

Socialist Organiser

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Defend women's rights STOP



POWELL!



By Jean Lane

THE 1967 Abortion Act is under attack yet again. The White, Benyon and Corrie Bills failed to further restrict women's rights to control our own bodies. So now Enoch Powell is trying to do it through the back door.

The Unborn Children (Protection) Bill has passed its second reading and is going into its report stage on May 3. If it passes the report stage it will then go the third reading, when the whole Bill will be voted on.

If passed the Bill will "render it unlawful for a human embryo created by in vitro fertilisation to be used as a subject of experimentation or, indeed, in any other purpose except to enable a woman to bear a child."

The Bill plainly affects infertile women who will find it very difficult to get in vitro fertilisation. Banning experimentation on the human embryo will stop research into infertility.

It also prevents research into handicap and new methods of contraception.

But the Bill has far wider underlying implications which affect all women. It implies that the foetus has legal rights from conception and therefore will create a new legal basis on which the anti-abortionists can renew their campaign. Women who try to campaign for our rights to control our own bodies and reproduction will be accused of "nazism" and "murder".

The vote on the second reading of the Bill in the House of Commons was 238 for the Bill and 66 against. Forty of those votes for came from Labour MPs. Three shadow cabinet members voted for Powell's Bill — Donald Dewar, John Smith and Michael Cocks. 122 Labour MPs failed to turn up to vote!

It is still treated as a matter of conscience which way a Labour MP votes, despite the fact that Labour Party conferences have voted repeatedly by big majorities for free abortion on demand and for women's right to choose.

It should be part of the Labour Party manifesto and there should be a whip on the Labour vote in the Commons.

It is essential to defeat this Bill not only because of what it does immediately but also for what it means in the future.

Get on the demonstration on April 27 to show your opposition to this Bill, and also to show the Labour Party leadership that we will not be pushed aside. Our fight inside the Party will continue and be stepped up.

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Editorial Disarm the union busters!

THE Tories and their press have targeted the Transport and General Workers Union. Basing themselves upon some proven cases of malpractice in the recent election for TGWU General Secretary and on much rumour-mongering, they are in full cry against the TGWU, baying for a new election. They are not interested in the fact that the TGWU itself has already investigated malpractices and sacked and expelled one of its full-time officials, or that it is investigating other allegations.

Their concern is to hammer the TGWU, discredit the left wing candidate Ron Todd and ensure that the plebiscite which every trade union is legally obliged to hold within the next year to decide for or against having a political fund will be held in the worst conditions — of rumour, scandal and distrust of the trade union leaders who will be advocating retention of the political fund and continued affiliation to the Labour Party. The Tories and their press have targeted and scandalised the TGWU to give an additional boost to their campaign to depoliticise the labour movement.

No challenge now facing the labour movement is as important as winning a yes vote in all the ballots on the political fund. If there is a 'no' vote in any of the important unions it will be a big defeat; if there is a 'no' vote in a number of the important unions then the labour movement will have been set back by decades. Though it wouldn't necessarily follow that it will take decades to regain the lost ground, every socialist and class-conscious militant must regard the fight to win a 'yes' vote as the number one task in the period ahead.

How the TGWU responds to the scandal-mongering campaign must be determined with this in mind.

We must disarm the scandal-mongers as quickly and as convincingly as possible. The only way to do that now is for the TGWU to organise a new election for General Secretary. It should be held as soon as possible and conducted in such a way that nobody can reasonably question the democratic validity of the results.

Instincts

Of course, the gut instinct of many militants will be to dig in and refuse to concede anything to the anti-union bigots and their scandal-mongering press. In the circumstances this isn't enough and it isn't responsible.

The aura of scandal and suspicion surrounding the TGWU election hasn't been concocted out of nothing by those who are now using it against the labour movement. There have, according to the TGWU's own investigations, been irregularities. The system of election was plainly open to abuse. Worse than that, it is no secret that the practice known cynically as "block voting" is pretty routine in the TGWU. The latest unanswered questions about the election for General Secretary underline this. Channel 4's "Union World" polled TGWU members in Wales who voted in the election and found that three out of four said they had voted for Wright and one out of four for Todd; but in the election nine out of ten votes counted went to George Wright, the right wing candidate.

The serious left has agitated and campaigned for decades against bureaucracy in the trade unions and for democracy and accountability. Today the Tories are opportunistically using the cry for trade union democracy to hit at trade unionism itself in an attempt to destabilise and break up the labour movement. They will not be stopped if we try to pretend nothing is wrong. We must disarm the would-be union-busters by putting our house in order.

This is made doubly important and imperative by the plebiscite on the political fund which looms ahead, threatening, if we lose, to drastically diminish and reshape the labour movement.

It can only harm the TGWU and perhaps do grievous damage to the broader labour movement if suspicions, allegations and unanswered questions like these are left polluting the political atmosphere. The only way to clear the air and give credibility to the next General Secretary of the TGWU is for the TGWU to ballot its members again.

We must disarm the union busters.



School strike against racism in Bradford

By J. Pero

RECENTLY the fascist British National Party attempted to hold an election meeting in Eccleshill, Bradford.

According to the anti-fascist journal 'Searchlight', the National Front has recruited pupils at Eccleshill Upper School and has organised a walk-out of 50 pupils "in protest over halal meat" (the meat from animals killed according to Muslim law).

Obvious

So the BNP meeting was an obvious attempt to cash in on and redirect the support given to the rival NF.

There are other kinds of fascist activity in Bradford and Leeds, too. Asian shops are regularly attacked — with fire-bombs and with stones to smash their windows. Agitation on things like halal meat give the fascists cover for their more murderous activities.

Halal meat

The demand by Bradford's Muslims for halal meat was conceded by the 'hung' Tory council because the Tories wanted to gain a full majority by courting the substantial vote in the city.

Before the crucial council meeting, 80 or 90% of Asian pupils went on strike, and 3000 people demonstrated in support of the demand for halal meat. The council agreed by 59 votes to 15.

The Asian students' strike was the end-product of months of radicalisation. There had been fights with racist youth at Eccleshill Upper School and school strikes which demanded that one teacher be sacked and school pupils in the classroom.

The most recent example of action by Asian pupils has been over the Honeyford affair. Honeyford is the headmaster of Drummond Middle School who contributed an article to the extreme right-wing 'Salisbury Review' claiming that white children were disadvantaged because in his school 86% of the pupils were Asian.

The BNP attempted to have him as a speaker at one of their meetings in Bradford. In March this year the parents and pupils of his school boycotted it for a week by setting up an alternative school, and he has since been suspended.

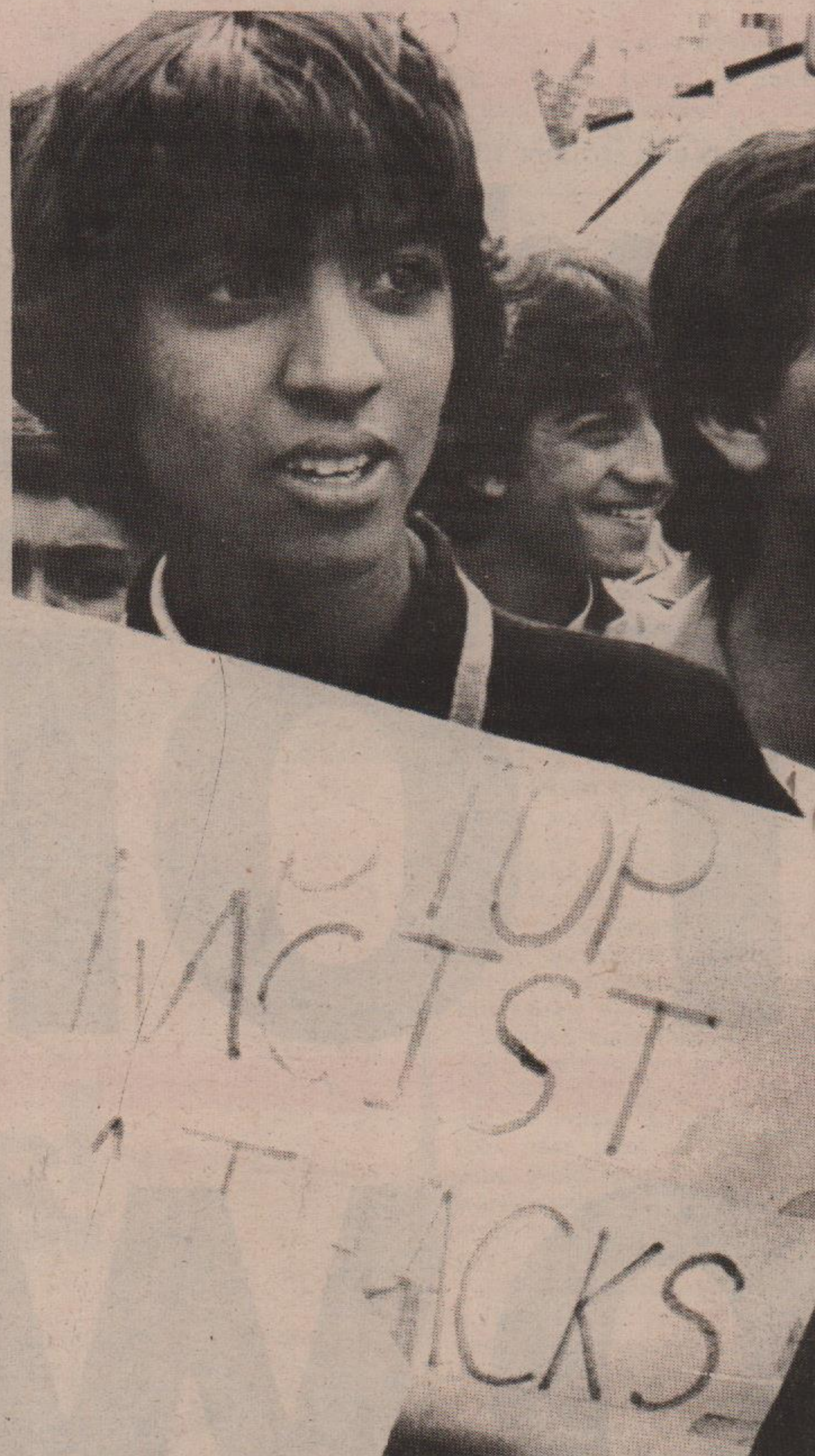
The scale of racist attacks in nearby Leeds has resulted in the setting up of the Black People's Action Group by Asians and West Indians.

Police

The scale of racist attacks in nearby Leeds has resulted in the setting up of the Black People's Action Group by Asians and West Indians. For them the police cannot be relied upon to defend them from racist attacks. As in the case of Makhhan Singh, they prefer to arrest those who complain rather than those who attack them.

The Labour Party and trade unions in West Yorkshire should take up the responsibility of assisting the Asian and anti-fascist youth, the Drummond Parents' Action Group, the Leeds Black People's Action Group, etc., in a united front against racism and fascism.

We must mobilise to counter each and every manifestation of fascist activity.



Defend the Newham 7

RACIST attacks on black people are a daily occurrence. But blacks have learnt from many years of bitter experience that the police are not much help or protection.

The police are a racist force and the best defence is self-defence.

In April last year, after a series of racist attacks in Newham, seven Asian youths were arrested and charged with conspiracy and affray. Their only crime has to fight back against racist thugs after being attacked outside the Duke of Edinburgh pub.

At the committal hearing in Stratford last year the conspiracy charges against six of the seven defendants were dropped but they all still face charges of criminal damage and affray.

After a year of campaigning a national demonstration has been called on April 27 to coincide with the beginning of the Newham 7 trial at the Old Bailey.

Previous conspiracy charges against black self-defence have failed in the Bradford 12 and Newham 8 cases. Let's make sure that this attempt to criminalise black self-defence fails too.

*Demonstration assembles at 1.00 p.m. on Saturday April 27 at Plashet Grove, East Ham, London E6.

Black People's Action Group

Interview with **Mustaq Kashmiri** spokesperson of the Black People's Action Group.

• How did the Black People's Action Group come into being?

We believe that Mankhan Singh is a victim of police harassment and a victim of racial attacks over a long period of time — typical of hundreds throughout the country.

Fascist organisations like

Column 88 acknowledge responsibility for such attacks. But the police fail to track these attackers. They do nothing even though they know who Column 88 are.

We can't allow this to go on. So the black people of Leeds have got together to defend ourselves, especially after the

Column 88 attack on a shop in Harehills.

• What sort of work does the BPAG do?

Dozens of Asian families in Leeds are in a similar situation as Mankhan is in today. They are afraid to report anything to the police because they themselves might get arrested.

When they do report an attack, all the police do is take a note of their name and date of birth.

In the case of Mankhan we have proof. Yet the police make no charges against his attackers. They arrest Mankhan on a charge with no proof or witnesses. We want to help people like Mankhan.

• How do you see your Action Group developing?

We have support from West Indian people, the Drummond Parents' Action Group (Bradford), West Bowling Asian Action Group (Bradford), Armley Sikh Temple (Leeds), Chapeltown Sikh Temple (Leeds), Islamic Centre (Leeds), local councillors, Derek Fatchett MP, and the Independent Black Collective (Bradford).

It's an ongoing campaign because we are not going to give up and allow racists, the police or the system to victimise Mankhan Singh or any other black person.

Send messages of support to: Black People's Action Group, c/o 132 Roundhay Rd, Leeds 8.

Parents' group

Interview with **Faqir Rahman** of Drummond Parents Action Group.

There could be no more proof of police racism than what happened last Saturday.

We went there with the agreement of the council that those first in line would be allowed in first, so we started queueing at 11am.

But as soon as the fascists came at 2pm, they formed another queue with the agreement of the police. Fascists from Norwich and other parts of England arrived in coaches to hold a meeting in Bradford to stir up racism.

Who was breaking the peace? The council and the police by allowing the meeting. The problem started in the meeting with the fascists throwing chairs.

The police arrested 12 anti-fascists and only one fascist. My son Altaf Rahman was arrested for doing nothing. It's

clear to me that the police allow the spread of racism in the UK, and we are setting up a defence committee to help those arrested.

Why do the press support racists? Honeyford wants, like they have in S.Africa, separate schools for whites. He goes round telling people that white pupils are disadvantaged in his school where the pupils are mainly Asian.

He's using racism between whites and blacks. We do not want separate schools. We should have education together.

How can we expect good education from a Head with racist views? Now he has been suspended, but we won't stop our campaigning until he is dismissed.

Send messages of support to Drummond Parents' Action Group, c/o 54 Wetley Hill, Bradford 8.

Women

Scots NUR
Continue
the
fight

THE SCOTTISH rail network was brought to a standstill last Wednesday (April 17) by a 24-hour NUR strike in opposition to the rundown of the Springburn British Rail Engineering Ltd workshop in Glasgow (the 'Caley').

BR is now collecting evidence to sue the union for loss of revenue.

1250 jobs are to be axed at Springburn by the close of the decade. It would then be only a matter of time before complete closure and the loss of the remaining 500 jobs.

Support for the strike was virtually 100%. "Don't dilly-dally — stop out for the Caley", read the placard outside the Polmadie depot on the other side of the Clyde from Springburn. NUR branch spokesperson Jimmy Barrett told SO: "Support for the strike here is solid. There's no-one going in, and there's nothing moving at all".

Ten

Only ten trains ran in the whole of Scotland during the day. Six were run by English crews between Carlisle and Dumfries, but the signalmen soon put a stop to that. The other four ran in the West Highlands.

ASLEF members abided by union instructions not to cross picket lines. Members of the clerical union TSSA did cross picket lines: unfortunately, there's nothing new about that.

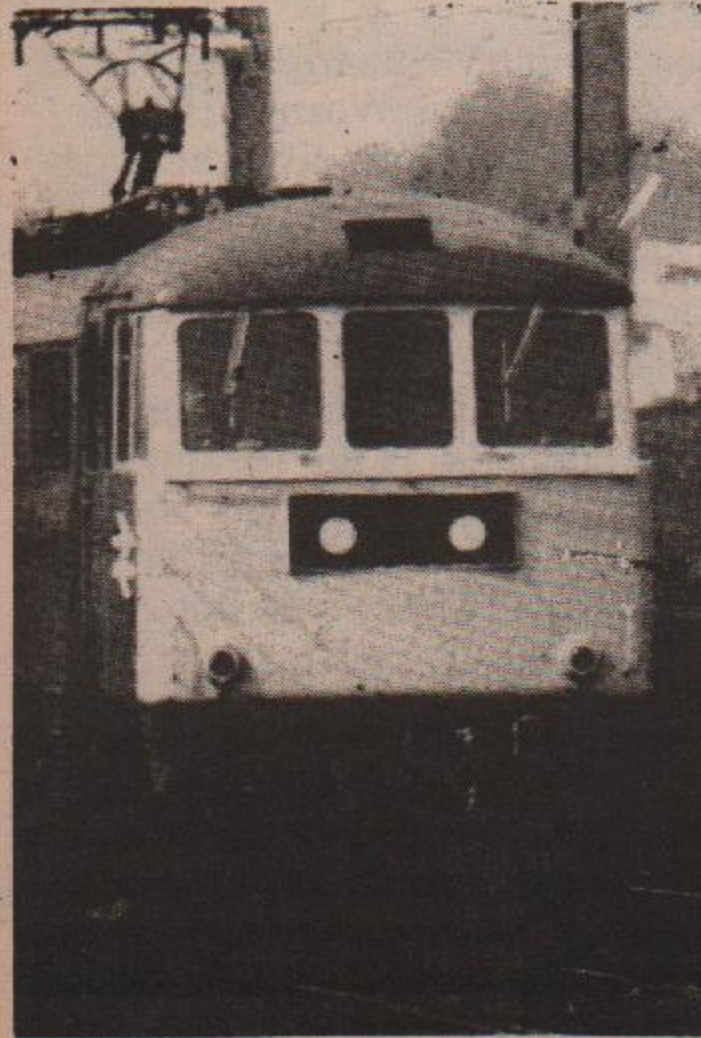
The NUR had drawn up rotas for 24-hour picketing of all depots, workshops and main railway stations. But no pickets were stationed at the Ravenscraig steelworks in Motherwell. Lorry convoys have continued to bring in coal there since the end of the miners' strike, and their size was increased on the NUR day of action.

As NUR West of Scotland organiser Charlie Wynd pointed out at a press conference: "BSC says it has large coal supplies stockpiled at Ravenscraig. So why do they need to bring in more hauliers because of a 24 hour strike? This is obviously provocative".

Pickets talked about further one-day strike to continue the campaign. At the NUR press conference Charlie Wynd was non-committal.

At the Springburn workshops, consistent and vigorous campaigning will be required to prevent the kind of large-scale voluntary redundancies which have undermined previous attempts to fight job losses there.

The NUR will also need to win active support from outside its own ranks, both to save jobs and to defeat BR's use of the Tory anti-strike laws.



The issues behind the Powell Bill
Defending whose rights?

By Gerry Byrne

AT first thought it feels rather strange that after years of fighting for free-abortion and contraception, the issues should suddenly be turned on their head and we have to assert the rights of women to have children. In fact, working class women have always had to defend that right, against forced sterilisation and "enlightened" population-controllers. Black women, in the not very distant past, have had their children stolen or sold, literally, into slavery. Working class and slave women were forced to desert their own children and become wet-nurse, carer and surrogate mother to the children of the white ruling class.

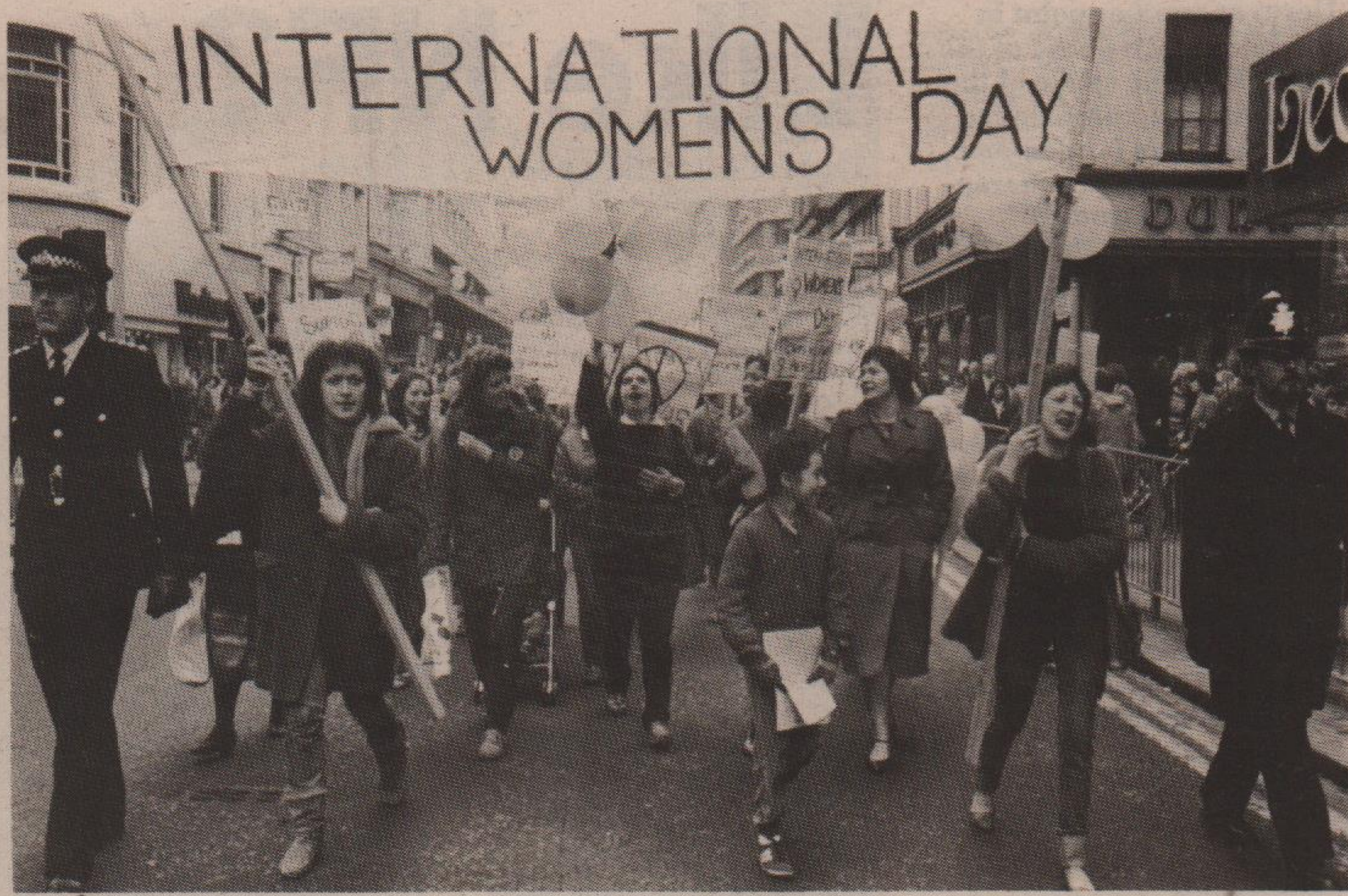
It has become an issue again now because of advances in the techniques of (artificial) reproduction, the Warnock Report and the panic reaction to it. Two Bills, one government-sponsored to outlaw "commercial surrogacy", the other, the Powell Bill, banning experimentation on human embryos, are wending their way through the legislative process. Powell's may well fall this time for lack of Parliamentary time, but will not go away altogether.

Reaction

The whole area is an emotive one, and rightly so. Both Bills gained a big impetus from "instinctive" public reaction. But precisely because they raise fundamental questions, there is all the more need for initial emotional reaction to be superseded by rational examination of the issues. Two TV programmes shown last Monday (thankfully, not simultaneously) set out to do this: World in Action, on commercial surrogacy, and Panorama on the Powell Bill.

Of the two, World in Action was by far the more riveting television, but probably less edifying. (It may just be that the issue is less clear-cut and therefore I could not reasonably be expected to be convinced of one side or the other). Its centre-piece was the case of a baby born brain-damaged, whose prospective buyer-parent rejected the child and demanded his money back. We saw heart-wrenching shots of a tiny baby (not the actual child who is now two) in intensive care, bandaged, surrounded by tubes, with a gaping hole in its chest, presumably from surgery. Then we saw the two lots of parents and their lawyers slugging it out on nationwide TV. It was horribly compelling viewing, like Family Fortunes crossed with Dallas and the News. You could certainly tell the goodies, the stolid natural parents who cared for the damaged child (it turned out anyway that the child was genetically the husband's and not the buyer-father's) from the baddie who even had an evil little moustache. What made the whole experience rather nauseous was the realisation that these were real people not characters from a soap opera.

There might have been more justification if that sequence had illuminated the issues. It dramatised, and how!, the issue of who is responsible if things go wrong, but that isn't the central question in surrogacy. Every birth carries the risk that the child may be born damaged in some way and while this creates painful dilemmas for those involved, nobody would argue that we therefore ban mother-



The central issue which was touched on but not satisfactorily it seems to me is whether commercial surrogacy is so repugnant that it should be criminalised. It seems to be generally accepted that a woman who, out of altruism, is prepared to carry a child for an infertile woman should be allowed (even encouraged) to do so. It is when she gets paid for her pains that the problem arises. Now there is something peculiarly hypocritical about capitalist politicians condemning the commercial aspect of the transaction. Commercial surrogacy is arguably the XXXXX of capitalist relations. The woman sells her labour power! She is a free agent, the only constraints on her are economic. As socialists these economic constraints concern us. In reality, it will be working class and oppressed "Third World" women who will be selling and white middle class women who will be buying. But that is capitalism. And the only way of removing this inequality is by getting rid of capitalism. There are cultures, e.g. the Masai, where women willingly bear children for other childless women. In this society, if women are willing to do that why shouldn't they be adequately compensated for the labour involved? Isn't it more exploitative that they be expected to do it for nothing? The problem for socialists seems to lie at the other end of the trans-

action: that only economically privileged childless women will have the option open to them. Should we then be demanding that this service be provided by the welfare state? Leaving aside the question of the current state of health and social services, priorities, etc., would that be a bad thing in principle? I don't know the answer and I'm afraid World in Action didn't persuade me. I am convinced, though, that the government's Bill won't help and is a further infringement of civil liberties.

Balance

Panorama on the Powell Bill was much more enlightening. It didn't seem to conform to the BBC's usual notion of balance — presenting the supporters of the Bill as religious fundamentalists, seasoned and cynical campaigners like "Life", emotional but misinformed public opinion and the dangerous Mr Powell himself. The opponents came over as better informed, with the weight of the medical establishment behind them, personally sincere, often desperate, like the childless women, or parents of handicapped or genetically damaged children. I think it is entirely laudable that the spurious "balance" was abandoned. If one side is ignorant and the other well-reasoned, then they should be seen to be so.

Over a million people signed a petition in favour of legislation to outlaw human embryo experimentation and in opinion polls the majority of those questioned were in favour of such a ban. I'm all for majority rule but it should be on the basis of informed rational argument, and things are not quite what they seem. In the same poll, when the question was put that if embryo experimentation was to help eliminate genetic defects, the majority was then in favour of such experiments.

The architect himself and some of Powell's supporters know exactly what is entailed in the Bill and are using, either cynically or through religious conviction or both, public emotion to stampede it through. There are those who believe that a human being exists from the moment of conception and are therefore opposed to embryo research, abortion and post-coital contraception.

The title of the Bill, for the Protection of the Unborn Child is designed to appeal to this constituency, although as Powell himself pointed out there is no mention anywhere else in the Bill of the "unborn child". These are the people who take their political instruction from the pulpit. But they are a small (and thanks to the campaigns for women's choice, increasingly beleaguered) minority. In order to gain mass support they have to rely on generating a wider public hysteria.

It is probably entirely coincidental that this debate coincided with revelations about the Nazi doctor Mengele, but having been handed such a gift, the SPUC/LIFE have played it for all it's worth. It is worth examining the implied argument here because it haunts much of public debate. SPUC/LIFE argue quite explicitly that there is a slippery slope leading from the denial of the humanity of the embryo/foetus to the ultimate pinnacle of inhumanity — the Nazi holocaust.

If you vote for abortion today, you'll be fuelling the gas chambers tomorrow. This is both historically and logically back to front. What made Mengele's atrocities possible was that the Nazis had established politically and militarily that it was OK to treat Jews and other minorities as non-human. Law had nothing to do with it: they had the political-military power to do what they liked. It is right that we are still haunted by the memory of

Nazi genocide, but the way to ensure it is never repeated is to fight every manifestation of racism/anti-semitism/homophobia including those sanctioned by law and state. We should not forget how Powell first made a name for himself!

The Powell Bill also plays on the anxieties of women that technologies of reproduction are getting out of control. Many women are unhappy that childbirth seems to have become mechanised and worry that the process will be pushed a stage further by the mechanisation of conception. But we shouldn't confuse the appearance (technology) with the real problem — oppressive social relations. What oppresses us is not the machine but the man. Pregnancy and childbirth have become alienating because the power to make decisions, and be informed is increasingly in the hands of an alien class (and race and sex). To oppose artificial methods of conception implicitly glorifies "natural" conception, as if it does not take place within oppressive social relationships!

Behind it lurks the heterosexist assumption that non-reproductive sexuality is "unnatural". The separation of sexuality and reproduction has been a major liberating gain for women and we should welcome its extension.

The final part of the Panorama programme was a debate between Enoch Powell and Kenneth Clarke, the Health Minister, who opposes the Bill. It wasn't the most exciting confrontation in the history of television. Although opposed on this issue, Powell and Clarke share a common ideology. The Tory Cabinet is split on the Bill, so Clarke was wary of throwing his ministerial weight around. If he hadn't bottled out, he would anyway have shown himself a lightweight against his intellectual superior. It was terribly low-key stuff. What made it compulsive (and repulsive) was Powell himself, like watching a very self-assured cobra. He can still send a chill down your spine.

Tribal

Powell combines ice-cold logic, a pendant's precision with a nose for the bloody subterranean side of the public 'conscience'. From racist rivers of blood, to Ulster Unionist tribal politics to protection of the "unborn", he knows how to calculate the exact pressure on collective nerve-endings. Apart from the hypocrisy over the "unborn child" mentioned previously, Powell revealed that his Bill would not outlaw the screening of embryos for genetic defects. In religious fundamentalist terms, he is in favour of killing defective unborn children. How many of his supporters know this? He treads a fine line between the need to mobilise these people with the pragmatic desire to frame his Bill in such a way that it is acceptable to the majority.

The programme alarmed me. Even if it falls for lack of time, Powell and his Bill are not dead. Undead, perhaps?

*Note: I have used the term "surrogate mother" throughout because that's the common usage and I can't think of a substitute. However, I think it's offensive since the woman who bears the child is its actual natural mother, and it implies property rights are the overriding thing.

CLPD

The brief flirtation of the Labour Coordinating Committee with the Campaign for Labour Party Democracy (CLPD) is definitely in a hazardous condition.

The recent AGM of the CLPD, concluded in Edinburgh after earlier stages in London and Sheffield, revealed a growing split with leading CLPD activists denying the rightward shift of the LCC under the increasing dominance of the Clause 4 Group. Rejection of LCC-inspired motions for "one member, one vote" and for their latest nonsensical ploy, the Constituency General Meeting, confirmed this trend.

Unfortunately, the limited horizons of the CLPD leadership were also revealed. They rejected Walter Wolfgang's motion to campaign for "vesting the right to elect the mem-

bers of the shadow cabinet in the electoral college", on the grounds that the CLPD should only adopt campaigns for "clearly winnable demands".

This phrase was curiously at odds with the view expressed by Vladimir Derer at another point in the Edinburgh phase of the AGM when he spoke of the CLPD having campaigned over the years for demands which other people characterised as "extremist".

Nevertheless, the CLPD continues to play an important role in the process of democratising the Labour Party. Not surprisingly, the ranks of the CLPD have been thinned in recent years with the desertion of careerist-minded, rightward moving LCC supporters. That is no excuse, however, for the desertion by many serious socialists, readers of Socialist Organiser, for example.

Broad?

Let it not be said that Neil Kinnock and his soft-left allies like Michael Meacher fail to support the fight for jobs.

Oh no. They just have preferences about the company they keep.

They did not like to associate themselves with the 'violent' struggle of the miners. But a joint initiative with SDPers, Tory 'wets', bishops, and academics to suggest that just a little more public investment would be in order? Nothing could be nicer.

The 'Charter for Jobs' and the

'Employment Institute' launched this Monday, 22nd, unites all these elements — plus seven trade union leaders and ten employers — with SDP economist Richard Layard in the chair.

No questions were asked at its launch conference about the SDP's and the Tory wets' ferociously hostile attitude to the miners' fight for jobs. Nor about how this 'Popular Front' enterprise fits in with Labour Party policy against a 'broad' Labour/Alliance/Tory-wet 'anti-Thatcher coalition'.

Brent against Ken?

BRENT East has unfortunately been dragged into the fight over the GLC rate because of the candidacy of Ken Livingstone.

The fact is that Livingstone not only failed to fight for party policy in the GLC Labour Group but actually organised for its defeat by:

1. attacking John McDonnell, the deputy leader of the GLC, for not providing full figures about the implications of rate-capping to the group (in line with leadership policy) and
2. by bringing the Reg Race budget out into the Labour group for the first time on Monday March 4, the day after London Labour Party conference unanimously voted for not setting a rate.

This statement has been circulated in Brent before the parliamentary selection conference on April 28

The combination of these two factors turned what could have been a six-vote majority for party policy into a six-vote majority against.

Although Ken kept his hands clean of the 'sin' of voting against party policy in group, he ensured that party policy was defeated by organising behind the scenes to panic the more ambitious elements in the group with the fear of disqualification and the washed-out deadbeats with the threat of surcharge.

His subsequent actions in full council of voting for the rate-capped budget rather than standing on party policy and the subsequent attacks on the 10



Like NF?

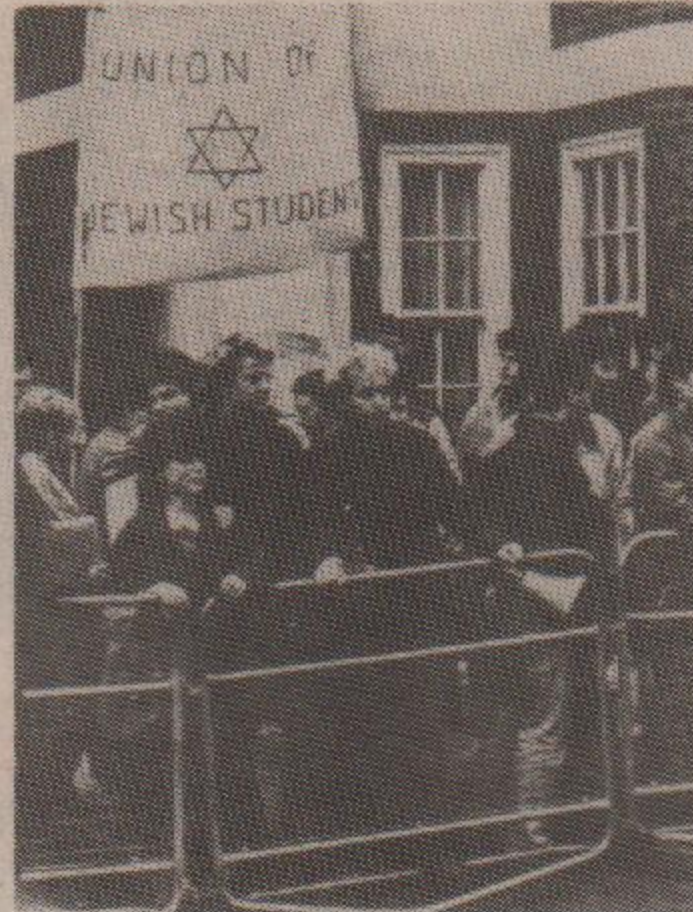
The May issue of Labour Briefing carries a rather silly attack on Socialist Organiser by Tony Greenstein, as part of Greenstein's account of the NUS conference decision to suspend Sunderland Poly for banning its Jewish Society.

Greenstein says that "the Union of Jewish Students also gave no support to North London Poly" when students objected to the presence of National Front leader Patrick Harrington there. Untrue (see picture). Certainly the UJS, like the NUS leadership, wrongly backed off to avoid contempt of court proceedings.

Greenstein says the UJS is Israeli-funded. No, it isn't: it gets its money from the Jewish community in Britain.

And there are numerous other 'blemishes' of the same sort in Greenstein's piece, all of them proving yet again that hysteria is something to avoid in serious politics.

The same approach was on full display in a leaflet which Tony Greenstein wrote for dis-



tribution at the NUS conference. Sample: "The reason why Sunderland banned a Zionist Jewish Society is that it will concentrate on supporting the genocidal activities of the Israeli state, not on Jewish cultural matters. Like the UJS and the NF, it will seek to associate Jewish people in this country with the actions of the Israeli state".



Letters

Popular fronts

THE article "Should we 'celebrate' Popular Fronts?" in Socialist Organiser, April 3, gives the impression, without saying so precisely, that Andres Nin was pursuing a correct policy over popular fronts. And it talks about what "the left" were in favour of without making a clear distinction between what left reformists and centrists on the one hand and Trotskyists on the other advocated.

Trotsky's writings on Spain in "The Spanish Revolution 1931-9" (Pathfinder, 1973) deserve close study on these questions.

For instance Trotsky observes (p.351): "In the heat of revolutionary war between the classes Nin entered a bourgeois government [in 1936] whose goal it was to destroy the workers' committees, the foundation of proletarian government. When this goal was reached, Nin was driven out of the

bourgeois government. Instead of recognising after this the colossal error committed, Nin's party [the POUM] demanded the re-establishment of the coalition with the bourgeoisie."

And (p.346): "If the POUM had not marched at the heels of the Anarchists and had not fraternised with the 'Popular Front', if it had conducted an intransigent revolutionary policy, then, at the moment of the May 1937 insurrection and most likely much sooner, it would naturally have found itself at the head of the masses and would have assured the victory. The POUM was not a revolutionary party but a centrist party ..."

Neither centrism or left reformism can assure victory: on the contrary they hinder its attainment. It is essential to build a revolutionary, a Trotskyist party.

DAVID HARRIS

SO & Ireland

AS a member of the Labour Committee on Ireland and a regular reader of Socialist Organiser, I was very disappointed in the two articles on Ireland in SO 223.

Your attack on the "local government left" who have taken up the Irish question is cynical. There is no basis to your allegations of electoral populism. Opponents of the LCI see a principled stand on Ireland as an electoral liability. Those in the labour movement who have taken that stand are subjected to campaigns of vilification not only from the Tory press and right, but also from pseudo-left wingers in the Labour Party.

It appears that you only dabble in Irish politics to snipe at other groups and individuals active on the issue.

Your analysis of Sinn Fein rivals that of Militant in its distortions and misrepresentation. You accuse Sinn Fein of being "militarist" — when Republicans are engaged in armed struggle against British militarism and imperialism.

You say that Sinn Fein is "sectional" because they have failed to recruit Protestant workers. Perhaps you regard the ANC or UDF as racist because they have failed to win over working class whites in South Africa.

You denigrate the working class credentials of the only mass socialist party in Ireland (the Irish Labour Party cannot be described as socialist). You claim to be in favour of a 'dialogue' with Sinn Fein,

yet you echo the dis-information campaign of the tabloid press.

It seems that every political sect must have its fetishes. SO has adopted federalism. Militant makes abstract calls for workers' unity and backs it up with economist slogans. SO makes the same abstract calls but backs it up with a demand for a federal constitution.

You have the audacity to call this "class politics". You contend that the British Left should "propose a convincing comprehensive alternative to the status quo" in Northern Ireland. That is the tasks of Irish socialists, not patronising chauvinists in the British labour movement.

Your federal alternative appears as a plausible, liberal solution to the division of Ireland. Yet that division is maintained by an artificial, loyalist state — kept in existence by British troops and sectarian paramilitary forces (e.g. the RUC, UDR, UDA and UVF). Your solution is to fossilise that sectarian state in a federal Ireland; to perpetuate the division of the working class under a bogus unity. Your plausible slogans hide a lack of serious analysis.

The task of British socialists is to build the movement for British withdrawal from Ireland; not to pontificate about a future Irish constitution. SO has an important part to play in building that movement. The LCI needs your active support.

Yours fraternally,
PAUL WOZNY
Southampton

Reply

Paul Wozny does not really believe that socialists in Britain should have nothing to say about Ireland other than Britain should withdraw. He wants a united Ireland rather than an independent Ulster, though both are equally Irish alternatives. He is against federalism: that is just as much "pontificating about a future Irish constitution" as our arguments for federalism.

We do not agree that socialists in one country should not criticise socialists in another. Actually, neither does Paul Wozny. He supports Sinn Fein and denounces anti-Provo socialists like the Irish Militant. If our criticisms are 'chauvinist', then so are his.

So let's place the debate on the proper grounds, rather than pretending that issues within Irish politics can be resolved in terms of general support for Ireland against Britain.

Paul Wozny argues that socialism can be won in Ireland despite or against the Protestant workers (that, presumably, is the meaning of his comparison with whites in South Africa); he believes that a strategy centred on armed actions by (Necessarily) small, secret detachments is not only legitimate nationalist resistance to imperialism but also a path to socialism.

Those are the real issues. Paul Wozny, unfortunately, doesn't even begin to discuss them. Why don't you reply to the arguments used in the articles you denounce?

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GLC members who stuck to party policy show where he really stands. Why?

Until Thursday February 28th it seemed clear that the GLC Labour Group would vote as an overwhelming majority for not setting a rate, after that a group of six to eight councillors would vote against in full council, and that the group would end up setting a legal rate after defeating the Tory rate.

As it happened, the Labour group received legal advice that the Tories might, after voting for their own rate, be free to abstain, and thereby allow the Labour group to open itself to the threats of "disqualification" etc. At this point the Labour leadership panicked and set out to undermine the united stand of the Labour authorities by breaking sections of the centre-left from party policy through bringing the Reg Race budget forward as a get-out.

Whatever rumours about deals there have been, it is clear that not only Patrick Jenkin but also Neil Kinnock have praised the GLC's 'realism'. In this light Reg Freeson's climbdown cannot be necessarily seen as an isolated act of pique but possibly a part of something larger.

Witness for example Livingstone's appearance on The London Programme on March 15 to openly undermine the 'no rate' option. By any standards this is above and beyond the act of skin-saving and falls into the category of incitement to break party policy and yield to the Tories.

When Reg Freeson described Ken as a left-wing opportunist many of us agreed. We felt however that Brent East would be able to keep him under some kind of control. This has proved

to be an illusion.

If we are serious about accountability it is necessary that we reject Livingstone as a candidate in Brent East. At this late stage it is impossible to find a candidate to defeat him in a straight contest. We therefore believe that it is necessary for the party to vote not to go ahead with the selection in order to allow the kind of full discussion of the implications of the rate-capping issue which is rendered impossible during a reselection process by party rules.

When someone sells out a struggle the usual procedure is to at least censure them and if possible remove them from office. It is a strange kind of 'control' which involves promotion to the higher office of MP!

We therefore ask delegates to vote not to proceed to select at the selection meeting.

This will not let Freeson back in, as he has absolutely no support in the constituency now anyway. It will give us time to fully examine the issues and not be railroaded into endorsing an able and dangerous opportunist who could throw back the socialist direction of our party for many years. It might only be a few months to wait, let's make sure we make the right choice.

Stop the reselection; vote not to ballot; vote not to nominate; for a full discussion on the GLC budget.

Mick Woods, Paul Wilkinson, S. Barton, Dave Statham, Deborah Knight, Jacqui Brown, Pete Firmin, Mark Wall, Rosemary Deane, Graham Durham, John Tymon, Paddy Harkins, Jill Fried, Howard Platt, Kyron Connolly (delegates to the selection conference, in personal capacity).

Problem at top Scabs and the courts

Ken Ambler, a sacked Yorkshire miner, spoke to Socialist Organiser about reinstatement and rank and file organisation after the strike.

SACKED miners in Yorkshire have so far received little support from the area NUM leadership.

Ken Ambler, from Wistow Colliery in the Selby coalfield, was sacked on March 29. His court case — on trumped-up charges of theft — has not been heard yet, but the NCB decided that they had not time for due process.

Even if the court finds Ken innocent, he will still remain sacked.

Ken Ambler spoke to Socialist Organiser on April 20 after speaking at a York Labour Party Young Socialists day school.

The area NUM, he said, has not tried to organise the sacked miners (unlike in Kent, where the 42 sacked men have been turned into a squad of full-time campaigners) — but he has made some contacts at rank and file level.

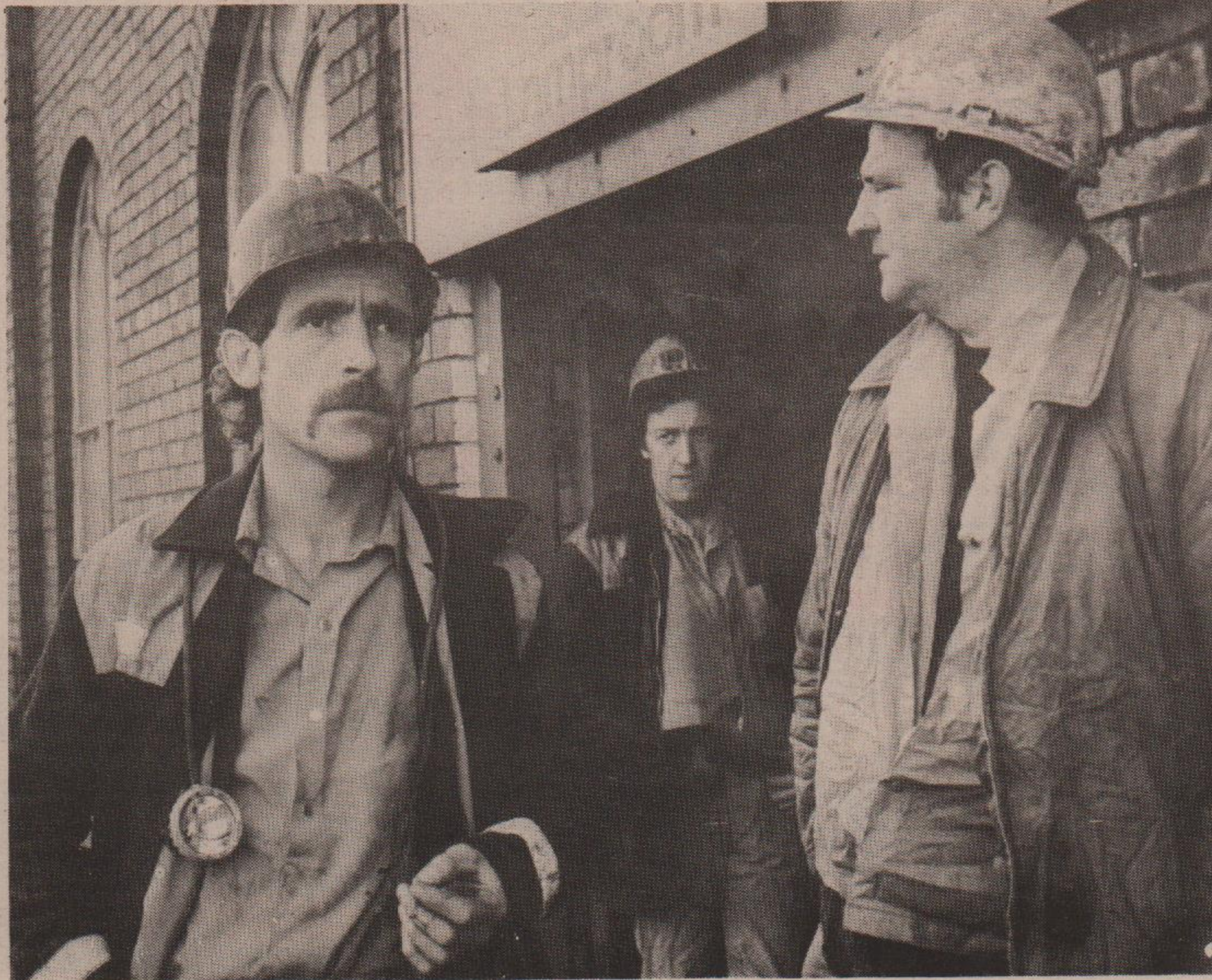
A group met in Sheffield recently. "We're forming a rank and file group to work within the union. There's a lot of lads been disenchanted with the right wing leaders in the union."

"Basically the group's aim is to get the lads' jobs back. The group involved sacked miners and working miners — and women's groups."

"There were a lot of women who came out like Joan-of-Arcs during the dispute. There's no way they should go back into the kitchen now that the strike is over."

"I'm going to get in touch with as many Labour MPs and Labour councillors as I can — see if they can apply any pressure in the right places."

"We also need to get in



touch with black groups, gay groups — the people who are being trod on."

Ken Ambler agreed that the Yorkshire area NUM should be pressed to follow Kent and get the sacked miners together.

Freedom

"What we could do with is getting to know the different groups that have been organised, and linking them all together. We could get together and go down and lobby Parliament — lobby the MPs."

We also discussed experiences during the strike.

"Some of the things I saw at Orgreave [coke depot, where there was mass picket-

ing in May and June 1984] stunned me. They woke me up to the fact that it wasn't just pit closures I was fighting about, it was freedom."

"Before the dispute, if I'd seen a copper being attacked, I'd have helped him. Not now, because of what I've seen. Some of them have loved it, beating lads up."

Ken agreed that in future trade unionists have to organise better to meet force with force on the picket line. "We could have stopped that place on the first day if it had been organised right"

But the real problem during the strike was the top leadership of the labour movement.

"I'm saddened that the trade union movement — and I'm not talking about the rank and file, I'm talking about the top end — couldn't see what's going on in this country. The rank and file is solid — it's the top ones."

"As soon as they get to the top, even the ones that are supposed to be left-wingers, they go in with the Establishment."

And the same thing is still happening.

"All the people we know in the support groups in London were all geared up to have a go on rate-capping. But when Ken Livingstone gave in, that was like a kick in the teeth."

By Paul Whetton, former secretary of the Notts Miners' Rank and File Strike Committee

THE attitude of some of the hardline scabs is that they are determined to twist the knife, and we found ourselves being forced into the position of using the courts. It's a situation we don't like. Levying the striking miners 50p a week dues for the whole of the strike period after the first eight week is not enough for some scabs.

An injunction was taken out against the area executive to make them demand the £1.18, the full weekly subs.

The Executive didn't defend this, a shrewd move on their part. We did send someone to court to defend it and the full case will be heard this week.

The scabs are still rushing to the courts every five minutes and using legislation in order to hound the former strikers.

For our part, we don't like using the courts, but we are faced with no other choice. Quite a lot of the men who worked throughout the dispute are beginning to see exactly what sort of people these scab leaders are. Even they are saying that this is going too far. I think it will rebound on these scab leaders.

In June the elections take place and I've been told that former strikers will not be permitted to stand because we are 'unfinancial'. Even though we've paid our money we are still regarded as being 'unfinancial' with regard to standing for elections.

There seems to be no initiative from the national union at present. It seems to be a case of letting Notts struggle through on their own.

They are aware of the situation, but there is not much they can do about it. I don't think much will happen about Notts until after the NUM annual conference.

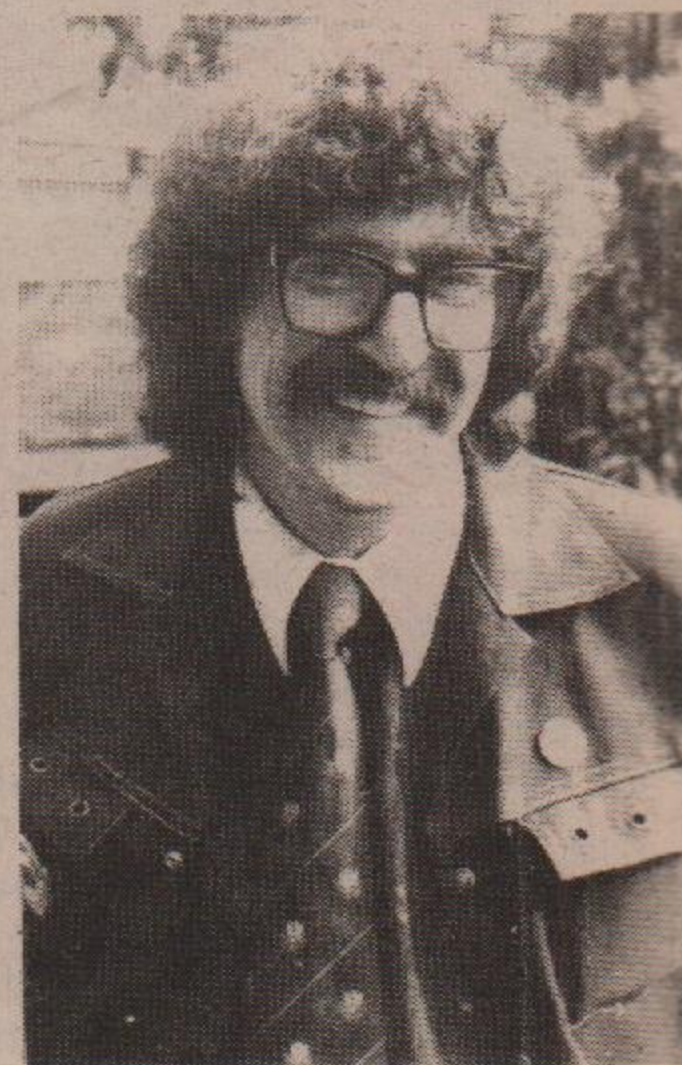
The branches in Notts have continued to meet and as at Bevercotes, former strikers have been expelled, meetings have been closed down and the whole situation is chaotic throughout the coalfield. Minutes of meetings haven't been taken, votes haven't been taken. Some branches let them stay in and vote, others didn't and it seems every branch has got a different interpretation of what they can and can't do.

One breakthrough has been the reinstatement of a sacked miner from Welbeck with no loss of service or

pension rights. This major breakthrough came as a result of an industrial tribunal, and we hope that now that case has been won a few others will get their jobs back.

As far as the pay offer is concerned, I think most people realise that we have very little choice but to accept it. We have got to face reality and get what we can.

The TGWU ballot is being used by the media and the



government to continue their attacks on the unions. It might not appear to have much to do with the NUM but it has got a lot to do with every trade unionist in this country.

The government continues to hound and harass the trade unions in order to justify bringing in further legislation.

I would imagine that the timing of this attack on the TGWU has a lot to do with the approaching ballots on the political levy throughout the trade union movement. I'm sure there will be more of the same still to come.

It's not for me to tell the TGWU how to run their business, but in general I think the rank and file need to be on their guard and keep a closer eye on the way elections are carried out in their unions.

We haven't yet begun our campaign around the political levy in Notts. We've got county council elections coming up soon and we will be arguing for miners to vote Labour, even though the Labour-controlled county council in Nottinghamshire was more obstructive than helpful during the miners' strike.

This is because we know that their record on maintaining services and opposing privatisation is much better than the Tories.

A full coverage

Albert Bowns, Kiveton Park NUM delegate (writing in a personal capacity), reviews the Socialist Organiser pamphlet 'Magnificent Miners'

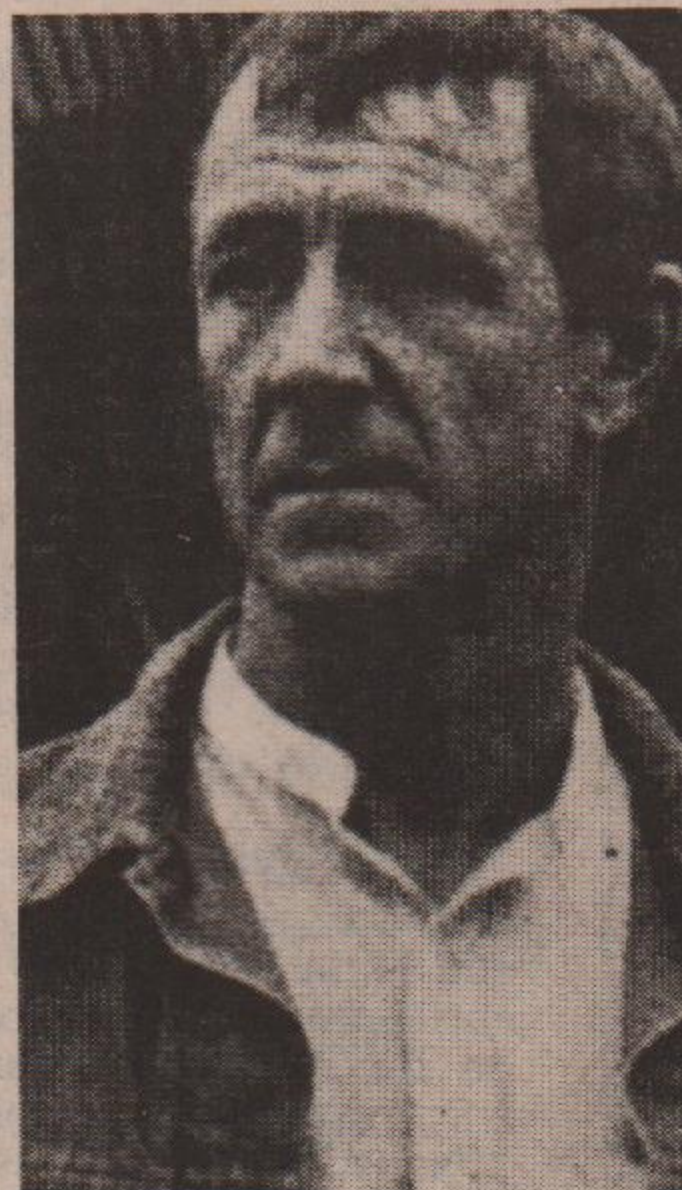
THE pamphlet gave a comprehensive coverage of the strike, and I particularly enjoyed reading the boxed comments from past issues of Socialist Organiser.

This brought the specifics back to mind which each chapter was covering.

There were also many photos which I had either missed in issues of SO or which had been newly included, and the excellence of the SO photographers of being in the right place at the right time was evident by their clarity.

An important section covering the facts and figures of the strike was included. Statistics showing the cost of the strike, such as coal imports, are important as an indication of the lengths the government will be willing to go to in future actions.

One criticism I do have is that I would have liked to have seen an account of the Ridley Report as an introduction to the strike. This report, and its full implementation by the govern-



ment, had a larger impact on the conduct of the strike by the government than it has been given credit for.

This pamphlet is well documented, easy to read and cheap to buy and would make an ideal education document for schools. Obviously that will not happen, because that is what the strike was about and until such a victory is won, this pamphlet will not be used fully in the way it deserves.

Socialist Organiser

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The real history of world war two

IN the coming weeks, official commemorations of World War 2 will reach a peak of self-congratulation.

And parts of the Left will join in the acclamation for Britain's and the US's "war for democracy against fascism". The Morning Star is organising a special festival to mark the anniversary of the victory over Germany.

On the face of it, this makes sense. Wasn't it the united democratic forces, behind Churchill and Roosevelt, which rid the world of the Hitlerite menace? Wasn't that war the sort of crusade of democracy against fascism which we need today?

In reality, the policy of the workers' movement sinking itself into a general campaign of "democracy against fascism" helped the rise of fascism and the unleashing of World War 2.

In Germany the strongest workers' party, the Social Democrats, kept calling on the police to deal with Hitler's thugs. They advised the workers not to fight the fascists on the streets, and to support Field Marshal Hindenburg for President instead of splitting the anti-fascist vote.

Hindenburg was elected – and in due course he called Hitler to power!

In Spain not only the Socialists but also the Communist Party called on the workers to support the Republican bourgeoisie in the name of the struggle against fascism. In the name of unity they suppressed factory occupations and land seizures, refused to support independence for Morocco and shot down Trotskyists, Anarchists and left-wing Socialists. The result was Franco's victory.

Stooge

France was the other great country of the People's Front against fascism. There, the Parliament elected in 1936 with a People's Front majority ended up, in June 1940, voting full powers to the Nazi stooge Petain!

In the last analysis, both fascism and parliamentary democracy are methods of the same exploiting class – the capitalists – in order to control the working class.

Britain has fought many, many wars. Almost all have been wars of subjugation against overseas peoples. One war seems different: the 1939-45 war in which Britain fought Nazi Germany.

But why were strikers jailed in wartime Britain? Why were miners who struck at Betteshanger, Kent, witch-hunted? Why was so much of Britain's war concerned with defending not Britain, but Britain's control of the Suez Canal?

For sure the Nazis had to be fought. But what was Britain's Tory government fighting for? Martin Thomas looks at the history.

Parliamentary democracy controls the working class by drawing the labour bureaucrats into an alliance with the state; fascism, which becomes a serious force in times of crisis when the capitalists can no longer afford to bribe the labour bureaucrats with small concessions, mobilises desperate 'little men' to crush the workers' organisations.

If middle class democrats at any time do actually fight against fascism, then of course socialists will fight alongside them. So revolutionary socialists fought against Franco in the Spanish Civil War – while at the same time fighting for the workers to take power out of the hands of the liberal-Stalinist Republican government.

But the Second World War wasn't about democracy and fascism.

After Germany was defeated in the First World War, the British, French and US left it ransacked, bled dry, and stripped of its colonies. As a result, capitalism developed in Germany with even more severe crises than elsewhere, which drove the German bourgeoisie first into fascism and then into war, to gain new territories and new markets.

It was joined by Japan, the latest-developing great capitalist power, which wanted to challenge the US-European monopoly of colonies and spheres of influence in the Far East.

The biggest imperialist powers, Britain and the USA, were not prepared to let Germany and Japan expand at their expense.

The Second World War was about the rival economic interests of the big interna-

tional exploiters, not democratic or fascist ideology. Britain went to war to defend the military dictatorship in Poland, not Czech democracy.

Among the Allies were Chiang Kai Shek's China and Vargas' Brazil, both extreme right wing regimes. The governments-in-exile supported by the Allies were also often very right wing: for example, the Greeks, the Yugoslavs, and the Poles.

South Africa, too, was on the supposedly 'democratic' side.

Italian fascism was courted by the British and Americans – "even when the issue of the war became certain", wrote Churchill, "Mussolini would have been welcomed by the Allies" – and the US made agreements with the Petain government and worked with the Petain administration in the French colonies in North Africa.

Desertion

Under the Darlan and Giraud regimes in North Africa, anti-Semitic laws were kept on the books, and (as local US army chiefs complained) "Fascist organisations continued their activities and victimise our former French sympathisers some of whom have not yet been released from prison... French soldiers [were] being punished for desertion because they tried to support the Allied forces during the landing."

All this time, Britain was maintaining regimes of more or less open racist military dictatorship over hundreds of millions of people in its own colonies.

The Allies denounced the

Nazis' slaughter of the Jews. Yet they themselves refused to admit Jewish refugees.

The war was not mainly a battle between democratic and fascist powers. The USA kept out of it until Japan attacked its bases in the Pacific in December 1941; both Britain and the USA refused to open a 'Second Front' until June 1944.

Up to 1943 Britain did no more than defend itself against bombing and defend its interests in North Africa and Asia – and watch with secret glee as the German army despoiled and decimated the Soviet Union.

The Nazi forces were sometimes welcomed when they first entered the USSR. Workers, peasants, oppressed nationalities, battered and famished by Stalin's dictatorship, reckoned that the Nazis could not be worse.

The Nazis' wholesale racist massacres of civilians – in the first place Jews, but also others – changed that. The USSR's resistance became bitter and stubborn.

20 million Russians – including seven million soldiers – died in the war. American and British casualties were much smaller: 405,000 American and 375,000 British soldiers killed.

From 1943 it became clear that Germany would lose the war – mainly as a result of the heroic resistance of the people of the USSR. Britain and America became interested in a more aggressive strategy – not so much to defeat fascism, or even to defeat Germany, as to gain themselves a good share of the spoils of victory and suppress the danger of revolu-

tions following on the war.

The first example of this policy was Italy. In July 1943 the Fascist Grand Council and officers led by Marshal Badoglio overthrew Mussolini. Badoglio bargained for terms with both Germany and the Allies. He reached agreement with the Allies, but meanwhile the German army had seized most of Italy.

In the Allied-Badoglio controlled areas, all publications, meetings and political activity were banned. Resistance partisans were disarmed and often imprisoned; the north, where the Resistance was strongest, was left in the hands of the German army.

In Germany, too, after the Anglo-American victory, a fascist government was initially kept in power under Doenitz. The Doenitz government was soon disposed of for the sake of appearances, but 700,000 German troops were kept in military formation by the British for possible use against Russian forces.



In many parts of Germany the British and Americans found that spontaneously-created workers' councils had taken over as Hitler's power collapsed. The councils were dissolved, trade union organisations were suppressed, and a total ban was imposed on political activity.

There was the same sort of clash between the Anglo-American armies and working class anti-fascists in Belgium. In November 1944, the Belgian Resistance, defying their Stalinist leaders, refused to obey orders from the occupying forces to hand in their arms. The Resistance leaders

re-established their control only after Belgian police, supported by British troops, had shot down demonstrators in the streets of Brussels.

In Italy, too, the working class resistance had been disarmed mainly through the efforts of the Communist Party – whose preaching of "anti-fascist unity" gained weight from the prestige of the USSR. After Italian CP leader Palmiro Togliatti returned to Italy from Moscow in April 1944, the CP gave full support to Badoglio and the monarchy.

In Greece, the CP was less directly under Moscow control – and the clash between the armed anti-fascist workers and peasants and the Allied armies reached the point of open war, despite all Stalin's efforts to sabotage the Resistance.

In October 1944, 23,000 British troops entered Greece. They came not to fight the German army, which was rapidly leaving Greece, but to suppress the ELAS Resistance



militians which had effective control of the country. The British ordered ELAS to disarm. Under CP influence, ELAS said it would disarm – if only right wing groups, like the 'Mountain Brigade' were also disarmed.

The British were unyielding. In December 1944 they killed 24 and wounded 150 when they shot on a demonstration in Athens protesting against the disarmament order. Open war then broke out.

ELAS asked for a truce – but after it was agreed, in January 1945, the British launched a terror campaign



against the Left. Resistance tax collectors were charged with looting; Resistance militants who had executed pro-fascists were charged with murder.

Martial law was proclaimed, trade unions were suppressed, 50,000 leftists were imprisoned, and meanwhile pro-fascists were assigned to leading positions.

The result was renewed war.

In France, when the people of Paris launched a general strike and uprising in August 1944 against the German occupation, the Allied armies' main concern was to prevent any revolutionary outcome. The French CP suppressed any revolutionary stirrings by all-out insistence on 'anti-fascist' unity and support for de Gaulle.

Then, in 1947, when under the pressure of a Trotskyist-led strike at Renault and the developing Cold War the CP turned left, de Gaulle, the hero of 'democracy', became . . . the leader of a fascist movement! His 'Ras-



Stalin, Roosevelt and Churchill meet together to divide up the world. Yalta 1945.

In the 1930s the world had been divided into rival trading blocs — empires or spheres of influence. The US sought to replace this set-up with a free-trade world under its domination. And in any case — as the British and French ruling classes discovered to their cost — the drive for freedom of the colonial peoples had become too powerful to be suppressed.

Despite Winston Churchill's vow that he would not preside over the dissolution of the British Empire, the old empires — for whose preservation the war had been fought

— did dissolve, over the next 20 or 30 years.

But direct and bloody repression of the workers and the colonial peoples always remained a weapon in their armoury — as the people of Vietnam learned in the course of 30 years' attempts to put them down by British, French and then American troops from 1945 to 1975.

The war policy of Britain and the US interacted with that of the conservative bureaucracy in the USSR. For the degenerated workers' state in the USSR, the war was not one of imperialist competition, but of self-defence against the efforts of the German capitalists to overthrow the nationalised and planned economy and turn the Soviet Union into a new field for their profit-grabbing. The British-US-USSR alliance was held together only by a common interest in preserving the world status quo.

Between September 1939 and July 1941 the USSR had allied with Hitler; and Britain and the US, in a different diplomatic reshuffling, would have been quite willing to ally with Hitler against Stalin. In seeking allies, all the powers looked not for democracy but for material advantage.

Dissolved

To reassure his allies, Stalin dissolved the Communist International in 1943 and assured them, repeatedly and sincerely, that he did not seek the overthrow of capitalism outside the USSR.

Stalin provided vital aid to Britain and the US in stifling all social revolutionary movements throughout Europe after 1943.

In return, the Kremlin bureaucracy were allowed to grab new territories, revenues and power in Eastern Europe.

The Stalinists' suppression of democracy and working class organisations in Eastern Europe did not worry Britain and the US. What did worry them was the curbs on capitalist enterprise there.

In Yugoslavia the CP escaped from Moscow control

even more than the Greeks had; and by the late 1940s the Russian occupying power found itself forced to destroy capitalism in the other East European states, on pain of seeing them transformed into outposts of US capital. Thus began the Cold War — which led in 1950 to the American invasion of Korea. A great victory for democracy!

Some British socialists still say that it was, for all that, a better outcome than the victory of Hitler would have been.

'British workers would have taken up arms — and rightly so — against a German army invading England. But they would not need to support Churchill and the Tories for that; on the contrary, they would have found most of the Tories and the officer caste collaborating with the Nazis'.

But the victory of Hitler over the Anglo-American armies would not necessarily mean his assured victory over the working class. Hitler was no more able to suppress the laws of class conflict than anyone else, and the more

he expanded his conquests, the greater the threat to him became from the real anti-fascist fighters: the working class resistance movements in the occupied territories.

Armed

British workers would have taken up arms — and rightly so — against a German army invading England. But they would not need to support Churchill and the Tories for that; on the contrary, they would have found most of the Tories and the officer caste collaborating with the Nazis.

The view that the British-US victory was a 'lesser evil' is also narrowly nationalist: it's not at all evident that Britain's defeat would be a worse outcome from the viewpoint of the people of Ireland, India, or the other British colonies.

Most fundamentally, though, it is a cravenly servile attitude.

Hitler's regime was more brutal than Roosevelt's. If you can see no options beyond Hitler's domination of the world or Roosevelt's domination of the world, then maybe it makes sense to opt for Roosevelt. But the revolutionary socialists active during the war — the Trotskyists — did see another option: the revolutionary overthrow of all the imperialist robbers.

They fought for the overthrow of Roosevelt by the American workers, of Churchill by the British workers, and of Hitler by the German workers.

They argued that the potentially progressive nationalised property relations in the USSR should be defended — but there too they fought for the overthrow of the established regime and for a workers' democracy.

Lesser evils

They pointed out that those who opt for the apparent 'lesser evils' within capitalism usually end up enduring not only those 'lesser evils' but also the 'greater evils' —

as the French workers suffered first the betrayals of the Popular Front, then the repression of the Nazis and Petain.

The Trotskyists earned themselves the hatred of all the imperialist powers and of the Stalinists too. But they were the only people who fought for a policy which could have saved humanity from the 35 years of wars, poverty for two-thirds of the world, and the threat of nuclear annihilation, which we have faced since then.

Their policy was simple: willingness to join any real fight against reaction, but complete political independence of the working class, and resolute insistence on workers' power as the only way out from the crises of capitalism. It is the same policy as we need against fascism and racism today.

Catch 22

Joseph Heller's book "Catch 22" describes an American soldier facing his officers:

"These three men who hated him spoke his language and wore his uniform, but he saw their loveless faces set immutably into cramped, mean lines of hostility and understood instantly that nowhere in the world, not in all the fascist tanks or planes or submarines, not in the bunkers behind the machine guns or mortars or behind the blowing flame throwers, not even among all the expert gunners of the crack Hermann Goering Anti-aircraft Division or among the grisly connivers in all the beer halls in Munich and everywhere else, were there men who hated him more."

And that's true for us all. Our 'own' ruling class is our deadly enemy, just as much so as British fascists and more so than fascists of other nationalities. Every form of nationalist poison — including anti-German nationalism masquerading as anti-Nazism — only diverts us from the fight against that class and helps the growth of racism and fascism.

But this setback for

Dealing with disease in the Third World

By Les Hearn

THE problem of parasite infections is a crippling one for many Third World countries. Hundreds of millions of people suffer from diseases like malaria, sleeping sickness, elephantiasis, and a host of others.

These diseases cause sickness, blindness, debility and death on a large scale, as well as economic stagnation and decline.

Western style medicine has failed to find cures to these diseases while the pesticide approach has failed to eradicate the carriers of the parasites. In fact, it has made things worse by encouraging pesticide resistance in the disease carriers while wiping out their natural enemies.

Meanwhile, Western-designed development projects often encourage the spread of parasite infections (e.g. irrigation projects provide breeding sites for mosquitoes or allow the spread of infected watersnails).

With the failure of high technology attacks, attention is turning to more socially and environmentally conscious (and cheaper) approaches.

Some results were described at a meeting of the Wellcome Tropical Institute recently (reported in New Scientist).

Sleeping Sickness. A team in Zimbabwe described their method for killing tsetse flies, which spread the disease by biting cattle and humans.

Rather than taking insecticide to the flies by spraying their method brings the flies to the insecticide. Tsetse flies suck the blood of cattle and can smell a cow from miles away. The team extracted the substance from cow skin that attracts the flies and put jars of the chemical under sheets of cloth impregnated with the natural insecticide, pyrethrin. 150 such set-ups over an area of 600 square kilometres was sufficient to reduce infestation by over 99%.

This represents a considerable saving in cost as well as ensuring that only tsetse flies are killed (since only they are attracted by aroma of cow).

Malaria. Several methods of tackling malaria were described at the meeting. Elimination of malaria from the world had been one of the goals of the World Health Organisation, but whereas they succeeded in eradicating smallpox, malaria merely took a dip in frequency and then bounced back up again. This was because the mosquitoes carrying the parasites started to develop resistance to DDT, while the parasites themselves developed resistance to the quinine-type drugs that were used to treat victims.

Luckily, the simple defence of the mosquito net still remained but a determined mozzie (which incidentally can detect the warmth of a human body from about 30 metres) could still find

holes in these nets. A worker from the London School of Hygiene, however, had the bright idea of impregnating nets with pyrethrins, insecticides based on natural plant products.

When tried out in Mali and Tanzania, even nets with holes were effective so fast-acting was the insecticide. Furthermore, the nets can be tailored and treated in the villages.

Other approaches involved attacking mosquitoes in their breeding stages. Mosquito larvae live in water but have to breathe air. They therefore float just below the surface sticking their tails up to breathe. They prefer still water, such as swamps, puddles and water tanks, so they don't get swept away.

In Tanzania, the London School of Hygiene worker found that simply covering the surface water in tanks with tiny polystyrene tanks prevented mosquitoes from laying eggs in the water.

Meanwhile, a researcher working in Burma reported that he had found a way to eradicate mosquito larvae usually found infesting oil-drums full of water (the usual method of storage).



SCIENCE

He had been trying to observe how the larvae grew and had put out an oil-drum of water for mosquitos to lay their eggs in. Finding no larvae at all, he examined the water more closely and found two dragonfly larvae, ferocious predators on mosquito larvae.

He then got local people to collect dragonfly larvae and put pairs of them in 400 oil drums infested with mosquito larvae. In two weeks, all the larvae had been eaten, and in six weeks, all mosquitoes had disappeared from the area.

This is obviously a method of choice in tackling malaria, but unfortunately dragonflies may be in short supply as previous insecticide spraying may have killed them off.

The direction of the research described above is away from expensive, environmentally harmful methods that increase dependence on the big drug companies or require costly equipment and towards methods that can be understood easily and controlled by the communities facing the problem of parasitic infections.

No doubt this makes such research a prime target for government spending cuts.

Dance with a stranger

The doomed

Mick Ackersley reviews 'Dance with a Stranger', the new film based on the case of Ruth Ellis, now showing in many cinemas

RUTH Ellis was hanged 30 years ago for shooting her lover David Blakeley, in an atmosphere of 'News of the World'-style sexual scandal, sensationalism and prurience which has dogged the case ever since.

She was the last woman to hang in Britain.

Soon after her death a film was made about her starring Britain's then top "sex symbol" Dianna Dors, centring heavily on her last days in the death cell waiting for the servants of the civilised British government to come at the appointed time and break her neck. "Dance with a Stranger" is the second film about Ruth Ellis — played by the deservedly much-praised Amanda Richardson — and it is altogether a better one, made from a script by Sheila Delaney.

Passion

In fact, the Ellis-Blakeley wasn't in itself a particularly remarkable murder. True it was a type of killing recognised and extenuated in most other countries as a "crime of passion". When she shot Blakeley, Ellis was depressed after a miscarriage and half-deranged by drink and a year of bad treatment by Blakeley.

She was hanged in England, whereas in France, Ellis would have drawn a short prison sentence, if that. But crimes of passion have never been recognised in England and here there is nothing remarkable about the Ellis case.

The case achieved its notoriety because she was a young woman with two children and it attracted the attention of the prurient and the Sunday "news-papers" because she was a "blond night-club hostess, a tart". The circumstances of the killing won her sympathy — a ripple of applause swept through the cinema when she shot him — and the case is credited with having helped the campaign for the abolition of capital punishment.

Abolished

(Two years later, it was abolished except for the killing of police and prison officers and in 1967 it was abolished altogether).

What "Dance with a Stranger" does with this pretty sordid story is to reconstruct it with great realism and depth. The centre of it is naturally the relationship between Ellis and Blakeley.

Blakeley is an upper class semi-wastral trying to be a racing-car driver. Fickle and sometimes childishly dependent, he is frequently drunk and violent to Ellis and he comes and goes as he pleases. Ellis puts up



Amanda Richardson as Ruth Ellis

feeble resistances; but she always has him back.

The core of the relationship is a strong sexual dependence which draws them together and time after time reknits the destructive relationship.

Counterpoint

The film counterpoints the relationship between Ellis and Blakeley by exploring Ellis's relationship with her well off, doggedly faithful and undemanding benefactor and occasional lover. She gives him at least as bad a time as Blakeley gives her.

The story of the events that led to the state legally killing off Ruth Ellis is unavoidably political, and the film is political too. But it is subtle and implied, as it should be, or humorous, as when Ellis responds to Blakeley saying he wants her to marry him with: "Why? Are you pregnant?" The repressive atmosphere of the '50s, like the snobbery of Blakeley's friends and Britain's class stratification are essential parts of the story.

Implied

But the politics is no more than the implied framework. "Dance with a Stranger" is about the tragic, tormented relationship which Ellis tried to free herself from with a gun, failing even in that. She never appealed against her sentence and, apparently, went to the gallows declaring her abiding love for Blakeley and believing it was right that she should hang. "Dance with a Stranger" is a very fine film.



Songs of liberty and rebellion



Close the coalhouse door

Close the coal house door, lad, there's blood inside.
Blood from broken hands and feet,
Blood that's dried on pit-black meat,
Blood from hearts that know no beat.
Close the coal-house door, lad, there's blood inside.

Close the coal-house door, lad, there's bones inside.
Mangled, splintered piles of bones,
Buried 'neath a mile of stones,
Not a soul to hear their groans.
Close the coal-house door, lad, there's bones inside.

Close the coal-house door, lad, there's bairns inside.
Bairns that had no time to hide,
Bairns that saw the blackness slide,
Bairns beneath the mountain side.
Close the coal-house door, lad, there's bairns inside.

Close the coal-house door, lad, and stay outside.
Geordie's standin' at the dole,
And Mrs Jackson, like a fool,
Complains about the price of coal.
Close the coal-house door, lad, there's blood inside
There's bones inside, there's bairns inside, so stay outside.

By Alex Glasgow

Assessing the miners' strike

The SWP's tunnel vision

SOMEHOW this book manages to make the great story of the miners' strike rather flat and dull.

For them it runs something like this. The miners fought hard. However, "the dead hand of officialdom" (p.92) had a very high degree of control.

So by late May or early June the battle had turned decisively in the Tories' favour. Orgreave "marked the turning point of the strike, just as Sattley Gates had in 1972. This time, however, the ruling class won".

The miners slogged on for another nine months, but eventually they crumbled.

All is not lost, however. Trade union strength can be rebuilt as long as militants concentrate on "small but concrete issues" (p.229).

The problem is "the belief of militant trade unionists that by electing left-wing officials they can avoid future betrayals" (p.241) and that "many of those active in the strike will be drawn towards the Labour Party" (p.249). In these ways militants can be pulled into the bureaucracy and into Parliament.

Therefore a revolutionary party is needed — the SWP — which will keep militants focused on the "small but concrete issues". Out of the struggle on those issues, some day, somehow, will come workers' councils, capable of replacing the capitalist system.

The book does give a competent narrative. On some points it is very interesting: the description of how the first flying pickets to Notts were organised despite attempts by the Yorkshire leadership to restrain them; of how the Yorkshire leadership, again, dragged its feet over Orgreave; or of how the CP-oriented 'soft left' finished off the strike in February 1985.

But it communicates very little of the living experience of the strike. Page 252 does mention that: "The experience of the strike transformed... men and women" — but you would not have guessed that from the previous 251 pages.

When miners are quoted, it is always to discuss the details of

John Bloxam and Colin Foster review 'The Great Strike' by Alex Callinicos and Mike Simons (published by Socialist Worker, £3.95)

clashes with the police or how pickets were organised. The women of the mining communities are quoted very sparsely; in fact, apart from one sentence in the introduction, the role of women in the struggle is not mentioned at all outside 4½ sketchy pages (pp.178-83).

The notion that real working class politics is about fighting hard at workplace level on small issues had possessed the SWP before the strike, and it made them unable to assess it or appreciate it properly.

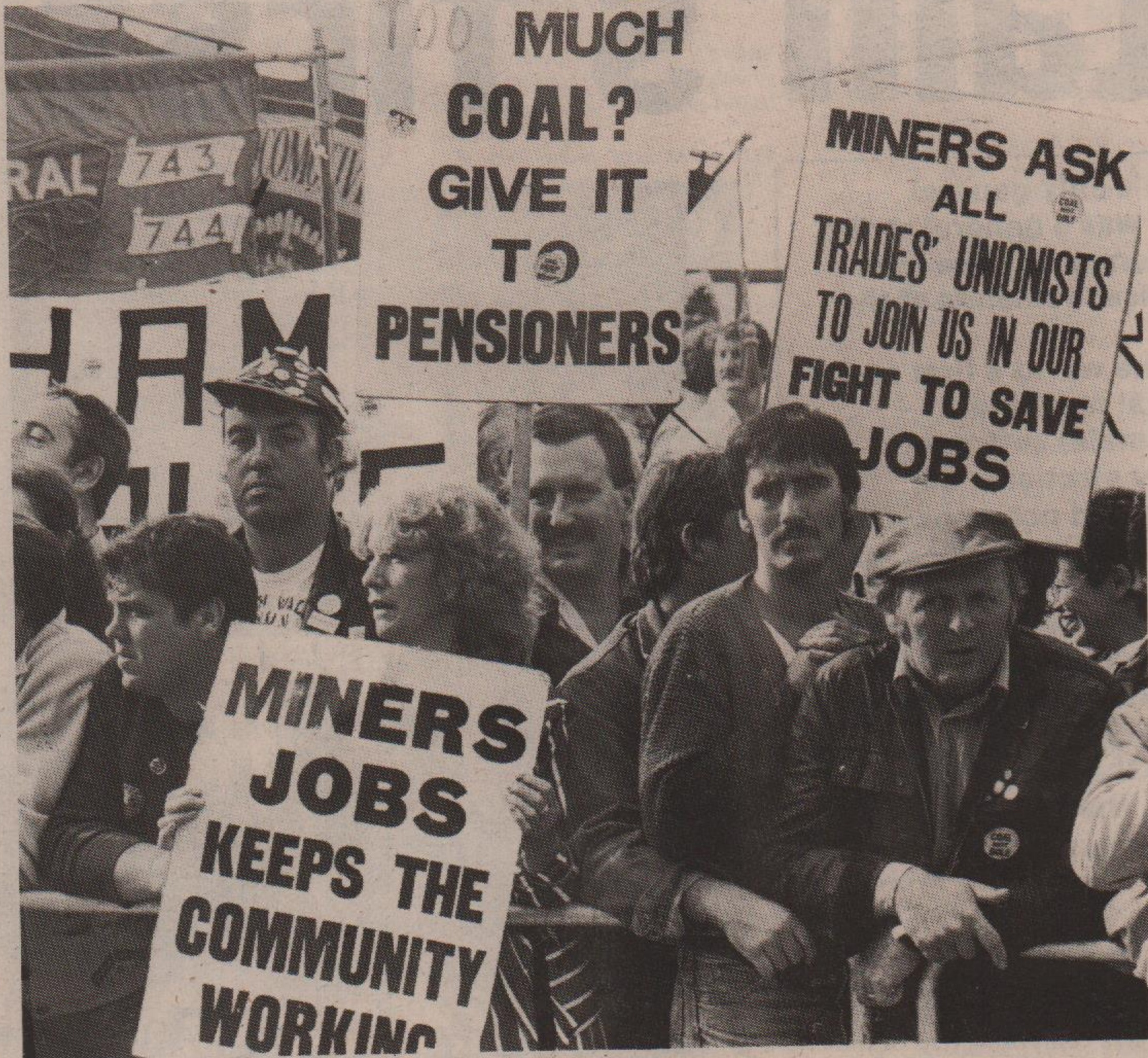
By early April 1984 Socialist Worker was saying that the miners' strike was almost a lost cause — "an extreme example of what we in the SWP have called the 'downturn' of the movement".

In early June, again, they were crying woe. "The chance was lost to rejuvenate a strike which has been drifting towards a 'compromise' settlement".

Then at the end of January 1985 while the majority of miners were still locked in epic battle with the NCB and the government, they ran a two-page feature which assumed the strike was already lost and asked "who is to blame?".

The book is less than honest about examining such errors, or acknowledging aspects of the struggle which refuted the SWP's stereotype ideas.

It applauds the miners' support committees — "a great movement of solidarity" — but does not mention that the SWP dismissed these committees as "left-wing Oxfam" until October. It mentions the Labour Left's role in that movement, but claims, quite untruly (p.250) that even the 'hard' Labour Left refused to challenge Kinnoch or criticise the TUC. It says something basic about the politics of the SWP that it tells downright-



lies to back up its campaign to stop militant miners joining or staying in the Labour Party.

Trying to dissuade miners and activists from joining the Labour Party, the book claims that "even the most radical and militant Labour Party member" believes in the parliamentary road to socialism (untrue: SO supporters and, in fact, many others don't). It also claims that parliamentary activity and workers' struggles cannot be combined.

In fact Marxists ever since Marx, without seeing parliament as the vehicle for socialism, have tried to use the parliamentary platform to assist workers' struggles. Dennis Skinner did it pretty well during the miners' strike.

But the SWP's drive to define away everything that falls outside the ambit of what they see as real working class politics — local economic struggle — also affects their assessment of the NUM leadership.

Dennis Skinner argued that a national strike would never have taken off without brave and competent leadership from the national NUM officials. Probably he was right. Callinicos and Simons, while devoting most space to (mostly justified) criticisms of the NUM area officials, pay tribute to Arthur Scargill's "determination, courage and tactical skill".

But here there is a problem for the SWP. If Arthur Scargill had been a member of the SWP, then they would have withdrawn

him from the election for NUM president! (The last time they had anyone put up for a national union position — in USDAW a few years ago — they withdrew him after he got the Broad Left nomination, on the grounds that rank and file activity was not sufficient to justify running for positions).

Yet Scargill's leadership did make a difference. More and better Scargills in the TUC leadership, or even just in the NUM leadership, could have made the difference between defeat and victory.

Despite the SWP's philosophy about this being an epoch of "building sectional strength" on "small but concrete issues", the miners' strike was a general class confrontation on a big and fairly abstract issue — jobs, communities, livelihoods versus capitalist economics.

The SWP did not have a policy for the labour movement in this confrontation. At best they had a policy for a small minority — join the SWP; if you are a miner, organise more picketing; if you are not a miner, organise collections.

The major turning-point of the strike (in our view) passes almost without comment in the book: the month between the seizure of the South Wales NUM funds and the TUC.

Miners' leaders called for a general strike. Ron Todd of the TGWU mumbled about a 'big bang'. The NUM put a motion to the TUC for "industrial action involving all unions"; FTAT called for a one-day general strike. But the TUC leaders escaped without committing themselves solidly at all.

Farcical

All this drama passes almost without comment in the book, as if it were all a matter of course. No wonder: at the time the SWP's searching for the "small and concrete" reached almost farcical levels. In response to the seizure of the miners' funds their main proposal was: "The trade union leaders... should now launch a campaign to make sure the two Read firms [small haulage companies which had brought the court case] are com-

pletely blacked."

Likewise, in discussing perspectives after the strike, Callinicos and Simons have proposals for "the small minority of workers who are at present convinced of the need for revolutionary socialism" — i.e. join the SWP — but none for broader sections of the working class. Despite making comparisons at length with 1926, they do not mention the Minority Movement, the cross-union rank-and-file militants' network that existed in the 1920s.

Chris Harman summed up the whole philosophy in Socialist Worker last November, arguing against the call for a general strike.

"We have at this point to stress demands that enable the militant minority to win over the majority in the workplaces to active solidarity (for example, support committees, collections, twinning), rather than those which assume the base already exists for such solidarity (for example calls for general strikes)..."

Calls for a general strike — like contests for union leadership, like parliamentary activity, like Labour Party activity in general — are presented as alternatives to nuts-and-bolts workplace activity, rather than complementary to it and the means of generalising, integrating and developing workplace activity into working class politics. And the result is to leave the SWP without general political answers (except — very like Militant, in fact — on the most abstract level of the need for socialist revolution).

Time and again Callinicos and Simons say that the mistake in 1984-5 was not to adopt the rank-and-file-based tactics of 1972. But this is at best quarter-

truth. More centralised organisation was imposed on the miners by the facts of the situation: the length of the strike, the scale of the police operation, the depressing effect of the slump on solidarity. The same facts imposed on the miners a greater need for official support from other unions.

Rank and file

Those facts cannot be evaded by one million repetitions of the words "rank and file". The only answer is to fight to change the policy, structure and leadership of the unions.

And not just of the unions. For the story of 1972 did not end with the Wilberforce Report. Within two years the wage gains had been etched away and the miners were on strike again. They won again. Indeed, they pushed the Heath government into an election that it lost.

The miners routed the Tories. And then, as the fruits of their victory, they got a Labour government which curbed wages, executed IMF-imposed cuts, imposed the area incentive schemes on the NUM, presided over rising unemployment and paved the way for Thatcher.

In 1984-5 there was a large element of victory in defeat; and in 1972-4 there was a large element of defeat in victory. Full victory will require not only good workplace organisation but also better organisation and awareness on the political front.

That is why the fight inside the Labour Party is so important. By abstaining from that fight, and by adopting a sort of politics which leaves a great vacuum between the "small and concrete" immediate issues and the ultimate goal of socialism the SWP has given itself tunnel vision.

More vicars, less pickets?

WHY was there so little mass picketing in Scotland during the miners' strike?

Why was the Scottish NUM apparently more concerned with vicars and 'public opinion' than with working-class mobilisations? Why did the Scottish NUM publicly denounce calls for a general strike?

The answers to these questions are to be found in the current issue of 'Marxism Today' (monthly magazine of the Eurocommunist wing of the Communist Party), which contains an interview with Scottish NUM vice-president George Bolton.

Bolton is chair of the CP, and, like Scottish NUM president Mick McGahey, he belongs to the CP Eurocommunist faction.

He says that mass pickets were pretty useless. "We hadn't learnt the lesson of Grunwick and how the police have been trained to handle mass picketing... And if you hadn't learned the lesson at Grunwick, the police certainly rammed it home at Warrington with the NGA... with the boot, the baton, with

the horse". In Notts: "Perhaps if we'd tried mass meetings, rather than mass picketing, we might have got a different result".

The whole argument is equivalent to saying that workers should no longer go on strike because managers have received such in-depth training to cope with industrial conflict. The real answer is not to drop mass pickets, but to organise them better, and to form workers' defence squads to beat off the police.

But Bolton is more impressed by "the importance of the churches... and more generally public opinion... Maybe we were very well intentioned, maybe we were trying to talk to the public, but we were very unsuccessful".

"They (the NUM) certainly didn't have a strategy for capturing it (public opinion)... Our people on national platforms were not always saying the best thing, or the right thing in the best way.

"I can remember hearing speeches early on saying 'and we will defeat this government'. You were causing confusion among the miners themselves

on that question, let alone public opinion".

The government made it quite clear that it was out to defeat the labour movement — but, according to Bolton, the miners should have played the injured innocent and said they had no intention of defeating the government!

Bolton also attacks the call for a general strike.

"Take Dennis Skinner. He was shouting general strike when his pit, Bolsover, was working. Tony Benn was shouting general strike, and in Derbyshire 80% were working. It's a reflection of a range of thinking in the movement that's not caught up with Thatcher and Thatcherism, and the state of British politics".

But the miners' strike was not a fight about conditions in the coal industry, but about the fate of the labour movement. It demanded labour-movement-wide action, and that meant a general strike.

Bolton insists on the sacredness of the ballot box, deploring "... all that connotation, of industrial action to defeat the ballot box. In the British condi-

tion the ballot box is so important... You elect or defeat the governments and local authorities with the ballot box".

But the Tories are not using the ballot box to defeat rate-capped local authorities. And the army officers who considered intervention in the crisis of 1974 — at the heart of which were the miners themselves — were certainly not planning on using the ballot box either. So why should the labour movement be tied down by a limited interpretation (excluding popular resistance) of the limited democracy of the bourgeois parliamentary system?

Bolton concludes with a cryptic comment: "It seems to me you're going back to do a whole number of things — popular fronts revisited indeed".

The 'popular fronts' in the 1930s were bodies of class collaboration, tying and subordinating labour movement organisations to the organisations and interests of the capitalist class. They led to terrible defeats.

That same popular-front philosophy, guiding the Scottish NUM, helped bring about the defeat of the miners' strike.

1842

Britain's first general

1926 was not Britain's only general strike. In 1842 there was a general strike in which economic demands were interwoven with the political demands of the Chartist movement.

The Chartists — the world's first real working-class political movement — called for universal (male) suffrage, annual parliamentary elections, etc. Formally its demands did not go beyond middle-class democracy; in practice, at a time when Britain's parliament had real power, and the huge permanent state machine which at present overshadows parliament had not been consolidated, they were revolutionary.

Arthur Bough tells the story of the strike in North Staffs, then a major centre of Chartist activity.

NORTH Staffordshire was built on three industries, coal, iron and steel, and pottery. All three industries were interlinked, and had some similarities in terms of being extremely paternalistic.

The potters were by far the most militant, being by and large craftsmen who had the time to read, study and develop their political ideas. The pottery industry also dominated the area's economy. As a result the working class was organised and politicised at a very early stage.

In 1837 the pottery workers went down to defeat at the hands of the bosses after a 20 week long strike and lockout. During the strike many of the activities that we have got used to during the recent miners' strike were developed.

Lord Talbot, the Lord Lieutenant of Staffordshire in a letter to the Home Secretary wrote, "The Trades Unions have already begun to collect contributions from the shopkeepers and the people who attend the market either by enforcing a system of long credit, or by direct cash payments, and they have sent out delegates to the several great manufacturing towns and to the General Trades Union for funds..."

Fusiliers

The State responded by sending in a detachment of fusiliers, and swearing in 400 men as Special Constables. Just like with the National Working Miners' Committee, the bosses funded a meeting of non-unionists calling themselves "Independent Workmen" who produced propaganda aimed at dividing the workers. The potters responded with a meeting of Trade Unionists from all over the country held in Hanley, which called on the potters to continue the fight, and promised continued financial support. However, the potters were starved back to work.

With this background one might have thought that the working class would have become very demoralised. In fact they turned their attention to looking for political answers, just as many miners have done in joining the

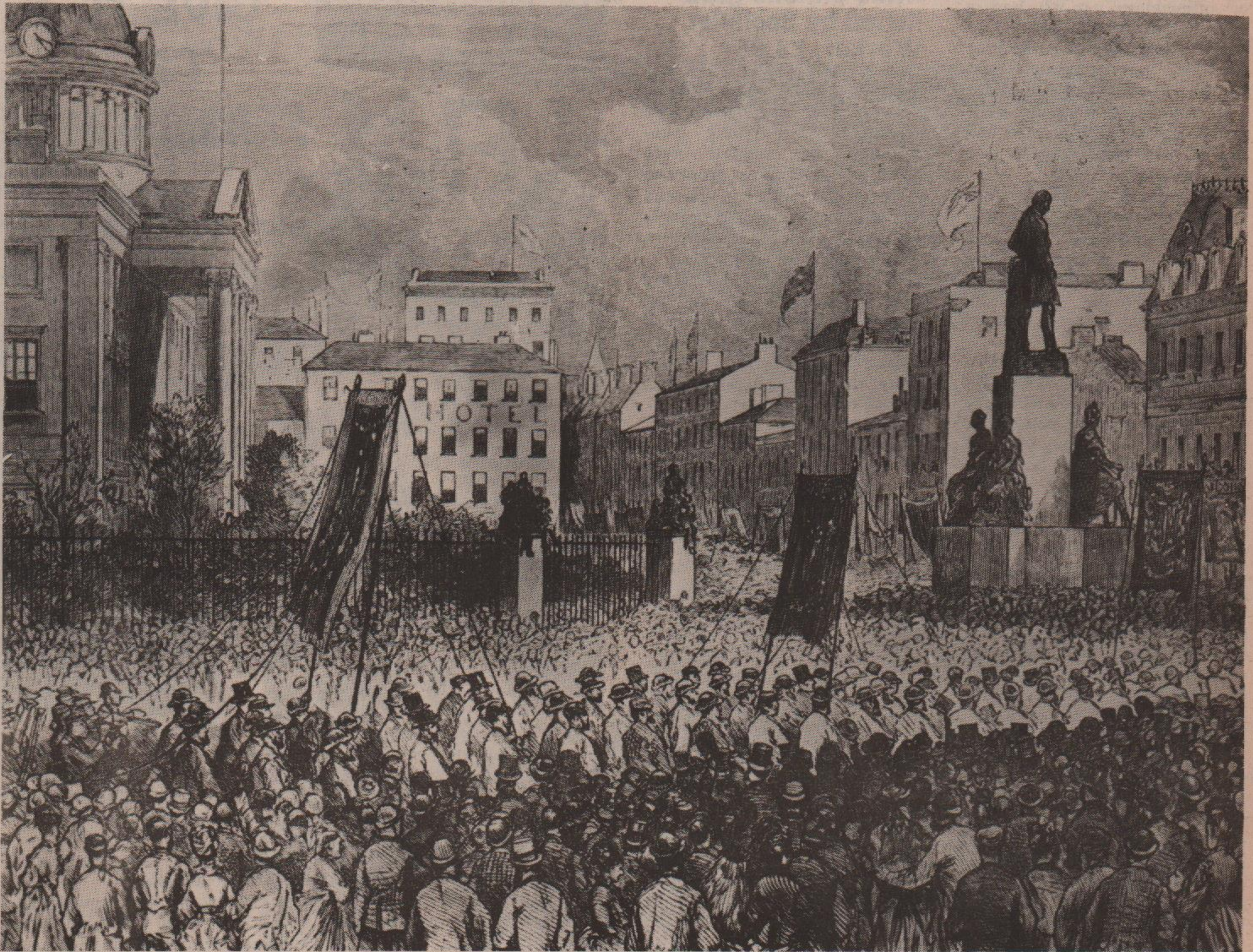
Labour Party. For the workers then, the political answer came in the form of Chartism. Several large Chartist meetings took place in the area comprising tens of thousands of people, and local Chartists like John "Daddy" Richards became part of the Chartists National Convention.

The miners' strike of 1842, therefore, took place under conditions where the bitterness and defeat of the 1837 potters' strike was fresh in people's minds, but in a situation of increasing politicisation of the working class. That politicisation took the form of the growing influence of the "physical force" Chartists who were advocating the need for an insurrection to achieve their aims. Reports abounded in North Staffordshire of the number of pistols and other firearms that were systematically being acquired and distributed at the local public houses where the Chartists met.

Just a few weeks before the strike began there were clashes in Lane End over the creation of a new police force. The North Staffordshire Mercury with a headline "Disturbances at Lane End: Militia Called Out" reported on May 11:

"During the week the inhabitants of Lane End have been in a state of fearful apprehension and excitement from the disorderly conduct of a number of persons in the lowest ranks of society. We have been at considerable trouble to attain accurate information as to the cause of the tumult and find that the principal one is the extreme aversion and hatred entertained by the parties towards the new police force lately established in that neighbourhood.

"Some of the respectable inhabitants of the town ascribe the violent conduct of the mob to the speeches delivered at a Chartist meeting on Monday last, on which occasion the people were encouraged in their hostility to the police; while others are of the opinion that the badly disposed only waited for any sort of pretext to avenge what they feel to be a check upon their lawless-



ness."

The miners came out on strike at the beginning of July, in support of miners employed by a coal owner called Sparrow from Longton who was attempting to cut wages, and raise production. In fact nearly all the mines were owned by Lord Granville, and this was just the start of an attempt to reduce wages in all the local collieries.

"The spirit of turbulence and disaffection...has this week broken out into insurrection."

Staffordshire Advertiser, August 1842

Although the strike was not called in support of the Charter the main speakers at the meeting which issued the call for a strike were Chartists and the main themes were the need for the Charter, and the call for a General Strike in support of the miners. Soon the potteries were at a standstill.

As the strike dragged on, and became more and more intertwined with the call for a General Strike for the Charter events began to unfold much faster. The State was worried and responded with terrible ferocity. Rioting and violence became commonplace.

The MP for Stoke J. Ricardo, made the following speech in the Commons about the situation.

"In my own constituency we see a desperate and reckless population braving death and the law, which have no terrors for the starving men.

"Trade is at a standstill; furnaces are blowing out, shops are shut, and markets untenanted for contributions are openly on the first, and carts are stopped and plundered in open day, as they take supplies to the other; for wages are falling, most obstinately falling in the teeth of the arguments of Hon. Gentlemen opposite, who maintain that high wages are synonymous with a high

price of food. "A reduction, inevitable under present circumstances, has taken place in the hard earnings of the colliers. The natural consequence is a combination among those whose wages are reduced, not only to refrain from working themselves, but to prevent others from working. And they have a mighty power, of which they are not slow to avail themselves.

"They know that without fuel the manufacturers must stop, and the potters thus deprived of occupation, must be driven to join in the outbreak..." (Hansard, July 21, 1842).

Ricardo read letters from some of his constituents. One letter shows how the colliers very quickly took control over the collieries. "The first outbreak was at Lane End, on the Monday in last week, and in the course of that and the

three following days all the collieries in this part of the country were taken possession of by the malcontents, and wherever resistance was offered by the managers or bailiffs they were treated in the most brutal manner."

On August 20 the Staffordshire Advertiser reported:

"The spirit of turbulence and disaffection which has so openly manifested itself in the North of the County during the last three or four weeks has this week broken out into insurrection.

"Monday: This morning at seven o'clock a Chartist meeting was held on the Crown Bank, Hanley, which was pretty numerous attended. One of the resolutions proposed and unanimously carried was, that there should be a total cessation from labour for a month, and that all those now employed should be stopped from working. No sooner had the meeting concluded, than a mob proceeded to carry the latter part of this resolution into effect.

The mob then returned in a body to the Market Place, Hanley, and after liberating several prisoners from the lock ups, confined for petty offences, made an attack on the Hanley and Shelton police office."

The report goes on to describe how the "mob", growing in number all the time until it was several thousand strong, went on to attack certain strategic targets like the house of the collector of poor rates, the Court of Requests, Stoke police station, the house of the Stipendiary Magistrate, and a house in Fenton where it was

believed that there was a stock of weapons. Only at 5.30 and with the intervention of the dragoons could the demonstrators be dispersed. A number were arrested, but come the evening thousands more returned to the streets to attack other targets, and liberate much needed commodities from local shops.

By the middle of August the forces of the State nationally became involved. Queen Victoria wrote to the Prime Minister, Sir Robert Peel:

"The Queen has just been writing to Sir James Graham (Home Secretary) (and repeats the same to Sir Robert Peel) that she is surprised at the little (or no) opposition to the dreadful riots in the Potteries and at the passiveness of the troops. This is all very well to send troops down in numbers, and to publish proclamations, forbidding these meetings but then they ought to act and these meetings should be prevented. The Queen thinks everything should be done to apprehend this Cooper [one of the Chartist leaders], and all the delegates at Manchester. The magistrates in many places seem to act very laxly."

Property

Peel replied on August 18: "People of property and Magistrates are now acting in harmony and with more energy. Every vigilance will be exerted with reference to Cooper and all the other itinerant agitators."

On August 16 workers in Stoke were joined by the workers of Leek. In the morning a Chartist meeting

strike

several thousand strong took place in Hanley. All industry by this stage was at a standstill.

After the meeting the crowd marched to Burslem, where they were met by several thousand more, who had marched from Leek. The authorities responded immediately. Captain Powys of the dragoons read the Riot Act to those from Hanley without effect. About an hour and a half later 5,000 marchers arrived from Leek, with a band in front, singing, shouting and brandishing their bludgeons. As they approached the military and special constables the order was given to fire. One young man Josiah Heapy was killed outright, another William Garrett was seriously injured, and many more injured by gunshot or sword cuts from the dragoons, who had chased the marchers up Smallthorne Road. As a result the demonstration dispersed. The forces of the State had begun to organise themselves.

Tactics

After this the workers had to begin to develop their tactics. At a Chartist meeting that night the following resolution was adopted. That after the lapse of a few days to lull the authorities attacks be made on out property to get the military out of the towns, and then attempts be made on the towns. The groups of men armed with pistols got to the different public houses where the military are billeted, drink with the soldiers and when so engaged suddenly shoot them." What would Neil Kinnock have to say about that?

But the authorities were now beginning to get on top. Warrants were issued for the

arrest of prominent Chartists, and as they were arrested or forced to flee the area so the political head of the movement was removed. On August 22, J.A. Wise JP wrote to the Under Secretary of State at the Home Office "I have the honour to inform you that the pottery district is comparatively quiet, notwithstanding the very large number of unoccupied potters and colliers."

Socialists

He went on to report that there were 600 beer houses where the Chartist Northern Star was distributed, and large numbers of seditious material received by leading Chartists and Socialists for distribution.

By the middle of September the strike and the riots were over. The leading Chartists were either deported or given sentences in Stafford gaol. Chartism did not die as a result of the defeat. It continued as an influential force for some time afterwards, but the consequence of the defeat was a search for an easier, more peaceful way forward.

Labour

Not surprisingly, therefore, North Staffordshire was one of the first places to elect Labour MPs to Parliament. In 1874 a miner was elected to Parliament to represent Stafford, and in 1900 Enoch Edwards, who was President of the Miners' Federation of Great Britain, and Secretary of the North Staffs Miners' Association stood for the Hanley seat. At the election he lost to the Tory by 642 votes, but in 1906 Edwards was elected with a majority of 4,896 standing as a Lib/Lab candidate.

CPSA defeat

MEMBERS of the largest, civil service union, CPSA, voted against a proposal for a one-day strike on Monday April 15.

The 45,563 to 45,103 vote against the proposal for a one-day strike almost certainly means an ignominious end to the 1985 pay campaign.

Several factors generated this failure. The miners' strike: "What chance do we have, if the NUM lost after a year?" is a comment almost all union activists will have heard.

Despite going, correctly, for a flat-rate increase rather than a percentage one, the special conference decided against including longer holidays and a shorter working week in the claim.

This was largely on the urgings of the new Broad Left '84 (Communist Party and soft Labour Left) group, who claimed that adding too many demands would "confuse the membership" (!). On strategy, it was agreed that all-out action would be necessary, probably preceded by a short period of selective action.

Amongst the measures agreed to build up the campaign was "a levy from all members to boost the fighting fund"... nothing more was heard of this levy after the special conference.

Similarly, another decision of that conference was that "every possible effort should be made to coordinate any action with other public sector unions". Again, once the conference

By Mike Grayson

rhetoric about the great "public sector alliance" had died down, the rank and file members heard no more about it.

If the union leadership had fought seriously even for the decisions taken at the December conference, the vote for action might well have been won — and won convincingly.

The pay offer came on March 14. £4 per week for lower paid grades (except 16 and 17 year olds, who were offered £3), and 4% for the higher grades. The union executives rejected the offer and made arrangements to ballot their members in time for a planned one-day strike on April 1 (the supposed pay settlement date).

It was now that the lack of serious campaigning in the previous months — plus the tenuousness of the alliance between the various unions involved — began to bear its inevitably poisoned fruit.

Alone among the unions the CPSA decided to abide by traditional voting methods ('show of hands' at workplace meetings) rather than going for a secret ballot in line with Tory anti-union laws. But then, when the potential court action against the union began to appear *cerain*, Broad Left '84 members on the executive committee bottled out.

Instead of pressing ahead they decided to hold a secret ballot after all. By this time, many workplaces had already voted. Now they were faced with

arranging a second meeting at short notice, to hold a secret ballot.

The one-day strike on April 1 was postponed until April 15 and selective strikes, scheduled to begin in early April were also put back.

The problem was that it was now clear that some of the unions were also going to do nothing after the 15th. The relatively small CSU had voted by a large majority *not* to strike. The IPCS (which organises technical and professional grades) had not even bothered to hold a ballot.

Most disappointing was the vote against strike action by the IRSF (Inland Revenue union), albeit the tiniest of margins — 161 votes, in an extremely high turnout.

Only SCPS (the lower- and middle-management union) had voted to strike by a small majority.

CPSA members knew this when they came to vote in the secret ballot.

Now we come to the bitter twist in the story: IRSF agreed to re-ballot its members because some branches had not sent in their votes on time. The re-ballot went by 645 votes for action, but now CPSA's vote has torpedoed any IRSF action!

Then — again after some workplaces had already voted — the government changed its offer. All adult staff were now being offered 4.4%, or £4 per week, whichever was the greater for the individual. There was no change in the £3 offer for young workers. At about the same time, the Treasury made

an offer of increased London Weighting (this regional bonus is separate from the annual pay negotiations).

The end result was the defeat by 460 votes in CPSA's ballot.

All industrial action has now been called off, though the Executive is claiming — with rather false bravado — that "the ballot result did not imply the pay offer should be accepted".

Further negotiations will be sought with the Treasury and the "government should be asked whether arbitration is available". In the past, the answer has been "No".

The Tories have now made a new offer — 5% for people on the maximum of their scales, 4.75% for others. Acceptance seems certain.

The pitiful end to this year's pay campaign has serious lessons for the future.

And the public sector alliance must be made a reality, rather than CPSA tying itself too closely to the other civil service unions which are, in the main, for managerial and professional grades.

Unfortunately the left in is bitterly split and the chances of these lessons being learnt seem somewhat slim. All activists should look especially at the role of the Broad Left '84 group and act accordingly in the elections for CPSA's president and NEC, coming up in late April, early May. Meanwhile, the 'hard left' Socialist Caucus group exists to organise those who are serious about a democratic, socialist, rank and file movement in CPSA, and across the civil service unions.

Terror Act arrests

By Stan Crooke

Britain's Special Branch officers struck another blow against international terrorism last Friday (April 19) when they used the Prevention of Terrorism Act (PTA) to detain three mothers arriving at Stranraer from Belfast, and threatened to take into care the 16 children they were accompanying.

The women and children had arrived at Stranraer at the start of what was meant to be a weekend's holiday in Scotland, as a break from the pressures of living in strife-torn Belfast.

But the boys from the Branch clearly confused by the difference between jelly babies and gellignite, pounced upon them as soon as they got off the ferry on the Friday evening.

The three four-year-olds amongst the children were obviously intent upon undermining British democracy during their weekend holiday.

While the women were marched off into detention, the children, the eldest of whom was 14, were left to fend for themselves.

When asked what was going to happen to the children, Special Branch officers replied that they were going to be put into care.

Having been taken to Stranraer police station, the three women were told that they were being arrested and held under section 4 (1) of the PTA, i.e. that they were suspected of "being or having been concerned in the commission, preparation or instigation of acts of terrorism".

Repeated phone calls to the police station by mem-

bers of the various Irish solidarity groups in Glasgow produced only denials by the police and Special Branch that the women were being held there.

Though eventually conceding the fact, they refused to release their "suspect terrorists".

All three were photographed, fingerprinted and repeatedly questioned, though the questioning had little to do with alleged terrorist activities.

Claim

One of the women was finally released on Friday evening, while the other two continue, at the time of writing, to be held in Stranraer.

The children were picked up by a minibus sent down from Glasgow and brought back to spend the weekend there. There are no reports of any acts of terrorism having been committed by them.

Special Branch would doubtless claim this as proof of how effective their prompt action was.

These vindictive arrests are only the latest of a long line of cases of use of the PTA to harass and intimidate Irish people for the "crime" of being Irish, and Irish solidarity activists for the "crime" of being Irish solidarity activists.

Of the 6023 people detained under the PTA in the last ten years, only 467 were charged with any offence. Only 152 of these were charged with offences under the PTA itself. In total, 129

people have been sentenced to more than one year in prison after detention under the PTA over the last decade.

Labour Party and trade union members need to cam-

paign in defence of all victims of the PTA, demand its repeal and make sure that the next Labour government carries this out immediately on returning to office.



Women quarry workers pictured in the middle of the 19th century.

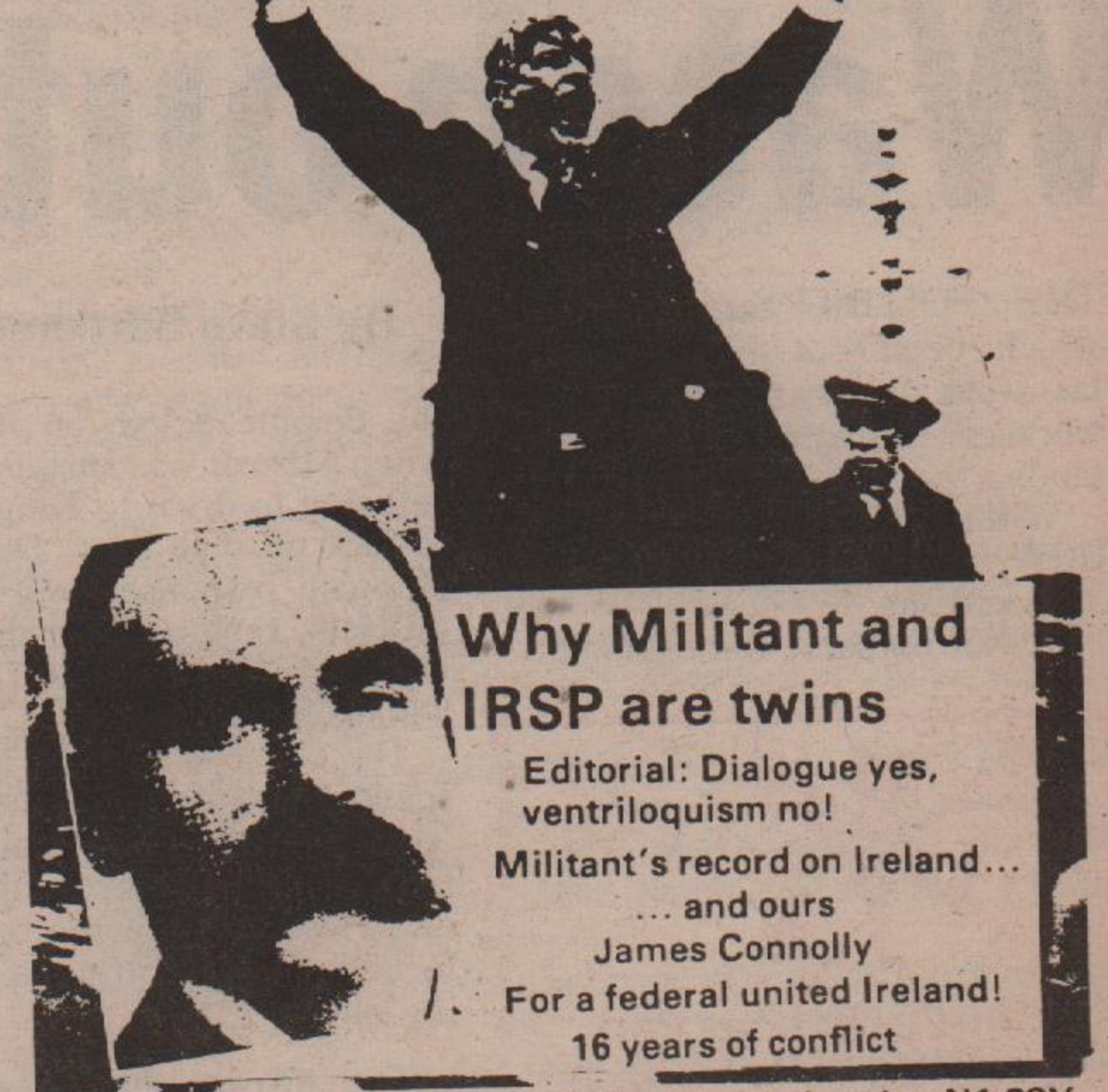
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HANDS OFF NICARAGUA!

26,000 people demonstrated in Washington on Saturday 20th against Reagan's policy on

Central America and South Africa.

Their alarm was heightened by a White House document leaked on Wednesday 17th, which said that direct US invasion of Nicaragua must be "an eventual option".

Today, Tuesday 23rd, Congress is expected to reject Reagan's \$14 million programme for aid to the 'contras' — the US-sponsored counter-revolutionaries who are fighting to overthrow the Sandinista

regime in Nicaragua. Reagan wants to build up the 'contras' to a force of 25,000 to 30,000.

On all previous experience, however, the result will be that the administration will find some underhand way to get money — if not the full amount — to the Contras.

Trying to rally support, Reagan claimed on Saturday 20th that USSR troops were operating in Nicaragua. He offered no evidence for this improbable claim.



Despite the future Lord Redken's capitulation to Kinnock's 'dented shield' line, the fight against rate-capping must go on



Time to stop debt payments!

Councillors and Labour and trade union activists from three rate-capped boroughs — Hackney, Islington and Camden — decided at a conference last Saturday, 20th, to stop debt payments to the City of any councillor is surcharged or disqualified.

The proposal was moved by SO supporter Nik Barstow at a meeting called by the three Labour groups.

However, it looks as if many councils could renege from their 'no rate' stand before it ever gets to the point of surcharge or disqualification.

Eight authorities are still standing firm, despite the climb-down of the GLC and ILEA in

Gerry Bates reports on the local government struggle

early March and of other councils like Haringey since.

Hackney has had a court order telling it to fix a rate by the end of May or be in 'contempt of court'. A shorter deadline had been expected: but the court's decision is a clever one from the Tory point of view.

Instead of bringing matters to a head quickly and explosively, they are letting the rebel councils sweat. This week the District Auditor has written to five London authorities, warning that

they could face legal penalties long before the end of May.

The strategy is to keep up the pressure, subdue the councils one by one, and then leave the most defiant ones — Hackney and Islington, on present showing — isolated so that they will crumble too.

Meanwhile (so the Tories hope) council workers' resolve will weaken and fragment, so that nothing will be left in the end except perhaps some local resistance to cuts in Hackney.

There are worrying signs that this Tory strategy could work. Southwark council has just "found" £26 million extra funds; while a Labour group meeting on April 22 voted to continue the 'no rate' stand,

some councillors are openly arguing for a rate to be fixed.

Lambeth council leader Ted Knight has come out with exactly the same alibi for a sell-out that he used in 1980. He has called for a general strike of council workers from a fixed date (this time it is May 16), and if the workers fail to meet Knight's deadline he will then declare that he did his best but the will to fight wasn't there.

In Islington, in some ways the strongest borough, council leader Margaret Hodge is talking about having to back down if her authority is left isolated.

Liverpool City Council is in a peculiar position because it did not set a rate last year until July. That means that it can delay until June or July this year without any legal risk at all. By then the other local battles will be settled one way or the other, and the Liverpool councillors will be able to plead isolation as a justification for backing down.

It looks grim. And the consequences should not be underestimated. Most of the councils involved can set budgets this year with minor, or no, cuts — Hackney and Liverpool are probably the exceptions.

But the Rates Act will be entrenched. Experience in Scotland, where similar legislation has been in force for some years, shows that the government will then gradually increase its squeeze on jobs and services.

And — just as important — thousands of council trade unionists, tenants, and community activists will feel cheated and demoralised by loud Labour talk against rate-capping which turns out to be just hot air.

There is still time to stop the retreat, but only just. Demand the councils stick by their 'no rate' pledges; demand they commit themselves to stopping debt payments in the event of any legal penalties anywhere.

Watch out Tuffin!

THE 'POLLING card' dispute which began at Northampton last week quickly spread to post workers throughout the Midlands.

Within a couple of days most UCW members were on strike or locked out.

In Nottingham, for example,

By Steve Battlemuch

the dispute began on April 18 when a driver was suspended for refusing to drive to Kings Lynn to pick up scab post. Despite a sluggish response from branch officials, rank and file initiative widened the dispute to the whole office.

The Labour county council scandalously decided to set up a 'courier service' until the strike is over — and, worse still, started to look to its own employees to deliver the Nottingham polling cards.

The dispute had begun in Northampton over payment for the extra work involved in delivering polling cards for the forthcoming county council elections.

The UCW national officials pushed the other offices around the country to vote on a return to work before Northampton had

voted. It was a very shoddy deal, and again showed the inability of the UCW leadership to fight for its members' interests.

Bill Pearch, the only UCW executive member in Nottingham to vote against the return to work, commented: 'The deal, which involves certain UCW members losing up to £45 each, cannot be described as a victory.'

However, the action has in itself been a success in showing to the Post Office management and to the UCW leadership the strength of feeling of UCW members, their willingness to fight. Particularly satisfying was their respect for picket lines and spontaneous strike action.

'This should serve as a warning to management and Tuffin alike that the forthcoming UCW conference will not be the foregone conclusion they both hoped for.'

Teachers re-start action

MEMBERS of the National Union of Teachers (NUT) start a series of three-day strikes in 200 selected schools this week.

The second main teachers' union, the NAS/UWT, is also undertaking selective action.

In Scotland — which has a separate pay system — the main union, the EIS, is calling a one-day strike in secondary schools this week.

Scottish teachers are demanding an independent pay review. Teachers in England and Wales are claiming a £1200 rise: they have been offered 4 per cent, which goes nowhere towards making good the 30 to 40% erosion of teachers' real pay in recent years.

Up until recently the Labour authorities had done nothing to distinguish themselves from the Tory authorities on the employers' side. Now — perhaps finally stung by a Tory leader comparing the NUT conference to a gathering of orang-utangs —

they have pushed successfully for a joint approach by employers and unions to the government for more money.

But this is just a face-saver, to be followed by a return to the hard line.

Legal action against the unions under the Tories' Trade Union Act is very possible. The NAS/UWT has called its action without the prior ballot demanded by the law.

However, amendments to increase action were defeated at the NUT Easter conference, which only gave the union executive a general mandate to step up the campaign. The NUT's policy of strike pay at full salary makes widespread strikes practically impossible for financial reasons.

East London and Lambeth NUT associations are convening a conference of militant associations and divisions in June, to keep up the pressure on the leadership.

VIETNAM 10 years on

TEN years ago on April 30, the US finally quit Vietnam.

The Vietnamese had suffered foreign domination for many decades — first the French; then the Japanese; then (at the end of World War 2) the British; then the French again; then the US.

They started an all-out war for independence in 1946. The French finally quit in 1954, leaving the country partitioned, with the North ruled by the national liberation forces, and a neo-colonial regime in the south.

By the early '60s, despite the reluctance of the Northern government, anti-imperialist struggle revived in the South. From about 1965 it became full-scale war. At its peak the US had half a million troops in Vietnam. Britain, including under the 1964-70 Labour government, gave the US support.

The US did not have big economic interests in Vietnam. But they saw it as a crucial place to draw the line against the Third World revolutionary movements which — having shattered the old British, French and Dutch empires between 1943 and 1967 — were more and more often generating aggressive nationalist regimes, hostile to the big capitalist powers and often allied with the USSR.

From their own point of view, the US weren't far wrong. The debacle of US policy in Vietnam, and the revolutions in Central America, are an index of the blow that the tenacious, heroic struggle of the Vietnamese inflicted on US imperialist power.

The Vietnam war also generated an anti-war movement of unparalleled size in the US — the echoes of which still hinder Reagan — and was a major factor in the transformation of the post-war phase of rapid capitalist expansion into a period (since 1969-71) of crises and stagnation.

The regime in Vietnam since 1975 has been hideously oppressive. Thousands of 'boat people' have fled its Stalinist-type police-state repression. Many who supported the Vietnamese against the US have become politically disillusioned and demoralised as a result.

Yet this outcome was entirely predictable from the previous experience of Stalinist-led revolutionary victories in China, Yugoslavia, Albania — and North Vietnam. Hailing the victory in 1975, the socialist weekly Workers' Fight wrote: "The new regime in South Vietnam will not be a revolutionary workers' democracy. Far from it. Any forces in South Vietnam fighting for such a programme will find the regime an enemy rather than an ally."

A new revolution remains to be made in Vietnam — a workers' revolution against the ruling bureaucracy. But the victory in 1975 was a victory for us, too.



Join the Labour Party.
Write to: The Labour Party, 150 Walworth Road, London SE17 1JT.