

Socialist ORGANISER

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SUPPORT YOUR UNION
NUM
STOP PIT CLOSURES



NUM president Arthur Scargill denounced the police moves as "almost tantamount to a paramilitary state".

POLICE STATE TORIES

"THERE IS no longer a soft option. We will use aggressive action against intimidation to enable miners to go to work" — Peter Joslin, Chief Constable of Warwickshire.

The Government and the police, in their determination to break the miners' strike, have turned whole areas of Britain into virtual police states.

In a massive centrally-coordinated operation, thousands of police (over 8000 according to New Scotland Yard's own figures) have been mobilised to prevent flying pickets reaching strike-breaking coalfields.

Roadblocks have been set up, and Kent miners were stopped at the Dartford tunnel and warned that they would be arrested if they crossed the county border.

Chief Constable David Hall, head of the New Scotland Yard strike-breaking 'nerve centre', told the press on Monday that his 'clearing house' was handling 400 calls per hour from Chief Constables throughout the country, outlining requirements for officers.

Enforce

"We arrange their movement from one area to another. We are determined to enforce that mass picketing is not permitted".

In addition, phone calls coming into the Yorkshire NUM headquarters have been interrupted by the police, and call boxes in Nottingham being used by pickets have been cut off.

So much for the image of the good old British bobby, non-political, impartial, and never taking sides in an industrial dispute.

The police know who their paymasters are. As the NGA pickets found out at Warrington, the cops are ruthless, well-organised and determined upholders of the 'rights' of scabs, the property of employers, and the whole anti-working-class offensive of the Tory government.

By Jim Denham

The Tories like to present themselves as upholders of democracy. But to defeat the miners they have been prepared to tear up the elementary rights of a citizen to travel freely round the country (of course British governments, Labour and Tory, long ago ended the equally elementary right to travel between countries) and of trade unionists to picket strike-breakers.

Contempt

It is the same contempt for democracy that the Tories have demonstrated in their proposals to abolish the Greater London Council and the metropolitan county councils. For this government all the cant about 'democracy' goes out of the window when it comes to dealing with their political opponents.

Despite the police, the flying pickets still managed to bring the majority of pits to a halt. And the Coal Board's decision not to proceed with its High Court injunction against the NUM was almost certainly due to the militancy of the pickets.

But there is no room for complacency. As Yorkshire area president Jack Taylor says: "On the surface this appears to be a victory for the Yorkshire miners and those who have been supporting them. But we are under no illusions."

"The main struggle — against pit closures and for jobs — will have to be continued with renewed determination"

For the striking miners, the immediate tasks are clear: to picket out every pit, and to stop the movement of coal to the power stations, docks, and depots.

The rest of the movement must give the miners every possible support. Trade union branches and Labour Parties should be raising money for the strikers, providing accommodation for pickets, and organising trade union boy-

cotts of coal.

Trades councils should be forming support committees in the areas.

Most importantly of all, we must be urging defiance of the anti-union laws at every level — from solidarity action at rank and file level to the demand for the TUC to break collaboration with the Tories and organise for a general strike.



Injured picket at Thoresby colliery

ORGANISE FOR A GENERAL STRIKE!

'Picket out the pits'

Jim Denham spoke to some of the flying pickets from Kent who had been billeted in Birmingham in order to visit pits in the Warwickshire area.

John, Pete and Michael are miners in their 30s, all married with children, and all working at Tilmanstone.

Bernard is about the same age, from Betteshanger. Rog and Bob are 19-year old apprentice craftsmen from Snowdown, and Dave is a 19-year old trainee hauler from the same pit.

The four older men have all been working in the industry for 10 to 12 years, the three younger ones started in the industry at the age of 16.

John says: "We've got everything to fight for, and not a lot to lose. Of the three pits in Kent, Snowdown has definitely been earmarked for closure, Tilmanstone have been told that they will be closed unless they massively increased productivity, and only Betteshanger is supposed to be safe."

"With Snowdown and Tilmanstone gone, the Kent mining workforce would be cut by exactly 50%, down to 1,200, and in that situation no-one really believes that Betteshanger would last much longer. Why should they keep it open?"

"In the Thanet area, where we come from, without the mines there will be nothing at all left for us, nowhere for us to go."

So the £1000 per year redundancy money is not a very attractive proposition.

Rog: "Hang on a minute! We are under 20, so we don't get anything at all. And my bet is that if we lose this battle, MacGregor will turn round and withdraw the £1000 offer. After all, he threatened to withdraw the pay offer because of the overtime ban, and if we've lost we'll have no comeback - no way of holding MacGregor even to that £1000 offer, or bribe as I call it."

Michael: "But that's not really the point, is it? Those jobs are not ours to sell. To accept MacGregor's bribe is to sell your children's future, not just your own job. It's a matter of basic trade unionism."

Why haven't the Midlands been ready to fight?

John: "A lot of them have been bought off by the bonus scheme and by the Board's promises of security. They think: we're safe, we've got the Vale of Belvoir, so that lot in Yorkshire and Kent."

Bernard: "I think the local leaders have got a lot to answer for, particularly people like Jack Jones in Leicester, with all his bleating about a ballot - that's just a way of letting himself off the hook, and giving people an excuse to scab."

What about a ballot?
Pete: "I read that the National Opinion Polls reckoned that we would have had a 62% majority for a strike in a national ballot. But it's easy to be wise after the event."

"I think the tactics that the

executive have used so far to get a rolling strike off the ground have been justified. I don't blame Scargill for not wanting to put himself out on a limb again after being let down in ballots twice before."

John: "We'll have a national ballot, but in our own time, not when the Sun tells us to have one. Meanwhile, all we can do is picket out the pits that are still working."

Bernard: "But the police are our main problem. 400 of us set out from Kent, but only 180 of us got through. The rest were pulled up on the motorways by the cops. Some were even stopped at the Dartford Tunnel and told not to cross the border of the county. The cops know which side they are on."

Dave: "Like at Daw Mill yesterday. Just four pickets got to that pit and were faced with 300 police! It's like a bloody police state round here if you're a picket. And they say they are defending democracy!"

Guessing

Bob: "Our plan is to try to keep the cops guessing, not let them know where we're going next, and to set off really early in the morning to beat them to the pit gates and the morning shift. That's why we'd better not have too much to drink!"

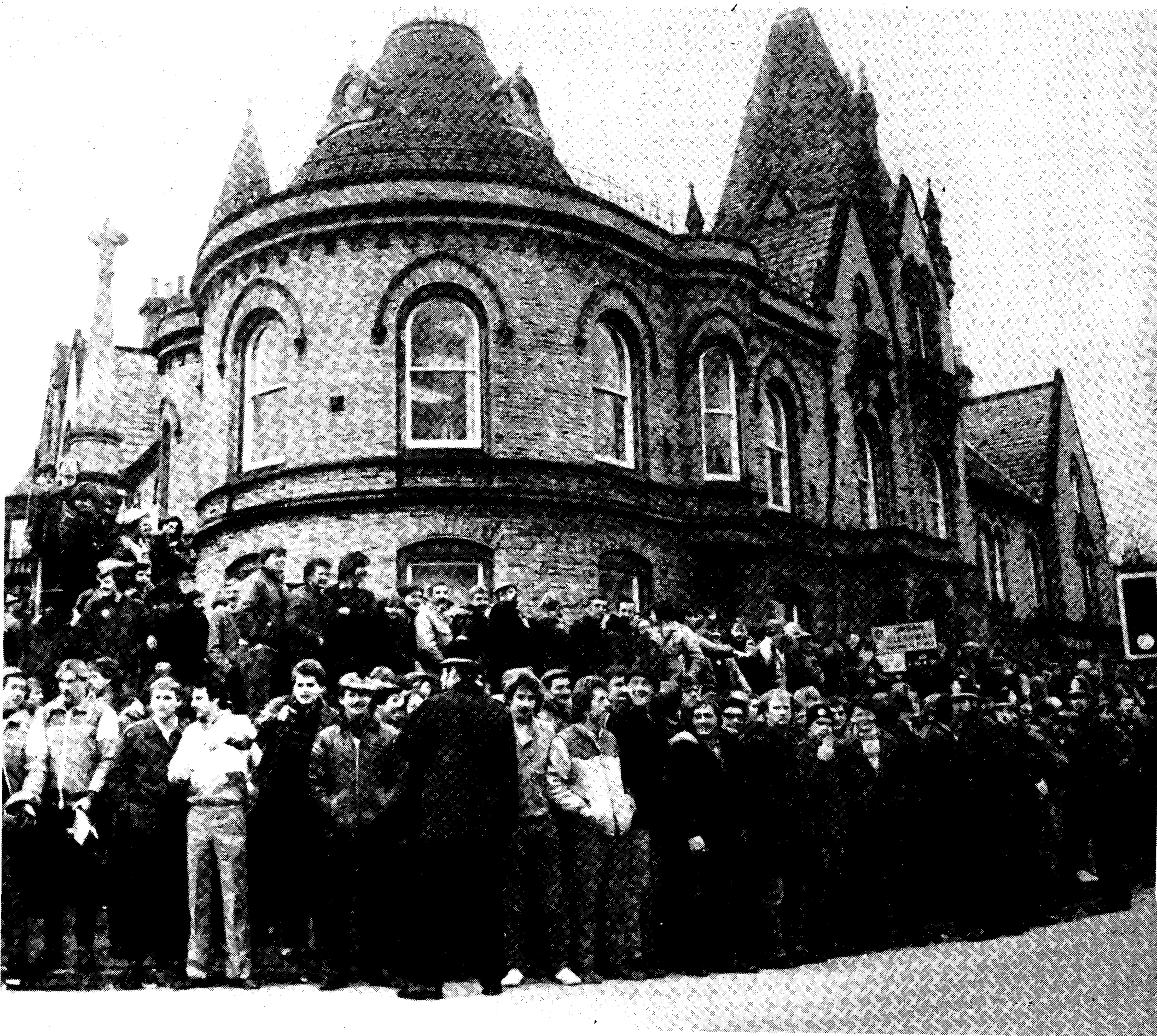
John: "We need to get all our own people out solid before we can turn to other trade unionists for solidarity. How can we ask the rail workers or the lorry drivers to back us when miners in Coventry, Leicester and Nottingham are still working?"

Pete: "Mind you, we've had good support from the NUR and the TGWU. They're blacking all movement of coal to power stations and stockpiles."

John: "Once we've got our people out solid, we'll go to the rest of the movement, and say: 'give us your support. Let's have you all out and deal with this government'."

A general strike?

Bernard: "Yes, if that's what you want to call it."



Miners outside Yorkshire NUM headquarters, Barnsley.

Scotland solid

By Stan Crooke

SUPPORT for the national miners strike in Scotland at the start of its second week was even more solid than it had been the previous week.

At Bilston Glen, for example, where there had been some sharp clashes the previous week, only one miner turned up for work.

Surrounded by a phalanx of police he managed to get into the colliery. In the entire Scottish coalfield, only 15 miners turned up for work on Monday, but there was no production at all.

Over the weekend, Barony pit NUM branch passed a resolution calling on the union to hold a national ballot, the only Scottish pit to do so to date.

Socialist Organiser spoke to Alex Hogg about the strike.

Speaking in a personal capacity, (he is NUM delegate for the Cardowan colliery, where salvaging operations have been in progress, after its closure last year) he told us:

"We've had pickets on the Longannet power station and a couple of other power stations in Fife. But there are still coal movements going on, as you see the lorries on the roads. They must be from open cast sites, so we need to move in and shut them down as well."

"It's hard to assess what other support we are getting. The dockers are giving us support, and have refused to unload coal supplies. On the railways, both the NUR and ASLEF have assured us that no coal will be moving by rail."

"The NCB is clearly using private contractors to shift the coal by road. We would hope that any TGWU members involved will refuse to cross picket lines."

"The national ballot is a difficult question. But the normal custom and practice in mining for centuries means that - rule 1, you assist neighbours if they are in trouble and ask you to; and, rule 2, you don't cross picket lines."

"These unwritten rules supercede the parliamentarians' laws, which are solely designed to break the unity of the men."

"The Polmaise men who were already on strike against the closure of their pit were down in London last week, but I don't know what the outcome was."

"The Polmaise question is now part of the national strike. The same applies to Bogside, where the miners are contesting the NCB decision to close the pit."

THE THUGS IN BLUE

Daily Mail
Press **EXPRESS** **Gang**
The Daily Telegraph
THE Sun

By Patrick Spilling

who was yesterday locked in NCB headquarters, and refusing to speak to the press.

Some MacGregors did manage to break the pickets' blockade, but stood forlornly outside the pits, thrusting £5 notes at miners reporting for duty, asking them to go home.

The pickets are all hand-picked militants from workforces all over Britain, skilled and highly trained in preventing bosses wrecking their industries.

The campaign to close down pits and throw miners on the dole took a sinister turn at the weekend when thousands of police travelled half the length of the country to help close the pits down.

Prompt action by pickets nipped this plan for violence in the bud. Pickets sealed the borders of every county and turned the police back. Police forces which attempted to move have been warned by pickets that they will be arrested if they try to leave their beat areas.

An attempt by the Kent Police Federation to challenge this ruling in the High Court failed when Mr Justice Scargill ruled the pickets had every right to stop police. "It is a fair bet that these thugs in blue uniforms will cause trouble if they travel to pit areas."

It is wiser that police are kept in check where they live rather than roam the country, terrifying the population at large," he said.

It is the threat from the police that the government must now combat. Police forces include in their ranks many people who joined up for aggro and whose idea of a good time is fighting on picket lines.

Public opinion has however turned against the thugs in blue uniform after seeing their vicious attacks on pickets on television along with a suitable commentary making it clear who was responsible.

In an interview on BBC television last night, a Chief Constable from Manchester - Anderton - fared extremely badly, when interrupted every other word, jeered at by reporters and asked whether he would deny he was acting on behalf of international freemasonry.

Mr. Jack Taylor, the man responsible for the immaculate picket operation, in reply to the question, "Excuse me, sir, but is there any point you would like us to make?" said the pickets were responsible for preventing widespread violence by police.

"We have been accused of being political", he said. "That is laughable. All we are doing is ensuring that the bourgeoisie does not try to upset the rule of the working class. That is our job - nothing to do with politics."

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by Satvinder Singh and Tony Purtil
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The police are not invincible!

"If, for example, the Yorkshire miners, assisted by large numbers of sympathetic trade unionists, decided to besiege the big coal-burning power stations in the Trent Valley and the Doncaster area — the backbone of the national electricity grid — there is very little the chief constables of Nottinghamshire and South Yorkshire could do on the day to make sure supplies were not affected if the workforce could not enter the premises.

"The government must consolidate its advantage. It could all unravel very rapidly if the flying pickets regain the initiative and official resolve crumbles."

The Times, March 20

'Respect our pickets!'

THE DEATH of Davy Jones, at Ollerton pit last week was the tragedy of a miner who gave his life for his union and the fight to defend jobs.

So just why was it that miner was pitted against miner? The background to this dispute is a blatant attempt by the NCB to destabilise the overtime ban. A lot of miners feel that the overtime ban was beginning to bite. The massive coal stocks were beginning to dwindle.

Frank Slater is an NUM delegate from Maltby colliery, part of the Manvers complex in the South Yorkshire coalfield. He spoke to Socialist Organiser in his personal capacity.

"Firstly they announced a change in shift pattern at the Manvers complex. This shift pattern has been used and agreed for the past 25 years.

"The official reason was 'to improve profitability'. This, after 18 weeks of overtime ban. The South Yorkshire panel of the NUM then unanimously agreed to go into dispute. The Yorks area NUM then attempted to negotiate with the board over the dispute in the South Yorks Area.

"But all they got was a snub by George Hayes, Chairman of Yorkshire Area NCB. On 28 February, the South Yorkshire coalfield went on strike.

"The Board then decided to up the stakes. On March 1, without warning, they closed Corton Wood colliery. On 5 March, the whole Yorkshire area came out and made the dispute official a week later.

Go-ahead

"Then when Ray Chadburn said that the Notts miners would ballot but that he expected them not to cross picket lines where they were formed, the rank and file of the South Yorkshire miners not unreasonably took this as a go-ahead for flying pickets.

"When they arrived in Notts the branch officials came out and said that local members should not cross picket lines, but confused things by saying that they should be allowed in to ballot.

"Some Yorkshire miners feel that this may be because the Notts branch officials are up for

re-election in June and want to remain popular by giving their members a free hand to cross the picket lines.

"This caused much bad feeling amongst the Yorkshire lads, who felt that Notts could have had a ballot much earlier but had only held one at this late stage under pressure of a flying picket from Yorkshire.

"Nonetheless, although the press would have us believe otherwise, the mood on most picket lines has remained generally cordial, with Notts miners joining pickets and miners' wives supporting."

Disgusted

"I would say that the stone-throwing and all that at Thoresby and Ollerton was started mainly by local youths with nothing at all to do with the NUM. At Thoresby, where I was, the police wanted to escort the night shift out. We reached an agreement with the police that we would allow this, and that they would allow us a two-minute silent vigil for the lad who had died at Ollerton, plus five minutes to talk to Thoresby branch officials.

"I got my lads round in a square to do this and we were then attacked by the police, who pushed us off the road, smashing through a wooden fence. This was on the TV later that day.

"We called off our pickets to let them vote. But I am absolutely disgusted with the vote. There will be massive flying pickets this coming week. We respected their ballot. Now I want them to respect our pickets.

"I think support on the picket lines from other trade unionists would be dangerous because the police would be likely to pick them off, but then again it wouldn't be any more dangerous under the present anti-union laws than for NUM pickets from Yorkshire, Scotland or Kent.

"I'd love to be on any platform with Chadburn. I've not got as much experience of public speaking as he has, but our case against him is cast iron. He's given us practically no support. He's not issued any clear instruction to his members. As far as I'm concerned, with the death of Davy Jones, he's got blood on his hands."

The miners can win!

IT IS miners who are standing up to the massed ranks of semi-militarised police.

But it is the entire labour movement which is now being probed and tested.

The brutally candid Lord Denning, former Master of the Rolls, put the issue squarely: "The trade unions are on trial". The trial is a trial of strength, which the Tories and the police are turning into a trial of naked force.

Thousands of police have been drawn from forces all over the country to fight the miners. They are ferried around in convoys of buses, billeted in church halls and other substitutes for a gendarmerie barracks.

They are centrally organised, coordinated, deployed and directed from a war centre at Scotland Yard.

They have occupied parts of Britain and imposed a state of siege there.

The police have blockaded the highways, to direct law-abiding citizens on trade union business as to where they can and cannot go. They have stretched the law. Possibly they are breaking the law.

As the present Master of the Rolls, one of those who interpret the law, said recently:

"The legal system is not in practice even-handed as between employers and unions: current functions put the courts almost entirely in the business of restraining or penalising the latter, and not of remedying their grievances".

Class law

That is the basic truth here. *the law is class law.* The development of police-state Toryism, the limited measures of controlled civil war which the Tories are now using, are the continuation by other, physical force, means of their legislation to shackle the unions.

They have passed laws to stop workers using their muscle in industrial disputes. They have outlawed the most effective weapon developed by the post-war labour movement — the mass picket.

Now they must make the laws they have enacted stick at the pit-heads. To do that they have to deploy more muscle than the miners. That is what is happening.

The Coal Board took a tactical

By John O'Mahony

decision not to use the courts against the Yorkshire miners for fear that that would unite the miners against them. But they hold that option in reserve.

They have been preparing for this showdown for the last 12 years, since 15,000 pickets — miners, engineers, and others — closed Saltley coke depot in Birmingham and won the 1972 miners' strike.

Look at what Tuesday's Times says on the subject.

"Since the 1972 coal strike every civil contingency planner in Whitehall has had the words 'Saltley Coke Depot' engraved on their heart... The event changed the landscape of industrial relations in Britain for a decade. It became the symbol of naked trade union power used ruthlessly and successfully.

Coordinated

"Saltley caused a fundamental rethink in Whitehall. It led to... the foundation of the Civil Contingencies Unit (CCU) in the Cabinet Office. The CCU remains Whitehall's 'doom watch' organisation. It keeps constantly updated files on 16 essential industries and services, assesses their vulnerability to trades disputes and the degree of relief that can be won by policing or by putting in troops as alternative labour..."

"[The miners' dispute] is being treated in Whitehall as primarily a law and order issue, hence the attention devoted to the National Recording Centre at New Scotland Yard from which the rapid reinforcement, using 7000 officers, of local police forces in the coalfields is being coordinated."

That's why the miners must win. The miners are entitled to labour movement support because they are fighting for their jobs. But it is not just a miners' issue: in the most immediate and direct sense of the words, the miners fight for us all.

The miners are right to fight, and the miners can win.

Despite the efforts of the police thugs, the strike is spreading. More pits were out on Wednesday (21st) than on Monday, despite the police-state Toryism in the coalfields.

Police thuggery has only stif-



Picketing out a pit

fened and hardened the determination of militant miners. They are not intimidated. The leaders of the Yorkshire miners at present are showing the labour movement what a difference good, loyal leadership can make in a serious struggle.

Behind the official leaders stand a mass of rank and file leaders throughout the Yorkshire coal fields, who are the organisers of the strike.

The militants of the NUM are right to fight and to push ahead in the hope that other miners will join them. The NUM general secretary Peter Heathfield said it very well:

"Can you justifiably say to miners working in relatively successful coalfields. 'You have a right to determine whether people working in less successful coalfields can defend their jobs'."

The call for a national ballot at this stage of the fight is in fact a call for demobilisation and capitulation.

The miners can win, even if — tragically — not every miner joins the overwhelming majority of miners now on strike. *Working class solidarity can tip the balance for the NUM.*

The policies of the National Union of Railwaymen and the TGWU not to cross miners' picket lines can be utilised to create a way to victory for the miners.

Neither the Tories nor their centralised gendarmerie are invincible. They are seemingly strong only because of the divisions in

the ranks of the NUM and because of the general depression in the labour movement.

They are strong only because of the miserable quality of the TUC leadership, who do nothing to mobilise support for the miners and their picket lines.

*No coal should pass the ports or travel on rail.

*No miners' picket should be left isolated to face the police. Rally to the picket lines!

*Trade union branches should demand that the TUC organise a general strike against Tory anti-union laws, against cuts, and in support of the miners.

*The Labour Party should come off the fence. Neil Kinnock's weaseling in the middle of the road is a disgrace to the Labour Party. Kinnock should do like Labour Party chair Eric Heffer, and stand on the line with the miners.

*Labour councils should follow Sheffield's lead and object on Police Committees to the deployment of local police on Tory police-state duty in the coalfields. They should refuse to pay them.

*The Labour Party should take the issue to the country. The Tories are creating a centralised national police force, and without any popular mandate or popular licence to do so.

It is part of the same drive as the abolition of major areas of local government.

If the labour movement throws itself into this fight, the miners can win.

BUILDING THE BR

THE RECENT industrial and political offensives — of the miners, Liverpool City Council, the GCHQ Day of Action and Benn's victory at Chesterfield all show that both the power and the will to take on the Tories are there — if union leaderships are ready for the fight. The Cheltenham affair reinforces the lesson learnt during the NGA dispute, that the present leadership is not ready and willing to take on that fight.

In this situation the need to build an organisation to link up those prepared to give a lead is ever more urgent.

Forum

The March 24 BLOC conference in Sheffield is expected to attract 1,500 delegates from union branches and stewards' committees.

It could provide the forum to develop strategy for organising and mobilising the ranks beyond the limits set by our present leaders in the fight against Thatcherism. This strategy must take account of the need to mobilise on all fronts where

By Chris Jones, secretary, ASTMS Manchester Broad Left.

workers are under attack and to develop our capability to organise a political and industrial offensive.

Such a strategy would not be limited to the legislative challenges, exemplified by the NUJ/Dimbleby and the NGA disputes or the attack on the political levy and links with the Labour Party.

Our strategy would also include a firm basis in developing political and industrial struggle at workplace, local, district and regional levels.

We have to develop both the confidence of workers and the credibility of Broad Left initiatives by responding swiftly and effectively, wherever and whenever workers are under attack.

This requires us to give leadership at workplace, local, district, regional and national levels.

It is in this context that we

must criticise those who, like the Socialist Workers Party counterpose the workplace to the wider trades union and labour movement and reject working in the latter. The consequence of their analysis is their failure to help build Broad Lefts within the unions. They will nonetheless be present in force at the BLOC conference. We recognise the right of these comrades to be present at the conference, but urge them to reconsider their mistaken strategy and join with us in developing a Broad Left capable of leading the fightback.

At the same time we must reflect on the organisational deficiencies which led to the lack of success of Broad Lefts in CPSA and the POEU. Our comrades of Militant are over-optimistic in perceiving a working class movement surging irresistibly to the left.

There is much hard work to be done before this becomes a possibility.

That is why the BLOC conference has to be more than a rally. We must first organise the Broad Left itself to reflect our strategy.

Around twenty unions are involved in BLOC and most have regional or divisional Broad Left organisations as we do in ASTMS. These must first be deepened within unions to establish firmer roots in the workplace and develop the capability to organise action.

They must then be broadened to link up action by forming local and regional BLOCs. This has already been recognised by Militant supporters.

However, this recognition has not been constructively implemented. In Manchester, a meeting was convened far too hastily, with only a few days notice, to establish "a local committee of BLOC". Few Broad Lefts were aware of the initiative, and the original error was compounded by establishing a steering committee to be replenished from the floor of a BLOC regional conference of which fewer still were aware.

Structures

Broad based, representative local and regional structures are required rather than hasty initiatives which lead to narrow, paper organisations. BLOC should now set itself the task of building the required structures by convening local steering committees based on all affiliated Broad Lefts. This will allow us to build inter-union solidarity by giving mutual support in action.

We need to discuss at the BLOC conference the kind of structure and organisation we require. We must also discuss the key tasks that structure will perform. These key tasks must include building support for disputes and the launching of a major campaign against the anti-union legislation. These laws are central to the Tory offensive, as we saw on the picket lines at Warrington and will see in the current Trade Union Bill.

We must centre our counter-offensive against this legislation, defending the political levy and links with the Labour Party and defending unions which come under attack. This counter-offensive must be a local as well as a national perspective.

Rally

The enthusiasm and confidence a rally can inspire are vital. But they cannot substitute for well developed strategy and organisation. We need sober discussion and planning on these issues. If this does not take place on March 24 then we must argue that a representative national meeting should be convened as soon as is practicable to hammer out these issues.



Neil Kinnock: which side is he on in the miners' strike?

Def

THE enduring strength and militancy of Britain's unions in the 1970s — no matter how sporadic, uneven and incomplete — combined with the emergence of a hard left around Tony Benn in the Labour Party — no matter how limited its perspective and success — to constitute a major problem for British capital.

In earlier measures, the 1980 and 1982 Employment Acts and in King's Trade Union Bill, the Tories have sought to use the law as an additional weapon to mass unemployment to weaken and remould Britain's unions.

Undermine

They have sought to undermine their organisational base by passing laws on the closed shop intended to cut membership. They have attempted to curtail unions' ability to protect their members by outlawing solidarity strikes, secondary picketing and boycotts. They have sought to limit members' involvement in the unions and make unions less democratic and more open to pressures from employer and state by bringing in secret ballots for union elections and industrial action. They have



Miners at Edlington, near Doncaster

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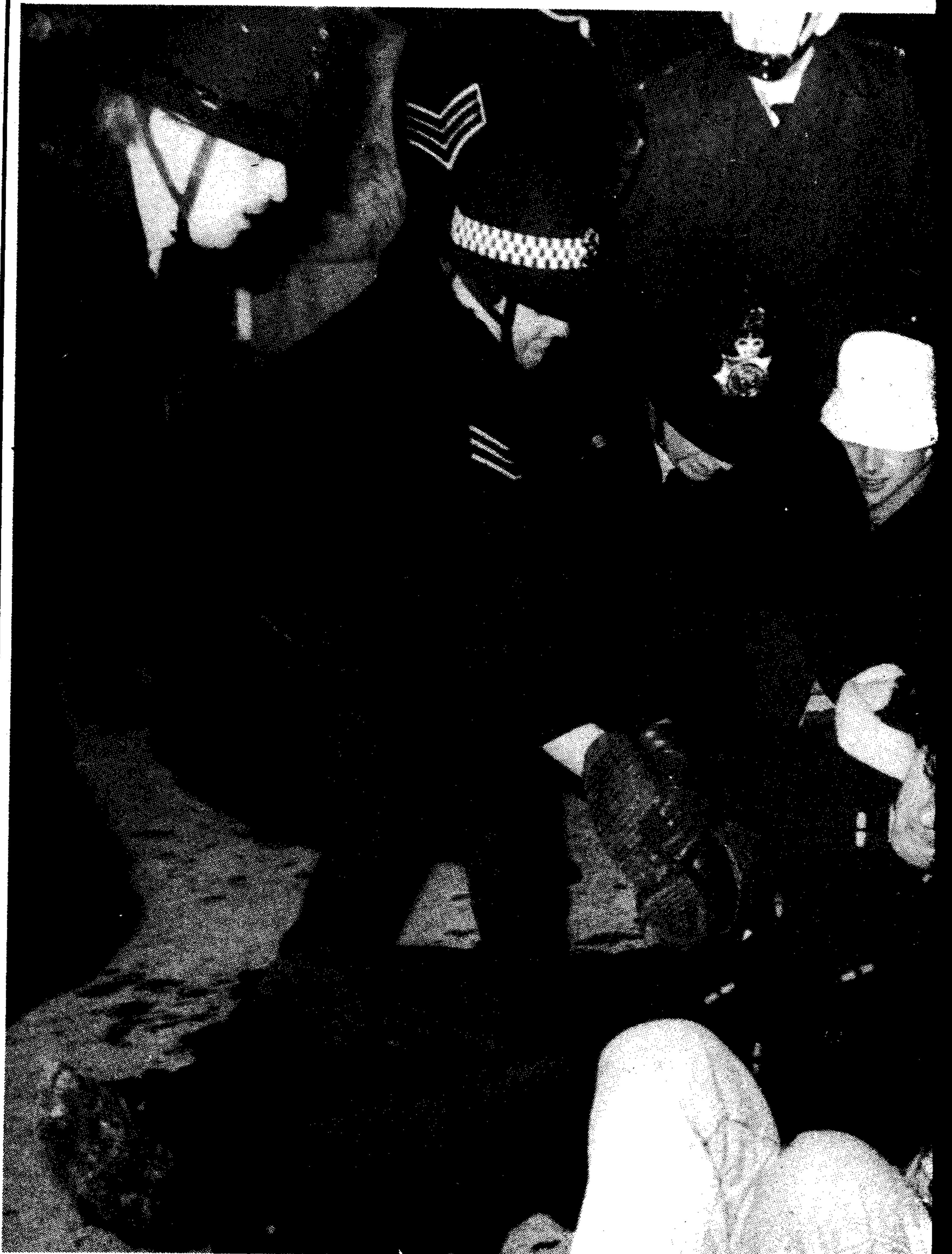
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The cops in action at Warrington in the NGA dispute

ROAD LEFTS

end the political levy

By John McIlroy

tried to drive home the division between industrial affairs and politics so that injunctions were granted against the POEU fighting to protect its members against the threat privatisation posed to their jobs and conditions on the grounds that their dispute was a political one.

This last point is vital when Mrs Thatcher said "What would please me immensely would be if the TUC were not and the unions were not a part of the Labour Party or the Labour Party a part of the trade union movement. That connection I must say is wrong." For capital in today's crisis the connection is a real problem.

Compared with Britain's competitors, its working class movement has a major advantage — the organic and enduring link between Britain's unions and their own political party. True, that party has in the past successfully integrated Britain's workers into the perspectives of capital. Its success in doing so has been of decreasing value. World recession has changed the name of the game.

In 1964 and 1974, Labour governments failed to satisfy its constituency or modernise capital. But important sections of activists were radicalised.

If Bennism should seize control of the Labour Party and this were to be accompanied by a left surge in the unions, the safety mechanism of turn and turn about by two parties, both in different ways and to different degrees trustworthy lieutenants of capital, might be disrupted.

One answer to this threat has been the attempt to politically disorganise the labour movement and build a second capitalist party as the replication and natural development of Labour's cold war right wing. It has been accompanied by a legal offensive intended to weaken both party and unions by weakening the organic links that exist between them.

This is the aim of the political levy provisions in the 1983 Trade Union Bill. Not only will they financially undermine the Labour Party. They could reinforce the right wing tendencies within the unions and open the way for the SDP and coalitionism. The existing overtures from Chapple and Duffy, and cautious Murray's distancing from the Labour Party is an empirical reflex to get into

Downing Street.

A situation where several important unions disaffiliated from Labour could turn these straws into bricks. It could be a major step along the road Thatcher wants where unions are less involved in political issues and less involved in class issues where they are more involved with the interests of their employers, their horizons bounded by the welfare of the enterprise in which they work, their responses conditioned by the needs of capitalist rationality.

US model

It could be a step in the direction of the US model where unions bargain sporadically with the representatives of capitalist parties. It could be an important step towards weaker unions on the US model.

That is why the political levy provisions are a vital challenge to the unions and specifically to the Broad Left. It is why we must devote a considerable part of our energies to campaigning against them.

What exactly is involved? The government, having now received TUC agreement to police the existing system by which workers have a right to

contract out of paying the political levy will not change this into a position where they would be automatically exempt and will have to opt in.

Instead unions will have to hold a secret ballot of all their members every ten years to decide whether or not they will be able to have a political fund. Any expenditure on political objectives has to come out of a special political fund. Unions cannot use their ordinary general funds for political purposes. Unions will have until March 1986 to hold ballots. Any union that does not get a 51% majority in the ballot will be open to legal action by any member if it maintains a political fund. Any such member will be able to go to court and the court will then make an order against the union, outlawing any political expenditure for the next decade.

Funds

Things are made even more difficult by another clause in the Bill which tightens the restrictions on unions using money from their general funds. If unions, for example, finance the publication or distribution of any publication, film or advertisement which taken as a whole seeks to persuade any person to vote for a political party or candidate then that finance has to come out of a union's political fund, not out of its general fund. We know the imaginative inclination of the judges and we know their predilections. Campaigns by the POEU against privatisation or by NALGO or the CPSA against cuts or by educational unions against the vandalism of learning (remember the 'vote for education' campaign around the last election?) could easily be read as falling within that clause.

As unions like NALGO and the CPSA do not have political funds, they would simply not be able to run such campaigns. And the Tories hope unions like the POEU may not have such funds after the ballots and will likewise be disqualified.

The position looks something like this. At one end of the scale are unions in which a large proportion of members pay the political levy and which might therefore be expected to gain the required 51% to keep their fund in the Tory ballot. 98% of TGWU and NUPE members pay the political levy. 96% of NUR members and 92% of USDAW members also pay.

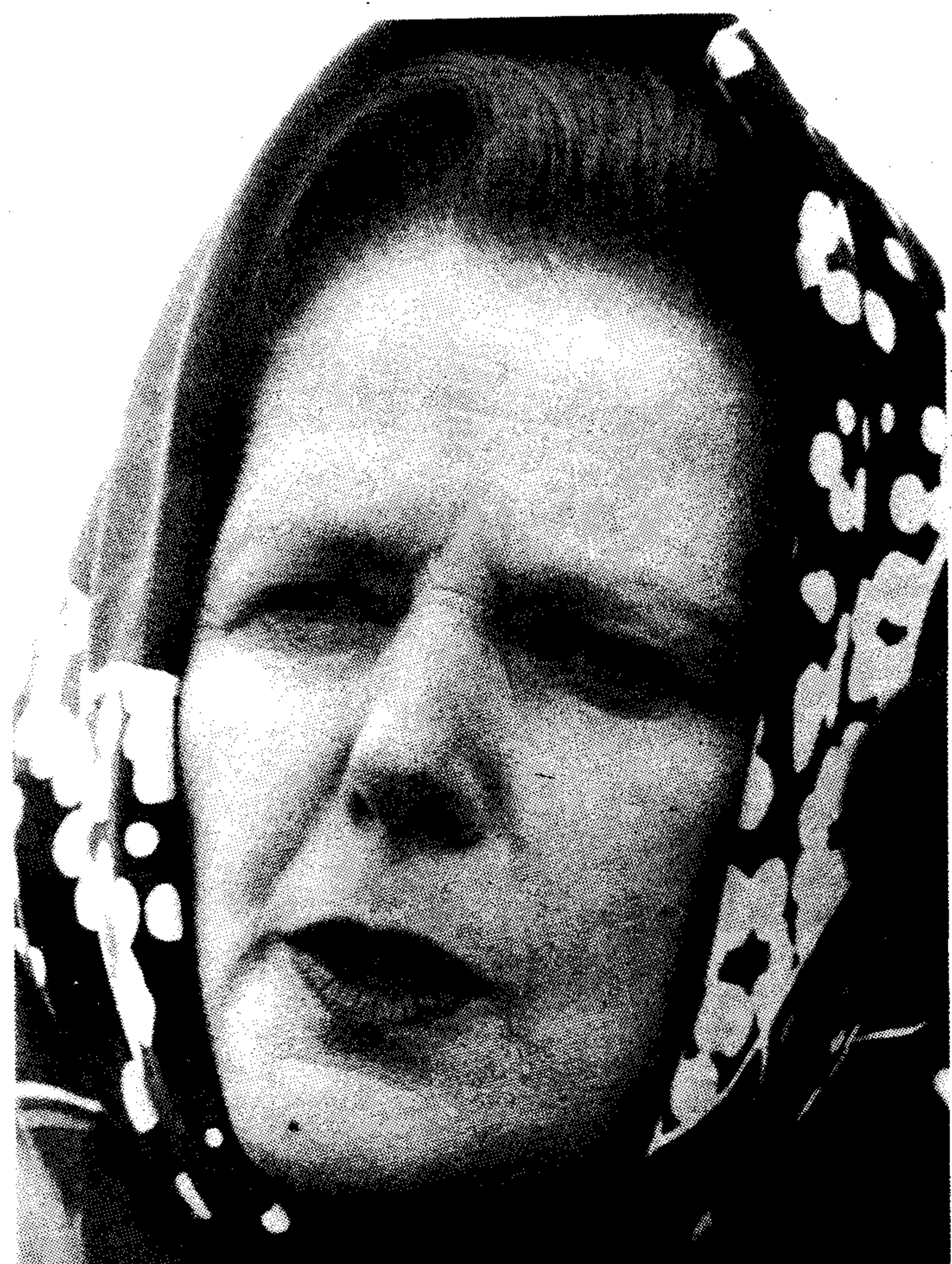
Then there are more middling unions such as AUEW (65%), UCATT (65%) and TASS (58%).

At the other end of the spectrum there are organisations like SOGAT (44%), the NGA (42%), and ASTMS (30%) whose prospects in a ballot look distinctly more rosy.

Unsuccessful

A Gallup Poll carried out recently for Channel Four showed that 53% of trade unionists did not want their union to affiliate to the Labour Party. Only 36% did favour the link.

The recent unsuccessful ballots in NALGO and the CPSA show the problems that will exist in many unions. A MORI survey in 1982 showed that a majority of members in the TGWU, GMBATU and AUEW were in favour of Labour Party affiliation while a majority in the EETPU, NUR and USDAW opposed it. Figures for all 63 unions with political funds at the end of 1982 show that 77% of



JOHN HARRIS

Thatcher wants to separate unions and Labour Party

union members pay the levy compared with 82% five years ago.

Yet in 1982 almost 80% of the Labour Party's income came from the unions. The Party depends on the unions for the overwhelming majority of its funds. At things stand today, without the unions' contribution, it would be bankrupt.

There is time. We have two years. But there is not a moment to be lost in mounting a campaign against the Bill. It is a sad comment on the retreat of recent years that non-collaboration with the Bill has not really been raised — that unions should not participate in the ballots but should wait for members to drag them before the courts.

The need to resist state interference should be raised in the context that trade unionists should be able to decide themselves on what their money is spent with no state veto and that every day that passes shows how impossible it is to disentangle unions' industrial objectives from their political aims. Unions are, whether the Tories like it or not, political bodies. They need, in the 1980s, to deepen not diminish their involvement in politics at every level.

Moreover, dissidents cannot have their cake and eat it.

If the majority decide that the purposes of the union require a political fund, on what grounds should they be entitled to opt out of union policy?

The issue of boycotting state interference must be raised in this context, pointing out that unions, unlike big business over which there are no controls, are being singled out not with the aim of deepening democracy but of curtailing it by stopping trade unionists having a say in how a major political part oper-

ates. However it is likely that all unions will opt to accept the ballots and that the fight will have to be made within the state framework. If a union boycotts the ballot, the court order will not simply order it to ballot but will prohibit political expenditure forthwith.

Most unions won't take that chance. To urge boycott once that decision is taken would be sectarian and would ensure defeat.

All Broad Lefts must put this issue at the very centre of their activities in the context of a fight against the Tory laws in general. But we cannot simply defend the status quo. We have to take up, whilst arguing against state interference, the abuses of a system in which unions purchase Labour Party votes according to the financial and political considerations of their leaders, not the numbers of members paying the levy and where those block votes are wielded by small groups, unanswerable to and unelected by the members.

We must campaign for more individual Labour Party members. We must explain and argue in the workplace the advantages of the Labour Party to union members. We must campaign in the Party to ensure those advantages are real. We must campaign in the unions to democratise the block vote. We must campaign in the Party to democratise its mechanism and turn it outwards towards the workers. We must use the fight against King's Bill to help us in transforming the labour movement. The newly-launched Labour Coordinating Committee campaign is a start. BLOC should give it every support so that it can be extended and deepened.



JOHN SMITH (IEL)



JOHN HARRIS

Murray: first moves to distance TUC from Labour Party

Build a rank and file movement

Mark Starr reviews some issues

THE March 24 conference should provide a forum in which activists in many different unions can come together to discuss the strengths and weaknesses of what they have done and analyse just what should be involved in building Broad Lefts and how they can link up across unions.

It appears to me that there are several interlinked points in talking about building broad lefts in 1984.

The first is the complete inadequacy of the existing leadership of the unions. Like the First World War armies, capital and labour hammer away at each other. Vast sacrifices are made for a yard of ground. The Tories are gaining the ground because they are doing the attacking. But overall they cannot make a decisive breakthrough. Each onslaught, like the NGA and GCHQ, opens their defences to counter-attack. Our leaders limit it, halt it. If we leave it to Murray and Co. then like the general in Sassoon's poem, "He'll do for us all with his plan of attack". If it ever comes, that is.

Left leaders

If we look at how the left leaders have behaved over the last few years, I don't think that they will fill the gap and organise in opposition to Murray. There is a difference between Murray and Scargill, an obvious difference. But I think that the ordinary members need to control both.

We need to fight to make all our leaders accountable. That's why I'm suspicious of those who tell us, "electing officials isn't central". It is, you know. We are all corruptible. We all have to be controlled. Should we have our shop stewards appointed by a democratically elected executive? No? Then the same goes for full-timers, only more so.

I hear that argument in the TGWU. In NUPE I hear, "we've got a left leadership, we don't need a Broad Left." I'm suspicious of that too, for the same reasons. Corrupting pressures and their material position act to separate union leaders, right and left, from their members. That's why we need Broad Lefts.

How to build them? We will get nowhere unless we base them on the ordinary members. At the moment those who are willing to fight and those who see even a basic way to do it are a minority. The existing leaders can take the majority, however protesting, reluctant, cynical, with them. We have to start from that minority of class conscious, aware workers. But we are heading for a dead end unless we turn this minority



NUPE general secretary Rodney Bickerstaffe

towards winning the rank and file and achieving the ability to mobilise them. That's why the workplaces are vital.

In many unions there is a structure where the branch is separated from the workplace. Ten or twelve activists attend the branch. Three or four are in the Broad Left. Some are on the divisional council. There is mutual toleration at the branch. They can even swing the votes in executive elections to get Broad Left members like themselves elected.

There is a temptation here to see this as a strategy for winning control of the union. In the workplace the membership is more backward or disillusioned. To win them is hard and unedifying. It's more congenial to huddle together with the activists at branch, district or division.

Even the centre and the right speak a certain common language and share certain concerns. Left wing full time officials may be sympathetic. It's a temptation to look upwards at the union apparatus, to stop taking issues back to the membership, to soft-pedal on them.

Stage army

They have no objection to you carrying on at branch or trades council as long as you let them get on with whatever gets them through the recession.

This is one big danger. Just as another is seeing the stage army of activists at branch, trades council or district who are won to left candidates or resolutions as a real army.

Branch, division, executive — the formal organs of union policy making are vital. We have to fight for leadership in the unions. But winning the apparatus, vital as it is, will achieve nothing but disaster if we don't win the members and take them with us.

Of course this is a tactical

question to be addressed according to the concrete circumstances in different unions. In one situation, winning an official position may play us best to fight for the membership. In another it may be a distraction from that fight. It all depends. What is certain is that that fight cannot be shirked or bypassed. When we see the relative failure of the CPSA Broad Left to change the union or the way, faced with the Tory court injunction over Mercury, Broad Left members voted to accept it, I begin to wonder whether a lot of the spadework has been done.

I also think that the TGWU Broad Left suffers from this danger of electoralism minus the workplace building. And what's terrible about it is the way, once left candidates are elected, they make so little difference to the union's practice.

So we need a workplace strategy as well as an electoral strategy. We obviously need to fight for the ordinary trade union requirements at the workplace active shop stewards, a proper steward structure, regular meetings, regular report back from other bodies, 100% membership, delegates to Labour Party GMCs and so on.

Bulletins

A useful way of communicating in larger workplaces is through union bulletins. It is also important that Broad Left bulletins and meetings reflect what is happening in the workplace. Often, given the blows of the last few years, this will involve us in rebuilding workplace organisation. We have to do this on a political basis means first of all behaving as socialist activists at work.

Compared with the past this is far easier. In today's crisis you can't make easy bread and butter gains like in the boom. There isn't the same gap between workplace issues and politics. The Tories are daily driving them together.

Members want to tackle and argue about the NGA, about Ireland, about the Royal Family, about GCHQ, about Hart and Mondale, as well as asbestos and the state of the canteen.

Often this is a tough job. Those who talk about an inexorable move to the left obviously have limited experience of it. But it's the key to starting to build anything of value.

Racism and sexism are particularly important. And you do have to show that the left are the best fighters in the everyday conflicts that erupt. But use them to take the members further. I think a very good index of any healthy Broad Left is whether or not it has a paper, no matter how primitive, that you can sell at work and that will start discussion and argument — in other words a paper which relates not just to the internal concerns of the activists, but to the ordinary members.

Of course we have to try and get our union structure improved, to focus more on the workplace.

Workplace union branches are generally a good idea. But so are workplace Labour Party branches. These can initially provide the forum in which the committed minority can come together at the workplace and begin to formulate a strategy for relating in a day to day way to the membership. That's why they are vital.

Building a Broad Left is a hard job. There are far too few socialists in the unions today. It has to be done on the basis of neither just the workplace nor just the apparatus, but fusing the two together. It can be done on this basis.



Union leaders — a long way from the rank and file

Fight these laws!

THERE is no let up in the Tory attempt to use the legal process to shackle the unions.

*The Trade Union Bill at present going through Parliament will mean that unless unions hold secret ballots before any form of industrial action they will be deprived of all legal protections and open to an avalanche of law suits by employers. Mass meetings to take decisions on industrial action after discussion and debate will be outlawed.

*The same Bill will introduce secret, probably, postal ballots for elections for union executives and chief officials. The present election in the TGWU, for example, will be the last that can be held by branch ballot. Nearly every major union will have to revise its rulebook at the behest of the state. The whole operation of internal union democracy will in future be supervised by Her Majesty's

By John McIlroy

Judges.

Later this year the tighter laws on the closed shop will be introduced. Unless four out of five workers covered by a closed shop vote for its maintenance in a secret ballot, employers will not be protected if they sack individuals who refuse to join the union.

If shop stewards attempt to continue to enforce the closed shop they and their union can be sued.

*In the wake of GCHQ, British Telecom unions have claimed that the government has inserted a 'no strike' clause into the Telecommunications Bill. The Lords passed an amendment last month which makes unions liable to unlimited damages if any union member takes strike action which disrupts the service

to Telecom users.

Unions representing 19,000 employees at the eleven Royal Ordnance Factories believe that the Bill which will allow the government to sell the factories off to private enterprise will also threaten trade union rights.

*A consultative document on banning strikes in 'essential' services is expected from the government at any time. The TUC's willingness to accept 'no strike' clauses at Cheltenham has pushed the door even wider open. A new paper by Sir Leonard Neal, former Board member of British Rail and Pilkingtons and Chair of Ted Heath's Industrial Relations Committee, calls for bans on industrial action in gas, electricity, water, sewage and the NHS.

He argues other groups of workers whose action might damage those industries, even though they are not directly employed there, should be covered. There should be no compensation. "It ought not to be necessary to reward people for not taking immoral action," he said.

*In the wake of the NGA dispute more employers are using the law in ordinary disputes. The BBC's injunction against the NUJ in the Dimpleby dispute and against SOGAT in the Radio Times dispute are only the most prominent examples. More employers are deciding that injunctions are not enough: they will return to the court for damages. The £73,000 awarded to Eddie Shah against the NGA has prompted the Fleet Street to go to court for "maximum damages" over the Day of Action stoppage.

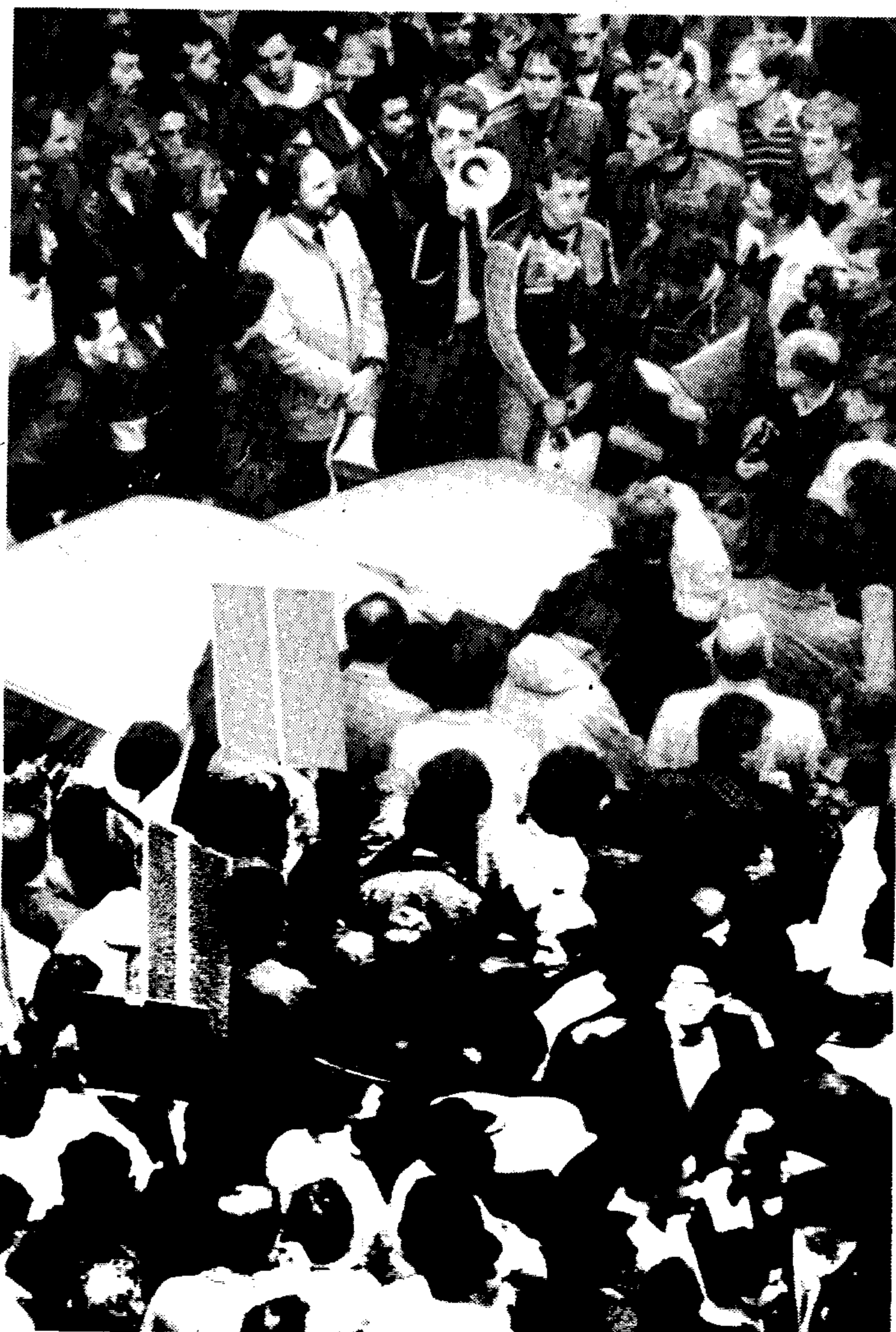
*In an attempt to place further pressure on the low paid, the government is still considering the abolition of wage councils.

The TUC strategy has been disastrous. Appeasement has meant more and worse. We need to begin the fightback now. The legal offensive will not go away. It will intensify. We must argue at every level in the unions.

— Don't accept the laws. Fight them! Unconditional TUC support for any union attacked. Reverse the shameful NGA decision!

— Break all links with the Tories. Force the TUC to stop talking and organise to fight the laws. Withdraw from NEDC, ACAS and MSC. This could give a tremendous boost to the fight against the Tories.

— Build at the base. The NUJ is only the most recent example of leadership buckling.



Westminster POEU branch secretary Colin Talbot addresses members during the privatisation dispute.

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



Broad Lefts conference

Which camp is the TUC in?

THE new season began confidently for Len Murray, the man who lays about militants like Jack Charlton lays about wildlife.

Len's game is "the new realism". On January 26, with the NGA in the bag, the TUC General Council agreed to circulate firm rules for the new game keeping one eye on the courts where the following day the NGA was forced to apologise for behaving like a trade union and assure Mr Justice Eastham that it would never happen again.

The new TUC 'Bible' could have been called 'corporatism without concessions'. As it was written by Len Murray and TUC Education Officer Roy Jackson whose worst enemies could never accuse them of possessing a glimmer of imagination, it was more prosaically entitled 'TUC Strategy'.

Intended to put an end once and for all to the December madness, much of the document was written in deadly Great Russell Street bureaucratese. Its meaning was however very clear. "Strikes", it warned workers with any idea that we can defend conditions or take on the Tories, "not only hurt the business and the community, they hurt the workers involved." Action, it appeared, was old fashioned and out. The new brew was something called 'blathering' and Murray had the patent. The way forward was to blather to employers, not organise against them. "The essence of accommodating industrial change through collective bargaining is the need for compromises reflecting both union objectives and those of employers."

There was a need to blather not only to employers but also to governments whatever their complexion. Blathering to Churchill in 1940 and 1951, the document said, had produced major concessions for unions. Unions should repeat the exercise today. There was a need for the TUC to distance itself from the Labour Party: it

By Mark Starr

had no power. But if the SDP looks like forming a government, said Murray, then they too must be given their fair whack of new instant blather.

Within days Murray was explaining exactly what 'workable compromises' with the employers meant. At a TUC conference in London he was urging trade unionists to accept a cut in wages to finance a shorter working week. Murray's lapdog, John Lloyd of the Financial Times, hastened to explain what Murray really meant to any bone-headed gaffers. "The trade-off", he purred, "is between income and jobs: lower wages rises in return for more employment." It was, he assured his readers, "a typically realistic comment by Mr Murray."

Some of the more intransigent capitalists muttered that they wanted both wage cuts and more unemployment. The majority were over the moon. "Whatever has happened to Len Murray?" the Sun leader writer inquired in an editorial entitled "The Making of Saint Len". They contrasted the bad old days of the 1980 Day of Action and talk of defying the law with the selling of the NGA and "the new grovelling". "If Mr Murray goes on this way" the concluded, "the trade unions will have a new patron saint."

The decision by Thatcher to ban union membership at GCHQ Cheltenham initially left Len unperturbed. Now was his big chance to prove to the cynics, the malcontents, the sourdoughs, that "the new realism" could work; that concessions could work.

As hotheads blustered about industrial action, Murray, armed with the sureties of his Methodist faith, kept his cool. "Unless you talk," he wisely opined, "you can't find out whether they're willing to listen." There was, he felt, "some evidence that



The Messenger newspapers picket line - sold out by Len Murray

the Tories are prepared to listen."

The entire nation was about to witness just how patently wrong Murray was in his view that "even Mrs Thatcher can change her mind if she is patently wrong." But as he muscled up for his big test, Murray took two further side-swipes at the interests of ordinary trade unionists.

In return for absolutely no concessions from the Tories on the third stage of their anti-union legislation on the Trade Union Bill, he gave Tom King "a solemn and binding assurance" to help those trade unionists who wished to exploit their fellows by refusing to pay the political levy.

If a member was experiencing difficulties in taking advantage of fellow members, Murray and Bill Keyes assured the Cabinet, then the TUC would intervene with his or her union to make the path to free riding just that bit easier.

And secondly, Murray vetoed two amendments put down by the NGA and the NGA on the fight against the anti-union laws for the TUC Women's Conference.

Fighting was finished. As Murray thought it undiplomatic to put the matter so bluntly, he argued that the Tory laws had nothing to do with women! This view is not only both nonsensical and sexist. Nobody can recall this champion of women's rights uttering a word when Ada Maddox justified the violation of the policy of her union, NALGO, involved in voting for Murray against the NGA on the grounds that as she had one of the women's seats on the TUC, she wasn't responsible to NALGO.

Nonetheless, Murray had

his evil way and trooped off to Downing Street with his cohorts for the Big One. As you will recall, to cut a long and boring story short, Thatcher wasn't having any.

Far from giving any concessions to keep the new realism going, she wasn't prepared to accept the concessions that Murray profusely pressed upon her! "Don't let's ban trade unionism at Cheltenham," he pleaded. "That's extreme and unreasonable and I must draw the line there. Let's just agree that the workers can't go on strike; won't have any bargaining rights; can't have access to full-time officials; can't attend outside meetings and can't take cases to industrial tribunals..."

Review

When the Blessed Margaret gave Murray the bums rush, even Basnett, Tuffin and Duffy got the message: if that won't wash with the Tories, what will? The decision was taken to call the February 28 Day of Action and review TUC involvement in bodies such as the National Economic Development Council (NEDC), the Manpower Services Commission (MSC) and the arbitration service, ACAS.

"Mr Len Murray's new mood of realism, heralded by the TUC leader on September 7 last year at the Trades union Congress has lasted less than six months" declared the Guardian. "He deserved a return from the government. Instead he gets a union ban", whined John Lloyd. "This is what happens when reasonable men (sic) are kicked in the teeth" lamented Murray.

We may be permitted to say 'We told you so'. We have

argued all along that tripartism is wrong in principle, and moreover the bosses no longer can, let alone want to collaborate with the official representatives of the working class as they did in 1940 or 1951.

Of course it would have been possible for Thatcher to have agreed to Murray's 'compromise'. It gave her everything she wanted. But she was motivated by the desire not to accord any place at all to the TUC in decision making until they have decisively shown what the last two decades have opened to question — their ability not only to want to serve capital, but their ability to successfully control it by delivering their members.

That, in the end, is what the TUC's response in terms of the Day of Action was about, to signal to the Tories that the TUC did still have some power and that they did still have something to sell and were therefore still worth dealing with.

Because the TUC's role is essentially that of broker between labour and capital, rather than that of leaders of labour against capital, it would be fatal if we simply did sit back and say 'we told you so'.

Murray and his friends will attempt to return to the trough as soon as they feel it expedient.

The task of the Broad Left is to build on February 28 and attempt to fill the gap between what the unions need now — leadership in the fight against the Tories — and what we have — not leaders, but appeasers.

The day of action showed the power that is there, the spirit of resistance to Thatcher that still burns.

The action was intended to

be limited and controlled called on Friday for a Tuesday with no clear instructions. Thousands went beyond the leaders, illustrated most clearly by the AUEW members who stopped Fleet Street. A new mood is there but it is to be effective we must crystallise it. We must strengthen it. Thatcher's victory will lead to further attacks on the unions. Broad Lefts have learned the lessons of the last months.

The existing leadership represented by Murray and the TUC General Council is a barrier to resistance. Appeasement doesn't work. Even where left leadership supposed to be strong, in the NUM, NUPE, POEU, TGWU no attempts were made to organise independent Murray and Basnett over the NGA or Cheltenham.

Broad Lefts must fight for new leadership in the unions.

We must build strong organisation in each union based on the interests of the rank and file to give direction and organisation to the will fight exhibited on February 28. That is the best guarantee of making left leadership fight.



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Miners vs. the State

John Douglas and Steve Battlemuch report from Nottinghamshire.

NO effort has been spared by the forces of the state to try to make the miners' picket lines in Nottinghamshire ineffective.

The Yorkshire and South Wales pickets were contained by up to 8000 police on duty in and around Nottinghamshire.

The police would only allow six pickets on the line at each pit. The rest were kept to one side, hemmed in by the boys in blue.

The Nottinghamshire vote - 20,188 to 7,285 to work - was obviously a blow, and the area officials have now joined the 'call a national ballot' brigade.

"We've had a ballot", whine the scabs. "You'll be wanting a ballot for your Sunday dinner next", was the response of one picket angered by the complacent smugness of those crossing the picket lines. They respect more the rights of the police to harry or assault pickets, than the right of fellow miners to form picket lines.

But despite all this, the pickets keep coming, and now their wives are coming with them.

The Nottinghamshire miners who voted for a strike are generally not crossing the picket lines, and in many cases they are joining the pickets.

Barnsley

1000 pickets gathered in Barnsley last Monday, outside the headquarters of the Yorkshire area NUM, to defend their union against the threat of sequestration of its assets by the courts.

The middle pages of Socialist Organiser, with the headline 'Tories and fascists - the last time round', were held up in front of the police, and one miner stuck them up on the fence to show what he thought of the police.

When the police attempted to arrest three miners, the pickets, having the balance of forces in their favour, demanded the release of the three and by sheer weight of numbers forced the police to retreat into a side street.

The strange spectacle of a senior police officer and Jack Taylor, the Yorkshire NUM President, both standing on the top of a police vehicle, with Jack Taylor announcing that the court hearing had been adjourned, was sufficient to get the crowd to disperse.

But many of the pickets were still angry. They demanded full union support for picketing Nottinghamshire.

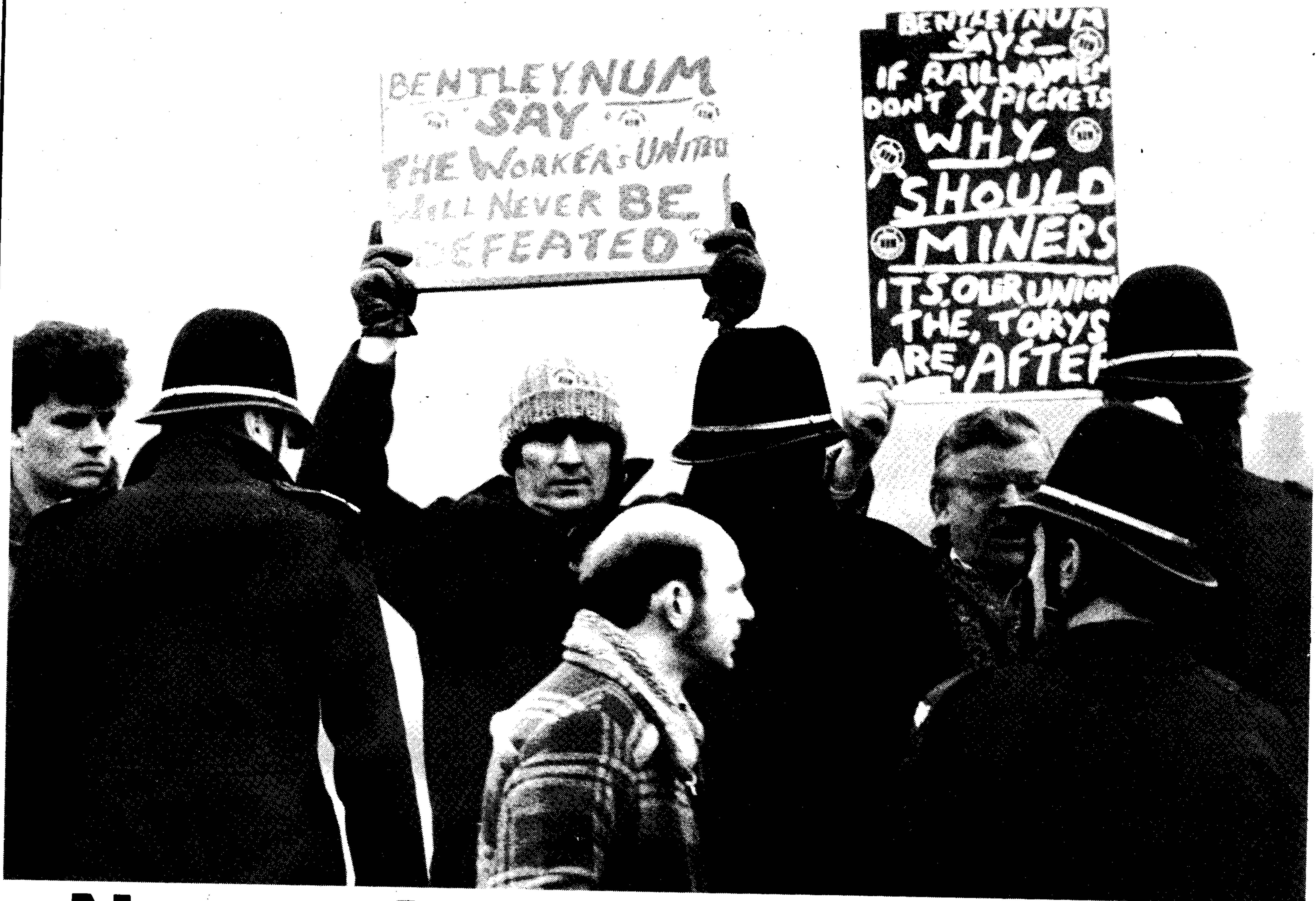
Jack Taylor was remiss in not explaining that the action of the National Coal Board in taking the Yorkshire NUM to court gave the police the excuse they needed to mount their action against pickets in Nottinghamshire. He had an excellent opportunity to galvanise the pickets for a fight not only against pit closures but also against the Tory anti-union laws.

The question of the Triple Alliance (miners-railworkers-steel) and how to deal with the police are already being posed by the militants in Yorkshire and North Derbyshire. At present all the initiative has come from the rank and file. It is up to the leadership to ensure maximum support from other trade unionists for the miners' action.

There are still large numbers of miners on strike in Yorkshire and Derbyshire. The police are still trying to contain the pickets. The police are still trying to contain the pickets. The police are still trying to contain the pickets.

In the Nottinghamshire area, the Bolsover colliery voted 479 to 341 to work.

On Tuesday 20th the afternoon shift refused to cross a Derbyshire miners' picket line, and on Wednesday the Bolsover miners themselves lobbied the Nottinghamshire area executive demanding an all-out strike.



JOHN HARRIS

No coal on the railways!

NOW IS the time for the NUM's partners in the 'Triple Alliance' to come to their aid. Railworkers could help tip the balance for the NUM.

Any coal or coke that is produced is carried by rail or road. Road is very difficult to stop, with poor union organisation, and because of the number of cowboy firms owning just a couple of lorries. But a commitment to stop movement has been won from the TGWU and, with determined picketing, it could be dried up.

Both the NUR and ASLEF

But rail has far better organisation and carries the bulk of the traffic. Here, the key could lie.

Both the NUR and ASLEF

By Rob Dawber
(Sheffield NUR)

have instructed members not to cross picket lines. Properly interpreted this should mean not that pickets have to stand on railway lines, but that a picket at the front entrance means that a train should not enter at the back.

And a Yorkshire picket outside a Nottinghamshire colliery should mean that NUR and ASLEF members do not cross.

Such a policy should be fought for by NUM pickets, outside train crew depots, persuading drivers and guards not to cross picket lines and informing them of which collieries have pickets outside.

Masses of police can get scabs in, but they can't make trains run into Nottinghamshire pits.

Repeat

Pickets should still try, nonetheless, to repeat the scenes of 1972 and 1974, when NUM banners on bridges over railways and at level crossings, stopped trains.

It is not only this policy which should be fought for in the Yorkshire Triple Alliance unions - some of whose areas (that is ASLEF and NUR) spill over into Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire.

Refusing to move coal could thus start to hit Nottinghamshire. While the effects on morale of such help from other unions to the NUM speak for itself.

BR management have already indicated their attitude to such a refusal to cross picket lines. At Tinsley, Sheffield, local union

officials have been told that:

"Refusing to work coal trains will be regarded as a breach of contract, which could mean the sack or other disciplinary measures."

In Doncaster, management have been told that if anyone is sent home for refusing to cross a picket line, "then you know where the next picket line will be."

Management may or may not take a hard line, either, in its own

way, could help the miners by allowing us to boycott or by escalating the situation.

*Oil normally arrives at Eggborough, Ferrybridge and Drax power stations at the rate of under two trains per week. As a substitute for coal, it is clearly a threat. That is why, for the last couple of weeks, traffic has increased to about one train a day - trebling the amount of oil. Pickets needed!

Special issue

THIS Socialist Organiser is an eight-page special issue on the miners' strike and the Broad Lefts conference this Saturday. This week we are also publishing a new pamphlet on the Broad Lefts.

THE good start we have to the March fund has been eroded. After dropping to £81.50 last week, we've only had £36 this week. That makes £312.70 this month.

Next week's paper - the last in March - will be out a day early. That will be a good chance for every SO seller to have a drive to sell more papers, but it means a day less for the donations to add up.

This week's smaller paper will help us save some costs, but we need to boost that £312.70 March total up as far as we can. Send donations to: 214, Sickert Court, London N1 2SY. Thanks this week to: Ann Crowder, £10; Patrick, East London, £2; and those who donated this week to the Science Column Birthday Fund (£2.64 collected); and to Siu Ming's sponsored sit-ups (a further £7.12 collected by South East London supporters and £14.24 by Southwark/Lambeth supporters).



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