

Socialist Organiser

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Defend Lairds!

By Lol Duffy, secretary, Lairds
Occupation Committee

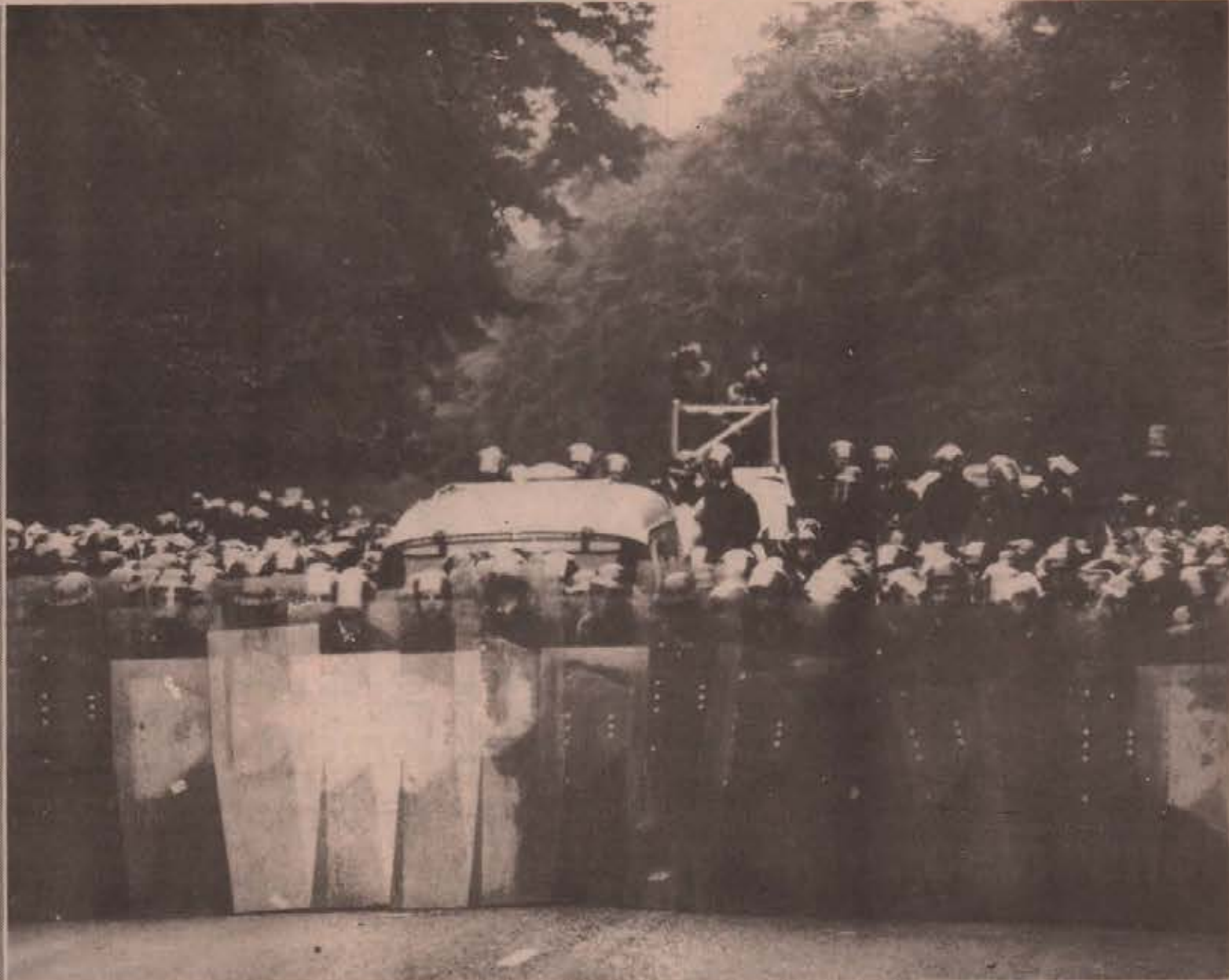
THE High Court in Manchester ruled today, Wednesday, 26th, that the 43 workers occupying Cammell Lairds shipyard on Merseyside must leave the vessels in the yard by midnight, Sunday 30th, or face arrest.

The response of the workers has been firm. We will not leave the vessels or the yard.

We are calling a mass picket for 7 a.m. on Monday morning, October 1. And we are calling for a national shop stewards' conference of shipbuilding unions.

In the event of any of the 43 workers occupying the yard being arrested, we call on the Merseyside trade union and Labour movement to take industrial action to defend trades unionism and defeat the law.

This is
class
war,
Kinnock:



Police at Maltby, 22 September. Photo: John Harris, IFL

OFF THE FENCE!

Paul Whetton is secretary of the Notts rank and file miners' strike committee and a delegate to the Labour Party conference in Blackpool. Here he writes — in a personal capacity — an open letter to Neil Kinnock.

Dear Neil Kinnock,

Did you hear Margaret Thatcher on Radio last week laying it on the line against the miners? Did you see the headlines in her lap dog press next day? "I will never give in" and "No surrender" were two of them.

Mrs Thatcher is tough, nasty, brutal, spiteful, single-minded and very hostile to the labour movement — but a good, tough, committed fighter for her own cause and capable of being an inspiring leader for her own side. Mrs Thatcher knows how to lead.

There is no double-talk from Thatcher about the miners' strike. She is out to beat us down and crush the NUM. She leaves her supporters in no doubt about it.

When Thatcher denounces "violence" she doesn't feel obliged to be "impartial" and denounce the police as well as the pickets who stand up to them. She denounces us —

she praises, lauds and defends the army of police thugs she sends to beat us down. She knows a bitter class war is being fought — and she knows which side she is on.

The contrast between Thatcher's conduct during the miners' strike and yours, Neil Kinnock, is a devastating one.

You have rightly blamed the Tories for the strike. But your backing for the NUM has been vague and equivocal at best. You have added your voice to the vile chorus of Tory orchestrated propaganda against picketing miners who are, in fact, victims of police thuggery. You denounce us for defending ourselves against the police and for trying to stop the police herding scabs to break our strike.

Whatever your intentions you thereby help Thatcher and MacGregor in their war to beat us down. You boost the Tory propaganda campaign which is designed to stop other workers

giving miners the solidarity action that would make such a difference to our strike.

Thatcher is a Tory pig, but I find it impossible to compare Thatcher's performance on her side with yours on ours without a feeling of deep disappointment in you.

One reason why Thatcher knows how to lead is that she does know which side she is on. No messing, no weasling, no equivocation. For her there is no hint of doubt in her own side of this class war. She is determined to do everything she can to make sure her side wins. She will do nothing that gives aid and comfort to the miners.

Mrs Thatcher faces the just charges we hurl at her with a hard face, impregnable self-confidence and skin as thick as a rhinoceros. No doubt you have seen it close up.

When Mrs Thatcher talks of 'Britain', she means her part of it, her class, the Tory party.

We accuse her of starving miners' families to break the NUM, but does she care?

Continued on back page.

Labour must back the miners

Socialist Organiser

General strike can beat these laws

THE High Court is currently hearing a case brought by two Yorkshire miners against the Yorkshire NUM on several counts.

Three Derbyshire miners are attempting to get the strike declared unlawful, and if they win they will sue Arthur Scargill for damages.

So far other haulage firms have held back from following the Read company's successful court action against the South Wales NUM, but they are unlikely to wait much longer.

It is only a matter of time and tactical calculation before the full weight of the Tory anti-union laws is thrown at the NUM.

And now the Tories have new weapons in the arsenal.

A major part of the 1984 Trade Union Act comes into force this week, and another — on closed shops — in a few weeks' time.

It is now unlawful to call a strike without first holding a secret ballot of all those workers to be involved in the action, not more than four weeks before the action is to take place, and winning a majority. If a strike goes ahead without fulfilling these conditions then the union is open to fines, seizure of funds and other legal action.

The law is very specific about the wording that must be used in the ballot. It must involve an answer that is either 'yes' or 'no', and must specifically ask if the individual is prepared to go on strike in breach of contract.

This makes quick, decisive action extremely difficult and the insistence on secret ballots rather than mass meeting votes will maximise anti-strike votes by asking each isolated individual whether they are prepared to face the risks and difficulties of a strike rather than seeking a collective decision where workers can hear and gain self-confidence from each others' arguments.

The part of the laws to come into effect on November 1 does not make existing closed shop agreements unlawful, but new closed shops will be unlawful unless agreed to by 80% of those entitled to vote. In existing closed shops, if unions do not hold ballots to reaffirm them, people who refuse to join the union cannot be sacked; it will be ruled unfair dismissal, and the sacked anti-unionist will be entitled to compensation of between £12,000 and £17,000.

Under existing Tory laws, strike action is already unlawful under many circumstances — if it is solidarity action, if it is deemed political, or if it is in support of workers outside the UK. And already, anyone with a 'deeply held personal conviction' is entitled to opt out of the union where a closed shop exists.

These are bosses' laws, reflecting the restricted, biased, capitalist nature of British parliamentary democracy.

The anti-union laws must be defeated, or in future every striker will have to fight bound, fettered and hobbled.

The answer is a general strike. The labour movement should be prepared for such action as soon as the courts hit the NUM again.

Dog doesn't bark

SOME READERS last year thought Socialist Organiser was wasting time and valuable space when we published an article on the naked anti-semitism of an editorial which appeared in *Newsline*, the daily paper put out by the Workers Revolutionary Party (with, it is widely assumed, financial help from their friend Col. Gaddafi, Libya's eccentric dictator).

The editorial, entitled 'The Zionist Connection', had a smaller headline above it: 'From Socialist Organiser to Thatcher and Reagan'. It began: "A powerful Zionist connection runs from the so-called left of the Labour Party right into the centre of Thatcher's government..."

"Top of the list, we have the most recent appointment of Mr Stuart Young, a director of the *Jewish Chronicle*, as youngest-ever chairman of the BBC... He is the brother of Mr David Young, another Thatcher appointee who is chairman of the Manpower Services Commission..."

The MSC, said *Newsline*, "is the key organisation which the Tories are transforming into a 'corporatist front' behind which they hope to mobilise jobless youth from 14 years upwards into a slave labour body..." But: "The Tories know they can rely totally upon Zionist imperialism to produce the most hated reactionaries..."

It raved on about "Thatcher's hand-picked Zionists" etc. Denouncing *Socialist Organiser*, it finished: "The Zionist connection between these so-called Lefts in the Labour Party right through to Thatcher and Reagan's White House is there for all to see in its unprincipled nakedness..."

It was crazy stuff, echoing fascist propaganda about the "international Jewish conspiracy", but giving it a 'left' and 'anti-imperialist' twist.

One would have expected the recent appointment of Mr David Young as minister without portfolio in Mrs Thatcher's cabinet — a rather spectacular promotion, which provoked comment in the bourgeois press — to have sent *Newsline* into a new frenzy of paranoia.

They already describe the Tory government as a 'Bonapartist dictatorship', and might have been expected to see Young's appointment as highly sinister, a new step in the development of Thatcher's 'Bonapartist dictatorship' in collusion with the international 'Zionist' conspiracy which is — so *Newsline* has asserted — at the heart of world politics.

Not a bit of it. They reported Young's appointment blandly, with less comment than the bourgeois press.

So challenging and branding their crazy anti-semitism seems to have been an effort in vain. It is unlikely to affect the way they see the world and that is a pity, but at least this time it has convinced them of the wisdom of their own policy.

That's progress, isn't it?



Picket arrested at Maltby. Photo: John Harris, IFL

Back the miners



Strikers join the Party

By Fred Able

SHERWOOD CLP is in the heart of the Notts coalfield. It covers 11 pits and two workshops. At the last general election, the new constituency elected a Tory MP with a 600 vote majority.

Five of the Sherwood CLP officials are in the NUM. Four are scabbing; only one is on strike. The response of one ward secretary to the NEC's call for a 50p weekly levy was to say they

couldn't take a position on it, that it was a matter for individual consciences and that he hoped members would help distress!

But in many ways, Sherwood's response has been untypical. From day one, neighbouring Newark CLP has been one of the leaders of the campaign in support of the strike. At this year's Party conference, they have the strongest resolution condemning police action during the strike.

But whatever the response, the strike is clearly having a profound effect. It is reported that 2,000 NUM members in the whole Notts Area have withdrawn from the political levy.

More importantly, there has been an influx of those involved in the strike into the Party — because of the politicisation going on, but also from seeing the need to shake the local Party organisations up and turn them into instruments of the working class.

The last Sherwood GC processed around 50 new members.

ship applications, largely from striking miners, their wives and those pulled in because of the strike. 45 of these were from Ollerton branch.

Over the last months, Blidworth has had 27 membership applications processed.

The battle on the picket lines has also been reflected in the Party. There are few reports of scabs leaving. Prominent ones have stayed to fight, and this has recently come to a head over the panel for the county council elections.

Although Sherwood CLP opposed the decision, a recent meeting of the County Party refused to let three scabs onto the panel. They are appealing to the Regional Executive against this. In response, a number of strikers put forward a statement about why they thought it should be rejected.

The signatories included two members of the Notts Miners Rank and File Strike Committee, Paul Whetton and Jimmy Hood. Both are prominent Labour Party members. The statement was supported by Betty Heathfield.

The strikers' statement

AS striking miners and members of the Labour Party we call upon the Regional Executive to uphold the decision of the County Labour Party to exclude miners scabbing on the NUM's strike against pit closures from consideration for positions as County Council candidates.

The Labour Party, through the financial and political support of its membership for the miners, has gained considerable credibility in the eyes of the NUM membership. Hundreds of miners locally and many thousands nationally are joining the Labour Party as a result. This work would be seriously undermined if the Labour Party were to now allow scabs to go forward to secure positions of responsibility in its name. We believe the mass membership of the party, who have contributed so much to the Party's credibility in this dispute, would feel greatly disappointed and angry should this happen.

It will undoubtedly be argued that there are many amongst the working class electorate in this area who are scabbing on the NUM dispute. But those who are most loyal to trade union and socialist principles are presently

on strike or are the wives and families of strikers. Presented with the right candidate they can be expected to the last man and woman to vote Labour. In many mining areas they are likely to form the active core of the Party's election campaign. They cannot be expected to work for the election of a Council containing councillors who have demonstrated in this dispute their selfishness, short-sightedness and total lack of principle.

It is, in any case, the intention of the National Union of Mineworkers to pursue this dispute to total victory. The justice of our strike and the irresponsibility of those who opposed will be even clearer after our victory. We believe that those presently strike-breaking who can be won back to the Labour Party are unlikely to vote for a candidate who failed to demonstrate either principle or foresight and refused to back their national union during these months.

We would remind you that the credibility of the Labour Party, both nationally and locally, depends on your decision. Do not allow scabs to bring discredit to our Party.

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THE Southwark group has recently been discussing estate sales. Some comrades thought they weren't practical — no-one would buy, and anyway the estate was full of fascists.

Eventually two comrades decided to confound the sceptics and go out and do it. First time round, last Sunday, they sold 13 papers in just over an hour. Yes, estate sales can be done!

The Islington group's estate sale continues: second time round, this week, 13 were sold, one more than the previous week. Two refusals and four 'outs' among those who bought the previous time were balanced by seven new sales.

We hear that the Basingstoke group is restarting an estate sale which they began briefly and then dropped at the opening of the miners' strike. Does your local group have plans? Send in reports to this column, c/o 214 Sicket Court, London N1.

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STOP STEEL

If they use anti-union laws, general strike

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Police and courts help the

Ogreave pickets beat police violence

POLICE OUT OF THE CO

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Longbridge: stop scab coal

By Jim Denham

SCAB COAL has been flowing into BL's Longbridge plant throughout the miners' strike.

Since June, when this disgraceful situation was first brought to the attention of striking miners in the Midlands, all efforts to stop the coal have been rebuffed by the Longbridge joint shop stewards and the Works Committee, whose convenor is Jack Adams, a leading Communist Party member.

In July, strikers from Birch Coppice pit in Warwickshire, where there is a majority of scabs and from where most of the Longbridge coal comes, joined up with members of the

TGWU Commercial District to put a token picket on the plant in protest both at the movement of coal and at the use of non-union drivers to bring it in. But still the Longbridge unions refused to act, claiming that the NUM's national headquarters in Sheffield had not asked them to boycott coal!

Meanwhile the efforts of a small number of militants to raise the issue at the Longbridge joint shop stewards committee were equally unsuccessful. At the July JSSC meeting, a motion calling for the immediate blacking of all coal movements

into and within the plant received only three votes — all of which were from Socialist Workers Party members.

At that meeting, Jack Adams used the argument that the membership could not be won to a policy of closing down the plant in support of the miners, and that the most useful contribution that could be made was money and food collections on the shop floor.

The issue next cropped up at the August meeting of the TGWU 5/908 branch, which covers Longbridge and which Jack Adams chairs. A similar motion to that put at the JSSC

again received just three votes — two from SWP members and one from an SO supporter.

This time, Jack Adams argued that no further action should be taken until TUC congress had decided a policy on the coal strike. He did however say that whatever policy came out of the TUC should be implemented, and a resolution to this effect was sent from the branch to Birmingham Trades Council.

When the Trades Council miners' support committee met immediately after the TUC to discuss the Longbridge situation, it was decided that a letter should be sent to Adams expres-

sing concern at the continued delivery and use of scab coal at Longbridge, and reminding him of his own branch's resolution. The letter also pointed to the forthcoming Austin Rover pay claim: "The best way to assist the miners' struggle is to organise for action in support of your own claim".

On receiving the letter Adams called an emergency JSSC at which a heated discussion took place. Adams and other CPers reserved their main fire for "interfering third parties", i.e. the Trades Council, and a motion, moved by SWP members, for a campaign among the

Back the miners



membership to win support for a boycott of scab coal, was ruled out of order.

Now, Adams and the Works Committee have agreed to accommodate a token picket of South Wales miners on certain gates at Longbridge, although the purpose of this is only "informational".

The crucial argument for solidarity still needs to be carried onto the shop floor.

Arrested for singing

PEOPLE in the South Yorkshire village of Kiveton Park continue to suffer daily police harassment. Last Sunday, 23rd, three girls, all aged 17, were walking home together after an evening out. They were singing as they walked past the house of Kiveton's chief scab, Norman Hayward.

The police in the van which is now permanently stationed outside the house called the girls over. Before they knew what was happening, they were in the back of the van, arrested, and driven off to Maltby.

When the mother of one tried to find out why they were arrested, she got a torrent of abuse and was told: "We can do what we like".

The three were eventually released at 2am in Maltby, with no transport back to Kiveton provided.

All three are daughters of striking miners.

But the village is now more solidly behind the strike, and more strikers are active pickets.



Australian NUS members, on arriving at Tilbury, collected 800 dollars for striking miners. Photo: Stefano Cagnoni. Report.

Ode to a scab

All for one and one for all
A fight for jobs was the call
No guts for a fight had the scab,
But anything gained he will grab.
On your union you turned traitor,
Which you'll regret sooner or later.
How, I wonder, could you be so thick
MacGregor's boots you choose to lick.

What happened to the miners who were strong and tough,
Who stood together when the going got rough?
They're the ones who won't be bluffed,
Their message is: "MacGregor, get stuffed!"
Aren't you ashamed of your selfish crime,
Walking past brothers stood on picket line?
Going to work and don't you think it's grand
Scores of bobbies to hold each scab's hand!

I'll never forget the sickening thud
Of heads attacked by leather covered wood.
Men lying unconscious on the floor
A state of pain, that's waiting for more.
And where were you as your brothers bled?
Going to work, properly fed!
It's blood not milk that's being spilt
And we know where to place the guilt!

Remember there's nowhere to hide in a pit.
You've the price to pay, you heap of shit.
Remember too, as the week's wage you earn,
Come next year, it could be your turn.
When it is, don't come running to us,
Go back and tell it to the fuzz!

We won't forget or choose to ignore
The battles and the traitors of '84.

By Ann Burrell

'In Belgium we'd rout the cops'

LAST WEEK a delegation of Belgian miners visited Maltby in Yorkshire and Ollerton in Notts. One of them spoke to Ivan Wels.

We had a 24 hour strike against pit closures supported by 99% of miners.

Did you have a ballot?
No, we didn't have a ballot.
You've been over in Britain for a week. What have you seen?

The miners in Yorkshire have shown great solidarity. The cops are very brutal.

In Belgium it is different. The

miners there are less solid but more aggressive.

The British miners have respect for the law. In Belgium, we don't. In Belgium, when cops come in, we use Molotov cocktails. At Maltby pit yesterday, at 4 o'clock in the morning, there were 100 pickets in front of the entrance. It was blocked. You could not get through.

But 50 police came and pushed us away. In Belgium, the police would not have been able to do that.

People here have some respect for the police, even now, although we have heard it is changing.

How many miners' unions are there in Belgium?

There are two large unions — the Union of Free Mineworkers (Catholic) and the Union of Mineworkers (Socialist). They are about the same size. It is a great problem, because there is always division.

The heads of the unions divide us. Our job is to unify.

It's not just the Catholics against the Socialists, but also the Belgians against the immigrants. 50% of miners are immigrants. And French-speaking against Flemish-speaking.

Since the strike started Poland has increased coal exports to Britain. What do you think about that?

I think it is a great problem for Arthur Scargill. It is against communist principles. When your brother is on strike you do not try to break that strike.

I don't think there is any real communism in Russia or Poland.

What do you think of Neil Kinnock?

I think he would do the same as Margaret Thatcher, except perhaps be a little softer in approach. He is a traitor to the working class. He wants to say to the working class, 'I am your man', but he is not. He should be ashamed of his comments on picket-line violence.

Support the Notts strikers!
Money needed urgently: to North Notts Strike Committee, Ollerton Miners' Welfare, Ollerton, Notts, or South Notts Miners' Strike Centre, c/o AUEW, 218 Mansfield Road, Nottingham.

Courts versus NUM

By Dave Barter

THIS Monday, 24th, the Yorkshire NUM refused to appear in court to reply to a case brought by two members at Manton colliery, aiming to force the area NUM to call a ballot.

Area officials said that the reason was that they had not been given sufficient time to prepare their case; they had asked for a two-week adjournment and were given only eight hours. Kiveton Park NUM delegate Albert Bowns told me:

"On August 6 proceedings were taken by Foulstone and Taylor. There were 36 affidavits taken out, and the High Court was asked for a wide range of orders against the union. During the previous 20

weeks of the strike, these two didn't complain through the union complaints procedure which is open to all members.

"The allegations cover 200 pages of detailed legal argument. The union has had only 12 working days to study and assimilate the documents.

"The union was asked to prepare a case while taking responsibility for 55,000 members in a critical period for the dispute".

Albert Bowns added:

"I believe that the union has been denied the right to defend itself in a proper manner. It only reinforces the belief in the mining community that every arm of the Tory government, and that includes the judicial system, will be used to defeat us."

Back the miners



NUM picket at BSC terminal, Hunterston, on 21 September.

Photo: Rick Matthews

A strategy of tension?



Paul Whetton, secretary of the Notts miners' rank and file strike committee [in a personal capacity] writes his weekly diary.

I DON'T know how much of it is going to come out into the open, but I certainly hope that at Labour Party conference the error of his ways is pointed out to Neil Kinnock in no uncertain terms.

I would imagine the NUM delegation would have something to say about Kinnock's attitude to the miners' strike, and I would hope that the constituency delegates will have something to say.

As recently as yesterday you had an organised police riot — there's no other way to describe it — against defenceless pickets at Maltby. That really points to where the violence originates.

It started in Nottinghamshire, and the way things are going, we'll have a national riot police force for every occasion. It will be used against political parties, ethnic minorities, CND — anybody who stands up and questions government policy, or dares challenge the state.

I'm the delegate from Newark

Constituency Labour Party to the Labour Party conference, and we have got a resolution down on the miners' dispute. If I get a chance to speak, I want to try to point out to people what the present police action could lead to.

With the Police Bill, what we have been experiencing in the way of police roadblocks, stop-and-search, entering homes, and all the rest of it, is going to become law — and therefore nobody can do anything against it, if you're going according to the book. But of course people aren't going to accept it like that. We're going to see an escalation of the opposition to the sort of things the police are doing.

Then you get the Tories using a strategy of tension, and the sort of measures used during the miners' strike becoming an everyday occurrence.

But I think the Labour Party conference is going to be pretty much like the TUC — signed, sealed and delivered in advance. I think the job of rank and file miners, and others who are involved in this dispute, is to point out the dangerous path that the State is taking.

But I am afraid that the Party leaders are going to resist that message. They're going to be aware that in a few years' time they may well be in the seat of government, and they're not

going to do anything that might undermine their position in the event of strikes taking place against their government. I can see them wanting the police to play a lower-key, but essentially similar role to under the Tories.

The reaction of the rank and file of the Labour Party to the dispute has been very uplifting. Newark has only got a few pits in its area, and the people right at the centre have really got no strong ties with mining communities. Yet they've really come over 100%.

Right from the start they've been taking the levies, doing the street collections — no big sums of money, but regular small donations.

Then they set up a support group and have forged strong links with the few pits that are in Newark constituency. I only wish the other constituencies in stronger parts of the coalfield had done half as well.

We've found that scabs have lashed out in all directions — withdrawing from the political levy, and so on. I think it's a reflection of conscience.

On the other hand, from the striking miners we've had massive applications to join the Labour Party, because they've identified the political arguments behind the strike.

The politicisation of the women has also been marvellous. We want to make sure that's an ongoing thing after the dispute is over.

On the TUC decision, our original fears were well-founded, that the TUC was just going to be words and nothing more. Attempts to join rank and file members together across industries have born fruit in some cases, but in other areas they don't want to know.

I think that reflects poor leadership.

We're not expecting any great revolutionary surge forward from NACODS. It will be a great morale-booster if the deputies pull off their two-thirds majority, and I think they will. I think that the Coal Board will rush to buy them off. We're pinning no great hopes on it, but if a deputies' strike does come off, it'll be great.

A police state

When men go on to the picket line
It's to save their jobs down the mine.
But they are not allowed to picket in peace
Because Maggie Thatcher sent in the police.
They don't want trouble as people may think,
But they are NOT going to see their industry sink.
So people unite before it's too late.
Don't let Britain become a police state.

In this strike the women are also involved
And they won't give in 'til the problem is solved.
They stand together side by side In their husbands' faces you
can see the pride.
The men want the women to help fight this fight
But the police try to stop them with all their might.
So people unite before it's too late.
Don't let Britain become a police state.

This government brought violence to the picket lines
When they sent the police to get scabs down the mines.
We are all faced with truncheons and riot gear
To make sure a scab we never get near.
The police always start a vicious attack.
All a picket does is try to fight back.
So people unite before it's too late.
Don't let Britain become a police state.

Vicki Smailes

Fighting the 'rate-cap'

Hilda Kean, Labour leader of Hackney council, in London, spoke to Martin Thomas about the fight against 'rate-capping'. The Tory government proposes to force 18 local authorities — of which Hackney is one — to cut services and jobs drastically by making it illegal for their budget to be above a certain level.

AFTER the rate-cap was announced in July Hackney took a very clear position.

The figure that the Tory minister Patrick Jenkin is setting for our expenditure level next year is about £82 million. That doesn't sound too bad at first, because our budget for grant-related purposes is about that figure at the moment.

However, our real budget, the money that we are actually budgeting for, is £106 million this year. The difference is made up from creative accounting, which is putting money into special funds, so it creates less penalties [the Tory government has been imposing penalties on councils that spend above centrally-decreed targets], and money we receive from the Greater London Council.

This is perfectly legitimate, and many authorities do this, but it does mean that if Hackney went along with the rate-cap we would be faced with very severe cuts.

Our suggested budget for next year is in the region of £112 to £115 million, and yet the government is saying that we can only spend £82 million. There is no way that we could implement such cuts.

The position that we have taken is one of recognising that we do have to fight the rate-cap in the first year. The experience of Scotland [where 'rate-capping' has already been introduced] has shown us that if we do not fight in the first year then the government will continue to erode any control that we have over local finance. The first year is absolutely crucial.

The policy that we passed through the Labour group in July, and was passed through the council in July with every Labour councillor present voting for it, was to say that we will be presenting a budget for next year which will preserve jobs and services, and we will not pass on government cuts to Hackney in the form of rent or rate increases.

Derogation

We also made it clear that we wouldn't go for 'derogation'. That means we won't appeal against the expenditure level set down by the [central government] Department of the Environment, because this would mean the Secretary of State coming in, looking through our books, and saying where we should make cuts.

So we have taken a very clear strategic position to go for confrontation. We are now at the stage of looking for particular tactics which we should adopt.

In accordance with our position on accountability and working with the local Labour Parties, we are arranging a conference with the local Parties to discuss tactics. We have already set up, with the local Parties and the Trades Council and the Joint Shop Stewards Committee, a campaign body to go out to the local people and explain the need to defend jobs and services and local democracy.

The main consideration is how best to mobilise local people to

defend jobs and services, and I think we have to learn the lessons of Liverpool. Their success was due to working with the unions and building a local mass campaign. That is where our attention has to be focused, rather than over-emphasising particular tactics which may appear esoteric and just manoeuvres in the council chamber.

I think we must also recognise that one of the reasons why Liverpool were successful is that they were putting forward a very clear position of a deficit budget — a position that was understood by local people, and one which they were able to mobilise local people on.

We also have to take on the argument about rates. An option that says that a rate won't be set does imply that rates are the issue. Rates aren't the issue. The issue is cuts.

That option also means that it is not clear to local people what we are saying. We have to be aware of the reputation of Labour councils. Unfortunately they are not as popular as one would like, and there has been a cynicism about promises made in the past by local councils.

So you have to have a very clear position that local people can see you are keeping to.

I think a deficit budget is the preferable option, but the main thing is that we have said clearly that we are going for a strategy of confrontation.

Mobilise?

The position taken at the national Labour Party local government conference in July, and which was subsequently adopted by the National Executive Committee, is generally one I would support.

It did recognise the necessity for a strategy of confrontation. It emphasised that within that there might be local differences, and that tactics need to be discussed on a local basis.

However, the main issue now is to what extent the Labour Party will actually mobilise support nationally for councils taking such action.

We also need to keep hammering home to the Labour Party that it isn't a question of rates. Some people have argued that what authorities should be doing is saying that we should be allowed to spend at higher levels, i.e. we should be allowed to put up the rates.

That is entirely wrong, in my view. That is not what came out of the conference in July. It was made very clear there that it was about defending jobs and services and the rate support grant.

Also we have to explain that the victory in Liverpool was won not primarily through having chats with Thatcher and Jenkin, but through working locally in Liverpool, building up a mass campaign.

In Hackney we're having workplace meetings. The Joint Shop Stewards Committee has recently met and taken a position that we should confront the Rates Act, so I hope that we will be able to work closely with them.

TRADE UNION CND DAY OF ACTION

Wednesday October 24

Trade unionists are urged to "leaflet their place of work, organise lunchtime meetings, and initiate symbolic and token protests at work".

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Move to gut reselection

By John Bloxam

APART from the miners' strike this year's Labour Party conference will be dominated once again by the issue of democracy in the Party.

The left will be fighting for proper representation for women and for women to have a real voice in the Party. The left is also supporting the demand of black members to have the recognised right to organise independently.

The right is backing Kinnock's attempt to start gutting mandatory reselection and shift the balance of power back towards the Party establishment.

Women's rights and black sections will be debated on Wednesday; re-selection on Tuesday.

The NEC majority advocate reselection, where there are sitting Labour MPs, by way of individual ballots of Party members instead of the present collective procedure whereby branch and general committee meetings select and reselect. They propose to cut out delegates from affiliated trade unions. Under their proposed new procedure Party members wouldn't even have the chance to interview the candidate, let alone make the sort of balanced political assessment GCs can make now.

The NEC is backing the 'Evans' proposal which has been cobbled together to try to win a majority this year. But its anomalies are well-known and widely criticised and even the right is not happy with it. For example, it only affects CLPs with sitting MPs, and is voluntary. Some on the right wing see it as irrelevant. Parties that are likely to kick out Peter Shore or Gerald Kaufman will be Parties unlikely to throw them the lifeline of a membership ballot. For the left the point is that it is a first step, and its implications are clear.

Labour Party chair, Eric Heffer, told Socialist Organiser: "What is being suggested involves a very fundamental change in the Constitution. Trade unions have had a real input into the Party, and the proposal will involve excluding them. They might pay their money, but they won't get their say. Of course, it's excluding the rank and file. What's being suggested is just a ploy to defend certain people."

Palestine ban

AN advert for a Labour Movement Campaign for Palestine (LMCP) fringe meeting at Labour Party conference has been banned from the Conference Diary. It has been banned on the advice of the International Department secretary, Jenny Little.

The ostensible reason for the ban is that the meeting includes a PLO speaker and representative of Matzpen, an anti-Zionist Israeli socialist group. The objection to Matzpen is that they oppose the Israeli Labour Party, which is a sister organisation to the Labour Party here — and has recently agreed a 'national



Eric Heffer

Vladimir Derer, CLPD secretary, also saw the attack as 'fundamental'.

"The implementation of 'one member one vote' is really a recipe for destroying the Labour Party as a political party, as a decision-making party, and to reduce it to the US model of a party existing solely for the purpose of elections. In this, conferences have nothing to say."

"What the proposal is really about is reducing the influence of the rank and file on policies by attacking accountability. It is only by making the Party's representatives accountable that anything can be achieved. This is what the proposal is really about under the smokescreen of extending the franchise."

The right want the proposal carried this year in time for this round of reselections, due to start on December 9. But there are also amendments which suggest that the issue be postponed until next year's conference when a 'better' resolution than the 'Evans' proposal can be put.

The Constitution says that the

timing of a selection must be agreed between a CLP and the NEC. This means that if the 'Evans' proposal is defeated or withdrawn, Kinnock and the right can use this technical provision, together with a conference decision to postpone the decision to impose a moratorium on selecting until next year.

Some leftists advocate postponement in order to avoid a defeat on re-selection. Postponement would be preferable to defeat, of course, but only if re-selection under the existing procedure is allowed to start after December 9. If it isn't, postponement will have played into the hands of Kinnock and the right. The problem is that there will be no procedure, apart from winning a majority on the incoming NEC, to ensure that re-selection will go ahead after December 9.

Some other people want postponement because they don't want to be tied to the 'Evans' proposal, which they see as inadequate. They want a moratorium.

Inspired by the ILP and an important section of the LCC, the amendments from Glasgow Hillhead and Birmingham Selly Oak want individual ballots accepted in principle this year, and then implemented after next year's conference.

Vladimir Derer assesses the voting options like this.

"The proposal must be killed dead this year. They key issue is the question of accountability. That is what they are undermining in the Kinnock proposal — and what they will be destroying, in the case of the ILP-inspired amendment. We must vote against

the proposal for a moratorium."

The widespread use of individual ballots in last year's leadership elections shows that a number of CLPs are attracted by the idea — but a majority will probably vote against the 'Evans' proposal, some because of its anomalies and the lack of discussion on it, others because they oppose it in principle. 37 CLPs and ASTMS have submitted resolutions and amendments opposing the move. The decisive vote will, as always, be that of the trade union section.

Until recently, Kinnock expected the support of the union leaders. But a series of recent executive decisions has now put this in doubt.

The TGWU EC decided firstly to ask for remission, and then if necessary, to vote against the 'Evans' proposal (decided 27-7). The NUR EC decided to vote against, reportedly against the advice of Jimmy Knapp. ASTMS and UCATT will vote against. If the union delegations follow their EC votes, then the outcome on Tuesday will be very close.

If the 'Evans' proposal is carried, then the left must organise an immediate campaign to get as many CLPs as possible to publicly pledge that they will stick to the existing reselection procedure. The battle won't be over, but if 'Evans' or postponement, (giving Kinnock the option of a moratorium) is carried, the left will have suffered a major defeat.

As Vladimir Derer says:

"If we lose we are back to where we were, or even worse — because the trend would be the other way, to the right."

Women's slate

THE Labour Party's unofficial Women's Action Committee has made giant strides over the last year in winning party women's support, and will be presenting a confident face to this year's party conference.

Thirty-five constituencies are presenting resolutions or amendments which support the WAC demands for measures to improve the representation of women and their concerns in the party. These will be debated on the Wednesday afternoon of the conference. Among them is that the Women's Conference should elect the Women's Section of Labour's National Executive, presently within the gift of the trade union delegations and their large block votes.

As a trail blazer, the Women's Action Committee has organised a slate of five candidates for the Women's Section. This is supported by a wide range of Party organisations, e.g. the Labour Coordinating Committee,

London Labour Briefing and the Labour Abortion Rights Campaign. The women on the slate are Joan Maynard MP, Margaret Beckett MP, Clare Short MP, Frances Morrell. Leader of the Inner London Education Authority and Diane Abbott, a Westminster councillor and the first black woman to stand.

As well as its resolutions and NEC candidates, WAC is also holding a rally and presenting a revue. The rally is on the Monday evening of Conference (October 1), and speakers will be Betty Heathfield (Women Against Pit Closures), Greenham women, Jo Richardson, and as our main speaker, Dora Russell.

The WAC revue will be on the Wednesday night of conference, and is called "The Heroes — An Everyday Tale of Labour Men". It is sponsored jointly by WAC and New Socialist magazine; many distinguished women will be contributing.

Reject the defence policy

By Judith Bonner,
CND National Council,
[in a personal capacity].

DELEGATES should reject the NEC's defence statement "Defence and Security for Britain".

It is being presented to conference without any prior discussion in the Constituency Parties or affiliated trade unions and without any possibility of amendments being added to the text.

It maintains, more or less, a commitment to unilateralism. But it abandons the previous commitment to reduce defence spending — even to the level of Britain's European allies.

And it calls for continuing British membership of NATO. It calls for 'changing NATO strategy' to secure a 'non-nuclear defence policy within NATO'. Precisely why membership of NATO is in the labour movement's interests or how it is possible to commit NATO to anything other than a nuclear policy is not explained.

In fact, membership of NATO and unilateralism are incompatible. NATO's current policy is to breed down the distinction between conventional and nuclear weapons by producing conventional weapons of incredible power and integrating them into its nuclear programme.

So the NEC's view of what should be done about NATO is based on complete fantasy. It fails to recognise that NATO's aggressive stance is not accidental, or a mistaken policy, but essential to its whole reason for existence, which is the defence of Western capitalism. In fact the NEC's call for greater spending on conventional weapons fits well with NATO proposals.

The document cannot, given this perspective, propose any action, and it does not. It leaves everything in the fight for 'peace' up to government negotiations.

Labour has organised no major disarmament event since 1981. Even for those few elements of what the NEC proposes are desirable — the commitment to getting rid of Cruise and Trident, for example — it proposes no action whatsoever. The document should be kicked out.



On the third anniversary of the peace camp, September 23, Greenham women organised blockade of the main gate. They are calling on women to support the camp over the next few days and thousands are expected over the weekend.

LCC backs Kinnock

By Ian McCalman

IT IS understandable if Labour Party members are increasingly confused by the gyrations of the Labour Coordinating Committee on mandatory reselection.

In July of this year the Executive of the LCC published a statement which contained the following — "The leadership [of the Labour Party] should not seek to interfere with the mandatory reselection procedures provided these conform with Party rules. If possible these should proceed quickly [our emphasis] after December 9, so that local Parties can concentrate thereafter on community campaigning rather than internal issues."

No sooner was the ink dry on this statement than the leadership of the Scottish LCC produced an entirely different formula, arguing for postponement of reselection for a year and the establishment of a working party of NEC members and lay activists to "undertake a consultative exercise to examine ways in which more individual and affiliated members can be genuinely involved in all the decision making processes of the Party."

The CLPD has rightly rejected this new formula as a recipe for delay, frustration and obfuscation of the issues at stake.

What was the motivation of the Scottish LCC leadership in

swinging the Scottish Executive of the Labour Party to their point of view?

Perhaps a clue is to be found in the latest issue of their publication, Scottish Labour Activist, where we are told that the decision of the Scottish Executive "allows the Party leadership a way out from the embarrassing situation in which it has placed itself."

Kinnock can rest assured that his chums North of the Border are looking after his interests whatever the cost in terms of conference decisions.

LABOUR CND DEMONSTRATION (jointly sponsored by Bold NUM)

Monday September 30: assemble 1pm at Cenotaph, near Metropole Hotel, Blackpool, and march to South Pier for rally. Speakers include Tony Benn and Arthur Scargill.

CND NATIONAL DEMONSTRATION

Saturday October 27, Barrow-in-Furness (where Trident is being built).

Lesbian & gay rights

THERE could well be a debate on lesbian and gay rights at this year's Labour Party conference.

Two resolutions and seven amendments on 'homosexuality' were submitted on time; and the Labour Campaign for Gay Rights has been energetically lobbying support to guarantee that the debate takes place.

In addition there will be an LCC fringe meeting at 7.30 pm on the Tuesday, with speakers Ken Livingstone, Claire Short, Gerald Kaufman, and Sarah Roelofs from Labour Movement Lesbians.

It is very important that the issue is discussed. The labour movement is historically very

backward on it. Lesbians and gay men have suffered for a very long time at all sorts of levels from discrimination and harassment without the labour movement taking action to defend us.

Attacks on pubs and clubs by the police, actions like the recent raid on Gays the Word book shop in London, and the periodic sacking of workers because of their sexuality have to be fought. The labour movement has to be convinced that lesbian and gay sexuality is as valid as heterosexuality, and has to take action both to defend lesbians and gay men now, and to secure the freedom and equality that is our right.

Tony Benn interview

The s of vic

Tony Benn talked to John Bloxam and M about NATO, reselection, Neil Kinnock's democracy and the question of coalition week: Tony Benn discusses the miners' call for a general strike.

won't be allowed to use the new procedure. Even if you do live in a constituency where there is a Labour MP, if he resigns or dies you can't use the new procedure.

Then there are other questions. There are police and civil liberties issues arising from the miners' strike. There will in my opinion be some move on Ireland.

My opinion is that the government are now preparing for a major volte-face on Ireland. A deal will be done to draw the Republic in on law and order under the guise of terrorism, and to try to get the NATO link built up.

MT: Shouldn't the Left be going onto the offensive and demanding British withdrawal from NATO?

TB: I think the important thing is to put it on the agenda.

If the opponents of unilateral nuclear disarmament do pose the dilemma of choosing between NATO and disarmament, then rather than changing our policy on nuclear weapons we should change our policy on NATO.

There is one other question, which the defence policy statement has in my opinion rather naively omitted — if you did try to close the American nuclear bases in Britain, would they go? I don't for one moment believe they would pack up their missiles and go without a very serious argument.

But at least we've launched into the argument. We've launched into it from the weapons technology, or unilateralist, aspect. But once you open up that argument at any point, the whole argument goes into the melting pot and has to be looked at again. The question is, what is the right way to do it, if we want to win majority support for a different foreign policy.

JB: How serious a setback do you think the change on reselection could be?

TB: It's very difficult to say. Some people would like to roll back the whole democratic reform, without any doubt.

This has been presented as an extension of democracy for Party members. Actually

it is the retention of a special role for the Parliamentary Party — and, truthfully, until we look again in a proper way at the main problem of the Labour Party, which is the relationship of the national conference to the Parliamentary Party, we're never going to make any progress.

If you read Michael Foot's book, you'll find him say that the Labour Party, like the Holy Roman Empire, has got two centres of power — the Pope and the Holy Roman Emperor.

The most important function, he then says, is to restore the executive power of the leader.

Of course the leader is now based on the whole of the Party and not just the Parliamentary Party.

But I think until that question is raised again and discussed and corrected, you're going to find that the conference is pushing a piece of string all the time, and nothing happens at the other end.

The election of the whole Shadow Cabinet every year, and the Cabinet when we are

FRANK CASE I

"This proposal denounces the proposition . . . by Frank Field MP . . . that an electoral pact be initiated between the Labour Party and the Alliance . . . to defeat . . . this Conservative administration at the next General Election."

"Furthermore, Conference calls on the NEC and the PLP to make it abundantly clear . . . that it is the business of this Party to work towards a truly socialist society and not simply to attain a government of convenience to gain power at any cost."

Resolution 494 from Bolton South East CLP to 1984 Annual Conference.

Resolutions

Anyone who thinks that the issue of Frank Field's 'Rainbow Circle' alliance with the Liberals and SDP, is just a matter for local activists, should realise that there are resolutions and amendments on this issue from York, St. Helens and Deptford, as well as the above from Bolton, at this year's conference.

JB: What are the other main issues you see coming up at Labour Party conference, besides the miners' strike?

TB: There will be an important debate on defence and foreign policy, and the defence statement, which is built around the idea that you confirm a non-nuclear strategy, though it does include aspects which are less fortunate.

One is the change in the commitment to reduce defence spending. And, secondly, I think, there is a gap, though we've managed to change it a bit in the foreword, on the question of how you assess the threat to the West from the Soviet Union. While you accept the argument that the Soviet Union would be in Britain if it wasn't for nuclear weapons, then I think you are in a serious difficulty about getting the defence side dealt with.

A defence argument in terms of weapons technology, truthfully, is less relevant than a defence argument which is based on a foreign policy assessment.

The assessment of the foreign policy of the United States and the Soviet Union, and how you relate to that, and the extent to which you can build up a Third World non-aligned movement with the trade union and peace movement in Britain and Western Europe and the United States — that is more relevant.

I think that if Reagan is re-elected, there are going to be tremendous strains on the Alliance. Some of the critics of the defence statement have been arguing that there is an ambiguity between membership of NATO and a decision to go non-nuclear, but I don't think they've entirely appreciated that saying that there is an ambiguity does not necessarily lead back to a nuclear weapons position. It may bring us to a much more critical view of NATO.

Then there's the reselection question. I presume that a majority has been lined up to carry the constitutional amendment, but in my opinion it is a very grave error of judgment.

It will cause endless trouble for the Party. It will create various classes of membership. Union affiliated members will be excluded. If you live in a constituency where there isn't a Labour MP you

"The idea that you can draw the anti-Thatcher forces into a winning coalition is an absolute dead duck... But if you ask whether the strategy of the Establishment could be to go for a coalition, in order to beat the growing strength of the labour movement, I think yes, and that is why Owen has had such an absolutely glittering press coverage".

Strategy Victory

Martin Thomas
leadership, local
government. Next
dispute and the

in office, by the electoral
college, is the thing we should
be pushing.

Whether now is the right
time to do it, in terms of win-
ning support, is another
matter, but until that ques-
tion is resolved you're going
to have some elements of the
Parliamentary Party trying to
reverse the democratic gains.

JB: How do you see the
record of Neil Kinnock as
leader over the last year?

TB: I worked very hard on
the electoral college, and we
got it and elected a leader. I
think we have a commitment
to get him to 10 Downing St.

And I think that over the
last year the Party has been
glad that the particular ques-
tion of the leadership has not
been on the agenda, in order
to free us for the struggles we
have had to undertake.

MT: The Campaign for Lab-
our Party Democracy has
argued that, as a matter of
principle, the electoral college
should be put into motion
each year — that the leader
and deputy leader should be
elected each year, just as in a

Constituency Labour Party
the officers are elected each
year.

TB: The central question at
the moment is how you can
mobilise the Labour and
trade union movement in sup-
port of those who are engaged
in struggle, and anything
else might be held to be a
diversion.

I can understand the logic
of the CLPD position. On the
other hand, I think from a
point of view of putting first
things first, the decision this
year was a correct one — to
concentrate on the other
aspects and not reopen that
particular matter.

JB: Some other questions are
likely to be important at the
Labour Party conference.
One is the question of black
sections...

TB: Yes. I'm all in favour of
them...

JB: And another is the ques-
tion of how to fight the
attack on local government
and local democracy.

What's your assessment of
the Liverpool experience?

TB: Liverpool fought with
considerable skill. They were
absolutely a case on their
own, because they were way
out in terms of their crisis.

They had to resist the way
they did. They won. They got
concessions. They very sensibly
accepted what they got,
which wasn't everything they
wanted, but far more than
they expected.

And now they're marking
time, and next year all the

Labour local authorities will
be in line, and then, I think,
the thing will go forward.

There's been an enormous
change in people's percep-
tions. The statement of non-
compliance that was issued
after the Sheffield [Labour
local government] conference
represents a major change.

But more generally, what
has come forward is the
whole strategy of victory.

There is one strategy that
believes that if you keep a
low profile and are moderate,
then you will pick up enough
Guardian readers from the
SDP to win.

The other view is the view
that Liverpool adopted, and
the miners have adopted, and
we adopted in Chesterfield —
if you go absolutely out on a
clear policy, you win support.

I would think that in
America Jesse Jackson, by
mobilising the black vote, has
been in a strange way engaged
in the same thing — the idea
that you win by bringing into
an involvement in the politi-
cal process people who
hitherto haven't voted at all.

I think that the strategy of
victory is a strategy of mobil-
isation and not of going for
the centre ground of politics.

MT: Do you think the idea of
a coalition — which was quite
common last year — is now
dead?

TB: I think the Hobsbawm
argument, which was a deep
pessimism based on a faulty
analysis, has had a terrible

FIELD: A SUITABLE FOR DESELECTION

By Lol Duffy, Chair
Wirral DLP and Secretary of
Cammell Lairds Occupation
Committee (in a personal
capacity).

Taken with the whole ques-
tion of deselection of MPs this
reflects a widespread determina-
tion on the part of Party mem-
bers to defend the gains made in
recent years in internal Party
democracy and in socialist
policies — such as opposition to
nuclear weapons and incomes
policies — all of which have been
supported by the majority of
Birkenhead Party members.

Unfortunately, their MP has
continued to oppose the local
party on these and other issues.

The latest issue to have
triggered the local labour move-
ment is Frank Field's refusal to
support the fight against redun-
dancies at Cammell Lairds ship-
yard.

He gave us the impression
that he would rather meet local

Tory MPs than workers' rep-
resentatives in the yard. Then he
urged Lairds workers to accept
management's plans for redun-
dancies — and even privatisa-
tion! — to keep a piece of the
yard open at any cost.

When some of us refused to
accept sackings and occupied an
unfinished warship and an oil-
rig he condemned us as 'just a
group of hot-heads'.

Solidarity

The Wirral Trades Council,
the District Labour Party and
Birkenhead Labour Party have
all given their support for the occu-
pation. Hundreds of striking miners
have come over to join local trade
unionists in the occupation and
pickets, to show their solidarity.
Dockers and tugboat crews have
refused to remove the vessels. The
Merseyside group of Labour MPs
have given their full public sup-
port.

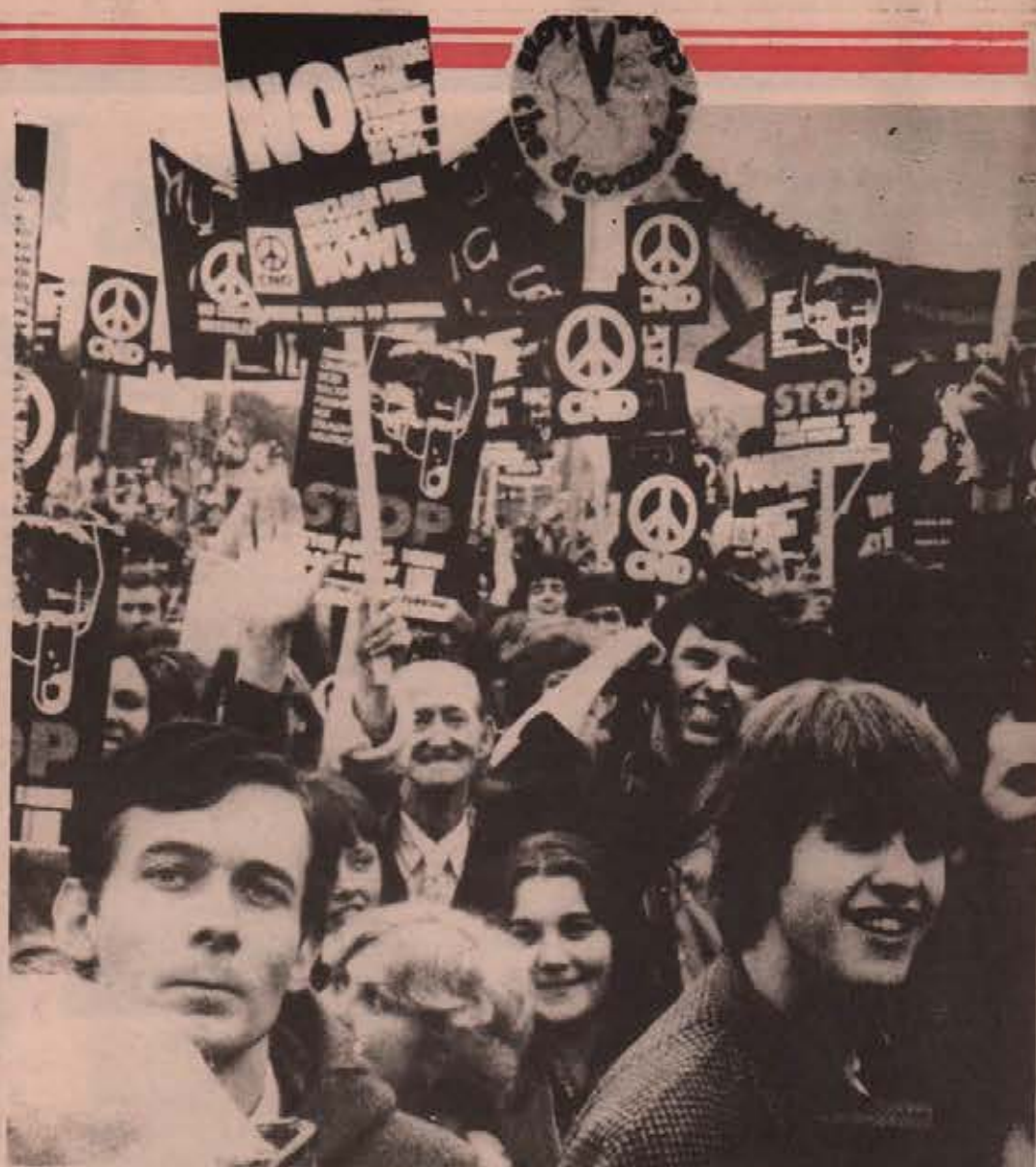
Yet, after three months, not
one word of support for the
occupation has come from Bir-
kenhead's Labour MP.

Perhaps Frank Field thinks
that jobs can be saved by Lairds
workers tamely walking out the
gates and down the road. But, as
Keva Coombes, leader of the
Labour-controlled Merseyside
County Council, pointed out at a
recent meeting in support of the
occupation, the experience of
Merseyside proves that you win
nothing by accepting redundan-
cies; the only way to defend jobs
is by the most determined
militant actions and by gaining
the widest possible support in
the labour movement.

Birkenhead is a Labour town
with a fine tradition of class
struggle. It deserves an MP who
will live up to that tradition, who
will be fully accountable to the
local party, and who will relen-
tlessly pursue the socialist policies
of the party.

Above all we need an MP who
will defend — unconditionally —
the struggles of workers for
local jobs and services. In other
words we need a Socialist MP.

We don't need Frank Field.
He should do the decent thing
and take himself off to join the
SDP. The sooner the better!



"Rather than changing our policy on nuclear weapons, we should change our policy on NATO".

knock this year.

There's a phrase from
Hobsbawm which Michael
Foot quotes in his book,
in which he says that indus-
trial militancy has no parti-
cular role to play...

This idea that you can
draw the anti-Thatcher forces
into a winning coalition is
an absolute dead duck.

The SDP now itself is
uneasy with Owen, and Owen
has appeared as a figure of
the hard, hard Right — well
to the right of Heath and
Pym and all these wets in the
Tory party.

To that extent, coalition-
ism is dead, because it has
been proved in struggle to be
ineffective. Look at Owen on
the miners — how could you
ever talk about the SDP being
part of our anti-Thatcher
alliance? The so-called anti-
Thatcher alliance is even
more an anti-socialist alliance.

So that idea of an anti-
Thatcher alliance is in
decline.

But if you ask whether the
strategy of the Establishment
could be to go for a coalition
in order to beat a growing
strength of the labour move-
ment, I think that is the
strategy, and I think that ex-
plains why Owen personally
has had such an absolutely
glittering press coverage.

I have no doubt at all in
my mind that if the move-
ment of opinion got to the
point that the miners' strike
and the GLC and the fight
against rate-capping and the
black community and Ireland
all came together, the Estab-
lishment would go very, very
hard for a government of na-
tional unity.

JB: How do you see the gen-
eral political situation now?

TB: I think it is important
that we don't appear to be
defensive. We are in a defens-
ive posture in terms of local
government, health service,
trade unionism, and so on,
but we shouldn't be defensive
really.

We have to take all this
energy which has been gener-
ated and try to direct it in
clearer and more specific
socialist demands. People will

make an effort to defend
their immediate interests, but
you have to channel that
energy to making demands of
a more explicitly political and
general character.

I think, personally, that
that is the key to our success.

If the miners were by any
chance defeated — which
they won't be — then the pros-
pect of a Labour government
being elected would be zero.
Therefore you have absolute-
ly no alternative but to sup-
port the miners — I mean, I
want to anyway, but those

who are hesitant about it had
better be quite clear in their
minds that the prospect of
success for Labour depends
upon this mobilisation.

For individuals, I feel at
the moment that the only
choice that each of us has is
whether to be relevant or ir-
relevant to the struggle. The
capacity to stop what's hap-
pening doesn't exist.

The question of whether
we're prepared to be a part of
this movement for change, or
not a part of it, is a decision
that every individual has to
make.



Demonstration in support of Liverpool City Council



By Vidya Anand

THE MOVEMENT to set up Black sections in the Labour Party will not go away.

Support black sections!

This year's Labour Party conference at Blackpool will give delegates from the Constituency Labour Parties, trade union branches, women's sections and Young Socialists, an opportunity of following the lead given by the Greater London Labour Party. At its annual conference the London Labour Party supported the right of Black members of the Labour Party to form Black sections within the Labour Party, in parallel to other special Labour Party organisations such as the women's sections.

Resolutions from many Labour Parties testify to the groundswell of opinion gaining ground campaign being waged against the leading comrades in the

in the party that racism must be combatted within the party as well as outside it.

Unfortunately, the leadership of the party has listened to its all-white advisers, instead of speaking directly to the Black comrades in the party. We have tried unsuccessfully to get this simple message across to them: an "all-white male-dominated party" will not be able to attract the hundreds of thousands of Black potential members who feel alienated by the party's structure, methods of working and heavy paternalism.

The Black presence in the Labour Party has come of age, and wants to come into its own. It will not vanish as many so

fondly hope and expect.

The Black comrades do not need minders, self-appointed spokespersons and middlemen to represent, articulate and speak on their behalf or about their causes, hopes, concerns and aspirations within the Labour party and the trade unions.

We are perfectly capable of combatting racism, whether it be covert or overt. We are not a problem for the party, nor are we an electoral liability. We believe that our communities are the natural allies of the Labour party.

Black comrades are increasingly incensed at the covert Black sections movement. It is suggested that the movement is

simply a front for some Black careerists to get propelled into Parliament, or get their names in the newspapers and their persons on the goggle box.

Similar arguments were once used against the formation of the women's sections.

In my opinion, this simply will not wash. It is a measure of the racism still in the party that comrades who are opposed to the formation of Black sections should raise such hoary canards.

Comrades in the Black sections movement are perfectly capable of dealing with their own careerists, godfathers and uncle toms. It is the business of the Black communities and their business alone to sort out the

sheep from the goats.

We look to our comrades of the Left to ensure that Black comrades are placed on the panels for parliamentary selections and are selected to represent the Labour party in constituencies which have substantial Black electorates, such as Bradford, Leicester, Birmingham, Manchester, Coventry, and (in London) Haringey, Lambeth, Hackney, Southall, and, of course, Brent.

The Black sections movement aims to unite the party on a truly internationalist basis so that comrades — irrespective of caste, colour, or creed — can work together towards a socialist Britain in a Socialist world.

Marx or Keynes?

By Colin Foster

'A FUTURE that works' is the title of the Labour Party national executive's economic policy statement to the Blackpool conference. 'A past that didn't work', would be more accurate.

The core of the statement is an idea developed in the 1930s by the Liberal economist John Maynard Keynes: that the economy can be revived by increased public spending.

If the state spends £10 million on building new roads, for example, argued Keynes, then £10 million are put in the hands of previously unemployed workers and of capitalists previously short of orders.

They in turn spend their new money on food, clothes, machinery, etc., creating a boost to income in other industries. As the process works its way through, the original £10 million spent can boost total demand, and thus total production, by maybe £40 million.

This Keynes called 'the multiplier'.

Most economists before Keynes had assumed that the state should run its finances like a prudent housekeeper, never spending more than it received in taxes. Keynes declared that,

on the contrary, 'overspending' by the state in time of slump could generate enough new production to more than pay for itself.

The national executive statement agrees: 'Putting Britain back to work will pay for itself'.

Now the Keynesian recipe can sometimes, under some conditions, work to some extent. But it can't and doesn't magically get round the contradictions and class conflicts of capitalism.

The capitalists have recognised that, in their own way. In the relatively prosperous 1950s and 1960s they were 'Keynesian'. Now they talk about monetarism, balanced budgets, and reduced public spending.

The NEC statement calls the Tories "short-sighted and dogmatic". But in terms of how to operate their own irrational and barbarous system of production for profit, the Tories are quite hard-headed.

The Mitterrand Socialist-led government in France tried a Keynesian policy when it came to office in 1981. The result? Rip-roaring inflation, a ballooning trade deficit, an unmanageable foreign debt — and unemployment stuck at around two million.

Instead of boosting production, the increased state spending had pushed up prices and pulled in imports.

After a comprehensive U-turn

A future that works

The NEC's document for conference

the French government is now cutting public spending and axing tens of thousands of jobs in steel and the coal industry.

The NEC statement talks about import controls to help its Keynesian policy work. But the fact is that increasing trade restrictions are part of the cause of the depressed state of world capitalism. To increase those restrictions further would just send the capitalist world further down a spiral of slump.

The NEC statement, in short, is preparing the way for a future Labour government to start off with a few radical gestures, and then pretty soon to execute a U-turn — like the Mitterrand government in France, or like the last Labour government in 1975-6.

There is nothing new about the core of the NEC policy. What is new is that many of the radical trimmings that were previously attached to that core have been removed.

Labour conference has pledged the party to a 35 hour week. The only mention of this in the statement is as follows: "Technological change can provide great opportunities to reduce working hours — at least to our target of the 35 hour week".

Labour policy is for the renationalisation of all assets de-



Keynes (right) declared that "the class war as such will always find me on the side of the educated bourgeoisie". But Labour's NEC prefer him to Marx (left).



nationalised by the Tories, and for a substantial and specific list of new nationalisations. The statement? "Our own priorities will determine which firms and sectors are brought into public ownership, regardless of whether they have been de-nationalised or whether they have always been in the private sector".

Labour's 1983 policy statement promised to "offer all young people without work a place on new youth training schemes... and give them an allowance of at least £30 per week...". It also promised to "provide student-trainees, in full-time education, with... £25 a week, at 1983 prices, [for] 52 weeks in a year".

No mention of those promises. 1983 Labour policy also in-

cluded a specific pledge to raise health spending by 3 per cent a year in real terms. That commitment is gone — and the accompanying defence statement junks the commitment to reduce spending on the armed forces.

Every Labour economic policy document for years has talked about "a fundamental and irreversible shift in the balance of power and wealth in favour of working people and their families". This one doesn't.

'Socialism', for the leading circles in the Labour Party, used to mean nationalisations plus welfare measures. Since 1945 that sort of 'socialism' has become an integral part of advanced capitalism, and not only in Britain.

Now the capitalists come forward, account books in hand, and say that this 'socialism' must be cut back. It is too expensive. The Labour leaders are reduced to pleading that this or that part of the welfare capitalism of yesteryear can be kept on without really damaging profit-making.

Instead of pointing out a future, they are feebly defending the past.

One sentence in the document does hint at some move forward: "The post-war years have taught us that a formal change in ownership [of industry] is not enough".

But the NEC's answer is to retreat even from the formal change in ownership — nationalisation — and to speculate about the advantages of two very old ideas, municipal enterprise and cooperatives.

The problem is a whole philosophy that sees socialism as something to be achieved through and tacked onto the existing (capitalist) nation-state. Faced with the inadequacies of post-1945 nationalisation, the NEC does not question the structure of the state, but instead looks for new 'socialist' forms on its fringes.

Throughout the statement, socialism appears as a programme, not of the self-emancipation

of the working class but of the competitive advancement of the British capitalist economy.

Instead of class struggle by workers against bosses, the statement talks of "a new partnership between a Labour Government, trade unions and employers".

Over 100 years ago Frederick Engels pointed out the difference between state-capitalist nationalisation and class-struggle socialism, condemning "a kind of spurious socialism... that without more ado declares all state ownership... to be socialistic. (If so then) the Royal Maritime Company, the Royal porcelain manufacture, and even the regimental tailor of the army would also be socialistic institutions..."

Socialism is not just state ownership, but the democratic planning of production for need through the common ownership of the means of production. It requires, therefore, both workers' control in industry, and political power for the working class through the replacement of the existing state structure by a new one.

The miners' strike is a good starting point for developing these ideas.

Doesn't MacGregor's record show that workers should be able to elect, and remove by vote at any time, their managers? Don't the Coal Board's plans for new technology indicate that workers should have control over such changes, and that working hours should be reduced to save jobs?

Doesn't the whole dispute show the need for a comprehensive plan, democratically decided, for the whole of energy and basic industry — a plan which could be made more than a piece of paper only through the replacement of the present apparatus of state economic policy by a sort of workers' parliament?

But the NEC statement contains not a single idea or phrase which is relevant to the miners' struggle.

THE LEFT SLATE

NEIL KINNOCK and the right wing have a two-pronged strategy to get control of the Party leadership — get a working majority on the NEC, and at the same time establish key committees in the Party not directly accountable to the Conference. Hence the establishment last year of the Campaigns Strategy Committee, answerable both to the NEC and the Shadow Cabinet and Parliamentary Labour Party.

Last year they got their working NEC majority, and they will keep it again this year.

Last year the Left slate won all seven places in the Constituency Labour Parties section.

A problem for the Left is the candidacy of Keith Vaz. The Black Sections National Steering Committee are supporting him, and Diane Abbott in the women's section.

There is a very strong case for giving the largest possible vote to the one black candidate in the CLPs section. It would be gesture towards the campaign for proper Black representation in

the Party.

But the cost of doing that in this year's election will be too high — namely, possibly to threaten two of the best members of the NEC (Audrey Wise and Jo Richardson) — who are two of the three left-wing women on the NEC.

It is for this reason that Socialist Organiser is supporting the Left slate of the seven sitting members.

The full Left slate is:

Constituency section

Benn, Blunkett, Heffer, Meacher, Richardson, Skinner, Wise.

Women's section

Abbott, Beckett, Maynard, Morrell, Clare Short.

Trade union section

Eric Clarke, Fullick, Haigh, Hoyle, Kelly, Kitson, O'Neill, Sawyer, Switzer.

Conference arrangements committee

Balfo, Briseve, Canavan, Jones, Shaw. Constituency place: Williams.

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



Students

How to help the miners

By Jane Ashworth

THE miners' strike has to be the priority for socialist students. It is the most important class battle since the war and students can help the miners win.

In the '72 and '74 miners' strike students raised money, laid on transport to mass pickets and opened up their union buildings for flying pickets.

In this strike, students unions are hampered in their solidarity work by reactionary guidelines from the government which tie up student union money and facilities. On pain of a fine which could cost your union thousands of pounds, student unions are restricted to support work which does not use money or goods which could otherwise benefit students. These laws are being broken every day — they should be broken, they are bad laws which deny students the right to run their own union as they please.

Most student unions have decided not to break the law, but they are still giving effective and important solidarity to the six month old strike.

As terms start this week and next, collections and trips to picket lines and soup kitchens are being organised. Miners' support committees are starting up, student unions are inviting miners to address general meetings and preparations are being made to adopt pits and soup kitchens.

The strike presents student unions with a real chance to break down the barrier between the student union and college trade unions. Maximum organisation in a college must involve joint work with the college workers, the lecturers, catering staff, lab technicians, office workers and the maintenance staff.

The key to solidarity could be the Labour Club where, for a start, every member should be paying the 50p a week levy the Labour Party has asked for.

WHAT TO DO

a) Together with, if possible, the college trade unions, organise an open meeting with speakers from the NUM and Women Against Pit Closures.

b) Again with the other unions, arrange collecting points on every site for cash and food donations. Remember to collect in the union shop.

c) Organise teams to go around every hall or block of flats collecting. Go once a week. Hold hall meetings to explain the miners' case.

d) Invite a miner or a representative of Women Against Pit Closures to speak to a General Meeting and propose adopting a pit and soup kitchen. Visit them every week with food and money.

Make sure your union's minibuses are booked in advance for those trips.

e) Organise regular trips to a picket line and prepare people to go to mass pickets at short notice. Insist that your student union covers the legal costs and fines of any students arrested on picket lines.

Working for the miners' strike can do more than helping them win. As well as taking part in the largest strike since 1926, you will be winning a generation of socialist students away from the coffee bars towards real, live working class struggle.

Tony Dale [NOLS NC], Simon Pottinger [President, Durham Students Union], and Debby Hindson [ex-gen. sec., LSE Students Union], explain the message of Socialist Organiser.

SINCE MARCH Socialist Organiser has put its main efforts into support for the miners' strike.

We also put some effort into organising among students. There are three reasons why.

We can't organise support for the miners without organisers. The socialist movement needs people with sufficient free time and fresh energy to provide back-up and coordination for the activists tied down in cumbersome routines in the labour movement.

Students have always been important in this role in the movement.

Socialist students can also be something more than leaflet-producers and distributors, paper-sellers, fund-collectors and meeting organisers.

The focus at present is on the miners. But students' own struggles, too, can be important. There are twice as many students in higher education alone as there are miners in this country, even if they do not have remotely the same economic weight.

Students are facing attacks from the government parallel to those faced by the working class: grants reduced in value, accommodation crises, numbers of student places severely cut, and student unions' autonomy hamstrung by government decrees.

Also, socialism is not just a matter of supporting struggles as they come up. It also involves a battle of ideas. And socialist students — on condition that they integrate themselves into the labour movement — can play an important part in that battle of ideas.

The whole business of being a militant fighting for a revolutionary change in society demands keeping a certain tension in your mind. You have to see the society around you as full of both horrors and obscenities, and sources of hope and inspiration. You have to avoid being lulled into acceptance of that society, but you must also avoid sterile alienation from it.

Theoretical education can help to maintain that tension; but nonetheless, as socialist militants find themselves a routine, and endure disappointments, they can easily drift into bread-and-butter concerns, or become sour and jaded — or even give up altogether.

Organisation

That is one reason why we need an organisation rather than just the scattered efforts of socialist individuals. It is also the reason why youth play a crucial role in that organisation.

Students have the advantage not only of youth but also of ready access to books, discussions, and time to think.

The working class, historically, has the task of envisaging and fighting for a new society while still itself being a slave class, largely deprived of culture and leisure, in the old society.

Socialist students can be a yeast for the working class struggle — if they go to school seriously both in the books and in the labour movement. That is why socialist students need to be a part of an organisation rooted in the labour movement.

Socialist Organiser has not only been supporting the min-

ers' strike but also arguing for our own ideas. We have argued, for example, in favour of organising for a general strike.

SWP

Some other socialists — the Socialist Workers' Party, for example — see a contradiction between our call for a general strike and the fact that we are in the Labour Party. To their minds, being in the Labour Party brands us as rather right-wing and parliamentarianist, while the call for a general strike seems ultra-militant.

But just think through what would happen in a general strike. Who would be to the fore in the local committees set up to run the strike? Not some unknown people arrived from nowhere, but the leading people in the actual labour movement that had organised the strike.

And the Labour Party is the political wing of the actual labour movement, warts and all. It is possible to argue for Marxist politics within it. And if it is possible, then it is necessary.

Both the SWP's abstention from the Labour Party, and their recoil from radical slogans like the general strike, indicate a lack of perspective for the essential task of transforming the labour movement.

Their approach comes down to a variant of what was called 'Economism' in the Russian Marxist movement around the turn of the century. The 'Economists' argued that Marxists should focus on the workers' trade union struggle and leave the political struggle against Tsarism to the bourgeois liberals.

The SWP focuses on rank and file trade union struggle and leaves broader politics — for now, until the trade union struggle somehow grows over into a socialist revolution — to the Labour Party leaders. Come election time, they vote Labour: the rest of the time they abstain.

Militant

'Militant' is in some ways a mirror-image of the SWP, and in some ways a replica. The transformation of the labour movement, for them, centres around their propaganda for 'the socialist programme', or at least for nationalisations.

The women's movement? Diversionary and divisive. Black sections in the Labour Party? Ditto. Lesbian and gay liberation? 'Militant' are 'opposed to all discrimination' but think this issue is not very important.

Socialist Organiser started out as a campaign for an organised left-wing voice within the official Labour campaign at the 1979 election. 'Militant' continued their usual propaganda for a 'Labour government with a socialist programme', as if they hadn't noticed that the Labour leadership had been following a capitalist programme for the previous 75 years, and implementing an IMF programme of cuts over the previous years in government.

Class struggle

In 1980 Socialist Organiser initiated the Rank and File Mobilising Committee, a united front of all the Labour Left which was central in the struggle for democratic reform in the Labour Party. 'Militant' did eventually affiliate to the RFMC once it was underway, but played no active part.

In short, we organise for revolutionary politics, but within the existing labour movement; we seek to relate to and integrate the class struggle on all fronts; instead of our politics



Anti-fascist demonstrators in Brighton last Saturday surrounding NF demonstration.

having a gulf between day-to-day immediate demands and general propaganda for a socialist future, we seek to develop each struggle so as to link it into a strategy for the overthrow of capitalism.

Both in the Rank and File Mobilising Committee and elsewhere, Socialist Organiser has fought for unity of the left in action. But there are political differences on the Left, and they need to be argued out: trying to ignore serious differences, or to sink them into a mush of consensus politics, can only paralyse us.

Stalinism

Worst of the political problems that has dogged the Left is the question of Stalinism. Socialist Organiser argues that neither the USSR, nor even any of the more popular regimes with a similar structure, like Cuba, is socialist. Despite the nationalised property relations, the working class is ruled over and deprived of political rights by a bureaucracy.

We support Solidarnosc and argue for the British labour movement to break its links with the official Stalinist state 'unions', which are in fact departments of the government rather than workers' organisations.

Ireland

We believe that the British-imposed partition of Ireland was unjust and undemocratic, and

that no solution to the present conflict is possible within the inherently sectarian Northern Ireland state.

A democratic solution is possible only within the broader framework of a united Ireland. We support the right of the Irish people as a whole to self-determination, and therefore solidarise with the Republicans and nationalists fighting against the British Army to enforce that right. We call for the withdrawal of British troops from Ireland.

At the same time we advocate a federal reorganisation of Ireland so that within a united Ireland the one million strong Irish Protestant/Unionist minority could not be oppressed by the Catholic majority.

No nation that oppresses another can itself be free, said Marx: the British state's current adaptation of police methods from Northern Ireland for use against the miners in Britain illustrates that truth.

Join us

Socialist Organiser is organised in local groups, coordinated through a democratic national structure, with publicly-advertised open Annual General Meetings. Anyone willing to sell a quota of papers each week and make a small regular financial contribution is welcome in the Socialist Organiser groups.

If you are not yet convinced, join us in our work to support the miners, and discuss with us.

SOCIALIST STUDENT

DEFEND OUR UNIONS!

SSIN AGM

Sheffield

Socialist Student 10p
Available from Dave Brennan,
204 Upper Addison Gdns, London W14.

Our history

Two steps back

By John O'Mahony

THIS is a book which deals with a very important watershed period in the history of the British labour movement. Nor is it just an exercise in examining the past.

For the decade 1935-45 was a time when many on the left questioned whether Labour could ever form a majority government and some despaired of it. Just like now. And just as now there were siren voices urging the Labour Party to go for a "Popular Front" which in practice then meant going for coalition with the Liberals. Today it means coalition with the SDP-Liberal Alliance.

Then as now, the most shameless voices urging the labour movement to betray itself came from the Communist Party.

All this coalitionist claptrap preached today by Professor Eric Hobsbawm and others in the Communist Party magazine 'Marxism Today', and elsewhere, is not new — their ideological and political ancestors were saying more or less the same thing 50 years ago.

They were saying it in 1945 on the eve of Labour's greatest election victory. In that year, when Labour broke the wartime coalition with the Tories and decided to ask the electorate in the forthcoming election for a clear Labour majority, the Communist Party was bitterly opposed to the decision.

It urged Labour to go, instead, for a new coalition with "progressive Tories" like Winston Churchill and Anthony Eden!

Trotsky had pointed out in 1939 that these so-called "Communists", advocating class-collaborationist government, were actually far to the right of the right wing of the Labour Party.

They, at least, wanted the Party of the trade unions to form a government on its own.

Transformation

Bornstein and Richardson tell the terrible story of the destruction of the original British Communist Party and trace the details of its definitive transformation into something else between 1935 and 1945.

In 1933 the British CP — like every CP in the world — was wildly ultra-left, breaking up Labour Party meetings and maintaining a couple of very tiny and insignificant sectarian breakaway trade unions.

In Germany, where the CP was a mass party, though smaller than the German Socialists, their policy — decreed from Moscow — led them to treat the Socialists as their main enemy — at the time when Hitler was driving towards power!



Utterly crazy though it seems, and indeed was, they allied with the Nazis against this Socialist "main enemy".

The tiny group of German Trotskyists advocated Socialist-Communist, workers' party unity to stop Hitler before he could get in a position to destroy the German labour movement. They were hounded as "Trotsky-Fascists".

Hitler was allowed to come to power peacefully. He destroyed the labour movement, both its Communist and Socialist wings impartially, and then set out to rearm Germany.

Alarm

Now panic-stricken alarm gripped Stalin. He turned the Communist Parties to the right — to help gain the USSR an alliance with France and Britain against Germany.

Those who had in Germany totally refused to unite with Socialists against Fascists now spent their time preaching that the workers' parties should get together with anti-fascist bourgeois parties and demanding an alliance of the "bourgeois democracies" and the USSR against Hitler.

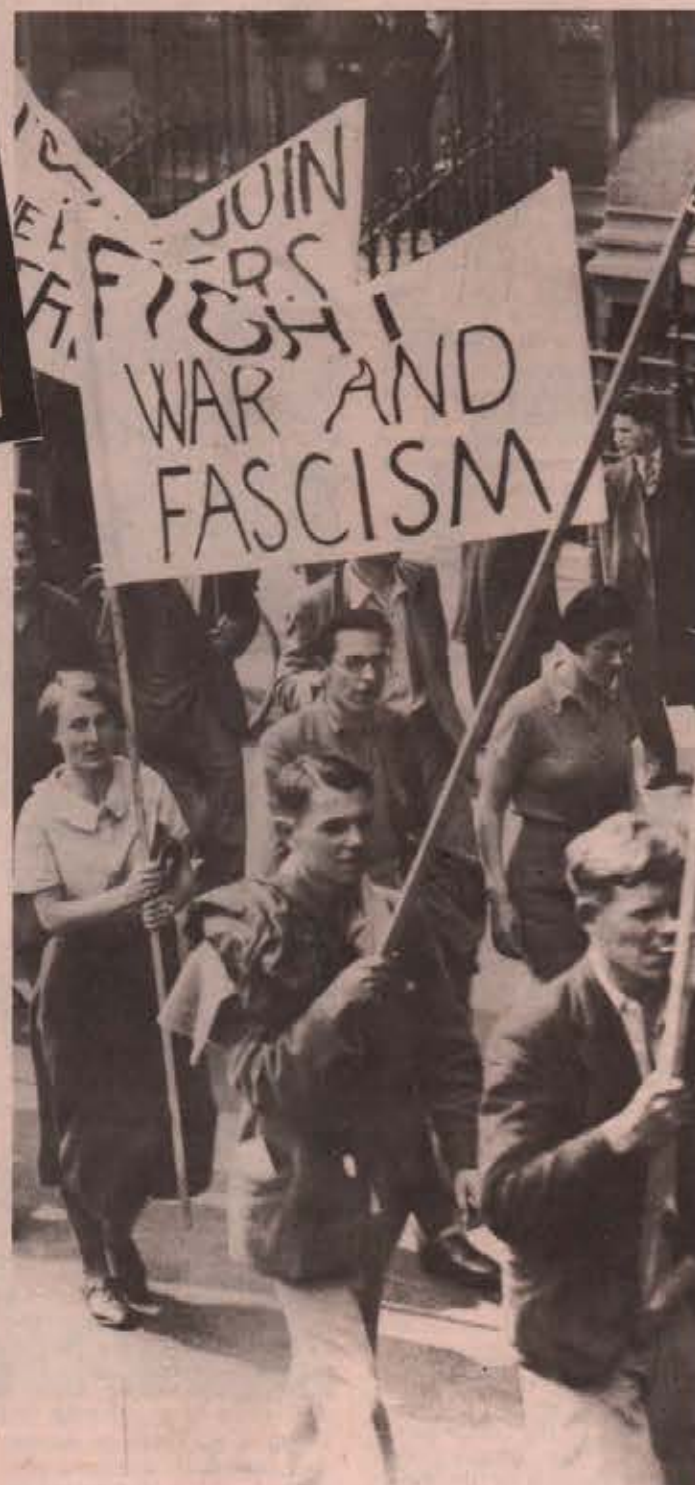
In Spain, during the Civil War, they set out to prove to Britain, France and America that they could be valuable allies.

In the anti-fascist Republican areas, the CP systematically drove out workers who had seized factories, and protected landlords from land-hungry peasants. They repressed the revolutionary left, setting up a pro-capitalist police state in the anti-fascist area.

This policy in fact broke the will and the energy of peasants and workers to fight the advancing armies of Franco and contributed to his victory.

But Stalin had proved to the "Western democracies" how useful he could be if they gave him a reason for it.

The Stalinist line was not constant all the way from 1935 to 1945. There was an interlude of 21 months, from September 1939 when Stalin signed a pact of eternal friendship with Hitler, to June 1941, when the Nazi armies invaded the USSR.



During that period the previous advocates of an anti-Nazi crusade and of the subordination of the working class to the "democratic bourgeoisie" made pro-Nazi propaganda!

Many people who know about the Stalin-Hitler pact don't know this. But, just as in the mid-30s the CPs everywhere glorified the British and French, who were being courted by Russia, in the period of the Stalin-Hitler pact, the CPs glorified the "peaceful" intentions of Hitler and explained

how wronged he was by the warmongers of Britain, France, etc.

In Mexico, the CP adapted to Stalin's new ally to the extent of denouncing Trotskyists — who had recently been denounced by them as Trotsky-Fascists — as "Jewish Trotskyists".

In Paris, on the eve of the Nazi invasion of the USSR, the French CP — which would later organise a powerful resistance movement against the German occupiers — was on the point of successfully negotiating the publication of a



In September 1939 Hitler became the wronged good guy, and the 'anti-fascist' democracies, Britain and France, the villains, as Stalin joined Hitler to invade and partition Poland. Bread to starving peasants? In the Russian-occupied area of Poland there were five million Poles (and 8 million Ukrainians and Byelo-Russians). Between one million and 1½ million of the Poles were deported to forced labour in the USSR — and an unknown number of Ukrainians and Byelo-Russians.

CP theorist Palme Dutt

legal daily paper with the German occupation forces.

After the invasion of Russia it was back to supporting the "peace-loving democracies", Britain and France and to such work as strike-breaking in Britain and America.

Now, the CP opposed all strikes, and when they occurred, organised scabbing. British CP general secretary Harry Pollitt made a notorious speech arguing the case for scabbing. "Today," said the general secretary of the

once-revolutionary CPGB, "it is the class conscious worker who will cross the picket line!"

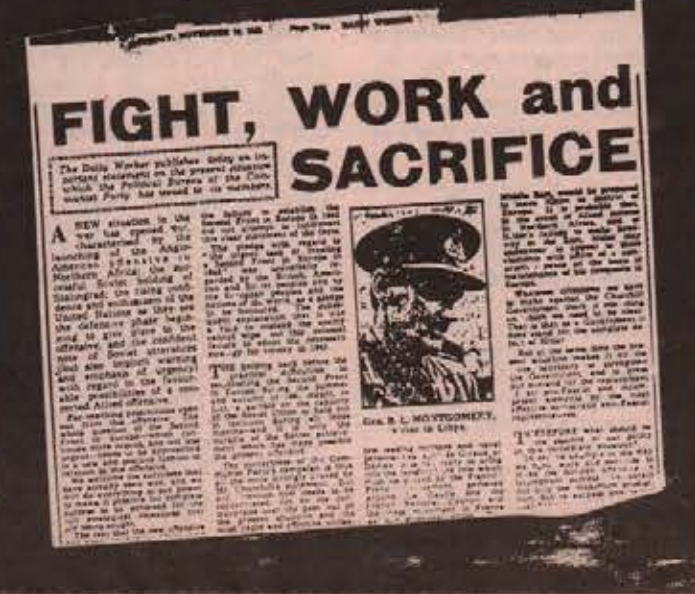
In the USA the CP advocated that striking coal miners be conscripted and forced back to work under military discipline!

It was a chapter of horrors in the history of our movement. The "Communist" Party grew to have 60,000 members at its height in 1946. (Today it has perhaps 10,000, most of them inactive). But it was out of any possible running to replace the Labour Party as the British working class party. That was a pretty good thing too, considering that the CP was to the right of the Labour right wing for most of that period.

Coalitionists like Eric Hobsbawm today continue that tradition. God knows why they still call themselves Communists.

Bornstein and Richardson are long-time advocates of the view that Marxists should be in the Labour Party.

The story they tell needs to be known and absorbed by those today who have to respond to the "Eurocommunist" claptrap advocating Labour coalition with the SDP-Liberal Alliance now being spread by leading sections of the Communist Party. Today — as in the 1930s — their views are echoed inside the Labour Party. Examining it last time round should help us to understand it and arm us to deal with the new advocates of coalitionism as they deserve to be dealt with.



"Fight, work and sacrifice" — and scab. The CP advocated and organised scabbing throughout World War 2. "It is the class conscious worker who will cross the picket line", said CP general secretary Harry Pollitt.

"Two steps back: Communists and the wider labour movement, 1939-1945", by Sam Bornstein and Al Richardson. £3.50: Socialist Platform Ltd, 8 Airlie Gardens, Ilford, Essex.

Industrial

NUR does another Duke of York

Twice now in the course of the miners' dispute, the rail unions, NUR and ASLEF, have backed down at the 11th hour from industrial action.

In May, strike action was called off when the two unions accepted a 4.9% pay offer which was way below our claim.

The government stepped in to keep the miners isolated by getting British Rail to with-

By Rob Dawber

draw the strings it initially put on its offer, and to up the offer by 1/4%.

For just the same reasons that the government wanted to keep the miners isolated, the rail unions should not have accepted this. The NUM dispute would have helped us to win, and we would have helped them to win.

THF blows the gaff

By Edward Ellis

THE Department of Health and Social Security's privatisation programme has come unstuck, with the announcement by Trust Houses Forte — Britain's biggest hotel and catering group — that it intends to boycott government privatisation schemes in hospital catering.

THF's decision is based on the fact that the government's proposals would lead to an enormous reduction in the standards of hygiene in hospitals.

The recent deaths from Salmonella poisoning in Yorkshire show that hygiene in hospitals and similar institutions is, literally, a matter of life and death.

THF are refusing to bid for the 2,000 hospital contracts now coming up for tender, and have withdrawn from a large NHS contract they already hold.

THF is insisting on two points. First, that the government withdraw the instruction that the company that offers the lowest bid should automatically be hired: THF say this encourages 'cowboy' firms with low standards to win contracts.

Second, they argue that the present system for contracting out cleaning and refuse collection be abolished. According to THF, this system cannot make

allowances for the real needs of patients, and underestimates the real cost of providing a good service.

THF have blown a hole in the government's claims that privatisation is good for us, showing quite clearly that it is very bad for us indeed. They have also angered some of their competitors: the managing director of Spinney's, a small firm just starting up in the NHS, complained last week that THF's "philosophy is out of date" — meaning, that to be up to date it is necessary to exploit people to the hilt without regard for the consequences.

Of course, THF's motives are not entirely altruistic. Its president, Lord Thorneycroft, is a former Tory Party chair and not known for his commitment to the NHS. The possible bad publicity resulting from a food poisoning epidemic such as the recent one at Wakefield is no doubt high up in their concerns.

The managing director of Gardner Merchant, THF's industrial catering division, made just this point in the Sunday Times last week: "Just imagine what it would do to us if we were running the catering where there was a food poisoning epidemic."

Still, THF have provided good ammunition that shows exactly how harmful — for the health of patients — privatisation can be.



NUR marchers on May Day demonstration in London

Photo: John Harris

Now once again railworkers have been wound up for action and the let down. 'Non cooperation' was due to begin to September 10, and a 24 strike in London was planned for September 12, in an attempt to put an end to escalating cuts, closures, and loss of jobs.

1,000 jobs have disappeared every month, on average, in the last 3 1/2 years, and BR's Corporate Plan proposes that a further 15,000 should go. It also accepts a cut in the government grant to BR for unprofitable lines of nearly £200 million.

The government instructed BR to draw up this plan, based on the Serpell Report, and has 'accepted' it, but told BR to complete the 5-year plan in three years. Joseph Stalin would have been proud of them.

The plan also aims to make three of BR's five sectors — Inter-City, Freight, Parcels — profitable by 1987. The decision to find the money for the electrification of the East Coast from inside BR is part of this drive for profitability.

But now the union action against these plans has been called off. Have we won? No! The plans remain.

The National Executive has said little about why the action was withdrawn, other than to detail what has been achieved in negotiations. The management has withdrawn proposed cuts in London Regional Transport (for the moment) and have granted a new, higher, stage in the machinery of negotiations in BR, allowing the union nationally to get involved rather than just the Sectional Councils.

BR have told the unions that they have no further proposals on line closures: they only wish to continue with the ones already in the pipeline. They have no present proposals to cut opening hours at main line stations other than at Fenchurch Street, London. There are no significant reductions planned for the 1985 timetable.

BR also say that they will make no more cuts in workshops until they have talked about it.

All in all, the rail unions have settled for more talks and promises of promises from a management which cannot afford to deliver even if it wants to.

As NUR general secretary Jimmy Knapp has said, "I would be misleading you if I told you that they [the concessions] represent a victory. They have bought us more time and given us the opportunity for more talks, but they do not solve some of the fundamental challenges that surround us".

The other reason given for calling off the action blames the membership. ASLEF, we are told, could not hold the line because the members are anxious to get their hands on the £50 per week extra that Driver Only Operation would give them.

We are also told that in many areas NUR members would not support the union.

Even if that were true, some areas could have given a lead and pulled the rest into line. Look at the NUM!

The NUR national leadership has a responsibility to lead and to make sure the members are adequately prepared to fight back.

Libel costs appeal

TODAY the dangers of asbestos poisoning are generally realized, but this was not always the case. Trade unions have played a major part in warning about asbestos. One very major contribution to this process was made by the British Society for Social Responsibility in Science (BSSRS). In 1979 they asked the Russell Press, which is associated with the Bertrand Russell Peace Foundation, to produce a trade union handbook about the hazards of asbestos, written by Alan Dalton.

The book certainly played an important part in stimulating the trade union campaign against asbestos. However, one of the medical experts who was criticised in the book strongly resented the criticism it offered. He issued a writ not only against the author and the publishers, but also against the printers. We are very alarmed that such an action is possible; it is a bit like being able to sue the electricity board for supplying power to a TV station on which a slander is uttered. Printers should not

censor the matter they print, since their service is purely technical. But this case dragged on for five years and only recently came into the High Court, where the hearings have lasted for more than two weeks. As a consequence, the legal costs are enormous.

The Russell Press are required to pay the best part of £10,000. This is well beyond their resources. If they do not get help, the important work of the Russell Foundation will be severely curtailed, it will no longer be able to offer many of the services that the trade union, Labour and peace movements have enjoyed for many years. In addition workers in the enterprise may have to be laid-off.

For these compelling reasons, we are launching a special Appeal. We ask you to give it your generous support. Please send donations to Ken Fleet, Bertrand Russell House, Gamble Street, Nottingham, NG7 4ET.

TONY BENN
ERIC HEFFER
RON TODD

International

Turkey solidarity grows

By Nathan Jones

A petition demanding the release of the tens of thousands of political prisoners in Turkey, and a call for Labour's National Executive to send a delegation to the trial of DISK trade union leaders in Istanbul, will be launched at the Labour Party conference.

These were two of the decisions on practical solidarity action taken by the Labour Movement Conference on Turkey held on September 22. The conference itself drew together the main groups campaigning against Turkey's military regime and representatives from labour movement bodies.

A main emphasis of the conference was the need to support the working class in Turkey against the heavy repression it still faces. 78 leaders of the DISK trade union federation (a 600,000-strong body banned when the military took power in

1980) face trial and possible death sentences.

Further waves of arrests have meant that another 535 officials of DISK-affiliated unions now face similar charges of "attempting to overthrow the constitution".

The military's 1982 Constitution gives them and the employers very wide-ranging powers to curb strikes and the trials are a further threat to trade union activists. Though "collective bargaining" by pro-government leaders of the TURK-IS federation (whose general secretary joined the military government) is now allowed, real wage rates have fallen by half in the last two years.

During 1984, workers' opposition to the regime has grown. A rally of 7,000 TURK-IS members in Istanbul in June saw its leaders shouted down by members chanting "Strike is our right, we will take it by force".

Appeal to bullet workers

By Jim Bennett

FOURTEEN relatives of victims of the use of plastic bullets in Northern Ireland picketed the Brock's Fireworks factory in Sanquhar, south-west Scotland, last Saturday, 22nd.

The lethal weapons are assembled at this factory.

Among the demonstrators was the brother of recently-murdered Sean Downs. Kathleen Stewart, who took the murder of her son by a plastic bullet before the European Court of Human Rights, was also there, as was Emma Groves, who was herself blinded by a plastic bullet in 1971.

The picket was supported by delegations from Glasgow Labour Committee on Ireland, Glasgow Sinn Féin, and the

Edinburgh branch of the British Society for Social Responsibility in Science. It was initiated by the recently-formed united campaign against plastic bullets, set up in Belfast from the conference held in the aftermath of the killing of Sean Downs.

Tony Benn, Ken Livingstone, Dave Nellist, Clare Short, Ann Pettifor and Tam Dalyell all expressed support.

In a letter handed in at the factory, the relatives appealed to the workers "to save the lives of our children and working people in our communities. We have the support of 17 British MPs, but need your support more than any other."

"You, more than anyone else, can bring these horrific tragedies to an immediate end — stop the production of plastic death bullets!"

Deal pleases GM bosses

By Jack Russell

LEADERS of the United Auto Workers Union, which has 350,000 members employed by General Motors — the world's largest private employer and motor manufacturer — agreed a settlement last weekend which proved that UAW members' fears of a sell-out had been justified.

Full details of the agreement are still to be announced, but it appears that the three year wages deal would give workers no more than 3.5% on basic wages in the first year of the contract, followed by about 5% spread over the next two.

91,000 workers who have been out on selective strikes over the last week, demanding a better wages packet including automatic cost of living increases and profit sharing, have been told by the union to resume

work.

The deal — described by UAW president Owen Bieber as an "excellent settlement providing much-deserved economic improvements immediately and in the years ahead" — falls well short of the current US inflation rate. It appears to rule out consolidation of cost-of-living adjustments into the basic wage; it provides for the payments in the second and third years of the contract to be given as bonuses rather than absorbed into the basic rate.

GM bosses and Wall Street made no secret of their satisfaction with the deal, reflected in the immediate rise in company share prices; and bosses of Ford — the second largest of the US motor groups — who are involved in similar negotiations with the UAW will use this betrayal as a basis for a settlement with their workforce.

US miners stitched up

70,000 US coal miners in the United Mine Workers have had their pay and conditions negotiations with the Bituminous Coal Operators' Association — a bosses' group representing 32 mine operators in the East and Mid-West — stitched-up by their own leaders.

The new 40-month contract, if approved by the union's members, would provide the first peaceful settlement in the industry for 18 years.

The deal involves only a 10.25% increase in wages over that period, and includes cost savings for the bosses, in particular, reductions in the amount the employers pay in medical benefits to the miners.

The contract reflects the attitude of the US union leaders — settle with the bosses in order to maintain production. Union members' interests are secondary to these class collaborationist misdeeds.

WORKERS Socialist Review

No. 4, out now, includes articles on Afghanistan, on the Northern Ireland Protestants, and on the theory of imperialism in the light of the South Atlantic war.

Back the miners

GENERAL STRIKE!



75p plus
postage from
PO Box 135,
London N1.

Socialist Organiser

Off the fence

Continued from page 1

We indict her for outraging social justice and for trampling on democracy with her plans to close pits and destroy jobs without giving miners and mining communities any say in it.

Mrs Thatcher, the self-proclaimed democrat, knows that charge to be true. She knows that British industry, private and nationalised alike, is run as a series of viciously autocratic dictatorships.

But if you tell Thatcher to her face that her commitment to democracy is therefore partial, shallow and 70% or 90% lying hypocrisy, will she go into a crisis of self-doubt? Will she mumble against 'police violence'? Will she concede any part of our case that industry should be more democratically run?

Like hell she will!

She will give you a Tory lec-

ture that this state of things is natural, that it has to be like that, that democracy is an election every five years and that any other sort of democracy is impossible — and that, therefore, right now, the miners have to be crushed.

You don't get much change out of the ruling class if you appeal to them in the name of the democracy they claim to cherish, to take their hands off our throats and out of our pockets.

History teaches us that whenever politicians like Thatcher and the class she represents have found their own limited democracy leading to concessions to working people that they thought they could not afford, then they have dispensed with democracy.

You can see that in the coalfields today. Over the last six months the police have made up

the 'law' from day to day, according to what they needed to do to suppress the miners.

Thatcher preaches law and order for propaganda — but she isn't hooked on her own phrases. She has not let her propaganda determine what she has done in the battle with the miners.

Mrs Thatcher believes in the rule of law — as long as it serves the rule of Capital.

In contrast to Thatcher, you, Neil Kinnock, seem constantly to feel abashed before Tory propaganda. You accept their biased partisan definition of the rule of law and of what democracy is.

You accept — and repeat — their version of what's been happening on the picket lines. The police have partly scrapped the rule of law in the coalfields — yet you attack us for resisting their lawless rule.

You take the ruling-class view that the police — right or wrong, when they keep within the law and when they go outside it — have the right to a monopoly of violence. In practice you join the Tories to deny us the right of self-defence.

The Tory government has turned the police into the biggest scab-herding agency in British history — yet you attack us for refusing to let them steamroller us for Thatcher and MacGregor.

That's not good enough, Mr Kinnock!

I can understand that you want to avoid getting the Labour Party splattered with the mud with which the media is deluging the miners. You want

Poland: support Solidarnosc

to keep some contact with 'middle of the road' and middle class voters, and you fear losing that contact if you are too closely identified with the miners depicted in the press as 'violent', 'subverting the rule of law', and so on.

So you add your weight to the propaganda campaign against us.

I think your choice is both short-sighted and unprincipled.

There is no way Labour can avoid being linked with the miners — probably not even if you joined the Tories and the SDP in a full condemnation of us. And if the miners go down to defeat, then the whole labour movement will inevitably be depressed and at least to a degree demoralised.

The Tories would follow up their victory with an offensive in every industry, believing that they had the whole movement on the run. They would step up their attacks on the welfare state.

The electoral consequences for Labour from a defeat for us would be crippling. Your condemnations of us would not save you from those consequences. We can deny the Tories such advantage only by denying them victory over the miners.

The miners' strike has become a decisive battle between the working class movement and the ruling class — the most important working class struggle for over a decade. Its outcome will probably shape British political life for a long time to come. You can, if you like, make smart-alec half-baked unjust comparisons between Arthur Scargill and a First World War general. Whatever you say, Scargill has the confidence of his 'troops' because he, too, knows what side he is on and he knows how to lead.

The question is, what side are you on, Neil Kinnock? So far you have been on the fence for most of the strike. You should get off that fence and come down on the miners' side — the side of the working class.

If you don't, then you will certainly not be forgiven by the miners — and not, I venture to predict, by the rest of the labour movement either.

The miners will win!

Yours sincerely,
Paul Whetton.

Fund

WE'VE received a sizeable number of donations to our premises fund this week — none of them very big individually, but together they are a useful boost.

Thanks to: Bruce Robinson £50; John Harris £29; Ian Hollingworth £2.50; Bev Wood £1; Sarah Cotterill £20; Tony Dale £20; Penny Campbell £5; Juliet Rodgers £10; Sally Page £9; Richard Bayley £24. Total: £160.50.

That leaves £400 to reach our £2000 target. But really we need to go well over that target. Fundraising events organised by local groups, plus more donations, can do it — as long as we get donations, not just from active sellers, but also from our readers who think we do a worthwhile job.

Send contributions to: 214 Sickert Court, London N1 2SY.

The lesson from the issue of what has happened with Polish coal during the miners' strike is that the entire movement in this country should have given Solidarnosc total support. If they had done so, we wouldn't have run into the problem that exists of the Polish government sending coal supplies during the strike. It is very important that we should have shown solidarity — free trade unions would not have allowed coal to have come in now. I'm delighted that the Solidarnosc committee in Poland has expressed solidarity with the miners in this country — it's a very fine example of internationalism.

ERIC HEFFER MP



Police use dogs on black youth in Johannesburg

POLICE SHOOT SA STRIKERS

By Bryan Edmonds

AT LEAST 10 black gold miners have been killed in the past week by police firing on strikers in the mining areas surrounding Johannesburg.

Their deaths come after the wages settlement last week by the black mining union, the NUM, and the official end of the first legal strike by the union which had involved about 40,000 black gold miners.

But many miners have remained on strike, with the dispute spreading to other mines where thousands of black workers are either not yet unionised, or where the NUM is not recognised by the mine-owners.

Those companies called in the police to smash the strikes.

Hundreds of miners have been hospitalised by police actions and many more arrested as the mine bosses, with the full backing of the apartheid state, seek to beat down the workers' militancy.

The killings in the mining areas come on top of a further 60 or so deaths during the past four weeks in the black townships around Johannesburg where blacks have been protesting about the recent coloured and Indian elections to stooge assemblies, about rent increases and transport charges, and the increasing police repression.

Last Sunday (September 23) police attacked funeral processions in Sebokeng — a township to the south of Johannesburg — and in Soweto, with tear gas, rubber bullets and batons, after magistrates banned public processions of mourners for 22-year old Joseph Sithole, and student leader Bongani Khumalo, both shot down by police.

Nearly 500 black mourners were beaten up and arrested in Sebokeng after defying the funeral restrictions.

Meanwhile in the British Consulate in Durban the six South Africans who sought temporary asylum from re-arrest by security forces after leading the boycott opposition to the recent elections under the new constitution, are continuing their sit-in which has lasted almost two weeks now.

The six, some of them members of the National Indian Congress, and all leading figures in the United Democratic Front — the focus of the public boycott campaign of the elections — face indefinite detention without trial.

On Monday September 24, Pik Botha, South African Foreign Minister, announced a tit-for-tat measure against what they consider to be British government intransigence in not expelling the six, by refusing to send back four white South Africans arrested and charged in Coventry earlier this year for illegal arms dealings.

However, the Tory government has done nothing to aid the six or the tens of thousands of political detainees held by the apartheid regime, even refusing to meet their representatives who flew to London last week.

Black workers' victory

STRIKE action by 1200 black workers at Dunlop's Durban tyre plant, began on August 9 over the company's breaching of agreements and the sacking of four shop stewards, joined the next day by a further 620 workers in Dunlop's sports division taking solidarity action, has ended successfully.

The workers — members of the Metal and Allied Trades Union — have won union recognition and the removal of sanctions against the black workers.

This comes after trade union pressure was put on Dunlop in Britain and Europe by workers protesting at the company's actions in South Africa. It highlights the importance of international working class solidarity to support black South African trade-unionists in their struggles.



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

Build workplace branches

THE Labour Party is, according to the NEC's report to conference, planning a national meeting for workplace branches. This is, presumably, the same meeting that Labour's national agent

By Nik Barstow
[Secretary, Islington
Council Workers Work-
place Branch].

had planned for 'shortly after the EEC elections', for 'early

September' . . . and it still hasn't happened.

Small wonder then, given the Party's seeming lack of interest, that the workplace branches movement is still growing only slowly — with some 67 branches established round the country.

Also small wonder that no party body felt inclined to raise the need for these new branches to be built in any single conference resolution (in fact, one resolution to conference mentions them).

But the potential for workplace branches of the Party remains enormous, and the enthusiasm of the existing industrial branches is high.

Guide

Many of the industrial branches have met together at three national meetings to discuss their experience and help build branches in new areas themselves. A simple guide to the forming of workplace branches and reports on the branches' experiences is being planned as a pamphlet. Work has been done to interest affiliated unions in backing the campaign and SOGAT 82 has carried a resolution in support of it.

To help keep the momentum going, despite the official disinterest, a fringe meeting organised by the workplace branches will be held at Party conference. Another national meeting is also planned for Saturday 27 October at 11 am at St. Pancras Library, Euston Road, London, which will be on the theme 'Socialism and the organisation of industry — the role of the Party at work'.



Strikers speak out!

Miners, Cammell Launds
The rank and file view

LABOUR CONFERENCE FRINGE MEETING

Speakers:
Paul Whetton, Secretary, Notts Miners' Rank and File Strike Committee, 4 Jan, Secord C.P.
Albert Brown, O.S., 4 Jan, Secord C.P.
Valley C.P.
Vicki Smalley, Secretary, Huddersfield Women's Action Group
Ed Duffell, Secretary, 4 Jan, Secord C.P.
Committee, Chair, Ward C.P.

7.30 Tuesday 2nd October
Hotel & Guest House
Assoc., 87a Coronation St.

Notts Miners' Rank and File Strike Committee Socialist Organiser



SOCIALISM AT WORK

Building workplace branches

Where they have been set up, workplace branches have really resulted dozens of new members to the Party — but so far these new bodies have received little help at recognition. But workplace branches have got together to find ways of promoting this new step for the Labour Party — producing new leaflets and simple guides to forming a branch yourself.

Representatives from a number of branches will be explaining the work they are doing and what other Party members can do to help. Meeting sponsored by Islington Council Workers Branch, Liverpool Postal Employees Branch and Business Print International Branch.

5.30 Tuesday 2nd October
Chamber of Trade, 53 Queen St