

Socialist ORGANISER

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ORGANISE FOR A GENERAL STRIKE!

Scargill says: bring rail out!

Miners President, Arthur Scargill, addressing the May Day demonstration in Mansfield, Notts., on May 7 said:

MAKE NO mistake, we're winning this battle. The fact that there is feeling inside the steel industry means that it is effective.

But the other sections of the trade union movement have got to become more involved in this dispute. There is no doubt that the support given by ASLEF and NUR has been magnificent.

But I know that the NUR and ASLEF are not only pressing for a wage increase! They are also fighting against the threat of redundancy.

And I would appeal to both the NUR and ASLEF. If ever there was a time to join with this join, not merely in an expression of solidarity, but to come out on strike in support of your own claim and join it with other, now is the time - and I call on you to do so.

On the 14th of this month - next Monday - I want to see in this town the greatest demonstration of trade union solidarity, both from miners and the wider trade union movement, that we have ever seen.

And I also want to see every single striking miner not merely on strike but actively engaged in picketing ports and wharfs and power stations to bring this dispute to a swift and successful conclusion.

I wish to say, from all the miners, to the wives and to the families, and to the wider trade union movement, that the solidarity that has been displayed in this dispute has been an inspiration to our movement. It's the first fight back that Thatcher has ever seen. Make no mistake, we are going to win this dispute. Comrades, it's a privilege to lead you!



Marchers in Mansfield on May 7. Even if the comparison of the Tories with the Nazis is not scientifically precise, it expresses what people feel about the "Notts police state".

AUEW calls for TUC day of action

THE AUEW National Committee last Tuesday, 1st, called for a national TUC day of action in support of the miners.

Scotland has a day of action on the 9th. The Wales TUC on Friday 4th decided to organise a day of action in Wales. The Yorkshire and Humberside regional TUC has called for a 24-hour strike in support of the miners on Monday May 21, and the Sheffield AUEW district committee has already supported this call.

Arthur Scargill has called for all workers to rally for the greatest trade union demonstration in years at Mansfield, Notts, on Monday 14th.

The TUC's duty now is to pull these initiatives together with a call for a full 24 hour general strike in support of the miners.

Such a call could rally the labour movement and help prepare for an all-out general strike capable of stopping cuts and closures and getting rid of the anti-union laws.

In the meantime we need to organise at rank and file level for maximum support on May 14 and May 21.

Stop the power stations!

THE MINERS' strike is still gathering strength. Over the last week all the Lancashire pits except Agecroft have been picketed out. In Notts, nearly 50 per cent are now on strike, and the numbers are increasing.

But there are real problems. There is a well-organised hard core of scabs in the Notts pits. It is backed up by an unprecedented police operation, based on over ten years of planning, practice and preparation.

To win, the miners need to stop the power stations and industry. Only three power stations have been stopped so far, West Thurrock, Aberthaw, and Didcot. Many are not even being picketed.

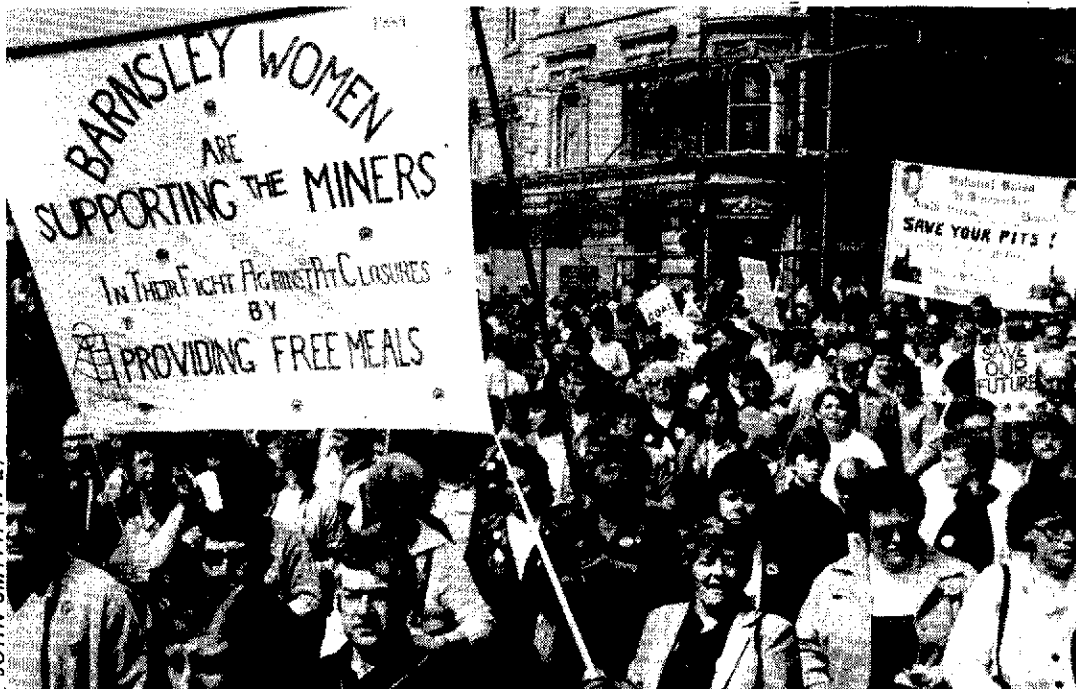
The focus has been overwhelming on getting the Notts pits out. There are good reasons for this. The Notts pits are important — not so much because of the reduced amount of coal still being produced as for political reasons. If Notts miners are still working, that makes it more difficult for striking miners to get support from other workers.

But the focus on Notts could be at the expense of sending pickets to other industries and to the power stations.

Trade unionists, and the Labour Party, are responding despite the scabbing in Notts. Arthur Scargill is right that the strike can be won without getting all of Notts out (though it would be much quicker if Notts were all out). And it may have to be that way. There is now a determined hard core of scabs in Notts, and the massive police operation makes it very difficult to picket them all out. (But it would be wrong at the moment to propose expelling all the non-striking miners from the NUM — 'scabs out of the union'. More Notts miners can be convinced. A right-wing breakaway 'Spencer-type' union may develop, but efforts should be made to prevent that).

Some miners have complained of conservative and sluggish organisation of picketing by the area leaderships.

There has been a certain improvement since strike organisation was centralised after the NUM special conference in Sheffield. The union is 'tightening the knot', cutting back on dispensations, and organising huge turnouts like the 10,000 at Harworth and the mass picket at Cotgrave on Thursday 3rd.



The May Day rally in Barnsley

Socialist Worker has raised the call for rank and file strike committees as a response to the problems with picketing. But they seem to propose committees based on the activists and divorced from the union structures. And simply to say 'increase militancy from rank and file level' ignores some of the real problems. The miners have to centralise their forces to have any hope of defeating the massive police operation.

Obviously there should be committees based on the activists where area/branch structures are not controlled by strikers, as in Notts. But where possible committees like the joint lodges in South Wales, the panels in Yorkshire, and the area strike committees in Scotland, should be central, with maximum communication to and involvement of the rank and file at branch level.

Money should be sent direct to the strike committees (this will also make it more difficult for the courts to seize it). The women's committees should have representation.

In this strike Arthur Scargill, as NUM president, has done much of what socialists have unavailingly demanded of other union leaders in the past. He has argued for increased picketing, for defiance of the law, and for other unions to take strike action.

His weakness is the lack of a rank and file movement in the NUM capable of leading a drive to implement his appeal for every miner to join the picket lines.

Scargill's failure since he became NUM president to take a fight into the TUC has also taken a toll. Personal approaches to left union leaders are not a substitute for a cross-union rank and file movement linking the militants in different industries.

The NUM was right, tactically, not to go to the TUC at the beginning of the dispute. But now the NUM should call on the TUC left leaders openly to organise for solidarity action, and to go into the TUC demanding a 24-hour general strike as a first major expression of support.

The support has been sufficient to push the Labour Party National Executive into its unprecedented and unanimous decision for a 50p levy on Labour Party members. It has also forced Neil Kinnock and Roy Hattersley to move much closer to clear support for the miners.

The decision on the 50p levy creates tremendous opportunities for turning the Labour Party outwards. The job of the serious Left is to make sure that it is implemented, through the regular local Labour Party structures and/or through special support committees or 'task forces'.

The local election results from May 3 open up the prospect of Liverpool Labour council confronting the Tories at the same time as the miners' strike. We should try to link these battles as closely as possible, in the perspective of organising for a general strike.

Other Labour councils should be urged to follow the example of Merseyside County Council, and refuse to grant extra money to the police to cover the operation against the miners' strike. Labour councillors on police authorities should also demand that Chief Constables withdraw from the centralised anti-picket operation, and call for their resignation if they refuse.

The demonstration against the Police Bill on May 19 should be made into a huge protest against the development of a centralised strong-arm police force, with Scargill speaking and miners' contingents on the march.

Another strength of the dispute is the blossoming of 'women against pit closures' groups.

Such committees existed not at all or on an entirely different scale in 1972 and 1974. Behind them lie not only the immediate issues but also many women's struggles. Greenham Common has been an inspiration to many of the women involved.

Another significant strength has been the government's refusal to use the anti-union laws. Right-wing Tories and business people have criticised this refusal, and pointed out that it discredits the laws.

Evidently the government hopes that the strike will peter out. But if they become convinced that won't happen, then they will use the laws. The call for a general strike will then become a very immediate issue.



Len Murray

By Mark Starr

FORGET for one moment the miners' strike, the local council elections, Liverpool, even the future of the TUC. There is something far more important: the future of Len Murray.

After all, Len has given more than a decade of selfless service leading the trade union movement. For much of that time he's been forced to eke out some kind of existence on a miserable pittance of £30,000. Now is the time for all of us to show our gratitude. Now is the time to give Len some real gravy. He

should go to the House of Lords.

Lord Len of Warrington, Earl Murray of Cheltenham? They both have a firm ring about them. In fact, we could hold a secret postal ballot to decide what we should call Len, as some will have other, perhaps cruder, suggestions.

But I want to go further. I want to propose that Len should not be created a mere Lord for life, those are ten a penny, but a Hereditary Peer.

This would have tremendous benefits for workers

from Lands End to John O'Groats, and far further afield. It would show them that socialist statisticians are damned liars: social mobility is not dead, but even in this day and age the humble scion of the proletariat can still reach the very top.

All workers would feel that little bit better, clocking on at eight on cold mornings, knowing the Shropshire lad, still comfortably in bed, would soon be donning his mink and ermine underwear, hobnobbing with the toffs.

Most important of all, Len's entry into Debrett would show him in his true colours, the bend sinister, with a yellow stripe, crowned with a grovelling carthorse: the colours for betraying his movement and being a traitor to his class.

For the NGA and GCHQ were nothing new. Right from the day he walked into the General Secretary's job, in 1973, Len strained every sinew to maintain the system. And even before that.

Having taken a degree at Oxford, in 1947 Len went to Liverpool, to train, he said, 'as a superior sort of waiter'.

For the next four decades, he was to serve the British ruling class in precisely that capacity, as a superior sort of waiter.

The restaurant trade itself was rescued from a fate worse than death by Len's applica-

tion for a job in Congress House. George Woodcock was impressed, he said, by Len's cynical views of trade unions. The working class has been stuck for the last 10 years with those views.

Murray had seen action during the Normandy landings. He was determined never to see it again. Within weeks of taking up office, he was proffering a way out of the miners' strike: the good grocer declined and paid the price.

Len played a leading role in derailing the militancy of the early '70s, and, with Jones and Scanlon, delivered the members to Wilson and Callaghan with the finesse of a veteran head waiter.

Sometimes a firmer hand was needed. The National Union of Seamen case was typical of the bile doled out to those who opposed TUC support for wage-cutting.

"By God, we'll make sure that no union supports you. We'll cripple you", the mild-mannered Methodist told their leaders during the 1976 strike.

His deep respect for democracy was illustrated two years later, when he removed the Bakers' Union resolution from the congress agenda in violation of the TUC constitution. Even as the Winter of Discontent developed, Murray issued codes of practice restricting strikes and

picketing, paving the way for the Tories' legislation.

With the TUC 'big six', he reached an agreement with Callaghan for a further round of wage reductions, only to be firmly repudiated by the TUC general council.

The Tory years saw the betrayals of ASLEF, the NHS workers, and the POEU, to single out just a handful. Typical of Murray's leadership was a strike at the Financial Times in the summer of 1983 by NGA members.

He threatened the NGA with suspension from the TUC unless they returned to

work and accepted the employers' offer. The NGA stuck it out. They won £7 a week more than they would have got if they had taken Len's wise 'advice'.

The GCHQ affair finally put an end to Murray's utopian project of establishing formal obedience to Thatcher in return for a few crumbs. Len had nowhere left to run.

An NUM picket approached him last week: "I said, 'Come on Len, are you going to support the miners?' But he just walked past". He was on his way to the House of Lords.

The Lords at last?

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



Miners

Swing Labour behind the miners

by Tony Benn

JIM Mortimer, general secretary of the Labour Party, has written to all the local Parties about the levy.

Some examples of what has come in. at Lambeth Town Hall there was £2257 raised in the collection. I've had a letter from a man in Bournemouth who is unemployed and says: 'I can't afford it, but here's £5 and I'll eat less'.

The Campaign group of MPs are levying themselves £5 a week. There is a move, I'm not sure how far it has gone, to get all Labour MPs to levy themselves. And the Chesterfield Labour Party, for example, is giving £500 a week - I don't know how it is doing it, but it's going canvassing for money and the amount coming in now is quite impressive.

I think many local Labour Parties are going round to the houses and getting an extremely good response.

I reckon that by deeming that miners are getting £15 a week strike pay, which they are not, the government has stolen about £900,000 to £1 million a week off the striking miners. 10p from every trade unionist each week would make it up again, so the resources are there. It's just a question of organising them.

I've never known an issue when the financial commitment is so strong.

I was in Nottingham on Friday night and I talked to some of the Nottinghamshire miners who are on strike. They reckon that as a result of what is happening in Not-

tinghamshire the cost of subsidy to each ton of coal being produced there now is between £70 and £90, because of the fact that the pits are not really able to operate.

The cost of policing the miners' dispute in Derbyshire alone is £111,000 a day.

Some constables are getting about £600 a week for operations away from home. When you gross all this up, you're running into something really big in terms of the cost of the dispute, and I think the government are getting very worried.

A number of issues have come up over the police operation. The Association Chief Constables are now operating in London as a sort of federal national police force - operating out of the Home Office, I think. I'm also getting questions about bugging, about whether troops are being used in police uniform.

I think people are very worried about the police operation, and that goes well beyond the mining community. With the police blocks there, stopping people all the time, you feel you are in an occupied country.

This dispute is a test of will. The miners are absolutely determined, and the public support is phenomenal, but we need the money - to give food to the people whom the government would like to starve back to work.

Tony Benn was speaking to Martin Thomas from Socialist Organiser.



Marching through Mansfield on May 7

Organising in South London

LABOUR Parties in South London have come together to organise a joint miners' support committee.

Tom Cashman, a member of Putney Labour Party, told Socialist Organiser:

"It started with Vauxhall Labour Party circulating the other Labour Parties to get sponsorship for a public meeting. Now the committee is meeting regularly every Friday.

All the inner South London Labour Parties are represented regularly, and less frequently Kingston, Richmond and other areas further out.

We also have trade union representatives from local government unions, health service unions, and the NUR

and we're trying to get more.

Kent miners billeted in Lewisham attend the meetings regularly, and we have links with Snowdown colliery. We will be sending four double-decker buses on a solidarity visit to Aylsham (the village near Snowdown) on June 2.

The committee has organised to get speakers round to Labour Party ward and women's sections and to trade union branches. We are trying to get Labour Parties to organise street collections, and door-to-door collections when canvassing for the Euro-elections.

The 50p levy on Labour Party members is being collected door-to-door, and large sums have been made. Treasury funds -

the Putney Labour Party EC is recommending £500.

We've also tried to work with the Labour councils in South London. Lambeth town hall is being used as a centre for collecting food parcels for the miners' families.

There has been an excel-

lent response from Labour Party members, and I think the same sort of effort in other areas would get a similar response."

Contact: Joan Twelves, 1 Alverstone House, Kennington Park Estate, London SE11.

Women against pit closures:
Thurnscoe: Sheila Jow, 105 Lidget Lane, Thurnscoe, Near Rotherham.
Blidworth: Doreen Humber, 50 Thorney Abbey Road, Blidworth Mansfield, Notts.
Edlington: Veronica Balderson, 62, Blowhall Cres., Edlington, Doncaster.

WOMEN against pit closures national demonstration: Saturday May 12, Assemble 11am, Church Fields, Barnsley. Women to lead the demonstration. Rally 12 noon at the Civic Hall.

Independent video and film makers throughout the country have got together to produce a series of videos putting the case for the miners as it is never seen on BBC or ITV.

Cash is needed to complete the tapes. Send to Miners Campaign Tape Project, 13 Tankerton House, Tankerton Street, London WC1H 8HW. Endorsed by the following areas of the National Union of Mineworkers: Kent; South Wales; Derbyshire; Northumberland; Yorkshire.



Miners

Fight for a general strike!

By Martin Thomas

THE call for a general strike is winning more and more support in the labour movement. But 'general strike' is not a slogan that should be used lightly.

What perspectives does it open up? What does working class history have to teach us about general strikes?

In the 19th century, the general strike was the anarchists' slogan, and the Marxists were sceptical. Engels wrote:

"In the Bakuninist [anarchist] programme, a general strike is the lever for unleashing social revolution. One fine morning, the workers in all the industries of a country, even the whole world, stop work and, in four weeks at the maximum, oblige the ruling classes to surrender."

But how would the working class reach the tremendous level of organisation necessary for such an act? And if they did get anywhere near it, could they not achieve their aims by other means first?

In the early 20th century, Rosa Luxemburg, basing herself on the experience of the Russian Revolution of 1905 and also the Belgian general strikes for voting rights, argued that the real development of the mass strike movements had outstripped both the anarchists' conceptions and Engels' objections.

"In a word the mass strike, as shown to us by the Russian Revolution, is not a crafty method discovered by subtle reasoning for the purpose of making the proletarian struggle more effective, but the method of motion of the proletarian mass, the phenomenal form of the proletarian struggle in the revolution."

Instead of the general strike being the product of an utopian all-at-once working-class rejection of capitalism, it could be the means by which working class consciousness developed from limited aims according to the laws and logic of the class struggle.

A general strike, even starting from very limited demands, rapidly raises the question of workers taking control of law and order, essential supplies and services, etc. It paralyses the state. It poses in a practical manner the question of who is boss in society.

It also poses an answer: the workers must take power and operate the means of production under collective control.

So we must be able to fight for the use of the general strike at relevant times as a weapon for immediate limited demands; and at the same time equip ourselves to fight for workers' victory in a general strike, once started.

That is the basis on which it makes sense now to argue for organising for a general strike in connection with such issues as supporting the miners, stopping the cuts and closures, and scrapping the anti-union laws.

What are the objections to this perspective?

Some comrades argue (see inset) that we should instead call for a 'general strike to kick the Tories out'.

But this slogan is attractive largely because it is ambiguous. And Marxists need precision.

'General strike to kick the Tories out' says that we are against the Tories. It does not say what we are for.

The last thing that will happen in a general strike is a government simply resigning (unless perhaps it hands over to a 'national unity' coalition or a military administration). It has to be replaced.

How and by what? Through an election, by a Labour government? That is what most people will understand when they hear the slogan 'General strike to kick the Tories out' at present.

A Labour government is the only labour movement alternative to the Tories, at present, and replacing the Tories even by a Kinnock-Hattersley administration would be a major achievement, at present.

But a general strike is not a weapon for winning elections! An actual general strike will start around an immediate limited issue or group of issues. The job of socialists is then to develop the movement through workers' self-organisation, workers' councils, working class administration of essential services, and a workers' government.

Escape

'General strike for a general election' would mean developing the movement to the point where it threatens the government – and endorsing in advance the government's best escape route, the one used by the French government in 1968.

A government which called an election would retain control of the situation – and might very well win the subsequent election. The labour movement which had rallied millions of workers to the heights of a general strike, and then sent the movement dribbling down into a ballot-box exercise, would lose the confidence of many workers and middle class people. That is what happened in France in 1968.

But the comrades who call for 'General strike to kick the Tories out' explain that they themselves would prefer the Tories to be replaced by a workers' government, through an armed uprising. The idea is that they would switch the actual meaning of the slogan as the movement developed.

This is trying to solve a real problem by forms of words. There is a real gap between the limited issues which would spark a general strike and the revolutionary perspectives which it would open up once under way. That gap cannot be bridged by finding a set of words – 'General strike to kick the Tories out' which is vague enough to cover both.

The function of Marxist slogans should be to enlighten, to clarify, to make more precise. Instead, this slogan blurs, confuses, smears over the issues.

Statically

A second objection is that our perspective is unrealistic. Revolutionary possibilities in Britain are something for many years in the future. To talk about them now is wild, irresponsible phrasemongering.

It does look like that if you assess the situation statically. But in times of mass struggle workers can learn more in a few days than normally they would in decades. In April 1968 no-one expected a revolutionary situation to develop within a few weeks in France.

Of course there is no guarantee that a general strike in Britain today would have revolutionary results. On a cold calculation it probably would not. But such a cold realism should not prevent workers from fighting for the best possible outcome.

The 1968 general strike in France did not bring the working class to power. But Leon Trotsky assessed it in the following terms, which still apply today:

"The first self-motivated act of the masses has outlined and in part brought forward the first elements of revolutionary leadership. The strike has stirred and regenerated the whole colossal class organism."

All this of course does not prove that a general strike is possible in the immediate future.



Above: mass meeting at Renault Billancourt, May 1968. The traditionally CP-dominated car factory hooded Communist Party union leaders who urged them to accept a deal with the government for wage rises and end the general strike. Posters from May-June 1968: below, 'The boss needs you, you don't need him', bottom left, 'The vote changes nothing, the struggle continues', bottom right, 'Return to normal'.

As Leon Trotsky put it in 1935.

"But is the general strike possible in the immediate future? To a question of this sort there is no a priori answer possible, that is to say, none ready made. To obtain an answer it is necessary to know how to question. Whom? The masses. How question them? By means of agitation."

"Agitation is not only the means of communicating to the masses this or that slogan, calling the masses to action etc. For a party agitation is also a means of lending an ear to the masses of sounding out their moods and thoughts and reaching this or another decision in accordance with the results."



DEBATE-

STRIKE TO KICK THE TORIES OUT?

By Tony Dale and Clive Bradley.

THE political logic of both the local government and the miners' struggles is inexorable: general strike to remove the government, or General Strike to Kick the Tories Out.

The struggle of the miners has developed beyond the fight to defend jobs. It is not primarily a confrontation with one piece of vicious anti-working class legislation. The attack on the miners is an offensive which is taking place on several different fronts. A slogan appropriate to building and extending that struggle cannot be limited to just support for the miners or to opposition to the anti-union laws, it must encompass the generalised offensive by the Tory government against the miners.

'General strike against various bits and bobs of Tory legislation' simply begs the question. It puts two and two together and refuses to make four.

The call for a "general strike against Tory anti-union laws, against cuts, and in support of the miners" lacks the clarity

necessary to give real direction to the struggle taking place. 'General Strike to Kick the Tories Out' is better.

The slogan for a 'General Strike to Kick the Tories Out' need not limit us to agitation for a General Election. The aim of this general strike is to remove the Tories from government: what kind of alternative will be possible will depend upon the development of the struggle.

In the context of a 'General Strike to Kick the Tories Out' we will be able to explicitly raise the question of what sort of government the working class need. It will open up the possibility of agitation for a workers' government based on and accountable to workers' councils. The dynamic of a general strike will be to agitate for the building of workers' councils and the creation of a government based on those councils.

The 'General Strike to Kick the Tories Out', far from limiting the movement to the election of a bourgeois Labour government, poses the question of what form of government will replace the Tories.

What they say

"I think it should be a general strike. Other workers should be supporting us. Why are TGWU drivers still crossing the line? Their union hasn't been doing its job properly. I would never cross a picket line."

"MacGregor's doing to us what he did to the steel industry. I only wish we had supported the steel workers then. But it's no use looking at what you should have done in the past. We have to learn from these mistakes."

Sheila Jow, South Yorkshire miners' wives' organiser.

"The time has come to say to other unions: Yes, we want your support, but not only financial contributions. When we're faced with Thatcher, MacGregor, the CBI, the Institute of Directors, we're entitled to say to colleagues in other unions: join us, come out with us in dispute."

Arthur Scargill

"I wouldn't put it [sending in troops] past them at all. I think this is when the rest of the country would rally round. We could even envisage a general strike if that happened – if they did bring troops in."

Kay Sutcliffe, Kent miners' wives' organiser.

"If we go under, then the trade union movement goes under. We want their support, but we also want positive action, including strike action. Eventually, it's got to come to a general strike to get rid of Thatcher's monetarist policies. Now we've got rid of the Falklands factor

we've got a good chance.

"Trade unionists have got to get united. If we want to destroy capitalism, then the time to do it is now."

Roy Barsley, chair of the South Yorkshire NUM panel.

"As the strike gains momentum the state will feel more and more threatened and will employ even tougher tactics against the miners. That should bring a lot of sympathy from other sections of the working class, and it could very well develop into a general strike situation."

"The Tory government will be seriously threatened, and perhaps a lot more than that. This is what it's coming to. People can only take the failings of the present economic system for so long."

Steve Shukla, Armthorpe NUM, Yorkshire.



Miners

Scottish day of action May 9: only a start

By Stan Crooke

THE SCOTTISH TUC's call to make May 9 a Day of Action in support of the miners got a strong response from many unions and workplaces.

Nevertheless it was only a start. And there were different responses from different unions and workplaces.

USDAW urged its members to support the Day of Action, but at the same time stressed that such support should not 'endanger the union', i.e. break the Tory anti-union laws.

The rail white collar union TSSA also informed members that 'action should be taken on May 9 in support of the miners', and urged them to 'do all in their power' to support local demonstrations and rallies, but fell short of calling strike action.

NUR action

Strike action was expected from many NUR and ASLEF members. British Rail had already announced that only a skeleton service would be operating in many parts of Scotland.

NALGO cannot instruct members to strike without a ballot. But a NALGO circular pointed out that 'the NALGO National Executive emergency committee will authorise members to take up to one day away from work... to participate in the activities organised...'

Similarly, the CPSA did not actually call for strike action in its circular, but was emphatic on the need for action to be taken on May 9.

The SCPS instructed members to strike on day of action.

In the steel union ISTC, though, it was a different

story. The shop stewards' committee at Ravenscraig voted not to strike on the 9th. Dalziel, sister plant to Ravenscraig, were likewise not to strike on the 9th.

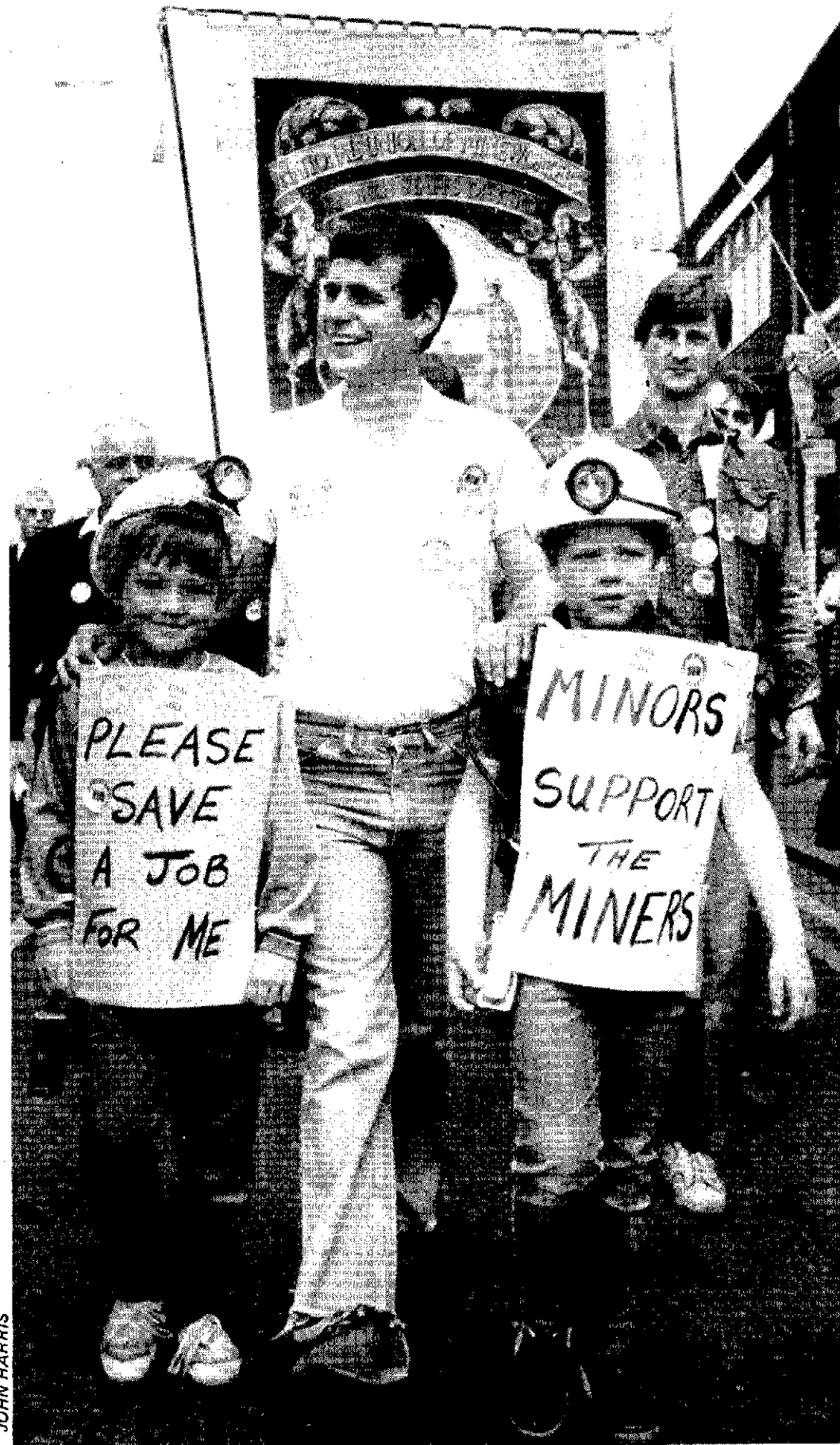
But a mass meeting at the Clydebridge steelworks voted for a 24 hour strike despite management's threat that they would be locked out for the rest of the week.

Telecom

The POEU called for support on the 9th without specifying, but the UCW told its members not to take action. The main Scottish teachers' union, EIS, advised members to hold school meetings and promised support for teachers who take part in the demonstrations.

Members of NUPE and CoHSE were expected to be on strike in a number of Glasgow hospitals for a whole day.

The response was certainly sufficient to show that a full TUC call for a 24 hour general strike would bring the country to a halt.



May Day march in Stoke

JOHN HARRIS

Rail: now is the time!

By Rob Dawber

British Rail have made a new pay offer to replace the one rejected by the NUR and ASLEF.

The new 'offer' consists of 4% on basic rates (meaning slightly more), the Minimum Earnings Level to be increased to £88.25, adult staff on rates less than this to get an extra quid, and one more day's leave at Christmas for everyone.

They still insist that it should be linked to getting rid of guards, saying this is what is left over from previous productivity deals.

This is true. Under Weighell, the NUR did agree to experiment and talk on getting rid of guards. But the AGM in 1983 decided there would be no more and instructed the NEC to withdraw from all present and pending agreements.

Rail

British Rail management have also announced the further rundown of British Rail Engineering Ltd (BREL), involving possible compulsory redundancies from June. There is no suggestion that this should be reflected in pay packets.

In response to the wages offer, NUR and ASLEF have let it be known that they are meeting to consider the possibility of action

later this month. Strike action has been explicitly ruled out. It will probably be an overtime ban or a ban on rest-day working.

With an average week of 54 hours, an overtime ban ought to be particularly effective. But it will be hard to police in some isolated, but key areas - signal boxes for example.

Unlike the NUM, for example, where an overtime ban could be used to run down coal stocks in preparation for an all-out strike, no such effect could result from an effective overtime ban on the railways.

Rundown

COTTAM and West Burton power stations have been blacked by action of NUR signalmen and guards around Workop for the last three weeks.

Coal that has been stockpiled for more than three weeks needs to be mixed with fresh coal for burning.

But guards and drivers at Shirebrook Depot are continuing to work into the 11 Notts pits they service, despite instructions from the NUR and ASLEF not to cross picket lines or handle coal - and despite an appeal from Notts NUM Branch Secretaries and one Branch Delegate

Disruption would be the immediate result which might get a bit worse if timetables were messed up. But the people worst hit would be those in the lowest wages, who grab all the overtime they can get.

The government has shown itself determined against the NUM, there is no reason to believe they will be any softer with us - unless of course they are beaten first.

The logic is an all-out strike. But the NEC of the NUR at least is still smarting from the humiliation Weighell subjected them to when he got the AGM to call the 1982 strike off after 18 hours.

on Sunday 6th not to work into their pits.

Worse, some Shirebrook train crews are taking work that other depots have refused, such as extra trains into Radcliffe Power Station.

Some guards and drivers want to take action but feel isolated.

Miners should mount a picket, at Shirebrook depot to talk to guards, drivers and signalmen - to get solidarity and the coal stopped.

Three day week

Mining equipment manufacturer John Davis and Son of Derby has put 300 workers on a three-day week.

They are worried about getting stung again.

There would be problems in making an all-out strike stick - at first - particularly in places like Derby BREL workshops.

But we should be given the chance. Which is more important - the individual prestige of 26 members of the NUR NEC or the jobs and conditions of 240,000 railway workers?

Scargill is right. Joint action now by the NUR and ASLEF alongside the NUM, is the way to strengthen both sections and make victory that much more likely for railway workers and miners.

General strike

NUR Willesden No. 1 Branch at its meeting on Tuesday 8th voted to call on the union executive to organise a one-day strike in support of the miners and to campaign for the TUC to call a general strike to back the miners.

It also called on the executive to instruct members not to cooperate with the movement of any fuel.

Troops

THE NUM is investigating reports that troops dressed in police uniform have been used in anti-picket operations. A Welsh miner

Pickets tighten grip on Scots steel

By Stan Crooke

1,000 pickets, including ten busloads of miners from Fife and Lothian, and delegations from the NUR and ASLEF picketed Ravenscraig steelworks on Monday morning, 7th.

Cashes with the police took place throughout the morning as pickets pressed round the plant entrance, while police - in the end, successfully - fought to divide up the pickets, leaving only 100, hemmed in by six lines of police, on each side of the road, outside the plant.

The bulk of the pickets were pushed back up a side road.

31 pickets had been arrested by the time the first convoy of the day arrived, shortly after midday. It drove into Ravenscraig through a rear entrance, where only a token picket line was stationed.

Success

But despite the success of the police in keeping the plant open, the blockade of Ravenscraig is gradually tightening up.

Picketing at Hunterston, where the coal is stockpiled, is also being stepped up.

All supplies of coal to the plant by rail have now been cut off. This was an immediate response to the decision of BSC to bring in scab coal by lorry. Demands are growing for supplies by rail of iron ore to be cut off as well.

One of the three lorry firms supplying coal to Ravenscraig has already dropped out after pressure from the TGWU. Drivers at the remaining two firms have been told to respect the picket lines. If they refuse to do so the TGWU will black diesel fuel to these firms.

But the implementation of this blacking of fuel supplies has been delayed by the absence of leading TGWU officials. Scottish Regional Secretary Hugh Wyper is in Bulgaria, while Glasgow secretary Willie Queen is in Moscow, along with Scottish TUC general secretary Jimmy Milne (less than 48 hours before the Scottish TUC Day of Action).

To win the battle of Ravenscraig it must be won on all fronts.

*Maintain the mass pickets.
*Black all supplies of coal and iron ore.

*Black all fuel supplies to any lorry firms transporting scab coal and/or iron ore to Ravenscraig.

*Continue to appeal for support from steelworkers, and tie up their fight for jobs with that of the miners.

has said that he saw his son, a soldier, in police uniform on a Lancashire picket line. A Yorkshire miner saw his brother, also a soldier, with the police in Nottinghamshire.

Notts coal

COLLIERY managers say that Nottinghamshire is producing far less coal than the NCB claims.

The Financial Times (May 5) reported that the British Association of Colliery Managers conference was told that production was less than two-thirds of normal, and still falling.

In the last two weeks, since the Sheffield conference, the fall in production has been particularly steep.

Banners

Get a banner made for your trade union or Labour Party organisation and contribute to Socialist Organiser funds. Send details of design required to Carla Jamison, 75 Freemantle Close, Basingstoke.

'No miner should wo

Arthur Scargill said in Mansfield on May 7:

YOU NO longer have the basic right to move freely about this county. If one had described this situation five years ago, you could have been forgiven for believing you were living in some South American dictatorship. You could have been forgiven for believing you were describing Poland. But you're talking about here, in Great Britain, where men and women no longer have the right to move freely.

I call upon all people in this county, I call on all the miners in the Nottinghamshire area, to recognise what is taking place. There should be no doubt in anyone's mind.

Once that lad was killed on the picket line at Ollerton, not a miner should have gone to work again.

Even if we've got differences of opinion, when they can put our lads in prison, as they are doing, when they can drag them from cars and smash their windscreens, there isn't one miner should go to work until that treatment stops.

The message that I conclude with on this May Day, to this marvellous demonstration, is to look forward, to raise our sights to a new horizon.

Not only should the labour movement be interested in winning the miners dispute, not only should we be interested in reducing the massive amount of unemployment, but, very important, all of us should be interested in working towards the next General Election, and getting rid of the worst government in living memory, and bringing about a socialist society in Britain.

He continued:

I'VE BEEN speaking from one end of the country to another. I've never felt so proud in my life because two new phenomena have emerged in this dispute.

I've constantly heard refer-

ences, by older well-meaning socialists, to the fact that young people today don't have the same understanding as their forefathers. If there is one thing that has come through clearly in this dispute it is that we have produced in 1984 the finest generation of young people that the trade union movement has ever seen.

And how many times have you seen these jackals and hyenas from Fleet Street thrust their microphones in front of some unsuspecting housewife to try to persuade her to condemn the actions of workers in dispute?

If there is one special word of tribute and appreciation that I want to say today, it's my deepest appreciation to the women's support groups who have been magnificent throughout this dispute.

On the question of a national ballot, he commented:

In 1977-8 there was a move by the National Executive Committee, led by my predecessor, for an incentive scheme. We argued that there was a conference decision to prevent the introduction of

such a scheme.

The National Executive decided to hold an individual ballot vote. And they lost.

Then the Notts leaders said: that's not right. We'll have an area scheme.

We said: you can't do that. You've got a conference decision that says no. And you've got an individual ballot vote by a 56 per cent majority that says no.

But then those people in Nottinghamshire who are currently still working violated an individual ballot vote, and continued to prosecute an area incentive scheme.

In 1977-8 the ballot vote was ignored because it didn't conform to what the Establishment wanted.

In 1981 there was a strike in the British coalfields against pit closures.

You didn't have a ballot vote. You didn't even have a branch meeting. The leadership could by no stretch of the imagination be described as militant.

But without a ballot vote, without a branch meeting, and without a conference, you came out on strike - and you compelled the Tories to reverse their policy decision.

Police campaign

By Ivan Wels

THE Notts Coordinating Committee Against the Police Presence (CCAPP) has been in existence for just over a month and seems to be having an effect.

In a statement issued last week the Police Committee, which at the beginning of the dispute had voted unanimously to support the Chief Constable, McLachlan has now decided to make £2 million worth of cutbacks in next year's police budget.

There will be no new police recruits, and no new buildings for police stations, as well as other economies.

However this was at the same time that the Labour Group had voted down an amendment saying that any spending during the dispute should all come out of the police budget, since if they had put that into effect there would

be no police department by the end of July!

CCAPP also called for an emergency County Labour Party meeting to discuss the issues - not a penny for the extra policing, withdrawal of police from other forces, and a public inquiry into the Chief Constable's behaviour as he's accountable to nobody.

The Labour Council's response so far has been to totally ignore these County Party policies - bleating about the illegality of such moves.

To emphasise the campaign, CCAPP has called for a mass lobby of the first full Council meeting for two months, next Tuesday, May 15.

"Winning"

Frank Slater (Maltby NUM) told SO:

In Nottinghamshire the police are going round villages and threatening miners.

We had a Scots lad in Ollerton. He was offered a lift to the picket line by some men. They drove up a back alley and beat him up. They were police.

The police want violence to justify their massive overtime bill.

But we're winning day by day. There's more and more people coming out day by day.

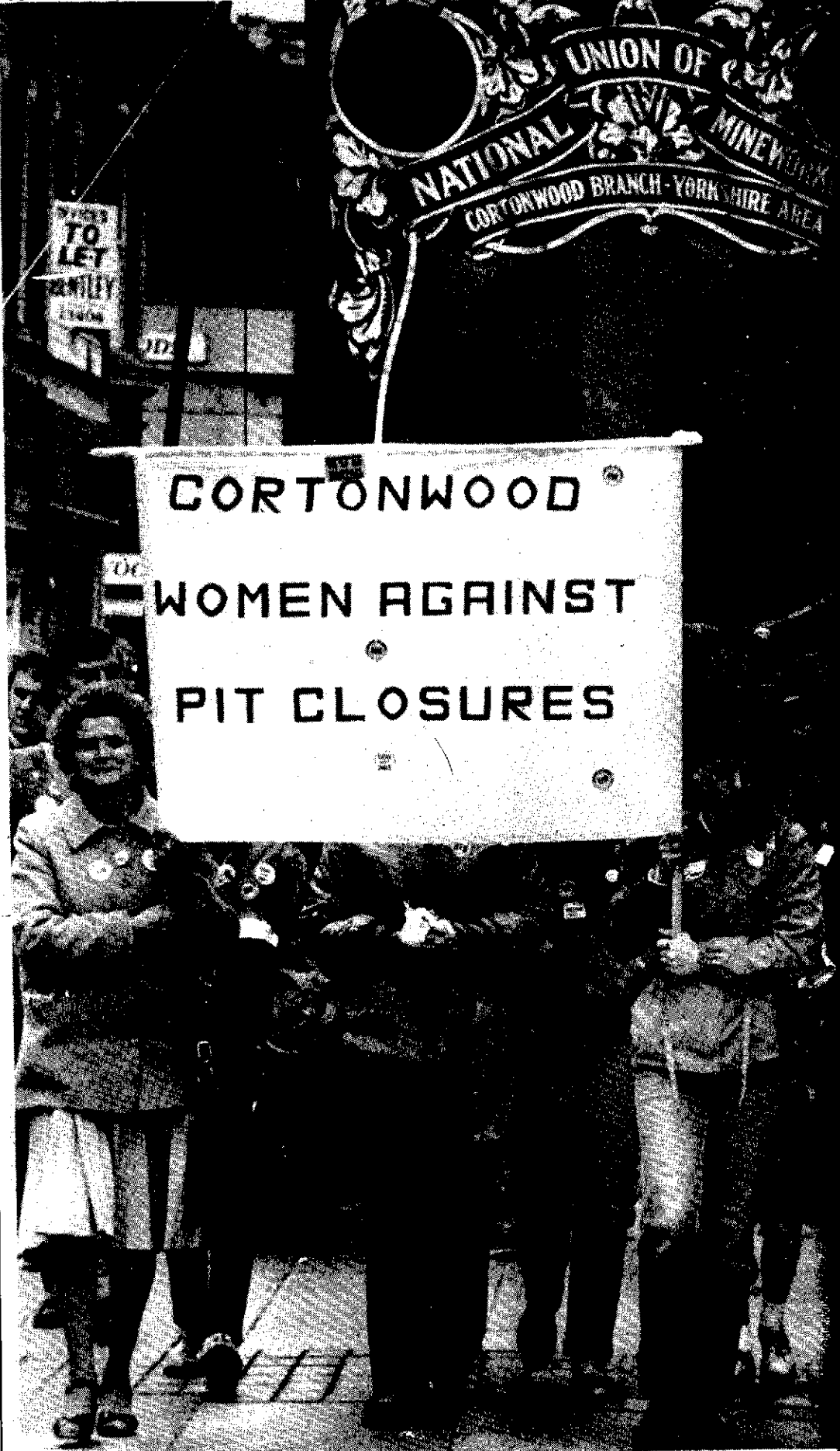
Nottinghamshire miners that came out last week are on picket lines this week.

On the NUR and AS-LEF, I'd agree with Arthur Scargill. Now's the time to strike while the iron's hot.

If they want to win wages and conditions, there's no two ways about it, they've got to come out.

It would tie up the Coal Board completely, because they can't move enough coal by lorry.

JOHN HARRIS



Marching through Mansfield on May 7

Llanwern picket

THE decision by the NUM cokemen's lodges on Friday 5 May to stop supplying coke to Llanwern steelworks has begun to hit production in South Wales severely.

British Steel management is already panicking at the prospect of the furnaces cooling, cracking and leaving a costly repair bill.

The cokemen, in defiance of the South Wales NUM leadership have now decided to inject a bit of badly-needed backbone into the fight in South Wales.

Picketing of the steelworks was originally called off because of police violence on picket lines

6000 march in Stoke

6,000 people marched through Stoke on May 1 to support the miners. There were delegations from unions throughout the Midlands, and more paper sellers in one day than Stoke normally sees in a month. It was the biggest demonstration in Stoke since the 1930s.

During the march and rally thousands of pounds were raised for the strike fund to go with the

at Port Talbot.

Emlyn Williams, South Wales Area President's response was to step in and reduce the number of pickets, in return for a smaller police presence "in order to avoid violence".

Fortunately, this excuse didn't wear at Llanwern, where picketing was also stepped up because most of the coke goes in by rail and NUR members had agreed to respect NUM picket lines.

The NUM leadership was clearly backing down in the face of hostility from ISTC officials and the whole episode made a mockery of the Triple Alliance.

hundreds of pounds raised by several smaller marches and rallies organised by the wives' committee which have taken place throughout North Staffs in recent weeks.

The march and rally was only a small part of the support committee's work. We now have to step up supporting action and backing, especially to stop the movement from Holditch pit of scab coal by TGWU drivers.

No more sexist slo

AT a demonstration of miners and women's support committees in Mansfield on May 7, a contingent of miners were chanting "Maggie Thatcher's got one; Ian MacGregor is one".

Some women argued with these men, and got some of them to accept that we hate Thatcher not because she is a woman, but because of her stinking anti-working class and anti-women policies.

But the slogan was still chanted by some.

During a lull in the shouting a woman shouted "Ian MacGregor's got one; a scabbing miner is one". Other

By Jean Lane

women applauded and took up the chant.

Many miners are now refusing to use the sexist chant because of pressure from women in the fight. But others are still using it.

Women in Notts and Yorkshire have proved themselves to be as militant and able to fight as the men - not just as supporters of the men, but in their own right.

Women's committees have sprung up all over the place. They have been organising pickets on pits that are still working. They have organised

the collection and distribution of food. And they have talked to the wives of miners who are working to persuade them to get their husbands out.

Miners have commented that if the women had done this right at the beginning, all of Notts would be out by now.

Nearly all miners accept the necessity and the value of the wives and women supporters throwing themselves into the fight. And yet the old sexism, treating women purely as sex objects, still shows itself, even in the struggle.

rk!"

gans!

FIRST THEY CAME FOR THE WELSH PITS
AND I DID NOT SPEAK OUT
BECAUSE I WAS NOT WELSH

THEN THEY CAME FOR THE SCOTTISH PITS
AND I DID NOT SPEAK OUT
BECAUSE I WAS NOT SCOTTISH

THEN THEY CAME FOR THE YORKSHIRE PITS
AND I DID NOT SPEAK OUT
BECAUSE I DID NOT COME FROM YORKSHIRE

THEN THEY CAME FOR ME
AND THERE WAS NO ONE LEFT
TO SPEAK OUT FOR ME

"We're out to win this"

Kevin Barron MP spoke to John Bloxam at the Mansfield demonstration on May 7

EVERY day, or every week, we're coming to Notts., there's more miners on strike than there was the week before.

I've had a Labour Party banner in my hand on this demonstration. My Party's been supporting it all along, and they all have.

The Party nationally knows the situation. I'm sorry there's been some calls for wanting us to get our coal into steel works, etc.

I hope the Party nationally does what I'm doing, and that is taking an active role in this dispute to make sure that we win.

I agree with Arthur Scargill on steel. I gave wages up in the steel strike to go picketing with South Yorkshire steel lads. We never touched any steel coming in to our pits.

We had a lot of problems. It cost us money and bonuses, because we wouldn't set new steel.

We didn't grumble about that - we didn't let any steel in.

And I'm very upset that these steelworkers want to do more than keep the steel works open. We don't want to shut them down, but we don't want them to produce.

"WE'VE got 80-100 men out. There is a hardcore of pickets - 20 men - regularly picketing. Last Thursday we organised a march from Linby, right round Hucknall, with a rally in Hucknall and Linby Miners' Welfare. 1,000 miners were on the march.

If the hardcore of men at the pits can be cracked then the rest will come out. Spencer's name should have been dead and buried long ago but it's not.

Many branch officers are still crossing the picket lines. Men respect these people and will follow them. This has got to be changed if the strike is to progress." Chris Hickling, Hucknall NUM

We're out to win this strike, and we aren't going to do it with satisfying everybody with coal.

Strike grows

A UNION office has been turned over to become a strike centre for the Notts striking miners. Money and food is being collected in workplaces, door to door and in the town centre. The Labour Party levy is being taken up enthusiastically. Bulwell East branch Labour Party is putting out a leaflet throughout the ward arguing support for the strike.

This ward covers an area with working miners.

The May Day demonstrations showed further support for the strike. 3,000 marched in Mansfield, made up of North Notts strikers, some South Yorks miners and local trade unionists. A further 2,000 marched in Nottingham in support of the miners, with a weighty contingent of striking South Notts miners.

The latest reports from Notts pits as we went to press:

Bevercotes. 50% out. No coal being produced.

Ollerton. 50% out. Only two shifts working.

Rufford. 50% out and only two shifts working.

Thoresby. 55% out and only two shifts working.

Bentnck. 30-50 men out. All three shifts still working.

Bilthorpe. Only two shifts working.

Bolsover. 85% out and only one shift working.

Calverton. A few men out and three shifts working.

Clipstone. 40% out and only two shifts working.

Cotgrave. A few men out and three shifts working.

Cresswell. 50% out and only two shifts working.

Gedling. A few men out and three shifts working.

Harworth. A few men out and three shifts working.

Hucknall. A few men out and three shifts working.

Linby. 50% out but three shifts working.

Mansfield. A few men out and three shifts working.

Sherwood. 60% out and only two shifts working.

Silverhill. 75-100 men out and three shifts working.

South Normanton garage. A few men out.

Sutton. 100 men out. Three shifts still working.

Welbeck. 50% out and only two shifts working.

Labour women's conference

The power to decide...

ON THE eve of the Labour Party's Women's Conference, (Swansea, May 12 to 14), the party's unofficial Women's Action Committee (WAC) has scored some spectacular successes.

The committee stands for giving women a real say in the Party, and its main aims are for positive discrimination on parliamentary and local government short lists, including provision of child-care expenses and the timing of meetings to suit women's needs: for a national Rules Conference for Party women's organisations, which presently have no formal rules: for the Women's Conference to elect the Women's Section of the Party's National Executive Committee: and for a number of resolutions from the Women's Conference to be debated as of right at Annual Conference.

Firstly, over a quarter (150) of the resolutions to be tabled at the Women's Conference are on WAC themes, due to WAC organisation harnessed to the considerable grass-roots feeling for them.

Recommend

Secondly, the party's National Labour Women's Committee has agreed to recommend to the Women's Conference that these resolutions be accepted.

Thirdly, some other WAC aims have recently been progressed. The NLWC is going to recommend to the NEC that a WAC proposal for obtaining an additional woman delegate to Annual Conference be accepted.

At present, the rules allow for this additional delegate in principle, but in practice this is often difficult to obtain. Also, after pressure from WAC, the NLWC is now to grant child-care expenses to women delegates in need of this provision.

Trade unions

WAC is also actively forging links with trade union women. We favour a block vote for the Women's Conference, provided that this is based on the women membership of the unions in question, and the delegates are answerable to a democratically elected body of women within the unions in question. We regard as democratically elected, committees, conferences, etc., elected by autonomous women's groups within the unions.

At the Women's Conference, the guest speaker at our main meeting on the Saturday night will be Kay Sutcliffe from Kent, to talk about women's organisation in her area for the miners' strike. We

Two views on the Labour Party women's conference, from the Women's Action Committee (top) and from Women's Fightback (below).

also have a trade union liaison officer, Christine Bickerstaffe (AUEW-TASS).

Other WAC meetings at the Women's Conference are a welcoming meeting on the Friday night and a review on the Sunday night. After a discussion of women's involvement in the miners' strike at the main Saturday night meeting, there will be space for a full discussion from the floor on WAC's aims and progress.

It is worth saying a few words to answer criticisms of organisations like WAC to the effect that their aims are irrelevant to the needs of working class women (better working conditions, social services, etc). Our line is that the male-dominated political parties and trade unions have been woefully amiss in pursuing women's issues; either these have been put to the bottom of the agenda or merely paid lip-service to, or else they have been actively resisted, if they challenge the male, white hegemony.

Hence, pay demands are turn, and women once again rendered powerless, if the underlying structures of male-

seen in terms of a married-man-n-two-kids, and women are virtually excluded from skilled, blue-collar occupations like engineering; you would never know from the engineering unions that this was the year of "Women in Science and Engineering", for example.

Only by relative autonomy can women achieve a society which is fair and reasonable for them.

Nor are recent strenuous attempts by male-dominated organisations, particularly unions, to pre-empt women's demands by making concessions on the most hard-pressed ones the answer.

The recent attitudes of the government and employers to trade union rights show how easily gains can be clawed back if underlying political and power structures have not been radically altered.

Lip service

Trade union men are in some instances making concessions to women because it is expedient to do so, and sometimes out of sheer vanity, because it is at present trendy to show an interest in women's concerns; but the tide could based power are not tackled.

Witness to this is the fact that the unions at their male-dominated conferences are always ready to pay lip-service to pious resolutions about women but will not tolerate proposals for autonomous women's decision-making bodies, except in a few notable exceptions.

... and policies to fight back

By Jenny Fisher

WOMEN'S Fightback is looking forward to a conference where women can again - as they did at their last Conference in Newcastle in 1982 - show that they are the most uncompromising section of the Labour Party in fighting the Tory attacks on the working class.

If the conference votes to accept all the resolutions on constitutional change (and the National Labour Women's Committee recommendation makes that more likely) it will be a great victory, and a tribute to the determination of the women who've organised the battle.

Two other key issues which will confront women at Swansea are support for the miners' strike and local government.

On both these issues, the fightback against the Tories cannot "wait till '88", because that fits in with the Parliamentary timetable!

Women always participate in strikes in male-dominated industries, even though this is usually by being the ones who have to manage family budgets on strike pay, etc., or by being the focus of press coverage of the "wives force men back to work" type.

But the formation of so many wives' support groups in this miners' strike, and their activities, which include picketing as much as organising financial relief show clearly how determined women are to fight the Tories at the front line.

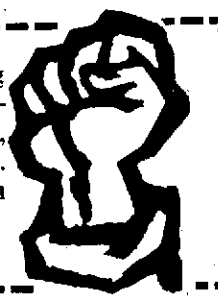
Many campaigns have been organised against rate-capping, cuts, and abolition of councils. Some, such as the GLCs, have included a specific focus on women. But the test will come in the sharpest area: the fight in Liverpool.

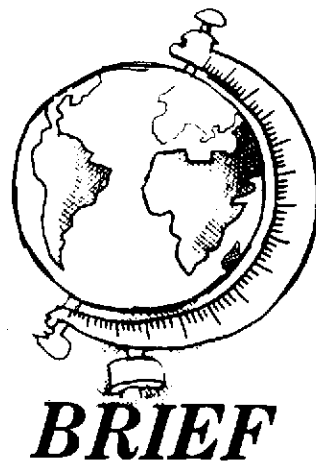
Liverpool Council itself has made no attempt so far to involve women specifically in the campaign or to think through the specific effects of cuts on women.

But the Conference will also be the test for Labour women nationally. Liverpool has decided to draw the line, and to refuse to implement Tory cuts any further: will they be supported, or will conference back the councils who prefer to lobby, petition, or "wait till next year"?

The Women's Fightback fringe meeting will attempt to link these two struggles, together with the fight to save the NHS: another area where women will be most affected by Tory cuts, and women are taking the leading in fighting them.

Women's Fightback fringe meeting at Labour Party women's conference. Sunday May 13, 12.30 pm, Singleton Hotel, Singleton Street. Speakers from South Wales women against pit closures.





Torturers in Turkey

THOUSANDS of women and men detained in Turkey under martial law have been systematically tortured, suffering savage beatings and electric shocks to their genitals and other parts of their bodies according to a new report from Amnesty International.

Detainees were also burned with cigarettes, tied to hot radiator pipes, suspended from the ceiling by their hands or feet for prolonged periods until they screamed with pain, and routinely subjected to falaka (brutal beatings on the soles of the feet).

One married woman, Sema Ogur, said that after her arrest

she was subjected to falaka and electric torture. "They wet the inside of my crotch and began applying shocks", she said in her statement. One of the torturers threatened to apply electricity to her ovaries and sterilize her.

On the second day of her detention, she thought she heard her husband screaming. She was then taken to the torture room opposite her cell and saw him: "He was lying naked against a black tiled wall. His hands were tied behind his back and they were administering electricity to his genitals."

Sema Ogur said one man of about 50 had been forced to watch his children being tortured, and vice-versa. "The torture never let up", she said. "After a while I was able to pick out which torture was being applied - from the screams."

Another prisoner, Nizammetin Kaya, said he had been tortured for 50 straight days. He was blindfolded, beaten, kicked, given the falaka treatment and electric

shocks, and hung from ceiling pipes.

Once, after a prolonged torture session, and although his feet were swollen and cracked, his torturers "forced my feet into shoes. Afterwards they told me to jump on each foot 100 times. I could not, so they kept beating me with a truncheon on my head... they kicked me on the legs and stomped with their heels on my toes, squashing them", he said.

Amnesty International says it has received the torture testimonies published in the document over the past three years and that the pattern had shown no significant change during 1984.

The pomp of British colonial rule will go - when, and to be replaced by what?

HONG KONG'S FUTURE Let the people decide!

THE future of Hong Kong is being decided in the coming months. After Foreign Secretary Howe's visit to Peking, China and Britain continue their "useful and constructive" talks in secret. Both sides agree on the need for "stability and prosperity". For whom?

After his Peking talks, Howe revealed only one important point at his press conference in Hong Kong. He said it was "not realistic" to expect "a British Administration after 1997", and that an agreement was being sought which gives Hong Kong "a high degree of

THE article below is translated from the latest bimonthly newsletter of the Chinese Information and Advice Centre (CIAC), a GLC-funded project. Please contact "Hong Kong Working Group" c/o CIAC, 152-6 Shaftesbury Avenue, London WC2, if you need a speaker for a meeting or more information on Hong Kong.

autonomy under Chinese sovereignty". Britain has now made public that it will give up sovereignty and administration, therefore agreeing to China's formula of "letting Hong Kong people rule Hong Kong."

What remains to be agreed is exactly how much autonomy Hong Kong will have in the

50 years after 1997, during which China has stated it will not change Hong Kong's capitalist system. Most of the rest of Howe's press statement merely repeated aspects of the Chinese position, such as retaining the Hong Kong Dollar as a freely convertible independent currency, with autonomy over administration, law making and public order, and the preserving of existing freedoms of travel, religion, speech, assembly, press and from arbitrary arrest. He refused to give further details, and was quite evasive when questioned on how Britain proposed to find out if the agreement was acceptable to a majority of Hong Kong people.

Colonial

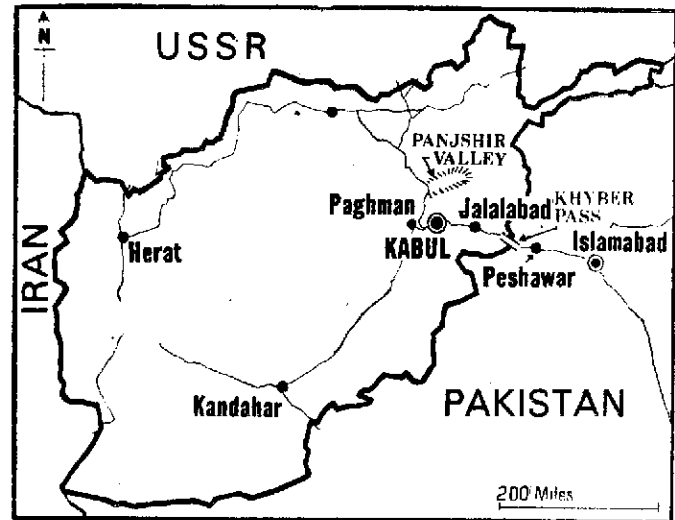
The Hong Kong colonial government has never had to find out what the majority of people want; they have ruled for over 100 years through denying Hong Kong people such democratic rights. It now has a real problem in that it does not have any meaningful method of developing the administration along "increasingly representative lines" (Howe). The newly created District Boards have drawn very little participation.

Hong Kong people know that as long as there is a London-appointed Governor, with an Executive Council and Legislative Council not elected by universal suffrage,

the USSR forces in the Panjshir.

According to the Financial Times some 4,000 to 10,000 people fled across the border to Pakistan in a few days at the end of April, following a big USSR offensive round Kandahar. Some two million to four million Afghan people are already refugees in Pakistan.

The USSR made six previous attempts to take the Panjshir valley in 1980-2, but subsequently made a pact for 15 months with the resistance leader in the area, Ahmed Shah Masoud. The problem now for the USSR is that maintaining a prolonged occupation of the area, in the midst of a hostile population and guerrilla attacks, is a much more difficult job than initially seizing it.



USSR seizes Panjshir valley

USSR forces and their Afghan allies have occupied the Panjshir valley, previously a major base of the Islamic resistance.

A huge offensive began in late April after preparatory bombing raids in previous weeks. According to resistance leaders in Afghanistan, their forces withdrew rather than taking on set battles.

According to the Paris daily Le Monde, the USSR forces in Afghanistan were increased to 100,000 earlier this year. Some 10,000 have been sent into the Panjshir valley offensive, and over 15,000 into other offensives around the major towns of Herat and Kandahar.

The Guardian reports that some 1,000 to 2,000 Afghan troops were involved alongside



Militants extend Bolivian strike

BOLIVIA is still convulsed by a showdown between the trade union movement and the popular front coalition government of president Hernan Siles Zuazo.

On Friday May 4 trade unionists returned to work after a 72-hour general strike, the second such protest against the austerity measures announced by the government on April 13.

The same day Juan Lechin, president of the COB (the Bolivian TUC) announced his resignation. Lechin, who has led the COB for over 30 years, said that his resignation was due to the 'indiscipline' of some trade unionists, who have gone further than the COB's calls.

Some industrial unions in the capital, La Paz, have been on indefinite strike since April 25, and are planning to escalate their action. Workers at the Central Bank are also continuing action. They have refused to implement the devaluation of the peso which is part of the government's austerity plan, and the police have occupied the bank.

A special congress of the COB has been called for this week. Trotskyists within the COB are reported to be pushing for an indefinite general strike - with

the perspective of a revolutionary workers' government - while the Communist Party, together with Lechin, insist on limiting the movement.

The Communist Party, as well as being strong in the COB, is also in Siles Zuazo's government! Lechin argues that "an indefinite strike will only help the military putschists. Although this government is committing blunder after blunder, we are obliged to defend the democracy which we have conquered."

The austerity plan - which raised prices of basic goods by 200% or more - is not, however, a mistake. The Siles Zuazo government, despite the representation of left parties within it, is a government tied to capitalism, and it is trying to carry out the requirements of the IMF.

The possibility of a military coup cannot be excluded, although the military rightists have lost their major external sponsors with the collapse of the military regime in Argentina and the big imperialist powers have been backing Siles Zuazo as the person most likely to be able to impose the necessary sacrifices on the Bolivian workers and peasants.

May	
Monday	7 14 21 28
Tuesday	1 8 15 22 29
Wednesday	2 9 16 23 30
Thursday	3 10 17 24 31
Friday	4 11 18 25
Saturday	5 12 19 26
Sunday	6 13 20 27

Saturday May 19. National march against the Police Bill. Assemble 12 noon, Speakers' Corner, London.

Saturday May 19. Labour Movement Conference on Palestine. County Hall, London SE1. Two delegates per labour movement organisation, credentials £2 from Andrew Hornung, 28 Carlton Mansions, Holmleigh Rd., London N16.

Saturday May 26. 'Free Europe from nuclear weapons'. CND demonstration in Coventry. Assemble 11.30am Edgwick Park.

Saturday June 9. CND demonstration against Reagan's visit. Friday June 8 - Monday June 11. Lutte Ouvriere fete, a weekend of international revolutionary politics with music, food, drink, amusements, etc., near Paris. If you would like to join the Socialist Organiser contingent going over to the fete, contact Ellen Taylor, 532 Abbeydale Road, Sheffield 7.

SPOTLIGHT

SCIENCE

The kid from Red Bank

Jim Denham looks at the life of blues musician 'Count' Basie.

WILLIAM "Count" Basie died two weeks ago.

For fifty years he had led a band that was arguably the finest of its kind — a big, swinging jazz band that specialised in the blues. He did more than any other single person (except, perhaps, Duke Ellington) to raise black music up from the brothels and nightclubs and win it the world-wide respect it deserved.

He also demonstrated in his own quiet way that a black man could succeed in the music business without going in for the kind of demeaning antics that were expected of black artists in the 1930s and '40s — the kind of Uncle Tommery that even the great Louis Armstrong occasionally went in for.

Modest

It seems likely that Basie never really understood the importance of his personal contribution to black music. Or perhaps he just didn't care. To the people who came to hear his band in Kansas City (where it started) and then in New York in the 1930s, it was simply a great band to dance to, and that is probably how Basie thought of it as well.

He was a modest man in every way, not at all the big-shot bandleader surrounded by press agents and heavies. Unlike most of his contemporaries, (Goodman, the Dorsies, Ellington) he even travelled in the band bus along with the rest of the musicians.

Sonny Cohn, the trumpeter who acted as the band's "straw boss" in the '60s and '70s, put it like this:

"He's just like a sideman — you can see that. Nobody is scared, nobody jumps to attention when he comes around."

Benny Goodman (the top white bandleader of the "swing era") by contrast, could reduce a musician to a quivering jelly just by looking at him — the famous "death ray". But ask any big band



Basie (at the piano) with his team from Kansas City: Walter Page, bass, Freddie Green, guitar, and Jo Jones, drums.

sideman who the musicians respected more: they'll all answer "Basie".

The band came out of Kansas City in 1936, and the legend has it that when they hit New York they were considered so rough and out-of-tune that the personnel had to be changed wholesale. The legend is probably exaggerated, but it is certainly true that compared with the slick precision of the white New York bands like Goodman's, the Basie outfit must have sounded a little rough.

Therein lay its greatness: for it was really a big blues band. The emphasis wasn't on the arrangements (most of these were simply riffs jotted down by Basie's early collaborator, trombonist/guitarist Eddie Durham) but on the soloists and the rhythm section.

Listen to the original recording of "One O'Clock Jump", for instance: Basie kicks off

with a simple blues theme at upish-tempo, the rhythm section (Freddie Green on guitar, Walter Page on bass and Jo Jones on drums) pushing him along gently. Then in comes the whole band, and — whoosh — we're into a series of marvellous 12-bar solos from Marshall Evans on tenor sax, Dickie Wells on trombone, Buck Clayton on trumpet and (best of all) the great Lester Young, also on tenor.

Swing

That band was at its best playing the blues. Other outstanding examples are "How Long Blues" (with the classic rhythm section demonstrating just how good it was) and the 1938 up-tempo "Swinging the Blues".

No-one had ever played the blues quite like that before. "The blues, then, was something played slow," said

Eddie Durham. "That was the first time the blues was ever swung."

Unlike the white bandleaders of the swing era, Basie never made much money. And being black could mean physical danger, too, especially in the segregated South.

Basie's musicians refused to knuckle down and adopt the servile manner expected of them. They stuffed guns in the waistbands of their trousers, and the larger men would get off the bus first, to show they meant business.

On one occasion, the band lay on the floor of the bus while racists shot out all the windows. Trumpeter Oran "Hot Lips" Page (an early Basie side-man) was refused service at the bar of a club that had his name displayed in four-foot neon lights on the outside.

But they didn't knuckle under and Basie kept going while the likes of Goodman,

Harry James and Artie Shaw all retired, rich men. Briefly, in the early 1950s, economic pressures forced him to cut down to a sextet, but he was soon back on the road with his big band.

He always said he could never retire, even after a heart attack in the mid-1970s. "It's tough to say it, but at this age I could almost be completely satisfied at home, but you miss travelling, I guess," he said on his 75th birthday. At the time of his death he was planning another tour of Britain.

So the quiet, modest black man who didn't even rate his own piano playing very highly, is gone, and another link with the great days is severed. But we should remember his contribution to music and — especially — to the standing of black musicians.

And if you've never heard it, go out and get a recording of "One O'Clock Jump".

New birth control

WITH the growth of evidence of possible harm from chemical contraception, interest is developing in more "natural" methods of birth-control.

One of the simplest of these is breast-feeding, though its availability is rather restricted.

Researchers in the Medical Research Council's Reproductive Biology Unit in Edinburgh recently looked at the effectiveness of this method by following the progress of 12 nursing mothers who actually wished to get pregnant again.

Some of the women did become pregnant again while still breast-feeding, but none did until the number of feeds dropped to four or less per day.

The researchers concluded that five feeds per day, each lasting about ten minutes would guard against pregnancy. This is more than most Western women would breast-feed, making this method less reliable than in some other societies.

However, if these results are confirmed, this information should be made available to nursing mothers, so that they can have a greater choice of contraceptive methods.

Info: New Scientist.

Rennin

ADVANCES in genetic engineering look likely to remove a dilemma for vegetarians (such as myself). Even though cheese is made from milk and therefore doesn't count as meat, one of the ingredients in cheese-making is rennin ("Rennet"), an enzyme extracted from the fourth stomach of a suckling calf. In the calf, rennin helps to break up one of the proteins in milk as part of its digestion. In cheese-making, rennin does the same thing and this causes the milk to form curds which are then fermented and so on to make solid cheese.

Now, of course, calves aren't killed for their rennin — they are killed for their meat and skin. Nevertheless, many vegetarians would prefer to eat cheese not prepared with calf rennin, but the vegetarian alternatives are more expensive.

So, genetic engineers to the rescue. A gene for rennin was constructed and inserted into the gut bacterium *E. coli*. *E. coli* then obligingly made lots of rennin and this was tested and found to be as good as the natural stuff.

Naturally, the genetic engineers weren't thinking of the calves or the vegetarians when they did this.

However, opposition to the particular cruelty of veal production from squeamish meat-eaters has caused a shortage of rennin, and soaring prices.

Celltech, the company making the artificial rennin, looks set to capture a large amount of a world rennin market estimated at some £40 million.

Letters

Ireland: two stages of revolution?

TANIA Johnson's polemic against Tony Twine (letters, SO 176) is based on the idea that all Irish politics must rotate around the 'national democratic revolution', which is the 'historically necessary first stage in the struggle for the overthrow of capitalism'.

But what is this 'national democratic' — as opposed to socialist — revolution? Marxists generally use the term 'democratic revolution' to refer to events like 1789-99 in France or 1640-9 in England, the overthrow of feudal structures.

Unify

One of the tasks of those revolutions was the creation of a unified nation state, so I suppose Tania Johnson's idea is that a 'national democratic revolution' is still necessary in Ireland to unify it. The 'second stage' of direct struggle for socialism cannot start until Ireland is first made a 'perfect' bourgeois state!

Who will execute this 'first stage' revolution? The working class? But then how and why is it a separate stage from the socialist revolution?

Or the nationalist bourgeoisie? But what makes Tania think that this bourgeoisie, which has lived very comfortably with Partition for 60-odd years, will suddenly rediscover revolutionary zeal? And on what does she base her demand that Protestant workers must side with the nationalist (i.e. Catholic) bourgeoisie?

I can see how we can hope to convince Protestant workers that their common class interests with Catholic workers are more important than communal catch-cries. I can see how we can hope to convince them that the Northern Ireland state is a blind alley, and that their best hopes lie with conciliating the two communities in a broader, all-Ireland framework.

I cannot see how we can ever hope to convince them to sink their identity into green national-

ism for the sake of some abstract scheme of the 'national democratic revolution' — or even why we should want to.

To quote sentences written by Marx at a time when there was practically no Irish working class, and hardly any Irish bourgeoisie,

All out August 18!

A DEMONSTRATION to mark the fifteenth anniversary of British troops being sent on to the streets of the North of Ireland will take place in central London on August 18.

The demonstration will be calling on the British government to implement a policy of political and military withdrawal from Ireland. It is sponsored by the following Labour MPs: Norman Atkinson, Tony Benn, Syd Bidwell, Dennis Canavan, Bob Clay,

and the chief struggle was between Irish peasants and absentee English landlords, is not very useful. Marxism is about analysing reality, not concealing it with formulae.

COLIN FOSTER,
Islington

Jeremy Corbyn, Joan Maynard, Allan Roberts, Ernie Roberts and Clare Short.

The organisers are also applying for a rally to be held in Trafalgar Square after the demonstration. This means challenging the ban on Irish demonstrations in Trafalgar Square which has operated for over a decade.

18 August Demonstration Committee,
27 Clerkenwell Close
London EC1

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Pay no.1 at UCW

Barking

FOUR hundred trade unionists marched in Barking on May Day in solidarity with 92 cleaners at Barking Hospital, sacked by private contractors Crothalls. Redbridge District Health Authority's answer has been to serve a writ on the picket line.

They are attempting to remove the strikers from any part of the hospital grounds.

The hearing will be on May 17 at 10.30 am at the High Court in the Strand. A demonstration will be held in Fleet Street beforehand (phone the strikeline 01-595 4252 for details).

Bathgate

THE 1200 workers at British Leyland's Bathgate truck plant in West Lothian struck last Thursday 3rd, on hearing reports on local television and radio that the factory was to be closed.

The plant has been under threat for some months now. Its closure, which management for the moment refuse to confirm or deny, could also lead to the closure of the Glasgow Albion engine plant employing 1000 workers.

Hitachi

THE EETPU has concluded another single union deal, likely to lead to a further effective no-strike agreement. This one is with Hitachi, the Japanese electronics company, at its South Wales factory at Hirwaun near Aberdare.

Five other unions organise there among the 1,400 workforce and a row is likely under the TUC's Bridlington procedures governing inter-union relations. Already APEX and ASTMS have written to the EETPU complaining.

At the Wales TUC's annual conference in Llandudno on Friday 4th, George Wright, the TGWU Welsh Secretary, called the EETPU deals "a substitute for Tebbitism".

Telecom

LAST Wednesday Norman Tebbit, Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, announced an outline for the impending privatisation of British Telecom.

On July 1, it is to become a public limited company. 51% of it will be sold off in the autumn. It will then become Britain's biggest quoted commercial company.

The Tories are counting on proceeds of up to four billion pounds from the sale.

BT workers are being given special terms to buy up to £2,000 worth at a 10% discount.

The political reasoning behind this is clear, as a safeguard against future renationalisation and as an incentive for workers to maximise productivity and minimise struggle.

The POEU is urging its members to refuse to buy.

Solidarity betrayed
LESSONS OF THE BASINGSTOKE POST OFFICE WORKERS STRIKE

This pamphlet tells the story of the victimisation of Socialist Organiser supporter Alan Fraser and how the fight to defend him was sold out by the union officials. 25p plus postage from "5 Free-mantle Close, Basingstoke."

THE UCW Conference begins on Sunday 13 May at Blackpool. Pay will be the no. 1 issue, since talks have broken down with the Post Office and the Executive Committee (EC) seems willing to go for action.

The union's claim is for an increase at least equivalent to the retail price index (5.2%); a reduction of three hours in the working week; a one-day increase in annual leave entitlement; maximum pay for postal workers at age 18; and progress at restoring internal pay differentials.

The Post Office has offered a 4% increase on basic pay, coupled with conditions on productivity and the acceptance of new business. This offer would increase postal workers' basic pay from £96.45 to £131.00 for a 43 hour, six-day week.

But there must be serious doubts about the Executive Council's commitment to the hard-line stance.

The timing and wording of the motion are just right to hold off branches from pressing any motions of no confidence or censure.

I can already see now the standing ovation which Alan Tuffin will receive at conference, but it is a total bluff, an excuse and an apology for the appalling record of the EC.

They hope that their record on wages over the years, the minimal progress on the shorter working week, the sell-outs on victimisations, the undemocratic actions over YTS, the almost non-existent policy on new technology, will all be swept aside in

By Greg Birch, Treasurer of Basingstoke UCW Branch, in a personal capacity.

a wave of euphoria.

The motion gives the EC the sole power to call industrial action and I have no doubt that very limited and ineffective action will be taken, so that after the sell-out they can say that they tried their best.

An all-out stoppage with no return to work until the claim is met in full is the only way to win the dispute.

Solidarity with other workers in dispute - miners, teachers, etc - would be a giant step forward, but one which the EC will not

consider.

Indeed, there is no reference to the NUM dispute to be found anywhere.

The rank and file must form these links and recognise the similarities between the two struggles. Like the Coal Board, the Post Office is a prime target for privatisation. Separate from the pay negotiations are the Post Office's intentions to reduce the number of offices and the Post Office has made it quite clear that these targets must be met even though it will mean a poorer service to the public.

Surely even our EC can see the similarity between this and the health service.

If anything, this has more serious consequences for the workforce than the pay claim.

Redundancies, cuts, the introduction of new technology and

mechanisation without agreement are the likely outcome. The reduced number of highly profitable offices would then be sold off.

The Post Office has also made it clear that negotiations will not take place on this issue. It is to be brought in by executive action.

The EC has made no response to this.

What are the alternatives to the EC's resolution? Firstly the motives and intentions to sell out any rank and file struggle must be raised with the membership. The whole of the Executive Council is bankrupt of ideas to fight the Post Office.

The dispute must be made an all-out stoppage. The proposals for selective disruption must be recognised and rejected for what they are, merely token gestures.

Finally, the UCW should join with the NUM in calling for a general strike in support of their actions.

COMMUNICATION workers Broad Left invite all UCW members to an open meeting on victimisation.

Guest speakers: Alan Fraser, ex-postal secretary Basingstoke UCW; Ron Rodwell, Branch Secretary, Basingstoke UCW; who will speak on the lessons of the Basingstoke strike and the way forward for the rank and file in the UCW.

Venue: New Clifton Hotel Talbot Square, North Promenade, Wednesday May 16, 8pm.

Rough ride for Graham

By Steve Battlemuch

Service), or else have carried out policies in such a way as to effectively sabotage them (the ballot on Labour Party affiliation). Graham and Co. are in for a lot of flack - but a bigger test will be whether the Broad Left candidates can this year kick out the right wing NEC.

Workplace voting meetings have been held over the last couple of weeks, and the results will be announced during the conference.

On pay, Graham and other

Civil Service leaders put forward a 7% claim; with no strategy for winning even this inadequate sum. The Tories have responded with a predictable 3% offer.

The left must fight for CPSA to withdraw from the present claim, give conference the chance to agree on a new one (for example, there are already motions on the agenda calling for a £12 per week flat rate increase), and argue for a strategy of all-out strike if the new claim is rejected.

Now is the best possible time for action, coming out alongside the miners, and giving a lead to other public sector workers who are also in dispute over pay.

There are emergency motions calling for CPSA to make sizeable donations to the miners and to organise local collections. Although £1,000 has already been donated, the right wing majority

on the NEC recently voted down proposals for larger contributions. They are also against giving conference time to a speaker from the NUM.

Delegates should fight to reverse this.

Other important matters to be discussed this year include the proposed merger with the management union SCPS (which is opposed by SO supporters); the salary of full-time officers; and sexual harassment - which has been given 15 minutes of conference time! On international issues, conference will probably debate Nicaragua and the US invasion of Grenada.

As usual, shortage of time will mean that many motions are not heard - and the right wing will doubtless be up to their usual tricks of prolonging certain debates in order to prevent other motions being discussed.



Mass picket at Longbridge, Tuesday.

Longbridge: 'the best strike for years'

"THIS is the best supported strike we've had for years," said one Longbridge striker at the mass picket on Tuesday May 8. The local radio station BRMB had just announced that the picket had lapsed and that the plant was working normally - much to the amusement of some pickets and the anger of others.

In fact, Longbridge is now at a virtual standstill. Only one line is working (the LM10 engine line in the East Works, which produces engines for Cowley) but as the internal transport drivers have now joined the strike, even that last remaining area of

production will now dry up.

The strike which began on April 30, was sparked by management's decision to discipline six workers on the Metro trim lines for supposedly not working hard enough. This followed the imposition of manning cuts on the already hard-pressed trim workers.

As one striker put it: "Conditions in there are appalling. If we were animals, they'd call in the RSPCA."

Striking miners from Keresley and Birch Coppice pits joined Tuesday's picket, driving home

the similarities between the NCB's closure plan and what's been happening in BL over the last five years - nearly 100,000 jobs slashed and preparations afoot for privatisation.

The Longbridge strikers intend to keep up the pressure with continued picketing until all disciplinary charges are dropped and management cuts withdrawn.

These are issues which affect all BL plants and so the strikers also need to send out delegations to factories like Cowley and Drew's Lane to explain their case and secure the boycotting of any production from Longbridge.

Islington nursery workers and parents lobby Labour council

"Goosey goosey gander, whither do you wander, Upstairs, downstairs, in the council chamber.

There I met some councillors who really didn't care So I took them by the left leg and threw them down the stair".

250 singing, chanting nursery workers, parents and children from Islington council's children's day centres marched on the council's mayor-making meeting on Tuesday 8th.

The nursery workers from 12 centres have been on strike since April 16 for better pay and more staff.

At the lobby some councillors - Pat Longman, Ken Banham, and Jim Franklin - spoke to the

workers and gave their support, but most shuffled through saying it was all being 'handled by the proper negotiators'.

The most public support for the workers came from the new mayor, Rose Dale, who took petitions into the council meeting.

The Labour Party in the borough is also rallying to the workers' support. The council workers' Labour Party branch has produced 1000 copies of its newsletter supporting the strike.

But a joint meeting of councillors and the Labour Party on May 7 was blocked from discussing the issue. The Labour group chair decided to close the meeting at 8.10pm (it started at 7.30), and when a vote to continue was carried by 30 votes to 17 she declared it invalid because "it had to be a two-thirds majority".

An open letter to Alan Clinton, chief whip of Islington council

Dear Alan,

Until a few weeks ago you were associated with Socialist Organiser. You had been active in Marxist politics for nearly 20 years. We dissociated from you because you took the council's - the employers' - side in the Building Works Department pay dispute. Now you are once again on the wrong side, this time, against some of the council's lowest paid workers.

In February you abstained on a motion in a joint Labour Party/councillors' meeting to open talks with the nursery workers. You have not dissociated from the council leadership during the strike. On May 7 you joined in the council leadership's move to stop the latest joint Labour Party/councillors' meeting discussing the issue.

You will say that the council is doing good work, and that to meet the workers' demands would create impossible difficulties for its budget. But which takes priority, the 'budgets' of low-paid workers, or the budget of the 'local state' (even under humane, liberal-administration)?

What answer would you have given to that question 20 years ago, 10 years ago, or even two years ago? Think again, Alan.

Nik Barstow, secretary, Islington Socialist Organiser group

Teachers strike for pay rise

WEDNESDAY May 9 is a one-day strike by teachers in the NUT in support of their pay claim. Thousands of schools will be closed on this day. Many NUT local associations are organising rallies and meetings of their members on the 9th to discuss future action needed to fight for a better pay deal.

Already, no cover action and refusal to supervise at dinner time has disrupted many schools this week. As yet, NUT action is not affecting exams, but action to affect exams in future cannot be ruled out if action is to be effective.

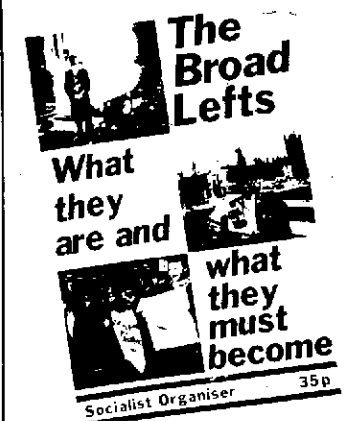
Teachers are extremely angry, not only with the low pay offer being put forward (4.5%), but also with Sir Keith Joseph's references to the laws of supply and demand in relation to teachers. According to Joseph, there are plenty of unemployed teachers who are queuing up for a job so there is no need to pay the

teachers already teaching more money.

Coventry's 1,800 NUT members are being called on by the local executive to attend a march in the city centre, to be followed by a meeting at which the local association executive are putting forward a resolution asking members to support further action, including limited or extended strike action, if this is necessary to pursue the campaign for a better wage offer.

The NUT nationally and other teaching unions on the Burnham panel are requesting that the teachers' claim goes to arbitration. Even this mild demand has been rejected by the employers.

Many of the delegates to 1984 conference were sceptical about the results of an arbitration exercise. This may yield more than the 4.5% offer, but a substantial increase in salaries is needed by the majority of low paid teachers on Scale 1 and 2. Overwhelming support was shown at the conference for a flat-rate increase, and the executive will find it difficult to ignore pressure from rank and file teachers for a more just salary structure.



35p plus postage from SO, 28 Middle Lane, London N8

Industrial

AKZO: regroup to fight

By Mark Starr

THE STRIKE over the victimisation of TGWU branch secretary Tom Hart is over.

On Thursday May 3 the strikers at Akzo Chemie, Littleborough, voted to return to work. The settlement achieved little, indeed nothing, that a halfway committed official could not have negotiated at the start.

Tom Hart remains suspended on full pay and 'the company confirmed that it was willing for the dispute to be referred to the full NJIC procedure'. The company has not even given an undertaking to abide by any decision the NJIC makes.

Even if the union gets a result — notoriously difficult under this agreement — the company can simply ignore

it.

One of the strikers, Jimmy Street, said: "If that happens, we'll come out again". Ray Atwell, a shop steward victimised by the same employer five years ago, commented: "Some of them really believe that. They've wrapped themselves in dreams to escape from the harsh reality of staying out."

"If they are going to come out in three months time, why haven't they stuck it out now? That would be the intelligent thing to do."

"If they had turned this down, management would have been under tremendous pressure from Holland to settle it. It could all have been over in 48 hours."

The agreement reached by the strike committee and district official Bert Pealing, in

return for a cash payment of £100 plus an average week's pay this week, says there will be 'no victimisations or recriminations by either party'.

'No victimisations' — except that Tom Hart will not be returning to work, for no other reason than that he carried out his duties to his members as TGWU branch secretary!

Recriminations

'No recriminations' — when an employer throws a workers' leader on the dole queue for upholding the TGWU and makes no bones about it!

Bert Pealing did not even postpone the agreement until it could be discussed with Tom Hart. He agreed on a mass meeting while Tom Hart

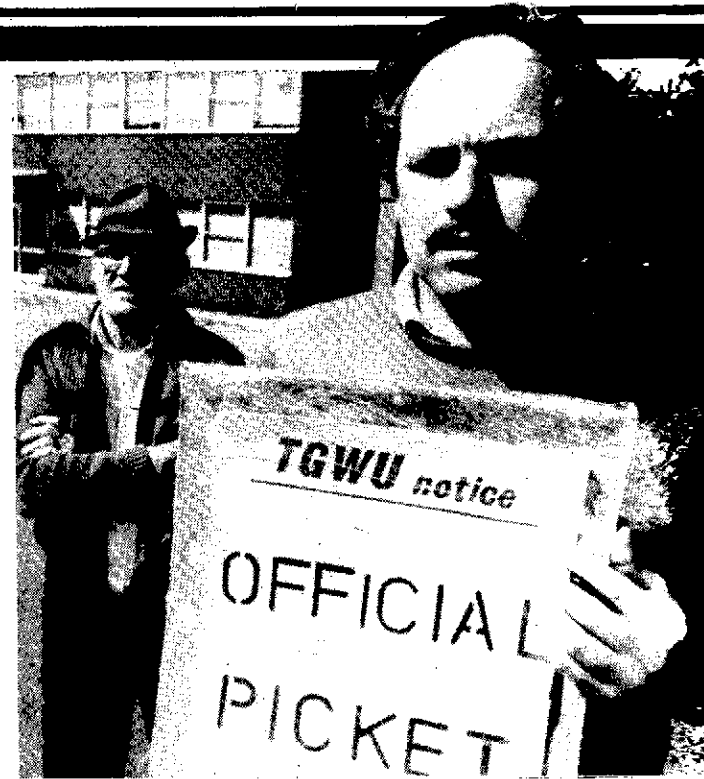
was still in Holland, knowing full well that the company had picked the time for the meeting so that it was by no means certain that Tom Hart would even be back then.

All TGWU shop stewards should ask themselves: what chance is there of defending union rights when the officials behave like this?

TGWU Region 6 has already requested an inquiry into the behaviour of national official John Miller during the dispute. They should also ask just what Bro. Pealing is being paid for.

The return to work is a defeat, but those who want to fight must regroup. Pressure must be brought to bear on Miller and Pealing. It looks bleak, but don't give up the fight!

After all, Brian Preston, a



Tom Hart on the Akzo picket line

TGWU shop steward at Car Transporter Ltd, was reinstated some years after a strike which recommenced around him after the original stop-

page over his victimisation was terminated. The struggle must now be taken up to achieve a similar result at Akzo Chemie.

Carousel: how the TGWU failed

Why were you forced to call off the strike?

Because we were not getting the support we wanted from the TGWU [the strikers' union], and we had all got really demoralised.

At the start we had been dead determined that we could do it for any length of time and would be at the picket lines at seven in the morning every day. By the end, though, when someone suggested we carry on for another three weeks, we couldn't do it for even five hours a day.

The TGWU just didn't want to know us. There were different things they were doing to us to isolate us. That's how we ended up demoralised, because of what they did.

The blacking of the flour and boxes was done by ourselves, and these were the main supplies to Carousel. But a lot of other things needed blacking as well. The TGWU could have been getting them blacked.

And the TGWU stopped organising mass pickets. We ended up doing that ourselves. All we had was a wee bit of paper about a picket, but people wanted to see paper with the TGWU heading on it.

When the Socialist Workers Party (SWP) used to come down to the pickets they would tell us of people who had phoned up the TGWU and been told that no

AFTER nearly nine months on strike for union recognition, reinstatement and better working conditions, the strikers at the Carousel wafer factory in the East End of Glasgow were forced to end their dispute on April 16.

Carol Rodger, shop steward for the strikers, spoke to Socialist Organiser.

mass pickets were on when they were.

The East End Support Committee [the local support committee for the strike] was fantastic. We wouldn't have gone on so long if it wasn't for them.

Do you think it would have made a difference if the EESC had called a support conference?

It might have been possible before the miners' strike, but not now, because there's too many things on as a result of the miners' strike. And it would have been terrible to have the conference and then give up. But the TGWU were not having it anyway and didn't want to have anything to do with a conference.

Cut off

If the EESC had called one, then the TGWU would have had the strength to put people off coming.

After Stark [Glasgow TGWU full-timer] spoke at one TGWU branch meeting, attacking a broadsheet history of the dispute we had produced, a member there came down and questioned us about what Stark had said. He knew us and believed us, so he could go back and argue our case to his members. But in all the branches where no-one knows us, then the TGWU would have cut off support.

We did get support from a lot of people. The Baillieston Labour Party branch gave us a lot of support. But you couldn't pin down support to just one or two, there were just so many.

That's what I don't understand — there was all that support there, but the TGWU didn't know how to use it. A lot of people wanted to see us win and came into the

shop we had once as a strike centre and helped with leafleting and fly-posting.

The EESC organised those people. If Stark had been as determined as the EESC, then he could have got the people who were really into the strike and organised them.

If Stark had sent notices about the strike out to all branches, then we could have had a lot of people handing out leaflets at shops which took Carousel wafers. We tried to get round the shops ourselves but couldn't manage it. We never got the right publicity from the TGWU.

I'll keep on going to the TGWU youth meetings now and try to get the rest to go. But some may hate it so much. Although they've seen people in the TGWU supporting them, they think of the TGWU in terms of the full-timers.

What do you think are the main lessons to be drawn from the dispute?

I've not really been thinking of it that much, it makes you depressed thinking about all the things that have happened.

I think that the TGWU thought that because we were young we would not last long on strike. But we got determination from working in the place. We wanted to get our own back on Saccamando [the owner].

But the TGWU were not prepared to step over the line. When the anti-union laws came in, Stark said so many brilliant things, but when it boiled down to it, the TGWU wasn't prepared to act against the laws.

I can't understand Stark taking us to all those meetings and getting us the support at the start. I don't think he knew how to use it. Maybe later on I'll be able to understand it more.

THE Carousel workers joined the TGWU in early 1983.

Take-home pay at the factory was just £37 a week, and only £32 a week for those aged less than 18. Working conditions were disgusting, with birds flying round inside the building, fungus growing on the walls, and buckets and bottles of Dettol being distributed during winter-time when the toilets froze up.

It was so bad that the MSC even withdrew YOP trainees from Carousel.

In July the TGWU members demanded union recognition and better pay and working conditions. Saccamando, the factory's owner, refused both demands, saying that he would rather see his factory burnt down than allow a union in it. The TGWU members went on strike. And Saccamando sacked them straight away.

The TGWU is Britain's largest union. Saccamando is a sweat-shop employer, running an even smaller scale operation than George Ward of the Grunwick dispute of the mid-'70s. But it was Saccamando who came out on top.

The outcome of the dispute was first and foremost a reflection of the failures of the local TGWU bureaucracy, heavily staffed by Communist Party (CP) members and fellow travellers like TGWU Scottish Secretary Hugh Wyper or Scottish Regional Officer Willie Queen.

The TGWU made the strike official and paid out strike pay from the outset. That apart, there is little positive to say about the role of the TGWU officials.

Picketing was never organised with any degree of enthusiasm by TGWU full-timers. When the strikers themselves tried to hold weekly mass pickets, there was little, if any, back-up from the full-timers.

The TGWU officials even failed on the basic issue of financial support for the dispute. Though the number of strikers never reached double figures, the TGWU soon began complaining of the unacceptable costs of the dispute, even going so far as to close down — in the

middle of winter — the vacant shop which had been hired for the strikers as a headquarters.

Being the largest union in the country, the TGWU would hardly have gone bankrupt paying strike pay to seven strikers for as long as was necessary to win the dispute.

After seven months on strike, the strikers found themselves not only isolated on the picket lines but also having to fight a constant rearguard action against their own union officials.

The dispute showed that those CP members who have secured a niche in the trade union bureaucracy are like other bureaucrats — a quiet life is more important than the class struggle.

It also showed up the limitations of other sections of the CP.

A number of local CP members who were not prepared to stand idly by as fellow members of their party allowed the strike to go down to defeat were active in the East End Support Committee (EESC).

The EESC did a lot of good work. But it had fatal political

limitations. The EESC was prepared to confront the TGWU bureaucracy, but only to a certain extent and within certain limits.

The EESC encouraged TGWU branches to call on the TGWU to convene a West of Scotland shop stewards' conference to help build support for the strike. Not surprisingly, the TGWU full-timers were not prepared to call such a conference. But then instead of convening such a conference itself, the EESC effectively dropped the whole idea of such a conference.

Broadsheet

When the EESC produced a broadsheet history of the dispute, it allowed only a limited circulation to prominent individuals in the labour and trade union movement.

The basic weakness of the EESC was that it was not really prepared to take the dispute and the scabby record of the TGWU full-timers out into the open and into the broader labour and trade union movement. Instead its approach was often along the lines of discreet pressure on selected individuals.

"The full-time officials were responsible"

Stan Crooke looks at the factors behind the defeat

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Second national meeting for Labour Party workplace branches

"WORKPLACE BRANCHES AND THE UNIONS"

Saturday May 12, Meeting Room, St Pancras Library (Shaw Theatre), Euston Road, London NW1.

Open to Labour Party members in workplace branches or who want to find out more about setting them up

Details from Nik Barstow, 165 Liverpool Road, London N1, or Geoff Dixon, 1 Pelham Court, 44 Hatherley Road, Sidcup, Kent

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Socialist Organiser

£5 for SO!

Donations have started to come in to help our extra activity round the miners' strike. To add to the £25 last week, we've had £78.50 this week. That's a start, but it won't pay for many leaflets, much petrol, or many extra copies of the paper to be printed.

Most of this week's money has come from SO supporters rallying round; collecting and sending donations from their groups. Now we need other supporters to go round their groups and do the same — so the money doesn't come in in £1s and £5s, but in £20s and £50s.

And if you're an SO reader, you can also join in our appeal and send us a cheque. Or, if you're renewing your subscription, or ordering a pamphlet, send us a bit extra on top.

Send donations to: 214 Sickert Court, London N1 2SY. Thanks this week to: Debbie Hindson, £10; S. Ellis, £5; Keyvan and Will, £8.50; Brent supporters £15; Hackney supporters, £10; South West London supporters £25; Les Hearn, £5.

Rally round Liverpool!

Local elections set scene for showdown

By Gerry Bates

WITHIN a few weeks, Liverpool City Council is likely to adopt an illegal budget.

The council elections last Thursday, May 3, produced a clear majority for loyal Labour members committed to refusing Tory cuts.

The last council budget meeting had produced deadlock because six right-wing Labour renegade councillors held the balance. The elections were a test of working class support for Liverpool Labour's fight against the Tories, and the results were a resounding vindication of that fight.

Right across Britain Labour scored gains in the council elections. The 'Falklands Factor' has faded. Labour won Birmingham, Edinburgh and Southampton, and made gains in Manchester which give councillors committed to City Labour Party policy a majority over the current right-wing Labour group leadership.

The Tories lost 131 seats, net. The results also, however, contained a warning that anti-Toryism is not enough. Though the SDP did not do particularly well (28 net gains), the Liberals made more net gains (115) than Labour (46).

In Liverpool Labour was fighting the Liberals as our major opponent. Paul Orr, the only one of the six Labour renegades standing this time, was the only Labour candidate not opposed by the Liberals.

After gaining seven seats, Liverpool Labour now has a 58-41 majority on the council, and only five of the 58 are renegades.

The Tories plan to bring in a special law to allow them to send commissioners into Liverpool. The Labour leader-

ship should fight any such move by obstructing and disrupting the business of Parliament.

But it is also possible that the Tories will let Liverpool 'stew' for a while. Either way, the crucial deciding factor will be whether industrial action is mobilised.

Socialist Organiser readers should start getting delegated now to the June 23 conference.

It must be a real conference, not just a rally, and a springboard for committing trade unions to support for Liverpool.

It must link Liverpool's fight with the miners' strike.

Councils

Other Labour councils should also be committed to supporting Liverpool. The most elementary thing they can do is offer to lend Liverpool funds to give it more room for manoeuvre. If the banks cut off Liverpool's credit, other Labour councils should hit back against the banks by refusing to pay debt charges.

They should bring themselves into the front line alongside Liverpool, and make this an across-the-board confrontation between the labour movement and the Tories.



The 'Sari Squad' protests against Afia Begum's deportation: Brick Lane, May 4.

Left gains in Manchester

By councillor Pete Keenlyside

Last Sunday the NEC called a meeting of all 79 Labour councillors, and sent down Eric Heffer, Ken Cure, Jim Mortimer and David Hughes to try and sort things out.

Heffer spent most of the meeting appealing for reconciliation and unity. He could have saved himself the train fare. The right wing are far too deep into their privileges and perks to give it up without a fight.

Running the Council has become part of their way of life. Where else would you find engineering workers turning up to the factory in suits and ties?

Any mention of putting us back into the group was greeted with howls of rage. Their contributions ranged from "over my dead body" types to threats to leave the party.

After three hours of this Heffer had to admit that there was nothing he could do and the whole issue has been referred to Wednesday's NEC meeting, where

they have two choices.

They can either accept the decision of the party and the electorate in Manchester, reinstate the 25 of us and allow the left to assume control, or they keep us out and allow the right wing to keep their formal majority in the group.

Less than 24 hours after the election results were known, the right wing held what they considered to be the AGM of the Labour Group, and re-elected themselves as officers. Only 37 of the right wing councillors turned up for this meeting and at last Sunday's meeting, Heffer stated that he didn't recognise that as the AGM.

Whatever happens on Wednesday won't solve the problems in Manchester. The left don't have a majority in the council and there are plenty of right wingers willing to do deals with the Tories. But one thing is certain. The party in Manchester is no longer prepared to tolerate a situation where its representatives on the council have no control whatsoever over the policies pursued.

Afia Begum is deported

By councillor Susan Carlyle

MANY protests came within hours of Afia Begum's arrest in the early hours of Thursday morning, May 2. But the Home Office deported her to Bangladesh just the same.

She had been living in hiding for a year after her appeal against deportation was turned down.

She had an entry certificate originally to come to this country to join her husband, but he died in a fire while living in a Brick Lane tenement before Afia had arrived from Bangladesh with their baby daughter.

Several demonstrations to local police stations in Brick Lane led by East London Workers

Against Racism re-awakened her case. Ken Livingstone offered her a GLC flat, and the Sari Squad chained themselves to railings. In addition a case is due to be heard before the European Human Rights Court.

There was strong support for Afia from MPs, from the Tower Hamlets council Labour group and many others. But Afia is being returned to Bangladesh, widowed and alone. The majority of her family lives in Britain. Another deportation campaign has been unsuccessful.

The message from the Home Office is increasingly hard-line. With Mohamed Idrish's case to be heard on May 9, the fight against the Immigration and Nationality Acts and for an end to all immigration controls needs to be stepped up.



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