

Socialist Organiser

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MINEWORKERS DEFENCE COMMITTEE

NATIONAL CONFERENCE

Octagon Centre, Sheffield

Saturday February 9, 11.00 a.m. — 5.30 p.m.

Delegates: Two per trade union organisation

One per other organisation

Confirmed speakers include:

Peter Heathfield, Betty Heathfield, Tony Benn
John Tocher, Phil Holt

Accommodation, credentials and creche:

Mineworkers Defence Committee, c/o 31 Cranwich
Road, London N16. Or phone 01-981 3289

Yorkshire names the day

YORKSHIRE and Humberside regional TUC has called a 24 hour general strike in its area on February 11, and is appealing to other regions to join in.

Several Regional TUCs called days of action for the miners last summer, despite Lord Scab Murray denouncing them. Unfortunately they were on different days.

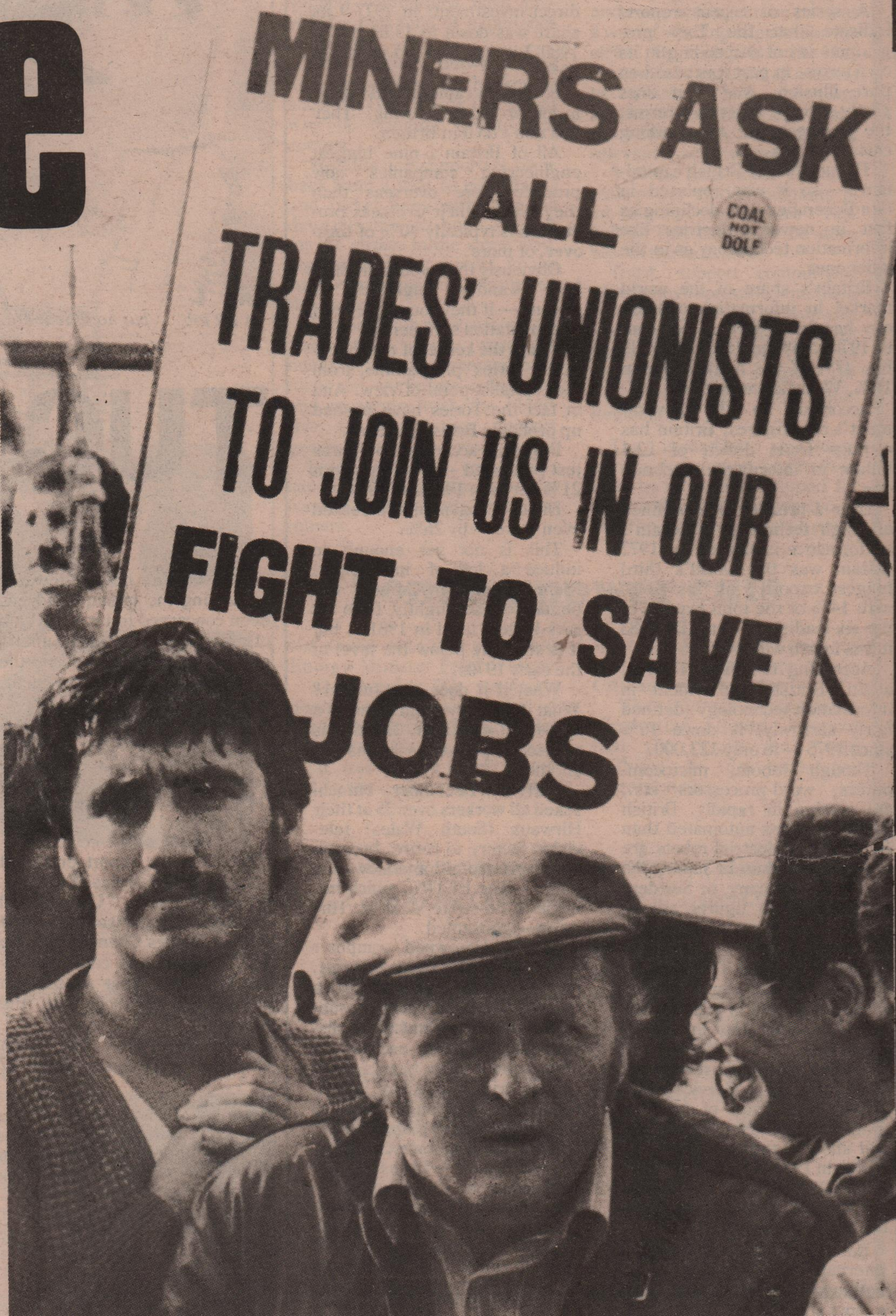
Now Yorkshire and Humberside is calling for united action. It is asking workplaces for all-

out strikes if possible, or if not, then the donation of a day or half a day's pay.

Pickets

Trades Councils are being asked to coordinate demonstrations on the 11th — but instead of rallies in town centres, the regional TUC wants pit picket lines to be the rallying point.

Socialists must work hard to build for February 11 and spread it from there.



Andrew Ward (Report)

24 hour general strike for the miners: Feb 11

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Tory strategy A new-tech economy?

A PHOENIX from the ashes? The decimation of Britain's steel, shipbuilding and coal industries — so the Tories' theory runs — is a necessary stage in transferring the country to a new industrial base.

The new economy will be more 'high-tech' and/or much more oriented to services rather than manufacturing.

A series of recent reports indicate that the Tory programme is not succeeding in its own terms. In part it is based on pure illusion. And if it does partly succeed in its own terms, the prospects for the working class are bleak.

The position of British capitalism — so it was reported in late December — is declining as fast in newer industries like information technology as in the older ones.

Britain's share of the world market in information technology has fallen from 9 per cent in 1970 to 4% in 1981. (The US has 47% of the market, Japan 19%, West Germany 7%).

According to the government's own figures, Britain has a huge trade deficit of £2.1 billion in information technology.

Over a broader field defined as 'high technology', Britain's performance is similar. In 1972 Britain was the world's third biggest exporter in this field, with 14% of the total exports of the six leading powers. By 1983 it was fourth with 10%.

According to official figures, again, British employment in information technology (defined fairly narrowly) is down 16% since 1975 — to only 123,000.

Though robots, microcomputers, word-processors etc., are coming in rapidly, British industry is less automated than elsewhere. Industrial robots are used far less than in Japan, the US, West Germany, or Sweden. No British firm figures among the top ten robot suppliers in Western Europe.

What about the Tories' other hope, that Britain can survive an all-round decline in manufacturing by specialising in service industries?

At first sight this theory has more going for it. Service transactions and flows of interest, profits, dividends and royalties, will show a surplus of over £4 billion in 1984 (it was £2.2 billion in 1978) London is still by far the biggest international banking centre in the world.

But the City's strength in international banking has nothing to do with finance being a more sophisticated and 'knowledge intensive' business than industry. On the contrary: it is much more traditional and static.

Partly because of that, monopolies are more easily preserved in the financial sector. The City of London is still living off the heritage of the British Empire.

Britain does also have another advantage in this sector. A recent report from the Economist Intelligence Unit says that Britain has lighter company taxes than almost any other capitalist country.

As a tax haven it is in many ways "as good or better than the Cayman Islands or Luxembourg".

But this is not the stuff that economic renaissances are made of.

One of the main features of the last few decades is that while the British capitalist economy has declined dramatically, British capital has done relatively well.

British industrial firms have often continued to get good profits — but by shifting their operations overseas. Britain is still the second-biggest power in the capitalist world as regards foreign direct investment, far outstripping every other country except the US. In 1960-2 Britain accounted for 15% of the world's total flow of foreign direct investment; in 1977-9 its share was down to 13%; but in 1980-2 it was back up again, to 20%.

So British capitalists do quite a lot of manufacturing. They just don't do it in Britain.

All of Britain's nine biggest engineering companies now produce more overseas than they export: their overseas production is typically 40% of turnover, or more.

Obviously they would produce here — and as "high-tech" as anyone — if they found the level of exploitation sufficient.

That's the kernel of rationality in the Tories' programme, from the capitalist point of view. And in fact the Tories have pushed up profits in British industry.

Profits — according to figures just published — went up about 21% between 1983 and 1984.

Dividend payments increased even more — by 26%.

This is not yet enough to induce a lot of investment. Manufacturing investment has begun to rise slightly from its rock-bottom level in 1981-3, but it is still way below the level of the early 1970s.

What if it does rise further? What if the Tory programme of a new-tech capitalist Britain is realised by some means or another?

Early in December, Hitachi asked all workers over 35 at their Hirwaun (South Wales) television factory to retire, because they were too old and slow. The union — the EETPU, which has made a no-strike deal at Hirwaun — consented.

Now a US-owned computer firm, Electronic Data Systems, has instructed workers in a recently-acquired British subsidiary that they must not discuss their pay with each other. They cannot wear beards, they cannot drink alcohol at lunchtime, and they must dress to meet the company's approval.

Most 'information technology' firms in Britain — from the giant IBM down to the smallest — ban, or do not recognise, unions.

Labour Research magazine (November 1983) surveyed 33 firms in different sectors of the industry: 12 recognised unions, 19 were wholly non-union, one recognised unions only for a small part of its workforce, and on one Labour Research gave no information.

The industry is also weakly unionised in other countries. An example: the US firm Western Union — which is 'betting its future' on a computer-to-computer message system — is currently demanding a 10 per cent wage cut from its workers.

Non-union workers have already taken the cut. The unions have agreed to the cut — on condition that Western Union grants workers shares in the company (British Telecom style) and puts a union representative on the board.

One of the areas where British capitalists have been investing heavily is the US — and you can see why. The core of Tory policy is their drive to cripple British unions to the point where they are as weak as their US counterparts. Any industrial revival comes after that.



"A PR job" — but no serious effort to organise the unemployed. Photo: John Harris.

TUC fails the jobless

By Stan Crooke

"The TUC's policy towards organising the unemployed has been concerned to be a 'PR' job of providing 'services' to unemployed people to lessen the harshness of unemployment, and to promote the image of 'caring' trade unionism."

"Nationally this has not been accompanied by a policy of seriously attempting to organise the unemployed, even on a minimal level."

This is one of the central conclusions in the report produced just before Christmas of the conference on "Unemployed Workers' organisations: the Role of Trades Councils and the TUC" which was convened by the Tyne and Wear Association of Trades Councils in the autumn.

The conference had been attended by delegates from 47

trades councils, 23 unemployed workers' centres/organisations and 16 trade unions.

For the TUC leadership, the report says, unemployed workers' centres are "a half-way house between trade union organisation of the unemployed and the provision of 'public welfare' services along with other groups (including local authorities, voluntary organisations and the MSC [the government Manpower Services Commission])".

The TUC "guidelines" on such centres, for example, set modest, essentially non-political and non-campaigning goals for them, such as counselling and advice on welfare and training, provision of social and educational facilities, representation

to promote work schemes by the MSC, etc.

And the situation is particularly dire in relation to MSC-funded centres, which have been threatened with loss of funding — with the threat sometimes being carried out — if they engage in campaigning activities.

The TUC has shared the MSC's concern to crack down on the centres' activities: "The TUC's Bulletin No. 6 (October 1981) contains an express prohibition of party political activities, including the promotion and distribution of material produced by parties, in centres".

In fact, the collaboration between the TUC and the MSC on this issue even goes so far as the TUC advising MSC-funded centres not to get involved in campaigns about unemployment which the TUC itself has set up!

The conference report also debunks many of the TUC's spurious claims about its support for the unemployed. For example: the TUC promised publication of a regular bulletin for Unemployed Centres. It has not appeared since November 1983.

Given the TUC's failure to establish a common programme of militant activity between the unemployed and employed, some unemployed have reacted by setting up their own organisations. The TUC quickly responded — by condemning them.

"It would not help the unemployed... to be organised separately outside the structures of the trade union movement... It would only weaken the voice of the unemployed inside the trade union movement... and make it easier for the government to drive a wedge between unemployed and employed".

But the TUC itself has helped prevent the unemployed from getting involved in the trade union movement.

The first of the conference's four main themes was the question of MSC funding. Minority viewpoints suggested that MSC funding might be accepted if it was solely for specific projects which would not hinder the rest

of the centre's work, or that no definite attitude could be adopted until more information about TUC-MS links had been obtained.

In general though, "MSC funding was overwhelmingly rejected on the grounds that it was politically restrictive... A campaign should be initiated to demand the TUC and Labour County Councils provide money for funding."

Secondly, the conference evaluated TUC commitment to organising the unemployed and found it lacking.

Thirdly, the conference looked at current activities undertaken by trades councils and unemployed workers' centres/groups. Experiences varied widely, depending in particular on whether or not centres were MSC-funded, the attitude of local trades councils, and the strength or otherwise of local unemployed organisation.

Suggested improvements to the situation, apart from getting rid of MSC-funding included unemployed representation on trades councils with full rights, and greater national co-ordination of local campaigning.

Unanimously

The model resolution finally adopted, unanimously, was based on the call for the TUC to "establish holding sections with full trade union rights for the unemployed workers not organised into existing trade unions, with those sections based on trades councils".

As a follow-up to the conference, the report and model resolution are now being circulated to all trades councils, trade unions, and TUC Unemployed Centres in an attempt to change TUC policy, and a follow-up conference is also planned for early this year.

Copies of the report/model resolution on trade union organisation of the unemployed available from: Newcastle Trades Council Centre Against Unemployment, 2 Jesmond Road, Newcastle, Tyne and Wear, price £1.50 (cheques payable to Tyne and Wear CATC).



No follow-up to the People's March. Photo: John Harris.

Miners' Defence Committee Linking up solidarity

The Mineworkers' Defence Committee, following its extremely successful conference in December, is holding a second, delegate-based conference on February 9. Chris Knight, a member of the committee, talked to Martin Thomas from Socialist Organiser about the forthcoming conference and other activities.

THE MAJOR focus has got to be power station pickets.

We've taken steps to get information on all the power stations which are being picketed, and we hope that the next Mineworkers' Defence Committee bulletin will contain a list.

We want to get far better publicity for mass pickets at power stations.

At the Taylors Lane power station in Neasden, North-West London, our committee has been able to make a difference. Obviously, we've been coming in behind what other organisations like the South East Region TUC have been doing, but at Neasden we were able to add something extra.

Feeder cable

We were consistently on the gates in the week from December 17 onwards. No tankers at all came through on Monday and Tuesday; two came through on Wednesday and Thursday; and then a few, all of them non-union, came through on Friday morning.

But we were very successful in turning away a series of Electricity Board vehicles coming in response to an urgent request by management to repair a feeder cable. In fact that feeder cable was left unrepaired through the whole Christmas/New Year period.

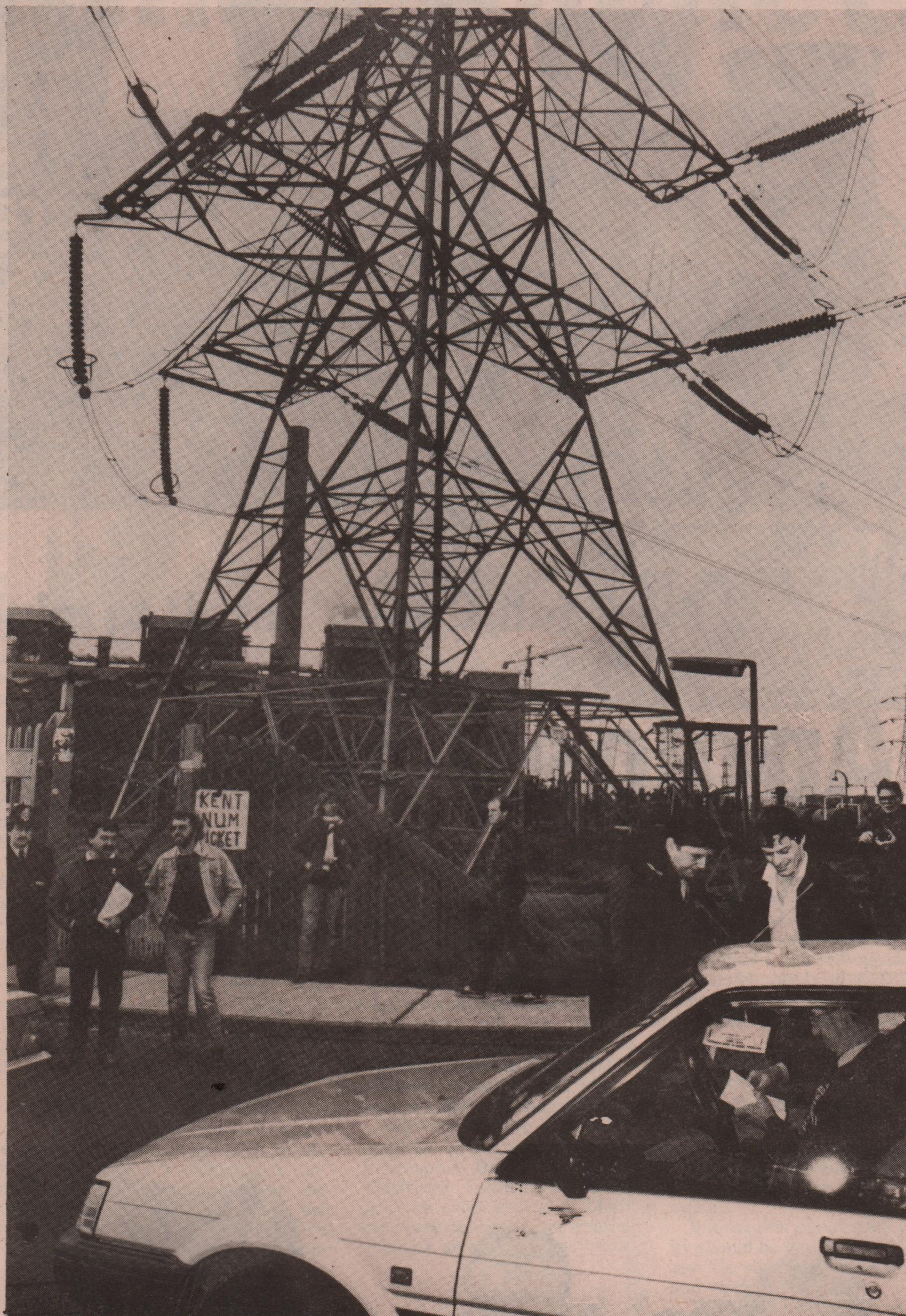
That was done with very small resources and at very short notice. Give us notice, and give us a chance to get publicity out, and we think that, with our range of contacts and supporters, we can make a difference.

If the strike is going to be won, then somehow we've got to find a way to overcome the usual bureaucracy that affects all of us, including the Left and the hard Left.

Alliance

It's an absolute scandal that it took seven months of this strike before the hard Left got together to do anything. I was very surprised to find at the Labour Party conference in October that there was no framework for organising even a fringe meeting at which the NUM leadership could present their message of defiance to the legal threats against them. But thanks to the fact that *Briefing* has always tried to represent an umbrella for the hard Left, we were able to get a meeting together. And the campaign was set up there.

From the start the campaign was an alliance of different groups, and it has been crucial



Picketing West Thurrock power station. Photo: Stefano Cagnoni (Report)

to extend that unity. That includes going beyond the framework of the Labour Party: there is absolutely no reason why the Labour Party should claim a monopoly of solidarity work with the miners.

Extend unity

The strike needs to be won on the basis of harnessing all the revolutionary elements in society — and that means not just staying within the confines of the Labour Party.

I think extending the unity is key. I'm glad that the Broad Left Organising Committee has got involved. We should have the Communist Party in on it too, but in the case of the Communist Party it's not our fault they're not. They have chosen not to take up the offer.

We're planning to get together a meeting at County Hall — Writers, Artists, Media Workers for a Miners' Victory. We want to make sure that the talents available for producing posters, videos, leaflets, are harnessed and organised.

We're hoping also that the same kind of framework can organise a very big benefit. We've been told by the NUM

that essentially what they want from us is money. Our view is that industrial action is also important, and power-station picketing is key, but certainly we'll be trying to raise money too.

I also hope that perhaps we could get some entertainers to come out to the picket lines — for example at Neasden — and help to draw people to those picket lines who would not be there otherwise.

We're now organising our second conference for February 9. Our aim is to fulfill the mandate given to us by the first conference on December 2. That conference instructed our committee to work for a delegate-based committee with the power and the breadth of representation to be able to take, jointly with the NUM, such measures as are necessary to win this strike.

Sponsorships

How successful we'll be remains to be seen. But the unity achieved at the December conference was extremely promising.

If we can get the sponsorships of the Bakers' Union, the seamen, the TGWU, the NUR, ASLEF, and the Campaign Group of Labour MPs, then we'll begin to have a force which can deliver real action to help win the strike.

The Fire Brigades Union is already sponsoring the February

9 conference, which is promising given that the requests for sponsorship have only been out for five days.

We've been able to work extremely well with the NUM. The leadership of the NUM have made their appreciation of the work of the committee very clear. We've been told by both Arthur Scargill and Peter Heathfield about the endorsement that they are giving to the work of our committee.

Notice-board

By developing our bulletin we hope to increase our input from the local support committees which, of course, have carried on the bulk of the work in supporting the NUM in this struggle. We hope that support committees will use the bulletin as their notice-board.

Of course, we're limited, because we're a small committee, with no secretariat and no funds. But at present the support committees have no structured communication among themselves — although of course there are lots of informal contacts — and I think the bulletin can usefully supplement the work of the local committees in that respect.

Framework

The quite small, but nevertheless measurable, success of what we've done around Neasden, shows what can be done in the way of providing support committees with a framework for coordinating their action.

Back the miners



Build
the
support
committees!

By Gerry Bates

TEN months' work by miners' support committees have provided a rich fund of experience to draw on.

Direct contact between rank and file workers is the key to success. Twinning is one major way of bringing about such contact.

Workers and supporters come back from a visit to pit villages and picket lines with renewed determination to build support for the strike. In the same way, regular visits by miners to the support groups help strengthen their resolve.

The basic job of street collections and street meetings needs to be supplemented by a focus on workplace collections and meetings, with the objective of setting up support groups in individual workplaces.

Local support committees can also be used to raise the issue of solidarity action with the miners.

There are three main ways of doing this:

First, the issue of the law, and court action, can be used as a way of winning support for the strike. By keying into the way the law is being used as a threat to effective trade unionism, support committees can make the issues in the strike directly relevant to other workers.

Second, links must be built with power station militants in an attempt to enforce TUC policy. This can often be done best at the local level.

Third, support committees, where they represent something in the local labour movement, can help to coordinate support for days of action, like the February 11 initiative from the Yorkshire and Humberside Regional TUC.

The immediate short-term priority for support committees must be to mobilise support for pickets of power stations and to stop the movement of scab coal.

London power cuts

No power cuts this year, said Energy Minister Peter Walker.

On Monday 7th, we had a power cut in the area of Islington where the Socialist Organiser office is.

It was only a short power cut, but apparently there

were longer ones — up to two hours — in parts of the City and East London.

The Central Electricity Generating Board claimed that the power cuts were nothing to do with the miners' strike.

West Midlands Miners' Strike Support Conference
Called by the County Association of Trades Councils

Speakers include:

National NUM speaker
Roy Butlin, Coalville NUR

Workshops on all aspects of solidarity and support
Saturday February 2 from 12.45 — 5.00 p.m.
Digbeth Civic Hall, Birmingham

Registration. £1 waged, 50p unwaged, strikers free
Four delegates per organisation. Observers welcome.
Contact Bill Timmington, c/o 7 Frederick St., Birmingham
B1 3HE, tel: 021-236 1240

MASS PICKET

Keresley Pit, Keresley village, Coventry
Friday January 25

Assemble from 5.30 a.m. outside pit entrance.

Get ORGANISED!



Become a supporter of the Socialist Organiser Alliance — groups are established in most large towns. We ask £5 a month minimum (£1 unwaged) contribution from supporters.

I want to become a Socialist Organiser supporter/I want more information.

Name

Address

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

STOP SCAB OIL AT TILBURY
POWER STATION

Mass picket on Monday January 21 from 6.45 am.
Details. phone 01-595 4252 or 01-981 6515
Called by Kent NUM

Back the miners



NCB: scabs first, health second

Peter Mansall is a striking miner at Kiveton Park. He lives, with his wife and two children, at 24 Dawson Terrace — part of a group of old, dilapidated Coal Board houses in the village.

There are only four families left in the terrace and many of the empty houses have been gutted.

Peter's youngest child is two years old and has a chest disability. Because of this and the living conditions Peter had got the health authorities in and received a top priority order to move.

He then applied to the NCB who said he would be moved when the first house became available. That was before the strike started.

Since then, Peter Mansall has been back to the NCB about the move, only to be told that nothing could happen "until

after the strike". The reason given was administrative problems — although the South Yorkshire Area offices at Wath-upon-Deane have been working throughout the strike.

Peter Ellis also lives in Dawson Terrace, with a wife and child. Just before Christmas, he was lucky enough to be moved out to another Coal Board house. He also had plenty of assistance with the move, with police officers and a police transit van mucking in.

Peter Ellis's child does not have a disability, he did not have a priority order from the health authority. But Peter Ellis is a scab.

NUM branch delegate Albert Bowns commented: "It's quite typical. It's also disgusting. It is the scab that matters for them, not the health of a child."

Power safety

STRIKERS at Lea Hall pit in Staffordshire have heard about a near disaster at the nearby Rugeley 'A' power station.

On Christmas Day, a safety valve on a main boiler was about to blow and an emergency maintenance team was called out in the nick of time, preventing a major explosion.

The strikers' informant, a sympathetic worker at the

power station, has told them that a dispensation has been issued exempting the power station from all statutory safety regulations and inspections until after the strike.

Clearly the Tories are not just willing to pay millions (about £20 million a week) to keep the power stations going, by mixing inferior coal and oil, they are also willing to risk the lives of power workers and those who live nearby.

High cost to Tories

EVERY tonne of scab coal now being produced is costing around £250 to mine — more than six times the average cost of a tonne of coal in normal times. This figure, announced by Dennis Skinner last week, includes the costs of the massive extra policing, the increased oil consumption, the increase in nuclear power, compensation to equipment firms, and scab wages, and provides yet more proof that the Tories are out to smash the NUM at no matter what cost.

A new 110-page report by two independent economic lecturers "The Economic Case for Deep-mined Coal in Scotland" destroys the Scottish Area NCB's plans to close seven pits, leaving only five Scottish pits open by 1990.

It reveals that the primary factor taken into account in making a decision on pit closures — one of "economic" grounds — is based upon "fictitious" accounting, incompetent planning and bad management. Highlighting the various NCB errors the report concludes by saying there was no case for closing any Scottish pits, since this would cost between £150 and £300 per lost job per week, from each pit, for about ten years.

Government figures just

released show that industrial militancy outside the coal industry far from being beaten down is in fact on the increase.

Over the first eleven months of 1984 work days lost in non-mining disputes totalled 4.044 million, a rise of 30% on the equivalent period in 1983, and the number of workers involved in stoppages increased even more sharply by 157% from a total of 415,500 in 1983 to some 1,066,000 non-miners in 1984.

This confirms confidential figures prepared by the CBI (the bosses' organisation) last autumn that industrial action to back pay claims had risen sharply. These showed that there had been more work-to-rules, more go-slows, more overtime bans, and more strikes than in 1983, and that one pay negotiation in 12 involved industrial action as compared with one in 18 two years before.

Over the last couple of weeks the cost of the miners' strike has risen dramatically because of winter power demands, according to a report produced by stockbrokers Simon and Coates.

The report was written before the current cold spell. Yet it estimates that the weekly cost had risen from about £60 million to £80 or 85 million.

So far, they estimate, the strike has cost the government some £2.4 billion.



Picket at Ravenscraig steelworks. Photo: Rick Matthews (IFL)

ISTC full-timers' insult to miners

Apology for betrayal

By Stan Crooke

"Up yours, mate!" This is the message for striking miners from Clive Lewis, Scottish Divisional Officer of the Iron and Steel Trades Confederation (ISTC), in a letter dated October 10 1984, which has recently been passed on to Socialist Organiser.

The ISTC full-timer's letter was supposed to express his apologies for being unable to

attend a miners' support meeting in Motherwell. He had not actually be asked to speak, but he let Motherwell Trades Council have his wisdom anyway.

His members understand only too well the miners' fears: "No group of people understand the threat of the dole queues like the BSC Strip Group employees. By organising united opposition

they beat MacGregor twice."

What about the thousands of Scottish steelworkers currently standing in dole queues because of the failure of the likes of Lewis to lead a serious fightback against job losses? How did they get there, after Lewis the Lion defeated the mad axeman MacGregor not just once, but twice!

Well, Lewis didn't quite do

that. Unless you believe that holding a joint rally with representatives from the Scottish CBI and Chambers of Commerce, with Scottish Tory Party chairperson Michael Ancram on the platform, is what "united opposition to beat MacGregor" is all about.

But Clive does not tarry to glory in past victories. He turns to today: "Quotas (of coal for Ravenscraig) were agreed, damaged, stitched back together and eventually thrown to the winds, and the lorry convoys which we all deplore, began to run. Why? I have asked myself that question every day."

Could the answer be: because some scabby ISTC bureaucrat has welcomed rather than "deployed" coal being brought into Ravenscraig, by non-union lorry drivers, across miners' picket lines? hat he has told his members that unless they collaborate in this strike-breaking, their jobs are at risk?

Clive does not come up with an answer. He is too busy complaining that "it was only in Scotland and Scunthorpe... that steelworkers were told to stick their moral, financial and physical support right up."

PR man

A witty play on words! Maybe Clive should try to get a job as PR man for the NCB. But there are some who think he is one already...

"Everyone here knows," Lewis continues, "that the Thatcher acolytes in the BSC want to close one strip mill, and that one is the Craig."

"The Scottish people..." declares Lewis, "know that the demands made by the NUM for support from the steelworkers could not be delivered, even by those who now call us liars, scabs and traitors, but steelworkers stand proud and will not be put on their knees by anyone".

And he tries to give this a learned Marxist gloss:

"To each according to his need, from each according to their ability"

Or, put into plain language: To Ravenscraig, over 20,000 tonnes of scab coal a week. From ISTC full-timers, no support at all for the miners.



Police use riot shields to push picket, Gascoine pit, August. Photo: John Harris (IFL)

Yorkshire frame-up

By Nathan Jones

SEVEN workers arrested in Fitzwilliam, north Yorkshire, have been given heavy sentences — for defending their community from undisguised police attack.

Shortly after closing time, in early July, police attacked the Fitzwilliam pub, following a demonstration outside the police station earlier that day. About 50 police charged into the pub, in what the defence lawyer described as a 'police riot'.

One of the police's victims, Peter Hunt, who is a building

worker, has been sent to jail for six months. Others have been given three or four month jail sentences, suspended for two years.

They have been charged — ludicrously — with breach of the peace or assault, and sentenced by a stipendiary magistrate: that is, they were not tried by jury. In fact, their only crime was to be assaulted by peace-breaching police thugs.

PC Boyer admitted to the

court that he twice hit one of the defendants before throwing him into the van. He said: "I don't mess around".

One of those arrested suffered a displaced fracture of the shoulder, while photographic evidence showed 15 truncheon weals on his back.

The defendants have been critical of the response of Yorkshire NUM who, they say, have tried to keep their distance from the incident on the grounds that it did not take place on a picket line.

Ten months on strike

Build mass pickets

By John Bloxam

ON Thursday, 10th, the NUM Executive meets for the first time since the Christmas break and the December Special Conference.

It is also the first meeting since the Notts Area Council voted, on December 20, to take the main steps in forming a breakaway union.

At the last meeting of the Executive, a majority of 11-7 voted to give the sequestrators access to a substantial proportion of the NUM's money, but were then decisively defeated at the Special Delegate Conference. Arthur Scargill was in the minority on the EC.

December's meeting was a crisis one, with the courts on the verge of trying to run the whole union. With the failure of the NCB's drive to get significant scabbing off the ground in the first week back in January, the right wing and the waverers should be weaker now.

The NUM has put the number of strikers remaining solid at 140,000, and certainly the backbone of the strike has stood firm with tremendous strength and courage.

On Monday, 7th, the NCB claimed 1203 "new faces". This was certainly an exaggeration — the previous week's scabs were counted again in at least one area — and in any case a disaster for what should have been the bosses' best day. It was only half the figure they were giving for Monday's during their November offensive.

At Kiveton Park, South Yorkshire, a further ten scabs went into the pit, seven of whom were definitely NUM members. The scabs still tend to be older miners, near retirement, and none have been actively involved in the strike.



The strike is still solid

More importantly, reports indicate strong support on the picket line. At neighbouring Shireoaks pit, where a majority are scabbing, the last few days have seen some of the biggest pickets yet. The deputies had crossed the picket line for one shift on Wednesday 2nd, but now they are being kept out and production has stopped.

The EC meeting will be able to register the continued strength of the strike. But it will also need to respond to the widespread feeling in the rank and file for new initiatives.

Strikers will be hoping that the NUM leadership will continue its round of meetings in the pit villages — which has undoubtedly contributed to the continuing strength of the strike — and that it will take disciplinary action against the

scabs leading the breakaway union in Notts.

Peter Walker's New Year boast that there would be no power cuts in 1985 emphasised both the propaganda and practical importance of the power stations for the strike. So did Arthur Scargill personally standing on power station picket lines on Christmas Day and New Year's Day, backing up the push to get regular pickets on all the power stations.

But this push urgently needs to be backed up by a propaganda offensive against the Tories' hollow boasts.

With the effective news blackout over the last nine months on information from the Central Electricity Generating Board, and the exact timing of blackouts very dependent on weather changes and machinery break-

downs, it is not possible to predict exactly.

But information available — on the cost of keeping the stations running; the maintenance situation; solidarity action; and stockpiles — indicates the power cuts are very likely.

Indeed, some have already happened — parts of London and Essex (including Ford's giant Dagenham plant, the biggest factory in Britain) had a power cut on Monday morning.

Information

Labour movement conferences in Yorkshire and Oxfordshire with power station workers and a series of mass pickets at power stations are also encouraging.

Information about such activity should be getting to the rank and file strikers more regularly and systematically.

The NUM EC can give a lead on this, together with a campaign to involve more strikers in the normal power station picketing and direct approaches to power station workers.

Time and again during the strike, Arthur Scargill in particular has called directly for industrial action in support of the NUM. On Saturday 5th, in the Workshop Miners' Welfare, he reiterated the point:

"We are not getting the support that we want. I would say to every worker in the power industry, and to every worker in the steel and transport industry: we've been on strike for ten months.

"Our people have suffered hardship the like of which you cannot begin to comprehend. A section of the working class, the miners and their families, have been bludgeoned by this government and their supporters...

"It's a terrible price that our membership have paid.

"How much longer are you going to stand at one side and see us continually battered? I ask trade unionists at rank and file level — 'Stop waiting for the leadership to tell you what to do. Take industrial action and put into effect TUC policy'."

February 11

Thursday's EC meeting should underline this once more, and back it with a call for a campaign — involving NUM members as much as possible — to get industrial action on such days as the Yorkshire and Humberside Regional TUC action on February 11.

Paul Whetton's diary



Paul Whetton

We're going to lift up the action

THE COAL Board are pulling out all the stops to try to get a return to work.

OK, so today some more lads have decided that they have had enough and they've gone back to work. But not anywhere near the numbers that the Coal Board were predicting or hoping for.

There's been virtually no movement in Notts — the odd one or so, but no major drift back to work.

I think everyone is hanging out now to see what comes out of the National Executive meeting on Thursday. It's going to be a crucial meeting.

We're particularly hoping to see some form of action taken against the scabs.

We're obviously pleased to see the cold spell now, but we don't have to depend exclusively on bad weather to win the strike. The strike is going to be won on the picket lines and by the rank and file.

The weather is a bonus, if we can get it. There's no way they can cover up the power cuts that are taking place today. They can come up with all sorts of excuses — we've had numerous telephone calls telling us about the power cuts in London, and people are saying that when they have rung up to complain they're told it's "maintenance" or something.

We're attempting to ensure that power stations are now covered by pickets virtually 24

hours a day, seven days a week. The police are still harassing us, and we've still got problems, but we're going to make an all-out effort.

We're hoping that trade unionists, Labour activists and people throughout the working class will respond to the 'day of solidarity' called by the Yorkshire and Humberside regional TUC on February 11. It's a very positive move.

I see Neil Kinnock finally got to a picket line last week. I'm surprised he could find his way there and recognise a picket line when he saw it.

What he should do is attempt to get to a picket line, not in a chauffeur-driven car but on his badges stuck on and a scarf around his face — then he'd see an entirely different picture.

Or if he had attempted to step into the road and talk to workers going in, he would have seen what the police are really like.

The indications are, specifically in Notts, that the strikers are as determined as ever to see this strike through.

There was a meeting today in Notts of rank and file activists from all over the British coalfields, and the discussion was about stepping the action up now. We want to show the scabs, the media and the general public that we're not down, not defeated — we're going to lift the action.

Paul Whetton is secretary of the Notts Rank and File Strike Committee, writing in a personal capacity.

Double standards

Socialist Organiser has recently received a report from Bevercotes pit (Notts), showing once again the NCB's double-standards.

A few weeks before Christmas two scabs at the pit were up before management for fighting both on and off the cage. One, Rod Connors, received five stitches.

Punishment for what is nor-

mally a sacking offence? Two days suspension with pay and a £200 fine.

Meanwhile, Bevercotes striker George Brookes is still awaiting trial, charged with supposedly assaulting a scab in the Ollerton Miners' Welfare. Without any verdict or proper hearing, he has been sacked by Bevercotes management for "gross industrial misconduct".



Mass pickets must be organised to stop the movement of scab coal. Photo: Rick Matthews (IFL)

Coal stocks exhausted

Information about power station stocks, and the cost of the operation to keep them running, continues to trickle out. The following appeared in the Financial Times of January 8:

"...the strike has enabled the NCB to supply power stations in the Midlands with coal which, in other circumstances, the CEBG would probably have refused to burn.

"In the Midlands alone, the

NCB has cleared out more than five million tonnes of coal from stockpiles up to six years old. However...these stocks are almost exhausted..."

In Monday's edition (January 7) the same paper carried a story about the probable switch from oil to coal by Northern Ireland's biggest power station at Kilroot (near Belfast). The reason?

"The latest fall in the value of sterling has made British-mined coal more competitive than ever with heavy fuel oil, which is priced in dollars and attracts a UK duty of £9 a tonne.

"Belfast officials say that as a result of recent exchange rate changes the penalty of burning oil instead of coal at Kilroot is running at £3 million a month..."

Class struggle and sectarian division

the strike committee hesitating to the strike and after the strikers' able display of loyalty to their bosses he was ripe for negotiations. Lord Chairman of Harland and Wolff, and ment Controller of Merchant Shipp- is in Belfast for Cuming's funeral. On day February 5, he met a delegation e strike committee. Pirrie's propos- e ludicrous: he would arrange a g with the shipyard directors if the services were restored immediately shipyard went back to work with a week with overtime paid after 47 The strike committee rejected this and but a meeting with the directors anged anyway, without conditions. negotiations dragged on over the d, but on Monday February 10, the ers proposed settlement terms. The ould return to work on the basis of a week and the employers would call onal" conference of engineering ers within 30 days and recommend working week shorter than 47 hours. onference" didn't accept this then the Belfast shipyards would settle with rkers independently within three

This is the second part of Michael Farrell's article on the 1919 Engineers and Shipbuilders strike in Belfast. It tells the story of how unity between Catholic and Protestant workers was destroyed by the employers and Protestant bigots.

Meanwhile the strikers had several setbacks. The National Executive of the ASE meeting in London had announced the suspension of its Belfast and Glasgow District Secretaries for involvement in an unofficial strike, the Committees were also suspended. The Negotiating Committee of the UK Federation of Shipbuilding, Engineering and Allied Trades had called on all shipyard workers to return to work. The government too took a hand.

Solidarity

Faced with a threatened strike by London electricians in solidarity with the Belfast and Glasgow strikers, the government made

a new regulation under the war-time Defence of the Realm Act. The DORA regulation made it an offence to deprive the community of light or to encourage anyone to do so. Guards were mounted on all power stations and troops stood by to take control. The electricians' strike was called off and this broke the back of the Glasgow movement. It weakened Belfast too.

By now the strike committee was in favour of the settlement proposals. Charles McKay, the Chairman, told a crowd of strikers "The 44 hour week was as good as won. It might indeed be shorter than 44". The committee began to make arrange-

ments for a ballot of the workers.

There was still fight in the strikers. On Tuesday February 11, the Corporation suddenly restored the public services, gas, electricity and trams. This was contrary to the settlement terms; the men were to stay out till the vote was taken. The Corporation thought they had the workers on the run, and attempted to press home the advantage. They were wrong. Strike pickets stopped the trams at Castle Junction, ordered the passengers off and told the drivers to go back to their depots.

The Gas and Electricity Departments were warned that if they didn't go back to the agreed level they would be closed down completely, hospitals or no hospitals. By Tuesday evening the public services had stopped again and the Newsletter was screaming with impotent rage at the "supreme dictators" of the strike committee.

The ballot on the terms offered by the employers was taken on Friday February 14, two days after the Glasgow strike committee had admitted defeat. But a serious problem had arisen. The negotiations had only been with the shipyard employers. It was assumed that other employers would accept the same settlement terms. However the engineering, building and electrical employers refused. They insisted on 47 hours.

So the workers voted on Friday knowing that the settlement might mean shorter hours for the shipyard men but leave the others as before. On the other hand the strike was about to enter its fourth week with many men not getting strike pay and with the Red Clydeside in retreat. If Belfast continued the fight they would be on their own.

Rejection

The result of the ballot was 8,774 for the settlement terms and 11,963 against — a majority of 3,189 for rejection. The skilled workers had voted 2 to 1 against, with the ASCJ five to one against, while the more numerous unskilled workers had a small majority for acceptance. The strike committee reluctantly accepted the verdict and agreed to continue but at the Custom House meeting on Sunday, Clarke declared that if the settlement had been accepted it might have meant the "44". This was countered by a tough speech from Sam Kyle of the Workers' Union but already events were moving fast.

On the Tuesday before the ballot Parliament had re-opened at Westminster and Lloyd George had strongly attacked the strikers, saying "Anarchy is their aim, anarchy is their focus, to destroy not merely trade unionism, but the state. We are determined to fight Prussianism in the

industrial world exactly as in the Continent of Europe, with the might of the nation." The support from William Adams of the Labour Party, who had been fomented by "re — "as the speaker for a cons he would encourage neither unofficial action".

Military prote

At the same time in Belfast newspapers, and City Council growing louder in their demands against the strike day the Lord Mayor met Sir Frederick Shaw, Commander Ireland and was promised r tion for blacklegs and for ke



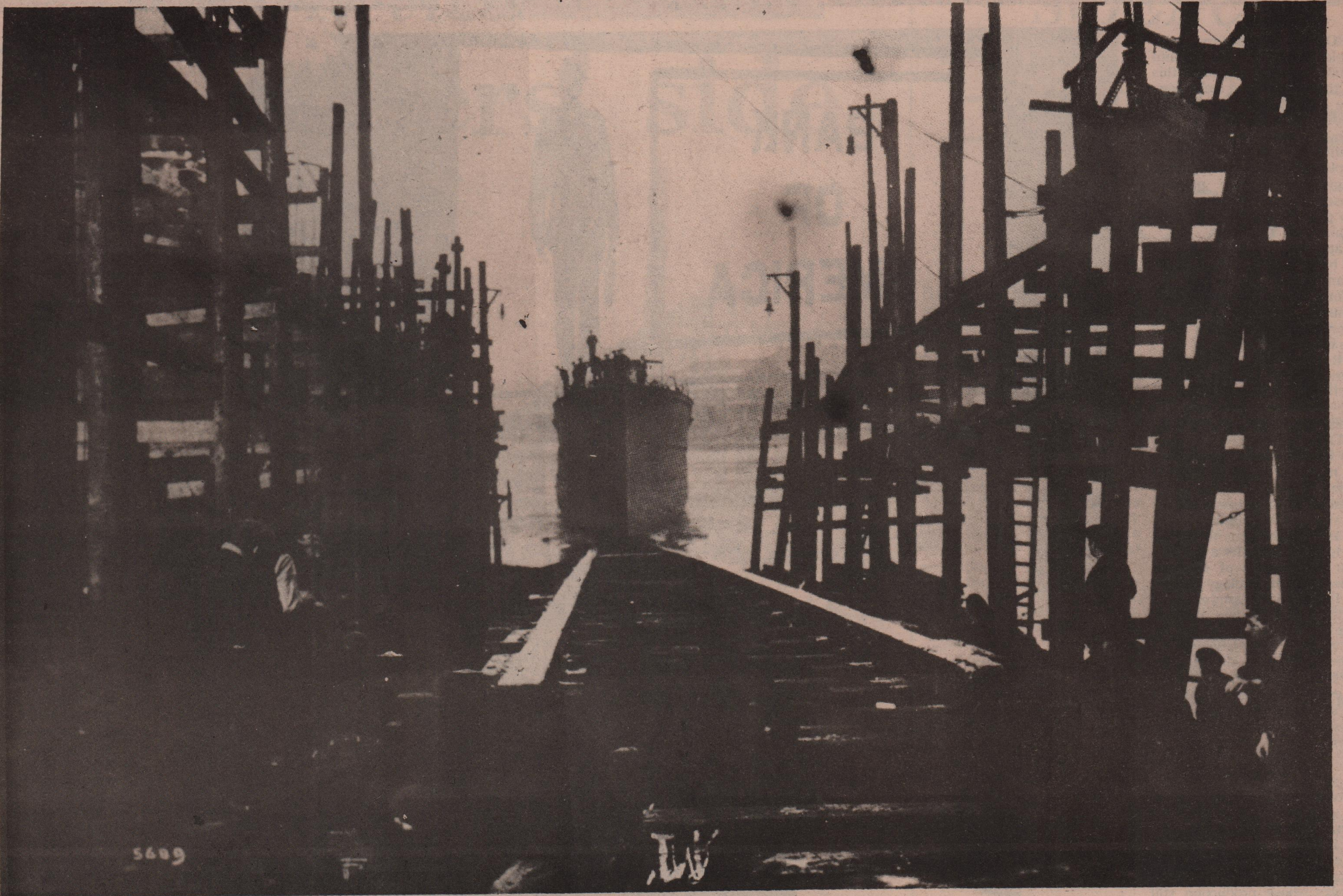
RIC officers stand guard outside

On Saturday the Mayor issued an invitation inviting "all members of the community who are prepared to put an end to the prevailing lawlessness and unjustifiable attack on the citizens (to help) by offering their services as workers" and to congregate at City Hall.

On Saturday night, troops of the Royal Irish Constabulary were in battle gear. The men were to work and most of them were stewards who refused to work and charged under the Defence of the Realm Act. The trams were put back though only a tenth of the up and only a skeleton servi



Group of Roman Catholic refugees from Belfast. By mid-June 1922, 23,000 Catholics had fled from Protestant terror in Northern Ireland



Launching a ship

returning from a Custom House meeting attacked the trams and fought a running battle with police in Royal Avenue, but they couldn't stop the service and by Monday more tram workers turned up for duty.

Power, gas and trams were restored by Monday and the strike seemed to be collapsing. Seizing their advantage the engineering employers announced that they would re-open their firms on Tuesday and the shipyards on Thursday, all with a 47 hour week. The demoralised strike committee made no attempt to picket the power station or gas works and on Monday night, February 17, they decided to recommend a return to work on Thursday. The decision was unpopular and they refused to reveal it to the crowd outside their offices. Charles McKay announced that there would be another ballot and there were shouts of "Sell-out" and "Who kept the transport workers in when they should have been out with us?"

Broken

The strikers voted union by union on Tuesday and Wednesday but their morale was broken. 20 out of 22 unions voted to resume and the others accepted the majority decision. By Thursday the strike was over. A fifth of the workers stayed out but it was not an organised protest. By the following Monday all were back at work and the troops were withdrawn. The cases against the power station shop-stewards were dismissed — to avoid further trouble — and the greatest industrial dispute in Belfast's history was over.

The shorter hours movement had failed, in Glasgow and Belfast as well as the smaller centres. The workers went back to the 47 hours they could have had for the asking without a strike. But the movement had a sequel.

Legacy

In Glasgow, where the strike was less widespread and sooner defeated than in Belfast it left a legacy of working class consciousness which made Clydeside the stronghold of the ILP and their apparently militant politics for 20 or 30 years. In the 1918 election the ILP had put up 19 candidates in Scotland and won two seats, only one of them in Glasgow. In the local elections of 1920 they won 45 seats on Glasgow Corporation and in the 1922 General Election they won 10 of the 15 Glasgow seats and 20 in Scotland as a whole. From then until their deaths the "Clydeside" MPs dominated politics in the West of Scotland.

Belfast had the same industrial background as Glasgow, the same miserable slums and grinding poverty. The strike had lasted longer there and had been more widespread. At first the great industrial conflict seemed to have the same effect. In Belfast Labour had been politically weak,

Labour candidates

four Labour candidates in the 1918 election had come well down the voting list. But on the first Saturday in May 1919, despite the inflammatory attacks of the Newsletter, over 100,000 workers took part in a May Day march from the City Hall to Ormeau Park. At the subsequent meeting the platforms were dominated by leaders of the strike earlier in the year, and they called for

Labour representation in the city.

The opportunity came in January 1920 with the first — and only — Corporation elections held under proportional representation. Labour nominated 20 candidates for the 60 seats and 13 were elected; two of them, Sam Kyle in Shankill and George Donaldson in St Annes, topped the poll. Five of the 13 including Kyle and Donaldson, were leaders of the 1919 strike. This was the strongest ever Labour representation on the Corporation and they were jubilant. They were sure they could smash the Unionist grip on the city inside a few years.

They were sadly disillusioned. As the war of independence in the South gained momentum so tempers rose — or were

inflamed — in the North. There was bitter sectarian rioting in Derry in May and June and the speeches at the 12th in Belfast were highly inflammatory. Then Col. Philips, a Banbridge man, and Divisional Commander of the RIC in Munster where his brutality provoked a mutiny, was shot dead in Cork and brought home for burial.

This was made the occasion for a meeting outside Workman and Clark's shipyard, held with the collusion of the management. One speaker called for a show of revolvers and the expulsion of Sinn Feiners from the yard. It was the signal for an orgy of terrorism in which all "disloyalists" were driven from both shipyards, and most of the engineering works as well. Some had to swim for their lives across the Lagan. That night rioting erupted in the city and continued for five days, leaving 17 dead and hundreds injured.

Tragedy

Perhaps the greatest tragedy was that the expulsions started and were fiercest in the very shipyards and engineering works which had been the backbone of the great strike scarcely 18 months before and where working class solidarity should have been strongest. Charles McKay the Chairman of the strike committee was expelled: he was a Catholic. But James Baird, a Protestant who had presided at early strike meetings, went as well as did John Hanna, a former Worshipful Master of an Orange Lodge.

Altogether 12,000 men were expelled and about 3,000 were Protestants, most of them socialists, Labour men or militant trade unionists. Thus ended working class solidarity in Belfast. It was no accident that the meeting on July 21 passed a resolution to stand by the employers as well as expel their fellow-workers.

A sad little footnote was added to the story when the Belfast District Committee of the Federation of Shipbuilding, Engineering and Allied Trades met on October 18, 1920. A letter was read from the management of Harland and Wolff refusing a further request for a 44 hour week and "the Federation decided to defer this matter owing to the unsettled and uncertain position at present prevailing in Belfast". (Northern Whig).

In the face of the pogroms the trade union movement was impotent. The employers must have been well satisfied. The Orange Card had worked again.

Final part next week.



Troops and tanks on the streets of Belfast

Why poverty?

THROUGHOUT history most people have been poor. Until recently the main reason for this was that science and technology were undeveloped. The productivity of labour was low.

Poverty in modern capitalism is different. Today we have poor people who produce computers, hungry people who produce masses of food, workers in rags who produce vast quantities of clothing.

Capitalism develops production but harnesses it to the self-expansion of capital — the accumulation of wealth — not to human need. Thus, as the American trade unionists' song puts it:

"It is we who plowed the prairies, built the cities where they trade, dug the mines and built the workshops, endless miles of railroad laid, Now we stand outcast and starving 'midst the wonders we have made."

But some are more outcast and starving than others. Workers and peasants in the Third World typically suffer a combination of the evils of different modern high-technology production-line labour intermixed with the long working days and low wages of early industrial capitalism, plus the mass beggary and pauperism typical of commercial/small workshop capitalism and even the personal servitude and stagnation of feudal landlordism or ancient Asiatic economies.

Colonialism

Colonialism, from the 16th to the 19th centuries, used pre-capitalist methods of exploitation in the colonies to help promote capitalism in Europe. As Marx pointed out: "as soon as peoples whose production still moves within the lower forms of slave labour, the corvee [feudal labour], etc., are drawn into a world market dominated by the capitalist mode of production... the civilised horrors of overwork are grafted onto the barbaric horrors of slavery, serfdom, etc."

An alliance with elements of the local pre-capitalist ruling classes was politically useful to the capitalist colonial rulers. And in a limited range of lines of production — cash-crops, mining — large profits could be made with low-skilled forced labour.

The drive for profits could be satisfied by pre-capitalist methods, or sometimes (as for example on the sugar estates of pre-revolutionary Cuba) by the most backward and stagnant forms of capitalism; and these forms of exploitation did not call for the prior social revolution and heavy investment (both social and industrial) needed for modern, large-scale, mechanised capitalist production.

Capitalism is evangelical. It always wants to expand. It spreads geographically, and its market economy tends to dissolve and overwhelm the fixed privileges fundamental to feudal or Asiatic modes of production.

The State

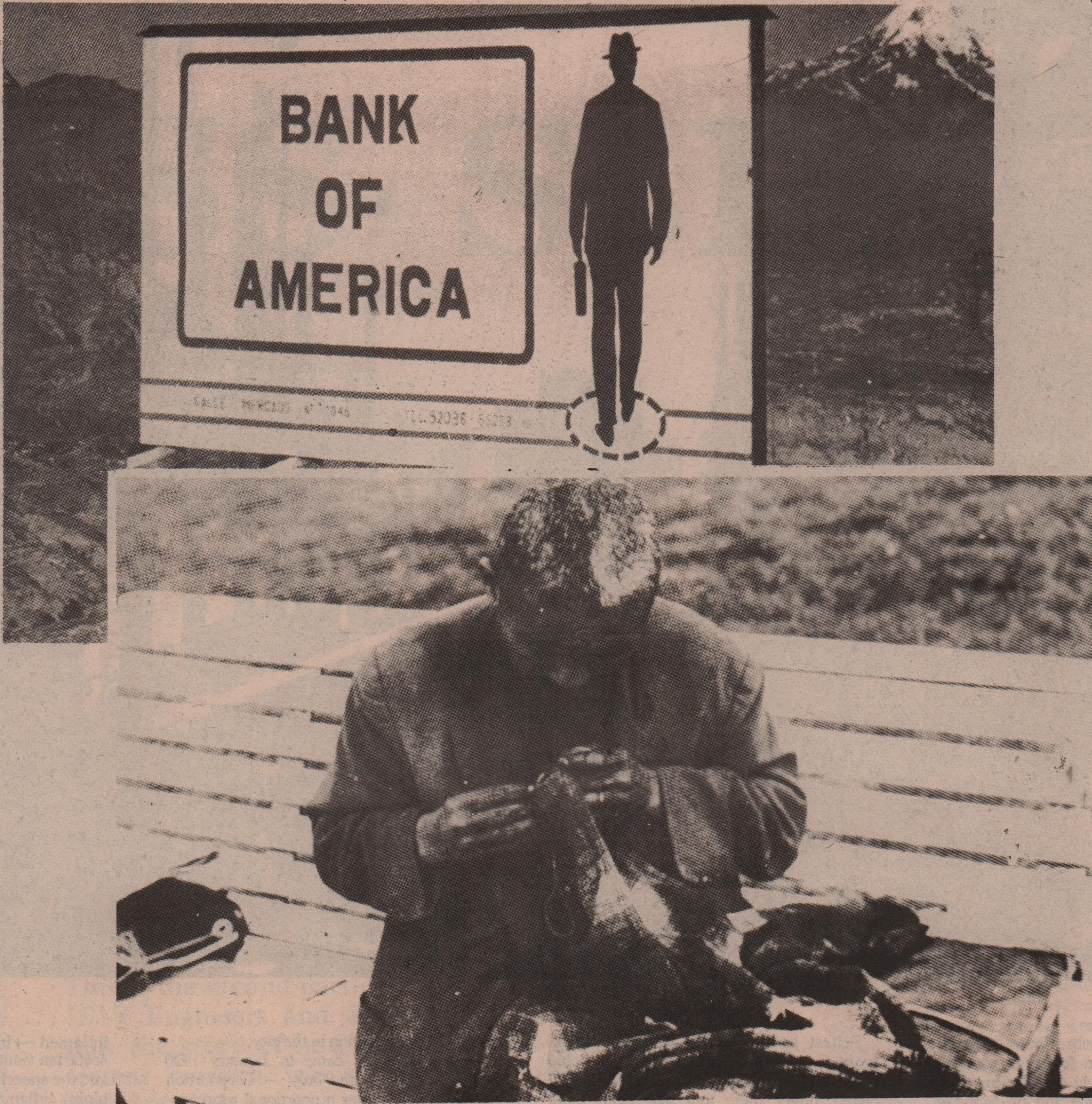
But this does not happen automatically. It happens through the actions of men and women, and especially of social classes.

The main instrument of an exploiting class developing a new mode of production is the state. Capitalism does not create a world state. It creates nation-states.

Over time, and especially this century, capitalism internationalises economic life. Even around 1800 few countries traded more than three or four per cent of their income. Most capitalist countries today trade at least 20 or 30 per cent.

But at the same time capitalism 'nationalises' economic life. The nation-state becomes more and more central to capitalism.

The dual process of internationalisation/'nationalisation'



Capital and inequality

Martin Thomas concludes a series on the roots of Third World poverty by summarising the mechanisms within capitalism which create international inequality, and arguing that the way to eradicate poverty and exploitation is through international class struggle.

creates all sorts of conflicts and unevenness. The peoples who do not have nation-states, or have weak states, become 'underdeveloped'.

As well as its levelling tendency, capitalism also has an inbuilt tendency to reinforce inequalities. Unlike previous modes of production, it can grow rapidly not only 'horizontally' (by geographical expansion) but also 'vertically' (by continuous revolutionisation of production within a given geographical area).

Growth in a particular state breeds more growth. 'Nothing succeeds like success' is a quintessentially capitalist proverb. Investment flows to the states which already have large markets, good communications, stable administration, and healthy, skilled and trained workforces.

Thus gross inequality between peoples — moulded by

colonialism, reproduced by the modern capitalism of the multinationals and international banks.

Over time capitalism does erode the pre-capitalist economic forms in the Third World but the process is still often very slow.

National capitalist development is possible today in the Third World — but only on the backs of the workers and peasants. The prospect of such development gradually bringing the peoples of the Third World up to West European standards of living is utterly hypothetical. Here and now, and in the foreseeable future, development means brutal exploitation and mass pauperisation as peasants are pushed onto barren land or off the land altogether to make way for capitalist agriculture.

But socialism does not promise better national development*. It never has promised

it: from the time of Marx and Engels, we have always argued that socialism must take off from the international integration created by capitalism, and therefore is not possible in one country.

Socialism cannot deliver better national development: socialist revolutions in individual countries can do many things, but they cannot provide a magic potion for economic growth in isolation from the world market.

Cuba's revolution has not ended its dependence on sugar; nor, isolated in one country, could it have done even if it had been led by the best of Marxist parties. In China a go-it-alone policy was viable for a period because of the huge size and resources of the country; but now China, too, is re-entering the world market. The way it does it is determined by the politics of the privileged bureaucracy which rules China: the fact that it has to do it is not.

Socialist revolution cannot change the basic facts of international interdependence. After Russia's revolution, Lenin and Trotsky repeatedly pointed out that the new workers' state was dominated by the

capitalist world market, and would face disaster without workers' revolutions elsewhere. What was true for the huge Russian economy is doubly true for the relatively small economies of most Third World states.

A revolution not extended to other countries will either collapse or lead to a USSR-type regime, as in Cuba.

With the resources of the international economy geared to the task, Third World poverty could quite quickly be wiped out. And there is no other way.

This does not mean that the peoples of the Third World have to wait for socialism to come in the richer countries. The Third World could lead the richer countries into socialist revolution. And the economic unification of areas like Latin America or Africa, under a socialist government, could permit serious progress even while capitalism remains in the richer countries.

But the alliance we must fight for is of the workers of different countries, with the aim of international socialism — not an alliance of the Third World (all classes included) against the richer capitalisms, with the aim of national development.

Such a Third World alliance is not possible because of competitive capitalist conflicts between the different Third World ruling classes. And if it were possible, it would be at the expense of the workers and peasants. The nearest approach to such an alliance which has been realised is the oil cartel OPEC: and Saudi Arabia and Libya, Nigeria and Venezuela, Iran and Iraq, have little to show in the way of progress and liberation.

Plekhanov

Socialists in the Third World fight for nationalist measures like nationalisations, land reforms, etc: but their aim is not national development. The pioneer Russian Marxist George Plekhanov defined his difference with non-Marxist revolutionaries by saying that for them the workers were necessary for the revolution; for him the revolution was necessary for the workers. Such a cool-headed approach is vital in the Third World, where even the most respectable capitalists are 'revolutionaries'.

A Third World alliance against the richer countries is not possible; however, an alliance of the richer capitalisms against the Third World is possible, and frequently operates. Usually it draws in many workers behind it, with demands such as import controls.

We must oppose that alliance. Given the long and continuing history of plunder of the Third World, the onus is on the workers' movements of the US and Western Europe to cleanse ourselves of racism and chauvinism and make international workers' unity possible.

We have to campaign for massive international aid without strings, and cancellation of debts for states suffering IMF-inspired austerity.

Tame unions

The TUC and the USA's AFL-CIO have spent millions on helping organise tame, pro-imperialist trade unions in the Third World. The Labour Party and similar parties support such groups in the Third World as the ruling parties of Mexico and Singapore.

And the majority of the Left in the West European labour movement, who object to such links, have links instead with Moscow and its network of dependent states.

We must fight for the resources of our movement to be directed instead to helping independent workers' parties and unions in the Third World. Direct links with the emerging black unions in South Africa, and the development of international combine committees in multinationals, are obvious priorities. Alongside such links we may perhaps be able to rebuild an international workers' Marxist movement of the same quality as the Communist International of Lenin's day.

*Most Marxists disagree: they argue that capitalism prevents Third World development by constantly draining surplus from the 'periphery' of the world economy to the 'centre'; that the development which has taken place in the Third World is phoney and bogus; that as long as Third World countries remain capitalist, they cannot escape colonial (or, at least, 'neo-colonial' or 'semi-colonial') status, that socialism, and only socialism, can break Third World countries from the world economy and thus permit national development; and that the fight for national development thus 'grows over' into socialism.

The basic texts of this school of thought are Paul Baran's 'The Political Economy of Growth' and Andre Gunder Frank's 'Capitalism and Underdevelopment in Latin America'. For some concise criticisms, see the relevant chapters in Anthony Brewer's 'Marxist Theories of Imperialism', and Robert Brenner's article in New Left Review no. 104.

Review

The miners' side

Clive Bradley previews Ken Loach's award-winning latest documentary film "Which Side are you On?" due to be shown, after some delay, on Channel 4 this week - Wednesday at 9.30 p.m.

IN KEN Loach's latest TV documentary, like the previous ones people speak for themselves.

And, more unusually, the people who speak for themselves are working-class militants. Indeed, Ken Loach's films are practically the only bit of television where people on an income of less than £20,000 a year get to speak for more than a few seconds and without a hostile presenter.

In these films there is no narrative. Often we just see workers involved in struggle discussing with each other in front of the camera.

People draw political lessons from their own experience. It is infinitely more effective than a schoolteacher-style voice-over telling us what it all proves.

'Which Side Are You On?' follows in the same pattern as Ken Loach's previous films - 'A Question of Leadership' (on the 1980 steel strike), 'The Red and the Blue' (on the Labour and Tory parties), and 'Questions of Leadership' (about the 1982 NHS strike and other struggles).

It was originally made for London Weekend Television's South Bank Show, but apparently proved to be too much for Melvyn Bragg and so was transferred to Channel 4. Ken Loach often has problems with informal censorship: 'Questions of Leadership' was never shown on TV at all, because of pressure from trade union leaders.

Even after it was agreed that Channel 4 would show 'Which Side Are You On?' TV Times refused to print Ken Loach's choice of blurb.

Through songs, poems, discussions, cartoons and film, the documentary tells the real story of the miners' strike - how it has transformed the lives of working class women, how it has opened the eyes of thousands of working class people to the real role of the police.



Pickets and police from a scene from the film

The film is in places inspiring and moving - and at times very funny, for example when a picket pretends to be inspecting police lines, making them look ridiculous, until he is arrested.

'Which Side Are You On?' is good pro-miners propaganda. Video-cassette copies would be

very useful to miners' support groups, trade unions and Labour Parties.

But the film is more than just that. It also shows how the miners' strike has shaken people's prejudices and illusions, and released creativity previously submerged. We hear poems and

songs composed in the mining communities.

Some of the songs by miners themselves suffer from being heard alongside the more polished work of professional songwriters like Ewan McColl, but they remain interesting and expressive.

Letter

Was Lenin a technocrat?

Gerry Ben-Noah (in his review of Jon Turney's 'Sci-Tech Report', SO 210) claims that Engels, Lenin, Kautsky, Stalin and Harold Wilson were all technocrats, united by "a curiously unbroken line of argument" which uncritically accepts capitalist science and technology.

It seems a strange consensus! Strange and, I think, imaginary.

Wilson did promote a version of 'socialism' which was little more than an efficient welfare capitalism. Some in the German socialist movement before World War 1, though more radical than Wilson, also had a rather limited reform-from-above vision.

But Lenin? Take for example his interest in 'scientific management', cited by Gerry as proof positive of Lenin's lack of critical insight.

At the same time as Lenin advocated seeing what the USSR could borrow from US 'scientific

management', he characterised the Soviet economy as state capitalism.

True, Lenin used this phrase to give extra sharpness to his efforts to debunk the romantics who thought that the backward, isolated USSR was going to move rapidly into full-fledged communism. Trotsky insisted anxiously (and I think rightly) that the term 'state capitalism' could only be used in a qualified way, as it were metaphorically.

But the basic idea was clear: that the USSR had first to attain civilised capitalist standards of technology, education, culture - and management - before it could move forward to socialist forms.

Lenin did not think that 'scientific management' was class-neutral. It was precisely because it was typically capitalist (but advanced-capitalist) that he advocated it.

And what of Marx and Engels? Marx wrote in 'Capital':

"It would be possible to write a whole history of the inventions made since 1830 for the sole purpose of providing capital with weapons against working-class revolt".

Hardly uncritical applause for technology! And all the evidence is that Engels' views were the same.

They considered that science and technology were fundamentally progressive - to the same extent that, and with the same qualifications, that capitalist development is progressive.

This capitalist progress will have to be superseded by socialist progress (and the supersession will not be a sweet, gentle evolution - history advances always by the bad side, as Marx put it).

So I think we can look to a socialist science and technology superseding capitalist science and technology. But -

SCIENCE

Bleeders' disease

By Les Hearn

Haemophilia is an intriguing, tragic and interesting disease. It has been in the news recently because some sufferers have contracted AIDS from contaminated blood products and also because the new technology of genetic engineering has held out the hope of more reliable relief from its symptoms.

Haemophilia is a rare inherited disorder in which the blood fails to clot when the sufferer is cut or bruised. Sufferers are known as haemophiliacs or 'bleeders'. It is intriguing in its pattern of appearance and transmission.

It is tragic in its effects - any cut may bleed for hours, and bruises become swollen. Bleeding into the joints can result in discomfort and pain. Quite minor cuts can prove fatal.

It is interesting in that it has helped to lay bare the complex way that blood normally clots to seal a broken blood vessel within a minute or so.

How is haemophilia transmitted? Put simply, it is passed from parents to children like other genetic diseases, but there are important differences. To understand these, we need to look at how our genetic inheritance is organised.

Every cell of our body contains two metres of a long thin chemical called DNA. This contains the codes for all the proteins we need to grow, feed, survive and multiply. The code for one protein is called a gene.

The DNA is divided up into 23 pairs of matching segments called chromosomes. Therefore there are normally two genes for each protein. This is a safety measure - if one gene is damaged or mutated, there is a back-up copy.

Most genetic illnesses only occur if a person has two faulty genes for a protein - e.g. Sickle Cell Anaemia.

Males

However, with haemophilia, it is almost always males who get the disease, while females only carry it. It is a sex-linked disease.

The 23 pairs of chromosomes in women include a pair called the X chromosomes. But men have only 22 matching pairs with one odd pair - an X and a shorter Y chromosome.

The gene for an essential blood-clotting substance called Factor 8 (F8) is on the X chromosome and in men there is no back-up copy.

We will now look at an actual case history, to see how this works out in practice.

Queen Victoria seems to have suffered a mutation in one F8 gene. This did not affect her health, but the eggs she pro-

duced carried a time bomb for some of her male descendants. Each egg gets one copy only of each chromosome. Half would have got a normal X chromosome and half the faulty one.

When these joined with sperm from her husband, containing either an X or a Y, the resulting sons were either normal or bleeders, while the daughters were normal or carriers.

Thus, while Edward VII was normal, Leopold of Albany was a bleeder who passed the disease to his grandson, via his daughter.

Royals

Two of Victoria's daughters were carriers and three of their sons were bleeders and three daughters were carriers.

In the next generation, there were six bleeder sons, in the German, Spanish and Russian royal families.

One of these was the Tsarevich Alexis, born to Tsar Nicholas II and the Tsarina Alexandra, one of Victoria's grand-daughters.

His birth in 1904, the first male heir for two centuries, was taken as a sign of hope, but despite his four healthy sisters, Alexis was a stricken child.

A few weeks after his birth, Tsar Nicholas wrote in his diary:

"A haemorrhage began this morning without the slightest cause from the navel of our small Alexis. It lasted with but few interruptions until evening."

Things got worse when Alexis could crawl and toddle, with large blue swellings appearing on his arms and legs.

Doctors could do little to stop more serious bleedings and in desperation, the parents turned to the sinister "holy man", Rasputin.

So why did Alexandra and Nicholas marry, when it was known that her brother, uncle and nephews had haemophilia? Its hereditary nature was well-known, and a French doctor, Giraudier, had counselled in 1873 that all members of bleeder families be advised against marriage.

Predating this, Jewish law excused male children from circumcision if their brothers or uncles had bled for a long time following the operation.

The scientist and communist, JBS Haldane, noted that "Kings are carefully protected against disagreeable realities". In his opinion, "The haemophilia of the Tsarevich was a symptom of the divorce between royalty and reality".

Next week, I will look at how genetic engineering has brought more reliable relief, if not a cure, for haemophilia sufferers.

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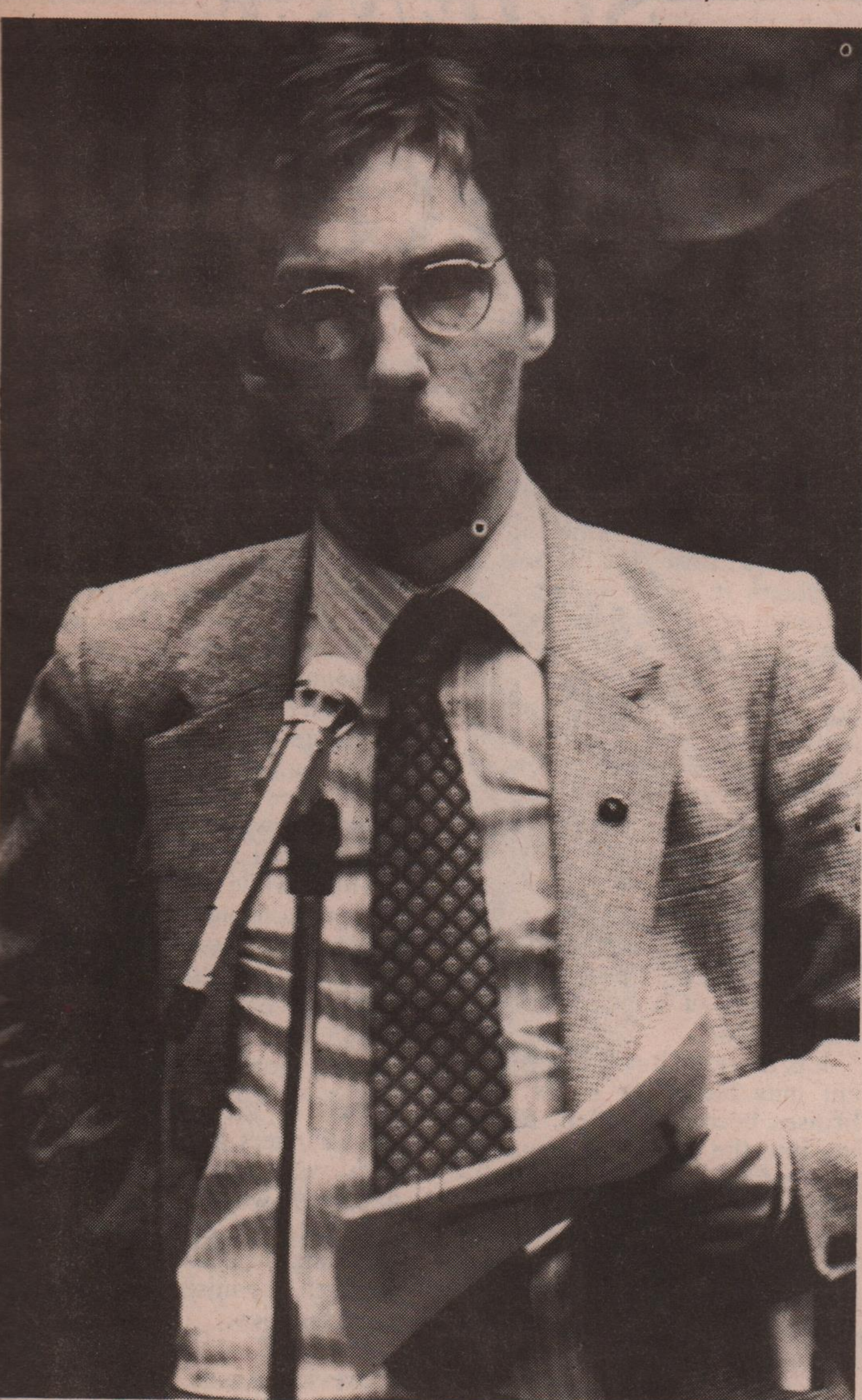
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MARTIN THOMAS, Islington.

Tribune's new realism

Working to lose



Nigel Williamson Photo: John Harris

Dear Nigel,
Your editorial in last week's Tribune caused the press to write about new divisions on the Left and of Tribune breaking with Tony Benn.

It is easy to see why. You write with an even-handedness as between the Left and the Kinnockites that suggests someone parodying the standard parody of a Guardian editorial.

It is a spurious even-handedness. The sharp edge of your criticism is turned against the serious Left, while the gist of what you write is to suggest that the Left demobilises itself and accommodates to Kinnock in the hope of weaning him from his close links with the right wing.

Your criticism of Kinnock is muted and perfunctory, like the comments of a man who inwardly accepts the status quo. Your comments on the serious Left express irritation and something very close to denunciation.

Far

That you implicitly denounce Tony Benn is the measure of how far the editorial takes Tribune.

Now, of course, an editorial does not necessarily make an entirely new outlook. But if Tribune is going to be guided by last week's editorial, then it will be truly back in the fold — perhaps back to what it was in the days of good king Richard Clements.

You are right in some of the basic things you say, and right also in your starting point. It is a life and death question for Labour to win the Tory-imposed trade union plebiscites on the political levy. The Left must do everything it can to win the next election. You may even be right that the election will be won or lost in the next year, though that is not so calculable.

Your conclusion from these general considerations seems to be that the Left should lean to the Right, forget about most of its own concerns of the last period, and go for an alliance with the so-called centre. In other words — that the Left must now substitute the goal of winning the next election under Kinnock, with Kinnockite policies and prospects in office, for the goal that has defined the serious Left over the last five years: to change the Labour Party and thus provide a real alternative to Thatcherism.

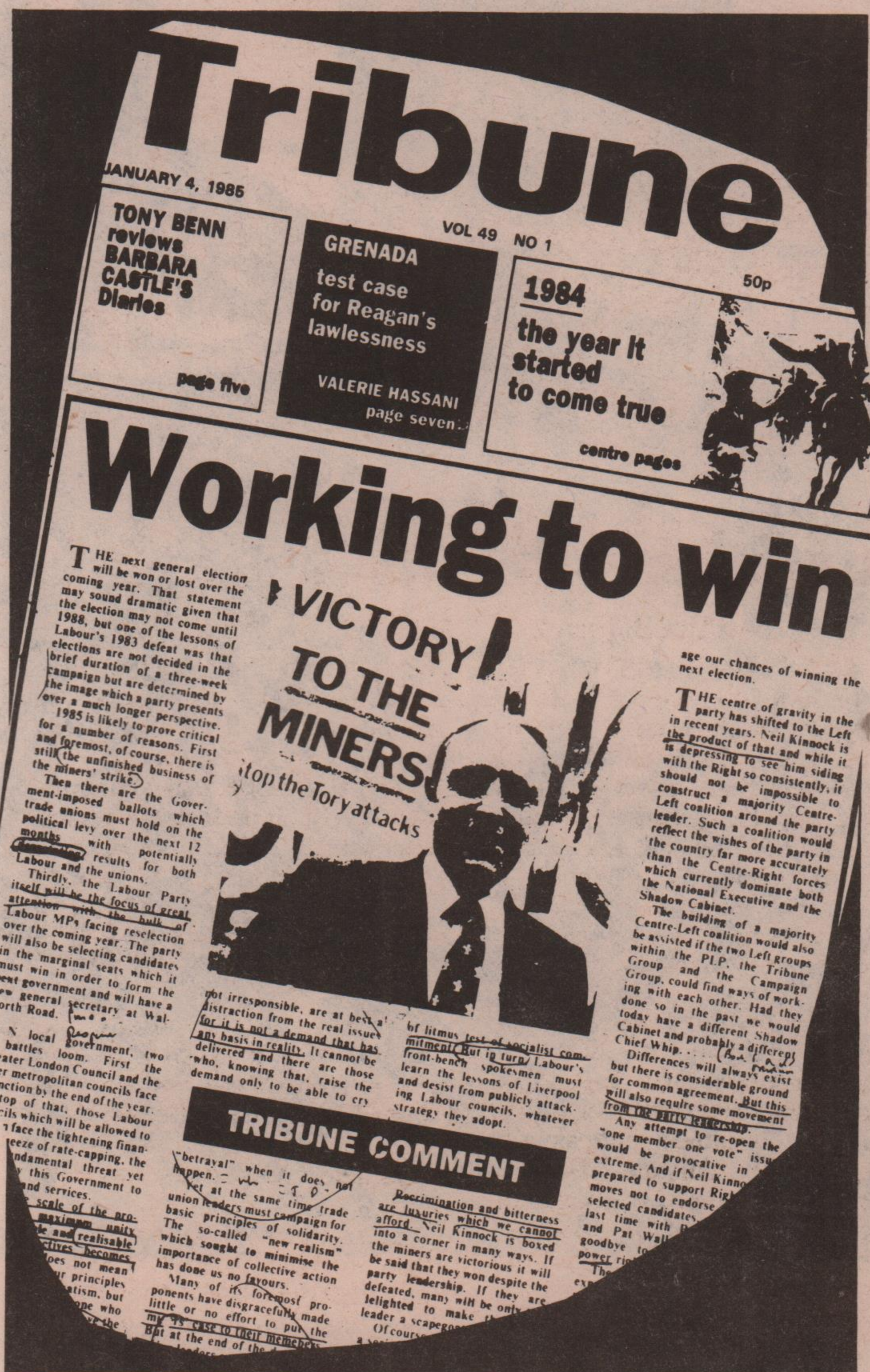
That goal was nicely summed up in the slogan the Left adopted after the end of the last Labour government: 'Never again' — Labour must never again put forward a government like that one.

It is, of course, easy to understand the mood and psychology of your editorial. Even a Labour government led by Dennis Healey would be preferable to the Tories. The five year battering the labour movement has taken since 1979 naturally nourishes a feeling that the Wilson/Callaghan government was not so bad after all. Labour's defeat in 1983 softened and un-nerved many who boldly set out in 1979 to make sure that 'never again'.

And the experience of the Left in local government in the last few years has also undermined the drive for a new start: the Left has put itself to school in the old Herbert Morrison school of reformist politics, working within the capitalist system and making choices within its confines.

All this explains the mood that now expresses itself in Tribune. It does not justify it, or

Last week's editorial in the Labour Left weekly, Tribune, lambasting 'ultra-leftism' seemed to mark a shift from that paper's recent 'Bennite' alignment. John O'Mahony and John Bloxam write an open letter to Tribune's new editor, Nigel Williamson.



and the man from the Holy Office surrounded by armed guards.

Unconditional commitment to parliamentary democracy — even though the ruling class revise, or break, its rules as they go along, like they have done during the miners' strike — is not up for discussion. It is being laid down as the fixed dogma of the Party establishment of the Parliamentary Labour Party, and of official socialism. It will be used against the Left as Kinnock has already used it against the miners.

There will be no debate about parliamentary democracy and class struggle — about what happens in a long-stable parliamentary democracy (like Chile's) when the class struggle rises very high — about the crippling incompleteness of the democracy we have won so far in Britain, or about the democracy we need to develop in a socialist society.

Parliamentary

There will not be a debate, but an attempt to re-define membership of the Labour Party in terms of unconditional commitment to Parliamentary democracy.

For the socialist Left, democracy is an irreplaceable part of the socialism we strive to establish, and an aspect of the struggle to overthrow the system. For the centre and the right, present-day parliamentary democracy, with its cross on a ballot paper once every five years, is the pinnacle of achievement, in a capitalist system that they do not want to overthrow and replace by socialism.

There is no real common ground on this question, except on such questions as defending our existing hard-won rights. And even here there is a difference. Neil Kinnock has been much less vehement against the police-state regime established in the coalfields for most of the last year than he is in demanding of Labour councils that they should keep within Thatcher's law.

Central to your whole picture of where we are now, and the choices we have in this situation, is the idea that the labour movement and its leaders are passive creatures to which things happen.

Thus, for example, we must refrain from raising the call for a general strike — that is, for generalised solidarity with the miners — because it "cannot be delivered".

This approach softens your attitude to Kinnock and the trade union leaders, and leads you to be grateful for anything positive you can discern in them. Kinnock deserves praise because he has stopped (or paused in) adding his voice to the chorus of condemnation of the miners' strike — that is, helping the scab-herders — and he should, not now be condemned for refusing to throw everything he has behind the miners.

We must stick to "winnable and realisable aims and objectives". And since the Left controls none of the existing levers of power (not even Tribune!), we must accommodate to the status quo and the leadership — to the "winnable and realisable aims and objectives" they set, or can be persuaded to set.

With this approach no radical socialist politics are possible — except perhaps in freakishly favourable circumstances.

Continued next week

'Be constructive'

Nigel Williamson, the new editor of Tribune, spoke to Clive Bradley.

CB: The press is commenting that Neil Kinnock has found a new ally on the Left. What is your reaction to that?

NW: I think it is made fairly clear in the editorial. The issues should not be seen in those personalised terms.

CB: The guts of the article seem to be an attack on the Left, for example the paragraphs on a general strike imply an attack on Tony Benn's recent comments. The article says that we have to have realisable aims and objectives, but doesn't say what those are.

NW: We make it very clear at the end of the editorial that we're not prepared to see a witch-hunt against Militant or anyone else.

We're not prepared to see refusals to endorse parliamentary candidates as with Peter Tatchell and Pat Wall.

Those are pretty hard issues. We're not prepared to see the 'one-member-one-vote' issue re-opened. That's a fairly hard position.

CB: What about the attack on the general strike call and by implication on those such as Tony Benn who have been putting it forward?

NW: I think you're hung up on personalities. It's the issues that matter. It is the opinion of a lot of people on the Left that the

general strike call is just not going to happen. We might desire that it would — personally I do — but it's not going to happen, so to raise it is irresponsible. And there are undoubtedly some people — not Tony Benn — who are raising it just so that they can cry betrayal.

CB: You also talk about "ultra-leftists" only being interested in the miners' strike in order to attack Neil Kinnock.

NW: Tribune has been supporting the miners 100 per cent in their struggle, and will continue that position. We do criticise Kinnock for allowing his reservations about the conduct of the dispute to obscure his basic commitment to the strikers' cause.

All we're saying is that we need to address the problem in a slightly more constructive way, and not just shout 'scab' and 'traitor'.

For instance, I would suggest that since Peter Hain wrote a very critical article on Kinnock's handling of the miners' strike in the New Statesman about six weeks, Kinnock has taken those criticisms on board. I don't accept that he is unprepared to listen to constructive criticism.

If you look at the speeches he has made over the last six weeks, he has concentrated far more on putting across the case for the Plan For Coal, and less on the conduct of the dispute.

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Ethiopian Jews

By Emma Nichols

12,000 Ethiopian Jews are safe from starvation, and it is an enormous propaganda coup for the Israeli state.

It is an effective propaganda coup precisely because the Ethiopian Jews deserve to be rescued. To use anti-Zionist phrases to denounce the airlift — as Arab regimes have done — or to complain about “an infringement of sovereignty”, as Ethiopia has done, is to try to use democratic principles to justify inhumanity.

But the airlift also highlights many sordid features of the Israeli state.

The 12,000 are safe from starvation (though 7,000 Jews remain in Ethiopia now that the Ethiopian government has called on Sudan to halt the operation). But millions of other Ethiopians are starving, and the Israeli state shows no concern at all for them.

Zionism

Central to Israeli ideology — Zionism — is the notion that the Jewish state is the only way to save the Jewish people. It is not necessary to assume that the Israeli government had no genuine concern at all for the Ethiopian Jews, but for sure they were glad of the chance to “prove their point” so spectacularly.

Although some Zionists do not see the safety and survival of Jews alone as their only concern, the practice of the Israeli state, and of the Zionist movement outside Israel, shows very little concern for other victims of oppression.

Operation Moses, in that sense, is similar to Zionist campaigns to allow Jews to leave the USSR: their concern is with Jews alone, and their concern is that the Jews should emigrate to Israel, rather than anywhere else. (In fact most of them don't go to Israel, and many prefer the US).

More macabre still, the Ethiopian Jews owe the airlift only to the fortunate outcome of a theological argument nine years ago. If the majority of the rabbis had decided differently — that the peculiarities of Ethiopian Jewry made them not Jewish at all — then the Ethiopian Jews could starve to death without

Israel feeling much concerned.

Then again, comments from Israeli sources not fettered by official hypocrisy indicate that the Ethiopian Jews will find Israel much less than a warm and welcoming haven.

Israel's European Jews are notorious for their racism towards black Jews. The mayor of Eilat (a port on the Red Sea) is quoted as having said: “[only] send us those who know how to sing and dance, so we can set up a folklore group for the tourists”.

Israel was originally established as primarily a white-settler state — in 1948 only 8% of the Jewish population were of African or Asian origin.

A huge influx of African and Asian Jews followed in the early 1950s — pushed by the reflex anti-semitism of Arab regimes, pulled by the Israeli state eager to prove its point that Jews could not live in peace in non-Jewish societies, and to secure cheap Jewish labour so as to continue their ‘Jewish labour only’ policy.

The Zionist promised land, however, turned out to be a capitalist state. The Jews of African and Asian origin — now 45% of the total, as against 40% of European and American origin, and 15% second generation Israelis — are oppressed by a mainly-white establishment.

Racism

The Ethiopian Jews can expect resentment both from white racist Jews and from many other black Jews. The poorer oriental Jews already feel threatened by Arab cheaper labour. The Ethiopian Jews are seen as a further threat.

And the final irony is this: many of the Ethiopian Jews, whose plight is in part due to the legacy of imperialism and racism, are now being trained for military service for the Israeli state — a state sponsored by imperialism and founded on racist expropriation and oppression of the Palestinian Arabs.

The Israeli state is also a major supplier of arms to the repressive Ethiopian regime, and the Sudanese government has alleged that the whole airlift operation was linked with an arms deal.



CPSA members demonstrate; and Alistair Graham (inset)

Computer staff sold out

ON Monday December 17, CPSA members at Newcastle Computer Centre voted for a return to work to be negotiated, thus ending their eight month old dispute.

An unanimous vote of no confidence in the leadership at the same meeting, showed how the strikers felt about the role of CPSA general secretary Alistair Graham and the National Executive Committee.

The strike began last May, when management introduced new shift rotas which would have meant sizeable pay cuts for the shiftworkers (up to £14 a week in some cases).

The strike leaders, influenced by the Militant tendency originally declared that the dispute could be won in Newcastle and opposed escalation of the strike to local offices. By August, with the fight into its fifth month, the strike committee had begun to call for the action to be widened.

Initially, the National Executive Committee agreed in principle to escalate the strike to computer centres in Reading and Livingstone. Votes at these two sites showed majorities in favour of joining the dispute when the NEC called them out.

But by this time NEC mem-

By Steve Battlemuch and Mike Grayson

bers from the Department of Employment were arguing against this form of escalation because of the effect it would have on local Unemployment Benefit Offices. Reading and Livingstone send out dole giro, and if they were stopped, UBO workers would have to write out 1½ million giro a week by hand.

At the next NEC meeting, the vote to bring out the two computer centres was lost. The strike remained extremely solid, but it became increasingly clear that Alistair Graham wanted to be rid of it, especially after members of the management union SCPS voted to return.

Matters came to a head at the NEC meeting in mid-December.

Alistair Graham tabled a motion saying that the strikers had got as far as they could get and should negotiate a return to work. This was defeated, since some of the soft-left (Broad Left '84) NEC members voted with the Broad Left.

Militant supporters then moved that all computer centres be brought out. This was also defeated, with the soft left voting against.

Then, after some NEC mem-

bers had left the meeting, Graham's initial motion was resubmitted by a member of Broad Left '84. This time it was passed.

The Newcastle strike committee then felt it had no alternative but to recommend a negotiated

return to work.

The role of the NEC members who recently left the Broad Left to set up Broad Left '84 should be a lesson to all activists who will shortly be recommending NEC nominations to their Branch AGMs.

Solidarity defeated

THE CPSA's consultation exercise on support for the NUM, held before Christmas, has been lost.

28% of those voting backed the proposal to give £5000 a month to the NUM in the form of food vouchers, and to offer an interest-free loan of £100,000. But the majority was against, and the number of votes cast — 45,500 — was disappointingly low.

This is a severe blow to CPSA activists who have been supporting the miners — and, obviously, to the miners themselves. But rank and file support will continue, whatever the view of the NEC in light of the vote.

CPSA's conference last May voted to give support to the NUM, but a number of resigna-

tions followed an initial donation of £25,000. The NEC decided not to make further donations without endorsement by the members: but then they failed to put in the necessary work for a successful campaign.

For the duration of the strike, the left has had a majority on CPSA's National Executive Committee, but its main achievement has been to tear itself apart, rather than to campaign for the miners.

Activists in the branches must take the disappointing result in the December vote as a spur to step up their solidarity work. There is a lot of support for the NUM amongst civil service workers: more effort must be made to coordinate and build on it.

Part of the team Tories back contras

By Tim Anderson

REDBRIDGE District Health Authority will meet on February 5 to decide the future of domestic services at Barking Hospital.

Domestics at the hospital have been on strike against the private contractors, Crothalls, for almost a year.

Barry Neil, at the Strikeline said on Tuesday, 8th, that he was “fairly confident” that Crothall's contract would be taken from them, returning Barking to in-house cleaning for the first time in 17 years.

The striking domestics have organised a lobby of the meeting to start at 1.30 p.m. and a mass picket of the hospital for the following day, Wednesday 6th.

The strike, now in its tenth month, remains solidly behind the demand for reinstatement.

On Wednesday, January 9, the strikers will publish their workers' plan for Barking Hospital, entitled “Part of the Team”. Examining the record of private contract cleaning, the report starts from the view that services should be provided to a standard and the cost taken from there — rather than fixing

a cost and working backwards to see what standard can be attained.

The strike started when Crothalls introduced new working practices at Barking which included a 41% cut in price (achieved by a similar cut in hours) but strikers say that they were under enormous pressure even before that. Often they had to work in their own time to bring cleaning up to an acceptable standard.

Based on the experience of domestics and independent professional reports, the plan comes to three main conclusions:

The District Health Authority should:

- 1) Remove Crothalls from Barking.
- 2) Re-employ the strikers.
- 3) Recognise that domestics are part of a team involved in patient care. The whole issue of cleaning in hospitals needs to be discussed between domestics, nurses and other members of staff.

Barry Neil stressed that this is “not a tender for the services at Barking but a positive look at what is actually needed”.

THE CIA has claimed that its manual for Nicaraguan counter-revolutionaries was designed to moderate the contras' methods.

The manual discusses assassination of “carefully selected and planned targets, such as judges...”, and notes, “Wherever possible, professional criminals will be hired to carry out specific tasks”.

Vietnam sends coal

IN the late 1960s the Vietnamese revolutionary leader Ho Chi Minh was asked by some Italian socialists how they could best help Vietnam's struggle against US imperialism.

Perhaps memories from his past in the Leninist Communist International of the 1920s somehow made their way to the front of Ho's mind, through the heaps of Stalinist doctrine from later decades. In any case, he gave the Italians a good answer: Make the revolution in your own country.

Now the British miners, though hardly yet making the revolution, are struggling with a

terrapty that might impress even the Vietnamese. And what are Ho's successors in the government of Vietnam doing?

According to the British government's latest energy statistics, they are sending coal to Britain.

During the struggle against the US, the Vietnamese leaders would sometimes protest — in oblique language — about the need for internationalism and the inadequacy of the support they were getting from the USSR and China. Nine years since the US withdrawal seem to have educated them all too well in the principles of ‘socialism in one country’.



Police brutality bites at Barking

Socialist Organiser

Babies for sale?



Women have been to the forefront on the pit picket lines

By Kath Crosby

COME what may, it appears that Kim Cotton the recent surrogate mother will make a profit out of surrogate motherhood.

She is selling her story to a newspaper as well as collecting £6,500 for her nine months work.

The Tory government (and Barnett social services) are in a panic.

A government that supports the economics of the market place is concerned about the financial arrangements of the case.

A government that supports the making of profits out of ill health, old age and deals on wheels is baulking at the making of profits out of childbirth.

So what do we, as socialists, think about the case? I, for one, am not opposed to surrogate motherhood in principle. It is a woman's right to decide what to do with her body.

The woman in Scotland, who of her own free will and without commercial arrangements, had a baby for someone else earlier this year, has my blessing.

What we should be opposed to is exploitation. £6,500 is not much—in fact little more than a secretary,

or a Barnet social worker could earn in nine months. It can hardly be described as exploitation.

What would be exploitation is for women who have no other means of income to be forced into selling their wombs. Legislation won't stop that, but merely push it underground.

If women want to be surrogate mothers, it should be organised by the NHS, with the woman being paid proper pay and allowances when she is pregnant and unable to work.

Getting worked up about a one-off case like Kim Cotton is a waste of energy. Between them, the social services department and the Tory government will make things worse, not better, for baby Cotton.

Perhaps life as a wanted child is better than life in care or with parents who don't particularly care about her.

Until we live in a society that doesn't sell its grandmother for sixpence and its babies for £6000; that doesn't make a fetish of having children and that doesn't see the children of the unemployed and of striking miners going without the necessities of life, then we have no hope of dealing with issues like surrogate motherhood adequately.

Build a working class women's movement!

By Jean Lane

The growth of women's support groups since the start of the miners' strike has been a tremendous boost to the women's movement in Britain. The Tory government have not been able to buy them off or use them as

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propaganda against the NUM.

Their courageous stand has given confidence to working class women everywhere who, over the years, have been attacked by the policies of cuts, redundancies, extra police powers and media lies. The Ford women at Dagenham and Halewood have resumed their 16 year old fight for equal pay. The women workers at Barking Hospital and at South London Hospital for women have struck and occupied against cuts in the health service. The Greenham women have fought for five years to prevent the introduction of cruise missiles at US air bases in Britain. Homeless families in London have occupied Camden Town Hall to stop the use of rat-holes for council tenants' living accomod-

ation. And so on, and so on.

The list of women in struggle is endless. And the Women Against Pit Closures groups have now been in existence for ten months, bringing a new momentum to our fight.

All the women involved in WAPC are determined that their groups will not just disappear when the miners' strike is over, because there are still so many battles to be fought.

The only way that this can be ensured is if all working class women in struggle join together and fight together — not just against the Tories' attacks which throw us out of work and treat us as second class citizens, but also to force the labour movement to take our battles seriously and to give us equal voice.

The militant action of working class women can only strengthen the labour movement and democratise it.

Link up

This is the theme of the Women's Fightback day school. Link up the struggles! Build a working class women's movement!

THE day school will include films and discussions about working class women's struggles — including Women Against Pit Closures, women in the Labour Party, black women's struggles, lesbians, battles against cuts and hospital closures, Greenham Common, etc.

Fund emergency!

This week's postbag for our fund was half good, half bad.

On the good side, the total was £275. If we can keep that up as a weekly average, then we can make the £570 we need to balance our monthly budget and also put a decent amount into our fund for new premises.

On the bad side, nearly all the £275 came from one donation — £240 from a London reader. To keep up the fund income we need on a regular basis, we need a much wider spread of contributions.

Thanks to: Patrick Murphy, £7; Mike Grayson, £5; six Basingstoke comrades (Carla Jamison, Alasdair Jamison, Chris Whelan, Angela Fraser, Alan Fraser, Sean Connolly) £1 each,

Richard Bayley, £10; Jo Thwaites, £10; Chris Bright, £2.

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Liaison committee

THE Liaison Committee for the Defence of Trade Unions is meeting in London this Saturday, January 12.

Delegates' credentials are £3 from 148 Glenny Road, Barking, Essex IG11 8QQ, and the conference starts at 10.30 a.m. at Friends House, Euston Road.

The Liaison Committee is dominated by the Communist party, and recent conferences have been fairly feeble. Saturday's conference continues a trend by proposing to finish early at 2.30 p.m.

But according to the Morning Star on January 8, there is likely to be an important proposal for activity put to the conference. "Scottish miners' leaders want a build-up to a national day of action in support of the ten month old strike", reports the

Morning Star. "This is the aim they want to promote at the... Conference..."

"February 20 was a date which had been put forward."

Such a proposal should be welcomed, but with two reservations.

The Morning Star speaks only of a "day of action". With the confrontation between the Tory government and the labour movement at its present pitch, surely bolder and clearer language is needed — a 24 hour strike.

Also, the February 20 date conflicts with a date already set for action by the Yorkshire and Humberside TUC — February 11. Coordination is vital, or we will end up with nothing more than a repeat of the scattered days of action last summer.

Socialist Organiser

Last weekend (4th-6th) SO local organisers from a number of areas gathered in London for a weekend school to discuss improving our organisation and efficiency.

We plan to follow up that school with a further one for local organisers (to cover those who could not make it or could not be fitted in on the 4th-6th), and basic educational schools for newer comrades.

Last weekend's school went over some of the ground covered by the previous one — for a different selection of comrades — in early December, but this time we decided to try to cover fewer items more thoroughly.

We looked at how to attract new supporters to SO; how to organise educationals on basic Marxism; how to organise the finances of local groups; the political traditions of SO; and how to increase paper sales.