

Socialist ORGANISER

Paper of the Socialist Organiser Alliance No. 184 June 21 1984 25p claimants and strikers 10p

If they use anti union laws - general strike!

STOP STEEL!



Orgreave: A woman from the Sheffield support group shouts for an ambulance for an injured miner. A mounted policeman in riot gear swears at her and hits out with his truncheon

Orgreave pickets beat police violence

By John Bloxam

THE miners' strike has suddenly escalated.

The Government has given signals to employers to go ahead and use the anti-union laws to sue the NUM. Such moves will make it starkly clear that the Tories' aim is not just to shut pits but to beat down the whole trade union movement. They should be answered by a renewed and more urgent campaign for a general strike!

For 100 days, the Tories have been persua-

ding bosses not to use the courts because they fear the effect - both on those miners still scabbing and on other trade unionists. Now, as the NUM moves to take serious action to stop steel production, they have decided to play this card.

On Monday 18th a nationally coordinated effort was mounted to shut off Orgreave coking plant. The Notts area sent pickets for the first time. Despite the police brutality, the



Orgreave. The policeman continues hitting out and she backs away...

size of the picket and improved organisation resulted in a decision to suspend coke runs from the plant. The NUM won the first 'battle of Orgreave'.

This followed directly from the breakdown of talks last Wednesday 13th.

Government pressure must have been behind MacGregor's hardline and provocative approach. According to Arthur Scargill, "we gained the impression" from the first two sets of talks, "that the plan to close the pits announced on March 6 was no longer applicable - they wanted to see the thing negotiated and a settlement achieved". Using the losses because of the strike, and a wide definition of closure due to 'exhaustion' and 'geological difficulties', the Coal Board negotiators were looking for a tactical retreat.

But the government could not accept the implications of even an apparent miners' victory.

The break-up of the talks meant that Thursday's NUM executive meeting, and other

regional and national meetings on the same day and Friday, were about stepping up the dispute. They produced immediate results.

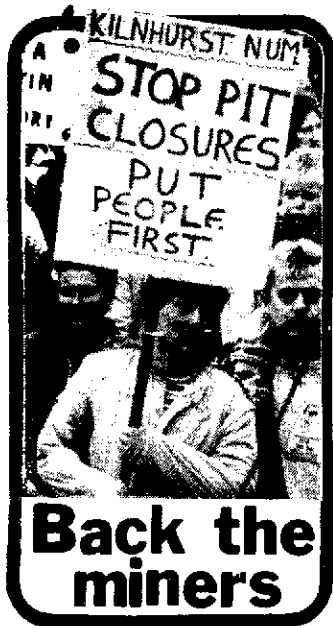
A rule change at the forthcoming Special Delegate Conference was discussed to put clearly in the hands of the national union the power to discipline officials who scab. Steel dispensations were put firmly in the hands of the national coordinating committee.

Those area leaderships who had gone along with local agreements to permit large-scale steel production were firmed up. On Tuesday South Wales president Emyln Williams was publicly disagreeing with Scargill on the issue. By Friday he was calling for a higher blockade on Llanwern steelworks.

The leadership of the steel union ISTC was given until today (Wednesday 20th) to agree an effective deal for 'care and maintenance' only in the steel plants - the level that existed during the steel strike. If they rejected this, a

Continued on page 2

POLICE OUT OF THE COALFIELDS!



Organise solidarity

Mick Davies (Thoresby NUM) spoke to Alasdair Jamison

WE'VE got to create a lot more solidarity.

I've been up to Preston, Blackburn, Blackpool, right around the country, to a lot of trade union meetings.

There is the solidarity there, but the problem is getting the solidarity organised and moving on from here — so that once we've won this struggle it carries on from there and we get the leadership and the fight has not been a waste of time.

On speaking to shop stewards, especially from the engineering unions, the solidarity is there — but the leadership is the problem. Unless this solidarity is organised and orchestrated, it's just hollow. It's not real.

I've no respect for a lot of the trade union leadership. There should be no room in the trade union movement for words such as 'right wing'. There should be no right wing in the trade union movement.

Any trade union leader who moves on from the trade union movement to the House of Lords — that to me is absolute hypocrisy. As far as Murray and Sims and people like that are concerned — they're not only selling us out, they're selling their own members down the river.

There are some good leaders around. I'd say that Scargill was the best at the moment. But we need more people like Scargill.

A lot of those who are on strike now used to say that the statements Scargill was coming out with were all propaganda, and he was too political. It wasn't actually until the strike started that it brought home to the rank and file NUM members the facts of what really was happening — the fact that Scargill had the foresight to see what was happening.

My personal determination now is unstoppable. I'm willing to go on for ever. We cannot now — this is my feeling and the feeling of all the lads I know — when there have been men sacked for standing up for their trade union rights, arrested, imprisoned, hit and kicked on the picket lines, we cannot stop until we have won this.

Hampshire support

By Tony Twine

ALTHOUGH it is not in a mining region, the Hampshire Miners' Support Committee has raised over £12,000 in donations and levies. Collections of food have also been sent to the families of striking Welsh miners.

South Wales miners have been active around Southampton and Portsmouth since the early weeks of the strike, speaking at many workplace and Labour Party meetings and raising large sums of money.

Problems have however arisen within the support committee due to the 'a-political' character determined by Communist Party members. Although challenged by certain Labour activists the CP have generally managed to guillotine discussion around such ques-



Arthur Scargill has called for a four-day week

Making Notts a police state

Jim Gillespie (Thoresby NUM) spoke to Alan Fraser

I THINK the police have turned Nottinghamshire into a police state.

The county is surrounded on each border by police officers who won't let any other miners come in.

Inside the county each village is separated from other villages through police tactics.

But in my opinion, these people who have been on strike since the beginning, like myself, are on a winner. It's not if we're going to win now, it's a matter of time, when we're going to win.

What do you think about a general strike?

I don't see that we've got any choice. If the NUM loses every other trade union is going to go down with it.

I agree with a general strike, because if all the working classes combine together then we'll be able to do something. We might be able to overthrow this government.

The role of the Labour Party leadership in this dispute has been negative. If we win this now, and let Neil Kinnock get in with his policy as it is now, then his Labour government is going

to be just the same as the other ones.

I see the Labour Party changing if the working class people, the rank and file miners, start to go to all these meetings — if we start to join the Labour Parties and overthrow the right wing and get a decent Labour government in.

What's your view on the role of the women's groups?

In this area, without the women, a lot of the miners who are on strike and who have stuck solidly together would not have done so.

Arrested!

By Jim Denham

YET another case of police harassment of a prominent strike leader has come to light in the Midlands.

Eric Lippett, a Midlands area executive member and chair of the Lea Hall strike committee, was arrested when police called at his home at 8.40am on Tuesday June 12.

"They accused me of criminal damage — supposedly having damaged an NCB van outside Handsacre social club. They took me down the station. I denied the allegation. They then asked me all sorts of irrelevant questions about my role in the strike, about how it would affect my future prospects, and about my attitude to the police!", Eric told SO.

Eric was held in the cell for over 3 hours before being released on bail. In court, the police prosecutor called for Eric to be remanded in custody, though eventually he was granted unconditional bail. "It's a clear case of the Board using the police and the courts to intimidate strikers."

"The secretary of the Lea Hall strike committee has also been arrested, and there have been other cases of our lads being told to 'get back to work' by magistrates in court", said Eric.

"I suspect that it is no coincidence that the day before my arrest the Cannock Chase district executive (which I'm on) had voted to suspend treacherous branch officials who have been strike-breaking, and that the day after my arrest I was due to attend the Midlands area executive to ratify that position."

STOP STEEL!

Continued from page 1

blockade would be put on with the transport unions. If British Steel attempted to bring in coal with scab lorries, then crucial iron ore deliveries would be stopped.

Elsewhere there has also been escalation. On Sunday over 50 miners began occupying the Betteshanger pit in Kent, in response to a report that two scabs were going to try to go in. They are now defying a High Court injunction obtained by the Coal Board.

The national agreement by transport union leaders to go along with blockading steel works is a step in the right direction. But they must campaign to get it to stick with their membership.

Developments at Shirebrook rail depot, in Notts, indicate both the possibilities and the problems.

It took 13 weeks for rail union leaders Jimmy Knapp and Ray Buckton to address a joint branch meeting at this, a key coal-moving depot. When they did, it helped reverse the decision of three previous meetings to continue moving coal.

But there is a further meeting this Saturday, 23rd, to consider the position again. Up to 50% of the guards and drivers have observ-

ed the blockade of coal movements — but the whole dispute has been run passively.

Workers have been sent home, but the policy of the officials is that other workers should not come out in support. ASLEF are paying the wages of those sent home, and the NUR also are not calling for supporting action — for the sake of 'the federation'.

This has given management the initiative on how many to send home on any one day.

A picket line was only recently set up at the depot, and the officials are keeping the strike isolated both from other railworkers taking action and from local miners.

Unless the unions move to strike action when individuals are sent home, there is a real danger of the boycott on coal folding up because of the isolation.

Despite what they say, the Tories and the Coal Board did not break up the negotiations last Wednesday from a position of strength. This became clear when MacGregor's threat to ballot the strikers was quickly dropped in favour of a letter.

Both inside the NUM, and for other trade unionists, the message is this: The strike is going to be won on the picket lines, by stopping coal, by stopping steel, and by extending the action.

Pickets increased in Scotland

By Steve Harvey

A MASSIVE police operation is underway in Hamilton to protect the coal shipments in and out of a small privately-owned coal company.

Pickets have arrived to prevent lorries delivering coal from open-cast mines to a local coal processing plant. From this plant the coal usually goes for domestic use, but now lorries from England are collecting it for power stations.

Pickets at first took the police by surprise and successfully persuaded some drivers not to deliver. Within hours a huge police operation built up and during the first three days of picketing over 40 miners were arrested.

The number of pickets has varied between 50 and a couple of hundred each day, but on Wednesday 13th for example 16 vanloads and two coachloads of police arrived during the morning and heavily outnumbered the pickets.

On the same day a Strathclyde regional councillor calmly told a Labour Party branch in Hamilton that so far the Regional Council has spent almost £2½ million on the police operation in the Region, but that they were 'powerless' in relation to police activities.

The pickets have been harassed, pushed and shoved against the perimeter wall of the plant, kept away from the entrance gates and arrested indiscriminately.

The Coal Board's use of this coal is another indication of coal stocks diminishing. The plant is situated on the periphery of a housing scheme where tenants have for years complained that the police avoid their area, even

in emergencies. The priorities of the police are thrown into sharp focus for the tenants as they travel past the coal depot into the town.

In Hamilton the Trades Council and Labour Party members have been out distributing leaflets and raising funds for the miners'

struggle. But this has been dependent on individual effort, the Labour Party has not yet taken a clear public stand in support of the miners and MP George Robertson wants an NUM national ballot.

Hopefully the June CLP meeting will endorse a motion from at least one branch calling for the establishment of a strike support committee and the indecisiveness will be swept aside.

What happened at Maltby

Frank Slater (Maltby NUM) spoke to Dan Duncan about the recent violence in Maltby

THE TROUBLE began a week last Friday when some coppers approached some lads coming out of the Caledonian. They said to them: 'It's about time you bastards went back to work'.

These lads, understandably, turned on the coppers. I told them to calm down, thinking it was a set-up and there were more police round the corner.

Things settled down. I went to the local Chinese take-away with some other lads. An inspector came in and dragged one of them out.

He returned, looked around, and said to another copper: 'Arrest him'. I was arrested and taken to the police station.

The lad who had been arrested five minutes before me was at the station. He was asking why he had been arrested, so the copper

slapped him around the ear.

Since then I have found that his eardrum is perforated.

My arm was bleeding was being shoved in the back of the van.

We were released at 3.30am. The next night at the same club, there were a lot of police outside, and some of their vans were in the marketplace. The same lads decided to walk away from the vans and went down another street.

A police car came after them, mounting the pavement, and a copper got out and started attacking one of them. This lad has now left the area for a while for his own safety.

The coppers that did this were from Greater Manchester. At the moment there are enough coppers here to arrest the whole town. The local coppers go around and pick out people for the outsiders to arrest.

With the number of police here at the moment, another conflict is almost inevitable.



The scene after the 'Battle of Osgreave'

'Enforcing the Police Bill before it's law'

Albert Bownes, delegate to the South Yorkshire area panel from Kiveton Park, spoke at the SO meeting in Ollerton, Notts, last Sunday (see p.4). He is on conditional bail, instructed not to picket on pain of four months' jail.

I got lifted about two or three miles away from a colliery in Nottinghamshire. That was enough to put me inside Lincoln Prison for 14 days, alongside a few of my colleagues.

We were going picketing, I can tell you that. They say it's sub judice, but I don't give a toss, and I don't give a toss about the bail conditions either.

I did take a video camera with me on that particular occasion be-

cause we have been stopped that many times at junction 27, it's nearly as bad as the old Cutthroat Crossroads.

So they stopped us. Vanloads and vanloads converged on us, as if they had found a coal seam. So we had a meeting in the middle of the roundabout, and said we were going to give them a test case.

There were 46 men from Kiveton Park, and 38 of them went individually to that picket line and got arrested.

It was a beautiful sight. Some people say it was stupidity, but it was great. The Charge of the Light Brigade was nothing on it.

Those lads from Kiveton Park did it for the National Union of Mineworkers. They didn't do it for themselves.

We don't accept the police conditions. What they're doing is testing us out for the new Police Bill. They're implementing the new Police Bill before it's law.

'We'll stick together'

Lynne Dennett, Tracey Middleton, and Phil Middleton spoke to John Bloxam and Miriam Fielding. Lynne and Tracey are active in the Church Warsop Women's Action group, and Phil is an NUM member from Warsop Main (North Derbys. NUM)

Lynne: We are patrolled every 10 minutes by police, past my door. And when it's shift time at the pit, we get masses of police buses.

But I think the police presence has made people on the side of the strike. It's not added to their cause, it's added to ours.

Phil: Before the strike a lot of the older men, who had had nothing to do with the police, might have thought that Scargill was a bit of a hothead. Since this has started they have seen the intimidation. Even when we're on bail and not going picketing any more, and we're cutting down trees for the old folk, we get stopped by the police. It's made people realise what the game is.

But haven't the police been successful? They've protected the scabs so far.

Lynne: OK, the police have done a job for the government - but it's those who have crossed a picket line who are wrong. I blame them.

All those who are crossing a picket line are not only damaging our union, they're also damaging the whole trade union movement. We all know about the police.

For the first weeks they had no leadership. You had no one saying: you don't cross picket lines. That's where the Notts leadership went wrong.

It didn't matter about votes and ballots - they should have said the basic principle of the trade union movement is you don't cross picket lines. If they hadn't dilly-dallied, they would have been out. But they shouldn't have had to say it!

Do you think the decision of the Shirebrook NUR and ASLEF on Saturday is going to have any effect?

Lynne: It was very good. And I think they will stick to it.

You might get one or two of them that will scab. But it's better than it was.

Jimmy Knapp and Ray Buckton were written to, and it got them up there, and it's done the trick. They are now coming out in support.

I went down to Wigan. Dennis Skinner was speaking, and a docker spoke who was very good. They hit the nail on the head for me.

We appreciate the support we're getting. But what I want to see, and what a lot of other people want to see, is a bit of action with the feet. We need some support by, like, dockers going on strike, like that docker said.

That's what we want to see.

Why do you think that hasn't happened?

Lynne: Well, because they've been bribed with pay rises. Power man, rail men, it's happening everywhere, because they want to isolate the miners.

How do you see the negotiations?

Lynne: I think they'll break up. It's exactly the same as it was before. I don't care if they sat round a table, to be honest with you. If they go back for less than what we want, we've been sold out.

Phil: MacGregor's so-called new plan for coal is exactly the same as what he was saying from the first we went on strike. It's no different.

Substantial pay increases? That could mean a lot of things. They could be linked up to productivity and bonus schemes. We want those schemes out anyway, as one of the conditions of going back to work.

What settlement would you consider a victory?

Lynne: We want no pit closures, and an expansion of the industry quicker than what we're getting.

Tracey: We want the incentive scheme scrapping.

Phil: We want a rate protection scheme for the lads that have to come off the coal face due to ill health, injury or just getting too old and knackered for the job.

What about the shorter working week?

Lynne: The miners, same as the other unions, fought for a shorter working week - and then they work seven days with overtime because it costs you so much to live that people are working seven days a week just to survive.

What we're saying, and what Arthur's saying, is let's have a four day week. If there's a need for overtime at weekends, there's a need for more jobs. So why not split your week up and get some of these young lads off the dole queues and into the pit?

That's basically what's wrong with the industry. All this talk about the millions of pounds they are ploughing in - they are ploughing millions in but the Coal Board are having to plough millions back because of the interest they're charging them.

Miriam: The machinery is produced by non-nationalised industry. Somebody's getting a rake-off



JOHN HARRIS

somewhere.

Tracey: That's it. They nationalised the Coal Board but they didn't nationalise all the industry that supplies it, or anything like that.

Lynne: British people are being brainwashed by this thing called privatisation. And they say that anything that isn't private should make a profit. Well, how can you make a profit in the health service, if you want a good health service?

How can you make a profit in mining if you want a decent mining industry like it should be?

The basic principle is that they're trying to get rid of the unions in this country - and then god knows where the working class will be.

As for the Labour Party leaders - it's time they all got off their backsides and started saying which side they're on.

A few have. Tony Benn and Skinner, and that's about it. But just look at the rest.

And the TUC. Well, Len Murray might as well buy 11 Downing St and live next door to her.

Throughout history we've been sold down the river. I've just read a thesis on pit closures from 1947 up to date, and all the way through, whether it is Labour or anybody, they've sold us down the river. The only people that can fight this are the men and the women themselves.

There's no great white god going to come down and do it for us. It's no good turning to Neil Kinnock and people like that. It's the trade union movement that can help us.

Len Murray is nowt to do with it. He's after his knighthood like bloody Gormley. They sell out to the establishment.

Arthur Scargill will never sell out. Tony Benn should have been leader of the Labour Party. But as soon as they find out that he's popular and speaks the truth, they slate him for it.

Miriam: There's no way they can let someone go about like that - drawing the links between the miners' strike, GCHQ, nuclear threats. They've got to destroy him.

Can you say something about the Women's Action Committee?

Lynne: I got a dozen lasses together. We had a meeting in a house. They chose me as chairlady. I said at the time, 'Don't be stupid, I can't do it'.

Anyway, it snowballed.

Have you been involved in picketing?

Lynne: Not many, because there hasn't been a need for it for our pit. But for a lot of them, we're going back to male chauvinism really, because a lot of husbands say: 'I'll do the picketing'.

I've always said - if you want to go picketing, do it.

What about a national meeting of women's committees?

Lynne: Yes, that's happening. When we've won we're not going to disband. We'll stick together.

I would like to see women's groups throughout the whole trade union movement - for each trade union, women come forward and stand up like we have.

You know, I was just a wife sat at home, with three kids, washing, doing all mundane jobs. And I've enjoyed this - I'm tired out most of the time, but I do enjoy it.

If I can do it, then there's a hell of a lot more women who can do it.

Above: at Orgreave, a press photographer stops to give first aid to an injured miner. The woman being attacked by the mounted cossack on p.1 was seeing aid for this man. Below: Arthur Scargill at Orgreave, injured by the police



Back the miners

Scargill: A four day week!

LAST WEEK Arthur Scargill set out his demands for the pit strike:

- *A complete withdrawal of the Coal Board's closure programme announced on March 6 aimed at reducing capacity by 4 million tonnes.

- *A reaffirmation by the Board and the Government of the Plan for Coal, the expansionist plan agreed between the Government, Coal Board and unions in 1974.

- *Development of 40 million tonnes new capacity.

- *New investment to expand all existing pits.

- *Rapid development of new coal burning technologies

- *The introduction of a four day week

- *A substantial increase in wages

- *Retirement age brought down to 55

- *A scheme to protect wage rates

- *Consolidation of the incentive bonus scheme.

The demands for the four day week and for scrapping the incentive scheme are particularly important as part of a working class programme to defend jobs and unite mineworkers.

The Broad Lefts

What they are and

what they must become

Socialist Organiser 35p

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



Forward to a general strike!



Miners lobbying the NUM special conference in Sheffield

they got there from those lads who are at the beginnings of taking industrial action in their own right, was colossal. Those fellows realised that the NUM is now fighting a battle that is their battle.

It's difficult to predict what sort of thing could set a general strike off. But the point is that the situation is there, and it could be sparked off by a variety of things.

So far it's been limited to these local struggles, and if we're unlucky it may go on like that. But the atmosphere is there, and it can be converted into action if enough of us go out and put the issues to people.

The government know it's the best chance to make a breakthrough against them! Press ahead, and we can do it!

I want to finish by looking back at the discussion we had last Sunday. One danger in this situation is a re-run of 1974, where eventually the government is down on its knees, but they call an election and let the B team under Neil Kinnock in.

I'm the chair of a Constituency Labour Party, I'm a Labour councillor, I've been in the Labour Party for donkey's years. But I have to say that there is a tremendous danger of winning a partial political victory by getting a Kinnock-style Labour government in.

We've got to get a Labour government in. A Labour government under Genghis Khan would be better than what we've got now. But a Kinnock-style Labour government would not do what has to be done.

It would not stop the pit closures. It would not stop the drain on jobs, not carry out nuclear disarmament policy, not do all the things that we need it to do.

Our movement

The way to change that is to get into the Labour Parties en masse, take them over, and make them what you want them to be.

And another way to do it is to get into a situation where change is carried out not by the Labour MPs at the top — personally I don't trust them an inch — but by the rank and file.

It's our movement, it's our country, it's our world, and it's time we built this opportunity into a chance to get a grip of it and run it in our interests instead of the interests of a few rich people at the top.

Victory to the NUM! Forward to the general strike!

I'm sure the idea of a general strike has been discussed quite a bit round here already. It has been discussed in Basingstoke, in the middle of Tory Hampshire, so I'm sure it's been talked about here!

I don't want to give you the impression that I'm going to suggest at the end of my talk that we pass a resolution in favour of calling a general strike and we all go out shouting and screaming down the street and denouncing anybody who doesn't join us. That would be absolutely idiotic.

The job that I'm going to try to do today is just to outline the possibilities, the prospects and the problems in the question of a general strike.

Obviously now the prime job is to win the NUM strike. And it's pretty obvious that although you people have demonstrated that you've got the strength to carry the strike on a long time — and in my opinion you could win it on your own in the end — the quickest way would be for the action to be extended beyond the NUM into other key sectors of industry.

The obvious ones are the power industry, the railways, and indeed the steel industry.

It's like the old story that if the working class were lined up at one side of a room, the ruling class were lined up on the other side of the room, and we all spat at once, we would drown them. The problem is, how do we organise everybody to spit at once?

France '68

Let's look at what general strikes have been in the past, right back to the 19th century, in this country and in other countries. Look at France in 1968. There were maybe three million members in all the trade unions put together — but when the strike got going there were ten million on strike. There were more on strike than the total membership of the trade unions.

And for a short time they had the government there by the throat. It was only through the intervention of the officials in the French labour movement, who played much the same role as the TUC have played in this country, that a major overturn didn't take place in France and the labour movement didn't take over the whole country to run it by and for the working class.

But there have been different types of general strike calls in the past.

Gormley

One I'd like to start with came from a man who will be dear to all your hearts, and that's Mr Gormley — Lord Gormley. I'm sorry.

Mr Gormley made a call for a general strike in 1973. I can just about remember it — I was just getting involved as a political activist then. I can

remember Gormley making a call for a general strike and me thinking we were going to have socialism the day after tomorrow.

Joe Gormley's call for a general strike was really, I think, the most dishonest type that you can possibly imagine. At that time there was no prospect, no atmosphere, no feeling that a general strike was possible. By making that call Gormley put himself out as looking very radical, but what he was saying was 'general strike or nothing' in order to get nothing.

Another version is the type of general strike we had in Britain in 1926, where the TUC called it, the TUC controlled it, and the TUC smothered it on the ninth day. There were more workers out on strike the day after it was called off than the day before, but the TUC still stabbed it in the back.

That kind of general strike — controlled by the kiss-of-death merchants at Congress House — is again not what we want.

Model

I think the model, and the most likely variant if there is to be a general strike round the NUM dispute, is the general strike in France in 1968.

That massive general strike developed quite spontaneously. It was people at the grass roots, the rank and file of the trade unions, who got that going.

In fact, it started, as I recall, over a thing you would never have imagined motivating the bedrock sections of workers. It started over a lot of students getting knocked over the head by policemen. It spread from there — and the key to the reason why it spread is that the atmosphere was right.

Last week's 200-strong Socialist Organiser meeting at Ollerton, Notts, was followed up this week by another meeting, attended by about 70 miners, to discuss the issues further. One of the main speeches was by Alasdair Jamison, on the general strike.

People in France in 1968 were thoroughly and absolutely pissed off with De Gaulle and his government. It was like dropping a match into a heath in July. It went up like a bomb. If you'd done it in December nothing would have happened.

In Britain in 1926, when the general strike was on, although the TUC managed to control it in the end, there were areas that started to break away. There were areas like Durham where people started to take over and run it not as a strike but as a reorganisation of society.

Look at the way you people are fighting now. The fact that you've got your welfare running for you, the fact that you've got organised soup kitchens and food distribution — you've just started to organise your lives on a much broader basis than just saying 'I'm not going to go to work for a few days and see if I can beat the employer'.

There is an edge in there of the type of thing that could be done through a general strike. A general strike is not just a big strike with more workers out than a sectional strike. A general strike fundamentally challenges the system that we live under. It poses the question directly — who controls? who

takes decisions?

There was a quotation in the Observer at the time of the 1968 general strike in France, when De Gaulle was trying to organise an election to find a way out of it. The Observer asked: How is he going to get this election organised?

How is he going to get the ballot papers printed, with the printers on strike? How is he going to get the thing administered? With the media workers on strike, how is he going to carry it out?

At the end of the day his friends in the leadership of the labour movement managed to create the atmosphere for him. But the point was that the working class had demonstrated its power.

Control

A general strike does that. It poses the question of who controls society.

Your struggle, even though it is not a general strike, has opened up the potential for that situation. It's just one trade union — a hundred and odd thousand out on strike — but the government is very afraid of this situation escalating.

You've only got to look at the way they try to strip your support away from you.

The leadership of the rail unions settled for the first crumb. But the government offered them that crumb because they wanted to make sure that the railway workers didn't come in with you and start to escalate the struggle into a general strike.

Now you might say that if we can't get anywhere with the railway workers we can't get anywhere with anybody. That's not true.

If you look at what has been going on at Shirebrook, and the stand that quite a lot

of railway workers have been prepared to take there — up to and including being sent home in large numbers by their employers — if you look at the walk-out at Charing Cross the other week — there is an anger there in the rank and file of the railway unions that is waiting to be tapped.

If you look round the country, there has been a rash of strikes, in all sorts of industries, all sorts of workplaces, since the NUM came out. In Basingstoke there have been at least three strikes since the NUM came out. Two of them have been successful, and there is another one in the pipeline. And all those strikers are talking about the mineworkers.

A couple of lads from the Welsh NUM came down to TGWU branch at our dust depot, where they've got a battle against privatisation at the moment. The ovation

Get ORGANISED!

Become a supporter of the Socialist Organiser Alliance — groups are established in most large towns. We ask £1.50 a month minimum (20p unwaged) contribution from supporters.

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

Name

Address

Send to Socialist Organiser, 28 Middle Lane, London N8 8PL.

'Notts has exposed inadequacy of left'

Steve Abbot (Notts NUM) spoke to Pete Radcliff



WHY do you think Notts has been a weak area in the national solidarity of the NUM?

Lack of solidarity with the rest of the NUM has been a traditional inbuilt part of the Notts area, because of various factors — better working conditions, usually higher wages.

And you've got a large proportion of labour from other areas who have given up the ghost in their own area, and that's why they've transferred into Notts.

What started the rot in this dispute was Ray Chadburn and Henry Richardson asking for permission from the NEC to have an area ballot. It could have been done a lot better if we had gone to a branch vote.

As for the position of the area executive — there have been some on the area executive who have been pressing all the time for instructions not to cross picket lines. And there has been the weaker element saying, 'We can't do that, we've got to respect the ballot'.

What did you think of the call for a national ballot?

The only people who were calling for a national ballot were people who wanted to stop the strike.

My position, and that of most of the members of the area executive, is that we're opposed to a national ballot. We were mandated from the branches to ask for a national ballot at the special delegate conference, but once it was rejected by that special delegate conference we're held by the mandate of the special delegate conference.

I had a proposal at my branch which was supposed to be a vote of no confidence. It was rejected at the branch meeting. Most members of the executive had something similar.

I've never had much time for full-time officials, but I thought we might be able to trust Henry Richardson a lot more than has proved to be evident. He has fallen right into a bureaucratic trap.

The tragedy is that some of the delegates on the area executive fell into that too. They deliberately kept a low profile hoping that they would get re-elected this year which turned out to be a vain hope. Even the most right wing of the executive got knocked off.

To some extent what has happened in Notts has exposed the inadequacy of the left's strategy of taking over various bodies within the union. It was a totally left-dominated area executive which just couldn't do anything.

The real alternative is to try to fight for rank and file militancy and then, if you have a left-dominated execu-



Picket at Cadzow coal stockyard, Hamilton

tive, they'll have some clout.

The executive voted 8 to 5 to instruct members not to cross picket lines, and a couple of days later they were overturned by a special conference.

What do you think about the elections which have taken place now for the area council?

We are now going to have a totally right wing set of delegates at the area council, and a totally right wing area executive. I don't know what they are going to get up to.

"The real alternative is to try to fight for rank and file militancy and then, if you have a left-dominated executive, they'll have some clout"

"I don't think the executive will sell us out, but that's only an opinion that's based on faith in Scargill more than anyone else"

Already the right wing are talking about going back to court to change the injunction so that we are not on strike officially.

All we can hope to do now is strengthen the unofficial bodies that exist. A lot of the lads who are on strike have

got a lot of criticisms not only of the official leadership but also of the unofficial leadership — the North and South Notts strike committees.

What do you think the likelihood is of a breakaway union? A Working Miners'

Committee has been set up.

I don't think they'll organise a secession from the national union. They don't need to, do they? Because of the nature of our union, they have a certain amount of area autonomy, and they'll be able to continue as they are.

How do you feel about how the union nationally has conducted this campaign?

I don't think the executive will sell us out, but that's only an opinion that's based on faith in Scargill more than anyone else.



Joe Green

"THERE'S blood on coal", people say, meaning that many miners die or suffer terrible injuries working to bring the coal to the surface.

Now the saying takes on a different meaning, in the fourth month of the strike — the blood of miners killed and injured fighting to stop Thatcher and MacGregor wrecking the coal industry. The blood of working class martyrs in the fight against Toryism. The blood of militants prepared to stand up against the state.

Last Friday, 15th, Joe Green from Kellingley pit was the second miner to die in this strike. Joe was 55 and he died picketing Ferrybridge power station at Castleford, Yorkshire. He was pulled under the back wheels of a scab lorry and crushed to death.

Arthur Scargill, who was himself to be injured and hospitalised as a result of a police attack outside Orgreave last Monday, said this about the death of Joe Green:

"I am calling on all those employed at power stations to refuse to handle any fuel including coal and oil being delivered across our picket lines, and to demonstrate as trade unionists that they are not prepared to condone this violence against our people."

"I am calling on every British miner to join the strike, the picket lines and the fight for jobs."

"Joe Green gave his life for the right to work — every miner every trade unionist in Britain must ensure that he did not die in vain".

How Tories planned it all

By Jane Ashworth

THE **TORIES** have been working out how to get their own back on the miners since the 1972 strike sent Heath reeling and the 1974 strike ended with him thrown out of office.

They want to teach the NUM a lesson. And they know that to get away with their plans to make Britain (read: British profits) great again, they would have to take on the miners.

The man who master-minded the Tories' build-up to the present strike, Nicholas Ridley, came up with the following plans as long ago as 1978.

- *Build up coal stocks, particularly at the power stations
- *Make contingency plans for the import of coal

- *Encourage hauliers to recruit non-union drivers

- *Introduce dual coal/oil firing in all power stations

- *Cut off the money supply to strikers and make the union finance them

- *Establish a large, mobile squad of police to deal with picketing.

And they got on with carrying out the Ridley report as soon as they won the 1979 election.

Within the first year of office, the Tories showed they meant business. British

Steel started to increase its coal imports, looking for half of its coking coal requirements to be imported by 1987. In the past they had only had 5% imported.

The Tories announced plans to build one nuclear power station a year for ten years with the intended effect of upping the nuclear power station contribution to the energy supply from 12% to 30% by the end of the '80s.

"A nuclear programme would have the advantage of removing a substantial portion of electricity from disruption by industrial action of coal miners and transport workers", as they put it in October 1979.

And just one year on from the election Thatcher came up with the Social Security Bill which deducts £15 strike pay from supplementary benefit regardless of whether the striker is actually getting it or not.

Not bad going — but that is what you would expect from a government that knows which side it's on and is willing to smash anyone who gets in the way.

In under a year the Tories were almost ready for battle. Following up that first round came the anti-union laws to restrict pickets and 'secondary' action, and the Code of Practice which limited pickets to six at an entrance.

Meanwhile work to establish — in effect — a National Riot Police had been underway for many years (see centre pages).

There was one other clause in the Ridley plan. Don't take on the miners first, it said. Soften up the labour movement first by beating other sections of workers.

In line with that, the Tories retreated tactically when the miners struck, against pit closures in 1981.

But by March 1984 the Tories thought that they had everything stitched up. They had won a second term of office. Industrially they had not had an unbroken record of success, but they had won more battles than they had lost. The TUC, in any case, had admitted defeat, deciding at its September 1983 congress to enter talks on new anti-union laws.

But we're well on our way to prove them wrong.

Information from Labour Research magazine.



Unemployed miner gathering coal from a slag heap at a closed pit in South Yorkshire



Yes, Britain has a N

JOHN HARRIS



Police photographers at the Orgeave coke plant picket

Their law and ours

IN THEIR operation against the miners' strike, the police have effectively been making up their own laws and imposing them by sheer force.

What is the answer to this? Who polices the police? Who can stop 'the law' breaking the law?

Laws never fall from the sky. They are generated by the structure and the ruling interests of the society they exist in. Law is class law.

In feudal society law was based on and mixed up with a social hierarchy. Feudal ownership of a particular area of land went together with legal authority over the peasants on that land.

Bourgeois law — the law of capitalist society — is, in contrast, based on the axiom of laws before which all individual citizens are formally equal, just as they are formally equal in the marketplace.

But bourgeois law, too, is ruling-class law. Formally, the law guarantees the right of everyone to make millions by exploiting the labour of others. In practice it protects the right of a small wealthy minority to do so.

Besides their property laws, that small wealthy minority makes many other laws to protect their position — laws against strikes, pickets, protests, demonstrations.

How many such laws they have, and how strictly they are enforced, is a matter of the balance of class forces.

Between 1799 and 1824 trade unions were illegal in Britain. Between 1901 and 1906 any union calling strike action could be sued for crippling damages.

A law passed in 1927 severely restricted trade unionism until 1946. During World War 2 and until 1951 most strikes were illegal.

'Justice' never had anything to do with it. The working class has always had what rights it could win and defend by struggle — and no more.

It does make a difference for the labour movement whether new laws are introduced by parliament or by police decree. The parliamentary method offers wider scope for pressure by the working class.

But as far as the ruling class is concerned the two methods are two sides of the same coin.

A parliamentary government has been planning, directing, and defending the police's 'law by decree' operation against the miners. And that government is currently promoting a Police and Criminal Evidence Bill which will transform some of that law by police decree into law by parliamentary vote.

First the police establish the law by sheer force. Then parliament ratifies it.

But that process can be reversed — as when working class action made the Tory Industrial Relations Act unusable, and the Labour government then followed up by repealing it in parliament.

This miners' strike could lead to a whole new series of laws being imposed to hamstring the trade union movement — by police decree and/or by parliamentary vote.

Or it could lead to the Tories' present anti-union laws being wiped off the statute books.

It all depends on the strength, scope, vigour and determination of the working class response. Even 8000 riot police are no match for millions of trade unionists — if the movement mobilises them.

"IT IS no longer the case that we do not have a riot police like the CRS in France.

This riot force is 'built in' as a unit within each constabulary. The British state, always subtle and covert, has organised a riot force within each constabulary area, and though they are called 'Instant Response Units' in London and 'Tactical Aid Groups' in Manchester, they are in fact one similarly trained and equipped national riot squad.

The majority of police officers in Nottinghamshire are para-military police officers. They travel to their destination in long convoys of white support unit vans, like an occupying army...

[They] are trained with DII and other quasi-military, police bodies. They are trained in the use of firearms and many of them are trained in the use of such weapons as the baton round, repeater gun, and gas guns.

They are trained in internal security strategies like 'snatch squads'...

The miners' strike is in effect the first large-scale try-out of Britain's national riot police. This pamphlet documents their methods and their organisation.

In formal, legal terms, there are 52 separate police forces in the UK. The Metropolitan Police in London is directly controlled by central government. Other forces are run by Chief Constables under dual supervision by a local police authority and by the Home Secretary.

The police authorities are partly local councillors, partly magistrates.

But this whole structure is being by-passed by the current anti-strike operation. The body used to create a national police command is the Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO) — supposedly only a professional association.

"ACPO... have set themselves up in the National Recording Centre (NRC) at Scotland Yard...

The Controller of the National Recording Centre is always the current president of ACPO — presently the Chief Constable of Humberside, David Hall. It was his decision to put the centre into operation on March 13 [in the first week of the strike].

We now know however that on February 9 there was a meeting at the Home Office between the Home Secretary, the Attorney General, and all Chief Constables... A month before the strike

Martin Thomas looks at the evidence collected in a pamphlet by Susan Miller and Martin Walker, 'A State of Siege: Policing the coalfields in the first six weeks of the miners' strike'. The pamphlet was written for the Yorkshire area NUM: available, price £2 plus postage, from Yorkshire area NUM, Huddersfield Road, Barnsley. Cheques payable to: Miners' Solidarity Fund.

began the police were already receiving political instructions by a method which bypassed the County Police Authorities.

Hall claimed that within three and a quarter hours of the picketing beginning in Nottinghamshire, 1000 officers had been mobilised from different forces. A few days later, after consultation ... Hall organised the deployment of more than 8000 officers involving all but two of the Constabularies in the country, to police the dispute.

The officers deployed came from specialised Support Units; they are officers trained in riot control techniques and provided nationally with the same transport and similar equipment.

These officers have been maintained at this level, on full alert, throughout the strike.



This sort of operation, as Miller and Walker point out, makes it "irrelevant whether or not the army is being used to bolster the number of police at the pickets... It is clear that the police who are being used in the strike are what strategists would call a 'third force': a force between the police and the army".

What this National Riot Police is doing in the miners' strike is a good distance removed from 'policing' — crime prevention and detection. It is much more like the operations of an occupying army in an area under martial law.

A large part of the police operation is illegal, or on the margins of legality, in normal terms.

In effect the police, off their own bat, have made up a number of new 'laws', and imposed them by sheer brute force.

LAW No.1: Miners cannot travel to sites of mass picketing.

Road blocks have been set up at the Dartford Tunnel — leading out of Kent — at the borders of Nottinghamshire, and also around pits and pit villages.

One miner quoted in the pamphlet reports on an attempt to get to Hucknall pit, in Nottinghamshire.

"A police officer signalled us in to the side of the road... The police officer asked us where we were going. I said that we were going to peacefully picket and he said, 'You're not going to the pit'... He said that if we continued we would be arrested.

I said, 'You look like arresting me then because I'm continuing'. The Inspector told me to get out of the car. He asked for the keys and I gave them to him.

One of them who was with me... said that he would walk to the pit rather than walk home. The police officer said, 'OK, you're arrested as well'."

There is no solid basis in formal law for this police operation. There are laws empowering the police to restrain action 'likely to cause a breach of the peace': but the police have no evidence at all

that miners crossing the Thames or going into Nottinghamshire will do anything but picket peacefully.

The fact that 'secondary picketing' is unlawful does not help the police. That is a question of civil law between the Coal Board and the union. The police have no right to intervene.

So how did the police enforce their own 'law'?

Primarily by sheer brute force. A miner stopped at a roadblock had two choices.

He could do what the police said — turn back and go home. Or he could try to argue about it.

If he argued, he would probably be arrested and have his car impounded, and he might also get knocked about.

Support committees

Cardiff: c/o Room 219 Transport House, Cathedral Road.
Birmingham: c/o Trade Union Resources Centre, 7 Frederick St., B1 3HE.
South London: c/o Joan Twelves, 1 Alverstone House, Kennington Park Estate, SE11.
Manchester: c/o FTAT, 37 Anson Road, Victoria Park, M14.

Brent Miners' Solidarity Committee, c/o Local Economy Resource Unit, 389 Willesden High Road, NW10. Ken Evans, 459 6221.

Maesteg Trade Union and Labour Party Support Group: Idwal Isaac, 10 Bridge St., Maesteg. (Tel: 738321).



A picket is arrested at Cadzow coal stockyard, Hamilton

National Riot Police!



Orgreave: mounted police go for the pickets

Miller and Walker record: "We spoke to one man who had refused to hand over his keys or open the car door; the police had smashed his windscreen with truncheons. They claimed later that it had been necessary in order to 'gain entry'."

A miner treated in that way can, of course, make an official complaint. He could even sue the police. He might, eventually, at the end of such proceedings, get redress.

But probably not — in most cases, it will be his word against the police. And in the meantime he has been arrested, his car has been seized, he has been beaten up or his windscreen has been smashed.

Little wonder that most miners turn back quietly.

When the police have

arrested miners at roadblocks, usually they have charged them with 'obstructing a police officer in the course of his duty'. It is a minor charge — so the evidence of a police officer is usually sufficient to convict. In the meantime the miner has been taken off the road and had his time in the police cells.

'Breach of the peace', 'threatening behaviour', and 'assault' are other, more serious charges which have been used, where likewise the unsupported evidence of a police officer is usually enough to get a conviction.

Even before and without a conviction, such charges can help the police to control pickets. Frequently during the strike magistrates have imposed bail conditions on such charges which forbid miners to travel outside their own immediate area. "At the time of writing this report", say Miller and Walker, "there were seven miners in prison: these men had not been found guilty of any offence, but simply broken conditions of bail determined by the police".

The police also have the option of releasing arrested people without charging them. And they can 'punish' people without even arresting them.

For example they can instruct drivers to present their documents to their local police station within five days. This forces miners picketing outside their own areas to return home.

LAW No.2: Pickets are allowed only in the numbers and in the manner approved by the police.

Miller and Walker quote an account by two Kent University law lecturers:

"[At Dawmill pit, Warwickshire] we were confronted by a three deep line of

police stretched across the road about 150 yards from the pit entrance itself. In front of the line were four Kent miners who had been held there for six hours and prevented from mounting what, in the circumstances, could only have been a limited and peaceful picket at the colliery gates.

When we pointed this out to the officer in charge, he simply referred us to what he termed the 'prohibition' against secondary picketing, and although he eventually conceded that this was indeed a civil matter over which the police had no jurisdiction, he nevertheless categorically refused on at least 10 further occasions to allow the miners through to the gates.

Eventually, having been ordered to do so by his Deputy Chief Constable, he did allow a maximum of six 'official pickets' (a term he never defined) through the line but only after each of them had had their names and credentials thoroughly checked and recorded, and only on condition that they made no attempt actually to speak to anyone going in to work."

LAW No.3: Any miner arrested is photographed and has his fingerprints taken.

According to Miller and Walker, "There are no laws governing the taking of photographs or fingerprints, but the guidelines would suggest that the police are meant to take them if a suspect is charged with an imprisonable offence".

Most miners arrested are charged with less serious offences, but the police take their photographs anyway. Again, their 'authority' is brute force.

Miller and Walker only found one miner who had resisted being photographed. His experience explains why

SOME Labour-controlled Police Committees have criticised the police operation.

George Moores, chair of the South Yorkshire Police Committee has said: "There is no doubt that the police can be blamed for a lot of the violence that occurred on the picket line", and added:

"If I had to sum up what was most worrying, I would say that it was the concept of national policies that are carried out by police officers, without any legal standing whatsoever. Here we have state repression against people

others did not resist.

While two policemen held him, another pulled his hair, then punched him in the face, held his head in an arm lock, and forced his head up so that the photograph could be taken.

Arrested miners have also been subjected to political and personal questioning: girl friend's names, any debts they have, political affiliations, what they think of Arthur Scargill, which way they voted in union and in national elections, etc.

Post Office Engineering Union officials have said that many members of the NUM are having their phones tapped.

LAW No.4: Any miner attending a large demonstration and picket, and known to be a militant, is liable to be arrested.

This is done by trained 'snatch squads'. As Miller and Walker report, "the men who are arrested by this strategy are picked out not because they are suspected of any offence but because they are prominent union officers or activists or because they have had some personal confrontation with a police officer at some other time during the strike..."

[In one case] it could be seen clearly [on TV film] how [plain-clothes] police among the pickets] pushed a miner from within the picket to the front so that other officers could arrest him".

Although the police operation against the miners' strike is unprecedented as a whole, many parts of it do have precedents, and the whole thing has been carefully prepared for.

Roadblocks preventing free movement were, for example, used around Greenham Common in April this year when the women's peace camp was evicted.

In October 1968, coaches going to a big demonstration against the Vietnam war in London were stopped and searched. Such operations have become commonplace for demonstrations and pickets since then.

The National Recording Centre — the base for today's national police command — dates from 1972. It was set up in response to the triumphant rediscovery of the fly-

le who are on the whole most moderate in their attitudes".

South Yorkshire has made a decision that extra policing costs arising from the strike should be found from the existing budget. A similar decision has been taken on Merseyside, and the result is that these police forces have had to cut down on building programmes, new equipment, etc.

These protests are useful, but not adequate to the situation.

As Miller and Walker point out, "The power of Police

ing picket tactic by miners and building workers that year.

According to Miller and Walker, "A Times report of March 19 1984 suggests that the Centre has been activated on at least three occasions since 1972, including the 1981 riots in Toxteth and Brixton".

The Special Patrol Groups and other special police units were initiated in 1965 — under a Labour government, like the 1968 incident.

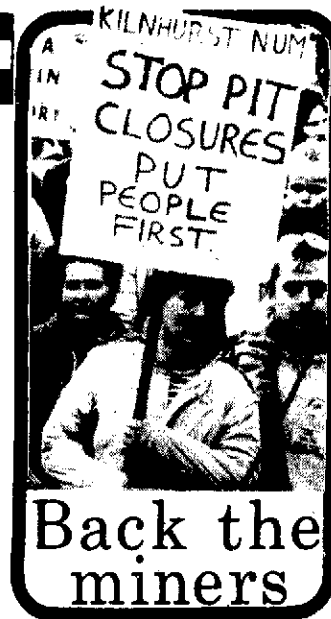
They developed most rapidly under the 1970-4 Tory government. But there was no move to disband them under the 1974-9 Labour government. On the contrary New units were established.

At the end of Labour's term of office, just before the 1979 general election, Special Patrol Group men killed anti-fascist demonstrator Blair Peach in Southall.

The new police methods also borrow heavily from Northern Ireland experience. Kenneth Newman, currently chief of the Metropolitan Police and thus Britain's top policeman, was previously chief of the Royal Ulster Constabulary. A miner who has served with the British Army in Northern Ireland told Socialist Organiser two weeks ago:

"I was thrown against the fence, army style. I know how it's done because I've done it myself in Ireland — put the arms up, legs kicked apart, searched and questioned... The police here now are using the same methods that we trained the B Special police in Northern Ireland for".

And that was under a Labour government, too.



Committees... is limited. However, there can be little doubt that the Chief Constables... could have been called on publicly to account for their actions during this dispute.

The Committees do have the power to sack their Chief Constables, even if this is subject to the agreement of the Home Secretary. Such an action would, at least, have drawn attention to the lack of public accountability with which Chief Constables operate generally...

Police committees in every area could also call on their Chief Constables to withdraw from the National Recording Centre operation.

Such demands have been raised by Labour Party campaigners, but the councillors on the police committees still remain very reluctant to speak out. There was a similar experience in Merseyside over the Toxteth riots: the police committee expressed concern about police operations, but shied away from any suggestion of no confidence in Chief Constable Kenneth Oxford.

The policy of collaboration with the police hierarchy, both by Labour councils and by Labour governments, has allowed the creation behind the scenes of a National Riot Police. It is high time that the collaboration was broken.

Labour should commit itself to:

- * Disbandment of special forces like the Special Patrol Groups, Instant Response Units, Special Branch, MI5 etc.

- * Putting all police forces under the control of elected local councils, which should have power to hire, fire and instruct police chiefs.

- * Effectively using such powers.

The police hierarchy — soaked in authoritarian and Tory ideology — will not submit quietly to such accountability. A determined drive by the labour movement to stop the police being used as anti-picket shock troops would probably lead to open defiance by the police hierarchy, and compel Labour to look to the radical alternative of disbanding the existing police structure to replace it by organised labour movement/community patrols.

Notts strikers need money

The job of organising the strike from within Notts goes on with the Notts Miners Rank and File Strike Committee carrying out the bulk of the work.

Send money or invitations for fund-raising visits to me at 10 Nicholas Place, Tuxford, Newark. Tel: 0777 871500.

PAUL WHETTON (Sec., NMR&FSC)



By Farrell Dobbs

"Special attention was given to keeping the workers informed about the strike's progress and helping them to answer lies peddled by the bosses. Each evening a general assembly was held at the headquarters for this purpose.

There were also regular meetings of the strike committee of seventy-five, which had been elected by the union membership...

Picket dispatching was assigned to Ray Dunne and me... We had a special staff at our disposal to handle the telephones and operate a short wave radio used to monitor police calls. Teenage volunteers with motorcycles were organised into an efficient courier service...

So many cars and individually owned trucks were volunteered that we had more than enough to achieve the high degree of mobility required in the strike...

Special cruising squads with handpicked crews were constantly at the disposal of the picket dispatchers. They were captained by qualified leaders who carried credentials authorising them to supersede all other authority in the field. These squads

POLICE VIOLENCE against pickets has long been a standard feature of trade union disputes in the US.

Among the most success-

ful efforts to respond to this was the picket organisation in the great Minneapolis Teamsters' (truck drivers') strikes of 1934, where the local union was led by organised

socialists.

Fighting for union recognition, they were confronted by the local police and by specially-recruited deputies. The strikers organised them-

selves with a firm discipline which prevented freelance, uncoordinated, counterproductive fighting with scabs and police, but made sure that the pickets collectively

were able to defend themselves.

Farrell Dobbs, one of the leaders of the strikes, has told the story in his book 'Teamster Rebellion' (Monad Press).

Beat police violence: Organise!

were used for special assignments on their own, and they were sent into tense situations to marshal the union forces and lead the fight.

Assembling the mass forces for such extensive picketing proved to be no problem at all. As soon as the strike was called, new members poured into Local 574 [the strikers' branch] from all sections of the trucking industry...

The union's approach to the unemployed workers brought spectacular results. Hundreds upon hundreds of jobless poured into the strike headquarters, volunteering their services... A significant number of college students pitched in to help the union.

[Then there were two incidents in which police and strikebreakers attacked and injured pickets. The police followed up by recruiting large numbers of special deputies.]

Contrary to the bosses' hope and expectations, the strikers were not exactly paralysed with fear at the prospect of facing an army of cops and deputies...

Up to now the workers had gone about their activities bare-handed; but they found that attempts to exercise their right to peacefully picket were being repressed with police clubs and black-jacks. They decided to take steps to enforce their demo-



Heavy fighting between pickets and police reinforced by volunteer deputies in the city marketplace

cratic right to prevent scabs from grabbing their jobs.

It would have been a tactical blunder for members of an isolated vanguard to attempt measures such as the strikers were about to take; they would only get themselves clobbered by the police. In this case, however, the means used in self-defence had their origin in a spontaneous mass mood that had been generated by capitalist repression.

Since these means were appropriately limited in the given situation to matching

the police club for club, the tactics employed were completely valid.

All day Sunday the strikers equipped themselves for battle. Baseball bats appeared; garden hoses were cut into short lengths, lead washers were tamped into the hollow and the ends closed with friction tape to make an improvised sap. Volunteers from the Carpenters' Union sawed two-by-twos into club lengths.

A sympathiser came to the strike headquarters pulling a child's coaster wagon loaded with bannister posts taken from the stairway at home, his wife steadying the load.

To make improvised helmets, heavy cardboard was stuffed inside the sweatband of hats. A fellow striker would be asked to test it out with a club, and if the result was negative, more cardboard would be added...

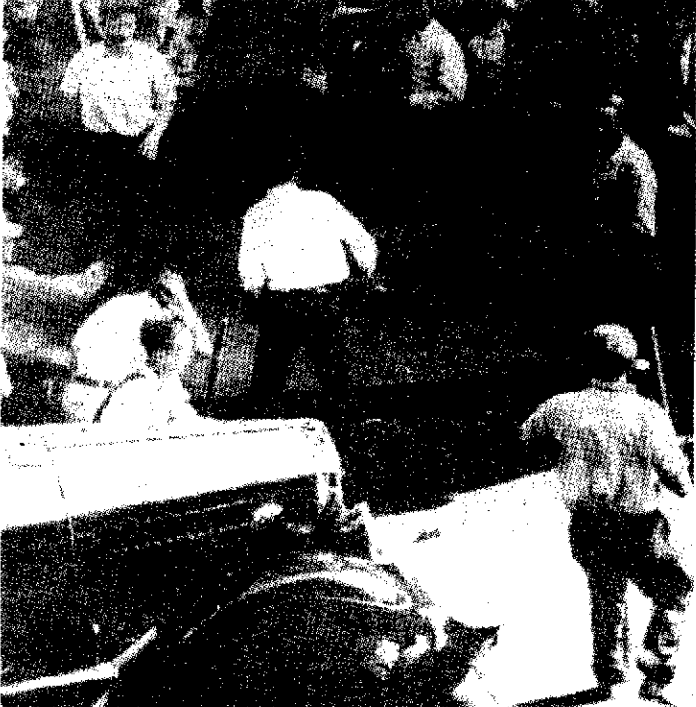
[On the Monday, street fighting soon broke out]. Cops and deputies alike were falling, amid cheers from among the many bystanders, some of whom pitched in to help the strikers. With the workers challenging them, club against club, most of the deputies took to their heels, leaving the uniformed cops on their own...

[At the end of the fighting] no less than thirty uniformed cops and a number of deputies had to be hospitalised. Union wounded were taken to the strike headquarters where all were taken care of, except for a few with broken bones who needed regular hospital treatment...

[The next day the police tried to rally their forces in greater strength]. The pickets charged the deputies first and soon noticed that many uniformed cops were tending to hang back. Obviously these cops resented being deserted by the deputies Monday and they didn't seem to relish another clubbing match...

In less than an hour after the battle started there wasn't a cop to be seen in the market, and pickets were directing traffic in the now peaceful district... Injuries in the fighting were heavy on both sides and two special deputies were killed...

Within days a settlement representing a major victory



Minneapolis, 1934. bosses' thugs attack pickets

for the union had been won.

The employers soon reneged on the settlement, and another strike proved necessary to consolidate union recognition. "At this new juncture many pickets were inclined to start where they left off in May, again arming themselves with clubs. In the changed circumstances, however, this would have been tactically inadvisable.

It would have given the cops a pretext for immediate violence against strikers who were trying to peacefully picket; and the union would have lost the tactical advantage of reacting to police violence under defensive slogans."

So the pickets went out unarmed. Within days the police had shot at pickets, killing two.

But organisation, discipline and numbers kept the picketing effective, and after five weeks the second strike was won, too.



Farrell Dobbs



Arthur Scargill being arrested at Orgreave, May 30

Women against pit closures

Dalkeith, c/o Dalkeith Miners' Welfare, Dalkeith, Lothian.
Fish Cross, c/o Fish Cross Miners' Welfare, Fish Cross, Clackmannanshire.
Durham, c/o Heather Wood, 18 Halford Drive, Easington Village, Peterlee, Co. Durham.
Kent, Kay Sutcliffe, c/o Aylesham Miners' Welfare, Aylesham, Kent.
Thameside, Sheila Jow, 105 Lodge Lane, Thameside, Near Romford.
Birmingham, Doris Hunter, 50 Thomas Adams Road, B Small Heath, Birmingham.
Edlington, Veronica Balderson,

62, Blowhall Cres., Edlington, Doncaster.
Maesteg, Teresa Parry, 13 Charles Row, Maesteg, West Glamorgan. (Tel: 738825).
Birch Coppice wives' group, Wendy Coxson, Tamworth 896069.
Barnsley, Ann Hunter, 5 Packhorse Gr, Silkstone, near Barnsley phone 791187.
Maesteg, Wives Support Committee, c/o Maesteg Strike Centre, Fernside 755 301.
Dunfermline, c/o Maesteg, 50 Maesteg, Dunfermline, Fife.
Glenkiln, c/o Maesteg, 50 Maesteg, Glenkiln, Fife.
Glenkiln, c/o Maesteg, 50 Maesteg, Glenkiln, Fife.

Dorothy Phillips, 13 Thorn Ave., Newbridge, Gwent. 0495 245000.
Rugeley, Staffs: Mrs Jackson, 9 Woodlands, Handsacre, Rugeley, Staffs. Mrs Southwell, Rugeley 6179.
Littleton, Staffs: 6 Tower Road, High Green, Hednesford. Linda Platen, Hednesford 76614.
Merton, Durham. Hetton-le-Hall 267641.
Sheffield Women Against Pit Closures, Kath Mackey, Sheffield 381 554 or 454163.
Sheffield Trades Council Miners' Support Committee c/o Sheffield 70 Trades and Labour Club, Taubert St, S2 2TG. Phone 24364.

Policewatch

Sheffield Police watch: 73, West Street, Sheffield S1 4EQ.
Kent police monitoring group: Richard De Friend or Ian Grieg Spall, 0227 66822.
Nottingham Co-ordinating Committee Against the Police Presence: c/o Ivan Wels, 11, Osborne St., Sherwood, Nottingham.
Ollerton strike HQ is collecting statements about police behaviour: Pete, Mansfield 862790.

Labour Party International

Black people organise

SOME three hundred Black activists from the Labour Party met in Digbeth Civic Centre [Birmingham] on Saturday June 9. It was a first-ever National Conference.

The main purpose of the conference was to set in train the movement for the establishment of official Black sections within the framework of the constitution of the Labour Party. Despite attempts by the media and some ill-informed leaders of the party, including Neil Kinnock, Roy Hattersley, and Gerald Kauf-

By Vidya Anand

man, the movement for the setting up of Black sections was clearly determined to go ahead.

Just as women's sections have met with opposition from the overwhelmingly male and white leadership of the party in the past, so too today the opposition has come from a similar leadership.

The Black sections have no intention of setting them-

ves up outside the pale of the party, but rather see their role as uniting the party and drawing in thousands and tens of thousands of Black workers, women and youth to the party itself.

Far from the sections aiming to divide the party, they will form a bridge between the Black people coming in to the party and the mainstream of the party in the CLPs, Trade Union branches, Co-ops, socialist societies, women's sections and Young Socialists.

The conference agreed to refer the constitutional document submitted by the Steering Committee for further discussions in the regions, and it is planned to hold another conference shortly when the grassroots view from up and down the country can be properly assessed.

The paranoia surrounding the conference is totally misplaced. It is an important beginning of the movement to involve the Black people in the Labour who for so long have been ignored.

USSR missiles

By Alex Simpson

IT HAS been known since the New Year that the Soviet Union has deployed nuclear missiles in Czechoslovakia and East Germany to match NATO's stationing of Cruise and Pershing missiles in Western Europe.

In the second week of May a statement by the Russian news agency TASS was the first official announcement of the presence of the new missiles in East Germany. The deployments had in fact been going on since Christmas.

It is believed that about 40 type SS-20 missiles have been deployed in total so far. The new missiles, despite having a

smaller warhead and a range much shorter than the SS-20 (only 550 miles), could from their forward positions reach most important targets in Western Europe, including parts of the UK.

Soon after the TASS statement, Soviet commander-in-chief Marshal Ustinov declared that the number of submarines carrying nuclear missiles stationed close to the United States (around 200 miles off the coastline) was to be increased.

On the same day four members of the unofficial peace group were arrested and held for several hours. Their only 'offence' was to try and collect signatures from ordinary citizens for a petition calling for 'talks' between the United States and the Soviet Union.

MX missiles

A PROPOSAL before Congress on the night of May 16 for a complete denial of funds to the MX missiles programme was defeated by a margin of only a dozen votes. It was widely believed that Congress would vote for the scrapping of MX if it had not been for an amendment proposed by Democrat Larry Aspin.

This amendment made the future of MX conditional on Soviet willingness to begin talks with the goal of achieving a strategic arms control agreement. The Reagan administration will be able to start construction of 15 missiles in April 1985 if the Russians have not by that time come to the negotiating table.

The president's supporters hailed the vote as a victory, but the administration had originally desired finance for the immediate construction of 40 missiles. The number was cut to 30 to get the approval of the House of Representatives Armed Services Committee, and then halved by the final Congressional vote.

The Carter administration's original plans envisaged 200 missiles.

EEC vote

THE LOW turn-out in the EEC elections was a comment on the European parliament's shortage of even nominal powers. But the results were still significant, and even astonishing in some countries.

In France the Communist Party was reduced to its lowest level since 1928, and, at 11% of the vote, almost overtaken by the extreme-right, racist, anti-semitic National Front, led by fascist Jean-Marie Le Pen.

The fascist list in the 1979 Euro-election in France got only 1%. The terrible discredit of the Mitterrand government has mobilised the extreme-right 'constituency' which has long existed in French politics — among former settlers from Algeria, in the militant petty bourgeoisie, and on the fringes of the Gaullist movement — and thrown a lot of people into its arms.

Mitterrand's own Socialist Party weathered the disaster better than the CP, dropping from 26% in the 1981 presidential election to 21% this time. The two revolutionary left lists — Lutte Ouvrière and the Parti Communiste Internationaliste — got 2.1% and 0.9% respectively.

In Italy, Communist Party voters rallied following the death of CP leader Enrico Berlinguer to give the CP a higher vote than the Christian Democracy for the first time ever.

In Ireland, Sinn Féin did worse than expected — getting 38% of the Catholic vote in the North instead of over 50% as they hoped. The Irish Labour Party, discredited by its coalition with Fine Gael, was wiped out in the South, being cut down from 30% of the vote to 10% in Dublin.

In West Germany the Greens did well, polling 8%.

The economic crisis is shaking up the established political party structures in Western Europe — but not yet to the clear advantage of the left.

'A milestone'

Extracts from the speech to the conference by Vidya Anand, chair of the Community Liaison sub-committee of the Greater London Labour Party.

THIS IS a milestone in the history of the Black people in this country. For here we have assembled for the first time a representative national conference of Black activists in the Labour Party from all parts of the country.

Let no one have any illusions about the commitment of the Black people to the Labour Party. Let no one doubt our determination to see a Labour government elected which is committed to turn back the evil tide of the Thatcher era, during which the social progress and democratic gains which have been painfully achieved over many decades, have been systematically undermined.

Let no one doubt our determination to shoulder our responsibility whether it be on the picket line, on the door step, or in the ballot box, in the campaigns to reverse the policies of this pernicious government.

Comrades, I must tell you quite frankly that up till now we seem to have been taken for granted, like women of this country in the past.

I say to you, comrades, that those days are over.

Comrades, our people have not just arrived on the political scene. We have been involved in the radical movements in this country for a very long time.

For hundreds of years Black comrades have fought and contributed to the struggle for social progress and democratic freedom in this country — all the way back to the Chartist and even before.

The Peterloo Massacre of 1819 involved a heroic Jamaican, William Davidson, who joined cause with the early working class movement in this country and even laid down his life for it.

During the Chartist movement such famous Black persons as Paul Caffee and others made their presence felt through the strength of their convictions and powerful

commitment. Right from the outset of the Labour Party at the turn of the century had such pioneers as Shyamji Krishanavarma and later Shapoorji Saklatvala, who entered parliament in 1920 from Battersea.

Comrades, sixty years had to elapse before the next Black candidate was selected to hold forth the standard of the Labour party in the same seat. And what happened? The comrade in question was de-selected.

We are not here to question the right of the CLPs to choose whomsoever they wish. But I ask you to ponder and think why we feel so strongly that Black sections have to be formed to bring the message to our party that this state of affairs is not acceptable.

Comrades, the Labour party is our party. And we shall not be moved. And our message to the party as a whole is simple.

We stretch our hand in comradeship — like our sisters in the women's sections — to the mainstream of the party.

Our vision is that of a socialist Britain where men and women, independently of class, race, creed, colour or sex, share in the rich resources that have been squandered for so long by the capitalist system.

More victims

Deportations from Britain increased by more than 20% between 1982-3 and 1983-4. The victims are mostly black people from Commonwealth countries.

Home Office figures released last week showed that 462 deportation orders were issued in the first three months of this year, and the overall total for the past 12 months was 2,150.

Deportation orders increased from about 500 a year in the mid-'70s, to some 1300 in 1979, and then to 2,500 in 1980. They have remained around that level since then.

This increasing trend comes on top of the Tories' clamp down on immigration to Britain of black people from the same countries. Last year immigration from the New Commonwealth and Pakistan reached its lowest point since restrictive controls became operative in 1962, dropping by 10% from the previous year to 27,500.

Argentina aids contras

ARGENTINE troops are still in Central America, helping the counter-revolutionaries.

At the time of the South Atlantic war it was reported that the Galtieri government had withdrawn its military advisers serving with the El Salvador army. But the Paris daily Le Monde reported on June 14 that: "According to Christian Democrat leaders in Argentina, Argentine military

advisers continue to assist the armed opposition to the Sandinista regime [of Nicaragua] on the ground".

The present Argentine government admits that it is supplying arms to the Nicaraguan counter-revolutionaries based in Honduras and to the Guatemalan government. Its excuse is that it has to honour contracts made before it came to power.



Police arrest Norma Kitson (wife of David Kitson, long held prisoner by the apartheid regime). 28 other anti-apartheid demonstrators were arrested last Friday 15th for attempting to picket the South African Embassy — a protest, linked to memorial services in South Africa for the blacks killed in the 1976 Soweto uprising, staged for the past two years. In a further erosion of civil liberties, police have banned all protests outside the embassy since Thatcher met Botha. RICHARD GILBERT (IFL)

Celebrating internationalism

By Ellen Taylor

LAST WEEK was the annual Socialist Organiser trip to the Lutte Ouvrière festival in France.

This is an annual international socialist festival which once visited is not quickly forgotten.

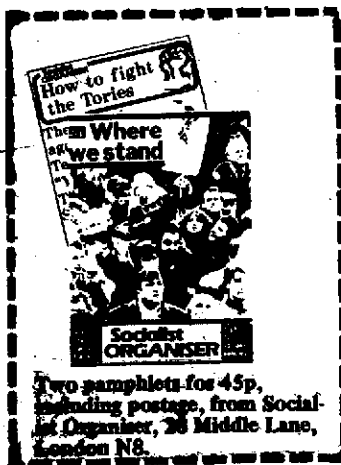
Lutte Ouvrière [Workers' Struggle] is one of the three big Trotskyist organisations in France, and this festival is one of its valuable contributions to internationalism. (Large sections of its magazine this month were also given over to the miners' strike in Britain).

Being unable to speak enough French to follow anything I am not a suitable person to comment on the political content of the fête — the forums, debates, speeches, political displays, etc. It is still worth a visit for the event itself.

The fête would be a lesson to any British socialist in organisation alone. It occupies the grounds of a large stately home near Paris. Many Lutte Ouvrière groups run stalls selling the food specialties of their region. Beer and wine stalls abound, and there is an international variety of music.

Lutte Ouvrière also builds its funds by running lots of craft stalls — where you do, as opposed to buy. You can listen to jazz, get drunk, and paint silk all in one sitting.

Arlette Laguiller — leader of LO's list for the EEC elections which got 414,000 votes.



SPOTLIGHT

SCIENCE

'The blackleg miner'

The miners' strike has stirred many miners and miners' wives to put pen to paper and express what they feel about the strike.

In every coalfield you come across verses on the strike, on the bosses, on the scabs, being circulated in duplicated form. Often they are unsigned.

Here we reproduce four of these verses, and one old miners' song, 'Blackleg miner', which we dedicate to the men still at work in Nottingham.

This is a Co. Durham miners' song from long ago when bitter local pit strikes were common. In the days before pithead showers the scab who had been working during a strike was recognisable by the coal dust under his clothes which showed on his black legs. Thus the name 'blackleg'.

It's in the evening after dark
That the blackleg miner
creeps to work
With his moleskin pants and
dirty shirt
There goes the blackleg miner

He takes his tools and down
he goes
To hew the coal that lies
below
But there's not a woman in
this town row
Would look at a blackleg
miner.

Now don't go near the Seggill
mine
Across the way they stretch a
line
To catch the throat and to
break the spine
Of the dirty blackleg miner

And Delevil is a terrible place
They rub wet clay in a black-
leg's face
And round the hill they run a
foot race
To catch the blackleg miner

So join the union while you
may
Don't wait 'till your dying
day
For that may not be far away
You dirty blackleg miner

You can take your tools and
your duds as well
And hie you down to the pit
of Hell
Down you go and fare thee
well
You dirty blackleg miner.

'MACGREGOR IS OUR CHAIRMAN'

While MacGregor is our chairman I shall want
He leadeth me to no mines, he depriveth me of work
He guideth me to the path of the unemployed for Maggie's
sake
So my expenses runneth over my wage.
Surely poverty and poor living shall follow me all my days
And I shall live in the red forever.
I am glad I am British, I am glad I am free
But I wish I was a dog
And MacGregor a tree.

C.Fay.

'OH GRANDAD CAN YOU HEAR ME?'

Oh, Grandad can you hear me
Our men are out on strike
Oh Grandad are you crying
As not all will join the fight?

The union you have fought
and starved for
United was the call
So you could have a decent
job
and your sons to follow on

The miners to the govern-
ment
Are always thought as scum
And now they are going to
close some pits
And kick us up the bum!

But Grandad we have got
some lads
That will stand up and fight
And we have got supporters
Who recognise our plight

But there are some Judases
Who think their jobs are safe
And cannot see that Mac-
Gregor
Is the devil's advocate

But Grandad do you hear me
We will keep up the fight
Until what you fought for
Is ours, by your sweat, your
blood
But our right.

S.S.



Wigan pit boys reading news of the coal strike in 1919

'COME ON NOTTS MINERS'

Come on Notts miners join
the rest
It'll do no good to fly from
the nest
Far better join the rank than
remain alone
So come on lads let's tackle
this fight
You know together we have
great might
We've got it made if united
we stand
Don't go and bury your head
in the sand
Together we'll beat Maggie
and Mac
To keep jobs for all — not the
sack
And knowing Maggie at the
end of the day
'Close all the Notts pits' is
what she'll say
No trouble there, no-one to
care
You'll be on your own, no-
one to share

No medals you'll get for
working on
Just wages for now then there
will be none
So please come search your
inner soul
Work for all and stuff the
dole
No need for pickets and
police
Let's send them all away —
Bring unity to our coalfields
Come on lads, what do you
say?

'COAL MINER'
(after 'Brown Sugar')

Yankie MacGregor a capitalist
man
brought in by Thatcher to do
what he can
smash up the union, break it
to bits
lay off the miners, close
down the pits
I say yeah, coal miner — how
come you fight so good
I say yeah, yeah, coal miner
— just like a worker should

Looking like an army, blood
running hot
Smashing down pickets,
that's no fair cop,
Intimidation, press telling lies
Skull smashed by truncheon,
another man dies.
I say yeah, coal miner — how
come you fight so good
I say yeah, yeah, coal miner
— just like a worker should

Notts miners split, but there's
no overtime,
Men know they're scabs when
they're crossing that line
Redundancy money, don't
take the bait,
Slander on Scargill, 'cause
he's playing it straight.
I say yeah, coal miner — how
come you fight so good
I say yeah, yeah, coal miner
— just like a worker should

Wives behind miners, kids
getting fed
Kinnock and Murray stay
tucked up in bed
Miners are fighting for you
and for me
The Class War is on, let's fight
'til we're free.
I say yeah, coal miner — how
come you fight so good
I say yeah, yeah, coal miner
— just like a worker should

Nuclear power?

THE 'ATOMS for Peace' programme launched some three decades ago promised unlimited cheap energy. Nowadays, few would argue that it has lived up to that promise.

Estimates of construction costs and times, efficiency and safety in operation can now be seen as ludicrously optimistic, while the disposal of the highly radioactive wastes seems scarcely to have been considered.

Nevertheless, for the sound capitalist reason that it would weaken the NUM, the Tories decided on an expansion of the nuclear power industry, using the Pressurised Water Reactor (PWR) design that has been the cause of countless minor and not-so-minor accidents in the US.

The expansion of nuclear power has not resulted in strong unions, though. The technology is so complex that knowledge and control tend to be concentrated at fairly high levels in the hierarchy. Safety regulations enforced from the top down can be used to discipline the workforce.

For instance, radiation doses are strictly monitored and it has been known for bolshy workers to be directed to work in 'hot' areas so that they receive more than the 'permitted' dose and must then be laid off.

After the Tories' success with trade unionism at GCHQ a logical follow-up would be to get rid of (or severely circumscribe) the nuclear industry unions, doubtless on grounds of safety and national security.

Despite the bluster of the nuclear industry, there are real risks to workers and public. Monitoring radiation doesn't stop workers being exposed and there have been many cases of illness and death. The industry has so far managed to avoid public blame by settling actions for damages out of court, with no admission of liability.

The greatest threat to pub-

Les Hearn begins a series of articles on socialist energy policy by discussing the arguments about nuclear power

lic health was the Windscale fire of 1957 which has certainly caused many cases of cancer. Areas around Sellafield and Sizewell 'A' are now showing increased rates of leukemia.

Let us suppose that it is possible to avoid risks to workers and public by properly applied safety precautions. In fact, Dungeness 'A', among the first generation of Magnox reactors, has a safety record second to none and no doubt with a socialist government and workers' control of the industry, safety could be greatly increased elsewhere.

Would there still be objections to nuclear power?

Well, apart from the fact that placid Britain is susceptible to the odd earthquake (recently confirmed in Wales) there is still the matter of waste.

Even at Dungeness 'A', uranium fuel rods with low levels of radiation are turned into highly radioactive waste. This is then transported by road and rail through major population centres to... Sellafield, where some is allowed to escape to the surrounding seas, beaches, and fields.

At present, no-one knows what to do with this waste, which will remain dangerous for thousands of years, far longer than any civilisation has yet survived.

Sea-dumping was stopped by the united efforts of the environmental and trade union movements, while attempts to find suitable ground to bury it have run into community opposition. One problem is that containers would corrode in quite a short time, allowing the waste

to contaminate ground waters. Casting the waste in blocks of glass or synthetic rock might fail due to leaching by ground waters, slowly dissolving the blocks.

One alternative suggestion involves firing a rocket full of waste into the sun or out of the solar system.

My solution would be to bury the waste in containers made of gold, which does not corrode and is also very good at stopping radiation passing through.

These problems are ignored or minimised by present Labour Party policy, which condemns the PWR as an American design, while praising the British Advanced Gas-Cooled Reactor. The AGRs' record is quite good, mainly because they have been years late in completion and have barely managed more than a few months of continuous operation.

The Labour Party has little to say on the scandal of Britain's uranium imports from occupied Namibia, let alone the appalling conditions that uranium miners work under.

Revolutionary socialists are split between those who think that the problems of nuclear power will be soluble under socialism, those who think they may, and those who think they will not. Militant expresses the first line of thought: most Socialist Organiser supporters have supported the second.

Others oppose nuclear power because it is capital-intensive and therefore destroys jobs, while others claim that it is not amenable to democratic control. I would argue that these last two points depend on the strength of the working class.

Overall, personally I tend to the view that a socialist energy policy would have to rule out nuclear power, if only because of the problem of what to do with the waste.

Info: Arthur Bough (Stoke SO); Labour Party NEC statement on PWRs.

Letter
How to reselect

Socialist Organiser is correctly dominated by news and analysis of the miners' strike these days, but I do not think that we should lose sight of events within the Labour Party, especially the process of reselection in which many constituencies will soon be deeply involved.

That being the case, I would welcome a debate on the manner of reselection, especially the 'one member one vote' issue. I find a wide variety of opinions on this issue, even among readers of Socialist Organiser, and divisions of opinion in the Party on this question do not fall into a neat right/left split.

There are many on the left, especially the ILP, who, whilst opposed to a postal ballot, nevertheless favour a system of aggregated voting at general meetings of the party membership. They see this as an extension of the democratisation process within the Party.

On the other hand, there are those who favour such decisions being kept within the province of the GMC. To move away from this, they argue, would serve to weaken the relationship between the unions and the Party, especially as expressed through

trade union representation at GMC level. This, in turn, impinges upon the question as to how far we wish to strengthen or limit the status of affiliated organisations within the Party.

The question must surface again in the next 12 months, and I am sure many readers besides myself would welcome a clarification of the issue.

Ian McCalman,
Glasgow.

Join the Socialist ORGANISER

Search for it right

BREAK LINKS WITH TORIES!

JOBLESS KEY TO WAGE-CUT PLAN

Subscribe!

Get SOCIALIST ORGANISER each week delivered to your door by post!

RATES: £5 for 3 months; £8.50 for 6 months; and £16 for a year.

Name

Address

Please send me ... months' sub. I enclose £

To: Socialist Organiser, 28, Middle Lane, London N8 8PL.

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

Hammersmith strike; NUPE day of action, June 26

Fight grows against NHS hive-off

MOST TRADE unionists are aware of the dire condition of the NHS as a result of repeated and continuing brutal cuts in spending. Not so many are aware of the sheer scale of the threat to jobs, living standards and the very NHS itself posed by the new Tory scourge that is now hitting the hospitals: privatisation.

Under the orders of the Thatcher government, a 1192 District Health Authorities (DHAs) in England had to submit a timetable by the end of April for putting their domestic cleaning, catering and laundry services out to competitive tender. Under more or less explicit threats and pressure, all but nine (mostly London) DHAs have now complied. This should be no surprise: the DHAs are appointed, stooge bodies chaired by Tory government nominees.

The fruits of this are now beginning to be seen, as private contractors crowd in on potentially lucrative fields of work, offering tenders based on rock-bottom wages, the exploitation of part-time workers, paying neither sickness nor holiday money, and cutting back on hours of work — with catastrophic consequences for hygiene and patient care.

To 'compete' with these racketeers, NHS management teams have themselves in turn put together — sometimes, shamefully, with union collaboration — their own packages for an 'in-house' tender, generally bringing redundancies, cuts in hours and wages, and a wholesale lowering of standards.

One example of this has now brought an all-out strike by domestic cleaners at Hammersmith Hospital, who are threatened with the sacking of 40 workers, the decimation of the full-time staff, a 50% cut in pay, and a halving of the hours allocated to clean the hospital: that is if the 'in-house' tender is accepted! If the contract goes instead to a private firm, they could all be made redundant: some choice!

But the competition does not stop at the first round of tendering. At Barking General Hospital the private contractors Crothalls, who had

By Harry Sloan

monopolised cleaning services since the hospital opened, were called upon to tender again, against rival firms, in the new Tory privatisation exercise.

The result? Crothalls offered a new, cheaper, tender to Redbridge DHA, based on a savage 60% cut in pay for the workforce of nearly 100 (mainly women) domestics. The cleaners — organised in NUPE and GMBU — walked out, and are now well into the fourth month of a bitter struggle against organised scabbing, police harassment and DHA connivance.

The dangers for health workers and patients from privatisation are obvious. Yet the health unions have remained largely paralysed as the threat has loomed ever closer.

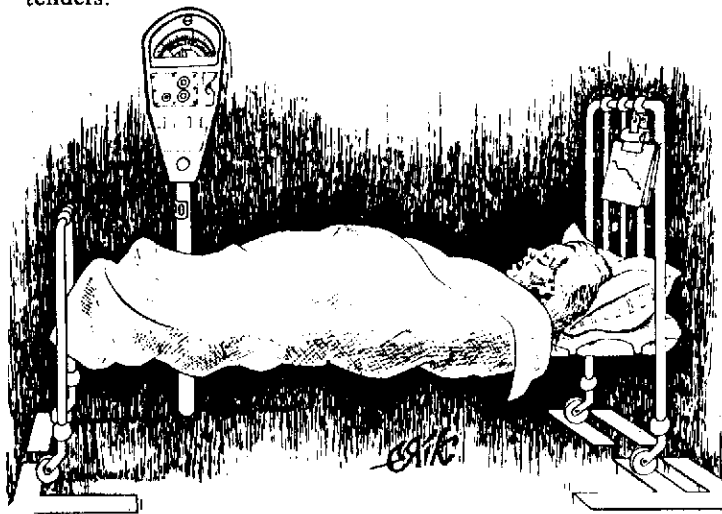
Not one of the health unions has any coherent policy on how to prevent the imposition of private contractors once DHAs accept tenders, or how to prevent new job-slashing 'in-house' tenders.

matum on privatisation.

Given the dictatorial powers in the hands of Norman Fowler to replace and appoint DHA members at will, this could at best be a stop-gap measure. In practice only a handful of DHAs have shown any real opposition, and one 'rejectionist' DHA, Islington, has already ignominiously collapsed.

The tenders resulting from the first wave of DHA invitations will be opened and acted upon starting in the later summer and autumn of this year. But no union has properly prepared for the later summer and autumn of this year. But no union has properly prepared for the kind of action that will be needed to beat back the profiteers and defend existing conditions for some of the country's worst-paid workers.

The radical, pre-emptive stance of Hammersmith Hospital's stand points the way forward. It is vital to nip privatisation in the bud before the contracts are allocated, and certainly before the contractors arrive in the hospital and NHS staff are sacked.



Nearly all have of course produced attractive educational material to persuade any members who might doubt it that privatisation is a bad thing: some have urged their branches not to participate in the tendering process.

But most have focused their efforts on the sterile activity of trying to persuade DHAs to reject the Tory ulti-

The growing solidarity of hospital workers throughout London with the Barking strikers — whose plight sums up the future for NHS ancillary staff if privatisation is forced in — is also a pointer for the struggle. Last Wednesday saw strike action in 25 hospitals in support of Barking.

The present battles in the NHS cry out for solid and

escalating strike action as the way to beat back the Tory offensive.

But the delays and prevarications of sections of the NUPE full-time apparatus in implementing NUPE's own conference decision to build national supporting action for the Barking strike help underline a major problem in the fight for action. NUPE is in many ways the most radical of the health unions: yet even here, union officials are reluctant to spread strike action in the NHS in defence of their own members.

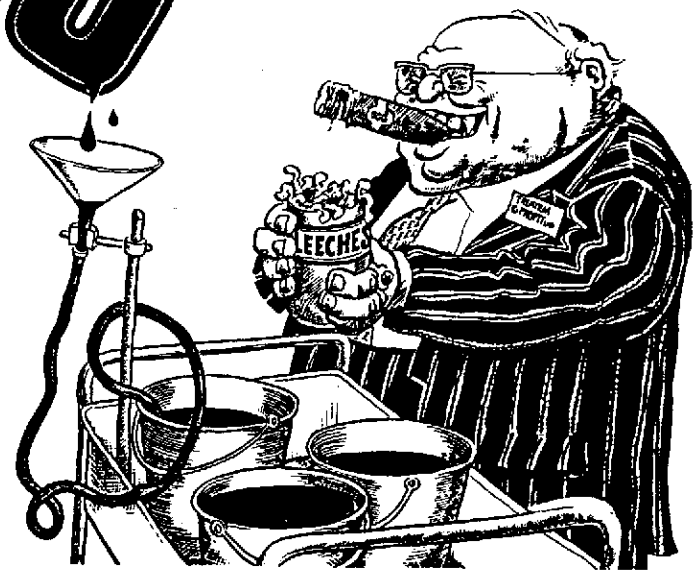
This can also be seen in the frantic and shameful efforts by NUPE official Bob Jones to strike a sell-out deal with Crothalls management behind the backs of the Barking strikers; by the half-hearted official campaign for last Wednesday's day of solidarity action — which depended chiefly upon rank and file support; and by the lack of energetic preparation for the national day of action behind Barking called for next Tuesday June 26.

It is evident that the isolation of NHS struggle must be broken by initiatives from the trade unions; yet the officials are intent upon restricting them to local level disputes.

The fight against privatisation

cial and practical support to the Hammersmith Hospital strikers.

In addition, labour movement activists in the NE Thames Region — where 4 DHAs are defying the Tories' privatisation ultimatum — should attend and build for



tion of course overlaps completely with the fight against NHS cuts. There is no way a fragmented, privatised NHS workforce will be able to defend the health service against further even more callous cut-backs; this is one reason the Tories are so determined to forge ahead.

That is why it is so vital for health trade unionists and anti-cuts campaigners in other unions and the Labour Parties to support the national day of action on Barking on June 26, and lend maximum finan-

an important working conference on privatisation called on July 14 by the London-wide anti-cuts campaign London Health Emergency. The conference, which will be held in Camden Town Hall, will feature speakers from all the main health unions as well as the Barking strike, Reg Race, and opponents of privatisation on the DHAs.

Further details, briefing pack and credentials (£1) from London Health Emergency, 335 Grays Inn Road, WC1. 01-833 3020.

Shipyards: Rearguard action

CAMELL Lairds shipyard in Birkenhead is in the process of having half its workforce made redundant with little reaction from either inside or outside the yard.

On April 16 a yard mass meeting overwhelmingly voted down a resolution from the full-time officials and stewards calling for:

1. No enforced redundancies or closure.
2. A high-powered delegation to Parliament.
3. A delegate meeting in support of Cammell Lairds involving the local labour movement and community organisations.
4. A mass lobby of Parliament.

Since then the full-time officials have concentrated on trying to motivate support from outside the yard. In the yard, those of us willing to oppose the redundancies are in a minority but are organising our campaign.

Among the first round of redundancies on May 29, three Boilermakers' shop stewards were named. Most of those named in the first round have left the yard, including some 'left talkers' and a member of the WRP.

Those who oppose the redundancies and were named on May 29 are now working their 12 weeks notice and taking part in the planning of the campaign to save jobs. This includes most of the staging (scaffolding) department, who are seen as the shock troops of the fight against redundancy, and the three Boilermakers stewards, one of whom is a staggers' steward.

At present there is no way for a united campaign throughout the yard. Most people are just waiting to be named, and only three sections have formal decisions for action against enforced redundancy.

By Lol Duffy, GMB shop steward, Lairds

cies — the general workers, the staggers, and the plant boilermakers, all in the GMBATU.

With more redundancies to come in the next few weeks, you can expect to see a reaction in a short time. What form that action will take is yet to be seen, but it won't be just token action.

Teachers close to sell-out

By Cheung Siu Ming

THE teachers' pay deadlock has been broken by the employers voting 'in principle' to take the claim to arbitration.

The vote was 22 for, with 15 Department of Education and Science representatives and three local authority representatives voting against.

The two sides will meet at the next Burnham committee on Friday 22nd to discuss terms of reference for the arbitration panel. Meanwhile the NUT executive is calling out 7000 members in 24 Tory local education authorities for another round of three days strikers. The NAS/UWT, the second largest teaching union, has called some members out in a series of half-day strikes in various authorities.

This is not a victory for teachers. In fact it will very likely be a sell-out. If the employers insist on certain strings on arbitration, the unions are in no position to fight this by further strikes.

There has been no attempt to build up the strike fund, or to call teachers out on indefinite strike with minimal strike pay. Even if no strings are attached, NUT militants are still against arbitration because:

- * It will produce a result binding on the unions which will fall substantially below our 12% claim.
- * It can still be overruled by central government.

* Even if the government agrees to the result, it may insist that the extra money come out of existing cash limits on local authorities — which will mean cuts in jobs and services.

This could weaken our ability to fight not just the next pay claim, but also rate-capping.

The Inner London Divisional Council of the NUT is lobbying the national executive, calling for:

- * opposition to arbitration,
- * a £20 per week flat rate increase for all teachers,
- * plans to escalate the strike action.

However, it seems very unlikely now that negotiations will break down. The further education lecturers' union NATFHE and their employers have also agreed to go to arbitration, though 'without strings'.

Even if we are sold out, the strike has generated militancy in teachers not seen in 15 years. Furthermore, it has brought about unity in action between the two major teaching unions, especially at rank and file level.

JUNE 26: Mass picket of Barking Hospital in the morning. Assemble at Tower Hill, noon, to march to Crothalls HQ, Liverpool St.
JULY 14: London Health Emergency conference on privatisation. Details above.



London: Strike June 27!

THE FIRE Brigades Union has called on all its London members to strike — while providing emergency cover — on Wednesday June 27, in the latest of the regional days of action in solidarity with the miners.

The action has been called by the South East Region TUC and Kent area NUM. Kent NUM secretary Jack Collins has said: "We are asking you to stop work on the 27th and join the London demonstration". But there is still a lot of work to be done to ensure a strong turnout on the day. For example, NUR members making inquiries of their union headquarters about what action to take have been told that to strike for the day is 'against the law'.

A march has been called on the 27th, assembling at 1pm at Tower Hill, and going through Fleet Street to a rally at 3.30pm at Jubilee Gardens (near County Hall).

After EEC poll: Get the Tories on the run!

The Tory government came out of last year's election looking solid and impregnable. It comes out of the EEC election looking wobbly and weak — though for other reasons as well as the election results.

By John O'Mahony

Labour came out of the 1983 general election diminished and crippled and possibly shattered. It comes out of the EEC election looking like a credible conventional alternative government.

Last year the Alliance of Liberals with the Labour turncoats of the SDP looked like it had 'broken the mould' of British politics. Labour was being compared not with the Tories as an alternative government but with the Alliance as an opposition.

The cruellest blow of the EEC election was struck against the Alliance — firmly put back in its place as the third party in British politics, with about a fifth of the vote, the sort of share long held by the Liberals.

In a total poll of only 31%, Labour gained 15 seats from the Tories. Its share of the vote was up from the general election by about 8%. There are now 32 Labour MEPs in Strasbourg to the Tories' 45.

The Tory vote was down 3%, the Alliance's 6.5%, most of it going to Labour.

These results in themselves fall a long way short of us having the Tories on the run. But they come on top of the blows struck to the Tories' credibility by the miners' strike; on top of serious and widespread divisions in Tory ranks, all through their party, over Thatcher's attacks on local government democracy; and on top of the trickle of petty but corrosive scandals that have soured the atmosphere for the Tories this last year.

Kinnock

The middle-of-the-road leadership of the Labour Party around Neil Kinnock will claim that this is the vindication of their programme for the Labour Party. That is a shortsighted view from almost any angle you choose.

Of course it may be true that some timid souls voted Labour who would not have done so had Labour been a militant fighting socialist party, boldly and without ambiguity lining itself up with the miners. And Labour's less negative attitude to the EEC probably helped.

But the turnout — only 31% — could have been far greater, to Labour's advantage, if the Labour leadership had led the Party into a vigorous crusade against the Tories.

If Michael Foot had fulfilled the promise he made when elected leader to drum up 'a storm of protest' against the Tories then the debacle of 1983 could probably have been avoided.

Against the 'floating' vote attracted by Kinnock's pretence that the Labour Party is a branch of showbiz has to be set the vast reservoir of untapped votes of those who abstained on June 14.

Measured against the atrocities this Tory government has inflicted on the working class, Tory losses in the poll were like a slap on the wrist for them, not the kick in the solar plexus they deserve.

That too must be laid at the door of Neil Kinnock, who disgraces himself and our party every time he opens his mouth about the miners' strike.

The election results are a blow against the government and their wretched 'Alliance' underlings. But it is the miners' strike that is

shaking the foundations on which that government has stood while doing its foul and terrible work — working class apathy and hopelessness and willingness to let the government and its hatchetmen like Ian MacGregor have their way.

The miners' strike is restoring courage, self-respect and belief in the power of its own direct action to the British working class movement. Electoral blows to the Tories will help and encourage the process of self-renewal now going on in the working class movement. But the miners' strike is decisive right now.

And to help the miners win is task no.1 for the entire labour movement.

The EEC elections confirm the message that the miners have been shouting at the labour movement for 14 weeks now — we don't have to wait for the next general election. Stand up and fight back now and we can get the Tories on the run.

Victory to the miners!

Shameful end to Longbridge strike

THE STRIKE by Longbridge transport workers ended on Thursday June 16 when a clear majority of the 300 strikers voted to return to work.

Zedekiah Mills, the black stacca driver who hit a foreman who abused him as a 'black bastard', stays sacked, and realistically is now highly unlikely to get his job back.

Zedekiah thanked the transport department for their solidarity but added that he felt 'betrayed'.

The exact reasons for the transport department's decision to call off the strike are not clear. The previous Thursday, June 7, they had voted almost unanimously to stay out until Zedekiah was reinstated. They were in a strong position: not only had all production at Longbridge been halted, but the strike had led to 19,000 lay-offs at six other plants. Lay-offs at Cowley caused by the Longbridge strike had sparked a further strike of 500 toolmakers there.

The main reason for the climb down seems to have been that transport department stewards were worried that the company



Orgreave: the cops lay into a picket

would use the strike to bring in outside contract drivers. The stewards appear to have reached their decision independently from convenor Jack Adams and T&G full-time John Barker.

However, one member of the Longbridge works committee is also a transport shop steward, so it is possible that the works committee had an input into the stewards meeting.

NALGO spreads strike

By Nik Barstow

400 MORE NALGO members in Islington are set to join the nursery workers' strike which has closed the council's 13 children's day care centres for the last ten weeks.

The social services department's NALGO members voted a ballot to join the strike together with workers in some key areas which collect council finances.

The escalation of the strike is a response to the 'left-wing' council's refusal to negotiate with the nursery workers on their claim for more pay and improved staffing levels.

The council has now resorted to calls for arbitration after coming under increasing fire from the local Labour Parties and other sections of the labour movement. Calls to support Islington nursery workers have been made by many other trade unionists — miners, miners' wives, local postal workers, and the other local authority unions in the borough.

The council has now agreed, very reluctantly, at least to let the Labour Party have its say at a joint meeting with the Labour group planned for late June. But that's too little, too late, as was shown by a demonstration at Islington council's meeting on June 19th, when Labour Party members asked leading councillors pointed questions in front of the nursery workers.

The Financial Times reported that "the vote to return to work follows a personal intervention by Mr Harold Musgrove, the chairman and chief executive. He called in Mr Adams and Mr Johnny Barker to spell out the seriousness of the stoppage in private".

Both Adams, a Communist Party executive member, and the Morning Star, defended the back to work decision. Adams explained it on radio by saying that the dispute had become too hard-

Neither the Longbridge joint shop stewards' committee nor the works committee have met during the strike, and that lack of leadership may be a factor in the transport stewards' apparent loss of nerve.

The Longbridge unions say that they will pursue the matter through the Commission for Racial Equality and perhaps a court action. But this is no substitute for the abandoned strike action.

Defend Newham7

By Tim Anderson

THE CASE of the Newham 8 — Asian youths arrested after they organised protection against racist attacks for Asian children coming home from school — now has a sequel: the Newham 7.

One Asian youth was arrested and charged with Actual Bodily Harm and criminal damage following an incident on April 7 outside a pub. Three white youths arrested at the same incident were released without charge. In the following weeks six other Asian youths were arrested.

At the first court hearing, 3 weeks ago, all seven were charged with conspiracy and affray. Individual charges of Actual Bodily Harm and criminal damage were also brought against some of them.

The three white youths have been rearrested and charged with criminal damage, and two of them with affray.

September 19 is the date set for the trial. The Newham 8 defence committee is now organising a campaign in defence of the seven.

Fund

We promised 'better news next week' in the fund column last week, and here it is!

Donations from supporters have combined to make £164.95 for the fund this week. That's more than doubled our June total — to £285.45.

But we still need a large effort in the next few days to add to that total; so, readers, sympathisers, sellers, supporters, what can you send us in the next week?

Answers to 214 Sickert Court, London N1 2SY.

Thanks to: Stoke supporter £50, Nottingham supporters £54, Will Adams £7, Julia Redman, Dave Spencer, John Douglas, Sue Carlyle, Pete Kenway, Jo Thwaites, Andrew Horning, Tom Cashman, £5 each, Mark Sapsford £2.50, Terry Connolly £2, Dave Elder £1.45, Keith White, Matthew Jones, Keyvan, Bev Wood, £1 each.



Join the Labour Party. Write to: The Labour Party, 150 Walworth Road, London SE17 1JT. Subscription is £7 per year, £2 unwaged, 50p OAPs.