish or the English, for example — don't merge into their surroundings, and neither do the Jews. That is all there is to it.

Factually this must be wrong: the Irish in England assimilate pretty quickly, and so for centuries did the English in Ireland. Ideologically it seems to be linked to Cohen's sharp opposition of regarding assimilation of Jews into non-Jewish national majorities as progressive, as Marxists traditionally have done.

The link is not entirely logical: if assimilation will not happen anyway, then why worry about it? But what is clear is that Cohen resists any notion of Jewish identity as being based on specific material conditions and therefore likely to fade if those conditions disappear.

Now assimilation does not mean forcible imposition of the majority culture on Jews, as Cohen seems to assume.

Marxists

Nathan Weinstock puts it well:

"Marxists defend the right of the Jewish masses to freely develop their cultural life as long as they wish to assert their specificity. Not only is this the only humane and democratic policy; it is also the only approach which will enable this so frequently oppressed minority to give full expression to the internationalist and socialist currents with which the best of its children are deeply imbued ..."

(But) only a reactionary in the full sense of the word could want to preserve artificially the specific Jewish identity ... To stand opposed to assimilation which occurs naturally and voluntarily through the destruction of national divisions and the disappearance of distinctions between peoples, even under capitalism, is to be, in Lenin's words, 'a supporter of all that is outmoded and connected with caste among the Jewish people' ...

('Zionism, false messiah')

Cohen, I think, tends to make his opposition to anti-semitism into a sort of Jewish equivalent of black cultural nationalism or of radical feminism. He himself draws out the political conclusions of his attitude in trying to justify the Jewish-separatist policy of the Bund as against the Russian Marxists in the early years of this century.

MARTIN THOMAS
Islington

Kinnock—another Harold Wilson?

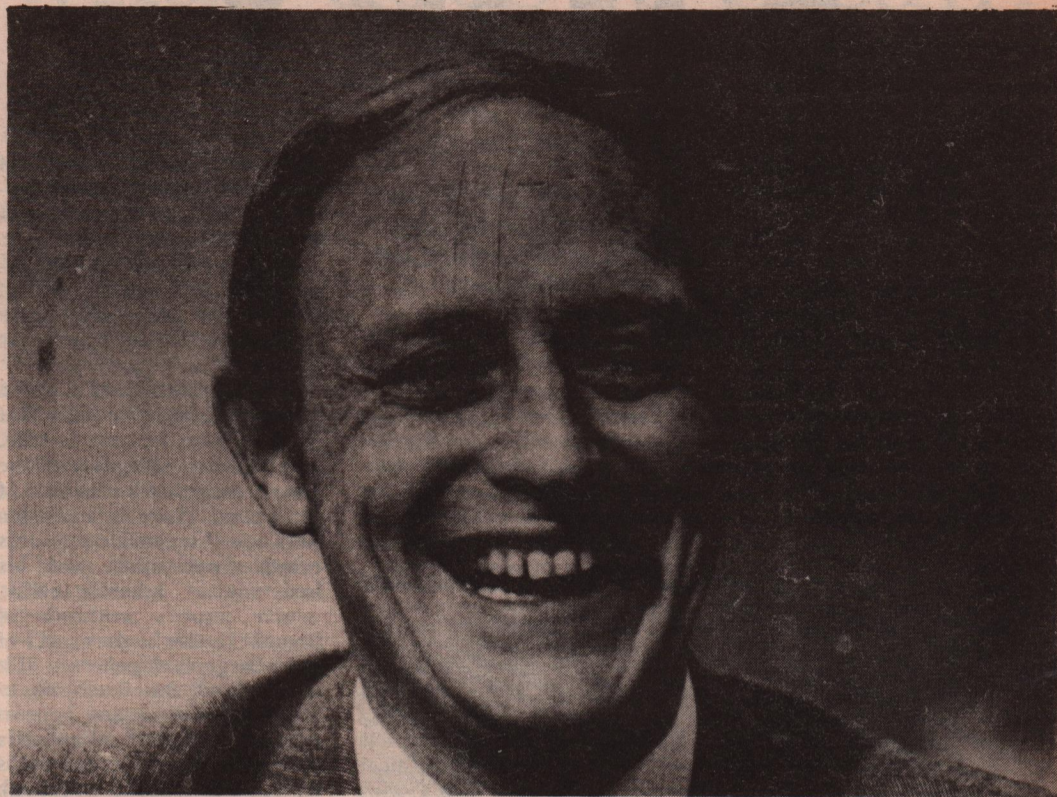
I HAVE been reading with great interest your articles on Neil Kinnock and on the whole I agree with your analysis, although I think you err on the side of charity.

Unquestionably Kinnock is not a socialist, but I doubt if he is even a radical. My own impression is that he is little more than an opportunist, whose only guiding principle is an overwhelming desire for office. He will say anything, go anywhere, do anything and make any compromise to get himself into 10 Downing Street.

He was created by and is the creature of television. Can anyone seriously believe that Kinnock would be the leader of anything but for his skill in presenting himself on TV?

Much is made of Kinnock's decisive victory in the leadership contest, but surely that episode is one of the most discreditable in the Labour Party's often squalid history.

At a time when the Party was frightened and demoralised after its defeat in the 1983 election, a group of trade union barons, headed by Clive Jenkins, persuaded Michael Foot to resign the leadership when the Left's only credible candidate, Tony Benn, was out of Parliament. With little time to think and less to organise, the Left allowed itself to be bounced into supporting Kinnock as the only alternative to the social democrat, Roy Hattersley.



Eric Heffer's gallant campaign to give the Left a genuine choice never got off the ground. The right and the Labour establishment supported Kinnock because they knew his hunger for office could be manipulated to their

own advantage.

Since his elevation Kinnock has convinced himself, or been convinced by others, that the Labour Party's only chance of victory in the next election is by moving to the centre, hence his

support for the witch-hunt. This strategy has been thrown off course by the sudden and unexpected re-emergence of a fighting socialist spirit within the Labour movement as evinced by the Liverpool councillors and the striking miners.

Kinnock's reaction to both has been worthy of Harold Wilson himself. He avoided committing himself as long as possible, only coming out with tardy and lukewarm support for the miners under strong pressure from Benn and other socialists on the NEC, while behind the scenes, I am sure, he and his cohorts are working desperately for some cobbled up compromise.

What should the Left do? Your own view and that of many sincere socialists seems to be that little can be hoped for at the moment other than to bring pressure on Kinnock to break with the Right by forcing his hand on the miners and Liverpool. With the greatest respect, I consider this to be a "triumph of optimism over experience".

Opportunist

Kinnock will temporise while he considers it expedient to do so, but as soon as he dares he will resume his efforts to move the Labour Party back to the centre. Should the Left not start now to plan a strategy to secure a change in the leadership as soon as possible, so that we are not caught napping a second time? Above all, we must guard against falling into the trap of replacing one opportunist with another, who seems, temporarily at least, to be rather more successful.

I refer, of course, to Ken Livingstone, who is rumoured to have his eye on Kinnock's job. I know he is the blue-eyed boy at the moment for embarrassing Mrs Thatcher, but having watched him in action at County Hall for the last three years, I am convinced that he has a commitment to nothing except the greater glory of Ken Livingstone. His record is far too patchy to inspire confidence.

It seems that increasingly the hopes, aspirations and views of the rank and file members of the party, including myself, are articulated by Comrade Benn, whose warm and unstinting support for both the Liverpool councillors and the miners has been in such marked contrast to Kinnock's mean spirited performance.

Benn is being forced by circumstances to assume the de facto leadership of the party in order to fill the moral and intellectual vacuum created by Kinnock's feebleness and want of principle.

PAULA WATSON,
Westminster CLP.

Get out of the EEC!

I write in response to Martin Thomas' article in SO, dated May 31, 1984.

While correctly seeing that Bennite and Stalinist opposition to the EEC is characterised by petit-bourgeois nationalism, it refuses to acknowledge that the EEC represents a more advanced stage in the development of capitalism which should be opposed because of its real effects on the working class.

To outline these effects would

be voluminous. I concentrate on the following themes.

1) You quote Marx's and Engels' response to the unification of Germany in 1871. Marx quite clearly was aware that there were some favourable aspects to the unification that could be used by communists. He also perceived that in the actual state of the class struggle internationally in 1871, following the defeat of the Commune, it was impossible to conceive of the class effect-

tively mounting a political opposition to the creation of the Empire in 1871.

But the situation in Britain is completely distinct.

We have not suffered a major defeat. On the contrary, on the industrial front we see an enormous advance on the situation nine months ago. We can capitalise on the popular opposition to the EEC which Thatcher is using to bolster her own position. The strength of working class opposition to the EEC is such that we can mobilise significant sections of the working class against capitalism. In 1871 Marx and Engels were not in a comparable situation. To cite Marx and Engels in 1871 without positing the citations against the realities of the conjuncture of 1871 is to betray the sort of formalism that Leninists should always avoid.

2) To say with Martin Thomas that "the Common Agricultural Policy has been relatively successful in capitalist terms" shows an amazing ignorance of the facts. Although it is true that labour productivity has increased, even if not to the extent of fivefold as claimed by Thomas, it is clear from all the bourgeois literature and from any objective treatment of CAP that it has actually been a colossal failure.

3) Martin points out that 'no amount of calls for 'Britain out' will turn the economic clock back' and 'abolish the huge scale of modern capitalist industry and its interconnections. Quite correct, comrade. But that misses the point. None of us calling for withdrawal believe that this would mitigate or overturn the tendencies within capitalism which Martin points to, just as opposing redundancies in the coalfields will not of itself prevent rationalisation and unemployment in other sectors.

The problem is to ask, in what ways will opposition to the EEC develop the implantation of socialist consciousness amongst advanced sections of the proletariat? How can a fight against the effects of the EEC on the working class develop consciousness and increase the level of class struggle in the present conjuncture?

SYDNEY NICHOLSON
(NATTHE, Feltham and Heston CLP)

Ban boxing

SOCIALISTS should support the British Medical Association's call for an end to boxing.

Firstly, boxing kills boxers. On that there's no argument.

Secondly it is neither a 'sport' nor 'fun'. Aside from the fatalities there are the injuries and brain damage.

Sugar Ray Leonard risks his sight every time he goes into the ring. Ali doesn't 'float like a butterfly and sting like a bee' anymore. He's permanently puddled and punchdrunk.

Boxing can't be made safe. 'When you get inside those ropes your head is a target for self-propelled missiles known as fists, and there is no way of making that safe'.

Back in 1951 in America, six boxers were killed in eight months. They said then, 'Boxing can be made a safe sport'. They've been saying it for 33 years.

But there's another reason why socialists should be against boxing. I've never read it better expressed than by James P. Cannon, the great American socialist and workers' leader.

Poisonous

"It's a commentary on the times and the social environment out of which the boxing business rises, like a poisonous flower from a dunghill, that nobody came forward with the simple demand to outlaw prize fighting, as it was outlawed in most of the States of this country up till the turn of the century.

"Cock-fighting is illegal, it is considered inhumane to put a couple of roosters into the pit and incite them to spur each other

until one of them keels over. It is also against the law to put bulldogs into the pit to fight for a side bet.

"But our civilisation ... has not yet advanced to the point where law and public opinion forbid men who have nothing against each other, to fight for money and the amusement of paying spectators. Such spectacles are part of our highly touted way of life."

Pacifism

Many socialists equate a hostility to boxing to class pacifism. Gerry Hoffa's article in Socialist Organiser no. 159 did just this. He applauds the anti-Semite Hyndman, leader of the SDF in his attack on "fabian lillies" who opposed boxing. (It's significant that Gerry doesn't stop to think in what ideology the term "lillies" is embedded — homophobia).

This is all just so much rubbish. What Gerry has to explain is how tragic deaths like that of Johnny Owen, the young Welsh boxer, help us argue, as we should, for organised workers' defence in the miners' strike.

Gerry argues that boxing is a 'noble art'. He'd do well to remember what Joe Louis said when, after renouncing his title to turn promoter, he was asked which he preferred, boxing or promoting. His answer came straight away, "promotin'".

The reporter seemed surprised. "Why is that, can you explain it?" "Sure," said Joe. "They can't hit you when you're promotin'".

ALAN JOHNSON

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Industrial



Photo: John Harris (IFL)

Asian women picketing Kemal Bros. garment factory, Handsworth, Birmingham.

Asian workers strike for rights

The dispute began on 22 May when 3 TGWU members were sacked for joining the union. Fifteen more came out, leaving only five workers in the factory. They, too, were sacked. Most of the sacked workers are Asian women. Some of them were

earning as little as £30 for a 45-hour week, in appalling conditions. On Tuesday 17 July their picket was joined by 100 miners, from Littleton and Leigh Hall collieries in Staffordshire and St. John's colliery in South Wales. Peter Clements from

St. John's said: "We have received so much support from the Asian community that the very least we can do is repay some of that solidarity by supporting these workers fighting for basic rights." The sacked workers are enduring continual abuse on

the picket line and welcome support from any quarter, especially the unemployed.

There is a mass picket every Thursday. The strike has been made official by the TGWU. The strikers can be contacted c/o Shahida, tel. 021-236 8323.

Pension staff strike

By Stan Crooke

AS strikers at the Crown Agents Pensions Division in East Kilbride, near Glasgow, approach their fourth month on the picket line, pressure for an end to the dispute from the leaderships of the unions involved is increasing.

The background to the dispute is complicated. The Pensions Division is part of the Crown Agents for Overseas Government and Administration, which provides investment and procurement services for British and overseas governments. The Pensions Division is responsible for pension payments to some 50,000 ex-colonial civil servants. 97% of its work is carried out in conjunction with the Overseas Development Administration (ODA).

In 1980, after a series of financial blunders, the Crown Agents for Overseas Governments and Administrations were made into a public corporation, with the result that new recruits to the Pensions Division no longer got civil service status. They were not part of the index-linked pensions scheme, nor of the civil service career structure.

Then, in February of this year, the Tory Minister for Overseas Development, Timothy Raison, announced plans for privatisation. This meant cutting costs in order to create a more attractive proposition for private "enterprise".

Workers in the Pensions Division demanded: no privatisation; the Pensions Division to be made part of the ODA; full civil service status. 120 of the 150 members of the Pensions Division struck on April 4 and have been out ever since.

The offices are picketed in work hours in an attempt to keep out the 20 or so scabs. Despite two arrests to date, the pickets have not allowed themselves to be intimidated by the police.

A backlog of mail is now piled some four feet high in the ODA post room. The strikers are receiving strike pay from the three unions involved - CPSA, SCPS, CSU - and collections have also been organised at a number of local workplaces and the recent CPSA and SCPS annual conferences.

However, the strikers have a number of problems. The London offices where the bulk of the Crown Agents workforce are sited, are a lot less militant and have not fought the privatisation proposals, so the Pensions Division is isolated.

Many trade unionists find it difficult to relate to the dispute because of the complex and specialised issues.

The strike has disrupted pension payments, but the ex-colonial civil servants have for some reason failed to complain.

But the major problem remains the lack of any real support from the union leaderships, particularly Alistair Graham of the CPSA.

Officials are now piling on the pressure for an end to the dispute as soon as possible, claiming that the strike pay is an excessive burden and that no more can be won.

"The leadership in the unions, especially Graham, just want compromises and to avoid confrontation. The lack of leadership is disappointing and disillusioning. If you rely on headquarters, they would have you back to work as soon as they could manage it," commented one of the strikers.

Inspired in part by the example set by the miners, the strikers are determined to stay out until they win their demands in full, and reject Raison's present offer that he will "reconsider" the question at the close of 1985.

Donations and messages of support to: The Strike Committee, c/o The Queensway Motel, Eaglesham Road, East Kilbride, phone East Kilbride 32435.

Mersey stewards

By John Riley

IN response to the Tories' continuing attacks on the Metropolitan Counties, shop stewards representing office staff, firemen, bus drivers, tunnel police and traffic wardens employed by the threatened Merseyside County Council have formed a Joint Shop Stewards Committee.

So far the stewards from NALGO, FBU, TGWU, GMBATU and MATSA have met twice on a monthly basis to plan joint action in a determined bid to frustrate the Tories' arrogant anti-democratic plans to destroy Metropolitan Counties such as Merseyside.

The Shop Stewards Committee are currently fighting these abolition plans on three fronts:

general anti-abolition propaganda, opposition to Tory plans to achieve abolition via back door methods like privatising the bus services or even the fire brigade; struggles against Rate Capping.

If Merseyside is on the government's hit list of so-called high spending councils to be rate capped, the Merseyside Shop Stewards plan a virtually immediate 24 hour protest strike. NALGO members voted almost unanimously for this at a recent 600-strong mass meeting at Liverpool Stadium.

The 24 hour strike is seen by the Joint Stewards as a warning to the Government of further action if they persist in pushing ahead with their irrational and undemocratic plans to destroy Merseyside County Council.



Islington council meeting with the local Labour Party. Photo: J.Harris.

Islington: action wins

By Nik Barstow

ISLINGTON council has now moved some way to settling the long-running dispute with its nursery workers over staffing levels and pay. After three months of strike action and virtual refusal by the Council to negotiate, they have now climbed down and offered an extra 13 staff and a small increase in pay.

The Labour council shifted its position after coming under mounting pressure from both its workers and the Labour Party.

Islington NALGO, after a branch meeting on July 17 declared its support for an all-out branch strike, won immediate backing for a ballot to take action from the union's National Emergency Committee.

This move came after NALGO's hopes that the Labour Party could influence the council's position were dashed at a joint meeting of the Party and councillors on July 13.

The July 13 joint meeting, where a large number of councillors broke mandates from their ward parties to veto an improved offer, also provoked a reaction in the Party.

Islington South and Finsbury CLP has attacked the councillors' behaviour, saying that it "makes a mockery of attempts to establish... accountability in local government", and backed the nursery workers.

The London Labour Party executive has also spoken out against the fact that "the Labour Group has ignored the views of local CLPs and the Local Government Committee", and urged Islington councillors "to work for a speedy resolution of the dispute by negotiation rather than... insisting on 'binding arbitration'".

But it wasn't Labour Party pressure now, or over the last three months, that forced the council to climb down. Islington's 'new left' Labour councillors have shown the same contempt for the Party as the people they largely replaced - the old right wing, most of them now in the SDP.

The only language that most Islington councillors understood, with a few honourable exceptions, was the threat of industrial action. The latest offer was made within a few hours of the national NALGO decision to authorise a ballot on a total strike.

St. Leonard's at risk

THE FIGHT to save St Leonards Hospital in Hackney is getting desperate.

Since the police and security guards smashed up the occupation on Monday 16th, the hospital administrators have flung caution to the winds and begun bundling elderly and sick patients out of St Leonards, even using minicabs.

The District Health Authority meets on Monday July 30, two days before the scheduled closure date. There must be a huge lobby of it, beginning at 3pm at Barts Hospital, Queen Mary's Nursing Home. (The DHA have changed the venue, presumably to be as far away from St Leonards as they can).

A minority on the District Health Authority will be opposing the closure. DHA members Dinah Morley, Lucy de Groot and Jo Thwaites visited the hospital on Monday July 23, with Brian Sedgeamore, Labour MP for Hackney South and Shoreditch.

During the visit itself three elderly patients were whisked out by the back door - at the same time as, in a top-floor ward, an angry nurse was telling the visitors that she had been ordered to hide the

luggage of two patients taken out through a side door earlier that afternoon.

A local resident, Jenny Smith, said: "A small, old ambulance, driven by a man in ordinary clothes - he had no uniform on - came out at speed. It happened so fast."

"A security guard rushed to make sure the road was clear, and the ambulance speeded out with three elderly patients in it wearing only their night clothes."

"I rushed round to the pickets at the main gate. We all came round to the back gate, and the security guards started jeering from behind the locked gates and banging the doors".

The hospital administrator, Mr Premdas, told the DHA members and the MP that he had been away for a week and had received no complaints.

Very few patients know when or where they are going to be moved. None of them want to go.

Some staff do not have jobs to go to, and don't know exactly when they will stop working at St Leonards. The DHA has still not given any commitment that all the staff will get jobs elsewhere in the District.

NUPE no to climbdown

By Alan Johnson

NUPE workers at Newcastle University are continuing their action over pay despite management threats and stewards recommendations.

First, the management, shaken by last week's 300-strong demonstration, offered negotiations on condition that the action was called off.

The workers offered to suspend the action from Friday morning while negotiations took place, but management, miscalculating the mood, said they would only negotiate if action was called off indefinitely.

On Monday morning a mass meeting heard a recom-

mendation from the branch secretary, chair and some shop stewards, to call off the action.

The recommendation was thrown out overwhelmingly. The workers, boosted by the visit of Durham miners to the picket line last week, are determined to hold out.

With promises from NUPE of more strike pay to allow an escalation of the action, and support from Tyneside Unemployed Workers Movement on the picket line the workers stand better placed now than before. Delegations to trade unions and Labour Parties in the area could build on this opportunity.

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: Mansfield 862790.

Cycling for socialism

Socialist Organiser supporter Les Hearn is cycling from Lands End to John O'Groats, beginning at the end of this month.

Sponsor him - 1p a mile if you're hard up, 5p a mile from the better off - and the proceeds will go to the Socialist Organiser fund drive.

Fill in this form, cut it out and send to Les Hearn, c/o 214 Sicket Court, London N1 2SY.

Name
Address
Phone

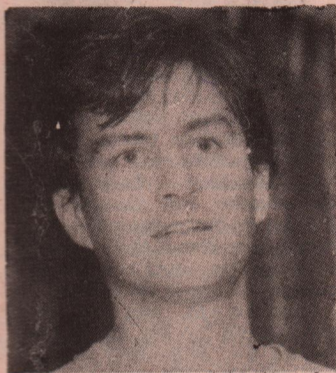
Amount of sponsorship p per mile.

Socialist Organiser

Support Lairds sit-in

We're into the fourth week of occupation at the yard now. It started over the management trying to take the two vessels that remain in the yard — a gas rig and a frigate.

They're the only work we've got — there's about six months work left on the gas rig and a few months on the frigate. If they take them out of the yard, it will be shut — there's no doubt about that.



Lairds shop steward Lol Duffy

We've got the local tugboat men and dockers to agree not to handle anything to do with the vessels.

At its peak Cammell Lairds employed about 30,000 people and had hundreds of apprentices every year. We're now down to about 1800. Another 400 redundancies went through this week.

Most of the people in the yard have just accepted the redundancies, apart from those are sitting in — there's about 100 of us at the moment.

We've gone down to no apprentices being taken on this year, and about 40 last year. So they have no plans to train any youth in the area in any of the engineering skills — in fact, Cammell Lairds is about the last place left in the area which does any sort of heavy engineering.

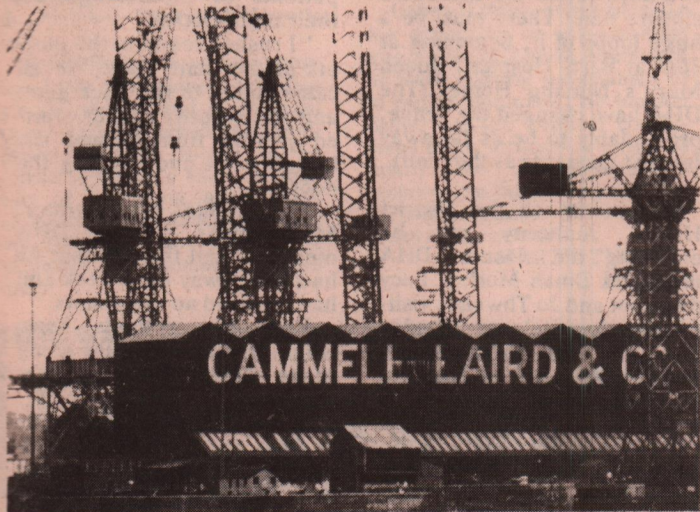


Photo: John Smith (IFL)

Lol Duffy, GMBU shop steward at Cammell Lairds, told an audience of miners at the Socialist Organiser meeting in Ollerton, Notts, last Sunday 22nd, about the sit-in at the shipyard.

British Shipbuilders was nationalised in 1977 by the Labour government. Since then — and the Labour government started this — there have been 30,000 jobs lost.

At the beginning of this year we were going to have a national strike against redundancies. We had a ballot, and it was overwhelmingly in favour of an all-out national strike. It was due to start on January 6.

The reason why the national officials called the ballot in the first place is that they were used to having ballots go the right way for them, which is not to strike.

We came back to work after the Christmas holidays on the 3rd. Everybody was buzzing. Everybody wanted to have a go. Then on the Thursday they sent the delegates back to the yards, telling them that they'd got a deal but they shouldn't say anything and shouldn't report back until the official documents arrived a week later. So effectively they called the national strike off, just by manoeuvres.

So the deal went through. It included massive rationalisations which would get the workforce down from 60,000 now to a total of *three thousand* eventually in the nationalised shipyards.

You've heard about Scott Lithgow. You know what they say about the mines — they're unproductive, you're can't get coal out of them. They said the same about Scott Lithgow. They said you can't build ships

in a yard like Scott Lithgow — it doesn't have the facilities, the workforce are all lazy.

Scott Lithgow was sold off to Trafalgar House. Trafalgar House got a deal, when they bought Scott Lithgow, that no other yard in British Shipbuilders would tender against them for any oil-related work. In other words, Cammell Lairds was just wiped out by the signing of that agreement on Scott Lithgow.

In British Shipbuilders over the last few years there have been about four or five closures and sell-offs. One of them was Robb Caledon in Dundee. The Shipbuilding Negotiating Committee called a series of one-day strikes over that.

We were on strike every Monday for four weeks. It was great for getting over the weekend, but it had no effect. Eventually the people at Robb Caledon caved in.

Then you had Henry Robb in Leith. There were some people there willing to fight. They approached the Shipbuilding Negotiating Committee for support, in line with its stated policy.

The SNC said: you don't seem to have much support in the yard. There's only about 15 of you willing to fight, so we can't call action. We can't have all those people losing money for just 15 of you.

That's the sort of thing that has been going on — the sort of betrayals we've had from the SNC.

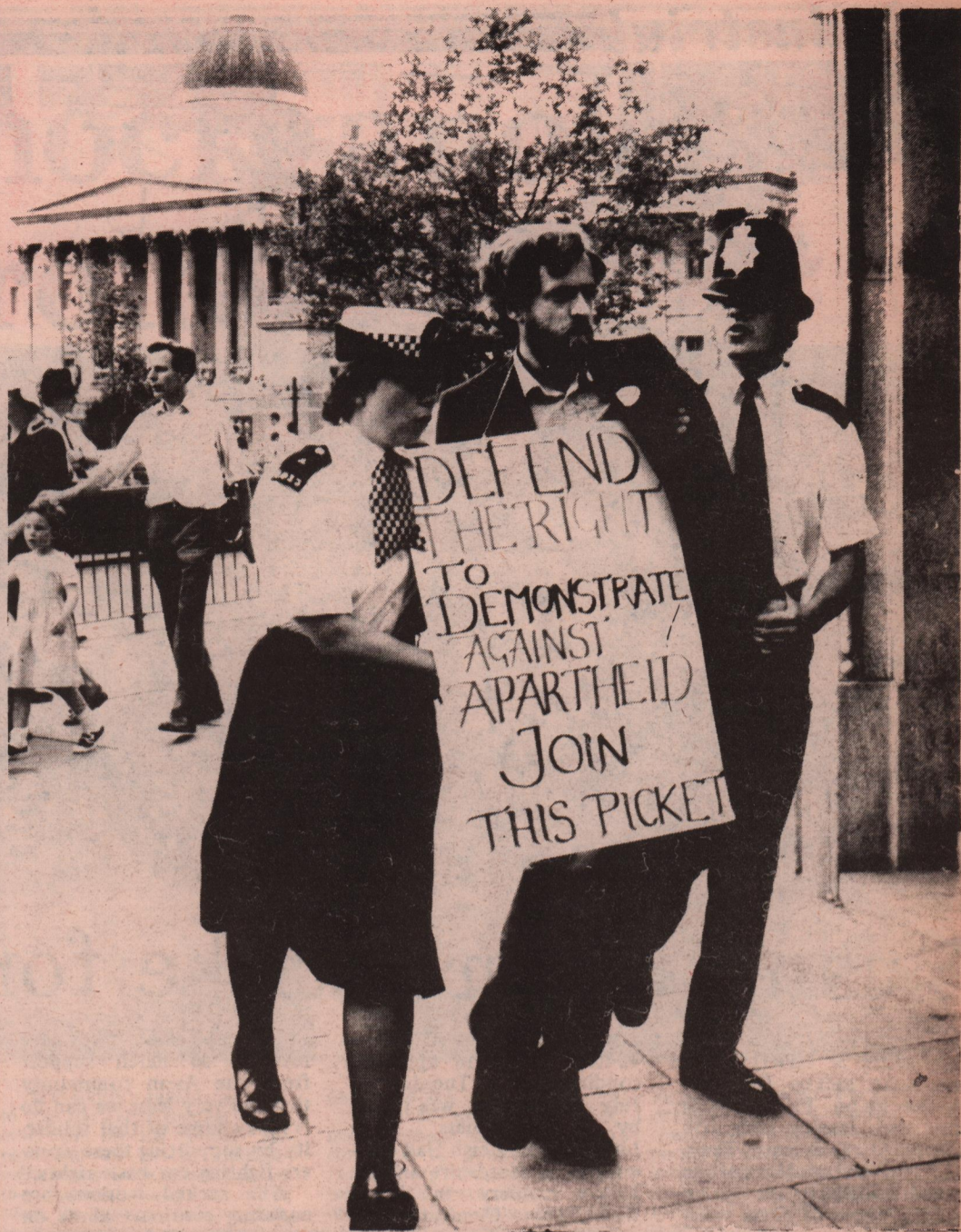
At Lairds there were only two major sections ready to fight — the stagers, and my own department, the plant maintenance department.

We're getting massive support from outside Cammell Lairds, though a lot of people in the yard have accepted the inevitability of jobs going.

They've been hammered down so much, and let down so much by the leadership.

We've decided in the occupation that it doesn't matter what they throw at us — whether they throw writs at us, or send in the coppers, or whatever — we're not budging. If they do get a writ, we'll have a mass sit-in and call on the people of the area to join us.

Donations, messages or requests for speakers should be sent to Lol Duffy, Cammell Lairds Occupation Committee, 3 St. James Court, Victoria Rd., Wallasey, Merseyside L45 9LD. Or phone 051-638 2310/051-647 6122.



Jeremy Corbyn MP is arrested with ten other people for demonstrating outside South Africa House, during a 24 hour picket organised by the City of London Anti-Apartheid Group, Saturday July 21. Photo: Paul Mattsson.

Reselection: an own goal

A dreadful own goal: just when the Tories were coming under real pressure from the miners' strike and Labour-held local authorities, the Parliamentary Labour Party's sudden reopening of the Mandatory Reselection issue is proving a wonderful diversion for the hostile media.

From the Mail to Maxwell, we are treated to the picture of a hopelessly divided Labour Party, with a beleaguered group of honourable MPs being hounded from office by a bunch of unscrupulous bed-sit Trots. Just like Reg Prentice and Ben Ford before them.

But the PLP's carefully orchestrated campaign is

On Wednesday 25th the Labour Party National Executive voted 15-12 to recommend a rule change on reselection of MPs. Francis Prideaux comments.

not just an appalling diversion from the major struggles which confront the movement. By questioning the whole delegate structure of each CLP's General Committee (and thereby fundamentally weakening the incentive for trade union branches to get involved) the MPs are deliberately downgrading the only body by which they can effectively be held accountable on a month by month basis.

Labour Party members must

now be very clear that our first duty is not to shore up the careers of ageing Parliamentarians but to select whichever candidate we feel will fight most effectively at Westminster for working people and their families. The Party's existing structure of accountability must not be stopped.

To ensure a proper debate of this vital issue at Conference, supportive amendments are urgently required to resolutions 58-60. Deadline is August 17. Drafts available from: CLPD, 10 Park Drive, London NW11 (01-458 1501) or Socialist Organiser, 28 Middle Lane, London N8 (01-981 3289).

Kinnock's diversion

Paul Whetton, secretary of the Notts miners' rank and file strike committee, said this to Socialist Organiser about the moves to change re-selection procedure

The argument has been presented as a diversion, to take the spotlight away from the miners' dispute.

Kinnock is using it to stamp his authority on the left, and it's time the left hit back. Kinnock is aware of the criticism of his handling of the miners' dispute, and wants to appeal to the so-called silent majority.

I don't think he'll succeed. My guess is that he's going to lose the argument.

FUND Help us move in

Just short of the £1000 target this month: £65 this week brings us up to £966.96.

Thanks to Neil Rigby, £10; Julia Garwolinska, £10; East London readers, £15; Southwark SO, £30 from a jumble sale.


But from August we are going to have to step up our fund-raising a great deal.

We still need the regular monthly fund, and we're still asking for £5 from every supporter (£1 unwaged) towards that — to cover the costs of our work round the miners' strike, petrol, fares, paper for leaflets, extra phone bills.

On top of that we need more. We now have a chance to move into new premises. But the new premises need rewiring, new plumbing work, a range of minor repairs, and re-decoration. To cover those items, and moving costs, we are launching a special fund appeal for £2000 by the end of September.

Please send a donation now; approach better-off readers in your area to ask them for a donation; and start now on planning jumble sales and other fund-raising events for September.

Send donations for the special fund, or the monthly fund, to 214 Sickert Court, London N1 2SY.


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

**Socialist Organiser
Weekend School
August 25-27 in London**
Write for details and registration (£4 waged, £1.50 unwaged) to SO, 214 Sickert Court, London N2 2SY.