

Socialist Organiser

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LOBBY THE TUC!
September 3
Assemble 8 a.m. Brighton
Conference Centre

TUC: support miners and dockers



(Photo: Martin Shakeshaft, IFU)

Miners' wives and children march in Maerdy, in the Rhondda, Monday August 27.

NEXT week Brighton could look like the pit villages of Nottinghamshire.

Police talk of sealing the town off, mounting road blocks, and flooding the area with their men.

In short, Frank Chapple and his like will get the same sort of protection from pickets and militants as the 'Silver Birch' brigade in Notts.

Very appropriate, too. Many top trade union leaders have been stabbing the NUM in the back just as viciously as the scabs in the coalfields — only more subtly and suavely.

Trade unionists will be going to Brighton to demand that their union leaders give real support to the miners. The current ballyhoo in the Fleet Street press about "the scab as hero" makes it clear that the battle between the Tory government and the miners is not about the details of conditions in the pits. It is a battle for the life or death of effective trade unionism. The Tories are out to break the NUM — and if they

succeed, no other union will be spared.

There can be no better time than *now* for other trade unionists to enter battle for their own demands and for the common cause. And if we do not fight with our full strength now, we will be seriously weakened in every future struggle.

Proposals before the TUC include an appeal to respect the NUM picket lines and a call for a one-day general strike. Both should be supported: indeed, what we should be working towards is a full-scale indefinite general strike.

But the trimmers and class-collaborators of the TUC leadership must not be allowed to use the call for solidarity as a lever to get control. For months they have wanted to end the dispute at all costs. AUEW general secretary Gavin Laird said on Monday 27th: "If an affiliate, be it the NGA, the NUM, or any other union, wishes to involve the movement and receive total support, then there must be the total involvement of the General Council. No union has the right unilaterally to adopt a

course of action, pursue its own strategy, circumvent the leadership of the movement, and expect the same leadership to give unconditional support on demand".

It's the same argument as the working miners in Notts used against the appeal for solidarity from Yorkshire and other areas hit by closures: except that now the people who demand to vote on miners' jobs are not even miners from other areas, but top officials of other unions, themselves safe in a job for life! All support from the TUC must be with the clear understanding that *only miners* can agree a settlement to their dispute.

The striking dockers also need full TUC support. The main weakness of the dock strike so far is the weakness of its leadership. At the press conference after the TGWU docks delegate

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DON'T RAT, FIGHT!

Socialist ORGANISER

"BY THEIR heroes ye shall know them... for in the individuals whom they exalt and glorify and hold up to the youth as example, every class and every movement unfailingly reveals its standards of worth, its morality, its very soul.

"Thus, the communist workers of Germany glorified the name of the courageous and incorruptible Liebknecht who sacrificed his life in battle for a great cause. The degenerate Nazis countered with the dedication of their official hymn to Horst Wessel, the pimp who was killed in a brawl...

"The Southern (USA) slaveholders hanged John Brown. But the feet of the slave-liberating soldiers of the Union were quickened on the march by the song about 'John Brown's Body', for his soul marched with them..."

A great American socialist* wrote that back in 1952, during the McCarthy witch-hunts in the USA.

The typical hero of Mrs Thatcher's brave new Britain is the scab. No-one in Britain today is more honourable or respect-worthy, the mass-circulation newspapers tell us, than the "men who take their courage in their hands and, braving the violent savagery of crazy left-wing-led pickets"... crawl on their bellies to lick their bosses' boots and help them defeat and beat down their fellow-workers.

No trade is more honoured than that of the scab-herder, no force more highly praised than the militarised ranks of police thugs who protect them.

'Scab' is an unlovely name for an ugly thing, and it fits the miserable creatures it describes. For what is a scab? A scab is a big-headed creep like 'Silver Birch' Chris Butcher, financed by the rich to

The scab as Hero

undermine his fellow miners' fight for jobs.

A scab is a man who has allowed his spirit to be crushed and broken by the privations of the strike which all miners and their families have had to live with. A scab is the Notts miner who fondly believes that his future is secure, and therefore says to the rest: "F... you — I'm all right". A scab is the London docker who crosses a picket line because the *Sun* tells him that it is all a plot to help that vicious thug Arthur Scargill.

The popular press now devotes much of its space to incitement to scab. And it is becoming increasingly hysterical.

Today, the patriotic British worker is the one who will help Mrs Thatcher smash up the union. The one who takes his cue from the baying gutter-press and sets himself up as a 'dockers' Silver Birch' to try to sabotage the official national docks strike.

Thus this Tuesday, 28th, one Medlock Bibby became an instant scab superstar when he tried to keep Tilbury docks working.

Single scab

Who is Mr Bibby? Three weeks ago he was the single scab at Tilbury when 900 men came out on a local claim!

Listen to Mr John Black, chief executive of the Port of London Authority, praising him at a press conference they set up for him. He told the journalists:

"Be kind to him. Mr Bibby has done a magnificent job. His initiative is brave and courageous and to be congratulated".

What sort of language did George Orwell say we would be speaking in 1984? War is peace. Truth is lies. Love is hate. Day is night. The belly-crawling treacherous scab is the new model working class

hero.

No, the working class heroes are still the men and women who dare to take on this vicious government despite the pressures of slump and mass unemployment. They are the dockers who fight for their own concerns, but also want to help the miners. They are the millions of loyal trade unionists who resist the pressure and the hysteria with the grim determination of people who know what the capitalists and their government are trying to do in Britain right now.

The scab-glorifying, scab-herding and witch-hunting of the Tory and Liberal/SDP politicians and the press, and the police-state conditions in the pit villages, add up to a concerted, cold-blooded drive to carve up the trade union movement.

They want to change the balance in British industry decisively. That's why they provoked the miners' strike in the first place. The slump makes them feel strong. The state of the labour movement encourages them. And so, embittered by the accumulated grievances of the 20 and more years when they could not control the working class, they are out to batter the labour movement into submission.

There can be no compromise with the scab-herders, strike-breakers, and would-be union-busters.

And god help the working class if the miners are defeated. The labour movement still has the strength to stop them being defeated. We still have the strength to beat back the Tory offensive.

We must use it — or 1984 will go down in official history as the year of the Heroic Scab, and in ours as the year of the Great Defeat.

It is still an avoidable defeat.

* James P. Cannon: 'The Informer as Hero'.

Why strikers should join the Labour party

WE HEAR that scab miners are tearing up their Labour Party cards in Nottinghamshire.

Most Labour Party activists will say: good riddance! In their own way the scabs thus recognise that the rank and file of the Labour Party is solidly behind the NUM. Local Labour Parties have been levying their members and collecting money, putting up pickets, and sending members to miners' pickets and demonstrations.

The other side of the picture is Labour Party leader Neil Kinnock and his supporters in the Parliamentary Labour Party.

Neil Kinnock lets himself be photographed with Arthur Scargill and expresses sympathy with the miners. He blames the Tories for the strike, not the miners. But at the same time he adds his voice to the chorus of Tory propaganda blaming picket line violence — for which the police are responsible — on the miners.

Neil Kinnock thus shamelessly throws the weight of his authority as leader of the political wing of the labour movement into the scales against the miners. He helps give credibility to the dirty class-war propaganda of the Tories, which is aimed to undermine working-class sympathy and solidarity with the miners. And that propaganda is a key Tory weapon in the most vital front of the miners' strike right now — the fight for solidarity.

Neil Kinnock wants to play the role of a responsible statesman and a future prime minister, and he doesn't mind stabbing the miners in the back if that will help.

Kinnock knows the miners are being smeared and misrepresented. He knows that the only point of view from which the miners who stand up to the armies of police thugs can be condemned is the view that the bosses and their police forces and armies have a right to a monopoly of violence and that the working class does not have the right to defend itself against them when attacked or to go on the offensive against them when the police are being used to herd scabs.

This is either a nakedly and unashamedly upper-class way of looking at the issue — or else it rests on the weaseling and cowardly double standard which allows one law for the rich and powerful and their hired thugs, and a different law for the poor and oppressed. The police have rights, but there are no rights for the miners who are fighting for their livelihoods, for their children's future, and to stop their communities being offered up by Mrs Thatcher as collective human sacrifices to the capitalist god, profit.

Kinnock knows what's what. But he is running scared before

the Tories, afraid that some of their vicious smear-propaganda against the miners will stick to him and damage him politically.

This is not only cowardly and pathetic. It is stupid and short-sighted also.

A miners' victory will be a hammer-blow to the Tories. A miners' defeat will inevitably weaken the labour movement and therefore also undermine both Labour's ability to fight for votes and its credibility. Helping the Tories damage the labour movement is an over-ambitious fool's way of preparing for the next election.

As one Notts miner said at the Socialist Organiser school last weekend, the danger is that while the scab miners are tearing up their Labour Party cards because they are scabs, the militant striking miners will tear theirs up because they think Neil Kinnock is behaving like the political equivalent of a scab.

It is understandable that striking miners should demand that Neil Kinnock, the elected leader of the political labour movement, should give them his unqualified support — and that they should feel bitter when he chooses instead to talk out of both sides of his politician's mouth.

Nevertheless, striking miners should not be leaving the Labour Party. They should be flocking into it, to help the serious Left fight the right wing and the Kinnock-spirited 'Left'.

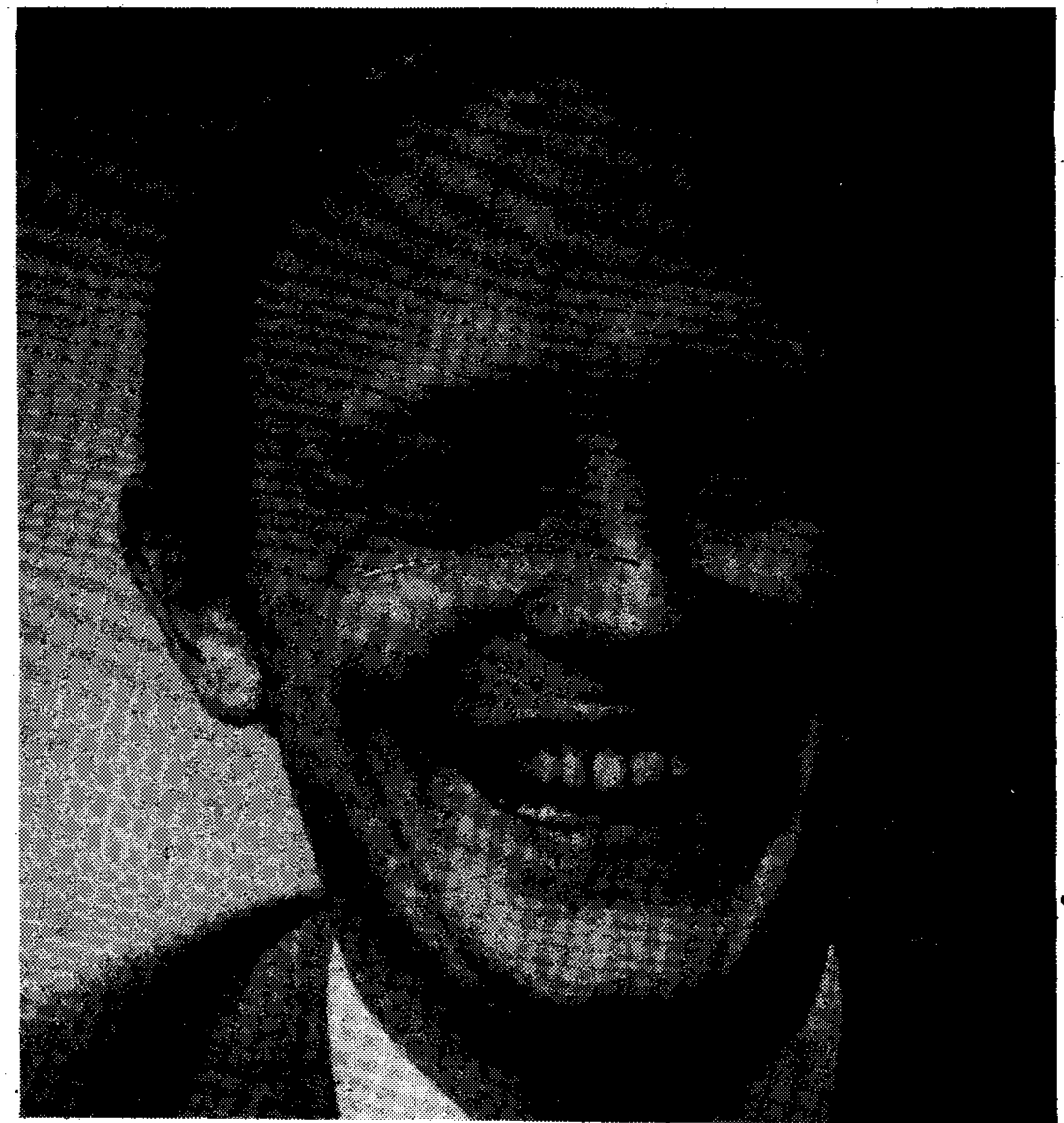
The trade unions need a reliable, honest, militant and principled political wing, led by leaders who have all those qualities. The Labour Party is the political wing of the trade unions. Miners should take part in the continuing fight to reclaim it for the working class, out of the hands of careerist politicians.

Despite Neil Kinnock, the Labour Party has helped the miners, though of course it would be a far greater help if it had leaders with guts and properly strung backbones — Tony Benn or Eric Heffer or Dennis Skinner, for example.

Militant miners could give the fight for a transformed Labour Party a great boost. For a start, the NUM could strike a powerful blow for a healthier labour movement by clearing out the bats and rodents who inhabit its own parliamentary lumber room. Some of the creatures sent to the House of Commons with NUM sponsorship make Neil Kinnock look good by contrast — men like Roy Mason, or Don Concannon, known to striking Notts miners as 'the copper's nark'.

But more than that. We can win this strike without the leaders

The best man lost. Newly elected Labour Party leader Neil Kinnock and deputy Roy Hattersley congratulate each other, watched by the defeated left wing candidate for leader, Eric Heffer



Kinnock: "an over-ambitious fool's way of preparing for the next election"

of the Labour Party. Kinnock has not got the power to rob the miners and those who help them of the strength to fight for victory over the Tories. Back in 1974, when the miners shattered the Heath government and drove it ignominiously from office, Harold Wilson did have the power to rob the miners and the whole working class of the fruits of our victory.

And he did rob us. We had nothing else to put in as a government to replace the Tories, except Harold Wilson's Labour Party. It made concessions to the miners, but within 16 months was helping viciously to cut working class living standards. Finally, with James Callaghan as prime minister, it scuttled itself in a bitter conflict with the unions in the 1978-9 'winter of discontent', and opened the way for Mrs Thatcher's vandal Tories.

The fight to defeat the right wing and the Kinnocks in the Labour Party and to make it into the sort of party whose leaders would unhesitatingly stand with workers in struggle — that fight is an irreplaceable part of the working of preparing the way for a radical working-class socialist alternative to Thatcherism.

Let the Notts scab miners tear up their Labour Party cards. Striking miners not already in the Labour Party should come in and help the serious Left sort out Kinnock and his short-sighted careerist friends.

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 Hallfield Drive, Easington Village, Peterlee, Co. Durham.
Kent, Kay Sutcliffe, c/o Aylesham Miners' Welfare, Aylesham, Kent.
Thurnscoe, Sheila Jow, 105, Lidget Lane, Thurnscoe, near Rotherham.
Blidworth, Doreen Humber 50 Thorney Abbey Road, Blidworth, Walsley, Notts.

Edlington, Veronica Balderson, 62, Blowhall Cres., Edlington, Doncaster.
Maesteg, Teresa Parry, 13 Charles Row, Maesteg, West Glamorgan. (Tel 738825).
Birch Coppice, Wendy Coxson, Tamworth 896069.
Barnsley, Ann Hunter, 5 Packhorse Gt, Silkstone, near Barnsley Tel. 791187.
Maerdy, c/o Maerdy Strike Centre, Ferndale 755 301.
Oakdale, Gwent. 82 Markham Cres., Oakdale, Blackwood, Gwent. 0495 220158.
Celyen North, Gwent. c/o

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, Kath Mackey, Sheffield 381594 or 454163.
North Staffs, Brenda Proctor, 153 Broadway, Meir, Stoke-on-Trent. 0782 332151.



JOHN HARRIS

JOHN HARRIS

Police violence is building up

Notts striker Paul Whetton starts a weekly diary



THE dockers coming out on strike in Scotland is bound to give us a lift, but what remains to be seen is the answer from the rest of the dock workers.

There will obviously be pressures put on them from all sides, trade union leaders, government, media, to try and avert what could be a key confrontation as far as government policy is concerned.

Last time the dockers came out everyone felt ten feet tall. Then, two or three days later, when they went back, it really cast everybody down into the depths. This time I don't think people are pinning such high hopes on it. If it comes off, great, but it would be terrible to get lifted up and then dashed right down to the bottom again.

The same sort of principle applies to the TUC. Some people are pinning quite a lot on it. Myself, I'm not pinning quite so much on it, because of the internal pressures there to do anything but give the miners the full support that they need.

The way to overcome that is to put rank and file pressure to be built up to force the leaders into putting their money where their mouth is. What's happening is that trade union leaders are saying that they support the miners, but there's always a but with it, and it is up to the rank and file movement, the shop stewards and so on, to pile that pressure on, and push the trade union movement to a point where it can't possibly duck out.

Intimidation

It has been said that certain aspects of violence have caused a fall off of funds from fund raising. I understand that but it's up to our lads to point out that what we are doing is making a success of the government's attempt to make the spotlight away from the issues of the dispute and place the full glare of publicity on the side issues.

People should stop to examine exactly what they mean by violence on the picket line. Nobody can convince me that four miners in a car are being violent to such an extent that coppers have to take truncheons out and smash the windows and drag them out the car in order to stop violence.

Military fashion

It seems to me that when we're talking about violence, we need to be very careful and say where that violence is coming from. When we sum up the question of violence on the picket line, the score is Police Pickets 0. We've had two of our comrades die on the picket line and I don't see how you can get much more violent than that.

A certain amount of violence has always been there and it is bound to be there in a situation like this. But the violence is initiated by people who carry sticks and organise themselves in such a fashion as to intimidate. And by that I mean the police, and not the pickets. We're not even allowed to approach the picket lines with sticks, unlike the police. We're not allowed to march in military fashion, or take dogs or ride in on horses. The police are. The first stage of violence is intimidation by a

parade of muscle — large numbers of police officers carrying offensive weapons.

Last week, the 25th week, in Notts has reached a levelling off point. Now it's just a matter of hanging on for grim life. The resolve of those now out on strike in Notts, the hard core, is that they are not prepared to settle for anything less than total victory. Any suggestion of compromise will be bitterly rejected.

The police violence that we have experienced for the last 25 weeks is now being seen in areas where it's not been seen before. It was witnessed briefly at Orgreave, but now we've got police taking that violence into mining communities in Yorkshire, South Wales and Scotland. Many lessons are being learnt by these communities who have not experienced this before.

I can accept to a point what McGahey said about there being secret talks but no secret deals. I understand that they've got to talk but I think a great deal more accountability to the membership and much more detailed explanations of why they went to ACAS and what was said should be released to the membership.

It's a difficult period for them and they've got to be seen to be willing to negotiate, but it is also important that the membership are involved and kept informed.

I watched the Scargill-MacGregor debate on TV. MacGregor was pathetic. He's even becoming one of our best allies. Whenever he goes on TV he makes a right cock up.

It was built up by the media as the battle of the century but it became nothing. When you analyse what was said by both sides, nothing came out of it except the news that the NUM had 'reluctantly' accepted the Orme 'peace plan' which had been passed to MacGregor and which he denied having.

It was obvious that the Coal Board had received the plan so this merely revealed his incompetence. If that's the kind of leadership we've got for a nationalised industry, then I would think the other members of the board ought to start to make their feelings known.

At the end of the week I went to the Socialist Organiser weekend school. I think the group is going to get a lot of benefit out of the events that are taking place. We ought to give a vote of thanks to Thatcher because she has provided us with the finest school to educate our young in politics that you could possibly imagine.

We couldn't have organised a politicisation of our young folk and women folk if Thatcher hadn't taken us through six months of strike. You could almost say she's done us a marvellous favour! I only hope that when the dispute is over it's going to roll on and gather strength. I think that groups like Socialist Organiser are going to gain a great deal of benefit insofar as the young lads and the women are going to stay in there and take the fight forward.

Whatever happens, even if we get a 100% victory, it's not going to mean the downfall of capitalism. The fight will have to go on.

Police to jail Scargill?

SOUTH Yorkshire police are investigating the possibility of getting Arthur Scargill and other miners' leaders in charges of criminal conspiracy — conspiracy to intimidate scabs.

This is an indictable offence under Part 1 of the Criminal Law Act 1977, passed by the last Labour government.

The general idea is to prove that NUM leaders have been whipping their members up into a state of frenzy and organising 'criminal acts' such as — horror of horrors — damaging property, and obstructing the highway.



A shop in Armthorpe, near Doncaster. (Photo: John Harris, IFL)

Support the dockers! Extend the scheme!

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meeting last Friday, 24th, TGWU official John Connolly repeatedly dodged questions about what the demands of the strike were. In effect the strike has been left as just a protest against something which has already happened — the use of scab labour — without any positive demands being defined. No wonder anti-strike agitators have been able to misrepresent it.

Dockers' pickets have already begun to close the gaps in the strike. But militant dockers should also call for clear demands to be defined, like extension of the dock labour scheme to the currently unregistered ports. They should also link up with the miners for joint action committees and joint picketing.

TUC leaders have been putting heavy pressure on the NUM to sew everything up before the

debate at Congress. David Basnett of the GMBU said: "What the miners want from us and what we can deliver must be clear before Congress starts".

In this situation it is understandable that the NUM leadership feel the need to manoeuvre. It is reported that the NUM is not supporting the amendment from the furniture trades union for a one-day general strike. The reasons are not clear. But we think the amendment should still be supported.

Manoeuvres by the NUM lead-

ership over the heads of the membership can only weaken their struggle. There is certainly no good reason for the secrecy which meant that the first NUM members heard about the meeting with ACAS, or their union's 'reluctant agreement' with the 'peace plan' proposed by Labour front-bencher Stan Orme, was on the television. Nobody yet knows exactly what the Orme plan is. Such secrecy can only leave the field open to the media, and lead to doubt and uncertainty in the rank and file.

The media are doing all they can to get the striking miners on the run. But they need not get away with it. The miners' strike is still overwhelmingly solid in most areas. The dockers' strike can — as the top bosses themselves say — cripple whole sections of industry within a few weeks. With strong rank and file organisation, with regular report-backs from the leadership to keep members fully informed, and with the support of the rest of the movement, miners and dockers together can beat the Tories.

Discussing a general strike

Do you think the atmosphere is geared up to a general strike. Jim. Among socialists and real trade unionists, yes. But there are a lot of people in the labour movement who aren't that bothered about it at the moment.

I don't think there'll be a general strike, because we can't get the members together within the NUM. There's a lot working in Notts, though the true trade unionists are out.

Mick. Myself, I think there could be a general strike. You've got the unemployed in the country, and you've got workers on low wages — they can see which way the government is going.

If other unions can't or won't see what's coming now,

At the Socialist Organiser school last weekend, three Notts strikers — Alan Brett, Jim Gillespie, and Mick McAlorum — discussed the prospects for a general strike with Alan Fraser

then they won't be able to come to the NUM and the dockers to ask for our support, because we won't have the muscle to give them that support.

But I think the workers are more fully aware than some people give them credit for. It's people like Frank Chapple who stop the TUC giving us full backing.

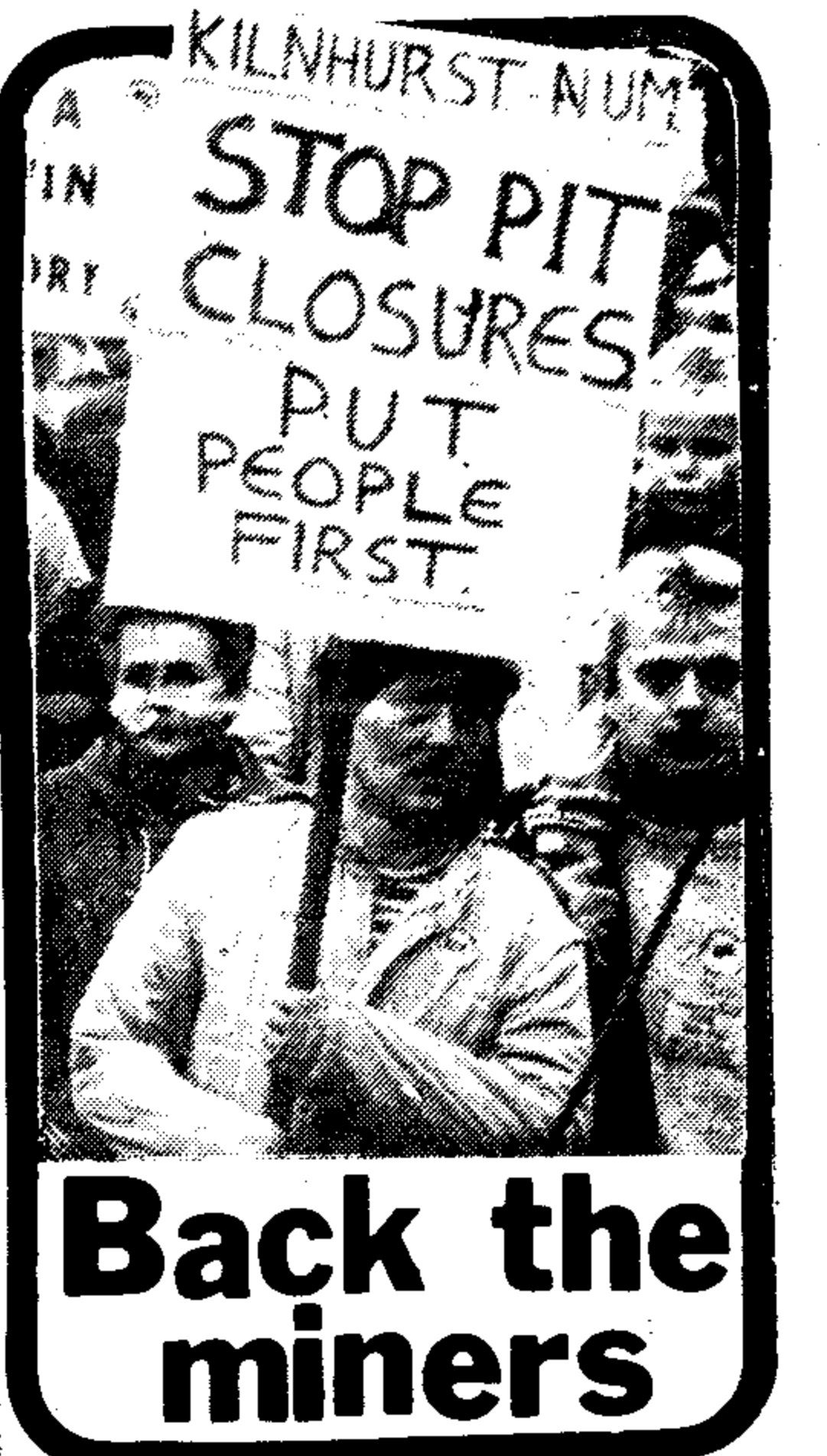
Jim. The trade unionists of this country look up to the NUM. Always have done. Now, can you honestly see

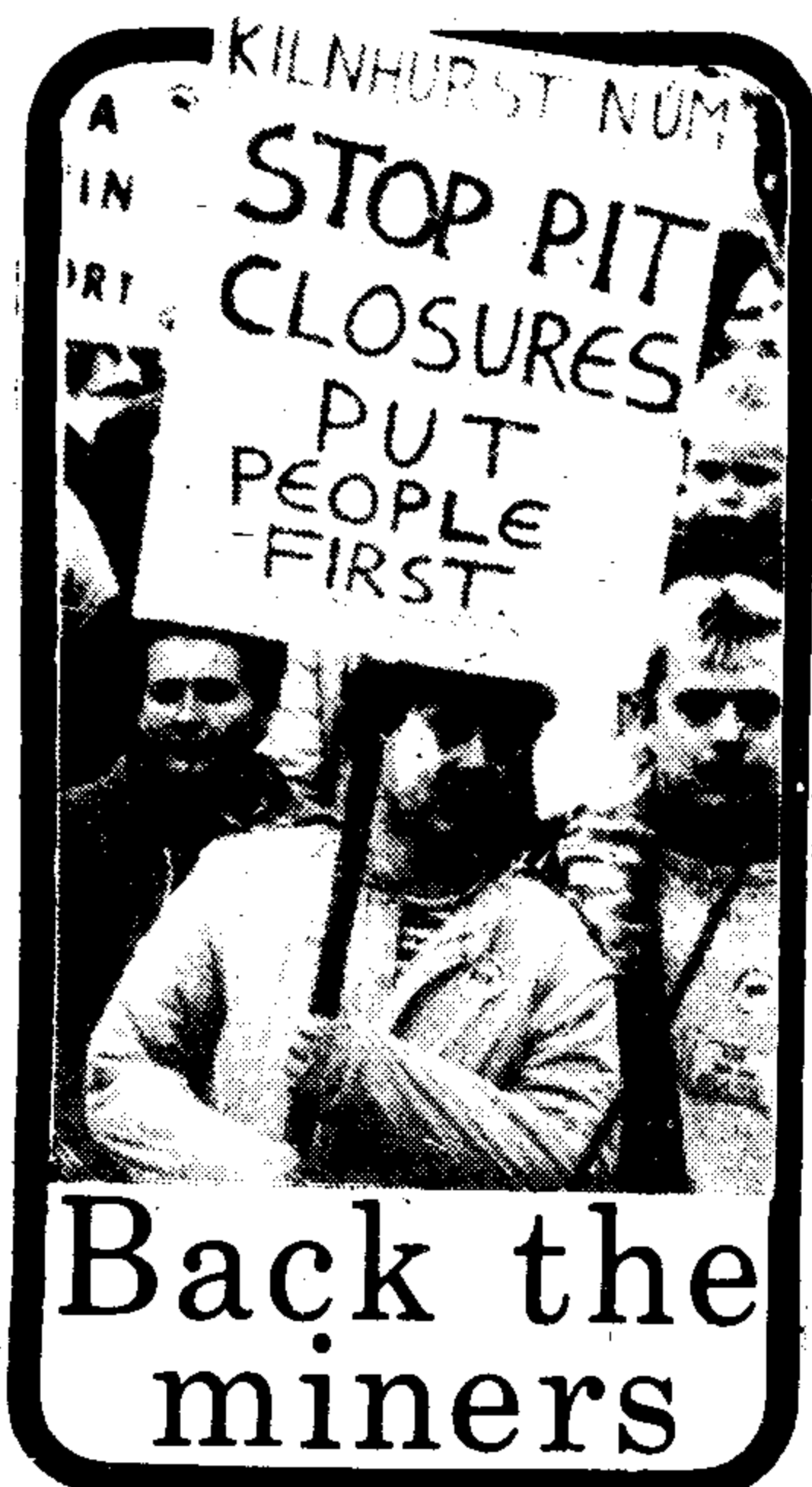
them backing us when they see that there's a lot in Notts still working?

I don't see any possibility of a general strike until we're all together in the NUM.

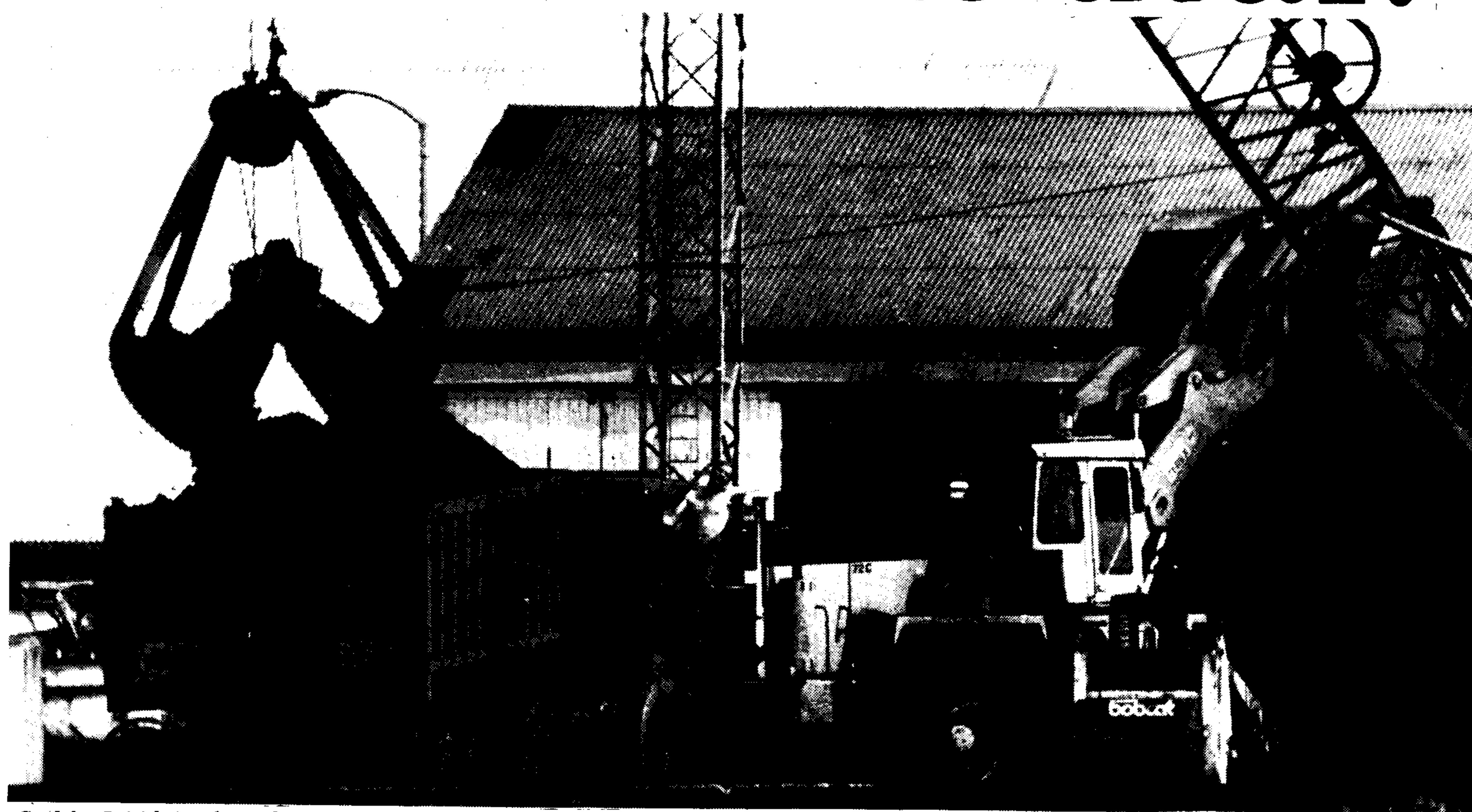
Alan. My view is that there is a possibility of a general strike, but the leadership of the TUC — leaders such as Len Murray — would actually sell us out. So I think that if we are going to have a general strike, then we're going to need to have organisations set up at rank and file level before it could be anywhere near successful.

We need organisations with rank and file members themselves in control, as back-up in case the leadership sells you out.





An amicable deal?



Coal for British Steel is unloaded at Flixborough. The Scottish TUC made no moves to support the dockers' fight against use of scab labour to unload coal at Hunterston for British Steel. (Photo: John Harris, IFL).

THE shop stewards' conference held in Glasgow last Friday, 24th, called to discuss further support in the West of Scotland for the miners, revealed the growing desire of sections of the Labour Party and trade union bureaucracy to see an end to the strike.

Although the main theme of the "conference" (in fact, it was more like a modest rally) was the need to build support for the September 15 demonstration in Glasgow, there were constant references to the need for a settlement of the dispute. And by that they didn't mean help the miners to win a victory!

John Smith, Labour Party spokesperson on employment, sung the praises of Stan Orme who is currently attempting to negotiate a "compromise" solution: "He is behaving like

He also reminisced about the days when Labour governments and union bureaucrats could get together to stamp on a diplomat. Only just out of hospital and he is carrying on his peace-making role, trying to find a solution. An early solution to the dispute would be in the public interest, he claimed.

By Stan Crooke

strikes: "There's a lot of sneering about beer and sandwiches at Downing Street. But I look back on that with pride, as a time when ministers saw their job as settling disputes, rather than allowing them to escalate beyond redemption."

Smith, like his hero Orme, was clearly opposed to the escalation of the dispute needed to achieve victory for the miners. And so too was Scottish TUC General Secretary Jimmy Milne, who opened his speech with an attack on a Socialist Organiser leaflet distributed at the conference which had criticised Milne's call for "an amicable resolution of the outstanding difficulties between the Coal Board and the NUM".

By "amicable resolution", he explained, he merely meant a "solution acceptable to both the miners and the NCB". But, especially by this stage in the dispute, it is nonsense to believe there can be a "solution" acceptable to both sides. Not for Milne, though, who concluded by stressing that a "settlement to the strike has to be found".

Scottish miners' leader Mick McGahey stressed the readiness of the NUM to hold talks and the need to "find a solution, but it must be a principled solution. There will be secret talks but no secret deals."

He also called for "the quickest possible solution, but a principled solution which meets the needs not only of the Scottish miners, but also of the Scottish economy and

the Scottish people."

But how can there be a solution in the interests of both the miners and the capitalist economy in the Scottish region?

Although some of the speakers from the floor did take up the need to go beyond merely financial and moral support and raised the need for more extensive blacking in particular, as well as solidarity strike, such calls were overshadowed by the emphasis of the platform speakers on the need for "a solution in the public interest" and "a principled solution".

What was not said at the conference was as striking as

what was said: Astoundingly there was no discussion of the start of the Scottish docks strike that same day and its implications for the miners' fight, despite its potential significance!

The "conference" did not make a serious analysis of the present stage of the dispute nor properly discuss how to escalate support for it. Apart from a few calls from the floor for stepping up support, it settled for a ritualistic statement of support coupled with pleas for the speediest possible settlement of the dispute. Yes, we need a settlement: on the basis of a clear victory for the NUM.

LETTER

The best way to fight

Dear comrades,

By any means necessary? (SO editorial, no. 193). No, not by any means necessary — but by the best means to build working class solidarity against MacGregor, the Tories and their police thugs. The way to do that is to organise serious mass pickets at the targets that matter. Llanwern, Orgreave, Hunterston, the Trent Valley power stations — if these targets were hit properly by successful and sustained mass pickets the miners' strike would be shortened by months.

It is not good enough to counterpose the SWP fetish of 'mass pickets and nothing else' to guerrilla actions against scab trucks. You claim "There is no evidence of a drift by militant miners into indiscriminate petty terrorism and away from mass picketing".

Absolutely right, comrades, but only because there has been no consistent mass picketing in the first place. The prime targets have been ignored: the Yorks NUM leaders have shied away from a serious fight at Orgreave; the South Wales leaders have followed suit over Llanwern; the Scottish leaders at Ravenscraig.

None of them have taken the mass picketing of power stations seriously. There have been one or two days when pickets have turned up in numbers, but not the kind of sustained picketing needed to

bring these places to a halt.

The editorial's claim that in these circumstances, it is alright to resort to hit and run raids is so much nonsense.

We've had the sabotage, now let's have the kind of picketing we need to stop these places — the kind of mass picketing that socialists throughout the labour movement can build on and use to call for support in their own workplaces. Remember Saltley Gates!

In comradeship,
MARTIN BARCLAY, Cardiff

Editor's reply

Martin Barclay mixes up a number of things. The subject of the editorial was what attitude we should take to sabotage activities to put scab trucks out of action, etc. An assessment of the state of mass picketing — whether it has been adequate, or needs to be radically stepped up — that is a separate question, which I won't try to deal with here, though I think Martin is mainly right in what he says about it.

There is no evidence that smashing up scab trucks at their bases necessarily diminishes the level of mass picketing. And it is not the same sort of thing as the South Wales decision to go for the stunt of occupying the sequestrators' office in Birmingham instead of a local picket.

Right now the cutting edge of the propaganda war against the miners and against solidarity with the miners focuses on 'violence'. It is necessary to defend the right of the miners to fight back in every way necessary — on the picket lines and, if striking miners so decide, in the loading yards of scab trucks.

That was the point of the editorial.
JOHN O'MAHONY

Out of
their
own
mouths

Golden Birch

From the Financial Times

AN appeal to more than 100 leading British businessmen has raised over £30,000 in the past three weeks in support of a fund for miners who want to go back to work.

The money, which is still flowing in, has come from their own pockets and not from their companies. It is understood the cash is being used to pay the legal fees and other expenses of miners such as Mr Chris Butcher, the man known as Silver Birch.

Some of the money is expected to go towards paying the costs of Mr Bob Taylor and Mr Ken Foulstone, the two South Yorkshire miners who are taking legal action against the National Union of Mineworkers, seeking, among other things, a national ballot on the strike.

The cash is being put into a fund held by Hodgkinson and Tallents, a firm of solicitors in Newark, Nottinghamshire. The firm is acting for Mr Taylor and Mr Foulstone in their legal action.

Appeal

A written appeal for money to help the anti-strike miners is being circulated among chairmen, chief executives and managing directors of major companies. The appeal is thought to have gone to senior people in manufacturing and commercial companies, clearing banks, merchant banks and insurance groups.

The appeal is headed by a quotation from Edmund Burke: "All that is needed for evil to triumph is that good men do nothing." It goes on to point out that striking miners and NUM pickets are receiving financial support from sympathetic local councils, from collections at factory gates and from other sources.

"On the other side are the Nottinghamshire and other miners who have carried on working," the appeal says. "They are now actively trying to persuade miners in other coalfields to return to work."

"But they are stretched for funds to pay for petrol, telephone bills, postage and printing. They have already scored a significant victory with their injunction against the NUM. However, the legal fees are likely to be very substantial and at a level they cannot possibly afford to meet themselves."

"They therefore need help not least because they are in the front line fighting for what we believe in and they need to know they have friends."

The appeal ends with a request for recipients to make personal contributions towards the miners' expenses.

Why secret talks?

DURING the current NUM dispute with the Coal Board and the Tory government, a number of significant breakthroughs have been made in the working class trade union movement. The mighty power of trade unionism has once again come to the forefront.

The NUM has led this fight magnificently throughout the 25 weeks of industrial conflict. The president of the union, Arthur Scargill, has shown that he is not prepared to bow down to the waffling Tory media, but is intent on taking the miners and the whole of the working class a step nearer the goal of a true socialist society.

Chris Hickling, a striking miner from Hucknall, Notts, writes about secret negotiations

Two points arise though to make you stop and think about how far the NUM is prepared to go. The first is a question which only Mr Scargill himself can answer. Why is he not taking the dispute to its ultimate conclusion by calling for a general strike?

By not coming out and demanding the full support of other unions in a general strike he is leading the miners on a road which may have at the end of it a sign saying 'Rest in Peace'.

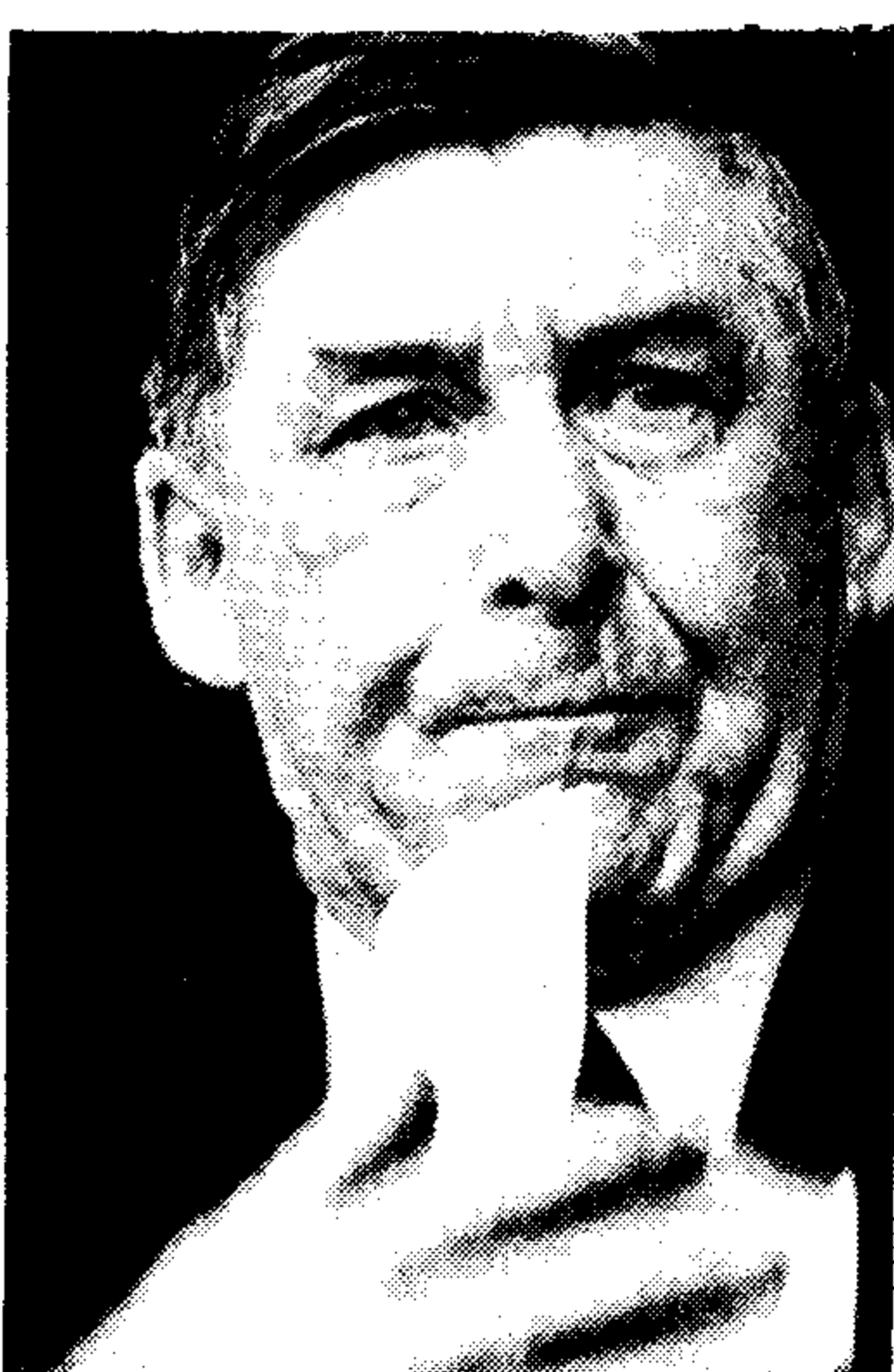
Maybe Mr Scargill thinks that to involve the high powered blood sucking leeches that form the TUC hierarchy may, as has been done in the past, lead to a massive sell-out of the NUM.

The second point to think about is the secret talks that have taken place behind closed doors. The rank and file of the NUM have an idea what has gone on in these talks, but not, as we should have, a full report from the NEC. In the situation the miners face now, secrecy will breed discontent and suspicion. The rank and file must have complete knowledge of what is happening.

Arthur Scargill is one of the finest trade union leaders of all time, but on this his conduct is in danger of becoming less than inspiring.

The rank and file are the union and therefore should be aware at all times of what is being discussed as to their future.

The rank and file must say that if anything is done to jeopardise the winning of the dispute then they will organise and fight to the bitter end.



Mick McGahey

Demo Sept 15

A major NUM rally is to be held in Nottingham on Saturday September 15. It will coincide with an NUJ demonstration against the city's scab printing firm T. Bailey Forman which is at the centre of the long-running dispute at the Richmond Times group of papers owned by TV broadcaster David Dimbleby.

Following this a solidarity week of support for the NUM begins on Monday, September 17, called by the East Midlands TUC. Three rallies have already been planned for Friday, September 21, in Nottingham, Derby and Chesterfield, together with a series of meetings throughout the week.

A call has been made for industrial action where possible in support of the miners that week, together with the stepping-up of cash and food collections.

Kiveton Park

Swamped by police!

KIVETON PARK is one of the Coal Board's main targets in their attempts over the past week and a half to crack the strike in the Yorkshire coalfield. The scabbing operation started last Wednesday, and since then the village has closely resembled the Notts pit villages.

The police are now swamping the village. They keep 24-hour watch outside scab houses, and threaten to arrest anybody who even shouts 'scab'. They offer kids sweets and ice-creams, in return for information. At the weekend video cameras were installed all over the pit yard where the police are now based.

The number of scabs going in is important for propaganda, not production. Only two of the seven scabs on Tuesday are underground trained. They are deployed on cleaning the bath-houses. The Area Director has been down to address them. They have been wine and dined, and offered the possibility of hotel

accommodation as an alternative to staying at home. Additional insurance has been taken out on all their property by the NCB. They are walled off from the pickets — even the miner who scabbed on Wednesday and then retracted, is not allowed to talk to them.

The response from the village has been overwhelming. On the picket line, NUM members who haven't been active in the strike so far are joining women, children and old people.

The police tactic has been intimidation. On the first day of scabbing, last Wednesday, the police made a number of arrests, including NUM branch delegate Albert Bowns. The media was then full of pictures of Albert's car, together with weapons and talk of violence and riot. Albert Bowns and his comrade were held in solitary confinement for over 30 hours. On Friday he explained what really happened.

How I was jailed

WE had heard that there might be some men moved in, and we had had instructions from the NUM headquarters in Barnsley to picket our own pits from Monday. On Wednesday all the pickets had arrived by 4.30 am.

We were all down the bridge end, at the entrance to the pit. We had nobody at the other end — we thought the Coal Board would take the scabs down the main entrance to get full propaganda value, to show people how easy it was to get to work.

At 6.45 a reporter from Radio Sheffield asked us about the police presence at the other end of the village, so two of us got in my car to go and check. All I saw at the entrance were five or six reporters and television people, and two pickets. I parked at the pit gates — the next minute the police were on us.

Two inspectors in particular seemed to have gone off their trolley — obviously we had stopped something. "You f...ing bastards. Get them. Get them." They got to both sides of the car, hands inside slamming them up against the f... "you f...ing bastard, who do you think you are?"

One of them then threw one of the pickets, and a sledge hammer, into the car. "Get in there". He also threw in a pickaxe handle, which was on the floor. One said: "Get in there before you get arrested". The other was saying, "No, arrest

them."

Three or four SPG fellas came down with riot gear on. The police got us out of the car then and into an SPG van. As we were pulling away I noticed that the cops had got my brief-case out, and some were reading an old map in it.

They wouldn't allow us to talk to each other in the van, and they kept us separated for the 30 odd hours that we were in. We weren't allowed to see a solicitor, or make a phone call or anything, until three hours before we were released. They kept us in separate cells and solitary confinement — the first time we were allowed to talk to anybody was 3 o'clock on Thursday afternoon.



Albert Bowns

They said they believed I had conspired to cause criminal damage with "one Ernest Warner", that I was there as a look-out while he was supposed to have done damage to this barrier. I told them I hadn't seen anything, and had only been there 2-3 minutes before being set on.

They said, "We did find in your car a sledge hammer and a pickaxe handle which we believe has been used in the past by pickets to attack police, and broken glass shards, bolts, petrol can, broken hack saw blades... all things that have been used to attack police with, or were going to be so used."

I said "all the things you found in my car were what you would find in any car, particularly those that hadn't been cleaned out, on a regular basis". They said they had found a diagram which

Silverwood colliery: police grab a picket. (Photo: John Harris, IFL)

they supposed was of the pit lane, with various obstacles outlined to stop the police and the men going to work. I said that there were that many documents in my bag, many of them not mine. They said that in another document I had alluded to three buses being burnt, and had stated that it gave the pickets a bit of a morale booster.

I said "that's probably correct" — they were notes of a speech I had made — "but there are other pamphlets against Cruise missiles, for ban the bomb and anti-apartheid — are you going to say that I'm responsible for all the demonstrations on these issues?" It went on for about 1½ hours.

The bolts, for example, were specially made for our branch banner, and there are that many people who can vouchsafe that I usually carried them round in the boot of my car. But they said I was going to use them against the police. They found spare petrol, and talked about me making petrol bombs, but there were no glass bottles in the car. I've always got petrol in my car because I've run out of it that many times.

They made other accusations,

Fringe meetings

THE National Campaign Against the Police Bill is organising meetings at both the TUC Conference in Brighton and the Labour Party conference at Blackpool. Both meetings are entitled "Towards a police state: policing the miners' strike".

The TUC meeting will be held at The Old Ship, Kings Road, Brighton and speakers will include Dennis Skinner MP (Labour Party), Paul Boateng (GLC Police Committee Support Unit), and Cecil Gutzmore from the Campaign.

There will also be contributions from the NUM, the Greenham women and the Campaign Against Criminalisation and Deportation of Black Youth. The meeting will start at 7.30 pm on September 5.

including that I had sent out all the pickets the night before with pickaxe handles. The police said they had seen large numbers of pickets with these running away — but they hadn't arrested any! I believe there were two pickaxe handles, which had been scrounged out of the yard.

They asked me if I deployed pickets, and I said yes. "Then you're responsible for what they do". I said: "In no way — we're all part of a union, we act collectively and take collective decisions. We're not like the South Yorkshire police. We don't just stand in a straight line, we

don't commit acts regardless of their effects on other people. Miners are free-thinking individuals who do what they want."

Insufficient

They then freed me, because they had insufficient evidence to remand me.

What they showed on television that night — it had all been chopped about, so it came across completely different. They didn't show that the police had opened the door of my car and thrown the pickaxe handle in. In the newspaper they show a picture of

my car with "weapons used by pickets found in pickets' car". We want a retraction.

The police say they've got a video, but, in fact they can't use it because it will show all the actions of the police — the way they came to my car and thumped us, opening the door, throwing the hammer and shaft in, and throwing Ernest Warner in.

They have made no charges — my bail sheet just says that I have to reappear in three weeks time. They'll probably be working on it and will maybe come up with something.

Police used to break strike

By Albert Bowns

I've told them to desist because we don't want to alienate the village. We can deal with these scabs after the strike is over, although I doubt if any will be at the pit. They'll have to pay them off.

At Silverwood, the pit has been taken over by the police — that is now their headquarters. That's where they came from this morning. The union office there is opposite the pit gates, and they've been able to use the phone facilities from the pit all through the strike, up until the day the scabs were brought in.

They were then told it was cut off — so they went to see the colliery manager who said "It's out of my hands now, the police have taken over the colliery".

The police are being used to break our strike, and the main weapon is to get men into work. They've tried that long drawn out thing and it didn't work, so they've got to do something

before the TUC.

If they say there's a drift back in Yorkshire then there will be a reluctance even among those taking the middle line and who are wavering. They want a few at each pit — it'll be impossible, but they'll have a good try. What they are doing is generating more anger and more miners are getting directly involved.

The press talk about 'picket riot'. But there was not one brick thrown. They charged up the lane, after they got us, and pushed everybody up onto the road. We've got that many harassment cases. One of those arrested — he's got two gouges on his arms, from handcuffs; little lumps out of his leg; and he had just had a vasectomy, they kned him in the groin and opened his stitches up.

There was no riot at our pit because they took us by surprise, no retaliation at all. They managed to get one barricade across, but that was just pushed aside. On the film — you could see the van going in and not a picket in sight!

Policewatch

Sheffield Police watch: 73, West Street, Sheffield S1 4EQ.

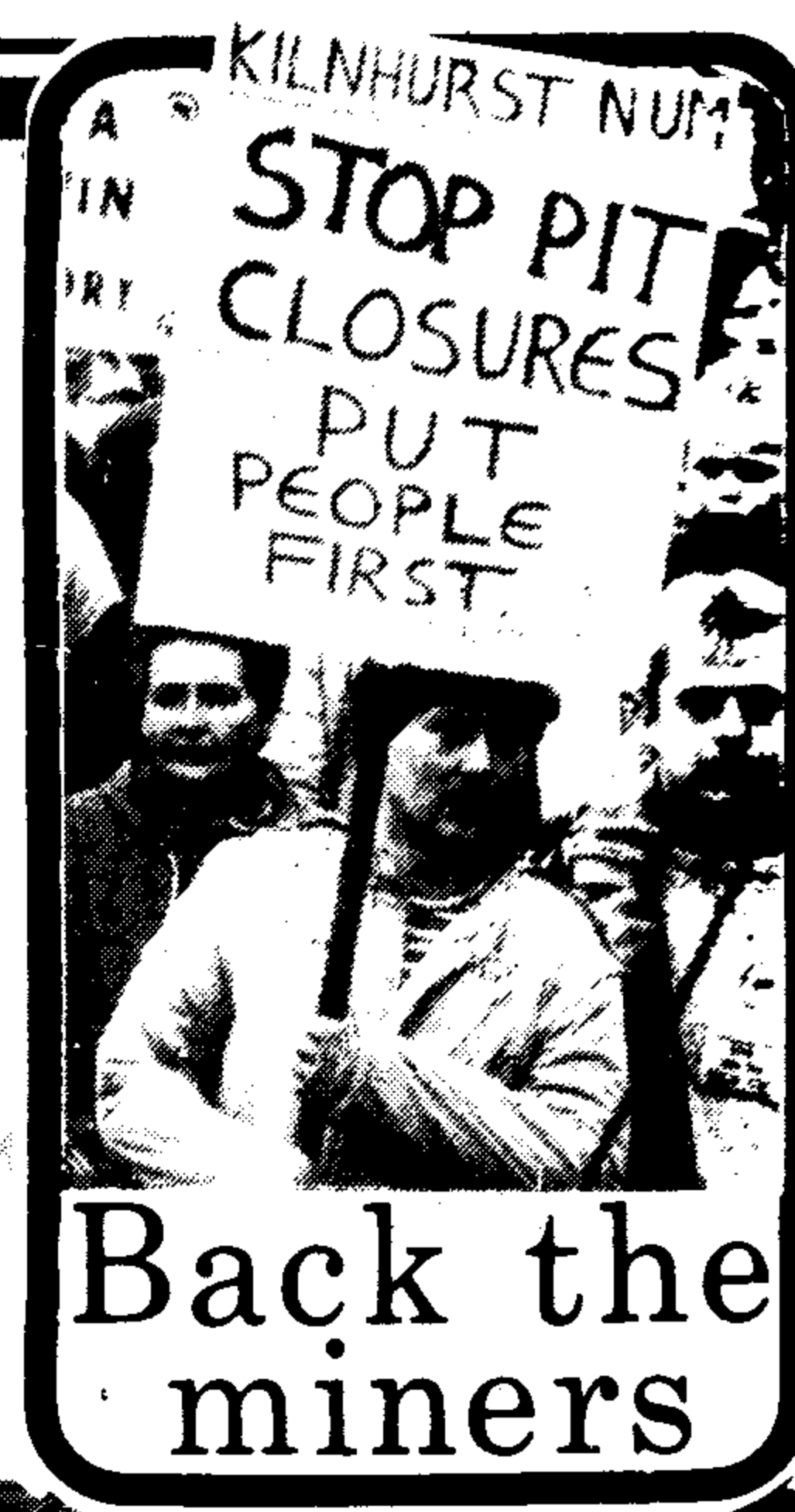
Kent police monitoring group: Richard De Friend or Ian Grieg Spall, 0227 66822.

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: Mansfield 862790.



Policeman holding the sledgehammer which was thrown into Albert Bowns' car.



IN PART one we saw how a great wave of strikes erupted in Poland in August 1980, paralysing the Polish Stalinist state. The working class pushed the official police state 'trade unions' aside and created their own organisations.

Alexis Carras's account of the strike resumes at the point where the government has been forced to negotiate with the powerful strike Committee — in fact, a great parliament of the Polish workers — centred on the Lenin shipyard in Gdansk.

When Jagielski (who took over as deputy prime minister and chief government negotiator from Tadeusz Pyka) met the inter-factory strike committee in Gdansk for the first time on the night of August 23, he was full of the bluster and bureaucratic haughtiness acquired through years of ruling over the working class, accountable to no-one.

To the individual demands of the strikers' representatives, contained in their 21 points, he would answer with insulting dishonesty.

Abolition of censorship? But 'we' need censorship for the security of the state. It is a key element in the ensemble of 'our' social institutions. And of course there is always the problem of pornography.

Release of political prisoners?

Jagielski would gasp in disbelief. Had he heard the strikers correctly? Everyone knew there were no political prisoners in socialist Poland.

Working class family allowances in line with those received by the police?

What ingratitude on the part of these workers who could not understand the difficult domestic life of policemen, due to their irregular work shifts!

(And what about us night shift workers? asked one of the strikers. Jagielski shut up at that point).

Fool us

As one of the workers put it, "He hasn't understood anything. He thinks we're a load of asses, that he can easily fool us. He forgets that we have the experiences of 1956, 1970 and 1976 . . . all that's nothing to him. But they'll end up by understanding us all right!"

The major demand on which the workers were intransigent was independent trade unions. The bureaucracy balked at this.

Democratisation of the existing 'trade unions'? Greater worker participation in the existing factory committees, alongside the managers and other assorted hacks? Yes! But free trade unions were out of the question.

They would without any doubt undermine one of the bureaucracy's key instruments for controlling the workers and making sure that any demands and complaints, after their initial airing, would be quietly buried in a file, in the office of some careerist who probably had never seen the shop floor in his life.

The negotiations were suspended for several days and finally resumed on Tuesday August 26, but only after the government lifted the telephone blockade on Gdansk.

There was a remarkable change in the government's attitude towards the strikers. The silly ultimatums that Walesa, Anna Walentynow-

Workers' power



wisz and Gwiazda should be excluded from the negotiating team were quietly forgotten. Regional party boss Tadeusz Fizbach was now full of goodwill towards the strikers, "whose actions are not really directed against the people's state", and whose frustrations were perfectly understandable given "the planning mistakes, the overcentralisation and the imperfections in socialist democracy".

However, by that very evening the negotiations were off again. Jagielski was prepared to go only as far as recognising the right to strike, but not free trade unions. It probably had occurred to Jagielski that this was not much of a concession, since whether or not the government recognised the right to strike, hundreds of thousands of workers up and down the country over the last two months were in practice affirming and defending that most basic class right, and had shaken the government and the party from top to bottom.

Jagielski hurried back to Warsaw to confer with his cronies at a summoned Politburo meeting.

Negotiations only started again two days later, on August 28. If the authorities'

aim was to isolate the Baltic workers, in particular those in Gdansk, to slowly whittle away their nerve and force them to return to work short of gaining their major demand — free trade unions — this tactic was manifestly beginning to fail.

The Gdansk and Szczecin workers remained solid.

Talks suspended

On that same evening, the talks were suspended again, with the government completely unwilling to concede free trade unions. The attitudes of sections of the bureaucracy, previously willing to go along with the 'soft line' negotiators, began to harden.

Jankowski, the new head of the state controlled 'trade unions', who replaced Szydłak, and Wojciechowski, head of Interpress, again began to hurl accusations of extremism, and, mouthing their peculiar variant of 'Marxist' and working class phraseology, violently insisted on the need to defend the 'unity of the trade union movement'.

But the bureaucracy was quickly shaken out of its inertia and its playing for time by events in other parts of the country.

On August 29 the giant steelworks of Huta Warszawa went on strike. In Wrocław over 30 factories created their own Inter-factory Committee, and reports were that the strike was spreading.

Bydgoszcz, 150 km south-west of Gdansk, was paralysed by strikes. In the Cegielski factory at Poznań, one of the largest in the city, a 48 hour strike in solidarity with the Gdansk and Szczecin workers, and a call on the government to meet their 21 demands.

The previous disdain of the Gdansk workers at the docile attitude of the Silesians now began to be dispelled. The Gdansk workers used to say, what can you expect of the Silesians, stuck down there at the bottom of their mines, whereas the Baltic workers, living at the edge of the sea, were always open to new horizons. This sense of regional superiority now became increasingly irrelevant.

Faced with the spread of the strike wave, the government rushed to sign an agreement with the MKS. By Saturday morning, August 30, a pact was made. Over the public address system in the Lenin shipyard, which had been used throughout the negotiations to keep the rank and file workers in touch, with live

in Gdansk

transmissions of the talks, the agreement was announced.

Jubilant in the strike committee, which numbered hundreds of delegates. Outside in the shipyard, on the streets in front of the Lenin works, the response was more unsure.

Many questioned the sincerity of the government's promises. Others were worried by the first reports of the terms of the agreement.

Was it really true that the agreement said that the trade unions recognised the 'leading role of the Communist Party'? and as for the free trade unions, were they to

cover only Gdansk? What about the rest of the country? What about the imprisoned KOR members?

Above all, there was the feeling that the great carnival of working class freedom of the last few weeks was now about to end. The return to work, the return to the normal daily grind of the factory routine.

During the strike, the area in and around the Lenin yard had been transformed into an island of freedom. Delegations from all over the country, and many parts of the world even, had come to Gdansk. Actors and singers would



During the occupation





At the Lenin shipyard

Gdansk

ne and perform in the open, every day something new, and over all the fear that had marked the life of workers for many decades was no longer there.

Would that remain the case when the return to work, when the workers were gathered throughout their individual factories?

It was these uncertainties which forced Walesa to cancel talks and the signing of the agreement on Saturday afternoon, until the government had given an answer to the ultimatum over the release of the political prisoners. For a moment it looked as though the tenuous agreement had broken down yet again.

Jagielski could not believe. Only an hour before he had undergone the humiliating experience of trying to get Walesa and the strike committee representatives to sign as soon as possible, whereas they insisted on reading every single demand and agreed to mutuality out loud, one by one, in front of reporters and delegates. The hapless miner could only repeat again and again, "OK, I accept, I'll sign".

Now yet again more delays, a possible breakdown. Jagielski was sent packing to immediate assurance

from the government about the release of the KOR members. His arrogance and self-assurance had been totally knocked out of him.

Jagielski arrived on Sunday, the next day. After the Plenum of the Central Committee of the PUWP signed the text of the agreement, and after a few more delays to ensure the release of the political prisoners (they were to be freed starting the next day), at 4.35 on Sunday afternoon Jagielski and Walesa entered the large hall in the Lenin yard.

1000 delegates

Sitting there in complete silence were over 1000 delegates from different factories in the region.

Walesa took the microphone. "Dear friends, throughout this strike we have thought of the interests of our country, and it is of that that we shall be thinking when we start work tomorrow — September 1, a date whose significance you all know."

"Have we obtained everything? No, but we have obtained a lot under the circumstances. The rest we can obtain because now we have our trade unions. We've fought to get them, not only for us but for all the country.

Let's make sure we maintain their independence. The strike is over."

For other Polish workers the fight was just beginning. Silesia, the industrial heartland, whose workers are the highest paid in the country, was continuing the strike. It had called out of solidarity with the Baltic workers.

They tore to shreds the government's last hopes that the disease of free trade unionism would remain firmly enclosed within the Baltic coastal area. The Silesian workers were now demanding their own free unions.

An MKS had been established in the Silesian coalfields as well. Centred in Jastrzebie, it grouped 26 mines and 208,000 miners, as well as 27 other factories representing 100,000 workers.

No pretence at delay, or even hard-line rhetoric, now. The government rushed to negotiate with the MKS directly, and apart from granting the same demands as at Gdansk it agreed to negotiate other demands such as abolition of the 4 x 6 hour shift system, lowering of the retirement age to 50 years, a working week of five days, and the abolition of the official trade unions.

By John O'Mahony

By the beginning of September 1980 the workers of Poland had won a victory unique in history. They had forced a ruling Stalinist bureaucracy, behind which stood the tanks of the rulers of the USSR, to concede to the working class the right to have its own free trade unions, independent of state control.

Short of calling in the Russian army to do to the Poles what it did to the Hungarians in 1956, the Polish bureaucracy had no choice but to make this concession.

But in fact they only beat a tactical retreat to prepare a murderous counter-offensive.

The existence of independent working class organisations was then and always will be incompatible with the Stalinist system. If workers can organise freely then they inevitably question the perks and privileges of the corrupt ruling bureaucrats, they begin to demand democratic control, they question and oppose the way the ruling bureaucrats run the economy. Stalinist rule and independent working class organisations cannot coexist together for more than a short transitional period: that was the lesson of history — most recently of Czech liberalisation in 1968 which led the Russians to invade.

But the leaders of Solidarnosc thought it was possible for them to carve out a new path of long-term coexistence with the bureaucracy on the basis of 'moderation' and 'compromise', with the Catholic church — tolerated in Poland as an independent power after 1956 — acting as honest broker between the government and Solidarnosc.

It was a fatal mistake. Why did they make it?

Because of the fear of a Russian invasion. What the

Below: Edmund Baluka, a socialist jailed by the Jaruzelski regime



The Gdansk MKS (Inter-factory strike committee) in session

Solidarnosc is not dead

striking workers in August 1980 wanted was to tear the head off the Stalinist system. They had the power and the will to do it. What the workers at Gdansk created was a great Soviet — a workers' parliament — the most democratic ever known in Poland, which by its very existence found itself contesting with the government for power in society.

That's what the government said was happening, and essentially, they were right about that. Had the strike movement developed according to its own logic and according to the wishes of the vast majority of workers then they would have displaced the government and smashed up all its apparatus of corrupt administration and repression and all the ties that bind Poland as an unfree, satellite to the USSR.

Memory

They didn't do it because of the memory of the invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968 and of the bloody repression of the Hungarians in 1956 — where the workers went on a general strike after the street fighting was over and had to be driven out of the factories by the invaders. That memory hung like a nightmare over Poland in August 1980. When the Polish bureaucrats repeatedly warned of the danger of "provoking their friends" across the border, it was no idle threat.

And so the resurgent workers' Poland which had something very close to control of Poland in August 1980 downgraded itself and tried to function as a trade union. It had spectacular success. Soon 10 million workers had joined the new union, Solidarnosc, and the official Polish state "union" shrivelled to an empty bureaucratic skin.

But in fact Solidarnosc was always much more than a trade union. As a licensed

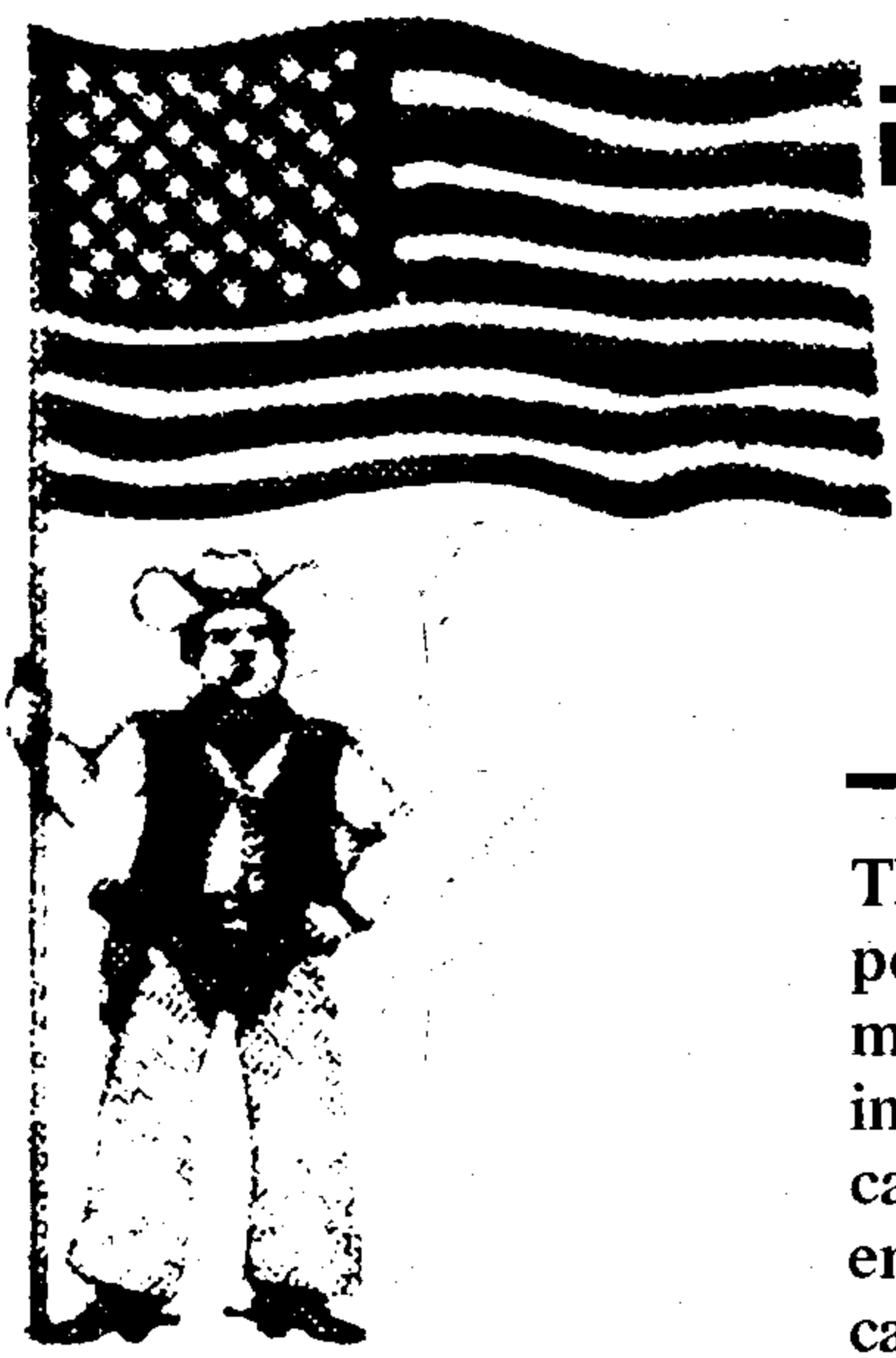
popular mass opposition movement where opposition political parties were banned, it inevitably played the role of a political opposition.

Tragically it held to the perspective of indefinite coexistence with the Stalinist system. The alternative was insurrection and, as the only alternative to being isolated before an inevitable Russian invasion, an attempt to spread the movement to the other oppressed nations in Eastern Europe and to the working class in the USSR itself. And in August 1980, Solidarnosc had decided against that perspective and demobilised.

By December 1981 the Polish bureaucrats had made their preparations and then they struck. Martial law was declared, thousands of Solidarnosc activists rounded up and interned. Strikes broke out, but the repression proved effective, partly because of the "moderating" role of the Catholic church hierarchy which, from August 1980 until today, has consistently strengthened its own position and its modus vivendi with the Stalinist bureaucracy.

And that's how the Polish bureaucrats are in a position to send scab coal to Britain to help break the miners' strike and the heroic Silesian coal miners — some of whom were shot dead in December 1981 — are too repressed by Jaruzelski's police state to do more than send messages of solidarity to British miners.

But Solidarnosc is not dead. It lives in the underground. The Polish workers movement will rise again — nothing is more certain than that. The message spelled out to the bureaucrats: the 1980 strikes is still true and clear, despite the terrible blows and setbacks our movement in Poland has suffered: your time of lording it over the working class like bloated capitalists hasn't much longer to run. Your days are numbered.



Dollar democracy

The US, from many points of view, is the most democratic country in the world. Yet this capitalist democracy is an empty democracy — because radical movements have always, so far, been diverted into the two big political machines, Democrats and Republicans. Martin Thomas looks at the history.

For the first half-century after the United States was founded 200 years ago, its policies were dominated by aristocrats from the longer-settled areas. The Democratic Party originated in a revolt against that domination by the more newly-settled West and the middle class in the growing cities of the East.

They elected Andrew Jackson as president in 1828. Jackson — the first president who went "from a log cabin to the White House" — alarmed the wealthiest citizens by abolishing the Bank of the United States (US equivalent of the Bank of England). "Ever since I read the history of the South Sea Bubble", (a famous swindle of the 18th century) he explained, "I have been afraid of banks."

The Democrats — and in particular Martin Van Buren, their leader in New York — originated most of the techniques of modern party politics. The New York Democrats, indeed, believed that efficient party organisation, linked to a "spoils" system for allocating public offices to the election winners was in and of itself democratic. The party policies were secondary; but the party organisation could enable 'the people' to challenge the long-established wealthy families.

Within this doctrine of the supremacy of the party machine, the Democrats spread their net wide enough both to win support from a sizeable share of the upper class and to absorb into their ranks its first-ever self-proclaimed workers' party.

The fate of the New York Workingmen's Party — which was absorbed into a radical wing of the Democrats in the 1830s — illustrates a recurrent pattern in US politics. It was a populist party, a party aspiring to represent working people in general as against a few rich parasites, rather than a socialist party of class struggle. By its definition, farmers, shopkeepers, even industrial capitalists, were all workers too.

Such ideas of "people's politics" rather than class politics have been a recurrent theme in US radicalism. Popu-

lism is always unstable. It tends to go in for quack schemes of social reform, and to be easily hoodwinked by capitalist politicians who can present themselves as "of the people".

In the 19th century there was a real social basis for such politics. Right up to 1880, more people worked on farms in the US than in all other occupations combined, and as late as 1900 nearly ten million out of a total labour force of 29 million were farmers or their immediate families or 'managers and proprietors'.

With new territory constantly being opened up in the West, every wage worker could hope to become a small proprietor. The ideal of an equal society of small property owners had a real grip.

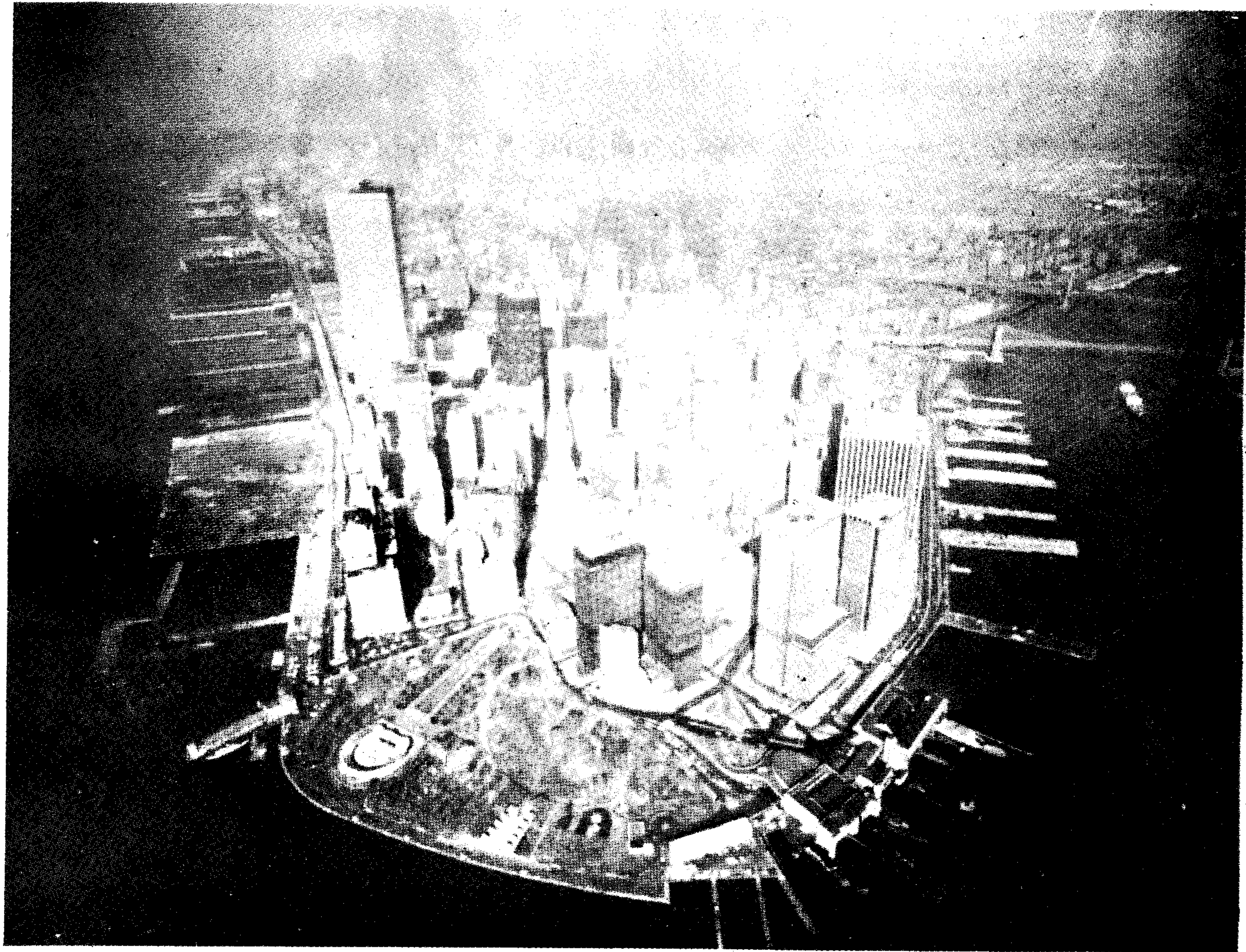
The Democrats ruled almost without a break from 1828 to the eve of the Civil War in 1861. The issue that led to the rise of America's second big party, the Republicans, was slavery.

The Democrats had never wanted democracy for the blacks (nor for the Indians). Andrew Jackson himself was one of the biggest slaveowners in Tennessee.

The issue became sharp with growing revolts among the slaves and with the opening-up of new territories in the West. Slavery had been legal or illegal in the US according to individual state law. What would happen in the new states?

The Republican Party was formed to resist the extension of slavery. Its initial base was among the settlers of the Northwest, alarmed at the prospect of newly-settled territories being made into slave plantations rather than free homesteads.

Under Abraham Lincoln, it led the Union side in the Civil War of 1861-65. The Democrats split several ways, some frankly supporting slavery,



Manhattan Island. many people in the US dreamed of an equal society of small property-owners, and cursed Wall Street for spoiling the dream

some advocating conciliation, and some supporting Lincoln.

Marx and Engels most enthusiastically acclaimed Lincoln and the anti-slavery war: "The workingmen of Europe felt instinctively that the star-spangled banner carried the destiny of their class". So how did the party of Lincoln become the party of Richard Nixon and Ronald Reagan?

The Republicans dominated US politics from 1860 through to 1884, with the Democrats discredited.

The Radical Republicans — who initially had the upper hand — imposed military governors on the southern states, to reform them by force. Blacks were given the right to vote and brought into politics, universal free education was established, and other social reforms pushed through.

But this regime of Reconstruction in the South soon degenerated disastrously. Many of the officials who had moved down from the North used the chance to line their own pockets. And during the hectic boom period of 1865-73

corruption was even worse in the Northern states. One city politician ripped off maybe \$200 million from New York.

Large-scale industrial capitalism was growing fast out of the "property-owning democracy". By the mid-1870s, the Republicans were the party of big business and the Democrats could come forward once again as the party of reform.

Around the turn of the century both parties revived themselves by absorbing new waves of populist radicalism.

The Populist party, founded in 1890, declared in its platform: "The fruits of the toil of millions are boldly stolen to build up colossal fortunes for a few... From the same prolific womb of governmental injustice we breed two classes — paupers and millionaires".

There were many elements of genuine radicalism in this party. It grew out of militant farmers' movements in the South which had united black tenant farmers with whites. Although its main base was in the West, it had some strength in the South, too: and Populists courageously argued against racism because it divided the working people. They demanded an 8 hour working day and public ownership of the railways.

But they were still populist — based on the impossible dream of a society of independent small producers.

The profiteering of Wall Street and the great corporations was an inevitable consequence of the market economy; but the populists hoped somehow to lop off the wealthy few at the top and keep their "property-owning democracy" in its primitive virtue.

The Populists also tended towards nationalism: immigration controls were one of their major demands, and they

made a lot of their hostility to British and Jewish bankers. (The US in the 19th century had a huge foreign debt).

But what led the Populists finally into being captured by the Democratic Party was their search for an economic quack remedy which would somehow give them an economy based

on individual profit without its oppressive capitalist consequences. They hit on the idea of bi-metallism.

The idea was this. The farmers were crippled by debts and high interest rates. They demanded that silver be coined for money, as well as

CONTINUED NEXT PAGE

Two sorts of democracy

FRIEDRICH Engels, writing in 1891, saw the USA as an example of the limitations of even the best capitalist democracy. At that time the USA did not even have a sizeable permanent state bureaucracy or standing army. Yet Engels saw a radical difference between the USA's democracy and the workers' democracy created in the Paris Commune, when the working class took power in Paris for two months in 1871.

NOWHERE do "politicians" form a more separate and powerful section of the nation than precisely in North America. There, each of the two major parties which alternately succeed each other in power is itself in turn controlled by people who make a business of politics, who speculate on seats in the legislative assemblies of the Union as well as of the separate states, or who make a living by carrying on agitation for their party and on its victory are rewarded with positions...

It is precisely in America that we see best how there takes place this process of the state power making itself independent in relation to society, whose mere instrument it was originally intended to be. Here there exists no dynasty, no nobility, no standing army, beyond the few men keeping watch on the Indians, no bureaucracy with permanent posts or the right to pensions. And nevertheless we find here two great gangs of political speculators, who alternately take possession of the state power and exploit it by the most corrupt means and for the most corrupt ends....

Against this transformation of the state and the organs of the state from servants of society into masters of society — an inevitable transformation in all previous states — the Commune made use of two infallible means. In the first place, it filled all posts — administrative, judicial and educational — by election on the basis of universal suffrage of all concerned, subject to the right of recall at any time by the same electors. And, in the second place, all officials, high or low, were paid only the wages received by other workers... In this way an effective barrier to place-hunting and careerism was set up, even apart from the binding mandates to delegates to representative bodies which were added besides.

This shattering of the former state power and its replacement by a new and truly democratic one is described in detail [by Marx].

From Engels' Introduction to 'The Civil War in France', by Karl Marx.



Franklin D Roosevelt co-opted working class militancy in the '30s with his 'New Deal' programme



William Jennings Bryan drew the late 19th century Populist movement under the Democrats' wing

gold, to increase the supply of money, make credit easier, and break the power of the banks.

The silver-mining capitalists supported this idea too, for their own reasons! And they built up a powerful lobby within the Democratic Party. By 1896 the 'Silver Democrats' had the upper hand, nominating William Jennings Bryan for president.

Bryan declared: "You come to us and tell us that the great cities are in favour of the gold standard: we reply that the great cities rest upon our broad and fertile prairies. Burn down your cities and leave our farms, and your cities will spring up again as if by magic; but destroy our farms and the grass will grow in the streets of every city in the country..."

Cross of gold

"Having behind us the producing masses of the nation... we will answer their demands for a gold standard by saying to them: You shall not press down upon the brow of labour this crown of thorns, you shall not crucify mankind upon a cross of gold."

That was enough for most of the Populists.

Bryan never won the presidency, but he did become Secretary of State under Woodrow Wilson in 1912. His last appearance in public life was to speak for the prosecution in the Scopes trial of 1925, in which a school teacher was indicted for teaching the theory of evolution, contrary to the Bible.

The remarkable thing is how many of Bryan's ideas — the vague identification with the 'producing masses', the praise for small-town virtues as against the big cities, the religious fundamentalism — are still alive, in diluted form, in US politics, even though today nearly 80% of the American people live in cities.

They can be found in Reagan's party, and were a theme of Goldwater's: "Sometimes I think this country would be better off if we could just saw off the Eastern seaboard and let it float out to sea."

The Republicans also had

their own infusion of populism, in a milder form, with the Progressive movement. Its themes were municipal reform, welfare measures, trust-busting, and imperialism.

Lenin defined imperialism as the monopoly stage of capitalism. The Progressives wanted imperialism without the monopolies. They presented themselves as champions of the nation and the common people — and, implicitly, of ordinary capitalism — against monopoly capitalism. But capitalism breeds monopolies like swamps breed disease.

They got the empire: the Philippines were made a US colony (after two years of war against the Filipinos); so was Puerto Rico. Cuba and Panama, and to varying extents much of Central America were made semi-colonies. But the trusts were not busted.

Theodore Roosevelt, Progressive Republican president in 1905-8, made a private agreement with the great JP Morgan business empire. The Morgan companies would cooperate with anti-trust investigations in return for a promise that they would not be harmed.

New Deal

By 1920 the Progressives had faded and both parties had become solidly conservative. But their talent for absorbing and deflecting radicalism had not been exhausted.

In 1932 Franklin D Roosevelt won the presidency for the Democrats with a campaign criticising the Republican, Herbert Hoover, as a spendthrift. But — under the pressure of the great slump of the '30s, when millions were living in shanty-towns round the cities of the US — he proved, paradoxically, more radical in office than he promised. The New Deal was pushed through, with big public-spending programmes, public works, and welfare measures.

The working class won some benefits from the New Deal. More important, however, was that the New Deal Democrats managed to absorb the most promising moves yet by the US

working class towards independent politics.

The US trade union movement expanded enormously and waged huge struggles in the mid-'30s; but it never got to the point of forming its own labour party. Many factors led to that result, including the policy of the Communist Party, which still had the reputation of a genuinely revolutionary party but in fact had been corrupted and diverted by Stalinism. The result, however, was that yet another move for radical politics had been absorbed, via the ideology of populism, into the existing system.

Soon enough the Democratic Party was once again solidly conservative. A Democratic president dropped the atom bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, opened the Cold War, and sent US troops to Korea.

Black revolt

A Democratic Congress passed the anti-union Taft-Hartley Act in 1947.

Through all the apparently radical phases of the Democratic Party, its most solid voting base had been the white racists of the South. Insofar as blacks had got to vote at all, they had mostly been for the Republicans. But the Democrats' most recent operation in absorbing popular protest has been in the black communities. They are counting on a huge majority of the black vote for Walter Mondale.

The process began in 1948, when Strom Thurmond (now a Republican) led a Southern Democrat split to form a "States' Rights" party. But as late as 1960 the Democratic candidate — Kennedy — still had his major base in the South.

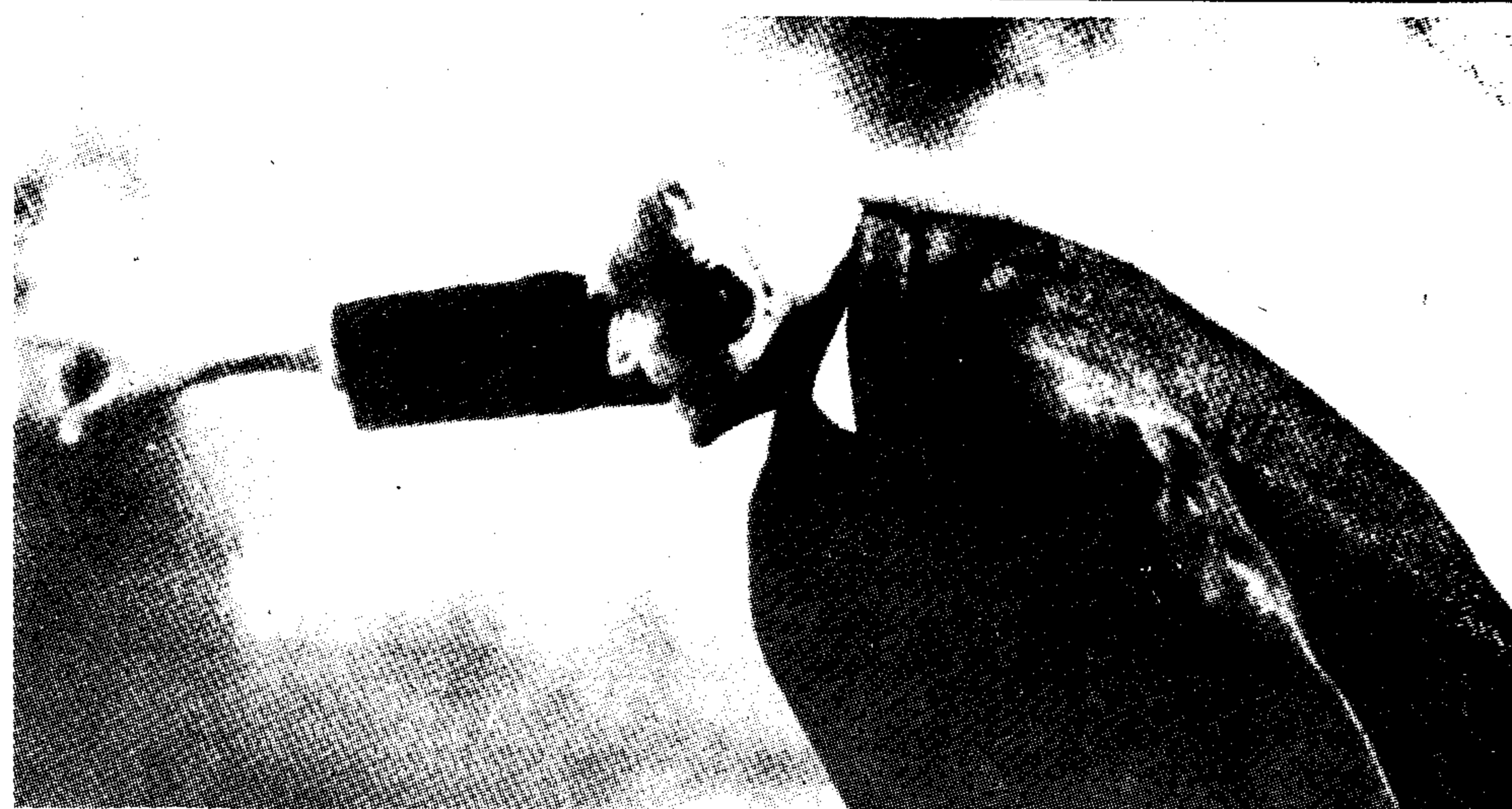
It was only in 1964, after great struggles had forced the Democratic administration to do something about implementing civil rights for blacks, that the black vote swung over to the Democrats and the Southern white racist vote to the Republicans.

Class politics

Part of the reason for the character of US politics is the elaborate system of checks and balances built into the constitution by its 18th century authors, who feared strong centralised government. The president can obstruct Congress, Congress can obstruct the president, the Supreme Court can obstruct both, and the individual states can obstruct any federal decision. The end result is that change can be brought about only by very militant campaigns — such as the blacks waged in the 1960s — or by behind-the-scenes consensus in the ruling class. Electoral politics is merely the means for gaining consent to whatever has already been decided, and for deciding which contender gets the spoils of office.

But Britain is not so much different. And the leaders of the Labour Party — with all their talk about "common sense" and "the national interest" — use the same sort of debased populism as their stock-in-trade as do US politicians. Our advantage is that the Labour Party, through its trade union connections, is anchored to something other than the career ambitions of its leaders.

Many Labour leaders would like to let slip that anchor. Our job is not only to stop them doing that, but to tip them overboard, and fight for a leadership that will represent class politics.



Eugene Debs got nearly one million votes as Socialist candidate for president in 1912. But the US working class is still crippled politically by not having a party.



No choice for workers

Martin Thomas looks at the Reagan/Mondale contest, and its lessons for us in the Labour Party

TAKE your pick. Any one of a dozen features of the US Republican Party's recent convention was enough to condemn the leading party in the world's richest, oldest capitalist democracy.

It could be their commercial for Ronald Reagan: brought up with small-town virtues and "pro-defence, pro-America, anti-socialism and anti-liberalism". It could be the Republican platform, with its call for the death penalty, for a ban on abortions, and for a return to the economics of the early '30s by putting the dollar back on the gold standards.

Or it could be the well-heeled delegates' wild cheers for every reference to the US invasion of Grenada.

The way the Republican Party presented itself could almost make you think that the Democrats must be better — or at least the lesser evil.

In fact there is little difference between Democrats and Republicans.

Jimmy Carter's Democratic administration launched the new Cold War and the new military build-up long before Reagan took over. The plans to site Cruise and Pershing missiles in Europe, and the US involvement in El Salvador, both date back to Carter's time, as does the Rapid Deployment Force for the Middle East.

The Democratic platform now differs from Reagan's policies mostly in tone and emphasis. It is thoroughly conservative on social questions.

Or look back to 1964. The Republican candidate was Barry Goldwater, a self-proclaimed right wing extremist ("extremism in the defence of liberty is no vice").

Radicals were particularly alarmed by Goldwater's call to extend the US war in Vietnam (then relatively low-key) and bomb North Vietnam.

But what did the Democrats do?

Lyndon B. Johnson — who became president after John F. Kennedy's assassination in 1963 — had already sent US bombers over North Vietnam in August 1964. After his reelection as president, he massively increased the bombing. In May 1965 US combat troops (as distinct from 'military advisers') were officially sent to Vietnam. By the middle of 1968 there were over half a million US troops there.

The Democrats and the Republicans, in short, are exactly the same sort of party. They both represent the bosses and bankers who rule America. At any given time one will present itself as more liberal, and the other as more conservative, for the purposes of electoral competition. Sometimes candidates are liberal when campaigning in one state and conservative in another — for example, Gary Hart in the contest for the Democratic candidacy.

Generally the Democrats claim to be the liberals. But that means very little.

Neil Kinnock

Elections in Britain are less of a sham. But it is only a matter of degree. And Neil Kinnock's moves to reduce the role of the trade unions in the Labour party and to transform the party into more of a personality-oriented election-winning machine bring us closer to the US situation.

For it is the trade union base of the Labour Party which decisively distinguishes it from parties like the US Democratic Party. That may be difficult to believe when we look at the rows of grey-suited, grey-minded bureaucrats at Labour Party conference, but it is true.

Trade unions, however conservative, are firmly rooted in the working class. However sluggish their internal life, they cannot avoid some

concern for debating as policies, from the view of the working class rather than just devising formulas which can attract support because they satisfy "the people".

general, all classes to This or that radical at this or that time to save the Labour Party degeneration if its line the unions were cut.

Showbiz

Capitalist politics at to some extent an endupery, and the U highest stage of capitalism in this respect. A better population than any other in the world long tradition of quite a democratic rig duces something scarcely politics at, specialised branch of

The Democratic co in several days of pro had just four hours of of political debate; the lican, none at all.

The democratic p politics is a matter of the right phrases and the right formulas this or that candidate

Roosevelt had h Deal". Truman h Deal". Kennedy h Frontier', LBJ h Society'. It is a b advertising, not po Britain the equivalent be Saatchi and Mrs. Thatcher's taking over the Co Party.

It is very little to deciding serious policy. Those are c behind the scenes ruling few.

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



Socialist Organiser weekend school

An eye-opener

ki and Cilla from Rhode-Notts., spoke to Jean

WAS really good and interesting. We picked up one or two things we didn't know. Like the film on gays and lesbians. That was a real eye-opener, that one. When they said 'weekend school', I was dreading it a bit, because I thought it would be blackboards and easels, sitting around discussing. Now I would come again. I'm sure a lot of people would find out a thing or two. They came to these schools. Issues are related to social and the labour movement, but when you're in a village the topic of conversation is just the strike. You go into other issues.

A wider insight

Brett, Bevercotes NUM, Gillespie, Thoresby NUM, Mick McAlorum, Bevercotes NUM, spoke to Alan

did you come to the school?

Mick said there was a place to come down, and I got the chance to see support we have down

and find some of the things I'd asked about a bit over my head because this is the first I've been politically involved. But it hasn't put me off at all. It has made me determined that trade unionists should get together and get the Tories and get a socialist society.

I've found the school very informative, and I've enjoyed it, because a lot of the ideas are based in my heart.

of the workshops did you enjoy most?

The one on the South Wales unions, because it gave me an insight into what unions are like in other countries compared to Britain. It is a large trade union movement throughout the country and a lot of socialists.

The ones I enjoyed most were the Irish one and the one on France 1968 general

father was an Irish Protestant and I've always believed in Ireland for the Irish. But I've learned things here that I didn't know before about the situation in Ireland.

the Catholics had to live with — the British government — how it oppressed them — how they had two different Protestant business and only one for a Catholic. The skilled jobs are mostly by the Protestants and the Catholics.

what made me most interested about the problems that the miners face is that when you look to the streets in a peaceful Civil Rights march the RUC just waded in with the truncheons. They went through. They went through now in a peaceful struggle in the streets so I can understand the problems in Belfast.

Focus on the miners



Kim Hickling, a miners' wife from Notts, spoke in the opening plenary

AN enjoyable and successful three days of workshops, discussions, films and social activities, together with fun events for the kids, took place over the Bank Holiday weekend.

Special emphasis was given to the miners' strike, with plenary sessions introduced by miners and by women involved in the wives' support committees, and by comrades involved in the monitoring of police violence on the picket lines.

There were workshops on the history of the South Wales miners, on the 1926 General Strike and other related topics.

Other themes covered in workshops were the oppression of women, and the history of women's involvement in the labour movement. This led to a practical focus, completed with a discussion about the work in the Women Against Pit Closures groups.

Workshops on basic Marxism looked at the ideas and work of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Trotsky, while the work and concerns of Marxists today were dealt with in workshops on contemporary imperialism and third world capitalism.

Vidya Anand from the London Labour Party Regional Executive was invited along to discuss the politics of Ken Livingstone and the GLC.

Finally a workshop on racism discussed the continuing campaign of the Newham 7 — Asian youths arrested in April and charged with conspiracy for defending themselves and their community from white thugs — and made a call to set up local defence campaigns and to

Bryan Edmands reports

support the picket outside the court where the seven are due to make an appearance on September 14.

Something over 100 people turned up over the weekend, including a number of miners and their families.

A dozen of those who were fairly new readers of Socialist Organiser decided to make a firm commitment to building the Socialist Organiser Alliance, and to join in the fight to carry out its central task of arming workers with revolutionary Marxism so as to transform the labour movement.

So if all that sounds interesting (which it was!) and you missed it then keep an eye out for future SO events — and better still, if you haven't done so already, how about making a firm commitment to becoming a Socialist Organiser supporter?



Speakers at the school (from top): Susan Carlyle, Paul Whetton (Notts miners' rank and file strike committee), and Judith Bonner



Pool our ideas - build a movement

MOST people at this weekend school have discussed and debated a whole range of ideas about the tasks that face us as working class socialists and about how we should organise. We have learnt much of different struggles — of women, of gays, the working class in struggle — and how and why we must be a part of those struggles.

At the moment, when we look around us, we can see that people are far more open to socialist ideas and are looking for answers and ways of organising against the harshness of class society, for basic democratic rights. Much of this has obviously been generated by the miners' strike.

If we look at just what that strike has generated, one thing which comes out most clearly is that there is an overall feeling of wanting change. People are looking for answers to combat unemployment, nuclear weapons.

The question is: how do we get that change. The miners' strike has tested all sections of the organised labour movement.

Judith Bonner spoke in the closing session of the weekend school

Clearly it has exposed those that pretend to be the leaders of the working class.

The miners' strike has also tested the work, ability and ideas of revolutionaries. Now we must address some questions to ourselves as Socialist Organiser supporters.

What has been our contribution? How successful have we been in our day to day work to create solidarity and in helping with the miners' fightback?

Have we properly lived up to one of the basic principles on which we organise — anti-sectarianism? Basically that means a refusal to be content to stand on the sidelines of the workers' movement, chanting good socialist slogans and a determination to be a part of that movement.

I think, and I hope others share this thought, that Socialist Organiser has made a valuable contribution and we

will fight to continue to do so. Leaving false modesty aside, I think the truth is that our ability to organise and contribute has been second to none.



Week one of the strike

As we saw in the discussion about what happened in France during the general strike of 1968 and afterwards, people go a long way in terms of political development in a very short time just as they are

doing in the course of today's great struggle, the miners' strike.

Often they will quite spontaneously throw up their own forms of organising. Women Against Pit Closures for example, which has created whole networks of organisation for child minding, for distribution of food and so on.

We want to maintain the way we are organising, maintain those freedoms we have discovered, like women being able to get out of the home, and more democratic ways of organising. NUM branches have been revitalised by the strike but they get stuck, they cannot see how it is going to be done. Revolutionaries can often make an impact here because we go beyond the here and now.

But, and it is a big but, often when revolutionaries could literally find themselves having a huge impact we find ourselves overstretched because of our small numbers, as in France in 1968 where the Trotskyists were far too small and overstretched to

keep the momentum and dynamic of class struggle moving.

That is beyond our control. We can only hope to keep those ideas — feelings of wanting change — alive by drawing in more people committed to their class, committed to fighting for change and wanting to share their experience, ideas, and the lessons of their mistakes, with other people.

Judge us and criticise us on the basis of our day to day work. It is on that basis that I ask you to join with us in the task of building that class struggle organisation.

We have a whole wealth of experience in this room — the organisation of the unemployed, the fight against racism, a record in the struggles of women, people who every day of their lives are faced with the harsh realities of class society and want to change it.

We need to pool the richness of our ideas, our experiences and our struggle and in doing so go out and shake up the labour movement.

Boycott in S. Africa

SCENES of terrible police violence against protestors, the detention of leaders of the United Democratic Front and the Natal Indian Congress, the arrest of scores of other radicals, the banning of anti-election meetings and posters — such was the familiar South African backdrop to its new elections.

Asians and Coloureds have been given the vote for their own racially-defined parliaments, though they remain strictly subordinate to the white parliament, and all three parliaments have now been strictly subordinated to the white Executive President.

The mass of Africans have been granted no political rights. The violence and arrests were apartheid's response to a highly successful and militant boycott campaign.

On Wednesday the 'coloured' (i.e. 'mixed' race) community were to vote for their 80 seats in the 'House of Representatives'. Nationwide under 30% of registered voters turned out, and although it was illegal not to register only about 60% of those entitled registered.

Registered

The vote was particularly low among the one million Coloured around Cape Town, where only 10% of those registered voted, and only 40% registered.

Thus the representative for Table Mountain constituency was elected to his £24,000 a year job with just 118 votes. The Coloureds in this area form the working class of South Africa's second-largest city, and are well organised in trade unions which campaigned energetically for a boycott.

The official winners in the Coloured election were the Coloured Labour Party, led by the Rev. Allan Hendrickse. His line is to 'attack apartheid from within'.

He has certain radical credentials: he was detained for 60 days around the Soweto uprisings of 1976, and in 1977 he rejected power-sharing because Africans were excluded.

However, his is a bourgeois party, committed to 'evolutionary politics'. Its slogan is 'Forward in Faith'. Hendrickse's position is that "you must not only look from a black perspective, but from a white perspective as well. What is a small step for us as part of the oppressed is a gigantic leap for the privileged people in power".

Although Hendrickse cites Lenin to justify participation in the system, there is little prospect that he and his party will use their new-found position for anything but limited reforms and winning privileges for themselves. It is reported that the Coloured Labour Party has already set up its own private army with apartheid's blessing.

Bob Fine looks at the recent elections for Coloured and Indian 'parliaments'

The Indian elections were held on Tuesday August 28. The turnout of registered voters was even lower than among the Coloureds, though a much higher proportion of Indians was registered.

The Indian community has highly organised political groupings radically opposed to participation in the elections, especially the Natal and Transvaal Indian Congresses. 30% of its population of 870,000 live below the poverty line, but it also has a very wealthy stratum, providing the base for the two main parties which participated in the election — Solidarity and the National People's Party.

Both of these seem to be quite reactionary, and have worked with the police in beating up anti-election protestors.

Practically all radical opinion in South Africa has been in favour of boycotting the elections. That includes all sections of the non-racial trade union movement; the United Democratic Front, which espouses the African National Congress's Freedom Charter; and the Black Consciousness National Forum.

For the UDF and Black Consciousness, boycott of elections under apartheid tends to be an absolute principle. The trade unions' objection was more specific: they are concerned about the divisive effects among workers of giving the vote to Coloureds and Asians but not to the African majority.

The boycott of these elections, in my opinion, was both right and successful, but it is important not to make a fetish out of boycott. It is only one method of struggle.

Trade unions

Within the black workers' movement, there are some who are beginning to think about how the new parliaments might be effectively used, and what the minimal conditions of entry should be (e.g. admission of Africans). Among nationalists, the boycott is sacrosanct, and the struggle for liberation is absolutely counterposed to the struggle for reforms. A statement from the Azanian People's Organisation is characteristic: "I've learned to fear reforms because it always happens that behind reforms there is repression. We are not interested in reforms. We want liberation".

The workers' movement, by contrast, has shown on the economic level that reforms can be a weapon for the oppressed and not merely for the oppressors. It now needs to carry this principle over to the political level.

Teachers' victory

By Ian McCalman

TEACHERS in Strathclyde have scored a signal victory against attempted intimidation by their employers, Strathclyde Regional Council. The teachers, led by the main union, the Educational Institute of Scotland (EIS) are engaged in a wages campaign to gain an independent salaries review. The first stage is a ban on all curriculum development.

The Labour-dominated Regional Council supports such a review, but has refused a formal joint approach to the government on the unacceptable grounds that the union should first abandon any form of industrial action.

The council then went on the offensive, ordering Edward Miller, the Director of Education to send the schools a letter claiming that the teachers' action constituted "breaches of contract" and threatening to dock the pay of teachers who took such action.

The teachers' response was instant. As soon as teachers were threatened with docking of pay, their colleagues walked out and sympathy strikes spread in schools throughout the region.

By Thursday over 20 schools were on strike, protests at the regional council offices were becoming a daily occurrence. In a few schools, pupils sent home committed a number of acts of vandalism and unrest spread to the Labour Party.

Glasgow District Labour Party unanimously passed a resolution calling for the withdrawal of the provocative letter. Labour Party members were appalled that the letter had been approved by a 41-11 vote at the Labour Group meeting and there was much talk of "MacGregor-style" management in the region.

The result of these pressures has been to extract from the Regional Council an agreement which effectively nullifies the consortia proposals, accepts withdrawal of the Director of Education's letter, and should enhance the confidence and militancy of the members for the struggle ahead.

YORKSHIRE HISTORY WORKSHOP

YORKSHIRE History Workshop are organising a weekend school/conference as part of an attempt to make working class history relevant and accessible to working class people.

It will be held at Northern College, Barnsley, on 14-16 September. Sessions will range from 'Unemployed labour camps in Britain, 1929-39', 'The Easter Rising of 1916', and 'The Women's Cooperative Guilds' to 'Orwell in Barnsley'.

Total cost for half board is £16, non-residents £5, strikers free. For further information contact Robbie Roberts, 4 Albion Terrace, Barnsley, South Yorks.



NALGO must back NUM

THE local government workers' union NALGO will be one of the crucial voting blocs in the TUC debate on the miners' strike. Ann Crowder, a member of the NALGO delegation, gave us her personal opinion:

"The TUC should give full support to the miners, both financial and physical. It is vital that delegates support those amendments, like the FTAT one calling for a 24 hour general strike, that would give the miners real support.

The NALGO delegation could play a crucial role. The right wing union leaders are hoping to get support from NALGO after a successful move to call a national conference on the issue before donating any more money to the NUM.

In fact there has been a tremendous response among NALGO members to the miners' strike, and the 50 branches who pushed for the special conference are not representative of NALGO as a whole.

The delegation meets on the Sunday before the TUC, and should decide to support the resolutions and amendments backing the miners."

BR: Electrification plus profits

By Rob Dawber

THE government's approval of a £306 million electrification scheme for the London-Edinburgh route or the East Coast Main Line (ECML) is being presented to BR staff as a vote of confidence in us of which we should be proud.

Like hell, we should!

It is true that the unions have been pressing hard for electrification for a long time as the logical next step for an efficient railway system.

Electrification is one thing. The electrification planned by the Tory government is another.

Diesel locomotives are long overdue for replacement. Consequently maintenance becomes a larger and larger part of their running costs. Diesel is a relatively expensive fuel. It is less efficient than centrally generated electricity.

Electric locomotives are generally more powerful. And there is of course the argument that the capital investment involved in electrification — overhead cables, catenary (i.e. overhead structures), new rolling stock and locomotives — would provide work for railworkers, increase demand for steelworkers and (maybe) coal to produce electricity.

This last argument was part of the basis of the relaunched Triple Alliance. (You remember the Triple Alliance? It used to have a fellow called Bill Sirs in it).

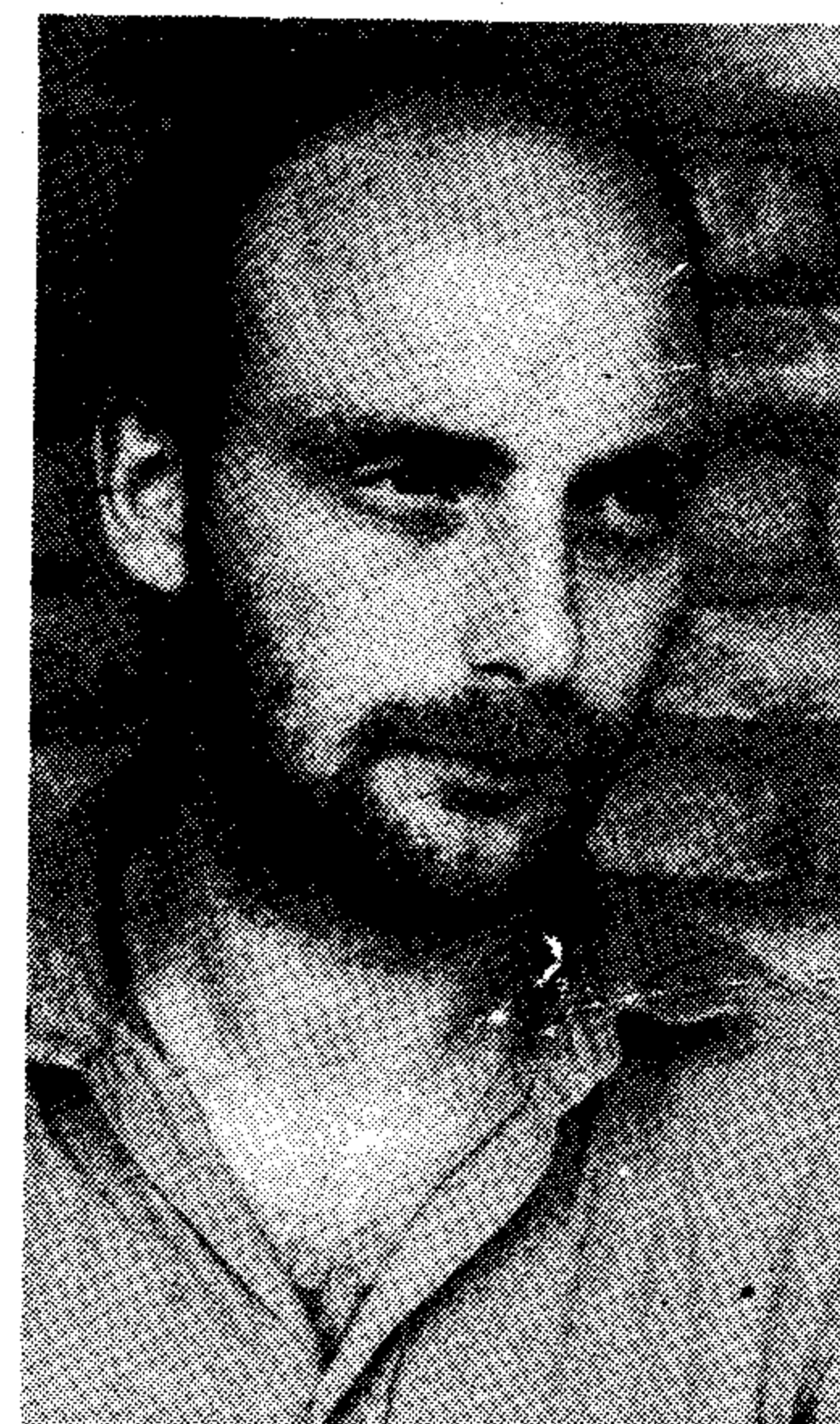
In short, electric locomotives are cheaper and fuel and maintenance.

Now most of these arguments commend themselves to the government. The Tories are all in favour of greater efficiency, and reducing costs. They are even in favour of providing work. But to the private sector.

So they have approved this £306 million scheme for the ECML in a way that signals not a boost for the railways but its continuing rundown. I'll explain.

The government has not given BR £306 million to spend on electrification but "allowed" it to find it from its own resources. That means that the £8 million profit that BR showed last year is not enough. Even though the £306 million is spread over seven years to 1991, completion, the money will have to be found by cutting and running down.

The biggest line threatened is the Sheffield-London leaving only local services. Other services and jobs will be cut to find the money.



stock.

The £62 million for 31 locomotives is already split between BREL and the private company Brush. And when the whole thing is finished that 7% profit will make it ripe for privatisation.

Announcing the electrification scheme, BR chair Bob — MacGregor — Reid spelled out what they are demanding of rail workers "in return".

"We have to do three things:

1. We have to meet the revenue targets we have set ourselves.

2. We must continue to reduce costs throughout the whole of our business by improving productivity.

3. We must satisfy our customers by providing reliable services and the standards of care they rightly expect.

By these means we shall make sure we have the cash to fund the scheme. However, we will undoubtedly have to cut back if our income and expenditure fail to come up to expectations.

No one wishes that. So I hope those who are supporting the NUM strike by denying our coal and steel customers a reliable rail service will consider the long term damage that their 'support' is doing to our industry and our reputation with customers."

In other words if you don't do whatever management asks you'll make it more difficult for them to carry this particular project through.

We want electrification, yes. But not at the price of the rest of the industry and not on our backs. And not as part of preparation for privatisation.

Women for peace

September's 10-day women's peace action, initiated by the Greenham Common women, was given a boost last week when Derbyshire County Council granted its 25,000 women workers time off to take part in the peace action.

Any time taken off to take part in the "10 million women for ten days" peace festival scheduled for September 20-30, however, will be treated as unpaid leave.

Approaches have been made to other Labour councils and trade unions by the Greenham peace camp's London office for a similar response.

Women throughout Europe are expected to take part in peace actions over the ten day

period with numerous gatherings, vigils and hoped-for strikes planned — timed to coincide with NATO's annual military manoeuvres which include 57,000 part-time territorial army soldiers as well as regulars, who are being released from their jobs to take part in the war games.

Transport is now being arranged by various women's groups in Britain to travel to Greenham Common for women wishing to spend time at the peace camp over the peace action period.

Any women interested should contact their local women's group or telephone the Greenham women's London office on 01-833-2831.

A QUESTION OF SOLIDARITY

Independent Trade Unions in South Africa



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Back Lairds sit-in

THE OCCUPATION at Cammell Lairds shipyard, Birkenhead, goes on, and has been extended into a 24-hour, around-the-clock sit-in.

Last week management announced its intention to sack all the workers involved in the occupation. Following that a mass picket was organ-

ised as part of an escalation of the fight.

The mass picket was held on Tuesday August 28, and drew together about 200 local trade unionists, people organised by the local unemployed centre, and a lot of miners. Miners came from North Wales, Lancashire, and other areas.

The pickets were met by about 200 back-to-work campaigners, led by a Cammell Lairds version of Silver Birch. But the mass picket was successful. The back-to-workers were shouted down, and management was forced to advise its workers to take the day off and go home.

It was then that the occupation was extended into a 24 hour one. The next challenge will obviously be management slapping writs on the workers from the High Court. They have been snooping around trying to identify people, with the probable intention of deciding who to put the writ on.

People are needed to defend the occupation if or when management goes to the courts. Birkenhead unemployed centre are compiling lists of people who can be called on to join the occupation to defend it when the threat comes. The occupation needs active support and solidarity now more than ever.

Drop the charges against Clive Ponting!

CLIVE Ponting is not exactly the image of a subversive. A top civil servant in the Ministry of Defence, he was awarded the Order of the British Empire in 1979.

But now he, like Sarah Tisdall earlier this year, has fallen foul of the Official Secrets Act, and could be jailed.

Ponting leaked documents which showed that the government had been lying to Parliament about the sinking of the Argentine ship, the Belgrano.

The Official Secrets Act here is protecting nothing but the government's political position. It should be scrapped. Clive Ponting should be freed.



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

A miner's appeal to the dockers

UNITY!

Dear Brothers,

Your dispute is, like ours, in defence of jobs. You have the sympathy, respect and support of every striking miner.

Everybody knows that the Tory government and the port employers have targeted the National Dock Labour Scheme. Indeed, one government minister has recently said so in public. The first chance they get, they will move to destroy the National Dock Labour Scheme and the job security built into it and maintained and defended for many decades by the struggles and sacrifices of port workers.

We miners know that this is why dockers are not in a mood to give them an inch or to let non-dockers do any dockers' work. You have our complete support.

We also appreciate the solidarity dockers have extended to the striking miners over the last months and are giving us now.

I want to suggest the following points for your consideration. I am secretary of the Notts miners' rank and file strike committee, and it seems to me — speaking in a personal capacity — that miners and dockers are now fighting or getting ready to fight on different fronts of the same war to resist the attacks of this Tory government, the most brutal, insensitive, unashamedly middle-class and vindictively anti-working class government which has ruled Britain since the Second World War. It seems pretty certain to me that the British Steel Corporation would not risk a national dock strike unless they have agreement from Thatcher's government or are acting on Thatcher's instructions. In any case, we face a common enemy and therefore we need to establish the closest links.

Together with other sections of the working class, but if necessary on our own, dockers and miners can beat the government hollow.

The points and suggestions I want to ask you to consider are these.

1. If you decide today to strike, we need to coordinate the action of striking port workers and striking miners. The best way to do this would be immediately to set up — in areas where that is practicable

action committees. We should also invite railworkers' and seafarers' representatives to join them. Rail and sea solidarity has been a great help to us in our strike.

2. We — militants, shop stewards and branch officials — should agree to argue in our respective industries for a miners/dockers alliance, and an agreement to stick together until we have both won.

3. For miners this means, first and foremost, defeating the pit closure schemes of the Coal Board and the government, and winning a shorter working week.

4. For dockers it should first and foremost mean the fight to stop anyone else doing even the smallest job that is now registered dockers' work.

But in my opinion it should mean more. It should mean a fight to extend the National Dock Labour Scheme to all the important unregistered ports.

As you know, in the last 15 years the pattern of trade has shifted to the disadvantage of ports like Liverpool and the now-closed-down Manchester Ship Canal, to ports like Felixstowe. It is this shift that has convinced the Tories that they can move, now or soon, to scrap the National Dock Labour Scheme.

So it must be one of two things. *Either* the Dock Labour Scheme will be extended to the ports which are growing and developing. *Or* the growth of those ports will mean the weakening, and ultimately risk the destruction, of the National Dock Labour Scheme.

Text of an appeal from Paul Whetton, secretary of the Notts miners' rank and file strike committee (in a personal capacity), distributed at the TGWU docks delegate meeting on Friday 24th

If you were to decide to fight to extend the National Dock Labour Scheme now, I'm sure you could count on the active support of the entire community of striking miners, and of course of other workers like the railworkers.

As well as that, portworkers, like miners, and like the whole working class, face the scourge of unemployment, which imposes terrible suffering on our working class communities and undermines trade unionism. May I suggest that you need to fight for a shorter working week, immedi-

ately? This is one of the NUM's official negotiating demands in our six-months-old strike (though you'd never know it from the media coverage).

We need a joint fight for a shorter working week.

5. British Steel will try to get coal out of Hunterston. If they do, it will not only be a blow to the miners, but also to the dockers. What can we do about it?

We can stop them. The best way to do that would be to occupy the port of Hunterston, or the ship itself. It will be far more difficult to stop the coal when they get out of the port area. Here is a common activity where miners and dockers can and should immediately coordinate our efforts.

Those are my main proposals. They may seem to some of you 'extreme'. If they are, they are 'extreme' proposals to meet extreme

conditions. We miners have been on strike six months. It has been a long and bitter strike. In this industrial climate, the choice workers face is either to fight strikes seriously and all-out, or face defeat.

Isolation and only limited solidarity has made the miners' strike a prolonged and bitter ordeal for miners and their families. We must face the fact that we can't win and defend our basic interests unless we fight the many and varied attacks of this government as seriously as Mrs Thatcher fights us, and with as much commitment.

United, dockers and miners can massively augment and increase each others' strength. We must unite. Unity will bring us victory.

Thank you, brothers, for your attention.

Yours sincerely,
PAUL WHETTON
Secretary, Notts miners' rank and file strike committee



Silverwood colliery: the pit entrance barricaded with supermarket trolleys, cars and wood. (Photo: John Harris, IFL)

FUND

THE COLLECTION at the Socialist Organiser school last week — see page 10 — raised £248.30 — of which half went to miners' strike funds, and half to our fund to enable us to get proper premises.

Other donations for the premises fund include: £5 Ivan Wells, £10 Simon Pottinger, £15 Andy Bennett, £15 Brian O'Neill, and £100 Cheung Siu Ming.

That makes our total so far £369.15. We still have to raise £1630.85.

At the same time we need to keep up regular fund-raising, especially to finance our work round the miners' strike. But we have only £15 for that this week — £4 Tony Serjeant, £5 Jim Denham, £1 Richard Bayley, and £5 Tom Cashman.

Please send donations to us at 214 Sickert Court, London N1.