

Socialist Organiser

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"The movement has to learn that if we stop running they won't chase us. Stand firm and fight".

Mick McGahey

TUC: GREEN LIGHT FOR SOLIDARITY

Now act for the miners!

MINERS ASK
ALL
TRADES' UNIONISTS
TO JOIN US IN OUR
FIGHT TO SAVE
JOBS



**We're
in the
driving
seat**

Dennis Skinner speaking outside the TUC.

IT'S been a long way to Brighton Pier — 26 weeks in which the miners and their families have struggled against the most terrible odds in any industrial dispute since the end of the Second World War.

When they make sacrifices of that kind, we cannot settle for small mercies, from the TUC or anybody else.

This road to Brighton Pier has been littered with the bodies of two of our miners, killed as a result of violence

on the picket lines. But to hear the media talk, you wouldn't know that it had happened.

There are men now lying in hospitals as a result of the violence meted out by Mrs Thatcher's Gestapo, her private army, the police force.

And yet we had the ludicrous situation only a few days ago when one of the leading members of the Establishment, Lord White-law, was rolling about with his gun in his hand, like a maniac, shooting people. Why

haven't they hounded him?

They've not hounded him because he's part of the Establishment — and they have different rules for the Establishment as against the workers. That's the reason.

The score

We've come down here to tell the TUC what the score is. We're not begging, we're not pleading, we'll never get on our knees. We're telling the TUC just exactly what they have to do.

The rank and file have

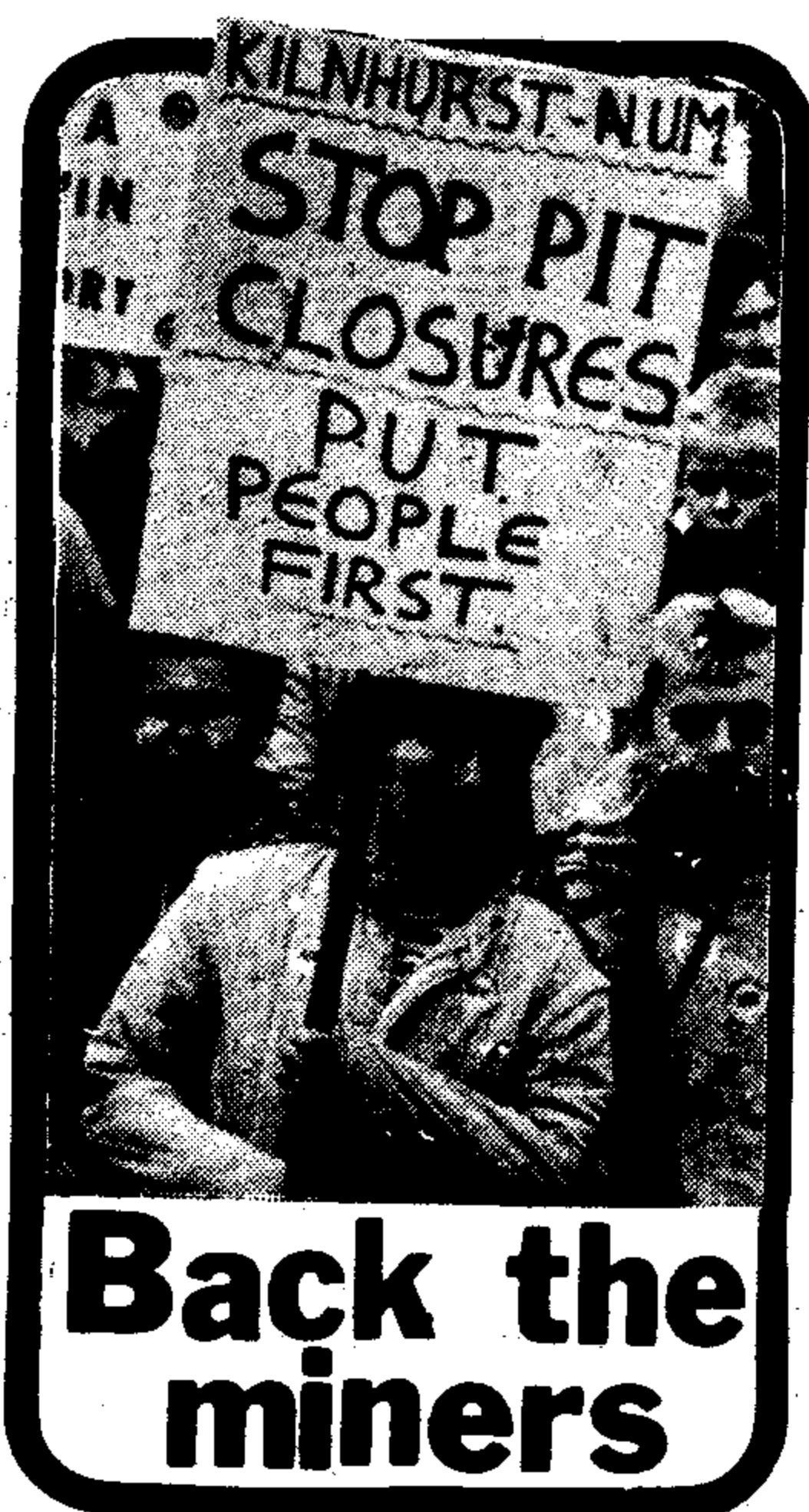
been marvellous right throughout this dispute. In every town and city in this land, the Trades Councils and the Labour Parties and other left wing organisations have helped the miners and their families to survive. It's been a marvellous experience, one that we've been proud to live through.

One group of workers had to make a stand, and I'm proud that it came from the mining industry. Now, as a result of your great efforts, 54 million tons of coal have not been mined, since the

overtime ban began; and we only started with 53 million tons of stock.

We've passed the point of no return. We're now in the driving seat, and the Establishment know it.

We'll remember 1984 for all the Big Brother tactics on the picket line; but we'll also remember 1984 as the year when the miners scored a historic victory on behalf of the whole working class. We're going for gold, silver and bronze. The miners united will never be defeated.



Police tell jailed miner 'Help a frame-up, and we'll let you off'

'The police offered to drop charges against me if I would incriminate Albert Bowns', reports Ernie Warner from Kiveton Park NUM. Ernie has already faced picketing charges. Along with another three men from Kiveton Park, he was held in Lincoln Jail in May. Through the High Court he is now challenging the illegal road blocks preventing miners picketing Notts pits.

I was picketing with another man at the quiet gate the first morning that scabs were due to arrive. A car drew up in the pit yard as we were walking along, but it sped off as soon as we appeared. It turned out that the BBC were filming at the time and I was holding a pick-axe from the yard that I'd found.

I waited while my friend went off to summon some more pickets, after which Albert Bowns arrived in his car with Pete Bainbridge and we chatted to the camera crew.

I was showing them how a bolt securing the gate had been sawn right through. Then in a matter of 30 seconds, four or five transit loads of police sped into the yard, doors flew open and one of them shouted at me: "Why are you intimidating people?"

He pushed me into the back of Albert's car, slinging tools, etc., on top of me.

The Inspector in charge, Sykes, went off his head abusing us, slapping Pete round the face

saying "I'll break your back, you bastard", and then having a go at Albert. All they'd done



was arrive at the yard.

It was just pure aggravation on their part. It's also all on film.

I was taken away and kept in jail for 40 hours. The majority of the time I was in solitary, but while I was questioned I was pushed around.

The questioning was vile — they offered deals to wipe the slate clean of all pending

charges if I would incriminate Albert Bowns, who was also being held. They tried to catch me out about what Albert could be doing — they obviously want to do him.

With the others arrested that day it was just the same. The chief upstairs could 'fix' it as long as we were prepared to stitch Albert up.

They had to let him go because of lack of evidence, but we've all got to go to court again and they've kept his brief case and possessions, so who knows what they will come up with.

They've had police watching his house from the field opposite; you can't move for police in the village. We've had 3,000 police for 2,000 pickets and there are only 4,000 people living in Kiveton altogether.

I'm now bailed on conditions which prevent me picketing my own pit. Prior to this I had conditions which prevented me picketing anywhere but my own place of work, following road block arrests.

Class law

NOTTS striking miner Brian Reed experienced the balance of British justice at first hand last week, when he was picketing at Sutton. A scab got out of his car, hit him twice, then drove off. When asked why they didn't arrest the scab, the police replied 'civil offence'. 'If I did the same to him, would that be a civil offence?' 'No', came back the reply, 'we would do you'.

HOW do the police get a miner who's found not guilty? Answer: threaten them with a criminal record in advance, so they agree to be bound over. Whatever then happens, they'll be inhibited from picketing and demonstrating.

This insidious tactic couldn't be plainer from the section below of a solicitor's letter to a Notts miner (who has asked to remain anonymous):

"We confirm that at the hearing of your case in the Worksop Magistrates Court on 19 July, 1984 the Police offered no evidence in relation to the two charges you face and you were found Not Guilty.

"Following your agreement you were bound over to keep the peace and be of good behaviour for a period of 12 months in the sum of £100. This means that if you are not convicted of any offences during the next 12 months you will not have to pay any money but if you are convicted of an offence during that period the Magistrates who deal with you on the next occasion may order you to pay all or part of the £100 figure set by the Magistrates on 19 July 1984.

Feeding miners' families

How many children do you feed?

It varies from day to day with school holidays, but between 70 and 100. The smaller children come with their parents. We do fast food because that's what the kids want and it's the most popular. We don't want any waste.

Are these funds you raise in your village?

These are what we raised when we went down to London and we're supplementing what we get from the Education Authority. We went to Cash and Carry to buy things and we spent just under £98 but we hadn't got nearly enough for a week's supply of food, just a few fish fingers, hamburgers, chips etc. So you see we do have to supplement it to provide enough.

Could you talk about how you do the dinners?

The first week we hadn't anywhere to cook, so we cooked in Vicki's kitchen and carried it up to school and then the council said that we could have Valley Comprehensive School and they put so many kitchen staff in with the cookers. So two of us go up there and help prepare the meals and then they all go in Vicki's car and transport it to Rhodesia in those big containers.

Anne Burrell and Yvonne Gregoyle from Rhodesia, Notts, spoke to Susan Carlyle.

How is it working out for the dinner women?

They're getting half their normal wage, so they are giving part of their service on a voluntary basis, which is part of supporting the strike, you could say.

There's a dinner lady in school and her husband is a striking miner, even though he wants to be at work and she totally disagrees with the strike.

She was asked if she would come in because for legal and safety reasons we've got to have some staff in. She said, "Certainly. As long as it's for children, I will gladly give up my holiday and do it". I think that's the way it's got to be looked at. Whether you are in agreement with the strike or not, you can't spite the children. She's given up five weeks holiday to make sure children are fed.

We give out food parcels on Thursday mornings at the club in the village and we've gradually increased to about 60 odd. We've now got people coming who at the beginning of the strike wouldn't have come — it was sort of below them. When we started it was only 22. But now they're nearly all coming

for a hamper.

Last week if everyone had turned up who was entitled, we'd have been 25 short. We only give out one hamper a fortnight.

What's in a typical food parcel?

A tin of peas, a tin of beans, a tin of meat of some description, a loaf, a packet of biscuits, margarine and sometimes sugar, and that's to do for two weeks if you're a family. A single striker is entitled to one a week.

Do you have families in dire straits that you've been able to help?

We had a letter from Sheffield Women Against Pit Closures who'd had a person write to them saying they had no idea who to go to for food parcels, they'd had nothing all this strike — a married couple and a seven month old baby and they were really desperate. They were in Worksop and they were on their own. Some people are scattered, not even in a village like ours.

Anyway we had a look at what we'd got in stock and a food parcel was made up and the day after we went to this address. Well, his face when he saw us — I'll never forget it. His uncle had written the letter. He's been to pick up again and we expect to see him regularly now.

Women against pit closures

Dalkeith, c/o Dalkeith Miners' Welfare, Dalkeith, Lothian.

Fish Cross, c/o Fish Cross Miners' Welfare, Fish Cross, Clackmanan-shire.

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, Mansfield, 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 B96069.

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. Hettton-le-Hall 267641.

Sheffield, Kath Mackey, Sheffield 381594 or 454163.

North Staffs, Brenda Proctor, 153 Broadway, Meir, Stoke-on-Trent. 0782 332151.

Albert Bowns

Sparks back NUM

ERIC HAMMOND, leader of the EETPU, told the TUC conference that 'his' members in the power stations would not support the miners. He spoke with great authority.

But whatever Hammond says, support for the miners does exist within the EETPU.

'Flashlight', a journal of rank-and-file members in the EETPU, in the latest issue, calls for all-out support for the miners.

And on the seafront at Brighton during the mass lobby of the TUC conference on Monday while Hammond was sounding off inside, banners and placards from EETPU branches could be seen outside, lobbying for the miners. One said "Some electricians do support the miners; but don't tell Chapple".



At the TUC: a standing ovation for Arthur Scargill. (Photo: Andrew Ward, Report)



Back the miners

Lesbian/gay support

On August 11, at the Women Against Pit Closures demonstration, the banner of the Lesbians and Gays Support the Miners group was cheered by other marchers when it arrived. A decade ago, in the struggle against the Heath government, it was not uncommon to hear the slogan "Heath is a Queer".

Links — both organisational and political — have been made between the mining communities and other groups of people involved in fighting the Tories that would have seemed unlikely only a short while ago.

Lesbians and Gays Support the Miners is one attempt to build up those kind of links. If the Tories can defeat the NUM, if the police can break up picket lines, a weak and unorganised community like the lesbian and gay community will stand a chance at all.

That means that if lesbian and gay people are to fight for the rights, it is important that the miners win. A victory for the miners would, in a very practical way, be a victory for lesbian and gay people. Attacks on clubs and bookshops, and individual harassment are on the increase. To roll back these attacks, a convincing defeat of the police state operation in the coalfields, and a convincing defeat of the Tories, with their anti-working class, anti-black, anti-woman and anti-gay bigotry are vital.

On the other hand, if lesbian and gay people are to reap the benefit of a miners' victory, it is important we are visible in supporting them.

Lesbians and Gays Support the Miners has been organising collections in clubs and pubs, publicising the miners' case to the community and has had a lot of success. So far we have raised about £1000.

Also, LGSM has had a feature in 'Capital Gae' which sparked off some debate, and organised a contingent on the BLOC lobby of the TUC. We are also planning a trip to the South Wales pits.

If you are interested in helping LGSM, or want more information, contact 39 Chippendale Road, London W9 2AH.

After TUC, organise!

Arthur Scargill got a standing ovation at the TUC congress on Monday 3rd. A big majority got to their feet after he had finished speaking, and the EETPU and ISTC leaders who remained seated were a tiny isolated island in a sea of applauding delegates.

The joint TUC-NUM statement on the miners' strike had united Congress.

It pledged the TUC:

* To give financial support to the miners.

* To refuse to handle coal or coke (or oil used as a substitute for them) moved across NUM picket lines.

But what does it mean? Arthur Scargill said: "Give that support today, and I am confident that in the weeks ahead we shall grow increasingly strong. We shall force the Coal Board not only back to the negotiating table, but to honour the signed agreement between the government, the Coal Board and ourselves".

And Len Murray said: "We now stand shoulder to shoulder with them. Our purpose is to bring the concentrated power of this movement to bear on the Coal Board and the government, to get the Coal Board back to the negotiating table in a frame of mind to make an agreement".

One of two things.

Editorial

EITHER this TUC Congress will mark the beginning of a new rallying of the working class around the miners.

OR it will go down in history as one of the worst examples of vile left-talking fakery in the history of the labour movement.

The reflex of every militant with an ounce of sense will be to regard the almost-unanimous vote as mainly an exercise in left-fakery by the leaders of the TUC, those who so recently sold out the NGA and have done so little to help the miners so far.

Right-winger Eric Hammond of the EETPU denounced the TUC plan as a con. He himself had been asked to agree to it, he said, on the grounds that it would mean nothing in practice.

He could safely agree to the statement — so he said he'd been told — as a means of uniting the TUC congress, knowing that the TUC couldn't deliver what it promised.

There can be little doubt that many trade union leaders did support the statement with no real intention of delivering.

Their strategy was to rattle the sabre loudly enough to push the Coal Board into negotiations, and at the same put pressure on the NUM to be willing to compromise. In that way they hoped they

could get the dispute settled without ever having to 'deliver'.

But there is more to it than that. The Coal Board has called the TUC's bluff by its refusal to negotiate. And the Congress statement does bring advantages to the NUM.

It puts an extra pressure on every self-respecting trade unionist to respect the miners' picket lines. It gives the NUM far greater leverage to demand solidarity.

When the miners' strike was made official in Notts, there was a big increase in the number of strikers there. There will be a comparable change in the mood of the whole working class after the TUC decision.

The TUC decision is a lever which miners can use to gain solidarity. For it to be effective rank and file militants should start organising to use it now.

Miners should discuss extending their picket lines at power stations and steelworks. They should couple this with direct approaches to rank and file power workers and steelworkers through delegations, joint meetings, leaflets.

Where possible, joint action committees should be set up to unite miners, dockers, railworkers, seafarers, and other trade unionists taking industrial action in line with the TUC decision.

The TUC statement includes a commitment by the miners to discuss with the leaders of other unions involved — with such as the EETPU right-wingers, who say they will not abide by the TUC decisions under any circumstances. That is a weakness, but it does not wipe out the advantages to the NUM (and to militants in unions like the EETPU) of having the formal backing of Congress.

The TUC leaders have not in return got any firm grip over the NUM. The NUM retains sole control over negotiations with the Coal Board.

Of course the TUC decision is very limited and inadequate. A decision for even a one day general strike would have been more appropriate.

But the job now is to make what the TUC declared mean something in reality. Coke, and oil, especially backed up by the dockers' strike, would bring the Coal Board and the government to the surrender table in quick time.



Pickets at Lea Hall power station, Staffordshire. Photo: John Harris

The movement must demand that the TUC and individual union leaders deliver the solidarity they have promised.

The signs are that the militant rank and file will have to rely on itself, not the leaders.

In the TUC discussion on the coal strike we saw the scandal of trade union leaders like Basnett and Murray denouncing 'picket line violence' as if the miners and not the police were to blame for it. In an atmosphere of hysterical press denunciation of militants and pickets which is not too far off lynch-mob level, these labour leaders sing in tune with the class enemy.

It would be foolish to rely on these same people being bold and unwavering in their promise to shut down the energy supplies of British industry.

The Tory offensive urgently demands that the labour movement stands its ground and boldly defends itself. A properly conducted campaign by the official labour movement to mobilise working class support for the miners and against the Tories could change the atmosphere

dramatically.

We must demand of every trade union and Labour leader that they help organise such a campaign.

But we must not wait for them. The first task is to turn the TUC congress talk in favour of the miners into action for the miners.

It needn't be a plastic bullet at close range to maim and kill
Nor a riot shield, nor a truncheon used so viciously, but still
There are other types of violence.
But they never, never will break our spirit.
Is it violence to take away the right to have a job
And keep telling us you're not concerned, and you don't give a damn
Bring scabs in buses built like armoured cars
And then call us a mob, to break our spirit
Take money from our benefits, and use our hungry children's shouts
And the misery of our unpaid bills, to prevent us staying out
And keep telling us you're not concerned, and you don't give a damn
To break our spirit.
Police our villages to stop our rights to walk, or gather on a street
Set up roadblocks, stop us travelling when our friends we like to meet
Stop us using our own village hall where our families could eat
To break our spirit.
Is it violence to hide the truth, and never let our story be told in full
Because you know the details are too gory.

Get ORGANISED!

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

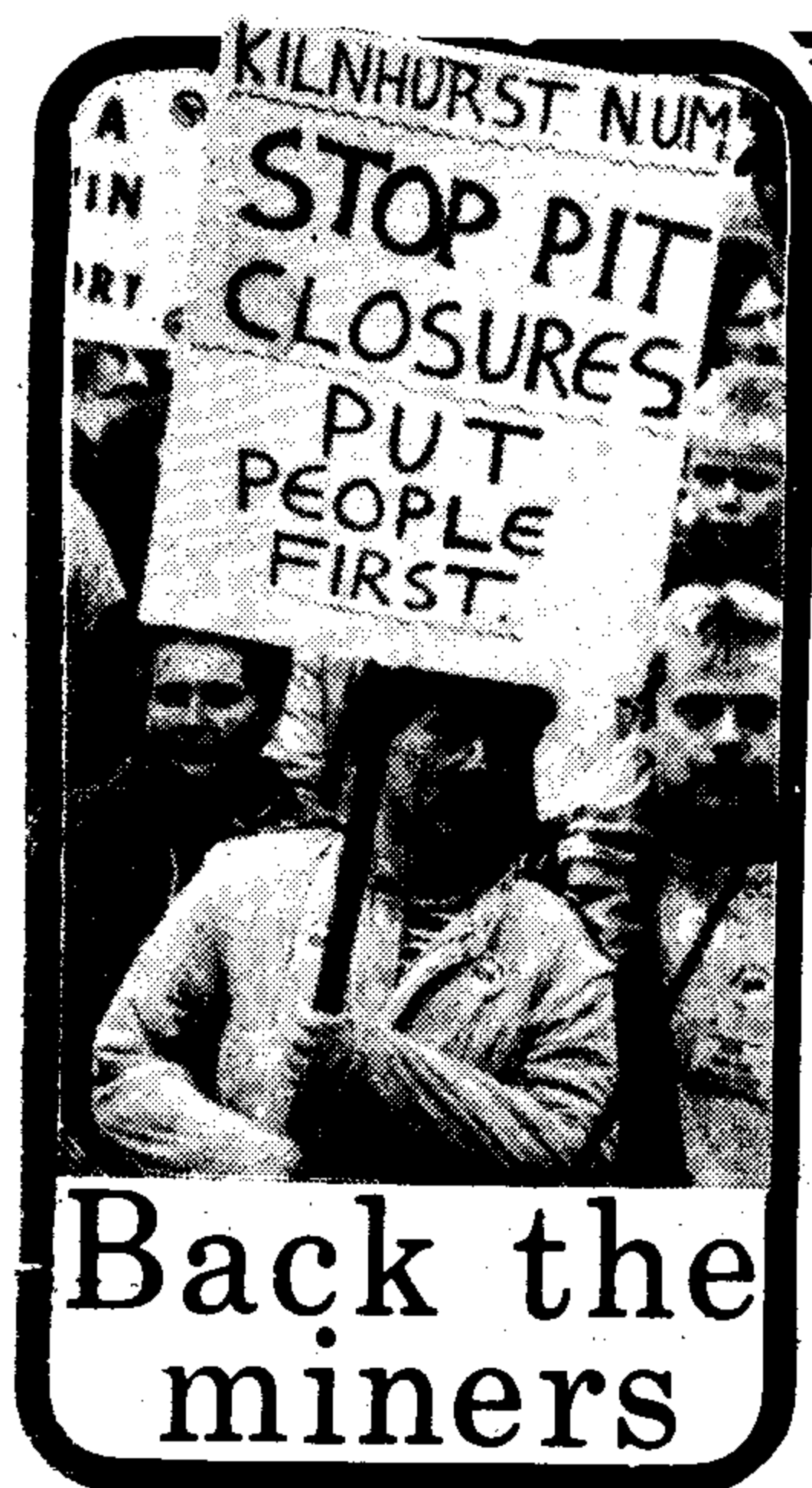
I want to become a Socialist Organiser supporter/ I want more information.

Name

Address

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





Paul Whetton's diary

Win on the picket lines!

THERE are three things from last week.

*The dock strike has held up when many thought it was going to collapse utterly. That it has held up, and looks like holding up, has got to be a plus for us.

*The so-called return to work in the pits has not happened in anything like significant numbers. Alright, a few odds and sods have gone back, but nowhere near what the Coal Board needed to

claim a success for the so-called return to work.

*The TUC decision — although it doesn't give anything cast-iron or in any way concrete — is at least an intimation of the sympathy that the rest of the trade union movement feel for the miners.

So, at the moment, it looks as though we've had a pretty fair innings so far. MacGregor looks like being our best ally because

Paul Whetton of the Notts miners' rank and file strike committee continues his strike diary



every time he opens his mouth he puts his foot in it and it finishes up as a plus for us.

It's all starting to come together — even the weather has come on our side now. The demand for electricity will start to increase. They say they can last into next year — if that's true then why are they going to such desperate lengths and spending god knows how much money on getting further coal and oil into power stations? It's because they haven't got the stocks, they can't maintain anything like winter peak production on the miserable stocks they've got left.

The stuff they're sending into the power stations is shit anyway — they've got to mix the oil with it in order to get it to burn right and the stock for a winter burn just isn't there.

So the weather's on our side, the stocks at the power stations are nowhere near what they said they would be and the backing of other trade unions, however small, will help us.

The TUC lobby

We lobbied the TUC on Monday to show our strength and indicate the depth of feeling — but I think it was fairly much an empty gesture because everything was signed, sealed and delivered before we went. But it was still an exercise we had to go through.

But I still think this strike is going to be won by the miners on the picket lines. The assistance we get from the other unions will be very welcome and we'll be very deeply in gratitude for it, but the actual battle itself is going to be fought and won on the picket lines by the miners themselves.

In court

I was in court last Friday and it was just as I expected. If any miner is still under the impression that he's going to get so-called British justice in a British court today, he's living in cloud-cuckoo-land.

I was in court for obstruction — a tuppenny ha'penny charge that I totally deny. I pleaded not guilty, I was found guilty. I didn't really expect anything else.

I shall be appealing against it but I don't think it's any big deal — it just shows that the magistrates courts are tied up lock, stock and barrel with the establishment — with the police and all the rest of it and I don't think that we're going to get a deal of change out of them.

New technology and the four-day week

On Sunday morning we had the meeting with Gordon Darling, talking on new technology, and myself, Carla Jamison and John Douglas from Socialist Organisation on the TUC and the anti-union laws. I would imagine over 100 people were there. It was a fairly good meeting and I'm sure that those who attended were quite impressed with it.

And I think Gordon Darling put it over fairly well about the threat to jobs from technology alone, without discussing pit closures or any other issues facing miners.

New technology alone is going to cost us somewhere in the region of 10,000 jobs and that's

without looking at the next step beyond that. I think that's another thing that miners have got to recognise and it's got to be accepted in the terms of settlement of this strike.

But in order to settle anything we must first win this strike. We're going to win it, I don't think there's any doubt about that. It can be said that it's already been won, and it's just that that stupid woman won't admit it. But we're going to win this dispute and, when we've won it, it's not just going to be an "honourable settlement" — we're going to go for broke. It's either the lot or we don't want to know.

And that includes securing a future for our pits, which is the prime reason we're on strike. But we've also got to talk about last year's pay claim and all the things that are involved in last year's pay claim.

*The four-day week,

*Reduced hours underground,

*A new technology agreement — not the Coal Board's technology agreement, but our's. We're not in any way opposed to new technology, but we want something out of it in return, a shorter working week — a four-day week and a six-hour shift.

It's on the cards, it could be done, it's not impossible and I think it's got to be one of the terms we talk about when we go back to work. Increased holidays, extra rest days, all those have got to be talked about.

The talks

But we've got to win the dispute first. And having won the dispute we'll then be in a position to press everything, lock, stock and barrel, that we want.

Why did the proposed talks break down? They are intransi-

gent. They want to win. I agree with Scargill — it's either direct orders from Downing Street, which is always a strong possibility, or it just shows the stupidity and incompetence of MacGregor and the National Coal Board.

Violence

Neil Kinnock is talking to the TUC this afternoon. I would like him to come out unequivocally in full support of the trade union movement and call upon the labour movement and the trades unions to give every help, to respect picket lines, to levy for the miners. What I expect him to say is that he backs the miners but... and he'll equivocate and, again, there'll be condemnation of violence.

Before he talks about violence he should get to know what he's talking about.

The £15 that's being stopped from our supplementary benefit — that's violent intimidation by the state.

The sending of coppers loaded up with riot gear from day one — that's state intimidation, violent intimidation.

Placing those coppers on picket lines is not preventing riots, but actually causing riots. Wherever they've sent police in they've caused riots in a situation which otherwise would have been peaceful.

I would want Kinnock to talk about that sort of violence and the violence that our lads are receiving at the hands of police and working miners that nobody talks about. Let him talk about that before he condemns men who have been on strike for six months, in defence of their jobs, reacting to a very violent police intimidation.

Solidarity in Scotland

CASTLEMILK is one of the largest working class ghettos in Europe. It is an area of "multiple deprivation" with an unemployment rate of about one in three. The Castlemilk miners' and families' support group is broadly based and contains Labour Party activists, anarchists, Socialist Workers Party, members of local community groups and independents.

Initially the Castlemilk group was under the umbrella of the Trades Council's Glasgow Support Committee, but it was clear from the beginning that there would be problems. Problem number one arose when we arrived at the Trades Council with the money we had collected. (The Glasgow Support Committee only collects money on Saturdays). We asked for a count of the money we had collected.

The reply was that the total for Glasgow should be good enough for us and we were being sectarian (!) and opportunist (!!) to ask for the total Castlemilk had donated. We argued that a certain amount of autonomy was necessary in the local groups and that it was important to feed back the amount of money collected in the area in order to set ourselves targets and to concretely raise the level of class consciousness by showing that the miners' struggle is our struggle. This fell on deaf ears.

Problem number two was politically more important. At one of the infrequent meetings of the Glasgow Support Committee we put forward the position that moral and financial support for the miners, although important, was inadequate for the needs of the situation and that a class-wide response of organising for a general strike was the type of

Problems in Glasgow

OTHER groups besides Castlemilk have also had problems with the Glasgow Support Committee.

Glasgow anarchists, in the latest issue of their bulletin, report that Glasgow Trades Council representatives told them to stop doing street collections. Trades Council secretary Jane McKay also phoned the Ayrshire Miners' Federation offices, and ensured that miners at Kircornell, who had received money from the anarchists' collections, returned that money and refused to accept any more.

Otherwise Kircornell would get no benefit or legal guidance from area level, and Ayrshire



Pickets at Ravenscraig, shouldn't support committees be helping with this sort of action as well as fund-raising? (Photo: Rick Matthews, IFL)

By Alan Horn (Castlemilk Miners & Families Support Group, in personal capacity)

solidarity necessary to ensure a victory for the miners.

We were told by Jane McKay, secretary of the Trades Council and a leading member of the Communist Party, that the remit of the committee was moral and financial support only and no resolutions for voting could be put forward to change this.

This, of course, was unacceptable and the Castlemilk group since then has developed its own links with miners by visiting pit communities with money and food, taking part on picket lines whenever possible and organising our own public meetings and fund raising events.

The Glasgow Support Committee, on the other hand, which is dominated by the Communist Party and its popular frontist politics, has not held a major public meeting or fund-raising event in Glasgow. It positively discourages other workers joining picket lines with miners and spends its time policing the solidarity movement to suit

their own, dare I say it, sectarian and opportunist politics.

The age old question of what is to be done now rears its head and my view is that support committees in the Glasgow area, both inside and outside the Trades Council's umbrella who are dissatisfied with the role of the Communist Party should be organising together to build a real solidarity campaign with the miners and any other section of the working class fighting the Tories.

Remit

Trade union branches should be passing resolutions to widen the remit of the Glasgow Support Committee to the objective needs and tasks facing us. These need to be fought for at the next trades council meeting. Rank and file miners should be demanding and organising mass pickets at Hunterston and Ravenscraig to stop the scabbing role of the ISTC and lorry drivers.

The present conflict is the most important since 1926 and will be a decisive test in the class war. The need for a general strike has never been more concrete, but in order to win support for this a change in the relationship of forces in the workers' movement in favour of militants is necessary.

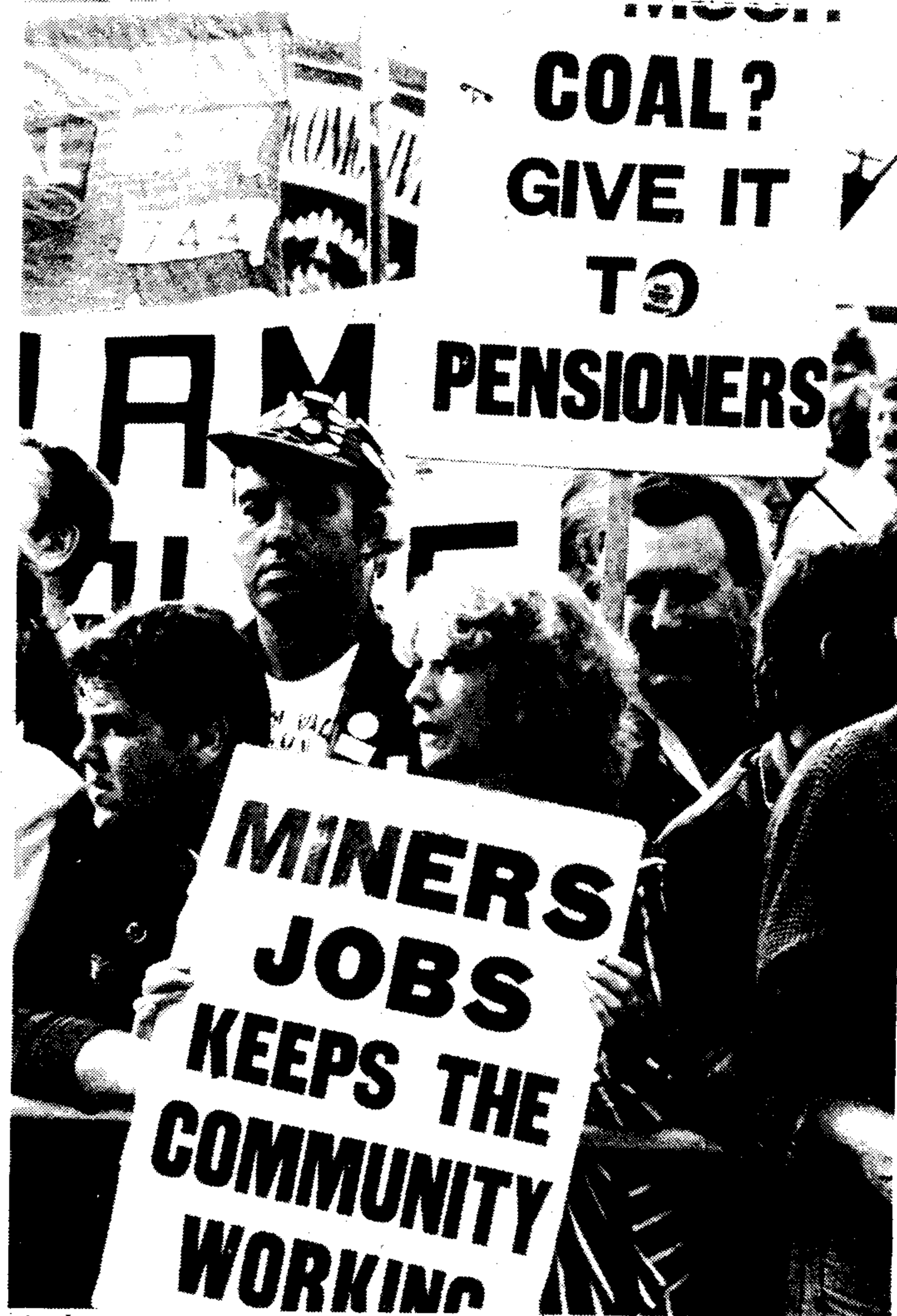
One step down this road would be for the NUM and the left in the Labour Party to call a national conference of militants who are committed to "total physical support" for the miners. If Scargill and Benn were to put their weight behind this call we would then be in a position to develop a new minority movement which could organise millions of working class people across union and sectional divide.

Such an organisation could break the isolation of militants, challenge the class collaborationist leadership of the unions and rally the forces necessary to win victory for the miners.

would get no money from Glasgow Trades Council.

The anarchists report that they have decided to send over £1000 thus returned or refused to the Ayrshire miners' area headquarters.

Glasgow Socialist Organiser supporter Stan Crooke also reports that on August 25 he was refused a collecting tin at the Trades Council offices. The reason given was a leaflet distributed by Socialist Organiser which had criticised the Scottish TUC leadership. Only after a sharp argument did the CP members in the office allow Stan to take a collecting tin.



At the TUC. Photo: Andrew Ward (Report)

NHS PRIVATISATION — AND HOW TO STOP IT

Conference organised by London Health Emergency in conjunction with the London Coordinating Committee of the South East Region TUC

SUNDAY OCTOBER 7, 10am-4pm, COUNTY HALL, LONDON SE1.

Open to delegates and observers from all labour movement and community organisations: credentials £2 waged, £1 unwaged, from London Health Emergency, 335 Grays Inn Road, London WC1.

Yes, if it comes from the ranks

Robert Smailes from Manton colliery spoke to Jim Gillespie (Thoresby NUM)

What do you think about the possibility of a general strike?

I think there isn't one, personally, because if the TUC call for a general strike I'm afraid it could turn out the same as GCHQ and Warrington, where the trade union movement was sold down the river.

What the miners don't want at this point of time is to be sold down the river. So I think it would be a bad thing.

Do you think it could be different if rank and file committees were formed?

I think it could. If the leadership just turns round and tells the membership, 'Right, we're going to have a general strike for 24 hours', then the membership won't necessarily support it, and I can see their point.

But if it comes from the rank and file, then they will believe in what they are going to do, which is a different matter from the leadership telling them what to do.



Silverwood Colliery: scabs, escorted by police, pass striking miners. (Photo: John Harris, IFL)

For a general strike?

What do you think are the possibilities of a general strike?

A certain number of dockers have come out. Now we're going to have dockers picketing dockers, and I think that's

Stan Crawford from Bevercotes colliery spoke to Jim Gillespie

going to harden the feeling of those dockers who do go on the picket lines.

The TUC and a general strike? If the TUC just call

for a general strike, I can't see anyone just downing tools and walking out. But if the TUC tell members not to cross NUM picket lines, you could get some form of spontaneous general strike.

The general strike is obviously a very necessary weapon, but I think a spontaneous general strike is more possible than an organised one.

So you're saying that we're not quite ready for a general strike?

You're never quite ready for a general strike. You can never quite define in advance exactly when it's going to come.

If some sort of rank and file movement could be built up prior to a general strike, that would help - instead of the leadership telling the members what to do, the members would be telling the leadership, which is what it

should be anyway.

If you think about it, in NUM branches you tend to have a type of rank and file organisation, because while the scabs split their votes hither and thither the strikers keep together and vote as a bloc. That is the semblance of a rank and file organisation starting. If you can link up each individual pit branch into an area block vote, and then into a national block vote, not only in the NUM but in other unions - you'd have to have some sort of organising committee to liaise between the unions - then you could have the rank and file telling the Labour Party and the unions what they want, not vice versa.

Legless Len

Workers have seen the TUC selling out too often. We saw it with the NGA. That is why Arthur Scargill kept this dispute away from the TUC, and I think quite rightly.

Let's face it, Legless Len will kill a strike as soon as look at it. What he wants is exactly the same as what Gormley got. He wants to end up a lord.

But some of the rank and file respect the TUC. A lot don't really know what the TUC is. Because they don't know what it is, and it seems to be very powerful, they respect it and they're a bit intimidated by it.

But I think the whole labour movement needs to be changed.

Kinnock has been sitting on the fence and wobbling about all over the place. When he got up to speak in Durham, half the miners there turned away and walked off.

Awareness now is on the up. Men and women are saying that they're going to get in there and change the Labour Party.

They realise that they have sat back for too long. They've walked up to the polling station once every so often, put their little cross beside Labour, and gone back home and forgotten about it. But they're saying now that they're not going to do that any more.

Sellout danger

Colin Smith from Bevercotes colliery spoke to Jim Gillespie (Thoresby NUM)

What do you think the chances are of a general strike?

The possibility is there. It's just a case of working towards it. The dockers coming out on strike has helped a lot.

I would prefer to see a general strike; but, having said that, it would have to be on our terms and not on the TUC terms.

You're thinking about the possibility of the TUC selling us out?

Definitely. The TUC leadership at the present moment are anti general strike. They've never been for a general strike. If they could head off a general strike any way, they would do it.

They're too moderate. I don't believe that they are fully for the working class.

The scab as hero 2

Dracula meets the Creature from the Black Lagoon ...

Silver Birch meets Medlock Bibby on the road to sanity

The heights of courage

By BRIAN VINE

Reporting on the day the Daily Mail brought the pits together



Chris Butcher, left with Medlock Bibby

"The tall docker and the squat miner did not look like heroes from Britain's industrial war front as they strolled down a lane in Essex talking strategies and tactics. Medlock Bibby and Chris Butcher appeared to have nothing in common.

Stocky Chris Butcher, crusader for pitmen's right to vote and work, has a premature white streak in his forelock, at 35, sparking his now-famous nickname. Med Bibby stands a miner's lamp taller and has hands big as grapples.

What they share is fighting spirit and respect for democracy. Silver Birch and Med Bibby have watched each other on TV. Bibby has been heartened by phone calls and letters of support from miners, each man recognised a kindred spirit. Shaking hands on a hill above Tilbury Docks, they forged a link between moderates ready to stand up for common sense in the face of blind militancy."

Daily Mail, September 1



Silver Birch drops out of poll

By Paul Whetton

AT our branch elections in June, 'Silver Birch' Butcher headed the poll for the branch committee. 50 strikers then complained to Area that they weren't able to vote because of police harassment. This number could have altered the branch committee result, so we were told to re-run the elections on September 14. We've now heard that 'Silver Birch' is not standing again. To my mind it proves one thing - that support for him has been withdrawn - even by the scabs who are working. What he has done has been counter-productive.

Many of the scabs now want nothing whatsoever to do with 'Silver Birch' or, indeed, anybody he deals with.

I think his decision to withdraw is purely and simply to ensure that he doesn't get humiliated in a resounding defeat, because I'm sure he would have got rejected by the vast bulk of men at Bevercotes pit. That would have been very damaging to his image and it may well be that he's been instructed to withdraw by his backers in order that we can't make any political capital out of the fact that even the scabs have rejected him.

I saw him last week at a petrol station. He was on his way somewhere. He called in for petrol, accompanied by two police cars, a transit van and with police officers sitting in his own car! When someone's got to go round in that sort of style it indicates quite a few things about the lengths the state is prepared to go to protect him.

Nobody has ever offered me that sort of protection as secretary of the rank and file strike committee. Even if they did it would be strongly rejected! It just shows what lengths they're prepared to go to, to protect a rotten cancer and make sure it grows. They molly-coddle it all the way.

Blight

What kind of creature dares besmirch

The slender beauty of the Silver Birch?

To take its noble name in vain Is vile, outrageous and profane. A man whose selfishness and greed

Sets all before our faith or creed Which says. No picket line we'll cross

Defend the union not the boss! His nom de plume should be the Blight

Which destroys everything in sight Turns plenty into barren waste And spreads its cancer cells with haste

In isolation he should stand No-one should touch his leprous hand

But take instead this cup of pride For right and justice are on this side

Instead, united, stand and strive For our jobs, pits and villages to stay alive.

The South Wales miners and the doctrine of ... Extreme socialism

"The impression conveyed to my mind in regard to the actions of the strikers throughout these disturbances, and the motives for rioting, is that the doctrine of extreme socialism preached by a small but energetic section is entirely responsible for the premeditated attempts to destroy property."

It could be 1984, but in fact it is General Macready speaking about Tonyandy in November 1910. He was blaming these 'extreme socialists' for causing riots and running battles with the police in the main street and attacks on scabs and collieries that were still open for scabs.

Macready blamed the Reds, but the 15,000 striking miners of the Cambrian Combine Co. and their families preferred to blame Macready and his coalowner friends, who had moved 1,300 police, 120 mounted police, one company of infantry and two squadrons of Hussars into the Rhondda, with 300 infantry and 200 cavalry in reserve, to intimidate them back to work.

But they weren't intimidated and the strike lasted a bitter 12 months, making Tonyandy a symbol of working class militancy that bordered on the revolutionary. Schoolkids in the Rhondda still sing songs about Churchill, Home Secretary at the time; probably the majority believe that troops shot down striking miners in Tonyandy.

Minority movement

BEFORE AND during World War 1 powerful rank and file movements existed not only in the coalfields but also in engineering and on the railways.

Those movements suffered heavily from a slump and severe industrial defeats in 1920-22. But the difference that a politically coherent leading force could make was shown when the Communist Party pulled the pieces together by founding the Minority Movement in Aug. 1924.

A Miners' Minority Movement was set up in January 1924, and industrial sections of the Minority Movement were also formed in engineering and rail.

The Minority Movement ran into problems when the Communist Party became disoriented by Stalinism. In the run-up to the General Strike of 1926, it allowed necessary criticism of the TUC leadership to be overshadowed by the slogan 'All power to the General Council'. And then, after 1929, the CP went on an ultra-left, ultra-militant binge. The Minority Movement was wound up in 1932.

Martin Barclay looks at the militant history of the South Wales coalfield before and during World War 1

There was one death — police batonned Samuel Reys to death — but what Tonyandy also killed was the support inside the South Wales Miners' Federation (the 'Fed') for class collaborationist policies of the leadership.

Out of the experience of this leadership selling out the strike came the pamphlet, 'The Miners' Next Step', published in 1912.

Determined

It bitterly attacked their determined attempts to do a deal with the employers when wages were being reduced and the cost of living was soaring. Generalising from this it declared, "All leaders become corrupt" — they take away the 'power of initiative' from the rank and file and fight against democratic accountability.

As long as these shepherds were in charge there could be no real solidarity because "sheep cannot be said to have solidarity". "But the remedy is not new leaders". The remedy was one big union covering mining and quarrying in Britain, "which, recognising the war of interest between workers and employers, is constructed

along fighting lines, allowing for a rapid and simultaneous stoppage of wheels throughout the mining industry" for a seven hour day and a minimum wage of 8 shillings for those seven hours.

"The Executive would be made up of working miners and nothing could be negotiated or become law in the organisation without sanction from the lodges. The more perfect the organisations, the more militant the policy, the more profits are reduced and the capitalists squeezed out, to be replaced not by nationalisation but direct workers' control with elected local officials, and a central board to control production.

'The Miners' Next Step' in its turn became a symbol and a declaration of war against the old leadership. The pamphlet was written by the 'Unofficial Reform Committee' which included local strike leaders Noah Rees and Will Hopla, and Marxists and syndicalists like W.H. Mainwaring and Noah Ablett.

They had been sent to Ruskin College in Oxford on a union scholarship where they had come into contact with the Socialist Labour Party (SLP) in Ablett's case, and the Marxist Social Democratic Federation (SDF) in Mainwaring's.

All of them had been influenced to some extent by Tom Mann's syndicalist ideas. When they returned to the pits they put their knowledge to use by running education classes, drawing about 50 supporters around them, mainly in the Rhondda and Aberdare.

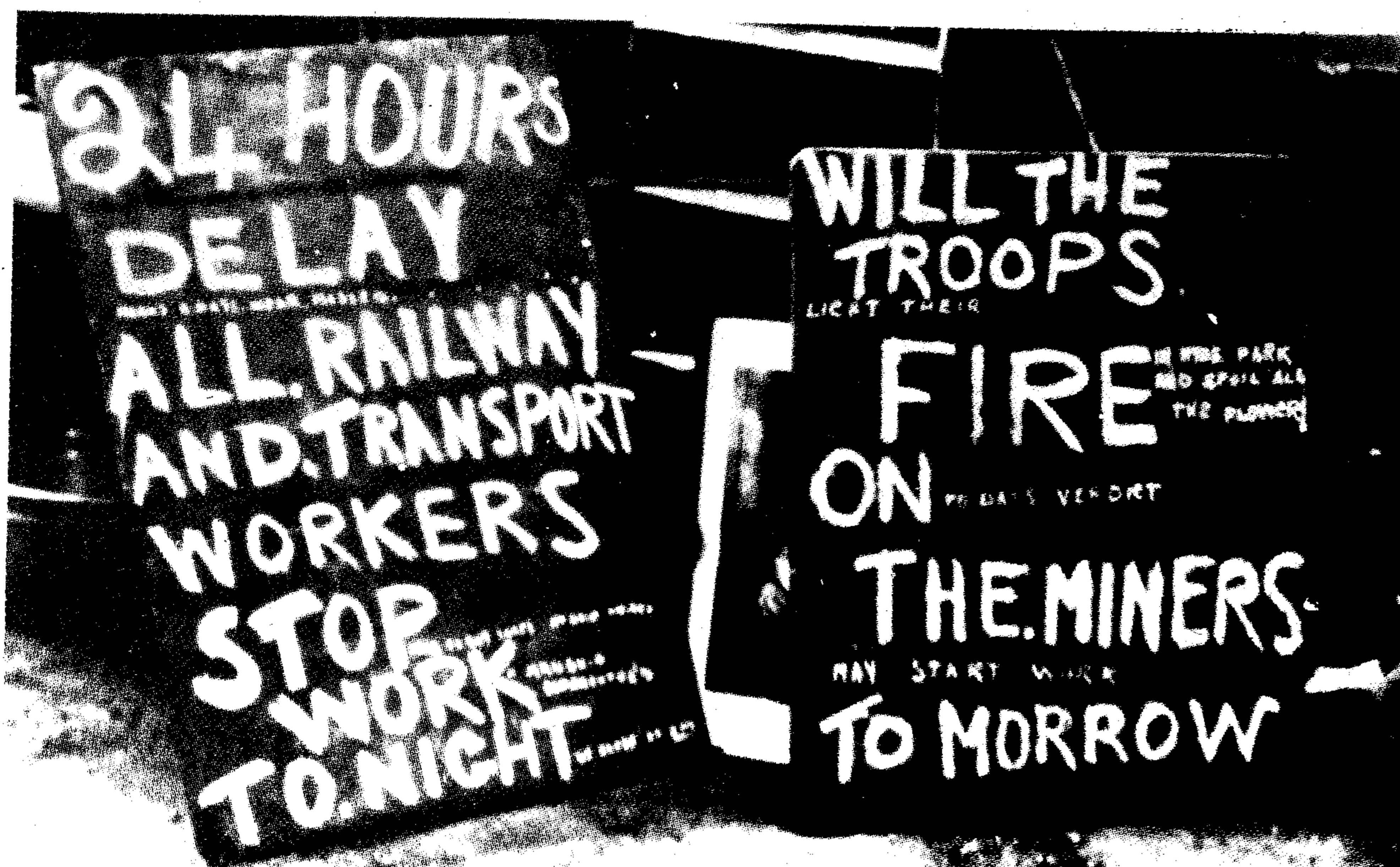
'The Miners' Next Step' represented

ted the collective ideas of the 'extreme socialists' thrashed out in series of meetings in 1911 and in effect it had been electric. The leadership of the Fed was exposed and the minimum wage became a national issue, leading to the first national miners' strike in 1912.

URC leaders were elected to the Executive in 1911 and up-and-coming militants like A.J. Cook and Arthur Horner were magnetised by the committee and by Ablett, more of a teacher than an agitator.

Patriotism

But the URC, like every other leading organisation, was swamped by the wave of patriotism which swept the country when war was declared in 1914. The Fed leaders literally became army recruiting agents and the rate of voluntary enlistment was high in South Wales in the first years. A



Working class propaganda during the General Strike of 1926



opposition, apart from a few pacifist members of the Independent Labour Party (ILP), was effectively silenced — until, that is, the 1915 strike dropped out of the air.

In that year, the whole coalfield came out for an increase in wages to compensate for the rise in food prices caused by war profiteering. It was completely unofficial and as near spontaneous as possible. In defiance of their own officials and a wartime government backed up by a baying press, they won.

They won higher wages and the anti-war forces won some breathing space to regroup, setting up the Rhondda Valley Anti-Conscription Committee. The mainstream was still pacifist, but James Connolly, the Irish Marxist, was fairly well known in the Unofficial Movement in South Wales because of his writings on industrial unionism, and the British presence in

Ireland was as loudly denounced as its intervention in Russia following the 1917 Bolshevik Revolution.

Cooke is typical — he started out agitating against food shortages but ended up denouncing the war as a capitalist war with no benefit for the working class.

After the impact of the first Russian Revolution of February 1917, Tom Mann was getting audiences of up to 2,000 on a speaking tour, and at one of these meetings, Ablett called for peace negotiations with no annexations or indemnities, the formula used by the Menshevik-dominated Soviets at the time. He wasn't aware of the finer points of the debate with the Bolsheviks.

This is fairly symptomatic of the isolation of the British left, and in particular the left in South Wales from the international movement, but the Unofficial Movement (UM) embraced Bolshevism in October 1917, seeing it as an expression of workers' control. The political consequences of the Bolshevik victory took a little longer to sink in.

Councils of Action

In 1920 Councils of Action were set up to oppose British intervention against the new Soviet government, and Cook, in the Rhondda, saw them as potential Soviets in their own right — that is, powerful workers' councils that might contest for power with the ruling class.

In fact, the UM had reached its peak in 1919 when education classes were 500 strong and a South Wales Socialist Society had been set up. Politically it was an unstable coalition of the Independent Labour Party, the British Socialist Party (formerly the SDF), and some Socialist Labour Party members, which flew apart under the strain of the negotiations to set up a Communist Party. Most of the ILP members withdrew into the Labour Party, while the BSP and some members of the SLP joined the Communist Party. A group around Cook set up the syndicalist Communist Party of South Wales and the West of England before following Sylvia Pankhurst's group into the Communist Party in 1921. Ablett and the true syndicalists stayed aloof — and increasingly alcoholic.

1919 was also the year when the UM launched an attack on the miners' leaders' proposals for nationalisation before the Sankey Commission.

The Miners Federation of Great Britain (MFGB) would agree to increase production by local cooperation between management and union officials to reach state-determined targets. In return the miners would get a six-hour day, pit-head baths, and the maintenance of the national wages structure built up before the war.

The only clear alternative was presented by the UM in their pamphlet, 'Industrial Democracy for Miners'.

Amplifying the ideas in 'The Miners' Next Step', this pamphlet set out a complete blueprint for workers' control when a detailed technical argument was needed. Responsibility for nationally agreed production targets would rest with local pit committees controlled by the lodges and all district and national committees were to be elected and accountable to delegate conferences.

It was an elaboration of the 'encroaching control' idea in 'The Miners' Next Step'.

By 1919 this idea had become feasible in the minds of most miners. The South Wales Miners' Federation, SWMF, was the biggest union in Britain before the war. Industrial militancy secured the minimum wage in 1912. In 1915 in South Wales, industrial action won out against all the odds. It began to appear as though a reformed Fed could challenge the state and the capitalist economy.

At a time when the shop stewards' movement had gone from strength to strength in engineering it appeared to many that maybe all that was needed was that extra shove.

In reality the initiative was already slipping away from the UM. The Sankey Commission was ignored by Lloyd George, the Prime Minister; it had only ever been a delaying tactic.

By 1921 industrial militancy was ebbing and the government felt safe enough to return the mines it had run during the war, to their private owners.

Black Friday

The story of Black Friday is well-known — the miners were locked out, the employers wanted wage cuts, the Triple Alliance were set to come out in support, but Jimmy Thomas, the NUR leader betrayed them at the last minute, just as today Bill Sirs and the leaders of the ISTC have betrayed their pledge to the miners.

The UM's response was pathetic —

Tonypandy

TONYPANDY is a mining village in the Rhondda valley in South Wales. It was the scene of fierce battles between police and striking miners during the strike of November 1910.

Churchill sent 300 extra police to the Rhondda, and kept a cavalry squadron in reserve at Cardiff and infantry units at Swindon. The police freely used their truncheons and killed one striker, Samuel Reys.

It is not strictly true that Churchill sent in the troops in November 1910, but troops were encamped at Penycraig, a few miles south of Tonypandy after the strike.

In August 1911 Churchill did send in the troops against strikers who were trying to stop a train at Llanelli. The troops opened fire and four men were killed.

an immediate appeal to the railway workers over Thomas' head would have brought them out. But they didn't even meet for two weeks and let the moment slip by. In response to the movement of the Army and Navy into industrial areas Ablett advised "masterly inactivity". Ablett and Cook recommended acceptance of the terms offered and a couple of lodges in Cook's district called for his resignation.

Minority Movement

Just then, Cook left the CP claiming they were "causing divisions in the movement". The CP was left to pick up the reins in 1923 with the Minority Movement. The Minority Movement at its peak had affiliated to it about a quarter of all the trade unionists in Britain. It organised all across industry and was the most powerful organised militant rank and file movement in our history.

The URC was effectively eclipsed as an active force. One consequence was that the question of workers' control was dead and buried for two generations.

Unemployment and economic crisis after 1921 buried syndicalism as an organised movement, but its basic ideas had already been absorbed by most militants in the unions.

That syndicalism hadn't just consisted of 'pure militancy'. The education classes were an attempt to create an educated Marxist vanguard cap-

able of challenging capitalism. It had sustained an anti-imperialist movement in World War I. And in fact it gave the Minority Movement its basic ideas for reforming the trade union structures.

Their central mistake was that they placed their Marxist vanguard, not at the head of a disciplined revolutionary organisation able to challenge the state, but at the head of the MFGB and this tied them to the routine, reformist rhythm of the trade union movement, unable to act and react quickly.

Despite the experience of Tonypandy, where the state used force and was prepared to use armed force, to defeat the miners, they were left with nothing to say about how to defeat the state violence and eliminate it once and for all.

The UM derived both its strengths and weaknesses from the Fed. It was strong because its ideas struck very deep roots in the movement. It was weak because it didn't get beyond the level of spreading ideas, issuing occasional manifestos and pamphlets, keeping militants in touch and generally playing the role of a ginger group when what was needed was a revolutionary organisation.

It is a chapter in our history which offers vital and essential lessons for our movement today and immediately for the miners who face the clenched fist of the state every day on the picket lines.

Councils and ratecapping

No more loopholes

Through its 'rate-capping' the Tory government hopes to give a further decisive twist to its squeeze on local services and local democracy. Michael O'Sullivan, a UCATT shop steward in Haringey Direct Labour department, looks at the policies for fighting back, and argues that Labour needs to turn to politics based on working class mobilisation rather than benevolent administration and an appeal to public opinion in general



For the unions it will be a major defeat, because jobs will be lost and conditions undermined and worsened.

Overall, such a state of affairs will mean a definite breach in the ramparts defending the social wage.

The road will be open to the large scale privatisation and 'Americanisation' of our social and welfare provisions.

This is not some fantastic scenario for Thatcher's third term in office. It is happening now, with the government decision to rate-cap 18 local authorities as its spearhead.

This development is a uniquely sharp break with past experience. Why have the Conservative defenders of our traditional institutions made this dramatic break? The truth is that despite the 'attention' and pressure they have brought to bear on local authorities during the yearly round of horse-trading, the government has failed to control expenditure and force cuts.

Perhaps the best indication of this is the comparatively low level of job losses in local government since 1978/9. Some manufacturing industries have seen 50%-60% job losses. By comparison, job losses in local authorities have "only" been 100,000 since 1979 — just 4%.

While a number of reasons have combined to slow the government down, the main one is that councils found an escape hatch which allowed them to avoid confronting and fighting both their workforce and the government — massive rate rises.

Rate rises

Rate rises gave councils a degree of financial independence which allowed them to protect jobs and services.

Around the rate rise strategy of the Labour Left a coalition of forces has been created to defend the status quo against the Thatcher government.

In 1979 and 1980, the major force of the Labour Left — Knight, Livingstone, etc. —

chose this rate rises and broad anti-Tory coalition strategy and rejected the only other alternative to capitulation to the government — mobilisation, confrontation and struggle against the Tories.

It was the victory of these forces within the labour movement which — indirectly — has determined the government's course of action and led to rate capping. It is the government's counter-stroke, aimed at closing off the rate rise option.

Likewise, the victory of the rate risers in the labour movement also determined the manner in which the campaign against the government has developed and most importantly, the state we are in now that the Tory government offensive means we have to successfully confront them or surrender.

In fact, rate rises were never a real alternative to Tory-imposed cuts — that was an illusion. Rate rises were a defeat in themselves. The rate rise strategy didn't really maintain the status quo, but started a slow bleeding to death of the inner cities, with the redistribution of taxation through rates falling largely on the working class.

In 1981 61% of planned council expenditure was paid for by central government. This year it will be down to 51%. This has meant a government saving of three billion pounds and the shortfall has been made up disproportionately by the workers in the inner cities. Government policy has redistributed finance towards the Tory shires, while jobs and services maintained in Labour boroughs have been paid for out of rates.

Socialism

It is local people who have not only had to face declining services but had to pay through the nose for the privilege, all done in the name of socialism and the rate rise strategy of the local government left.

Workers in the inner cities, who are on the receiving end of it, know that the rate rises strategy was just one variant of a defeat, with the council cutting their real income through rate rises.

But those on the left who supported that strategy still do not understand. They do not understand that the illusory rate rise strategy has had one main effect on working class communities, namely it has massively undermined the possibility of the local government left mobilising the working class community in their own defence against the government now that the inevitable government counter-attack is underway.

Rate rise coalition

The rate rise coalition came together in 1980/81. Within the Labour Party and councils a fusion took place between the "rate-rise/grab-a-little-bit-of-power" left and sections of the



Demonstration in support of Lambeth council, 1979 — but the council soon backed down, raised rates, and then made cuts

discredited centre who had been pushed back on a whole series of issues such as party democracy by the left. But the left rapidly disintegrated and split. The big majority went with the centre when they were faced with a concrete choice of whether or not to organise a fight against the government. Instead they formed the no-struggle alliance.

To understand the stability over three years of this no-struggle alliance we have to turn to its sleeping partner, the lynch pin of the whole coalition — the local authority trade unions.

They were shell shocked in the early years of Tory rule by the retreat of the big battalions. Their national leadership came out against a fight. For example, at the second Lambeth conference on the cuts in 1981, Ron Keating, then assistant general secretary of NUPE, the most militant public sector union, made his pessimism plain when he said: "My members are not kamikaze pilots".

Locally the unions were politically very weak, and only too ready to jump into the life raft of rate rises that the erstwhile left offered them instead of an immediate confrontation with the government. However understandable this was, it was utterly shortsighted.

For the unions rate rises protected the status quo; rate rises meant no loss of jobs. Once jobs were protected — for the moment — by this deal, there was no question of the unions being mobilised for a campaign against the government. Truth to tell, the local government left

didn't try very hard. They — especially Ken Livingstone — were into other things. The weakness of the local government unions also played a central part. The experience of

Socialist Organiser and the rate-rise left

RATE RISES as a supposed means of avoiding both cuts and confrontation with the government have been a divisive issue in the labour movement since the Tory victory in 1979. Socialist Organiser has found itself in dispute with the majority of the Labour Party Left on the issue.

Socialist Organiser was founded in 1978 as the paper of the Socialist Campaign for a Labour Victory, a very broad left-wing movement set up by us together with people like Ken Livingstone and Ted Knight to run an independent left-wing election campaign in critical support of the Labour Party.

Our founding platform included a flat rejection of rent and rate rises. Knight and Livingstone then agreed.

But after June 1979, when Thatcher and a hostile Tory government replaced Labour in office, they changed their minds and opted for rate rises as the alternative to confrontation with the Tories.

Knight, leader of Lambeth council, in fact first opted to cut services, but his local Labour Party forced him to change his mind.

A big part of the London Labour Left backed Livingstone and Knight and others who supported rate rises. Socialist Organiser said that rate rises were essentially another form of cuts. London Labour Briefing was a breakaway from Socialist Organiser triggered by disputes on this question.

We lost a lot of support on the Left on this issue. But events since have shown that we were right. The working class can still beat the Tories, but back in 1980-1 it was in better fighting trim than it is now. Confrontation was the right choice then. The rate rise strategy was the wrong one.

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In fact, rate rises were never a real alternative to Tory-imposed cuts — that was an illusion. Rate rises were a defeat in themselves.

the last years have shown that while militant struggles have taken place over jobs, such as the Wandsworth dust dispute, attempts to create inter-union link-ups and organise across unions and boroughs have failed. The DLO National Combine was abandoned. The London Joint Local Government Stewards Committee closed down.

Populism

While the hard Left — which Socialist Organiser represents not an inconsiderable part — was, after 1981, temporarily isolated by the no-fight coalition, the political approach which has come to dominate the local government left has been that of a 'left wing populism'.

The switch to populism was achieved with no great difficulty. The mechanism for this was — strangely — a turn by many Labour councils and parties from discussing the political options and perspectives in the wards and General Committees, to the 'real' needs of the constituencies. This otherwise admirable development had one fatal flaw — politics were left behind. The argument that we have power locally and must choose the best option, the lesser evil within the political and financial framework laid down by the Tory government dominated, creating a vast new school of short-sighted reformist politics.

Reformism

By the middle of 1982 a hard headed pragmatism and reforming zeal worthy of the turn of the century "gas and water municipal socialism" had come to the fore. It won the applause of the local government unions at first but paradoxically it meant that soon many councils began to get tough with their unions over local issues.

"Red" Ken and the GLC now spend vast amounts on glossy advertising campaigns — trying to out-Saatchi and Saatchi the Tories, to show people that the councils are relevant. Yet the whole point is that as far as

manual workers and tenants on the estates are concerned, there is very little that the councils can do within the limits of the rate rise option because neither the money nor the resources exist.

While councils have been able to do a certain amount for oppressed minorities and women, the main benefactors have been the new breed of bureaucrats that have emerged through the social mobility that council money has opened up and the mainly white petit-bourgeoisie who staff various campaign units.

There has been a proliferation of bureaucratic apparatuses which in this writer's opinion is nothing short of a scandal. This whole set-up wouldn't be quite so bad if the councils didn't make such a virtue of it.

Workers'

Over the last few years many Labour Party lefts have been making the mistake made by equally serious people before them. Instead of seeing the mobilisation of the working class as central to the struggle they are seen as just one more constituency. The working class could, of course, be appealed to, just as the House of Lords had to be lobbied. But the working class was not seen as socialists must see it — as the central actor in the struggle with the Tories, with reaction and with capitalism. Instead it was seen as yet another pressure group for the elitist local government campaigners to mobilise.

It is this pressure group politics which separates the populist approach from the class approach of revolutionary Marxists. The difference is seen very clearly in the contrast between London and Liverpool. In Liverpool, despite the campaign's shortcomings and the Council's eventual compromise, the working class turned out to support a clear and simple call from the council.

The struggle against rate capping demands a radical reorientation of the London Labour Parties and councils to fully confront the Tories.

Fear of the potential strength of resistance has determined



"The hard left was temporarily isolated by the rate-rise coalition"

the tempo of the government attack. This year they have only picked 18 authorities. This represents a totally arbitrary decision on the part of the Secretary of State. Under the new Act he has the power to select councils which appear to him to have excessive spending levels. The criteria used this year have been authorities who budget to spend 20% above GRE and more than 4% above targets. Equally he could have selected a total of 92 authorities who have overspent on government targets, one-third of the total authorities in England to be capped.



Ted Knight (photo: John Harris)

But even the 18 authorities are a massive potential force of opposition. The Greater London Federation of Trades Councils have calculated that job losses (including those on London Transport) in 1985/6 from rate capping and abolition will amount to 50,928 in the London area alone! The scale of redundancies, the breadth of the areas covered and the subsequent effect on services opens up the potential of a mass struggle, uniting councils, Labour Parties and unions with the communities, in defence of jobs, services and the traditional independence of councils. If such a struggle is undertaken seriously then we will have a movement of equal importance and depth to that of the miners — a mass movement against the Tories in the inner cities.

Learn

That won't happen unless the Labour left learns to understand that the turn it made in local government in 1980/81 away from confrontation and towards the rate rise strategy was a mistake of a fundamental character.

But while the situation is still somewhat confused, it seems that many local councils and parties are hoping to transpose their populist approach of the last three years to the struggle against rate capping. That is the road to disastrous and shameful defeat.

This is in spite of the fact that the Sheffield recall Labour Party

local authority conference last July saw 16 of the 18 threatened authorities declare for a common strategy of not making a rate and for preparing a no-cuts budget. They also agreed not to seek derogation, that is, plead with the Secretary of State that they cannot meet his demands.

Undoubtedly behind the scenes of unity at Sheffield, division and pressure is building up for a compromise. Individual careers are at stake as well as the prestige and esteem of municipal office. No council has yet stated it will renege on its debt charges rather than stop paying wages.

Danger

The danger is that Tory pressure will create a domino effect as councils crumble one after another. While this cannot be ruled out, it is not the most likely scenario. The situation is not quite the same as in 1980 and 1981.

Then the councils made all the running. But now the alliance — especially their alliance with local government unions — on which their political "strategy" was based and which allowed them to dominate their Labour Parties, is being fragmented by the blows of the government. Councils cannot any longer protect jobs and services by raising rates.

The unions will have to break with their passivity and begin to mobilise in defence of jobs and services. It is this potential development which opens the road to a reorientation away from populism and towards working class politics. It can allow the Labour Party to awake from the torpor that the rate rise alliance sent it into and once again move towards a class struggle perspective.

Such a struggle will demand a massive regeneration of local authority trade unions.

Link up

The starting point must be for local authority workers to develop an authoritative inter-union and inter-borough organisation linking initially at least all the rate-capped boroughs. Such a body would not only show workers that their organisation means business but show the councils that they will have to be accountable to their workers.

The rate rise strategy has meant over three years on a long route-march to avoid a confrontation with the Tories that is now nevertheless looming ahead of us and which can now not be avoided except by surrender. This time the local government left must fight.

Clay Cross: a council that made a stand

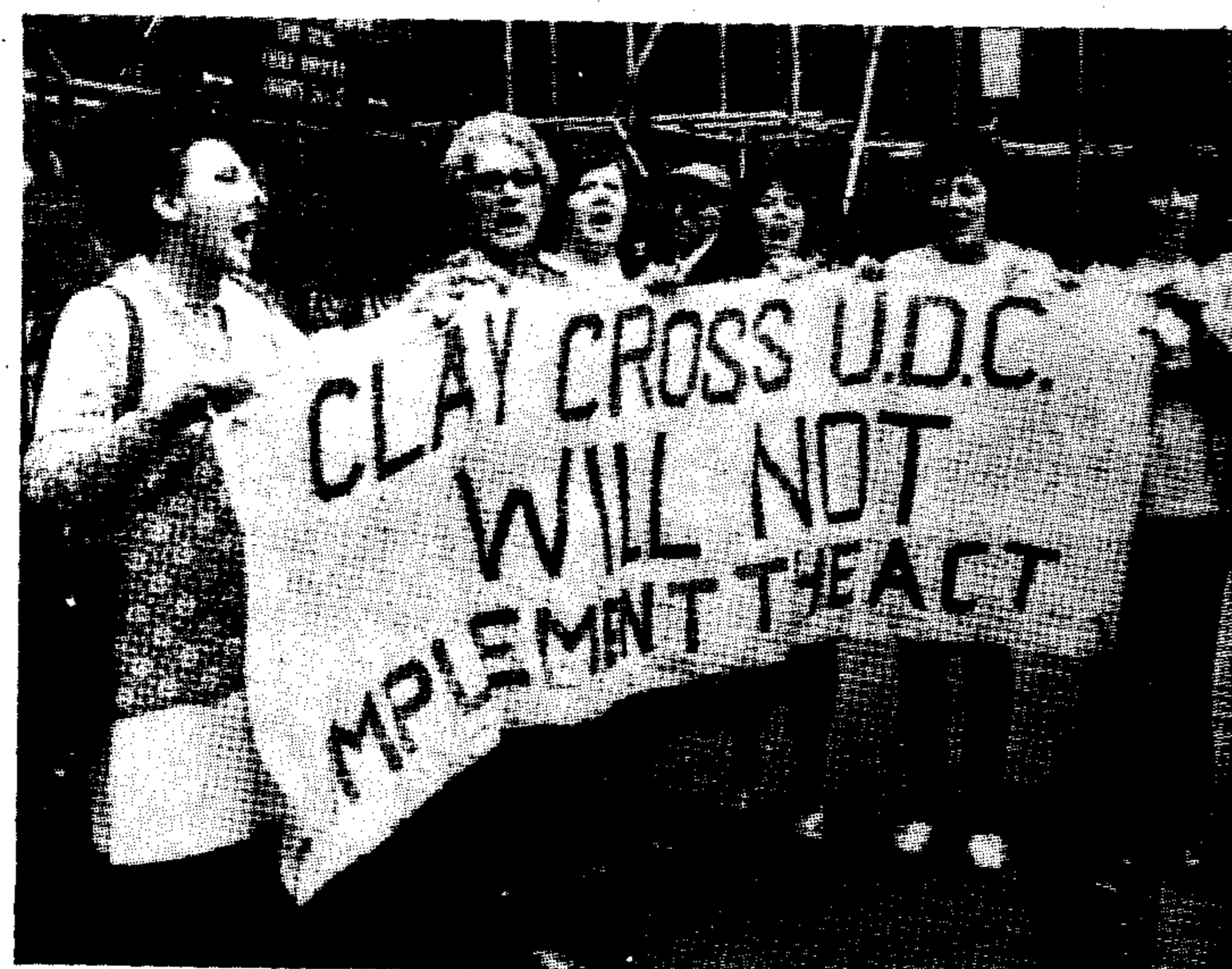
THE 1970-4 Tory government introduced a law — the Housing Finance Act — which compelled councils to charge 'fair rents'. In fact most of council rent goes to meet interest payments to moneylenders, but the Tories' notions of 'fairness' demanded an increase in rents.

Dozens of Labour councils promised to defy the law, but in the event only one stuck it out: Clay Cross, in Derbyshire. Thousands of tenants in many other areas also went on rent strike.

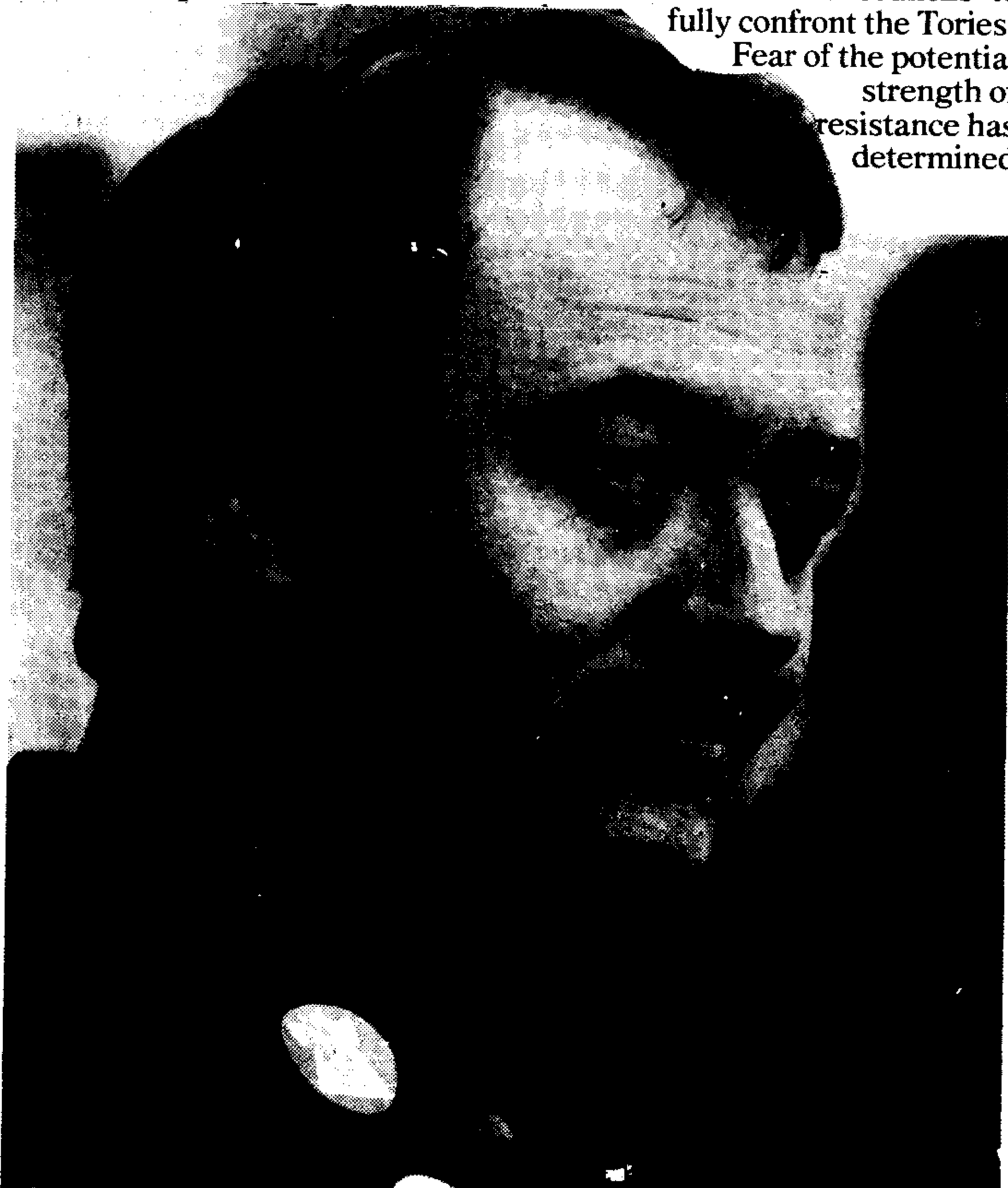
Clay Cross's fight was weakened by isolation and lack of active support from the Labour Party and TUC leadership. The Tory government sent in a Commissioner to run housing in Clay Cross, and got the councillors surcharged and disqualified from office. A 'second eleven' of Labour councillors, equally committed to the fight against the Tory law, was elected, but the ex-councillors are still officially bankrupt and disqualified from office. The 1974-9 Labour government refused to reverse the penalties on them.

But Clay Cross's fight was not in vain. The Labour government did repeal the Housing Finance Act (it might not have done if Clay Cross had not fought), and the present Tory government has not dared to try to reintroduce it. And the rent arrears in Clay Cross from the time that the council defied the Tory-imposed increases have never been collected.

Even one small council, on its own, was able to strike a major blow against Tory strategy.



Top and bottom, demonstrations in support of Clay Cross council's stand. Centre: council leader Arthur Wellon (on left) with other rebel councillors

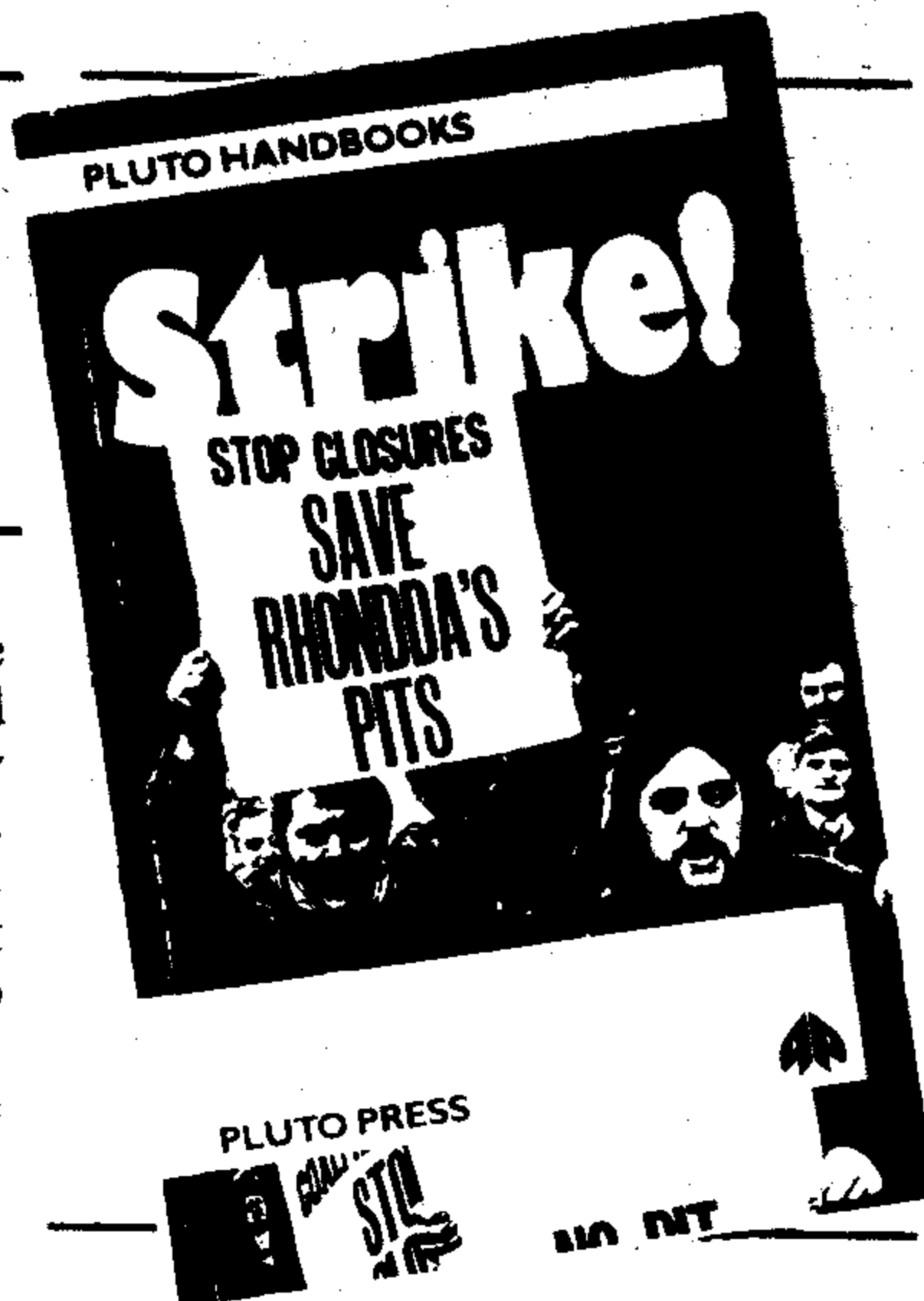


Ken Livingstone (photo: John Harris)

Review

'Nobody owns me'

Clive Bradley reviews
"STRIKE! How to fight,
how to win" by John
McIlroy, published by
Pluto Press at £5.95.



"I realised that the workers are the people who give their blood for management and that they should have good conditions, good pay and should be well fed. The trade unions are the best thing here — they are not so powerful in other countries. They are a nice power and we should keep it on." (Jayaben Desai after the Grunwicks strike).

"I was against unions before then. From what I saw on the TV and read in the papers I thought they were a complete waste of time and the damage done to the country was the result of them... It's just a start as far as I'm concerned. I've always been pretty outspoken. It's even been the cause of arguments at home. I'm my own person. Nobody owns me. The future? I'll fight the fight. But because of what's happened I'll always be politically involved". (Elsie Broad, striker, Royal Pride, Salford).

These two quotations sum up the experience of many workers during the course of strikes. The miners' strike now is an indication of the kinds of lessons that can be learned and links that can be made.

However, most strikes are badly prepared, badly led, and many workers — including members of trade unions — are opposed to strikes, and accept many of the basic arguments of the bosses that "strikes damage the country".

This book by John McIlroy, a regular contributor to Socialist Organiser, tackles these arguments, and is a handbook on how to successfully organise and win strike action.

Forced to fight

McIlroy's basic case is that workers are forced to fight for their interests against the employers by the nature of a class divided society. Strike action is simply one weapon, and generally the most effective one, of defending those interests. Indeed it is lack of strike action which leads to so many sections of workers being so badly off and so demoralised.

As McIlroy puts it, "In many workplaces in many industries

we need more strikes. Workers are forced to put up with atrocious wages and conditions of work because they have not realised that such things are not inevitable. They can be changed and the power of industrial action can play a part in that change." (p.29).

Useful

McIlroy's book will be enormously useful to many militants. It is specifically aimed at generally inexperienced militants, giving a basic outline of very simple tactical necessities in a strike, as well as looking at bigger questions and detailing management tactics and the law.

This, incidentally, explains the way some of the book is written: Socialist Worker, for example, complained that McIlroy is hazy on the treacherous role played by the trade union bureaucracy. This is not true — and the tone of what McIlroy writes is addressed to workers who do not yet know what experienced socialists know, and is intended as a rational warning of future betrayals rather than a head-banging denunciation.

The book shows how management is usually well prepared in advance for strike action, whilst the unions are not. It also shows how trade union officials, who see their role as negotiation and who feel threatened by independent rank and file action, fail to use strike action, or even the threat of it, as a successful weapon in negotiations.

"Not only are strike preparations essential to effective negotiations but the ability to organise a strike should be seen as an essential quality for all negotiators."



Asian women on strike at Supreme Quilting. McIlroy focuses on the need for solidarity with black and women workers and workers in other countries

"The situation is often the contrary. Even when a strike is declared, too many union officials are still psychologically adjusted to 'jaw, jaw' to the exclusion of 'war, war', see their job as that of the diplomat, not that of the general, and the organisation and impact of the strike suffers." (p.48).

McIlroy discusses important tactical and political questions involved in organising effective strikes. As well as giving useful advice on how to keep the rank and file informed and involved, how to organise effective mass meetings and so on, he emphasises a number of crucial points.

Rank and file

"The need for democratic, rank and file organisation to run and win the strike. Both the demands of the strike and the actual running of the strike must come from the rank and file. All decisions — including the decision to strike and the decision to go back — must be democratic, rank and file decisions. Strike

committees, involving militants on the ground with various talents, are vital. The strike committee must seek to organise and involve the membership as a whole.

"The need to develop the widest possible action and unite different sections of workers. McIlroy discusses practical ways to get the message over to other workers — often, of necessity, quite independently of the official union structures — and encourage necessary solidarity action from blacking to strikes.

He also discusses the need to link together different issues so as to unite wider groups of workers, and gives examples of the consequences of failure to do this.

For example, the failure of the ISTC leadership to bring the issue of closures into that of wages in the strike of 1980 was fatal to its outcome, as was the calling off of the strike just as a dock strike was starting; and the parochialism of the local leaders of the Leyland Vehicles dispute in 1982 was likewise fatal.

McIlroy looks, too, at the question of solidarity with workers in other countries, and with black and women workers, showing how nationalist, racist and sexist prejudices, along with the failure of the official union structures to fight for the interests of these workers, is damaging to the whole movement.

Different tactics

The book covers various ways of dealing with different kinds of disputes — recognition disputes, victimisation and so on. And it looks at different possible tactics, ranging from various kinds of occupation, sit-ins, work-ins, to methods of picketing. It deals with the inadequacies of many forms of partial action, such as one-day strikes or sectional strikes, arguing that whilst they may be a way of mobilising support they can often simply lead to confusion and demoralisation.

McIlroy touches on the topical question of the general strike. He writes: "If a sit-in raises the question of who runs a workplace, a general strike poses far more starkly the question, who runs the country? It can easily lead to a full-scale confrontation between the trade union movement and the state, a confrontation where the workers have to think about moving forward to take over the running of the country or step back and accept defeat... Because the economy is gradually paralysed, at a certain stage workers have to organise their own production, transport and administration" (pp103-4). Some of this could do with being spelt out more, but the basic argument is a sound one. Equally valid is McIlroy's comment that: "It is wrong to argue that because a general strike can escalate quickly into a full-scale confrontation and civil war, it can never be used unless the labour movement is prepared for this. A general strike can achieve limited objectives and it can strengthen the labour movement. It can lead to a government withdrawing a

piece of legislation, changing policies or calling an election. In 1968, De Gaulle eventually defused the strike by calling an election. In 1972 the English courts ordered the release of the dockers. It can, of course, fail to achieve limited objectives and weaken the working class. But it is not necessarily a once-and-for-all struggle." (p.104).

He looks at the anti-union legislation, and necessary ways of fighting it, including:

*Union democracy to avoid the strike weapon being blunted from the top to avoid confrontation with the law.

*All union members to be prepared for industrial action to protect the union if funds are at risk.

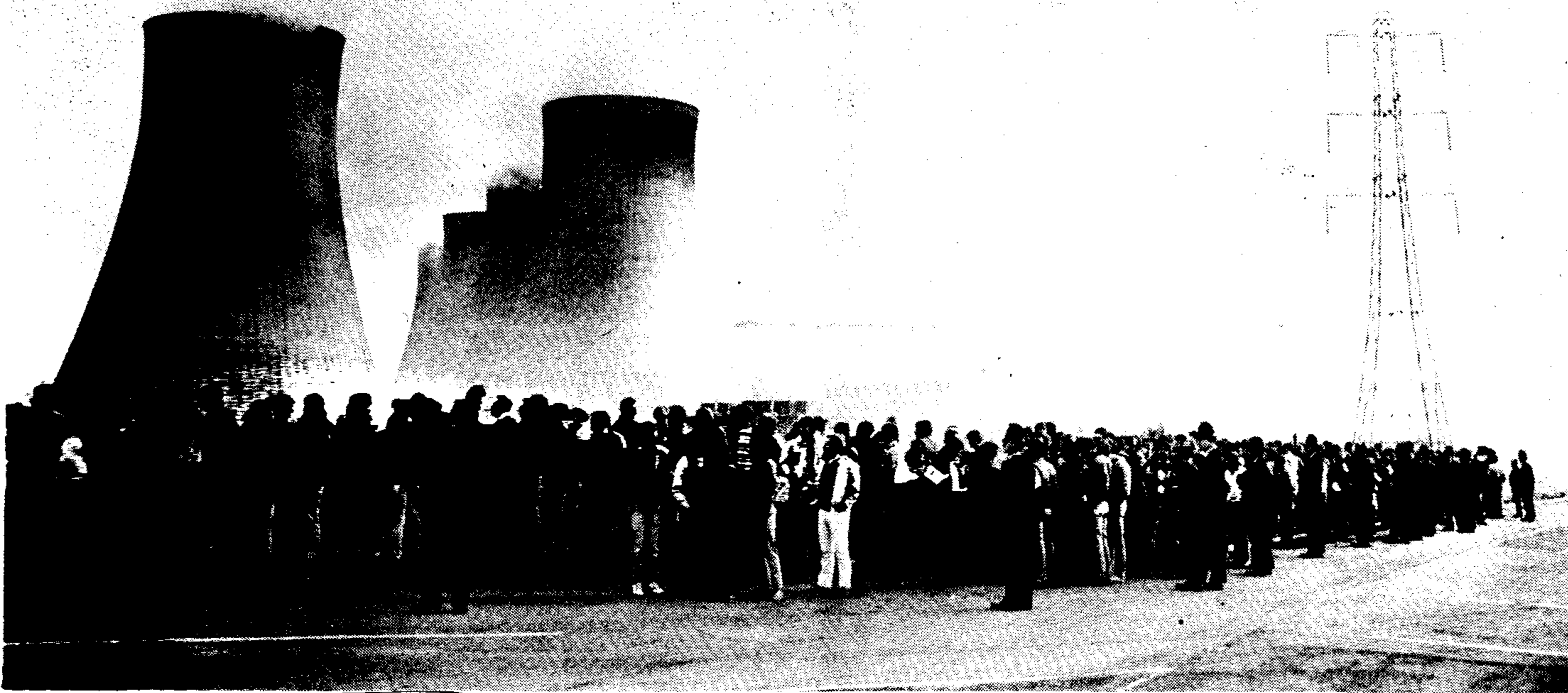
*Every union to call for immediate strike action to answer any legal threats.

*A united fight against anti-union legislation led by the TUC. And the book also looks briefly at the Emergency Powers Acts of 1920 and 1964. Troops have been used in no less than 23 disputes since 1945, seven of which have been since 1970. McIlroy notes that "the best protection against undermining of a dispute by the military is the extension of the dispute as happened in the docks in 1949 and 1950." (p.195).

Distinguish

Finally, he stresses the need sometimes to make compromises and keep the union intact, to be able to distinguish between a retreat and a sell-out.

It is a snappily-written and enjoyable book, crammed full of useful examples — of successes and failures, good and bad strike strategies. And in an undogmatic way it makes it quite clear how in practice a militant, that is a socialist policy is the best way to defend workers' interests and win in the here and now. McIlroy says in his introduction: "If this book produces more successful strikes it will have done its job". It will certainly help.



Notts miners picket Ratcliffe power station

Rebellion against apartheid state

ON Monday, September 3, at least 22 protestors were shot dead in South Africa, and scores more injured, as unrest appeared to be rapidly spreading through black townships south and east of Johannesburg. Monday's slaughter in South Africa was the work of armed police and military contingents who had been unleashed by the apartheid state to beat down protest actions sparked by last week's police killings of at least seven people, several of them children, in black and Asian townships outside Johannesburg.

Late on Monday afternoon a retaliatory bomb went off in the passport and immigration offices of the Department of Internal Affairs in central Johannesburg.

The focus of the escalating violence seemed to be the black township of Sharpeville. Sharpeville was the scene of the slaughter of 69 people in 1960 when police fired on a crowd demonstrating against the Pass Laws, which restrict the movement of non-whites. 178 people were wounded then.

Fires are raging in several parts of Sharpeville and the deputy mayor, Sam Dlamini, was killed by blacks after he had shot dead two black youths.

Similar unrest is reported in neighbouring townships of Sebokeng and Evaton.

The police and Army are using helicopters, armoured troop carriers, automatic

By Bryan Edmands

weapons and tear gas against the black population. Hundreds of arrests are being made as the security forces sweep through these areas.

The unrest was sparked initially by anger over rent increases, enforced by black officials hated as government stooges. Discontent has been seething amongst youth over the grossly inferior and authoritarian quality of black education.

This comes on top of the recent rejection by the Coloured and Indian communities of the new apartheid constitution in last week's election, when over four-fifths of them abstained. The regime is setting up a sham triple chamber democracy which excludes the majority of South Africa's population — the blacks — and leaves all power in the hands of the whites.

The police killings at the weekend only provided the spark for the eruption of the present fury.

This is the most serious and sustained black unrest in South Africa since the riots in Soweto in 1976 which started and spread in very much the same way, lasting for almost a year and leaving 600 people dead.

Non-whites in South Africa are having to endure daily an increasingly harsh state. Now the black masses are fighting back against their oppressors.

S African arrest

Mr Kader Hassim has been arrested and detained by the South African government under their Internal Security Act.

Kader Hassim, chair of the Maritzburg branch of the African Peoples Democratic Union of South Africa, an organisation affiliated to the Unity Movement of South Africa (UMSA), is a former Robben Island prisoner who served an eight year sentence for his opposition to the regime in South Africa.

His recent arrest took place at

a time when UMSA was campaigning to boycott the elections being conducted by the racist regime in their attempt to give apartheid a new look, by establishing separate Parliaments for the different ethnic groups.

The Unity movement appeals to all freedom-loving people all over the world to demand the release of Kader Hassim and the other militants arrested with him and to create solidarity movements in support of the struggle of the blacks of South Africa against racial oppression and exploitation.

Fight state racism

A SERIES of joint meetings have been planned around the country this weekend by the Newham 7 and Karamanjit Singh Defence Committees.

The case of Karamanjit Singh is a completely new development in deportation by the Home Office. Karamanjit was arrested in 1981 for petrol bombing a pub known to be a place where racists met, when it was empty.

After being found guilty and serving his sentence he was told he was to be deported. This can be for no reason other than being a black militant.

The Newham 7 defence case being organised by the Newham 7 Defence Campaign, is linking up with the Karamanjit Singh Defence Campaign and asking people to organise jointly around both.

Response to the Newham 7 case has been encouraging but

By Tim Anderson

what is needed now is a massive build up to the picket of the magistrates court on September 14 and the linking up of the two cases.

The joint meetings are in Coventry on September 7, Birmingham on the 8th, Sheffield on the 9th, and Newham, the major London meeting, on the 10th.

It is vital that all those committed to anti-racism attend and offer their support.

Messages of support and further details can be sent to: Newham 7 or Karamanjit Singh Defence Campaigns, PO Box 273, Forest Gate, London E7, telephone 01-555 8151 or the Karamanjit Singh Defence Campaign, 101 Villa Road, Handsworth, Birmingham, B21, telephone 021-523 0580.

New Idrish campaign

A NEW campaign was launched last week by NALGO to support the fight of social worker Mohammed Idrish against deportation.

Leaflets, letters and a petition are being circulated, and a national demonstration has been called to take place in Birmingham some time in October.

Mohammed who has been living and working in Britain since 1977, has been fighting against the threat of deportation since his marriage broke up in 1980 — and now, since his appeal to the Home Office was lost earlier this year, support is urgently needed to fight against this racist deportation.



Ray Buckton addressing the conference on Monday

TUC: a delegate's diary

By Ann Crowder, NALGO delegate.

by 3,000 striking miners.

Meanwhile, on the inside, we spent the morning presenting each other with awards and slapping each other on the back. Then Ray Buckton went through the disputes of the year — GCHQ, the NGA — and forgot to mention the miners.

By the time the miners' debate started we were biting our fingernails: would Congress back the miners or buckle under pressure from the right and the press?

Legless Len tried to convince us that the compromise statement was just as good as the withdrawn motions; and the EETPU delegation were working out how to split the movement.

The Rev. Hammond delivered a lecture to us about how striking miners were in fact not workers fighting for their jobs at all, but Hitler's grandchildren.

Fortunately the tension broke when Hammond got what he deserved — a load of heckling and booing.

Even the AUEW came down on the right side with Gavin Laird announcing their support. Something must have happened in their delegation — only a couple of days ago Duffy was sounding off, supporting the EETPU. Still, where there's life there's hope...

Monday night: One cocktail party after another. As much as you can guzzle, drink and

smoke on the members. In these flashy hotels no-one talks politics; there's just gossip and vote trading.

All the bureaucrats lounging around — if the waitresses were in unions they must have wondered why they paid their dues. And if the waitresses weren't in a union, they're not going to join on last night's showing. To my mind, those cocktail parties are more fitting for the foxhunting set.

Tuesday: Len Murray — presumably still legless from the night before — defended his corner while he got a pasting over his role in the NGA dispute.

Surprisingly, the most stick didn't come from the NGA delegates, but from McGahey and Rodney Bickerstaffe. Len's mates staggered up to his rescue. Roy Grantham from APEX came out with a novel line: It was all the NGA's fault. If they'd gone to the TUC and asked them what to do, we could have won it for them — single-handed. Which rather contradicted his opinion that the TUC shouldn't have supported the NGA anyway, because we should only back winners.

Tuesday afternoon: Enter Neil

Kinnock, playing right into the hands of the press by putting the blame for violence on the NUM pickets, not on the police. Oh and women are involved, apparently, because it's a family dispute, not just an economic one.

Kinnock missed a big opportunity to argue for socialism and condemn a system that forces people to go on strike for six months to fight for their livelihoods. I noticed some Conservative trade unionists giving him a standing ovation.

This conference belongs to the press and the bureaucrats. The bureaucrats are professional who switch from one union to another like football players on the transfer market. When delegates get up to speak, they seem just to want to boost their reputation.

You can tell the sort of people who go to a conference by the creche. This one isn't bad, but it is only open during conference sessions so parents can't go to fringe events. And parents have to pay to use it.

But most telling is that there are only six kids in it, for only 152 delegates out of 1150 are women.

Pensions strike

By Stan Crooke

THE STRIKE by civil servants at the Crown Agents Pensions Division (PD) in East Kilbride, near Glasgow, is entering its sixth month.

130 of the 158 PD staff (members of CPSA, SCPS and CSU), began their strike on April 4 in the wake of the announcement by the Tories' Minister for Overseas Development, Timothy Raison, that the PD was to be run along increasingly commercial lines with a view to its eventual privatisation.

The strikers are demanding full incorporation of the PD (responsible for pension payments to ex-colonial civil servants) into the civil service and full civil service status for all PD employees.

Although there are a number of complicated aspects to it, these should not be allowed to obscure the basic trade union and political issues at stake in the dispute.

Nowhere else have the Tories' proposals for privatisation been opposed by a six-month long strike. The PD employees are implementing the trade union movement's policies of opposition to hiving off in a way

that no other section of the movement yet has. This underlines the need for increased support for their fight from the rest of the movement.

The second basic principle at stake is the right of workers to fight back. Crown Agents management have already gone to the courts on the grounds that the dispute is political and therefore in breach of the Tories' anti-union legislation of 1982.

Management eventually lost the case — but only on the basis of a procedural technicality. A court judgement against the strike is still possible and this would set a precedent for use against other workers who fight privatisation, for example health workers.

To date, however, support for the strike has been limited including from the strikers' own union leaders.

Donations, messages of support and requests for speakers should be sent to Bosfield House, Old Coach Road, East Mains, East Kilbride. Phone East Kilbride 32435.

SELF DEFENCE IS NO OFFENCE!

Mass picket in support of the Newham 7
West Ham Magistrates Court, West Ham Lane,
Stratford, London E15
10 a.m., Friday September 14

Newham 7 Support Group
Public meeting

Friday September 7 at 7.30 p.m.
Barras Heath Social Club
Coventry Street, Coventry

Speakers:
A Newham 7 defendant
Karamanjit Singh Defence Campaign
Keresley miner

South London Newham 7 Support Group
Public meeting

Tuesday September 11 at 8.00 p.m.
Dominica Centre, 69 Peckham High Street

Speakers:
Satinder Singh, S. London Support Group
A Newham 7 defendant
A black miner
Greenwich Action Committee
Against Racist Attacks

OCCUPATION

LAST Monday 20 women from the Welbeck Women's Action Group occupied the village hall on Elkesley Road, to ensure its use for local strikers and their families. As Jan Spencer told Socialist Organiser: "We have occupied our village hall as a last resort because the trustees, who are not sympathetic to the strike, have turned down our demand to use the hall to feed striking miners and their families."

By Wednesday, between 40 and 50 were involved in the occupation. Jill Timmins said: "We have heard that an injunction is about to be issued, but we do not intend to move until our demands have been met. We have support outside and plenty of stocks of food. We sympathise with any member of the public who intended to use the hall, but feel that, as the issue of feeding our families is central to this dispute, we have no choice but to continue our occupation."

Dr Roger Thomas

Statement from the Labour Campaign for Gay Rights.

The Labour Campaign for Gay Rights applauds the decision of Dr. Roger Thomas not to resign as MP for Carmarthen. He should never have offered to resign in the first place.

His 'offences' have no heterosexual equivalent and should not be a consideration in judging him.

We would compare his case to that of Gerry Birmingham MP for St Helens. Mr Birmingham did not feel that he was under similar pressure to resign for heterosexual 'offence' of having two similar affairs.

He was not embarrassed by his conduct, if anything he was proud of it — unlike Dr.

Thomas, exposed as thousands of gay men have been before him.

The statements by Michael Cocks and Neil Kinnock of full support for Dr. Thomas smack of rank hypocrisy. Since when have they publicly supported lesbian and gay rights? We feel that considerations of potential damage in a by-election carried more weight with them than any support for lesbian and gay rights.

We also recognise that in refusing to resign, Dr. Thomas is trampling on the rights of his constituency party. However, this only makes it clearer to us that the party as a whole must insist that sexual orientation plays no part in the selection or de-selection of MPs.

Socialist Organiser

Police picket line violence



Inside the Cammell Lairds occupation. Photo: John Smith, IFL.

Back Lairds sit-in

SOLIDARITY!

By Lol Duffy, Lairds shop steward

EVERYTHING was very quiet over the last week until yesterday morning. Then at 8 a.m. 16 managers turned up outside the rig led by the managing director, Murray Easton, complete with loud-hailer. They all had bits of paper in what was a mock attempt to issue writs. Easton shouted that if we weren't off the rig in one minute, then legal action would be taken. He was trying to frighten us.

The response from those on the rig was to tell them plainly what to do with their pieces of paper and threats. We also requested, and got, a meeting with personnel management.

Shortly before this meeting took place, 200 miners from Bold answered the call for assistance and were outside the gates. At the meeting we told management to stop messing around and playing games. They denied any connection with or responsibility for Easton's actions.

and said he had done it off his own bat. They would tell the workers if any action was going to be taken against them.

The only activity of the 'back to work' committee was to go down to the TUC yesterday at management's expense. The rumours were that they were meeting the Conservative trade unionists there.

The best response so far from the other shipyards has been from the Tyne, but there has been little from elsewhere. It's obvious that some are using the divisions at Lairds as a cop-out.

There's a meeting of the national combine committee this Saturday in Carlisle - what we're looking for is clear support and practical action, particularly money.

My own view is that the occupying workers have every right to call on other yards to take strike action, because we are implementing the national policy of fighting against redundancies

Pete Mansell, Kiveton Park NUM, told Susan Carlyle:

"SIX or seven of us, 1½ miles from the pit, had come through road blocks and were walking through a housing estate to the pit entrance, looking for it. We came to the end of the road and there were two police with riot gear, shields and truncheons drawn.

"You're not going that f...ing way, you go that way, away from the pit", they said aggressively.

They sent us into a trap with about 70 riot police waiting for us, all massed on one side. We were forced to walk past. I was first there. I heard one say "Let's get the bastards". By this time I'd no chance of escaping.

About 20 of them took me down a front garden path of a bungalow and stood around me.

Five or six drew truncheons and the rest stood on the side in case I got away.

I tried to run and they beat me down on a pile of building bricks. They beat me all over my anus and my back. I went down once, got up again, tried to make a swing, and then they got me again.

An inspector came over and got between them and me and told them to get off me.



But one policeman told him, "You f...ing Inspector"! He walked away and they hammered me again.

Since then I've thought they could have been army blokes, the way they talked to that Inspector.

The Inspector got them off me eventually and told me I'd be all right now.

He wasn't arresting me but I'd got to tell the rest of the pickets that if they continue to mass picket, they'd get it too.

"You can beat me black and blue but I'll be back tomorrow" I said as I limped off.

After a few days to recover, I'm back picketing. I've still got bruises coming out all over.

GLC by-elections VOTE LABOUR

ON Thursday September 20, Ken Livingstone and three other former Labour GLC members are seeking re-election to the seats they recently resigned - Paddington, Edmonton, Hayes and Harlington and Lewisham West - in order to provide a decisive show of support for the labour Party campaign against the government's intention to abolish the Greater London Council. The Parliamentary seats for these four constituencies are all held by Tories.

With the government facing a growing challenge to its rule from the miners, a Labour victory will serve not only to highlight the mass resentment against the Tories' plan to abolish the GLC and the broader attacks on local government contained in plans to abolish the six Metropolitan Authorities and rate-cap councils which "overspend", but will also provide a boost to the miners and other sections of workers, fighting back against the Tories.

Ken Livingstone talks about the GLC by-elections

IN one sense we've won already, which is that the Tories, by announcing that they're not standing are basically admitting that they don't have the support for the abolition of the GLC and they recognise that they'd badly lose this sort of election. So already we've won on the key issue, which is demonstrating that the government doesn't have a mandate to abolish the GLC.

Secondly, the Alliance have announced that they will be standing against us on the grounds of opposition to our policies, saying that whilst they support the GLC, they think that we've brought abolition on our own heads by the fares policy, by the statements on Ireland, by the general style and the way we've worked, our controversial grants policy, all those sort of things.

So the Alliance are clearly going to go into this election looking for Tory votes and running a broadly Tory campaign in order to get them.

So what we're now facing is a

campaign much more firmly based on our policies, and on the defence of jobs and services. If we can win we can demonstrate that Labour can win majority support in key marginal seats that are vital for the election of a Labour government.

From London Labour Briefing



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

Docks: extend the scheme!

SO FAR the dock strike is ragged and uneven. Ports like Liverpool, Bristol, Hull and all those in Scotland are out, but Felixstowe and Grimsby are working, and there is confusion in many ports, including Tilbury, which is nevertheless out.

In fact too much should not be made of the failure so far to have a united national docks strike because national dock strikes are very rare. Even in the years of prosperity and super-militancy, it was normally impossible to unite the ports for national action.

And now the savage press campaign against the miners will have convinced many dockers that they are being

used as shock troops for the miners. This happens because of the way the TGWU leaders have gone about organising the strike.

Dockers are themselves targeted by the Tories. The only think that will protect dockers is to extend the National Dock Labour Scheme to the expanding non-registered ports. Instead of demanding this and organising dockers to fight for it, the leaders call for a strike on the limited question of non-dockers doing a limited amount of dockers' work at Hunterston.

They are right, of course, but many dockers are suspicious. Demand the extension of the National Dock Labour Scheme!



Pickets at Tilbury. Photo: Martin Shakeshaft, IFL.