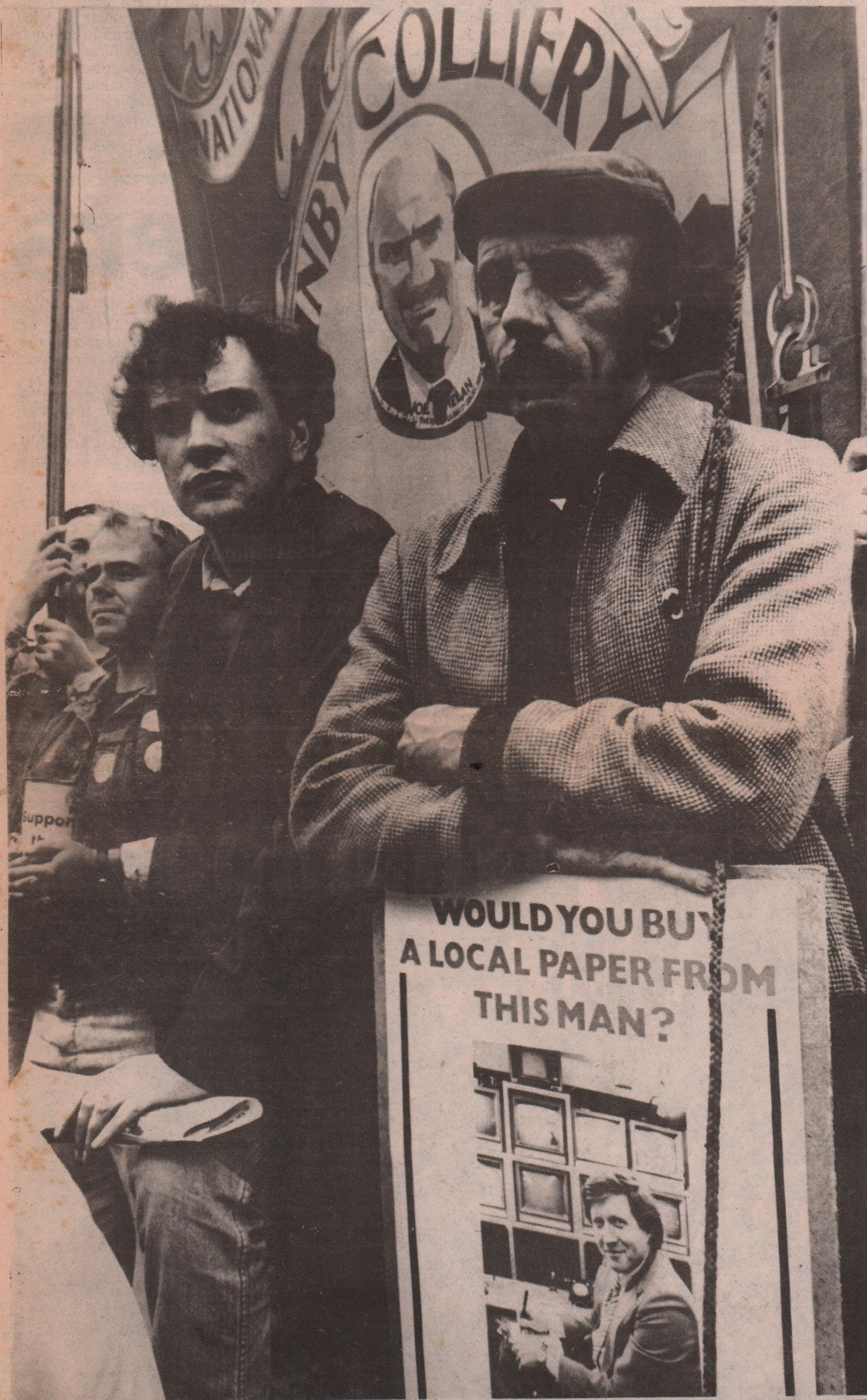


Socialist Organiser

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Tories call TUC's bluff



STOP ALL COAL!

Left: Notts striking miners at a demonstration by the print unions in Nottingham against union-busters David Dimbleby (on poster) and Christopher Pole-Carew. (Photo: John Smith, IFL).

'It's them and us'

Tony Benn speaking at
Barnsley on Saturday

A week before the Americans withdrew from Vietnam, they launched the biggest attack on the Vietnamese people that had

been seen in the whole war. I believe that this is what is happening today in the miners' dispute in Britain.

When the Home Secretary said recently that miners convicted of picketing offences might well serve life sentences, that was an indication of the desperation that the government felt and they knew when they said that, that they could never, never, never beat the National Union of Mineworkers.

We know that they planned this strike. Nigel Lawson said in the Commons that he could have had a strike in 1981 when he was energy secretary. Why didn't they

have a strike in 1981? Because they were not ready. They had other things they wanted to do first.

They had to get the law changed so they could starve the miners when their strike came. They had to recruit more police. They had to pay the police more for the work they knew the police would have to do.

They had to make an allowance in their public expenditure for the cost of the strike. And Lawson, who is now Chancellor of the Exchequer, said in the Commons two months ago, that the investment in this strike has been well worthwhile.

This is a struggle between them and us. Nobody can separate themselves out from this struggle — it is one big struggle with the miners in the forefront.

Everything hinges on the support that the labour movement, every trade unionist, every single member of the Labour Party, and millions of others, give to the miners now.

We have three sources of strength. One is solidarity — do not cross a picket line. Another is struggle — because all the gains that have ever been made by working people have been made by struggle. Thirdly the power to understand what is happening.

Back the miners



Paul Whetton: We want victory



Paul Whetton

I would have thought that the breakdown of the talks was to be expected.

The Coal Board has been placed in an impossible position. They've been told to settle but under no circumstances to let it be seen as a victory for the miners or for Arthur Scargill. That can't be done.

We've also given Arthur Scargill his instructions that there is to be no compromise, no face-saver, nothing. We want victory. After six months we are not prepared to settle for anything less.

However, NACODS has decided to take a ballot of their members. The feedback we are getting from rank and file deputies is that they are sick of all the hassle and quite a lot of them have got a great deal of sympathy with our fight.

The reports suggest that there will be a majority of NACODS members voting for industrial action. That will really put pressure on the Coal Board. That would virtually close all the pits.

We didn't expect a great deal from the unions in the electricity supply industry so it came as no surprise that at their meeting on Monday, they decided to do no more than meet the NUM for talks.

Police swoop at Kiveton Park

By Matt Cooper

THERE were more unprovoked and indiscriminate arrests at Kiveton Park last Thursday, 13th.

About twenty miners and a few women were standing on a grass verge watching a women's demonstration on the road, outside the house of scab-in-chief Norman Heywood. This was being filmed by Amanda Richardson (maker of the film 'Carry Greenham Home') and Lisa Ubsdell who are making a documentary about the effects of the miners' strike on women. Just after the demonstration had dispersed, the police attacked the twenty onlookers. There were three arrests.

Amanda Richardson and Lisa Ubsdell explained what they saw: "The women's demonstration was very good natured, they were just singing a few songs and so on.

It was clearly a women's demonstration and there were just a few men on the other side of the road.

As the demonstration dispersed, 13 or 14 police vans came up the road in convoy. We could not see what happened after that.

It is quite clear that it was a peaceful demonstration which was organised by women. It was turned sour by the police."

From the grass verge it was clear what had happened. Just as the women's demonstration had dispersed, and just as the cameras were out of range, 14 transits appeared.

Nearly 200 police don't turn up by accident. It had been well planned. The police were obviously annoyed that they had to let

a women's demonstration go ahead or risk being filmed breaking it up by a film crew sympathetic to the miners. So they planned a display of strength to show that they still had the upper hand. 200 police to move on 20 people is a good example of "inefficient policing".

When the police arrived they told the onlookers to move on, although most of them were obviously just about to go anyway. One miner was told that if he opened his mouth again he would be arrested. He did and he was arrested with the usual measure of excessive force.

Trevor Wilson was held by his arms and legs and bashed against the van doors. The three were held for seven days in Armley Jail for "besetting" - a charge based on an 1875 Conspiracy Act.

A stipendiary magistrate brought in from the Midlands refused them bail, even though one of them, Bryn Landican, has the care and responsibility for two young children on his own as a single parent.

Two other miners were arrested for no other reason but the desire of the police to show who was boss.

At one stage, Norman Heywood came out of his house and started shouting and pointing at people he thought ought to be arrested, but he was quickly escorted back.

By coincidence this was an election day for the local parish council. The police refused to allow the Labour candidate who was electioneering through a loudhailer to drive past Heywood's house.

Later some striking miners demanded to know what he would do for them. He said that he had arranged to meet the South Yorks chief constable on the following Monday and would certainly be pushing everything through the police committee that he could. He said he had been on police watch but "watching them is no bloody good. They don't just want watching!"

The three arrested men, Bryn Landigan, Johnny Smith and Trevor Wilson have been remanded for a week, charged with "besetting" a house and the much more serious charge of conspiracy (exactly to what, no-one knows). A demand of the miners' strike must be an amnesty for all striking miners arrested during the strike and the destruction of all records collected.

TUC must act for miners EDITORIAL

AS they say, put up or shut up. The NCB and the government are already calling the TUC's bluff. They are encouraged by the widespread scabbing during the docks strike and by the miserable spectacle of TGWU leaders suing for a settlement in Scotland, so eager to settle that they are giving BSC virtually everything they want. So, for the moment, the Tories aren't interested in ACAS - nor in using ACAS to throw a lifeline to the TUC leaders who seem to be trying to get off the hook they swallowed at the TUC.

'Help'

With the TUC's help the government still think they can beat the NUM. The breakdown in negotiations last week was immediately followed by Peter Walker's call on the TUC to sing the NCB's tune to the NUM: to call a national ballot, to meet MacGregor to hear the NCB's proposals, to limit the picketing to the TUC guidelines. But the NUM and its leaders are standing firm on the 'basic issue of pit closures.

The authors of the TUC resolution supporting the miners are now under pressure to deliver something.

Although donations of money and interest-free loans are very important, the central issue is to implement the resolution on action - the pledge not to cross picket lines and to refuse to handle scab coal or substitutes for coal. That's the way the miners can win. The transport unions are due to meet the NUM today, Wednesday, to discuss the TUC decisions. On Monday, the Electricity Supply Trade Union Council met.

Scargill

Arthur Scargill described their decision to accept a meeting with the NUM as "very positive", and it is certainly an improvement over their previous refusal to do so.

But nothing else was offered

by them and the leaders of the EETPU and the Power Engineers are clearly still intent on getting their members to scab. Given that, the key question now will be whether the TGWU and GMBATU leaders and others will be prepared to campaign on their own to get their members to act. Or will they hide behind the likes of Hammond and Lyons?

The GMBATU regional officers have held meetings with their shop stewards in the power stations. Those from the Trent Valley power stations met on Monday. There are reports of opposition to taking action - but it was agreed to take the issue back to the branches. But the NUM has not been involved and most likely they are deliberately being kept at arm's length.

Rank and file

The NUM rank and file should take a direct hand in this. The mass picket at Eggborough power station on Monday was the first in Yorkshire. That's what is needed regularly. Immediate proposals should be made to the power station workers and their shop stewards and to rail workers, etc., to form joint action committees to coordinate the campaign to stop coal.

The other focus remains picketing the pits. The NCB's attempt to organise a significant scabbing movement in the main strike areas has forced the militants to concentrate on their own areas and reduced the pressure on the scabs from flying pickets. Of course the number of scabs has been tiny. The strength of the miners' strike and effective picketing has defeated this NCB move. Most people know that for them to rely on the 'back to work' movement to break the strike is just whistling in the wind.

One good effect of the NCB offensive has been an increase in the number of miners actively involved in waging the strike. An irrefutable proof of the strength of the strike and of the NUM's will to endure and win is the fact that there are more miners picketing now than at any other time in the last 6½ months.

On Monday, Panorama gave a figure of 50% involvement for North Derbyshire - half of the total number of 10,350 strikers.

Certainly, apart from money, there is no practical reason why there shouldn't be widespread picketing at both the pits and the power stations. But the importance of money does mean that the rest of the labour movement needs to step up its work of collecting money, not only for food, but to finance picketing and allow the NUM to go out to other workers.

Reinforcements

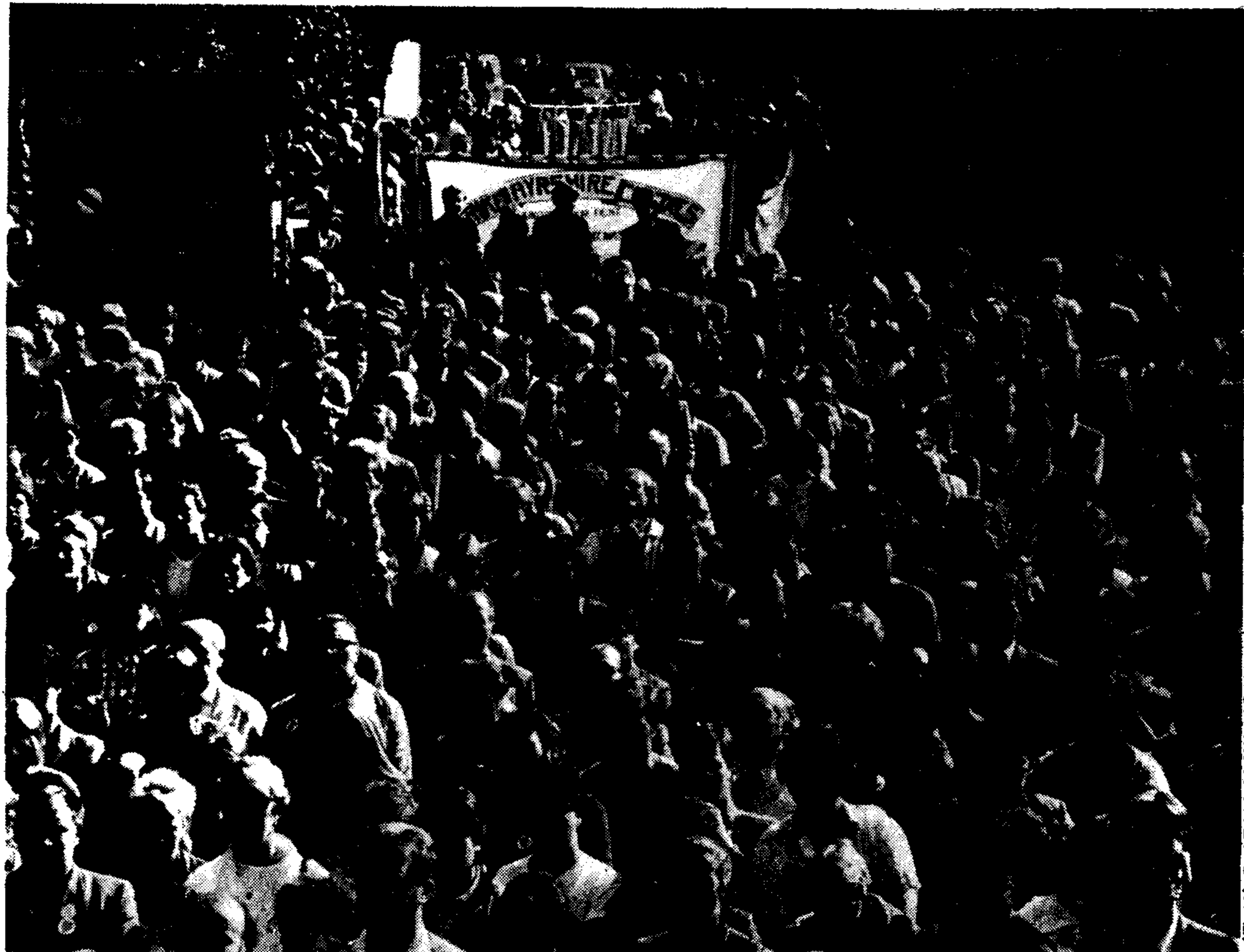
Powerful reinforcements may be on hand for the NUM. NACODS, the pit supervisors' union, is balloting all its 16,000 members next week with a recommendation for strike action

against the NCB's stupidly brutal attempt to blackmail them into being scabs.

The union reports that 700 of its members have been suspended because they refused to 'report for duty with the aid of police and suitable transport'. NACODS men are angry and there might be the required two-thirds majority for a strike. If that happens, every pit in the country will stop. Without supervision, the scabs couldn't work. It would be a big morale booster for the miners and a very powerful blow to the NCB and Thatcher.

Critical

Now that it's autumn, coal stocks will erode fast. A detailed report in the Guardian (September 18) concluded that, even with the present rate of scab coal being moved to the power stations, the critical point will be reached around the end of November.



Miners' rally in Glasgow

RICK MATTHEWS (JFL)

Railworkers call for strike

By Rob Dawber

Railworkers carrying out union policy of not handling coal have been demanding that our unions respond to management harassment.

But the NUR and ASLEF have delayed and delayed on this issue.

Guards and drivers at Shirebrook, Coalville, and Westhouses, and signalmen at Worksop, have faced threats,

threatened with the sack, and guards and drivers at Shirebrook have been classified as 'on strike' so that they don't get tax rebates.

A local meeting of the NUR/ASLEF Rail Federation in Doncaster last Saturday, 15th, supported the 24 hour strike call, and so did the Sheffield and Chesterfield NUR District Council.

Now they have appealed to other members in North Notts, South Yorkshire, and North Derbyshire to strike for 24 hours unless management withdraw the threats.

Overtime has been withdrawn, workers have been

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Arthur Scargill

Like the US Miners

Back the miners



Arthur Scargill speaking at the miners' rally in Barnsley last Saturday.

There has been a lot of talk in the last 24 hours about the breakdown of talks between the Coal Board and the NUM. What ought to be said in the newspapers, on radio and on television, if they had a degree of objectivity and integrity, is that Ian MacGregor and the National Coal Board invited the NUM to talks on the basis of a false pretext.

On September 6, the Coal Board wrote to the NUM, asking for a recommencement of negotiations. On behalf of our union Peter Heathfield wrote back and said we were willing to meet the Board on the following Sunday provided that the National Coal Board were prepared to sit down and negotiate a settlement on the basis of the documentation presented by the NUM to the Coal Board on July 18.

That documentation said that there must be:

*A withdrawal of the pit closure programme.

*The five pits threatened with closure must be kept open.

*No insistence from the NCB now, or in the future, on a pit closure programme or closure on 'economic' grounds.

The Coal Board replied that they were prepared to meet this union on the basis of Mr Heathfield's letter.

And yet, when we met in Scotland to discuss this, it was obvious that Mrs Thatcher had given marching orders to Ian MacGregor and either he was glue sniffing when he put that bag over his head or he was on a microphone to No. 10 to see what his latest instructions should be.

It was perfectly clear throughout those discussions that the Board have not got a case. We put it to them in negotiations, how can you possibly defend the position that you adopted on March 6, when you said you wanted to close 20 pits and make redundant 20,000 miners?

They said that their main emphasis was dictated by a desire to take four million tonnes of coal production out of the industry.

MacGregor said we are producing too much coal. But once we've reduced it by four million tonnes, this industry will have balanced demand and supply and there will be no further contraction.

He even went so far as to predict five years ahead, when he said our intention is to produce 97.4 million tonnes in the first year and 100 million tonnes in the four succeeding years - making a total output of 497.4 million tonnes. That programme, with that output, would involve at least 20 pit closures this year, working towards 70 pit closures, which means the destruction of 70,000 jobs.

"We'll beat MacGregor"

In the negotiations this week the Coal Board have admitted that because of the strike itself, because of the overtime ban, we have already lost 54 million tonnes of coal production and even if they kept open every single pit over the next five years, the maximum coal production they could get would be 480 million tonnes - 17 million tonnes less than what they were planning with the pit closure programme.

Why then are they continuing to have this dispute with the NUM?

The real intention of the Coal Board in this dispute is to smash the effectiveness of the NUM. That is the intention of this government as part of its plan to weaken the whole labour and trade union movement.

Nottingham

This is nothing new to Ian MacGregor. He was in charge of an American mining company called AMAX. This weekend, although you will have read of the collections made by Soviet miners towards our strike fund, you will not have read in these unbiased newspapers, written by these Piranha fish, of the fact that we've got coming today, four United States miners bringing a substantial amount of American dollars for the British miners' strike fund.

One of those American miners comes from Harlan County where Ian MacGregor and people like him were prepared to deploy state troopers, armed to the teeth, to try and defeat the US miners.

The hat I wear on demonstrations is an American miners' hat. It was worn by US miners who fought Ian MacGregor. Do you want to know the outcome? The miners beat him! Just as our people are beating him today.

We are told there are a number of uneconomic pits that have got to close. Not true. I say without fear of contradiction there are no uneconomic pits in Britain. There are only pits which have been starved of investment.

The NUM in this area planned to close a whole number of pits over the last 14 years. They haven't done so and the reason has nothing to do with economics. It has to do with the fact that miners in this area would not accept pit closures and redundancies.

We have in this industry a plan for coal. The Plan for Coal was devised by a Labour govern-

ment, the trade unions and the National Coal Board. And this document does not contain in any section any reference to the closure of pits on economic grounds.

This document was updated in 1977 and presented to Parliament and Parliament adopted that document. There was a secret memo at NCB HQ that we shouldn't see so I'll read it to you. It says, "in negotiations with the NUM we should avoid reference to the 1977 Plan for Coal. It does not help the Board's position. Concentrate on the 1974 version because we are better able to justify our argument." Do you know why they don't want to talk about the '77 version? It was presented to Parliament by the person who drew it up - Tony Benn, the secretary of state for industry. In that document it provided for investment policy into existing pits to maintain them, to expand existing collieries with new capacity, to develop new pits to the tune of 100 million tonnes of new capacity and above all it said there would be government assistance to protect this industry in common with all other coal industries in Europe against the ravages of the market economy.

That was the policy laid down in Parliament, and it's because Plan for Coal supports the union's policy that Ian MacGregor and the Coal Board want to depart from its terms.

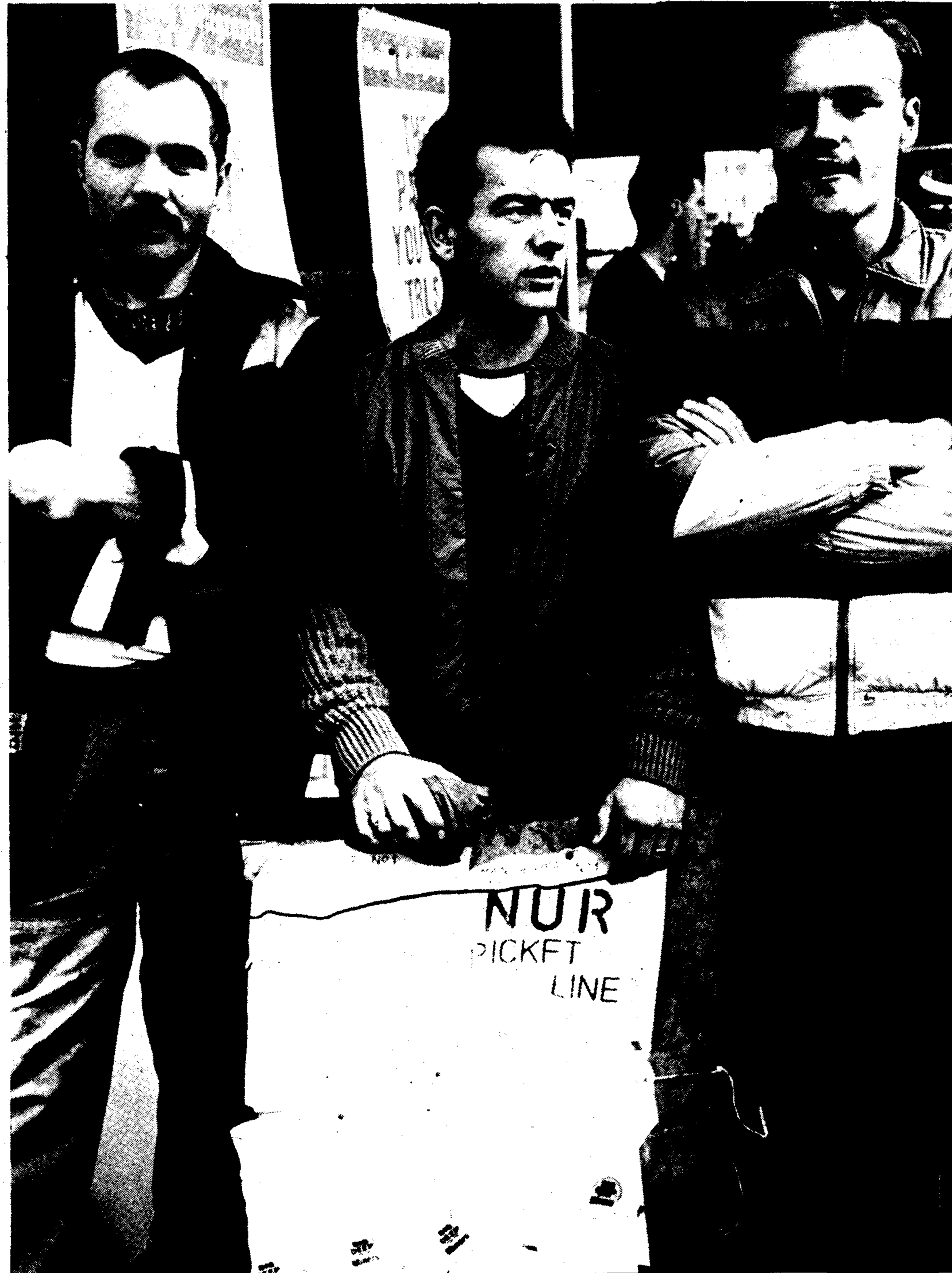
What is wrong with arguing to stand by a signed agreement? We have an agreement between the Coal Board, the government and the union. We signed it as recently as 1981. Ian MacGregor at the beginning of this year said he pledged his support for the Plan for Coal. Why is it then that Ian MacGregor and the Board will not withdraw the pit closure programme in the knowledge that it has now been overtaken by events and agree to settle this dispute on the basis of the Plan for Coal?

81% of investment in the last ten years has gone into new collieries like Selby and only 19% into the old collieries which should have been maintained.

We've had during the course of this dispute 7,000 people arrested. Well over 90% of those people have never encountered the law before in their lives. They've not even had a parking ticket and they are being described by Tory ministers as hooligans. I'll tell you what crime our membership have committed - there's only one crime - they're fighting for the right to work!

Over 3,000 of our people have been injured on picket lines. We've young lads with broken legs and broken arms. We've had five of our colleagues killed during the course of this dispute. And there are still people in the wider movement who question whether the time is right to come in and stand firmly beside us.

When five of our colleagues have died fighting for the right to work, we say we've come too far,



Guards at Piccadilly Station in Manchester went on strike for 24 hours last Wednesday, September 12th. Guards had been arrested for collecting money for the miners on station premises.

we've suffered too much to accept any other than fulfillment of what we set out to do - maintain our pits, keep open our industry and ensure that no-one destroys our communities and our way of life.

I tell you we're not negotiating with the Coal Board, there's another hand on the table. We're negotiating by proxy with the Thatcher government. That's the main problem.

Why do you think MacGregor flew back from Scotland on Wednesday night? I'm not suggesting he went to get his orders. He might just have wanted a chat. But it's significant that the temperature rose considerably when we met him the next time in London. This government, right from the beginning of the dispute, have been pulling the strings and instructing MacGregor not to resolve this dispute.

When people talk about a word or eight words, we're not talking about words, we're talking about a whole concept, a whole philosophy. We're trying to reconcile the irreconcilable.

There's only one way we can resolve this dispute, and that is by the National Coal Board withdrawing the plan to close pits, withdrawing the threat to the five pits in question, and reaffirming their commitment to a Plan for Coal that is signed by them, signed by us and endorsed by this government as recently as 1981.

I met the TUC yesterday. And it is significant that the TUC did

not merely reaffirm Congress policy. The TUC went on record supporting what we have done in the negotiations and deplored what the Coal Board had done. They said it was obvious that the Coal Board are refusing to settle this dispute.

If those people who built this union could look upon us today they would salute with pride the finest example in these young men and women that the trade union movement has ever seen. They would also look with pride at a new phenomenon in British politics - for the first time women have formed themselves into groups and called themselves women's support groups, backing the fight against pit closures.

Power

They've not done it because they support men - they've done it because they're beginning to realise the potential power that they themselves have - they're not fighting for their husbands or their boy friends, they're fighting for themselves, their children and their communities, and we should salute the tremendous efforts that women have made.

What we have to do now is to redouble our efforts. We have to say to miners on strike - it's not sufficient to be merely out on strike in this struggle, you have to become a picket involved in the struggle. We have to say to our colleagues in other industries - there is a golden rule in the trade union and labour movement, it's a

tenet on which we've built, that when workers are in struggle you don't cross picket lines.

Finally, we should say to the whole trade union and labour movement - we're only asking one thing. Give to the NUM in financial terms the same kind of assistance the Tories are giving to theirs in the NCB. We're suffering terrific hardship in the mining communities - we need help. For god's sake give it, and give it now. Give us physical assistance. And give us the same commitment that the CBI and the Institute of Directors have given to the NCB. We have a right to ask for that kind of support from the wider labour and trade union movement.

I'm convinced that, provided we continue with the resolve that we've displayed in the past 26 weeks, there is no question of the outcome of this dispute. The miners are on the way to a victory. We will win not only the right to keep open our pits, to save our jobs, but we'll also get the demands to which we're entitled in the most dangerous and arduous industry in Britain. Decent wages, better conditions, a rate protection scheme, and, yes, an early retirement without having to resort to redundancy pay - the same terms for early retirement as those who are offered redundancy. If we keep on with the kind of policies that we've indicated throughout this dispute, I say to you, to this government and to the Coal Board, make no mistake we're on our way to a victory.

By Stan Crawford,
Bevercotes NUM.

THE main problem during the week of NUM-NCB talks was not knowing what was going on at the talks in Edinburgh, Selby, Doncaster and London. All we knew was what we saw on television or read in the papers. We were left to guess what was happening.

My guess is that, after two days of talks an agreement was nearly reached but the government was not prepared to accept that agreement. It was no coincidence that at this stage Leon Brittan made a statement to the press about life sentences for miners' pickets, thereby creating the backdrop needed to break the talks.

Talk in the open

MacGregor was recalled to London for a new briefing, based on the government's assessment that the docks' strike was crumbling. I think that when talks resumed in Selby MacGregor told Scargill that he had an offer but wasn't prepared to make it with the press around.

Hard line

This led to the NCB-NUM attack on the media. The meeting moved to Doncaster where, I guess, MacGregor's offer was not the compromise Scargill expected but the hard line Thatcher told him to put. The

fiasco ended with the break down of the talks in London.

I think that the problem for us is that we didn't know from start to finish of the talks what would have been the basis of any agreement. It seems that other trade union leaders know far more about the talks than the miners on strike have ever known.

I would like to see talks held in the open, as they were during Solidarnosc's negotiations with the Polish government in the Polish shipyards four years ago. Then, the discussion was broadcast to the membership as and when it was happening.

Back the miners



IT MUST be one of two things: either the miners will win, or the whole working class will be defeated.

Every class-conscious worker knows that this is the sober truth — and knows also that there is no half-way house now. They will win or we will win. The Tories will suffer a terrible defeat, or we will.

The Tories know this, too. They have deliberately engineered the situation. They are going for the kill, believing that they have got militant trade unionism in their sights and can wipe it out for years to come.

They call it 'Scargillism' or 'picket line violence', but the proper name for it is militant trade unionism, the force that time and time again over the last 20 years has defeated and thwarted the ruling class in this country.

Therefore the Tories are throwing everything they can at the miners. They hit miners' families by withholding social security money. They use the viciously biased and unfair press and their other media to bludgeon the miners and the rest of the working class. They use vast concentrations of semi-militarised police, antique laws, and compliant courts.

And they make eager use of every person or grouping within the labour movement willing to help their campaign to demoralise and defeat the miners.

The miners' strike is now the great dividing line in British society, in British politics, and within the labour movement. You are either with the miners or you are against them. There is no neutral ground.

Everyone in the labour movement is faced with a stark choice: either help the miners win, or, because of your indifference, inertia, cowardice, or incapacity to understand, allow Thatcher to win.

The propaganda war is one of the key fronts in this conflict — for it is there, to a considerable extent, that the crucial fight for working class solidarity is being decided.

The Tories have portrayed their intended victims as villains for fighting back; scabs as heroes; bloodthirsty police as defenders of peace and quiet; pickets as mindless thugs.

Jimmy Reid chimes in with the Tories

From a red to a rat

By John O'Mahony

Arthur Scargill, the trade union leader who has had the guts to take on the entire Establishment (including much of the labour movement Establishment) in defence of his members, is portrayed as a vain and petty-minded little man out to tear Britain apart for his own personal and political ends.

And Mrs Thatcher, leader of the vandal Tories who have demolished Britain over the last five years, is painted as a constructive politician; Ian MacGregor, her professional pit butcher, as a responsible industrialist.

The double standards of the media are outrageous! This strike started because the government and the Coal Board decided to close down 20 pits and axe 20,000 jobs. Neither the NUM nor the miners directly concerned, nor their families, nor the communities that would be decimated as a result, were to be given any say at all in the matter. They would have to accept the dictates of MacGregor and Thatcher.

Nobody but the NUM and the Left talked about how viciously undemocratic that was.

Ballot

Now the Tories, their belly-crawling press, and their allies in the labour movement, base their campaign against the NUM on the ballot issue. Though 80% of the miners are on strike, and democratic delegate conferences of the union have endorsed the strike, there has not been a formal ballot of the members.

So now they all scream at the miners: 'Democracy is the issue'.

The Tories have sent armies of policemen and police cavalry against the striking miners, turned pit villages into mini-police states. Where — as in Kiveton Park, South Yorkshire

— even a paltry half-dozen scabs could be found, the police have used unrestrained violence to defend their right to scab and work.

Yet the Tories, and their press and TV, supported by powerful voices within the labour movement, base their press campaign against the miners on denunciations of 'picket line violence'.

The blame for the violence is put on the miners who defend their jobs, and not on the Coal Board which employs scabs and the government which has turned the police force into the biggest scab-herding agency in British history!

These obscene double standards are themselves proof that there is no common ground between the working class movement and the bosses, their government, and their media, in this strike — no ground of 'national interest' upon which to meet, and no terrain where people of reason and goodwill can find a common viewpoint.

This is war — class war. In war, they say, truth is the first casualty. In this class war the truth is being massacred.

The propaganda war of the ruling class has had serious effects on the working class, hindering the movement for solidarity with the miners. That is what it is meant to do.

That is why those in the labour movement who pick up and repeat the media claptrap about democracy and picket line violence are nothing less than second-string — ideological — scab-herders.

Neil Kinnock has played that role — and the forthcoming Labour Party conference should call him to account for it.

Jimmy Reid, the one-time Communist Party leader who fronted the sit-in at Upper Clyde Shipbuilders in 1971 and is now in the Labour Party, is close to making a profession of ideological scab-herding. These days he specialises in writing polemics



THE OBSERVER

8 St Andrew's Hill, London EC4V 5JA. 01-236 0202.

The damage Scargill has done to the Left

IN WHATEVER way the present and now sadly continuing coal strike ends, the main casualty will undoubtedly be the democratic movement of the breakdown of the coal talks.

JIMMY REID, who led the Upper Clyde Shipyard workers' sit-in during the days of the Heath Government, counts the cost to the Labour movement of the breakdown of the coal talks.

demonstrate an absolute commitment to the democratic rights, won (and enjoyed here and now) by the British people. It is this which the Tories want to see destroyed. The homes of working

for the Tories against the miners.

For the Tories? Yes, for the Tories! He has published articles attacking the miners and Arthur Scargill in the Guardian, the Scottish Daily Record, and now last Sunday's Observer.

This last long screed of vituperation — 'The damage Scargill has done to the Left' — appeared on the Observer's editorial page as the main feature article.

Public

Mr Reid says things in public, bluntly and crudely, that are said privately by many of the Labour and trade union leaders, and for that reason his article is important.

The author's viewpoint seems to be that of the Kinnockite Left — though he frequently sounds like Mrs Thatcher or David Owen. His concern, Reid says, is that the miners' strike and the picketing that sustains it are damaging both democracy and Labour's electoral prospects.

They have created a climate of opinion among British workers favourable to the Tory anti-union legislation, he says. However the strike ends, 'the main casualty will undoubtedly be the democratic Left in British politics'. It 'could even mean a further decline in the Party's mass base among the working class'.

'The miners' union will come out of this strike bleeding, torn apart and demoralised by a surfeit of rhetoric unrelated to reality. The likelihood is that the union will be finished as an effective fighting force for the rest of this century'.

All these evils will flow, says Reid, from one great crime committed by the NUM leaders — their failure to have a national ballot.

'This raised an issue of fundamental importance for all democratic socialists. The ballot box is not an expendable luxury, something which can be abandoned to suit the tactics of any individual or group.'

Reid condemns the labour movement for collusion in the NUM leaders' crimes against democracy.

What does he want us to do? What Neil Kinnock has done.

The only words of praise in the article go to Neil Kinnock:

'Labour leaders, with the sole exception of Neil Kinnock, [have failed] to say one word of criticism about the refusal to hold a ballot and the conduct of the strike'.

The main jet of Reid's venom is spouted over Arthur Scargill himself. Reid does say that the appointment of the 'industrial gunslinger' MacGregor was a 'provocation' by the Tories. But he still manages to blame Arthur Scargill for more or less everything. Scargill's psychology and 'adventurist' politics are the biggest problem faced by the labour movement in Britain today, it seems!

'Scargill had been desperate for a fight ever since winning the NUM Presidency'. He considered the previous two votes against strike action as 'a personal rebuff'. Reid vouches for it.

'As someone who has known Arthur for nearly 30 years I understand how bitter he must have felt at what he was bound to consider a personal rebuff'.

Much of Reid's article is like that: Jimmy, the 'trade union activist for many years', knows these things.

He also knows this of Scargill: 'His nature seems to demand that he must be the centre of attraction around which everything must revolve'. All typical Stalinist polemical tricks learned by Reid back in the '50s.

'To be blunt and honest', he goes on, 'many Labour MPs are intimidated. Arthur Scargill has become the Ayatollah, the focal point, for all the hard sectarian groupings within the labour movement'.

These forces, spearheaded by Scargill, threaten democracy and therefore undermine the credibility of the labour movement within the working class.

Sacred democracy

For Reid, the sacredness of democracy is best preserved when the militant working class is meek and mild, and the Tories and the police can rampage unchecked.

Reid's arguments about the ballot are claptrap. Of course it would be better if there had been a ballot vote for strike action, and a united NUM on strike. It may even be that it would have been tactically wise for the NUM to call a ballot in April, once the strike was firm. But the leaders of the NUM were in the best position to

judge that.

Faced with divisions in the ranks of the miners, the militant areas had a right to act and a right not to be held back by areas like Notts which did not feel threatened and would probably have voted peacefully to accept closures in other areas.

To make a principle of a national ballot at all costs meant letting people other than those immediately affected decide to let MacGregor decimate the coalfields.

Once on strike, miners had the right to appeal to other workers by picketing them, and to other miners by picketing them out.

Credit

It is to the credit and honour of the NUM leaders that they stood with the militants. It is to the credit and honour of Arthur Scargill as a working-class fighter that he has given a determined lead ever since.

The whole working class needed the stand the militants in the NUM have made in defence of jobs. A united NUM would have been better, but not every fight can be conducted under the best conditions.

Reid blames the militants and not the scabs. He blames and attacks the union leaders, and uses the bosses' press to join the Tories' propaganda war against the miners.

His philosophy reproduces the basic idea of liberalism, that trouble and strife could be avoided if only the oppressed and exploited would be more docile and wait for reform through the proper channels. Indeed it could: there would be no union-busting if there had not been rough and bitter struggles to set up unions in the first place.

The idea that ballot rules are the highest principle is self-evidently false. Suppose, for example, the scabs in Notts had tipped the balance against strike action in a ballot in March. Would Reid advocate that the militants, the miners directly affected, and the NUM leaders sigh, shrug their shoulders, and submit to pit closures?

The fact is that the NUM was divided. Why, once the militants were out, did they not have the right to picket out the less militant? Does Reid — or Kinnock, for that matter — support



Pickets confront police at a power station

The media and miners

TV bias

Back the miners



the Tory laws against secondary picketing?

Reid argues that the strike may damage Labour electorally. He may well be right. Labour certainly will be damaged if the miners lose. At present Labour suffers both from the Tories' propaganda war and from its own weaseling leaders.

Propaganda

The best way to stop the propaganda damaging both the NUM and Labour is to face up to it fair and square. By running away from it or echoing it, Labour leaders will only make sure it gets at them. Nothing short of outright condemnation (and maybe not even that) can distance Labour sufficiently from the miners to avoid being hit by the stream of Tory propaganda. Nothing can protect Labour from the terrible consequences that will come to the labour movement from a Tory victory.

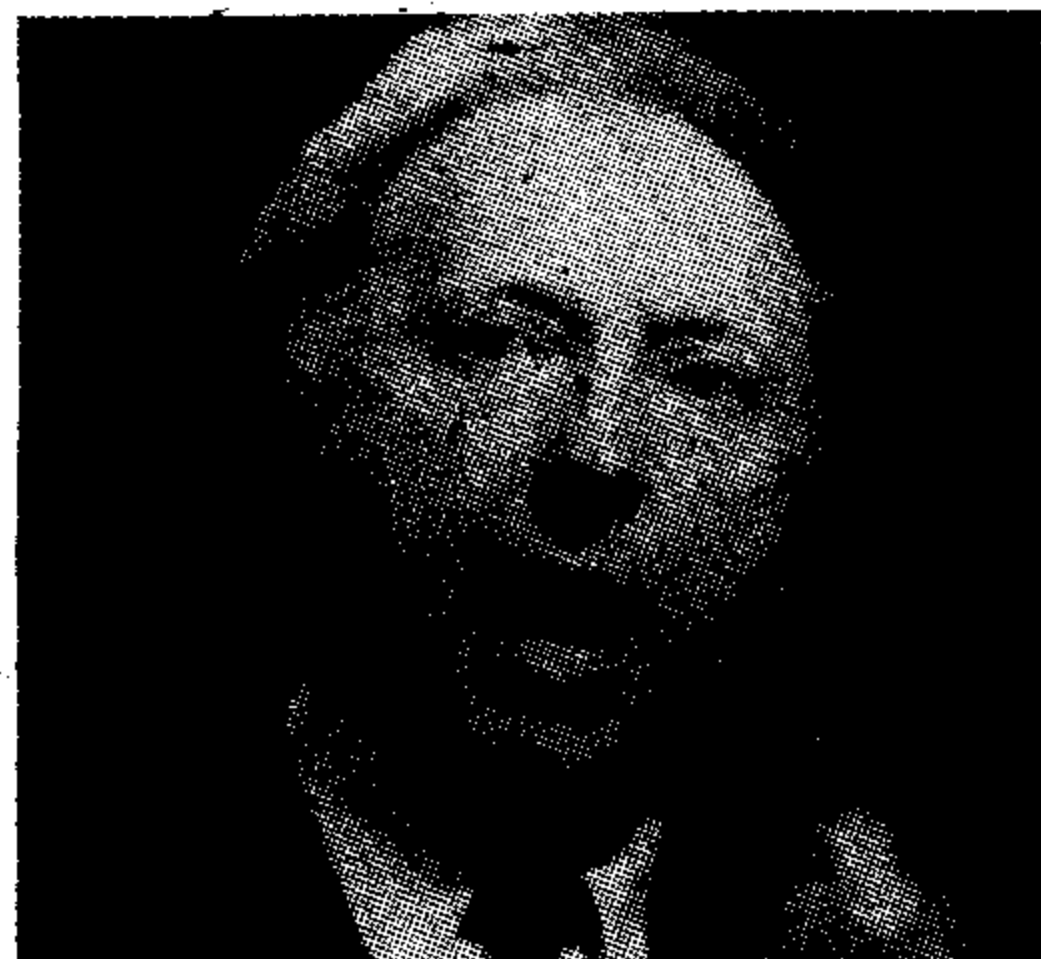
The notion that the labour movement could or should have avoided this confrontation underlies most of what Reid (and Kinnock) say. The militants of the NUM should have chosen peace and avoided the strike... by accepting the closures.

But the miners rightly did not choose to submit, and they refused to be daunted by the splits in their own ranks. The labour movement owes them an eternal debt of gratitude for it.

If they lose, it will be our fault for not backing them and joining them sufficiently. The fault will not be with the miners who started this fight back for jobs which is so necessary and was so long overdue.

But, says Reid, to fight without a ballot majority is not socialism, but Stalinism.

Now Reid should know about Stalinism. He was in the Communist Party for nearly 30 years before he left in 1977, and for much of that time he was a leading Party functionary. He called his autobiography, 'Clyde-Built Man', but he was given his final shape and rebuilt in the CP and on courses for Party functionaries in Eastern Europe and the USSR.



He knows about Stalinism all right. From Stalinism he has swung to crass middle-of-the-road Labourism. He identifies militant class struggle with Stalinism, and rejects both. He identified them before, but favoured them. Now he sees a refusal by fighting workers to treat constitutional legalities as gods to be worshipped, as the seed of a future Stalinist dictatorship!

Socialist Organiser is opposed to Stalinism in all its shades and periods, and no-one who reads the paper can doubt it. We are democratic revolutionary socialists who know that there can never be socialism without liberty and democracy.

We understand, however, that Stalinism is not an expression of working class struggle, but the action of a bureaucracy against the working class; and that right now we live in a bourgeois democracy.

This bourgeois democracy allows large areas of liberty to the labour movement, areas which are now being attacked by the Tories.

But still the state and the institutions of this democracy serve the ruling class in a thousand ways. Despite what Kinnock, Reid and the official Labour leaders say, the state

does not stand impartially above the classes. The law protects bourgeois property and enshrines the values that subordinate life to bourgeois property.

The police protect the Coal Board and the scabs at the behest of the government, and throw their full weight against the miners fighting for jobs. There is no democracy in industry.

This is a class-riddled democracy, hollowed out and undermined by the savage inequality which gives the rich in our society so many advantages over the poor.

"Arthur Scargill has become the Ayatollah, the focal point for all the hard sectarian groups in the movement."

Jimmy Reid

The idea that the working class should and must treat the institutions, rules, regulations and accidental majorities of this democracy as binding and even sacrosanct is a proposal to abandon labour militancy. Even the most reformist labour movement would not have got anywhere if it had been so deferential. We would have no unions at all if it were not for workers breaking the laws passed by Parliament which banned trade unions.

What Reid's idea means here and now is that we should let the Tories steamroller the mining industry. The class struggle cannot be reduced to a few basic 'democratic' ground rules without becoming impossible in a complex society ruled over by a clever and cunning bourgeoisie with agents throughout the labour movement.

Especially so since the ruling class themselves do not respect their own rules. A lot of what the police have done during the miners' strike is illegal by their own laws. There is no force standing above the class struggle that will call them to account for it — or give workers prizes for good behaviour when we stick by the rules.

Socialists who remain committed to democracy and believe there can be no socialism without democracy have to combine our commitment and education against Stalinism and totalitarianism, our fight to preserve and expand liberty and democracy, with an understanding that our aims can only be realised by class struggle.

Capitalist democracy does not function impartially between workers and bosses, and does not make them equal before the law except in the most empty, formal, and legalistic sense. We have to pursue our own class interests. If that fight demands breaking the bosses' rules in society, we break them.

Tragedy

The tragedy of Reid and the many others who swing from Stalinism to vapid bourgeois democracy (or the other way) is that they are wrong in both their phases. They are wrong that bourgeois democracy is a working class alternative to Stalinism — or that there is secure protection within it for the working class.

The working class has to prepare for, defend and carve out its own historic version of democracy, in opposition to both the bourgeoisie and Stalinism. But in the first place it must defend itself, whatever the legalities — even the legalities of its own organisations.

Right now the miners are in front line of working class self-defence. They deserve our active support. Reid and the other ideological scab-herders deserve our contempt and hatred.

Victory to the miners!

SEVERAL programmes this past week dealt with scabbing in the South Yorks/North Derbyshire coalfield and depicted its effect on the community life of those areas.

However much such programmes are formally 'balanced' by giving each 'side' 50% of the time, several of the participants in the films found their contributions severely distorted by editing.

Thus the programmes still reflected what the media men wanted to see and not what their interviewees saw. They did not reflect or adequately portray the strength of the strike movement which has expressed itself with such overwhelming power against the tiny nest of scabs and the vast armies of scab-herding policemen.

The Channel 4 feature on *Shirebrook*, for instance, gave a wide picture of the area and focussed on one family with a husband scabbing. It became quite obvious that his wife had tried to dissuade him from going to work, but he was determined.

So she was left in a hellish situation, having to watch her children through the streets where she was jeered, and spat at. One child cried not to go to school because she'd been called 'scab' in the playground.

Channel 4 'balanced' their portrayal of that family's dilemma with coverage of striking miners and their families. They were shown getting up at 4 am to picket every day, eating cheap meals, run off their feet to make ends meet and facing police bullying and arrests in the street.

But the next night they showed a follow-up story of the poor scabs. Now we saw their caravan home with wrecked windows. They had moved to a quiet new 'temporary' house in a village housing estate, having received numerous offers of holidays and finance. They were happy at last away from the confrontations in *Shirebrook* itself.

No questions were asked of

By cllr Susan Carlyle

the family as to how they will cope after the strike is over and whether peace will reign after the police and TV cameras have departed. That 'happy ending' was obviously going to be temporary — the equivalent of a 'Jim will fix it' stunt.

The *TV Eye* film was intended to convey a picture of scabbing at Kiveton Park. It showed the daily routine of picketing early morning and lunchtime, food parcels at the welfare club, fundraising socials and interviews with scabs, strikers and their families.

Many interviews and viewpoints from all kinds of people in that village were filmed but by the time the programme went on the air it was all reduced to a macho-battle between Harold Laws, secretary of the NUM branch, and Norman Heywood (and wife), chief instigator of the scabbing!

Rank and file

The rank and file strikers' views were confined to a few quick shots while they focussed on Harold weeding his back garden, singing in the Welfare, and emerging from court. The views he expressed were admirable and consistent with the union's fighting policies. But the programme presented him as though he carried all the weight of the strike.

Heywood, the chief scab, was treated differently. He was shown in the pit and in the scabs' van, being filmed at home with his wife and then driven to a rendezvous with the High Court applicants Bob Taylor and Ken Fouldsen. "They're my heroes," crooned Norman.

Finally, the *Panorama* programme on Monday, 10th, looking at the traditionally 'moderate' North Derbyshire area took a more truly balanced

and measured approach. It

showed quite clearly management working with a deliberate strategy to bring miners in to work from outlying districts, bringing in several hundred. But it also showed the NCB failing to persuade the thousands who remain on strike.

It was interspersed with MORI poll findings which, although never fully trustworthy showed that 'violence on the picket lines' did not contribute to scabbing and that now only four out of ten, compared to an original six out of ten, would support the call for a national ballot.

It showed that over 50% of striking miners were actively supporting the strike and that their attitudes had hardened. Their anger was submerged into a deep feeling that no-one would give in and the strike was not crumbling.

The mass branch meeting at Whitwell, which included women supporters, said it all. Back in March, feelings had been 50-50 for and against a ballot and the strike. Now a *Panorama* poll showed that seven out of ten people supported the NUM's policy and would stay out to win.

The viciously exploitative NCB strategy for scab-herding was presented — or rather exposed. Devised by Ken Moses, Derbyshire Area Director of the NCB, their plan was first to make a village-by-village survey; then select those miners with good work records, mortgages and a wife not working and living in outlying areas away from the pit and not easily in range of the strikers. Then they did door to door visiting...

Other factors taken into consideration were the proximity of neighbours who might be hardened strikers and pickets. Then they arranged police cover to bring in the crop of scabs across what was referred to as 'bandit country' in grided buses driven by helmeted escorts and drivers.

The whole truth

By Albert Bowns



The organised violence of the bosses' state: riot police at Orgreave

THERE has been a general acceptance of the TV programme by the members of my Branch and other NUM members who I have spoken to. But I myself was rather critical of the programme, mainly because I know what sections had been edited out.

The programme was too concerned with two characters — Norman Heywood, scab, vs. Harold Laws, striking miner and branch secretary. There is no criticism of Harold intended, because like me, he thought the programme would be of a broader nature, covering all sections of the strike equally, i.e. the women's action group's role in the strike, police harassment, the individual comments of the striking miners about the situation in the village, the effect on the village people in general.

As we now know all these sections which were filmed and spoken about by Harold and myself, by rank and file members and the women's action group were cut. In their place was only a confrontation between two people, Harold Laws and Norman Heywood, and their different views on the strike situation.

I was also appalled that seven scabs should have 50% of the programme to air their views while 711 strikers received the

Moses admitted that without police 'cover' — intimidation of strikers and paramilitary scab-herding services — 'we would have had a complete stoppage'.

By contrast the NUM did not even have a list of all miners' addresses! Their so-called co-ordinated attacks that cause so much fear in the media, really are confined to maintaining picketing and the welfare of strikers.

Again we had great coverage of scabs being shouted at, and accounts of their windows being put in — but nothing about strikers being harassed when scabs finger them to the police. This has been very prevalent in this area during the dispute.

Moses' comments on a scab who had had his car unsuccessfully petrol-bombed were very revealing. "Serves him right, he should have come back to work sooner", his benevolent boss joked.

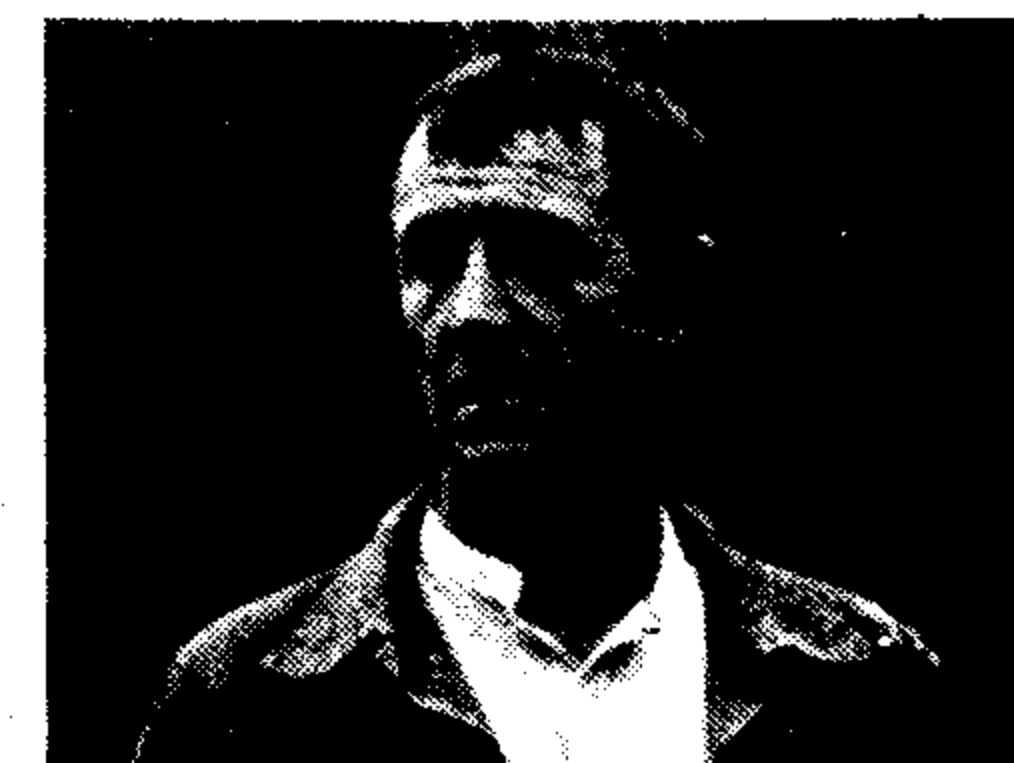
Of pickets facing court charges he said "If they go found guilty, we sack them".

The NCB is determined to pursue its revenge and it wins the strike there will be no stopping it.

Between August 29 to the day of the programme, September 17, the NCB boss predicted doubling of the number of scabs — now 737. In fact, despite spending so much money, time and effort the number had only risen to 869.

As the NUM's Gordon Buler remarked, "At the rate of getting 20 more in a week, how long will it take to get 10,500? Probably till the next century."

The women gathered at War-sop Main Scabs' Alley every afternoon summed it up, the media and the polls being incapable. "We've got up, we're standing up and we're sticking out for as long as it takes. We'll go to this Christmas, we'll even go to the next one. We'll win."



Albert Bowns

other 50%. If this is impartiality as recognised by the media, the surely organisations like the National Front and the Communist Party should have equal time to the Conservatives and the Labour Party during the next election.

The producers were more concerned with the confrontation of the two major characters than with the major issue — the betrayal by seven scabs of a NUM branch and the village.

The fact that police harassment was never mentioned in the whole programme also concerned me. They were shown to be playing a quiet role of amiable referees when in fact the massive police presence in the village was the sole reason for there being a scab presence at Kiveton Park. Without the police, *TV Eye* would not have had a story to film in the first place.

Also on the question of picketing and general harassment, the fact that we have had 80 members arrested and four imprisoned was a glaring omission as was the uniqueness of the mining community. Both these questions would have given the viewer the answer as to why mining communities in Yorkshire are so strong in their support of the union and their communities.

THE MEN WILL

**With
solidarity...**



JOHN HARRIS



STOP ALL GOALS!

read

Socialist
Organiser

The black revolt

UNTIL the American Civil War of 1861-5 black people in the Southern United States were slaves – bought and sold like so much machinery, subject to arbitrary beating and abuse by their owners, told that the god-given destiny of their race was to act as instruments of labour for the white masters.

There were many slave rebellions, from the 1820s onwards and black regiments played an important role in the Civil War, when finally they were allowed to form. But the white racists of the South remained strong enough to impose new forms of oppression, scarcely lighter than slavery, after the Civil War.

In the later years of the 19th century, 'Jim Crow' laws were passed in the Southern States which effectively deprived the blacks of most civil rights. Right through to the 1920s, dozens of blacks would be lynched by racists each year. As late as the 1960s, schools, colleges, and many other facilities were segregated, and it was dangerous and difficult for blacks in the South to register to vote.

Only a long and militant struggle by US blacks curbed this open racism.

The centre for most radical black movements this century, however, has not been the South but the cities of the North, where an increasing proportion of the black population has moved.

One of their greatest leaders was Malcolm X, assassinated in 1965. First he became a leading speaker for the Black Muslims, a militant movement clouded by religious mysticism and rigid race separatism. In the last years of his life, breaking from the Black Muslims, he moved towards revolutionary socialism, looking to "a global rebellion of the oppressed against the oppressor, the exploited against the exploiter".

Until 1917 the labour movement in the US, even when courageously anti-racist, had little concept of a revolutionary alliance with black revolt. The line of the best labour leaders was that questions of black oppression by whites should be pushed aside and ignored. The labour movement, they believed, should concentrate on organising both white and black workers against the bosses. The only important issue was the issue of workers vs. bosses.

What changed that was the Russian Revolution and the Bolsheviks' programme of linking up workers' struggles with the cause of national liberation. The US Communist Party became the most militant champion of black workers' rights.

In the 1930s this line won the CP a strong base among blacks. By then, however, the CP had been corrupted by Stalinism – and the militant blacks who rallied to what they thought was communism were channelled into support for the racist Democratic Party and strike-breaking during World War 2.

In the sixties there came the spectacular black urban rebellions which led to the burning down of parts of northern and western cities such as Watts (Los Angeles) and Newark (near New York). Open racism was forced to retreat.

Today, while the most obvious legal racism has been removed, black people in the US still suffer tremendous economic and social oppression. Youth unemployment rates in the black ghettos of the big cities are often over 50%.

The Jesse Jackson campaign was an attempt once again to channel black militancy into the Democratic Party. But black people in the US are more confident and strongly placed than they were in the '30s. They could play a major role in a rebirth of socialism in America.



A striker from the Autolite plant in Toledo, Ohio, shot by National Guardsmen

US Labour: The powder keg beneath Reagan

Martin Thomas concludes a brief survey of workers' struggles in the US. The first part was last week.

When the Great Depression began in 1929, the US labour movement was not in good shape to meet it. The AFL still stuck firmly to its rules: no blacks, no women, no unskilled, no politicians. The Communist Party was not only small and isolated (its membership in 1919 had been 90 per cent foreign-born), but by now thoroughly corrupted by Stalinism. The Trotskyists, who had been expelled from the CP in 1928, were much smaller and more isolated still.

It took some years before the US working class rallied to fight back. But then it fought on a huge scale.

The first major battles were in 1934, at Toledo Auto-Lite and among truck drivers, warehouse and coal yard workers in Minneapolis. The Minneapolis strikes, led by Trotskyists, featured the systematic organisation of flying pickets, pickets' self-defence, a women's auxiliary, and a daily strike newspaper.



National Guardsmen escort scab truck



Detroit police brutally smash up occupation at York and Towne Co.

In Toledo, another radical group (the 'Musterites', soon to merge with the Trotskyists) were prominent, and organised the unemployed to help the strikers smash an injunction against mass picketing. Even though less than half the workers had joined the strike to begin with, they won.

Sit-down strikes in the 1930s

A whole wave of struggles developed for union organisation in the mass-production industries which the AFL had neglected. A major turning point was a sit-down strike at the General Motors plants in Flint, Michigan, in 1936-7.

The company controlled the local police, courts, city council, press and radio. They used everything they could against the strikers. But the strikers won.

They seized two plants on December 30 1936 and another — through a finely-planned operation to divert company thugs and police — on January 30 1937: and they held on to them with absolute discipline and determination.

The entrances were barricaded with car bodies. Steel frames were welded round every door. The windows were covered with bullet-proof metal sheets. Paint guns, fire hoses, and metal parts were made ready to use against invaders. Organisation and discipline inside the plant were immaculate.

A Women's Auxiliary mounted picket lines outside the plant: one of its leaders declared "A new type of woman was born in the strike. Women who only yesterday were horrified at unionism, who felt inferior to the task of organising, speaking, leading, have, as if overnight, become the spearhead in the battle of unionism".

Following the GM workers' victory, some 400,000 workers joined hundreds of sit-down strikes across the US in the course of 1937.

The newly organised workers went not into the AFL but into a new federation, the CIO. At the 1935 AFL convention, the United Mine Workers leader John L. Lewis had swung a punch at the carpenters' leader Bill Hutchinson, and that

marked the beginning of the split.

The CIO was very different from and more radical than the AFL. The years 1934-8 were full of talk and agitation about a Labour Party in the US. Yet it never emerged.

Why not? The influence of people like Lewis was one factor. Capable of tremendous militancy — he led miners' strikes during World War 2 in defiance of the law and the no-strike pledge accepted by all other unions — he was also high-handed, bureaucratic, and in absolutely no way a socialist. Politically, he was mostly a Republican, though he collaborated with the Democratic president Roosevelt in the 1930s.

But the crucial factor in channelling the newly-organised workers politically behind the New Deal Democratic Party was probably the Communist Party.

This was the epoch of the 'Popular Fronts' — when the CP in Britain wanted a common front between Labour, Liberals and 'progressive' Tories. In the US they translated this into support for Roosevelt. After 1941 they were the strongest supporters of the no-strike pledge.

And the CP had considerable influence. It was the biggest radical movement, and in that period its connections with the Soviet Union brought it extra glory. By 1946 the CP controlled maybe 35% of the CIO unions.

The US working class after World War 2

The end of World War 2 brought the greatest strike wave yet in the US. Three million workers struck during the first six months of 1946: at the high point, 1.6 million were out simultaneously.

The miners played a central role here, too. In April 1946 they struck for a raise. The government responded by using war powers to seize the mines. So strong was the strike, however, that the government eventually conceded increases much bigger than the coal owners wanted.

That was the general pattern. The employing class made concessions — and then, when they reckoned workers' militancy was

receding, they hit back.

In December 1946, the UMW was fined \$3.5 million for contempt of court. In June 1947 a sweeping anti-union law, the Taft-Hartley Act, was introduced.

Closed shops and secondary boycotts were outlawed. 60 days' warning were required for strikes, and the president was empowered to impose a further 80 days' "cooling off" on strikes which he judged might "affect national health or safety". Union leaders were required to sign a pledge that they were not communists.

The Cold War

Many trade unionists called for general strike action against this law. But the union leaders let it pass with a few demonstrations.

As after World War 1, the employers drew deadly advantage from the political weaknesses of the trade union movement. Radicals were put on the defensive by fierce Cold War anti-communism. By the early '50s, as McCarthyism developed, socialists working in the GM car plants in Flint (the same plants as had seen the great struggle of 1936-7) had to run out of the factory at the end of each shift to avoid being beaten up by right wingers.

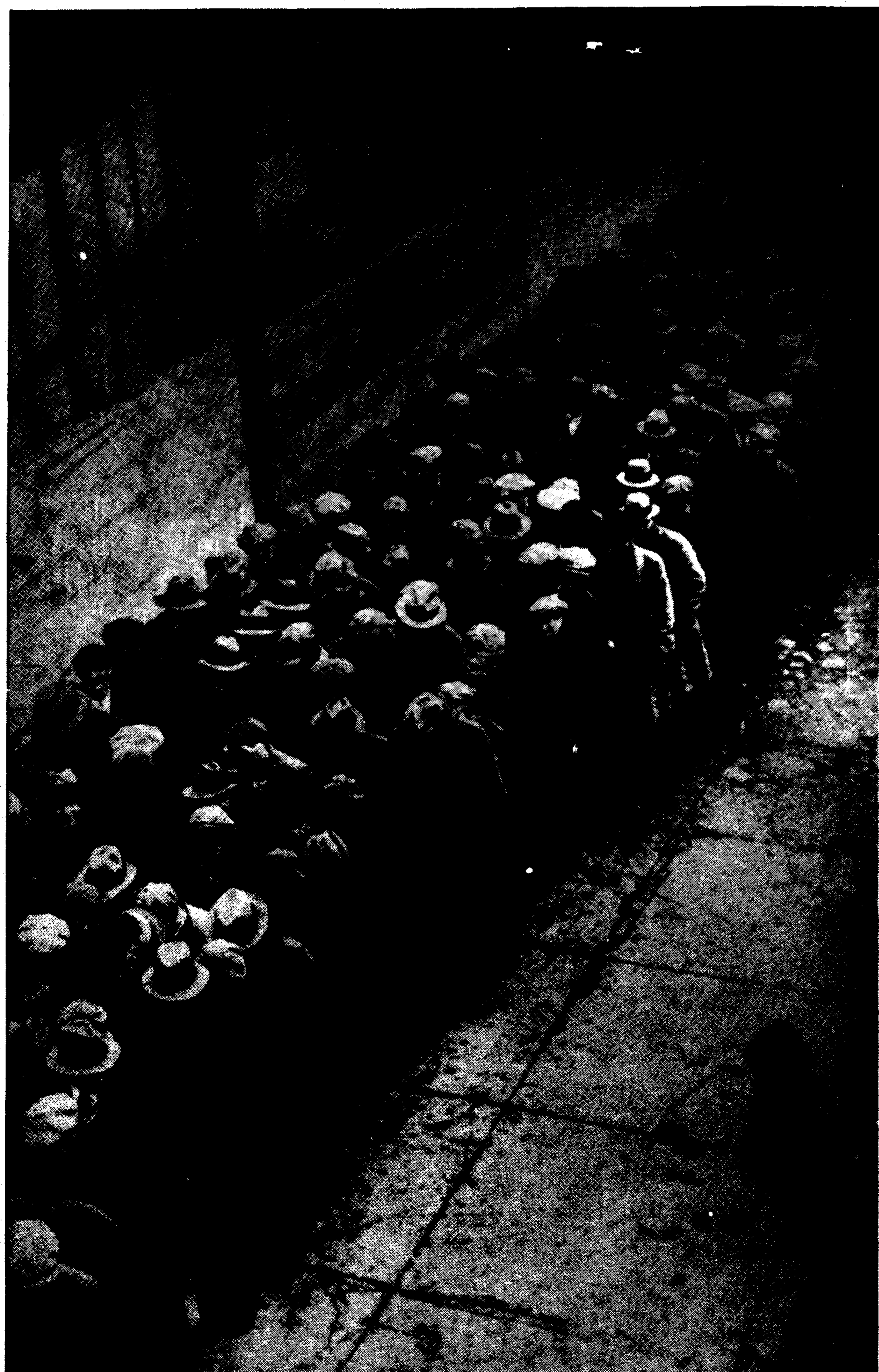
The US's continuing prosperity helped persuade the mass of workers to accept this.

And the politics of the CP helped the capitalist class here, too. The unions led by the CP had been no less bureaucratic, and even more viciously anti-strike during the war, than others. When the drive against "communists" began, it had an easy target, loved neither by militants (because of what the CP had done) nor by non-militants (because of what the CP called itself).

Prospects today

The CIO reunited with the AFL in 1955, under the presidency of the AFL's invincibly conservative George Meany. "To be frank," declared Meany, who dominated the AFL-CIO until his death in 1980, "we American trade unionists like the capitalist system".

Meany himself, and other



Unemployment queue in the 1930s. Shanty-towns — called 'Hoovervilles' after the President of the day — sprang up round the big cities, as in the Third World today

union leaders, certainly did well out of that system. Teamsters' (truck-drivers') leader Jimmy Hoffa drew a salary of \$100,000 a year in 1966, in addition to a large income from corruption.

Despite such leaders there were militant strikes — and also militant movements within the unions, particularly the Teamsters.

Still, to date, post-1947 US trade unionism has remained overwhelmingly conservative. To see the signs of hope, you have to look at the more fundamental underlying trends.

Right into the 20th century, US workers would generally not think of themselves as a distinct class divorced from the means of production. Many workers could reasonably hope to win their own little share of the means of production — to establish a farm somewhere in newly-settled territory in the West, for example.

This situation gave a real basis to ideologies of self-help, rugged individualism, and free enterprise.

Ideologies can and do continue to grip long after their original real basis has disappeared. And these ideologies in particular have continued mainly because, since the early years of this century, the US has been the most powerful capitalist country in the world, the one with the highest living standards

and also, most of the time, one with a constantly rising living standard.

In 1885, when there was no working class party in England, Friedrich Engels explained this from English industry's dominant position in the world market. "During the period of England's industrial monopoly, the English working class have, to a certain extent, shared in the benefits of the monopoly . . . With the breakdown of that monopoly, the English working class will lose that privileged position . . . And . . . there will be Socialism again in England."

The US and the world

Now US industry has had a much greater domination in the world market than English industry ever had, and for much longer.

But Leon Trotsky pointed out in 1928: "The international strength of the United States and her irresistible expansion arising from it . . . compels her to include the powder magazines of the whole world into the foundations of her structure . . . the class struggle in Old Europe, the uprisings of the colonial masses, and all wars and revolutions".

The Vietnam war rebuffed the US's world power, shook up US politics, and severely damaged the world economic system based on US dominance. Since the early '70s, real wages in the

US have hardly risen, and they are no longer above wages in many West European countries. The US's technological lead over other countries is rapidly disappearing.

How soon these trends will have an effect, no-one can tell. But for sure they are all working to undermine US conservatism.

The lack of socialism in the US working class has allowed ethnic and religious divisions to play a big role in US politics — and thus in turn to become an additional obstacle to socialism. Again, some things have changed. The civil rights struggles of the 1960s have not stopped US blacks suffering unemployment and poverty, but they have raised their dignity and self-assertiveness, and put racism on the defensive.

The US working class, uniquely, contains groups from every continent, and from a vast range of countries across the world. That is another way in which the US includes the powder magazines of the whole world into its foundations.

The African liberation struggles of the '50s and '60s inspired the US blacks. The battles in Central America will now inspire the millions of Hispanic workers in the US. There are reports of Solidarnosc inspiring the normally fiercely right-wing Polish workers in the US.

One day the powder magazines will explode.

Songs on our side

Brian O'Neill talked to Robert Wyatt

FOR anyone with more than a passing interest in popular music it's been an interesting year. So far, I would pick out three high points. First there was the release of the Specials' "Free Nelson Mandela", then New Order was the first nationally known group to play a benefit for the miners, and now the latest release from Robert Wyatt.

Called "Work in progress", it is a fourtrack, 12 inch single. The choice of songs reflects Robert's continuing interest in performing songs that focus on issues for which he feels it is important to show his support.

The tune most reviewers are picking as the outstanding track is Peter Gabriel's "Biko", dealing with the murder of Steve Biko while in South African government custody, but the others are equally enthralling. "Amber and Aubergines" is his salute to those involved in the Grenadan struggle, with Robert's words set to music by Hugh Hopper.

The other two songs are "Yolanda" by the Cuban musician Pablo Milanés and "Te Recuerdo Amanda" by Victor Jara, sadly now dead, who was one of the more well known victims of the military regime in Chile.

For most of the record he is his own accompanist on a synthesizer programmed to sound almost like a harmonium which gives a suitably warm background to his highly individual and compelling voice.

Recently I interviewed Robert. It is best to let him speak for himself, but since I've had to edit the conversation it doesn't truly show his warm sense of humour and deep feeling for the oppressed peoples everywhere, especially at this moment, Latin America.

What moved you to choose the songs you use?

I tend to get my inspiration and encouragement from looking at wherever people are standing up to big money, power. Steve Biko, for example, represents a spirit I really admire. So I look for any examples I can find in the form of a suitable song. I like the folk tradition that if it's a useful song it can be done by lots of people in lots of places but we have particular responsibility to songwriters or people who've been killed or silenced, to carry on their work. In the case of Cuba it is to help indicate that they do have a flourishing culture.

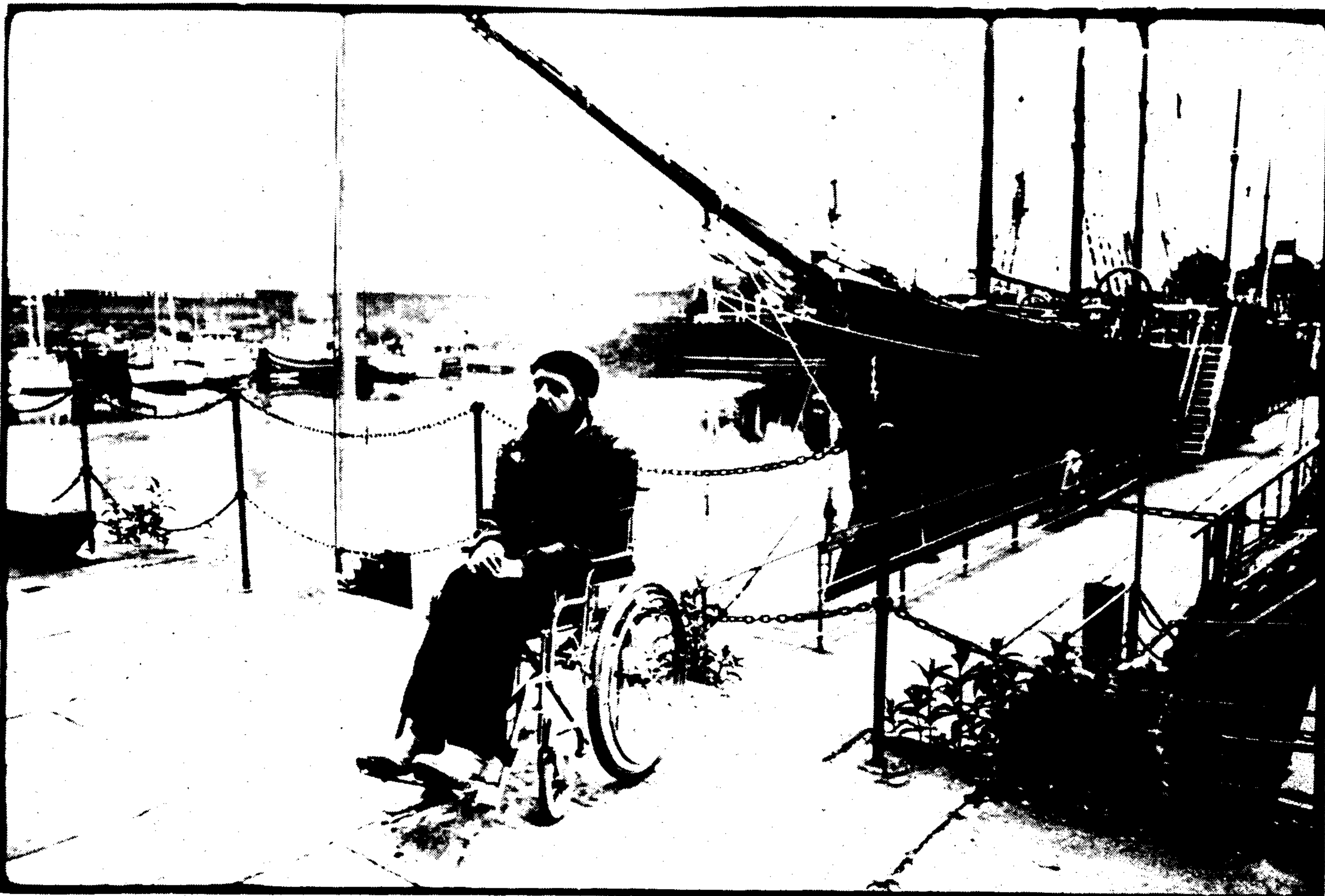
How do you feel about the media tending to make you some sort of icon of the Left?

I think I'm treated with quite a lot of circumspect caution about what I'm doing having political meaning, and if I'm not, I think I should be, because in the end musicians don't do the trick. But I don't hedge my bets and I do take sides.

There is a tendency for musicians to be frightened of losing audiences and saying things like "I want to sing about Ireland but I don't want to be rude about the Catholics or the Protestants", so they end up with a neutered record. I haven't addressed myself to that issue at all, but I don't mind losing half my potential audience if it means making clear what side I am on with any given issue.

Do you ever think about your participation in the pop world with its capitalist axis?

I don't have the freedom to choose. There is only this way of doing it available to me, and to that extent capitalism is absolutely totalitarian - I have to participate in that machinery in order to earn a living. I take it as given that that is the situation and try to jaywalk my way around, holding up little flags which are morale boosting signals towards people. The only thing I can do is find the most honourable record company to do it through, and look for material that has no ambiguity whatsoever - you



don't have to guess what I'm thinking.

In a way I'm part of the protest tradition but having seen so many protest movements absorbed into the mainstream, I'm very cautious about making claims - for rock musicians reflect current tensions and are not capable of creating them. After all, how can a few songs that I sing about what is wrong with NATO compete with a Hollywood blockbuster glorifying US soldiers?

In a similar way I've never seen any aesthetic avant-garde movement that hasn't been absorbed by mainstream capital. After all Saatchi and Saatchi are leading collections of it; they have it and don't feel threatened. One can't underestimate the gargantuan power of capitalism.

You've been living in Spain recently.

Yes, it was a very happy six months, but the overall picture there is ominous. They've done what the French did with Mitterrand, that is voted for a 'nice' left which effectively means letting the conservatives have a holiday for a few years. The situation is a bit grim as I think Gonzales is basically a coward, a Harold Wilson. It makes me wonder how long people will go on voting for figures like that just because they call themselves socialists.

How did you come to join the Communist Party?

Well I heard about this bunch of people who wanted to undermine international capitalism and thought, that sounds like a good idea!

So I joined and found there is no great left wing plot to undermine capitalism, just a bunch of nationalistic

groups trying to up the local wages. Practically speaking, for serious communists, the trade union fight for wage claims and recognition is the main priority and I'm happy to be part of any body of people who will support, say, the miners to the hilt without sitting on the fence.

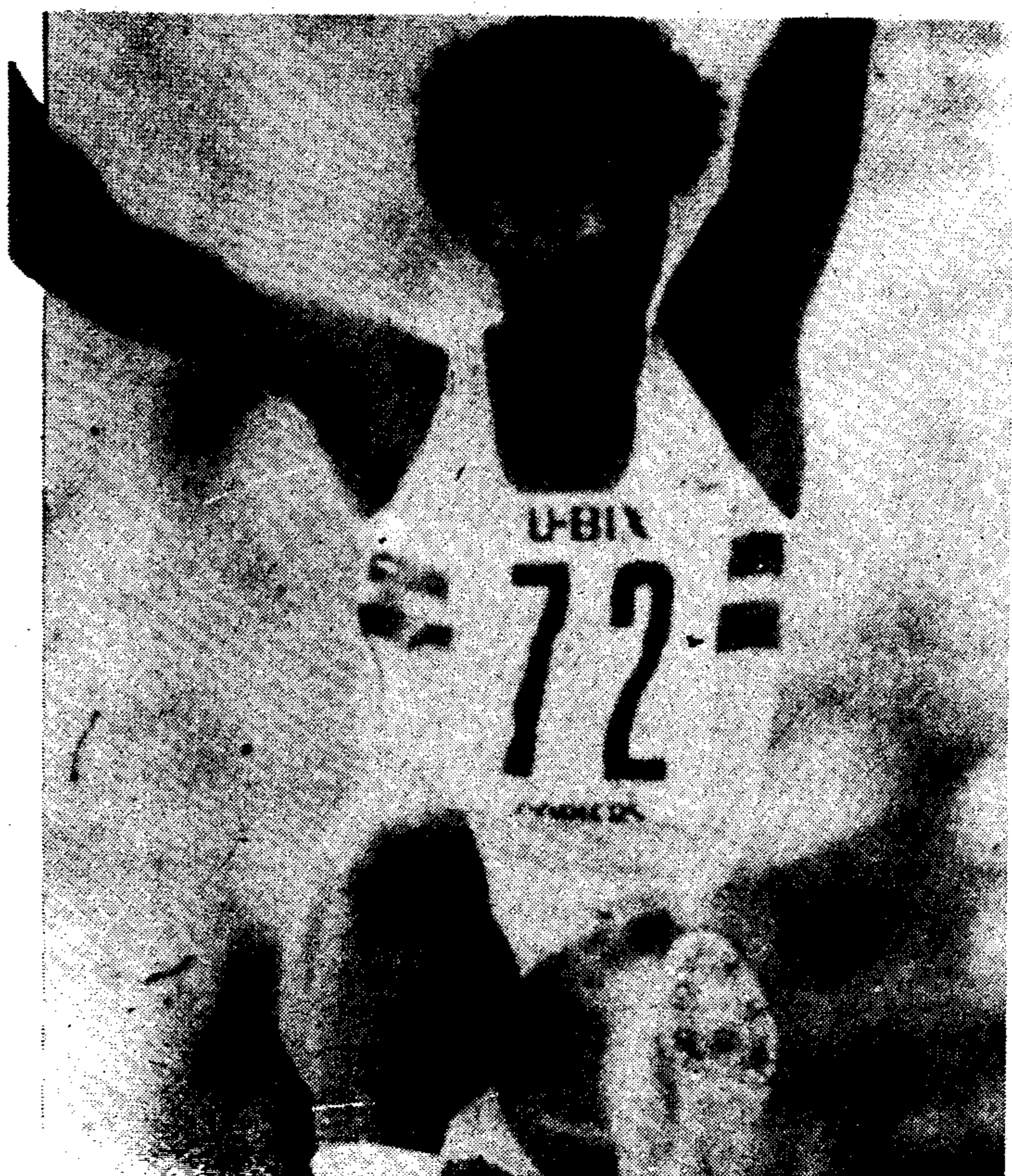
At the same time I'm exasperated at the establishment of the CP and other left wing parties not reclaiming the issues. They tend to react defensively, building negative personality cults around people such as the current Prime Minister, that the right wing press build positive personality cults around. They don't do enough to say that these are not the arguments, that it's about the rich getting richer and the poor getting poorer.

They also spend a lot of time bickering internally.

Too true. The right seems to have adopted our slogan "Unite and Fight" - perhaps we should readopt it! Tensions between the left can be healthy, but it's getting to the point where we're destroying each other. That's what is sad. I hoped that when the SDP lot split, all those old Labour careerists would have gone and left the Labour Party alone to be a party of change.

It comes down to specific points - do you support the miners? - of course you do. If you even have to think about it you shouldn't be in the Labour Party.

There are plenty of parties willing to sit on the fence - join one of them. If you can't make radical change happen, you should support it wherever you can, be it the miners or the struggle in South Africa.



How women can win

IN a recent issue of New Scientist, two researchers examined women's athletic performance. As I reported last week, Craig Sharp pointed out that in events which tested stamina and endurance women were *already* outperforming men, and could probably do so in others. Sharp felt, however, that women would probably always be outperformed by men in sports calling for sharp bursts of power.

Kenneth Dyer comes to a different conclusion, though, believing that women could eventually equal or exceed men's performance in all events.

He points out that women have only recently taken up (or been allowed to participate in) many events (distance

SCIENCE

By Les Hearn

running, for example) and as more and more attempt these, hidden depths of talent will be revealed.

Thus, many women have taken up marathon running in their thirties (or later) and have achieved excellent, even winning, times. One contender for the US marathon team was 56 years old.

In only a few years, the gap between men's and women's marathon records has narrowed from 25% to 10% and may disappear by the end of the decade.

Dyer looks at the gaps between the records in other track events and predicts that these, too, may disappear within a century.

We can test his prediction by looking at the 3000 metres records at the turn of the century.

Dyer's theory goes against physiological knowledge but he says that much evidence has been wrongly interpreted or is selective or misleading. Most important to Dyer is the fact that "women's lifestyles have always been different to men's; women have always had fewer chances to train or participate to the same extent in most sports; they have always been socially discouraged from becoming dedi-

cated, full-time sportswomen or developing their bodies to the peaks of physical condition required."

But is this the point? Perhaps a non-discriminatory athletics would shift the emphasis away from impressive but pointless tests of strength (like weight-lifting or sprinting) towards endurance events which actually test and improve our ability to survive. It would give less credit to beating others and more to personal improvement and achievement.

Perhaps Carl Lewis could run for the bus, but Joyce Smith (British marathon record holder at 42 years of age) wouldn't need the bus. (Information: New Scientist).

Industrial

Hackney health sacking

CITY and Hackney District Health Authority in London has sacked local union activist Andrea Campbell.

Andrea, chair of the local joint shop stewards' committee and COHSE branch, has been summarily dismissed for 'gross misconduct' because of her part in the occupation which tried to stop closure of St. Leonard's Hospital.

Geoff Craig, the NUPE steward at St. Leonard's, was suspended together with Andrea at the end of July and may also be sacked.

Labour members on the Authority have unsuccessfully opposed these victimisations. One of them, Jo Thwaites, told us: "It is outrageous that the people who want to keep hospitals open



JOHN HARRIS

are being sacked. It should be the ones who are closing them."



ANDREW MOORE

Newham 7 leave the magistrates' court

200 back victimised black youth in Newham

By Lal Chanda

ON Friday September 14 the Newham 7 appeared at West Ham Magistrates Court for their committal hearing. As with the Newham 8 and the Bradford 12, a mass picket of the court had been organised and around 200 people attended.

There was a good mobilisation of the black community in Newham, including Asian women, children and men. But the support was not limited to the black community. There

were several union and Labour Party banners.

Present also was one of the black miners interviewed in last week's paper.

It was an extremely noisy picket. It had to be so that the defendants could hear us from inside the court.

There were coaches from Coventry, Sheffield and Birmingham which all received a loud cheer as they arrived.

Inside the court itself the Newham 7 were put in the same dock as the three white racists who had also been arrested. This was something that the defence campaign had fought against and will fight when the case is heard at the Old Bailey.

By putting them in the same dock the State hoped to make it look like the whole affair was just gang warfare. Trying to present the case as just a matter of rival gangs will be the main prosecution argument so they must attempt to portray the white racist attackers and the Asians who defended themselves against the racists in the same light.

The end result of the hearing was that the conspiracy charges were dropped against six of the Asians, leaving one Asian to conspire with himself! The affray charge was dropped on all seven Asians and the three whites.

However, they still have to appear at the Old Bailey sometime in the middle of next year to face the remaining charges. It is important to continue campaigning.

Stop Press: There was more trouble in Newham on Sunday September 16. Five Asians were beaten up by attackers who came from the Duke of Edinburgh pub — the same pub whose clientele sparked off the case of the Newham 7. A couple of people have reportedly been arrested but no charges have been made as yet.

Sheffield: not so socialist

By Helen Rigby

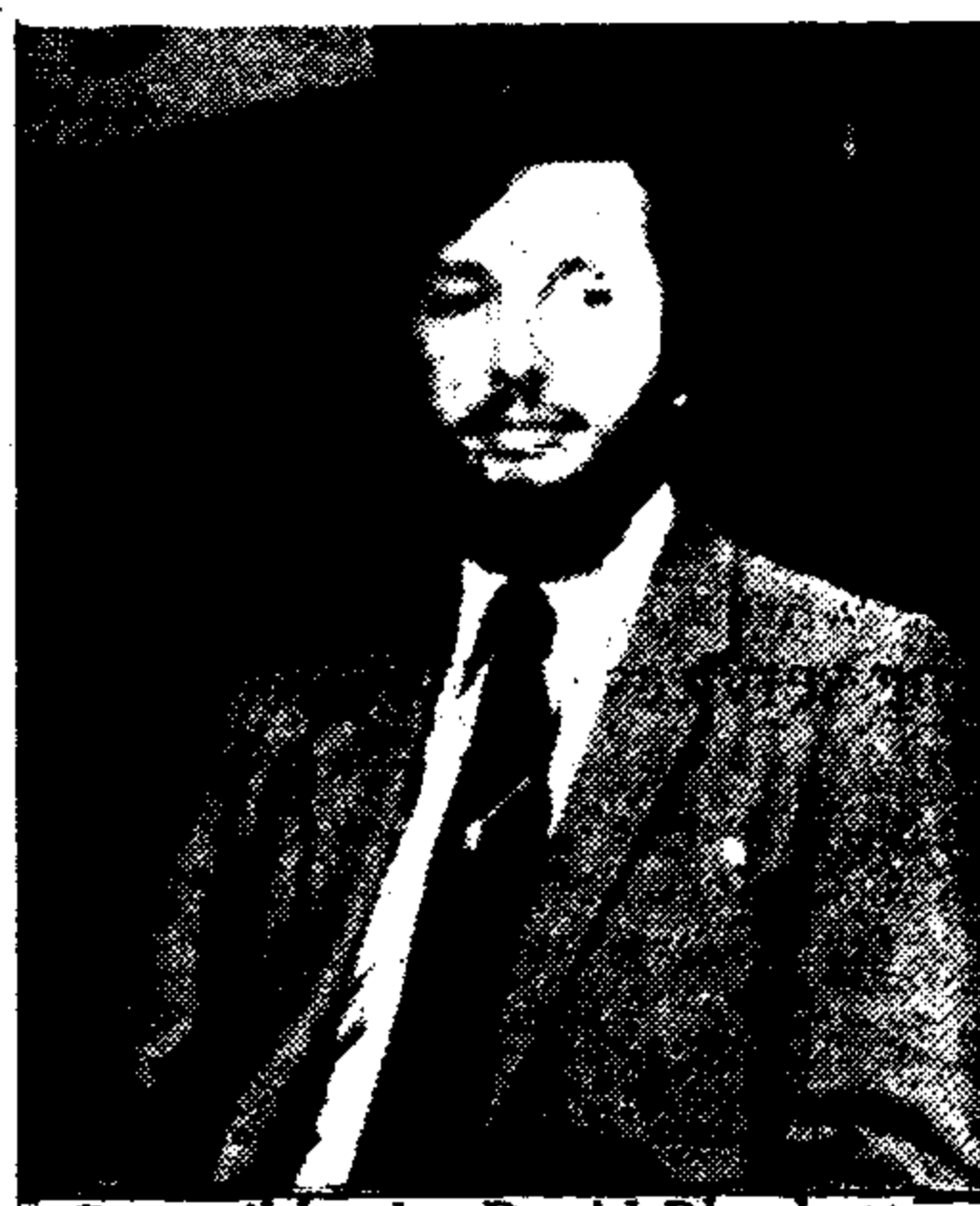
Sheffield City Housing Department is on indefinite strike.

The background to the dispute shows all too clearly that there is not a Red Flag flying over the Town Hall, and that council leader David Blunkett's socialist speechifying is hollow rhetoric.

'Sheffield City Council cares' — but not about its own workers.

Earlier this month the council imposed a new document on the operation of computer systems. The document removes union negotiation rights, and does not contain a guarantee of no redundancies or enforced relocation of staff. On September 6 ten members of control staff were suspended for refusing to implement this document, and on the 7th a further 13 for refusing to issue scab rent slips to rent collectors.

This led to the immediate walk-out of the rent collection department, who were



Council leader David Blunkett

joined by the rest of the Housing Department on Monday 17th.

Sources at the Town Hall inform me that the Education Department will be the next target for similar measures, and there is a possibility that there will be a Town Hall-wide dispute.

So, at a time when the Labour council and the unions should be uniting to fight rate-capping, the council is taking on its own workers.

Bunkum about bunkers

By Di Gash

A DEMONSTRATION will be held in Stratford-on-Avon on Saturday, 22nd, against the new Civil Defence Regulations and the Bunker being built under the new council offices.

District Council chairman Rear Admiral Rupert Wainwright denied, all over the front page of the local paper, that the bunker was anything more than an emergency room and claimed that it was nonsense to suggest that it was a preparation for nuclear exchange.

However, a CND member, worried by the article and not wanting to march through the town for nothing went to see him and asked him the following two questions:

1. Is the County of Warwickshire implementing government civil defence plans?

2. Is it conceivable that the basement could be used as a nuclear bunker?

The chairman replied that he really didn't know! This was

shortly after he had publicly criticised CND for not going to the council for the true facts.

The facts are that Stratford District Council are receiving large government grants for the construction and equipping of the Control Centre, and are currently trying, against strong NALGO opposition, to write a compulsion clause into all new workers' contracts forcing them into civil defence training and are planning to recruit 450 local volunteers to be trained into key civil defence positions. The county council have appointed an extra officer to be in charge of emergency planning who will be "deployed mainly within the Stratford area".

The council are building a nuclear bunker — no doubt about it.

Demonstration: Meet outside Theatre, 11.30. Speakers: Sid Platt, NALGO, Bob Attwood, Labour Councillor, James Hinton, Midlands CND, Ben Kingsley.

Socialist ORGANISER

A number of new Socialist Organiser groups have been set up since our weekend school at the end of August.

Two are now operating in North Notts, made up mainly of miners who have recently become SO supporters. In addition, broader public political meetings with Socialist Organiser speakers at Ollerton continue to attract audiences of about 100 miners and miners' wives.

The miners' strike increases our opportunities to get across socialist ideas not only to miners, but also to other people aroused and activated by the strike.

Many groups around the country report new supporters, in ones and twos.

The present is also a good time for expanding sales of the paper, and we're trying to get regular door-to-door estate sales going in a number of areas.

Comrades who have never done this sort of thing before are often hesitant

and doubtful about estate sales, but they are certainly no more difficult than election-time canvassing for the Labour Party. And they can produce results, too, including recruitment to local Labour Party branches.

The Islington SO group started its estate sale this Monday. An hour's work on a small estate yielded 12 sales.

Next week they'll be back to see if the new buyers want to continue taking the paper regularly. Not all will — it's never as easy as that! — but at the same time the sellers will be moving onto a neighbouring estate to get fresh sales.

Let us know what your group is doing, in terms of new paper sales and winning new supporters. With a bit of effort from comrades round the country, we hope to make this a regular column of reports from local groups — successes, achievements, and perhaps instructive failures too.



As P.W. Botha was inaugurated as Executive President under the new Constitution of South Africa, a wave of killings of black workers was mounting. 400 marched in protest last Friday evening, September 14, in London.

South African miners

By Bryan Edmands

OVER 30,000 black goldminers in eight gold mines stopped work on Sunday night's late shift (September 16) while their union, the National Union of Mine-workers, held mass meetings to discuss the possibility of a total stoppage.

The South African NUM, formed two years ago, has about 100,000 members out of a total black gold and coal mine labour force of about 500,000, and represents 40,000 of the 75,000 miners in the eight affected mines, where the union is officially recognised.

This is the first ever legal strike by black miners. It follows a ballot in which over 60% of the black miners favoured strike action to resolve a three-month dispute over wages and working conditions.

The union is demanding a 20% wage increase and improved conditions. The bosses' coordinating body, the Chamber of Mines, has offered 14%. After the vote to strike, they offered holiday pay allowance equivalent to half a month's wages as well. At present black miners do not get holiday pay, only a "return bonus" if they return to the mine.

But the miners are militant. They forced the issue by beginning to strike despite threats of dismissal, with no chance of getting another job, and with no strike pay as the union has no strike fund, and there is no social security benefit in South Africa.

As we go to press it appears from latest reports that the NUM has accepted an offer of 16% from the Chamber of Mines, though thousands of miners have remained on strike illegally at three gold mines. Police killed a number of striking miners at Waterspan mine, hundreds were injured at Durban Deep, and more than 250 miners from Vlekom were hospitalised, as police fired upon them and used rubber bullets, batons, tear gas and dogs to smash the strike.

Meanwhile in the vast black township of Soweto at least 50,000 black workers stayed at home on Monday September 17 in response to a call from the Release Mandela Committee in protest at apartheid policies. Police and security forces in armoured cars and troop carriers were out in force, patrolling Soweto, the largest black township in South Africa with a population of two million — where many demonstrators have been shot in the past three weeks.

US carworkers strike in GM

By Jack Russell

IN what could become America's most damaging industrial dispute for 15 years, workers in the United Auto Workers Union employed by General Motors — the world's largest private employer — are taking selective strike action over new proposals on job security and wages.

About 62,000 of General Motors' 350,000 strong UAW workforce were called out at the weekend at 13 of the company's 29 assembly plants — plants involved in assembling GM's best-selling models.

Negotiations have been taking place between the union and car bosses since early July over the new three year wage contracts, with the strike move coming after the deadline for talks on the new contracts had expired.

Stocks of cars held by GM are low, and it has been estimated that the stoppages could cost the company about \$125 million a week, so the strike could bite quickly.

However, despite the union having a strike fund of about \$565 million, uncertainty exists amongst the UAW members over whether their leaders

actually want to fight.

At one of the original 13 plants involved in the strike, Van Nuys in California, workers were told to end their strike after a day, apparently because a local contract agreement had been reached unbeknown to the workforce. And at the close of the day on Wall Street last Friday GM's shares showed little change, reflecting the feeling amongst investors that neither side — the union leaders and the bosses — want the dispute.

The workers, though, are demanding a better wages packet to include some element of annual wage rises, combined with automatic cost-of-living increases, and profit sharing, and they should make sure that now they are out on strike, their "leaders" break the secrecy of the negotiations and extend the strike to the component plants in an all-out campaign of action to win the strike.

Such action would inspire other sections of workers, and worry the administration officials who are watching the wage terms closely because they are likely to be used as the basis for pay claims in other strongly-unionised sectors of the economy.

Socialist ORGANISER



Mass picket in support of the occupation. Photo. John Smith (IFL)

Lairds sit-in resists legal threat

The occupation of the HMS Edinburgh and the gas accommodation rig at Cammell Lairds shipyard is now in its thirteenth week.

On Thursday September 13, management went back to Manchester High Court

for an enactment order on their original writ to have us removed. It was granted.

That morning a mass picket of the yard showed the solidarity of the labour movement with the workers in the occupation. Among those on

By Lol Duffy
(Sec., occupation committee).

the picket were shipyard workers, miners, city councillors, unemployed groups and local MPs.

At a meeting after the picket, representatives from the Tyne shipyards suggested that a national lay delegate conference be held on Wednesday 19 September. This view was supported by workers from the Clyde. Unfortunately,

19 September has come and gone and we have heard no more about this meeting.

Last Sunday, we were able to speak at the People's Festival in Liverpool, alongside Arthur Scargill, dockers and councillors.

The County Council has produced a fact sheet about the Lairds workers fight for survival which is available from the Lairds occupation committee.

On Monday September 17 the local sheriff came into the yard and gave us five minutes to consider his proposal that we leave the vessels and the yard. He came back after five minutes and said that as we had refused to leave peacefully, the due course of the law would not take place.

Our reply to him on both occasions was that we were staying put until reinstated, although our language wasn't that polite.

We heard a report that the bailiffs were trying to recruit bouncers, but they couldn't get any to help them.

Management are continuing to fortify the walls of the yard, coating them all with non-drying paint, building extra fences, putting up barbed wire and in general trying to make it more difficult for any general movement in and out of the yard.

Messages of support and donations are still coming in and are very important, but more importantly direct action will be needed in support of the yard if the occupation is going to succeed.

Messages of support and donations should be sent to: Lol Duffy, Secretary, Cammell Lairds Occupation Committee, c/o Birkenhead Unemployed Centre, 1 Argyle Street, Birkenhead, Merseyside.

Docks

THE dock strike ended on September 18, with a 76-8 vote to return to work at a TGWU delegates' meeting.

Pickets at Tilbury that morning were non-committal about the settlement, but on all evidence it is a very bad deal indeed for the dockers.

A 'quota' has been agreed for coal shipments to Ravenscraig steelworks from Hunterston - but this quota gives British Steel the full 22,500 tonnes it wants within eight weeks, and 18,000 tonnes until then. It was agreed without any consultation with the miners.

Hunterston management has given no promise not to use scab labour again, and other uses of scab labour and breaches of the Dock Labour Scheme during the strike are unresolved.

The timidity of the union is likely to open the way to renewed attacks on jobs by the pit employers. The bosses' daily, the Financial Times, reports:

"The government [has] agreed to a re-run of the severance scheme for registered dockers. This could mean another 1,000 of the 12,500 registered dockworkers leaving the industry within the next three weeks..."

"The government can expect renewed pressure from the more hawkish port employers to scrap the labour scheme..."

Pit women's appeal Form joint committees

We, the women's action groups against pit closures, wish to make it clear that after six months on strike we are not prepared to accept any compromise or anything less than 100% victory in or fight against the attacks on the NUM, jobs in coal or our community.

We recognise that if this strike is lost, not only will the NUM be smashed but the vicious anti-working class policies of the Tory government will be unleashed triple-fold on all workers' right to a job, a union and a decent way of life.

These attacks will hit women hardest of all. Not only will our husbands, brothers and sons be thrown onto the scrap heap while the coal industry is replaced with dangerous nuclear power, but our communities will be lost. We will be herded like animals from town to town in a search for jobs. We will have to raise our families on a far from adequate and punitive social security system.

And, worst of all, our own rights as women to work and to organise will disappear and we will be forced into the home as unpaid cooks, nurses and child-minders - isolated and unable to

By Vicki Smailes, sec. Rhodesia Women's Action Group

fight. That is why we have fought for six months alongside our brothers in the NUM.

Our action committees in every pit village and every coal field have organised food collection and distribution, pickets and rallies. We have lived on a starvation level, we have faced police brutality and intimidation and we have faced media lies but we have stuck together.

Without this the miners' strike

could not have continued its valiant struggle that will benefit the whole class in the end.

But, we also recognise that the successful conclusion to our strike depends on the active support of other workers and unions. That is why action by other workers to fight for their own demands is very important. The dock strike, for example, was a tremendous boost to us.

The sooner all workers see the

need to fight a common enemy for a common cause, the nearer we will be to victory.

The active participation of women in this strike has been crucial to its success. Don't let that initiative be lost! Spread the action! We call on all women involved in campaigns, strike actions, occupations, to form action committees to link up to us and join us in a common struggle.

Victory to the miners! Down with the Tory government!

Jaruzelski helps Thatcher: Poland sends more coal

THE import of coal from Jaruzelski's Poland has increased no less than 316.7% since January this year. The contribution of 'socialist' Poland to the international class struggle is to go for bust as the biggest producer of scab coal.

By May, Poland was in fact the largest single exporter of coal to Britain. The only country to have increased its exports to Britain by a larger percentage is South Africa (370% up on 1983) - although South African coal is still not very significant.

In May, Poland accounted for 286,000 tonnes of coal

imported into Britain, Australia for 263,000 and the US for 168,000. The figure for the EEC countries for May is not known, but in April they exported 143,000 tonnes to Britain.

So at the same time as

sections of the underground Solidarity movement are sending letters of solidarity to the NUM, the Polish dictatorship is cashing in on the situation to boost its own income - at the expense of the miners.

'Star' suppresses letter

FIFTEEN Labour MPs, supported by the Yorkshire miners and Fire Brigades Union leader Ken Cameron, have sent a letter to the Morning Star protesting at the Polish coal imports.

But the Morning Star has refused to print it, first pleading 'lack of space' and then saying that the paper never carried 'political statements' in its advertising columns.



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

Fund : £561 to go

DESPITE the promises, this week's fund hasn't been as good as we hoped. Thanks to Sarah Bryant for a donation of £40; Hastings YS, £5 and Andy Dixon, £10. The Fund now stands at £1439.15, still £561 short of our target of at least £2,000.

Comrades in Sheffield are planning two socials, the Islington group is also planning a social, while a jumble sale is being organised in South London and a party by the Manchester group. This should bring us closer to our target, but in the meantime this week we need to dig deep, ask readers for contributions and most importantly, get a fund raising event organised, where one isn't already planned.

Send donations to: The Treasurer, 214 Sickert Court, London N1 2SY.