

Socialist ORGANISER

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STOP THE PITS!

"Stop merely saying you support us. Come out and join us. We are facing a fundamental challenge to the whole working class, not merely miners. We are facing the organised might of the state machine. There is a police state in Nottinghamshire".

Arthur Scargill,
speaking in Nottingham last Saturday, 14th.

The Scottish TUC is calling on all its members to act in support of the miners. The date has not yet been set but it looks like the day of action will be May Day (May 1).

That's the way to help the miners and beat the Tories!

Now we must fight to make it a Day of Action throughout the whole of Britain.

Demand that the TUC comes off the fence and organises a national strike on May 1.

Demand that individual unions support the Scottish TUC.

Convince your mates to come out with the miners on May 1.



JOHN SMITH (IFL)

STOP THE TORIES!

Victory to the miners!

THE miners' strike is vital to the interests of every British trade unionist. In the trench warfare that has characterised the industrial struggle since 1979 it represents a major onslaught by the forces of capital, led by their vanguard, the Tory government. It is a battle which could be potentially decisive for both the government and the trade union movement, coming as it does hot on the heels of the NGA and the GCHQ affair.

This is a provoked strike. It has been planned. It has been prepared for.

As early as 1978 the Tory cabinet asked present Minister of Transport Nicholas Ridley to prepare a detailed reconnaissance on the enemy forces. Ridley singled out groups like teachers, road transport workers and steelworkers as amongst those who could be taken on and gunned into submission.

Within months of Thatcher taking power a derisory offer to the steel unions had provoked a national confrontation.

Thanks to the defeatism which riddled Generals Murray and Sirs, the Thatcher administration gained its first major victory and opened the ranks of labour to the subsequent toll of jobs and conditions.

The government strategy was to postpone an all-out attack on the strongest groups such as the miners until unemployment had sapped Labour's vigour and the anti-union laws were on the statute book and tested.

The miners had to be moulded, disorganised and weakened before a set-piece battle could commence. So in 1981 Thatcher gave ground, made concessions but kept her guns firing.

The Labour government had already, as so often, laid the groundwork. The strength of the 1972 and 1974 strikes was based on the national wage scales.

Since its introduction in 1978, the productivity scheme has gone some way

to meeting its objective of splitting up the miners. 'One rate for the job' means united action.

Today more than a fifth of miners' wages consist of productivity payments. Those at the safe and productive pits can earn over £40 a week in bonus — a strong basis for conservatism.

Thatcher's biggest howitzer was the generous redundancy terms.

Last year 20,000 jobs were sold in the pits, bought for £193 million in Judas money.

At the end of March 1981 there were 225,000 miners, today there are 190,000.

Other lessons had been learned by governments from the 1970s strikes. A Civil Contingencies Unit in the Cabinet Office kept watch constantly on the essential industries, assessing their vulnerability to disputes. After the experience of the NGA strike, the National Recording Centre at Scotland Yard was made responsible for police all over the country being used to stop mass pickets. Thatcher and MacGregor were ready to take on the praetorian guard of the working class.

The boss class is united and determined.

If they can blast the miners into oblivion, they can break through on all fronts. A severe defeat for the miners would have serious Falklands-style ideological repercussions amongst workers. If the early '70s revenge 1926, capital could now take its revenge for Edward Heath. 'The defeat of Mr Scargill's miners will do more for the economic prospects of Britain than any chancellor could...' (Sunday Times editorial, 18 March).

The strike was not manipulated by the devious Arthur Scargill as the bosses' press alleges.

It was deliberately provoked by Ian MacGregor.

The decision to close Cortonwood pit with four weeks' notice, a pit which had been promised five years' life and which involved many miners who had recently moved from other pits, was in violation of the NCB-NUM procedures.

MacGregor felt now was the time to show his hand and announce the hit list Scargill had long and correctly alleged existed. 20 pits and 20,000 jobs would go in the next 12 months.

MacGregor and Thatcher felt that this announcement might well herald strike action in Scotland and Yorkshire. They were gambling on the rest of the

coalfields staying put.

They have temporarily lost that gamble. But the workers cannot stand still. The executive of the NUM should now announce that **the strike is a national strike and will be organised and controlled nationally.**

They should tell the members to dig in for a hard and bitter struggle.

The executive should campaign throughout the coalfields to inspire and deepen the commitment of the membership.

They should announce: **there will be no national ballot. The purpose of the call for the national ballot is to break the strike.** It is the demand of the blacklegs who would consign their brothers and sisters to the dole queues. It is the voice of Thatcher and MacGregor in our midst.

This argument must be put across again and again to those in the safe pits. Not only have you a duty to fight for your fellow members. Your own future is not secure!

The Tory strategy will not stop at this year's mutilation. The drive for contraction of the mining industry to a few super pits with a handful of jobs will continue. You will not be allowed to succumb to your own lack of understanding of your own self-interest in the shameful secrecy of a ballot. You will not be allowed to vote your comrades out of a job.

National direction and organisation is required to build the strike in the pits. **But the strike cannot be**



Jack Taylor

won in the pits. The arguments for the fight to stop pit closures has to be got across to the entire trade union and Labour Party spectrum.

We have to hammer home that a job sold is a job gone forever. That the UK pits produce the cheapest deep-mined coal in the world.

That every pit pays for millions of pounds worth of interest to the capitalist money lenders.

That Thatcher's "massive subsidy" is a fraction of the cost of the Falklands war.



Demonstration in Scotland in support of the miners on 24 March

That the miners are not the aristocratic elite Fleet Street paints, with surface workers earning £75 basic a week.

That a defeat for the miners will be a defeat for us all.

Armed with these arguments the miners must move.

The time of year is not a good one. The coal stocks are high. Only light minded dilettantes would fail to measure the odds. But if stocks are 24 million tons today, they were 17 million in 1972.

There is a magical chemical which can instantly dissolve those stocks as a weapon for Thatcher and MacGregor. Its name is **solidarity.**

Mass picketing must be organised consisting of miners and other workers to take the struggle into the wider movement.

*The open cast mines which provide a financial boost to the NCB must be stopped.

*All British ports must be closed to coal.

*Not one piece of coal must move in Britain. All TGWU drivers and ASLEF and NUR members must boycott the movement of coal.

*A campaign must be mounted to bring out Britain's power workers.

*The TUC said it would call a one-day general strike if GCHQ workers were sacked. The miners strike is just as important. A one-day all-out stoppage should be called immediately.

If this strategy was implemented, victory would be in sight. But while the boss class is united and determined — witness its

police hordes — our own movement is divided. **Solidarity such as we suggest will require a hard fight.**

At its meeting on March 19 the TUC General Council failed to even discuss the life and death issue. It was not raised by miners' delegate, Mick McGahey.

If the fight is to be won, the struggle must be taken into the TUC. If Murray and Basnett are not prepared to fight, the TUC must organise.

Evans and Bickerstaffe and Tony Dubbins should form a miners support committee and appeal directly to the ranks of all unions to support the miners.

The ranks can move now in the branches and stewards committees to form local support committees. We don't have to wait for the trade union leaders.

If possible, support groups should be organised around the trades councils.

We must raise again the call of miners president Herbert Smith in 1926 when he berated other union leaders to stop talking and 'Get on the field!'

In particular we have to say to the Labour Party leaders, stop lending support to Thatcher and get on the field.

Kinnock's statement "when people become violent in the process of picketing I condemn it" is a shameful endorsement and amplification of the lies of the Tories and the media which can only harm the miners.

Every pressure must be put on Labour's leaders to give total and unconditional support to the miners, particularly as a campaign

of mass picketing outside the miners will require us to prepare for an attack from the courts.

The NCB have not renewed the offensive against the Yorkshire miners but the use of the anti-union laws may be expected from the CEBG or British Rail or a host of smaller employers.

Every Labour Party branch must pass resolutions calling for the Labour Party to be put on a war footing and devote all its resources to this dispute.

Every local Labour Party should make all its facilities available to the miners, whether they be local or visiting pickets.

Leaflet local workplaces, put up miners' pickets and organise pickets themselves.

Extra-parliamentary campaign is a pet word in the Party. Now is the chance to make it real.

A campaign on these lines could start developing the perspective of an all-out general strike. But right now what's essential is to push the dispute another few miles forward.

Now is the hour for every single person who opposes Thatcher's Britain to stand up and be counted.



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

Subscription is £7 per year, £2 unwaged, 50p OAPs.

LABOUR FOCUS
ON EASTERN EUROPE



Box 23, 136 Kingsland High St., London E8

The strike is spreading

Nottingham Socialist Organiser supporters report

THE BATTLE to shut down the Nottinghamshire pits is still being waged – in the face of an unprecedented operation by thousands of police.

On Sunday night/Monday morning (25th/26th), hundreds of miners were stopped from entering Nottinghamshire by police who threatened mass arrests.

The pickets asked: 'If we carry on towards the colliery, will we be arrested?' 'Any colliery?' 'What are you doing with that list of our names?' 'We're keeping hold of it in case there is any more trouble'.

'Where do we go now?' 'Home'.

The police stopped every vehicle at the county border, and checked every person. There were many arrests.

At one major road block, about 100 miners marched 10 miles before being confronted by hundreds of police. Scuffles broke out, but the weight of police numbers forced the pickets back.

The Nottingham labour movement is starting to organise for the miners, and the question of the police is being taken up by the Constituency Labour Parties. An emergency County Labour Party meeting is being pushed for to attempt to get the Labour-controlled County Council to take a firm stand against flying police.

Dan Duncan reports from Sheffield

AS THE coal strike moves into its third week, the NUM has considerably stepped up its action.

This week has seen the formation of picket lines at coal depots and stockyards, with train and lorry drivers on the whole supporting the miners' struggle and refusing to cross the picket lines despite threats that refusal to cross constituted a breach of contract and would result in sackings.

250 pickets also successfully closed down the Yorkshire offices of the Coal Board in Doncaster.

The police have responded with increased use of roadblocks throughout Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire.

There were 27 arrests on Monday 26th.

Police smashed the windscreen of one miner's car in order to drag him out and arrest him for obstruction.

Such behaviour, however, has not demoralised the striking miners. Quite the opposite. It has hardened their resolve.

Alex Fry reports

THE POLICE have since been smashing up miners' cars with crowbars. In Nottingham, Maltby NUM branch delegate Frank Slater, had his car windows smashed when he refused to talk to the police.

Eight cars were stopped at a roundabout off the M1 and received the same treatment. Last Wednesday night half a dozen Welsh miners were tied up to a metal fence by Thoresby pit to stop them picketing.

Fund-raising disco for the Yorkshire miners, organised by Nottingham South Labour Party women's section.

8pm, Friday March 30, at the Narrowboat, South St, Nottingham.



Kent miners' wives marching in Leicester

Labour slams police

Humberside County Labour Party has called on the Labour-controlled county council to refuse to make overtime payments for police time on anti-strike activity against the miners.

The decision was made by an overwhelming majority at a County Party meeting on Saturday 24th. So far there has been no response from the Council leadership.

Northampton South Labour Party has sent a resolution to the County Labour Party condemning police action against the miners.

It calls on the County Council's ruling Labour Group to do all it can to stop such action, and asks the Labour Group to refuse money for extra police overtime on anti-strike duty.

Benn, continued from p.1

of any party, but certainly not for Labour councillors – consciously to take a decision that would impose such suffering on so many people in an area that has suffered so much.

If anyone has any doubts about the relationship between conscience and the law, conscience historically – the idea of what is right and wrong – is and must always be above law made by men. And it is *their* law they are trying to make us obey, and not a law that conforms to our position.

The Liverpool labour movement has mobilised the people and educated them into the reality of what is happening. And I believe that the real battle that we are now fighting is the battle to enlighten people against a Tory press that harasses, distorts, and misrepresents what we are trying to do – nowhere better demonstrated than in your own Liverpool press, and also in that other formidable centre of reactionary opinion known as the SDP-BBC-Liberal Alliance.

It is said by some, and it cannot be denied, that in setting your force in the way you have done

there are risks involved. Nobody denies this. And certainly those outside who are not taking the risks themselves are bound to regard the decision as one that you have to take yourselves.

But I would repeat what has been said by others – none of the gains that have ever been made by the working class movement in Britain would ever have been made unless people were prepared to take risks for themselves and those they sought to represent.

This year we are celebrating the Tolpuddle Martyrs. I wonder what advice they would have been given by those moderates. Would they have said that they should have gone to Australia quietly.

What about the people of Poplar, under George Lansbury, who stood up against a Tory government under very similar circumstances.

All our gains have been made by struggle, and if we stop struggling, they will take them all away again.

Liverpool is entitled to expect now the full-hearted support of the entire labour movement in and out of Parliament, in and out of the councils, because what we are doing is right.

Police on the roads

By Jane Ashworth

A carload of Socialist Organiser supporters set off from Sheffield last Sunday night/Monday morning to go down to the picket lines in Nottinghamshire. We knew the police were out in force and there might be difficulties getting into the county. But we went down the M1 anyway, armed with cover stories.

Everything was fine until we got within five miles of Nottingham, when we saw flashing blue lights in front and a tail-back. We slowed up. There was a police escort through Nottinghamshire.

The A610 turn-off was blockaded with rows of police, cars, and vans, to stop us leaving the motorway. Police cars went up the outside lane, looking into the cars they'd slowed down.

We pulled into a service station and thought about leaving by the slip road but it was next to a packed police station so we went back onto the motorway and finally made it into town where we met up with some Socialist Organiser supporters.

We went to Gedling pit, which had had one of the best votes in the ballot and found about 60 South Wales miners picketing with a few from Nottingham. We were only able to turn back 20 miners at the most.

The police outnumbered the pickets and another three or four coach loads of them were waiting inside the pit. They radioed amongst themselves and back to HQ about the eight 'students' on the picket line so we were expecting trouble as we went back to the car.

And it came. As we were about to drive off, two coppers came up and asked the driver for his licence. Then they demanded to see in the boot. We asked them if they had any right to force us to open it, which they wouldn't answer. So we asked them again and again and again. The copper then said that he suspected people like us, with 'funny politics' from 'outside the area' of causing

trouble. We asked him what he meant by 'funny politics' and he said 'you're educated you should know'. Then he said he wanted us to open the boot because we were suspicious. Suspicious because we wouldn't open the boot. We pointed out that this was stupid so he said that he suspected us of being terrorists. We asked him if he was being serious and if he really meant to do us under the Prevention of Terrorism Act. At this he backed down and his mate drove up and offered him a home so he went.

The same car was stopped on the way home. A car full of Manchester coppers was stopped twice. Saturday, travelling to E

YS and the miners

WHAT YS Branches can do in the miners' strike.

1] Contact the nearest NUM Panel and ask them if it is okay to organise street and estate collections. Try to organise factory gate, or office block collections. Organise soap-box meetings, preferably with an NUM speaker.

2] Go around flyposting the centre-page poster in the issue of Socialist Organiser. It's not usually a good idea to do it in the middle of the night. Do it during the rush hour.

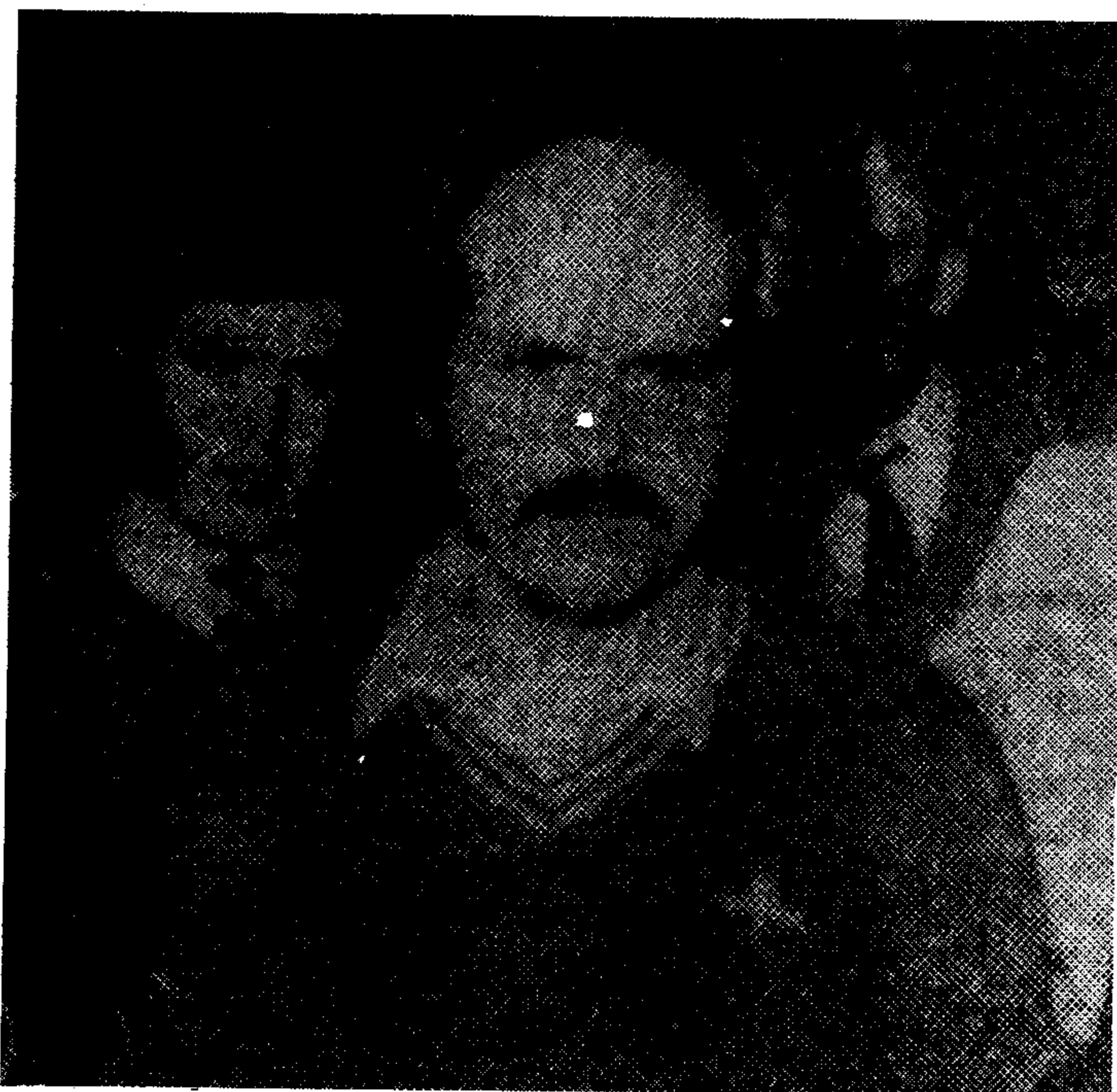
3] Argue for unemployed groups, student union branches, Labour Party and YS branches to adopt the pit. Visit it regularly. Take down food and drinks for the pickets. Hold public meetings in support of the miners.

4] Get student unions to open up facilities for flying pickets. Labour Councils should send messages of support to the NUM and open up their facilities to

ORGANISE FOR A GENERAL STRIKE

Choice in El Salvador elections

Repression or repression



Dublin helps London



North and South

By Paddy Dollard

DOMINIC McGlinchey, the reputed head of the Irish National Liberation Army, was captured in County Clare two weeks ago and handed over to the British authorities in Northern Ireland within 24 hours.

It was a holiday, so the heating was turned off and the judges had to sit in their overcoats to decide McGlinchey's fate. He is the first to be extradited from the South to the North and the extradition is an important event in cementing a common Dublin-London "law and order policy".

The following is the front page editorial of the Sinn Féin paper, An Phoblacht.

THE extradition of Dominic McGlinchey — passed over the border from gardai [Southern Irish police] to RUC in the last dark hours of St Patrick's Day — marks one of the blackest spots in all the long years of Free State collaboration.

Whatever fine legal distinctions are drawn or judicial sophistry is engaged in, the reality is

a piece of political treachery which lies squarely at the door of the coalition government.

Over the last decade, British and loyalist politicians have clamoured for this ultimate collaboration as the final submission of a Dublin government to British rule in Ireland.

In spite of the most repressive legislation in the form of the Offences Against the State Act, in spite of the harassment and imprisonment of countless republicans, in spite of the disastrous financial cost of guarding the British-imposed border from the South, in spite of Section 31 censorship, in spite of the political hounding of Sinn Féin, in spite, even, of the Criminal Law (Jurisdiction) Act, they have always demanded this final capitulation in the form of extradition.

And the reason is that extradition means that Dublin is acknowledging the sectarian and brutal RUC as an 'impartial police force'; it is giving its official blessing to the infamous Diplock courts, show trials and all; it is accepting Britain's attempt to criminalise the Irish struggle for freedom; it is finally cementing a joint Dublin/London approach to the North as fundamentally a 'law and order' or 'security' problem rather than a political one.

All of this, in short, amounts to the craven acceptance by Dublin of Britain's presence as unchallenged occupier of six counties of Ireland and the abandonment of the national objective.

What further step is necessary for the Free State government to drop all pretence and apply for admission to Britain's 'united kingdom'?

Paul Muddle reports on the presidential election in El Salvador, where the votes are now being counted.

ELECTIONS in El Salvador have always been characterised by fraud and coercion.

In the Assembly elections of March 1982, voters were given a choice of the Right or the extreme Right. They had to vote with numbered ballot papers which corresponded with numbers registered for each voters at polling stations. Ballot papers fell into a clear perspex box presided over by a soldier, usually sporting an armband of the far-right ARENA party.

When the votes were all counted up in 1982, it was clear that there had been extensive ballot-stuffing. The claimed turnout exceeded the size of the electorate by several hundred thousand.

And yet this huge fraud was pronounced a 'return to democracy' by US Secretary of State Alexander Haig. Why?

Opinion polls in the US indicated that for many Americans the growing US military involvement in El Salvador was too reminiscent of the bloody and inglorious defeat suffered by imperialism in Vietnam. To US policy-makers it became clear that to pacify the oppositionists at home, imperialist intervention would have to be dressed up as defence of the democratic process rather than support for a teetering military tyranny.

As the elections aroused a blaze of international publicity, Reagan testified to Congress that El Salvador's human rights record had improved, and Richard Stone was sent to Central America

to initiate 'dialogue' between the dictatorship and the FDR-FMLN. (On February 17 this year Stone was sacked by Reagan for favouring negotiations).

Since 1982 the military strength of the Salvadoran regime has declined. In the past few months the FMLN have inflicted major blows on government troops.

In December the military complex at El Paraiso in Chalatenango was overrun. In January the strategic Cuscatlan bridge was destroyed.

Whole army units are surrendering without a fight. A major counter-insurgency initiative by the army has ground to a halt.

More than ever, the US policy-makers need a propaganda victory. Hence the rush to get the presidential elections in El Salvador going by March, even though the Salvadoran central elections committee complained that it could not possibly draw up a new electoral register in time.

In an attempt to overcome criticisms of fraud, the US Agency for International Development provided the Salvadoran elections committee with a computer on which a proper register could be compiled. However, complaints are already being voiced about the election.

The ballot papers used at 'national' polling stations (those stations at which refugees are required to vote) are so complex that few can understand them. This favours the extreme right, because the refugees are more likely to vote for the 'moderate' Christian Democrat candidate.

It is also reported that on the agricultural cooperatives ARENA members who work for Agricultural Reform Institute have been using bribery and coercion to ensure that the peasants vote for ARENA leader and death squad organiser Roberto D'Aubuisson.



Face of the death squads

The Guardian on Monday 26th reported that many areas have not received ballot papers in time because of the haste with which the election has been called.

The election has been a farce. Thatcher endorsed it by sending two observers — one of them an Oxford geographer described by an associate as 'a political nincompoop', and the other a local government officer. If they are anything like the last lot of British observers, they will spend two days shut up in a hotel and return to announce that the elections were a model of fair play.

Although the FMLN declared that this year they would not physically disrupt the elections or promote a boycott as they did in 1982, they still managed to keep up the pressure on an overstretched military. On polling day, March 25, they ambushed a convoy, killing nearly all 40 soldiers.

It seems likely that none of the candidates will achieve the necessary 50% of the votes cast in the first round, and that there will be a run-off in May between Christian Democrat and ex-president Duarte, and ARENA leader D'Aubuisson.

A Duarte victory would please US policy-makers because they could dress it up as a victory for the moderate centre. Yet Duarte was president in 1980-2, and showed neither the ability nor the inclination to curb the activities of the death squads.

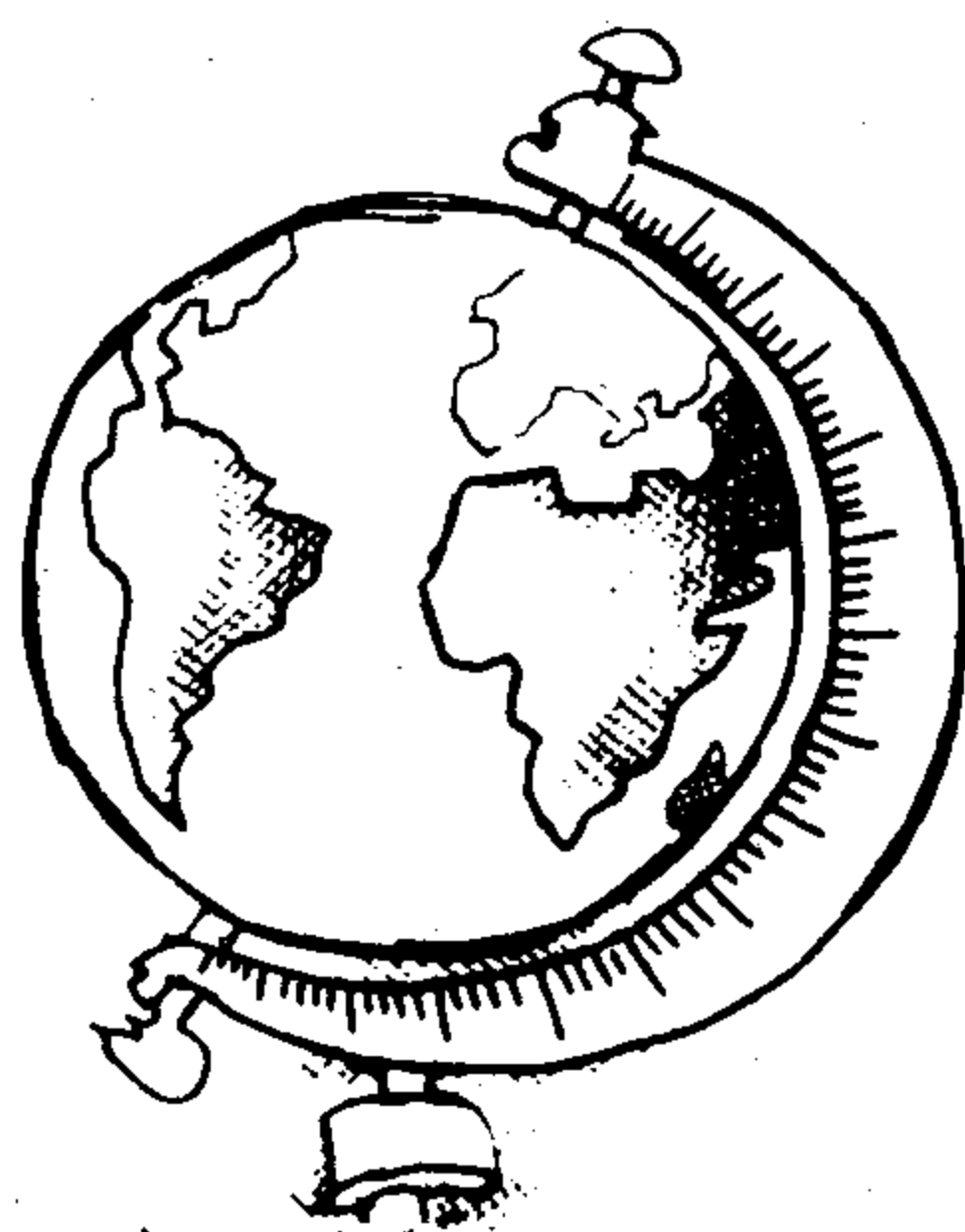
At a recent press conference Duarte seemed to be trying to outdo D'Aubuisson, saying that he would never negotiate with the Left.

A D'Aubuisson victory would mean that any last restraints placed on the activity of the maniac Right would be swept away, and thousands more would die. It would be a tricky position for US imperialism, but ultimately they would have almost certainly back D'Aubuisson.

In the words of a State Department adviser talking about the Cuban dictator Batista 30 years ago, 'I know he's a son of a bitch, but at least he's our son of a bitch'.

As an FMLN militant pointed out in a newspaper interview last week, the choice facing the Salvadoran people in this election is between 'repression or reform/repression'.

WORLD



BRIEF

Italy

THE Christian Democrat-Socialist Party coalition in Italy plans to take away the labour movement's right to index-linked wage increases. It is in effect a plan to reduce wages.

In response to this, over a million workers marched through Rome in a protest organised by the largest union federation, the Communist Party backed CGIL, last weekend. It was one of the biggest demonstrations in the militant history of the Italian working class.

The new Bill was introduced by Bettino Craxi, the right wing leader of the Socialist Party and head of the ruling coalition. Previous legislation guaranteed automatic inflation-linked increases for Italy's 20 million workers.

'Socialist' Craxi succeeded in pushing the Bill through the Senate, but faces big opposition — mainly from the Italian Communist Party — in the Chamber of Deputies.

Opposition is also being organised by the Socialist Party, however, and even by some of its parliamentary deputies. The CP has tabled over 1,000 amendments to delay approval of the Bill until after April 15, when the government decree on which the Bill is based is due to lapse.

US aids Egypt

THE USA is helping Egypt go to the aid of the Sudanese government in a war to control the waters of the Nile. Work on the Jougla Canal was halted five months ago when sabotage action by the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM) caused French contractors to withdraw.

About 4,000 guerrillas, mostly defectors from the Sudanese army, are doing battle with the Numeiri regime.

The badly unstable Numeiri regime has proved incapable of stemming the growth of the SPLM, as demoralisation has spread in the Sudanese army.

The more powerful Egyptian state — which wants to restore itself as a regional power — has been airlifted into Sudan by the US. About 12,000 Egyptian troops are now supplementing Numeiri's army.

THE Bromley Health Emergency campaign are organising a protest march and cavalcade of cars against the inhuman policies of this government in the National Health Service.

We will assemble on Saturday 31 March at 10.30 am at Bromley North Station and go through the centre of Bromley to finish at Norman Park, Bromley Common. For further information phone Mike D'Arcy on 01-466 1297.

Czechoslovakia

By Alex Simpson

LAST month a poster was put up in Prague University protesting against the siting of new Soviet missiles. Students were asked to register their support by scrawling peace signs on the wall around the poster.

Apparently, the poster stayed up for several hours before being noticed by the university management, and the police took it down. By the time it was removed, hundreds of signs had been scrawled around it indicating strong support for the sentiments it expressed.

More generally in Czechoslovakia, public dissent is often being expressed at civil defence lectures and official rallies. "Communist" Party propagandists find themselves facing abuse and hostile questioning. Audiences no longer accept setpiece speeches with unquestioning docility.

The strength of popular opposition is such that Party papers have printed letters against the new missiles. The government has been forced to beef up its propaganda efforts to justify stationing of the missiles while at the same time issuing assurances of the Warsaw Pact's commitment to disarmament.

All this is modest and even minuscule by Western standards, but it is tremendously important nonetheless. Since the Russian invasion of 1968 Czechoslovakia has been politically docile and the regime amongst the most repressive in the Soviet bloc. For this level of opposition to be expressed publicly on such a subject there has to be a tremendous volume of popular feeling against the siting of the Soviet missiles in Czechoslovakia.

Alan Clinton and Socialist Organiser

THE debate in Socialist Organiser over the fate of the local government left has rightly been overshadowed by our coverage of the fightback in Liverpool. But it is worth drawing out some of the lessons of the failure of other councils to follow Liverpool's stand.

Liverpool City Council Labour Group has had one huge advantage over the other left wing councils in Britain — it had a clear-cut policy on what it was going to do to confront the government from the start.

The councils, like Islington, which refused to adopt a clear strategy of confrontation have, instead, muddled along and increasingly become simply 'managers' of the system.

That has led to Islington, along with other left councils in London, being drawn into disputes with its workers and turning on many of its supporters. Islington has tried to take back the first flat-rate pay scheme for DLO workers, refused to negotiate with its low-paid nursery workers, refused planning permission for a women's centre under pressure from the press, raised council rents, etc., etc., etc.

And most of the left on the council went along with this, leaving only a handful of councillors serious about the type of policies and the spirit of resistance they started out with.

Sadly for us, one of the key figures in this retreat was for many years an SO supporter — Alan Clinton, the Council's chief whip. The other SO supporter among the councillors, Pat Longman, played a prominent role in the resistance to the retreat.

After nearly 20 years of involvement in revolutionary socialist politics, Alan reacted to the confusion and retreat around him on the council by succumbing to it — and joined the chorus of tired "realists".

He has supported rent and rate rises and opposed the DLO workers' struggle to keep their flat-rate pay system. At our last meeting Islington SO group decided that we had to dissociate from him publicly.

It is often difficult being trapped on the edge of the movement, or "at the back of the hall" as Alan would have it.

But faced with a movement that has led itself into confusion and crisis, better to be at the back of the hall and with the council's workers than at the front of the hall or on the platform and against them.

Better, I should add, not from the point of view of 'trying to keep your hands clean' but from the point of view of trying to reorganise and reorient the movement to the tasks it faces.

Islington SO supporters have been trying to do that. We have been afraid neither to take 'responsibility' when the choice is there to lead, nor to face isolation 'at the back of the hall' when that is the best course.

Alan and many on the local government left have had a taste of 'responsibility' and being 'at the front of the hall' — and now can't realise that what they're taking responsibility for is the local finances of the capitalist state and for locally carrying out Tory policies against the rank and file of the labour movement. The socialist future lies with the rank and file. Socialist Organiser's job is to help prepare that future. We stay with the rank and file.

NIK BARSTOW
Islington SO Group

(Note: Nik Barstow is secretary of Islington Labour Party's Local Government Committee).

Edinburgh's other face

By Ricky Houston

Edinburgh District Labour Party will advocate a rent freeze and a programme of increased service and council house building in the May elections.

This was decided by a 2-1 majority at the District Party meeting, but a sizeable number of the Labour Group councillors supported a defeated resolution which urged the party to campaign on a policy of raising rents by a minimal amount to improve services.

Supporters of this point of view ranged from Labour "traditionalists" to those who did not think that the Labour Party had strong enough support to confront central government.

It was pointed out that a minimal rent increase couldn't pay for improved services. The cost of upgrading Edinburgh's housing schemes would be enormous.

Council housing in many parts of this Tory-controlled "Festival City" is in an extremely bad state.

Rents are among the highest in Scotland, the level of service is publicly acknowledged to be abysmally low, and the proud capital of Scotland boasts the highest council tenant eviction rate in the country.

Inner city deprivation common among English cities is turned on its head in tourist-conscious Edinburgh where the beautiful view of Edinburgh Castle at the heart of the city stands in marked contrast to the boarded up windows in the sprawling housing estates which cover the outskirts of Edinburgh.



Above: Glasgow. Edinburgh's 'outer city' is just as bad.

The criteria which Oxfam use to designate a third world poverty area have been met in the Niddrie/Craigmill council estate which lies to the East of the City and now houses two Oxfam workers who live and work in the area!

The Tory controlled council have fostered the image of Edinburgh as an international cultural centre while deliberately hiding the other face of the city which gave birth to the author of Jekyll and Hyde.

The "dossers", Edinburgh's down and outs, are arrested on sight during the Edinburgh Festival if they

venture into the "wrong places". The Council has consistently refused to grant licences for an "alternative" tour of Edinburgh aimed at enlightening the gentfolk with bulging wallets as to the state of council housing in Edinburgh.

Enormous sums of money are required even to bring a vast number of council housing schemes up to a reasonable standard.

On the day following the District Party meeting, Labour councillors vainly attempted to get the Tory controlled housing committee to demand a large central government grant to carry

out essential work on the city's Orkney built houses.

The Tories have carried through government policy and sold off council houses in desirable areas and coupled it with homesteading in some of the undesirable areas over the past few years.

Some environmental improvements are now being made to some council schemes, reportedly financed from council house sales. The council's maintenance, not surprisingly in this true blue council, is mostly done by private contractors.

The lengthy catalogue of maltreatment of tenants by the Tories is very prominent

in tenants' minds. But the level of activity by the various tenants' groups varies.

The Labour Party will therefore have to take heed of the words of District Councillor Alex Wood who said, when moving the Finance Paper, "this campaign must not just be half a dozen or so councillors and almost no-one else. It must involve every member of the Labour Party."

The District Labour Party has until the May election and beyond to next year's rent fixing date to build the campaign.

The Guardian, Sarah Tisdall and the law

By Peter McIntyre

THE Editor of the Guardian, Peter Preston, claims to have learned painful lessons from the decision that put 23 year old Sarah Tisdall into prison instead of him.

In a long, self-agonising account of how the Guardian came to hand back a secret document outlining Heseltine's public relations plans for Cruise, Preston says:

"We made — I know — some serious errors. Sometimes they were realised quickly; sometimes they came only with hindsight. There are painful lessons that remain with us, and from which we are resolved to learn."

The only lesson that the Guardian has learned is next time it will try harder not to get caught.

Precautions

Next time the Guardian will have taken precautions. It may have destroyed the document before the law can act — but it has not budged from its policy decision to comply with the law even if that means an innocent person going to jail.

Most people who have the haziest knowledge of how newspapers work believe that journalists do not reveal their sources — whatever pressure they are put under by police or government. Most people are right in theory.

The code of conduct of the National Union of Journalists

is explicit on the matter. Poin. Seven says simply: "A journalist shall protect confidential sources of information."

Sarah Tisdall herself in a moving interview on the World in Action TV programme was quite clear about the issue. She said the Guardian ought to have destroyed the document and defied the law. At first blush only the most craven pro-Thatcher hysteric could fail to agree with her.

That the Guardian did not follow this course is only partly due to mistakes on the part of the paper and its editor. The crucial decision — not to defy the law — was woven closely with the ideological view the Guardian took of the decision which the NGA had just taken to defy the law over Stockport. The decision was taken cold-bloodedly. It put the rule of law above the duty of the paper to protect its sources. In other words it made freedom of the press a lower principle than upholding the law.

The final choice came after the Court of Appeal issued its judgement on December 16. Sir John Donaldson of various anti-union rulings fame delivered as crude a judgement as he knew how.

He identified the key question not as the ownership of the documents, nor as the content

— but that the fact that someone had leaked irrespective of the material.

"Whether or not any harm has been done on this occasion, the next may be different. It is no answer to this threat that the editor of the Guardian is a patriotic and responsible citizen. The responsibility for deciding what information shall be treated as classified and what shall be released into the public domain is not his or that of any individual civil servant applying his (sic) own criteria."

"The maintenance of national security requires that untrustworthy servants in a position to mishandle highly classified documents passing from the Secretary of State for Defence to other Ministers shall be identified at the earliest possible moment and removed from their positions. This is blindingly obvious."

By delivering the judgement so brutally Donaldson at least left Peter Preston in no doubt about the issues at stake.

Depressed

There followed some soul-searching among Guardian staff in "a depressed and melancholy atmosphere". The three choices (to be made within an hour and a quarter) were — defy the court and destroy the document; defy the court and keep the document while

appealing to the House of Lords; or hand it over.

It was at this moment of sharpest crisis that the true colours of the politics of the Guardian were revealed. Peter Cole writes:

"The battle between the National Graphical Association and Mr Eddie Shah was on at the time, and we had before us an example of the capacity of the courts to fine huge amounts for contempt. We knew that if we stuck to our resolve not to return the document the inevitable outcome would be the loss of all our assets and the closure of the paper..."

Superior

"But there seemed to the small group discussing the matter a superior issue to that. The Guardian is, and had stated in court that it was, a law abiding newspaper. Only that week in its own editorial columns, it had expressed the view that it was not for the NGA to take the law into its own hands simply because it did not like the law."

"The Guardian advocated campaigning to change laws of which it disapproved, not selective breaking of them. It would have been inconsistent with the Guardian's regularly published views of these matters to break the law then."

"It would have weakened the

paper's authority in the future, and made it very difficult for the Guardian to argue against the selective breaking of laws which others found disagreeable."

That was the whole matter in a nutshell. The Guardian could not act in defence of its own interests, because it did not wish to damage an ideological attitude to other groups — particularly the trade unions and councils like Merseyside considering illegal budgets.

Peter Preston left the office still not knowing what he would do. A detached observer could have told him he was on his way to hand over the document which led Sarah Tisdall to her six month jail sentence.

The reaction inside the NUJ has been to blame Preston as an individual. He was to blame and deserves the criticism. What must be tackled, however, is the ideological stranglehold which allowed him such free rein.

Muscle

The Daily Mirror chapel has since used its muscle to force its editor to refuse to hand over the name of a source to the courts. The courts then ruled that the name did not have to be handed over — so the resolve of the staff there was not ultimately tested.

The NUJ has its code — it must now fight for chapels to insist that it is put into practice.

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JOHN HARRIS

A J Cook : the limitations of a

"The greatest leader the miners ever had" is a judgement often passed — and passed by ordinary miners, on Arthur James Cook, secretary of the Miners Federation of Great Britain between 1924-31.

Cook is frequently bracketed with Larkin and Tom Mann as the very model of a socialist union leader. As the miners today face their greatest trial since 1926, it is important to look at the lessons of past struggles and the career of the man whose portrait in the Northumberland Miners Headquarters is rightly inscribed, "With never a thought of self he served the miners' cause."

Wookey, Somerset, is an unlikely birthplace for a militant workers' leader. But in his mid-teens, like many fellow Somerset farm labourers, Cook sought work in the expanding coal-field of the Rhondda Valley. South Wales was booming. A quarter of a million miners toiled in its collieries, under conditions of the most ruthless exploitation.

During the forty years to 1914 production in the Welsh mines trebled. When Cook arrived at the turn of the century, workers pouring into the mining districts lived in overcrowded shanty housing, in poverty, malnutrition and disease. Confronted by the powerful mining combines, trade unionism was — in the words of one militant — just emerging from 'the bow and arrow stage'.

In competition with company unions, the South Wales Miners Federation was established in 1898. Soon it contained three-quarters of the workforce. But its leaders were old fashioned Lib-Lab men, they held back the young proletariat. Lib-Labism was personified in Wales by an infamous scoundrel named William Abraham.

'Mabon', as he was known, commanded at the height of his career £700 per annum at a time when Cook and his working miner comrades earned around

By John McIlroy

£100. He was also a director, company shareholder and landlord. Small wonder that George Askwith, the government conciliator, could comment: official leaders could maintain their authority. Often there was more difference between the men and their leaders than between the latter and the employers.

Like many other colliers, Cook's main concern before 1905 was religion. Disillusioned with its inability to change the atrocious social conditions, he joined the Independent Labour Party and for the first time became active in the union.

The spectre now haunting the valleys was the spectre of syndicalism. Violent struggles erupted, such as the eleven month long Cambrian Combine Strike in 1910-11 when the troops at Tonypandy shot down strikers. The 1912 national struggle for a minimum wage was the biggest single strike the British Isles had yet seen. The influence of syndicalism increased.

The Marxist Plebs League had been established after the students of Ruskin, the trade union college in Oxford, revolted in 1909 and established a Marxist education movement. Soon it was running classes in South Wales, where its most vigorous supporter was Noah Ablett. Cook lectured on economics and trade union history, spending some time in 1911 at the Cadre Central Labour College in London.

The conflict between ranks and leaders produced in 1912 the miners' Unofficial Reform Committee of which Cook was a staunch supporter and which published the famous pamphlet — *The Miners' Next Step*.

This pamphlet expounded the leading syndicalist ideas of this period when South Wales was in the cockpit of class struggle. It called for a minimum wage, a seven hour day and a



Troops in Liverpool, 1911

policy of remorseless struggle against the employers. The Miners Federation was to be transformed into an industrial union which would eventually bleed the masters, and itself take over the running of the industry.

The pamphlet, analysing graphically the weaknesses of the miners' leadership, ended denouncing and discarding the idea of leadership itself. It put forward no idea of political leadership: the democratised industrial union was sufficient to overturn capitalism and build socialism.

Cook, who spent two decades underground, was finally shaped and formed in these years fighting in the van of intense class battles. And that formation, with all its strengths and all its inadequacies, was to endure.

The war failed to still the struggle. Cook was involved in numerous disputes and he helped found the Socialist Society of Wales. From November 1916 he was under police surveillance for 'down tools' and peace. In March 1918 he was found guilty of six counts under the Defence of the Realm Act and sentenced to three months' gaol.

As a hardened veteran his rise within the union now began. By the start of 1920 Cook was full-time miners' agent for the Rhondda North District and on the South Wales Federation Executive. He spent two months in Cardiff Jail for 'unlawful assembly'.

A founder member of the Communist Party he was chosen in 1921 as the South Wales delegate for the MFGB Executive.

But Cook's lack of any deep political foundation now began to show. When the Triple Alliance collapsed on Black Friday, 1921, the miners were left to fight alone. Cook and Ablett recommended a settlement which the members threw out. They were criticised by the Communist Party. Cook resigned, claiming that he had "no major differences" with the Party policy. He continued to work in the CP-led trade union rank and file Minority Movement and as late as 1925 he described himself as 'a humble follower of Lenin'. But his grasp of Lenin was limited.

In the next two years Cook toiled tirelessly to revive militancy and regroup in the "back to the Unions" campaign.

When, in 1924, Frank Hodges, the Miners' Federation secretary, resigned to enter Parliament, Cook narrowly defeated Ablett for the South Wales nomination and won the National Ballot.

At the age of 40 he was the most powerful union leader in the country. His leadership was to be immediately tested. As the coal owners demanded a wage cut and longer hours, Cook tirelessly toured the coalfields speaking to meetings after meetings and coining the slogan "Not a penny off the pay, not a second on the day".

In July 1926 the miners' executive, now deserted by the TUC and fighting on alone, accepted proposals from a group of Bishops to return to work. Several area executives immediately condemned this as undemocratic, lacking the required conference authority. The special conference called for a district vote and sharply criticised the executive who lost the consequent ballot. The ranks were more determined than their leaders.

In July 1926 Cook was again involved in secret negotiations for a return to work with a group of Liberals and actually signed a memorandum of agreement for which he was later rebuked by the executive. As the Times said on Cook's death, "The public speeches for the most part showed an inflexible resolve to fight it to the end, but in secret he was accessible to mediation."

He was also not prepared to fight the General Council to the end. Left and right, they were not even prepared to levy affiliates for the miners, let alone black coal imports. Cook did criticise these misleaders for their sell-out in his pamphlet 'Nine Days'. He then agreed to withdraw the pamphlet and backed Citrine and Thomas to stop an inquiry into the role of the General Council in May. Instead of strengthening and crystallising the widespread bitterness in the rank and file over the General Council's behaviour, Cook at the September Congress stuck to the agreement made with Citrine and stood out against the militants.

As the coalowners and the Tories progressively worsened the terms of surrender from wage cuts to extended hours, to district agreements, the miners remained firm, voting down proposals in both October and November 1926 before being driven back to work. As the Times obituary again remarked about 'Not a penny off the day...' "Cook himself had abandoned the slogan but it swayed the miners to the last."

By the end of 1926 Cook was burnt out. He had

On Red Friday 1925, the government backed down from a head-on clash with the miners. There was to be a subsidy to the coalowners for nine months to enable them to maintain the wage status quo. It was clearly a tactical withdrawal to gain time — a pause before battle. The Tories and the owners used every second of the time to make propaganda and to organise.

Cook's fighting oratory inspired the rank and file. But the TUC did nothing and the miners failed to take the fight to prepare to organise into the TUC. Moreover, the miners had the illusion that the General Council would back them to the hilt. In short, Cook had no strategy.

From the start of the 1926 General Strike, the TUC were looking for a way out. Cook relied on diplomacy at the top of the TUC, rather than taking a fight against them to the ranks. Indeed before the TUC betrayal, he privately stated that concessions in the form of wage reductions would have to be made to the bosses.

Now the moderate miners' chair, Herbert Smith, represented better than Cook the intransigence of the rank and file Cook had inspired. "If it were not for the mule-like obstinacy of Herbert Smith, A.J. Cook would settle on any terms", Beatrice Webb commented. The cabinet secretary, Thomas Jones believed that Cook would accept reductions but "Smith had his feet on Cook's neck".



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Miners' leaders militant



A J Cook

imposed on himself a super-human schedule of speaking engagements, addressing four or five meetings each day seven days a week and the consequences were apparent.

Elected to the General Council in 1927, Cook was isolated and until his death from cancer in 1931, dogged by ill health. When the TUC entered into the 'new realism' of those days, the Mond-Turner talks on how to best collaborate with the employers, Cook campaigned against it with James Maxton, of the ILP.

It was ironic that when — like many on the left now — he turned away from industrial action to support the 1929 Labour government, his hopes should not only be betrayed by McDonald but that he should be witch-hunted by the CP now in the throes of their ultra-left third period.

Cook's final political involvement was with Sir Oswald Mosley who resigned from the Labour Party because it would do nothing for the unemployed. Cook, together with 17 Labour MPs signed the 1930 Mosley Manifesto and supported Mosley's New Party in its initial stages. Had he lived, there can be no doubt he would have broken from Mosley as he headed towards fascism.

Cook was an honest, dedicated and inspiring leader. Despite his lapses, he resisted corruption and defied incorporation. He

literally gave his life for his members. We should, we must honour him. His limitations in the end were the limitations of syndicalism. He believed militant trade unionism was enough. When the balance of forces made it impossible for trade unionism even at its most intransigent, to win he had no other answers.

Like Arthur Scargill today he was not prepared to organise against the right wing across the whole union movement. Like Arthur Scargill today he lacked any real strategy for the political development of the membership and was forced to play the game of trade unionism — bargaining his members with Bishops and diplomats.

If Arthur Cook failed to develop beyond syndicalism to Leninism the tragedy of so many of today's leaders, like Arthur Scargill is that they were formed in the politics of that terrible debasement and negation of Leninism, Stalinism.

That, and the ever worsening position of British capitalism, is what makes the building of a rank and file alternative in the unions and a socialist alternative to the political misleaders of our movement even more essential today than in the early years of this century. If an alternative can be built those like A.J. Cook, who sacrificed themselves for the struggle, will not have given their lives in vain.

Arthur Scargill

By John McIlroy

THE LAST three harsh years in the mines have somewhat tarnished the idea that Arthur Scargill walks on water.

But he is still by a long chalk the best of the major trade union leaders.

His steadfast support for the flying pickets, and refusal to bow to the pressure for a national ballot, have been major factors in allowing the miners' strike to spread.

True, his support for Stalinism against Solidarnosc, and his infatuation with sexist pin-ups are blots on his record. But on the other side of the record there is Saltley Gates, Grunwick, the health workers' dispute of 1982, his championing of Tony Benn, and his rock-solid hatred of Thatcher and all her government stands for.

Arthur Scargill's initial political involvement was not in the National Union of Mineworkers, but in the Young Communist League, which he joined as a 15 year old. He never made any clear cut break with Communist Party politics, but, as he told the Observer some years ago,

"I gradually began to be interested in the union itself because it appeared to me that irrespective of what ideas politically the Young Communist League, or any other political organisation, had, the real power lay either with the working classes or with the ruling classes. Now the working classes were obviously identified with the trade union movement, and not directly identified with the Labour Party, which in my opinion had, and indeed still has, lost complete contact with the basic problems of the movement".

Bedrock

This outlook was the bedrock of the militancy of the '60s and '70s. The power lay not with political parties but with the workers' basic organisations, the trade unions. The best way to prosecute the class war was to get control of the levers of the power within the union.

Throughout the '60s Arthur Scargill saw the way to do this as building rank and file organisation against the timorous leadership of the Yorkshire Area NUM. Links were established between the Barnsley panel, in which he was active, and those in Doncaster and South Yorkshire.

Scargill was involved in a Barnsley NUM Forum, which was open to all miners.

As he became more involved, he quit the CP. He came to see trade union militancy as sufficient and central, and political party

organisation as restrictive.

"Basically, it was because the party insisted that I should work in a certain way when I became a trade union official. They wanted me to sell the Daily Worker and promote CP ideals to the pit branch of the NUM. I resented this. It meant I wouldn't be exercising all my efforts for the men as miners".

It was the organisation from below in Yorkshire that won its spurs in the unofficial strikes of 1969 and 1970, and redeveloped militant tactics such as the flying pickets that were so successful in 1972.

Arthur Scargill was coming up in a period when the bargaining power was swinging towards the miners and militancy was strong throughout the working class.

He told New Left Review: "We took the view that we were in a class war. We were not playing cricket on the village green".

Scargill saw the necessity for organising — for not relying on the official structures, their tempo and their conceptions. If you want something done, do it fast and do it yourself, was his philosophy.

That spirit took the miners forward in the early '70s. The fall of the Heath crystallised and confirmed Arthur's views.

In June 1972 he became full-time compensation agent in Yorkshire, and with Owen Briscoe's election as area general secretary the following year, the Young Turks had evicted the right wing.

The problem was that, as Arthur Scargill rose to Yorkshire president and National Executive member, the open rank and file organisation that had achieved so much was allowed to decay.

With his vision focused on winning the union for the Left, and not a broader political perspective, such organisation no longer seemed vital.

Meanwhile the introduction of the divisive bonus scheme in the pits created problems in the NUM in the late '70s.

Nonetheless, the Left still looked forward to victory within the union. With the retirement of the right-wing national president, Joe Gormley, they hoped to get the entire union machine in their hands.

Arthur Scargill's landslide victory to succeed Gormley confirmed that class-conscious leadership can produce a response. In a 80% poll, he obtained 70.3% of the vote. His nearest rival got 17%.

Arthur Scargill seems to have somewhat overestimated this victory. It was a vote of confidence by the miners in a battle-tested



representative of their interests, rather than a vote for an all-out struggle against the Tories. And the situation, with high unemployment, working-class defeats on the wider front, high coal stocks, big redundancy payments, and the divisive bonus scheme, made the membership hesitant about an all-out stoppage.

In hindsight, the lesson of Thatcher's U-turn on pit closures in 1981 was not that she was ready to crumble, but that she was simply biding her time.

Spadework

The 1982 strike ballot over the wage offer and pit closures was, from the NUM headquarters angle, a model exercise. The union leadership spared no effort to agitate and convince. But the campaign was inadequate to deal with the tactics of the Coal Board and the government. The strike recommendation was defeated.

This highlighted the need for a Broad Left organisation in the NUM, as in any other union. Perhaps Arthur Scargill had forgotten the intense years of spadework at the base that went into producing

1972 and 1974.

Many also felt that not enough was done by the leadership to build and develop the 143 registered NUM strikes in the first half of this year into a more general challenge.

It is easy to criticise, but foolish not to try to understand the real weaknesses of Scargill's leadership. Like many other militants, he has not gone beyond the syndicalism of the 1970s. He has not seen a way to integrate union involvement into militant socialist political organisation. He has not taken on the job of organising across unions, at both leadership and rank and file level: he has not used his position to organise for the Left within the TUC as Alistair Graham or David Basnett use theirs to organise for the right wing.

Perhaps his days in the Communist Party have left Arthur Scargill with some of their ideas of 'socialism from above', combined with his basic class combativity. His attacks on Polish workers certainly suggest that.

His leadership and politics are now under test. We can only hope he comes through victorious.



Saltley Gates, 1972

Television review

Rock and the Wall

By Alex Simpson

THE March 9 edition of Channel 4's "The Tube", reported on the rock scene in the divided city of Berlin. The "on location" report was of particular interest as it touched several times on the relationship between the music scene and contemporary German politics.

In West Germany the output of many punk groups is geared to the peace movement. Many bands model themselves on the British group "Crass", with playing on peace themes, complemented by subversion gimmickry.

So successful have some bands been apparently that they have had their records confiscated by the police on the grounds that the material is anti-state. When the government of West Germany takes actions one would have more normally expected to occur in East Germany, it is an indication of the degree of threat politicised punk poses to the Establishment.

In West Berlin punk thrives with groups using deserted cellars and basements as improvised studios. Punk, to many, is expression for the youth sub-culture, centred around the most organised network of squats in Western Europe.

Alternative lifestyle has for several years extended its



Police disperse a rock festival in Czechoslovakia

influence beyond the other side of the Wall.

In East Berlin many young people are prepared to bear both the political risks and the financial cost in an attempt to create their own counter culture.

As in West Germany the people seem to take their cue from British bands.

In the Russia of the 1960s Beatles records were the most prized black market items. In contemporary East Berlin it is records by The Clash, UK Subs and Dead Kennedys.

In the GDR there is strict licensing of bands and only ones whose output meets

party approval can perform publicly without harassment and purchase decent instruments.

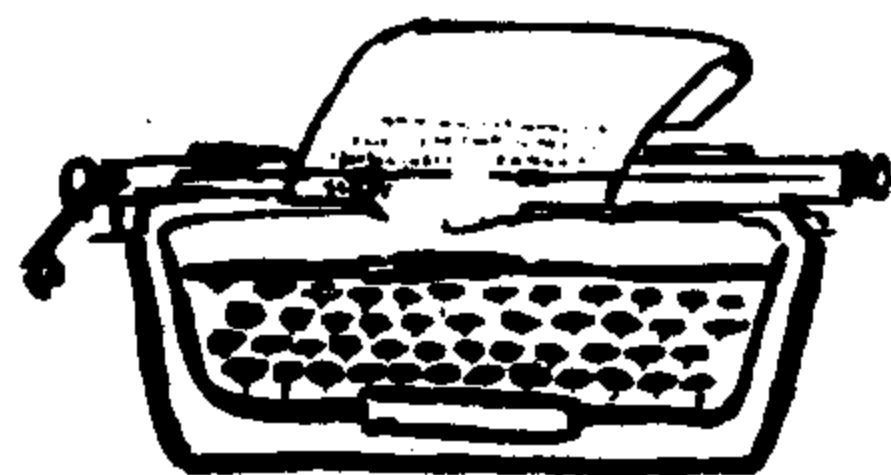
Unofficial bands play where they can and obtain equipment from the black market. A synthesiser in West Berlin costs around 700 marks but, smuggled across the Wall it soars in price up to 9,000 marks.

A clue to why young East Germans go to all the risk and expense was graphically illustrated when the programme showed clips from "RUND", state television's equivalent of "Top of the Pops".

Two or three mediocre bands with a safe, slushy output performing in an indoor studio as part of a concert for the state-sponsored "Rock for Peace" campaign. If "RUND" is the best entertainment the East German Stalinists can provide for their young people then the growth of music counter-culture is hardly surprising.

Despite its limitations, it was good to see Channel 4 prime time television giving lively and politically sympathetic treatment to a youth scene whose backdrop is the Wall that symbolises the artificial division of Europe.

Writeback



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

CHRIS Reynolds' reply to my letter (SO 168), together with your centre-page spread on the USSR, and Clive Bradley's article on Lenin (well taken up by Paul Hubert, also in SO 168) make clear that the question I originally raised is not just a matter of phraseology or form. Are the "degenerated and deformed workers' states" workers' states at all?

The term "workers' state" has just as much precise theoretical content for Marxists as "capitalism". Lenin, following Engels, saw the state as (at bottom) organised bodies of armed men in the service of the ruling class. If we are, as I agree with Reynolds we should, to pursue working class politics in every country, we must be clear which class the organised bodies of armed men in each country serve.

Trotsky was quite clear in the last analysis, in however deformed and, indeed, counterrevolutionary a fashion, the Soviet state served the working class.

TURKEY

INFORMATION BULLETIN



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The USSR's armed men

He drew an analogy between the USSR and a trade union led by gangsters and scabs — like the Teamsters Union in the USA or the Peronist-led CGT unions in Argentina — which is, all the same, a trade union.

The class position is to defend the union, but fight to get rid of its leadership — in the full knowledge that the leadership will rather split the union than lose control, so that ousting the leadership will involve destroying, in a sense, the old union apparatus, and building up a new apparatus more firmly based on and controlled by the membership. That this sort of struggle is what Trotsky meant by "political revolution" is quite clear from the section on the USSR in the Transitional Programme of 1938.

In Britain today revolutionary Marxists identify the Parliamentary-monarchical regime as a bourgeois state — an organisation based in the last analysis on organised bodies of armed men in the service of the bourgeoisie. This must surely be the basis of your polemic with Labour Briefing: their version of the "workers' government" slogan is ambiguous about the bourgeois state.

"Degenerated workers' state", then is not a mere label or sociological category. It is a political assessment of the class character of the special organisations of armed men in the USSR — an assessment which has political consequences. In the "Soviet bloc" countries, for instance, revolutionaries would expect to split the state machine, while in the West the army, etc., will have to be destroyed by civil war. And we defend the workers' state both when it is involved in war with capitalist countries, and against internal counterrevolutionary movements.

So Reynolds should say plainly and without equivocation whether he regards these states as workers' states or not. It's

by no means an impossible demand.

The political assessment that these countries are workers' states is based in the first place on the social ties between the state apparatus and the proletariat. Miliband has pointed to the social ties between the bourgeoisie and the British state; Peter Green's article on Poland in New Left Review 139 displays similar links between the Polish bureaucratic regime and the proletariat. The same mechanisms operate in the USSR, the other East European countries, China, Cuba, Vietnam.

Another point is the material gains of the proletariat in those countries: reported in the Western press as "overmanning" in the factories, "unrealistic prices" and "excessive public expenditure." Trotsky wrote The Revolution Betrayed in 1936, at the height of the Stalinist terror, when conditions were many times worse than they are in any "communist bloc" country today — but nonetheless reported the gains of the working class as compared to the Tsarist regime.

Reynolds in effect admits that comparison of the workers' states with the colonial "Third World" is overwhelmingly favourable to the workers' states. His suggestion that Japan is a better comparison with Russia than India merely displays ignorance of Japanese history. His argument that East Germany is to be compared to West Germany ignores the integrated character of the world economy, the effects of Marshall Aid, and the imperialist technological blockade. He also conveniently omits to mention that per capita income is higher in East Germany than in Britain, in spite of these limitations.

We still face the problem that some capitalist countries — which I continue to insist on calling imperialist — offer the proletariat better standards of living and more democratic

liberties than the degenerated and deformed workers' states.

The position advanced by Trotsky, is that this is possible under bourgeois rule because of imperialism, because the bourgeoisie of the imperialist countries exploits other countries. It can concede high wages (or welfare benefits) because of super-exploitation in the colonies. Because it can concede material benefits, it can also concede the right to organise the proletariat, confident that revolutionaries will not win influence.

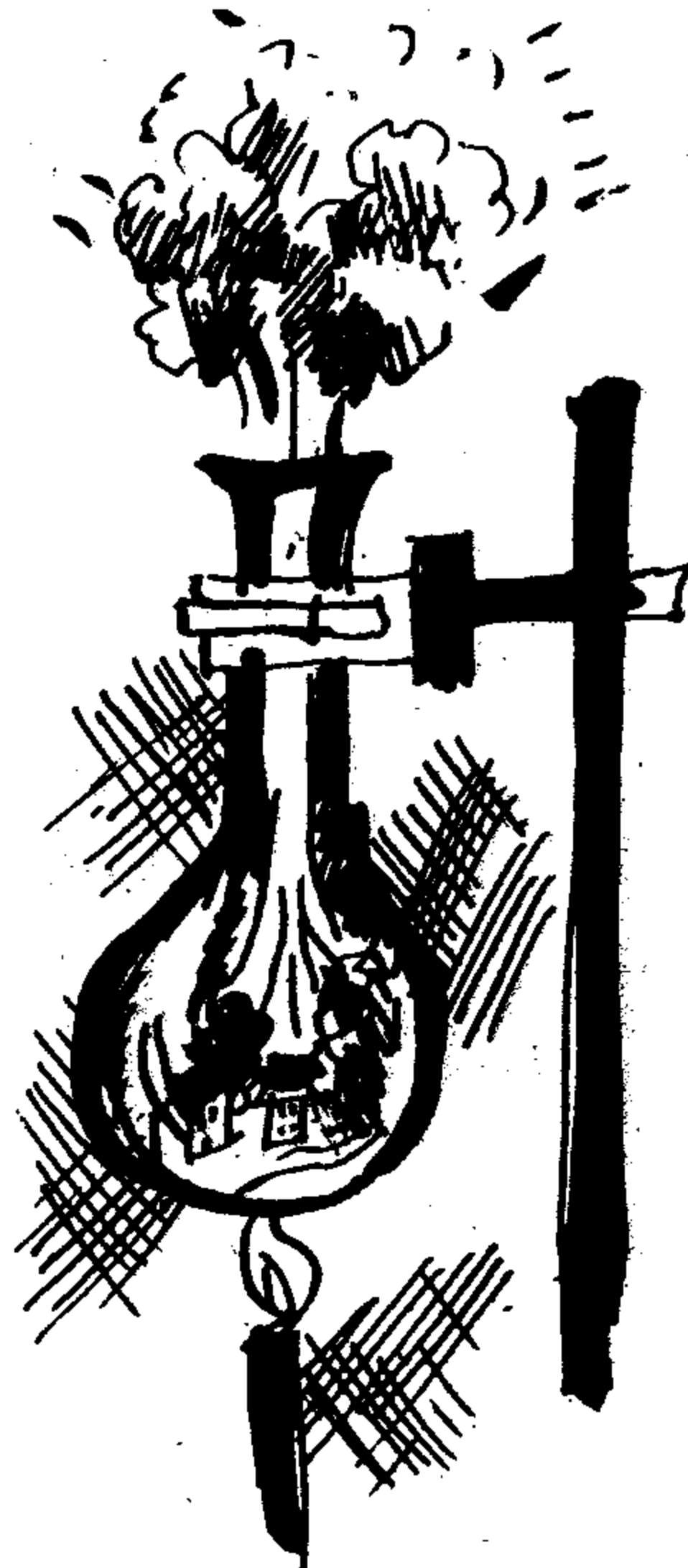
Reynolds' answer to this is that... "Western Europe and the USA do not only consume vastly more than the Third World, they also produce vastly more." This is vulgar Proudhonism, elevating the labour theory of value into a moral principle of entitlement. Trotskyists reject "socialism in one country" and favour world revolution precisely because capitalism has created an integrated world economy. We cannot simply demand the whole product of our labour; rather we must create a workers' state in order to expropriate the bourgeoisie and so begin to build socialism on a world scale. From this standpoint it is clear that the degenerated and deformed workers' states are far closer to socialism than any "Western" country.

The theory of imperialism is not directed to say that workers in the imperialist countries are immoral but that our gains under capitalism are possible because of imperialism, and, conversely, that until we create a workers' state in this country, the bourgeoisie will be able to take them away; as Thatcher's attacks on the unions, material living standards, welfare and democratic rights demonstrate all too clearly.

Reynolds' answer to my letter is decidedly worse than his original article.

Communist greetings, Mike Macnair

Bouncing universe



SCIENCE

by Alex Simpson and Les Hearn

THE Big Bang brought into existence a universe which has been expanding for the 15 billion years since. Will this expansion continue for ever (an open universe) or will it, stop, to be followed by contraction (a closed universe)? In other words, is there a maximum size to the universe?

There is no force to slow down the flight of the galaxies except the force of gravity between them and there has to be a certain amount of matter in the universe to provide enough gravity to stop the expansion. However, up to now it has seemed that there is only about 10% of the matter needed to "close" the universe, and astronomers have generally agreed that the cosmos will expand infinitely.

But recently evidence has come to light of vast amounts of invisible, dark matter. What is the evidence and where is the matter?

From the appearance of galaxies, stars near the centres should be orbiting faster than those further out, as each galaxy spins. Now it has been found that the outer stars are orbiting faster than expected, implying that galaxies are surrounded by vast dark haloes of matter.

Some astronomers believe that up to 90% of the matter in galaxies could be in the dark haloes, making the total amount of matter close to the critical amount for a closed universe.

So what is this dark matter made of? There are two suggestions:

1) Super-massive black holes

Black holes are made of matter that has collapsed in itself under its own gravity. The collapsed matter exerts such concentrated gravitational force that not even light can escape. Though they can't be seen, they should be detectable. Matter being sucked into these black holes should give out radiation which would seem to be coming from all parts of the sky. So far attempts to detect this have been inconclusive.

2) Neutrinos.

These odd particles can travel through the Earth as though they weren't there. They are affected by gravity and might be expected to orbit around galaxies. But to play a part in closing the universe they need to have mass and hitherto have been thought to have none. Recent controversial experiments suggest they have a small mass — less than one-tenthousandth of an electron. This is not much, but large enough number of neutrinos could weigh an awful lot!

What, then, are the consequences of living in a closed universe? None, immediately you will be relieved to hear, but there will come a time (perhaps 70 billion years) when the expansion stops and is reversed. The galaxies will fall towards each other, the sky will become brighter and brighter and the temperature will rise. Eventually, everything will end in a "Big Crunch", followed perhaps by another Big Bang.

Hence the theory of the "Bouncing" or "Pulsating" universe.

This fits in with the theories of some physicists about the nature of space.

According to David Bohm of Birkbeck College, London, what we think of as empty space actually contains an immense background of energy while the universe consists of a series of ripples on this sea of energy, radiating out from a "Big Splash".

But why was there a Big Bang in the first place? Edward Tryon of City University, New York, suggests that our universe is the result of a chance fluctuation in this vast sea of energy. If the universe is closed, Tryon calculates that the amount of positive energy that exists is equal to the amount of negative energy stored as gravity. In other words, the total amount of energy is zero and the universe has been created out of nothing.

This is rather like a bubble of steam forming in superheated water and then collapsing again into water.

This doesn't match up with "common sense" ideas of the universe, but it does provide some sort of answer to the question of where the universe came from and where it is going.

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



Industrial



More cuts in school meals

SCHOOL meals staff — members of NUPE — are coming under attack from a growing number of local authorities for wage cuts of between 5% and 25% and a worsening of job conditions.

Cuts are being implemented or threatened for 16,000 dinner workers in Birmingham, East Sussex, Hertfordshire, Lincolnshire and Surrey. The workers have been presented with an ultimatum of accepting new contracts which eliminate the half-pay retaining fee during school holidays, and reductions in holiday pay and working hours — or face the sack.

School meals staff are now only one group facing the wage-cutting being carried out by local authorities in order to curb expenditure and avoid penalties from the government for over-spending. GMBATU says that the bonus earnings, working hours, and conditions of other groups, like cleaners and refuse staff are being reduced, often by councils raising the threat of privatisation.

Sacked by Labour

SOUTHWARK NALGO are now entering the second week of their strike over the sacking of child-care worker Siobhan Stokes.

Siobhan was sacked because she refused to sign a 'loyalty oath' which meant agreeing to work where and when she was told.

The council wanted to move her place of work from Camberwell to Sidcup in Kent which would have meant four hours travelling time per day to and from work).

The response of her union has been very strong. The strike is solid and has been declared official.

It looks like the strike could be a drawn-out affair. It can best be won by building solidarity throughout the local labour movement and with calling Southwark's Labour-controlled council to account.

Durham benefit cuts protest

By Tony Serjeant

FROM April 1, 18-20 year olds living at home will lose the housing benefits from their supplementary benefit.

This amounts to a cut in dole of £3.10 per week — about one eighth of total benefit.

Fowlers Yard Youth Project is a scheme organising facilities for youth in Durham. Many of the youth involved in the project are unemployed and directly affected by the benefit cuts. The Youth Project therefore organised a lunchtime demonstration against the cuts on Thursday 22nd.

Although arranged at short notice, the demonstration drew support from local Labour councillors, and many townspeople signed a petition protesting at the cuts. Students, themselves facing Tory cuts, along with Durham LPYS, also took part in the march, but the majority of those involved were local unemployed youth from the Youth Project.

Broad Lefts: conference or rally?

THE Broad Left Organising Committee conference last Saturday, 24th, was the biggest rank and file trade unionists' conference for many years.

With over 2,000 delegates, it was perhaps twice the size of the biggest of the 'Rank and File' conferences which used to be held by the Socialist Workers' Party.

Over £2,500 was collected at the conference, half to go to the miners' strike, half to go to BLOC.

But it was also a disappointment.

Very little was decided about future campaigning. A resolution from TGWU 5/833 branch, calling on BLOC to organise a campaign against anti-union laws, was ignored. The event was largely a rally, dominated by the Militant tendency.

The conference declaration focused everything on the TUC Congress in September, not on rank and file action or immediate demands:

"We pledge ourselves to campaign to commit the 1984 TUC to:

1) Coordinate the fight back of the unions against this government's anti-trade-union laws, so that no union cooperates with any section of these laws and that no funds are drained one penny further by fines imposed under these laws.

2) Call a 24-hour general strike as the first step in solidarity action in the event of the seizure of union funds, or the arrest or fining of any individual trade unionist."

Even the basic demand for the unions to break collaboration and stop talks with the Tories was missing.

There was also a resolution of solidarity with the miners. But



Applause for rousing speeches — but few plans for action

Martin Thomas reports

there was no chance to amend, or even to seriously discuss, either the resolution or the declaration.

The conference also failed to discuss the experience of the Broad Lefts. There was a great deal of general talk against the Tories and against the right wing of the TUC, but no critical

unions like the CPSA and POEU where Broad Lefts have recently won majorities on the National Executives. (Though the new Socialist Organiser pamphlet analysing that experience did sell well).

Most of the speeches were on a very general level, like Terry Fields': "Despite the so-called leadership who will be swept aside, our class is moving forward."

The main opposition to Militant in the conference came from the Socialist Workers' Party: but they did not take up many political issues. They stressed the general industrial 'downturn' and argued that taking workplace collections for the miners was central (and, indeed, just about the only thing it was possible for socialists to do). They agitated noisily

for the conference collection all to go to the miners, rather than 50% to the miners and 50% to BLOC.

The conference declaration also called for local BLOC committees to be set up. In some areas these already exist but are dominated by Militant. If they can be established on a more open basis, they could be very useful.

Dunlop links with miners

By John Douglas

450 strikers, mostly women, are on strike at Dunlops (Slazengers), Doncaster Road, Barnsley.

Last week the boss suspended a section and the whole factory came out in support.

Some weeks previously the workers had been locked out for refusing to accept the productivity scheme. Their union, GMBATU, negotiated a return to work pending discussion of the scheme.

Dunlop in the past has transferred Slazenger production from their Lancashire factory to both Atlanta, Georgia and the Philippines.

The workers have put a 24 hour picket on the gates.

The police have been there in force. Two van loads of them, with dogs, have been keeping their eye on the pickets, many of whose husbands are on strike in the coalfield. That is perhaps a reason why Dunlops have taken this action at this vital time.

GMBATU regional official Joe Kitchen eventually agreed to meet stewards at Dunlops Slazenger factory on Monday 26th, five days after the strike began.

Kitchen had previously told the stewards to get back to work, but the stewards impressed on him that they would continue their 24 hour picket until management withdrew their package of wage cuts, speed-ups, and redundancies.

Solidarity between Dunlop strikers and miners is being built

upon. The miners are supplying coal at the Dunlop picket. The Dunlop pickets attended the funeral of David Jones last week, and are lending their support to the campaign by women relatives in support of the strike against pit closures.

Messages and donations to: Dave Buckton, 93 Barnsley Road, Darfield, South Yorkshire.

Mass pickets at LaBour

By Dave Green

MASS pickets are being organised every Monday in the dispute at LaBour Pumps, Wellingborough, where management sacked 37 union members for supporting a suspended fellow worker.

At the first mass picket on Monday 15th, 80 picket were faced by almost as many police (even though Northants sent hundreds of police to the coalfields).

Police arrested one picket then — and another two (Socialist Organiser supporters) on Thursday.

The pickets are, however, successfully stopping lorries.

The AUEW (the strikers' union) is organising a district levy, and also a fund-raising gig. The strikers are calling for a trade union boycott of LaBour Pumps.

Donations to LaBour Pump Strike Fund. Treasurer, T.C. Puckerin, 6 Palmer Close, The Links, Wellingborough, Northants.

Stop privatisation

By Dewi Lewis

at least one hospital.

When the vote on privatisation was forced through after a brief discussion, the anger of the pickets erupted and they refused to let the meeting continue. Despite the police being called they sat tight and forced the Authority members to leave instead.

The Wales TUC nominee, Anne Delaney, then discovered that the supporter of privatisation were meeting secretly in the basement! After this little

400 hospital workers in Cardiff besieged a meeting of South Glamorgan Health Authority on Wednesday 21 March. The meeting had before it proposals for a cut in the coming year's budget of 1%, and for the laundry, catering and domestic facilities to go out to tender for privatisation.

The Authority had tried to keep the document on privatisation quiet, but eventually had to issue copies to NHS unions on the Friday before the meeting.

Brushing aside the detailed objections from the unions, the document set out a timetable to put the services out to tender in every hospital, within three years.

They plan to start with the smaller hospitals and work round to the big ones in 1987. In this bonanza for private sharks, 2,000 ancillary staff could face redundancy — two-thirds of the ancillary workers in South Glamorgan.

Despite the short notice, half-day strike action was organised in every major hospital and the Authority was picketed. There were scuffles outside the meeting as administrators tried to restrict public entry to the meeting.

One administrator in particular, Alan Trew, punched and kicked several domestics before he was pulled off.

Brushing aside these bully-boy tactics about 100 pickets forced their way into the meeting to confront some very nervous members. Labour members of the Authority attempted to refer back the budget and demand more money from the Welsh Office, but this was outvoted by 11 to 8. The Authority will now go ahead and try to shut

cabal was broken up, they gave up and went home.

The timetable for privatisation has gone through — now the campaign against contractors must begin in earnest.

We should not help contractors to 'case the joint' and tour departments put out to tender — a walk-out is the only answer. Jobs at Rookwood and Barry hospitals will be the first to be put out to tender in October this year — workers there must have the support of all NHS workers in South Glamorgan, in action as well as words.

Scab threat at Phillips

By Tony Dale

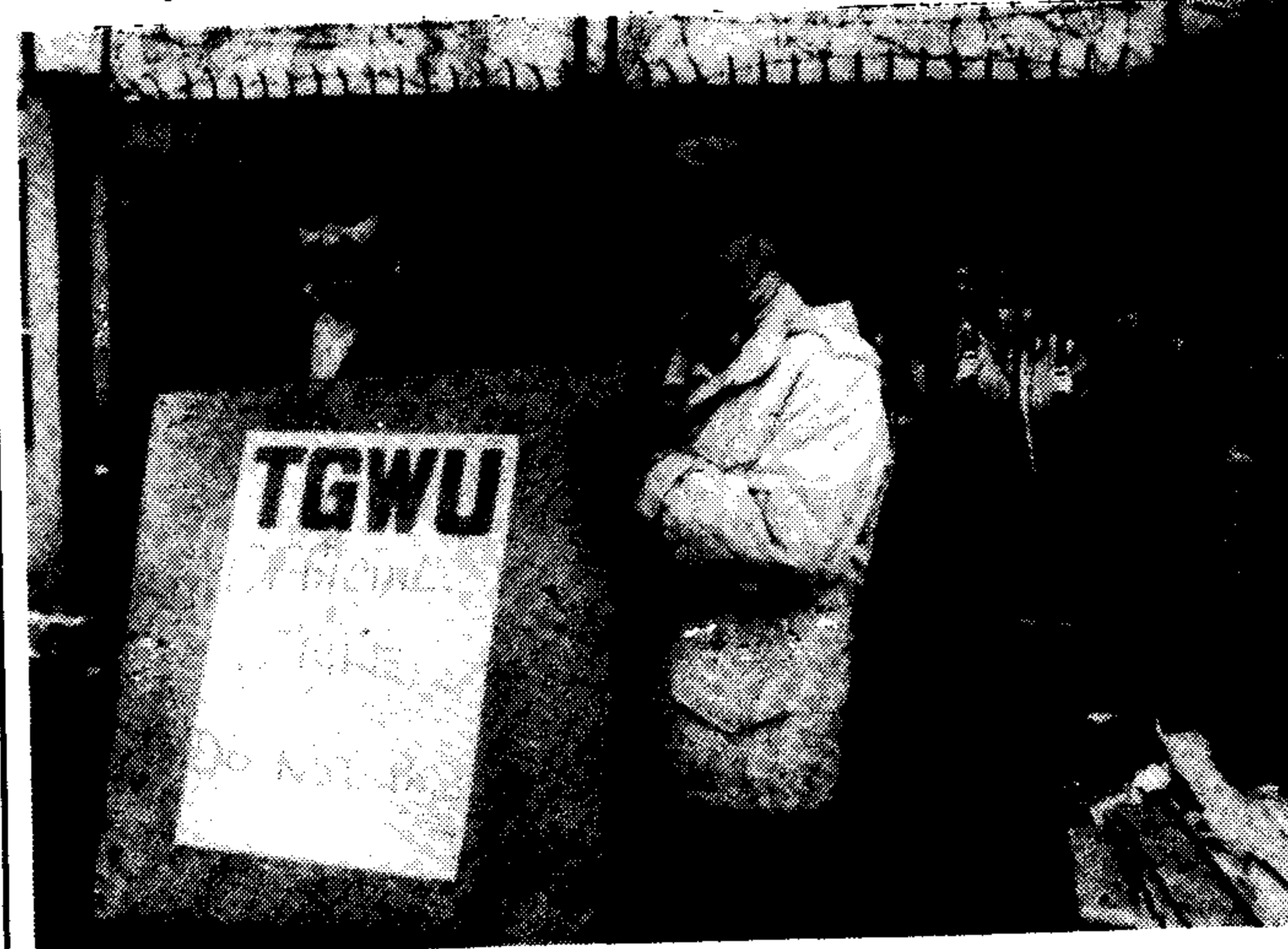
THE WORKERS at Phillips Rubber in Manchester have now been on strike for 13 weeks.

Management appear to be making preparations for another attempt to reopen the factory. The earlier attempts failed thanks to mass pickets and occupations.

Management attempts to break the strike can be defeated, but only if the basic groundwork

and organisation is done now. Following the eviction of workers from their occupation two weeks ago, the factory has been guarded and patrolled by uniformed security staff with dogs to prevent a third occupation.

There are rumours that interviews are being carried out away from the factory to recruit at least 50 strikebreakers. The CPSA in the Manchester Job Centre have refused to advertise the jobs



After March 29

Build up the links!

THOUSANDS of workers will strike and demonstrate on March 29 against the Rates Bill.

This Tory Bill which aims to put direct limits on local councils' spending is due to finish in the House of Commons on March 28, and go on to the House of Lords in April.

The protest — 'Democracy Day' — is organised by the TUC and the Local Government Campaign Unit (which is sponsored by several Labour councils and trade unions).

David Lloyd of the Local Government Campaign Unit told Socialist Organiser: "Since 1979 local government has been in the front line of the government's attack on services and the public sector in general."

Awakening

"We hope that 'democracy Day' marks the beginning of an awakening about what Thatcher and her cabinet colleagues are really doing."

"So far they have passed the buck to local councils when it comes to cuts in spending, but people are now beginning to point their fingers and saying that the buck stops at the Cabinet."

NALGO and NUPE have authorised their branches to strike on March 29 and some NUT branches are likely to strike too.

It will be a strong show of opposition to the Tories' assault on local services and local democracy. But what next? How to organise to defeat the Tories?

The most important job is to build links.

Stewards

In each local authority a joint shop stewards' committee must be built. Council unions should take up affiliations to trades councils and (where they can) to Labour Parties. Links with the Labor Party should also be developed through council workers' Labour Party workplace branches.

Joint committees linking council workers in whole areas — for example London — are also needed.

So far, despite cuts in services, local government workforces have lost far fewer jobs than manufacturing industry. Union organisation has remained relatively strong in local government.

Now the Tories want to crack and break that strength. Straightforward cuts; the Rates Bill; abolition

By Martin Thomas

tion of metropolitan authorities; and privatisation — these are their methods.

NALGO, the biggest local government union, has a policy of no cover for unfilled vacancies, non-cooperation with the abolition of metropolitan authorities, and support for local branches taking industrial action against compulsory redundancies.

At a conference of NALGO local government delegates on Tuesday 20th, a resolution instructing the union to organise for national strike action in support of such local action was defeated. But without that fight for national action, each local group of workers can be isolated or intimidated.

The object of the Rates bill is not directly or simply to cut local rates or council spending. For that purpose it is a rather clumsy instrument. In Scotland, the Tories already have similar powers to those in the Rates Bill. Noel Hepworth, an expert on local government, explained what's going on in the Times of January 16.

Pick off

"The rate-capping proposals contained in the Bill are unlikely to produce, either immediately or in the foreseeable future, the kinds of reduction in overspending that the Government wants . . . The Government . . . must know this to be the case. But if the real objective is not expenditure control but simple limitation at the government's initiative of rate increases in a few authorities, then the legislation will achieve that."

In other words, the Tories are intimidating and picking off councils one by one, and groups of council workers one by one.

Mere public opinion will not stop them. Industrial action can — provided that it is widespread and well-organised enough. If the union leaderships will not organise for that wide-



spread action officially, then the rank and file must organise unofficially.

Labour councils can help:
*By refusing to make the cuts that the Rates Bill aims to impose.

*By defying the undemocratic ruling class law.

*By confronting the government.

*By helping to organise industrial action to defend such a stand.

A declaration by a large number of Labour councils that they would follow this policy could force the Tories to withdraw the Rates Bill.

"All-party"

But not even the left Labour councils are doing that. Their line is that it is too early to talk publicly about tactics if the Rates Bill is passed.

For now they are supporting such protests against the Bill as March 29. But they are appealing for "all-party support", not for industrial action.

They are asking supporters to lobby the Lords. And on the 29th they will be bringing Tory members of the Greater London Council and a leading Liberal onto the platform at the London rallies, alongside Neil Kinnock and Len Murray.

Such tactics are just the other side of the coin of the Labour councils' attempts, in this year's budgets, to make themselves look 'respectable'. Labour activists should demand a change of course. Stop trying to persuade the Tories. Start fighting them.

We need not only to fight the Rates Bill but also to discuss what the labour movement's alternative should be:

Alternative

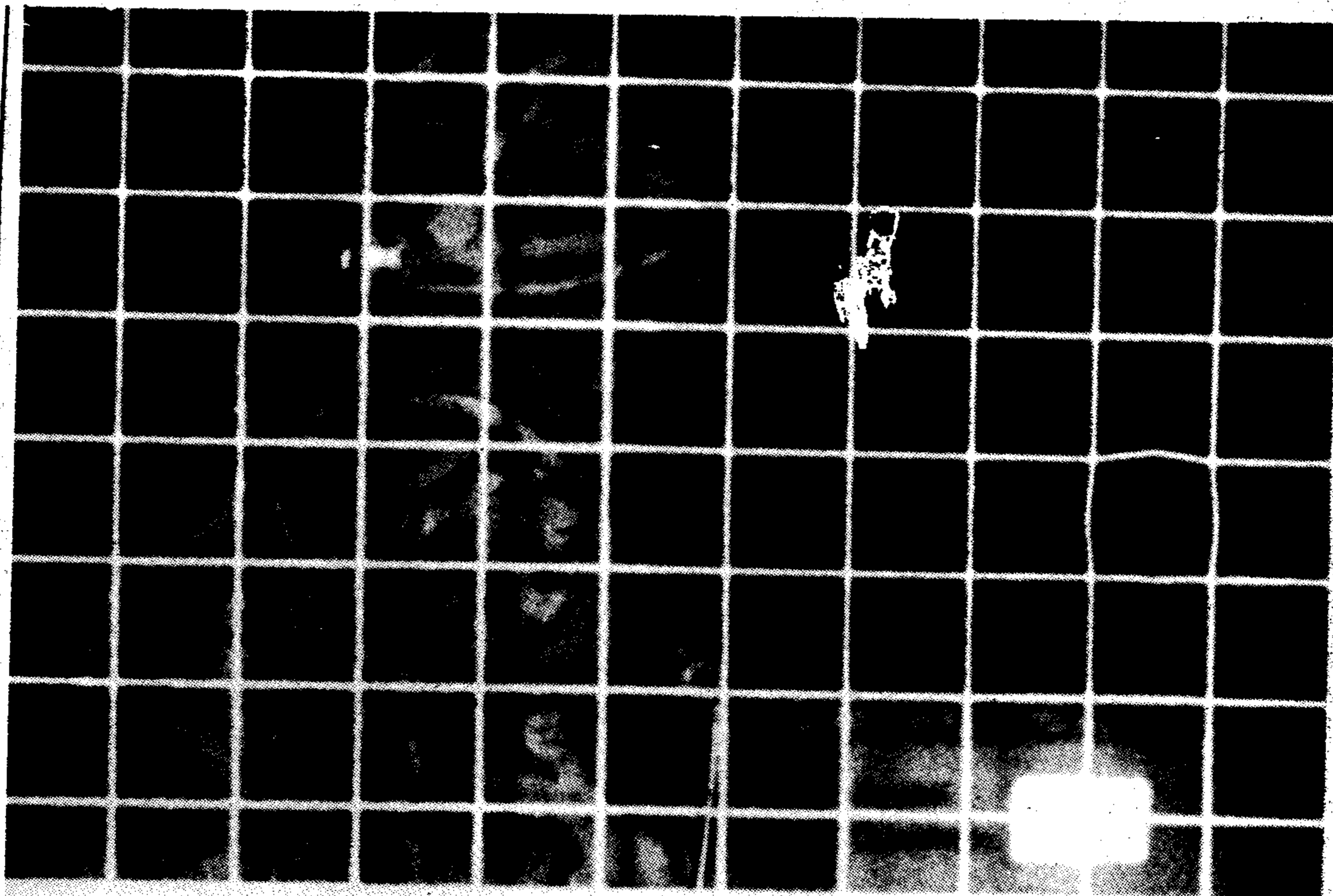
*Defend existing local democracy: demand increased powers for local authorities to levy whatever taxes they decide on. Put the burden of taxation on the wealthy.

*Cancel the councils' debt burden. Nationalise the banks and finance institutions without compensation. Interest-free loans to finance projects to improve services.

*Local trade union, tenants', community and Labour Party groups should draw up plans for what services they need in their areas — nurseries, schools, housing, libraries, social services . . .

*Workers' and community control of housing and education.

*Defend council Direct Labour Organisations. Take the whole building industry into public ownership, without compensation and under workers' and community control. Launch a national crash house-building programme.



JOHN HARRIS

Armed US soldier at Greenham

ACCORDING to the Tories, 'security' at Greenham is in the hands of the British army and the police. But this photo reveals quite clearly that there are armed US guards at the base.

The exclusive picture was taken during a "yellow alert" in a nuclear alert. What happens during such occasions is that the British Army and the police withdraw from the perimeter and the US guards take over. The photo also sums up a basic fact about NATO. It is an integrated nuclear alliance, within which Britain is not subordinated to the US but is an equal partner.

FUND

AFTER a good start in March, a miserable end. Only £48 this week (£40 Nik Barstow, £6 Steve Battlemuch, £2 Birmingham), making £360.70 for the month. Send money to 214 Sickert Court, London N1 2SY.